

MISSION FAIRGROUND
7650 GRAND STREET MISSION BC

Description of Historic Place

The Mission Fairground is a six acre site located uphill from Mission's historic core. An agricultural fair was held annually on this site to promote local industry from 1910 until 1997, making it the site of the longest continually held fair in western Canada and the fourth oldest fair in British Columbia. The Mission Leisure Centre was constructed on the site in 2002 to continue the legacy of the Fair and offer a range of community recreational uses.

Heritage Values

The Mission Fairgrounds is significant for its historic, scientific and social heritage values as well as its association with the agricultural history of the Fraser Valley.

The Mission Agricultural Fair was first organized in 1894 by a group of prominent Mission area citizens to "promote pleasant reunions and comparison of the best products of local industry". Due to its success, the fair became an annual event held at different locations. In 1909, the Mission Agricultural Association purchased a six acre site at 7th Avenue between Taulbut and Grand streets for \$18,000. An annual agricultural fair was held on the site from 1910 until 1997, making the Mission Agricultural Fair the longest running agricultural fair in western Canada.

The Mission Fair was originally held to exchange ideas relating to industry and showcase local produce. Over time, the Fair included a wider variety of events such as displays of home-grown produce, livestock shows, sporting events, concession stands and a midway. The popularity of the Mission Fair peaked in 1960 when 4,000 visitors attended the 2 day event.

Other popular events were held on the Fairgrounds depending on evolving social trends and changing interests over the years. These events included galas, art displays, parades, a celebration of faith, family-oriented New Year's Eve celebrations, awards ceremonies, cultural exchanges, live entertainment and music, sports competitions, school graduation ceremonies, logger's sport show and the renowned A particularly popular event was the Soap Box Derby, first held in 1953, in which 12,000 youth ages 11 to 15 attended from all over western Canada.

By the late 1990's, fairs had fallen out of favour with the general public and there was a growing demand for modern recreational facilities. When it opened in 2002, the Mission leisure Centre included a swimming pool, sauna, fitness centre, ice rink, meeting rooms and concessions on the Old Fairground site.

Although it is no longer used as a Fairground, the site is important historically to Mission residents. Many local residents believe it to be one of the most socially significant sites in the Fraser Valley bringing together people of all ages and interests for decades to enjoy a wide variety of events. The annual Mission Fair was associated with the expression of strong social values, community pride and civic spirit and was a reflection of local social and economic interests.

Character Defining Elements

The Fairground site accommodated a number of temporary wooden building and barns, playing fields, a track, ice/curling rink, bleachers, internal roadways and parking. The site was altered considerably to accommodate the leisure Centre and there is little of historic value on the site. It is recommended that interpretive signage with historic photos be installed in strategic location on the site. Remaining elements which define the heritage character of the Fairground site include the following:

- Large and centrally located site on the north side of Seventh Avenue between Taulbut and Grand Street, uphill from Mission's historic downtown core, and adjacent to a mix of commercial, residential and institutional uses.
- Retention of the mature deciduous trees lining 7th Avenue and mix of deciduous and coniferous trees on sloping portions of the site
- The historic and social values of the site are based on its association with the Agricultural Fair held annually for almost 90 years and the ongoing community, social and recreational uses to serve Mission residents of all ages and interests.
- Aesthetic value of the site lies in the mix of open spaces, forested areas, trees lining Seventh Avenue and sloping topography.