

This recording is an interview with sisters Coleen McDonald and Kathleen Langstroth, who were born and raised in New Westminster and are longtime residents of the city. The topics discussed in the interview are descriptions of various stores and institutions in New Westminster during their childhood, the changing nature of the residential spaces in the city, and community events.

Interviewers: Courtney Manlove & Colin Osmond

Interview Date: 16 March 2014

Date Range: 1940s - present

Recording time: 1:48:33

McDonald and Langstroth were the daughters of a New Westminster longshoreman, and have lived in the city their entire lives. Their father became a longshoreman during the Second World War, and was president of the longshore pensioners association union. The women are current teachers in Delta and Coquitlam, but will be retiring soon. In the interview they describe vivid memories from their childhoods in New Westminster including dressing up to visit Woodward's Department Store, visiting the weekly farmers market with their mother, and listening to CKNW radio for the announcement of the May Day Queen. The interviewees provide detailed descriptions of stores along Columbia St. and observations on how the "feel" of the city changed with recent residential redevelopment.

The interview was conducted as part of History 461 – Oral History Practicum at Simon Fraser University. The 2 minutes from first 1/3 of the interview and last 45 minutes are inaudible, and have been deleted from the mp3.

Section 0:00 – 4:56

In this portion of the interview, Langstroth talks about how she acquired her current heritage home on 7<sup>th</sup> St. She had previously restored a 1901 house on 9<sup>th</sup> St. with help from their father. The sisters talk about the friendly community on 9<sup>th</sup> St, where Langstroth's husband would go out for milk and be gone for 2.5 hours because he would sit down for a drink with a friend or two on the way.

Section 4:56 – 8:05

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about their childhood home at 518 Ash St. They describe their memories of the waterfront, especially driving down 8<sup>th</sup> Street. At the foot of 8<sup>th</sup> St. there would be big ships, Pacific Coast Terminals, and King Neptune Restaurant, which they remember as having the best popcorn shrimp in the world.

Section 8:06 – 13:26

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about how going downtown was a "big deal" until they were in their early twenties, and how they would dress up for it. The two women describe shops and restaurants that were well-known during the 1960s and into the 1970s: Eaton's, Sweet Sixteen, Germane, Tip Top Tailor, the two theatres, Kresge's, Spencer's, Fraser Cafe and the Pacific Cafe. They state that New Westminster was a curious place during the time and they describe its characteristics. The sisters describe how the BC Penitentiary was on 6<sup>th</sup> St, and

Woodland's asylum was located on "Number 9 Hill" (Columbia/McBride), which came from the telephone number for the area being 9.

#### Section 13:27 – 15:00

In this portion of the interview, the sisters report that New Westminster was a good place to grow up. They learned how to swim at the Kiwanis Pool, there were three movie theatres, and they went ice-skating on Fridays. They say that if you had a quarter you would be able to pay for a movie at the Odeon Theatre and still have money for a treat. They describe their excitement when Woodward's Department Store opened [uptown in 1954], and how their mother wanted to be within walking distance to of the Woodward's when they were looking for a new house, as she visited daily.

#### Section 15:01 – 20:36

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about the shift in the "feel" of New Westminster that occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They report that the beautiful shops on Columbia St. closed in the mid-1970s because of the development of malls and the one-stop-shopping model. The only store that remained was Army & Navy, and they felt that new residents without an "investment in the community moved in" when single-family housing was replaced by apartment buildings. They mention Royal Columbia Hospital, the Hollywood Sanatorium (drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre) and the CN passenger train station in Sapperton.

#### Section 20:37 – 22:13

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about their father's work as a longshoreman. They state that "good girls" did not go to the waterfront, nor did people who did not work there. They tell a story of when one of them was 18 years old and went to visit her father in a miniskirt. The sisters state that it "still feels weird to drive down there and not see any big ships."

#### Section 22:14 – 28:13

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about how you did not need to leave the city to get anything before the 1970s. The New Westminster farmers market occurred every Friday and Saturday and it was possible to purchase everything from baked goods to vegetables to knitted Barbie clothes. They would walk to the market with their mother. They remember municipal Christmas decorations shaped as crowns at the main intersections, and how there used to be photographers who would take photos of people walking down Columbia St.

#### Section 28:14 – 31:23

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about how their dad had been a rumrunner for the Rifle family and a logger in the New Westminster area. During WWII, he was sent to the longshore dispatch hall instead of the army, as he was deaf in one ear and blind in one eye. He liked working at the waterfront, but retired in 1970 at the age of 60. They report that at the time of his retirement, their father did not like the work ethic and the thievery he observed among some of the younger longshoremen.

#### Section 31:24 – 36:47

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about when the Dairy Queen opened up and they could walk over with their sister to get an ice cream dipped in chocolate for 6 cents. They discuss

shoe stores on Columbia St, mentioning Johnson on the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> St. and Carnarvon St., and Copps Shoes on Columbia St. They tell how the Army & Navy store would decorate their staircase with hats, and they would go there to get new hats for Easter and Sunday school.

#### Section 36:48 – 38:12

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about how the waterfront was a place of work but is no longer one today. They describe it as industrial, closed off, busy and “not a stroll in the park.”

#### Section 38:13 – 45:49

In this portion of the interview, the sisters describe May Day in New Westminster and the traditions attached to it when they were young. On the day itself there would be “canon” fire, a program in Queens Park, a May Ball, and Maypole dances at school. They discuss the time a carnival came to Moody Park, hurricane Frieda in 1962, and how the Fraser River froze in 1948. The sisters return to tell the story of the Nassau apartment block, which they describe as the first modern apartment building in the city, and how they would build castles and ride the elevator at the construction site.

#### Section 45:50 – 51:05

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about how they can still recall what New Westminster used to look like. Their mother used to send them to Woodward’s to get Matinée Mild cigarettes. Woodward’s had a conveyer belt to carry customer groceries from the checkout to the parking lot. They state that 90% of New Westminster teenagers would have learned to drive in the parking lot at Woodward’s. The sisters talk about the swimming pool at Moody Park, they report that Princess Margaret attended the opening in 1958 of Century House in Queen’s Park for the celebration of the Centennial of British Columbia<sup>1</sup>, and describe a pool hall on Hamilton and 6<sup>th</sup> St, where high school boys would hang out after school.

#### Section 51:06 – 54:55

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about single-family housing and state that their childhood house was torn down for an apartment building, as were other houses in the area. They talk about how they would walk their children to school until they were 12 years old, but their mother never walked them. They agree that New Westminster used to be “bustling without being hectic,” and that they now find it hectic due to increased traffic.

#### Section 54:56 – 59:32

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about changes that came to New Westminster following construction of the Skytrain in 1986. They state that the Columbia St. station had a reputation as a place of crime and drug dealing. They report that their mother was robbed right outside the station, but they feel that with more homeowners than “transient” renters the social climate has improved.

#### 59:33 – 01:02:53

---

<sup>1</sup> Century House is in Moody Park, not Queen’s Park.

In this portion of the interview, the sisters talk about how they know fewer neighbours today than they used to. Some of their longtime neighbours have passed away, and their new neighbours are of Asian origin. They state that there is a language barrier in the communication with their new neighbours.

Section 01:02:54 – 1:48:33

The interview is inaudible from this point on.