

## Asiatic Exclusion League

THE ASIATIC EXCLUSION LEAGUE, often abbreviated AEL, was a racist organization formed in the early twentieth century in the United States and Canada, aiming at preventing immigration of people of East Asian origin.

A sister organization with the same name was formed in Vancouver on 12 August 1907 under the auspices of the Trades and Labour Council; its aim was “to keep Oriental immigrants out of British Columbia.” On 7 September riots erupted in Vancouver when, after listening to inflammatory racist speeches at City Hall, league members besieged Chinatown. Shouting racist slogans, the white mob marched into Chinatown and Japantown smashing storefronts. An important, albeit indirect, consequence of AEL activity was the introduction of the first drug and gambling laws. The Minister of Labour (and future Prime Minister) William Lyon Mackenzie King investigated the riots and the victims’ claims for compensation. An

The Tait residence, called Glen Brae and located in the Shaughnessy Heights district, became the official headquarters of the KKKKK. The twin domes of the lavish home led many to refer to it as the “Mae West” House.



The Kanadian Council of the Ku Klux Klan held a meeting in the former William Lamont Tait residence in Shaughnessy Heights on 25 October 1925 to discuss the expulsion of “Asiatics” from British Columbia.

opium manufacturer submitted a claim that sparked an investigation into the local drug scene, and politicians and police convinced King that opium consumption was spreading to young white women. A federal law was soon passed “prohibiting the manufacture, sale and importation of opium for other than medicinal purposes.”

White racists used similar tactics in 1914 to keep the *Komagata Maru* with passengers from India from landing in Vancouver by having crafty lawyers come up with new legislation requiring direct passage from potential immigrants’ birthplace to British Columbia.

The AEL resurfaced in the early 1920s and pushed for the passage of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 to restrict Chinese immigration to Canada.

In the fall of 1925, the Invisible Empire of the Kanadian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan paraded south down Granville Street to their headquarters in Shaughnessy Heights at Glen Brae, the former residence of lumber baron William Lamont Tait. The klansmen paraded around the grounds in masked white robes, carrying crosses adorned with red electric lights. This came to an abrupt end when the city passed a bylaw prohibiting mask wearing.