

OLD IS NEW AT THE MUSEUM

Recent visitors to the museum this week will have noticed our new eye-catching facade which reflects an image from a photograph of the Kirkness Brothers general store in old Van Anda.

Huge thanks to Lorrie Pirart and his skilful construction. Thank-yous as well for the donations of time, effort and materials from Ken Barton, David Johnson, Gerry Johnson, Mike Martisca, Darryl & Marie McCormack, Al Mitchell, Doug Paton, Aaron Rairie, Dave Rairie and Mark Rousseau. Siding from the Community hall recycling - thanks Malcolm and PRRD. A great effort by everyone!



The two Kirkness brothers were one example of several merchants who set up shop on Copper Queen Street, the main thoroughfare of old Van Anda. By 1900 the area boasted a population of 500 to 600 living in the two townsites - Van Anda (centred around Copper Queen Street) and Texada City (centred near Marble Bay mine).

The “official” Van Anda town plan was fantasized in 1898 in New York City. Wall Street investors sought to impose an impossible rectangular grid on the multi-levelled Van Anda topography. Many streets plotted on the map never appeared in reality (example: Dunsmuir, Graaf, Medora).

Van Anda was a prosperous town. Arriving by steamship at the government wharf, one would walk past Pooke’s general store and post office. The Carter Brothers’ sawmill was beside the creek at the base of the hill which climbed to Deighton’s and Kirkness’ general stores and on to the Texada Hotel.

The *Coast Miner* newspaper of 1900 advertises a “Van Anda Home Bakery”, “Hamilton the Shoemaker” and “Neis Barber Shop” where you could get “shaved by an expert”.

Disaster struck in June, 1910 when a strong westerly breeze fanned flames to both general stores, the hotel and five other buildings. They all burned to the ground within 40 minutes.

Showing pioneer resilience, Bill Kirkness rebuilt immediately, adding rooms to rent above. Alfred Deighton rebuilt, adding a second-storey community hall area. The hotel was rebuilt and renamed as the Windsor.

Two years later (1912) the second Van Anda fire destroyed these buildings again. Unfortunately the best efforts of the fire brigade failed to prevent a third fire (1917) from destroying the third Kirkness store, the Windsor Hotel and the Union Hall.

Never saying “die” Bill Kirkness moved across the street and built his fourth store - which, by way of confirming a trend - burned to the ground as well! Perhaps this was the last straw for Bill as there is a reference to him competing with Bill Young in the 1920’s - not in retail, but in towing logs.

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