



Maple Ridge History Analysis

Hampton Memoir



MAPLE RIDGE
MUSEUM
& COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

Lesson Plan:

Author: Maple Ridge Museum

Subject: History and Social studies

Grade Level: 8 - 12, best for Grade 10 Local History

Objectives: To learn about the daily life and experiences of people in the past in our community.
To relate those experiences to our lives today.

Materials:

This document, pen/
pencil or computer

Other Resources:

Maple Ridge Museum
website for background
information

Additional Notes:

Additional background
information can be
found on our website

REQUIRED PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:

Some knowledge of the layout of the neighborhoods of Maple Ridge BC is helpful. An understanding that Maple Ridge was first settled in the 1870's and the historic areas of town are still there but quite changed from how they look today.

PROCEDURE/STEPS:

First you will read the memoir below then answer the questions. Questions 1 - 6 ask you to consider the text, its meaning, importance, and use it as a comparison tool with an historic map. You will then expand your mind with question 7, which is a creative writing activity. There is no right answer, you simply need to consider history in the context of what is past and our own time which will one day be history. When you think about looking back on our time as history, consider how life, culture, the environment, society will be different. You can write as much as you would like for this question but you must write at least a page.

There are photos at the end of the PDF for visual learners to picture life when the memoirs are taking place.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The museum has collections of memoirs, or oral histories, from time periods stretching back to the mid 1800's, this memoir is one collected by the museum for a first hand account of what life and the area was like in its earliest years.

This is an excerpt from Alma Ward Hampton's memoirs. Alma was the tenth of fourteen children born to William & Amanda Hampton in 1894. She wrote these memoirs in the 1970's. She passed away in 1998 at the age of 104. This is a small excerpt of her extensive memoirs.

For Teachers

Here's how to transform this activity into an interactive in-class lesson:

Introducing Primary Sources: Start by pairing the memoir worksheets with a primary source worksheet to ensure students understand what constitutes a primary source, as well as how to read a primary source.

Reading and Highlighting: Either read the memoir as a class or have students read it individually. Encourage them to highlight passages they find interesting or significant.

Class Discussion: Engage in a discussion about the memoir. Focus on its historical significance and context. Some discussion prompts could include: (Please feel free to create your own questions and have students ask questions)

- What factors motivated Billy Hampton and John Laity to leave Colorado and seek new opportunities in British Columbia?
- What role did community relationships play in the Hampton and Laity families' integration into their new environment?
- What cultural exchanges or interactions are hinted at in the memoir?
- How were gender roles depicted in the memoir in terms of responsibilities and contributions within the family and community?

Creative Writing Exercise or Reflection: After the discussion, students can choose between:

- Engaging in a creative writing exercise related to the memoir.
- Writing a reflective piece summarizing what they have learned from the memoir and the discussion.

Content Warning

The Maple Ridge Museum and Community Archives acknowledges some materials in our collection includes harmful and/or offensive language. While the following memoir reflects outdated and biased views, retaining the original language is important to understand the historical context. We are committed to working with our communities in order to create appropriate solutions. If you have any questions or concerns please reach out, we welcome all feedback.

A NEW LIFE IN MAPLE RIDGE

An excerpt from Alma Ward Hampton's memoirs. Alma was the tenth of fourteen children born to William & Amanda Hampton. She wrote these memoirs in the 1970's. She passed away in 1998 at the age of 104.

The day came when Billy [William Hampton] and John [Laity] felt they wanted to move again. They had heard of a gold rush to Nevada. Then John Laity's parents heard from their friends, Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert of Penzance, about their son, T.H. Gilbert, who had gone as a missionary to British Columbia, Canada. He was stationed at an Anglican Church at Derby, a district south of Langley on the south side of the Fraser River. He told them about the good fertile land in that part of the country. [Question 1]

This sounded good to John and Billy, and they decided to pack up and investigate. They were tired of the mining, longtime miners were bothered with a cough caused by too much dust getting in their lungs, so they thought it was wise to try farming where they would be in the fresh air. They would go to Denver, by the narrow gauge railway from Silver Plume, to arrange for this trip and to find out the cost. Since they were going to buy land, Billy found it necessary to sell his precious bass horn.

One day in late March, they were on their way. Amanda and Mary stayed in Colorado to await the results of their trip. At this time there was a continuous line of railway from New York to Denver and San Francisco which was completed in 1869. They were very impressed at the sight of the Golden Gate Bridge over San Francisco Bay. At this city they boarded a steamboat, probably a side-wheeler, which took them to New Westminster. When they arrived there they found a hotel in which to stay and enquired where land would be available.

They were told about Ladner where there was farming land near the mouth of the Fraser River. They were taken there by rowboat but found that all good locations had been taken, and only a peat bog section was left. At certain seasons this flooded very badly since there were no dykes and the farmers were having a difficult time because of this condition.

Another place that was specified was Granville, later to be named Vancouver. There was a trail or narrow road of twelve miles leading to this place. They could buy land there for one dollar an acre. When examined, it proved to be too stony and the soil was not good enough for farming. They decided that was not the place for them.

The next venture was to board a boat for Maple Ridge.

STEAMBOATS ON THE FRASER RIVER

Early pioneers traveled on stern-wheelers owned by William Irving called the "Onward" and "Reliance". At his death in 1872, his eighteen year old son, John, inherited the steamboats. In 1879, John was captain of Reliance II, and had two others the "Royal City" and the "William Irving". It took two days to make the return trip, one day up to Hope and Yale, and one day down to New Westminster. Since Father had to make the trip to the city quite often, he came to know Captain John Irving very well. There was another owner of steamboats, Captain Moore, who had two boats on the Fraser called the "Western Slope" and the "Gladys".

Through the years there were many more boats known to the family. The "Beaver" sternwheeler appeared on the Fraser in 1898, and we had many trips on it. Another one was the "Ramona", and later the "Skeena" owned in 1914, by Captain Seymour.

The Fraser was a very treacherous river with sand bars, and snags of debris that would drift and fasten in shallow parts. There was a boat named the "Samson" that plied the river to remove these snags and to dredge the sand bars to keep an open channel for the boats. The boats had to be replaced during the years, but kept the same name with a number added; Samson I, Samson II, and so on.

In the pioneer years it also was colder, since the river would freeze very solid, sometimes to several feet deep. It was known that a horse-drawn wagon with a load of hay made the crossing on the ice. Some people skated on the river, but they had to watch for air holes in the ice. There was a disaster when a man and a boy drowned by striking one of these. Sometimes the steamboats were frozen in but there was a cutter that would get them out by making a channel.

A SEARCH FOR LAND

Billy and John boarded one of the river steamboats and after many calls along the way they arrived at Nelson's Landing in the section known as Maple Ridge. This was half way between Port Hammond and Port Haney on the north side of the Fraser. There was a long steep hill to walk up since there had been a slide that took away a large portion of bank on one side. On the west side there was a bluff on which a pioneer, Mr. Nelson and his wife, a Kanaka, a native from the South Seas, had their home. The short length of road leading to the River Road is now Fir Street.

On the east side of the slide hill there was a boarding house owned by a former Sapper named McKenney and his wife. This is where Billy and John found lodging.

Sappers were Royal Engineers from the British Isles headed by Colonel Moody, who came to survey the land and to plan and build bridges and roadways. They were given a portion of land adjoining New Westminster city on the north side of the Fraser, for their homes, which was named Sapperton. When they were no longer needed, most of them preferred to stay in this lovely country, while others went back to their homeland.

Billy and John were directed to the Lillooet where the lovely, clear Lillooet River flowed, now named the Alouette. The farmers in that part were bothered with this river flooding the land, so they knew it would not be wise to locate there.

Next, they went east of Port Haney to Thorne Mountain, but found the soil too sandy. Finally they were able to buy land from John Hammond.

There were a great many pioneers already settled in Maple Ridge, and each had a section of land along the Fraser River. Starting from the west, John and William Hammond owned the Hammond part, then McIver, Irving, Nelson, Howison and Carr. Thomas Haney owned the Haney section. Billy's section of one hundred and sixty acres was to the west of John Laity's section. To the west of the Hampton section was a pioneer called Keary. To the east of Laity's section was property owned by a pioneer named Trembath who lived there many years. The property had a gradual slope from the south to the prairie. There was a narrow creek or "crick", on the Hampton's part and two creeks on the Laity's, one quite large near the eastern border. At this time they could not see the prairie as on the higher slope it was mostly forest with very large trees of Fir, Cedar, Hemlock, Pine and Balsam. On the border of the prairie, the trees were smaller consisting of Alder, Willow and Spruce. On the flat prairie there were areas of a bush called Hardhack. Beyond this rose the mountains - one with two sharp peaks. When the setting sun shone on its cap of snow, the colour changed from blue to gold, thus its name the Golden Ears.

A narrow, woodsy road, which led to Maple Ridge, was at the eastern border of the Laity property. There was a small house near this road that John Laity could use. Later, the senior Laitys lived in this place. A trail led from this road west through the Laity land to a clearing on the Hampton land. In this clearing was a small house with a kitchen and living quarters and a bedroom, where Billy could live.

Ahead was the task of developing their properties. As soon as they could obtain their tools, an axe, a long crosscut saw, shovel and crow bar, they each were ready to start chopping and sawing the trees. The sounds of this work would be echoing through the woods for many years.

GETTING SETTLED

In May, when Johnny [Hampton] was nine months old Amanda with Mary and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Laity, came from Colorado, following the same route as Billy and John had taken. No doubt Billy and John met them at New Westminster and they were welcomed at the McKenney's.

At first they would obtain only the necessary things for living in their temporary home. There were a few stores, one down the hill in Haney, owned by John Carr, and one by George Howison, who also had the Post Office on his property.

Eventually they moved into their homes. Later it was found that the Hampton house was partly on the Laity property, so it was moved farther west. Near this there were wild crabapple trees, and grouse would roost in them at night. These game birds could be shot and were one supply of meat. Another was salmon, as there was an abundance of these in the Lillooet and the Fraser. At the time of the salmon runs, they were packed by the thousands from shore to shore. These could be bought from Indian [Note: this term can be considered offensive and out of date term, ask people their preference before using this term] fishermen for about ten or fifteen cents apiece.

When Amanda and Mary arrived, it was Spring, and they would find the woods full of wild flowers, trilliums, Adder tongue lilies, violets of yellow, blue and purple, the pink wild rose, and yellow Oregon grape. There were also many kinds of berries, huckleberry, salmonberry, wild red raspberry or thimbleberry, and black cap, and the delicious wild blackberry that was so good in pies.

During the first summer the young couple walked on a trail through the woods to the Methodist Church near the bank of the Fraser, a distance of a mile and a half.

Soon it was necessary to have a cow, and Billy went to a farm on Langley Prairie owned by a Mr. Jolly. In order to pay for this first cows Billy made another sacrifice, by selling his Colorado gold watch. He kept one article though, a stickpin with a gold nugget.

It was also necessary to raise chickens. A setting hen was procured and with some eggs it wasn't long before some chicks were running around. Most of the pioneers owned pigs, so in time these were added. They were free to roam around in the stump areas, rooting around for the Bracken Fern roots which grew after the trees were cut and making hollows in and around the stumps in which to rest. Pork was a very staple food, and was preserved for the winter by putting cut up pieces in wooden barrels of brine. When it was needed it was soaked in cold water to get rid of the salt, and then well cooked.

Of course the Hamptons would need to have a dog and it would be a Collie. All through the years there was a dog of this breed on the farm, as they were good for herding cattle.

At that time the only animals available for work and transportation were the oxen. As soon as possible Billy had a pair of these. A double yoke was made out of wood to fit over their necks. An iron staple and a ring were fixed on the yoke to enable a heavy chain to be fastened which would be connected to the object that needed to be pulled or drawn. Oxen were very strong animals so could draw very heavy loads. No reins were used – they were guided by words; "Yip" for go, "Whoa" for stop, "Gee" for left, "Haw" for right.

For the winter a sleigh was made with runners to slide over the snow. At times going around a curve or a rough spot, the passengers would be dumped out. With a laugh they would get up, brush themselves off) and get back into the sleigh. To keep the feet warm, bricks were heated in the oven then wrapped in a potato sack.

As the clearing progressed, the rich soil was cultivated and crops were sewn, starting with potatoes which grew to an immense size. As one Old Timer put it, "After the chickens had pecked and eaten the inside of one, the space was large enough for a hen to build her nest and lay her eggs."

Father knew how to find water with a bent Willow branch or stick. There was quite a knack to this. The stick was held at each end with the hands and as it passed over the ground would turn downwards when over a spot where there was a spring underground. [Question 6]

The spot was found and a deep well dug until they came to water flowing in. At first they had an open well with a cover, and a bucket was let down with a rope attached. Some wells had a rack with a roller over the well on which the rope was wound. Later a pump with a long handle was placed over the well, and connected to a long pipe through which the water was drawn. A wooden tub was placed under the spout to catch the water spilled.

The first winter was a very cold one. Since the house was not built for cold weather, the wind would blow through the cracks making it very drafty. They were advised to paper it with newspapers, so this they did and it worked very well. "The Weekly Columbian" became very useful.

In October of 1879, the Laity's had their first child, a daughter named Mabel. Then on February 10, 1880, the Hampton's second child was born, and was named Edith. Mrs. Honour Laity was the mid-wife. When she and her husband Thomas Laity had first arrived in Maple Ridge, she was overcome at the sight of so many trees, she felt she was in a wilderness and so closed in. In a short time they went back to Georgetown, but soon found they were not content there on their own. It wasn't long before they returned to Maple Ridge this time to stay, and Honour continued to be mid-wife in the community, and as far away as Langley, for many years.

Questions:

Answer the following questions based on the memoir above.

Answer on a separate page if necessary.

1. How did Billy and John's mode of transportation influence their ability to explore different locations?
2. New Westminster was often referred to as "the city". Why was it important to people living in Maple Ridge and why did they need to go there so often?
3. Why did Billy and John decide to leave mining and pursue farming? What were the advantages of farming over mining for them?
4. What cultural practices, such as food preservation and hunting, did the Hampton and Laity families adopt to sustain themselves in Maple Ridge? How did these practices reflect their adaptation to the local environment?
5. Describe Alma Ward Hampton's relationship with her parents, William and Amanda Hampton, as depicted in the memoir. How did familial bonds influence their decisions and experiences?
6. Discuss the significance of preserving cultural heritage and personal narratives, like Alma's memoir, in understanding the broader history and development of British Columbia during the late 19th century.

Creative Writing:

Write your own short memoir! Describe the daily life of Maple Ridge resident in 2024 for future historians to discover!



P04189

Alma Hampton in author of this memoir lounging in her beautiful dress on a nice summer day, 1911.



Hampton Family members in front of the Hampton house in the early 1900s



P01653

Team of Oxen clearing land in Maple Ridge