

The Shawnigan Lake Historical Society by Lori Treloar

In November 1976 a group of Shawnigan Lake residents held an exploratory meeting to see if there was enough interest in the community to form a local historical society. The first formal meeting of the newly registered Shawnigan Lake Historical Society was held February 16, 1977 in the old Community Hall. One of the initiatives for the Society was to take over the sale of the third printing of Shawnigan's history, *Green Branches and Fallen Leaves* (6th printing in 2009) – and another, to provide a home for the collection of memorabilia that had been preserved by the local trustees of the village-owned library. The Society was without a permanent base for six years before finding a suitable home for the Shawnigan Lake Museum. In spite of the lack of permanent space, the Society was busy. Volunteers collected artifacts and archival material; registrars and curators documented and catalogued the items. The Society held open houses; arranged interesting and informative speakers; sent representatives to seminars and conventions; interviewed and recorded old timers; went on field trips; and paid visits to local schools. The time was well spent – they were learning how to run a museum. In 1983 their preparation was put to good use when the village Firehall, built in 1950, became the new home of the Shawnigan Lake Museum.

The Shawnigan Lake Historical Society celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2007. The collection has grown; the building has had further modifications; many dedicated volunteers have come and gone, but the original purpose is still the same: to preserve and celebrate the history of Shawnigan Lake; and to provide a permanent repository for information, records and objects of historical and cultural value associated with the area. A local museum is a resource for the benefit of the community. On behalf of the community, we continue to receive a steady stream of donations of artifacts, written material and photos. With these generous donations the story of Shawnigan Lake continues to develop.

We are surprised that many Shawnigan residents are not aware that the museum exists. And that many people who are aware of it, have never ventured inside. If you have an interest in the history and development of the area or, like many of us, have forged a strong bond with Shawnigan Lake, the museum offers an intimate look at its interesting and surprising past. You will see an elaborate light fixture that once hung in the lobby of the Strathcona Hotel (c 1900); hear the sound of music from our old gramophone; tap out a message on the old typewriter; learn about the early settlers, and enjoy the ambience of an old-time theatre while watching slideshows of the area. The displays, which strive to highlight the social, industrial and recreational aspects of the area, continue to evolve and change. We invite the community to enjoy the museum - bring your friends and family.

