



# Street Stories

## Abbott Street

GPS: [49.112944,-122.3033358](#)

A local pioneer fruit grower, inventor and community activist Edward James Abbott settled in Mission in 1895 with his wife Charlotte and two of the four children they would eventually have.

Born in Lakefield, Ontario, Abbott built a house and began fruit farming in Cedar Valley. Although he only had a Grade 8 education, Abbott was a successful farmer and businessman, handling the promotion and marketing of his products. He was one of the “first shippers of soft fruits” from the Mission area and was so profitable he was able to retire from farming



*Edward Abbott picking strawberries on his farm using his invention—a wheeled platform with a canopy offering protection from the hot sun which one could lie on and push between the rows with your feet. It had a slotted centre from which to pick berries and space for placing the fruit baskets.*

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and pursue other interests within 20 years after his arrival!

It was the job of licking and stamping the envelopes with which he mailed out his fruit catalogues that inspired him to invent a stamping machine in 1908.

Buying the Canadian, English, and US patent rights for his machine, he set off for Chicago to try to sell his patent for the Abbott Envelope and Stamp Affixing Machine. Once there, however, he discovered that an American company was developing a similar machine and claiming that Abbott had copied part of their model.

Abbott hired a lawyer to fight his case but lost. Later, when he bought one of the American models, he found that it was an exact copy of his original machine and that the lawyer he hired had worked behind his back for the US company!

Undeterred, Abbott continued to work hard in Mission, dreaming up new inventions, including a thief-proof lock for the teller’s cage in the Bank of Commerce and a hydraulic dumbwaiter in the 3rd Avenue home he built.

From the very beginning, Abbott was also civic minded. In 1898, he was elected a council member for the District of Mission - a position he held for 5 consecutive years - and when the Mission Townsite (a.k.a. Mission City) was incorporated as a Village in 1922, he was one of first elected officials, serving as chairman (equivalent to mayor). During his first year of office, his initiatives included the establishment of the first annual “Clean-Up Week” to encourage both residents and businesses to take pride in maintaining their properties.

Throughout his life in Mission, Abbott was an active member and promoter of St. Andrews United Church. He was also instrumental in founding the Mission Memorial Hospital and worked as a volunteer handyman and gardener at it until his death in 1932 at the age of 71.

By David Buss; edited with additions by Val Billesberger