



Sylvan Lake & DISTRICT ARCHIVES

Preserving the Past ~ For Future Generations

Why the Mermaid?

Driving along 50th Avenue (Railway Avenue) and seeing the fountain with the mermaid and baby, you might wonder what is this all about. The mermaid is a symbol of the great community spirit of Sylvan Lake that endures from the days when Sylvan Lake hosted the annual regatta.

The first "regatta" was held in 1907 in the form of a picnic and one swimming competition. The event continued to grow and by 1913 it had become the "official annual two-day Regatta" hosted by the Sylvan Lake Board of Trade. By this time, the events included boat races, swim races, canoe races, tennis competition, a banquet and dance. With the outbreak of WWI, the last regatta of that era was held in 1914. The Regatta was resumed in 1920. It gained national prominence in 1930 when the Provincial Wriggley Swim Competition was approved and the first one-mile swim was held. The event continued through the Great Depression with good and bad years until it petered out in 1950. It was again resurrected in 1959. The event came to an abrupt halt in 1962 when faced with three consecutive years of bad weather.


During the '50s organizers of the event recognized the need for a symbol and the mermaid became the choice. She soon appeared everywhere. In 1975 the Chamber of Commerce resurrected the mermaid as a symbol of Sylvan Lake. Soon after, the Town of Sylvan Lake Council adopted the Mermaid as the official symbol of the town. For a number of years, the mermaid graced the corner of 50th Ave and Centennial Street (50th Street) until the CIBC building was enlarged. Unfortunately, the mermaid could not be removed without being

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"Birth" – fountain commissioned by the Heart of Town as a Millennium project in 2000.



Medallion presented to the winners of the regatta events during in the early 1960's.

destroyed. In 1990, Will Truchon, an artist at Red Deer College, was commissioned to create a new mermaid. It graced the foyer of the old Sylvan Lake Town Office (4926 - 50 Ave) for several years. The mermaid wore a Sylvan Lake T-shirt after an individual complained that she was nude. The mermaid now resides at the Sylvan Lake and District Archives (minus the t-shirt).

The present-day life-size Mermaid and Baby fountain entitled "Birth" was commissioned by the Heart of Town as a Millennium project. The fountain was unveiled during the 1913 Days celebrations in 2000. The mermaid



Honorary Commodore of the 1963 regatta, Percy Page, Alberta Lieutenant-Governor, was entertained at the home of Ken Wilkinson where he was presented a mermaid statuette. Two of the statuettes reside on display at the Archives.



Mermaid that graced the foyer of the Old Town Office. Now located at the Archives.



The Miss Mermaid once sailed the lake offering spectacular views and delicious dinners.

continues her presence in a variety of ways. At one time you could have dinner and cruise around the lake on the Miss Mermaid. The symbolism of our community spirit is also commemorated at the annual Sylvan Lake Chamber of Commerce Miss Mermaid Ball, which celebrates and awards its shining business stars. So, as you pass the fountain be reminded of all the hard work of the many volunteers who made it, and continue to make Sylvan Lake a great place.