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Metis Tea Rooms

When we hear the name "tea room", we immediately think of a Victorian-inspired establishment, and a place for women in pearls. If you lived at the turn of the century in Scotland or America, it's likely that you have a different picture entirely. In the early years, women weren't always welcomed to dine together in many establishments unaccompanied by a male (quel horreur!).

The idea of a place for women to go to have a light lunch, without alcohol, caught on in light of the temperance movement (people opposing the consumption of alcohol due to its effects on drinkers' health, personalities and families). By the 1900s, tea rooms sprang up, with most owned by women. Tea rooms also were the answer for women who wanted some sort of career to help supplement family income and as well served as centres for social interactions among women.

The three tea rooms that once were in Metis were very popular, and had a homelike environment. They were decorated with simple plain wooden furniture and hooked rugs, which gave patrons a clean, wholesome feeling. Two tea rooms were on Leggatt's Road.

One was called *The Firs*, owned by Mable Page.

THEN – Mabel Page's 'The Firs' Tearoom



And

The Firs', circa 1910, Motley Collection, Courtesy HSL

NOW



Gervais Ratté house, Micheline Williams, 2018, Metis 200

The other was called Blue's Tea Room, owned and run by two sisters – Maude and Lillie – with help from their brother, Sam Blue.



The third tea room was in the Metis area on Beach Road, just east of the Town Hall and west of Cascade Brook. While its sign may have said **Knotty Pine Tea Room**, most people called it **Ye Old English Tea Shop**. Its owner, Mrs. R. H. Campbell, served afternoon teas and refreshments at all hours. A summer resident remembers being taken on a very few special occasions by a great aunt for the tea room's excellent fudge.



The ladies of the three tea rooms would serve tea and other light refreshments, scones, crumpets, tea sandwiches, and even light meals. Cooking and other food preparation would often take place at home or over a very tiny stove in the establishment. Most tea rooms didn't have access to water, requiring their proprietors to bring all supplies to the tea rooms.

These tea rooms closed as the hotels in Metis started to serve afternoon teas for their guests and their friends.