

Remembering Mount Prevost Hillcrest School

Carlton Stone incorporated his lumber business as the Hillcrest Lumber Company in the Sahtlam area in 1917. By 1927 his company was one of the largest on Vancouver Island. Homes were built near the mill site for employees and their families who came from every ethnic background and nationality.

At first the employees' children attended the one room Sahtlam School. The eventual increase in that school's population finally resulted in the splitting of the Sahtlam School District in 1932 to create Hillcrest School District comprising the Hillcrest mill site and properties. A new schoolhouse called Mount Prevost Hillcrest was built on Pollock Road by Carlton Stone for all the children in the area. It opened with 37 students under teacher James Edward Somerled MacDonald.



1934-1935 Mount Prevost Hillcrest School class photo with teacher James E. S. MacDonald

Two years later another classroom was added on and a second teacher hired. The school continued to operate with two classrooms and two teachers until the fall of 1942. The previous April the Japanese contingent at the mill site had been evacuated by government authorities resulting in a decline in student numbers so that only one room and one teacher was required.

By the end of the 1942-1943 school year the timber in the area had run out and Carlton Stone was forced to move his operations to Mesachie Lake. The Sahtlam mill site was shut down and Mount Prevost Hillcrest School closed its doors for the last time. The schoolhouse was moved to Mesachie Lake

in 1943 where it was revitalized as Berry's Store. About 2011 the store was torn down to make room for a ballfield and the lumber from the building sold. No remnants of the school exist today.

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 small schoolbell shaped signs as close to their original locations as possible.

At 10 am on Saturday, May 27, 2017 a CVSHS schoolbell sign marking Mount Prevost Hillcrest School will be unveiled at the driveway entrance to 4350 Pollock Road. Former students, former Hillcrest Lumber Company employees and members of the Cowichan Valley community are invited to attend this event. Please bring along your class photos, schoolhouse photos, stories and memories to share with those in attendance.

Carolyn Prellwitz
Retired Teacher, School District 79
Secretary-Treasurer, CVSHS