

## Ruskin society celebrates its history



By Maple Ridge News

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On May 4, the Ruskin Hall Society will celebrate the history of Ruskin.

Everyone is invited to attend between 1-4 p.m. at Ruskin Community Hall.

The present Ruskin hall started being used in 1924, although the heritage plaque awarded to the hall by the Maple Ridge Community Heritage Commission shows the year 1923.

This date probably stems from a contribution by local historian Charles Miller, published in Marjorie Houghton's Souvenir Booklet for the Diamond Jubilee of Ruskin of 1975.

In this account, titled "The Halls of Ruskin," Miller writes that early in 1923 a women's committee finalized plans for the opening.

Miller goes on, illustrating the opulent decoration of the hall with huge bouquets of spring flowers and vases with "tulips and other spring bloom" on tables covered with snow-white linen. Perhaps these were Miller's memories of

another memorable celebration. But the official opening happened in the fall and not in the spring. Moreover, as we know from reports in Daily Province of Oct. 16, 1924, and the Weekly Gazette of Oct. 23, 1924, the hall opened in the fall of 1924.

In the 1970s, when Miller wrote his story, there was no access to the old issues of the Gazette to verify dates, but now, with easy access to old issues of the Gazette and other newspapers at the Maple Ridge library and the Maple Ridge Museum, it is possible to put the record straight.

An earlier hall, the former Ruskin one-room schoolhouse, preceded the present Ruskin Hall. In 1916, a two-room school replaced the one-room schoolhouse and the obsolete building was pulled across the road and converted into a community hall.

But the residents' pleasure of enjoying their own hall was brief.

"Last evening," so reads an item in the Weekly Gazette of Aug. 3 1922, "bush fires devoured the spacious Ruskin Hall, which was kindly furnished by Messrs. Gilchrist Bros. The school opposite was endangered."

A week later, a well-attended meeting was held at the Gilchrists' home to discuss the prospects of a new hall.

An item in the Gazette of Feb. 15, 1923, reports that the lumber was being hauled to the spot, and there is a note in the Gazette of April 26, 1923 about a shingle bee: "... rapid progress was being made on the roof during the day," but according to the paper a lot of work was still to be done to finish the hall.

After the progress in the first quarter of 1923 work on the hall slowed down.

The Gazette of Feb. 7, 1924, reports that the hall was "almost completed," but that work was at a standstill because everyone was "very busy."

Again, as with the first hall, the Gilchrist bothers were major contributors to the construction of the new hall. The three brothers and their relative William Laing gave each an estimated 60 days of their time to the completion of the hall.

Nelson S. Lougheed officially opened the Ruskin hall on Friday evening, Oct. 10, 1924.

It was a grand affair.

The Ruskin Community Hall Society would like to see a repeat when for a celebration of its history on May 4.

Looking Back by

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