

# WHONNOCK NOTES

Occasional papers of the Whonnock Community Association to promote the research  
and understanding of the past of our community.

∞ Series Editor: Fred Braches ∞

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## *Robert Robertson & Tselatsetenate*

BY FRED BRACHES

In the early 1860s, Robert Robertson from the Shetlands and his Stō:lo wife from Nikomen Island settled just west of the Native village that would give Whonnock it's name. Before that time Robert Robertson served as a labourer for the Hudson Bay Company in New Caledonia. This is the story of these early settlers of Whonnock and some of their descendants.

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Also available: *Records of the Whonnock Community Association's Historical Project, 1985.*

# *Robert Robertson & Tselatsetenate*

BY FRED BRACHES



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2001



Photo courtesy Donald E. Waite

Figure 1. Robert Robertson and his wife, Tselatsetenate. The child is perhaps their first-born son, Andrew. The photograph was taken in New Westminster by a photographer named Thompson. In 1977 Donald E. Waite copied the original for publication in his book *The Langley Story*. The photograph was then owned by Grace (Moses) Copeland, a granddaughter of Edward Muench and Tselatsetenate's sister. The original is now in possession of Mrs. H.L. Gillard in Surrey.

THIS SEVENTH ISSUE of *Whonnock Notes* is respectfully dedicated,  
in friendship and gratitude, to Marie (Gardner) MacDonald,  
mother of Lyn Ross, and great-granddaughter of Robert Robertson.

*Archives are the libraries of historians and genealogists*

THIS RESEARCH involved the holdings of numerous archives and museums to piece together the little that is known about Robertson and his family. I owe a word of special thanks to the staff of the following institutions who assisted me on my quest.

British Columbia Archives, Victoria BC  
British Columbia Land Titles Office, New Westminster BC  
BC Conference on the United Church Archives, Vancouver BC  
Cemetery and Funeral Services, Victoria BC  
Corporation of the District of Maple Ridge, Maple Ridge BC  
Coqualeetza Library & Archives, Sardis BC  
Crown Land Registry Services, Victoria BC  
Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg MA  
Langley Centennial Museum and Archives, Fort Langley BC  
Maple Ridge Museum, Maple Ridge BC  
Mission Community Archives, Mission BC  
National Archives of Canada, Ottawa ON  
New Westminster Public Library, New Westminster BC  
Oblate Archives of St. Paul's Province, Vancouver BC  
Union of BC Indian Chiefs Resource Centre, Vancouver BC  
University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections, Vancouver BC  
Surrey Public Library, Cloverdale Branch, Cloverdale BC  
Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver BC  
Vancouver City Archives, Vancouver BC

All institutions mentioned above provided information and copies of documents which are now part of the collection of the Whonnock Community Association in custody of the Mission Community Archives.

Fred Braches  
*Robert Robertson & Tselatsetenat*  
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### *Quotes from well-known publications*

Incorrect or doubtful information is underscored.

The late Mr. Robbie Robertson, who located there very early, having been employed at Fort Langley in the fifties, told the late Dr. Dunn that the name was the same as his former home in the Hebrides. "Place Names of the Lower Fraser Valley."

By coincidence, [Robert] Robertson's Hebridean home was called Warnock.<sup>1</sup> *Maple Ridge, a History of Settlement*. 1972

The first white settler to make a permanent home in Whonnock was undoubtedly Robert Robertson, boatman and assistant to the cooper at Fort Langley back in 1858. *Maple Ridge, a History of Settlement*. 1972

Cooper and Chief Boatsman at Fort Langley [Robert] Robertson left the Hudson's Bay Company to become the first settler in Whonnock. *The Langley Story, Illustrated*. 1977

Robertson, Robert, Sapper, received Crown Grant, Aug. 7, 1884, for Lot 433, Group 1, New Westminster District, 153 acres; 1872-1887, farmer, Whonnock. *BC Studies* No.24 Winter 1974-1975

Robert Robertson from the Shetland Islands worked for the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Langley when he took up land.... *Cemeteries in Whonnock*. Whonnock Notes No. 2,

<sup>1</sup> I have been unable to locate a place in the Shetlands with a name even remotely sounding like "Wharnock" or "Whonnock."



# INTRODUCTION

THE QUOTES on the opposite page are from well-known publications. The authors writing about Robert Robertson had no reason to doubt the quality of their sources, yet the information is flawed (underscored passages). The facts are that:

- ❑ Robert Robertson came from the Shetlands, and not from the Hebrides.
- ❑ He was never part of the Royal Engineers—someone else also called Robert Robertson was, and he was shipped back to England in disgrace.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ There are no Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) records showing that Robert Robertson was assigned to work at Fort Langley at any time during his employment at the HBC.
- ❑ Robert Robertson was classed and paid as a labourer throughout his seven years of service of the HBC. He is not recorded as an assistant to the cooper, or as a cooper, carpenter, or a boatman.

Writing local history is a perilous journey. Local histories are stories of ordinary people leaving only faint trails in the documentary legacy. The local historian relies mostly on what relatives and old-timers remember or what is written down years after the event. Many of the facts presented may not be based on personal experiences or are vaguely remembered.

A search for fragments of written information is not practical when a study involves large areas and many people. In those circumstances one has to rely on previously published material and interviews. But the risk is, that doubtful information finds its way into print. In the eyes of many readers publication of a fact or event serves as an affirmation of historical correctness. Flawed interpretations find a legitimate place in the local lore alongside or in competition with correct information. Later researchers reuse this kind of information at their peril as is shown in the examples.

This is a small study of Robert Robertson and his family. I was put on the trail of Robertson by Whonnock historian BRIAN BYRNES. Some years ago, when I started my quest for the first white settler of Whonnock and his family, Brian directed me to DONNA RASH of Mission. I will always remember how spontaneously she shared her findings with me, and introduced me to the maze of intertwining Robertson, Garner, Gardner, Cromartys and other pioneer families.

LYN ROSS, great-great-granddaughter of Robert Robertson, gave me access to the information she had gathered over the years, including an invaluable collection of letters<sup>2</sup> of which transcriptions can be found in an appendix to these notes. We spent hours and days trying to find answers to many still-unanswered questions. We rejoiced about new and exciting finds. Lyn is my guide through the tangled web of First Nations-based families. She is my teacher in this new world. She is also a great friend. I have limited this publication to the period more or less ending with the First World War—the time the Robertsons were present in Whonnock. Families have a right to privacy.

As all published history, this is “work in progress.” My many footnotes should be a paper trail allowing others to retrace my findings and to continue the quest. I had the advantage of studying only one family and not more than two generations. I could also count on the valuable assistance from descendents and old-timers. Still, the possibility of mistakes exists. I am thankful for all the help received, but I take sole responsibility for any errors and omissions.☺

<sup>1</sup> In “The Influence of the Royal Engineers on the Development of British Columbia” (*BC Studies* / Number 24, Winter 1974-75) Frances Woodward mentions another Robert Robertson, a Sapper of the Columbia Detachment of the Royal Engineers. This Robert Robertson did not receive the Crown grant for lot 433 in Whonnock as suggested in her article. Sapper Robert Robertson did not stay in British Columbia. He was sentenced to chain gang, sent to Victoria jail, and returned to England. Frances Woodward, personal communication, 20 September 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Transcripts of these letters can be found in Appendix 1. Please use the text of these letters only for research purposes.

# *In Service of the Company*

ROBERT ROBERTSON, from Yell Island in the Shetlands, was engaged as a labourer in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company in Lerwick in March of 1852 and arrived at Fort York at the Hudson's Bay in the summer of that year. The Engagement Register shows that his contract was for five years ending in the autumn of 1857, which he would extend to 1859. Robert was around 21 year old when he came to Canada.

Four years earlier Robert's brother John had also left the Shetlands for employment with the HBC. John was engaged in May of 1848 for a five-year term of service.<sup>1</sup> John worked all his life for the HBC in the Northern Department. The record shows that John first went to "Youcon," Fort Yukon on the Mackenzie River, and later to Norway House, where the record shows him still employed in 1890.<sup>2</sup>

It seems that Robert Robertson was stationed at York during the first years of his contract, although he may have travelled far and wide through the new country. His name appears in the Servants Accounts of the Northern Department for the outfit 1852-1853.<sup>3</sup> In the Servant Accounts of the Western Department 1854-1855 Robert Robertson is also mentioned but this time as being in New Caledonia, the area originally centred on the upper Fraser River, later expanding as far south as today's Kamloops.<sup>4</sup>

The surviving HBC records do not show where Robert Robertson was stationed in New Caledonia.<sup>5</sup> Labourers were almost invisible in the HBC records and nothing seems to have happened to Robertson during his HBC years that was important enough to be recorded in the reports and letters of his superiors. The Fort St. James Post Journal entries dated 2 and 3 October 1854 mention a Robertson working in the field with other men.<sup>6</sup> We don't even know if it is our Robertson.

Records from Fort Victoria continue to show Robert Robertson as part of the workforce of New Caledonia. The Abstract of Servants for the outfit 1857 (1857-1858) shows Robert Robertson, labourer, New Caledonia and so does the Abstract for the outfit 1858 (1858-1859).<sup>7</sup> These are the two years Robertson added to his original contract that expired in 1857, and the time he was reported by others to have been in Fort Langley. But there are no HBC records showing that he ever was there before the end of his contract. Robertson is always shown as being a labourer in the HBC records and he is paid accordingly. He was not employed as a specialist of any kind. There is no mention of him in the HBC records as being a cooper, or assistant cooper, carpenter, or a boatman.

The question how and when Robert Robertson came to the Lower Mainland is not answered by the HBC records. There are other sources suggesting that Robertson was at Fort Langley at some time during his employment with the HBC. An account by Jason Allard mentions that Robert Robertson was at Fort Langley in 1858. The Allards stayed at Fort Langley from February until May of 1858. Jason Allard was then about ten years old. Many years later Jason Allard prepared a list of the persons who were at the Fort during that period including: "Robert Robertson, Assistant Cooper." How much credibility should we give this list written much later from memory?<sup>8</sup> There is a second source mentioning that Robert Robertson (Robie) was one of a dozen HBC men present at the swearing-in ceremony of James Douglas as Governor in November 1858.<sup>9</sup> It is tempting to assume that Robert Robertson joined one of the yearly trips of the bateaux from New Caledonia to Fort Langley, but there is no evidence for that. Is it possible that Robert Robertson was at Fort Langley for some time in the gold-rush year 1858? We don't know.<sup>10</sup>☺

<sup>1</sup> B.239/u/1-3 Engagement Register, Northern Department

<sup>2</sup> B239/u/2 Engagement Register. According to a letter dated 24 June 1900 from his sister Mary to Robert Robertson he must have died before 1900.

<sup>3</sup> B.239/g/32 Folio 422, Robertson, Robert. Parish: Yell. Capacity: Laborer. District: Genl Ch [General charges]. No. of years in service: 1. Contract expires: 1857. Wages: £15.17.4. Cash advanced in England: £8.18.

<sup>4</sup> B. 239/g/34 In the summer of 1853 the HBC divided the territory west of the Rocky Mountains into two districts. The Oregon District included Fort Vancouver and all parts within the American territory and the Western Department, including the area of British Columbia known as New Caledonia.

<sup>5</sup> "...you know my address but I can not yours (sic)but only as you write me." This sentence in a surviving letter from Charlotte Johnson (Robertson) to her son dated 6 November 1855 seems to suggest that he had no permanent address at that time.

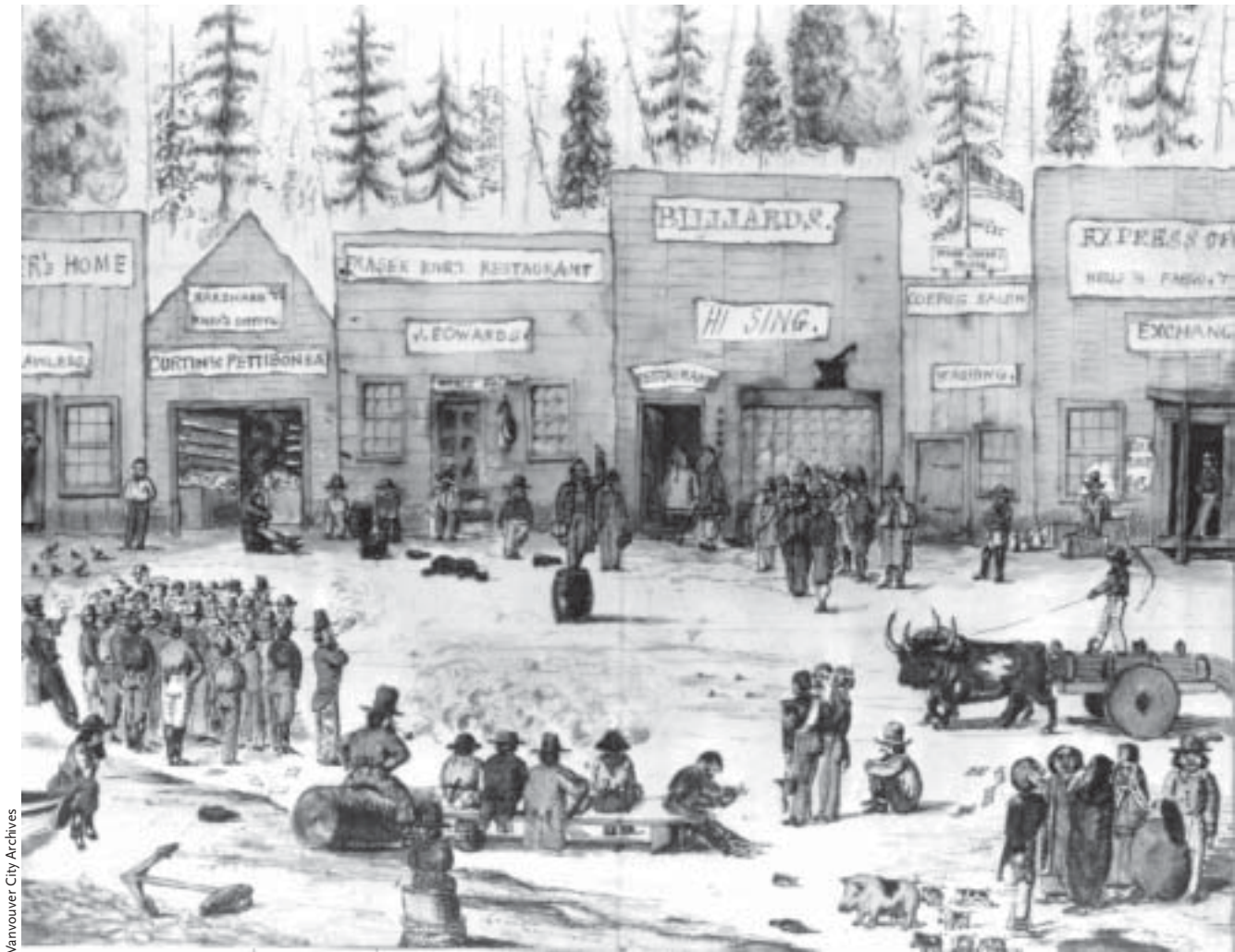
<sup>6</sup> B.188/1/11-23 Ft. St. James, Post Journals, 1820-1898.

<sup>7</sup> B.266/9/5 and 266/9/6

<sup>8</sup> *Fort Langley, 1827-1927*. Denys Nelson (Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver, B.C.).

<sup>9</sup> Writing about John McIver on 17 May 1908, M.R. Cree mentions that “twelve of Hudson’s Bay Co. officials and twelve of Colonel Moody’s men were officially witnesses of the swearing in [of Sir James Douglas as Governor on 20 November 1858.]” Cree mentions six of the Hudson’s Bay witnesses. “The Hudson’s Bay witnesses were Morison, Crommerty [sic], Taylor, McIver, Manson, and Robie [as Robertson was commonly known].”

<sup>10</sup> We will never know if Robert came down with the last of the annual brigade arriving on 30 June 1858. Did he meet his future wife at the welcoming ball? It was “conducted with the best possible decorum. The music was sweet, from the violin, and the dancing was performed in the most graceful manner, by the Indians and the half breeds, who took a very prominent part at that occasion.” *The History of Fort Langley 1827-96*, Mary K. Cullen. Canadian Historic Sites No. 20, Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History. Ottawa, 1979. P. 59.



Vancouver City Archives

Figure 2. “Derby, British Columbia. Reverend W.B. Crickmer preaching from a barrel in main street, 1859.” By the time Robert Robertson settled in Whonnock Fort Langley was no longer an isolated trading post. Derby, across the river from Port Haney was abandoned in favour of New Westminster.

# Yell

A SMALL COLLECTION of letters addressed to Robert Robertson has survived and is in the custody of Lyn Ross.<sup>1</sup> Most are written from the Shetlands by Mary Robertson, one of Robert's sisters. There are also letters from John Robertson, Robert's brother at Norway House, telling his story of settlement.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately none of Robert's own letters home or to his brother at Norway house exist. The collection of surviving letters is not complete. There are long pauses between the letters. Transcript of the surviving letters is included as Appendix 1. The collection of letters provide a unique insight into the lives of the Robertsons in the home country and the two sons who left the Shetlands to find a future in the New World. Life on this side of the ocean seems uncomfortable by our standards, but the Shetlands had even less to offer.

"You mention having 2 years yet to remain but My Dear Robert they will appear 4 years to me in expecting you home," wrote Robert's mother, Charlotte, on 6 November 1855. It is the only surviving letter dating to Robert's years of service to the Company. There is a lapse of five years between this and the next surviving letter, dated 11 December 1860. It was addressed to Fort Langley. "You...may forget me but I can never forget you," Charlotte wrote to her son. It is obvious that she had not heard from him for a long time. This letter is a reply to a letter written by Robert in September 1860. He might not have mentioned his wife, or the fact that she was expecting. Their first son, Andrew, was born that year. His mother and his sister Mary did not mention that in their replies.

But Charlotte commented on Robert's plans to buy land and settle in British Columbia. Judging by his mother's comments, Robert had high expectations of the new country. His mother wrote him: "The rapid improvements of British Columbia have been brought on during the last 3 years and a change from Barbarism to Civilisation will be gradually year by year...The Gold Silver Iron & Lime you mention will hasten its improvement...still much time must be taken for such. But in a short time great changes will take place as sure as they are promised in the Scriptures of truth both home and foreign." And she agreed that "although the place is capable of great improvement," the old country had little to offer to her boys. She seemed to agree that Robert should stay in British Columbia. But her daughter Mary added to the letter: "...there is nothing on earth she would desire so much as to see you and we all trust you will strive to come home if it was but for one season." On 27 February 1875, about 15 years later, Charlotte Robertson died without having seen her sons again.

The family was very poor and over time the situation only worsened. On 7 February 1875, three weeks before her mother died, Mary Robertson wrote to Robert "...we had to leave the place we were in and is come to a smaller place." There was little to comfort her helpless mother. In a letter dated 1 May 1875, two months after her mother's death, Mary Robertson wrote that her 78-year-old father "failed very much but still he must work both to save his life and so to pay for a house." "I should be very glad that my father never was obliged to live on the parish allowance," she adds, hoping that some financial help would come from the brothers.

In the fall of 1879 her father was still able "to walk about." Mary and her sister Andrina looked after him as they did for both parents before. The oldest sister, Jane, and Barbara were no longer at home.<sup>3</sup> Jane, who had a son from a previous partner, married a shoemaker and Barbara worked for a family, "poor people, so her fees is not much." It is obvious that they were destitute and the harshness of their existence echoes in the surviving letters. Mary remained unmarried and later moved to Mid Yell.

Robert loved and respected his family in Scotland. His oldest daughter Charlotte was named after his mother and his other daughters carried the names of his sisters: Andrina, Jane, Barbara, and Mary. One may assume that he sent money home. But he and his brother John had little to spare. They both had large families to care for.∞

<sup>1</sup> Transcripts of the letters follow the orthography of the author as closely as possible.

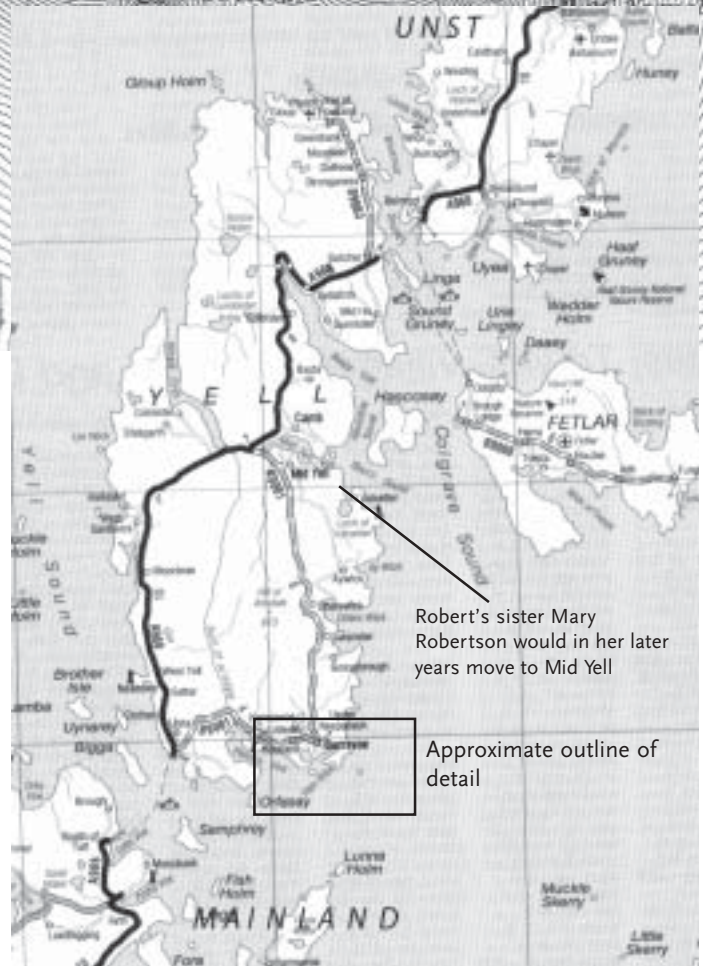
<sup>2</sup> "...I have a large family and everything is Dear. So I can save nothing...Six sons and 2 daughters alive and 1 son and 1 daughter dead that is the oldest of the family..." (John Robertson, 16 March 1875). "This summer one of my sons got married last month and one died a year ago that is four of my children I have buried at this place and wife and child in the Mckenzie River..." (John Robertson, 29 December 1881).

<sup>3</sup> In Charlotte Robertson's letter of 11 December 1860 she mentioned that at that time "...four youngest Sisters are at home [and] Jane has gone to Reawick...", where she "got service." The correspondence does not reveal the name of a fifth daughter. Was this the "cripple sister" to whom Charlotte referred?





Figure 3. Detail of a Victorian Ordnance Survey map of Yell showing Burrayoe and surroundings.



Robert's sister Mary Robertson would in her later years move to Mid Yell

Approximate outline of detail

Table 1

*Descendant Tree of the Robertson Family in Whonnock*

ROBERT ROBERTSON (Aug 1832 - 1 May 1912) & TSELATSETENATE alias Jane (Mary?) (1841 - 1886?)

- 1 - ANDREW ROBERTSON (1860 - 22 Oct 1888)
- 2 - WILLIAM ROBERT ROBERTSON (23 August 1861 - 13 Mar 1884)
- 3 - ROBERT ROBERTSON (October 1864 - )
- 4 - CHARLOTTE ROBERTSON (14 Mar 1867 - )  
& FRANK ALMOND OWENS (31 Mar 1862 - )  
Richard Owens (16 Apr 1890 - )  
Ellen Owens (25 Jul 1895 - )  
Ethel Owens (23 Jun 1898 - ?)  
Charlotte Muriel Owens (9 Jul 1900 - )
- 5 - BARBARA CHRISTINE ROBERTSON (29 Nov 1868 - 6 Dec 1943)  
& WILLIAM HENRY GARNER (23 Nov 1868 - 26 Jan 1910)  
Jennie Elizabeth Garner (Jul 1894 - 18 Jan 1900)  
William Henry Garner (11 Jul 1895 - 23 May 1976)  
Pearle Garner (17 Jan 1900 - 17 Jan 1900)  
Barbara Evelyn Garner (20 Oct 1902 - 19 Mar 1981)
- 6 - ANDRINA ROBERTSON (1871 - 18 Dec 1896)  
& CHARLES ROBERT GARNER (About 1864 - 29 Jan 1951)  
Craig Robert Garner (4 Oct 1893 - )  
Mabel Andrina Garner (14 Jun 1895 - )
- 7 - JENNY ELIZABETH ROBERTSON (22 Feb 1875 - )
- 8 - MARY ROBERTSON (About 1879 - 1908?)  
& JOSEPH GARNER (About 1881 - )

This descendant tree shows the children of ROBERT ROBERTSON and TSELATSETENATE that are known to have reached maturity and were recorded in the 1881 Census. (Table 2, page 12)

We know nothing of the fate of ROBERT ROBERTSON, the third son, known to be alive in 1884, and of JENNY ELIZABETH ROBERTSON, after 1891.

Grandchildren shown are those recorded in the 1901 Census as living in Whonnock. Added is BARBARA CHRISTINE (ROBERTSON) GARNER's daughter born in 1902: BARBARA EVELYN, mother of MARIE MACDONALD and great-grandmother of LYN ROSS.





Photo courtesy Lyn Ross

Figure 4. *Sitting are Barbara Christine Robertson and her husband William Henry Garner. This photo was probably taken in 1895 to commemorate the baptism of baby William Henry Jr. Sitting in front between Barbara and Henry is probably their daughter, Jennie Elizabeth Garner. The young people standing behind Barbara and Henry are perhaps the 16-year old Mary Robertson and her future husband, Joseph Garner.*

# The Robertson Family

In 1860, after his engagement with the Company ended, Robert Robertson settled in what today is called Whonnock with his Stō:lo wife from the Nicomen area.<sup>1</sup> Robert would live in Whonnock for more than half a century.

We know almost nothing about Robert's wife Tselatsetenate, or Jane, as her name is shown in the 1881 Census. (Table 2) Perhaps she was baptized as Mary Jane.<sup>2</sup> Her age shown in the 1881 Census is 40 years and she must have been about 19 years old when she gave birth to her first son, Andrew, in 1860. She had a younger sister, born around 1848, known as Catherine or Kathleen. Kathleen was Edward Julius Muench's wife. Baptism records of the children of both Jane and Kathleen show that the sisters were Lakahahmen from the area on and near Nikomen Island.<sup>3</sup> It is thought that—like her sister later— Mrs. Robertson died of tuberculosis. She probably died around 1886, when her daughter Charlotte was 19 years old. Her youngest, Mary, was only eight years old.<sup>4</sup>

In 1860, when his first son, Andrew, was born, Robert was about 29 years old.<sup>5</sup> His second son, William Robert was born in Whonnock in August of 1861,<sup>6</sup> and the third son, Robert, was born there in 1864.<sup>7</sup>

The sons were baptized during visits of Father Fouquet of the Order of Mary Immaculate, then establishing St. Mary's in what now is Mission. Baptisms of children of non-Catholics by a Catholic priest were not uncommon before Protestant preachers arrived. The registers show that the OMI priests, who had understandable problems with the orthography of Native names, also failed to spell the name Robertson correctly. It is likely that Robert himself was not present at the baptisms and was not even aware that Catholic priests baptized most if not all of his children. As early as 1862 Presbyterian clerics were serving the Lower Mainland. Did they baptize the children as well? In the Census the beliefs of the children are shown as Presbyterian, following their father's church.<sup>8</sup>

As shown in the 1881 Census (Table 2), after the three sons followed five daughters. The eldest, Charlotte, was born in 1867,<sup>9</sup> Barbara Christine in 1868,<sup>10</sup> Andrina in 1869,<sup>11</sup> Jenny Elizabeth in 1875,<sup>12</sup> and Mary Robertson in 1879. At least two more children were born prior to the 1881 Census according to the baptism records of the OMI fathers, but they must have died as infants or small children.<sup>13</sup>

The Cariboo gold rush, peaking in 1862 and 1863, does not seem to have lured Robertson away. He found employment around Whonnock. Possibly after his HBC contract ended, but not earlier, Robertson worked with cooper Cromarty, who continued for some time to produce barrels for the need of the Company and for sale.<sup>14</sup> That would explain why he was remembered as an assistant to the cooper and also how he acquired skills as a carpenter. Cromarty pre-empted land at the confluence of the Stave River and the Fraser and also land across the river from Whonnock. Robertson's settling nearby could have something to do with the presence of the Cromartys nearby. Like all early settlers Robert Robertson

<sup>1</sup> "Was a Man of True Worth, an appreciation of Late Robert Robertson, former Hudson's Bay Company's Employee," in: Rev. Alexander Dunn, *Experiences in Langley and Memoirs of Pioneers*. 1913, New Westminster, Jackson Printing Co. (See Appendix 2)

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that in the marriage certificates of Mary Robertson and Barbara Christine Robertson the name of their mother is shown as "Mary." Dunn, who knew the family well, signed both documents.

<sup>3</sup> Lek'-eh-mel or Leq'ámel = Nicomen. On Nicomen Island except its SW corner and on the bank of the Fraser River. (Oliver Wells). On McColl's 1864 map: Nickaamen. Also Lakahahmen, Nikamel, Nekamel, Nokamel. Charlotte Robertson's baptism record shows her mother to be "...de la tribu Nokamel." During an interview published in the *Islander* of 24 August 1957, Grace Evelyn (Moses) Copeland refers to her grandmother, Mrs. Edward Muench as: "a full-blooded Gwandolin [i.e. Kwantlen] Indian orphan girl from Fort Langley..."

<sup>4</sup> "She died when the girls were all young. Mother [Charlotte Robertson] was only 19 years old at the time they were all 17, 15, 11." Interview of Charlotte Muriel (Owens) Heinsbergen by Lyn Ross 8 May 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Census 1881 and 1891 gave his age as 50 respectively 60 years.

<sup>6</sup> New Westminster Baptismal Register Volume 1 (1861-1868). An enclosed "Liste de Baptêmes trouvé sur mes notes de voyages, mais incomplet," includes the following entry in English: "have baptised Andrew son of Robert Robenson [sic] Honoc, born in 1859 [?] and William at Honoc son of Robert Robenson [sic] born the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 1861." The entry is signed Fouquet.

<sup>7</sup> New Westminster Baptismal Register, Volume 1, (1861-1868). An enclosed "Liste de Baptêmes trouvé sur mes notes de voyages, mais incomplet," includes the following entry for the year 1863. Entry B[aptême] 107, page 57: "Robert agé d'environ [no information given] fils de Rob[ert]son [et] de Tselatsenat[e]. L. Fouquet. Pour copie conforme Ch. J. Grandidier. There is another record of baptism in 1864. "Registre (#284) of the OMI at Mission. St. Marie, 12 November 1864. Robert. Je sous-signé, pêtre O.M.I. ai baptisé à St. Marie le 12 Novembre 1864, agé d'environ un mois fils de Robert Robenson [sic] et de Chenassenat - Nekamel.

<sup>8</sup> In the marriage registration forms of Marie Robertson and Barbara Christine Robertson their religion is recorded as Presbyterian.

<sup>9</sup> OMI Registre 1863-1874. St. Marie, 14 Avril 1867. B[aptism], Charlotte—Le quatorze Avril mil huit cent soixante sept, par nous, sous-signé,



may have worked on numerous jobs to earn some cash, but he was not a farmer and he probably worked mainly on the river with boats. He made his reputation as a “boatman” even before the arrival in 1875 of the Reverend Alexander Dunn from Aberdeen, Scotland.

In an “appreciation” written after Robertson’s death in 1912 (see Appendix 2) Dunn described Robert as a worthy man and he continued: “In appearance and manner Robbie was rough, awkward, and brusque, but appearances notwithstanding, he was kindness personified.”<sup>15</sup> At home Robert may not have shown much affection and he is remembered to have been a rather stern father. He insisted that Halquemeylem not be used at home, and he punished the children for speaking the Native language. On the other hand the family shared Scottish traditions, including the celebration of Burns Night. Robert loved reciting Burns’s poetry. His children seem to have admired his principled lifestyle, but not all the children met his standards and some drifted away.<sup>16</sup>

John Williamson, father-in-law of shopkeeper L.C. York, lived in Whonnock at the end of the 1800s. He and Robertson did not differ much in age and both were Scots. In Williamson’s diary of 1897 he always wrote respectfully about Robertson and his family but the two elderly Scots—they were neighbours—kept at a distance. Williamson was a bit of a snob, and Robert’s lack in charm and social skills may also explain why Williamson did not seek his company. Throughout Williamson’s diary are entries showing Robert’s activities—he was around 66 years old then—rowing people around, preparing firewood, caulking, repairing, and painting boats. One entry in the diary reports Robert Robertson going through a drawer in the store and getting five pieces of “tape” for nothing from Williamson. One would like to think that these were coloured ribbons for his grandchildren.<sup>17</sup>

In 1875 the Rev. Alexander Dunn was appointed minister to the districts on both sides of the Fraser River from the mouth to Yale. He took up residence in Langley. From the time of the Dunn’s arrival Robert rowed him all over his huge territory. Robert’s was already well-known as a trusted boatman by performing these services for instance for the school inspector as mentioned in Dunn’s “appreciation.” An account of one of Dunn’s trips with “my boatman, Robbie Robertson,” gives an idea of the harshness of these trips during cold and rainy weather.<sup>18</sup> Dunn was stationed in Port Alberni from 1886 to 1889 but he returned to the Fraser Valley for an 18-year ministry radiating out from his property in Whonnock.<sup>19</sup> Robert continued working for Dunn as long as he could.<sup>20</sup> Providing this service was not only a source of income for Robert, but also a fulfilling human relationship.

Before 1885 there was no school in Whonnock and it is not clear if and where the five oldest Robertson children learned even the most basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. It is said that William, who was said to have “a weak mind,” could not write his own name.<sup>21</sup> Andrina, Elizabeth Jane, and Mary attended the Stave River School in Whonnock.<sup>22</sup>

The first Census in BC of 1881 (Table 2) shows the names of the Robertson children then alive. The sons by that time were already young men: 20, 18, and 16 years old. There is tragedy around the lives of these sons. In 1885, 138 acres of land to the west of Robert Robertson’s grant was granted to Andrew, the oldest boy, who seems to have loved farming. However, he died of tuberculosis only a few years later in 1888. In his moving last will, signed on the day of his death, he hesitantly left his fruit trees to his father, in whose capacities as a farmer he seemed to have little confidence, and his cattle to his sisters Barbara, Andrina, Jane, and Mary.<sup>23</sup>

Pêtre Missionnaire Oblat de Marie Immaculée, a été baptisée a St. Marie CHARLOTTE fille naturelle de Robert Robertson, Eccosais de nation, résident prs du Fort-Langlois, et de Chenassenat, indienne de la tribu Nokamel, il n’y a eu ni parrain ni marriane.

<sup>10</sup> No OMI baptism record found.

<sup>11</sup> OMI Registre 1863-1874. St. Marie, 30 Juin 1872. B[a]ptism] Henrica. Le trente Juin 1872 Je sous-signé, pêtre O.M.I. ai baptisé à St. Marie HENRICA agee de 9 mois & 23 jours, fille de Robert Robertson natif d’Ecosse demeurant près de Honock & de la S-lastena femme de N-kraimey. Il n’y a eu ni parrain ni marriane.

<sup>12</sup> OMI Register. B. Le 25 Avril 1875, Je sous-signé, pêtre O.M.I. ai baptisé à St. Marie JENNY ELZABETH, née le 22 Fevrier de Robert Robertson, écosais, resident près de Langley and de Tselatsetenate de Honok. Le parrain a été George Apnaut qui a signé avec mois. [Original not seen by me FB]

<sup>13</sup> The OMI records suggest that there was an earlier Mary: OMI Registre 1863-1874. Honok, February 27 1874. B[a]ptism]. Mary. The 26<sup>th</sup> February 1874 I undersigned have baptized at Honok MARY born the 24<sup>th</sup> January last, daughter of Robert Robertson from Scotland and Slartenate, indian woman. The same Registre also mentioned: Honok, 22 March 1870. B[a]ptism]. CELESTINE. Je sous-signé, pêtre O.M.I. ai baptisé au Honok le 22 Mar 1870, CELESTINE de 10 mois de Robby et de Tsalasstenat (Marrain Celestine). The later Mary’s birthyear (1879) is confirmed by her age of 20 years mentioned in the registration of her marriage in 1900.

<sup>14</sup> *The History of Fort Langley 1827-96*, Mary K. Cullen. Canadian Historic Sites No. 20, Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History. Ottawa, 1979. P. 64.

<sup>15</sup> Rev. A. Dunn, *Experiences in Langley and Memoirs of Prominent Pioneers*. See Appendix 2. Curiously Robert’s wife and children are not mentioned in this “appreciation.”

Table 2

Census 1881	Robertson	Robert	M	50	Scotland	C. Presbyterian	Scotch	farmer
		Jane	F	40	BC	"	not given	-
		Andrew	M	20	BC	"	Scotch	-
	*)	William	M	18	BC	"	"	farmer
		Robert	M	16	BC	"	"	-
		Charlotte	F	14	BC	"	"	-
		Barbara	F	12	BC	"	"	-
	**)	Hendrina	F	10	BC	"	"	-
		Jane	F	4	BC	"	"	-
		Mary	F	2	BC	"	"	-

\*) Andrew, not William is the farmer  
 \*\*) Andrina, not Hendrina

Table 3

Census 1891	Owens	Frank	27		US	Methodist	farmer
		Charlotte	25	Wife	BC	C. Presb	
	*)	Edward	1	Son	US		

\*) In 1901 Census and other records "Edward" is shown as Richard.

Table 4

Census 1901	Owens	Frank A.		31 March 1862	39	Ontario	Welsh	Meth
		Barbara	W	14 March 1867	34	"	Scotch	Presb
		Richard	S	16 April 1890	11	US	Welsh	Meth
		Ellen C.	D	25 July 1895	6	BC	"	Meth
		Ethel G	D	23 June 1898	2	BC	"	Meth
		Charlotte M	D	9 July 1900	0	BC	"	Meth

Frank's profession is shown as "farmer." Some liberties here about origins.

Table 5

Census 1891	Robertson	Robert	M	60	Widower	Scotland	Boat Builder
		Barbara	F	21	Daughter	BC	-
	*)	Hennie	F	19	Daughter	BC	-
		Jean	F	16	Daughter	BC	-
		Mary	F	12	Daughter	BC	-

\*) Andrina

Table 6

Census 1901	Gardner [sic]	William H.	Head	23 Nov 1868	32	BC	Meth.	fisherman
		Barbara	Wife	29 Nov 1868	32	BC	Presb.	
		William H	Son	11 July 1895	5	BC	"	
*)		Craig Robert	Nephew	4 Oct 1893	7	BC	"	
*)		Andrina M	Niece	14 June 1895	5	BC	"	
**)	Robertson	Robert	Father	August 1839	69	Scotland		fisherman

\*) Robert Craig Garner and Mabel Andrina Garner are the children of Andrina Robertson (d. 1896) and Charles Robert Garner. \*\*) Robert's birth year should be 1832 and not 1839. Year of immigration is given as 1852

From Andrew's testament are missing the names of his two younger brothers, William and Robert. His brother William Robertson—William Robert Robertson, a.k.a. Robby—came to a tragic end at the gallows in New Westminster in 1884, as will be discussed in the next chapter. The youngest son, called Robert according to the 1881 Census, may also have carried a second name—perhaps the name of his uncle John. William Robert Robertson testified in 1883 that he met his two brothers in Whonnock that spring, so the youngest brother must have been in Whonnock then. There is no trace of the youngest son after 1883. He may have died or he may have left Whonnock.

Also missing in Andrew's last will is the name of his sister Charlotte Robertson. Robertson's oldest daughter left home in 1886 or early in 1887.<sup>24</sup> The 1891 Census shows Charlotte Robertson in Whonnock and wife to Frank Owens, with a one-year old child born in the United States. (Table 3) The 1901 Census lists the Owens family in Whonnock with four children, including Charlotte M[uriel] Owens, the later Mrs. Heinsbergen. (Table 4)

Between 1902 and 1910 Frank Owens owned 114 acres at Whonnock Lake (SW¼ Sec 17, Twp. 15), including the site where Whonnock Lake Centre is today. The property changed hands in 1911 and the Owens family moved away.

The 1891 Census shows that, after her mother's death around 1886, Barbara Christine and her younger sisters Andrina, Jean (Elizabeth Jane), and Mary and their father formed the household. It is not known what happened to Elizabeth Jane (Jean) after 1891, when she was 16 years old.

Barbara Christine, Andrina, and Mary married three Garner brothers, sons of Robert Craig Garner, who was born in Virginia, and Sialemat, baptized as Alice Joseph, a daughter of Etienne, the chief of Skwa in Chilliwack. The Garner boys grew up on or near Nicomen Island and at some time or another all found employment on the steamers serving the settlements along the Fraser between New Westminster and Chilliwack and elsewhere.

Andrina Robertson married Charles Robert Garner early in the summer of 1893.<sup>25</sup> She died in Whonnock only a few years later, in December of 1896, of tuberculosis.<sup>26</sup> She left a three-year old son, Craig Robert Garner, and an infant daughter, Mabel Andrina Garner, in the care of her sister Barbara Christine. (See Table 6)

Dunn married Mary Robertson to Joseph Garner on the first of January 1900.<sup>27</sup> She followed her husband to Chilliwack and little is known of her later life.

Barbara Christine Robertson married William Henry Garner in December of 1892.<sup>28</sup> Her children, Jane Elizabeth, and William Henry, were not much more than a year or two old when her sister Andrina died, leaving her with the care of Craig Robert and Mabel as well. In January 1900 her five-year old daughter Jane Elizabeth Garner<sup>29</sup> died of tubercu-

<sup>16</sup> Lyn Ross. As per her grandmother Barbara Evelyn (Garner) Gardner.

<sup>17</sup> *Whonnock 1897, John Williamson's Diary*, Whonnock Notes No. 5.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix 2. *Sermon and Missionary Journeys*, Rev. A. Dunn, Sr. DD, March 7, 1925 and Rev. A. Dunn, *Experiences in Langley and Memoirs of Prominent Pioneers*.

<sup>19</sup> His initial missionary field when he came to Whonnock may have embraced Mount Lehman and Aldergrove on the south side of the river and the area between Agassiz and Whonnock on the north side. *Fraser Valley Record*, 5 November 1908.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 2. Dunn wrote: "Towards the end of my residence at Whonnock he began to show signs of failing strength, and though he never refused to accompany me I could see that long trips were too much for him and ceased to ask him." Rev. A. Dunn, *Experiences in Langley and Memoirs of Prominent Pioneers*. See also Appendix 1. Mary Robertson wrote in a letter dated 24 June 1900: "I am also thankful to hear that you still travel with Mr. Dunn."

<sup>21</sup> See the following section: Regina vs Robertson

<sup>22</sup> Original Rolls of Honor for Department issued by the Stave River school at Whonnock to Andrina Robertson, 25 June 1886 and Elizabeth Jane Robertson, 29 June 1888, are part of Lyn Ross's collection, as are copies of similar documents for Robert Craig Garner, 25 June 1902; Mabel Garner, 30 June 1910, and Eva (Barbara Evelyn) Garner, 29 June 1917 (for deportment and proficiency).

<sup>23</sup> For the text of Andrew Roberson's last will see Appendix 2

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Mary Robertson to Robert Robertson, 10 August 1887. The letter ends with the note: "Please give this to Charlotte." See Appendix 1.

<sup>25</sup> In *Mission City News* of 17 June 1893 under "News from Dewdney:" "The number of weddings in our section of the country shows that we are a loving people. The last victim was Mr. Charles Garner, aged 20, to Miss Robie [sic], of Wharnock, Rev. Mr. Dunn binding the contract." No Vital Statistic Register found.

<sup>26</sup> Vital Statistics Reg. No. 1896-09-079226. Her name is recorded as "Mrs. Charles Garner."

<sup>27</sup> Vital Statistics Reg. No. 1900-09-117523.

<sup>28</sup> Vital Statistics Reg. No. 1892-09-115778.

<sup>29</sup> Vital Statistics 1900-09-080577. Daughter of fisherman. She died on 18 January. Pearle, born on 16 January died on 17 January. Registration is signed by W.H. Garner, father. Her age is given as 5 years and 6 months.

<sup>30</sup> Vital Statistics 1900-09-080651. Daughter of fisherman. Registration signed by W.H. Garner, father. Age is given as one day.

<sup>31</sup> Barbara Evelyn Garner married Robert Craig Gardner, a son of well-known steamer captain Charles Alphonsus Gardner and his second wife, Elvira Jane Garner. Elvira Jane was Barbara Evelyn's aunt, a sister of her father. Captain Charles Alphonsus Gardner himself was a child of Charles Clinton Gardner, from Washington DC, part of the United States boundary commission, and Selamie, baptized Angeline or Angelique, also known as "Anna from Matsqui."

<sup>32</sup> The event was reported in detail in the *Fraser Valley Record* of 3 February 1910. On 8 May 1989, in an interview with Lyn Ross (8 May 1989), Muriel (Owens) Heinsbergen remembered Henry as a fine man. "I was proud to call him uncle Henry. He was murdered while fishing on the

losis and the records show that a day earlier another child, Pearle Garner, was born and lost.<sup>30</sup> Their last child, Barbara Evelyn Garner was born in October 1902.<sup>31</sup>

In February 1910, Barbara Christine's husband, William Henry,<sup>32</sup> was killed in a drunken brawl near Nikomen.<sup>33</sup> She was left with four children at home and an ageing father to take care of. Barbara Christine was the last of the Robertson children still living in Whonnock. The young widow went out working to make a living.<sup>34</sup> Those were hard years.<sup>35</sup> The family moved away from Whonnock around 1922.

Robert Robertson wrote his will in September of 1905 leaving what he had to his daughter Barbara.<sup>36</sup> He died in his eighties in 1912.<sup>37</sup>

The 1897 diary of John Williamson (Whonnock Notes No. 5) shows something about the role played by the population of mixed descent in the activities in Whonnock in those Victorian days. The Garner brothers, the Cromartys, the Hairsines, and others, figure prominently and frequently in the entries about farming, fishing, the search for precious minerals, and river transportation. The word "half-breed" or "breed" appears only once or twice in the Williamson diary of 1897, but others in white society looked down at these people with disdain, referring to them as "Indians" rather than considering their European parentage.<sup>38</sup> The blood of their white fathers worked to their detriment rather than in their favour.

With the increase of white newcomers the descendants of the first white settlers were pushed aside and became less and less visible. Increasingly these children of the land became outcasts. Already the Williamson diary shows that their working partners are of similar descent. They found friendship and partners in the mixed-blood community or in Native society rather than in the white community. If they married to Europeans at all they and their children would often be reluctant to acknowledge their Native mother or grandmother.

Of the surviving children of Robert Robertson and Tselatsetenate—with the possible exception of Charlotte—the partners of the daughters were descendants of European and Stō:lo parents. This pattern repeated itself in the following generations and marriage partners came mostly from other mixed-parentage families. Some would merge with the Native population and others, would disappear in the white community, but until the present day many continue to straddle both cultures, never being entirely part of either.∞

Fraser River in 1908 [1910]... Henry often visited us at Whonnock Lake. We had a homestead and he came out and would go hunting deer—Deer hounds: they were big animals with floppy ears. We all loved uncle Henry. Mother [Charlotte Robertson] spoke highly of him. When he was killed it left poor aunty [Barbara Christine] with no support. Like all youngsters at a young age we weren't much help. She walked to Gilcrests [Gilchrist] in Ruskin for a year. Working at washing and housecleaning. I loved her. We had many wonderful visits together."

<sup>33</sup> Edward Wilcox was given 15 years for manslaughter. *The British Columbian*, 10 June 1910.

<sup>34</sup> The *Fraser Valley Record* of 21 April 1910 reported: "A most successful basket social was held last Saturday evening, the proceeds amounted to upwards of \$180, was divided between Mrs. [Albert] Nelson and Mrs. Garner, two widows who were in need of assistance." See: Whonnock Notes No.1.

<sup>35</sup> Two entries in the minutes of the Council meeting of the Municipality of Maple Ridge show the financial condition of the family. On 15 April 1913: "That the constable be instructed to locate Mr. Garner if possible and take steps to compel him to support his family. In the mean time look after the children." On 10 May Council decides: "That Mr. Whiting [the store keeper] be instructed to supply for the use of destitute children to Mrs. Garner goods to the amount of \$6.00 per month until further notice."

<sup>36</sup> In the minute book of the Ladies Club, established in 1911, an entry dated 8 May 1912 reads: "Moved by Mrs. West, seconded by Mrs. Gill, that some token be presented by the Club to Mrs. Garner, whereby the members may testify to her the respectful esteem they feel for her in their hearts." On 14 May: "It was proposed that the token presented by the Club to Mrs. Garner should take the form of a brooch—and it was suggested that brooch should be looked at in Vancouver." On 22 May: "Mrs. West was deputed and choose Mrs. Garner's brooch."

<sup>37</sup> Vital Statistics 1912-09-087322. Alex. J. Stuart, physician with an address in Mission certifies that he saw Robert Robertson alive on 29 April and that he died on 1 May 1912. A curious note accompanies the certificate dated 17 June 1912. "With reference to certificate of death of Robert Robertson which you returned to me in your letter of 10<sup>th</sup> ult. I find it impossible to obtain any information with regard to him. He was, so far as I know, unmarried, he lived alone nor had he any relatives to whom I could apply. I regret therefore that I can not fill in the reference as required."

<sup>38</sup> Some extreme feelings against people of mixed descent of some people in Whonnock around 1912 is reflected in Godwin's novel *The Eternal Forest*. See Whonnock Notes No. 6. The presence in Whonnock of Mrs. Boulanger and Mrs. West may have put a lid on racism in the community. Mrs. Boulanger, a daughter of the respected Spilsbury family was married to August, a member of the mixed-blood Baker family, and Mrs. West, an outspoken Norwegian women, was married to a son of ship builder West and a daughter of the mixed-blood Fallardeau family



# Regina vs. Robertson, a Half-breed Indian

[Bob] was accused of stealing horses and was hanged in Whonnock. After many years he was proven not guilty. Mother [Charlotte] and Auntie [Barbara] were both saddened by this terrible tragedy. I often heard them speak of it. Charlotte Muriel (Owens) Heinsbergen interviewed by Lyn Ross on 8 May 1989.

MURIEL HEINSBERGEN, daughter of Charlotte Robertson was right. One of the Robertson boys was hanged, but not for horse stealing. William Robert Robertson, commonly known as Robby, about 19 years old, was hanged in the prison in New Westminster in the spring of 1884. He was convicted mainly on his own evidence for the murder of Richard (Dick) Bailey, like him, a son of mixed ancestry. His contemporaries questioned the verdict. In all probability he was innocent.<sup>1</sup>

The murder took place in the evening of Thursday, 15 March. Bailey had money with him and, among other things, two kegs of beer. It was robbery and Robert was at the scene when it happened. That night he went to his aunt, Catherine Muench's house, telling her about the murder.<sup>2</sup> The next day he stayed at his aunt's and on Saturday and Sunday he visited his father in Whonnock.<sup>3</sup> On Monday 18 March he went with his aunt to New Westminster to sell eggs. He told a constable he knew that Bailey was murdered and he was arrested.<sup>4</sup> A week later Robbie confessed that he was an eyewitness to the crime committed by Peter, a Musqueam, and Jim, a Coquitlam Indian. That confession was recorded on 25 March 1883. A few days later, on 31 March he signed a confession that he himself had shot Bailey, threatened by Peter and Jim. The next day he helped the authorities to find the body of Dick Bailey in the river.

During his cross-examination in the case against Jim and Peter, Robertson told the jury that his first confession, of 25 March, was correct but he dismissed the confession recorded on 31 March as "false." Was this last confession made under pressure from Todd, the superintendent of police, as he alleged? Charles Hughes, Government Agent, who witnessed the document together with Moresby, the gaoler, admits: "Todd, I may say, conducted the thing and Moresby and I, I may say, were more witnesses than anything else. I don't know what happened in the gaol before this. I know that Todd went into the gaol to see him, but I know nothing as to interviews between prisoner and Moresby." Moresby did not talk about the second confession. In his statement he said: "This is all in connection with first confession" and he adds, "Prisoner is ignorant and dull. I think he can't

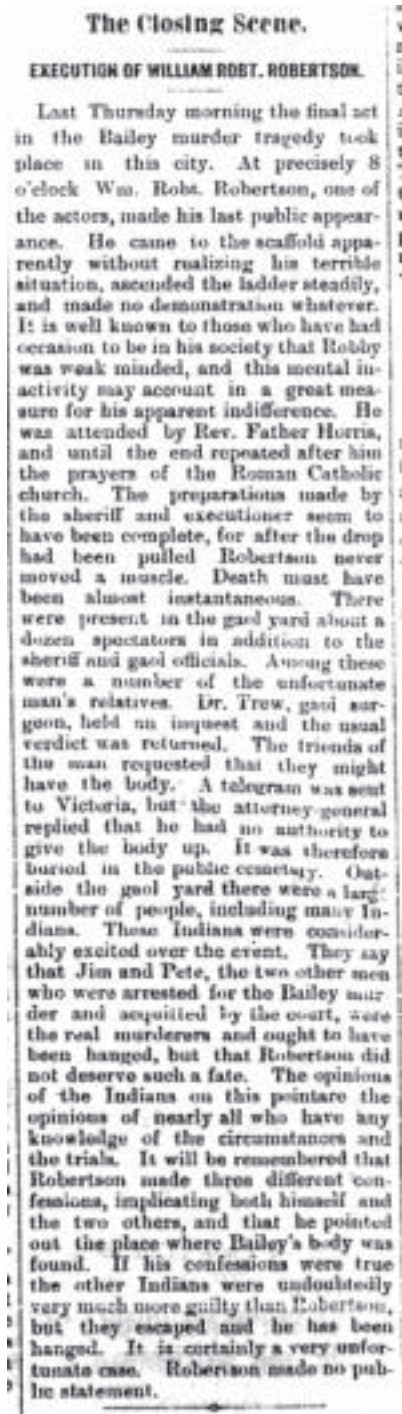
<sup>1</sup> Appendix 3 includes transcripts of Justice McCreight's letters of 8 December 1883 and 2 February 1884, a letter from the Deputy Minister of Justice in Ottawa dated 28 December 1883 as well as the petition from William Robert Robertson to the Governor General of Canada. Copies of other documents relating to the conviction and execution of William Robert Robertson, provided by BC Archives and National Archives in Ottawa, including the confessions, are part of the collection of documents of the Whonnock Community Association held at the Mission Community Archives. The collection also includes contemporary newspaper accounts.

<sup>2</sup> Attached to Justice McCreight's letter of 8 February 1884 is a transcript of a testimony by Matilda Muench, telling the jury: "I heard Robby say: 'Peter and Jim have killed Dick.'" This evidence was "not relied on by the prosecutor." See Appendix 3.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Stewart, a Native witness living in New Westminster: "[William Robert Robertson] was living at the time a little above Langley. If [he] had occasion to come to town he would go back again to Langley for his father and he generally resided there. Understood [that William Robert Robertson] was living opposite Keatsey near Langley on the Langley side at the time he last saw Bailey."

NOTES CONTINUE ON PAGE 16

Figure 5. British Columbian, New Westminster, 18 March 1884



read or write. He makes his mark.” Justice McCreight wrote in a letter to Ottawa on 8 December: “I have no reason to suppose there was any understanding between Counsel for the Prosecution and the prisoner as to the terms upon which he was to give evidence and of course there could be no understanding of any effect in the case of a prisoner under sentence, but I may observe that there is great difficulty in obtaining proof in cases of murder of this description...” Did Todd make promises as alleged by Robertson? It was the young man’s word against Todd’s. Todd won and Robertson died.

At the assizes held in November 1883 in New Westminster the confessions made were sufficient for a Jury to find William Robert Robertson guilty of the murder of Dick Bailey. William Robert Robertson, convicted of murder, was then called as a witness for the Crown against Jim and Peter, an action considered questionable by both Justice McCreight and by Ottawa. “On my oath,” said Robertson during a gruelling six-hour examination, “I did not shoot Dick Bailey, it was Peter [who] shot him.” But it did not help him. A Jury, partly consisting of men who were part of the Jury that convicted him before, did not believe the often confusing and conflicting statements by William Robert Robertson and acquitted Jim and Peter.

After reading the transcripts of his evidence and cross-examination in this case Ottawa commented, “his [Robertson’s] statements are so contradictory that it is not a wonder that the Jury gave no weight to them.”<sup>5</sup> Giving evidence Robertson admitted that conviction of Peter and Jim would benefit his case and that their conviction could probably save him his life. He took the Jury through an afternoon in New Westminster and a kaleidoscopic succession of events around Dick Bailey, Jim and Peter, and himself. Jim and Peter are clearly drunk but Robertson showed the Jury that he was not sober himself and even Bailey, otherwise described as abstinent, is pictured as sharing some of his whiskey with Robertson. But it was perhaps an attempt to show that he purchased liquor during that afternoon for his own consumption. His testimony showed that he had little or no direct contact with the two Indians, but he knew them both and it is possible that he was the one providing them the liquor they drank and that they could not buy legally. Admitting that would have validated at least part of his second confession, which he rejected totally.

Throughout the case young Robertson underlined that there were no hard feelings between him and Dick Bailey. “I had known Dick Bailey since he was a little boy. I am 18. I had known Dick Bailey about six years. Dick Bailey and I were very friendly. He and I were both half-breeds. We were good friends all the time. I had never any spite towards him or he towards me. He would not do a bad turn to me or I to him. I felt bad about his being killed. I thought as much of Dick as of my brother and up to the day of his death we had no quarrel.”

At eight in the evening, when the tide turned, Dick Bailey headed for home on Pitt River and for his untimely death. As all witnesses agreed, he left the New Westminster shore accompanied by Jim and Peter in another canoe. They had one or more guns on board. Robertson decided to go home as well and rented or borrowed a canoe and followed the others some time later, catching up with the others some miles upstream on the moonlit river. The owner of the canoe Robertson used stated in his cross-examination in the case against Jim and Peter, “Robby had no gun and asked for none, there was no gun in the canoe.”<sup>6</sup>

Robby Robertson spoke the language of the white men and Peter and Jim kept silent and were acquitted. Robertson’s own word placed them at the murder site and a fisherman at the tip of Douglas Island heard only one canoe going upstream: Robertson’s by his own admission. Jim and Peter left no trace.

The Jury let Peter and Jim go as free men but seemed to share Justice McCreight’s opinion that Robertson could not have been the only man concerned in the murder.<sup>7</sup> The Jury convicted William Robert Robertson recommending mercy “on the ground of youth and made a tool of to a certain extent.” The Ministry of Justice in Ottawa saw nothing outside Robertson’s confession and evidence to support the view taken by the Jury that “Robertson was a tool in the hands of other Indians,” and asked Justice McCreight for clarification.

In his reply of 8 February 1884 Justice McCreight suggested that Robertson’s confession and his youth might have been a factor in the Jury’s recommendation but perhaps also “an outside general impression that others, namely Peter and Jim, men of mature age, were involved in the crime.” He added that the case “had excited much interest.”<sup>8</sup>

In this letter Justice McCreight admitted a lack of information in this case, which could, he suggests, have been remedied by the presence of a police officer having “the confidence of the Indians and their Chiefs.” He expressed

<sup>4</sup> This is what he told during cross-examination in the case against Jim and Peter. The first confession of 25 March states: “...I went up as far as my aunt’s Mrs. Munch [sic]. I told my aunt all about it that same night. On Sunday I told my two brothers and cousin. I did not see them until Sunday.”

<sup>5</sup> Deputy Minister of Justice to McCreight 28 December, 1883.

<sup>6</sup> McCreight to Deputy Minister of Justice, Ottawa, 8 February 1884.

<sup>7</sup> McCreight to Deputy Minister of Justice, Ottawa, 8 February 1884.

<sup>8</sup> McCreight to Deputy Minister of Justice, Ottawa, 8 February 1884.

concerns about many unresolved murder cases and mysterious disappearances in the last two years in this neighbourhood, adding, “in most of which probably Indians have been involved.” It is important to remember that in the eyes of those dealing with the case William Robert Robertson, he was not a white man. He was just another Indian. His petition to the Governor General of Canada describes him as a “half breed Indian boy aged about 19 years,” and Justice McCreight referred in his correspondences to both Robertson and to Bailey as “half breed Indians.”

In December 1883 the Ministry of Justice seemed still at a loss what to do and asked Justice McCreight for help and clarification. Justice McCreight’s reply of 8 February provided Ottawa with a reason why “the law should take its course.” A line is drawn in the margin of the letter at the paragraph dealing with the unresolved murders and mysterious disappearances, alleging that Indians were the perpetrators. Ottawa may have decided that a firm hand was needed to cope with this problem.

In the margin of the letter another line is drawn at the paragraph where Justice McCreight mentioned that he considered Robertson fully responsible for his acts, even if, as he has learned, Robertson was a person of weak intellect. Therefore William Robert Robertson was hung that spring of 1884, on little more than his own confession, extracted perhaps under false pretences for a murder he possibly did not commit.

His hanging was justified as a deterrent to his fellow Indians. The unresolved murders and mysterious disappearances had to come to a stop.

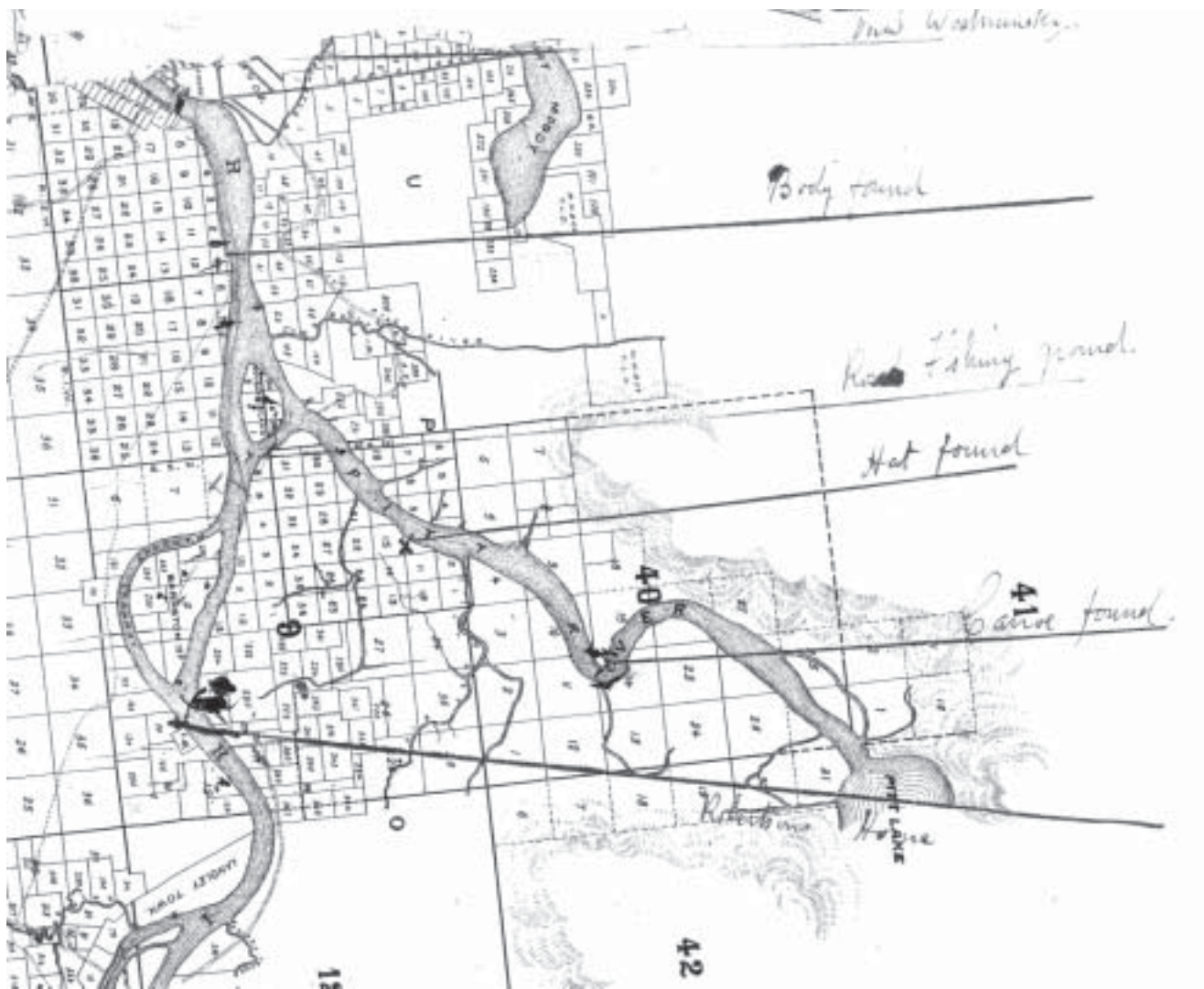


Figure 6: Justice McCreight to Deputy Minister of Justice in Ottawa, 8 February 1884. “I enclose a copy of the map used at the trial”. Noted on the map are: Westminster; Body found; Ross Fishing ground; Hat found; Canoe found; and Robertson’s Home, just west of the Katzie reserve on the south shore. The Muench family lived east of the reserve.



# Whonnock

IN THE EARLY 1860s there were more Aboriginals than white people in British Columbia. Only a handful of white settlers lived on both sides of the river between Fort Langley and the Stave River. The Robertsons settled west of a Native village called Ōo-a-nuck in the Lower Halquemeylem language of its inhabitants. The name of this Stō:lo village, to which I will refer as Who-nock, was later used as the name for the white settlement of Whonnock. That was only when a post office and a railway station were established in 1885. Before that time the settlement was nameless.<sup>1</sup> The railroad decided to call their station “Wharnock,” and this spelling is frequently shown in documents around the turn of the century. The white settlers preferred the spelling Whonnock and changes were made to accommodate their wish. Just before the Second World War, the Federal Government decided to apply the spelling of the name of the reserve, Who-nock or Whonock, to the entire settlement. “Whonock,” with one “N” became the official name. Most of the residents, however, continued to prefer the spelling with two Ns and they petitioned successfully for a change. In 1969, the spelling of the name of the settlement and the reserve became Whonnock, with consent of the Kwantlen First Nation.

In 1860 the Robertsons squatted on land—a total of 290 acres—that would later be granted to them, next to the Native village. A few years later, in 1864, Sergeant McColl, laying out reserves under instructions of Governor Douglas, reported that there were 33 inhabitants in Who-nock village. Across the river, along the swampy shores of what we know as Glen Valley, was another Native settlement called Saan-oquâ, with 20 inhabitants.<sup>2</sup>

Governor Douglas planned a 2,000-acre reserve for the Who-nock, which is not excessive, considering that each white settler, like Robertson, could pre-empt 160 acres of land for himself. Under pressure from immigrant settlers, Governor Douglas’s reasonable proposals for the reserves were discarded. Aware of the attempts to reduce their lands, First Nations, including the Who-nock people, presented a number of petitions to protect the lands assigned to them previously. The Who-nock people joined in a petition to Governor Seymour on 24 May 1864 saying “please to protect our land, that it will not be [too] small for us, many are well pleased with their reservations, and many wish that their reservations be marked out for them.”<sup>3</sup> Again in 1866 they and others in the Lower Mainland pleaded: “The white men tell many things about taking our lands: our hearts become very sick. We wish to say to Governor Seymour: please protect our lands.”<sup>4</sup> But all reserves were cut back.

The 2,000 acres of land set aside for the Who-nock reserve was “adjusted” to 92 acres. On 18 December 1868, a public notice appeared in the government’s *Gazette* with a list of reserves in New Westminster District including “Whonock [sic] Reserve, 92 acres, on right bank of Fraser River, about four miles above Fort Langley.”<sup>5</sup> Saamoqua across the river was not on this list.<sup>6</sup> Earlier, on 6 December Father Durieu, O.M.I, forwarded a memorial from the Who-nock people to Governor Seymour on the matter of the “adjustments to their reserve.”<sup>7</sup> This petition compared their “small patch of land” to “what they allowed to a white man, our neighbour.” That neighbour was Robert Robertson. The Who-nock people joined in other petitions in 1873<sup>8</sup> and 1874.<sup>9</sup> On 15 May 1878 Lot 433, Robert Robertson’s pre-emption claim was surveyed.<sup>10</sup> The land, 153 acres west of the 92-acre reserve, was granted to him in 1884. In 1885 his son Andrew received a grant for an additional 138 acres.

Until 1874 and perhaps till the railroad came, the Native village of Who-nock was located at the riverside on the southwest corner of the present-day reserve. The railroad cut their track through the land along the river, and the village core was moved inland. A Catholic church was built there. A new, Christian, cemetery was established just east of the present Whonnock cemetery, which is situated on land once being part of the reserve. The original First Nations cemetery was destroyed when the Lougheed Highway was constructed in the late 1920s.

Even in the years prior to the coming of the railroad Whonnock was not a lonesome or boring place. Aside from the goings on in the neighbouring Native villages, there was much activity on the Fraser, the main thoroughfare for the white settlers as it had been for the Native population since time immemorial. Every year people went out on the river to net an abundance of salmon: a staple for everyone. In addition to the Native traffic up and down the river, the Fraser river carried a flow of fortune seekers on their way to points in the Eastern Fraser Valley, the gold discoveries in the Cariboo, and other interior destinations. Later thousands of Chinese were shipped upriver to work on the new railroad. Paddle wheelers went their way up and down the river carrying people and supplies. The steamers needed large quantities of fuel and supplying firewood became as important a source of money for cash-starved settlers as railway ties would be in



later years. Rowboats and canoes were used frequently to visit friends and do business and Robert Robertson was able to add to his income by rowing people around. The rail remained an expensive alternative to river craft and roads between the communities on the riverside were virtually non-existent for many years.

In the *Fraser Valley Record*, (Vol. 1 No. 21, Mission City, B.C., 5 November 1908) the Rev. Alexander Dunn, reminiscing of the time around 1889, gives us an impression how pioneer settlers' homesteads looked.

Dwellings, outhouses and fencing were built all very much after the style of the new country, clumsy if substantial; and, though for the most part the buildings were the workmanship of individual owners, there was a remarkable similarity or uniformity in design and execution. Log houses were not rare, barns of split cedar were common, and the small patches of clearing were studded with large stumps of fir and cedar trees, between which some fruit trees had been planted, and around which potatoes, peas and oats, and timothy grew, and in most instances grew luxuriantly. So far apart in most cases were the homes of the settlers in 1889, that travelers, hurried along the line by the train, failed to observe them, and were wont to declare that they saw no settlement at all unless it were an Indian village here or there.

On 12 September 1871 the Municipality of Maple Ridge was incorporated. The 1875 list of persons entitled to vote showed "claimants," that is men who pre-empted or owned land. The Langley Polling Division listed residing "above Langley:" Robert Robertson, William Nickales, and James Cromarty. James Cromarty is shown as a "resident," and the Cromarty property was in what we call Glen Valley. On the north shore of the Fraser are Robert Robertson and William Nickales as pre-emptors.<sup>11</sup> In the following year, 1876, both Robertson and Nickales are shown as "farmers" with residence: Maple Ridge. These lists of voters give an idea of the population explosion in the Maple Ridge area. In 1877 there were about 20 voters in Maple Ridge. That number doubled in 1879 and quadrupled by 1890. The 1890 voters lists shows the residence of those listed as Maple Ridge, Port Haney, Port Hammond, Stave River and Wharnock. Whonnock lists about 25 voters and there are five more at the Stave River. But these voters are only people with a claim to land, excluding all women and non-British settlers. The 1901 Census gives a better idea of the population in the eastern part of Maple Ridge. In 1901 there are 60 "dwellings" in the Whonnock and Stave Lake area, including five on the Whonnock reserves, each dwelling representing resident families in the area.

The new railroad encouraged settlement and the growing of communities on the north shore of the river. Construction of the railroad between Yale and Port Moody was carried out through 1883 and into January 1884. The first train between the two points ran on 23 January 1884, a day after the line was opened. The fare between Port Moody and Yale was \$5.50—a lot of money in those days.<sup>12</sup> The work through the Fraser Canyon was not yet completed in 1894, and the first trans-continental train passed through Whonnock almost two years later, on 8 November 1885. But for the residents of the Fraser Valley the trains started running in January 1884.☺

<sup>1</sup>The school built in Whonnock in 1885 was originally known as the Stave River school. Only after 1897 was the school in Whonnock called Whonnock school. The name Stave River school was then given to the new school in Ruskin.

<sup>2</sup> Colonial Correspondence. Report of Segt. McColl of Surveys of Indian reserves. 16 May 1864. In November 1867 Joseph W. Trutch visited both villages and reported 36 inhabitants at Who-nock and 14 across the river. The Who-nock population included 13 men, 14 women, and 9 children. In the Saan-ouâ village lived 9 men and 5 women, but no children. Three "cattle" and 12 pigs were owned by the Who-nock and six "cattle," three horses, and five pigs were at the Saan-ouâ. In December of that year Edward Mohun reported: "At Whannock [sic] I laid off about 100 acres, with which the Indians appear perfectly satisfied." In BC Papers connected with the Indian Land Question, 1850–1875 Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works to Colonial Secretary 19 November, 1867 and Mr. Mohun to Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, 3 December 1867. Copies of these and other documents mentioned are part of the collection of documents of the Whonnock Community Association held at the Mission Community Archives.

<sup>3</sup> Great Britain, Colonial Office, C.O. 60/19. Seymour to Cardwell, 31 August 1864.

<sup>4</sup> Great Britain, Colonial Office, C.O. 60/27. Seymour to Cardwell, 19 February 1867.

<sup>5</sup> *BC Papers connected with the Indian Land Question, 1850–1875*, Appendix

<sup>6</sup> William Cromarty's Sr. identified himself in his last will (1875) as "I, William Cromarty, Farmer of Samaqua Creek." It is also referred to as Cromarty Slough and today is called Beaver Creek, Glen Valley.

<sup>7</sup> The text of this memorial is included in Appendix 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Mainland Guardian*, 28 May 1873 including the words: "The white men have taken our land...White men have surrounded our villages so much, as in many instances, especially on the Fraser River, but few acres of land have been left us.

<sup>9</sup> To the Indian Commissioner. British Columbia, Provincial Secretary, Letters Received, (1874) No. 510. Including the words: "[We] view with great anxiety the standing question of the quantity of land to be reserved for the use of each Indian family." Also: "Our hearts have been wounded by the arbitrary way the Local Government of British Columbia have dealt with us in locating and dividing our Reserves." and "For many years we have been complaining of the land left us being too small."

<sup>10</sup> Field Book BC 1116

<sup>11</sup> Nickales's property would go to Spilsbury before 1891.

<sup>12</sup> I thank Robert D. Turner for providing the information about the first train.

# Robertson's Land

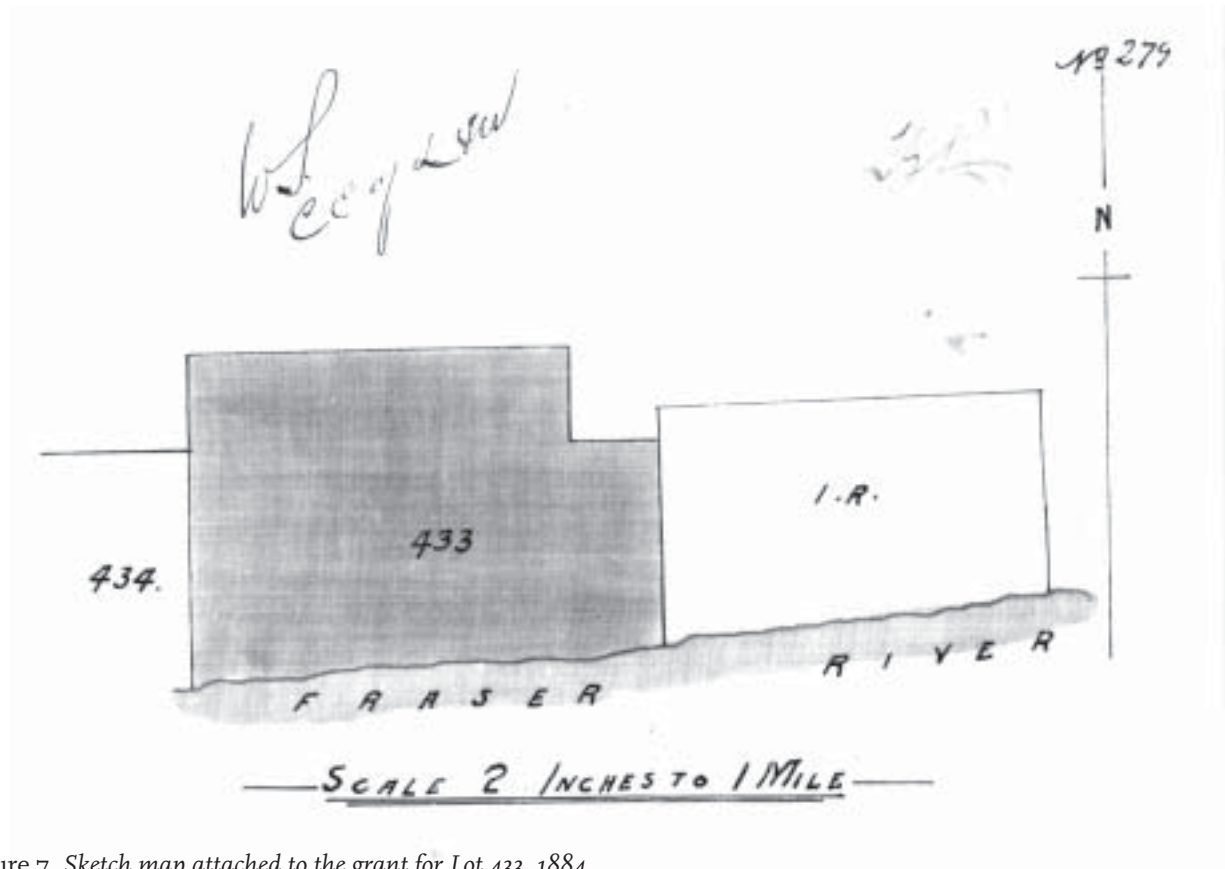


Figure 7. Sketch map attached to the grant for Lot 433, 1884.

IN JULY OF 1884, in consideration of a dollar per acre, Robert Robertson received a Crown Grant for the 153 acres of land he pre-empted. This land was Lot 433, the historic core of Whonnock. Land for the building of a school was set aside in the south-east corner and Robertson yielded acreage for the right-of-way of Canadian Pacific's track. Five years later the Reverend Alexander Dunn owned most of the land of Lot 433 and Robert owned not more than an acre, where his house stood, the family cemetery on the hill, and a path from his house to the cemetery.

1. In 1884 Robert Robertson transferred to Her Majesty the Queen land for the construction of the STAVE RIVER school which would be completed in the summer of 1885. (see Figure 12, page 23)
2. That year Robert Robertson also sold one acre of land to CATHERINE OLIVER. This land "adjoining Wharnoc Station," is where Noble Oliver started Whonnock's first store.<sup>2</sup>
3. In 1885 Robert transferred the title of about 14 acres of his property to "Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria." to allow CANADIAN PACIFIC its right of way.

<sup>1</sup> Unless stated otherwise the following information has been gathered from the records of the New Westminster Land Titles Office and the records of the Municipality of Maple Ridge. Copies or transcripts are part of the collection of documents of the Whonnock Community Association held at the Mission Community Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Noble Oliver was appointed postmaster in 1884. After he sold the land and the shop the new shopkeeper George Alexander Smith was acting postmaster till his appointment in 1890.

4. On December 1885 Robert Robertson sold the REV. ALEXANDER DUNN 100 acres of his property north of the CPR.
5. The land south of the tracks, alongside the Fraser, was bordered to the east by the school property. In January 1886 and March 1898 Robert Robertson sold a total of seven acres of land west of the school property to CLEMENT STICKNEY.
6. In September 1889, Robert sold another 27½ acres to REV. ALEXANDER DUNN.

By 1890 the Rev. Alexander Dunn was the owner of most of the land of Lot 433 above the CPR corridor with the exception of the one-acre property housing the store, first owned by Oliver and then by Smith. Also not included in Dunn's land was about an acre of land with the Robertson family home as well as the cemetery and a right-of-way from the Robertson home, through the 27½ acres property, to the family cemetery.

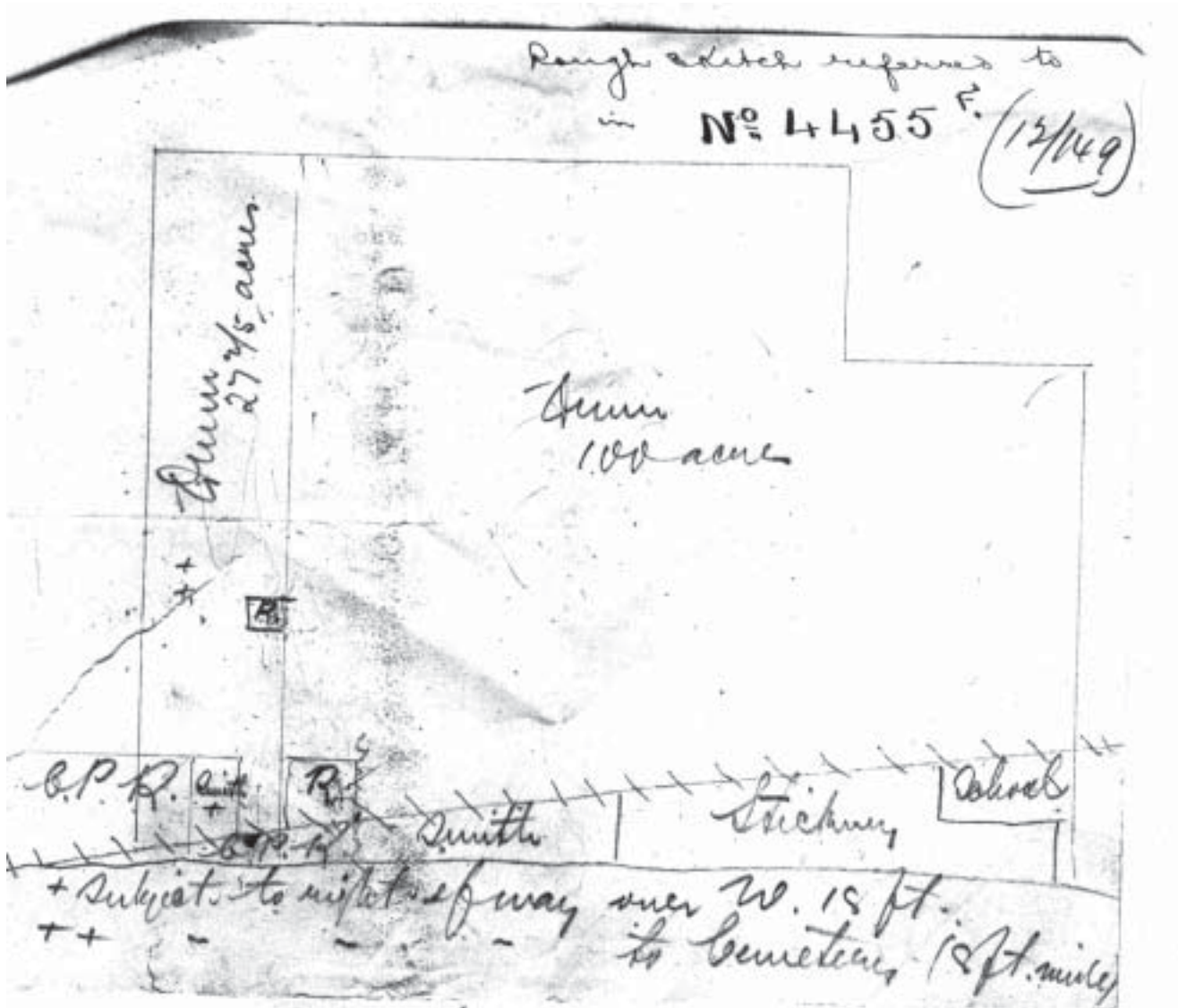


Figure 8. A rough sketch showing the land owners in Lot 433 in 1889. The sizes of the lots are not accurate. Note Robertson's home and the cemetery marked with an "R". The right-of-way to the cemetery (8 ft wide) through the 27½ acre property was established at this time. Some land between "Smith" and "R[obertson]" was included in the 27½ acres purchased by Dunn, but later returned to the Robertson acreage. Note the site of the Stave River (later Whonnock) school.

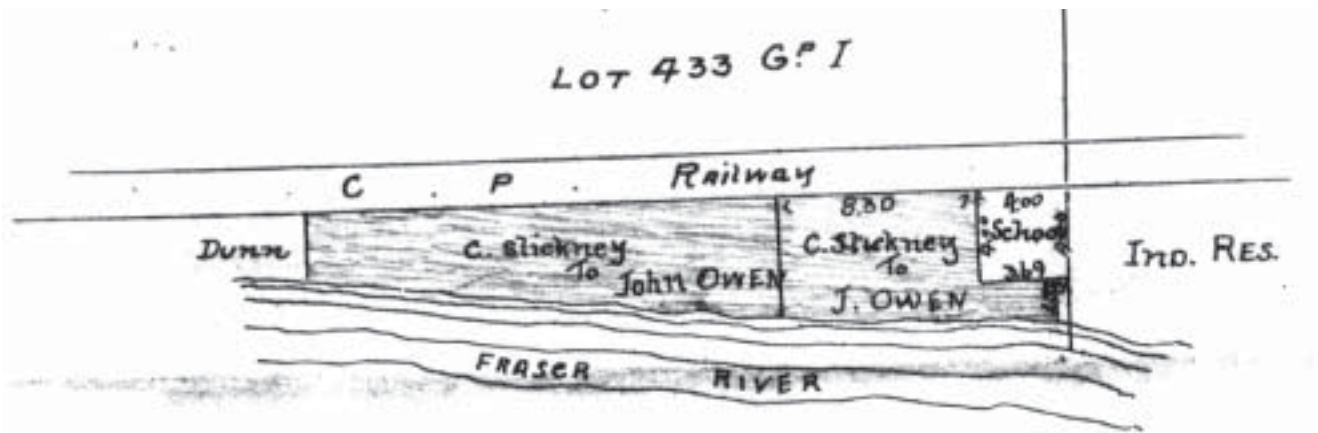


Figure 9. 1896—Part of Lot 433 south of the railway track showing the school property and the two properties purchased by Stickney from Robertson. Note that Dunn owned some land here on the water.

South of the rail tracks, Robertson had no land left either. From east to west the land along the river was taken by the school, the seven acres sold to Stickney, and, it seems, some land Smith owned that later went to Dunn after Smith sold his business to L.C. York in 1894. (see Figure 9)

One may wonder why Robert Robertson would sold his acreage so quickly. Cash was always in short supply and taxes may have been a problem. Besides, for the sum of five dollars his son Andrew acquired a Crown Grant for the adjacent lot No. 344 of some 138 acres in 1885. (see Figure 11) That land seemed well suited for agriculture and it bordered the new rail station. It seemed a good investment property. The tax load of the combined properties was certainly a burden. Robert Robertson and Andrew Robertson paid taxes on these properties from as early as 1881. Their properties were assessed as “wild lands” and fell into a higher tax bracket than the “improved lands.” Andrew died in 1888 leaving the family with an abundance of land. Robert was growing older and he was never interested in farming as is shown in Andrew Robertson’s last will. His sons-in-law, the Garners, fishermen and workers on the steamers, pursued other interests than farming. The family held on to lot No. 344 till 1905, when it was sold.<sup>3</sup>

In October 1911 Ashton W. Spilsbury, Justice of the Peace, drew up a deed of sale of the eastern part of the Robertson family property—a slice of 19/100 of an acre on the corner of Wharf Road and River road. It was sold for \$325. The document was signed by Robert Robertson. Although Spilsbury must have considered Robert legally capable, it seems that the latter’s eyesight was not sufficient to read the small print of the document. Spilsbury added a note to the document saying: “The contents of this instrument were read to him [Robertson] and he thoroughly understood the contents thereof.” Robert died in May of the following year. Andrew Graham would build a warehouse and a store on this land. (see Figure 10)

About the time Showler opened his store across the street from Graham’s, Barbara Christine (Robertson) Garner and her children left Whonnock. In 1922 Barbara Garner sold the family home. Documents related to the sale confirm that the property she inherited from Robert Robertson consisted of “two portions of District Lot 433..., one being approximately one acre lying between the Dewdney [River] Road and the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the other being the portion known as the Cemetery with the right-of-way leading to it.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 5 contains transcripts of some letters and extracts from council meetings relating to a dispute regarding compensation for the right-of-way for the River Road through the Robertson Estate.



PLAN OF A 1.08 ACRE PART OF  
LOT 433 GROUP I NEW WESTMINSTER DISTRICT.  
 SCALE - 1 INCH = 100 FEET

REFERENCE PLAN

509612  
 sketch 518

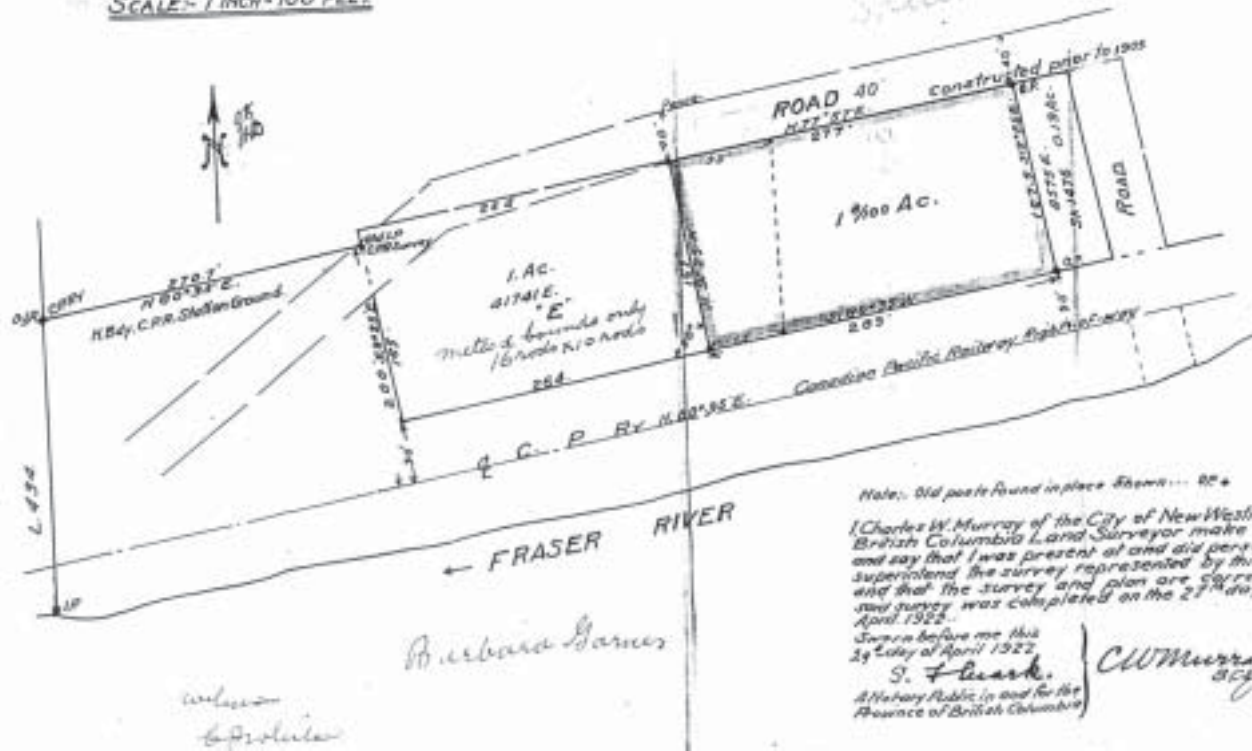


Figure 10. 1922. Survey of Robertson property prior to sale. The 0.19-acre lot to the right (east) of Robertson's property, at the corner of River Road and Wharf Road, was sold in 1911 and Graham's store was built there. The one-acre property to the left (west) of the Robertson lot was where the old store stood (site now under Lougheed Highway) till it burned some time during the First World War. The dotted line through the Robertson property shows the direction of the "right-of-way" to the cemetery.

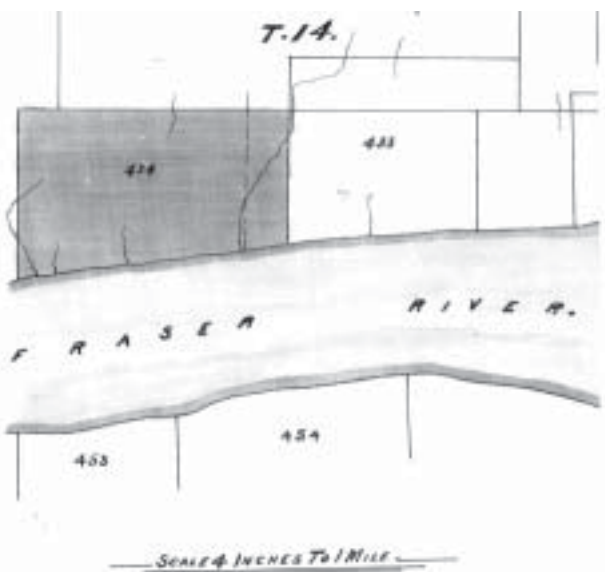


Figure 11. 1885. Sketch map of Lot 434 granted to Andrew Robertson.

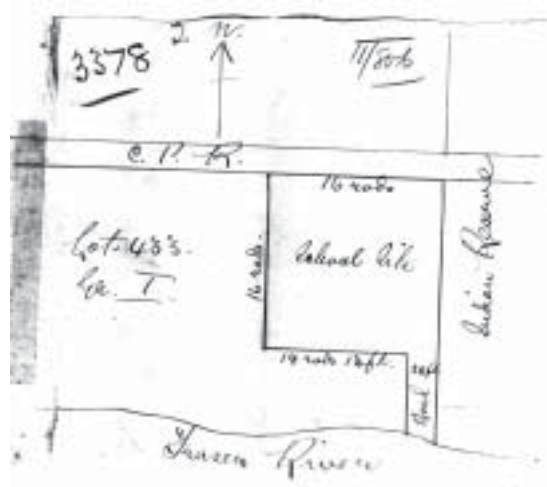


Figure 12. 1885. Sketch map of school property. The British Columbian of 14 February 1885 reports: "Rev. Alexander Dunn, of Langley, has purchased eighty acres of land from Mr. Robert Robertson, of Warnock, and has donated an acre of his purchase to the government for a schoolsite."

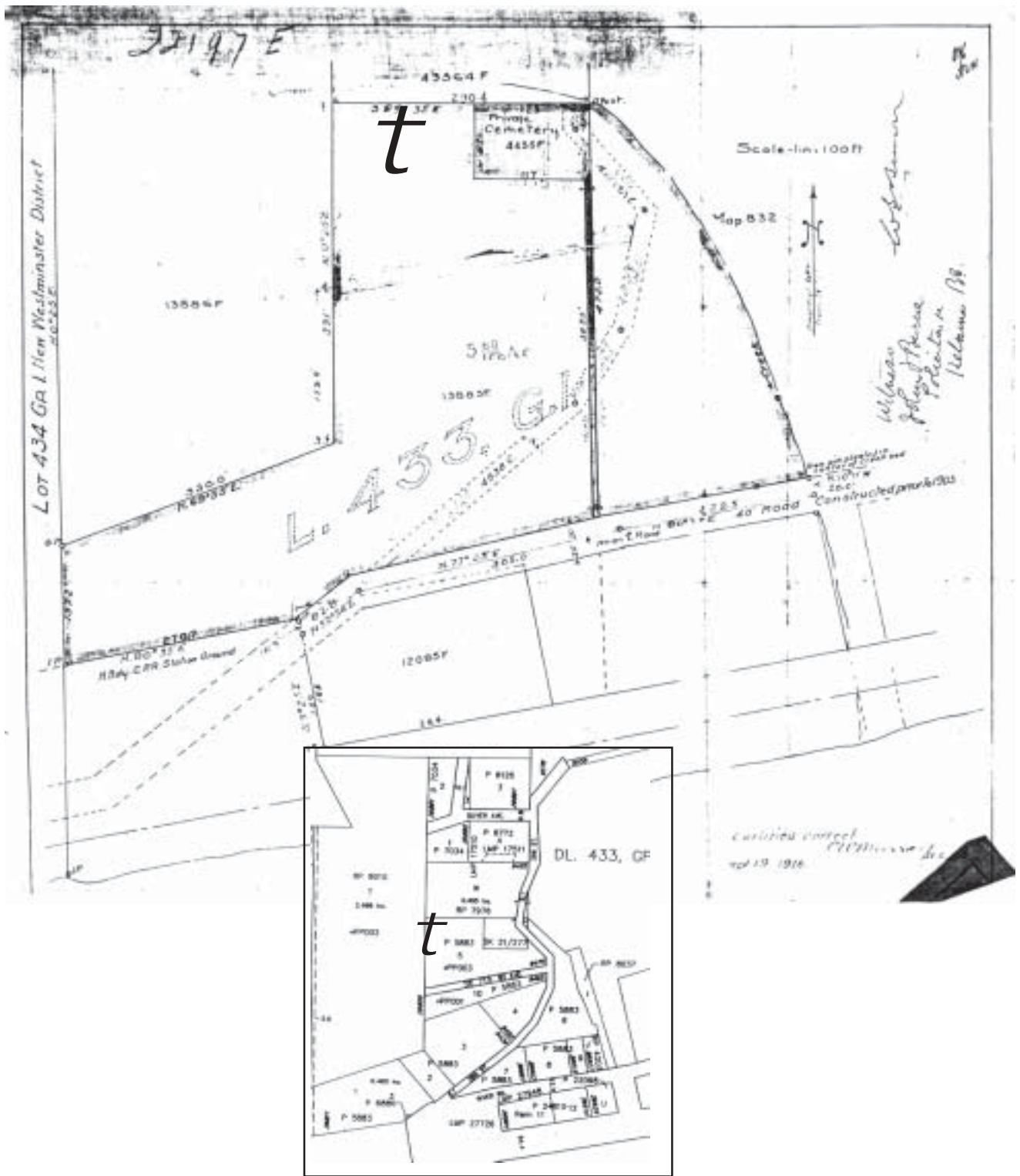


Figure 13. The map dated September 1916 shows the future 269th Street, ending at the Robertson family cemetery. In 1937, the right-of-way—still shown on this map—leading from the former Robertson property on River Road to the cemetery, was sold by Barbara (Robertson) Garner to the owners of the land through which it leads. The insert is a detail of a recent cadastral map of the Municipality of Maple Ridge. The cemetery is the lot numbered SK 21/277. Today the graveyard is no longer marked as a cemetery, as it should. There is no direct access to the cemetery. Permission for access by the owners of the adjacent land is required.

# The Little Cemetery on the Hill

...And a quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.<sup>1</sup>

THE SITE of the Robertson family cemetery was clearly marked on the older maps as a cemetery. It is a small plot of land only measuring some 87 by 125 feet. On the map of the Corporation of the District of Maple Ridge the land is marked SK 21/277 and it is identified at the Land Titles Office as 21/277 4455<sup>f</sup>. It needs again to be identified as a cemetery in the municipal records and shown as a cemetery on the municipal maps. The land is still registered to the Robertsons.<sup>2</sup>

Who was the first to be buried here? It is likely that Robertson babies and young children found their way here already in the 1860s. We know that two daughters of Robert and Tselatsetenate died in the 1870s. An infant CELESTINE, was baptized in 1870, and an earlier child called Mary, was baptized in 1874. Both are not shown in the 1881 Census.

The *British Columbian* reported that WILLIAM ROBERT ROBERTSON was buried in New Westminster (see Figure 5, page 15), but Richard Whiting, who was postmaster in Whonnock as from 1907, thought that this Robertson was buried in Whonnock in 1884.<sup>3</sup>

TSELATSETENATE, Robert's Stō:lo wife died of tuberculosis around 1886. Her son, ANDREW ROBERTSON also died of tuberculosis in 1888. ANDRINA ROBERTSON, the wife of Charles Garner, died of the terrible disease in 1896. They were buried here.

Little JENNIE ELIZABETH GARNER, the five-year old daughter of Barbara Christine, was another victim of tuberculosis. She died in 1900. Buried with her was another child of Barbara and Henry: PEARLE GARNER was born and died one day before her sister died in 1900.

The *Fraser Valley Record* mentioned "a burial of a baby in the private burial ground" in Whonnock in October 1909, but we don't know yet who it was.

WILLIAM HENRY GARNER, Barbara Christine's husband who died in a brawl in the Nikomen area, also rests here. He was buried in February 1910. "The widow and children and many relations were present at the grave."<sup>4</sup>

Probably the last to be buried in this family graveyard was ROBERT ROBERTSON himself. He was put to rest on Friday, 3 May 1912, and "there was a large attendance both of old-timers and new-comers, from some of whom he received, during his prolonged illness, many kindnesses."<sup>5</sup>

Today there are no gravestones or other signs showing that this is a cemetery. It is a small part of an ordinary garden, an extension of a well-kept lawn, covered with ivy. The Robertson family cemetery is a historic cemetery. It is therefore registered by the Municipality of Maple Ridge as a heritage resource. What else can be done to assure that future generations don't disturb the peace of these early pioneers?<sup>∞</sup>



CELESTINE ROBERTSON  
MARY ROBERTSON  
WILLIAM ROBERT ROBERTSON  
TSELATSETENATE ROBERTSON  
ANDREW ROBERTSON  
ANDRINA ROBERTSON  
JENNIE ELIZABETH GARNER  
PEARLE GARNER  
WILLIAM HENRY GARNER  
ROBERT ROBERTSON

<sup>1</sup>The last sentence of *Sea-Fever* by John Masefield, a poem Robert Robertson liked to recite.

<sup>2</sup>"I have confirmed with Land Titles that the land referred to is indeed still registered to the Robertsons." Letter from Cemetery and Funeral Services dated 13 November 1998.

<sup>3</sup>Whiting told Brian Byrnes that "there was one there with a knife in his back and another with a rope around his neck."

<sup>4</sup>*Fraser Valley Record*, Vol. 4, February 10, 1910. (see Whonnock Notes No. 1)

<sup>5</sup>*Experiences in Langley and Memoirs of Prominent Pioneers*, Rev. A. Dunn, 1913. See Appendix 2.

# Appendixes

## Appendix 1

### Letters from Yell and Norway House

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Transcripts of the letters follow the orthography of the author.

---

Burravoe Yell Zetland, 6th November 1855

My Dear Robert

Your deeply interesting Letter of the 1 March 1855 came here in June and relieved my anxiety and that of your Father and Sisters by informing us of your being then in health and business.

Thank be to the great Author of our many mercies we are all in ordinary health at present and we trust this will find you in the same

Your Dear Sisters are all home with me at present except Jane who is at Shore with Mr Buce. Mary Rendal has got a stronger than ever she was and recovered ever since her Mother's decease and Robt himself is becoming Blind. Wm Rendal returned from Australia with above a Thousand Pounds and Married Mr. Bruce Widow (Janet Williamson) and have gone to reside in the Hall at Reaforth. John Rendal went out to America. John & Old Catherine fell out and she had to leave the House before he went — so there is none remaining but Robert and the Losses.

You mention having 2 long years yet to remain but My Dear Robert they will appear 4 years to me in expecting you home Mags Maunson married Janet Smith and has gone to North Roe.

Christina Maunson has a Son at O'Glove and Barbara Pearson has been rooted out of Brough and has got a house built for her up at the Dike bewest Bruntel at the Roadside and is Washer at the Shire and the Chapel.

Young Mr. Bruce has Married a Liverpool Lady Mrs Walkers [?] Niece who not agreeing with her sisters they have removed to the Chapel House.

Your cousin Andrew Gardner went to Hudsons Bay in June 1854 and yesterday his parents got a letter from him with money or an Order for some.

Thomas Gardner Married a Black Wife one Nancy Fidler [?] - was Sixteen Pound in Debt then and is believed to be Thirty Two Pounds now. Jo Williamson of Lenkshouse [?] Married before Christmas and had a Son named Laurence. No one knew of it all till he was proclaimed. Janet Odie has married James Guthrie

All your friends & Acquaintances desire to be remembered to you

Your Cousin Peter had gone to America and has written his Parents. There is none now at home there but the youngest, Marg—Christina has gone to Bressay all Winter.

Now my Dear Robert you must write me every occassion and I shall do the same—you know my Adress but I can not know yours but only as you write me. Your Dear Father, Sisters and Friends join me in

Love and Blessings and praying for your every comfort. I am, My Dear Robert

Your affectionate Mother [three undefinable characters here] Charlotte Johnson

---

Burravoe Yell, Zetland North of Scotland 11th Decr 1860

My Dear Robert

I was yesterday relieved of a wearisome waiting in hopes of life but having every fear both for you and John that no life was for me.

Your letter astonishes me by its date of Fort Langley September 16th 1860 thus wanting 6 Days of 3 Months.

It find us all and all our friends and neighbours in ordinary health and I am thankful to Providence that it left you in health and business.

I am sorry my letter of 25 March 1858 was 18 ½ Months in reaching you.

But I thought you were at Hudsons Bay not at Columbia You say truly that John may be 2500 miles nearer to us that you are — but your letter via Panama can come here in 80 days — and you can now write me and I you every fortnight by the regular Steamers whereas the Ships to Hudsons Bay go only twice a year and it will yet be some time before the Mails get there through the United States and Canada.

To forget any of you is impossible

You in the Bustle of business and the anxieties of Life may forget me but I can never forget you.

The rapid improvements of British Columbia have been brought on during the last 3 years and a change from Barbarism to Civilization will be gradually year by year as in every New Country.

The Gold Silver Iron & Lime you mention will hasten its improvement as in Australia still much time must be taken for such. But in a short time great changes will take place as shure as they are promised in the Scriptures of truth both home and foreign

Here my Dear Robert the ruin of what money is keeps all aback. Mr Bruce has gone on with Drunkenness and mischief till he has had to give all west of the Burn of Errisdale to Mr Joseph Leask of Lerwick for about Two Thoudand Pounds and you may guess how long what remains will last him.

Your four youngest Sisters are at home Jane has gone to Reawick and her son is at home with us Never hearing from you or receiving a farthing from John for years We have been driven by constraint to much exertion and difficulty and had it not been by your Sisters we could not have kept the farm Poor things they are all growing up to Woman-hood and could do well if any good had been doing But the want of employment keeps all in misery.

In a few years I fear Mr Bruce will have lost the whole of Burravoe as well as West Yell—and perhaps then it may fall into hands for



improvement. Your uncle Robert is much the same as you left him—on decline of course but still going to the fishing and other things for his amusement Magnus Manson Married Janet Smith of Viewfield and is at present a Merchant in O'erby he has 2 Children alive and 2 dead Robt Rendal is where you left him and still keeps the Farm. Mary has been South at Greenoch all Summer at her Sisters and would not have come back had it not been for her father. Your aunt Andrina is in \_\_\_\_\_d. Garth Laurence goes to Greenland and Mary & he remain at home with them. Your friends at Lerwick are all in ordinary health all doing the best they can Your uncle Magnus is getting quite infirm.

As to your buying Land and settling in British Columbia I need say little you know \_\_\_\_\_ there \_\_\_\_\_ here and though at present there is little improvement here yet the place is capable of very great improvements but likely it will only be by falling into other hands I gave Mags Manson what you ordered and also to your cripple Sister.

The Post Office people tell me I and you can write each other every Week and I must therefore \_\_\_\_\_ you will write us more frequently Laurence Mathewson at Melbourne Australia writes his father and his father him every Month regularly and I trust you will do so too

I need not therefore add very much News at present in hopes you will soon give me the pleasure of answering you again when I shall gather all the news you may require.

Your Father and Sisters join me in Love and Blessings as do all your Uncles Aunts cousins and acquaintances and in hopes of an early reply \_\_\_\_\_ you shall have a ready answer

I remain, My Dear Robert, Your Affectionate Mother  
[three unclear characters here], Charlotte Robertson

---

Burravoe Yell Zetland, North of Scotland  
11th Decr 1860

My Dear Brother

I was yesterday favored with your affectionate letter of the 16th Sept 1860 and happy to find you still alive

I and your other Sisters are at home except Jane doing the best we can — but there is by far too little for any of us to do. I am happy to find you now in a place where you and I can write each other and I trust you will do so. You will find by this, what time it may require to reach you Jane has got service at Reawick and having gone to a Room in Lerwick with her son where she was not duly supported we had to take her son home who has since got nothing from his father. But we are all alive as yet and a gracious Providence may provide for him. All our friends are in ordinary health and desire to be remembered to you

Mother desires me to say there is nothing on earth she would desire so much as to see you and we all trust you will strive to come home if it was but for a season.

Your sisters join me and our Parents in Kindest Blessings and trusting you will give me soon the pleasure of answering you again.

I remain

My Dear Brother, ever yours Mary Robertson

[On the reverse side of the letter: "Mrs. Charlotte Robertson"]

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Norway House Jan 28th 72

My Dear Brother

it is with the greatest of pleasure that I take my pen to write this few lines in answer to your kind letter also I am glad to find that it left you all in good health as this leaves me and famaly one of my boys has been very sick the whole winter But thank God he is getting around prity well and I think I told you in my last letter that I had a Daughter born on the 5 day of June last she is getting on very well she calls for Papa and Mama already and is just commencing to crate [crawl?] — My Dear Brother I do not know what answer to give you about leaving hear as I have gotten a large famaly But I shall spake to Mr. Christy in summer if he comes hear But as to the Red River I think it is not much better than where I am who ever I shall let you know what I settle on in my nixt letter to you I wish I could git whare you are But that is far out of my power at present.

Cousin Andrew Gardner went home last fall very sick and I have no word from him since I have had no letter from home since last you wrote me only one from Mr James Williamson concerning £12 I had to pay him for my Dear Mother which I do with all my heart But since then I have not gotten any word from them I shall write my sister Mary by this packet and let her know that I have had a letter from you and let her know that you have written twice and gote no answer from them S \_\_\_\_\_ Robertson that was at Oxford House went home about 13 years ago and went to New Zeland and Forbis Jamson went home and came back to Mouse factory and William his brother went home and married and remains at home there is not one man hear that we knew at home there is only 2 Shetland men hear besids my selfe namely James Hutchinson from Whalsey and another Hughson from South Delting

there 2 Steam Boats to be in the lake winnapeg this sumer at least one in the lake and and one to go up the Saskatchewan River the one for the lake comes here she is 1005 feet long and the other I did not hear what size she was but it is said to be longer there is great changes taking place on this sid such as I never thought to be in my time and I think there will still be greater changes yet I hear that the wages is to be very high in the Companey's servie from first June But wither it be true or not I can not tell you just now But shall let you know nixt time I write and now I have give you all the news I can hoping to hear from you soon. I shall close this with our best regards to you all and I beleave me my Dear Brother and sister and Children. Your ever affectionat Brother & Uncle untill Death, John Robertson

P.S. Please let me know the name you gave your daughter. I called mine Mary after my sister. J.R.

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Burravoe Brough 7th Feb 1875

Dear Brother

I sit down to write you this few lines to let you know that your parents is yet alive it gives me very great sorrow as well as troubel to see my aged parents in so much need as they are in with none to help them you know better then me what our dear mother did for all of us all now she is helpless and there is not any to give her any thing to make her the last comfort.

I went south but had to come back to take care of my Mother my sister Andrina is home with me all that we can do is to take care of the house and get our fiering I have wrote to my brother John the troubel that I was in but I never got answer to that letter we had to leave the place we were in and is come to a smaler place this can keep a cow if there can be any means of paying the rents my father is very much failed as may be expected of a man 78 years yet having nothing but his poor old bones must toil for the last time I wrote to you I got it returned from London for one shilling postish but sometimes I have not a penny to put a letter to Leith to my sister Jane She is married there with a shoemaker the name of John McKenzee Jane trys to send cloths to father and mother as she can abel to do my sister Barbara is in Mid yell but it is not often we see her She is with a family 11 years they are poor peopel so her fees is not much it can scree keep herself —

I hope if this comes to you you will be so kind for the sake of your dear parents to write to John perhaps he might do something for his parents if I could know of any means for the rents while any of them is alive if it please the Lord to spaer me and my sister we will never leave them I have written to John till I am wearie of writing and is never got any answer now this is the only thing I can think of doing it is for my parents if any help can be for them I hop God will bring this safe to your hands and you will write emeditly to John

Mother is very ill and this been a very bad year all over the countrie nobody is ever known the poverty that we are been in for I always tried to behave myself proudly, never telling my wants to any one

I must conclud this with my kindest love to you and family and remains your affect sister Mary Robertson

Burravoe Yell Brough

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Norway House, March 16th 1875

My Dear Brother

I write you this short letter to let you know that we are all in Good Health at present thank God and hope that this will find you in the same I have nothing strange to write you of from this place Mr Graham is to be hear in sumer and then I am going to ask him to get up to the Sascatchewan I think he will give me a year or too in the service there and then I shall tray to get a good place for myselfe if spared. I have had no letters from home for nearly a year and then father and mother were both alive and my sister Mary was in Leith But wither she was going to stop there or not I cannot say But I think she was thinking of going home as she told me to adress as before and Jane still lives is Edenburgh and Andrew Gardner told me that she was marrie [?]. But I never had it from Mary I think if it was true Mary would have told me of it any how I shall ask her now that I write her

Now my Dear Brother I shall give some account of my selfe at preasent I am a shed man or steward att this place and have Been for the last 3 years I do not like the Birth very my wages is 38 £ a year But I have a large family and Every thing very Dear. So I can save nothing after all we have another son born on the 8 of December 1874 that is six sons and 2 daughters alive and 1 son and 1 daughter Dead that is the oldest 2 of the famaly and now my Dear Robert I must close with our kind love to you and your famaly and remain your affectionat Brother John Robertson

Norway House March 17 1875

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Burravoe 1 May 1 1875

Dear Brother

I now sit down with great sorrow to inform you of the death of my dear and loving Mother which tock place on the 27th Feby you know how dearly we all loved that dear parent so you will not be surprised that tow month is past befor I could write to you my father is faild very much but still he must try to work both to save his life and so to pay for a house

I have often wrote to my brother John and told him the circumstance of his aged parents but that letter is never been answered my sister and myself is tried all in our power to keep a home with our parents it is best known to God what we have gone through for their sakes and I should be very glad that my father never was obliged to live on the parish alowance I have wrote to John just now but perhaps it will be like other times but them that never writes shall never be troubel with letters — . give my kindest love to my sister in-law and all the Children and except the same for yourself from your affect Sister Mary Robertson

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Burravoe, 10th June 10, 1875

Dear Brother

I received your letter of which I was very glad: by this time you will be got the last letter I sent informing you on the death of my dear and loving mother nothing can fill her place to me but I can rejoice to belive that she is safe at home in heaven while I am left to mourn the loss of one I loved so dear but it will only be a littel time that shall be devided we will all meet again and may it be with joy never to part again — ; my father can do very littel but we are in the same house my Sister Adrina would like us to keep it for she feels she is not fit to serve there is none with father but us too Barbara is in the same place she is been in for this seven years Janes son is saling in a packet between here and Lerwick but he is going south to Leith very soon I wrote to John the very day that your letter that I have now got the answer to and I wrote him the day I wrote to you last but I shall get an answer before I write again if my letters had not come to his house they very likely would be returned to me the same that yours was but since he thinks me not worth writing to I shall not troubel him with any more if this comes to you when you write to John give him my kind love, I have surely told you before that Mary Randell married with a Son of Robert Robertson and died when she had her first babe her hsuband died shortly after her their son is with R Robertson Robert Randels family was broken up at her death Jesse went to Greenick to her sister Ann keep a house with her father in Lerwick only short time and then they both went to Greenick Robert died 2 years ago John his son was dead before him last word I heard from them Jesse was married but Ann was still unmarried L Gardner is well he is home at the fishing after Uncles death they removed to this house they call the lone my cousion Margret is dead Jane is stoping with david her Mother is dead Uncle Magnes is alive but his wife is dead his daughter Magge is with him Christina they know not where she is or any of their sons but peter is married in Lerwick. Aunt betty is with him he has a family of 4 daughters and one son this will have to do just now

father sister joins in our kindest love to you and all your family from your loving Sister Mary Robertson

This Janes address She is going to remove but I will write her and give her yours. Mrs. McKenzie, Lambs Court No 4, Giles Street, South Leith

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Burravoe 13th Sepr 1875

Dear Brother

I now sit down to write you this few lines that will inform you that we are all in our usual health thank God; likewise it will inform you that I received your letters one wrote the 20 of June I received the 24 of July and one wrote the 7 of August I received on 3 of September when I see how quick your letters comes I am grived to think that so many years should have passed away and we heard so seldom from each others but one heart that ever grived over the loss of her lost ones is now at rest and I thank God for it often when I come in and sees the vacken place. I cannot help going and setting in that very place and crying for some time but often I reproach myself for she is only gone home a littel befor her loved ones, o may we all meet there

Dear Brother we are cutting our corn and this is been a very good hearvest day and after its toil I am glad to embrace this moment to let you hear from home this is been a good fishing season all over the Shetland isles I mean the long [?] fishing; smal fish at the shore is been got in any place. My cousion Betty Annie Gardner has five sons and one of them married last week the oldest one is with with his grandfather Uncle William Mr Mattewson is still in the schoolhouse. His Wife died 2 years since he has two of his daughters and Andrew with him yet his daughter Elizabeth married and went with her husband to Leith to stop they got the smal pox and both died their child a girl of a few months was taken to her fathers house and is there yet Andrew is married but has no family. Laurance is married away at Austrila [Australia?]. I cannot tell what family he has Walter is a light house keeper he married a woman that could be his mother She belonged to the isle of fetter he has not family Andrew wife is a daughter of peter Christies Jane Christie the old peopel that you know is all past away and the young ones is the must them gone away John Odie is alive and his wife they have none of thier family with them Janet Odie married with James Guthrie She is left a widow with 2 girls and 3 boys Ann Odie is married with William Guthrie they have 2 boys and a girl;

The young peopel that was your acquaintance is not known to me so I hope you will not be like Jane for she can find no excuse for me when I tell her I dont know I have had no letter from her since I wrote you last fathers sister has been here for a week. She is stoping with my Cousion peter in town of Lerwick, I have had no letter from John yet if you write him give my kind love to himself and family by the time this comes to you our hearves will be all in I have not seen Barbara for this 2 mounth I have been wanting Andrina to write to you but she thinks herself no hand at writing I must conclud this with my kindest love to my sister in-law and each of the children the oldest of them will be grown big I would like to know all about them and how they are like Dear Brother except the kind love of your youngest sister Mary Robertson

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Norway House 13th Sepr 1875

My Dear Brother

I take this oppertunety of writing you this few lines to let you know that I received your welcom letter and glad to find that it left you in good health as this leaves us all at presen thank God I have nothing new to write you of at this time only looking out every day for the arivel of the new and first Steam Boat at this place She is to be here on the 15 of this month and there has ben a boat up at the old Fort for this last week put down Buoys on showls and to mark the Channal.

Crops is a failur in R.R. this year again the Grass hoppers has eaten up the whole here we have good crops of potatos and barly and at the Mission wheat and oats looking splendet and some others of the settlers about this fort has good crops of wheat, all though I had none sowan myself this year & the Lieutenant Governer is coming here with the Steam Boat which makes a Good Deal of Bustel and preperation for his reception he is coming to se the place and trat [?] with the indians of this District I think this is about all the news of this place theres is very few men at this fort now 6 Scotch men 3 Orkney men and my self, a lone Shetlander and 1 Canadian my older son is learning the carpenter trad I was taken from Boat Building and made stewart 4 years ago and still have the Birth my wages is £ 38 sterling and I keep 2 milking cows and ox this is my stock I would like to be at some place where I could have something more — I have had no letters from home for this long time and know not wither they are dead or alive

My dear Brother I have given you all the news I can and now I close this with kind love of myself and famaly to you and yours and remain your

Ever affectionate Brother  
John Robertson

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Burravoe 5th March 1876

Dear Brother,

I received your letter and was glad to hear that you were all well this leaves us all in life for my sister is never enjoied health now for some time back and father is an aged man I cannot expect him to have much health now I got a letter from John which enforms me that he is had much sorrow to undergo by the death of his children of all the letters I have wrote him he is only got the last one I sent I am writing him to day this is Sabbath and I ought to have been at the house of God but, my circumstance in this earth is so that it is very seldom that I am there —

I have not much news to write I have had a letter from Jane she is been very bad She says she is got no word from you; this is been a very bad winter as is been for this good many years the season appears to continue the same

Dear Brother if it can be so that I could get the likeness of your family I would like think it a great preasent. I always thought to get my own taken to send to you both my brothers but I have meet with many disapointments that only myself can know if it had not been for my father I should soon leave here but if I leave him my sister is not fit to

take care of him.—

When you write John pleas let him know that I have got his letter and that I have answered it I hope that you will write to me again and let me know the names of your two young ones I have the names of the three boys and the two oldest girls but not the youngest and I fell anxious to know every thing about your family for although I can remember nothing about you yet I love you all and often I wish myself with you—

So I will conclude this with the kind love of father and sister  
And except the kind love of your loving sister Mary Robertson

Miss Mary Robertson Burravoe Brough Shetland

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Norway House Jany 7 1878

Dear Brother

As the opportunity offers I most writ you a few lines to let you know that we are in good health at presen and hope that this may find you and yours in the same.

I had a letter from sister Mary 3 days ago and then they were all quite well only complaining that they had no letter from you she says that they have had a very bad harvest She is going to write you and give you her own news so I shall give you my own I never saw a winter like this one since I came to this Country there is not one grain of snow and fine warm wather all the time we had 3 12 days and nights of rain in the Christmis week and the ice not safe to walk on and many of the men falling through and sometimes the dogs and sledges I was looking for a letter from you but was dissapointed got only one from Mary

I am still in the Companey's employ my work is not heavy and wages good I am still stewar at this place but my term is out first June So I cannot tell you what I may do I am hanging on untill I see a good chance which I will think not be long to wait for I think the H.B.C. is going to the dogs but that may be as it is as it will. But the Country is gitting better in Every point and I hope will still git better and better.—Remember us all very kindly to your wife and famaly and except of our kind Regards to yourself and Beleive me, your affectionate Brother John Robertson

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Burravoe 21 Feby 1879

My Dear Brother

I received your letter which found us all in life thank God for all his mercies to us all; I am truely thankfull to hear that your family is well and all healthy that is not what I have seen in my fathers family my sister and myself being left alone with our parents their health and strangh was gone befor we could remember and we taking ourselves to work as what you saw our Mother do is brought us to be old looking almost in our youth but for all that I believe if we are left after our father we will have to serve in a worse time as if we had left home like others but you are not to think that we are etheir bald or gray headed my father is been very ill this winter but I am thankfull that he is abel to come out of bed or dregs himself; this is been a very bad season not only in this place but all over the Kingdom if you get the Shetland papers you will see that we still have snow things is quite different to what it was when you were here; My Sister son isin Leith he works at shoe making and at

other times as a labour at the Docks I wrote to Jane why she did not write to you but I got no answer to that I have had no word from John since the month of August he and family was well then I am longing much for a letter from him now; all our friends is living as far as I can hear my sister Barbara was here last week. She is well and wishes to be remembered to you and family my father and sister joins in the same I am glad that you have minister in your place like as we have here Barbara and us too belongs to the Wesleyen Church so does Brother John; please give my kindest love to my sister and all the children I hope you will write when conveint I shall be glad to hear from you; except the kindest love of your ever loving Sister Mary Robertson

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Burravoe, 16th Sept 1879

My Dear Brother

having received your kind and welcomed letter it afords me much pleasure to answer it I am thankful to say that this leaves us all in our usual My father is able to walk about yet which I look upon as a great mercie from God for we both that is left of the family is the frailest of all the family but Gods promise will never feal for if he gives us trials he will also give us strangth to pass through it may he give us grace to bear our earthly lot with pet\_\_\_\_\_ and with child like supmission always say father they will be done; I must just say before going forthe that Aunt Bessy mothers sister died on the 9 of this month. My cousion Margret died some years ago Jane is living with her youngest brother ; Mr Mathewson is still living but is not able to School but his son Andrew is taken his place his wife died some time ago he has one daughter with him and one of his sons is on his death bed of all his family theres only 3sons and 2 daughters alive; I had a letter from John in July himself and family was well then but he deplyly regreated that he had not got no word from me for a whole year my letters very likely had been lost some way but that is not hendered me to write to him again for I always write if I should not get an answer for sometime I just write again I have got no word from Jane since the month of May but I have wrote her twice since then.

I have not seen Barbara for some time but I hear that she is well I am sorry to say that it is been and still appears to be very bad times in this place and also over all Briton we have a very cold wet summer and crops look very bad—; Please when your write let me know the name of your daughter likewise how all the other children is if they seem to grow fast or if they are healthy you do not know how anxious I feel about them all give my kind love to my sister-in-law and all the children father and sister joins in the same and except of the same for yourself from your loving sister Mary Robertson

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Norway House 29th Decr 1881

My Dear Brother

it is with the Greatest of pleasure that I sit down to write you this fev lin to let you know that we are in good health at present thank God and hope this will find you and you famaly in the same I am sorry to say that it is a long time since I have had any letter from you and I cannot account for it why I cannot git letters as well as other people I write and git no



answer others write and git answers to all they write I hope I shall git the answer to this I have got no word from my sister ether I had a letter from Mr Thomas L. Odie and he told me that they were all well considring the great age of my fater — My Dear Brother I se from the news papers that you have had an awfull time of storm and lost mostly all your Croops 900 houses Blowan down and 500 lives lost in \_\_\_\_\_ We have not had any of the storms here the Croops came on very well here those that had wheat sowan got good increse potatos and barley the same and I am gotten a house built 31 feet long by 21 broad 10 feet high with a lot between 2 and 300 acres of land and the railroad comes close by it and a town about 10 miles from me there will be plenty of work here on the roads there is 2 roads from the Hudson Bay up to Winnipeg

one comes from Churchill to ner the Grand Rapid and the other North River up to Norway House there has been survayers out on these roads this 2 years and will been on them early in the spring times are getting much better here in all respects than it was ten years ago we are to have a weekly steamer this sumer one of my sons got married last month and one died a year ago that is four of my children that I have burried at this place and wife and child in the McKenzie River this can let you se that I have my troubles to bare as well as other people But God has given me strenght to bare the whole and I hope that he will give me always the strength and in a month or so my wife will be \_\_\_\_\_ of another — My dear Brother I have given you all the news I can think of and I hope that you will write to me and let me hear your news and how you are geting on and if your children are all with you.

and now with the kind love of myselfe and family I shall close this wishing you and yours a happy New Year

While I remain, your Ever affectionat Brother, John Robertson

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Burravoe Yell Shetland Augt 10th 1887

My Dear Brother

with pleasue I embrace the oppertunity of writting to you and also your Children there is nothing that I take more pleasure in than doing so; I had a letter from Charlotte which informs me that she is not at home but I hope that your other girls will be able to keep your house in order for you — ;

I have got no letter from John for this last 18 months but I have wrote severall letters to him but have got no answer in my lest letter to him I have give him your address and I told him that I was going to write you and give you his address it is this

John Robertson Green Bank  
Norway House Hudsons Bay  
North America

I do wish that he might get my letter and also that he would write you I cannot understand what is the reason that John is not wrote to us I am as anxious for letters from any of you now as ever I was when my dear Mother was with us I have not foregot what I heard my Mother say about all my Brothers all the family was gone when I first remember and my sitsters and myself is had many a sad time tring to keep a home but I see that I am foregeting that I never wish to write about the past yet I never

can forget — ;

Well my sister Jane never writes us She is living in Leith her husband is been very poorly for this last too years I never saw her when I was at the Infirmary; our cousion Betty Annie had 5sons but no girls her oldest son was married he died leaving a wife and 3 children the one nixt to him is married and has 2 sons and 3 girls the nixt was lost at the fishing in the year 1887 the next one is working in Lerwick and the youngest is at home with his father and mother they have a farm in North yell Andrew Gardner never writes to any of his friends our cousion Mary Gardner is become avery poor old looking person and so is our cousion Jane and I think that I can say the same of ourselves if I could get to Lerwick I would take my card and then you would see it is to year since I was there so you see that I neve get far from home I will close this with kindest love to yourself and family While I remain your affect sister, Mary Robertson

Please give this to Charlotte

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Garth Cottage Midyell May 7th 1899

Dear Brother

We received your letter and was very glad to hear from you we have had a very bad winter and spring we had not much snow in the first of winter but rain then in March we had a heavy fall of snow some of the people is not got all their seed in the ground yet but this last week we have had good weather I hop we will have it fine now there is been no fish this spring and this is been a very bad winter no fish there used to be plenty of littel fishes in shore that all familys could have plenty of but this winter there is been none all round the place; we are all been down with Influence we are just begining to move about now but we are very much done up with it but what can we expect now that we are getting old; you never said if any of your girls is with you where is Mary she never wrote to us the others never wrote to us after they got married but we were just as glad to hear from them as ever and your littel Grand Children what of them where is their father is he alive and Charlotte what of her and her family I am very anxious to know about them all—

our Cousion Jane is living and wounderfull of her age she lives with her half brothers family our cousion Mary Gardner is a poor creature very much bent like that old woman that lived with the Rendalls it is very seldom that ever any of us is there; my sisters wishes to be kindly remembered to you and all the girls we will be glad to hear from any of them that can find time to write tell them that I send my kind love to each of them; I will close this with my love to you from your loving Sister Mary Robertson

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LOVE

Pleasant is the rosy dawning,  
Gracious as the golden sky;  
Sparkling as the brightest  
morning,  
Smiles the maid for whom I  
sigh.

Garth Cottage Midyell Jany 7 1900

Dear Mary

With pleasuer I sit down to write you this few lines at the beginning of the new year, I wish you much happness; it is some time since I got your letter I am not been at hom for some weeks but I hope that you are all well. You will be home with your father and the littel ones that was left to you. O Mary dear I do hope that you will teach these littel ones to fear God and keep His Commandments What they learn now will be what they will remember in after days teach them to love and go to Him how said suffer littel children to come unto me for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven try by the help of the Holy Spirit to lead that littel ones to that Loving Jesus; Mary dear I hop you will stope with your father and make his home as happy as you ever can you will find that you will be happy yourself while you make others happy; may God bless you my dear Child my sisters both join with Kind love to you Mrs Owens and Mrs Gardner is never wrote to us for some time I hope they are well. give our love to them I close this with kindest love from your loving Aunt Mary Robertson

Mys Mary Robertson, B.C.

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Garth Cottage Mid Yell June 24th 1900

My Dear Brother

we received your letter and was glad to hear that you were well in health; but I know that it must be very lonley for you to be in a house all alone but I am very glad that your daughters is so near to you that you can be with them so often; I am also thankful to hear that you still travel with Mr Dunn; well about Mary I hope that she will be well I was fearing that it was some runaway that she was run away with but I am thankful that it is not they may be better than you think; your girls is not been lik your sisters never excepting any one well when your letter came I was away from home working I only came home on Saturday and left on Monday I went for that for 9 weeks in winter the first paper I sent to you was from that place and I had no time to write and since I came home I am been working to our Landlord. I work the must of his work myself that is his garden cleaning the cabbage and turneps and patoates but it takes a lot of work to make our rent and taxes I have never heard from Brothers Children since they wrote of his death very like they dont care anything about us but I should like to hear from them our cousion Jane is keeping well for her age but Mary Garner is one of the greatest poors that can bee she is bent just like that old woman that lived with the Rendalls and she is so stuped and selfish I do peity her husband if its was the greatest wrong she must have her way. None of us is been there for a long time but we hear from others) I sent you too papers and I will try to send you one or too next week or the week after then you will see what news is in Shetland; my sisters is both on foot and working as best they can but we are all getting old so we cannot expect to be in health but thank God for what we are; both Sisters join with kind love to you and all your family I wish to be kindly remembered to them all and will be glad to hear from any of them at any time.

I will close at this time with kind love from your loving sister Mary Robertson

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Green Bank Norway House

To Miss Charlott Robertson, from her Cousan Mary

My Dear Cousin

I write you this to let you know that I am well hope that you are also well I can not write you much just now But I will write you a long letter when the Steam Bout comes which will be in the month of June. We had a letter from my aunt Mary she is thinking long to hear aunt says that you did write to her But she has Gotten no letter for a long time My Dear and loving Cousin I canot write more at this time But shall give you along letter soon from your loving Cousin Mary Robertson

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Green Bank, 25 March

To my Dear Cousin Jane Elizabeth

I write you this few lines to let you know that we are all well and hop that you are well also it has been very cold since New Year and the snow is very deep But it is fine and warm now all my brothers are married only too one small Brother and Andrew But I think Andrew is going to mary in sumer I shall write you and tell you about it in Sumer

I am your loving Cousin Mary Robertson

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Green Bank March 28

To my dear Cousian Mary Robertson

I am glad to write you this few lines to let you know that we are all well I hope that this will find you the same this not a good place like what papa says you place is where you have no winter But we have long winters here and cold some times this is a very cold winter since New Year But fine and warm now. I will write you a long letter nixt time

Your loveng Cousion Cathren Robertson

## Appendix 2

### The Robertson Family

1. Andrew Robertson's last will and testament.
2. Extract from: *Sermon and Missionary Journeys*, by Rev. A. Dunn.
3. Extract from: *Experiences in Langley and Memoirs of Prominent Pioneers*, by Rev. A. Dunn.

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#### I

*Transcript of Andrew Robertson's last will and testament signed on 22 October 1888. He died that same day.*

I, Andrew Robertson of Wharnock in the Township of Maple Ridge in the province of British Columbia, Bachelor, and of the age of twenty eight or thereabouts, do, on this twenty second day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty eight do hereby declare this to be my last will and testament

and

firstly by this will I revoke all or any previous testamentary instruments I may have made

and

secondly I hereby give and bequeath to my father Robert Robertson and to my sisters Barbara, Anterina [sic], Jane, and Mary Robertson all of them now residing with my father at Wharnock aforesaid all my right title and interest in the ranch owned by me and deeded in my name and situate north & west from the Canadian Pacific Railway Station at Wharnock aforesaid for his and their joint use and benefit my father Robert Robertson to have possession of the said ranch up to the time of his death for the joint use of himself and my four sisters before mentioned and after his death the said ranch to become the joint property of my four sisters aforesaid or of so many of them as may be then alive for their exclusive use and benefit either to hold jointly or to dispose of to the best advantage as they may think fittest

and

thirdly I do hereby give and bequeath to my sister Barbara the cow owned by me and known as "Maggie"—to my sister Jennie or Jane the cow owned by me and known as "Daisy"—to my sister Anterina [Andrina] the yoke of yearling steers owned by me and to my sister Mary the calf owned by me and I also give and bequeath to my father Robert Robertson all the fruit trees now on Ranch before mentioned on the condition that he attend to their proper planting and cultivation and in the event of his not planting and cultivating such fruit trees they to become the joint property of my four sisters aforesaid or on such of them as may be then alive—

and

I do hereby appoint Clement Stickney and William Curtis Sampson both of Wharnock in the township of Maple Ridge in the province of British Columbia as joint executors under this my last will and testament.

Andrew—his mark—Robertson

Signed by the said Andrew Robertson in the presence of us being present at the same time who at his request and in his presence and in the presence of each other subscribe our name as witnesses this twenty

second day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty eight.

Clement Stickney  
W. Curtis Sampson  
Neil Carmichael

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#### 2

*Transcript From: Sermon and Missionary Journeys, Rev. A. Dunn, Sr., DD. March 7, 1925.*

No. 3. To North Arm—1878.

The Rev. R. Jamieson, who came to New Westminster in 1862, conducted services at North Arm (Richmond) as soon as settlers located there. But for some time previous to 1878, the state of his health prevented him from going outside of New Westminster. Indeed his strength was often barely sufficient for the morning and evening services in St. Andrew's.

In the beginning of the summer of 1878 I held my first service at North Arm in the Methodist Church there, which was situated on the mainland, on the bank of the river, and to which the entire congregation came either by rowboat or canoe. There was no road leading to the church.

Of that Sunday morning, calm and balmy—of that picturesque scene—cedars and firs of immense stature with their vivid green foliage in the back ground—the majestic Fraser, silently rolling along its torrent by Lulu and Sea Islands—the extraordinary wealth of vegetation along its banks, and, the strong sweet scent of wild roses—the pleasant looking little church standing a few yards from the river—the healthy, happy faces of the people as boat load after boat load was landed—I say of that Sunday morning and of that interesting and attractive scene I still have a clear and happy remembrance.

At the service adherents of different denominations were present, North of Ireland Presbyterians predominating. As might be expected there was a good deal of chaffing in subdued tones while the boats were being tied up. I say in subdued tones, for they could not know whether their jokes might be considered timely by the new minister. Once in church all looked serious and expectant. The singing of Psalms and Paraphrases was general and hearty. The eager faces and the devout appearance of these men and women, who were unmistakably persons of a superior class, encouraged the preacher, and made preaching pleasurable.

If the first settlers had peculiar hardships they also had peculiar pleasures. Only the earliest settlers fully fathomed the depths of that feeling of loneliness and homesickness which stole over the heart, when, hemmed in on every side by the forest primeval, they thought of the broad continent and the broad sea which separated them from their native land and loved ones there. And only the first settlers experienced the peculiar joy which came to them, when in the far-off land, in a church building, however humble, they could after the manners of their fathers, worship God. Passages of Scripture, familiar from childhood, came

home to them with fresh power and appeared singularly appropriate to their changed surroundings. The very Psalms sounded sweeter on a foreign soil.

For three years the missionary stationed at Langley gave supply to North Arm every third Sunday; and, singular to relate, he never once failed to keep his appointment, during these years. On several occasions, ice on the river prevented his going to Maple Ridge, only five miles from Langley; but on the North Arm Sundays, as it always happened, the river was open. In summer, the journey was pleasant enough, if tedious. In winter, during cold, rainy weather, it was the reverse.

Let me here give a brief account of a journey to North Arm in January, 1879, and from one learn of others. To ensure an early start on Saturday morning, my boatman, Robbie Robertson, came from Whonnock to Hudson's Bay Company's farm, Langley, (where I then lived) on Friday evening. Breakfasting before daylight, at early dawn we set out for Fort Langley, (3 miles) carrying coats etc., needed for warmth and protection. The distance from point of commencement to North Arm was from 33 to 35 miles, according to location of respective stopping places. In New Westminster we had dinner at the "Farmer's Home," kept by a most worthy couple, Mr. and Mrs. James Turnbull, and almost immediately afterwards the journey was resumed. In the short days, North Arm was seldom reached with daylight. If the tide was going out good speed was made; if coming in, progress was labored and slow. On the day referred to, we got to the point opposite to the house of Messrs Robson and Smith, which was situated on the bank of an ugly slough, between 6 and 7 o'clock p.m. The tide was out; it was very dark; it was raining, and a cold wind was blowing from the east. Robbie, who was wearing long boots, insisted on packing me to the bank. I, somewhat unwillingly consented, fearing the result. He got along only a few steps when he stuck in the mud and fell. I was then obliged to wade and crawl through the slimy mud till I got on to solid ground. Our figures, as we appeared in the lamp-light, must have been provocative of laughter, but our hosts succeeded in restraining merriment, and proceeded at once to get us change of garments and something to eat. Under the influence of the cup that cheers we ourselves soon became merry over our struggle in the mud—a struggle, which if not serious was nevertheless calculated to test the temper.

On the following morning, the rain was heavier and the wind stronger. Messrs Robson and Smith endeavoured to dissuade us from going to Church, assuring us that no one would be there in such a wild day. We went notwithstanding, and, on arriving at the meeting place, we found one man waiting, who, fearing the big breakers on the river with his boat, had had a tough tramp through the bush, not without danger either, owing to the violence of the gale. He said, "I supposed you would be here as usual else I would not have come out on such a tempestuous day." Soon the doors were opened, a fire made, and the service went on as formerly even to the taking up of the collection, which amounted to five dollars. The man alluded to was Fitzgerald McCleery. He and his brother, Samuel, were and continued to be generous supporters of the Presbyterian Church in that locality. Others did nobly; they excelled in Christian liberality.

In the afternoon the wind moderated, but the rain continued, and in the evening New Westminster was reached in safety, if not in com-

fort. On Monday evening, long after dark, we got back to Fort Langley, but still had three miles of trudging through mud in a pouring rain, before home was reached.

Other exhausting and perilous trips on the Fraser River were made (we seldom could wait for time and tide with definite appointments to meet) but the trip just described was the worst we ever came through. It blew fiercely part of the time; twice we were in actual danger, and it rained steadily during the whole three days, except two or three hours on Saturday morning.

Referring again to money received at North Arm, the Sunday collections amounted to four, five or six dollars (one Sunday they amounted to \$17.25) according to the attendance, which again rose and fell according to the state of the weather. Sunday offerings together with subscriptions totalled over \$300 a year, a sum greater than the united contributions of all the other stations.

In justice, however, to the ranchers in other settlements it ought to be kept in mind, in this connection, that they were heavily handicapped in various respects. 1. Removing heavy timber was a slow process, involving much hard work. 2. Crops raised on cleared bush land were seldom remunerative in less than three years. 3. There was no steady or reliable market in New Westminster, the only market town, for farm produce. 4. The roads leading to New Westminster, during the greater part of the year, were all but impassable. Whereas in North Arm, after the initial undertakings of dyking and draining were accomplished, the way was at once open to success and prosperity. The soil yielded abundant crops from the beginning. Steamers came to every farmer's landing to take away his hay, oats, cattle, etc. to Victoria and Nanaimo, where cash was paid on delivery.

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### 3

*Transcript from Experiences in Langley and Memoirs of Prominent Pioneers by Rev. A. Dunn, 1913. New Westminster, Jackson Printing Co., pages 52-54.*

#### XXIV. Was a Man of True Worth

An appreciation of Late Robert Robertson, Former Hudson's Bay Company Employee.

The funeral of the late Robert Robertson, a well-known and trusted boatman of the Fraser took place at Whonnock on Friday, the 3rd of May 1912. There was a large attendance both of old-timers and new-comers, from some of whom he received, during his prolonged illness, many kindnesses. The following appreciation of the late Mr. Robertson has, on the request of the "British Columbian," been contributed by Rev. Alexander Dunn, the pioneer Presbyterian minister of the Fraser Valley:

The late Mr. Robertson, a native of the North of Scotland, came to British Columbia in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1860 he took up land in Whonnock, and from the date of his arrival to the day of his death Whonnock has been his only home. I became acquainted with him that is, since he began to take me, in the discharge of ministerial duty, up and down the river in his row-boat, down in the early days as far as North Arm (Eburne) and later up as far as Matsqui and Nicomen



Island. For at least 25 years I depended on him to do work of that kind. I did not then of, nor do I now believe that I could have found another who would have been able to do the work, the hard, heavy work of pulling a boat (as he sometimes did) for as far as 33 miles in one day, often against the tide, and, at times, against both wind and tide. I never new one who could pull a boat as long as he without apparent fatigue. I always carried some food, but he could never be persuaded to rest a while or eat till our objective point was reached. And when our destination was reached he was just as bright and jocular as at our commencement.

He had not only great powers of endurance—strength to pull a long distance without being exhausted—but also self-control to wait a long time without becoming impatient. When out with school inspector, for example, or with myself, he sometimes had to wait on the banks of the river for hours while we made excursions inland. Once, I remember, he waited for me at the river while I crossed to the inlet, by what is now known as the Cemetery Road, baptized a child there, and returned, having meantime covered a distance of some 10 to 12 miles.

In making an appointment with Robbie one could depend upon him absolutely. He was never sick. On the first appearance of a grippe in the country in the winter of 1890, when almost every one suffered from it more or less, Robbie told me one day, with much merriment, that he had a headache and wondered whether that was the grippe. Towards the end of my residence at Whonnock he began to show signs of failing strength, and though he never refused to accompany me I could see that long trips were too much for him and ceased to ask him. So that at the time of my life when I most needed him with his boat, Robbie, by reason of advancing years, was not in a fit condition physically, to help me. Hence in late years, came my long Sunday walks of 12 or 15 or 20 miles, as the case might be, when neither steamboat nor train could be found to suit.

In appearance and manner Robbie was rather rough, awkward, and brusque, but appearances notwithstanding, he was kindness personified. There were few that he disliked, and one or two of these I knew he disliked without a cause, but once an idea got possession of him it were next to impossible to dislodge it. On a journey he was always in the mood to talk. He loved to talk upon religious subjects, in a reverent, manly way, upon early-day persons and events, and also of the scenes of his youth in the North of Scotland. He had his on ideas about respectability to which he firmly clung. Whiskey was no treat to him and he almost invariably refused it. If at any time he did consent to take a mouthful it was at the hand of some one of known respectability. Well, everything comes to an end. The longest life ends at last. Robbie has passed from the Fraser River forever, and landed, we trust, on a happier shore. ☺

## *Appendix 3*

### *Regina vs Robertson*

- 1) Petition from William Robert Robertson to the Governor General of Canada.
- 2) Letter 8 December 1883 from Justice I.F. McCreight to Ministry of Justice in Ottawa.
- 3) Letter 28 December 1883 from Deputy Minister of Justice in Ottawa to Justice I.F. McCreight..
- 4) Letter 8 February 1884 from Justice I.F. McCreight to Deputy Minister of Justice in Ottawa.
- 5) Testimony by Matilda Muench in the case Reg. vs. Peter and Jim.

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#### I

*Petition from William Robert Robertson to the Governor General of Canada*

To His Excellency, The Most Hon., The Marquis of Landsdowne, Governor General of Canada.

The Petition of William Robert Robertson now a convict under sentence of death in the common gaol at New Westminster B.C.

Humbly shewith

1. That your Petitioner is a half-breed Indian boy aged about Nineteen years.
- 2 That your Petitioner was on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> November instant at New Westminster tried before the Hon. M<sup>r</sup> Justice McCreight and a Jury for the wilful murder of one Richard Bailey upon the 15<sup>th</sup> day of March 1883 convicted thereof recommended to mercy and sentenced to death.
- 3 That your Petitioner owing to the representations and solicitations of Superintendent Todd head of the Provincial Police force M<sup>r</sup> I.C. Hughes the Government Agent and other persons in authority and under the belief that by so doing he would clear himself from all danger of punishment made two confessions namely one on the 25<sup>th</sup> March and one upon 31<sup>st</sup> March 1883 in the first of which your Petitioner truly alleged that Peter and Jim, Indians, committed the murder and that your Petitioner was merely an eye witness. In the second of these confessions namely on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1883 into which your Petitioner was virtually forced by said Mr. Todd and other persons in authority your Petitioner falsely stated that he shot Bailey under coercion from Peter and Jim and on the following day your Petitioner went with the Police and shewed them where the body was sank in the river, believing in so doing that he was going to be taken as Queen's Evidence against Peter and Jim and that your Petitioner would not be prosecuted at all.
- 4 Your Petitioner further submits that he was quite satisfied that such really was his position when at the New Westminster May Assizes 1883 he was called before the Grand Jury as a Crown witness in the indictment wherein he with Peter and Jim were charged with murder and that under that belief he took the book and was duly sworn and gave evidence in the presence of the grand jury and Counsel for the Crown

who was also present, and mainly if not entirely upon your Petitioner's sworn evidence the Grand Jury found a true bill against your Petitioner and said two Indians.

5 That to your Petitioner's astonishment at the November Assizes your Petitioner was placed in the dock alone and was tried as aforesaid and, owing to the fact, that in the present state of the law your Petitioner could not give evidence in his own behalf, said confessions were received in evidence as said Mr Todd and Mr Hughes denied having offered threats or inducements and your Petitioner had no witness to depose to the fact and could not do so himself.

6 That upon such confession made by your Petitioner when he verily and truly believed he was securing his own immunity by so doing and being received as Queen's evidence the Jury convicted your Petitioner as without said confessions there was really no evidence to commit your Petitioner with such a crime.

7 That upon the 21<sup>st</sup> November and three subsequent days Peter and Jim were also tried on such indictment before said Judge and a Jury and although your Petitioner was under sentence of death he came forward voluntarily and told all he knew against said two Indians but owing to a very protracted cross-examination of nearly six hours the Jury did not believe your Petitioner's evidence more especially as some of the Jury had already formed portion of the Jury which had convicted your Petitioner of the same murder.

8 Your Petitioner most humbly submits that taking into consideration his youth, his extreme ignorance, he can neither read nor write and his having had no religious training as also the evidence upon which he has been convicted has been furnished mainly by himself both by the confessions and before the Grand Jury upon oath — he is a fit subject for the exercise of the Royal Prerogative of Mercy, and your Petitioner as in duty bound will ever pray.

W<sup>m</sup> Robert Robertson  
his x mark

Witness: W. H. Bale, New Westminster BC  
Barrister at Law,  
Prisoner's Council, 28/11/83

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2

*Letter 8 December 1883 from Justice I.F. McCreight to Ministry of Justice in Ottawa.*

Regina v Robertson—A half breed Indian

December 8<sup>th</sup> AD 1883, New Westminster BC

Sir: I have the honor to forward to you for the information of H. Ex. the Governor General a copy of the evidence in the case of Regina v. Robertson, a half breed Indian tried before me at the last Assize held at New Westminster on the 14<sup>th</sup> November last and the following days on a charge of the wilfull murder of one Richard Baily, a half breed Indian.

The Jury found the prisoner guilty of the murder but recommended him to mercy on the ground of his youth and that he was to a certain

extent made a tool by Indians. His age was about 18 years.

I passed sentence of death in the usual form such sentence however not to be carried into execution till the 31<sup>st</sup> of January next, (See Sec. 107. Crim. Pr? Act as amended).

Two Indians named respectively Peter and Jim were afterwards at the same Assize likewise tried on the charge of committing or participating in the same murder and the convict Robertson so [though] then under sentence of death was called as a witness by the prosecution and gave evidence, (A copy of which I also forward), but owing to the want of corroborative evidence they were acquitted.

The recommendation of the Jury I think I can in \_\_\_\_\_ for the reasons they assigned.

I have no reason to suppose there was any understanding between Counsel for the Prosecution and the prisoner as to the terms upon which he was to give evidence and of course there could be no understanding of any effect in the case of a prisoner under sentence, but I may observe that there is great difficulty in obtaining proof in cases of murder of this description and that necessity may against counsel resort to similar evidence noted the understanding the obvious objections to which it is open, among which I may mention the objection actually made that Robertson being a [convicted murderer] was incapable of giving evidence in the case against the Indians Peter and Jim.

I have forwarded a copy of the evidence which he gave on their trial as it may perhaps assist in determining what punishment he might suffer.

A little delay has taken place owing to the necessity of copying the evidence...

I thought it would be more satisfactory to report after sitting on the trial of Peter and Jim than if I had sent such report in the first instance.

I have the honor to be, Sir, Your obed. Servant, I. F. McCreight,  
Judge S[upreme] C[ourt] of British Columbia

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3

*Letter 28 December 1883 from Deputy Minister of Justice in Ottawa to Justice I.F. McCreight*

Ottawa Decr, 28<sup>th</sup> 1893

Sir

I have just telegraphed you as follows: "Was all the Evidence in Robertson's case sent to the Secretary of State? Was there no trace of the money or beer kegs which Bailey had sent him"—am writing."

In reference to this matter the Minister of Justice will be much obliged to you for a further report. Apart from the confessions and evidence of Robertson, there is nothing to support the views taken by the Jury that Robertson was a tool in the hands of the Indians.

Even if Robertson's evidence was properly received—which is doubtful in view of the decision of Sask. [?] Judge in Regina vs. Webb, 11 Cox's Criminal Cases 133—his statements are so contradictory that it is not a wonder that the Jury gave no weight to them.

The Minister desires to have pointed out to him the ground upon which the Jury concluded that Robertson was a tool in the hands of

other Indians. He also desires to know whether there was any trace of the money or beer kegs which [Bailey] had with him.

The possession of these after the murder would tend largely to show who the guilty parties were. Have you any reason to doubt the evidence of Ross who states that he was fishing that night on the river after the shot that the person in the canoe used a tin bailer while Indians generally use wooden bailers.—You will remember perhaps that Robertson admitted that he had a tin bailer.—

The Minister will be glad to receive any other \_\_\_\_\_ or suggestions which you can give him in respect of this case.

I am, Your Obedt, Servt. (signed) Deputy Minister of Justice

P.S. To give full time for the consideration of this case, the Minister thinks you had better relieve the prisoner for a month from the date fixed for his execution—See 32 + 33 Vic. Ch:29—Sec. 107—

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4

*Letter from Justice I. F. McCreight to the Deputy Minister of Justice in Ottawa.*

New Westminster 8<sup>th</sup> February / 84

Sir

I have the honor to acknowledge your letter of the 22<sup>nd</sup> January enclosing copy of the letter of December the 28<sup>th</sup>. I enclose a copy of the map used at the trial. I was absent in Victoria I telegraphed that the evidence was sent complete.

The exact words of the Jury on recommending to mercy were “Recommendation to mercy on the ground of youth and made a tool of to a certain extent.” I cannot say their exact grounds but conjecture that they were his confession, youth, and perhaps an outside general impression (as the case had excited much interest) that others namely Peter and Jim, men of mature age, were involved in the crime. The beer kegs were never discovered nor was there any trace of them. No money was found on Robertson I am told, but if there had been it would have proved but little as Indians here usually carry money on their persons. Fifty cents was found on Peter, nothing on Jim as I am informed. There is no reason whatever to doubt the evidence of Ross who states that he was fishing that night on the river and also as regards the tin bailer. I may observe however that in his evidence in the case against Peter and Jim he states that “He can’t say whether what passed was one canoe or two canoes close together,” and also “I heard the canoe coming up a long time before the bailing was heard but the tin-bailing after they passed first attracted my attention.” I also enclose the evidence of Matilda Munch given likewise in the case of Peter and Jim, whose evidence however was not relied on by the prosecutor and I am unable to give any further information on the subject, except that the Indian witness Jim, who lent Robertson the canoe stated in his cross examination in the case against Peter and Jim “Robby had no gun and asked for none, there was no gun in the canoe, there was no bailer in the canoe of any kind,

the canoe leaked, it was not very old.”

The impression I derived from the two trials was that whether Peter and Jim were guilty or not Robertson was not the only man concerned in the murder. I may add that gentlemen who have had means of observing Robertson since he was in custody tell me that he is a person of weak intellect though doubtless he is fully responsible for his acts.

I cannot think of any suggestion that I can usefully make with reference to this case, but I may advert to the following circumstances as proper to be brought to the attention of the Minister of Justice. I have been credibly informed within the last day or two that during the last two years it has been ascertained that at least nine or ten murders have been committed in this neighborhood in most of which probably Indians have been involved, and there has been a failure to bring the guilty parties to Justice except perhaps in the Robertson case. Besides which there have been several mysterious disappearances. The best means of checking this great evil that I can think of would be the employment of some officer resident in the district for the purpose of prompt investigation, who would have the confidence of the Indians and their Chiefs.

The evidence forwarded to you in this case seems to indicate that immediate action on the part of such an officer might have resulted in obtaining more complete information.

I have the honor to be, Sir, Your Obedient Servant, J.F. McCreight

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5

*Reg. vs Peter and Jim (Enclosure to Justice McCreight’s letter of 8 February 1884).*

Matilda Munch [sic]

I know Robby—he is my cousin. He usually stays with his mother. Robby was staying at my mother’s place at Maple Ridge four of five miles this side of Langley.<sup>1</sup> I heard of the murder the night it happened. I do not know the hour I heard of it. I was in bed. I heard of the murder the night of the murder. Robby was away from home—he left my mother’s. I know he was away the day of the murder: He came home to my place that night. Don’t know time, I heard his voice. He was talking to my mother. I could hear what he said.

To Jury: Robby brought nothing home but his paddle.

To Jury: I heard Robby say “Peter and Jim have killed Dick.”

<sup>1</sup> The Muench family owned land on the south bank of the Fraser, across from Port Hammond. Because they interacted with Maple Ridge, across the river, more frequently than with Fort Langley it is understandable that they considered themselves living in Maple Ridge rather than in Langley.

## Appendix 4 Whonnock

The Memorial of the undersigned Indians of the Honock Indian Village.

*British Columbia. Colonial Correspondence P. Durieu, F503/2. Durieu to Seymour. 6 December 1868. Provincial Archives of British Columbia.*

To his Excellency Frederic Seymour, the Governor of British Columbia.

Shewith that

Governor Douglas did send some years ago his men among us to mesure [sic] our Reserve and although they gave us only a small patch of land in comparison to what they allowed to a white man our neighbor, we were resigned to our lot, consequently your memorialists build new houses, cultivated the land to raise potatoes for themselves and their children, and make if possible, some money selling the overplus.

Some days ago came new men who told us by order of their Chief they have to curtail our small reservation, and so did to our greatest grief; not only they shortened our land but by their new paper they set aside our best land, some of our gardens, and gave us in place, some hilly and sandy land, where it is next to impossible to raise any potatoes: our hearts are full of grief day and night, and in fact we have been many days without being able to sleep.

Your memorialists hope that such orders did not come from your Excellency, whom they have been accustomed to regard as their great Father. They cannot believe that such (an) act as this could be approved by their first Chief the Queen whom yourself did represent to them as being so gracious and so well disposed toward her children of the forest.

They therefore humbly pray your Excellency to listen to their request and give to them the same patch of land marked before by orders of Governor Douglas, of which grant we send a copy.

Kolasten x (his mark); Slapken x (his mark);  
Tseatlak x (his mark); Sltemtern x (his mark); Saykwlatas x (his mark); Skerhalam x (his mark); Saaha x (his mark); Skwayaten x (his mark)

## Appendix 5 Robertson's Land

*Correspondence regarding the road through Andrew Robertson's Estate*

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Hammond, Sep. 6 1890

From: D.C. Webber, C. M.C.

To the Executors - Estate of A. Robertson

Gentlemen: I am instructed to inform you that the obstructions to the right-of-way of River Road as Gazetted, through the land of the late Andrew Robertson at Whonnock — must be removed on or before the first day of November 1890. I have the honor to be, Gentlemen your obdt. Sevnt. [signed] D.C. Webber, C. M.C.

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*Transcript from C.M.C. copy book.*

Hammond, 10 October 1890

To the Executors - Estate A. Robertson

Gentlemen: Your favor was duly received and came before Council at last meeting.

In reply I am to inform you that the By-Law Gazetting River Road together with field notes, which are very copious also complete map of Road are in "municipal By-Law Book" and can be seen at any meeting of the Council, or by applying to the Clerk—You will also find a copy of Gazette by consulting files of "B.C. Gazettes" for the beginning of 1888. For your present information I can assure you the road is gazetted for a width of 33 ft. directly adjoining and parallel with railway fence — the entire length of Lot 434 and continuing around Station mounds until it connects with Oliver Road.

As to the matter of Compensation. The council have very good evidence to show that the Owner of the Land was present at time of survey and was anxious to have the road made without compensation, and as the road has been gazetted nearly three years and no protest made any claims now made for compensation would not in their opinion be either just or valid. I have the honor to be etc. [signed] ???

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*From Minutes of Council of Corp. of Maple Ridge, transcripts 1917 by Edmund Pope, Chief Constable*

4 September 1891.

Communications: From Armstrong, Eckstein & Gaynor stating that they are Solicitors for the Robertson Estate and advising that all communications re the proposed road through the said Estate be addressed to them. From Armstrong, Eckstein & Gaynor refusing to accept the compensation advanced by the Committee for right-of-way through the Robertson Estate and further state that the Corporation must remove the barn which is upon the proposed road if they desire the land.



Moved by Councillor Stephens seconded by Councillor Dockstaeder; That the Reeve be authorized to confer with the Executors of the Robertson Estate re the proposed road with the power to settle same, limited payment for compensation \$ 75<sup>00</sup> and owners to remove building.

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29 May 1893

To: Lazenby Esq.,  
Clerk Maple Ridge Council.

Dear Sir,

I beg to enclose you a Bill of Costs sent me by Messrs. Armstrong & Eckstein in the matter of a dispute between your Council and the Excrs of the late Andrew Robertson. The costs were incurred by the Excrs. in protecting the Estate from a trespass committed by the Council of 1891 and I really think it is time some steps were taken to close the matter. A definite offer was submitted to the Council of 1892 by Messrs. Armstrong & Eckstein but apparently nothing has been done towards a settlement. —I shall esteem it a favour if you will lay the matter before your council at their next meeting.—The whole thing can be settled by the payment to the Excrs. or their solicitors of the sum of one hundred dollars. Yours truly [signed] M. Curtis Sampson.

Memo: Purchase of Land required for roadway:	\$ 50 <sup>00</sup>
Solicitors costs	\$ 33 <sup>00</sup>
Executors costs	\$ 16 <sup>90</sup>
[total]	\$100 <sup>00</sup>

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*On stationary of: Inland Corporation & Development Co.,  
Head Office, 524-526 Cordova Street, Vancouver B.C. (Letter-  
head deleted).*

From: W. Curtis Sampson  
To: A.L. Lazenby Esq., C.M.C. Maple Ridge, Port Hammond

Nakusp. B.C. 10 May 1894

Dear Sir: Maple Ridge Municipality & Estate of Andrew Robertson, deceased. In reply to yours of the 7th May this matter was long since placed in the hands of Messrs. Armstrong, Eckstein & Gaynor of New Westminster the solicitors for the Estate and to them I must refer you.—Any arrangement they may make will be retified by me—if it is necessary that such formula should be gone through. —For your information I will state that the first claim was for \$100<sup>00</sup> before any costs were incurred.—The next arrangement was for \$50<sup>00</sup> cash to Robertson and the Council to pay Messrs. Eckstein's cost and to this or any other arrangement I am perfectly willing to agree if Messrs. Eckstein are satisfied. —I suppose Mr. Stickney must also be again consulted in the matter although he joined with me in placing the matter in Messrs. Eckstein's hands. I trust you will get the road through anyhow. Yours etc. [signed] W. Curtis Sampson.  
I have written Messrs. Eckstein by same mail.

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Eckstein & Gaynor, Barristers, Solicitors Co. L.P. Eckstein J.E. Gaynor,  
Offices Burns Bldg. Columbia St.  
New Westminster B.C.  
19 October 1894

The Reeve and Council  
Maple Ridge, B.C.

Dear Sirs

We are pleased to inform you that we are authorized by the executors of the Robertson Estate to accept your offer made to them of \$80.00 in settlement of roadway through the property near or at Whonnock & concerning wh we have had some correspondence with your honorable body.

The \$80<sup>00</sup> to be in settlement of roadway + all costs—kindly send cheque.

We are, gentlemen  
Yours etc. [signed] J.E. Gaynor