

HISTORY ON THE ROAD

MCLEAN MILL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



In 1926, during the boom years of logging, Robert Bartlett McLean, together with his wife Cora and their three sons, arrived on Vancouver Island. They soon established a successful independent logging and lumber mill business in the Port Alberni area. The mill thrived through to the 1960s when it was shut down. Men and women lived and worked in this remote camp on the edge of the world.

For almost three decades, the mill, the equipment, and associated camp lay quiet in the abundant forest just north of Port Alberni. Recognizing the site's significance in relation to the history of logging in British Columbia, it was acquired by the City of Port Alberni in 1988 through donations from the McLean family and Weyerhaeuser Company. With the assistance of funding from Parks Canada and

Forest Renewal B.C., the sawmill has been restored to fully working condition. In the spring of 2000, the McLean Mill National Historic Site opened to the public.

Fortunately, many of the fine historical pieces of equipment, the buildings, and the mill itself were recoverable. Beautiful examples of a full range of restored artifacts are displayed. During visitor season (June 15–September 2), mill demonstrations take place daily. Visitors see the old turn-of-the-century steam engines in operation.

Professional actors offer interpretive drama at the site. Balancing entertainment with information, their dramatic presentations tell the physical and human history of the logging industry of British Columbia from the perspective of those who lived it. Tremendous efforts have been made to re-create a living, historically accurate, period setting in which visitors can experience an important part of our heritage.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MCLEAN MILL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE.

Visitors can take a steam train ride to the McLean mill from Port Alberni on the No. 7, a 1929 Baldwin logging locomotive.

Also available is a steam train ride from downtown Port Alberni to the McLean Mill pulled by a 1929 Baldwin logging locomotive. The railway winds its way over about 10 kilometres of picturesque countryside, over two trestles. The trip takes about 35 minutes each way.

The McLean Mill is located in the beautiful Alberni Valley on Vancouver Island in British Columbia Canada. Airports are located at Nanaimo, Victoria and Comox on the Island, with most flights going through Vancouver. Those that drive will take a ferry from Vancouver or Port Angeles, Washington to Nanaimo or Victoria. Total traveling time by car from Vancouver is about 5 hours.

For more information see the web site at www.alberniheritage.com or contact Dave MacDonald, General Manager, Site 125, C14, 5633 Smith Road, Port Alberni, BC, V9Y7L5; 250-723-1376; mclean@island.net. □



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