

the lakeside of this dike. A wall of 12"- to 16"-diameter pilings was constructed on the lakeside of this dike to which log booms were chained.

The company built two large pumphouses that were easily capable of pumping the excess rainwater coming off the mountains and into their ditches through the floodgates and back into the Pitt River. It took three years for the Dutch to rebuild the dikes and install pumphouses that were large enough to keep the water on the riverside of the dikes.

In 1955 the Pitt Polder Limited board of directors decided to take on a Canadian partner and raise the necessary capital to help finance the upgrading of the dikes. From the corner of Sturgeon Slough going in a northerly direction another dike needed to be reinforced due to the constant erosion caused by the run of the lower Pitt River plus the twice-daily tides running in and out around Addington Point. The repair to the one-and-a-half miles of this dike occurred between 1959 and 1961. The dike was built to 14 feet above sea level with a 12-foot top. Sieb Swierstra, the dragline operator, estimated that 72,000 cubic yards were moved to construct this dike. Ironically, Dr. Blom sold shares to Ladner and Koerner, the same two principals involved in the original sale to Blom and his Dutch investors. The reclaimed acreage was used for dairy farming and blueberry crops. Pitt Polder Limited leased ten dairy farms, each comprising approximately 100 acres, to Dutch farmers who shipped milk to dairies in Vancouver.

At the confluence of the north and south Alouette Rivers the dike builders dug up Hudson's Bay Company bottles that had been used for trading with either the First Nations people or some of the earliest settlers.

Once the Pitt Polder project was under control, Dr. Blom founded Canadian British Associates, an engineering firm based out of New Westminster, and took contracts for the building of dams and bridges throughout the province. His company took the contract to build the Port Mann Bridge over the Fraser River. The bridge, more than a mile long, opened in June 1964 and at the

time of its construction was the most expensive piece of highway in Canada.

Upon learning that Dr. Blom and his associates in Holland were interested in selling the Pitt Polder, Dr. Marco Terweil, a Maple Ridge physician, introduced entrepreneur Gordon Robson to Blom in 1980. Robson acted quickly and began bringing together partners to evaluate the land's potential. Robson and neophyte realtor Stan Pavlov managed to broker a deal and sell a huge portion of the Pitt Polder to Luigi Aquilini, who turned the Pitt Polder into a giant cranberry operation.

Emile Menton, one of the original investors, split away from the others and his property was called Ellendale Farms. Pavlov later that same year managed to sell Menton's 1,000 acres to Japanese investors, who turned the property into Swan-e-set Bay Resort and Country Club. Pavlov, although a rookie realtor, managed to sell more acreage in Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge in his first year than all the other realtors in those two municipalities combined.



Queen Juliana chats with Klazina and Martin Faber, 24 May 1967.

Queen Juliana's Visit to the Pitt Polder

By Peter J. Langbroek

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The Dutch and Canadian flags waved in the wind on either side of the small wooden bridge that led to the small green and white farmhouse. The crowd stood aback gazing behind the white fence. Mrs. And Mr. Faber waited by the front porch. Everything was tidy as a pin. Even the barn was clean after Mr. and Mrs. Faber and their son Ted had brushed the cows and trimmed their tails of any dirty clods.

The Fabers had waited for this time. Finally, they arrived, that cloudy day on 24 May 1967. Close friends and family gathered around, watching the woman with a light green dress, wearing a light brown beaded hat walk to their home. Mrs. Faber, in her Sunday best, a black dress, with a red rose

corset, and Mr. Faber, with a red carnation pinned to the lapel of his grey suit. Then, the moment came. Mrs. Faber stood a meter apart, bent forward, and shook the hand of Queen Juliana of the Netherlands. The queen had come to visit the dairy farmer in Pitt Polder, British Columbia.

Mrs. Faber escorted the queen inside their home while Mr. Faber followed, with his hands behind his back. There was a hushed mood inside the living room that afternoon. There was Ted, his wife Wilma, and their newborn son, Martin, in the crib. "Is that your son, Ma'am?" the queen asked Mrs. Faber.

"No, it's my grandson."

"Then, how old are you?" the queen replied. The family and friends laughed and the mood lightened as they realized how down to earth the queen was.

The moments passed in that living room. Time was precious for a queen on a whirlwind tour. After admiring the strawberries growing in the backyard garden, the queen, her escort, and the Faber family and friends went out the backdoor, down the scrubbed sidewalk to the barn. Mr. Faber walked beside her, politely choosing to walk on the wet lawn.

Mr. Faber was nervous inside the barn. They had made it as clean as possible. Such a royal figure surely hadn't seen a barn before, nor would she understand the smell or the mess that cows could give. The queen walked near the back of a cow.

"Please, Queen Juliana, you must step aback. I would not want to see your dress get dirty." Mr. Faber said politely.

The queen laughed, "That doesn't matter. I can always get it washed."

Time was precious. They soon left the barn, down the scrubbed sidewalk to the home, out of the home, from the front porch to the small wooden bridge with the Dutch and Canadian flag where her car awaited her. The crowd was still there, gazing over the white fence to catch a glimpse of her.

Queen Juliana stopped at the edge of the bridge. Cameras clicked and microphones were placed before her mouth. Some small talk and laughter, and the queen was off, waving from her car to the crowd of happy fans. It isn't everyday that you see a queen.

Time for work again. Mr. Faber and Ted put on their barn clothes to milk while Mrs. Faber and Wilma tidied the room.

Rannie's Ranch

By Helen Rose Pauls

Written for the Mennonite Historical Society

...In the mid-thirties, the Mennonite Board of Colonization made arrangements for settlers to purchase pieces of a huge acreage on what is now Pitt Polder, from a millionaire named Mr. Rannie. This land was reclaimed lake bottom, protected by dykes. The board, under the leadership of a Mr. Sawatsky, who also purchased land there,

encouraged depression weary Mennonite farmers from the prairies to make down payments on these acreages. At least forty families with money were expected to settle there, but instead, ten without money arrived. The settlement, called Rannie's Ranch, soon became known as Rainy Ranch.

The Rannie Ranch settlers attempted to develop an infrastructure, and a tiny store served them. Church services were held in various homes, and the Pitt Meadows Mennonites decided to join their group for services. A small school was established in a converted chicken barn. Abe Pankratz remembers the teacher, Mr. McRae, and how he longed to taste his teacher's "store-bought white bread" sandwiches. He also remembers playing on log booms with the other boys and fishing for bass and bullheads in the Sturgeon Slough, a man-made canal nearby.

While they tried to establish a viable community, they also worked very hard to build up small dairy farms. Marie Peters Balzer remembers that her family purchased forty acres at Rannie's Ranch as well, but they remained in their house near the Pitt Meadows townsite, travelling to the larger farm to look after the hay fields.

...Unfortunately, it was soon apparent that the Rannie's Ranch settlement could not continue. The land was too low, and the settlers did not have the resources to maintain roads or drainage systems. The soil was found to be extremely poor and swampy. "They couldn't make a go of it," says Marie, "and so they dispersed to other settlements, many to Mission or Vancouver. The whole community was dissolved." These hard-working pioneers lost not only their land, which reverted back to Mr. Rannie, but also their last dollars which had been used for down payments. They moved to other communities, and found work wherever they could, often in sawmills or peat bogs, so that they could earn some ready cash to survive.

In the sixties, farmers from Holland drained the area for dairy farms and renamed it Pitt Polder. Recently, a prestigious golf course has been developed on Rannie Road called Swan-e-set Bay Resort and Country Club.

When I asked a former resident whether she had photos about anything depicting Rannie's Ranch, she replied, "Photos? No, I don't think anyone had photographs. We were all too poor for pictures."



Alan C. Thompson



Laurence W. Anderson



Brian R. Marshall



David A. Riddell

VERNON & THOMPSON LAW GROUP - A PROUD TRADITION

The roots of our firm began in 1901 when Charles Foster Campbell, who began the practice of law in Melitta, Manitoba in 1898, moved to British Columbia and began the practice of law in Vancouver. He came to "Haney" in the late 1930's and set up practice here. Dick Lester, fresh out of law school, joined him in 1953. After the death of Charles Campbell, the firm became Lester & Leggatt when Dick Lester and Stuart Leggatt (who later became a member of Parliament and of the legislature in B.C. and then a Supreme Court Justice) became partners. In 1962 F. David S. Vernon (later, a chairman of the Assessment Appeal Board and a Q.C.) joined the firm, then called Lester & Vernon. In 1969 the firm became Vernon & Thompson when Alan C. Thompson joined David Vernon (now retired) in practice at the offices at 22195 Dewdney Trunk Road, moving to our present location in 1975.

Laurence W. Anderson joined the firm in 1970, Brian R. Marshall in 1974, and Thomas E. Dinsley in 1980. With five law partners, the firm name became rather long, so was abbreviated back to simply Vernon & Thompson. In 2002, the lawyers became an association of law corporations, under the name of the "Vernon & Thompson Law Group". In 2001 (exactly 100 years after Charles Foster Campbell left the plains of Manitoba), another lawyer, who began the practice of law in Manchester, England in 1993, moved to British Columbia, practiced law in Vancouver, and then came to "Haney" to join our law group in 2008. His name is David Andrew Riddell.

We now have a group of lawyers and dedicated staff numbering 19 in total, carrying on our proud tradition of providing quality legal services to our clients in Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows and other parts of British Columbia.

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