

DERBY REACH/BRAE ISLAND
PARKS ASSOCIATION (DRBIPA)

Do you love this park? Do you enjoy outdoor activities; appreciate wildlife, the environment, heritage and culture; or support park-based education? Join us! Share your interests and have a voice on how the park is cared for, used and developed.

For more information contact us at:
derbyreach@shaw.ca
http://members.shaw.ca/derbyreach

PACIFIC PARKLANDS FOUNDATION

Encouraging philanthropy, enriching communities, and protecting greenspace, the Pacific Parklands Foundation fosters awareness of regional parks and raises funds for special projects. For more information or to make a donation, please visit www.pacificparklands.ca

ABOUT THIS PARK



Derby Reach Regional Park is one of 22 regional parks and five greenways managed by Metro Vancouver. Its 320 hectares of Fraser River frontage, peat bog, upland forest and farm meadows are located on the river's south shore, four kilometers west of Fort Langley. For more information about Derby Reach and other regional parks, call 604-432-6200 or visit www.metrovancouver.org

Written by: K.Jane Watt. Research assistance by Cheryl MacIntosh, Joan Martin, Sharon Meneely and Glenn Howes


Produced by Derby Reach/Brae Island Parks Association with support from:



Historic SELF-GUIDED TOUR



Derby Reach REGIONAL PARK



Heritage Farm Self-Guided Tour


"The soil appeared to be rich and fertile."

—James McMillan (leader of the Hudson's Bay Company reconnaissance party on the Fraser River) 1824



LIVESTOCK TIE-UP RING


HERITAGE FARMS OF DERBY REACH

**STOVE FRONT**

Now a quiet backwater of Langley, the Derby Reach area was once a lively settlement on the Fraser River. Families at Derby Reach were connected to the commerce of New Westminster and to the social life of other Fraser Valley communities by the river. They were linked to nearby neighbours and to the faraway Interior by the new wagon road that passed by their doors. While they lived through times that B.C. commemorates

today—the gold rush, the settlement era, the dawn of the commercial salmon trade—much of their history, including the significant legacies of their First Nations mothers, has been overlooked.

As history was made at Derby, local families hunted, fished, farmed, and planted large gardens and orchards, with many prospering as they observed and participated in the changing world around them.



1 Muench Bar

The area west of what we now call Edgewater Bar was one of the earliest settlements in Langley. In the 1860s, Edward Julius Muench was drawn here by the chance to secure private property on the river and by a new road link to Fort Langley and beyond. He married a First Nations woman named Catherine, who was visiting here from Port Townsend, Washington. Together, they had eleven children.

The Muench family operated a wintering area for pack horses to the goldfields in Barkerville, B.C. and, according to *Whonnock Notes*, owned the first threshing machine in the area, “an invention that took eight horses to operate.” In 1872, Muench signed the petition that led to the incorporation of Langley. After her husband died in 1882 or 1883, Catherine kept farming with her family until her death in 1899. The Muench family continues to live in the area today.

2 “Stupendous Slide at the Ridge”

On the afternoon of January 30, 1880, Edgewater Bar became a place of disaster. According to the *Daily Colonist* newspaper, 27 wooded acres of riverbank in Maple Ridge crashed into the Fraser “with a sound resembling the discharge of a heavy cannon.” This slide was on the east side of W.J. Howison’s farm, between 220th and 222nd streets in modern-day Haney. It blocked most of the channel of the river. At the Edge farm, where the “greatest force” of the debris flow struck, “trees on fifteen acres were mowed down as though they were ferns and huge firs were stripped of their branches fully twenty feet from their roots.”

William Edge, at work in his orchard with his son, was found “frightfully wounded” and died some time later of his injuries. Edward Muench’s wharf was shattered, and “two valuable horses belonging to that gentleman” narrowly escaped the deluge of water, trees and flying ice.

From Edgewater Bar, you can still see remnants of the Haney Slide—reminders of the changing nature of landforms.



HORSE DRAWN DIRT SCRAPER

3 New Kind of People: A New Kind of Family

You have just stepped onto the Edge family farm. William Edge and his wife Harriet Mighton Edge and their four children moved here from Ontario in 1875. They were the beginning of a wave of new families to Langley with roots in the British Isles and in Eastern Canada. Until their arrival, newcomers to Langley had been single men who created families with local First Nations women.

Early settlers like the Edge family valued land on the Fraser. The river was their highway, linking the landings of individual farms and the wharfs of small settlements along the riverbank east to Chilliwack and west to New Westminster.



PICNICKERS AT EDGEWATER BAR

MAPLE RIDGE MUSEUM 00186

4 The Edge Family House and Barn

The Edge family had deep connections across the river. After William Edge’s death, his widow married Samuel Robertson, a former HBC boatbuilder who had—in the language of the day—“taken up” land and planted an orchard at Kanaka Creek with his first wife, a First Nations woman named Julia. Together, they raised a blended family there.

William Hamilton Edge—the boy who had managed to elude the devastation of the Haney Slide—continued to farm here and it is his name that graces the Crown grant of 1913.

The barn features a wide central alleyway into which a team could be driven for harnessing. It has a loft for the storage of loose hay, and likely contained stalls for housing livestock on each side of the lower levels.

5 A Rich Food Resource

Newcomers to Langley not only grew large gardens, they also capitalized on exceptionally rich local food resources, including fish such as salmon, oolichan and sturgeon from the Fraser River, and trout from local streams; waterfowl such as ducks and geese; game ranging from deer and elk to bear; and a cornucopia of native plants, greens, and berries. On this corner of the trail, you can see a visual sampler of edible native plants, including blackberry, assorted ferns, hazelnut, elder and crabapple.

6 Village of Change

You are standing on the site of a village inhabited by waves of people for 4,000 years. Kwantlen and Katzie traditional territory, the Derby Reach area became part of the local Hudson’s Bay Company trading neighbourhood after the company set up its first fort nearby in 1827. It continued to be a meeting place for many cultures—Stó:lō, Hawaiian, European—until almost the 20th century, a place where farmland, native plant resources and the Fraser River created opportunities to gather and settle.

The human connections between this village (called by many names over time, including Chuchul, Derby, Old Langley and Langley Townsite) and lands across the river at Kanaka Creek were foundational to the region’s agricultural history.

7 A Mixed Farm

In 1890, James Houston moved here with his family from his farm in present-day Fort Langley after the death of his wife, a Cowichan woman named Mary Cusheon. Their son, Alex Houston, built this house in 1909 and with his family operated a farm typical of its time—producing a wide range of crops for family use as well as fish, timber, milk, vegetables and berries for sale locally and to the metropolitan hub of New Westminster.

8 An Agricultural Legacy

The agricultural story of the Fraser Valley is also told in its buildings. The Karr/Mercer barn was built in Chilliwack for David Karr in 1876. His farm was sold



MILK CAN

to James Mercer in 1902. Eighty years later, when demolition loomed for the structure, Mercer’s grandson, Roger Tweedle, had the barn dismantled and its pieces catalogued and stored. When it was reconstructed here in 1989, more than a century after it was built, builders noted with wonder that the original timbers “fit together like the day they were cut.”

9 The Town that Never Was

In 1858, Governor James Douglas envisioned the rural land around you as the colony of B.C.’s first capital city, to be called Derby. The planned town of 3,000 building lots extended along the curve of the Fraser from Edgewater Bar to the Salmon River. However, Colonel Moody of the Royal Engineers convinced Douglas to abandon Derby in favour of a location downriver far superior in military terms. In the spring of 1859, Queen Victoria announced that B.C.’s capital would be known as New Westminster, and the town of Derby became “the town that never was.”

10 Lost Land

The land underfoot was granted by the Crown to George Brouse in 1913. The farm, including the house and barn, was sold to the Markow family in 1933 and occupied by the family until 2006. During the years the family lived here, many acres of land were swept away by the fast-flowing, Fraser River.

11 Wagon Road to Derby and Beyond

As you leave the park and emerge onto Allard Crescent, you are standing on the old wagon road that stretched from Derby to Fort Langley, then on to Sumas and eventually Hope. “Leaving the boat at Derby,” Governor James Douglas notes in a letter of May 5th, 1860, “we travelled two miles by the bridge path which skirts the Fraser to Langley.” On this occasion, his plan to continue by horseback was impeded by the freshet and he was “compelled to seek the River and to proceed by canoe.”

In 1913, the land to your left was granted to James Ralph Elkins, a HBC labourer, farmer and signatory on the petition to establish Langley in 1872. It is likely that he and his wife, a Kwantlen woman named Marie Skokrwán, lived here without ownership in the years before the Crown grant was processed, a fate that was common to many settlers of the era.