

The Hawaiians from Fort Langley

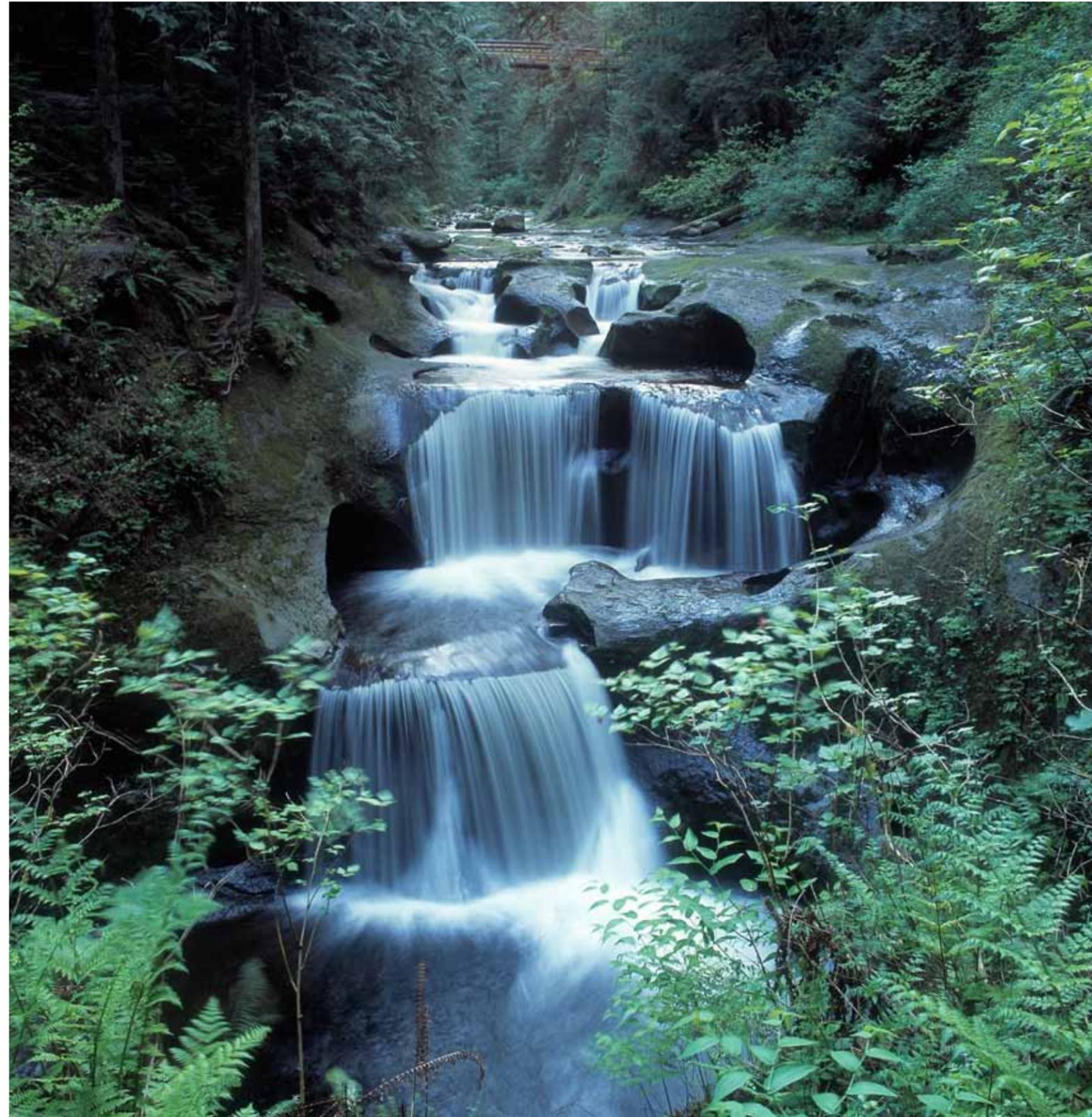
HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY ships often had to stop over at the Hawaiian Islands to take on fresh supplies and water. When the company founded Fort Langley in 1827, several Hawaiians, called Kanakas, signed on as labourers and it wasn't long before some of these men moved across the river to intermingle with the Kwantlen and Katzie First Nation women and squat at the mouth of a creek that emptied into the Fraser River. The creek was later named Kanaka Creek after them. George Apnaut, Papua Mayo, and Robert Vicacary originally squatted on land on both sides of the creek in the late 1850s. After Apnaut's death his wife Sophia married William Nelson of "The Ridge" who saw an opportunity in marrying her son George Apnaut Jr. off to Julia Hamburger, the granddaughter of Ovid Allard, the Chief Trader at Forts Langley and Yale.

When Allard came to Fort Langley in 1839, he brought with him a blond daughter named Sennie from a marriage at Fort Hall, Idaho. A few years after his arrival at Fort Langley, James Murray Yale, in charge of the fort, persuaded Allard to marry his wife's relative and a sister of Chief T'soschia of the Cowichan Confederacy. His young wife, motivated by jealousy, gave her stepdaughter away to a sloop-master, and lied to her husband telling him that the young girl had fallen into the Fraser River and drowned. Allard was heart-broken upon hearing this news and it took twenty years to learn the truth about his daughter Sennie's disappearance.

Upon leaving Fort Langley, Allard had gone to Nanaimo and from there to the HBC store at Fort Yale in 1858 for the gold rush. It was at Yale that Allard recognized his eldest daughter Sennie, now married to a German Jew named David Hamburger. She and her husband, together with their small daughter Julia, were on their way over the newly completed Cariboo Road en route to her husband's store at Barkerville. Apparently Julia was the very first child to travel on the Cariboo Road. Hamburger was one of the founders of the firm of Oppenheimer, Boaz, and Hamburger.

Julia Hamburger's early years in Maple Ridge at Nelson's Landing was nightmarish. In 1863 the young woman had been orphaned when her parents were lost at sea off the coast of Oregon. She was first placed in St. Ann's Convent in Victoria to be educated by nuns. Sophia Nelson, wife of William Nelson, was responsible for Julia

Kanaka Creek Falls.



leaving the convent and coming to live in Maple Ridge. Sophia, niece of Cowichan Chief T'soschia and previously married to a Hawaiian named Apnaut from Fort Langley, had connived with Matilda Allard, Julia's aunt, into obtaining her release from the convent. Sophia hoped to come into Julia's inheritance when the young woman reached the legal age of eighteen years. Also, because Julia was beautiful and well educated, Sophia planned to marry her off to her son George Apnaut.

Julia was most useful to Sophia, who could neither read nor write. Sophia forced Julia into giving her an education. Roman Catholic priests, especially Father Ponzi, often used the Nelson home to hear the confessions of the Katzie First Nations. Because Father Ponzi could not speak the local First Nations language and since the First Nations people could not speak English, Sophia, now conversant in both languages, translated their confessions to the priest. Julia, because of her religious upbringing, refused to give confessions to the priest with Sophia listening in and this infuriated her guardian. In an effort to break the girl's spirit, Sophia beat her with sticks across the bare back sometimes into unconsciousness. To further humiliate the child, Sophia made her work naked in the vegetable garden. These and other punishments to a convent-reared child who bathed in her underwear was cruelty beyond comprehension. Sadly, all this was taking place unknown to Ovid Allard, her grandfather, who had returned to take charge of Fort Langley from 1864 until his death in 1874.

Julia attempted to escape time and again, and on one occasion a black ex-slave who lived along the Fraser and who sometimes worked on the Nelson farm tried to persuade the confused young woman to run off and marry him. She refused, only to be forced into a submissive marriage to Sophia's son, George Peter Apnaut. For the next several years Apnaut forced himself upon her, making her life intolerable. Their first child died in infancy but a second did reach maturity.

When the CPR construction workers came to Maple Ridge, Mrs. Nelson took in boarders. A young boarder took pity on the poor Mrs. Apnaut and managed to get her onto a boat bound for Victoria. Julia returned to the convent and told the priest there what had transpired since she had left St. Ann's, and the priest immediately had the marriage annulled. The day George Apnaut died, Julia went out and purchased a red dress instead of a black one. She rejoiced. Her husband was credited with being the first and only part-Hawaiian to serve on Maple Ridge council. Julia lived out the rest of her life as a dressmaker in Victoria and passed away in 1952 at the age of 91.



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