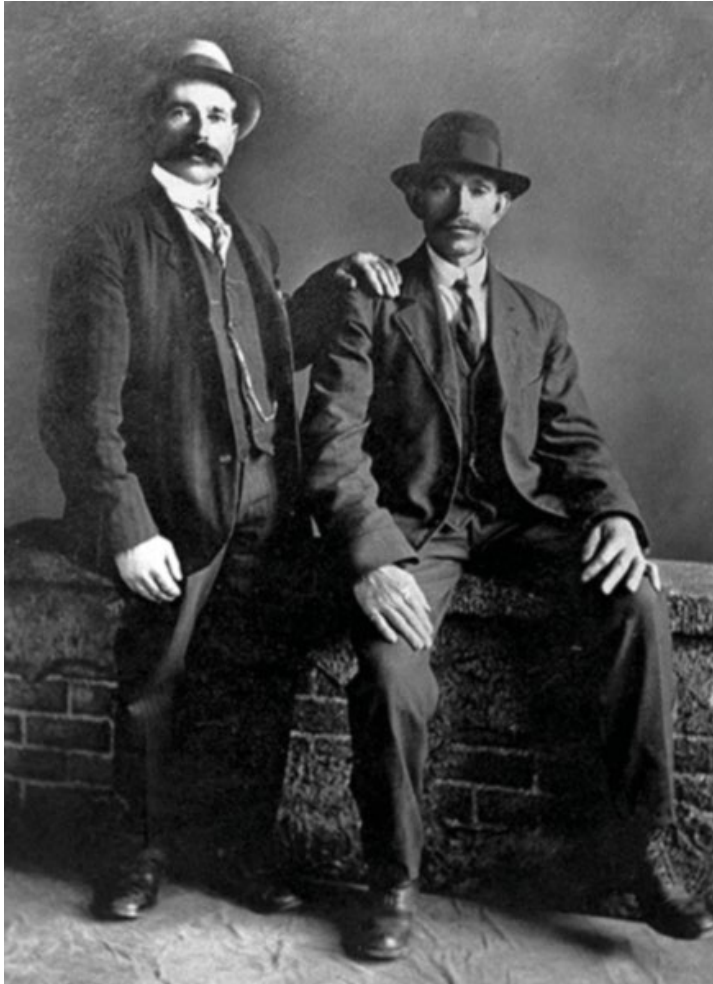




Street Stories

Donatelli Avenue

GPS: [49.1622046,-122.4049299](#)



In addition to farming, Guiseppe, on left, and Gaetano Donatelli logged as partners, cutting logs, poles and cord wood for the paddle wheelers.

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In 1883, Gaetano (James) Donatelli left Italy for America in search of his 15-year-old runaway brother, Guiseppe (George). Arriving in New York with only four dollars in his pocket, Gaetano set off after Guiseppe and eventually found him in Pittsburgh.

The brothers found employment with the Canadian Pacific Railway in Winnipeg and worked their way to British Columbia. On the recommendation of an acquaintance, they moved to Silverhill, where Gaetano intended to try his hand at homesteading. In 1890, many Canadian men had left for the gold strike in California, making land in Western Canada a sweet deal. In those days, you could buy a 64 hectare parcel for five dollars. Gaetano bought 64 hectares on Wolfe Road and Guiseppe bought land at the corner of what are today Manzer and Silverhill streets.

In 1892 Gaetano married Carminella Paduano and they had 11 children. Because there was no school in Silverhill until 1916, the children had to walk to school in Silverdale. To remedy this problem, Gaetano bought 64 hectares of land in Silverdale. Guiseppe then built a house across the field from his brother. Donatelli Avenue runs between where the two farms were located.

Gaetano had a bull and he charged neighbors two dollars a shot for “Peter’s” service. All of the Donatellis’ bulls were

named Peter.

Guiseppe was married twice but did not have any children. Well-known in the community, he was affectionately known as “Uncle George” by everyone. Later in life, he became “the works foreman for the District of Mission” - a position he held until his retirement.

Despite their rather isolated location, the Donatellis had some interesting experiences. Particularly memorable was Billy Miner’s famous train robbery. The Donatelli children were awakened when miner stopped the train in front of their home, and Carminella pushed them to the floor when shots rang out.

The Donatellis are remembered by many a hungry soul for their generosity. Hobos always found a meal at the homestead. “Pat the hobo” felt especially welcome at the Donatellis, where he eagerly awaited every Christmas.

With the assistance of their neighbours, the Donatellis erected St. Anthony’s Catholic Church on Gaetano’s property. Father Fouquet, founder of St. Mary’s Mission held services there from 1900 to 1910.

Street Stories is provided by the Mission Community Archives, which is operated by the Mission Historical Society.

by Laura Barth; and Val Billesberger