

# South Fort George School House

## 1. Documentation

**Type of Site:** Building

**Location:** Present legal description is Lot PCL Plan 1409 DL 417 located at 755 20<sup>th</sup> Ave. in Fraser Fort-George Park adjacent to the Exploration Place. The Building was originally located at Thapage Lane and Queensway Street. DL 934 Block 17 Lot 12.

**Material:** The building is primarily made of wood including the interior and exterior wall coverings. The roof is covered with asphalt roll roofing with a mineral surface. The foundation is wooden beams

**Environmental Setting:** The building is situated in a park near the Fraser River adjacent to the Exploration Place. Today, it is owned by the Fraser-Fort George Museum Society.

**Historical Information:** The Historical information is very complete. The building is mentioned in several sources. The Exploration Place has collected a great deal of historical information on this building both primary and secondary sources are used. There is also information available about the people and the place where the building was located.

Full documentation of this building is held by the Exploration Place.

## 2. Historical Associations

**Thematic:** The Building was used as the first school in South Fort George so it is one of the best examples of a school or the history of education in the area theme. The building is a simple all wood construction very common to the time (1910) and therefore is a very good example of typical building construction of the period.

**Person/event:** This is the first school building in South Fort George. It is associated with some very prominent people of the time. Mr. Cosgrove, the first Teacher, Mrs A.B. Campbell the first professional Teacher. The first school Board consisted of James Cowie, Joseph Bower, Mr. A.K. Bouchier (Chairman) and A.G. Hamilton (secretary) who was one of the founders of South Fort George townsite in 1906. The first students at the school were: Alex Bird, Eliza Bird, Harriet Duncan, Patrick Pierrot, Sallie Pierrot, Minnie Seymour, Aggie Seymour, Mary Halm, Edith Senior, Frank Bird, Clarence Burns, Evelyn Edwards, Albert Pierrot, William Seymour, Sarah Seymour, Sophie Seymour, Phillip Halm Gladys Senior. The age range of the students was from 6 to 16 years old.

The building was originally owned by Mr. Wiggins of the Northern Development Co. It was subsequently owned by the Weatherly family who donated the building to the museum (now Exploration Place) in 1976.

**Local Development:** When the school opened it was recognized by the people of the time as a turning point in the history of the community as every city must have a school and this was the first. The time of the School, 1910, is a time when the idea of the railway coming to the area was starting to be generally accepted and speculation on a railway boom was just starting.

*“First school in Fort George Section opens its doors at South Fort George. On Monday last, the first government school opened its doors to the children of this section, and the fact that sixteen names were entered on the roll during the first day of its existence shows how great was the necessity of such an institution here.*

*The advent of this school provides one more primal necessities of a young city. Without educational advantages for children surely no town can be considered to be worthy of the name, and the fact that South Fort George now boasts of a school which is well attended and admirably presided over both by the principal and board of trustees, gives this place a vastly added importance in the estimation of those families which are settling here, and the many more to come.”*

Fort George Herald, Oct 8, 1910

### 3. Architecture

**Aesthetic Design and Designer:** The visual look of the building could be describes as “quaint”. It has a flat roof and a corner entrance with wood siding that give the building a nostalgic look. The design has elements of early commercial buildings such as the corner entrance and a flat roof. It may have been originally built for commercial purposes as it was only rented as a school. The designer is not known at this time.

**Functional Design:** The Building was originally one room only with a very practical construction, which turned out to be sturdy and lasting. The building was approximately 15 x 30 feet in size. Heat was provided by a single wood burning stove which made use of a brick chimney. It was not originally built to serve as a school and was only rented for this purpose until a proper school could be built. It appears as if there were few changes to the building over the years. It served as a school, business, residence, and Historic exhibit building over its lifetime beginning in 1910.

**Craftsmanship and Material:** The building shows the use of wood and standard building knowledge at the time. It was cheaply built and cheaply maintained. There is nothing unusual, unique or remarkable about its construction type or design. This alone makes the building interesting due its use as a very good example of the quick, efficient, economical, and practical construction of the time. Some of the original glass panes have been replaced with Lexan. It is not know if any of the remaining glass is original.

**Integrity:** The history of alteration of the building is only roughly known at this time. It was originally only room and later one or more partitions were added when it was used as a home. The building was restored in the 1970’s and 80’ as a school house by the museum. The look of the building is very much the same as when it was built in 1910 both inside and out. It is not known at this time how much of the building is original but a brief survey of the building seems to indicate that a great deal of the original structure is there today.

The building has only had one major move from its original site to the museum site in 1976. After this time the building was moved several times within the area adjacent to the museum. Although the building has been moved it is still within a few kilometers of its original site.

The condition of the building appears to be good and although some work is necessary to keep the building well maintained it still a functional building as it presently stands. It is in fact now used as a schoolhouse to teach children about what going to school was like in the past.

#### **4. Environment**

**Location:** The building has been moved from its original location but it is still close to “South Fort George” where it was originally built.

**Setting:** The setting is in a Park adjacent to Exploration Place. This is a very appropriate setting for this building and it adds to the look of the park and to the value of Exploration Place. The previous setting was away from the river a few blocks on a town street at the corner of Fourth and Thapage which is today between Jasper and Lasalle streets. The heritage value of the current setting is lessened by the move of the building and strengthened by the fact it is within a heritage setting with the museum.

**Landmark:** This building is a symbol of a rough settlement making the first steps toward becoming a city. These steps were sure and steady as is proven by the high number of educational opportunities in Prince George today. Without this first step there would be no progress. The building, therefore, also stands as a symbol of progress and steady growth. One early picture of the building with the sign “Public School” and the teacher and the students in the front speaks volumes about the pioneering spirit of the community, the mix of European and Metis population. This building alone shows how so much was done with so little in those early days.

**5. Age:** As the Building was used as the first School in 1910 five years prior to the incorporation of Prince George as a town, it scores maximum number of points as a heritage structure.

## **Statement of Significance:**

### **South Fort George School House**

- Current location Fort George Park adjacent to 333 Becott Place
- Original Location Third Avenue and Thapage (South Fort George), which is now Queensway Street between Hamilton Ave and LaSalle Ave

### **Other Names**

### **Images**



North Elevation

West Elevation

Interior

### **Description of Historic Place:**

The South Fort George School House is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century one room vernacular style wood frame building with a flat roof. It is a rectangular shape interrupted by a truncation of one corner, which serves as the entrance. The historical place is confined to the footprint of the building.

### **Heritage Value:**

Built in 1910 the South Fort George School House represents the style of many commercial Prince George buildings at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is simple and functional building and has survived virtually unchanged since September 1910.

The School House is significant because it is the first school building in South Fort George and the first in this section of BC. The 1910 Fort George Herald best describes its importance to the development of the city when it published the following “The advent of this school provides one more primal necessities of a young city. Without education advantages for children surely no town can be considered to be worthy of the name, and the fact that South Fort George now boasts of a school which is well attended and admirably presided over both by the principal and board of trustees, gives this place a vastly added importance in the estimation of those families which are settling here, and of many more to come.” (Source: The Fraser Fort George Regional Museum (Exploration Place)).

One early picture of the building with the sign “Public School” and the teacher and the students in the front speaks volumes about the pioneering spirit of the community, the mix of European and Metis population. This building alone shows how so much was done with so little in those early days.

The structure has been relocated to near the Exploration Place and as a museum piece it is used for historical interpretation and serves the community well as a means of conveying the real nature of the early towns within what is today called Prince George.

## Character defining elements:

- simple form and modest scale (only one room 15'x30')
- Rectangular plan truncated of one corner, which serves as the entrance, Flat roof, nearly all wood construction
- Original foundation was replaced when moved. Originally the building was set off the ground, currently it is at ground level.
- This building is very well documented with much historical information and associations with important persons and events in the early days of the City of Prince George.
- Original wood siding has been replaced with newer wood siding of similar look.
- Wood board walls and ceiling are circa original
- Front windows are missing and replaced with storm windows. Side windows panes are original but glass has been replaced
- Chimney is likely not original
- Doors are circa original

## Location:

Fort George Park  
Adjacent to 333 Becott Place  
Prince George, British Columbia

## Recognition

Jurisdiction	British Columbia
Recognition Authority	Local Governments (BC)
Recognition Statute	Local Government Act, s 954
Recognition Type	Community Heritage Register
Recognition Date	In Process

## Historical Information

Construction Date	1910
Theme- Category and Type	Building Social and Community Life Education and Social Well Being
Function – Category and Type	(Historic) One-Room School (Current) Museum
Architect/Designer	n/a
Builder	n/a

## Additional Information

Related Listing(s)	n/a
Location of Supporting Documentation	Exploration Place Heritage files City of Prince George

## Update January 2014

Roof was repaired in late 2013. Repairs to the door and windowsills (which are rotting) are planned in 2014 with some funding from the Heritage Commission. The School House is a Protected Heritage Property under City of Prince George Bylaw 8383, 2011.