

City of Courtenay

# Heritage Register



November 2011



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**City of Courtenay  
Heritage Register**

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## **1.0 Ongoing Heritage Register Implementation**

One of the most important concepts in current heritage planning and assessment is that of values-based management. Heritage value describes how communities such as the City of Courtenay recognize the significance of the resources which embody its heritage character. Heritage values extend beyond the physical aspects of an historic resource. Rather, they answer the question “why is this resource important to our heritage?” by assessing the aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual values which are embodied in the heritage resource, and which are important for past, present and future generations. Identifying heritage values ensures the appropriate conservation of these historic places, which in turn protects the heritage character of a community.

A Community Heritage Register is a planning tool which allows a local government to monitor and manage change in its historic places. As a tracking tool, the Community Heritage Register informs the local government when changes may occur to a registered historic place, and gives legal authority to guide that change to allow for the most effective form of conservation to occur.

For registered historic places, a local government may consider and, if necessary, undertake protective action such as temporarily withholding demolition permits and building and development approvals, ordering heritage inspections, or monitoring changes in properties through a licensing and permit application process.

Properties that are placed on a Community Heritage Register are added to the British Columbia and Canadian Registers of Historic Places once they are submitted to the Province of BC.

While the Community Heritage Register legally permits the local government to manage and guide changes that occur to its historic places, the CHR does not put a limit on the changes a heritage property owner may make to his or her historic place. Heritage registration does not constitute designation or any other type of formal protection of an historic place.



## City of Courtenay Heritage Register

The ongoing expansion of the heritage register is an important tool that will allow the City of Courtenay to manage change while retaining the heritage value and character of its historic places.

The following are steps that can be taken to fully integrate the heritage register into the city's planning and policy.

### 1. Ongoing update of the heritage register

- Continue the initiative of updating the heritage register each year
- Apply for funding for 2009-2010 immediately and set up an ongoing mechanism for continued funding applications each year
- Regularly review the context, themes and existing statements of significance as new research or information is revealed
- Continue to solicit input on the register from a wide variety of community groups and local citizens

### 2. Selection of sites to the heritage register

- Apply selection criteria to the heritage register by adapting the criteria listed in section 1.1
- Continue to select a wide variety of resources to the register
- Ensure the inclusion of threatened resources on the heritage register
- Establish a nomination process for the register to involve the general public. A nomination form could be developed and placed on the city's website
- Use the themes developed during this process to ensure the register is comprehensive. Subthemes can continue to be added to the list

### 3. Policy development for the heritage register

- Establish policy and protocol in consultation with local Aboriginal groups for the inclusion of sites significant to their heritage on the heritage register
- Consult with the Regional District to establish policy for sites outside the city's jurisdiction but which are critical to Courtenay's history and heritage value



- Encourage neighbouring communities - Comox, Cumberland - to establish heritage registers as an important regional planning tool and to support a regional heritage network
4. Heritage conservation and city planning
- Ensure the ongoing integration of heritage conservation into city planning procedures using the heritage register as an important tool
  - Investigate current approaches to heritage conservation from other levels of government to expand the use and relevance of the heritage register as a cornerstone of community heritage program
  - Investigate funding and other opportunities from other levels of government to implement at community heritage program eg. Provincial Heritage Branch
  - Expand heritage planning process and awareness beyond the planning department by including parks and recreation, engineering and building departments
  - Initiate a strategic planning process for heritage conservation in the City of Courtenay
  - Investigate and implement opportunities for the interpretation, commemoration and celebration of heritage resources and their significant associations between people and place



## **1.1 Criteria for Site Selection**

The selection criteria below offer guidelines for site selection to the heritage register. They have been developed based on generally acknowledged criteria found in the various heritage charters, and Courtenay's historical context and thematic framework.

These criteria should be used in conjunction with identified themes, community heritage values and a broad spectrum of opinion from community members to select resources for Courtenay's heritage register in upcoming years.

Which places get onto the register first? In any given year, the heritage program's past and current activities, and a review of other objectives of the City of Courtenay will likely provide some direction as to those resources that should be placed on the register next. Or, a criteria or theme could be chosen as the basis for that year's register selection.

For example:

- it may be evident that a specific resource or group of resources should be placed on the register because they are under threat
- a new and unique heritage place or group of places has been brought to the attention of the City of Courtenay and the Community Heritage Commission, through the community or a nomination form
- there may be an opportunity to develop a resource or group of resources to fulfill tourism policy objectives
- it may be decided that natural heritage resources will be selected to fulfill sustainability objectives
- it may be decided that a certain type of site is under-represented on the heritage register
- it may be decided that a certain neighbourhood or area in the City of Courtenay is under-represented on the heritage register

A place may be entered in the Heritage Register if it is of cultural or natural heritage significance and satisfies one or more of the following criteria. A place is not to be excluded from the Heritage Register on the grounds that places with similar characteristics have already



## City of Courtenay Heritage Register

been entered in the Register. A place may be excluded from the register because of its status as an archaeological site.

- The place is under threat from damage or loss through proposed development, neglect, or other reasons
- The place illustrates the heritage of, or is located in, regions or areas in the City of Courtenay that are under-represented on the heritage register
- The place corrects disparities in the heritage register by representing themes, styles or types of heritage places that are under-represented on the heritage register
- The place is important in demonstrating the evolution, theme, pattern or community identity in the pre-contact period and the history of the City of Courtenay
- The place demonstrates unique, uncommon or endangered aspects of cultural or natural heritage in the City of Courtenay
- The place has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the region's history
- The place is important because of its aesthetic significance or is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period
- The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons
- The place has a special association with the life or work of a person, group or organization of importance in the city's history
- The place is associated with an historical event, or has a particular meaning or cultural association important to the city
- The place has the ability to demonstrate the general characteristics of a particular type of resource, either natural or cultural
- The place has the potential to contribute to economic development and to be used in the everyday lives of people in the region
- The place has the ability to contribute to the social well-being of the community
- The place has the ability to contribute to the biodiversity of the community, area or region



## 2.0 Statements of Significance

*Statements of Significance have been completed for the following historic places:*

1. *Native Sons Hall*
2. *Tsolum River Garry Oak Ecosystem*
3. *5th Street*
4. *Courtenay River*
5. *Courtenay Post Office*
6. *St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Sandwick*
7. *Courtenay Riverway*
8. *St. Andrews Comox District Anglican Church*
9. *Sandwick Manor*
10. *Creech House*
11. *Lewis Park*
12. *'Scoop' Johnson House*
13. *Billy Booth House*
14. *Simms Park*
15. *Settler's Cairn*
16. *Old House Restaurant*
17. *Seale and Thompson Garage*
18. *Vancouver Island Regional Library Courtenay Branch*
19. *Old Church Theatre*
20. *Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds*
21. *Sandwick War Memorial Cairn*
22. *40 Houses*

The statements of significance for Courtenay's individual resources contributing to its heritage character together tell the story of the city, and embody its unique character. This first group of 21 statements reflects the diverse nature of the city and its storied past.

Each heritage resource has been assessed to determine how it embodies the heritage values of the place and of the community. This process must answer the questions, "Why does this site have significance to the community? Where does its heritage value lie?"

### *Statement of significance*

A three-part document that includes a description of the historic place, the core heritage values of the historic place, and a list of character-defining elements which embody the heritage values and which must be retained in order to conserve those values.

### *Heritage value*

The aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual importance or significance for past, present or future generations. The heritage value of a historic place is embodied in its character-defining materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses and cultural associations or meanings.

### *Character defining elements*

The materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to the heritage value of a historic place, and which must be retained in order to preserve its heritage value.

# 1

## **Native Sons Hall 360 Cliffe Avenue, Courtenay, B.C.**

### **Description**

The Native Sons Hall is a large, rectangular wooden clad log structure located in downtown Courtenay. Initially built as a recreational hall, the Native Sons Hall is a well-used and prominent landmark in the community.



### **Value**

The significance of the Native Sons Hall lies in its scientific, historic, aesthetic and social value, particularly for its form and composition, architecture, architects, and its ongoing use as a community hall.

The Native Sons Hall's scientific value is expressed in the use of building technologies and methods that created the largest free-span log structure in Canada.

Constructed in 1928 as Courtenay's original recreation centre and meeting hall, the Native Sons Hall's historic value lies in its association with Bill Eastman -one of Canada's foremost bridge builders- who supervised the construction of the Hall and William Hagarty, a prominent local architect who designed the building.

The Native Sons Hall is valued as an exceptional example of rustic inspired architecture, which is evidenced by the buildings extensive use of indigenously grown and milled fire killed cedar logs. It is significant that the Native Sons Hall is comprised of donated logs from local timber companies, particularly Robert Filberg, and its prominent situation above the Comox Logging and Railway line serves as a fitting symbol to the legacy of the local logging industry which had a profound impact on the social and economic development of Courtenay.

The Native Sons Hall is socially valued as a symbol of the advancement of the Canadian spirit and the adoption of a Canadian identity by the Native Sons of Canada in the interwar period. It is also significant that the Native Sons Hall reflects the spirit of philanthropy in Courtenay which is highlighted by the fact that the land, logs and most of the labour were donated towards the endeavor of building a community hall. Actively used for a span of 80 years, the Native Sons Hall reflects the importance of social connection and recreation in the development of Courtenay.

In 1987, the Native Sons Hall was the first municipally designated heritage building in Courtenay, signifying the community's early stewardship and concern for heritage conservation.

### **Character Defining Elements**

#### **Siting**

- prominent location in downtown Courtenay; situation of structure directly above the former Comox Logging and Railway right-of-way

#### **Architecture**

- free span log structure built almost entirely of locally milled lumber
- cantilevered roof with angled bracket
- variety of exterior wood cladding including cedar shingle siding and vertically configured logs
- large internal space with massive log support beams, and original eastern maple and oak floor

#### **Social**

- ongoing use as a community hall

## 2 Tsolum River Garry Oak Ecosystem Tsolum Valley, Courtenay, B.C.

### Description

The Tsolum River Valley Garry Oak Ecosystem is a unique ecosystem in north Courtenay roughly located between Headquarters Road, Highway 19a, Vanier Drive and Ryan Road, and include prominent sites such as the Glacier View/Dingwall neighbourhood, Comox Valley Sports Centre property, the Vanier School property, the forest north of Vanier school, and the Presbyterian and Anglican church properties on Highway 19a. The area is approximately 115 acres in size and features over one hundred Garry oak trees as well as numerous species of mature trees and vegetation.



*Garry Oaks at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church*

### Value

The Tsolum River Valley Garry Oak Ecosystem is significant for its biological, cultural and aesthetic value, particularly for its uniqueness, its ability to impart knowledge, its association with the area's First Nations people, and the mature nature of the several species of trees, vegetation and shrubbery found in the area.

The biological value of the Tsolum River Valley Garry Oak Ecosystem lies in its location as the most northern Garry oak ecosystem in Canada. Many of the trees are found on deep, moist soils, a contrast to most Garry oak ecosystems which are typically found on shallow, dry, or rocky sites. Also of significance are the varieties of trees that are found within the ecosystem, including Sitka spruce, grand fir, Douglas fir, bigleaf maple, and bitter cherry, making this particular stand one of the last remaining "woodland" oak communities in Canada.

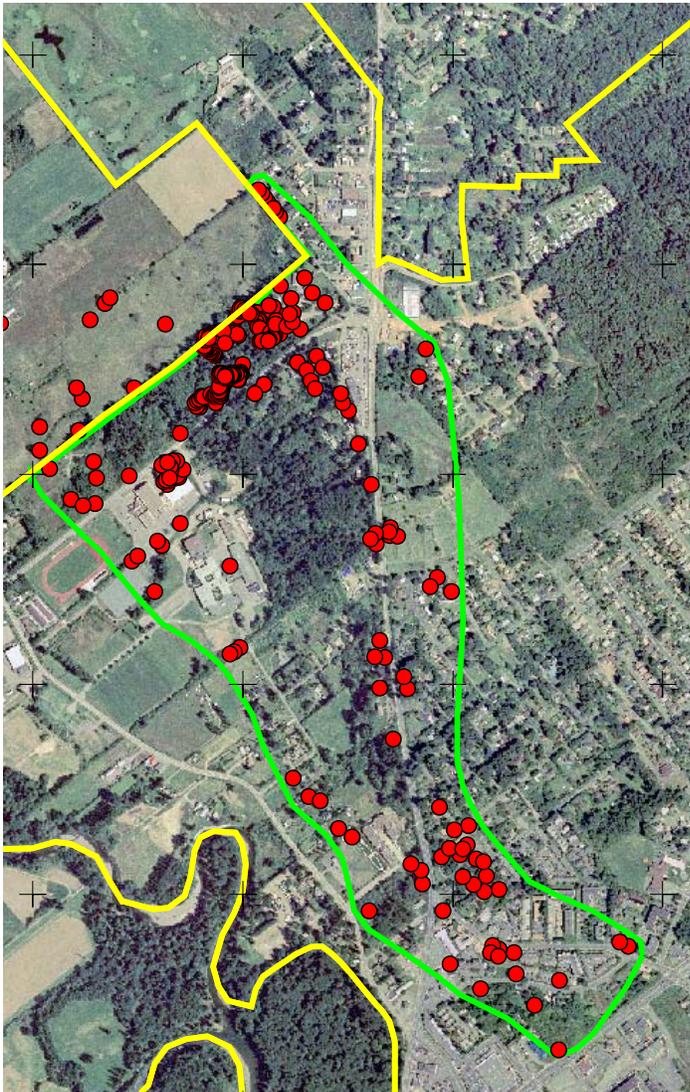
The cultural and social value of the Tsolum River Valley Garry Oak Ecosystem is linked to its association with Comox Valley's First Nations people, a cultural history that includes archaeological sites and written or verbal knowledge indicating a long history of First Nations use in the area. It is an example of a cultural ecosystem which was sustained by First Nations using fire to maintain oaks and open meadows. First Nations use of the area occurred for at least 5000 years.

It is also notable that the rarity of this Garry oak ecosystem, coupled with the area's close proximity to a large high school, highlights the potential for this ecosystem to present learning opportunities to a large student population as well as neighbouring residents, naturalists, scientists and all citizens. It also presents opportunities for students to learn restoration techniques and stewardship practices.

The oaks and their open meadows and associated vegetation are also distinct from most conifer-dominated native forest, and are a valuable aesthetic feature in Courtenay. The aesthetic value of the Tsolum River Valley Garry Oak Ecosystem is also exemplified by its prominent setting which serves as a transition space between the burgeoning residential growth to the east of the Tsolum River Valley and the predominantly agricultural areas to the west. The mature nature of the Garry oak trees, which are between 80 and 200 years of age, coupled with the presence of other types of species of trees and vegetation greatly add to the aesthetic character of this historic place.

## 2 Character Defining Elements

- mature Garry oak trees occurring either in groups or as isolated trees
- associated native vegetation including other trees, understory shrubs, ferns, wildflowers, and grasses
- native animals including birds, small mammals, and butterflies that use Garry oak or other components of the ecosystem
- rich soils that developed with the oaks and which were influenced by First Nations burning
- evidence of the management of vegetation with fire to maintain open meadows and improve resource availability
- open meadows or shrub communities with mature oaks



*Location of Garry oaks in Tsolum Valley Range, photo courtesy of Nick Page*

### 3 Fifth Street (Originally known as Union Street) Courtenay, B.C.

#### Description

Courtenay's Fifth Street is the main commercial street in downtown Courtenay, stretching from the Courtenay River to Lake Trail Middle School. The two-lane street encompasses both residential and commercial uses in distinct districts; the commercial downtown consists of one or two-storey businesses along a pedestrian street while the residential portion consists of modest homes immediately adjacent to the sidewalk. The historic place consists of the length of the streetscape and its component built and landscape features.

#### Value

Fifth Street is valued for its historical, cultural and aesthetic significance, particularly as part of the early organization of the City of Courtenay, its early and ongoing connection between the Courtenay River and Comox Lake via the Lake Trail Road, and its vestiges of an untouched commercial main street in a small British Columbia town.

The heritage value of Fifth Street lies in its historical association with leading Courtenay pioneers of the late 19th century, particularly Joseph McPhee who was the visionary behind the original subdivision, and its historically central role in the commercial culture of the city. It is important as an identified constituent of the very earliest conception of the city of Courtenay, being part of the original townsite and noted as Union Street on the town's first survey by George F. Drabble in 1892. This early subdivision paved the way for the establishment of Courtenay's commercial core, which would be thriving after the opening of the Cumberland coal mines, originally known as Union, beginning in 1888 and the arrival of businesses which established Courtenay as the service and commercial centre for the resource-dependent Comox Valley.

The street is important for connecting key aspects of the city. In 1874 the bridge over the Courtenay River was a key connection point to sawmills and other industries on the other side of the Courtenay River. The street connects the commercial heart of the city in its central blocks to houses further west and the Lake Trail School property before continuing to join Lake Trail Road. Also important is the visual connection to the Comox Glacier, a reminder of the closeness of the natural heritage of the area and which contributes to the character of the street. The change in character and land use between the main street commercial and modest residential portions of the street are a valuable reminder of the continuing expansion of Courtenay as its population grew.

Fifth Street is important for its early and ongoing role as the commercial centre of town seen in its early establishment as a centre for adjoining settlements such as Union and the ports of Comox and Royston and through the development of a variety of businesses over its history catering to the needs of worker, citizen and visitor alike. It is important for its social role as Courtenay's ceremonial route, as the city's embodiment of the 'main street' in small towns throughout North America, and for having withstood the vagaries of the economy and the growing dominance of the automobile in Courtenay beginning in the 1920s and 30s.

Fifth Street is important for its aesthetic values, seen less in the individual buildings and structures than in the overall effect of its physical characteristics combined with the intangible values of community life and social use of the street. The low profile buildings, boutique stores, open air shopping, the intimate relationship of street, sidewalk and storefronts, and 1950s feel combine to cement the particular character of this rare, viable, surviving main street in a small British Columbia town.



### 3 Character Defining Elements

#### Siting

- retention of original survey pattern and lot layout
- east-west alignment with a gentle graded slope down to the River
- curve of street after it passes over the E&N right-of-way
- views to the Comox Glacier
- Courtenay River Bridge
- open space of the Lake Trail Middle School anchoring the residential end of the street
- spatial definition of the commercial area by one or two-storey buildings
- more open character of the residential area
- minimal setbacks in the residential area

#### Buildings and structures

- mostly continuous walls of building fronts in the commercial core
- false fronted architectural style of the commercial buildings with raised parapets, awnings and plate glass storefronts, often with recessed door openings
- modest homes in the residential section
- wood frame building materials
- contrast between commercial and residential areas
- long time businesses still remaining in the commercial area
- variety of signage including Leung's Grocery and Graham's Jewellery Clock

#### Landscape

- intimate relationship of building, sidewalk and street
- site furnishings including benches, street trees, lamp standards
- pockets of tree planting in the residential portion
- front yards in the residential portion

## 4 Courtenay River Courtenay, B.C.

### Description

The Courtenay River is a historic waterway which forms from its source at the confluence of the Puntledge and Tsolum Rivers and flows through the City of Courtenay before draining into Comox Bay two miles away. The Courtenay River features a naturally cleared River Estuary at its mouth.

### Value

The Courtenay River is significant for its historic, scientific, and social value, particularly for its historic importance to Courtenay's early inhabitants and businesses, its biological importance, its unique physical characteristics, and its role in Courtenay's recreational development.

The heritage value of the Courtenay River lies in its cultural and historical importance to both the Pentlatch and K'omoks First Nation's people who occupied and controlled the territory in and around Courtenay for thousands of years. The remnants of numerous fish traps located throughout the mouth of the Courtenay River and Estuary, one of the largest concentration of inter-tidal fishing structures in North America, attest to the abundance of marine life made available by the Courtenay River and Estuary. The remnants of these aboriginal fish traps are valued as a unique educational opportunity to study sustainable First Nations fishing technologies and culture for all citizens.

The Courtenay River is valued for its important role in Courtenay's early pioneering development. Thousands of years of natural flooding of the River resulted in cleared and rich alluvial soil which made conditions perfect for agricultural settlement and prompted Courtenay's first settlers to preempt in the area in 1862. The width and depth of the river facilitated early transportation and business ventures, which is reflected in the pilings and cribbing that still line the River and estuary.

The Courtenay River's scientific value lies in its biological importance to a variety of species of wildlife, including salmon and migratory birds that winter in the area. It is significant that hundreds of protected Trumpeter Swans winter at the Courtenay River estuary, resulting in the largest concentration of the species anywhere in the world.

The River's scientific value is also expressed in its physical uniqueness as the River is believed to be the shortest navigable River in the world.

The Courtenay River's social value lies in its central role in the development of Courtenay's recreational identity which is exemplified by the River's prominent and accessible location through the heart of the City.

### Character Defining Elements

- the prominent central location of the river through the heart of Courtenay
- remnants of local First Nation's fish traps
- historic pilings and cribbing which suggests the importance of the Courtenay River as time passes
- the short length of the River



*Courtenay River, 1911, BCAR-B-01882*

## 5 Courtenay and District Museum (Formerly the Courtenay Post Office) 207 Fourth Street, Courtenay, B.C.

### Description

The Courtenay Post office is significant for its historical, aesthetic and social values, particularly for its design and materials and its ongoing use as the Courtenay and District Museum.



### Value

The Courtenay Post office is significant for its historical, aesthetic and social values, particularly for its design and materials and its ongoing use as the Courtenay and District Museum.

Begun in 1924 and opened in 1926, the Courtenay Post Office is valued as a symbol of the federal government's presence in Courtenay, despite the fact that it took over ten years to become a reality due to disagreement over a potential site and the outbreak of World War I. The federal government presence is also reflected in the other federal functions in the building, initially a customs office, and in the 1950s, a Veterans Land Act office, Fisheries office, and unemployment office in the second storey addition.

It was important to the growth and importance of Courtenay's downtown when the post office moved from the McPhee Block on Fifth Street to this substantial masonry structure.

The building has aesthetic values related to its massing, imposing structure and use of materials, a mix of brick and concrete masonry. The design has elements of both classical and art deco architecture, and the massing, like many government buildings, reflects the importance of its original function. Located on donated land, the building was composed of brick from Alberta and Victoria, and used lumber from local sawmills. Despite earthquake damage in 1946 and additions in the 1950s, the building remains a significant landmark in downtown Courtenay.

The Post Office building is significant for its appropriate adaptive re-use as the Courtenay and District Museum, which celebrates the natural and cultural heritage of the Comox Valley. The building and its use is valued by the community as a heritage building used to its fullest, a scientific, social and historic gathering place and resource centre for residents and visitors alike.

### Character Defining Elements

#### Siting

- location at the corner of Fourth Street and Cliffe Avenue in downtown Courtenay
- minimal setback from street
- first floor raised above grade

#### Architectural Features

- rectangular form and horizontal massing
- masonry construction
- scale of the building expressing its use as a government building
- tripartite design, with raised base, body and parapet
- decorative entrances including semi-circular arch and square columns
- symmetrical window openings, one-over-one
- decorative horizontal banding, stepped facades and red and yellow patterned brick detailing in the parapet

## 6 St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sandwick 4778 Highway 19a, Courtenay, B.C.

### Description

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sandwick is a simple, one-and-one half storey gabled-roof structure located at the top of Mission Hill. Situated on its original site, the church is surrounded by a substantial grove of Garry oak trees and features a civic cemetery and stone cairn adjacent to the church building.



### Value

The significance of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sandwick, lies in its historic and aesthetic values, particularly for its role in the establishment of the Presbyterian faith in Courtenay, its unique vernacular architecture and Garry oak trees.

Constructed in 1877, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church is valued as one of the oldest surviving pioneer structures in Courtenay and is a symbol of the establishment of the Presbyterian faith in Courtenay and surrounding area. It is significant that the construction of the church was a community effort and was built by several pioneer Presbyterian families on donated land.

Architecturally, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church is valued as an exceptional example of early local building construction, evidenced by the use of indigenous building materials which were processed on the site. The church's simple symmetry and modest detail and style demonstrate the practicality of Courtenay's earliest Presbyterian pioneers.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church is important aesthetically because it contains an impressive stand of mature Garry oak trees and a cemetery which has been used since the inception of the church. It is significant that the church and cemetery grounds are situated in a predominantly urban and commercial area, and provide a tangible reminder of the contribution of Courtenay's earliest Presbyterian pioneers to the development of faith in Courtenay and surrounding area.

### Character Defining Elements

#### Siting

- situation of the church on its original site
- prominent setting in a predominantly urban area

#### Architectural Features

- modest one-and-one half storey scale, rectangular massing, and symmetrical form
- elements that reflect vernacular construction materials and methods, including: wood planking at the base of the building, original hand planed spruce log flooring, plaster derived from clam shells, cedar shingled roof
- exterior features such as wooden drop siding, and original single paned double-hung wooden-sash 6-over-6 windows with wooden shutters
- brick chimney

#### Landscape Elements

- stand of mature Garry oak trees surrounding the church building
- church cemetery
- Piercy family cairn commemorating the contribution of the Piercy family to the community

## 7 St. Andrews Comox District Anglican Church Courtenay, B.C.

### Description

St. Andrew's Comox District Anglican Church is a modest, one storey gothic revival inspired church situated on its original lot at the intersection of Dingwall and Highway 19a. The site consists of landscaping which features mature trees and landscaping, and a historic Anglican cemetery at the rear of the church.



### Value

The significance of St. Andrews Anglican Church lies in its historic and aesthetic value, particularly for its age, its association with the establishment of the Anglican faith in Courtenay and area, its association with church's first minister, and its unique architecture.

Built in 1877, St. Andrew's Anglican Church is valued as one of the oldest buildings in Courtenay and is a symbol of the establishment of the Anglican faith in the area. The church, situated 35 feet from its original historic site, was constructed by devout Anglican followers after their previous place of worship, a modest log cabin church shared with Presbyterians from 1864-1874, was deemed by the Anglican congregation as too small for the growing population of pioneers, reflecting the early expansion of the area's population generally during the 1870s.

St. Andrew's Anglican Church also has a historic relationship with Reverend Jules Xavier Willemar, (1842-1935) Courtenay's first resident clergyman, who ultimately had a profound impact on the religious and social development of Courtenay and area by serving as minister for a span of 42 years.

St. Andrew's Anglican Church is architecturally significant for its blend of gothic revival style and local building materials. While the gothic style, reflected by its stained glass windows, rectangular massing, pointed arched windows and tower is typical of many gothic revival styles of churches in North America, the church blends them with regional influences such as the use of locally milled timber in its construction, and for the pews and pulpit. The church's beautiful stained glass windows, initially obtained by Willemar, and church bell salvaged from a wrecked Australian sea vessel, symbolize the functional nature of Courtenay and area's earliest Anglican pioneers.

### Character Defining Elements

#### Site and Setting

- the elevated setting of the church which adds to the structures prominence
- location of original roads adjacent to the church which highlight the church's historic use as a community landmark

#### Architecture

gothic revival elements, including: traditionally shaped stained glass windows, rectangular massing, church tower and exterior trim

- locally processed pews, pulpit, and timber framing
- church bell

#### Landscape

- mature trees and shrubbery
- cemetery

## 8 Courtenay Riverway Courtenay, B.C.

### Description

The Courtenay Riverway is a prominent community walking trail that begins behind the Courtenay City Hall building on 6th Street, and extends through the heart of the City adjacent to Courtenay River and Estuary. The trail circles the Courtenay Municipal Airpark before ending at 31st Street.



### Value

The Courtenay Riverway is significant for its historic, aesthetic and social value, particularly for its association with the local logging industry, facilitation of prominent views and containment of several historical interpretive signs and its ongoing use as a community trail by the community.

The heritage value of the Courtenay Riverway lies in its historical association with the Comox Logging and Railway Company which at one time was the largest logging company in the British Empire. The current Riverway generally follows the alignment of the former logging railway right-of-way and serves as a valuable reminder of when the logging industry was a central force in the economic and social development of Courtenay.

The Courtenay Riverway's aesthetic value is expressed in its facilitation of prominent views from several vantage points on the trail and features several recently added historical interpretive signs symbolizing the community's commitment to promoting Courtenay's heritage.

The Courtenay Riverway is socially valued for its appropriate conversion to a highly accessible community trail and features a paved surface and slight bends and grades reminiscent of the railway.

### Character Defining Elements

- the prominent location through the heart of the City
- the picturesque views from various points on the trail
- historical interpretive signs
- the paved surface, slight bends and gentle grades
- ongoing use as a recreational trail by the community

## 9 Sandwich Manor 276 Sandwich Road, Courtenay, B.C.

### Description

Sandwich Manor is a tall, two-storey, residential structure situated on its original lot. The house features notable landscaping which includes several mature trees and a decorative gazebo.

### Value

Sandwich Manor is significant for its historic and aesthetic value, particularly for its association with the initial occupants of the house, its architecture, and its setting.

The primary value of Sandwich Manor lies in its association with Eric Duncan (1858-1944), who constructed the substantial residence for his wife Anna in 1910-1911, making the house the oldest residential structure east of the Courtenay River. A respected farmer, store owner, and post master, Eric Duncan was perhaps most renowned for his poetry and writings, and whose recollections and memoirs have helped tell the story of Courtenay's early history. Regarded as the "philosopher of Vancouver Island," Duncan was known for his columns about life on Vancouver Island which appeared in both the Vancouver Province and Sun, as well as local newspapers. It is significant that Duncan was the author of two influential recollections including *Fifty-Seven Years in the Comox Valley* and *Shetland to Vancouver Island*, a book which received praise from the London Times and was re-published several times.

Sandwich Manor is a good local example of Edwardian era architecture seen in its overall building form and in the extensive use of faux stone, laid by prominent contractor Samuel Cotton, as well as in decorative flourishes such as elaborate gingerbread scrollwork under the central projecting gable and horizontal banding. While Sandwich Manor features utilitarian influences including the concrete bricks from Vancouver and use of timber milled on site, no expense was spared in the construction of the house which is highlighted by the manor's slate roof derived from Duncan's native Scotland.

Situated in a predominantly commercial area, the manor is a prominent landmark which evokes a time when the house was the family home in a sparsely populated agricultural district.

Sandwich Manor is additionally valued for its notable landscaped elements, including manicured gardens, several species of mature fruit trees dating from the 1920's, shrubbery, substantial evergreen hedges bordering the property and a decorative gazebo that is sympathetically designed with the architectural character of the manor.

### Character Defining Elements

#### Siting

- prominent situation in a historically agricultural area that is now predominantly commercial
- substantial setback from street
- location of the house on its original site

#### Architectural Features

- square form, residential scale and massing
- asymmetrical façade and verandah, edifice of concrete bricks
- detailed gingerbread scrollwork under central projecting gable, medium pitched gable roofs, second storey sleeping porch and double hung wooden sash one-over-one windows
- slate roof

#### Landscape Features

- decorative gazebo
- mature shrubbery, fruit trees and evergreen hedges



# 10

## **Creech House 443 Fourth Street, Courtenay, B.C.**

### **Description**

The Creech House is a two storey, Victorian influenced residential building situated on its original lot. The house includes landscaping which includes shrubbery and two mature deciduous trees.



### **Value**

The significance of the Creech House lies in its historic and aesthetic value, particularly for its age, its architecture and its setting in West Courtenay.

Constructed circa 1890, the Creech House is valued as the oldest surviving single family residential building in Courtenay, and oldest building west of the Courtenay River, an important representation of the very early development of West Courtenay as the city expanded across the river. The Creech house was built by a Mr. Fletcher, a prolific home builder in early Courtenay, and purchased by Edward and Eliza Creech in 1908. The Creeches ran a prominent livery stable in Courtenay's downtown at a time when increased settlement heightened the need for transportation services. The conversion of the stable to a trucking depot in the 1920s is indicative of the changing nature of transportation in the city.

The aesthetic value of the Creech House lies in its Victorian-influenced architecture, seen in its L-shaped massing, asymmetrical façade, verandah and prominent central front projecting bay window. Relatively modest in character, the Creech House is valued as a symbol of Courtenay's early working class residents of the late Victorian era.

The house is valued for its location in a predominantly commercial area in downtown Courtenay, representative of a time when the house was a large family residence in a sparsely populated area of Courtenay.

### **Character Defining Elements**

#### **Site and Setting**

- situation of the residence on its original lot
- location of the residence in a predominantly commercial area

#### **Architecture**

- residential form and scale, and 'L' shaped massing
- elements that reflect the Victorian influences on the residence, including: asymmetrical façade, modest semi-open front verandah supported by square vertical columns, and medium pitched gable roofs with side shed dormer
- exterior features including: prominent central front projecting bay, wooden drop siding and trim
- fenestration, including double hung wooden sash one-over-one, two-over-one, and two-over-two windows
- brick chimney
- prominent two-storey gabled front facing 4th Street

#### **Landscape**

- mature shrubbery and two deciduous trees

# 11

## **Lewis Park** **55, 489, 295 Old Island Highway** **Courtenay, B.C.**

### **Description**

Lewis Park is a 17.39 acre municipally owned park located directly across the street from Simms Millennium Park on the Old Island Highway. The park is naturally bounded by the Courtenay and Tsolum Rivers and features several mature trees, open play fields, trails, tennis courts, skateboard park and four notable buildings.

### **Value**

The significance of Lewis Park lies in its historic, aesthetic, spiritual and social values, particularly for the site's historic uses, exceptional design, link to the Comox Valley's First Nations people and its on-going use as a community park.

The historic value of Lewis Park is associated with its link to Courtenay's early agricultural roots. From 1893 to 1957 the grounds were used for the annual Fall Fair, an important legacy that continues today at the Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds.

The park is valued for its association with Courtenay's role in World War Two when the park served as temporary barracks for the 'Fisherman's Reserve,' who were the crews of the Assault Crafts which were moored at the Courtenay River Slough. The site was one of only two areas in Canada used for combined operations training and played a key role in the preparation for the defense of the west coast of Vancouver Island and future operations in Europe.

The spiritual value of Lewis Park is exemplified in the park's two totem poles which stand prominently at the park entrance, serving to grant peace to those who enter. A series of three totem poles have been erected here, the first placed in 1927, purchased from Chief Joe Wallace of the Greenpoint Rapids reserve. These were replaced in 1957 by two new poles carved by internationally renowned aboriginal artist Mungo Martin and raised in a traditional ceremony by K'omoks Chief Andy Frank. The third pair of poles were placed in 2002, carved by Calvin Hunt, Mungo Martin's step-grandson. These totems remain an important link to the area's First Nations people.

Lewis Park is also valued for its picturesque setting and exceptional design. Initially owned by the Lewis family, the site was acquired by the City of Courtenay in 1928. Designed as a recreational park, the site features open playfields, park and a perimeter trail which maximizes picturesque views of the Courtenay, Puntledge and Tsolum Rivers. Mature trees, including species of Sitka spruce, Big-Leaf and Japanese maples, cypress, cedar, and Silver-Leafed poplar greatly add to the natural beauty of the historic place.

There are two historically significant buildings that are included on the park grounds. The Lewis Center building is situated on the site of the Comox District's Agricultural Hall, which was the hub of social activity in Courtenay and area for over half a century. The Courtenay and District Memorial Pool, built in 1949, is an important landmark which serves as a memorial to the military service personnel who gave their lives in World War Two.



*Lewis Park c.1940*

# 11

Actively used for a variety of sporting and leisure activities over a period of 80 years, Lewis Park is a prominent City landmark which reflects the importance of recreation to the social development of the community.

## Character Defining Elements

- picturesque setting overlooking the Courtenay, Puntledge and Tsolum Rivers
- proximity to Simms Millenium Park
- open spatial qualities
- tree-lined configuration of the trail that extends around portions of the park
- mature specimen trees including species of Sitka Spruce, Big-Leaf Maple, Japanese Maple, Cypress, several varieties of Cedar and Silver-leaved Poplar
- First Nations totem poles
- Memorial pool, Lewis Centre
- ongoing use as a community park

# 12

## Scoop Johnson House 754 Stewart Avenue, Courtenay, B.C.

### Description

The 'Scoop' Johnston House is a one-and-one-half storey, gable-roof single family residence situated on its original lot. The site features distinguished landscaping including mature shrubbery, fruit trees and a holly hedge that borders the front and sides of the property.



### Value

The 'Scoop' Johnston House is significant for its historic and aesthetic value, particularly for the building's exceptional design and composition, and its association with John 'Scoop' Johnson, the initial occupant of the house.

Constructed in 1912, the historic value of the 'Scoop' Johnson House lies in its association with John 'Scoop' Johnson (1853-1921). Scoop Johnson was renowned for his strong political convictions which enabled him to be elected to Courtenay Council as one of the City's first Alderman shortly after the incorporation of the City of Courtenay in 1915. It is significant that Scoop was also a strong proponent of publicly owned utilities and was a key figure in the development of a Courtenay-owned water works; a system that would be installed shortly after Scoop's death in 1921.

The aesthetic value of the 'Scoop' Johnson House is an eclectic expression of Queen Anne and Gothic revival influences, seen in the extensive use of wood shingled siding, asymmetrical one-storey porch, and fanciful gingerbread bargeboard under the eaves. The construction of the 'Scoop' Johnson House was the work of Mr. Ledgerwood, a well-respected local builder who constructed several houses in early Courtenay. Situated in a predominantly residential area in Courtenay, the Scoop Johnson House is representative of a time when the residence was located on a substantial piece of acreage which extended to the E&N railway line and its setting was largely rural in character.

### Character Defining Elements

#### Site and Setting

- reduced setback from street

#### Architecture

- residential form, scale and massing reflected by its one-and-one-half storey height and rectangular plan
- evidence of Queen Anne inspired design elements, including the gable roof with central front sleeping porch gable and rear dormer, wood shingle siding, corner boards, trim, and deep open eaves with gingerbread trim bargeboard
- fishscale shingle detailing in upper portion of sleeping porch gable
- single hung wooden sash 1/1 original window, some arranged in double assembly
- brick chimney
- large open verandah, supported by square vertical columns

#### Landscape

- manicured holly hedges and mature fruit trees

# 13 Billy Booth House 307 First Street, Courtenay, B.C.

## Description

The Billy Booth House is a one-and-one-half storey, wood-framed single family residence situated on a large lot on 1st Street in the heart of Courtenay's historic Old Orchard neighbourhood. The residence consists of mature landscaping including trees, shrubbery and a shed and was uniquely constructed with the front elevation perpendicular to the street, maximizing frontage on the Puntledge River which runs adjacent to the property.



## Value

The Billy Booth House is significant for its historic and aesthetic value, particularly for its association with Billy Booth and its setting in the Old Orchard neighbourhood.

Constructed in 1912, the Billy Booth house is valued for its association with William Booth who was a prominent figure in Courtenay's early business and civic affairs. Billy Booth and family operated a highly successful grocery business on the corner of 5th and Cliffe Street and in 1923, Booth served on Courtenay City Council, where he contributed to Courtenay's early economic and civic development.

The Billy Booth house is valued as one of the earliest homes constructed in the Orchard neighbourhood, Courtenay's first residential subdivision, and is representative of the ongoing expansion of the city during an era of prosperity. The house is a good local example of Edwardian architecture seen in its rectangular massing, symmetrical façade, front entrance featuring a decorated large raised verandah with central door and multi-gabled roof, and remains a significant residential landmark in the community.

The aesthetic value of the Billy Booth House is related to the configuration of the house, which is oriented to the side yard, facilitating magnificent views of the Puntledge River and is encompassed by noteworthy mature landscaping which features distinct shrubbery, several species of mature trees and a shed that is sympathetic to the architectural character of the residence.

## Character Defining Elements

### Site and Setting

- prominent setting on a large residential lot in the Old Orchard neighbourhood
- unique configuration of the residence overlooking the Puntledge River
- substantial setback from street

### Architecture

- asymmetrical form and rectangular massing
- Queen Anne inspired features including: medium pitched multi-gabled roof, overhanging eaves, full wraparound verandah supported by white Doric columns, exterior trim, dormers and wooden drop siding
- double hung wooden-sash 1/1 and 2/2 windows with wooden casements, double assembly adjacent to the front entrance
- internal and external brick chimney

### Landscape

- picket fence
- mature shrubbery and trees
- shed

# 14 Simms Millennium Park 50 Old Island Highway, Courtenay, B.C.

## Description

Simms Millennium Park is a municipally owned 9.0 acre park located off the Old Island Highway directly across the street from Lewis Park and is naturally bounded by the Courtenay River and Courtenay River Slough. The park consists of a combination of open fields and forested areas and features lookouts, trails, gardens, pavilion, gazebo, pond, and numerous indigenous plantings and trees.

## Value

The significance of Simms Millennium Park lies in its historical, scientific, aesthetic, and social value, particularly for its role during the Second World War, its association with important Courtenay businesses, its design, its situation in a riparian zone and ongoing use as a community park.

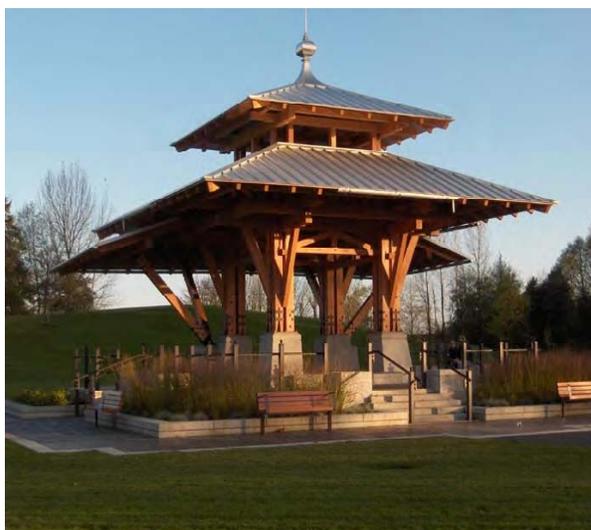
Simms Millennium Park is valued for its role played in the defense of the West Coast of Vancouver Island and training for the D-day landings on the beaches in Europe during World War Two. From 1942 to 1944 the Courtenay River Slough was used to moor the several assault crafts used in Combined Operations training and was only one of two of sites of its kind in Canada. Currently used as a government dock, the Courtenay slough reflects the presence of the federal government in the City.

Simms Millennium Park has an historical relationship with two noteworthy businesses that occupied the site, including Simms Wharf, and Brackman and Kerr Milling Company which operated on the site from 1917 to 1958. Both businesses were situated facing the Courtenay River, highlighting the importance of the river as a transportation corridor for Courtenay's economy.

Simms Millennium Park is associated with Charles Simms, the initial owner of the majority of the current park property. Simms, a prominent watchmaker, jeweler and local businessman, operated a high traffic wharf on the site, and was actively involved in civic affairs, serving three terms as Courtenay mayor between 1921 and 1942.

Flanked on two sides by water, Simms Park's scientific value lies in its situation in a riparian zone. The grouping of mature trees, shrubbery, grasses and water around the park provide an immensely important habitat to a variety of wildlife ranging from numerous species of salmon that spawn in the area, to birds and small mammals. It is significant that the park is uniquely configured to minimize the impact on this sensitive area, while enabling the public to view the wildlife that reside in their natural surroundings.

The aesthetic value of Simms Millennium Park lies in its exceptional design and setting. Constructed as a promenade park, Simms Park features a network of trails which provide views of the Courtenay River and slough. It is notable that the park consists of heavily forested areas, and features a variety of mature and recently planted deciduous and conifer trees. The park is important for its educational value seen in the unique and interactive paleo-garden designed by local paleontologists, and which features a variety of prehistoric plant species and fossils.



*Simms Park Pavillion, Donated by the Courtenay Rotary Club*



*Fishing Boats in the Slough, 1946. BCAR-I-21457*

# 14

The social value of Simms Millennium Park is vested in its on-going use as a highly accessible community park and is valued as a cornerstone of the City of Courtenay's Park program.

## Character Defining Elements

- prominent setting adjacent to the Courtenay River
- situation in a riparian zone
- evidence of cribbing and pilings that reflect the historic uses of the site as time passes
- Courtenay River slough and federal government wharf
- elements that support the aesthetic value of the park, including: recently planted and mature species of trees and shrubbery, paleo-garden, gazebo, lookouts, and pavilion
- open spatial qualities
- forested areas with trails
- ongoing use as a community park

# 15 Settler's Cairn Courtenay, B.C.

## Description

The Settler's Cairn is a stone monument featuring two plaques which commemorate the landing place of the Comox Valley's first pioneers. This historic place is located along Headquarters Road, at a bend adjacent to the Tsolum River.



## Value

The Settler's Cairn's heritage value lies in its association with the landing of Courtenay's first non-aboriginal settlers who arrived and subsequently pre-empted in the area in August 1862.

The Settler's Cairn's heritage value also resides in its association with the first pioneers who landed at this historic place including, Reginald Pidcock, Reginald Carwithen, Harry Blaksley and John Bailey, who would ultimately pave the way for the social development of Courtenay and surrounding area.

Erected in 1956 by Captain Bates, a relative of Reginald Carwithen, the Settler's Cairn symbolizes an early community effort to recognize and honor its heritage.

## Character Defining Elements

- the situation of the cairn on the original landing place of Courtenay and surrounding areas first non-aboriginal pioneers
- the stone cairn

# 16

## Old House Restaurant (also known as the Kirk Residence) 1760 Riverside Lane, Courtenay, B.C.

### Description

The Old House Restaurant is an eclectic wooden clad, two-storey gabled-roof structure situated on its original lot at 1760 Riverside lane. The house overlooks the Courtenay River and consists of landscaping which features gardens, mature trees and shrubbery and a gazebo.

### Value

The significance of the Old House Restaurant lies in its aesthetic and historical values, particularly for its architecture, setting, landscaping and its association with the Kirk Family.

The Old House Restaurant is valued as an eclectic example of Arts and Crafts architecture in Courtenay. The house features locally produced wood construction with masonry detailing. Constructed in 1938 as a residence for the Kirk family and converted to a restaurant in 1975, the restaurant is an attractive cottage style enhanced by a formal garden setting which features mature trees and a wood shingled gazebo, and is prominently situated overlooking the Courtenay River.



*Geoff Kirk's oil distribution business, 1932*

Additionally, the Old House Restaurant is valued for its magnificent setting overlooking the Courtenay River and its outstanding landscaping which features several gardens, species of mature trees including varieties of weeping willow, spruce and oak, shrubbery and a decorative cedar shingled gazebo that is sympathetically designed to match the architectural character of the restaurant.

The historic value of the Old House Restaurant lies in its association with the Kirk Family, the original occupants of the building and prominent members of the community. Geoff Kirk operated a highly successful oil business from the dock of his riverfront property while Kath Kirk initiated the 'Mile of Flowers' campaign in 1969, which is now a renowned yearly event in Courtenay which draws over a thousand volunteers to plant flowers a mile in length along the Cliffe Avenue corridor.

### Character Defining Elements

#### Site and Setting

- prominent setting adjacent to the Courtenay River

#### Architectural Features

- residential form, scale and massing expressed by its two-storey plus basement height, and rectangular plan
- medium pitched gable ends with central front dormer
- substantial exposed interior timber frame
- paired projecting bays on the front façade
- elements that reflect the building's Arts and Crafts style, including: wood shingle siding and roof, projecting eaves with exposed rafters, grouped windows, and shed roofs over windows on the rear
- masonry, including: multiple brick internal and external chimneys, rear brick façade and brick walkway

# 16

## Landscape Features

- several gardens, several mature species of trees including varieties of oak, spruce and willow, shrubbery and wood shingled gazebo
- evidence of pilings in the Courtenay River that reflect the historic usages of the property

# 17

## Seale and Thomson Garage 409 Cliffe Avenue, Courtenay, B.C.

### Description

The Seale and Thomson building is a one-storey, Art Deco structure prominently situated on the corner of 4th and Cliffe in the heart of Courtenay's downtown core. The building features a spacious courtyard and two mature trees.



### Value

The significance of the Seale and Thomson Garage lies in its historic and aesthetic value, particularly for its association with the emergence of the automobile in Courtenay, and the building's notable architecture.

The Seale and Thomson Garage is valued as a reflection of Courtenay's response to the proliferation in the use of the automobile as a primary method of transportation in the early twentieth century. In 1918, the first garage on the site was opened by Willemar and Wain as the creation of new roads prompted the need for service stations. Dick Seale and Joe Thomson opened a second garage on the site in 1948 which was heralded as a unique and modern building that was highly equipped to service an increasing influx of automobiles in Courtenay, a reflection of the rapid growth of the city after the Second World War.

The aesthetic value of the Seale and Thomson building lies in its Art Deco architecture and prominent setting. Constructed in 1948, the Seale and Thomson building reflects the values of modernity and efficiency inherent in an optimistic post World War Two era, seen in the sweeping curved façades and use of glass bricks. The building's horizontal banding and parapet emphasizes 'speed and movement,' and parallels the modern developments made to the automobile in the 1940's.

### Character Defining Elements

#### Site and Setting

- prominent location in the heart of Courtenay's downtown core
- modern complement to the Courtenay Museum across the street
- open courtyard with mature trees

#### Architecture

- rectangular form and horizontal massing
- elements that reflect the former use of the building as an automobile service garage, including: large ground level windows once used for showcasing vehicles, and courtyard once used for gas pumps
- elements that reflect the art deco style, including: sweeping façades, glass bricks, decorative horizontal banding fronting Cliffe avenue, and parapet
- extensive fenestration, including: glass doors, symmetrical window openings, and glass bricks

# 18

## Vancouver Island Regional Library, Courtenay Branch (Courtenay Public Library) 300 Sixth Street, Courtenay, B.C.

### Description

The Courtenay Library is a contemporary, one-storey, wooden-clad building prominently located at the intersection of 6th Street and Duncan Avenue in the heart of Courtenay's historic downtown district. The building is used as a public library, and features surrounding landscaping including several trees planted in the front of the building's entrance.

### Value

The Courtenay Library is valued for its historic and aesthetic significance, particularly for its association with Courtenay's early agricultural economy and its modern Arts and Crafts inspired architecture.

The Courtenay Library's value lies in its association with the Comox Valley Co-operative Creamery Association Building, which originally occupied the historic site from 1901 to 1980. The Creamery was a prominent landmark in the City, and played a central role in Courtenay's early economic and social development. The Creamery Association was formed by local dairy farmers in 1901 with the specific intent to produce and market local butter. After a decade, Comox Creamery Butter was renowned throughout the Province for its high quality, thanks to the work of butter-maker William Carroll. The social significance of the Creamery was vested in the Creamery whistle which served as the unofficial timekeeper for Courtenay's downtown businesses and residents for more than half a century.

The Courtenay Library has aesthetic values relating to its architecture, extensive use of wood throughout the exterior and interior of the building and the building's prominent setting. Constructed in 2001, the building is a unique example of a modern interpretation of the Arts and Crafts style in Courtenay which is demonstrated by a high quality of craftsmanship featuring warm and inviting interior open spaces, massive timber frame and use of rustic wooden accents throughout the building. It is also significant that the building was specifically designed to recollect the character of the Comox Co-operative Creamery Building, seen in the use of wood shingles and clerestory windows. Wood cladding over the entire building exterior serves as a fitting reminder of the forestry sector which has played a pivotal role in the social and economic development of the City of Courtenay. The situation of the library in the heart of Courtenay's downtown core makes the building a significant landmark in the community.

### Character Defining Elements

#### Site and Setting

- the elevated position of the building which adds to the prominence of the building
- prominent location in Courtenay's historic downtown
- setback position of the library facilitates an open courtyard and accompanying landscaping

#### Architecture

- horizontal form, rectangular scale and massing expressed by its modest one storey height
- elements that reflect the building's contemporary interpretation of the Arts and Crafts style, including: open and inviting interior spaces, substantial interior timber frame, exposed rafters and use of subtle



*Comox Creamery Building, c. 1905 BCAR-H-00910*

# 18

- wood accents throughout the building
- extensive use of wood throughout the exterior and interior of the building, including: cedar shingled siding and roofing, wooden louvres, and timber-frame
- extensive fenestration including multi-paned windows with wooden casements
- elements of the building which are sympathetic to the 'Creamery' building which occupied the historic site including wood shingles, and lights

# 19

## **Old Church Theatre 755 Harmston Avenue (Roman Catholic Church of the Canadian Martyrs) Courtenay, B.C.**

### **Description**

The Old Church Theatre is a small, gothic-inspired church with a rectangular floor plan and tall spire located on Harmston Street in downtown Courtenay. The heritage place consists of the church and grounds.

### **Value**

The Old Church Theatre is important for its historical, aesthetic and social and spiritual values, particularly related to the advent of a Catholic place of worship in Courtenay and its ongoing importance to the community.

Dedicated in 1938 by Bishop J.D. Cody, the Old Church Theatre has historical value through its association with the Catholic Church and its relatively late arrival in Courtenay. Prior to the construction of the Roman Catholic Church of the Canadian Martyrs, Catholics living in Courtenay worshipped in the City's residences and in neighbouring municipalities.

The church has an historical relationship to the tenure of Father John Tunner, who arrived in 1945, and is important for its service to a wide ranging congregation in local communities outside Courtenay from Oyster Bay to Buckley Bay for a period of several decades.

A downtown landmark, the church is symbolic of the new parish of Cumberland-Courtenay and the occasion of Courtenay's Catholics to have a church of their own, reflecting the expanding population of Courtenay generally during the 1930s.

Designed by local architect and builder Mr. Hagarty, the designer of Courtenay's Native Sons Hall, the church's simple vertical lines, steep gable roof and stucco exterior are an adaptation of the typical Romanesque Catholic church fine-tuned to its location, available building materials and 1930s construction date. While the Gothic style, reflected by the arched windows, rectangular massing and spire is in keeping with the beliefs of religious revivals and used for churches across North America, the Old Church Theatre has a domesticity reflected in its stucco cladding, gable roof and square roof brackets, while the recessed facades around the windows suggest a 1930s design aesthetic.

The church's social value is found in its historical and current importance to community groups, originally to the Catholic Women's League, the Knights of Columbus, and Catholic youth groups and currently, the Old Church Theatre Society, a volunteer society formed in 1992 to purchase the Church to preserve it from imminent destruction and to educate and raise the artistic awareness of the public-at-large through the medium of theatrical, musical, and literary presentations and artistic displays.

### **Character Defining Elements**

#### Site and setting

- location of the church in Courtenay's downtown

#### Architectural features

- rectangular massing
- cross-gable roof design with square brackets
- stucco cladding accented by a curved recessed pattern
- symmetrically spaced casement windows with semi-circular upper portion, two-sashed rectangular lower portion, each divided into 12 panes
- details including metal church spire, stone entry walls and wooden door

#### Landscape

- foundation planting, Virginia Creeper Vine covered exterior, and lawn surrounding the church



# 20

## **Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds 4795, 4835, 4839 Headquarters Road Courtenay, B.C.**

### **Description**

The Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds are a substantial forty acre property consisting of both developed areas and nature park settings. The property is located off Headquarters Road and is bounded by the Tsolum River and Dove Creek Road. The site features several open fields, forested areas with trails, access to the Tsolum River, an equestrian area and a curling rink.



### **Value**

The Comox Valley Exhibition Grounds is significant for its historic, scientific, aesthetic and social value, particularly for its association with the Piercy family, its situation in an historic floodplain and riparian area, and its ongoing use as community agricultural fairgrounds.

The historic value of the Exhibition Grounds lies in its association with Piercy Family, a prominent pioneer family who initially established and operated a substantial 165 acre farming operation on the site until the land was purchased by the Canadian government in 1941 and subsequently used as an Army training camp during World War two. The property represents an important connection to the Comox Valley's agricultural and military history.

The Exhibition Grounds site is important scientifically for its location in an historical floodplain and riparian area. The open spatial qualities of the Exhibition Grounds, coupled with the proximity of the Tsolum River which borders the property, highlight the legacy and importance of the area's natural flood patterns. Recurrent flooding deposited the alluvial soil which provided the impetus for the agricultural settlement of the area when the first pioneers of the Comox Valley arrived in 1862. Bounded by the Tsolum River, the site features a riparian area which consists of mature conifer and deciduous trees and native vegetation. This area provides habitat for a variety of wildlife, including species of salmon, which have recently been re-introduced into the Tsolum River.

The aesthetic value of the Exhibition Grounds lies in its open spatial qualities and forested areas which feature several mature species of deciduous and coniferous trees, and a series of trails which have views of the Tsolum River.

The social value of the Exhibition Grounds is reflected in the variety of annual events held on the grounds. One of these is the Comox Valley Fall Fair which has been held for over a century and reflects the importance of agriculture to the social and economic development of the Comox Valley. Also of social significance are the equestrian centre and curling rink, which serve to demonstrate the recreational values held by the community.

### **Character Defining Elements**

- elements that link the property to Comox Valley's agricultural history, including: property boundaries lined with mature deciduous trees, open spaces, and on-going use as a community fairgrounds
- situation of grounds in a historical floodplain and riparian area
- forested areas with trails
- proximity to the Tsolum River
- equestrian area and curling rink

# 21

## Sandwich War Memorial Cairn

### Description

The Sandwich War Memorial Cairn is a visually prominent stone monument that is located at the intersection of the Island Highway, Dingwall Road and Back Road. This historic place consists of a stone cairn, commemorative plaques and adjacent landscaped grounds and a “Quercus Robur” Oak Tree.



### Heritage Value

Dedicated in 1922, the historical value of the Sandwich War Memorial Cairn lies in the efforts of residents in the Comox Valley to honour those who sacrificed their lives during the Great War of 1914-1918. The land was donated by Mrs. Barbara Dingwall, daughter of Oliver Duncan, one of the earliest pioneers in the valley. Stones to build the cairn were brought from the farms of those men whose names were listed on the WWI Plaque. Later additions to the Memorial Cairn were three plaques to honour those who died in the Second World War, Korean Conflict and Peacekeeping Services.

The Oak tree at the south west corner of the Cair was planted in June of 1937 to commemorate the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. This “Royal Oak” was sent from Windsor Park (Windsor Castle), one of many such oak seedlings planted in the countries of the Empire. The oak was planted by J.B. Holmes who had lost his son in the Great War.

Formally designated as the City of Courtenay’s first Municipal Heritage Site in 1985, the Sandwich War Memorial Cairn is significant for the community’s early stewardship and concern to preserve its most valuable heritage.

The Sandwich War Memorial Cairn is valued culturally as the place that symbolizes Courtenay’s past and continual commitment to honour those who have lost their lives in war and peacekeeping action.

Aesthetically, the Sandwich War Memorial Cairn is valued for its visual prominence as seen in its significant use of local stones and various commemorative plaques and its adjacency to the manicured grounds and its proximity to St. Andrews Comox District Anglican Church and Cemetery grounds, providing a tangible link to Courtenay’s earliest history.

### Character Defining Elements:

- Stone cairn
- Commemorative plaques
- “Royal Oak” Tree
- Manicured grounds and resting benches
- Proximity to St. Andrews Comox District Anglican Church and Cemetery.

## The 40 Houses

### Lewis Avenue, 18<sup>th</sup> Street, and McPhee Avenue

#### Description

The 40 Houses consist of single storey, post-World War II veteran's housing located in the area bounded by the E&N Rail Line, 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Lewis Avenue, and 18<sup>th</sup> Street.



#### Value

The 40 houses are valued as a group of properties for their connection to a federal housing program intended to provide returning veterans of World War II and their families with affordable and appropriate housing. This project was a joint Veterans Land Act and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation venture spearheaded by Mayor Harry Simms and the Courtenay Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. The houses were awarded to World War II veterans based on their "length of service in Canada and overseas, intended length of residence ... marital status, and number of dependants." Of the reported 110 applicants, only 19 fulfilled the initial allotment requirements. Leased for \$31.50 to \$34.50 per month for a two or three bedroom house, they could be purchased after a period of a few years.



Historically, their construction reflects a significant stage in the development of Canadian communities. The construction of the 40 houses was part of the post-war response to a massive country-wide housing shortage created by the impact of the two world wars. Similar housing developments were created across the country with modest homes on small uniform lots aligning narrow curving streets. The neat, tidy, simple and efficient design of the both houses and the subdivision, and the 40 houses location "in the woods", reflects social attitudes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and influenced later housing styles and suburban development patterns. Little changed today, the 40 houses continue to provide affordable housing options for many households.

#### Character Defining Elements

##### Site and Setting

- Originally located in a rural area with access to nature and greenspace
- Curvilinear street pattern with rear lanes reflective of garden city suburban plans and many subdivisions created under the federal veteran housing program following WWII
- Spatial relationship of house on lot and to other houses in the development
- Small, uniform lot sizes of roughly 48 x 110 feet with consistent building setbacks give a neat, tidy appearance
- Planting program providing one tree per lot

### Architecture

- Modest single storey bungalows consistent with federal housing programs that focused on providing housing quickly and economically
- Repetition of standardized housing plans in 4 to 6 room options throughout the development
- Low pitch hipped roofs or single gable roofs
- Simple rectangular massing of buildings
- Typically wide plank horizontal wood siding on exteriors
- Minimal porch defining front entry



The 40 houses neighbourhood shown in an aerial photograph taken in 2012. Lot lines are shown in red.