

Silverton School - Gallery History 1916 - 2012



Time Line for Silverton School-Gallery

1917	Silverton School Completed
Early 1970's	Silverton School Closed, students bused to New Denver
1977-1996	Silverton Fire Department housed in east side on lower level
1978-1981	Silverton School renamed Silverton Gallery Slocan Lake Gallery Society established in 1981 Extensive renovations to building
Late 1990's	Addition to East side of Building Frank Mills Outdoor Mining Museum opened on grounds
2001	Metal Roof Replaced, Stucco and Trim painted
2008	Silverton Gallery becomes a Municipal Heritage Building



Silvertown School Students (likely Dominion Day Celebration) [ca 1919] SHS A006-002-0084

Silverton School

The Silverton School opened to a school population of 77 students in 1917. Two classrooms occupied the upstairs of the school. The junior grades were one to three and the senior grades were four to six. The first two teachers were Mr. Sparks, a very strict disciplinarian and Miss Wilmas who taught the lower grades.

Jim King was one of the first senior teacher and he was a very popular teacher with the students and parents. In fact, author John Norris in “Old Silverton” recounts that many young people came from the surrounding areas just to attend his classes and his own mother “insisted on moving from Rosebery to Silverton so that her young daughters could be in his school.”



Silverton School [ca 1920's] SHS A006-000-824



● School & Lock-up [ca 1920s] SHS A006-000-0017



School & Lock-up [ca 1920s] SHS A006-006-0041

The Silvertown School was built with formal plans from Victoria; this was fairly unusual for a rural school, which were usual built without plans on a smaller scale.

Schools which enrolled at least twenty pupils were classified as Rural Schools. These schools were established within formally-defined rural school districts and were administered by locally-elected school trustees.

This school house was, according to the fashion of the times, high from the ground with concrete foundations and a basement underneath, with two flights of steps leading up to the porch, cum cloakroom, cum washroom, with larger windows on one side only. It had high ceilings with is still the nucleus of the present building known as the Silvertown Gallery.



DEPARTMENT OF WORKS.

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS.

SILVERTON SCHOOL.

SEALED TENDERS, superscribed "Tender for Silverton School," will be received by the Hon. the Minister of Public Works up to 12 o'clock noon of Tuesday, the 24th day of October, 1916, for the erection and completion of a two-room school and outbuilding at Silverton, in the Slocan Electoral District, B.C.

Plans, specifications, contract, and forms of tender may be seen on and after the 11th day of October, 1916, at the office of the Provincial Constable, Silverton, B.C.; Mr. R. J. Stenson, Government Agent, Court-house, Kaslo; Mr. J. Cartmel, Government Agent, Court-house, Nelson; or the Department of Public Works, Victoria, B.C.

Intending tenderers can obtain one copy of plans and specifications of the above school by applying to the undersigned with a deposit of ten dollars (\$10), which will be refunded on their return in good order.

Each proposal must be accompanied by an accepted bank cheque on a chartered bank of Canada, made payable to the Hon. the Minister of Public Works, for a sum equal to 20 per cent. of tender, which shall be forfeited if the party tendering decline to enter into contract when called upon to do so, or if he fail to complete the work contracted for. The cheques of unsuccessful tenderers will be returned to them upon the execution of the contract.

Tenders will not be considered unless made out on the forms supplied, signed with the actual signature of the tenderer, and enclosed in the envelopes furnished.

The lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

J. E. GRIFFITH,

Deputy Minister and Public Works Engineer.

Public Works Department,

Victoria, B.C., October 3rd, 1916.

oc5

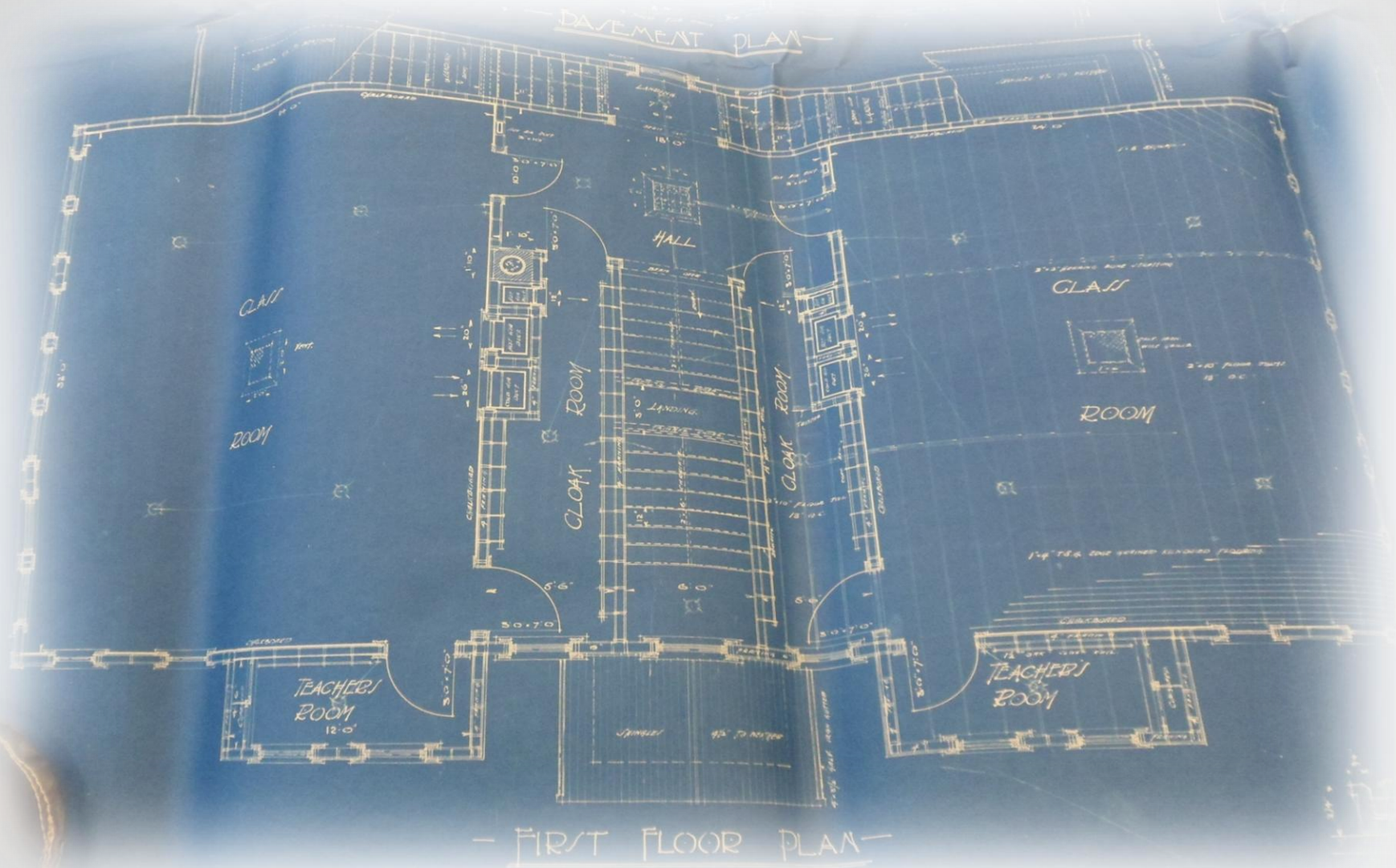
Department of Works

Notice of Tender for Silverton School October 24, 1916

J. E. Griffith Deputy
Minister
and Public Works
Engineer

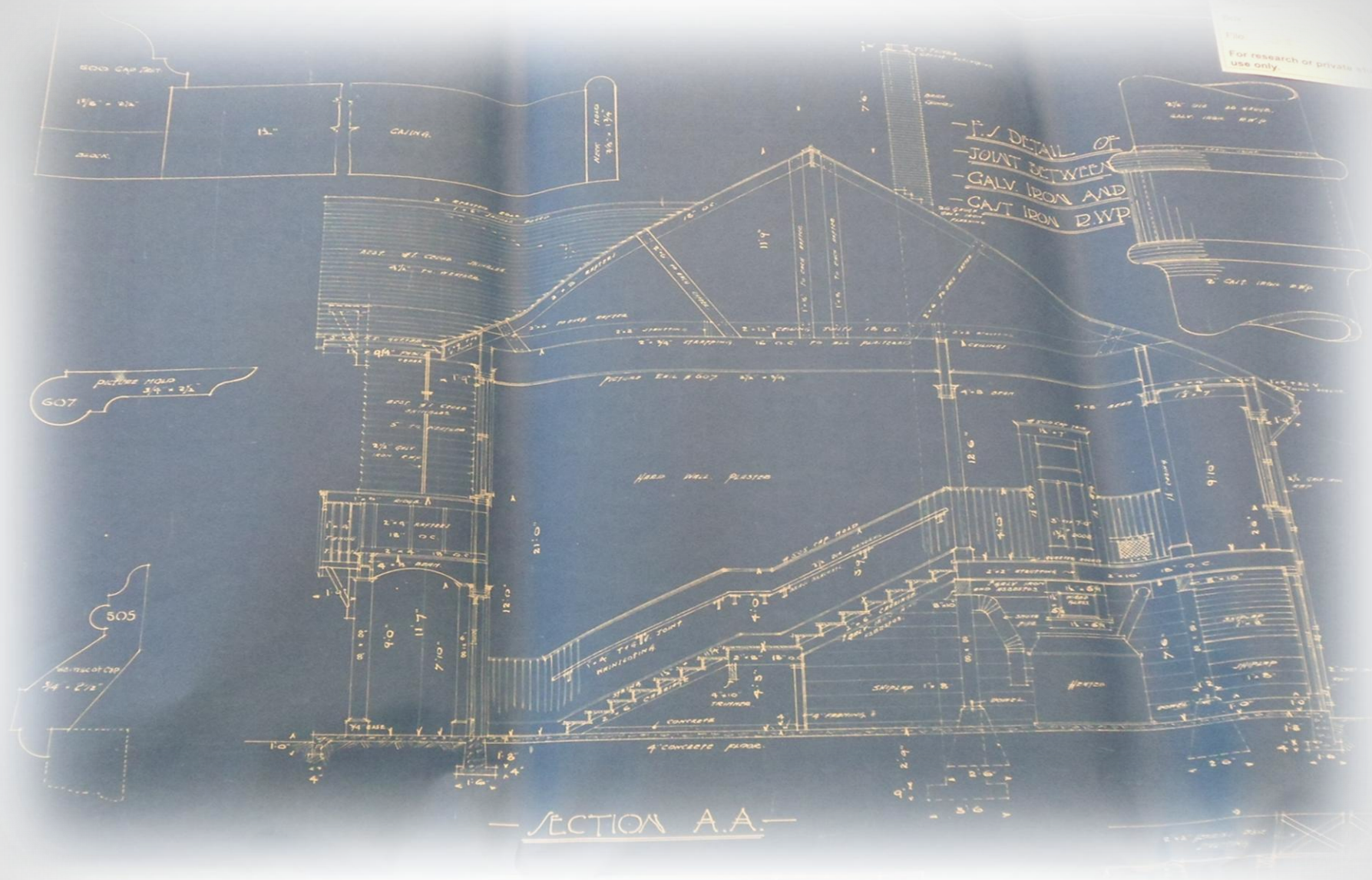


Blueprint South Elevation



Blueprint of First Floor Plan - Stairway & Two-Class Rooms

For research or private study use only.



Blueprint Cross Section of School



Blueprint of Basement of School

Completed

Contract for TWO ROOM SCHOOL

Situated at SILVERTON
IN THE

SLOCAN ELECTORAL DISTRICT

Contractor Geo. M. William

P. O. Box 829

Address Victoria B. C.

Contract sum \$ 6,750⁰⁰

Date of completion 31st March 1917

Maintenance period, six months.

Contract for Two Room
Silverton School

Contractor
George M. William

Contract Total \$6,750

Date Completed by March
31st 1917



Silverton School [ca 1920's] SHS A006-014-041

Silverton School Exterior Paint Colours from Contract

COLOURS.

Exterior.	Body of building	Buff.
	Trimmings,	Medium dark chocolate,
	Sashes inside and out,	Cream,
	Roof Shingles,	Red,
	Wall Shingles,	Light umber,
	R.W.P's and gutters,	Emerald green.



Students at Front Entrance [ca 1920's] SHS A006-000-0019



Rare inside photo of school class [ca 1920]
SHS A006-001-0013



School Class [ca 1920's] SHS A006-000-0016

The basement or lower level was a recreation area for the children to play in during inclement weather, a furnace area and washrooms. The heating was first a wood furnace (which caused at least two fires in the bell tower from sparks) then coals and finally oil.

The building is centrally heated and information from local residents that attended the school was that the school difficult to heat and the heating challenges were a contributing factor along with the declining school population.



School Class 1920 SHS A006-014-043



School Class 1930 SHS A006-006-032



School Class 1936 SHS A006-006-033



School Class 1940 SHS A006-006-031



School Grounds [ca 1920's] SHS A006-000-0021



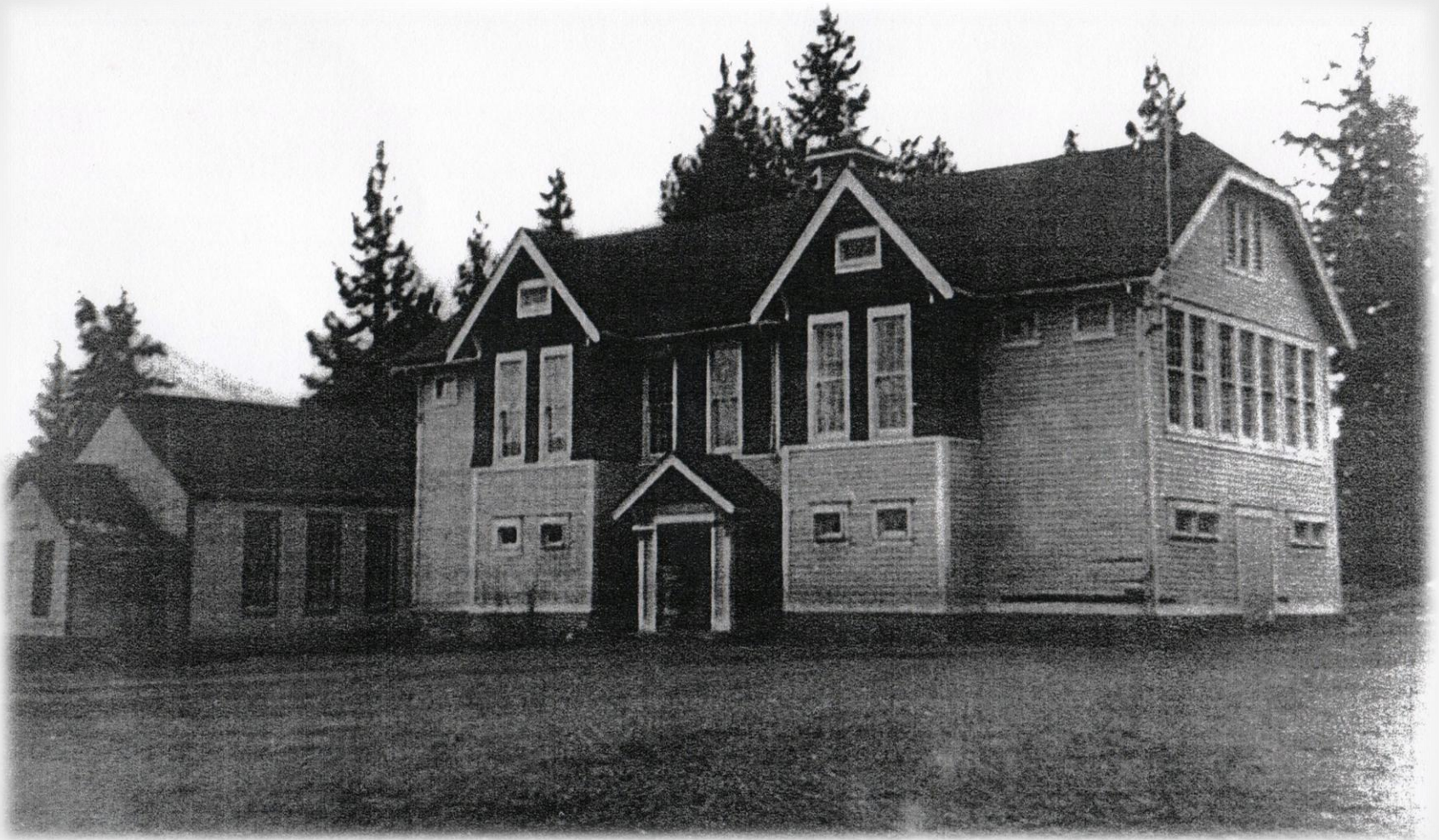
Silverton School [ca 1920's] SHS A006-006-020

In 1997, British Columbia Building Corporation surveyed the Gallery with these recommendations.

1. Remove the underground fuel tank (on north side) and replace with above ground tanks and concrete slab. Estimated cost \$1500.
2. Remove and replace metal roofing, replace any rotten wood, remove and replace insulation. Estimated cost \$15,000-\$20,000
3. Replace furnace with propane. Estimated cost \$3,000-\$5,000
4. Install proper ventilation for kitchen. Estimated cost \$500



Silverton School in distance, Photographer Trotter, [1933]
BC Archives I-30477



Silverton School with old school to left [between 1933-1967]

In around 1967, stucco with coloured glass was installed on the building.

The last few years, students from New Denver and Silverton were bused between the communities.

The school was closed about 1970, for was used for two or three years as a kindergarten.

There was some vandalism when the building was vacant.



Grade 2 Classes with teacher Mrs. Bell 1967-70

SLOCAN VALLEY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY ARTS COUNCIL

On Oct. 18, 1975, at the Slocan Valley Community Library in Vallican, 15 people met to form the Slocan Valley and District Community Arts Council. The area represented by this Society starts in the south at South Slocan and includes the Slocan Valley north to Nakusp.

The Arts Council programme, which began during the Social Credit government of W. A. C. Bennett, receives its operating funding from the B. C. Cultural Fund. This fund consists of \$15 million of which the interest each year is spent on cultural activities in the Province of British Columbia. Each Arts Council which is incorporated under the Societies Act of B. C. receives ten cents per year for each resident within its area. This money is to be used by the Arts Council to aid the development of cultural activities in the area.

An Arts Council can serve many functions within its area of operation. Many councils are active in bringing tours and shows into the area, as well as organizing tours and shows of local artists to be sent to other districts. Arts councils also act as a communication system between working artists, putting people in touch with each others' work, problems and ideas. The Council can act as a support body for grant applications from groups and individual artists and can itself apply for funds for community-oriented projects aimed at enhancing the culture of the area. Of course, as with any organization, the degree of its success depends on the energy of its members.

On Feb. 21, 1976, a public meeting of the Slocan Valley and District Community Arts Council was held in New Denver, B. C. At that time an interim board of 8 members was elected to finalize the constitution and organize a general meeting. This meeting will be held on *May 16 at 2:00 p.m. at Bowen Hall in New Denver, B. C.* At this meeting the purposes and possibilities of the Arts Council will be discussed, a 10-member board of directors will be elected, and membership will be recorded. There will be a \$1.00 membership fee per person. If you are a craftsperson, artist, photographer, writer, musician, actress or actor, or are in any way interested in the pursuit of a creative expression, you should consider membership in this society and attend the *May 16 meeting* in New Denver.



Slocan Valley &
District
Community Arts
Council newsletter
1975-76 describes
the meetings and
forming of the arts
council.

In 1975 the Slocan Valley and Arrow Lakes Art Society was formed with a committed and dedicated group who were passionate about bringing the arts to the northern valley. Ron Woodward (Interim Board Director), Joel Harris (Corresponding Secretary) , Fran Wallis, Judith Maltz, John Norris, Celeste Crowley, Erik Lees, Patty Bossart, Jae Sheele, Margaret Reid, Judy Bradford and others 1975-76 in order of appearance in the recorded 'minutes'.

Sometimes between 1976-77 the Village of Silverton purchased the building from the Ministry of Education of \$1.00.

Following the formation of “Slocan Valley and Arrow Lakes Community Arts Council” which consisted of residents from Winlaw to Nakusp the council renovated with gallery with funds of \$117,000 mostly through various grants. The group disbanded.

...School house...is being brought back to life as a visual and performing arts centre
....provide a 500 square-foot gallery and display area and a 1,200 square-foot performance - workshop area

NELSON
DAILY NEWS

Wednesday, February 22, 1978

THE REGION

SILVERTON — A 1919 two-room school house in this Slocan Valley community is being brought back to life as a visual and performing arts centre.

Grants obtained by the Arrow Lakes — Slocan Valley Arts Council are being used to renovate the long-abandoned building. Four young men are busy replacing rotton beams, building new interior walls, and as soon as the snow melts they will repair the ailing roof.

The school, not used as such for several years, is owned by the village of Silvertown and has been temporarily rented to the arts council at no charge. Only when the project is complete and admission charges start rolling in will the city charge for use of the building.

Mayor Randolph Harding and members of council are more than pleased about the arts centre project. They say the community can use another facility and they are happy to see the old Silvertown Elementary School preserved.

"I think there's a need for it," Mayor Harding said in a telephone interview Tuesday. "I can be put to good use. They are going along quite nicely with the renovations. Whether they'll have enough money to complete it the way they want I don't know, but their being quite careful."

MOST ATTENDED

Mayor Harding, as many Silvertown natives, spent his first years of schooling in the building. He attended there from the first grade through to Grade 7, which is as high as classes went.

Several years ago, the elementary classes in several Slocan communities were consolidated at New Denver. That left the Silvertown Elementary School vacant, and it has only been used sporadically since.

Today the thud of hammering the whine of electric saws emanate from the school, where workshop workshops and meeting rooms are taking form. Most of the work is being done on a \$16,000 federal grant which pays the labor of the four men. They are installing interior walls, insulation and will soon do the needed re-roofing. After that, if money for wages allows, will come the finishing work.

It is quite possible the arts council will find itself short of funds, but in the coming years the group can apply for more employment-creating grants to do more of the project.

In their optimism, most Silvertown people look in envy at the Langham Building in Kaslo, and hope to emulate that success.

Those involved in the point out the Langham was not retrieved from oblivion overnight. They are willing to do the basic work this year and will complete the

planned landscaping, parking areas, walkways and the outside of the building refinishing as money becomes available.

LOTS OF ROOM

Once complete inside, the schoolhouse will provide a 500 square-foot gallery and display area and a 1,200 square-foot performance — workshop area.

Theses will serve several purposes, acting as art show display areas when local artisans are selling their wares, and as a stage and audience area when an acting troupe comes to town. As an outlet for art work such as pottery, clothing and all the other hand-made goods that are becoming ever more popular, arts council people say they hope the arts and cultural centre will attract more tourists to the village.

The Slocan is becoming known across B.C. and the nearby United States as a heartland of

craft skills. This facility, local citizens hope, will provide a focus for those talents, and a place where the resulting artwork can be seen and sold.

This will be discussed at a 2:30 p.m. meeting Sunday at the future arts centre building. Council members will sit among the sawdust, nails and hammers to discuss whether two groups — one in Silvertown-New Denver and the other in Naksup — would aid growth of the arts in this region.

Whatever course is taken, completion of the Slocan Lake Centre for the Arts is certain, considering the determination of those participating. And with that centre complete, arts and crafts will receive a welcome focal point in Silvertown.



RESPECTIVE GALLERY
SILVERTON GALLERY

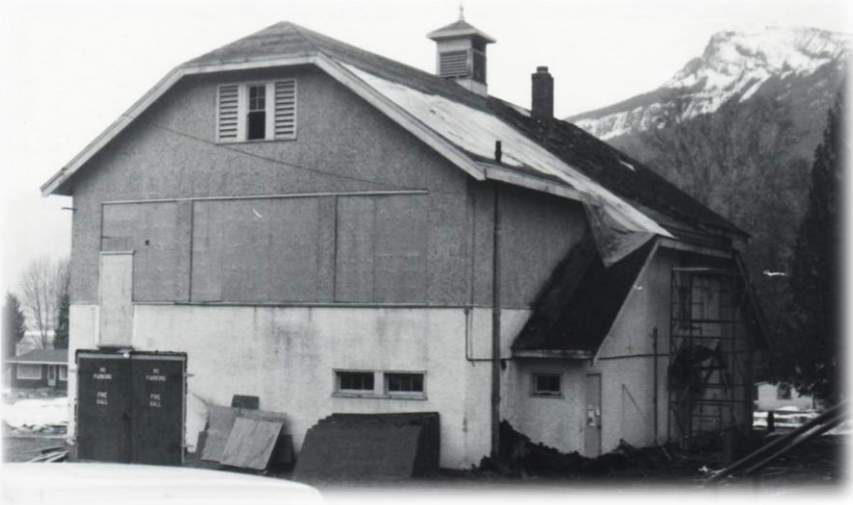
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“Eric Clough presented his plans for the Silverton School...he informs us of a municipal sharing arrangement...if the village submits a master plan for development...It was agreed by all present...the support of the village should be sought.” minutes dated September 17, 1977

“Ruby announced that she, Hank, Howard, John Norris & Celest have formed a theatre company. Summer Company Playhouse. The company will put together a one hour production partly historical aimed a tourists, performance to run every Wednesday from June 23 - Sept. 1.” minutes dated May 12, 1982

“official title ‘Slocan Lake Gallery Society’ opening April 3, 4, 5. 1981” minutes dated March 15, 1981

After extensive renovations in the late 1970's and early 1980's, the building was renamed the Silverton Gallery. In the late 1990's the east side of the building was altered and a small museum and archives were added to the lower floor and dressing rooms and storage to the upper floor. This facility is now valued as a cultural centre. It continues its civic function by housing a gallery and interpretive centre. The Silverton Gallery hosts art exhibits and classes, theatre productions and community events and the museum displays a collection of local artifacts and archives. Frank Mills Outdoor Mining Exhibit, a variety of mining equipment and other local artifacts are displayed on the gallery lawn.



Renovations to create Silverton Gallery - South Side [1978]



Silverton Gallery [late 1970's or early 1980's]

Silverton Gallery Renovations 1978 to late 1980's

much of funding from grants

- New red metal roof replacing the shingles
- Small flat roof for the south side entrance of the building
- Exterior Painting of stucco and trim
- Changing the stairway from central to the west side:
- Creating two gallery spaces on upper floor
- Projector room with lighting and sound systems
- Small kitchen and office built in gallery
- Workshop with dark room for Camera Club

About 1980, citizens from the Silverton, New Denver, Rosebery, and Hills formed the “Slocan Lake Gallery Society”.

The group incorporated in November 1981 and signed a lease with the Village of Silverton on February 1, 1982.

With almost \$40,000 in grants, the society installed a ramp on the east side of the building, a lighting and sound system and a piano.



Silverton Gallery and Fire Hall 1991 SHS A006-001-0407



Silverton Gallery [ca 1999]



East Side Addition of Interpretive Centre to Gallery, 1999 Photo Credit SHS



Photo Credit: Village of Silverton

Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place:

Silverton Gallery, a two-story wood-frame original schoolhouse with a central entrance and two large gabled extensions on the front façade.

It is located in the “heart” of the Village of Silverton.

Character-Defining Elements:

- Original location, the “heart” of the village
- Institutional form, scale and massing, symmetrical rectangular plan with central entry and rectangular front elevation extensions and raised basement
- Wood-framed construction
- Gabled roofs on the front extensions
- Wooden-sashed windows in front façade
- Bell tower (cupola – houses the Village’s emergency siren)

Heritage Value:

Located in the Village of Silverton, an early silver-lead mining “boomtown” in the Upper Slocan Valley of the West Kootenays, this two-classroom schoolhouse symbolizes the importance the community held in providing their children with a sound and thorough education.

The standardized design reflects the central role of the provincial government in setting educational standards, and the reliance of local school boards on the province's assistance. The standards of British Columbia public school architecture was set out by the Provincial Department of Lands and Works, which provided the plans and specified the orientation of the building.

The Silverton School is also significant for its continuing role in the community. When the school closed in early 1970s, the east side of the lower level housed Silverton's Fire Department from 1977 to 1996. In 1978, following extensive renovations the school was renamed the Silverton Gallery and became a local centre for the arts.

This facility is now valued as a cultural centre. It continues its civic function—the gallery hosts art exhibits, classes, music, theatre productions and community events and the museum displays a collection of local artifacts and archives.