



# Street Stories

## Silverhill Avenue

GPS: [49.1761742,-122.3795595](#)



*A giant tree stump located at the corner of Silverhill and Wolfe was known as "Lonesome Pine." It was a favorite meeting place for children in the Swedish community. Sitting on the stump (L to R): Harry Ericson, Folke Lindell and David Lowe.*

*Mission Community Archives 0238-PR069-028*

Although some say that the Donatelli's originally lived in the Silverhill area as early as 1880, the first major settlement started in 1908.

Charles Wolfe purchased 160 acres of land and persuaded other Swedish settlers to buy parcels of land from him and move into the area.

It worked and by 1910 Sivar Lowe, Oscar Johanson, Henry Green, Carl Herstrom and Jonas Gidlof had all moved into the area. Working and building their homes up in Silverhill, the men had one goal in common – bring their families over from Sweden and build a community. The first to succeed was Jonas Gidlof whose wife and 4 children joined him, soon followed by another one, born in Silverhill in 1912.

The Swedish community continued to grow, with more young families moving into the area. Along with this influx of residents came a pressing need for a school as the nearest one was 3.5 miles away.

The parents approached the Mission School Board and after some consideration, they agreed to provide the building supplies as long as the residents built the school. The community pulled together and by 1916 they had completed a schoolhouse for children up to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In 1926, a new schoolhouse was built which today is a private residence.

Next on the list for the residents was a

community hall. Beginning in earnest in the spring of 1915 on land donated by Sivar Lowe, everyone pitched in to construct the hall by doing whatever was necessary - cutting lumber, hewing the inner-walls smooth and preparing food for the workers.

The building was completed on Midsummer Day in 1919, an important Swedish celebration. For decades, the hall served as a community hub for celebrations and special events. In 2004, the rustic, hand-hewn structure was awarded heritage status by the District of Mission. Tragically, the almost century-old Silverhill Hall was destroyed by fire on October 11, 2018.

Silverhill became largely self-sufficient, having their own blacksmith, and two families that operated an 'inn' who also purchased surplus groceries to re-sell to the community between the long trips to Mission City.

Following the construction of Ruskin Dam in 1931, the area had access to electricity and mail delivery didn't arrive until 1939. It was truly a "pioneer life" in Silverhill.

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 Silverhill community, please call us at 604-820-2621.

*by Charis Young and Val Billesberger*

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