

# WHONNOCK & RUSKIN HISTORY CALENDAR 2012



A truckload of oars for the life boats of ocean steamers in the 1930s.  
The oars were made by Mr. Oey, an Ainu from Hokkaido, who lived in Ruskin.



Relative latecomers to East Maple Ridge in comparison with other parts of Maple Ridge, the Japanese were an essential and large part of our community in the years before the Second World War. The picture shows the Maehara children. Their parents farmed on lots on both sides of 100th Avenue at 256th Street, including the lot where the Thornhill School was later built.

Hard working, energetic and frugal they were, these Japanese, turning our poor soils into fertile agricultural lands and producing the best berry crops we've ever known. They were very active in the lumber industry as well. Japanese were not allowed to fish the river.

Anti-Japanese sentiments had been part of life in BC for a long time. They were believed to be stealing the livelihood of the white man—perhaps a fear of Japanese superiority.



Most of the children attending Ruskin elementary school during the school year 1936-1937 were of Japanese origin.





Unidentified woman and child, probably living in Ruskin.

## Teruko Hidaka

Toshio Mukaida remembers in 1997: “She [Teruko Hidaka] was a school teacher. She had all the qualifications, but she, being Japanese, could not teach [in government schools]. She was very active in the United Church. She was a Sunday school teacher. She never married. I remember her because we used to look up to her, she always looked after the young ones.

My mother always used to think highly of Teruko Hidaka. She was Canadian-born, but she always looked up to the elders. My mother could not speak English, but when she came to visit my mother Teruko would converse and do things with my mother and treat her, you know, like an equal.”



*Photos: Teruko Hidaka and her Sunday school children at Whonnock United Church.*

# Weekly Gazette

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED "THE MAPLE RIDGE HERALD"  
CIRCULATING IN HANEY, HAMMOND, PITT MEADOWS, ALBION, RUSKIN,  
WHONNOCK, WEBSTER'S CORNERS, YENNADON, ETC.

PORT HAMMOND, B.C., THURSDAY, MAY 26, 1927

## QUEEN OLGA HONORS WHONNOCK SCHOOL

### THE MAY QUEEN AND HER COURT



Queen Olga and her Maids of Honor (at back). In front the little flower girls who distinguished themselves at the fete, May Day, 1927.

### Queen Olga's Address

"Loyal and loving subjects, I accept with grateful heart the high honor you confer upon me.

"Ours is a realm to be proud of and I will make it my duty to maintain the beautiful standards of love and joy set me by my predecessors. That will be no easy task, but you will help me and together, with our advisors, we will aim at making this our realm, famed far and near, a one within whose borders dwell health and peace with sweet content, side by side with joy and love.

"Our duty performed, we now go with you to join in the frolics of this glad day. Be gone dull care. Pleasure is at hand this May Day. Let us to our revels!"

Queen Olga, a student of Principal Miss Kent's room, Whonnock, was the recipient of a beautiful pearl necklace. Retiring Queen Vera received a lovely locket.

Right: Queen Olga Gjelstad and Helen Merkley.

Note: One of Queen Olga's Maids of Honour was Yaeko Fujishige, a high-school student. This was the first and probably the last time in Maple Ridge that a Japanese girl was allowed to be a Maid of Honour. Customarily elementary schools nominated white students.







Anker Gjelstad, George MacBryer, Barney Byrnes and Harry Pullen.



Standing at the back: Ted Lee, Hank Lee and Fred Lee.  
At the front: Noble Buckley and Chris Engen.



Back row: Winnie Parker, John Hoicka, Marjorie Muston, Katy Sprott, Brian Byrnes, Margaret Ellis, Cyril Hewson, Celia Way, Harvey Kent.

Front row: George MacBryer, Rudy Westerlund, Edwin Brickman, Bernice Carmichael, Olga Gjelstad.

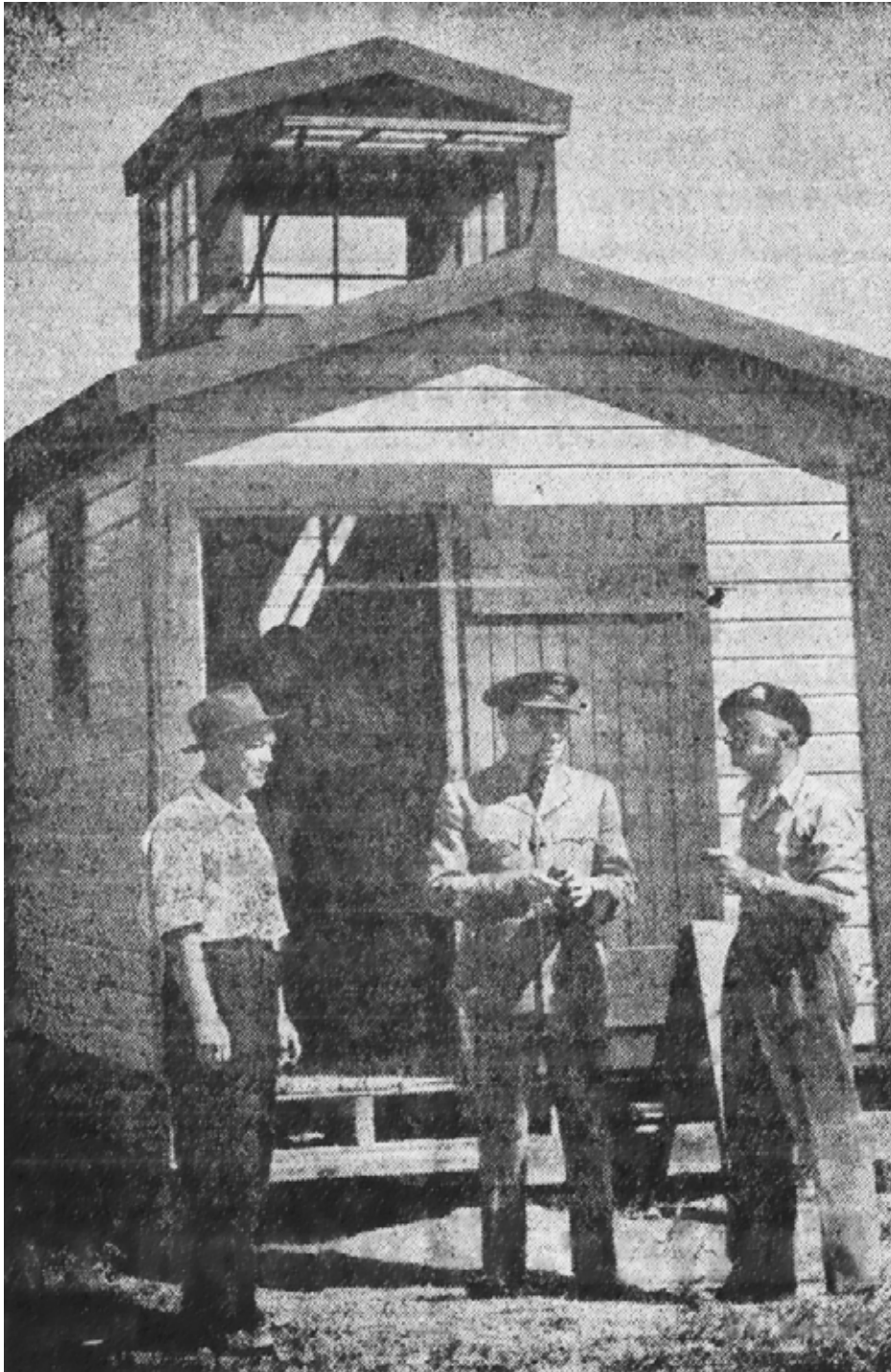


*Nancy Webster, daughter of Ted Lee and Olga Gjelstad, is the last of the descendants of the original Norwegian settlers still living in Whonnock. These are some of the photographs she allowed to be copied for the archives and to be shown on this calender.*



Sailing up Chehalis Lake ca. 1932  
Ralph Daniels and Brian Byrnes  
Photo taken by Dick Whiting

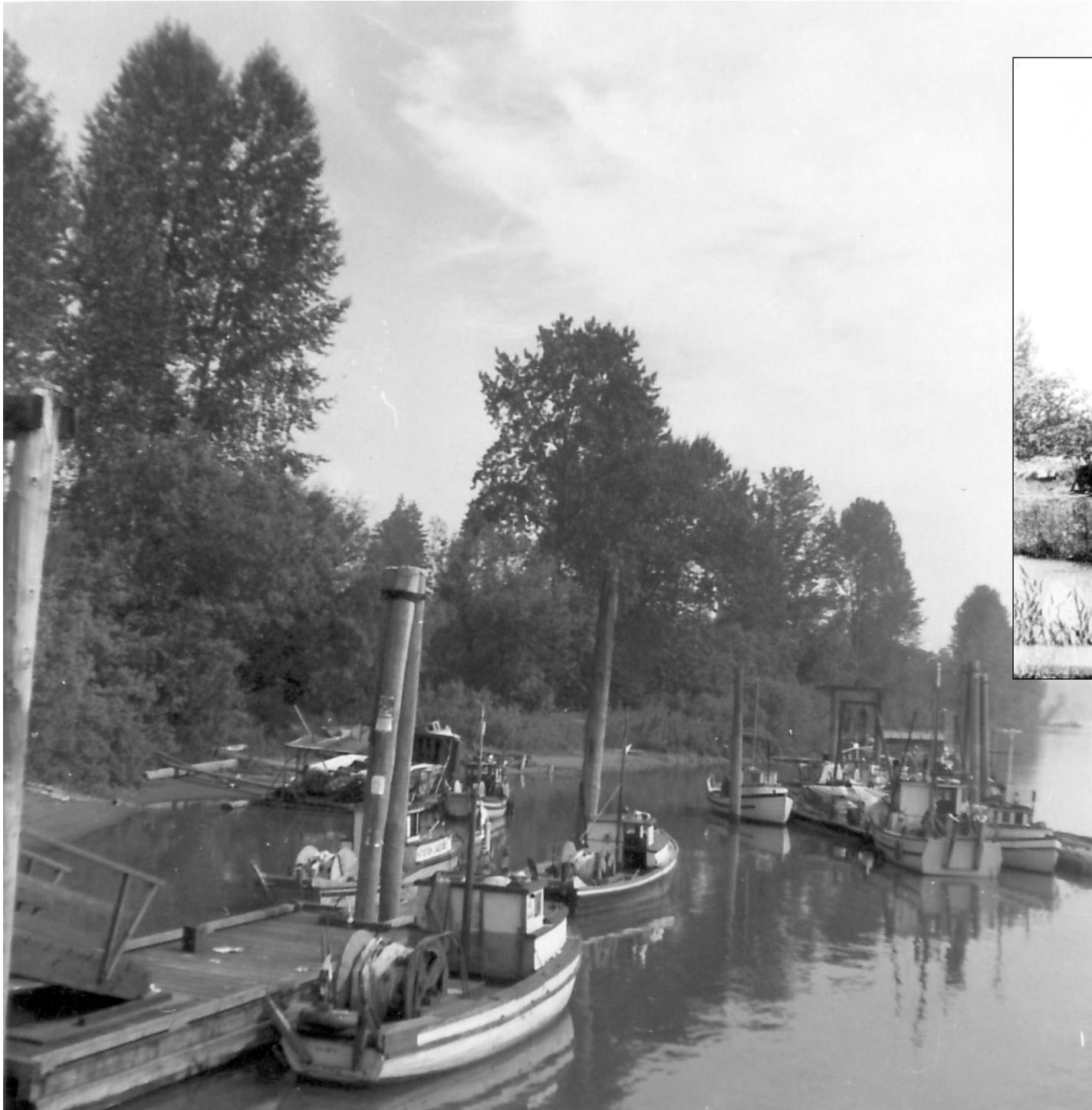




In 1943 the 60th Company Whonnock of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers came to the attention of the *Vancouver Province* when its members constructed an aircraft detection post.

The story did not tell that the base of the structure was an outhouse the girls of Whonnock School did no longer need—by then the school had indoor plumbing. Crowning the former outhouse was the belfry of St. Paul's, the former Anglican Church, providing an excellent lookout for spotting aircraft.

The old belfry was glazed in providing shelter from the elements for the women and men on duty.



September 1960



## WHONNOCK WHARF

The river and fishing played an important part of Whonnock life.

Today life on the river is forgotten.



*The Gazette* reported on February 19, 1953: "A huge Douglas fir log measuring 10 feet 6 inches in diameter was hauled from the woods near Stave Lake by Gold Standard Logging Co. At 28 feet long, the log was said to contain 12,500 board-feet of lumber. The owner, Gil McNutt, said the log will probably be sold to Maple Ridge Lumber Co."



## The Rangers at Ruskin

The PCMR 60th Company Whon-nock on its way to Silverdale for a training exercise. Sitting on the right side of the truck (below) is Christopher (Kit) Benson, who grew up on Crescent Island. He may well be the only one still living of the men shown in these pictures.







This house at the corner of 272nd Street and Bell Avenue was built in 1926 to a design of Robert Hamilton on a parcel owned by Arthur G. Watson, who lived here, and his brother Lewis H. Watson. Today its future is uncertain.



**B**EFORE the Second World War Japanese, born overseas or in Canada, formed a substantial part of the population of Whonnock and Ruskin. After the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941 they were evicted from their lands and homes by order of the Canadian Government and sent to live in camps in the interior. With the white population looking on, the Japanese boarded a train that stopped at Ruskin with no more than they could carry.

School photos give us an idea of the number of Japanese living here at the time. A Ruskin school photo of 1936-1937 shows only a handful of white faces among the 27 students. In Whonnock slightly more than half the students in Miss Ferguson's classes were Japanese. Still, in a half hour talk about the Ruskin school, probably in the late 1950s, local historian Charles Miller only mentioned the "influx" of the Japanese in the Ruskin area in one sentence. The pre-war presence of the Japanese kids attending that school could hardly be overlooked but in the 1950s neither Miller nor his audience were ready to be reminded of the Japanese or their fate.

Old-timers did not often talk about the Japanese residents of Whonnock and Ruskin.

The first pages of this calendar will remind us that the presence and activities of the Japanese are an integral part of our local history.



Ruskin *nokai*. The Japanese community hall ca. 1931.



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