

## Locating a Forgotten Past, Sikh Workers at Fraser Mills



Sikh women at Fraser Mills c.1930

Do you recognize any of these people or do you have an interesting story of significance to share? Contact Jasmine Moore, Heritage Manager at [jmoore@coquitlamheritage.ca](mailto:jmoore@coquitlamheritage.ca)

*“My grandpa used to always talk about his time in Canada when he was in India in the 1950s...he said one day Canada is going to have big highways. When he came, it was only a horse and buggy or wagons and the Fraser River froze over in the winter time.”*

~Mike Ghuman, 2017

In the early 1900s, the Canadian Western Lumber Co. ran the largest sawmill in the British Commonwealth and the third largest in the world. Located along the banks of the Fraser River, the mill was one of the major seeds to Coquitlam’s growth, and supported not only the town site of Fraser Mills but also the French-Canadian town of Maillardville. Anecdotal evidence and community memory make it quite clear that First Nations, Chinese, Japanese and South Indian communities made critical contributions to the early industrial enterprises in the sawmilling and fishing industries in Coquitlam.

While Coquitlam Heritage has collected oral histories and reference materials documenting these communities in the early development

of Fraser Mills and Maillardville, most of our collections reflect French Canadians or Anglophone life. We are hoping to locate families whose relatives may have worked at Fraser Mills to learn about intercultural relationships throughout the history of Coquitlam.

In January 2017, Coquitlam Heritage Manager, Jasmine Moore, tracked down Mike Ghuman and this photo of Sikh women at Fraser Mills. Mike’s father and grandfather both worked at Fraser Mills in the first half of the 20th century. Mike attempted to track down more information about his family’s time here about a decade ago but was unsuccessful.

Daya Singh arrived in Canada on April 4, 1906 with his oldest son Katar Singh. Soon after their arrival Daya obtained employment at Fraser Mills. In 1909, Daya was one of the first Sikhs to be initiated into the Khalsa in Canada at the first Gurdwara built in Vancouver (1866 West 2nd Avenue). His younger son Rattan Singh (Mike’s Father), journeyed by himself from India to Fraser Mills in the mid 1920s. Rattan attended Millside school in 1926 and 1927, he later obtained employment at Fraser Mills and worked there until 1940.



Rattan Ghuman, Millside School 1926-1927

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## MUSEUM HOURS

Tues-Fri	<b>11AM-5PM</b>
Saturday	<b>12PM-4PM</b>
Sun & Mon	<b>CLOSED</b>
Holidays	<b>CLOSED</b>

### NEW SUMMER HOURS

Starting June 1

Mon-Fri	<b>11AM-5PM</b>
Sat & Sun	<b>10AM-4PM</b>
July 1	<b>CLOSED</b>
Aug 7 & Sept 4	<b>OPEN</b>



## COLLECTION HIGHLIGHT

### HOBNAILED BOOTS

*"We would break up the logs with a pike pole and axe and, sometimes, crosscut saw, and supply them to the mill. We would walk out on the logs wearing cork boots and, hopefully, not fall in."*

~Aurele Boileau from *Coquitlam 100 Years*

In anticipation of our upcoming exhibition, *A Man's World*, we are featuring a unique pair of boots from our collection. These hobnailed boots were made in Maillardville and were a fundamental part of safety for the mill. Their most notable safety feature is the hobnail soles combined with iron toes. Men working for the Canadian Western Lumber Company would have worn boots like these during their long shifts at Fraser Mills.

Navigating slippery, sawdust covered floors, and slick moisture covered logs required extra grip from the metal studs seen on these boots. As logs were dragged up from the Fraser River and onto the conveyor belt, conditions underfoot were quite precarious. Hobnailed boots like these kept many a worker safe and able to work effectively.

John Graveling, a local Maillardville shoemaker, made these boots for James Joseph Noel Bernard Allard. They showcase the local craftsmanship available to the strong men who toiled long hours at Fraser Mills. Men like Graveling kept the workers at Fraser mills safe and out of the water. Do you have a unique item from Coquitlam that you are interested in adding to the Coquitlam Heritage collection? Please contact Jasmine Moore, Heritage Manager at [jmoore@coquitlamheritage.ca](mailto:jmoore@coquitlamheritage.ca) or 604.516.6151.

## EXHIBITION

### A MAN'S WORLD: 1900-1920

June 6 to October 7, 2017

As a follow up to *A Woman's World*, Coquitlam Heritage is proud to dedicate the summer of 2017 to men! The early 20th century marked drastic changes for societies and cultures all over the world. Canadian men across all classes, ages, and ethnicities had unique experiences during the period between 1900 and 1920. Come to Mackin House and explore the world men experienced in the early days of Coquitlam's history.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### HISTORICAL FICTION BOOK CLUB

Our book club meets in the Parlour every second Thursday of the month at 2pm for literary discussion, coffee, tea and treats. It's free to join. Visit our website for more information on the upcoming book.

### CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Coquitlam Heritage is always seeking friendly and talented volunteers to help with tours, fundraising, collections & curatorial work, crafts, gardening and more throughout the year. Please email [sklaric@coquitlamheritage.ca](mailto:sklaric@coquitlamheritage.ca) or visit the volunteer's page on our website for more information.

### WE'RE LOOKING FOR BOARD MEMBERS!

Do you have a passion for heritage? We are a non-profit society dedicated to preserving, honouring, and promoting Coquitlam's heritage. We are working towards creating a dedicated Heritage Centre space to celebrate our City's rich, diverse history. Currently, Coquitlam Heritage runs Mackin House, a heritage home built in 1909. The society offers a wide variety of events and programmes and launches several exhibits each year throughout Coquitlam.

We are looking to fill several new Board positions as we expand its size.

If you are interested, email our Chair Ann Carlsen at [chair@coquitlamheritage.ca](mailto:chair@coquitlamheritage.ca). We encourage those who reflect Coquitlam's rich & diverse community to consider applying.



MAY  
06

### MOTHER'S DAY HERITAGE GIFT MAKING

12:30pm to 1:30pm

Registration is required  
Event is by donation

Ideal for ages 5-12. Parents will enjoy tea and scones fireside in the Parlour while kids work alongside our staff and volunteers in the dining room to make lovely heritage crafts for mom.



MAY  
10

### A WOMAN'S WORLD SPEAKER SERIES

7:00pm to 8:30pm at Poirier Library

Tickets online or at door  
Cost is \$10 per person

Join E. Brenda Flynn as she describes the roles of female nurses in WW1 based on primary research and stories that have been passed down. Brenda has been a nurse for over 30 years and is a member of the BC History of Nursing Society.



MAY  
25

### THE FRIENDLY GARDENER

6:30pm to 9:00pm

Registration is required  
Cost is \$20 per person

Join Cheryl of Sentimental Creations as you create green products that will help your garden thrive without the use of harmful pesticides, and keep your hands healthy and soft. You'll create a soapy marigold insecticide, gardener's soap bar, hand repair salve and a fungicide spray. Plus recipes for slug removal and insect repellent.



JUN  
13

### MEN'S SKINCARE ESSENTIALS

6:30pm to 9:00pm

Registration is required  
Cost is \$32.50 per person

Throughout our *Man's World* exhibit we will be offering workshops geared towards its highlighted themes, like the grooming practices of gentlemen. In this fun and informative class, make and take home a hand-milled shaving bar, an after-shave splash, moustache wax and beard oil, plus recipes for herbal facial alcohol toner and body cream.



JUN  
17

### FATHER'S DAY FLY TYING WORKSHOP

12:30pm to 3:30pm

Ages 12+. Registration is required  
Event is by donation

Calling all fathers! Join us at Mackin House for a fly tying workshop sponsored by Sea-Run Fly & Tackle. Learn the basics of fly-tying from a great instructor and take home new flies for your next fishing trip! Intended for adults, but dads may bring a child 12 years of age or older.



JUL  
29

### NATURAL REFRESHING COCKTAIL WORKSHOP

12:30pm to 3:30pm

Ages 16+. Registration is required  
Cost is \$18.50 per person

These natural cocktails, also known as shrubs, are made from a mixture of either fruits or vegetables and herbs. They are a base for cooling summer drinks with the addition of something bubbly. You will do some taste testing along the way and will be able to take away several versions from the class.



MAY  
13

### MOTHER'S DAY HIGH TEA

2:00pm to 3:30pm

Our Mother's Day High Tea is now full. Please inquire about our waitlist. Tea is provided by Culinary Blossom, take away gifts are courtesy of our sponsor Oxygen Yoga & Fitness Coquitlam.

## OUR SPONSORS

We would like to take a moment to thank our sponsors. If your organization is interested in sponsorship, please do not hesitate to give us a call! We have something for every budget. You can also visit our website to learn more about our many sponsored programs and how we recognize our sponsors.



The Coquitlam Heritage Society is funded thanks to a municipal grant from the City of Coquitlam. Thank You!



## LET'S TALK ABOUT HERITAGE!

We want to hear from you. Coquitlam Heritage preserves, honour, and promotes Coquitlam's rich and diverse heritage. YOUR heritage.

Stop by **City Centre Library on Tuesday, June 27 from 6:00-7:45pm** to offer your feedback through fun, interactive displays. Chat with our Board of Directors, ask questions of our heritage professionals, and enjoy delicious snacks and beverages.

We'll be collecting feedback on:

- Our exhibit topics for 2018 & 2019
- Heritage programming – what you like, what you'd like to see more of
- The focus of our collections
- How we deliver and promote heritage information throughout the City

No RSVP required.

**Our Annual General Meeting will follow at 8:00pm.**

Feel free to stay if you'd like. Voting at the AGM will be limited to members whose annual membership dues are paid prior to May 12, 2017 in keeping with our current bylaws.