

# Walking into Bamberton's past

## **OTHER OPTIONS:** Weekend tours showcase the historically significant industrial site

LYNDA HILLS  
*News Leader Pictorial*

Like many good stories, Bamberton's past is an intricate weave of people and time.

And thanks to the Bamberton Historical Society, the public can now experience that story.

This historic site isn't just about preserving the past; it's about recreating it.

Who knew cement's chronicle involved industrial espionage or that the RCMP bomb squad held mock bank robberies at the old Bamberton bunkhouse?

"It was a story waiting to be told, just out there waiting for someone to pull it together," said society president Maureen Alexander.

It's not too late to get in on the action.

Weekend public tours march off each afternoon for the rest of the summer.

Start with the Bamberton museum, a treasure house of artifacts and memories, complete with an anecdotal DVD, layer on a walking tour and

you've got a solid foundation.

Strolling the overgrown lanes of the town site is like visiting an inhabited ghost town.

It takes just a small leap of fancy to picture labourers building the interlocking rock walls that mark the town's entrance, or hear the shouts of children as they sled down the main street in winter.

According to Alexander, Bamberton is one of the most significant industrial sites in the history of B.C.

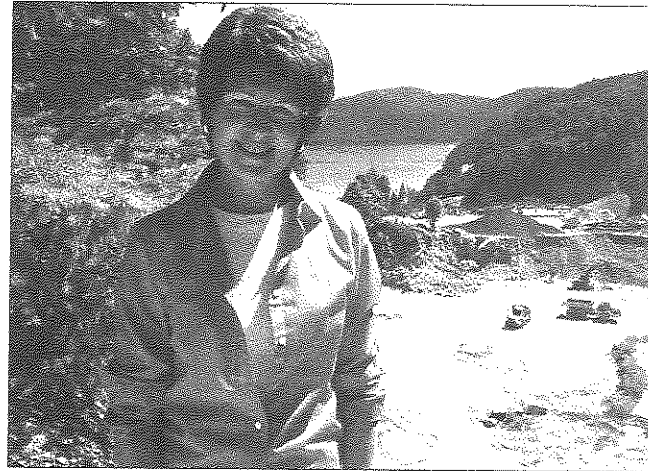
For over 50 of its 70 years it provided the cement for construction projects throughout the province and the world.

At its peak, 150 people lived within the Bamberton town with other workers living off-site.

The challenge for the historical society has been getting people to realize the museum is there.

"Bamberton has a fantastic history, it opened in 1912, and even at the time it was really isolated, so people weren't aware of how extensive the project was."

The major cement distribution site closed in 1980 after



*Lynda Hills*

**Maureen Alexander urges people to come down and hear echos of the past at the old Bamberton cement plant.**

supplying the world with the tools they needed to build skyscrapers and swimming pools.

In conjunction with owner, Three Point Properties, Alexander started archiving in 2005.

Since then, Alexander has received a mountain of artifacts and anecdotes.

Cement encrusted milk bottles and baby rattles, firebricks and core samples all tell the story of the town and its people.

Like many curators, Alexander is a storehouse of wonderful anecdotes.

From the whistle toots mothers used to call their children, to specific cement making ingredients, she provides the blueprint with which to construct a vision.

Three Point Properties, owners and partners of the museum, have a proposal before the Cowichan Valley Regional District for a house and parkland development so Alexander urges people to take advantage of the opportunity to have a glimpse into a rare part of B.C. history.

For more information call 743-9196.