



Street Stories

Catherwood Street

GPS: [49.1343699, -122.2960289](#)

John Alexander Catherwood was a creature of firsts. He was among the first school-teachers hired in the Mission municipality, co-owner of the first official telephone service company in Mission, and possibly the town's first car owner. He also attended the historic meeting where Mission was founded and personally formulated the resolution that resulted in the formation of the Corporation of the Municipality of Mission in 1892.

Born in Bolton, Ontario in 1857, Catherwood began his teaching career at age 18 but, after four years, he gave this up to become a surveyor on the building of the CPR.



John Catherwood in his car—the first one in Mission, which arrived by rail “knocked-down” and was assembled in the CPR freight shed.

Mission Community Archives 0025-198302-3751

The railway brought him to Mission in 1884, where he homesteaded on the land where the city hall now stands, at the corner of Stave Lake and Dewdney Trunk roads. Here Catherwood grew cereal crops and developed a fruit orchard. He also taught school between 1886 and 1890 in a small log cabin. Later he would do more survey work for the railway as well as teach in Dewdney.

On Christmas Day 1886, Catherwood married Margaret Solloway, with whom he would have nine children. His interest in politics, however, led to his prominence.

He proposed that Mission become incorporated in 1891 “because we’re numerous enough now to look after our own interests.” The following year, his resolution passed and Mission officially came into existence. Eventually Catherwood would serve as Reeve of Mission, an office he was re-elected to 14 times. He would also serve as a Conservative member of the provincial legislature.

In 1908, Catherwood moved from his homestead and established himself downtown, where he set up a real estate and insurance business which he would continue until his death. In 1909, he and Thomas Northcote threw in \$5,000 each and started the Mission Telephone Company. Catherwood’s strangest distinction, however, is as Mission’s first ‘automobilist’ or car owner. His vehicle, which appeared on the scene around 1910, arrived in Mission by train ‘knocked down’—that is, unassembled—and was put together in the CPR freight shed.

Catherwood died in 1940 and his wife, Margaret, followed in 1962. In 1982, the University of Victoria named a regional scholarship after John Catherwood.

Street Stories is provided by the Mission Community Archives, which is operated by the Mission Historical Society. If you have any questions or further information on Catherwood, please call us at 604-820-2621.

by David Buss and Val Billesberger