

**DERBY REACH/BRAE ISLAND  
PARKS ASSOCIATION (DRBIPA)**

Do you love Derby Reach and Brae Island Regional Parks? Do you enjoy outdoor activities and events; appreciate wildlife, the environment, heritage, and culture; or support park-based education? Join a group of community volunteers that provides input on how the parks are cared for, used, and developed.

For more information, contact us at [www.drbipa.org](http://www.drbipa.org)

**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](http://www.pacificparklands.ca).

**ABOUT THIS PARK**

Derby Reach Regional Park is one of 22 parks, four reserves, two ecological conservancy areas, 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](http://www.metrovancouver.org)

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**Historic SELF-GUIDED TOUR**



**Derby Reach  
REGIONAL PARK**



**Historic Farms: West  
Self-Guided Tour**

**HISTORIC FARMS: WEST**

“They have cleared, fertilized, and befriended the river soil; the soil has responded...and a species of permanent farmfolk – steady, solid, educated, and co-operative in the joint life of the community – has joined in permanent marriage with the river.”  
—Bruce Hutchison, *The Fraser*, 1950.



**Welcome** to the south bank of one of the world's most significant and productive rivers – the Fraser. For almost 10,000 years, this foreshore has been a place of human connection, home to First Nations people and later to the settlers of European descent who came to farm and fish here, creating their own economic, cultural, and family legacies.

*Photo left: Maypole dancers, West Langley, 1935. Back row (l-r): Shirley Muench, Andree Nordman (top of car) Doreen Hooker and Donald Matheson. Middle row (l-r): Dorothy Woof, Irene Bethell, Joan Bethell, Barbara Harris, Doris McDonald, and Veronica Wood (on fender). Front seated (l-r): Kathleen McVicar (Kay Kells) and Lily Kirby. The car belongs to the school principal, Nancy McLeod. LANGLEY CENTENNIAL MUSEUM COLLECTION. PHOTO 3453.*

*Front cover: Nordman home, 1952. Barbara and Oscar Nordman and their children Freddie, Janet, and Sandy are standing on the front porch. SANDY NORDMAN COLLECTION.*



# Farming on the Fraser: a continuum of change



Mrs. Elizabeth Fox Crompton operating a stump puller, West Langley, 1930s. LANGLEY CENTENNIAL MUSEUM COLLECTION. PHOTO 2704.

## MCQUATT DITCH

You have just crossed the ditch that drains water from nearby agricultural land into the Fraser River. Today – as in yesteryear – cranberries grow in the surrounding peat soil, the ancient organic matter of wetlands. The signatures of these related waterways are distinct: coloured by peat, the brown water of McQuatt Ditch meets the silt-laden water of the Fraser.



Looking west towards the Nordman Barns. The roofline of the 1915 barn appears at top left. PHOTO K.J. WATT

## METAL COWS

These stylized cows stand at the edge of the barnyard of Craigentinne Farm, bought in 1919 by Sven Nordman and his wife Sarah and named after a Scottish town on the outskirts of Edinburgh. The Nordmans grew their seven-cow Ayrshire herd into a prize-winning dairy operation by the 1930s and shipped milk locally and via milk train to Vancouver. In 1963, a modern barn was added to the west of the original barn, built in 1915 by William Smith, the farm's previous owner. A place of tremendous family pride, this farm is also a place of sadness: Sven Nordman was killed by a bull here in 1943, and his family was left to carry on his farming legacy.

## ALLARD CRESCENT

Allard Crescent is one of the oldest roads in the region, created in a time when the Fraser River was the main transportation route. Originally called River Road or Muench Trail, this road was renamed to honour Eugene Allard, a local man who fought and died at Ypres in World War I. It connected the large farming operation of the Muench family in



The Fraser River at Muench Bar. PHOTO K.J. WATT

the growing agricultural settlement of West Langley with the emerging town of Fort Langley. The graceful Edwardian farm house facing road and river on Allard Crescent is the century-old Nordman home, built in 1911 by William Smith.

## PLOW

Changes in farm practice and the ongoing march of technology have always been a feature of farm life in the Fraser Valley. Before the turn of the twentieth century, the Muench family brought a modern machine to the Derby region in the form of an eight-horse threshing machine for farmers to use to separate grain from straw. In 1928, many years after it was available elsewhere, the telephone came to the area. This technology transformed human culture by making dialogue across distance instantly possible. A couple of decades later, electricity changed farm life here just as horse power was replaced by the tractor after World War II.

## MUENCH BAR

A source of food and transportation, a place of gathering and recreation, the Fraser River shaped life here. Farmers paddled their farm produce to the busy market at New Westminster. Steam powered riverboats such as the *Skeena* loaded live animals, hay, and crates of produce. They ferried cargo, people – and news – between river settlements and landing places such as this one. Newcomers, in turn, shaped the Fraser's shores by planting familiar crops. The remnant Hudson Bay Company apple orchard in the field to the east is one such living artifact from

former days, and many of the grasses growing in the adjacent fields are immigrants from far corners of the world.

## GRASSLANDS

This field is part of a continuum of change. Early Langley settlers converted forest to fields with hard work, horse-powered stump pullers, and plenty of dynamite. Modern intensification of agriculture and urban growth means that grasslands are hard to find today, but they provide a critical food source, nesting ground, and wintering area for a rich array of birdlife.

## LOWLAND FOREST

When you enter the forest that flanks the fields, the air becomes cool. This riverside ecosystem is subject to periodic groundwater flooding, so species that thrive here – including a giant-sized cedar and the huge old cottonwood trees that dot the trail – must be able to tolerate wet feet. These giants are becoming rare along the Fraser, but from their heights, raptors survey the adjacent grassland. The wet growing conditions are also perfect for Sitka spruce, alder, dogwood, willow, and salmonberry.

## 208TH STREET TRAILHEAD

Here at the westernmost edge of Derby Reach Regional Park, you stand at a place of cultural – and agricultural – connection through time. When newcomers in the 1860s paddled upriver from the emerging town of New Westminster, they found thriving potato fields planted by the chief of the Katzie people. The vigour of the humble spud convinced men of the promise of agriculture – and many applied to take up land on these now-quiet shores.

This riverside path forms part of the Trans Canada Trail and the Experience the Fraser's Canyon to Coast Trail which connect people to place and history through land trails and blueways, art and storytelling.