

Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Date: April 25, 2017

Background

As part of the requirements under the new *Societies Act* our society must submit a number of things to maintain our legal status. This includes filing an annual report within 30 days of our Annual General Meeting. As you are aware the change over process has been underway for some time and we are planning to submit all the necessary material as soon as possible so that we comply with the new regulations.

Introduction

As some of you are aware the *Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society* was established thirty years ago—in 1987—to manage the heritage site. A review of the use and tasks undertaken by the Board of Directors and many hundreds of volunteers are outlined in the many reports prepared over the years. At this time it may be worthwhile to provide a short statement on how and why the society was established.

The Fairbridge Chapel was constructed in 1939 and opened in the spring of 1940 for the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School. It remained in their possession until the home site property was sold to Bellamy Properties, a Victoria firm, in January 1975. This firm wished to develop a very large rural residential community but was scaled back after the firm met with opposition from both the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) and the BC Agricultural Land Commission.

By 1977 the historic site (0.5 acres) with the chapel was transferred to the CVRD. In addition the developers agreed to move the one room schoolhouse built in 1886 to the site. This building was also used as the farm managers and then the herdsman's home when the Farm School operated (1935-1950) and finally rented to new immigrant families in the 1950's through to 1975.

Between 1978 and 1988 a small amount of money was allocated by the CVRD to maintain the chapel and grounds—usually about \$500 a year. For example, in 1979 the money was used to repair all the broken lead glass windows (about 192) and cost less than \$700.

In 1987 the Regional District condemned the Chapel and proposed tearing it down. At this point the Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society was formed and in the fall of 1988 the property was transferred to the new society. The site was designated as both a local and provincial heritage site in 1981.

Over the past 30 years the society has been able to maintain the heritage site thanks largely to provincial heritage grants (now hard to acquire) donations from society members, the Fairbridge Canada Association and their members as well as volunteer work by the residents of the Fairbridge Strata Corporation. It should be mentioned the heritage site is not a part of the bare land strata but surrounded by it. Over this period of time about \$250,000 has been spent maintaining the buildings and grounds. This does not include the volunteer labour.

There is always work to be done to maintain a heritage site and while much has been accomplished, the site hosts a wide range of events from weddings, funerals, concerts such as the annual Fairbridge Carols afternoon, as well as the Fairbridge Canada reunion service so it must be kept in the best possible condition, inside and out. It should also be mentioned that as a heritage site it is a memorial of the children who were brought from the British Isles decades ago and called the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School their home.

Projects Undertaken in 2016 and Planned for 2017

This was a year when only a few, what should be called, maintenance projects, were undertaken at the heritage site. As outlined in the Projects Report, 2016, there were a number of tasks recommended but for one reason or another most were not accomplished; the main reason being the lack of funds. This included the fact we only had one wedding booked, another event in early October had to be cancelled due to the high winds and fear that one or more of the large Douglas fir trees would snap, or be uprooted and fall on the chapel while the afternoon concert was being held. The Fairbridge Carols event was held, but attendance was low due to the December snow fall.

It is expected we can accomplish many of the projects outlined in the above mentioned report during the coming four or five months as well as tackling a number of other projects to maintain the heritage buildings and site. The Projects Report from 2016 is attached for referral.

In addition, the society is having the official web site updated and improved. Work has already begun and expected to be completed in a few months.

Finally, the clock was heavily oiled sometime during the winter. This included all the moving parts such as the wheel teeth, pinion leavers, arbors and the escapement, something that should *never* be done. There are only about four places you oil this kind of clock, (SAE 30 oil), and with an eye dropper. An attempt will be made to remove as much oil as possible.

Heritage Site Uses and Activities

As mentioned above, there was only one scheduled wedding. There are more booked for both this year and in 2018 to this point in time. Also, we held only one event, the Fairbridge Carols on December 17th while in September the Fairbridge Strata hosted the members of the Fairbridge Canada Association to a remembrance tea at the heritage site. This was followed by a memorial chapel service for everyone. In addition, during this event, a number of those attending helped with a very historic event and does not occur all that often, namely the 'turning of the chapel bell'. It is recommended this be done every 150 years or so. With a number of people fit enough to do this, and climb the 82 steps up the bell tower, the work began. Even though it did not take place exactly on the 150th year, all felt the time had come for this significant event to be undertaken. Successfully accomplished, everyone hoped the clock and bell will be keep perfect time and bell striking each and every the hour for the next 150 years.