

Marr house

Dr. Benjamin Butler Marr, who settled in Fort Langley in 1910, was the first general practitioner to settle in the area and a prominent member of the young community.

Born in 1882 in Jordan Mountain, a town in Kings County, New Brunswick, Marr took his medical training at Tufts Medical School in Boston. He graduated from Tufts in 1907, and travelled to B.C., spending short periods of time in both Fernie and Kaslo.

He arrived in Vancouver in 1908 and soon joined Rev. John Antle to work on the Anglican Columbia Mission which was establishing churches and a number of small hospitals in remote coastal villages.

Dr. Marr left the mission and settled in Fort Langley in 1910 in response to an advertisement by R. engineer-in-chief William George Swan. Swan wanted a medical man to set up a practice in the village to attend to the railway's large work crews.

Dr. Marr's first office was a small building on the northeast corner of Francis and Glover Rds. Unfortunately, the local cemetery was just across the road, a coincidence which, according to son William Marr, was occasionally embarrassing and the basis of many a morbid joke.

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During that first year he built a house and outbuildings nearby on Glover Rd. (now 9080 Glover Rd.), boarding with local blacksmith Billy MacIntosh and family until its completion.

Dr. Marr married MacIntosh's daughter, Drew, in September of 1913. At that time what is now the southern wing of the house was added. The family lived in the new addition, and Dr. Marr's office and waiting room were in the northern portion of the home.

Ten years later a late night fire which spread from the office's fireplace threatened the Marr house.

Marr's younger brother Alfred, who had just arrived in Langley, smelt smoke and wakened the doctor. Marr told him not to worry — the furnace always smoked. However, 10 minutes later the doctor reawakened to the crackle of flames. Fortunately, Marr had purchased a large water soda extinguisher a short time before and managed to contain the blaze.

Also of note, in 1920 half of Dr. Marr's barn was moved to the corner of Church St. and Mavis St. and was rebuilt into a home which still stands there

Marr's wedding

station, was quite eventful. On the return journey a harness trace broke, jamming one of the buggy's wheels and flipping the rig over.

The best man was thrown free, but Marr was dragged for a considerable distance by the panicked team.

Dr. Marr arrived at the church later that day minus a considerable amount of skin, and sporting a broken collarbone and three cracked ribs. After the wedding service, the wedding party travelled by boat to New Westminster.

There, Marr visited the Royal Columbian Hospital, and was patched up before continuing on with his bride on an Alaskan honeymoon.

World War I broke out in August the following year and Marr was the first Langley man to enlist. A volunteer in "C" Squadron, 31st B.C. Horse

(Mounted Rifles), Dr. Marr was posted overseas after achieving the rank of Field Officer.

While overseas, Dr. Marr's practice was taken over by Dr. McBurnie, who eventually settled in Langley Prairie.

When mounted units were abandoned in 1916 he was assigned to the medical corps and served in hospitals in France.

Returning to the Fort in 1919, Marr was made first president of the Langley branch of the Great War Veterans Assn. Later, when the Langley Legion was formed, he served as first president of that organization.

Marr initiated memorial services for fallen soldiers and supervised construction of cenotaphs at the Fort Langley and Murrayville cemeteries.

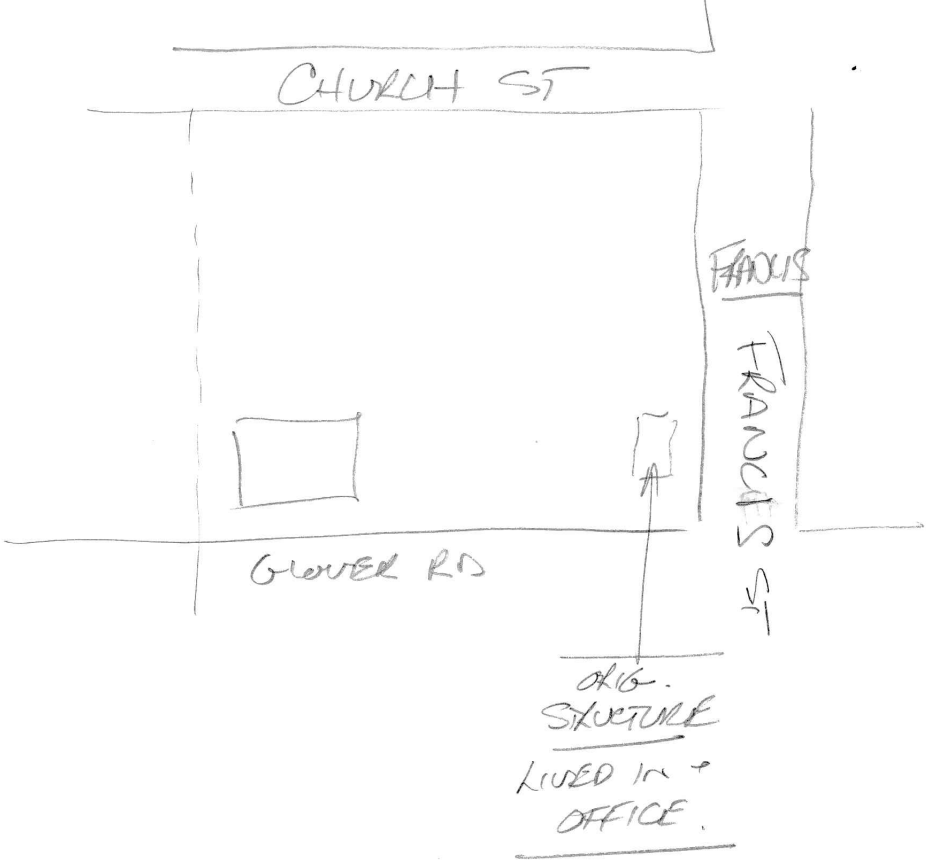
Dr. Marr lived in Fort Langley until

1928. At that time he moved to Murrayville, very near what is now the site of Langley Memorial Hospital.

In addition to his involvement with veteran's affairs he was active in constructing the Fort Langley Community Hall, helped preserve the last original building at Fort Langley, and was a Guernsey cattle breeder of note. He also served briefly as president of the Langley Conservative Assn., and belonged to numerous fraternal organizations.

Dr. Marr died in 1939 at the early age of 57 and is buried in the Fort Langley cemetery. His Fort Langley home, now an antique store, is still a prominent building on the village's main street.

(Compiled with the assistance of the Langley Heritage Society)



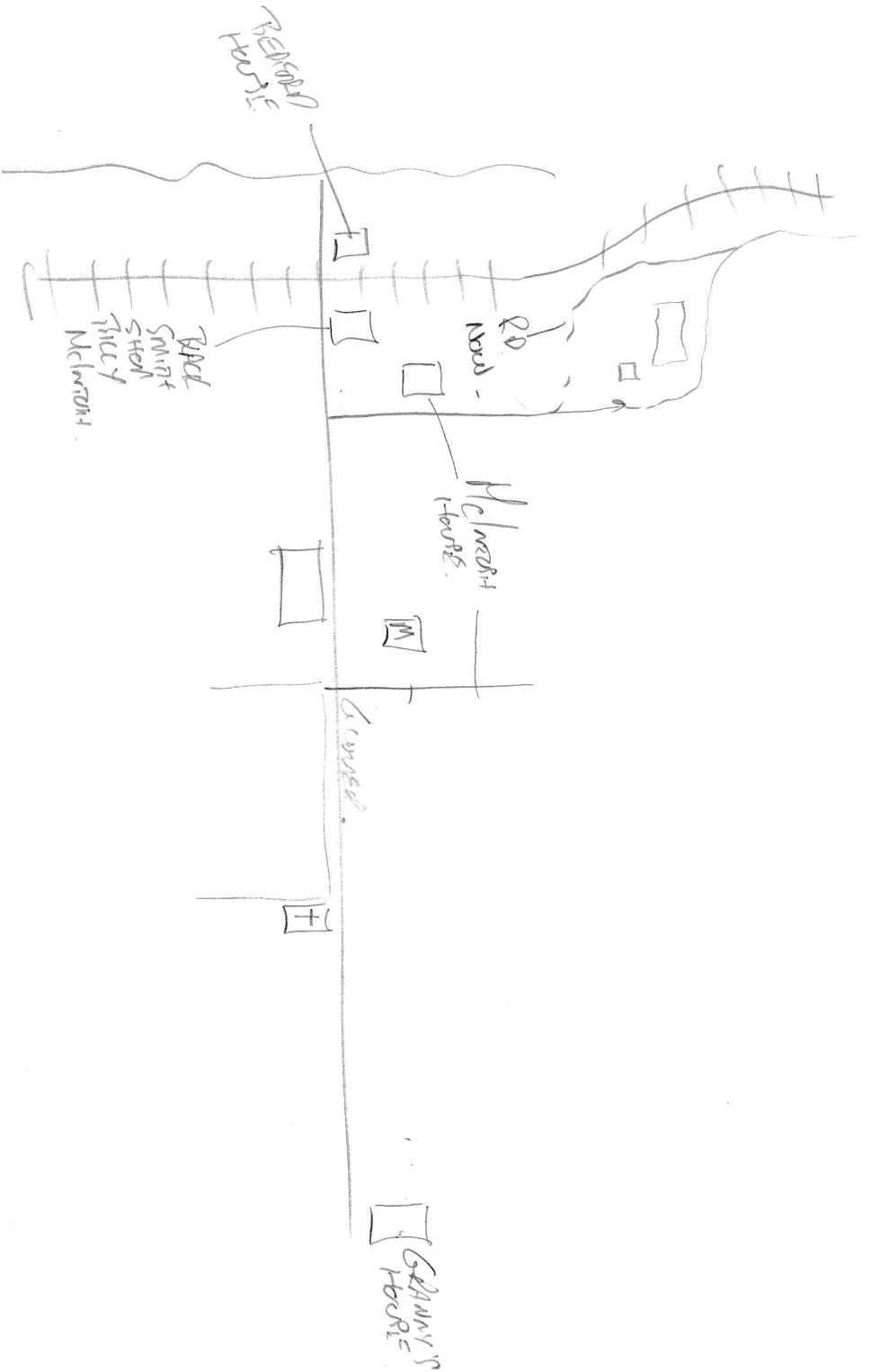
Merr House - 1923



GRANNY McINTOSH
Self, Katherine & Jeff, Mut is leaving .

FOX TERRIER





May 20, 1977

The Marr House
Glover Road
Fort Langley

The old place is not really old by Fort Langley standards, but in its day it was one of the outstanding houses in the "Fort" and one of the loveliest places in the valley. The house was built by Mr. Murphy, a builder who lived later on, near County Line, and who had built a number of houses in and around Fort Langley. It was built in 2 stages, the first stage was commenced within the year that Dr. Marr came to Fort Langley, and comprised the north half of the structure, it contained what was later to serve as the doctor's office. The office at that time was in a small building which stood near the corner of ^{FRANCIS} Mavis and Glover Road, across from the cemetery, - a source of occasional embarrassment and the odd bad joke.

During the period that the house was being built in 1910, Dr. Marr boarded with Mr. & Mrs. W.J. MacIntosh and their daughter Drew, whom the Doctor married several years later. Billy MacIntosh was the blacksmith and his home and shop were across the road from the Coulter & Berry Store and near ^{TOWEL'S} Towels' Hotel and the river.

Etta Marr, the Doctor's sister came out from New Brunswick about this time, to keep the new house for him. Shortly after this first section was completed the barns and buggy sheds were added at the rear of the property which comprised the block, back to Church Street and south to ^{FRANCIS ST} Mavis road.



Dr Arthur Bagnall
 Best went to pick him up
 - Best man at wedding - trace
 Broke - Silver Ket - middle
 of Langley - Broke Lalla Bone
 Crystal Vase thrown - broken.
 St Langley United Church.

About 1920 the barn was split and the larger section moved to the corner of Church and ^{FRANCIS STREET} ~~Mavis~~ and eventually rebuilt into a home which still stands today. Mr. Geo. Sailes was the first owner and lived for a number of years in that house.

The Doctor married Drew MacIntosh in September 1913, and it was in preparation for this marriage that the house was rebuilt, and the south portion added. This involved adding the living room, with the fireplace on the end wall, and a master bedroom upstairs with a large screened in dormer for summer sleeping. (The doctor claimed that the Fort Langley mosquitoes were large enough and mean enough to steal chickens.) The downstairs porch was extended to wrap around the front of the house and covered almost the full length of the north side as well. The wood shed at the back was enlarged and the tower added to contain a water tank at sufficient height to gravity feed the water at reasonable pressure to both levels of the house.

The water system deserves a word as it was a source of employment for many men in Fort Langley, a frustration and annoyance to the doctor and something held in fear and suspect by the rest of the family. The system was elaborate by any standard, the upstairs bathroom required a very high tower to give adequate pressure, this tower was situated over a seventy foot well and on top of this well was the pump. The heart of this contraption was a very large and tempermental electric motor. It was about a foot and a half in diameter and it sounded somewhat like the modern jet engines as they accelerate under great air pressure through various starting phases. Only this ancient electric motor would accelerate in an undulating manner with a series of clicks, snaps and flashes of blue fire as the various brushes and windings were energized, each in its turn to get everything in

motion - this consisted of a flat belt about 5 inches wide that used rawhide laces to hold its ends together, it turned a pump that stood some 6 or 7 feet away.

The pump looked somewhat like an old man who stood erect, shoulders back, but with knees well bent. The arms hung straight at the sides and each fist grasped the handle of a large cog wheel that was situated among sundry other lesser wheels and things at the foot of the machine. When it was made to work it would straighten to its full height, and in so doing the arms would lift and the hands revolve the wheels, as the shoulders rose and fell, the water would be lifted 60 ft. out of the well and deposited in the tank some 30 ft. above. In practice, only $1/3$ of the water would go into the tank, $2/3$ would flow out the pumphouse door and the rest would fall back into the well - that is, if it worked.

If it didn't produce in a reasonable period of time, the drill was to pour a bucket of water over the entire unit, this would do something to the valves and the whole heaving contraption would slow and then with sudden and explosive violence, water would fly in all directions, this indicated that it was pumping. When the water poured from a pipe near the top of the tower, it meant that the tank was full and it was now time to switch it off. This was done by opening the door a few inches and reaching in and carefully moving a switch that looked somewhat like a cheese cutter, this caused another blinding blue flash and then dripping silence. The tank was now full of wonderful cold water.

The hot water system was only slightly less sophisticated. The water was led by a zig-zagging pipe through the firebox of the kitchen range into a large tank that stood behind the stove. It thumped and gurgled

contentedly most of the time, however sometimes in fits of overheated temper it could blast steam out of every hot and cold water tap in the house. There were often times when there was no water at all, but for the most part, there was sufficient to supply a large house and keep one of the loveliest grounds and gardens in the valley, a reward sufficient for all who were called upon to tend the monster that stood under the tower and over the well.

Dr. Marr and his family lived in this house until it was sold in 1928, with the exception of the war years, when Dr. McBurnie tended it until Dr. Marr returned in 1919. There were a few alterations made to the house in 1923^{4?} when a considerable portion of the veranda was removed and a new entrance made through a waiting room built on to the north side of the house and the room that had been used as an office and study was revamped to serve as the doctor's office.

There is another incident that should be recorded that concerns the old house and happened about this time. Dr. Marr's younger brother Alfred had just arrived from New Brunswick to take up permanent residence in Langley and was put up in the spare bedroom at the front of the house. Prior to going up to bed, he and the doctor talked until quite late, before a roaring fire in the office fireplace;- a fire that nearly became a disaster. Towards morning, Alf awoke and knocked on the doctor's bedroom door and suggested that as he could smell smoke they should investigate! The doctor said not to worry as the furnace always smoked and to go back to sleep. Alf went back to bed, but fortunately not to sleep for in a very few minutes the house was full of smoke and the flames were crackling, there was no doubt but that the house was on fire.

Fortunately the doctor had purchased a large water soda type of fire extinguisher a short time before, and this plus the warning that Alf was able to give, saved the house and probably the lives of the family.

The old Marr home was a happy place with beautiful lawns and gardens and it served the people who loved it well. Despite its deficiencies, and there were many, heat, light, water and almost everything else, it was an example of some of the best things that that era produced. It had a charm and gracefulness that were of a different age and a different life. The old house stands a reminder of our heritage.

