

Volume 2 - Richmond Neighbourhoods Series

# Time and Tide: The Settlement of Lulu Island's South Arm Shore



by  
Mary Keen  
City of Richmond Archives

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Published by City of Richmond Archives  
7700 Minoru Gate  
Richmond, B.C. Canada, V6Y 1R9

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Keen, Mary, 1942 -

Time and tide : the settlement of Lulu Island's south arm shore by Mary Keen.

(Richmond neighbourhoods series ; v. 2) Includes bibliographical references.  
ISBN 0-9690031-8-8

1. Southarm (B.C.)--History. 2. Lulu Island (Richmond, B.C.)--History.  
3. Richmond (B.C.) - History. I Richmond (B.C.). Archives II. Title. III.Series.  
FC3849.R53Z5 2005 971.1'33 C2005-904293-1

*Cover Photo:*

Erosion control on the South Arm dyke, south shore of Lulu Island, Richmond, circa 1950s. The aerial photograph shows rock added to dyke west of Woodward's ferry landing at the south foot of No. 5 Road.

Noel McConnell / Richmond Photo.

City of Richmond Archives Photograph 1997 16 30.

## Preface

“Time and Tide: The Settlement of Lulu Island’s South Arm Shore” is the second in the series entitled *Richmond Neighbourhoods*. This series is intended to document the history of the settlement of various areas of Richmond. The selection of the neighbourhoods is loosely based on the Ward system previously used for electoral representation in Richmond. The first book in the series “A Bridge to the World: The life and times of Sea Island” was published in 2002. The idea for this series was implemented by former City of Richmond Archivist Ken Young and has been carried forward to this point of publication by the present City of Richmond Archivist Lynne Waller.

One of the aims of the publication of the series is to showcase the extensive documentary and photographic holdings of the City of Richmond Archives, as well as previous publications on the history of Richmond. These include the invaluable “Richmond, Child of the Fraser,” and its supplement by Leslie Ross and the first history of Richmond, “History of Lulu Island” by Thomas Kidd. The City of Richmond Archives also hold many valuable unpublished studies on Richmond and its varied history such as: “A history of London, Lulu Island, Richmond,” by Marie Bannister; the series of articles on Lulu Island railways written by Eric Johnson for *The Sandhouse*, the newsletter of the Pacific Coast Division of the Canadian Railroad Historical Association; and the *George Massey Tunnel Information Manual* written by Carole J. Laffleur.

I would personally like to thank Audrey Wylie and Geraldine Wray for their generosity of time, memories and personal anecdotes. I would also like to thank Lynne Waller, City of Richmond Archivist for her assistance in the publication process. The Friends of the City of Richmond Archives provided the financial assistance necessary for the publication of this document. I would also like to thank those people who reviewed the manuscript: David Dorrington, Carole Farrell, Jack and Nora Lowe, Dody Wray, and Audrey Wylie. Any errors or omissions in the text are solely my responsibility and should not be attributed to the City of Richmond Archives or those who assisted in this effort to document an important part of our community history.

I would like to acknowledge the use of the documents, photographs and other holdings in the City of Richmond Archives. As a historian and resident of Richmond I value these holdings as a truly irreplaceable community record.

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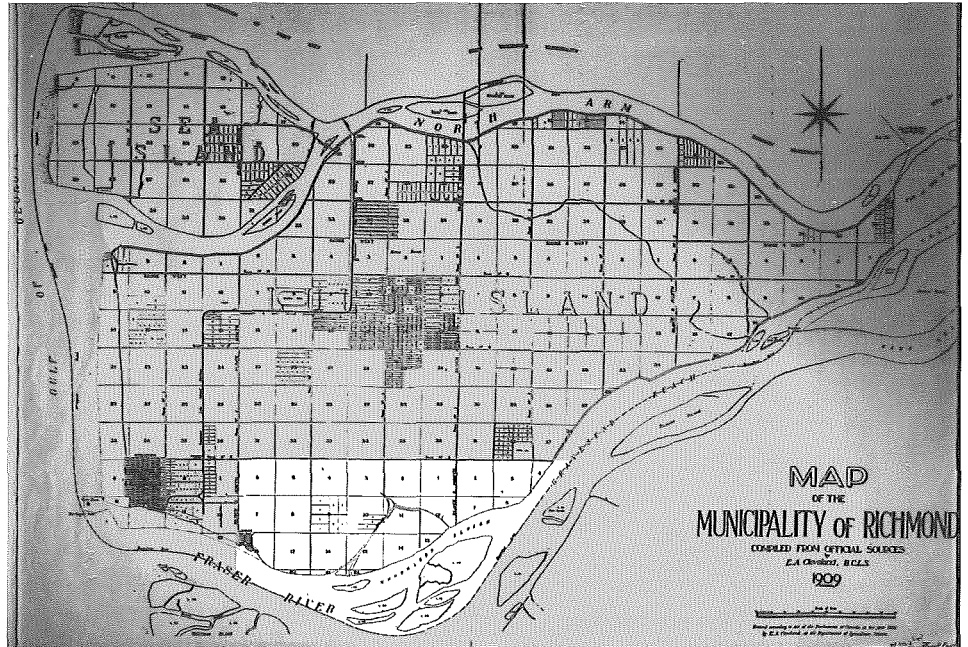
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## Introduction

The Richmond Neighbourhoods Series chronicles the settlement and growth of Richmond as it changed from the new and isolated pioneer homesteads of the 1880s into the large, cosmopolitan city we know today.

At first, European migrants settled in areas on the periphery of the two major islands, Sea Island and the South Arm shore of Lulu Island, which makes up the landmass of Richmond. With this volume we begin to look at the rich history of Lulu Island's south shore.

"Time and Tide: The Settlement of Lulu Island's South Arm Shore" will examine the land along the South Arm of the Fraser River, north to the Steveston Highway, and east of No. 2 Road to the end of the Steveston Highway where it meets the Fraser River. The area under study comprises the southern portion of the old Ward 4. The initial settlement of the South Arm neighbourhood is illustrated in this book by the stories of a few of the pioneer families. The book examines the progression from the pioneer settlers to the present day community by highlighting certain developments and areas



of industrialization. Research revealed that the development of South Arm was an amazingly rich component of our local history.

The first story associated with the South Arm area is about the naming of Lulu Island by an American actress, Lulu Sweet, who had been appearing at the New Westminster Theatre in 1861 along with the Potter Dramatic Troupe. She was on board the Otter steamship en route to Victoria accompanied by Colonel Moody of the Royal Engineers. The Otter steamship regularly travelled from New Westminster down the South Arm of the Fraser River to Victoria.

According to Corporal George Turner who was present at the time, Colonel Moody was pointing out various landmarks to Miss Sweet during the voyage when he mentioned the large island on the northern shore of the Fraser River.

*"What is its name?" she asked.*

*"It has no name," he replied, "except its Indian name whatever that might be."*

*Then after a brief cogitation, he exclaimed, "By Jove! I'll name it after you."*

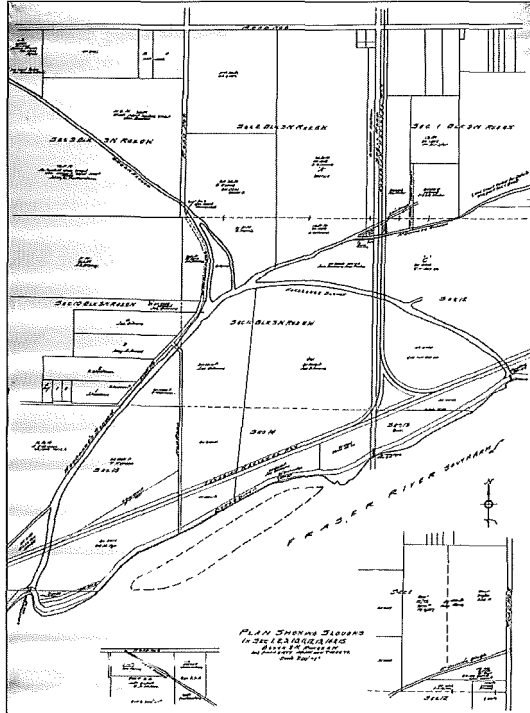
Immediately he instructed Corporal Turner to put 'Lulu' on the map as the name of the island. In 1863 a British Admiralty chart was published which named the island officially as Lulu Island.<sup>1</sup>

④ This 1909 map of Richmond is marked to show the boundaries of the area of study for this book.

*City of Richmond Archives Map 1985 153 1.*

## South Arm Landscape

The initial settlement of Richmond was directly related to the ease of transportation and the availability of land close to transport routes provided by the Fraser River. The South Arm waterfront was one of the first areas of Lulu Island to be inhabited due to the extensive complex of sloughs or inlets from the river. The sloughs - Daniel's, Green, McDonald, Woodward's, Horseshoe, Finn - all named after early settlers, provided water transport into the fertile lands of the South Arm.



- ④ Drawn in the era between the two World Wars, this map shows clearly the navigable sloughs that made the South Arm district an attractive place for European immigrants to settle.

City of Richmond Archives  
Map 1987 25 18

*The south side of Lulu Island between No. 2 and No. 3 Roads was bare of timber on the riverbank, was a mixed growth of spruce, cottonwood, crabapple, and elderberry about a quarter of a mile inland. This extended eastward until it reached the big slough and its branches until it ended where the peat bog comes out to the river above No. 6 Road- some places narrowing down to a scattering fringe, out to large clumps and containing trees of considerable size, of which spruce was the largest.<sup>2</sup>*

The Slough District of Lulu Island was situated along the South Arm of the Fraser River, extending north to the present Steveston Highway and east to the Fraser River across from Deas Island. All of the sloughs were fresh water, from rainfall, seepage and the Fraser River. The area was fertile and probably easily accessed by canoe or boat for the local First Nations people from their summer camps. There would

have been a ready source of food from fish stocks. Chum, coho and pink salmon spawned in the sloughs. The presence of the sloughs created a friendly environment for many species of plants, animals, and fish, which in turn meant excellent food sources for the First Nations people. The area now known as Lulu Island contained deer and beaver habitat, the bogs were rich in berries and medicinal plants, and the rivers hosted various salmon migrations through the summer and fall. There were also sea lions, seals, sturgeon and eulachon to be caught. It is difficult to be exact about the presence of certain species of fish due to dyking, draining and ditching of the sloughs, which destroyed the natural spawning grounds. The majority of the sloughs were drained prior to World War I.

There are few remaining permanent reminders of the Coast Salish nation on Lulu Island. This is possibly due to a smallpox epidemic which devastated their population in the 1780s, but is also more likely to be due to their nomadic lifestyle. It is possible that the Coast Salish established camps on Sea Island and harvested areas of Lulu Island.<sup>3</sup>

Given the ease of movement along the banks of the Fraser River delta, the South Arm area was quickly settled. The grasslands allowed for a quick development of the land by ploughing. Drainage of the land was poor during the winter months but the ease of development made it cheaper to own and operate. The few deciduous trees were easily transformed into lumber and logs for housing for the men working the land. The soil was fine-grained, easily cultivated and retained water for the drier summer months.

## First Settler of South Arm

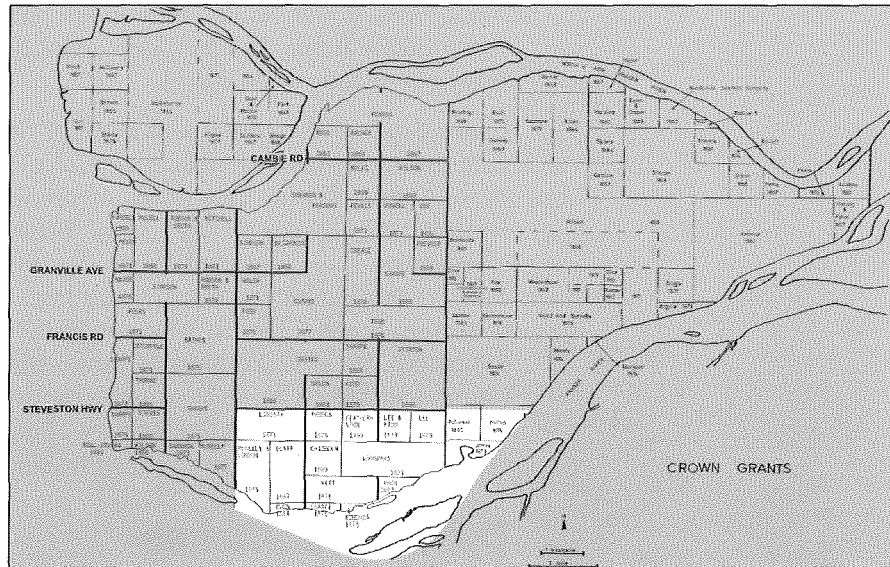
Many of the Crown Grants for the Slough District of Lulu Island were registered in the 1870s, but the owners of the land had probably been draining, ditching and dyking for some time before then. William McNeely, who with his brother Thomas owned land along the South Arm of the Fraser River close to No. 2 Road, was the first European settler to ditch and dyke land on Lulu Island. In the spring of 1865 he arranged for William Shannon to bring his three yoke oxen team by scow from New Westminster to the McNeely property to plough and prepare the land. Unfortunately the high tides of the summer broke down the dyke and flooded the land, ruining the crop. William McNeely did not repeat the exercise, but he still held claim to being the first settler to dyke his land on Lulu Island.

## Crown Grants and First Land Surveys

Although the Crown Grant holders were registered owners they were not necessarily Richmond residents or even farmers. Many men took up the Crown Grant as a speculative measure hoping for a quick return on their money. Some worked for the Provincial Government building roads or trails and accepted government scrip in payment, which they then could transfer into a Crown Grant registration.

The original land survey of 1859, undertaken by Joseph Trutch and his brother John, divided the area into 160-acre allotments by the block and range system. Each block was three miles square and divided into thirty-six sections of forty chains, which is a half-mile square. Land on the islands was valued by the new Provincial Government at a prohibitively high price of 10 shillings per acre. At this price only four sections of 160 acres each were sold, to two members of the Royal Engineers.<sup>4</sup>

After the Pre-emption Act of 1860 was amended in 1861, a new land policy was put into place to encourage settlement by men willing to farm the land. Settlers were granted a pre-emptive right to 160 acres on condition that they occupy and improve the land immediately. They also had to agree to pay the government 10 shillings per acre when the land was surveyed. As part of the Act, surveys were postponed until roads were built. This meant that farmers could settle, work and harvest the land presumably for several years before having to pay for it. It also meant that there were few if any controls on working of the land. The Government had attempted to create ease of settlement without creating land speculation. However, this proved not to be the case and there was much criticism of the role of the Government in this matter. One editorial stated, "it encourages the landshark and discourages the hardy pioneer."<sup>5</sup>



④ Crown Grants of land, circa 1890. The South Arm area is highlighted.

City of Richmond Archives  
Map 1986 70.



## Many Islands of Richmond

The landmass called the City of Richmond is comprised of many islands, the two largest ones being Sea Island and Lulu Island. The small islands scattered throughout the South Arm of the Fraser River which are inside the City of Richmond boundaries include Whitworth or Gilmore Island, Woodward's Island, Rose Island, Kirkland Island, Duck Island, Williamson Island, Gunn Island, Don Island, Lion Island and Barber Island. Woodward's, Duck and Barber Islands are undyked and Provincial Crown land. The land is very wet as it is not drained. Access is by boat only. Williamson, Rose, Kirkland and Gunn Islands are dyked, farmed, and privately owned.

Islands and sloughs are usually named after the original settlers in the local area. A good example is Gilmore Island, named after the Gilmore family who farmed at the end of No. 4 Road. Another is Kirkland Island, named after pioneer John Kirkland. He arrived in Ladner in 1870 where he purchased 160 acres, then a further 480 acres in 1871. The Kirkland family also farmed on Westham Island. Kirkland and Rose Islands were originally separated by a slough but this was later dammed to form one island. Daniel and Nathan Woodward purchased land on the south bank of the Fraser River. The purchase included the island which then became known as Woodward's Island.

Lion Island, in the Annacis channel of the Fraser River, was associated with the Lion brand of salmon canned on the island in a cannery owned by Alexander Ewen. This brand of salmon became very well known in Australia and Great Britain. Deas Island, although not officially part of Richmond, is connected to the city by means of the George Massey Tunnel. This island was named after John Sullivan Deas, a freeborn black man from South Carolina who emigrated to Victoria in 1862 to work as a tinsmith. In 1872 he manufactured cans for Captain Edward Stamp's Cannery and then in 1873 he pre-empted the island to build a cannery which he owned until 1878 when it was purchased by Finlay, Durham and Brodie. John Deas died in 1880 in Portland, Oregon.<sup>6</sup>

## Dykes and Ditches

The land on Lulu Island was swamped every year when the full moon tides coincided with spring floods. Therefore it was necessary to dyke the land close to the river and create a ditching system to drain the land. The first settlers dyked their own land along the riverbanks using piles of earth which had been removed to excavate the ditches. The dykes were hand dug, often by Chinese labourers and the water would flow over the top on a regular basis. The building of roads across Richmond went hand in hand with the draining of the land. After application to Richmond Council, landowners living alongside gazetted roads could cut a ditch and use the earth for the road and would be paid 10 cents for every cubic yard of soil. At the point where the ditch flowed into the Fraser River, flood boxes were installed to control the flow of water. The boxes operated on water pressure which balanced the flow of water. The flow was regulated by gates which operated at high tide to prevent the salt water from flowing back into the ditches. As the settlements of Richmond grew, the pace of development was matched by the growth of ditches and dykes.<sup>7</sup>

The Land Ordinance Amendment Act of 1873 was an attempt by the Provincial Government to attract settlers to low-lying areas but the support was more in principle rather than in funds.<sup>8</sup>

Farmers continued to be responsible for the costs associated with building their own dykes. Then neighbourhoods formed into dyking districts to take on the responsibility of dyking, with funds provided by the Municipal Government. Finally, in 1937 all the different dyking districts were placed under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Richmond. Richmond's dyking system has more than repaid the early efforts of the farmers and the Municipal Dyking Commission.

The presence of the Fraser River has a direct effect on the community of Richmond. This was exemplified by the local volunteer efforts to hold off the flood of the Fraser River in 1948. Although the water broke through approximately 100 feet of the dyke east of the Canada Rice Mill, relatively little damage occurred. The flood of 1952 washed out the flood box at Finn Slough and damaged the dyke at Woodward's Landing. An automatic pumping system was added in 1953.

The present dykes have a base of clay which is covered in rocks and gravel. They form a complete walking and bike-riding trail around Lulu Island. In some areas the dyke has been covered in asphalt and incorporated into the road system.

## London's Landing

The land that William McNeely had attempted to farm was purchased by two brothers, Charles Edwin and William London, in 1881 for 10 shillings per acre. Charles and William were born in Brant County, Ontario, and went to California in 1877 to seek their fortunes. They then travelled to British Columbia and decided to settle. The brothers would eventually own approximately 200 acres of fertile farmland in



Richmond. The history of the London family can be traced back to George London, chief gardener to Charles I of England, and designer of Kensington Gardens.

The brothers built a small farmhouse in 1881. They also hand-built the first dyke against the Fraser River along their property line. Once the land was productive they needed a method of shipping grain and other products to market. They subsequently built a small wharf immediately south of the farmhouse. The settlement of the London area was greatly assisted by

④ London's Landing at south end of No. 2 Road, showing the post office, general store and Union Church, circa 1910.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 1984 17 10.*

the construction of the first road in Richmond, the No. 2 Road, or “Trunk Road” which was completed in 1883. This easy access to the rest of Lulu Island and Vancouver led directly to the development of the public wharf, school and church at London.<sup>9</sup>

A private wharf was built at the Phoenix Cannery and used as a postal station, operated by J.W. Sexsmith. In September of 1885, the Richmond Council asked for tenders to build a community wharf at the south end of No. 2 Road. This was completed by January of 1886 by Messrs Gilley and Mooney of New Westminster for the princely sum of \$1,054. The wharf and most of the early road building conducted in Richmond was funded by the Provincial Government which was anxious to attract settlement in the area. The wharf measured 60 feet long by 40 feet wide and extended into the river far enough to allow for a depth of 10 feet at low tide. This extension into the river meant that steamers from Victoria could land and collect freight for all the settlers in the Slough area.<sup>10</sup> The boats announced their imminent arrival by a steam whistle. The wharf at London’s Landing was destroyed by fire in 1926 and rebuilt with the aid of Federal Government money in the amount of \$4,800.

## **First Church**

The building of the Government-sponsored wharf led to more settlement in the Slough district, which resulted in more local infrastructure to serve the residents. Prior to 1885 worship services were held in settlers’ homes and were conducted by various ministers who came by boat or skiff from New Westminster. Reverend James Wood, a Methodist preacher, first visited the London district in 1885 and by the summer of 1887 had persuaded the residents to build a small church. (There are two dates for the completion of the church, 1887 or 1891, with the latter date from Reverend Woods’ diary.<sup>11</sup>)

It is believed that the church was first built close to the dyke and then moved to a location on the west side of No. 2 Road and 100 yards north of the London Wharf. This building was not solely used by Methodists. Other itinerant ministers would preach there to small congregations and therefore the church was known as the Union church.<sup>12</sup> Reverend Alex Dunn was a Presbyterian minister who served the London area as part of his large mission which covered the whole lower Fraser Valley. The church at London was a preaching station only for the Presbyterian Church.

Many of the residents of Steveston and South Arm would row across the river to attend church on Westham Island if a minister was preaching there. Church services began to move away from London area when the Methodists moved their services into the Steveston Opera House which was built by Herbert Steves in 1890. The Presbyterian congregation remained at London’s Union Church until 1906 when the South Arm Presbyterian Church was built at the corner of Steveston Highway and No. 3 Roads.

## **First School District**

By 1887 there were enough children of school age to create a need for the formation of the first school board. By 1885 Virginia English was teaching her three younger brothers along with Jane and Bob Blair, Mabel Branscombe, Mary London, and others in the empty post office building

on Phoenix wharf, west of No. 2 Road. A petition was sent to the Ministry of Education to create a school district and the first trustees were elected June 20, 1887. These trustees, Thomas Lindsey, Martin Marshall English, and Thomas Kidd began the English District School in September 1887 using the small church on London's Landing as the school premises. M.M. English was actually an American citizen. There were no restrictions against "aliens" serving on School Boards until the late 1890s.<sup>13</sup>

The English family, including Virginia, moved to California in 1887 for a year. The children of the Slough district attended school in the small church building for the first year and then the English School was built at the southeast corner of No. 2 and No. 9 (now Steveston Highway) Roads. This was a one-room school and Mr. Robertson was the first teacher. He lived on Westham Island and used to row over every day to the school. One of the early teachers was Jean Baptiste Hebert, a French Canadian, who taught at the school while working locally on one of the farms. The boys used to call him John the Baptist.

The Good Temperance Lodge, "which was a secret society in the early days," according to Ida Steves, used to hold small meetings in English School. The general meetings of the lodge were often held in the Opera House in Steveston which held more people. The small brown schoolhouse was eventually moved to Pleasant Street in Steveston where it was used as a Presbyterian Church.<sup>14</sup>

## **London Post Office and Store**

The Post Office was moved from the Phoenix Landing in 1889 to the London Wharf. It was initially called the Lulu Island Post Office but became known as London Post Office in 1894. A general store and boarding house were also built and owned by the London family. William London was the first postmaster. He had originally begun working as the postmaster on the Phoenix Wharf. He died in 1899, possibly of tuberculosis according to Ida Steves, and was replaced by John Bowditch who had been a clerk in the Post Office.

The Post Office remained at London until the store was destroyed by fire in 1924. The London Brothers store was opened in 1886 and also contained a boarding house. In the 1889 directory of Lulu Island, the enterprise is described as a general store and temperance hotel. It would appear that William London was most responsible for the building and operation of the store, while his brother Charles farmed and built the London farmhouse. After William's death in 1899 his store and land holdings were inherited by John Bowditch and a single woman called Nancy Lulu Frazer.

The community of London seemed destined to prosper and continue as a population and business centre for Lulu Island but various events conspired to change this outcome. London was the site of Richmond's first dyked land, island road, school, church, and post office, but soon after 1900 the momentum slowed down. The church congregations left and the school was moved in 1897. The Canadian National Railway line did not have a station at London. The Hell's Gate slide of 1913 had a devastating effect on salmon returns, dramatically altering the fishing industry, and in 1924 a fire destroyed the warehouse and adjoining buildings at the Landing.

In 1926 another fire destroyed the Beaver Cannery, Winch Cannery, bunkhouses and the London Brothers' store. This store was never rebuilt and the residents of London had to use Hong Wo's Store further down river. At this time the London area lost its standing as a centre for the community.<sup>15</sup>

32. A Farmer's Residence.  
Steveston, B. C.  
September, 1908.



❶ In this 1908 postcard, the gardens around London Farm can be clearly seen. The London family is in the centre of the photograph; from left to right James Gilmore, Nellie Gilmore, Charles London, Edwin London, Henrietta London, Mary Agnes Dalziel, and William London.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 1984 17 74.*

## London Family

Charles London married Henrietta Dalziel in 1888 and they became the parents of eight children: Edwin born in 1889, Charles, George, Lewis, Lucy, May, Florence and another son also named Charles. Three of the sons, George and the two Charles, died in infancy.

The farm was apparently prosperous and provided a good living for the Londons although they worked long and hard. The farm could afford maids, a Chinese cook, and two Chinese gardeners, Sing and Chung, as well as farm labourers. One of the hired hands, Billy Calvert, married one of the maids, Kathleen.

The site of the original small farmhouse was behind the larger house built in 1898. Parts of the present day farmhouse date from 1898 with the front portion added in 1906. The house is an example of the Edwardian style with Craftsman influences<sup>16</sup> and was constructed in the balloon style, where the studs run from the foundation to the top of the house.

The parlour was not used except for formal occasions and contained an upright piano. One can imagine the London children taking their turn at piano practice, with cold fingers during the winter months. Next to the parlour was the parents' bedroom. The kitchen contained a couch, treadle sewing machine, a table with benches, wood stove for cooking, a very large box to hold firewood, and a large wooden clothes rack on a pulley system. The dishes were washed in the pantry, off the kitchen. The pantry

contained cupboards and shelving for dishes, baking equipment and pots and pans. The dining room was furnished with armchairs, a large table and chairs, and a sideboard. It had a door into the east veranda so the threshers could come into the dining room without going through the kitchen to avoid impeding the frantic work of preparing food for all the men. The bathroom was next to the kitchen but did not contain a toilet.

The second floor contained two girls bedrooms, the boys' bedroom, the guest room, and the hired hand's bedroom. Water was piped into the house from a large water storage tank. Heat was provided by wood stoves in the kitchen, dining room, and parlour. There would not have been electricity in the early days, but there was gas lighting in the kitchen and dining room. The rest of the house was lit by coal oil lamps including the parlour, which held an ornate central hanging lamp. Several rooms were carpeted with oilcloth floor covering.

There was an orchard on the south side of the house, containing approximately 25 fruit trees, which included plums, cherries, pears, apples. Raspberry and black and red currant bushes were planted at the front and back of the house. Henrietta is believed to have preserved around 300 jars of fruit every year. There were vegetable gardens around the house and out buildings which grew all kinds of vegetables except for cauliflower and broccoli. Also, cash crops of potatoes, hay and grain were grown annually and marketed through New Westminster. The ornamental side of gardening was not neglected as there were generous flowerbeds around the house. Henrietta was responsible for all the gardening and preserving of the produce, with the help of her children and the Chinese gardeners.<sup>17</sup>

The farm produce was typical of the day and area. The crops grown were usually potatoes, grain for the cattle, and oats and hay for sale. Holstein and Jersey cows supplied milk for the family and for sale. Henrietta would have been responsible for overseeing the churning of butter and other dairy products for family consumption. The family was basically self-sufficient for food; Mr. London made salted fish, salted pork, sauerkraut, and apple cider vinegar. The produce was either preserved or sold. Although the London farm was one of the more successful ones, other farms in the area would have produced similar crops and food items. Farmers helped each other out with a steam thresher going the rounds of farms at harvest times.

Charles London sold the farm in 1920, four years after his wife passed away, to his daughter Lucy who had married Herbert Howse in 1919.

London Farm is now a well-known heritage attraction, open year round. Gilbert Beach is a popular family attraction for beach combing, picnicking, and sunbathing. Many people use Dyke Road for cycling, roller-blading, and general pleasure driving.

## **Blair Family**<sup>18</sup>

Another well-known farming family in the district, the Blairs, also were descended from two brothers who were early immigrants to Lulu Island. John and Archibald Blair arrived in British Columbia in 1879 having travelled from Maghermorne, Ireland to New York, then overland by train to San Francisco, boat to Victoria and steamer to New Westminster. John

wrote to a friend in Ireland on July 25, 1880 saying that he was working in a cannery at New Westminster and Archie was working in Victoria.



④ Photograph of the original Blair residence, showing family members gathered around the front porch and garden, circa 1890.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 1978 25 2.*

John and Archibald were two of nine children born to James and Selina Blair between 1856 and 1879. They jointly purchased 320 acres, in 1883, situated between Gilbert and No. 3 Roads, facing the South Arm of the Fraser River. By 1882, all of the large Blair family had made the long journey to Richmond to join the two brothers. They became well-known farmers, increasing their land holdings as the family expanded. As the sons and daughters grew up they built houses and farmed in the same area. The men of the family were involved in

the building of the pioneer church at South Arm and the family hosted visiting ministers in the original homestead until the church was built. Throughout several generations the children of the extended family played together, attended school and rode on the school bus together.

## Archie and Mabel Blair

The main business of the Blair family was farming, as was typical of the time period. Archie Blair, son of Archibald Blair, had prize winning dairy herds for many years. The children of Archie and Mabel Blair enjoyed a wonderful childhood, each with a pony, and enjoying all the good produce of the farm: vegetables, fruit, dairy, and meat products. However, they were all expected to pitch in and do their part working on the farm. Geraldine Wray, the oldest daughter recalled how she drove the tractor, disking and ploughing when needed. The sons and daughters also worked off the farm at a young age, picking berries for 13 cents an hour and working at the harvest. There were two farm labourers throughout most of the years and at one time two East Indian men lived and worked on the farm. At harvest times, the farms shared a threshing machine and crew. It was Mabel Blair's job to provide large meals for the crew and family at this time.

For a time, Archie Blair grew peas for the Aylmer Company. He also grew hay, oats, and potatoes as well as other vegetables. In the 1930s he decided to sell his cows, keeping one for family use, and turned his attention to horse breeding and boarding. Initially the Blairs boarded polo ponies and then Archie bought a race mare as a riding horse for Mabel. Soon the interest in horse racing grew and Mabel and Archie were breeding and racing horses. Roberta and Geraldine helped to train the horses. The foals were sold to help finance the operation. The Blairs retired from horse racing and breeding in the 1950s.

An event in the cycle of farm life in the Lower Mainland was the annual Pacific National Exhibition. Farming families participated in the various competitions and the Blair family was no exception. Mabel Blair spent much time teaching her daughters how to cook and the girls were frequent prize winners in the pie, cakes, and other cooking classes. The children also were members of the Calf Club, now known as the 4H Club, and entered their animals in the PNE competitions. A celebration in the Blair family life was the annual July 1<sup>st</sup> family picnic held on the original farmstead just east of Gilbert Road at the dyke. These happy occasions were discontinued at the outbreak of World War II. In 1979, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Blair brothers arriving in Richmond, Mabel Blair and Willard Blair contacted descendants of each branch of the family and a very successful reunion was held. These reunions are now held every five years. In 2004 the family celebrated the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John and Archie Blair's arrival.

The Blair family was frequently involved in community life from the early days. John, one of the original immigrants, served several terms as a Councillor, beginning in 1889. His nephew Archie served many years as a Councillor following World War II. Archie's son Gilbert Blair was elected as a Councillor in 1971 after his father's retirement, and served as Mayor of Richmond from 1974 until 1990.

## Thomas Kidd

Archie Blair married Mabel Harris, the eldest grandchild of Thomas Kidd, a prominent early settler of Lulu Island and author of the first history of Richmond. Mr. Kidd wrote "History of Lulu Island and occasional poems" in 1927 and it remains a fascinating picture of the settlement of Richmond. Thomas Kidd was born in County Down, Ireland in 1846, the son of William and Margaret Kidd. He immigrated to New Zealand in 1863, at the early age of 17, spending 100 days at sea on board a sailing ship. One of his first acts on arrival was to join the Third Regiment of Waikato Volunteers, formed to fight in the Maori Wars. He was discharged from the regiment in 1866 as a corporal and took passage to California, arriving in 1867, along with his friend Walter Lee. While there he worked in logging and ranching.

In January 1874 he and Mr. Lee sailed to Victoria from San Francisco, and then went to New Westminster where they met Samuel Brighthouse and W.J. Scratchley who employed them for a short time. Thomas Kidd applied for a Crown Grant in the summer of 1874 on 160 acres in the Slough district of the South Arm of the Fraser River. Both he and Walter Lee homesteaded their properties, beginning with rough cabins and then improving the land and housing as their fortunes improved.

In 1883 Thomas Kidd married Letitia Smith in Ladner. They had four surviving children; their first daughter, Almira, and their last son, Harold, died in infancy. Thomas Kidd became active in the politics of the growing settlement. He and Walter Lee, with 23 others, signed the petition sent to the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia in 1879 requesting that the islands of Richmond be incorporated into a municipality. Both Lee and Kidd served as Councillors on the first Council of Richmond in 1880 and Kidd remained as a Councillor for several years. He was elected to the Provincial Legislature as Member of the Legislative Assembly for



☛ Thomas Kidd and his daughters in 1909. From left, Gertrude, Agnes and Margaret.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 2005 57 1.*



☛ Letitia Kidd with her daughters. From left, Agnes, Gertrude, Margaret and Letitia, circa 1910.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 2005 57 2*



Richmond in 1894 and served in this capacity until 1902. In 1927, when he was 81, Thomas Kidd published his history of Richmond. In his later years he lived with his daughter and her husband Goldie Harris in their house on No. 4 Road. This house has a heritage designation today. Thomas Kidd died in 1930. The three daughters of Thomas and Letitia Kidd married into other pioneer families of Richmond and continued farming. Their son, Joseph drowned when he was 22 years old, followed six weeks later by the death, from convulsions due to meningitis, of Harold, the youngest son.

## **Walter Lee**

Walter Lee was 49 when he arrived in Richmond, quite a bit older than most of the immigrants. He and Thomas Kidd had served together in the Maori Wars in New Zealand where Mr. Lee had married and had children. Walter Lee was described by Thomas Kidd as being, “a stout-bodied man, grizzly beard and distinctly bald; blue eyes under rather heavy eyebrows, but a face of a most genial expression, sociable and ready to take part in any conversation that was not too philosophic, fond of music and kind to animals.”<sup>19</sup>

Walter Lee and Thomas Kidd formed a partnership, purchasing land which they farmed, and constructing roads and trails. Prior to Mr. Kidd’s marriage, he and Walter Lee shared a cabin, which was a centre point for meetings in the early days of the settlement. In 1897 Albert Brook Lee came from New Zealand with his three sons from an earlier marriage and joined his father on the farm. Walter Lee died in 1899 and Brook Lee remained on the farm for eight years before selling it and moving into Steveston. According to Ida Steves, “Brook Lee married an old practical nurse who was then known as Granny Lee. She drank and often drove her horse and buggy too close to the ditch and had to be pulled out.”<sup>20</sup>

## **McNair Family**

Matthew (Max) McNair was born in Scotland in 1889 and settled in Richmond in 1911. He was employed on a farm before establishing his own milk business where he bottled and sold fresh milk to residents of South Vancouver. He, along with many other recent immigrants from Britain, served in the Canadian Army in World War I. On his return from overseas in 1920, he settled on a farm at Finn Road and No. 3 Road. In 1922 he married Annie Varina (Winnie) Blair, who was the daughter of Archibald and Elizabeth Blair. Their four children were: Hugh, born 1923; Elizabeth born in 1924; Marjorie born in 1928; and Archie born in 1933. Matthew McNair was a member of Richmond Municipal Council from 1946 to 1948, and served on several community boards and associations. He was a charter member of the Columbia Potato Club and his son Hugh followed in his footsteps by starting a school Potato Club at the relatively early age of 10.

In the 1940s Hugh was able to purchase an old barn from Sea Island and then used lumber from English school to improve the gable-roofed barn.<sup>21</sup> Hugh and his wife, Sylvia, raised five children on their family farm, which ceased operation in May 1997, a victim of the changing economic times. Hugh McNair continued to tell stories and relate farm lore until his death in 2003.

## Gilmore Pioneers<sup>22</sup>

The Slough settlement area continued to attract many settlers, who enjoyed the comparative ease of homesteading on the fertile land, and the small community flourished. Some settlers were attracted to the isolation of island living. The Gilmore family, led by James Gilmore (born 1861) from Ballymena, Ireland, settled at first in 1883 on Sea Island on his uncle Hugh Boyd's farm. James later bought land on Westham Island just prior to his marriage to Nellie Dalzeil.

Following the death of James Dalzeil in Scotland in 1885, and the marriage of Charles and Henrietta in 1888, Charles London arranged for the Dalzeil family to move to Lulu Island. Mary Agnes Dalzeil, the widowed mother, sold her store in Scotland and took passage accompanied by Nellie, Jeanne and twin daughters, Mary and Margaret. The son, Andrew, worked on ships and came to Canada independently. Mrs. Dalziel gained employment looking after the newborn baby of Mr. Hudson Tiffin whose wife had died in childbirth. She later married Mr. Tiffin in 1893 and made her home on his farm on No. 4 Road and the dyke where they brought up Mr. Tiffin's daughter and her daughters. Jeanne Dalzeil married George London, the son of Richard London, in 1897 and they farmed on Westham Island.

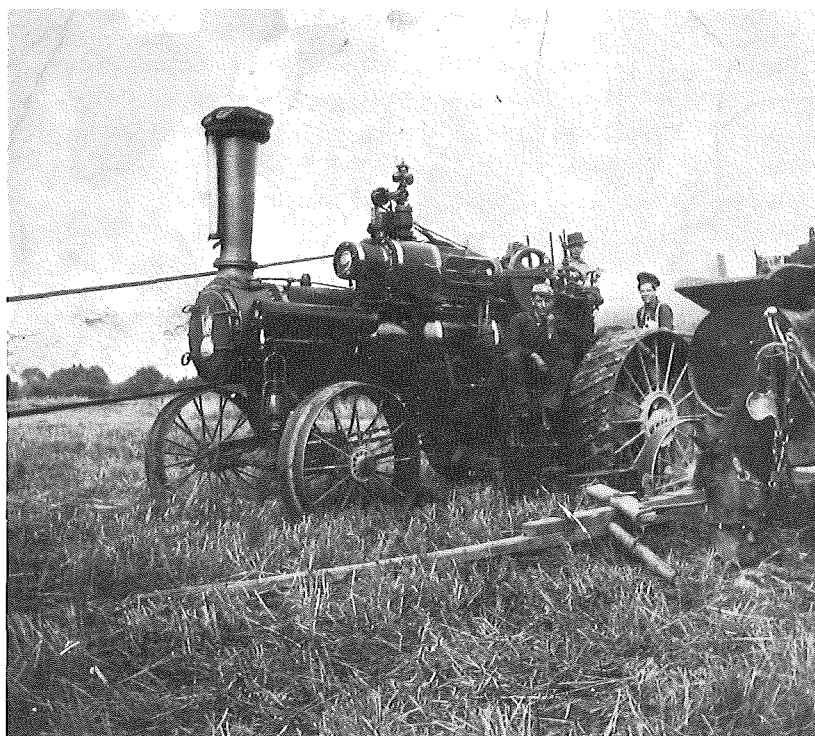
Nellie Dalzeil married James Gilmore in 1890 when she was 16 years old, and they moved to James's farm on Westham Island. They had eight children: Samuel Hugh Boyd, 1892; Leslie, 1894; William, 1896; Andrew Carson, 1898; Sarah Mary, 1900; Christine (Teenie), 1904; Edward James, 1906; and Douglas, 1917. Nellie Gilmore, in the early days of living on Westham Island, would load her small children into a boat and row across the Fraser River to visit her mother Mrs. Dalzeil, later Mrs. Tiffin. Her mother would see her coming and would immediately rush out into the yard, kill a chicken and have it plucked and in the pot by the time the Gilmore family landed.

Life was often precarious in those early days of living in a pioneer community. Leslie and William Gilmore were playing in the bushes on the family farm in 1902 when they ate some brightly coloured berries, which proved to be poisonous. Mrs. Gilmore forced medication on the boys, aged 8 and 6. Leslie managed to vomit the berries out of his system. William did not and subsequently died.

After the death of Mr. Tiffin in 1907, the Gilmore family moved from Westham Island to the Tiffin farm, now owned by Nellie's mother, and the children attended English School.

☉ Pea harvesting on the James Gilmore and sons farm, Lulu Island, circa 1914.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 2001 1 3.*



## A Family Story

### James And Nellie Gilmore<sup>23</sup>



④ Nellie and James Gilmore in 1936.  
*City of Richmond Archives*  
*Photograph 2005 57 4.*

Many stories feature James Gilmore as the principal player. He loved auctions and would often come home with surprising articles. At one sale he purchased a pony and cart. The pony, named Teddy, had been a circus performer and knew many tricks. Teenie was the only family member who could handle the pony and she would drive the pony and cart to the English School and tie him up while she was at lessons. Teddy would untie his own reins on a regular basis, eat the local garden produce, and then chase the school children around the field. Teddy was happily chasing the children on the occasion of a visit from the Reverend Alver MacKay. The Reverend valiantly went to the aid of the children and Teddy sank his teeth in the Reverend's rear end.

James decided to buy an automobile and proceeded to do what he loved best, to haggle for the best bargain. He finally made a deal with the garage owner, Mr. Begg, that he would purchase the car for a set price if Mr. Begg would work on the farm for three days. James was a bad driver; he would talk to the car just like his horse, shouting, "Whoa!" until he realized that he had to put the brakes on.

Nellie Gilmore also had her place in the family history. She loved the beach and was the first Canadian to purchase land at Boundary Bay on the United States side of the border. She put up a tent for the first few years and then, following World War I, had two cabins built on the property where she holidayed with all her children and grandchildren.

James Gilmore was owed money by a feed merchant and despite his best efforts could not get payment from the merchant. Nellie, saying that she would get the money somehow and then keep it for herself, went to the merchant's office. She was not allowed in to see him so spent the day in the office, knitting and telling everyone who passed by that he was untrustworthy and did not pay his bills. At the end of the day Nellie was paid in full and she used the money to purchase a new bedroom suite that had been deemed unnecessary by James.

### Leslie Gilmore<sup>24</sup>

Leslie and Samuel Gilmore enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, Twenty-ninth Battalion, in World War I, where Leslie was badly injured. He was put on a hospital ship bound for England, but the ship was torpedoed and it sank. Leslie was one of the fortunate ones who was rescued by a coal barge and hospitalized in England, where a steel plate had to be put in his skull. After the war, Leslie was at home on the family farm when an inspector came to check on the boiler of the steam-driven threshing machine. Leslie went to meet the inspector who asked him if he had been wounded in World War I. The inspector was the captain of the coal barge.

Leslie Gilmore took over the farm previously owned by his grandmother, Mrs. Tiffin, and was an aggressive, smart farmer who made money on his crops, many of which were trend-setting. The President of the National Farmers Union of Great Britain, Sir James Turner, while on a tour of Canada, called Leslie Gilmore "the most progressive farmer in the Commonwealth." He first grew potatoes, vegetables and small fruits, and was the first farmer to grow over 27 tons of potatoes per acre. In the 1940s

he went into dairy farming and was well known for his prize-winning herd of purebred Holsteins. Leslie Gilmore won North American recognition for high milk production and also farmed beef cattle at his ranch at Soda Creek. His first wife, Annie Isabella was the daughter of John and Sarah Blair. In his later years he and his second wife, Mary became involved in horse racing. His brother Edward was the first chairman of the British Columbia Coast Vegetable Co-operative.

## Samuel Gilmore<sup>25</sup>

Samuel Hugh Gilmore, who went to war with Leslie Gilmore, also went into farming on his return to Richmond. He married Gertrude Kidd, the youngest daughter of Thomas and Letitia Kidd, and they moved to the Kidd family farm, which was situated at 695 Shell Road. They farmed on 100 acres that ran from Steveston Highway at Shell Road to the sloughs. By this time Thomas Kidd was living with his daughter Agnes and her husband Goldie Harris at the house on No. 4 Road.

Sam Gilmore became an avid lacrosse player, beginning with field lacrosse and moving into box lacrosse. He played after World War I along with his brothers, and in the 1930s he started to coach lacrosse teams. He coached and managed a South Arm team called the South Arm Sovereigns sponsored by A.B.C. Packing Co. All through the Great Depression, he managed to find enough money and players to keep the team going. He would make sure that his boys had a ride to the game, equipment to play with and generally supported each team member. His lacrosse interest ended with the coming of World War II when many of his players enlisted. The roll call of the Richmond World War II dead included many of the lacrosse players, including Sam Gilmore's own son Boyd.<sup>26</sup>

## Boyd Gilmore

Boyd Gilmore, born in 1923, was educated in Richmond. He played lacrosse and football and was a member of the Presbyterian Church. According to Audrey, his older sister, they enjoyed a wonderful childhood surrounded by their large extended family. Boyd enlisted in the Royal Canadian Airforce in 1942 and served as an Air Gunner, going overseas in 1943. On July 31 1944, the Halifax aircraft in which Boyd was serving failed to return from its mission and he was listed as "missing, presumed dead" on August 1, 1944. In March of 1945 word was received that he had been officially buried in the cemetery at St. Martin Aux Bosc, France. Boyd Gilmore is listed on the Richmond Cenotaph.<sup>27</sup> His sister Audrey married Thomas Wylie in 1941.

## Finn Slough<sup>28</sup>

Lulu Island has had a long history of settlement by immigrants who arrived from all parts of the world and for many different reasons. Many immigrants left Finland after 1870 to settle in either the United States of America or Canada, mostly men who were looking for a better life for themselves and, eventually, their families. One of the first Finnish immigrants to settle in Richmond was Mikko Hihnala. In his new surroundings he changed his name to Mike Jacobson. He had been a miner in Astoria, Washington. On



④ Samuel and Gertrude Gilmore in a photograph taken after World War II. Note the picture of their son Boyd in the background.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 2005 57 6.*



④ Fishing boats, houses and part of wharf at Finn Slough, circa 1970.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 1978 34 7.*

a visit to Richmond he fell in love with the lush green countryside and decided to become a fisherman and settle here. At first he lived in a scow house on the North Arm of the Fraser River, but later purchased land on what was to become Finn Road and moved there prior to 1900.

Other Finnish fisherman soon joined Mr. Jacobson; Pete Manini, Kalle Helenius, Mannos Inkstrom and Gustaf Eldstrom arrived over the next two years. Several of the settlers bought land along Green Slough, now called Woodward's Slough. Bylaw 123 was passed by the Richmond Municipality in 1907 to have Finland Road (later shortened to Finn Road) officially designated

prior to paving. This road ran from Woodward's Slough to No. 4 Road. Many recent immigrants could not afford the land price of \$40 per acre of uncleared land and \$90 per acre for cleared land so they looked for other options for housing including living on scow houses along the river bank.

The network of navigable sloughs allowed boats to travel along them to the land owned by some of the Finnish community. However, the dyking of the land alongside the Fraser River, deemed necessary to protect the ploughed fields from flooding, resulted in the closure of the sloughs as natural travel routes. In 1900 there were dramatic changes to Woodward's Slough. A dam was built close to the end of No. 5 Road as well as a floodgate at the south end of the slough. In 1905 another dam was built at Woodward's Slough and the river. This forced the Finnish community to find another mooring place for their boats and scow houses. They required a place to set up the bluestone tanks where they soaked and cleaned their linen nets, net rack floats to dry the nets, net sheds to store their nets, as well as a safe harbour for the boats and scow houses. The closest and most suitable area appeared to be at the present end of No. 4 Road.

At the turn of the century this road did not extend to the river, but there was a foot trail to Finland Road, and best of all, there was a slough to harbour the boats away from the turbulent Fraser River. This slough has had various names over the years - Anderson, Whitworth, Gilmore and Tiffin - names usually based on the owners of the nearby land. At the time of the move, the slough was called Tiffin, but soon became known as Finn Slough. The numbers of Finnish fishermen and their families grew as word

spread about the excellent fishing and temperate climate. In 1901 some Finnish settlers also moved to British Columbia to set up the community called Sointula, an experiment in communal living on Malcolm Island.

By 1910 there was a solid group of fishermen living on scow houses, in net sheds or on their boats at Finn Slough. This was a remote place at that time. Dwellings were built on the small island which formed the south side of the slough. This island has also had several names - Anderson Island and Whitworth Island, and is now known as Gilmore, or Gilmour Island. In 1907 a well-constructed bridge was built to connect the island to the north bank of the slough. The bridge, a drawbridge to allow for the passage of boats at high tide, still exists today. When a fisherman wished to take his boat through the slough, he could easily draw four planks out of the bridge, sail through and then replace the planks. This is the only drawbridge remaining on Lulu Island.

The community grew along with the growth and mechanization of fishing. In 1931, a Malcolm Islander, Laurie Jarvelainen, invented the first powered gillnet drum which revolutionized fishing on the coast. Finn Slough became a strong local of the fisherman's union, the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union (PCFU), which later became the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union (UFAWU). The fishermen originally joined the local in Steveston, but found it frustrating to go to meetings where all the business was conducted in English, so they formed their own local where all the business was conducted in Finnish. In those days the fishermen could fish 5 days a week and often had large catches. One record day, Jack Jacobson, Mike's son, caught more than 1,000 sockeye salmon.

Finn Slough was an active community through the years. In the off season saunas were built, improvements were made to the fish boats, vegetable gardens were cultivated around the scow houses, and the hard work of the Finnish settlers yielded dividends. However, the stock crash of 1929 and the subsequent crash in fish prices affected their standard of living. Finnish fishermen added to their income by working for their neighbouring farmers, earning 15 cents an hour and working a 10-hour day. They also worked on maintaining the dykes on a seasonal basis. The fishing companies did try to keep the men working, sometimes paying them 5 cents for every salmon caught and then instructing them to throw the fish back into the river. After the Great Depression and World War II, life returned to a better economic standard and the population of Finn Slough and area reached its highest point of approximately seventy households between 1950 and 1960.

The community was known for its spirit and character. One fisherman, Matti Lampi, who also raised two pigs for slaughter each year, used to climb a tree every afternoon to call his pigs home. Herman Torvi was a talented shoemaker who made leather boots for his fellow fishermen and William Rahja was a tinsmith who made sheet metal baking pans. Leo Astola was an electrician and several men were expert net makers. The children attended school at the English School on the corner of Steveston Highway and Shell Road.

As the children grew and became part of the greater community of Richmond and Canada, the original Finnish settlers passed on or moved to the Finnish rest home in Vancouver, and the spirit of Finn Slough changed.

The fishing industry was no longer the primary industry of the Steveston area. Logging interests further up the Fraser made the river a highway for logs and log booms to the detriment of the small fishing boats. After the 1960s Finn Slough households diminished in numbers and the few squatters who remained there were not necessarily of Finnish descent. The community attracted artists looking for the simple life, and many of the present day residents work in Richmond or Vancouver.

According to an article in the *Globe and Mail* dated April 13, 1994, there were approximately 50 people living on Finn Slough at that time. The houses are built on stilts or rafts and are connected by wooden gangplanks to a central boardwalk. The vegetation consisted mostly of skunk cabbage which gives off a sour smell. The houses are relics of Finn Slough's past, wooden structures created from the flotsam and jetsam of the Fraser River, heated by wooden stoves and without many modern amenities.

The Finn Slough community has been under threat from the modern world for most of its existence. There have been eviction notices issued several times throughout its history, to little effect. In the 1990s developers who owned parcels of land adjacent to Finn Slough made a case for building a new residential community on Gilmore Island, thus effectively sounding what appeared to be the death knell for Finn Slough. The Finn Slough Heritage and Wetland Society was formed to fight this development process. Gilmore Island is bog land which is virtually covered with water at high tide. This makes the island Crown land, the definition being any spit of land in a river or ocean that is covered by water at high tide. The actual size of Gilmore Island has decreased quite significantly over time due to erosion and the changing patterns of the River. All these legal considerations have meant that development of the area has not taken place and for the moment Finn Slough remains a quiet picturesque oasis, beloved by artists, photographers, the movie industry, and many local residents.

🕒 A class at English School in 1929.

Back row, left to right, Illa Harris, Eva Jacobson, Lily Palmberg, teacher Beulah Bothwell, Olive Robinson, Jean Forsyth, Doug Forsyth, and Lester Finlayson. Third row, seated, May Finlayson, Leona Faulkner, Christine Marrington, Verna Jacobson, and Audrey Gilmore. Second row, kneeling, Bill Robinson, unknown, unknown, Hugh McNair, Jack Gibbons, Doug Robinson, Ken Forsyth, Albert Hill, Dick Beck. Front row, seated cross-legged, unknown, Doug Gilmore, Alvin Jacobson, Albert Hall, and Jack Forsyth.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 2003 3 3.*



## Schools of South Arm

The growth of the population in Richmond's South Arm area led to an increased level of infrastructure which included the construction of new schools. In 1888 the Provincial Government built a school on the corner of No. 2 Road and No. 9 Road (Steveston Highway). This created a split in the English School District, leading to the eventual building of the English School at Shell Road and No. 9 Road by the English School District. The Provincial-built school at No. 2 Road became

part of the Steveston School District. In 1906 a new Provincial School Act was passed which decreed that only a certain number of school districts

could exist in the Province and all the four existing districts, Steveston, English, North Arm and Sea Island, were amalgamated into the Richmond School District.

Thomas Kidd donated the land at the southwest corner of Shell Road and No. 9 Road (now named Steveston highway) for the purpose of building a school. The new English School was built in 1893 with a single door entrance and windows on either side of the building for maximum light. There was an outhouse behind the school and a shed for horses and buggies to be stabled for the day. The students sat at double desks and used slates to write upon, having a small bottle of water and a rag to clean their slates.

In 1904, due to increasing enrolment, the building was demolished and a new two-storey school was built. Two brothers with the last name of Gregory erected the building and the school was painted battle-ship grey. This school used scribblers for the first time in Richmond schools. A coal-burning stove heated the building and the yard was surrounded by a picket fence. Two of the first teachers were Mr. Messinger and Mr. Grauer. One of the early teachers was a man called Mr. Robinson. He was 6-feet-3-inches tall and weighed over 250 pounds. As Ida Steves recollects, when he gave you a strapping you really felt it.<sup>29</sup>

By the time Kathleen McNeely taught in English School, in 1910, there were eight grades. Miss McNeely had begun teaching at the age of 18. The school was closed in 1949 and the building was demolished in 1952. Crestwood School was built on the site of the English School in 1961 to serve students with special needs. In 1984 Crestwood became the Incentive School, which had previously been housed in Palmer School until that school burned down.

## Canadian Pacific (Winch) Cannery<sup>30</sup>

Farming and fishing were the staples of existence in the early days of settlement in the Slough district. The Steveston area was best known for canneries, but there was one cannery built in 1893 east of No. 2 Road, the Canadian Pacific Cannery founded by George Alexander, R.V. Winch and Dave S. Hennessey. Mr. Hennessey and Alexander Ewen had started the first salmon cannery in British Columbia across the Fraser River at Annieville in 1870. The Canadian Pacific Cannery was known for its colour, being nicknamed the Red Cannery by many people. However the Japanese community knew it as the Winch Cannery. Hennessey and Winch sold their shares in the cannery to Alexander Ewen in 1896.

The British Columbia Packers Association purchased the cannery in 1902, along with the assets of 34 other canneries. After 1905 the cannery was only operated during the dominant salmon run years: 1909, 1913, and 1917. It was destroyed by fire in 1924 as were the bunkhouses used by



④ Winch Cannery mess house in 1908. Greta Cheverton is the child playing in front of building with an older woman.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 1977 22 28.*



fishermen and cannery workers. This fire was started by an overheated stovepipe in the Richmond Cannery and quickly spread along cannery row assisted by a southwest wind. Three hundred Japanese residents were left homeless along with many other fishing industry workers.

British Columbia Packers used the Canadian Pacific Cannery site as a storage and wharfage facility during the Great Depression. By 1951, two years after the end of the wartime internment of Japanese Canadians, the Canadian Pacific Camp was in full operation, with several Japanese families living in small houses at the camp and the fishermen using the wharf. These fishermen operated a shrimp fishery from December to March as a fill-in fishery. They used innovative methods to economically fish for shrimp and eventually became part of a co-operative to process the catches. By the 1960s up to 30 boats were participating in the Canadian Pacific co-operative.

A camp for part of the British Columbia Packers gillnet fleet was kept at the cannery site until the property was sold to the City of Richmond in 1994. The City of Richmond built a fishing pier at the site of the Canadian Pacific Camp for the enjoyment of the local sports fishermen.

A fish camp was also located at London's Landing which was owned and operated by the Delta Cannery from Ladner's Landing. The owners were T.E Ladner, J. Laidlaw, D. Chisholm and F. Page. Delta Cannery became part of the Victoria Canning Company in 1885 and then was acquired by British Columbia Packers Association in 1902. Fish camps were delivery points for the fish caught in the area and consisted of a fish scow and scow house. The camp boss lived in the scow house while the fishermen had to find their own accommodation. Fish were delivered on a regular basis to the fish scow and then were collected by a cannery tug once or twice a day.

## **Saltery**

River Fish Company, a co-operative made up of approximately 150 Japanese fishermen, operated a saltery and store at the foot of No. 2 Road on Bowditch Wharf beginning circa 1926. The products were dry-salted chum salmon, herring, and herring roe for export to Japan. The store sold fishing gear, dry goods and groceries at discount prices to the members of the co-operative and their families. Annual profits from the fish processing and the store were distributed annually to members. After the Great Depression years the Japanese were trying to diversify their endeavours and eight Japanese fishermen purchased lots from the River Fish Co-operative along No. 2 and Dyke roads. This enterprise ended when the Japanese fishermen were removed from the coast in 1942. The land was seized and placed in the control of the Secretary of State for Canada and was disposed of by the Veterans Land Act director in 1945.

Vancouver Fisheries operated from the wharf in 1946. In 1951 Mamoru Sakamoto started a boat works next to the net shed. Two other Japanese boat-works were located at the London townsite area in the 1950s - Yamanaka Boat-works and Nakade Boat-works. All of these small shipyards have been moved or closed. The Sakamoto Boat works and wharf was removed by British Columbia Packers Limited in 1976.

## Mckinney/Eyestone House<sup>31</sup>

Moving east from the No. 2 Road pier, there is now a new development of townhouses and heritage-style houses. Further east along Dyke Road is the Curtis Eyestone residence. James McKinney built this house (originally at the corner of No. 2 Road and Steveston Highway) for his wife Jane.

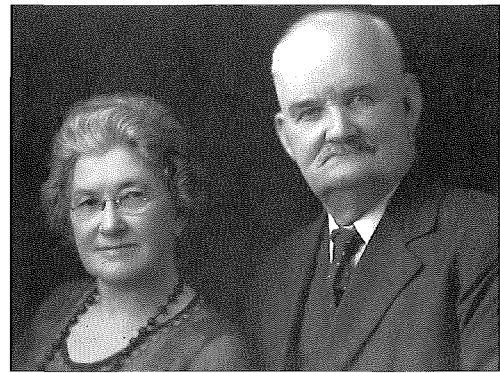
The basic house was ordered from the Sears catalogue for the price of \$879 and the optional extras came to another \$2,054. Shipping costs and labour charges brought the total amount to approximately \$4,500. The house featured oak floors, Belgian hand-cut bevelled crystal windows, knot-free lumber, radiant hot water heating throughout, solid silver faucets on indoor plumbing fixtures, hand-crafted brass and crystal light fixtures and chandeliers, panelled wainscoting, and the latest in furniture and appliances.

The order to Sears took three years to accumulate, pack and ship; first by train from Chicago to Seattle, then by paddle wheeler to New Westminster, by barge to London's Landing, and by wagon to the site. It arrived in 1911. Building the house took a further three years, as trades people were difficult to obtain due to the remote location of the site and the booming construction scene in Vancouver. The family moved in March 12, 1914 while the finishing carpentry was still underway. During the construction period James McKinney was also involved in the building of the little white church at the corner of No. 3 Road and the Steveston Highway (No. 9 Road).

The McKinney family, James, Jane and their six children, had a number of successful businesses. He originally purchased 200 acres at the corner of No. 2 Road and No.

9 Road for farming purposes. Taking note of the land boom in Steveston in 1906 due to speculators, he subdivided 100 acres into two-acre lots and sold all but two of them for \$800 to \$950 per acre. The family then moved to Vancouver and bought a mansion on Barclay Street. But James missed his rural life style and arranged the purchase and building of the house. One of his next business ventures was the growing of loganberries for wine and canning. This was highly successful, especially during the time of the prohibition in the United States, and operated until 1934.

The McKinneys remained in the house at No. 2 Road and Steveston Highway until 1948 when the house was sold to the Scollon family, who lived there until 1968 when Mr. Scollon died. At this time the house was in need of major repair and was unable to be sold and of no interest to the



④ Jane and James McKinney in 1920.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 1993 5 1.*



④ McKinney's new house, 1914.

*City of Richmond Archives Reference  
Collection, Heritage Buildings  
– McKinney House.*

family. The lawyer handling the estate finally purchased the house and land in his wife's name and held onto it until 1978 when he formed Triple A investments and transferred the house into the company's holdings. All attempts at selling the house failed, but portions of the land were sold to pay for the costs of holding the property. In 1988 the house was declared a heritage building by the City of Richmond and the city installed a caretaker on site who was able, several times, to save the house from vandals.

Triple A Company was acquired by Hong Kong investors who attempted to develop the land, but to no avail as a restoration plan for the house was never put in place. As the house had a Provincial Heritage Designation, the Triple A Company was required by law to restore the building. In 1992 Curtis Eyestone, a volunteer with the Richmond Historical and Museum Society, with a keen interest in the history of Richmond, became fascinated with the idea of saving the McKinney home by moving it to another location and restoring it.

Mr. Eyestone owned a 10-unit industrial property next to London Farm Historical site and he had already worked with the City of Richmond on the restoration of the original farm workers' bunkhouse. He made an offer of \$1.00 for the house with the idea of moving it down the road to his industrial site on the dyke. His first offer was refused, but after much negotiation with Triple A Company and the City of Richmond an agreement was finally reached. The City agreed to zone the site on Steveston and No. 2 Road as Townhouse District with a commitment to erect a memorial to commemorate the McKinney house. Triple A agreed to sell the house for \$1.00 to Mr. Eyestone, and to give him the 1911 rose bushes, the hand-grafted multi-coloured rhododendrons and the 900 original granite field stones from the McKinney property as part of the deal. The rose bushes and rhododendrons were repotted to be placed around the restored house and the stones were used to construct the gate posts, walls and fence posts on the new site.

Permits were the name of the game to get the house moved from its No. 2 Road location to the site on Dyke Road. Permits were required for road closures, traffic diversion, road loads, building, plumbing, gas installation, electrical, sewer and water. There were specific permits related to heritage buildings – heritage designation, heritage relocation and site designation. Then there were permits for rezoning, utilities rights-of-way, soils testing, geological and geotechnical, environmental assessment, foundation engineering and structural. Finally there was the moving permit.

Many problems were encountered before the house could be moved safely. These included widening Dyke Road so the towing vehicle could turn the corner from Gilbert Road safely. Electrical lines needed to be temporarily removed so that the vehicle could pass along the road; traffic signals also had to be removed and the traffic flow controlled by police. The move had to be timed to occur during the lowest traffic hours on Steveston Highway. The route chosen was east for 1 kilometre along Steveston Highway, south for 2.5 kilometres along Gilbert Road and then west for 0.8 kilometres on Dyke Road. The route had few buildings but all the road signs, street lamps, traffic signals, a few trees, and 29 utility lines had to be removed, albeit mostly temporarily.

The house had to be prepared for the move. Windows were removed and packed separately. All three chimneys had to be taken down and the bricks taken to the new site. All 14 cast-iron steam radiators were removed along with the furnaces and hot water tanks. The rear deck was removed, and extra temporary walls placed inside the house to prevent it from collapsing during the move.

On Thursday August 5, 1993, the house was slowly moved towards Steveston Highway over a Bailey bridge built on the property to get the house safely across the lawn. By 5:00 am on Saturday the house was eased onto Steveston Highway, watched by hundreds of interested spectators. The house finally moved onto its site on Dyke Road by early afternoon on Saturday August 7<sup>th</sup> 1993. The bill for moving the house was \$175,000.

The massive task of restoring the house to its previous glory then began for Curtis and Eileen Eyestone. All of the labour was undertaken by the Eyestones themselves apart from items such as concrete foundations, roofing, and chimneys that required specialized labour. In 1998 the Eyestones received the Personal Achievement Award for Heritage from the City of Richmond Heritage Commission, which recognized the immense task of restoring the house.

## **South Arm United Church**

The original owner of Mr. Eyestone's house, James McKinney, was involved with South Arm United Church. The church that is situated on the original site celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding in 2004.

In 1885, Reverend James A. Wood, a Methodist minister, visited the south side of Lulu Island and by 1887 had succeeded in obtaining a small building to hold church meetings at London's Landing. As there were few settlers on the South Arm at this time attendance at the church was sparse. Reverend Wood was living in Ladner and commuting by boat to London's Landing. The building became a home for other community activities such as the first school for South Arm. It was also used by the Presbyterian Church to hold meetings and services. In 1889, Reverend J.A. Jaffray, Presbyterian, used the building as a regular preaching station. This meant that the South Arm area was then under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church and was served by ministers of that denomination. For a while services were held in the English School, at the corner of Shell Road and Steveston Highway, which was a more central location for the Presbyterian settlers living in South Arm.

By 1902 the population of the South Arm area had increased to such numbers that it was decided that a full-time minister was needed. In April 1903, the Westminster Presbytery appointed Reverend William Burton as the missionary in charge. Services were held at three buildings in South Arm: London's Landing in the morning; the English School in the afternoon; and Steveston in the evening. The minister was assiduous in his duties and on February 22, 1904 the first annual meeting of the "London branch of the Presbyterian congregation of South Arm and Steveston" was held at London's Landing. Mr. Archibald Blair and Mr. J.A. McKinney were elected as managers.<sup>32</sup>

In 1905 it was decided to organize a congregation solely for South Arm and go ahead with a subscription list for the building of a church. On September 12<sup>th</sup> of that year the congregation agreed to proceed with the building of a church at the corner of Steveston Highway and No. 3 Road. Mr. Alexander donated a half-acre of land, situated on the south side of Steveston Highway. The contract for building the church was given to Thomas Patterson of Ladner for \$450. Lumber was purchased from the Delta Saw Mill in Ladner at a cost of \$540 and was delivered by the mill to London's Landing. The windows, doors and seats were delivered later to Woodward's Landing. The total cost of building the church came to \$1,126.55, which included the stove and painting.

The church organization sold the London's Landing building for \$50. The new church was dedicated on May 20<sup>th</sup> 1906, with Reverend Alexander Dunn preaching in the morning, and Reverend J.A Logan, Richmond Presbyterian Church, preaching in the evening. The first communion service was held in the new church on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1906. Reverend William Ross was appointed to succeed Reverend William Burton in 1908 and remained in charge for the next seven years.



④ The South Arm United Church building in 1930. At this time it was being used as a "summer centre."

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 1978 8 10.*

The Ladies Auxiliary was officially started in 1911. Their first project was a Thanksgiving Supper held in the Orange Hall. Their profit was \$ 70.75. By the annual congregational meeting in 1912, there were 40 members on the roll, 12 new members having been received throughout the year. The Sunday school was now open year round, Bible classes were held, and a Young Peoples' Society was started. The first elders elected in 1906 were Archibald Blair and William McKenzie and they remained as elders for some time.

Reverend R.G. MacKay was the minister at South Arm Presbyterian for the years 1916 to 1919 and during this time a small Presbyterian church was started in Steveston. It was aligned with the South Arm Church. This gave new life to the Church and a Girls' Club and a Boys' Club were started. The young people felt the need for a church hall building and following a subscription drive that raised \$500, a hall was completed by 1919.

His cousin the Reverend Alver MacKay, a veteran of World War I, succeeded Reverend MacKay and he served South Arm and Steveston for the next ten years. This was a noteworthy era in the life of these Protestant Churches. The United Church of Canada was formed in 1925, which amalgamated the Presbyterian Churches and the Methodist Churches throughout the country. The vote passed easily at the South Arm Church, which had previously proposed union with the local Methodists in 1917.

The Steveston situation was slightly different as the two existing churches, the Methodists and the Presbyterians, came together to form the United Church in Steveston. In 1921 the Women's Missionary Society was formed at the South Arm Church to support the work of the Church in Quebec and among new Canadians on the prairies. The South Arm Church membership grew rapidly during Reverend Alver MacKay's ministry. An annual congregational picnic was started in 1923. In 1924 this event was called the Richmond Municipal Picnic and more than 500 people attended, travelling to Bowen Island by chartered boats.



Reverend Alver MacKay was very much a part of community life in Richmond and paid particular attention to the sacrifices made by Richmond citizens during World War I. He became the chairman of the Memorial Committee that was formed in 1921 to erect a memorial to the fallen. Reverend MacKay, as a war veteran and a community figure, was ideally suited to this public role. He appeared before the Richmond Municipal Council in February 1922 to state that the war memorial, or Cenotaph, would cost \$1,612. The money was raised by public subscription and a grant from the Municipality. The Cenotaph was dedicated on April 9, 1922 with Reverend MacKay and two other clergymen conducting the service.

South Arm United Church was well served throughout the coming years by a series of ministers and also by the local established families who worked hard to maintain the growth of the congregation and service to the community. The members of the Blair, McNair, Gilmore, Gay, Steves, and McKinney families were annually listed as serving on the committees and auxiliaries of the Church.

The McKinney family attended the small white church on Sundays, walking from their large house on No. 2 Road and Steveston Highway to No. 3 Road and Steveston Highway. James McKinney never owned a car, or learned to drive.

④ First annual Richmond municipal picnic, Bowen Island, B.C., June 30, 1924.

*City of Richmond Archives Photograph 1992 5 1.*

## ***A Not-So-Simple Funeral***

Curtis Eystone, the current owner of the McKinney House, related the following story about funeral arrangements for a member of the church who had passed away just after World War I.

James McKinney was one of the pallbearers and was instrumental in the decision where to bury the body. The police constable in Steveston would not allow the corpse to be buried on Lulu Island, as there was a strong possibility that the coffin would float above ground if or when the land flooded. So the corpse was loaded into a canoe and after an 18-hour journey from London's Landing to Gastown dock the pallbearers accompanying the body were stunned to find that the body could not be buried in Vancouver as the ground was solid rock. They then loaded the corpse into a wagon and headed into the forest along the Kingsway Road toward New Westminster where the ground was softer to allow for burial. This rather macabre episode gave James McKinney an idea for a financial opportunity. He decided to back financially two men who were in the process of building a crematorium and graveyard at 41st and Fraser Street, the Vancouver Crematorium and Graveyard. The two men soon had financial problems and failed to repay the loans so James McKinney took over the business. The cremation process was expensive and many burials could still take place all over the area, so people did not see the need to have their loved ones cremated. James McKinney offered free Cremations as a service to all but the cost of funeral services, flowers, and associated costs soon made up for the "free" service.

## **Outhouses**

As the Municipality of Richmond grew in size and population, services and infrastructure were put in place according to the needs of the community. Originally the settlers used outhouses with a pit. These were decidedly smelly in the summer and not too wonderful in the winter either. Outhouses were soon replaced by septic tanks. In those times farmers would dig in a septic tank for each household but the heavy clay soil conditions proved unfavourable to the proper workings of a septic system. As the population increased after World War II the Municipality of Richmond put a long-range disposal system into operation.

The first areas of land which were required to have proper sanitary sewers were housing developments built after 1958. The priorities were housing developments and houses built on areas of poor soil and/or a high water table. By 1970 the long range scheme for sewage disposal included the building of a sewage treatment plant at the south end of Gilbert Road close to the South Arm of the Fraser River. Prior to the building of the plant, raw sewage was discharged into the Fraser River. Brighthouse treatment plant was completed in 1960 for secondary treatment of sewage but the new Lulu Island treatment plant on Gilbert Road would also treat this effluent. The land was preloaded in 1970 and the building completed by 1972. By the 1990s the treatment plant was in need of overhaul and modernization

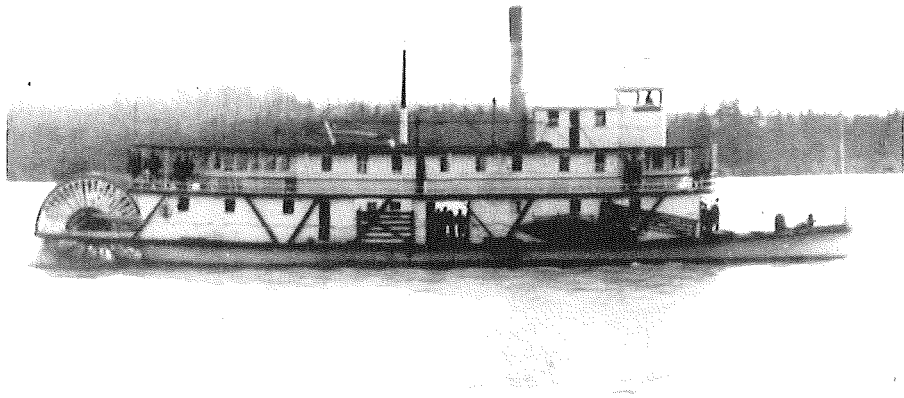
## **Crossing the River by Ferry**

The transfer of goods to the capital, Victoria, and the up-river communities was by steamer calling at the London wharf and other private wharves along the South Arm of the Fraser River. The Hudson's Bay Company operated a side-wheeler called the "Enterprise" from 1862 to 1885. It travelled along the Fraser River from Victoria to New Westminster picking up mail and transporting people and goods. The steam ferry "Alice" which was owned and operated by John Wesley Sexsmith, Reeve of Richmond

from 1887 to 1892, originally used the Phoenix Cannery wharf, owned by Marshall English. The ferry moved its terminus to the London's Landing wharf in 1884. Captain F. Stewart then purchased the "Alice" and later replaced it with a newer, larger boat, which unfortunately burned soon afterwards. The side-wheeler steamer ran twice a week in the summer and once a week in the winter between London's Landing, Ladner's Landing, New Westminster, and Victoria.

The Hudson's Bay Company had competition in the 1870s from independent steamboat owners after its previous monopoly of the Fraser River route. The Irving Pioneer Line put a side-wheeler on the same route, the "Wilson G. Hunt" which competed for passengers and goods with the "Enterprise." In 1883 the two companies formed the Canadian Pacific Navigation Co. Ltd. which ran the "Transfer" from New Westminster to Ladner and lower Fraser River ports. It ran daily trips between Ladner and Steveston as well as daily trips between London's Landing and New Westminster and service three times a week between London's Landing and Victoria. The Canadian Pacific Navigation Company was absorbed by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company in 1903. In 1908 the daily sailings came to an end for the "Transfer" and it was sold in 1909.

It was then realized that a river crossing for passengers and goods was needed from the South Arm area to the Delta area and south. The small riverboat the "Telephone" connected the communities of Steveston, Westham Island, Ladner, and Woodward's Landing to New Westminster on a daily basis. The steamboat the "Edgar" was also in competition with the "Transfer" but could not



compete with the Canadian Navigation Company. Although the boats had a published schedule of stops, they would always make an unscheduled stop if necessary at any of the private wharfs along the South Arm of the river. The hopeful passenger would attract the attention of the boat by running a flag up a pole or waving at the boat from the shore.

④ The S.S. Transfer in 1890.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 1977 1 197.*

A public wharf was built at the bottom of No. 2 Road in 1947 and consisted of a wharf measuring 40' x 100', an approach which was 16' x 145', a float, boathouse, and an office building and workshop. In 1954 Coast Ferries Ltd. began operating a ferry service to the Gulf Islands using the "Lady Rose." It had room for one car which was lifted on to the ferry by a crane, but the main cargo was agricultural goods. In 1960 the "Lady Rose" was moved to Vancouver Island. The wharf was removed in 1976 by British Columbia Packers Ltd.<sup>33</sup>



## **Woodward's Landing**

In 1874 Nathan Woodward and his 18-year-old son, Daniel, arrived from Ontario to homestead on Lulu Island. Nathan was an experienced boat builder and his son Daniel was interested in farming. They settled in the area around the present No. 5 Road, south to the Fraser River and west to Garden City Road. The land holdings contained junctions of sloughs. They erected their first rough cabin before 1875 and Nathan was one of those to sign the petition for incorporation of the Municipality of Richmond. In 1893 the Municipality purchased three-tenths of an acre for the price of \$75 from Nathan Woodward for the erection of a wharf to be known as Woodward's Landing.<sup>34</sup> Private and commercial vessels used the wharf as a stop on a route linking Ladner, Richmond and New Westminster. Produce from the rapidly growing agricultural industry was shipped from the new wharf. The flow of goods and cargo demanded the services of a wharfinger even prior to the ferry being established. The first man to be appointed to this position was Nathan Woodward.

At the beginning of World War I the wharfinger at Woodward's Landing was John George Lemon, an immigrant from London, England. He and his wife Annie had five children, three sons and two daughters. Two of the sons, Reginald and George were killed in France in 1917. The oldest son Wilfred Lemon also served in World War I and later joined the Vancouver Police Force and quickly rose through the ranks. The daughters were Annie, who married Mr. Forsyth, and May. The Lemon family had a small confectionery store at the Landing.

In 1921 a fire at Woodward's Landing, started by sparks from a pile driver, destroyed the wharf and the buildings. The wharf was quickly rebuilt along with a new warehouse. John G. Lemon remained as wharfinger for several years. Woodward's Landing changed from a stop along the river to a commercial enterprise with the coming of the ferry and consequent use of the land for parking and other ferry-related services.

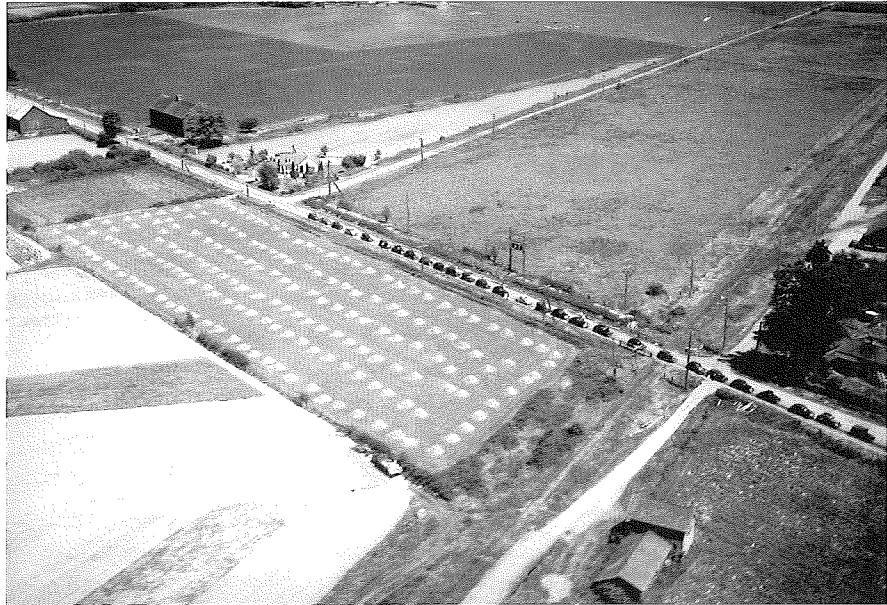
## **The (Almost) Ladner to Richmond Bridge<sup>35</sup>**

In 1910 a petition was presented to the Delta Municipal Council from the Delta Board of Trade requesting the building of a bridge over the Lower Fraser River at Ladner but no immediate action was taken. In 1912 a ferry service was established from Steveston to Ladner - a 45-minute crossing. In the fall of 1913 the route was changed to Woodward's Landing to Ladner and this remained the course until the opening of the Deas Island Tunnel in 1959. The final run was made by the Delta Princess on May 23, 1959. The ferry was operated as a regular service, with extra sailings in the summer and during rush hours. In the 1920s the ferry boats were the 40-foot "Senoma" which was operated by Captain Brewster, and the "S.S. Delta."

In 1932 the number of cars using the ferry was more than 48,000 per year. By 1956 this number had increased to 378,000. There were many problems associated with operating a regular service across the Fraser River. During the spring floods new eddies and whirlpools were created, and new channels were dredged out by the force of water. The river could freeze during winter months making ice floes a hazard. All this meant that a strong

hand was needed on the tiller and an expert knowledge of navigation was required. Due to these difficulties the ferry was often late. The population of the whole Lower Mainland area was increasing, as was the use of the automobile, and the combination of these factors led to a demand for a fixed crossing.

On February 8, 1927 a bill was passed through the Provincial Legislature authorizing the Fraser River Bridge Company to build a proposed toll bridge linking Ladner to Lulu Island. This action led to a great deal



④ Cars lined up for the Ladner Ferry on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1947. Image includes surrounding farmhouses, the intersection of No. 5 Road and Rice Mill Road, and the C.P.R. rail crossing.

*City of Richmond Archives, Noel McConnell / Richmond Photograph 1997 16 19.*

of opposition and public debate. The Department of Public Works, Ottawa, held a board meeting in the City Hall in New Westminster on November 3, 1927 to hear public opinion and views of representatives from interested parties. The New Westminster Board of Trade urged the construction of a bridge above New Westminster in preference to one at Woodward's Landing. The Terminal Engineering Company undertook a full traffic survey of the Lower Mainland and Lower Fraser Valley. Eventually the Act of 1927 was amended in 1931 to fix the site of the proposed bridge at or near Deas Island. This led to various proposals from other bridge and engineering companies. John Davidson, an engineer, proposed that Terminal Engineering Company build a hard surface road and bridge.

In September 1931 Bylaw 578 was passed by the Municipality of Richmond authorizing the Ladner Bridge Company, sponsored by John Davidson, to "build, erect, construct, maintain and manage a toll bridge for ordinary passenger and traffic purposes over the Fraser River, on or near Deas Island – to erect and construct toll houses and toll gates."<sup>36</sup> Plans were submitted to the Provincial Legislature stating, "...bridge shall have a clear roadway of not less than 24 feet and provision for a sidewalk of 4 feet. ... It should be ready for operation not less than 2 years after construction commences...."<sup>37</sup> The cost of the Ladner Bridge project was estimated at \$2,600,000 and would have employed 1,000 to 1,500 people over a two-year period. The toll system was set out and the levy on the tolls was to revert to the Municipality in an orderly fashion.



④ The Ferry Inn at Woodward's Landing, circa 1960.

*City of Richmond Archives Photograph 1986 68 34.*

By September of 1931 the Federal Government had agreed to authorize construction of highways to connect to the bridge. By December 1931 the financing was in order and some construction work had begun. Men on relief were sent to the bridge site to report for daily work. In 1933 the Ladner Bridge Company reported that it had started preliminary work on

the wharf, road connections and test borings. The Delta Municipality passed resolutions supporting the bridge, but the New Westminster Municipality was still adamantly opposed to the plan.

There was a change in the Provincial Government in 1933 and the new Premier T.D. Patullo stated that the Ladner project was not in the public interest and the Government favoured the idea of a bridge above New Westminster. T.D. Patullo just happened to be the Liberal Member of the Legislature for New Westminster. In 1934 the Government passed the amendment to the 1927 Act changing the site of the bridge to New Westminster and the Ladner Bridge project died. The Patullo Bridge was built and officially opened in 1937. Although there was still latent interest in the idea of a Ladner bridge, World War II intervened.

## **Deas Island Tunnel<sup>38</sup>**

A ferry continued to serve the area and in 1949 the “Delta Princess” was especially built to handle the growing congestion on the route. This purpose-built vessel could handle 30 cars, double the amount on the old ferry, and unlike the old ferry, could also accommodate large trucks with ease. It had two 240-horse power engines, giving it a top speed of 12 knots. There was a cabin for about 25 to 30 passengers, and large deck spaces to enjoy the fine scenery on clement days. The “Delta Princess” plied the route for the next ten years. After the Deas Island Tunnel was completed, the ferry vessel went on to sail the routes between Salt Spring Island and Crofton. Interestingly one of the ferry captains on the route was George Forsyth, grandson of John George Lemon, a pioneer wharfinger at Woodward’s Landing.

Although the bridge project had not come to fruition, interest in an alternative crossing of the Fraser River at Woodward’s Landing continued to grow. Following World War II a group of Delta residents began to press again for a bridge.

In March 1947 George Massey, from Ladner, spoke at the monthly meeting of the Richmond Board of Trade. As he unrolled his map of the lower delta area of the Fraser River, it became apparent that he had researched his project very thoroughly. Mr. Massey had promoted, researched, lobbied and spoken to any interested persons on behalf of building a tunnel underneath the Fraser River at the site of the Ladner Ferry terminal. Among his arguments in favour of a tunnel instead of a bridge were that the approaches for a bridge would be so long as to be wasteful from a land use point of view, and very expensive to build.

The Fraser River at the point of the Woodward’s Landing ferry terminal was 3,825 feet wide and sufficiently deep that no boring would be necessary. In 1946, Mr. Massey, the operator of a small machine shop, had contacted the engineers who designed and built a tunnel under the Maas River in Rotterdam, Holland. The firm of Christiani and Nielsen had finished the project and they had equipment left over which would contribute to savings in the overall cost. The principal idea for the tunnel was to dredge a channel, build the tunnel in dry dock and carry it out and sink it in sections. Mr. Massey did not have the final figures for the cost of the project as much depended on the bearing ability of the subsoil. However he did point

out to the eager audience that the cost of maintaining the tunnel would be much less than for a bridge, which would require regular painting and roadbed repair. The Ladner Board of Trade was wholeheartedly behind Mr. Massey and the Richmond Board of Trade joined their comrades in backing the project.

The Provincial Public Works Department received a petition in October 1947 bearing 1,039 signatures from the citizens of Delta asking for a new crossing of the river at Ladner. Mr. Massey was President of the Tunnel Committee of the Delta Board of Trade. This committee then became the Lower Fraser River Crossing Improvement Association. The group lobbied and pressured the Government for the next three years.

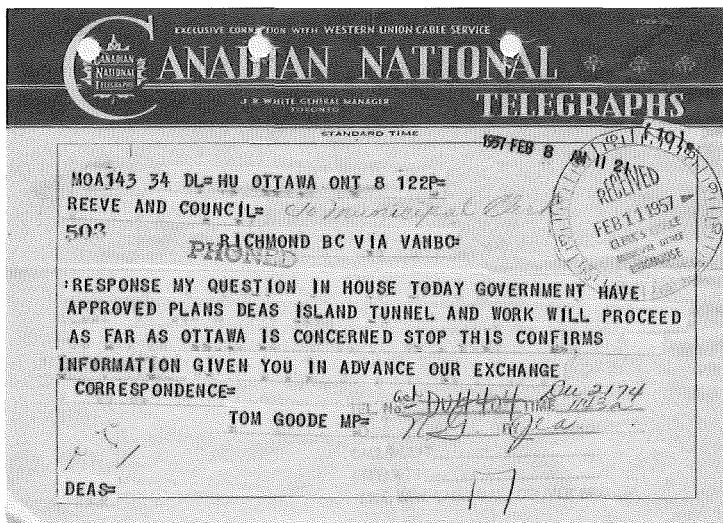
In March 1949 at a meeting of the Fraser River Crossing Improvement Association, Reeve Grauer of Richmond and Reeve Kirkland of Ladner reported that their joint meeting with the Minister of Highways had gone well and that the Minister was prepared to meet the cost of a survey for the tunnel if the Association could produce the necessary financial backing for the project.

In 1952 Phil Gaglardi was appointed as Minister of Public Works. He created the British Columbia Toll Highways and Bridges Authority with a mandate to construct, operate and finance crossings in the Province. In 1955 two separate studies were undertaken by bridge consultants into the possibility of constructing highway crossings at either the vicinity of Annacis Island or Deas Island.

Foundation of Canada Engineering Corporation undertook a further study, with the assistance of Cristiani and Neilson. Their conclusion

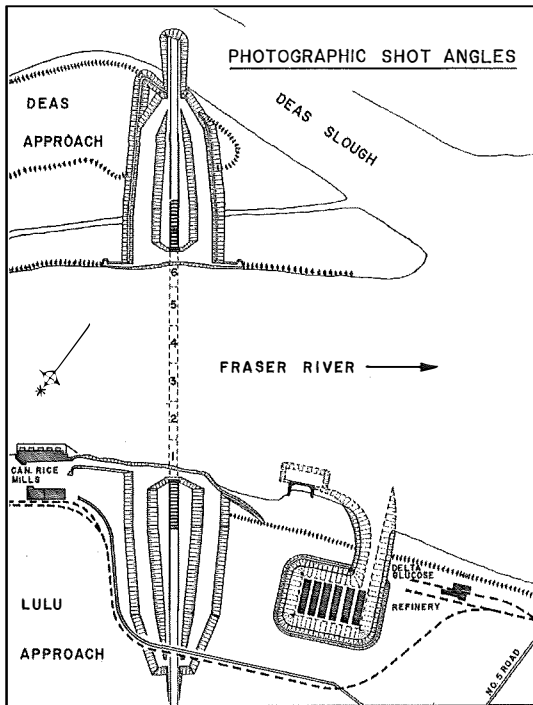
was that the previous two studies had not taken the complete highway system into consideration and had considered each site separately. They recommended that a crossing should be built at Deas Island that was four lanes wide and that a tunnel could be constructed for less cost than a high-level bridge. The cost of a high-level bridge was estimated at \$24 million and that of a tunnel at \$17 million. Also, 85% of the cost of labour and materials for a tunnel would be spent in British Columbia versus 60% for a bridge. At the time of this study, work on the Oak Street Bridge had already commenced, so the public was interested in the idea of a four-lane highway to the United States. The traffic levels on the Patullo Bridge had already reached the saturation point. The approach of airlines to the Vancouver International Airport also lent credence to the idea of a tunnel, which would not have an impact on the skyline in any way.

Minister Phil Gaglardi made his decision and announced in 1956 that the tunnel would be built under Deas Island and would cost between \$15,000,000 and \$17,000,000. Construction began in 1957 with the building of the dry dock where the six tunnel elements would be fabricated.



- MP Tom Goode let the Richmond Town Council know by telegram about Federal Government financial involvement in the Tunnel.

City of Richmond Archives, Municipal Records, Series 37.



Ⓢ This diagram of the tunnel was created in 1956 for an album of photographs taken of the progress of tunnel construction. It shows clearly the location of both the Canada Rice Mill and the Delta Glucose Plant.  
*City of Richmond Archives,  
 Joan Smythe Collection.*

The design of the tunnel was based on the Maas River tunnel at Rotterdam, designed by Cristiani and Neilson. The tunnel is rectangular in shape, unlike most tunnels, which are round. The design concept of the tunnel was six pre-cast reinforced concrete elements, which were constructed in dry dock, floated out to the site where the trenches had been gouged out of the river bottom and then sunk in place. These elements formed a four-lane highway beneath the river, which was automatically ventilated and illuminated.

The first construction task was to build the dry dock where the concrete elements were to be created. The dry dock was created by building temporary dykes in the shape of the dry dock along the north side of the Fraser River. These dykes were closed off and the water pumped out. The dry dock was completed in March 1957 and measured 633 feet by 384 feet and is the present day site of the ferry maintenance and re-fit dock just to the east of the south end of No. 5 Road. Timing the placement of the six concrete elements was a very precise operation involving the coordination of the work schedule with the tides. The first element was sunk on a rainy, windy and foggy January 6, 1959 taking

17 hours, the second element on January 26, 1959 and the sixth and final element which only took 30 minutes was put in place on April 17, 1959.

There was only one fatal accident during construction. A workman on a scow died when a barge load of logs struck the A-frame of the sand-jetting scow. In another incident 11 men were rescued without injury when the dredge "Townsend" sank after being struck by a runaway scow which had broken away from a tug.

### Tunnel Statistics<sup>39</sup>

- Cost:**
  - \$ 25,000,000
- Tunnel:**
  - Six separate reinforced concrete elements
  - 344 feet (104.9 m) long by 78 feet (23.8 m) wide by 24 feet (7.3 m.) high each element.
  - Two double lanes each tunnel separated by a bulkhead
  - 12 feet (3.7 m) each lane
  - 2,150 feet (655.3 m) long from portal to portal
  - 56,000 cubic yards (42, 784 cubic m) of concrete
  - 6,200 tons of reinforced steel utilizing 140 men
  - 300,000 bags of cement.
- Approaches:**
  - the Deas Island approach is 1,100 feet (335.3 m)
  - the Lulu Island approach is 1,800 feet (548.6 m)
- Vehicles:**
  - capable of handling 7,000 vehicles per hour.
- Labour force:**
  - 1,100 maximum – averaging 500 annually over 2 years



The tunnel has many special features including that of the ventilation system. This is rarely necessary unless there is a high carbon monoxide level due to a slow down of vehicular traffic.

Underneath each ventilation building there are two 40 horsepower centrifugal pumps, with a capacity to handle 1000 gallons per minute, to catch the rainwater runoff. There are also two 25 horsepower submerged centrifugal pumps with a 400 gallon capacity located mid-river which handle the excess water runoff from washing the tunnel. Inside each ventilation building there are four 7.5 horsepower horizontal nonclog pumps with a capacity to handle 1,000 gallons per minute. These pumps handle the water collected on the surface between the approaches and the dykes.

Lighting was an important factor in designing the safety aspects of the tunnel. The louvered approaches and the specially designed lighting system allow for a gradual transition of light from the outside to the inside of the tunnel.

There are many safety features that were either built in to the tunnel construction or have been added at later dates when technological advances were made. These include closed-circuit television cameras, sprinkler systems, and electronic eyes to measure vehicle heights.

- ④ Aerial photograph taken in 1976 from an altitude of 4,000 feet looking north from south arm between No. 5 and No. 6 Roads, showing Canada Rice Mill and Delta Flour Mill on either side of George Massey Tunnel.

*City of Richmond Archives, George S. McNutt Photograph, 1988 10 18.*

A Massey Tunnel Cycle shuttle was begun in 1974 by order of the then Highways Minister Graham Lea in response to a request by M.L.A Emery Barnes. Passengers were carried by a van which had a trailer for eight bicycles per trip. The shuttle operated between the Town and Country Motor Inn at the south end of the tunnel and the Weigh Scale at the north end, and is still in operation.

The tunnel was completed in May 1959 and the unofficial opening was Saturday, May 23, 1959 when thousands of cars lined up to be among the first to drive through the tunnel on this toll-free weekend. Between 7:00 am on the Saturday and midnight on the Sunday more than 136,000 cars drove through the tunnel. The first civilian car was driven by the project engineer Ole Bentzen of Christiani & Nielsen of Canada Ltd. The official opening was held on July 16<sup>th</sup> 1959.

*This was a royal opening with Queen Elizabeth II officially cutting the ribbon and the blessing given by the Reverend Godfrey Gower, Archbishop of New Westminster. Also in attendance were Prince Phillip, the Premier of British Columbia, W.A.C Bennett, the Minister of Highways P.A. Gaglardi, State of Washington Governor Rossellini, Reeves Stolberg of Richmond and Kirkland of Delta ... thousands of people, scouts, guides, army cadets, along with 100 red-coated R.C.M.P. members and a detail of Vancouver police to control the crowds.*

*With 1,000 flags decorating the site on a sunny day, the Queen pressed a dime, encased in a blue leather box, into W.A.C. Bennett's hand in exchange for the ceremonial scissors and cut the 20-yard long ribbon. This exchange is an integral part of an ancient ritual.*

*There was also the unveiling of two plaques commemorating George Massey and the building of the tunnel. These two plaques are located at the tunnel approach roads.<sup>40</sup>*

From its initial opening in May 1959 until March 1964 the tunnel operated on a toll-paying basis.

*The toll plazas were located at the North end on Lulu Island. The vehicles were controlled by automatic lighted signals. The following is a breakdown of rates for private passenger vehicles. Tolls applied to car and driver. There were no tolls for passengers.*

*Non-commuter toll - 50 cents*

*additional for Oak Street Bridge (if made on the same trip) - 10 cents*

*Commuter tickets - \$5.00 per month for 100 tickets*

*or - \$ 1.25 per week for 24 tickets (2 tickets clipped at tunnel and one at the bridge.)*

*Farm vehicles carrying farm freight paid the same toll as passenger vehicles.*

*Motorcycles with no sidecar - 10 cents*

*Motorcycles with side car - 20 cents*

*Other vehicles were charged on a sliding scale for weight.<sup>41</sup>*

## George Massey

The toll fees were removed in 1964 with George Massey paying the last toll. He was selected to pay the final toll of \$1 and received a commemorative coin in exchange. When the tunnel was officially opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1959 it was named the Deas Island Tunnel, reflecting the geographical location of the construction. Even before the tunnel was completed there was strong public opinion that the tunnel should be named after the man who was instrumental in the concept and completion of the project.

George Massey was born in County Wexford, Ireland and went to sea at the age of 14, living and working on merchant ships. He immigrated to Canada at 21, living first in New Brunswick and then in Regina, before arriving in Ladner in 1936, to work as a blacksmith. He was an active lobbyist for the idea of a tunnel, helping to form the Lower Fraser River Crossing Improvement Association and speaking at any public and private event to advance the cause. Mr. Massey was elected as an M.L.A. in 1956 and served one term.

In February 1959 a public petition was signed by thousands of people to request that the tunnel be named after Mr. Massey but to no avail. The South Delta Social Credit Association in 1967 made a proposal endorsed by the Reeves of Richmond and Delta and their Councils, to rename the tunnel the George Massey Tunnel. On September 25, 1969 an Order in Council proclaimed that the tunnel would be henceforth known as the George Massey Tunnel. Unfortunately Mr. Massey died April 8, 1964, five years prior to the change of name.

## Railroads

In earlier years transport of freight and passengers was an issue for Lulu Island. The agricultural and fishing products required a fast and economical route to markets outside the Lower Mainland. The Canada-wide rivalry and competition between the railway companies led to the Canadian Northern Railway eyeing Richmond as a possible site for its ocean terminal. The Canadian Pacific Railway had already claimed Vancouver as its own terminal.

In 1912 the Canadian Northern Railway purchased waterfront land in Burnaby at the “Big Bend” on the North Arm of the Fraser River. The proposal from the Canadian Northern Railway was to have Mile 0 at the north end of the Fraser River bridge in New Westminster, the Big Bend at mile 4 and Steveston at mile 15. These plans were announced but never came to fruition despite a lot of publicity both in Canada and elsewhere. However, as the Provincial Government had granted \$35,000 per mile to the Canadian Northern Railway for the initial plan, the company, which had also gained free right of way from property owners along the route, was obligated to build the Lulu Island portion of the line.

The line was built from the existing British Columbia Electric Railway track in Queensborough, New Westminster. The Canadian Northern Railway joined the track at Mile 0, Boundary Road, and swung south off the British Columbia Electric Railway track and over a drainage ditch into the Municipality of Richmond. It proceeded west along the South Arm of the Fraser River to Steveston and mile 11.65.



The track ran approximately 300 feet from the river and was relatively uninteresting except for the trestle bridge between mile 3.22 and mile 5.66. This bridge was 12,880 feet in length and was built on 3,472 pilings of red cedar driven into the deep and unstable peat bogs. There were six other trestles built along the line. There were station buildings at Queensborough, Woodward's Landing, and Steveston. Ewen's Landing was a flag stop along the line as there was a considerable work force at the Ewen Cannery on Lion Island. As the heavy locomotives were unable to use the Queensborough Bridge the line was an isolated branch line, which remained under the jurisdiction of the construction department. The official opening of the Lulu Island line was held in March 1917, but the line was already beset with problems.

*"It is said that during the year and a half the construction department operated this line, the total revenue was only \$50. The cost of operation will be about \$25 a day."*

*Inauguration of service in February was delayed due to the fact that a suitable coach was not available on the coast and had to be sent from Winnipeg."*<sup>42</sup>

*"Three brand new stations for use on the Lulu Island branch of the Canadian Northern Railway were to be seen on Front Street (New Westminster) this morning. The trio of stations were built in Port Mann, loaded on to flat cars and hauled to this city. ... the height of the stations prohibit their passage through the local B.C.E.R. depot. They will therefore be routed to Vancouver over the G.N. Railway, arriving at their destinations via the B.C.E.R. Steveston line some time tomorrow."*<sup>43</sup>

June 30, 1918 saw the rapid demise of the Lulu Island branch line as peat bog fires flared around the line and destroyed several of the small trestles. A letter to the Municipality of Richmond dated July 2, 1918 read in part:

*Sunday night a fire originated in muskeg near mile 4 on our Lulu Island Branch destroying 450 feet of a long trestle we have at that point and the company is fighting the fire which is getting out of control. ...unless action is taken at once I have no doubt the trestle will be completely destroyed.*

The long trestle was only partly destroyed but was never repaired as events far away from Richmond took precedence. Following World War I, the Canadian Northern Railway was hopelessly in debt as was the Grand Trunk Pacific. The Government of Canada took nominal control of both railway companies and on June 6, 1919 the Canadian National Railway was incorporated, an amalgamation of the two companies. From then until 1930 there was no activity along the Lulu Island branch line. There are very few reminders of the trestles and pilings along the south shore right of way, but the majority of the wooden posts and trestles fell victim to both peat fires and advancing industrialization. A piece of the original track from 1917 still exists along the industrial line: the spur line close to the auto-loading ramps at the Fraser Wharves.<sup>44</sup>

In September 1965 the Richmond Review published an article entitled "C.N.R. Contribution to Richmond," which detailed the history of the

Canadian National Railway involvement in the Lower Mainland. The early days were dealt with, including the rivalry between the two railway companies but the main point of the article was to detail the bounding optimism for the future of the railway business, which led to the construction of the industrial line and wharves.

*“And in the course of years a vast terminal and industrial area filling the whole east half of Lulu Island,” said Mr. C.O. Scott, editor of the Daily Province in July 1930. The line, 32 miles long was to be built from a new bridge to be erected across the North Arm of the Fraser at the foot of Bryne Avenue, Burnaby, then along the river bank to Fraser Bridge where it was to turn south near No. 5 Road and continue across the centre of the island to the South Arm at Woodward’s Landing and the Canada Rice Mills.”*

Construction began on the Lulu Island industrial line in 1931, but was checked by the full impact of the Great Depression and had to be finished by the Canadian National Railway gangs who had been laid off in other parts of the Province due to decreasing traffic flow. The line was built along the North Arm of the Fraser River and then south beside Shell Road.

It must have been quite a sight at Woodward’s Landing, where a circus tent was erected to provide stabling for the more than 100 horses of the Campbell Construction Company, which was responsible for the grading and ditching of the land. The peat bogs once more were an impediment to rail traffic. Great efforts had to be made at this time to gain a firm foundation for the rail bed. It was rumoured that several pieces of large equipment were lost in the bog before the project was completed. The line first served a couple of peat companies and two mills on the South Arm producing flour and rice. This situation continued for at least another 15 years but by the time the newspaper article was written in 1965 the line served Crown Zellerbach, Aluminium Company of Canada, LaFarge Cement, Shasta Beverages, Richmond Plywood, B.C. Coast Vegetable Co-op, Canadian Miraclean Products, Swift’s Meat Packers, and many more.

In the Spring 2004 edition of *The Sandhouse*, journal of the Canadian Railroad Heritage Association, Pacific Coast Division, an article by Eric L. Johnson describes the extension of the Ewen Branch on Lulu Island. For the purposes of this book, the area of interest begins at the Fraser Wharves, Mile Post 17.2 on the South Arm of the Fraser. The Ewen branch was part of the Canadian National grand plan for expansion into Richmond prior to the Great Depression. It was graded in 1930 but not constructed until the 1950s. The problems with the peat bogs which had impeded development of this area was helped by the depositing of clean dredged fill from the South Arm for approximately one mile inland. The clean fill, mostly sand, was slowly stabilized to provide a firmer foundation for industrial use.

## **Fraser Terminals – A Deep-Sea Port**

In 2002 the Fraser River Port Authority, Richmond Properties, and the owner of the land, and a private partner, announced a Fraser River, Richmond site which would house deep-sea and coastal terminals. The Canadian National began to build a new track west from the Lafarge Cement Plant, built on the original Ewen’s Landing site, which will



⦿ Aerial photograph of Fraser Terminals and the car lot at the foot of No. 6 Road and South Arm of the Fraser River. The ship at the dock has the name "Honda" printed on the hull at midships.

*City of Richmond Archives, George McNutt Photographer, 1988 10 378.*

eventually reach the Fraser wharves. The new line runs along the same direction as the old line but will be further inland from the South Arm of the Fraser River "circumventing the entire length of the CNoPR's 'great trestle'."<sup>45</sup> By the time of the publication of Eric Johnson's article in 2004 fewer than three miles of the new track had been built, with approximately two miles left before the junction at Fraser Wharves.

Fraser Wharves Limited is situated on the South Arm of the Fraser River in the City of Richmond approximately ½ mile east of Highway 99. The entire area consists of approximately 45 acres. The Wharves opened in 1972 to receive shipments of cars from Japan, which are then transported to automobile dealers across Canada. Toyota and Honda cars are shipped from Japan in large container ships, especially designed for that purpose. European cars, including Renault, Peugeot, and Saab are shipped to Halifax and then transported by rail to the Fraser Wharves for distribution in British Columbia only.

## Grezcmiels and Industrial Development

After World War II, industrialization changed the landscape of the South Arm of the Fraser River forever. In previous times, the geological features such as the clay sediment, and natural features of peat bogs, and a high water table impeded industrial development. The major portion of the

landmass of Lulu Island was set aside for agricultural use which took advantage of the ready availability of water through the ditching systems. Agricultural use did not require the land to be compacted or the peat bog to be assessed for potential fire hazards. The municipality had few areas set aside for industrial development.

Until the end of World War II the principal markets of Richmond depended on products of either the land or the Fraser River. The main industries were agriculture, dairying, fishing, horse racing and the by-products of flour and fertilizer.

The first industrial resident of the South Arm area was the Canada Rice Mill, which was approved by the Municipality of Richmond in 1932 and built the following year. At this time the population of Richmond was about 14,000 and the municipality was spending a quarter of its annual budget to provide relief payments to citizens suffering from the effects of the Depression. It would appear that the plant was built to provide the railway with freight products on an ongoing basis.

The Canadian National Railway entered into an agreement with Canada Rice Mill Limited to provide land and access to the company at the extreme east end of the railway property at Section 8, Block 3 North, Range 5 West. The railway company further agreed to pay two-thirds of the cost, not to exceed \$4,000, of constructing the portion of a road through Section 7, Block 3 North, Range 5 West from the Mill to No. 5 Road.

Rice Mill Road was, for a brief period, known as Gibson Road. It was named after James Gibson who sold part of his property for the princely sum of one dollar so that the road could be built. When the plant was constructed, a dock was built 100 feet out into the river, and the buildings were placed on the top of the dyke. The riverbank was under constant threat of erosion, partly due to the ferry traffic at Woodward's Landing, and many hundreds of tons of rock were used to reinforce the bank and dyke. The consulting engineer was L.T. Alden of Vancouver.

Eugene Greczmiel arrived in 1927, an immigrant from Germany. His first job was installing boat engines, but he then turned his attention to operating a radio shop and a gas station and eventually became a well-known businessman with diverse interests. In 1963 he was briefly called the Wheat Czar when he negotiated a \$5 million wheat flour sale to the Russians. Part of his diverse business empire included the glucose plant and the flourmill. His wife Maria was born in Switzerland, and also came to Lulu Island in 1927. She spoke four languages fluently and was very interested in the arts. After her death in 1986 a fund was set up in her name to provide funding to the arts in Richmond. Mr. Greczmiel, with his partner Jacob Kalkowitz, was responsible for many residential developments in Richmond during the years spanning the 1950s to his death in 1975.<sup>46</sup>

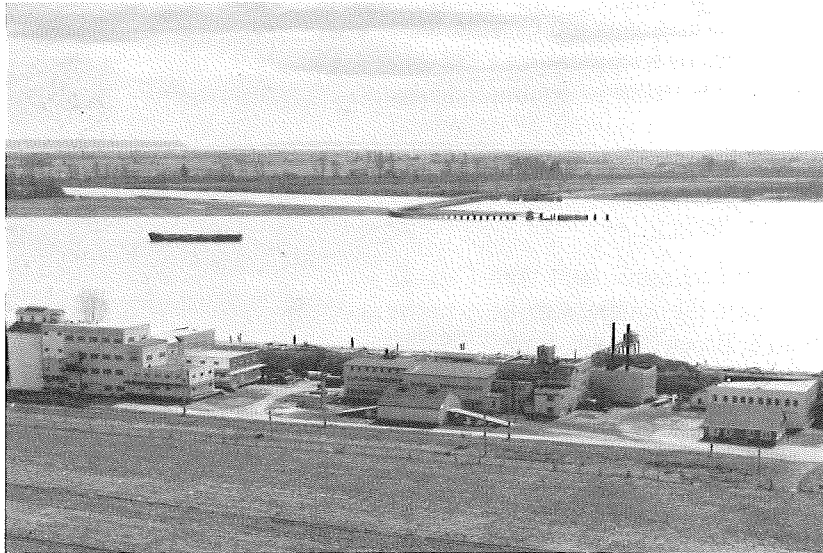
The 1930s and early 1940s were not the best of times to invest in new ventures but with the end of World War II in sight, it was an opportune time to think of the future. Eugene Greczmiel opened, very quietly, a new venture close to the Canada Rice Mill and the railway line. The Delta Glucose factory converted starch into pure glucose syrup, initially using



⦿ This photograph was taken during a Christmas party at Delta Flour Mills, circa 1960. Eugene Greczmiel is seated cross-legged on the floor at the left. His wife Maria is standing immediately behind him.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 2001 18 17.*

potatoes for the starch but later turning to wheat as the source for the starch. Starting in 1944 the enterprise grew from just a few employees to having three shifts and seventy-five employees by December 1946. Flour was transported from the prairies, using the railway facilities, and then turned into pure glucose syrup, which was packed into huge barrels, 500-600 pounds in each. The syrup was sent to Eastern Canada to be used in candy making, medicine for humans and animals, ice cream, jam, cakes, and many other products. Eugene Greczmiel designed the process, plant, and much of the machinery.



⦿ Delta Flour Mill circa 1950 with the Ladner Ferry Terminal to the south.

*City of Richmond Archives  
Photograph 2001 18 20.*

The freight rates for wheat and flour being the same, it made sense to the owner of the Delta Glucose plant to build a flour mill so that the grain could be processed on a year-round basis in good conditions to feed the glucose requirements. Any bran and processed flour not used by the glucose facility would be sold to local consumers. The two factories made excellent economic sense, savings being made in transportation, marketing, and handling costs.

A natural offshoot of the glucose plant was the Delta Flour Mill, which was opened in April of 1947. The flourmill and grain elevator were built to handle 25 tons of flour daily. The cost of new machinery for the mill was exorbitantly high at \$98,000, but Mr. Greczmiel heard of a mill in Missouri that was about to be dismantled. His bid on the second-hand machinery being accepted, he sent his 17-year-old son, Eugene, to the States to dismantle and bring the machinery to Richmond. This was successfully accomplished in seven weeks.

## Shopping Centres, Temples, Golf – Changing Times

The opening of the George Massey Tunnel in 1959, the completion of the Oak Street Bridge in 1957, the development of the highway to join these large endeavours, and the ease of transport of goods by Fraser River and rail led to a demand for industrial land in the South Arm area. Following the resurgence of the post-war economy the City of Richmond developed an industrial policy which allowed for large open spaces close to transportation routes to enable businesses such as Crown Zellerbach to be constructed and the Delta Flour mill to expand.

Before the 1950s era of expansion, the Municipality of Richmond had a zoning policy regarding industrial use which was geared to individual businesses wishing to become established. In 1955 the population of Richmond was approximately 21,000. There were two hotels in the municipality where rooms started at \$2. Housing in the post-war period

had become more oriented to subdivisions for returning veterans and the parents of baby boomers, as compared with the farm houses, and accommodation for farm and cannery workers of previous times.

Richmond was on the verge of changes - dramatic changes - to its economic and cultural life.

In 1973 the Agricultural Land Reserve was established by the Provincial Government of British Columbia to safeguard productive farmland. Richmond holdings which fall under the Agricultural Land Reserve Act comprise almost 5,000 acres, a major portion of which is situated in the area examined for this book. The land is used to produce vegetables with some mixed agricultural use such as stables and golf courses.

Richmond has supplied vegetables, dairy, and meat products to Vancouver and other urban areas since its very early days, a trade and way-of-life which gave rise to the nickname "Garden City." After World War II the cost of farm labour increased so to reduce costs yet maintain the supply of farm produce, large landowners would rent small parcels of land to prospective market gardeners. Many growers of vegetables or market garden owners have commercial outlets to sell their produce. One example is the Kong Lum barn on Steveston Highway.

Dairies have always been a predominant factor in the Richmond agricultural scene. Robinson's dairy operated in the early 1900s on Finn Road. This site is currently known as the Magnolia Dairy Farm.<sup>47</sup>

On January 26, 1955, Crown Zellerbach announced plans for their Lulu Island plant. At that time the plant, a paper converting and box manufacturing facility was estimated to cost \$4,000,000. The plant site had 3,000 feet of river frontage situated between No. 3 and No. 4 Roads along the South Arm of the Fraser River. At the official opening in September, 1956 Councillor Archie Blair pressed a button for the opening of the warehouse door. The building was constructed on a 24-acre site, previously part of the McNair farm, and had a deep-sea dock facility as well as railway track capacity for 20 freight cars, and many truck bays. The new plant employed more than 600 people at peak periods and at the time was the largest single-storey factory under one roof in Western Canada.

Following the Centennial of the Incorporation of the Municipality in 1979, the Planning and Engineering Departments embarked on the long process to organize and prepare an Official Community Plan (OCP). This plan was finally approved in 1986 and its implementation began. The South Arm area covered by the OCP was known as 'Gilmore' and was bordered by No. 2 Road, Steveston Highway, Highway 99, and the Fraser River.

By the 1980s the industrial components of the economy were far greater than anticipated in the 1950s. South Arm was home to a large industrial subdivision known as Riverside Industrial Park, close to Steveston Highway and No. 5 Road. Land for the industrial site was removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve. Three of Canada's better-known companies in Riverside in 1981 were Mercedes-Benz Canada, London Drugs Limited, and Keg Restaurants Limited.

The land south of the Steveston Highway and west of No. 5 Road has undergone dramatic change over the past few years. It was previously occupied by a diversity of small houses, small industries and farming

operations. Today the large and popular shopping districts known as Ironwood and Coppersmith are situated there. The major tenants include Save On Foods, Canadian Tire, London Drugs, and Sleep Country, among many others.

The International Buddhist Society built the Kwan Yin Temple on Steveston Highway in 1983. It was the first authentic Buddhist temple in North America, and is now one of the largest Buddhist temples in Canada. The Temple was founded by a group of Chinese immigrants who decided that Buddhists in the Lower Mainland needed a place for the study and practice of their faith. Since 1983 the temple has grown to include a classical Chinese garden, a bonsai garden and buildings for a meditation centre, library, and chanting hall. The main hall of the facility is called the Gracious Hall and contains a large statue of Buddha.

Along with the increased urbanization of the community came increased demand and opportunities for leisure and sporting activities. The Richmond Golf and Country Club had long been established on the land directly behind the Kwan Yin Buddhist Temple. Golf courses are prevalent in Richmond and other previously agricultural communities as they are an approved use of Agricultural Land Reserve resources. This is based on the assumption that the golf course could be easily returned to productive farmland if required.

The massive change from agricultural land use and rural living south of the Steveston highway to a car and consumer-driven society exemplifies the urbanization of the Richmond landscape. The cultural diversity that makes Richmond one of the most multifaceted communities in Canada also adds a dimension to this urbanization.

## **Conclusion**

The islands that lie under the modern, culturally and economically diverse City of Richmond were formed by the deposit of silt from the Fraser River. From the earliest settlement, the Fraser River has had a profound influence on Richmond and in particular the South Arm district. The river has been used for a food resource, a means of settling the land, transportation, and as a location for industries such as fishing. Appropriately, the South Arm of the Fraser River was the site of the official naming of Lulu Island by Colonel Moody. (See Introduction.) The South Arm district on the banks of the Fraser River was one of the main areas of early settlement. The Fraser River allowed the settlers to produce and transport their goods with ease, thereby creating a prosperous small community which profited from the rich soil of the river delta.

As time passed the underlying prosperity and growing infrastructure was the basis for community growth, and outreach to other communities through the new transportation routes of the railway line, bridges, and the George Massey tunnel. The South Arm district was also welcoming to new ideas of urbanization and cultural diversity. It was a place where the community could work out the co-existence of the old ways with new methods. The continued existence of river-based communities such as Finn Slough and the heritage area of London Farm alongside the new developments of Ironwood and the industrial parks makes for a fascinating and stimulating habitat.

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- <sup>2</sup> Kidd, 16.
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- <sup>6</sup> H. Keith Ralston, "John Sullivan Deas: A Black Entrepreneur in British Columbia Salmon Canning" *B.C. Studies* No. 32 (1976-77): City of Richmond Archives Biography Files.
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- <sup>9</sup> Marie A. Bannister, *A History of London, Lulu Island, Richmond* (Richmond, B.C.: City of Richmond, 1992), City of Richmond Archives Reference Files, Heritage Buildings – London Farm.
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- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> Kidd, 103.
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- <sup>27</sup> Mary Keen, *We Will Remember Them: The lives behind the Richmond Cenotaph* (Richmond: City of Richmond Archives, 1998), 50.



- <sup>28</sup> Sources for this section:
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- <sup>29</sup> Ida Steves.
- <sup>30</sup> Mitsuo Yesaki and Harold and Kathy Steves, *Steveston Cannery Row: An Illustrated History* (Richmond, B.C.: Mitsuo Yesaki and Harold and Kathy Steves, 1998), 34. Bannister.
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- <sup>34</sup> Ross, 51.
- <sup>35</sup> City of Richmond Reference Files, George Massey Tunnel.
- <sup>36</sup> City of Richmond Archives, Bylaw 578.
- <sup>37</sup> City of Richmond Archives, File 4703 Ladner Bridge, 1927-1934.
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- <sup>40</sup> “George Massey Tunnel Information Manual” p. 29
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- <sup>42</sup> “British Columbian” February 19, 1917 quoted in Eric J. Johnson, “Tracing Lulu Island’s South Shore Line” *Sandhouse*, Vol. 27, No. 4 Issue 108, (2002/3): 8.
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- <sup>45</sup> Eric L. Johnson, “CN extends Ewen Branch on Lulu Island,” *The Sandhouse*, Vol. 29, No. 1 Issue 113, (2004): 14.
- <sup>46</sup> Ross, 171.
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Looking north from the South Arm of the Fraser River in 1976. This aerial photograph was taken at 4,000 feet, showing the South Arm neighbourhood between No. 3 and No. 4 Roads. The Crown Zellerbach plant is at the bottom centre. Garden City Road runs up and down through the middle of the image. The outlines of the the golf course at the Richmond Country Club can also be seen. Steveston Highway, the line of demarcation between agricultural land and housing developments, is clearly visible in the upper section of the photo. Finn Slough is at the bottom right.

*City of Richmond Archives, George S. McNutt Photograph, 1988 10 15*