

9. RUSKIN



View of Mount Baker from Ruskin, 1911. [F. Todd Dundas, Photographer. VPL #14368]



Hudson's Bay employee William Cromarty, a cooper at Fort Langley, was the first settler recorded to claim land where the Stave River meets the Fraser. He gave up his claim and opted to settle in Glen Valley opposite Whonnock. His former claim became the industrial core of Ruskin.

The history of Ruskin as a distinct community started with the building, around 1896, of a sawmill and a small village by members of the Canadian Co-operative Society. There was nothing in the constitution or the bylaws of the CCS referring to John Ruskin, but the members gave the name Ruskin Mills to the place

where they lived. John Ruskin was an influential late nineteenth century English philosopher; his social reform theories inspired the local inhabitants to establish a club for the discussion of Ruskinian socialism. The name 'Ruskin' became official with the opening of a post office on January 1, 1898.

In 1897 the co-operative counted 54 members, most living close to the mill and not less than thirty students, mostly the members' children, attended the first school. However, 1898 was the last year of the co-operative in Ruskin. Due to a rainless summer, the Stave River dried up and logs could not be moved



This building housed the Heaps mill offices, a store, and a hotel, offering mostly living accommodations for senior staff. The building stood on the south side of the tracks where the Stave and Fraser Rivers meet. Heaps mill was on the other side of the tracks. [MRMA P01864]

THE HERITAGE RESOURCES OF MAPLE RIDGE



Japanese-Canadian kindergarten class outside school, Ruskin, B.C., 1920s. [BCA B-01067]

to the mill. The Society surrendered its assets to E.H. Heaps & Co. who had supplied the mill machinery on credit.

Heaps & Co. had pioneered steam and railway logging, and turned the small Ruskin mill into a progressive operation. The Heaps office building accommodated the general store and post office and provided living quarters for senior staff. It was also where the settlers would have their get-togethers. The mill burned down several times and the Heaps operations in Ruskin went bust in the general depression of 1913.

As the Heaps operations came to an end, the Stoltze Manufacturing Co. shingle mill commenced operations in 1913 just across the border in Mission. In the 1920s Stoltze had grown into the largest shingle mill in British Columbia. Their success depended heavily on the employment of Japanese workers in the woods and in the mill. Lumbering remained a main source of income for Ruskin residents as did the construction and operation involved with the production of hydro-electric power – the Stave Falls dam and later the Ruskin dam.



After the First World War, Japanese families had started farming in Ruskin; mostly growing raspberries and strawberries. In the 1930s there were about thirty registered Japanese landowners in Ruskin, and some seventy-five percent of the Ruskin population was Japanese. There were also Japanese logging operations in the area and small Japanese sawmills. It all ended with the forced expulsion of Japanese-Canadians from the coast in 1942.

The Ruskin railway station, built in 1910, stood until there were no longer enough passengers to warrant a stop; the building was dismantled in 1961. The Ruskin Post Office closed in 1969. Ruskin School closed in 1998, and afterwards Ruskin students attended the Whonnock Elementary School.

RUSKIN SITES

- Ruskin Community Hall, 28395 96 Avenue
- Miller Residence, 28594 104 Avenue (Heritage Register / Heritage Revitalization Agreement)
- Wilfred Maxwell Smith Residence, 9449 285 Street
- Maddock Residence, 28306 Dewdney Trunk Road

RUSKIN CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

- Twin Maples, 10350 280 Street

THE HERITAGE RESOURCES OF MAPLE RIDGE



RUSKIN COMMUNITY HALL
28395 96 Avenue (Street Address)
28395 River Road (Legal Address)
1924

For their community events the residents of Ruskin assembled in the schoolhouse or occasionally in the Heaps building. In 1916 the old schoolhouse was replaced by a two-room building, and the residents pulled the old structure across the street and made it their community hall. The Gilchrist family gave significant support to the repurposing of the first building ('Gilchrist Hall'). When the hall burned down in 1922, it was replaced by the present structure, which was completed in 1924. A half-acre of land donated by William Gilchrist Laing, Albert Miller prepared the plans, the Abernethy & Loughheed Logging Company donated the hemlock lumber that was delivered to the wharf at Ruskin and hauled up the hill to the site, and the Stoltze Manufacturing Co. donated the shingles. Many volunteers and local residents participated in the building work. The hall is still owned and operated by the Ruskin Community Hall Association, incorporated in 1930, and remains an important local meeting place for the Ruskin community.



MILLER RESIDENCE
28594 104 Avenue
1932

■ Heritage Register / Heritage Revitalization Agreement

In 1898 Moses Ball sold 130 acres of his original 160-acre property to James and Robert Harris. In turn, in 1903 they sold their property to Albert Miller, father of Charles A. Miller. The house stands on a fraction of the land bought by Albert Miller in 1903. His son Charles A. Miller built this Craftsman-inspired farmhouse for his family. The house has a gable-roofed porch to the east, and a garage built into the basement. A legal agreement protects the house, a number of early agricultural outbuildings, and landscape features including orchard trees and ornamental deciduous trees set against a backdrop of the downslope coniferous forest.



WILFRED MAXWELL SMITH RESIDENCE
9449 285 Street
1941

This unusual rustic residence, with the exterior clad in mill slabs, was built for Wilfred Maxwell Smith (1890-1986). The interior is substantially clad in wood, with stone fireplaces. Located on a rise at the northwest corner of 285 Street and Loughheed Highway, it is unusual for its date of wartime construction, and domestic building was curtailed at the time. Smith was born in Dewdney; his parents were Samuel Smith, an Irish immigrant, and Elizabeth (née Vasey), a native of Quebec. He was married in 1920 to Hazel K. Woods; he worked as a farmer and later as a stockbroker, and this may have been a vacation property, as he appears to have lived in Mission City. By 1948 the house was acquired by Donald and Jean K. MacLeod.



MADDOCK RESIDENCE
28306 Dewdney Trunk Road
1947

This unique rustic house features log construction with notched corners, half-timbering in the gable ends, a central entry porch and a stone chimney. It was built for Roger L. Maddock (1923-2008), who operated a mink ranch. His English-born parents, Gerald Lewellyn Maddock (1892-1966) and Bessie (née Rogers, 1891-1961) also lived here in the 1950s. Gerald Maddock was an architect who retired in 1954. The Maddocks later moved to Salmon Arm.



“Twenty-one walking wounded soldiers arrived at the C.P.R. depot here from service in England... R. Maddock, New Westminster, and Mrs Ruby Jones, past president of the New Veteran’s Auxiliary.” [Vancouver Province, March 15, 1944, page 9]

RUSKIN CULTURAL LANDSCAPES



TWIN MAPLES 10350 280 Street

E. Thomas Parker's father Isaac and the Kusha family took up homesteads in an area that had been a Finn colony about a mile west of the Stave Dam and north of Dewdney. A bad fire burned them out and Parker then bought what was to become the Twin Maples property on 280 Street in Ruskin. Isaac Parker later worked as a boom man for the Heaps Mill.

Gazette, June 3, 1938.

The first settler to work this piece of land was Peter Calder, who arrived in 1887. The second owner was Isaac Parker; the Parker family moved here in 1902.

The Parkers planted the two Sugar Maples that grew into prominence and after which the property was named. It was also the name given to the women's correctional facility, the Twin Maples Farm for Women, that opened here in 1960; it was renamed the Lynda Williams Community Correctional Centre in 1977. This was the first minimum-security facility for adult female offenders and provided treatment for low-risk inmates from the women's section at Oakalla. Many humane and experimental ideas were tried here, including allowing residents to keep their newborn babies, and encouraging outdoor work on the farm. The facility was closed a number of years ago, and the 248-acre site remains vacant.



The Sugar Maples in front of the Parker House, circa 1925. [MRMA P01937]