

THE ALDERGROVE AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION PLAYED HISTORICAL ROLE IN OUR TOWN'S FORMATION – Kurt Langmann The Aldergrove Star, Wednesday September 5, 1984

Aldergrove today, is a mix of suburban and rural properties, and this pleasing blend is home for approximately 16,000 people. Few of these contemporary residents, however, realize that their town is one of the oldest farm communities in the Fraser Valley.

In the book, "Apple Lands of Aldergrove", published by the London-based F.J. Hart and Co. Ltd., circa 1910, the insurance and mortgage brokers explored in great detail the viability of farming in this area.

The first farm operation in the B.C. mainland was established circa 1835, by the Hudson's Bay Company in Langley Municipality near Aldergrove. This historic farm was to produce grain for the company's horses and sundry roots and other edibles for the staff at the newly established Pacific headquarters in Fort Langley. The large tract of land produced such "lavish quantities" that the company did an extensive wheat exporting business with Czarist Russia, employing a great number of natives from the Sandwich Islands in their fields. The products were taken to tidewater in scows by way of the Salmon River, to the Fraser.

The Hudson's Bay Company's role in this area faded with an elected parliament taking control of the province in 1858, but no one hardly ever passed over the Yale Wagon Road (roughly the same path Fraser Highway follows today) without having the site of the famous old Hudson's Bay farm pointed out as a milestone in B.C.'s development.

As "Apple Lands of Aldergrove" noted, "The soil in Aldergrove is the same almost-magical clay loam which met the requirements of those tested old pioneers (at HBC)," and through the 1800s and early 1900s, pioneer families like Ross, Vannetta, Poppy, and Jackman brought livestock and seed to this fertile ground.

By 1909, the toot of the train whistle and whirr of the trolley were heard in Aldergrove. Stopping here several times daily, the Great Northern Railway and the B.C.

Electric Railway supplied a long missing link for agricultural prosperity. The two lines took the products of local farms to the markets of Vancouver, New Westminster and Port Mann, and returned with the money. Everybody was happy and real progress and prosperity began.

With other developments, such as motor coach service, electrical and phone service, the area began to truly blossom, and the emphasis began to shift to small holdings using intensive cultivation techniques.

Fruit and root crops were very good, and the clamoring demand from the cities for milk, cream, butter, eggs and cheese led to large investments in dairy and chicken farms. "Apple Lands of Aldergrove" notes that one local dealer had shipped 34,000 dozen eggs within one year at a retail price of 60 cents per dozen, and dairy farmers were receiving 20 cents per gallon (22 cents in winter).

This prosperity brought many other businesses to Aldergrove: sawmills and cobblers, to physician and accountants, and a Farmer's Institute with 105 active members was established to bring in tools, seed and other needs. The Otter Farmer's Institute has maintained to this day and is now known as the Otter Co-op.

The Aldergrove Agricultural Association was first formed in 1912 and held their first fair that fall. Among the names of the managers and directors were the families of Westland, Goldsmith, MacIntosh, Duff, Elliott, McComb, Nascou, Nash, Sherlock, Shortreed and Vannetta.

For the first ten years the Annual Exhibition members rented the Orange Hall, which used to stand in the general vicinity of the new Elks Hall, for the display of small entries, and held the horse and roadster (horse carriage) judging on a side street. Entries included horses, poultry, dairy produce, fruit and flowers and needlecraft. A junior calf club competition was later added as well as a junior pet show.

The Aldergrove Agricultural Hall was built in 1923 by the members and was used for the fall fair display until 1961. The property was sold that year and the society held flower shows in the United Church hall and the fall fair at the high school gym from 1961 to 1964. In 1965, the fair was moved to the Elk's hall and in 1982 again moved, to the spacious Aldergrove arena.

Parkland, now known as Aldergrove Park was developed by the association in 1948 and maintained by the association until 1964. In 1961 the association turned over to Langley municipality a portion of the park for a community swimming pool, as well as a \$3000. cheque toward pool expenses. In 1964 the remainder of the park was deeded to the district of Langley.

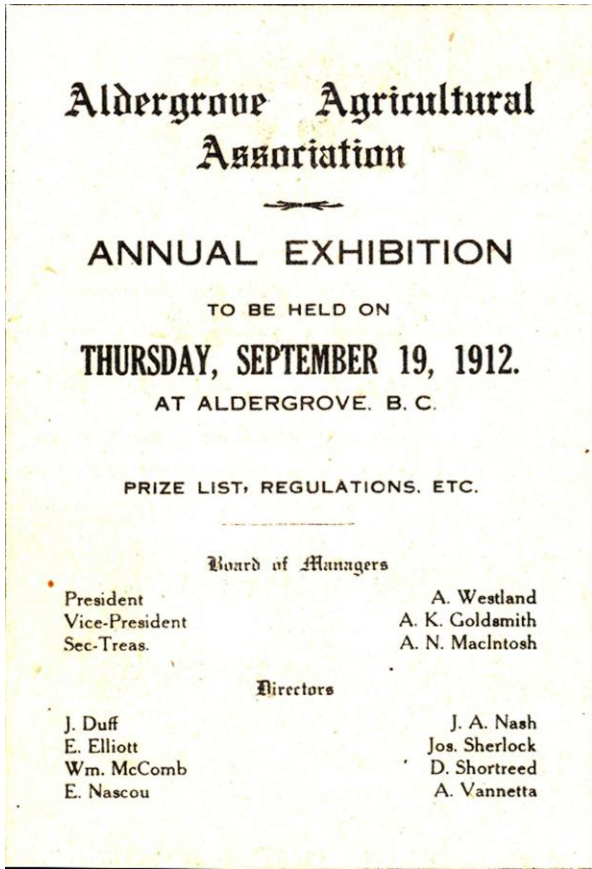
From 1970 to 1981 the association sponsored the Aldergrove Rose Queen pageant, and the Rose Queen and Princesses officiated at the fall fair. In 1970 to 1972 they held the June Rose Show and Festival as well as a children's parade, and also donated roses for the planters alongside Fraser Highway.

Each year the association awards a bursary of \$300. to a graduate student from Aldergrove Secondary, for further training in agriculture or home economics.

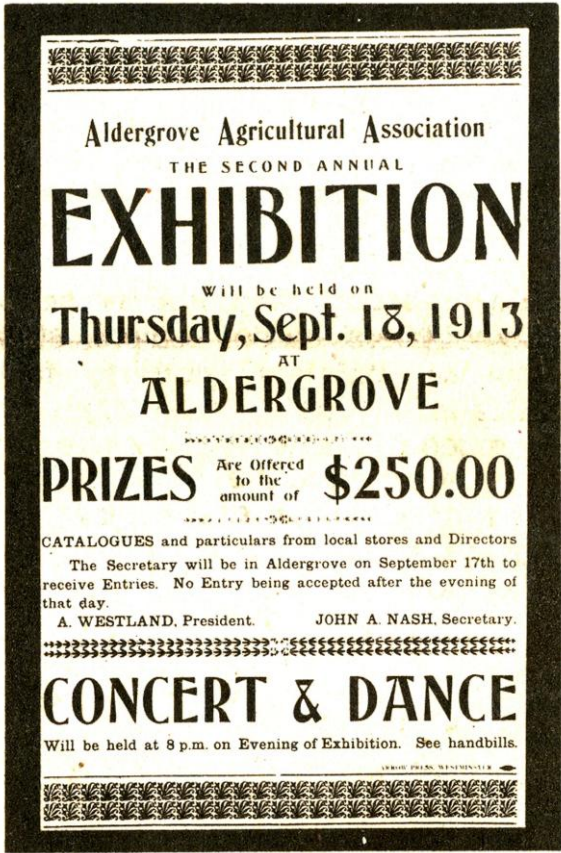
The purpose of the association are to promote agriculture in this area; to promote the fall fair; to promote and encourage the exchange of information with other agricultural associations; and to promote and encourage gardening of produce and floral landscaping.

The association, a registered non-profit group, actively seeks new members. Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Elk's hall, Aldergrove. Annual dues are a nominal \$2.

Take a look at the fruits of their efforts this weekend at Aldergrove arena and judge for yourself their success at promoting the efforts of our erstwhile gardeners and craftspeople.



First Aldergrove Fall Fair program 1912



Poster for the second Fall Fair 1913



Photograph of first Aldergrove Fall Fair 1912