

## B.K. Grocery - 2308 E 34<sup>th</sup> Ave – Historical Research Summary

Prepared by Christine Hagemoen, July 2020



"Going to the Store" photo collage by Christine Hagemoen, 2020

**Name:** B.K. Grocery – since 1968 (aka BK Grocery)

**Street Address:** 2308 East 34th Avenue (pre-1929 original address 1902 E 35th)

**Legal Address:** DL 394, Block 3, Lot 57

**Type of Resource:** Store/residence

**Date of Construction:** 1918

Source: South Vancouver Water Service – Feb. 9, 1918

**Original Owner:** Mrs. Harry Bridge [Annie Bridge]

Source: COV Water Service record – Feb. 9, 1918 / City Directories

### Other Significant Owners:

A.B. Washbern of Washbern Grocery

Source: City Directories & The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Fri\_\_Feb\_22\_\_1963\_.jpg

Bing K Mah of B.K. Grocery

Source: City Directories & B.K. Grocery by Roy Mah

**Builder:** Unknown, likely Harry Bridge – bricklayer

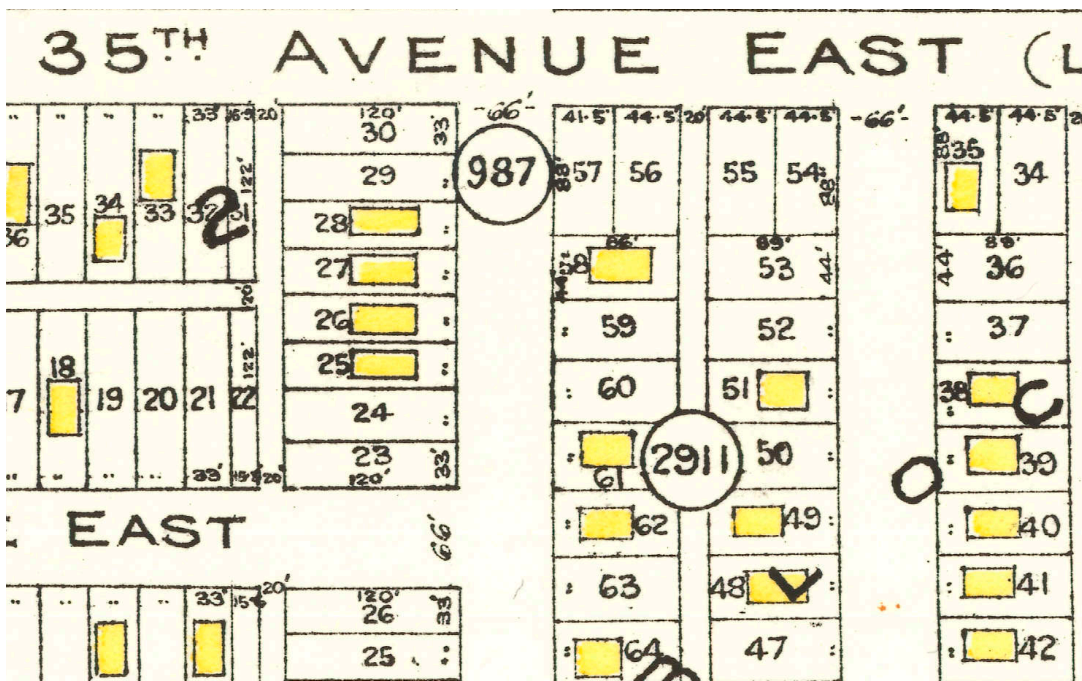
**Building Permit: N.A.**

**Water Permit:** South Vancouver application #0113 – owner: Mrs. H. Bridge

**Architectural Plans: N.A.**

**Additional Information:** There is no South Vancouver Building Permit in extant for this property, as all building permits for District Lot 394 from 1917 to 1919 have been lost.

The property lies on the western boundary of Renfrew–Collingwood in East Vancouver. This area is also known as Norquay, which surrounds the 1.3 km of Kingsway that lies between Gladstone Street and Killarney Street, has reached as far north as East 24th Avenue, and still reaches as far south as East 41st Avenue. Norquay straddles the Nanaimo Street boundary that separates the municipal communities of Renfrew-Collingwood and Kensington-Cedar Cottage.



This detail of a Fire Insurance plan from 1912 shows the immediate neighbourhood sparsely dotted with single-family residences of wood construction (indicated in yellow) surrounding the subject property (Lot 57).

## Historic Significance and Heritage Value

Located in historic South Vancouver, the 1918 B.K. Grocery building is a rare example of a 2-story red brick structure in a city once predominated by wood construction. A classic example of the once ubiquitous neighbourhood grocery store, the building is historically significant as a visual landmark at the intersection of East 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Nanaimo Street for over 100 years.

At the time of construction, this part of South Vancouver was still sparsely inhabited, essentially rural, which explains the lack of heritage structures in the area. This makes the B.K. Grocery building a highly significant historic place in this neighbourhood.

The original owner was Harry Bridge a bricklayer and storekeeper from Lancashire, England. His wife Annie was also born in England and it is her name that appears as the property owner on the Water Permit dated February 9, 1918. The style of the building reflects the original owners ancestry in that it represents the type of building commonly found in industrial areas of British cities in the late 19<sup>th</sup> C and early 20<sup>th</sup> C.

B.K Grocery building is not only significant for its function as a neighbourhood “mom-and-pop” grocery store, but also as a community meeting place. In the 1950s and 1960s, store owner Art Washbern, would always have a “pot of coffee perking on the old enameled oil stove in the kitchen” at the back of the store where there would often be a “couple of people sitting there, drinking coffee” and swapping “news of the neighbourhood”. The store also served as a gathering place for generations of local school aged kids who would walk or bike to the corner store to spend their allowance on penny candy, frozen treats, and bottles of pop.

The changing demographics of this predominately working class south Vancouver neighbourhood is also reflected evolution of the proprietorship of the store. Like the building’s early storekeepers, a century ago most residents of Vancouver were of British ancestry. The growth of multicultural immigration into Canada from the 1960s on further changed the city. During this time, from 1968 to 1986, the B.K. Mah family, originally from China, owned and operated the eponymously named B.K. Grocery. The working class neighbourhood of Renfrew-Collingwood appealed to newcomers of Chinese, South Asian, and Southeast Asian ancestry, many of modest backgrounds not unlike their predecessors several generations earlier.

Sources: South Vancouver Water Service Records; City Directories; BK Building SOS v3.pdf; The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Fri\_\_Feb\_22\_\_1963\_.jpg;  
1910CanPassngerListSt.JohnNB.png; USImmigratioAug22\_1911side1.png &  
USImmigratioAug22\_1911side2.png



Aerial View of 2308 East 34th at Nanaimo, 1955. Photo: 55-26detail.jpg

### Historical City Directory Listings

Information collected for city directories is gathered in the year preceding publication by surveyors who go door to door to collect the information provided to them by whomever answers the door. Errors in gathering information do occur and is often 6 months to 1 year out of date.

## BRIDGE

„ Fredk longshoreman h 1308 Grant

„ Fredk J blksmith h 1597 5th Av W

„ Harry brklyr h 5131 Highgate

„ May onr R C Phone Co r 104 Geo

1918 City Directory listing for Harry Bridge, bricklayer

**Directories:** Harry Bridge\*, grocer – 1684 Kingsway\* (lives at same)

Source: 1916 City Directory

**Directories:** Harry Bridge, bricklayer – h 5131 Highgate Street

Source: 1917 & 1918 City Directory

**Directories:** H Budge [Harry Bridge] – 1902 E 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue\*

Source: 1919\* & 1920 City Directory

**Directories:** vacant

Source: 1921 City Directories

**Directories:** Alex Smith, warehouseman; Mrs. Ellen Smith, grocer

Source: 1922 - 1924 City Directory

**Directories:** Doug Thompson, grocer

Source: 1925 - 1927 City Directory

**Directories:** T.L Baldwin, grocer

Source: 1928 City Directory



In 1929, South Vancouver amalgamated with the City of Vancouver (whose southern border was at 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue) & Point Grey to create the City of Vancouver that we know today. Many changes/adjustments were made in street names and house numbers at this time and 1902 E 35<sup>th</sup> becomes 2308 E 34<sup>th</sup>.

**Directories:** Charles J Noel, grocer

**Source:** 1929 -1931 City Directory

**Directories:** M.J. & Ann Soroka, grocer

**Source:** 1932 -1933 City Directory

**Directories:** Jacob & Sarah Dyck, grocer

**Source:** 1934 City Directory

**Directories:** Edwin & Isabella Carley, grocer

**Source:** 1935 - 1937 City Directory

**Directories:** Charles D. Shaw, grocer

**Source:** 1938 – 1946 City Directory

**Directories:** Joseph Edward (E.J.) & Margaret W. Marcotte, grocer

**Source:** 1947 - 1950 City Directory

## NANAIMO INTERSECTS

**2307\*Cosco F -DE2196M**

**2308\*Washbern Gro -DE1061**

**2308\*Washbern A B -DE1061**

**2315\*Buntain R -DE2326M**

**2321\*Buchanan J C guitar mkr -DE6393Y**

**2322 Vermin Chemical Co exterminators  
-DE4536**

**2322 Wilson D -DE4536**

**2329\*Dolg F J -DE1705L**

1955 City Directory listing for 2308 E 34<sup>th</sup> Ave.

**Directories:** Arthur Bacon (A.B.) & Doris Washbern, Washbern Grocery

**Source:** 1951 - 1960 City Directory

**Directories:** A.B. Washbern – Washbern Grocery

**Source:** 1961 - 1965 City Directory

**Directories:** Lion's View Grocery

**Source:** 1966-1967

**Directories:** BK Grocery – Bing Kuen (B.K.) & Mei Yiu Mah

**Source:** 1968 - 1986 City Directory

**Directories:** B&K Grocery (Sing-Kwan Sue)

**Source:** 1987 - 1994 Directory

From 1995 – 2014 Ton Wai operated B&K Grocery

\* = First appears in the city directories

## Property and neighbourhood historical summary

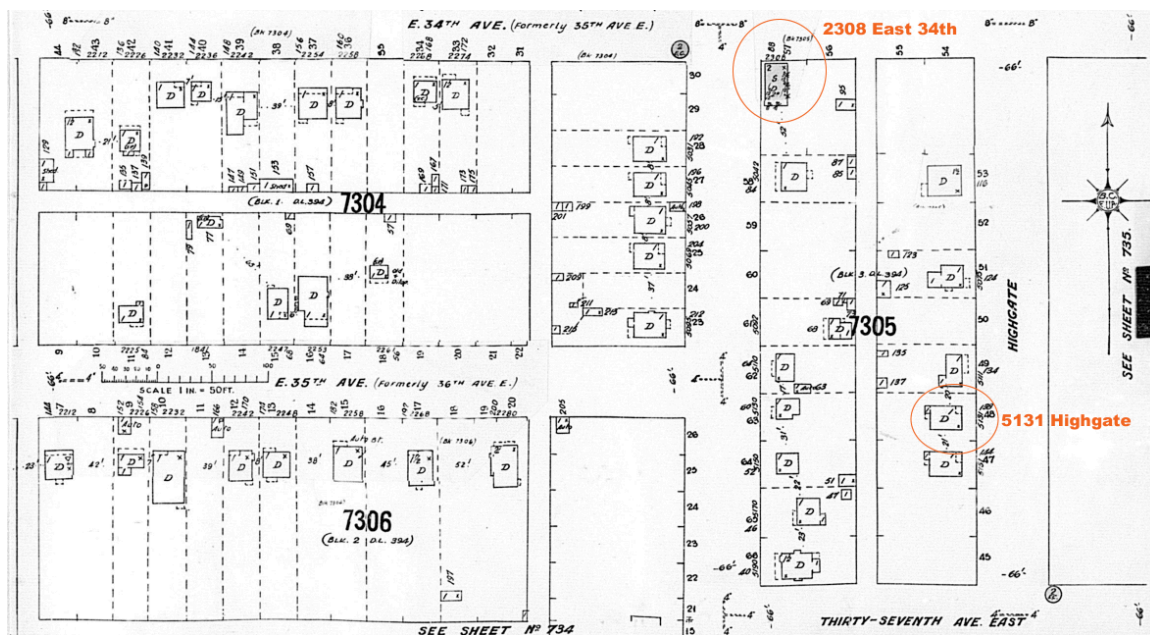
### A tale of two Harry Bridges

Previous narratives concerning the history of this property are actually a tale of two different people named Harry Bridge. All agree that Harry Bridge, bricklayer, and his wife Annie were the first owners of 2308 East 34<sup>th</sup> (then 1902 E 35<sup>th</sup>) from around 1918 to about 1920. Water Service records and City Directories support this claim. However, it appears there were two men named Harry Bridge who lived in the Vancouver area during this early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Another Harry Bridge, a carpenter by trade, and his wife Amy lived in North Vancouver. Harry Nelson Bridge (b. 1879 in Liverpool, Eng. - d. 1954, Penticton) married wife Amy in North Vancouver in 1914. A year later, 5'5" Harry N. Bridge enlisted in the army and was sent overseas in 1915 according to WW1 attestation papers. He served in Europe until he was discharged and returning to Canada, wife Amy, and the North Shore in 1919.

The Harry Bridge who is associated with the subject property (B.K. Grocery) is a little more mysterious and did not leave a neat biographical trail for future researchers to follow.

Harry Bridge, bricklayer, was born in England, possibly in Lancashire, around 1880. He was married to Annie Bridge. Immigration/border crossing documents from 1910 and 1911 reveal that Harry Bridge, a married bricklayer, arrived in Canada destined for New Michel, a mining town in BC's Kootenays. He is also physically described as being 5' 9 1/2" tall. Harry and Annie Bridge drop off the radar for a few years until they reappear in Vancouver, for the first time, by 1916.



Fire Insurance Map 599 vol. 7, South Vancouver, July 1926

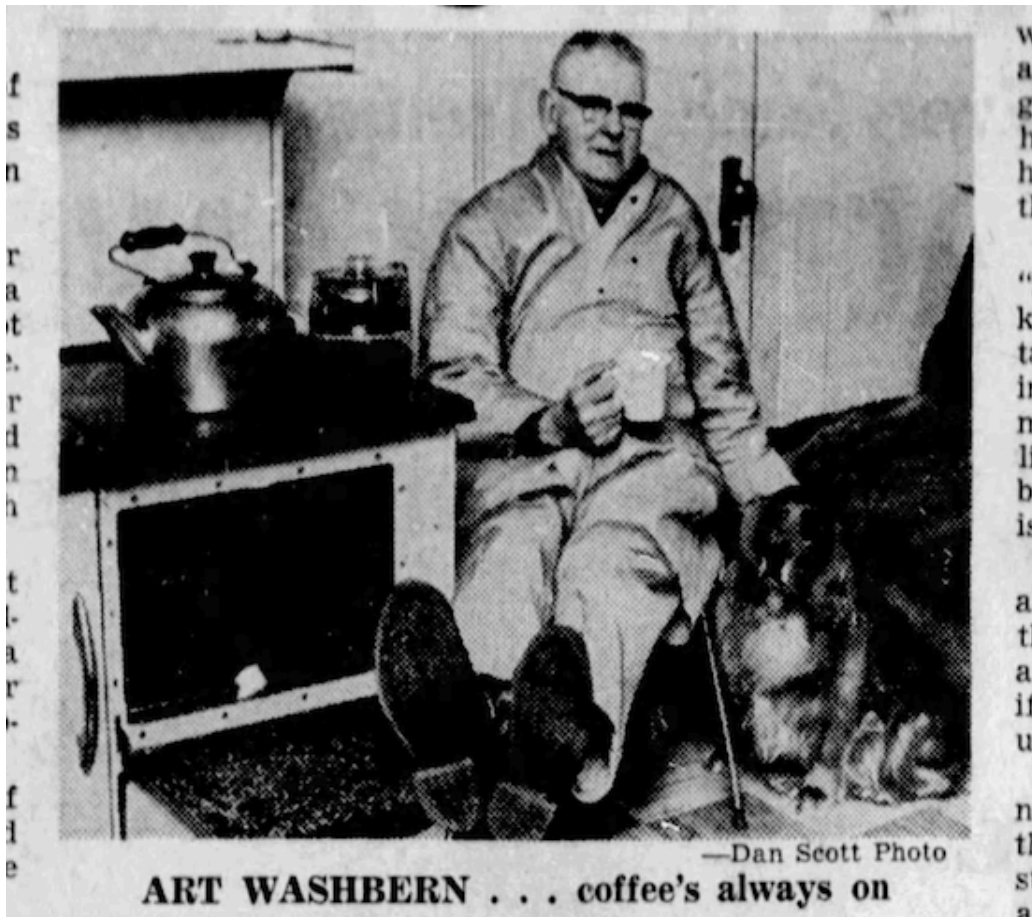
In the 1916 City Directories, Harry Bridge was listed as a grocer working and living at 1684 Kingsway, only a few blocks away from the subject property (at that time the 1600 block of Kingsway was between Commercial & Beatrice Streets). The following years, 1917 & 1918, Harry Bridge, bricklayer, is living at 5131 Highgate Street, which is just around the corner from the subject property. On February 9, 1918 a Water Service application for 1902 E 35 is taken out for Mrs. H. Bridge of 5131 Highgate St. Water service is usually requested near the end of construction, so it is likely that our subject property was built starting in 1917 and completed in 1918. As a bricklayer by trade and now a storekeeper, was Harry Bridge building his own live-in store at 1902 E35th? It is very much possible.

In 1919 & 1920, an "H Budge" is listed in the city directories as living at 1902 E 35th. It is safe to surmise that "Budge" is a transcription error and that it is indeed Harry Bridge. If you look at the 1918 Water Service record for the subject property it is signed by Mrs. H Bridge, but in cursive writing "Bridge" looks a lot like "Budge". By the time that the 1921 city directory is published the brick building is listed as "vacant" and the Bridges have left Vancouver and likely the Province as mysteriously as they came.

No British Columbia marriage, birth, or death records exist for Harry and Annie Bridge. This would indicate that Harry and Annie Bridge did not marry or die in British Columbia nor do they appear in the 1911 and 1921 Canada Census. It appears that their time here was limited and not permanent.

Sources: City Directories; South Vancouver Water Service Records;  
1910CanPassngerListSt.JohnNB.png; USImmigratioAug22\_1911side1.png &  
USImmigratioAug22\_1911side2.png

### Arthur Bacon (A.B.) Washbern – Washbern Grocery



Vancouver Sun Fri. Feb 22, 1963

Art Washbern owned and operated Washbern Grocery, along with his wife Doris, from 1951 to 1965. Born in Brooklyn, New York in 1894, Washbern came to Canada in 1920 and Vancouver around 1923. He married Doris Fixter (1903-1960) in Banff Alberta in 1920. Together they had 3 children. A storekeeper his entire working career, the last store he had was Washbern Grocery at E 34th and Nanaimo. Washbern and his grocery store were featured in a "day-in-the-life" style article in in The Vancouver Sun, Friday Feb. 22, 1963. He was also featured in a Vancouver Sun story in 1959, when he and another neighbourhood man acted as crossing guards to local school children trying to navigate an unmarked crossing at Nanaimo & E. 34<sup>th</sup> on their way to the new Norquay Annex at 5330 Nanaimo Street at E. 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Both of these newspaper clippings are worth a read to find out more about Art Washbern, his corner store on E 34th, and his contributions to the community. They are attached as appendices at the end of this document. Art Washbern died from stomach cancer in 1968.

Sources: City Directories; The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Fri\_Feb\_22\_1963\_.jpg;  
Washbern004479281\_01423.jpg; The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Thu\_Sep\_10\_1959\_-1.jpg;  
Ancestry.ca; BC Archives Vital Statistics



### Bing Kuen (B.K.) Mah – B.K. Grocery

Photograph courtesy of Kathy Arnsdorf.



**My father in his store, B.K. Grocery, December 1985.**

From *Finding Memories, Tracing Routes: Chinese Canadian Family Stories*, B.K. Grocery by Roy Mah

Bing Kuen & Mei Yiu Mah owned and operated B.K. Grocery from 1968 to 1986. Bing Kuen Mah was born in China in 1925. He immigrated to Canada with his wife Mei Yiu and their children (Roy, Jack, James, Lana, & Kathy) via Hong Kong in the 1960s. The Mahs oldest son, Roy, wrote a beautiful and vivid memoir of his family's store and their experiences running it in *Finding Memories, Tracing Routes: Chinese Canadian Family Stories* called B.K. Grocery. In it Mah tells of the struggles his parents had running their new business in a new country with a new language which was a very common story in Vancouver. There is also a very vivid description of the store interior and what it was like to run a small corner grocery store in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Bing Kuen Mah died suddenly in 1996 at the age of 71. Though the Mah family stopped working in the grocery business in 1986, they still owned the property and later leased the store to different operators. In 2014/2015, the Mah family sold the property at East 34<sup>th</sup> and Nanaimo to property developer Richard Wittstock principal at Domus Homes. (See appendix C)

Sources: City Directories; B.K. Grocery\_Roy\_Mah.pdf;  
The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Sat\_Jul\_20\_1996.jpg; BC Archives Vital Statistics

## **Neighbourhood Historical Information**

### **Street and place names:**

**East 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue** – In South Vancouver was originally Bodwell Road prior to 1910. South Vancouver By-law 141, 1910 changed Bodwell Road to East 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue east of Cambie Street. Then in 1929, after amalgamation, East 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue became East 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**Nanaimo Street** – Shown on Plan 100, a resurvey of Hastings Townsite in 1906, and named after the provincial government after the Nanaimo Mining Division. Nanaimo Street was Vancouver's eastern boundary from 1886 until 1910, when the sparsely settled Hastings Townsite to the east voted to amalgamate with it. The jogs in the east-west roads north of First Avenue (an area settled by the time of the amalgamation) reflect the different surveys on either side of the old boundary line. Vancouver's southern boundary was at 16th Avenue until 1929, where it abutted the municipalities of South Vancouver and Point Grey.

**Kingsway** - Originally a foot trail for local First Nations, it then became a wagon road in the mid-19th century. Stretching diagonally from Vancouver's Main Street just south of East 7th Avenue and becoming 12th Street at the Burnaby-New Westminster border, Kingsway is a living part of our region's history and cultural fabric.

It was named after Kingsway, a thoroughfare in London, England. Completed in 1906 and named in honour of King Edward VII. Vancouver By-law 1114, 1913 (covering the distance between Main and Knight Streets), and South Vancouver By-law 197, 1913 (covering the distance from Knight Street to Boundary Road), changed Westminster Road to Kingsway.

In 1911, Vancouver By-law 842 changed New Westminster Road to Westminster Road. There was no comparable South Vancouver By-law. The Granville and New Westminster Road, shown on Plan 187 (1885), was the popular name for the trail slashed between New Westminster and the Granville Townsite. This trail was also known as the False Creek Trail, constructed in 1860 on the recommendation of Colonel Moody, to link New Westminster with the government reserve on English Bay.

Westminster Road became the auto route heading south once the Fraser River was bridged at New Westminster in 1904. Nine years later Westminster Road was widened and paved with asphalt. Vancouver City Council celebrated by changing the name to Kingsway. On the improved route's opening in October 1913, some 600 cars paraded four abreast along Kingsway's pockets of settlement amidst farms and empty lots to a celebration at Central Park in Burnaby.

The booming 1920s made it possible for more and more families to afford an automobile and thereby holiday trips no longer dependent on public transportation. Together with gas stations, garages, and cafes, Kingsway acquired its first auto camps.

Determination grew to widen Kingsway to three lanes in each direction. No sooner had the cost of the 1913 improvements been repaid in 1925, the talk began. Some work was completed during the early 1930s, but it took until the end of the Second World War for

the project to get underway and until 1949 for it to be completed. By then Kingsway was the main arterial highway not only heading south but also east along the new Trans-Canada Highway. Kingsway was re-opened as a six-lane highway between Vancouver and New Westminster In 1949. It was described as 'strikingly handsome' in the newspapers. However, the future so optimistically envisioned for Kingsway was not to be. Across North America, the first generation of roads was mostly bypassed by extensive highway construction beginning in the 1950s.

Source: "Street Names of Vancouver" (1990) by Elizabeth Walker;  
<https://2400motel.com/car-culture/> ; Birmingham & Wood Architects Planners "2400 Motel Statement of Significance for The City of Vancouver" January 2007;  
<https://www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org/place-that-matters/original-border-of-vancouver/>

### **Significant historic buildings/businesses in the surrounding neighbourhood:**

2400 Motel – 2400 Kingsway –constructed in 1946 just north of 33rd Avenue between Nanaimo and Slocan. Its original name of 2400 Court signaled the growing sophistication of accommodations. Auto camps were giving way to auto courts, which offered a common open space, or 'court,' fronting furnished bungalows with kitchenettes. A large blue and red neon sign greeted travelers as they crested the hill to 2400 and viewed Vancouver in the distance. Car culture was at its height, and a future filled with tourists appeared to be assured. The buoyant postwar economy permitted more and more families not only to own cars but to afford the leisure they facilitated. The 2400 Motel was one of the first drive-in motels in the area, and is now the last.

Source: <https://2400motel.com/car-culture/> ; Birmingham & Wood Architects Planners "2400 Motel Statement of Significance for The City of Vancouver" January 2007.

John Norquay School - 4710 Slocan St & Annex (B) – 5330 Nanaimo Street – 1913 – present. Named for John Norquay (1841-1889), the first Premier of Manitoba. Originally built in the Municipality of South Vancouver. "The school, opened in August 1913 under the principalship of Mr. J. A. Hamilton previously in charge of Brock School, consisted of four divisions, a fifth division being added during the term." By the 1919-1920 school year, the enrollment had risen to 344 students. The first Norquay Annex (A) opened at 3323 Slocan Street in 1928 until 1955. In 1959, Norquay Annex (B) opened at 5330 Nanaimo Street at E. 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue, which was replaced by Cunningham Elementary School in 1966.

George T. Cunningham Elementary School - 2330 East 37th Avenue - 1966 – present. Named for George T. Cunningham (1889-1965), Vancouver politician and founder of Cunningham Drug Stores Ltd. (now Shoppers Drug Mart). Replaced Norquay Annex (B).

Source: <https://www.vsb.bc.ca/schools/john-norquay/About-Us/School-History/Pages/default.aspx> ; <https://blogs.vsb.bc.ca/heritage/archives/lost-schools/john-norquay-annex-a/>; <https://blogs.vsb.bc.ca/heritage/archives/elementary-schools/george-t-cunningham/>



B.K. Grocery store. 1978. Photo: COV Archives CVA 786-100.20



**Resources (used in this report and suggested for further information)**

**The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Thu\_Sep\_10\_1959\_.jpg** – “Two-Man Team Patrols Unmarked School Crossing”, Vancouver Sun September 10, 1959. Newspaper article and photo of A.B. Washbern and Lloyd Gibbs escorting Norquay School children across the intersection of 34<sup>th</sup> and Nanaimo. (Appendix A)

**The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Fri\_Feb\_22\_1963\_.jpg** – In the Right Corner – Art, by Tom Ardies for the Vancouver Sun, February 22, 1963. Feature article on Art Washern of Washbern’s Grocery at 34<sup>th</sup> & Nanaimo. Includes photo of Art in the kitchen area of the building/store. (Appendix B)

**B.K. Grocery\_Roy\_Mah.pdf** - B.K. Grocery by Roy Mah from *Finding Memories, Tracing Routes: Chinese Canadian Family Stories*. (Appendix C)

**The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Wed\_Feb\_20\_1957\_.jpg** – “Small Stores Unprotected”- “I’m Scared Every Night’ says bandit-wary grocer”. Newspaper article in the Vancouver Sun about hold-ups and robberies in small grocery stores. Includes quote from Art Washbern.

**The\_Province\_Wed\_Feb\_16\_1977\_.jpg & The\_Province\_Wed\_Feb\_16\_1977\_-1.jpg** – “Corner Stores Fight to Make Ends Meet” by Alan Merridew for the Province Newspaper. Lengthy feature about corner stores in Vancouver in the 1970s. Discusses survival of the corner store after many now operated by recent immigrants to Canada and the competition from chain stores like Mac’s and 7-Eleven.

**The\_Province\_Sun\_Nov\_4\_1990\_.jpg** – “Corner Stores Wrap Up our Past and Community” by Lyn Cockburn for the Province. Nostalgic piece about corner stores and the ones that survive into the 1990s.

**The\_Province\_Mon\_Aug\_12\_1974\_.jpg** – Young Bandits grab \$200. Piece in Province Newspaper about 1974 robbery at B.K. Grocery mentions operators B.K. Mah and Jack Mah. Source: The Province, Monday August 12, 1974.

**1910CanPassngerListSt.JohnNB.png** – Harry Bridge in Canadian Passenger Lists (1910) St. John, New Brunswick accessed via ancestry.ca. Source: Library and Archives Canada; Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; Series: RG 76-C; Roll: T-4821

**USImmigratioAug22\_1911side1.png & USImmigratioAug22\_1911side2.png** - Harry Bridge  
in the U.S., Border Crossings from Canada to U.S., 1895-1960 – accessed via Ancestry.ca  
Source: The National Archives at Washington, D.C.; Washington, D.C.; Manifests of Alien Arrivals at Blaine, Washington, 1905-1924; Record Group Title: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787 - 2004; Record Group Number: 85; Series Number: A3416; Roll Number: 001

**Century-old East Vancouver convenience store set for rebirth as neighbourhood café –**

Carlito Pablo, The Georgia Straight, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016 -

Link: <https://www.straight.com/news/719146/century-old-east-vancouver-convenience-store-set-rebirth-neighbourhood-cafe>

**BK Building SOS v3.pdf** – Statement of Significance for BK Grocery created ca. 2015.  
Researched by Bruce MacDonald for Barry McGinn, Architect, AIBC, SAA, P.Eng.

**The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Fri\_\_Apr\_22\_\_1960\_.jpg** – 1960 obituary for Doris Washbern from the Vancouver Sun, April 22, 1960.

**The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Sat\_\_Jul\_20\_\_1996\_.jpg** – 1996 obituary for Bing Kuen (B.K.) Mah from Vancouver Sun, July 20, 1996.

**“Street Names of Vancouver”** (1990) by Elizabeth Walker. Vancouver Historical Society.

**Car Culture and the 2400 Motel, 2400 Motel website.** Article about car culture on Kingsway and with the 2400 Motel. Link: <https://2400motel.com/car-culture/>

**“2400 Motel Statement of Significance for The City of Vancouver”** January 2007.  
Birmingham & Wood Architects – Planners - [sos2400motel.pdf](https://2400motel.com/sos2400motel.pdf)

**VSB Archives & Heritage** - a digital Archive drawn from photos and documents collected over the decades by Vancouver School Board staff and stored at the VSB Education Centre.  
Link: <https://blogs.vsb.bc.ca/heritage/>

**The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Fri\_\_Apr\_22\_\_1960\_.jpg** – 1960 obituary for Doris Washbern

**The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Sat\_\_Jul\_20\_\_1996\_.jpg** - 1996 obituary for Bing Kuen Mah

**Vital Events:**

Event Type: Death

Registration Number: 1968-09-011179

Event Date (YYYY-MM-DD): 1968-08-07

Event Place: NORTH VANCOUVER

Age at Death: 74

Person: ARTHUR BACON WASHBERN

Source: BC Archives Vital Statistics

Event Type: Death

Registration Number: 1996-09-015043

Event Date (YYYY-MM-DD): 1996-07-15

Event Place: VANCOUVER

Age at Death: 71

Person: BING KUEN MAH

Vital Stat Images(s):

Source: BC Archives Vital Statistics

### Historical Photos

**CVA 786-100.20.jpg** – 2308 E. 34th Avenue [B.K. Grocery], Vancouver Heritage Survey 1978. Source: COV Archives, CVA 786-100.20

**CVA790-0986BKGrocery.jpg** - 2300 East 34th Avenue (B. K. Grocery) [1985], Heritage Inventory 1986. Source: COV Archives, CVA 790-0986

**GoingtotheStore\_Hagemoen.jpg** – “Going to the Store” - 2020 photo-collage by Christine Hagemoen of B.K. Grocery building. Base image: “City of Vancouver Archives, CVA790-0986, 1985”

**The\_Vancouver\_Sun\_Thu\_\_Sep\_10\_\_1959\_.jpg** – Newspaper photo of A.B. Washbern and Lloyd Gibbs escorting Norquay School children across the intersection of 34<sup>th</sup> and Nanaimo. Source: Vancouver Sun, Thursday, September 10, 1959

**Map599\_0001.jpg; Map599\_0002.jpg; Map599\_0003.jpg** – Fire insurance plans showing neighbourhood around property and detail of property. Fire Insurance Atlas has been updated and covers 1926 -1950. Source: City of Vancouver Archives, Map 599 vol. 7, South Vancouver July 1926

**MAP342b.36.jpg** -Goad’s Fire Insurance Plan Plate 100: Renfrew-Collingwood [Rupert Street - Thirty-fifth Avenue - Victoria Drive - Forty-sixth Avenue] December 1912. Source: COV Archives, MAP 342b.36

**55-26.jpg & 55-26detail.jpg** - Vancouver Collingwood - 1955, Air Photo, View-North  
This is the Collingwood area of Vancouver from 1955. The main street near the bottom of the image is East 41st Ave and the street on the left running up/down with the “zig-zag” in it is Nanaimo Street.

Source: <http://vintageairphotos.com/55-26/> - This image for research use only. To purchase copy (digital or print) please contact Vintage Air Photos



Aerial View of 2308 East 34th at Nanaimo, 1955. Photo: 55-26.jpg



B.K. Grocery, 1985. Photo: COV Archives CVA 790-0986



# Appendix A



**OKAY, KIDS, IT'S SAFE NOW** and self-appointed traffic cops A. B. Washburn, left, of 2308 East Thirty-Fourth, and Lloyd Gibbs, of 2346 East Thirty-Third,

escort Norquay School children across intersection of Thirty-Fourth and Nanaimo. Gibbs, concerned about lack of school crossing signs, like many other

parents in area, found non-parent Washburn already at work. They teamed up, escorted 50 kids Wednesday.—Deni Eagland photo.

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## JUST 'TAKING AN INTEREST'

### Two-Man 'Team' Patrols Unmarked School Crossing

A city storekeeper and a striking plywood worker teamed up Wednesday to patrol a dangerous school crossing.

Arthur Washburn, 65, of 2308 East Thirty-fourth, and Lloyd Gibbs, 31, of 2346 East Thirty-third, went to the inter-

section of Thirty-fourth and Nanaimo separately — but for the same reason.

A new school annex was opened Tuesday morning at 5330 Nanaimo to supplement the John Norquay school which serves the area between

Kingsway, Victoria and Forty-first.

The annex handles 190 children, ranging in age from five to nine.

But the intersection of Thirty-fourth and Nanaimo, one of the busiest in the vicinity, has no proper crosswalk and no sign to indicate that school children cross there.

#### NARROW ESCAPE

So Washburn decided to do something about it after a seven-year-old boy narrowly escaped being hit by a truck as he went to school Tuesday.

Washburn went to see the school principal Tuesday, then phoned the Vancouver School Board office and complained about the lack of safety precautions at the intersection.

#### 'MAKE SURE'

"We helped about 50 children," said Gibbs. "And we'll keep doing it until the situation is improved."

City traffic engineer Ken Vaughan-Birch said Wednesday night a crosswalk is "automatically" installed on any main street after an investigation is made by police officers assigned to supervise school board crosswalk patrols.

and Fire Chief Gann Nalley's official car.

#### MOVE SECRETLY

Police and the FBI moved in the closest secrecy.

Sims' arrest came Tuesday afternoon, but it was not disclosed until his lawyer sought his release late Wednesday through habeas corpus proceedings.

Amis Guthridge, lawyer and a spokesman for the Citizens' Council, said Mrs. Sims had

### CNE PUSHES PANIC BUTTON

TORONTO (CP) — The Canadian National Exhibition today began manning the emergency pumps.

With attendance off 44,500 from last year and only three days to go, the CNE decided to throw the fair open to children free of charge in a move to bolster sagging revenues.

### Princess Ends Jasper Holiday

JASPER, Alta. (CP)—Princess Alice has left here by train for Eastern Canada after a week of fishing and hiking in the mountains.

The 76-year-old Countess of Athlone walked three and four miles a day during her four-day stay at Jasper Park Lodge.

One of these trips took her two miles down a mountain-side path from upper Maligne Canyon tea room to the federal government's fish hatchery on the lower Maligne River.

Another time she was travelling the Banff-Jasper Highway by car when she asked the driver to let her off so she could walk two miles of path into the lodge.

She has been in Canada since Aug. 23 when she

### Dog Owner Held For Death Plunge

NEW YORK (UPI)—A 67-year-old widow has been charged with murder in the death of a 16-year-old youth.

The boy fell six storeys in panic when she allegedly sicked her large Belgian shepherd dog on him.

Police said Mrs. Anna Maronet became annoyed Wednesday when she heard two youths stomping on the roof above her ceiling. She went to the roof with her dog and asked them to go away.

The boys, Jesus Acosta Delgado, 16, and Antonio Hernandez, 14, were flying kites and refused to leave. Mrs. Maronet said she told them: "If you don't get off the roof, I'll turn the dog on you."

When they stood their ground, she unleashed the dog.

Hernandez jumped over a three-foot parapet to the next building and escaped, but Delgado fell over the edge of the roof into a courtyard.

### Class Arranged For Handicapped

LADNER—The Savoy class for handicapped children will be held in a classroom at Boundary Bay elementary school.

The class will be held daily Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. under the direction of Mrs. Ross Duncan.

Mrs. Duncan can be contacted at WH 6-2037.

The Kinsmen bus will supply transportation.

Silk Specialists Since 1903

Saba Bros Limited

622-628 C  
Phone M



The Vancouver Sun Thurs, Sept. 10, 1959

Appendix B

14\*\*\* THE VANCOUVER SUN: Fri., Feb. 22, 1963

## THIS IS THE CITY

# In the Right Corner—Art

By TOM ARDIES

The trouble with a lot of our corner stores these days is that they are located in the middle of the block.

You find yourself a corner store that is located on a corner and you have got yourself a real corner store.

Washbern's Grocery, for example, doesn't fool around — it is located smack dab on the corner of Thirty-fourth and Nanaimo.

And it's sort of nice, what with all the modern, crowded supermarkets, to know a real, old-fashioned corner store like Washbern's Grocery.

There is always a pot of coffee perking on the old enameled oil stove in the kitchen out back.

There are usually a couple of people sitting there, drinking coffee, having a smoke, and chewing the fat.

In fact there are often more people in the kitchen than in the store.

Just about everybody sits there a spell — customers, salesmen, tradesmen, the postman, the garbage collectors.

Art Washbern, who owns Washbern's Grocery, right



—Dan Scott Photo

ART WASHBERN . . . coffee's always on

down to the mortgage, is the main attraction.

Art, who is 68, and comes from — of all places — Brooklyn, can drink coffee, have a smoke, and chew the fat better than probably almost anybody.

The other attraction is a beat-up chesterfield. Every kitchen should have a beat-up chesterfield.

You take a kitchen without a beat-up chesterfield

and what have you got? You've got a bunch of darned uncomfortable people in your kitchen.

"My customers are more than customers — they're my friends," Art says. "I like to see them comfortable. We use this as a place to swap news of the neighborhood. There's hardly anything that goes on that we don't chew the rag about."

Art, who used to be a rail-

way machinist, and also did a spell in the wholesale dry-goods business, says the happiest years of his life have been since he bought the store in 1950.

"I make a living," he says. "It's not much but I can't kick. I didn't have the capital to stay with the big boys in the drygoods business. I made up my mind to get a little business where nobody would bother me. This is it."

He works long hours, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 12 noon Sunday. But if anything important comes up he can always get away.

"I just call up one of the neighborhood ladies and they come in and mind the store," he says. "I say, 'It's all yours,' and walk out. Where else can you do that?"

Art, who sits in the kitchen chewing the fat until the front door announces a customer, operates what he calls a take-your-choice store. "Customers can do as they darn well please," he says. "If they want service, they get it; if they don't, they can serve themselves."

This even applies to children who want to help themselves to candy. "The best way to teach kids honesty is to trust them."

Art says a corner store has to grant credit to survive and he loses some money that way. The worst he got hit was for \$150.

"My regular customers are good as gold but you always take on someone you don't know," he says. "You shouldn't, but you still do. What the heck are you going to do when a woman comes in with a couple of kids and says she has no money for groceries?"

But nobody would dare rob Washbern's Grocery. Pete Lamont, the police inspector, lives right across

the street, and he would consider it a personal affront.

"Pete watches this place like a hawk," Art says. "He won't have any signs in the window because he wants to see inside. I wouldn't want him after me. That fellow would catch his own grandmother. He'd break down and cry when he did it but he'd do it."

Art also has a couple of cockers, Lumpy and Chips, who are pretty good watchdogs, even though they are kind of fat, on account of everybody feeding them doughnuts.

Art's wife, Doris, died three years ago, and he thought of retiring then, but the neighbors talked him out of it.

"They said, 'Nothing doing,' so I stayed, and now the one thing I dread is retiring," he says. "I couldn't be any happier any place in the world than right here."

One of the reasons may be that the neighborhood ladies keep bringing him samples of their home cooking.

"I sure get my share," Art admits. "Everything from pies to roast beef. They always save a bit for me and I pretty near live off what they bring."

He can show you a dozen plates on hand that belong to neighborhood ladies. "I don't know who owns what," he says. "It's time I sorted them out and gave them back."

You've got yourself a real corner store when you've got a dozen plates licked clean of home-cooking and you don't know who owns what.

## Greco's Arrogant Grace Delights Again and Again

By JACK RICHARDS

There is just one Jose Greco in the Spanish dance genre and he stands alone.

No matter how many times his Spanish ballet visits—his appearance at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre Thursday night was his sixth to Vancouver—he never fails to delight and stir the blood.

There were only 28 empty

He has surrounded himself with a fine troupe of young dancers, gorgeously costumed, wonderfully trained and full of Hispanic fire.

With only piano or guitars as background, the emphasis is on the dancing, which ranges from the delicate folk dance of the Galician fishermen to the wild Rincon Flamenco which closes the pro-

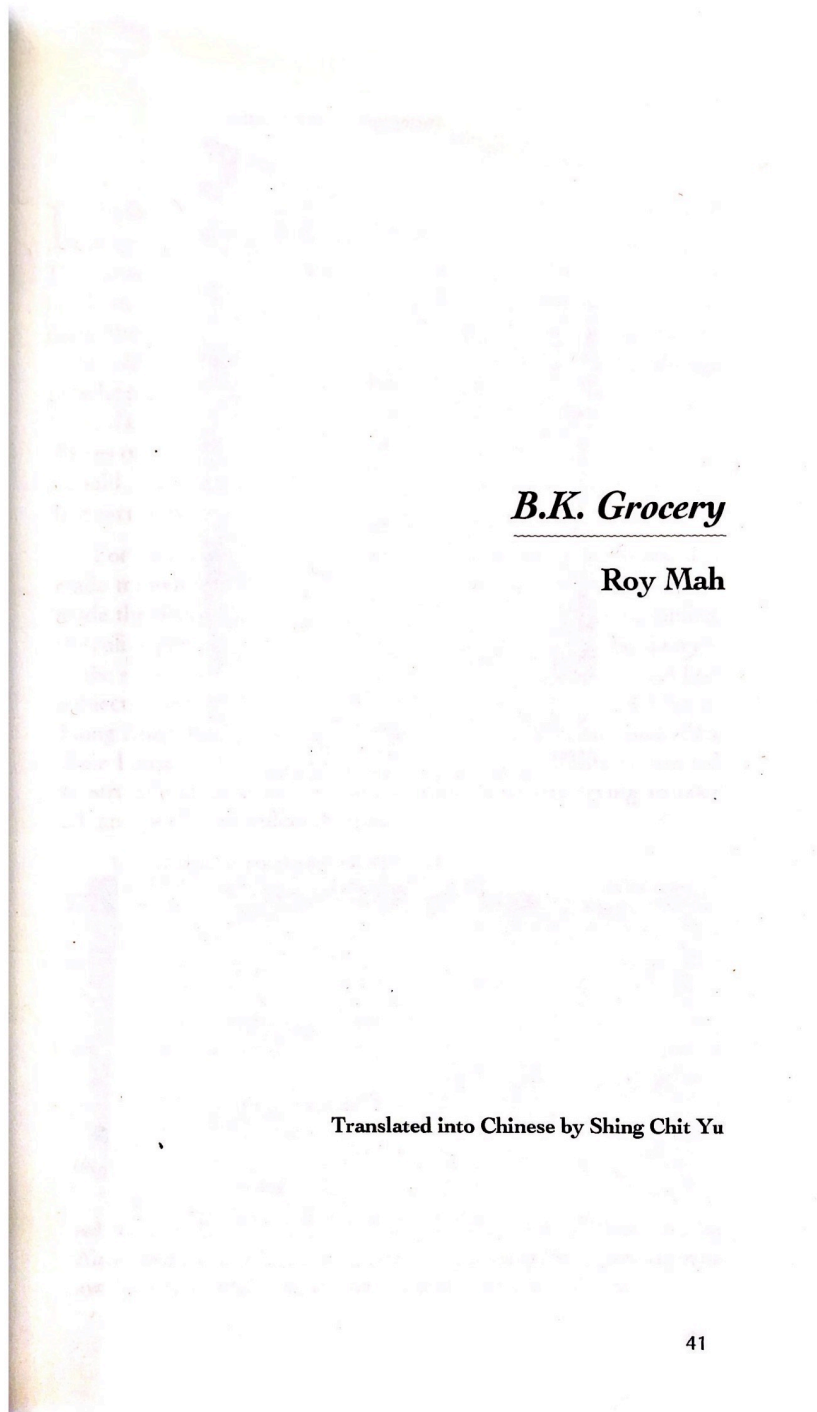
duction, often adding delightful touches of comedy.

Heredia, slender as a whip-lash and just as pliable, exhibited some spectacular body control, while maintaining a contemptuous woodenness of face that scorned his most polished feats as "nada."

The dancing of the dark beauty Nana Lopez and of the

CITY OF VANCOUVER  
**COURT OF REAL PROPERTY**  
REAL PROPERTY ACT

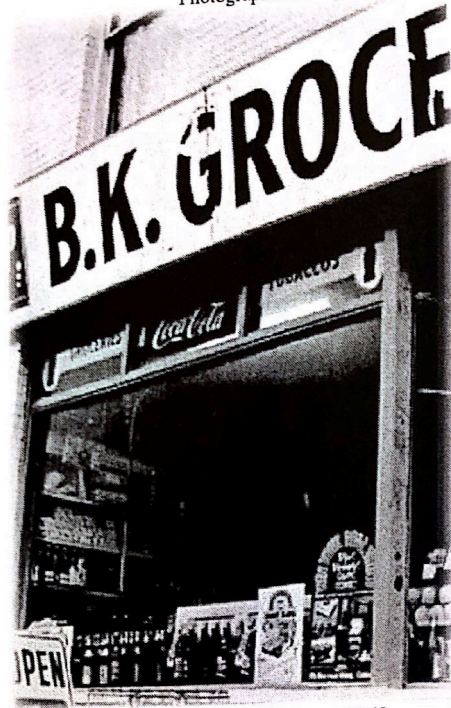
Appendix C



Scanned with CamScanner



Photograph courtesy of author.



The front of my father's store, 1968.

Photograph courtesy of Kathy Amsdorf.



My father in his store, B.K. Grocery, December 1985.



In *Saving Private Ryan*, a squad of eight soldiers goes behind enemy lines to find Private James Ryan to escort him home. The General orders the mission necessary because Ryan's three brothers were already killed in combat. Faced with impossible odds, the soldiers question their orders, and in the end six out of eight soldiers pay the ultimate sacrifice. As the captain lies dying, he whispers into Private Ryan's ear, "Earn this. Earn it." Years later, James Ryan brings his family to the captain's grave, where James confesses to the headstone, "I've tried to live my life the best I could. I hope that was enough. I hope that at least in your eyes, I've earned what all of you have done for me."

For me, the theme of the movie hits home. My parents also made tremendous sacrifices for their children. When my parents made the decision to leave China, the communists were becoming the ruling party, and all business owners were deemed to be enemies of the state. Because my parents owned a business, they would be subjected to torture or even death. So they escaped from China to Hong Kong, leaving behind all their worldly possessions, including their house and store. Once in Canada, my parents continued to struggle in their new business, facing a society trying to take advantage of their vulnerabilities.



*The store feels antiquated in a location surrounded by newly built single-family homes. Though the banner sign is showing its age with bits of chipped-away paint, the building has an old-age appeal. You notice the steep roof, two top rounded windows, and the large front display window looking out onto the street. As you approach the corner of 54th Avenue and Nanaimo Street, you are struck by the two-storey red brick structure. Records suggest that a bricklayer named Harry Bridge of 5151 Highgate Street in South Vancouver probably built it in 1917-1918. It became a grocery store in 1920, and the owner's initials are proudly displayed in the "BK Grocery" sign, which divides the upper living quarters from the storefront below.*

*The store window, plastered with cigarette posters and the familiar red plastic Cola-Cola characters, occupies the width of the front. Facing Nanaimo Street is a huge blue square sign displaying the Player's cigarette symbol—sign rental being another source of revenue for the store.*

*An outside staircase leads to the upper floor, and just behind the staircase is a large open carport. Right beside the staircase is a small, un-insulated shed used as storage for goods. The area is very residential, and there is an elementary school close by. For neighbourhood convenience, the store opens at 8 A.M. and closes at 9 P.M. Children mingle in front of the store, eating the popsicles and chips they just bought. A teenage girl is sweeping the sidewalk and picking up the scattered candy wrappers.*

*As you push the green door into the store, a bell announces your entrance. You immediately notice that the space feels cramped. Wooden shelves and coolers are spread out in the tiny room. To the left of the door are bags of potatoes stacked one on top of the other. The aisle is wide enough for only one person. You face shelves of canned beans, cereal boxes, candy in plastic bags. A stout smiling Asian man behind the milk fridge that does double duty as the service counter greets you with "Good morning." The owner speaks little English but appears to grasp the business side of running the store.*

*A manual cash register is to the left, and a heavy gold-coloured scale is to the right of the counter. On the counter is a small sloping rack displaying rows of Lifesavers and Wrigleys gum. A wire shelving unit containing bags of potato chips sits in front of the scale. Who can resist the garlic shoestring potato chips clipped onto the side? A black high wooden stool relieves the constant strain of standing.*

*You have to ask for cigarettes behind the counter, located there because cigarettes are the most profitable item in the store. Players, Rothman's, Export A's and Sportsman are prominently displayed. Above these are Old Port, White Owl, and Marguerite cigars, including pouches of pipe tobacco. The next row displays Crackerjacks, five-cent Rainbows, fifteen-cent Fundips, and yellow bubble gum pouches.*

*You pick up a loaf of bread, fruit, and a bag of buns from the center wooden shelving console. On the top centre console are packages of Twinkies and Ding Dongs, and cookies, marshmallows, flour, and sugar take up the rest of the space. The red Coke cooler to the right is inviting, and you want nothing more than to open a fresh bottle. You remove the bottle cap and add it to the collection in the removable bin below. Next to the Coke cooler is a blue postal stamp dispenser where you insert change, pull one of the levers downward, and retrieve the stamps. A green portable radio against the wall is playing soft music. You watch as a customer requesting paper towels from one of the top shelves waits. The owner uses a "claw," a wooden stick with steel handles that when compressed, rubberized prongs at the top close to grab the products.*



*Just behind the store is the kitchen. The smell of salted fish wafts through the opening, and when you peek in, you can see a small woman cooking supper. A Coca-Cola radio sits on top of the fridge. A young boy with a mischievous smile leans against the fridge, and ever so slightly jerks the fridge with his palm and the radio shuts off. You can hear sounds of children playing on the upper level. The woman sees you peeking in curiously and waves you through. She takes you upstairs, where there are three very small bedrooms, a living room and a bathroom. The northeast bedroom has funky green walls and a night table separating the two beds. At the end of one bed sits a dresser and a red folding mahjong table serving as a desk at the foot of the other bed. A pot of boiling water sits in the boys' bedroom. Two girls share the other bedroom. A very young boy is singing what sounds like "Gee Mau Woo" in the girls' room. Close by is a big hardcover book, Reader's Digest Treasury. The upper level is alive with youthful activity while the parents work downstairs.*



In the beginning Dad had a difficult time with his lack of English as he carried out the daily business and learned the grocery items. During the day, Mom worked at the Aero Garment Factory or peeled shrimp at the docks. I spent whatever little time I had between school and work to translate for him. The odd customer would also try to teach Dad some phrases, greetings, or names of items. Some of the more humorous, and probably embarrassing, incidents involved female customers attempting to purchase feminine hygiene products.

As we did our homework upstairs, we would run downstairs whenever we heard the doorbell ring nonstop because we knew Dad would be overwhelmed with customers. At other times, one of us accompanied him to either H. Y. Louie or Malkins wholesalers to replenish stock. Once back, the hundred-pound potato bags were split and measured out on the large scale into five- and ten-pound bags. Stacking the chips was quite a chore because the old ones had to be taken to the front and lined up row-by-row and inserted between two stacks, pyramid-style. Similarly, canned goods were stamped with a rotary price marker and placed with labels facing customers.

In the summer, we were busy packing empty pop bottles into cardboard cartons, filling the pop machine, and storing the empties in the storage hut. When Weston's (the baker for Sunbeam breads) went on strike, we had to make a special trip to pick up bread. For

all that trouble, we only needed to pick up a tray of bread, about two dozen loaves. Each day we eagerly looked for the delivery of fresh glazed or long john donuts. When not busy, we dusted the top of cans and stacked milk under the counter cooler. At closing time, the floor had to be swept.

When the work was done, we went outside and played in our own small "playground," an odd-shaped concrete slab whose purpose no one knew. The concrete slab was "home" whenever we played hide-and-seek with the neighbourhood kids. Up against the white picket fence separating our yard with our neighbour's, my brother burned ants with his magnifying glass—a reddish brown circular one that neatly rotated into a plastic sleeve—and killed slugs with salt.

The biggest troubles we encountered were the robberies. The girls never worked alone; one of the brothers was always there. A male presence offered a sense of security, or so we believed.

One day Mom, Dad, and young James were visiting relatives. On their return James ran through the front door and called out Jack's name, but there was no response. James thought my brother was going to pop out of nowhere and scare him. As they made their way past the counter and into the kitchen, Jack and Kathy were sitting on the green floor mat. Jack immediately cried out that they were just robbed. It was a matter of minutes until the police arrived after the telephone call. Jack had to tell the same story over and over to different officers. As his story went, the robbers were taller than he was, one had deep-set eyes, and they were holding probably a pellet gun as the hole was small. They took the cash from the register and a few cartons of cigarettes. A couple of days later, a small article appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* regarding the robbery. So many customers expressed their concern and anger. What a community we lived in!

Another robbery attempt was foiled when the robber pulled out a knife demanding money. Enraged, Dad pulled out a long and dull machete (used to cut popsicles in half) and challenged him. It was the classic *Crocodile Dundee* scene: "That's a knife?! Now this is a knife!" Sure enough, the robber fled. Minutes later, the police were snickering at Dad's story. All these incidents happened despite the fact that a detective lived just across the street.



From their penniless arrival in Canada, to their learning the ropes of owning a Western business and defending themselves, working for nearly twenty years without so much as a vacation, my parents are at the same time typical of Chinese immigrant parents yet exceptional in what they sacrificed for their children. I would like to say to them, "I've tried to live my life the best I could. I hope that was enough. I hope that at least in your eyes, I've earned what both of you have done for me."



Photograph courtesy of Kathy Arnsdorf.

My parents in front of their store, 1985.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Time sure goes by fast. It seems like only yesterday that a twelve-year-old boy came to Canada with his family. Since that time, I have been educated at UBC and worked as a professional engineer for over thirty years. Our challenge to assimilate in a new country was not new, but the time period was unique. Nowadays, whenever our family gathers around the kitchen table and talks about the old times, my two sons, daughter, nieces and nephews are very intrigued but do not appear to grasp the sacrifices the older generation had to endure. They not only want to know how but also why we immigrated. Therefore, I am hoping that by writing my family history, I can leave a legacy for future generations to appreciate the struggles our parents experienced by their decision to come to Canada.

This story, "B.K. Grocery," is a collaborative effort among myself and my siblings, whose memories are much better than mine, especially my brother, James. They have supplied most of the minute details in the story. My sister, Kathy, provided the accompanying photographs, and her collection on the earlier times is now the envy of the family.

For an engineer, writing is not my forte. This workshop has shown me that Chinese family history is integral to Canadian culture. Brandy Liên Worrall, our facilitator, demonstrated the various techniques used to bring to life these family stories. Group critique was also invaluable. A bonus was meeting people who have similar desires to write their own unique and interesting stories. For me, the single biggest obstacle in writing family history is wondering where to begin. I learned that it really doesn't matter where or when to start, as long as you start to write. Thanks to the workshop, my inertia to write has been broken. The workshop gave us all the courage to write.

*~Roy Mab*



Appendix D

South Vancouver Application for Water Connection # 0113 – Feb 9, 1918

**THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT  
OF SOUTH VANCOUVER**  
WATER RATES DEPARTMENT

SCHEDULE "A"

**Application for Water Connection**

To: THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH VANCOUVER:

I HEREBY APPLY for water connection to my premises, No. 1902-35<sup>th</sup>  
Combermere Street 235<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Lot No. 57  
Sub. Div. 7 Block 3 D. L. 394

pursuant to the following particulars:

Purpose required general purposes  
Size of building on ground 18'-6" x 38'-6"  
No. of rooms 6 Rooms & Bathroom  
No. of bath tubs (private) 1  
No. of bath tubs (public) —  
No. of water closets (private) 1  
No. of water closets (public) —  
No. of wash basins 1  
No. of laundry tubs —  
No. of taps 3  
No. of horses —  
No. of cows —  
No. of automobiles —  
Size of property to be sprinkled —  
Other fixtures —  
Position of tap on — Street is — feet  
from the — line of — Street.

I AGREE to duly pay for all water supplied as per rates prescribed by  
"South Vancouver Water Rates By-Law, 1917," and any amendments thereto  
that may be hereafter enacted.

The undersigned, for himself, and for the tenants, occupiers and residents  
of the above premises, agrees to be bound by and to observe the provisions  
of the "South Vancouver Rates By-Law, 1917," and all amendments thereto  
made hereafter.

And I further covenant and agree that I will protect and save harmless  
the Corporation of the District of South Vancouver from all claims for damage  
caused by the bursting of any of the pipes used for the supply of water under  
this application.

Owner's signature Wm. H. Knolpe  
Postal address 5131. Highway 8 S. Can  
South Vancouver, B. C., Feb 9<sup>th</sup> 1918

NOTE.—This application is only for connection to water main, and when  
water is required it is necessary to notify the water office to turn same on.

*app # 0113*  
*ordered*