

Remembering Mayo School at Paldi, BC

In 1920 the first school in Paldi was built on a small hill among huge stumps and debris of a former logging area. All building materials were donated by the Mayo Lumber Company. Parents and others provided the labour and other equipment. The piano was personally given by Mr. Mayo Singh. The one room school opened in January 1921 with eight students and Miss Margaret Winifred Evans as the first teacher.

School class photos from the 1920's to the 1960's feature Sikh, Japanese, Chinese and Caucasian students, clearly denoting the ethnic diversity of the community of Paldi. Mrs. Ethel May McKelvie (nee Weismiller) was appointed principal of Mayo School in September 1943. She remained there for five years and was well respected by her students.

In 1946 the school came under the direction of School District 66 (Lake Cowichan) and was renamed Paldi School. Declining enrollments saw the school close at the end of June 1969. During the late 1980's the school was used as a secondary alternate education site as an annex of Lake Cowichan Secondary. A cedar canoe carved by students under teacher Rick Bates was raffled during the Lake Days Festival as a fund raiser for physical disabled in Lake Cowichan.

Unused for ten years the schoolhouse was burned to the ground by an unknown arsonist in August 1997. Paldi historian Joan Mayo wrote: “. . . our beloved school was . . . a reminder of those happier, simpler days when families of different nationalities lived, worked, and played together in harmony.”

The property was sold by the school district in 2003 and is now the site of a private residence. The Cowichan Valley Schools Heritage Society (CVSHS) has been working to document the histories of former schools in the area and recognizing them with the erection of school bell-shaped signs as close to their original locations as possible.

On Saturday, July 1, 2017 a CVSHS school bell sign marking Mayo School was unveiled at the driveway entrance to 5972 Paldi Road, Paldi. Former students, Mayo Lumber Company employees and members of the Cowichan Valley community were invited to attend this event.

Carolyn Prellwitz
Retired Teacher, School District 79 (Cowichan Valley)
Secretary-Treasurer, CVSHS
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Mayo School 1921 Teacher: Miss Margaret Evans



Mayo (Paldi) 1959 Grades 1-4 Teacher: Mrs. Lineham



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