



The barns from the Spencer farm in Albion. The barns were later used for the exhibits of the agricultural fair. The Golden Ears Mountains are visible in the background.

The Spencer Farm

IN 1919 BROTHERS DAVID S. SPENCER and Colonel Victor Spencer, the sons of David W. Spencer, the department store magnate, purchased 400 acres of the original Samuel Robertson farm and built a huge barn for a dairy operation as well as a large slaughterhouse on Kanaka Creek. They then set about making sure that any of the low-lying area of the Albion Flats they had purchased was adequately diked. Later Colonel Victor Spencer became interested in the Jersey breed of cattle and turned the farm into a purebred Jersey farm, with a herd of 150 head, including some imported directly from the island of Jersey.

On January 6th, 1927, under the heading "Maple Ridge has best Thoroughbreds in BC," the *Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows Weekly Gazette* ran an article on what we would now call an open house at the Spencer farm. The event, which had taken place a month earlier, was attended by 200 people. In part the article reads:

Every part of the district and Pitt Meadows was represented, indeed, so well that this proved the largest crowd ever in the municipality gathering to benefit from an agricultural demonstration.

The theatre for the forenoon was the abattoir, dairy and hog farm at Albion of Messrs. D. Spencer and Co. Needless to say the demonstration was thoroughly practical and an entire success and covered the two great aspects, production and marketing.

It might otherwise be classed as a demonstration and a clinical lecture, the former taking place at the farm and the latter in the afternoon in the Haney Theatre.

Dr. A. Knight, Provincial Live Stock Commissioner, could ask for no more attentive and thoroughly intelligent audience.

The Spencer family also operated a 400,000-acre beef ranch at Dog Creek, 65 miles west of Williams Lake, where they had 4,000 head. These animals would be shipped by rail to Quesnel for fattening before being shipped for a second time on to Albion. A portion of the large slaughterhouse at Albion sat on stilts over Kanaka Creek so that the waste could be dumped into the creek to be carried downstream into the Fraser River to feed the sturgeon.

David Spencer Ltd. owned eight department stores in total: Mission, Chilliwack, New Westminster, Duncan, Nanaimo, Victoria, and two in Vancouver. The milk and meat were dispersed by trucks to these stores daily. In 1948 Eaton's purchased the chain of Spencer stores.

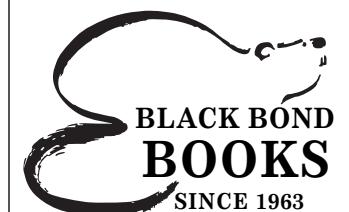
Associated Dairies acquired the farm in the 1930s and it was used for a variety of purposes. The property was no longer being farmed when the Municipality purchased it in 1959. The District of the Municipality of Maple Ridge used the barn and other buildings for the Fairgrounds for the North Fraser Valley Exhibition. The Fairgrounds are still owned by the District of Maple Ridge. The milk house is the last remaining original structure on the site built for Victor Spencer.



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A view to the southeast of Albion Flats during the flood of 1948.

- 1 David Spencer's residence
- 2 Samuel Robertson's farm
under water
- 3 Fraser River
- 4 Lougheed Highway
- 5 Canadian Pacific Railway
- 6 Kanaka Creek
- 7 Abernethy & Lougheed
Logging Company trestle



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