

SPRING 2010

# H e r i t a g e H e r e

## OLD OUTBUILDINGS IN RUSKIN

Old out buildings in Ruskin

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*On the grounds of the old Miller house in Ruskin are a number of interesting outbuildings such as the one above and another shown on page 4.*

*A photograph of the well-preserved house itself illustrates Lisa Zosiak's contribution on the adaptive use of the property.*

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## SAVING HERITAGE BUILDINGS

MAPLE RIDGE is justifiably proud of its policy that new buildings should be “green.” For the sake of preserving the environment, building materials should come from sustainable sources, while water use and power consumption are carefully controlled.

Converting an existing building to a new use can be an even better way to care for our natural environment. “The greenest building is one that is already built,” stated architect Carl Elefante, Director of Sustainable Design. Tearing down an older building and carting the rubble to a landfill wastes valuable raw material and destroys the energy that went into its construction.

Adaptive reuse is the way to break the cycle of destruction of usable buildings. Vancouver has many good examples of this policy. The Vancouver Art Gallery is now housed in the architecturally elegant Vancouver Courthouse. The iconic BC Hydro building has been converted into an apartment block.

Maple Ridge has its own examples of adaptive reuse. The Post Office building on 224<sup>th</sup> Street was converted to office and retail space. The public schools in Whonnock, Ruskin, and Thornhill have all been changed to different roles. On Dewdney Trunk Road, a stylish family home is now a dental clinic. Our Maple Ridge Museum and Archives are presently using the Haney Brick and Tile Company Manager’s House and its solid brick office building.

The Maple Ridge Community Heritage Commission congratulates the owners of these buildings, and others not mentioned, for conserving heritage features and values. As our community continues to grow, there will be other opportunities for adaptive reuse. For more ideas and information, visit the municipal Web site at [www.mapleridge.ca](http://www.mapleridge.ca) or consult the Planning Department.

—Jim Connor



The former Post Office building on 224<sup>th</sup> Street converted to office and retail space.





## WHEN PAST MEETS PRESENT ADAPTIVE USE OF THE MILLER RESIDENCE SITE

THE WELL-PRESERVED MILLER RESIDENCE was constructed in Ruskin for Charles A. Miller and his family in 1932. It is a beautiful house with extensive interior wood inset and detailing on the walls, floors, and ceiling. Surprisingly, much of the original character of the house has remained over the last 80 years, which makes the Miller residence a heritage gem. Since the initial 1932 construction, the site has evolved to reflect the rural character of the Ruskin farming community, with an orchard and outbuildings for sheep, goats, and chickens, surrounded by a forest backdrop. It is believed that the farm uses were at one time for both domestic and commercial purposes.

In the late 1960s the Miller family's era on the Ruskin homestead came to an end when the property was purchased by Gerhart and Kathe Wagner. At this time, beekeeping was introduced as a new agricultural activity on the site. The Wagners changed very little of the site's character and remained until their final days. As a childless couple, the farm was willed to a non-profit organization.

Purchase of the site by a developer in 2008 initiated a modern shift to the Miller property's future. Over the last few decades, the trend in Ruskin has been the subdivision of larger farmsteads into much smaller hobby farms and large-lot single-family residences. Municipal policies permit a minimum lot size of 2 hectares (5 acres) in areas designated as Rural Residential with no provision for community water. The total size of the Miller site is 7.8 hectares and is therefore short (by 0.2 hectares or .acre) of meeting the municipal bylaw requirements for subdividing into four Rural Residential lots.

Given the new owner's interest in maximizing the development of the site, an opportunity for conserving the Miller residence arose through existing heritage conservation legislation in the Local Government Act. This legislation states that in order to preserve a heritage site, the municipality and the property owner may negotiate a Heritage Revitalization Agreement that has the ability to supersede local government land-use bylaws in order to vary use, density, siting, and lot size requirements. The intent of the legislation is to enable unique development situations that will result in the preservation of heritage value, often in the form of an adaptive (i.e. more modern) use of the site. This legislation enabled an opportunity to increase the density of the site from 3 lots to 4, in exchange for protection of the heritage value of the Miller residence site in perpetuity.

The District of Maple Ridge has several Official Community Plan policies related to heritage conservation, which support undertaking the restoration and maintenance work in an appropriate manner. Recommendations for preserving heritage value specific to the Miller site are provided in a Conservation & Feasibility Study, prepared by Denise Cook Design and Birmingham & Wood Architects and Planners. This study informed the preparation of the Heritage Revitalization Agreement document, which is available for public viewing at the Maple Ridge municipal hall front service desk.

—Lisa Zosiak



*One of the outbuildings on the site of the Miller residence in Ruskin.*



## Events + Projects

### HERITAGE AWARDS 2011

The nominations for the 2011 Heritage Awards are due October 15, so it is not too early to start thinking about who or what you think deserves an award this year!

The categories for nominations are:

*Heritage Landscape*

*Heritage Building*

*Sheila Nickols Award for Community History & Heritage Teaching*

*Heritage Projects by Youth(s)*

*History and Heritage Research & Publication*

*Significant Contribution to the Preservation of Historical Documents*

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