

Mission Museum

33201 2nd Avenue
Mission, British Columbia

Description

The Mission Museum is a two-storey wood-frame building with multiple dormers and a full-width covered front porch. A set of full width stairs leads up to the porch where there are three pair of Doric columns. It is located on Second Avenue at the intersection of Welton Street in Mission, British Columbia.

Heritage Values

The Mission Museum is valued for its historic and cultural significance.

Historic

Erected in 1907, the Mission Museum building is one of the oldest extant buildings in Mission. It was originally placed on First Avenue on land purchased from the town's founder J.W. Horne. It was purpose built for a branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce and was the only chartered bank in Mission from 1907 until after World War I.

It is particularly valued for being a prefabricated kit building from the B.C. Mills Timber and Trading Company, designed specifically for the Canadian Bank of Commerce by the architectural firm of Darling and Pearson. The company was an influential and innovative manufacturer of prefabricated building systems in Western Canada between 1904 and 1910. The prefabricated building represents an important step in the evolution of wood marketing in British Columbia during the first decade of the Twentieth Century. This example of their product is even more significant for being one of a handful that remains in British Columbia

Upstairs, the building included a dining room, two bedrooms, and a bathroom, but no kitchen. By having the living quarters in the same building as the bank, it was easier for the company to recruit clerks.

It is impressive that the building survived through pioneer times to modern times, changing from bank (1907-1947) to library (1947-1972) to museum (1972-present day) in ways that retained its architectural integrity and contributed to its cultural history. Not only did it adapt to different uses, it also adapted to relocation when it was moved in 1947 from its original site on First Avenue to its current site on Second Avenue.

Important people associated with this building when it was a bank are K.V. Munro, W.H. Mathewson and James Muir – the first three bank managers from 1907 to 1949. Important people associated with the building when it was the Library are Freda Waldro (President of the Canadian Library Association) and Mrs. Houlder, Mission's first librarian. Important people associated with the building when it became the Mission Museum are Tony Taulbut, who donated his extensive collection to initiate a public museum for the community, Ethel Ogle, the first president of the Mission District Historical Society. Dorothy Crosby was the first Curator and Bill Kells, former president of the Mission District Historical Society, initiated and managed the external restoration

of the building in 1992.

Cultural

The Mission Museum building has strong cultural value for the community. When the bank opened in Mission in 1907, it symbolized permanence. Its design, which can loosely be called vernacular classical, was consciously chosen in order to convey security – the design said, “bank” and the wooden construction said, “west coast bank”.

Of great amusement to the community is the story associated with the photograph of the building with a trench mortar cannon on the porch. The photograph was purportedly published across the country to show how robbery was discouraged in the west, even though in reality the cannon belonged to the Mission Legion and was just being stored there.

The building continued to serve the community with its donation to the municipality and its function as a library for 25 years. When the library was relocated to new accommodations in 1972, the Mission District Historical Society was registered by a dedicated group of volunteers who had been informally collecting and preserving pieces of Mission’s past for years. The municipality leased the building to the Society and Mission’s first museum was created. In 1995, the Society received the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Heritage Society of British Columbia for the 1992 heritage restoration of the building.

Recognized for its heritage value, the Mission Museum building was formally protected with a Designation Bylaw by the municipality as an historic building in 1981.

Character-defining Elements

- The form, massing and scale of the building as evidenced in its footprint, two-storey height, multi-hipped roof and its temple front design.
- Architectural elements such as the Classical Doric columns, portico, full width porch stairs, dormers, clapboard siding, decorative brackets, shingled upper storey, vertical battens used to cover the pre-fabricated wooden panel connections underneath, and the decorative ridge trim on the roof.
- Interior elements such as original V-groove paneling on walls and ceiling, doorframes, spiral wooden staircase with turned spindles, stained-glass window in stairwell.