

# **KILBY**

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## **HISTORIC SITE**

*“BC’s Museum of Rural Life”*

### **INFORMATION GUIDE**

#### **COME BACK TO THE 1920s...**

One and a half hours from the hustle and bustle of the concrete jungle of Vancouver there is a place where mountains, fields, grazing cattle and brilliantly coloured wild flowers surround a unique, five-acre, living history site. Near the mouth of the Harrison River, the Kilby Historic Site is a reminder of the once thriving community of Harrison Mills. It is a place where you can escape to the past.

Harrison Mills is bordered on three sides by water and has endured many floods in the past. The ramps and elevated boardwalks, built to stay above the floodwaters, gave Harrison Mills its unique architecture. At the bottom of the Main Ramp, the Oil House and gas pumps wait for the return of the Model A. Walking through the front door of the General Store is like entering a time capsule. The original shelves are crowded with the necessities of life from the 1920s. The friendly storekeeper is waiting to show you around and pass the time with a story or two.

You are welcome to head up the creaking staircase to hotel rooms that reveal clues about life in the 1920s. Uncle Ed, a Great War veteran, is a heavy sleeper and you may still find him in one of the hotel beds. While upstairs, pause for a moment in the Reading Room with an old book or the picture puzzle. Photographs and mementoes on Harrison Mills, the First Nations on the Rivers exhibit and the Retail Product Packaging Gallery await history enthusiasts and the curious.

Back on the grounds pass through the weathered Garage into the Basement of the Store, where you will find the Sunshine Furnace and a good stock of items kept for a “rainy day.” Nearby are the sights and sounds of the farm animals as they scratch and forage. You and your children may wish to feed the chickens or other animals. You are invited to picnic behind the Store in our Orchard Shed, and then try your hand at croquet or the stilts in the Playground. With all the things to see and do at the Kilby Historic Site, be sure to save a moment to sit on the porch of the 120 year old Log Cabin and let the world go by.

## ***CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES***

In addition to our School Program, "Lock, Stock and Cracker Barrel," we offer tours of the site tailored to suit children of all ages. We have developed displays and activities for the whole family. Kids can pick up a Fun Sheet chock-a-block with things to look for, including peeking in on Uncle Ed, visiting the basement with its assortment of mysterious objects and exploring the grounds. The children can feed, pet or just watch the farm animals. Food suitable for the animals is available from the Gift Shop. A croquet game is often going on in the side yard near the Cottage. In the Orchard Playground, children may enjoy the swing, tree fort, checkers, sandbox, teeter-totter and stilts as well. A brochure describing the Children's and School Programs is available upon request.

## ***HANDS ON ACTIVITIES***

These 1920s hands on activities are both informative and enjoyable. They may be tailored to suit either an adult or a children's group and are available by advance booking. A minimal fee is required.

**Ice Cream Making:** Visitors help measure & mix ingredients and then crank the old fashioned Ice Cream Freezer. Everyone then tastes the frozen treat.

**Apple Cider Pressing:** Grind apples and press cider on a century old cider press.

**Junior Merchant Activity Area:** The Storeroom in the Sub-basement of the Store serves as a "play store," where the children are encouraged to sell, weigh and wrap goods.

**Walking Tour:** Learn about Harrison Mills and the surrounding area's unique culture. The students will be introduced to our region's geography and industry. Archival photographs will reveal the need for the extensive dyking system in place today.

**Traditional Games:** Playing or watching various 1920s games, the participants experience traditional forms of entertainment. These may be interpreter led or self guided and can include: croquet, badminton, checkers, stilts and other forms of old fashioned play.

## ***TOURS***

**Guided Tours:** Spend an hour or more with our costumed tour guides exploring the 110-year-old Store and the other delights of our site. Guided tours are tailored to the level of interest, special needs and the type of group, whether it is seniors, adults or children.

**Customized Tours:** Spend an hour or more with a private guide who is an expert in your area of interest. Whether it be agriculture, art or archaeology, we have an expert in the field! (An additional fee applies.)

**Self-guided Tours:** Enjoy the Site at your own pace, with a little help from our illustrated and informative Visitor Guide and a friendly shopkeeper.

**Hands on activities:** These are tailored for any age, group or level of interest. See above for details.

**Restaurant Service:** Our quaint home-style dining room offers a group menu that can be included in your tour package.

**Information:** Please request our information sheets describing specific tour packages for adults and seniors, and teacher's packages for children.

## ***BOOKING A TOUR OR PROGRAM***

Call for information about tour and school program bookings at **(604) 796-9576** or **events@kilby.ca**.

## ***SITE FACILITIES***

**Accessibility:** The Kilby Historic Site is wheelchair accessible, with ramps and gravel paths to each area of interest. The only exception is the staircase to the Manchester House Hotel which is located on the top floor of the General Store museum. All of our washrooms are wheelchair accessible.

**Parking Lot:** Our parking lot has ample room for cars, buses and recreational vehicles.

**Picnic Tables:** Enjoy your picnic lunch on the grounds, in the Orchard Shed or under the shade of the old willow tree.

**Washrooms:** Public washrooms are available in the restaurant and also in the basement of the cottage.

## ***KILBY Restaurant***

Relax and enjoy a soup & sandwich menu in our quaint, 1920s style restaurant, featuring the best home-style country cooking this side of the Fraser River. Experience old-fashioned treats such as home-made scones, a delicious sundae or root beer float! We are famous for our pies, made locally by Cabin Fever Junction. We also manufacture a full line of jams and preserves, made right here on site with local, farm fresh fruit.

## ***KILBY Gift Shop***

The Gift Shop offers merchandise related to the 1920s and our living history themes. There are many items of interest to children, students and adults, including: books, local crafts, wooden toys and souvenir items. The Fraser Valley is famous for its wide variety of artisans and farmers which is reflected in the shop. We feature a large selection of farm fresh, traditionally produced, jams, jellies, preserves and honey. In addition, you will find a wide range of books by local authors, and publishers not normally found in generic book stores. When planning your visit to our site, be sure to allow time to browse the gift shop.

## ***SITE INTERPRETATION***

Interpretation of this historic site is under the direction of the Fraser Heritage Society. The Society is a charitable, non-profit, community-based organization whose mandate is to manage, preserve and enhance the history of the provincially owned Kilby Historic Site and neighbouring Kilby Park. All of our interpreters are costumed in 1920s apparel to enhance the experience our visitors enjoy. The Fraser Heritage Society endeavours to provide a living history heritage site, complete with farm animals, and all the other sights, sounds and smells of a simpler time.

## ***SPECIAL EVENTS***

For a complete description of our current Special Events visit [www.kilby.ca](http://www.kilby.ca).



## ***EXHIBITS***

Our living history site features many small exhibits, set in a period context, which explain the life and times of the Kilby family, Harrison Mills and the 1920s. Many of the displays are family oriented. Perhaps the best of all are our friendly interpreters.

**Bull Pen:** Once home to the Kilby's prize-winning bull, the bullpen now holds Daisy, our Jersey cow, our calves and our sheep.

**Cottage:** The oldest original Harrison Mills building, the cottage dates from the 1890s.

**Farm Animals:** Be sure to visit the chickens, pigs and turkeys. Animal feed is available in the gift shop.

**First Peoples of the Rivers:** Featuring the local First Nations and their history in Harrison River area, this exhibit is upstairs in the museum.

**General Store:** The shelves are fully stocked and ready for the friendly shopkeeper to open the doors for business.

**Heritage Gardens:** Enjoy the old plantings made by the Kilby family as well as our traditional gardens.

**Implement Shed:** Man's classic dilemma-What to fix or hook up first? The plough, the harrow and the wagon wait to be used one more time, along with many other tools and implements of days gone by.

**Interactive Room:** The newest exhibit at Kilby provides a place to view stories from Harrison Mills's settlers, a dedication to previous societies which ran the museum, and a searchable artefact database. History comes to life in this one room!

**Kitchen:** Breathe in the aromas of a simmering meal and imagine that special warmth of a wood fired stove, even in August.

**Neighbourhood Landing:** The landing at the top of the stairs in the Store features the Kilby and Pretty families, who were the founding families of Harrison Mills.

**Log Cabin and Logger's Batch:** Imagine the life of the lonely logger in the bush living in this 1890s Log Cabin.

**Manchester House Hotel:** Determine for yourself, which ghosts of the past are in residence.

**Milk House:** Jersey milk and cream were separated and stored in cans chilled with cold water.

**Needle Arts:** The Dining Room is replete with examples of the gentle art of sewing.

**Oil House:** This 1920s version of a gasoline filling station waits for a Model A to come around the corner.

**Orchard and Shed:** The history of the 80 year-old orchard is depicted here.

**Orchard Playground:** The children will delight in the sandbox, tree fort, teeter-totter and tree swing.

**Pantry:** A room stocked with the right ingredients to create the family's meals.

**Parlour:** At the end of the day, when the work is done, this is the place for the family to relax and read.

**People of the Harrison Gallery:** The life and times of the people of the Harrison Mills region is on display upstairs in the museum.

**Post Office:** Imagine your mail is waiting but Mr. Kilby has just stepped out for a moment.

**Product Package Gallery:** A kaleidoscope of colour represents generations of shopping.

**Sitting Room:** Sit back and enjoy an old book or browse the 1920s information.

**Store Basement:** This handyman's dream is full of items awaiting a rainy day project.

**Store Room:** Once used for storing meat, produce, canned goods and other supplies needed to stock the shelves; this room waits for another delivery.

**Store Keeper:** Friendly and knowledgeable staff dressed in period costumes interpret the site.

**Temporary Exhibit Room:** Visiting exhibits or seasonal featured exhibits are often on site. The current exhibit is "Fashions of the 1920s"

## ***HOURS OF OPERATION***

Kilby Historic Site is **open daily**: July and August, 11 am to 4 pm.

April, May, Sept and October site hours vary, please check our website for 2016 hours of operation. **Pre-booked tours are available year round by appointment.**

For more information check [www.kilby.ca](http://www.kilby.ca).

## ***OUR HISTORY...***

### ***THE KILBY FAMILY***

Thomas Kilby was born in England in 1868 and immigrated to Ontario at the age of sixteen. In the late 1880s he moved west to British Columbia, where he got a job in the company store at the Brunette Sawmill in New Westminster.

Eliza was a widow from Manchester, England, who immigrated to Ontario and then to New Westminster. In 1889 she and Thomas Kilby were married. They established a dairy farm in Vancouver but a down turn in the economy eventually sent them to Harrison Mills to run

the company store and boarding house. In 1906 when the company store was damaged by fire, Thomas and Eliza founded their own store. The next year they added to the building and Eliza opened the Manchester Hotel. In 1914, Thomas started a dairy farm.

Thomas and Eliza's only son, Acton, was born in 1890. In 1919 he and Jessie Barton were married and soon returned to Harrison Mills to help the ailing Thomas with the store and farm. When Thomas died in 1928 Acton inherited the business and dairy operation. From 1935 to 1955 he augmented the family income by working for the Milk Shipping Agency in Vancouver and returning on weekends, while Jessie managed the day-to-day operations of the store and post office.

In 1968 when he was forced to retire as Harrison Mills' Postmaster, Acton decided to promote the old General Store as a Museum. He succeeded and when the Province of British Columbia bought the operation in 1972 from the Kilby family, Acton and Jessie stayed as curators until ill health obliged them to retire. Kilby descendants still reside in British Columbia, although not in Harrison Mills. They maintain a close relationship with the historic site that once was their family home.

## ***KILBY AS A PROVINCIAL HISTORIC SITE***

The Province of BC purchased the site in 1972. Curator Clarence Wood from BC Historic Site at Barkerville transferred to Kilby to implement interpretative programs. In 1987 the province set up the Kilby Museum Historical Society and a period of expansion began. Eventually management of the site was transferred from the Parks Branch to what is now the BC Heritage Branch.

The Kilby Historical Society made use of provincial and federal employment programs for site development. BC Heritage carried out major projects to preserve the original buildings. Planning sessions in 1994 resulted in a management plan identifying several major steps, which were subsequently taken to reach the current level of interpretation.

It was in 1998 that the Kilby Historical Society ceased regular activity, and subsequently the Fraser Heritage Society incorporated. In 1999 with a mandate to support heritage, this new society delivered educational and historic programming to both the Kilby Historic Site and a second BC Heritage site, Historic Yale. In 2000 the Fraser Heritage Society concentrated its efforts at Kilby Historic Site. Responsible for not only the daily operations of visitor services, it was also accountable for the curatorial and collections management, stewardship planning and the creation of new exhibits.

In 2002 the provincial government went through the process of devolving all thirteen of its heritage sites to private enterprise, local governments, school districts, non-profit and other organizations. Currently, the District of Kent holds a one year management agreement with the province. The district has engaged the Fraser Heritage Society to continue to operate the site on their behalf.

## ***THE COMMUNITY OF HARRISON MILLS***

The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s drew industry and business to places where the railway intersected with waterways such as the Harrison River. Where steamboats and railway met, a transportation hub developed and communities sprang up. This was the case in Harrison Mills at its conception.

The name "Harrison Mills" is derived from the sawmill that once stood on the shores the Harrison River, becoming the mainstay of the local economy. Several earlier mills had been in existence, but it was the Rat Portage Lumber Company, built in 1903, that permanently changed the face of the community. Soon, Harrison Mills included houses, a school, churches, stores, a community hall, a railway station and sawmills all connected by a network of raised wooden walkways and ramps. These ramps became a distinctive feature of the community, necessary because of the annual Fraser River floods.

The mill closed in 1911, never to re-open, although a shingle mill across the bay continued for many years. Gradually the old buildings disappeared until the Kilby General Store remained as the only reminder of the once thriving town of Harrison Mills. Today the population of Harrison Mills is greatly reduced from its peak in the early twentieth century, but the lumber and dairy industries continue to be the mainstays of the community. Tourism and recreation are budding markets and community growth is on the rise.

## ***THE FIRST NATIONS***

For thousands of years, aboriginal people have lived in the vicinity of what is now known as Harrison Mills. It was a meeting place and a cross roads in the confluence of the Fraser and Harrison Rivers. Anthropologists have called these people Coast Salish; their own term (commonly in use again) is Sto:lo, meaning People of the River. There are 14 bands in the Chilliwack area that are under one umbrella called Sto:lo. Embodied in this name is the focus of much of their lifestyle: the Harrison and Fraser rivers.

Aboriginal people form a large part of the present-day Harrison Mills population. Across the railroad tracks in front of the Kilby Historic Site is the Scowlitz reserve. The name is said to mean "steering around the point" and band members may still do so in their outboard motor boats, which are the successors to earlier dugout canoes. Upriver from the highway bridge is the Chehalis reserve. The name is said to mean "running aground on a sandbar" which past and present generations have tried to avoid during periods of low water. Other sources indicate that Chehalis is actually Sts'ailes and means something similar to "beating from the heart." Aboriginal people continue to be an integral part of the Kilby Historic Site as neighbors, employees, customers and as visitors.

## **HARRISON MILLS AND REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS**

Various attractions within a short drive include: Harrison Hot Springs, the town of Agassiz, the Agassiz Harrison Museum, Agassiz-Harrison Mills [Circle Farm Tour](#) and the Harrison River. An eighteen-hole golf course, "The Sandpiper," is located on Morris Valley Road (at the Pretty Estates Resort). Mission is approximately 30 minutes west of Harrison Mills home to the Westminster Abbey and Stave Falls Hydro Plant. To the east along Highway 1 is the town of Hope with its chainsaw carvings and the Othello Quintette Tunnels. Just past Hope is the Yale Historic Site featuring the St. John the Divine Anglican Church and Yale Museum (phone 604 863-2324), and Hell's Gate Air Tram, where visitors ride the gondola over the canyon of the Fraser River. Local Visitor Information may be found in Mission (phone 604 826-6914) and Harrison Hot Springs (phone 604 796-5581) and during the summer season in Agassiz (phone 604 796 3545) Fifteen minutes from Kilby Historic Site, along Morris Valley Road is the Weaver Creek Spawning Channels, and the Chehalis Trout Hatchery home to the annual Fraser Valley Bald Eagle Festival. Also Hemlock Valley Ski Resort is only twenty-five minutes away.

Just down the road is the Kilby Park campground, located at the confluence of the Fraser and Harrison rivers. The area is a popular fishing spot, and holds natural wonder with the many eagles, sturgeon, seals and salmon. In 2010 the Harrison River was officially identified as the first Salmon Stronghold in Canada by the North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership. For more information about the Chehalis Flats Bald Eagle and Salmon Preserve visit [www.fraservalleybaldeaglefestival.ca](http://www.fraservalleybaldeaglefestival.ca)

Accommodation is available at several local bed and breakfast operations: Sasquatch Crossing Eco Lodge, Mt. Woodside B & B, Woodside Inn & Rowena's Inn on the River. Kilby Historic Site is a short drive from hotels, motels and campgrounds in Harrison Mills, Harrison Hot Springs and the Chilliwack/Cultus Lake areas.

## **CAMPGROUND FACILITIES**

The Kilby Park is situated on scenic Harrison Bay, in Harrison Mills. It features a beautiful 35-site waterfront campground complete with picnic tables, a day use area, sandy beaches, nature trails and boat launch. The Park is at the end of Kilby Road, within walking distance of the historical site. The campground operates on a first come, first served basis, and is open seasonally. We do take campground reservations May thru October. Check website for details [Kilby Campground](#)

Meals are available at the Kilby Restaurant at Kilby Historic Site (phone 604 796-9576, open 11 am to 5 pm), the Sasquatch Inn and River's Edge at the Pretty Estates. Groceries, supplies are available at the Silver Dollar, located just a few minutes west on Hwy #7.

Wood and ice are available from the campground or museum staff.



## LOCATION

Getting here is part of the fun! Scenic Highway 7 (the Lougheed) from Mission to Agassiz, passes through very picturesque countryside. Whether coming from Agassiz over Mt. Woodside, or from Mission through the Hatzic Prairie, the scenery is sure to delight the senses.

Kilby Historic Site is located at 215 Kilby Road, just off Scenic Highway 7, in Harrison Mills. The Site is only 35 minutes West of Mission and 20 minutes East of Harrison Hot Springs. The turn-off, from Highway 7, is well marked at the east end of the Harrison River Bridge. The Site may also be readily accessed using Highway 1, from the east via route #9 through Agassiz and from the west via route #11 through Mission.

