

Historical Walking Tour of Gibson Creek Through Kensington—Cedar Cottage



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of
Kensington—Cedar Cottage CityPlan Committee

How to Use this Booklet

The booklet, which is available for download at www.vcn.bc.ca/gibbys, can be used to conduct a self-guided walking tour using the map in the centre spread of the booklet.

This booklet is adapted from the script used by Dan Fass when he gave walking tours of Gibson Creek as part of Jane's Walk organized by ThinkCity in May 2008, Jane's Walk in May 2009, and the Lost Streams Walks organized by the False Creek Watershed Society in September 2009. Those walks went from Kingcrest Park to Cedar Cottage Park and lasted about 1¾ hours. It takes about half an hour to walk from Cedar Cottage Park back to Kingcrest Park.

You could continue walking to East 7th Avenue and Glen Drive, in Mount Pleasant, if you wished. That will add approximately 40 minutes to the tour and 20 minutes to the return time.

The beginning-point and two end-points are all close to public transit. The beginning point is close to Kingsway and Knight Street. The end point in Kensington–Cedar Cottage (KCC) is close to Broadway, and to either Clark Drive or Commercial Drive. The end-point in Mount Pleasant is close to the new VCC–Clark SkyTrain station.

This tour can also be followed on a bicycle.

Photographs on the Front Cover

Image 1 (on the left): Photo title: “Elsie and playmates by Creek, 15th Avenue [Cedar Cottage area]” Photo taken 1907. City of Vancouver Archives CVA 330-3.

Note that this photograph is part of the set CVA 330/1-43, which was a “1908 collection of personal photos of/by George E. Timms and family.” According to the 1911 *Henderson Directory*, “Timms George F [sic] ... lvs Knight Rd (Cedar Cottage). According to the 1913 *Henderson Greater Vancouver City Directory A-C*, a “Timms Geo F [sic] lived where “Knight Road (South Vancouver)” intersects 16th Ave E, at 3268 Knight. In other words, a George Timms lived at Knight and 16th Avenue, and the photograph of the unnamed creek was taken at 15th Avenue in the Cedar Cottage area, then it seems reasonable to assume that the photo is of Gibson Creek at 15th Avenue.

Image 2 (on the right): This photograph of Moses Gibson, courtesy of Moses Gibson's great-grandson Vic. The photo was probably taken in the 1910s, according to Vic. For more about the photograph, see the note accompanying Image 5.

Photograph Underlying the Map on the Centre Pages

Image 9: Photo title: “Aerial view of Mount Pleasant, South Strathcona and Kensington-Cedar Cottage.” Photo taken “between 1942 and 1945.” City of Vancouver Archives VLP 186.6.

Historical Walking Tour of Gibson Creek Through Kensington–Cedar Cottage

This walking tour is about the influence of Gibson Creek on the social history and urban development of Kensington–Cedar Cottage (KCC). Gibson Creek arguably passes through the “centre” of KCC.

Beginning-point / Stop 1: Southwest Corner of Kingcrest Park (1) (south of King Edward Avenue, east of Knight Street)

1. The beginning point for the walking tour is 40 or so metres from the southwest corner of Kingcrest Park (1), at the end of the properties on the Knight Street side.

Gibson Creek flowed through this park. Imagine a shaded creek flowing through forest in some National Park north of here. Imagine a ravine 30 and 40 feet (9–12 metres) deep. That’s what Gibson Creek was like in places on this walk.

Gibson Creek was the longest creek in the 60km+ China Creek system (at 16km or so including China Creek). The China Creek system was the second largest in the Lower Mainland after the Still Creek system.

Gibson Creek, which contained salmon, trout, lamprey, eels, and sticklebacks, began south of 41st Avenue in bogs around 41st to 45th. It joined with three other major creeks and became China Creek. China Creek flowed into False Creek, which used to extend east to Vernon Drive (i.e., almost to Clark Drive) and south to the Great Northern Way.

Those three creeks were Davey Creek (also called Davy Creek, cf. Hamilton, 1957, p. 30); Canoe Creek, which flowed from Trout Lake (Huck, 1980); and Jones Creek (Hamilton, 1957, p. 30).

Exactly where “Gibson Creek” turned into “China Creek” is open to interpretation. I view “China Creek” as starting where Gibson Creek met Canoe Creek because this is where the combined creeks formed a major ravine. Along this ravine were Chinese hog farmers that likely gave “China Creek” its name. Hamilton (1957, p. 30; see also p. 61), who regarded Davey Creek as “a branch of Gibson Creek,” thought that those two creeks and Jones Creek “joined the China Creek near its mouth before it flowed into China Creek” (Ibid.).

Huck (1980), though, views “China Creek” as beginning at the point where Gibson Creek joined with Davey Creek. However, this point was on land owned by Moses Gibson, who gave “Gibson Creek” its name, so it seems anomalous to change the creek name at this point when the reason for naming China Creek (the Chinese hog farmers) lived some way to the north. Also, as will become apparent to those taking the tour, the point at which Huck proposes the name change is within a pronounced

valley. It makes more sense at this point to name the combined creek after the name of the larger of the two creeks that met, and the larger creek is Gibson Creek.

Other than urban development, two City projects accelerated the demise of the creeks in this area and other parts of Vancouver.

1911–1917: Sewers were built in the area.

1915–1917: False Creek Flats was created (by land reclamation).

Nevertheless, we know from various sources that long stretches of Gibson Creek and China Creek remained open into the 1940s and 1950s. Bruce Macdonald’s book *Vancouver: A Visual History* contains a map of the area, circa 1949 (Macdonald, 1992, p. 47), which shows Gibson Creek and China Creek was open:

- From its source, through Kensington Park, down beside Knight Street to 28th Avenue.
- To the immediate north and south of 19th Avenue.
- From 18th Avenue to 14th Avenue.
- From 11th Avenue (Cedar Cottage Park) to False Creek Flats.

Additional support comes from the recollections of some long-time residents and also a wonderful aerial photograph at the City of Vancouver Archives, titled “Aerial view of Mount Pleasant, South Strathcona and Kensington-Cedar Cottage.” This photograph was taken some time “between 1942 and 1945.” The centre pages of this booklet contain that aerial map, overlaid with a variety of information. The paths of creeks in the area are from Harris (1978), Huck (1980), and my own research. The areas coloured green represent green spaces along the paths of creeks. (Note that green spaces not along the creeks — such as Clark Park and the future site of Gladstone Secondary School — are not coloured.)

Some of those open stretches of the creeks became garbage dumps, and many citizens were glad to see those dumps covered over.

Some of those dumps were turned into parks (Cedar Cottage Park, the two China Creek Parks). Gibson Creek and China Creek flowed through or just past six existing Eastside Vancouver parks (Kensington Park, Kingcrest Park, Clark Park, Cedar Cottage Park, China Creek South Park, and China Creek North Park) — and you will pass through or by four of those in 16 north–south city blocks (just four blocks east–west).

You will also pass by the points where Gibson Creek and three other major local creeks combined to become China Creek.

There was no known First Nations settlement in the area (except a little evidence by False Creek). I’ll just sketch the non-First Nations urban development in the area by talking briefly about its main transportation corridors and neighbourhoods.

Let's start with Kingsway, Cedar Cottage, and the Interurban.

- The development of “Kingsway.”

There was an Aboriginal trail from False Creek to New Westminster.

1858: Gold was discovered on the Fraser River, leading to the arrival of nearly 30,000 Americans in the area within weeks, leading to the British declaring the mainland the Crown Colony of B. C. to keep control.

1859: New Westminster was incorporated and declared the capital of the province.

1860: A military trail (dirt road) was constructed called False Creek Trail, also known as Westminster Road.

1867: Confederation of Canada.

1871: Gladstone Inn was built at the corner of Gladstone Street and Kingsway (at 2219 Kingsway), a stop for carriages and stagecoaches.

1913: Westminster Road was paved. It was named “Kingsway” after a thoroughfare in London, England, named in honour of King Edward VII.

- The development of “Cedar Cottage.”

1871: First sale of lots (three) around the Granville Townsite (now Gastown).

1870s: Land along Kingsway was acquired by Gastown pioneers including by Jonathan Miller in this area. Miller was Granville Townsite's first constable and later a customs collector and postmaster.

1886: Canadian Pacific Railway announced Vancouver as the railway's western terminus, leading to the incorporation of Vancouver.

1886: “Cedar Cottage” takes its name from a cottage established very close to here, but gave its name to an area a kilometre or two away.

1891: The Interurban tram service was established between Vancouver and New Westminster, including a stop at “Cedar Cottage” (also known as “Epworth” at the time), a little south of the Croatian Cultural Centre.

1892–1929: Incorporation of Municipality of South Vancouver. Its northern border was 16th and 15th Avenues. (It was amalgamated into Vancouver in 1929.)

1892–1910s: The golden age of Cedar Cottage, centred on the business district between 15th and 20th along Cedar Cottage Road (Commercial Street). Cedar Cottage had at the time “the largest hall in South Vancouver” (Marfew Hall), a new movie theatre showing silent films, a Bank of Hamilton, post office, hardware store, and a small roller coaster. “On Saturday night the area was like downtown, jammed with shoppers” (Reid et al., 1968, p. 16). The roller coaster disappeared before the depression of 1913. The population fell when men went to fight in World War I. But

what killed Cedar Cottage was the paving of Kingsway in 1913, leading to traffic and streetcars focussing on Kingsway, leading to Cedar Cottage being bypassed, which damaged the businesses there.

- The development of “Knight Street.”

1893: “Knight Road” was constructed around 1893 and ran north from the present East 31st Avenue to the present Kingsway through the 1910s.

1910: Knight Road became Knight Street in 1910.

1920s: In the 1920s, Knight Street ran north as far as 20th Avenue.

1947: The Clark–Knight Diversion, formerly Coy Street, was built 1907–1915.

1974: Knight Street Bridge opened, Knight Street became an arterial.

- The development of “Kensington.”

1907: “Kensington Avenue” appears on a Vancouver plan. It was named after a borough of London, England.

1910s: “Kensington Heights” was created in the 1910s and grew in the 1920s.

- The development of “Kingcrest.”

Kingcrest was a third neighbourhood in the area that bloomed briefly in the 1940s–1950s, then disappeared. Vancouver historian Bruce Macdonald (personal communication) says that there used to be five stores called Kingcrest, including Kingcrest Jewellers, which is still at 1384 Kingsway. (There is also a King Crest Coin Laundry at 4005 Knight.) A Kingcrest Business Association lobbied for a Kingcrest Community Centre in 1950s.

Kingcrest Park (1), at 4150 Knight Street, was officially named in either March 1961 (www.vancouverparks.ca) or November 1967 (Steele, 1988, p. 257).

Stop 2: Northwest Corner of Kingcrest Park (1)

2. You can see Kensington Park (2) up the hill. This park was created about 1930 or maybe before then. It was known as Union Park until 1947. Gibson Creek ran in a “deep ravine” through the park. There were “large salmon” and “river lampreys” in the creek up there (Rich, 1997, p. 106). Lampreys fed to chickens and ducks. A Mr. Foster grazed ten cows in the “park.”

Gibson Creek was open from its source, running through Kensington Park and down beside Knight Street to 28th Avenue, circa 1949 (Macdonald, 1992, p. 47).

King Edward Avenue was 25th Avenue until 1929.

Kingsway was constructed in 1860, and paved and named in 1913.

3. Cedar Cottage, the original cabin (**3**) which gave its name to the neighbourhood, existed from 1886 on. In 1886, Jonathan Miller sold 14 hectares (35 acres) of his land to Arthur Wilson. The land occupies the present southeast corner of Knight and Kingsway. Wilson built a cottage among a grove of cedar trees at

- Either Kingsway and Thynne Road
- Or the southwest corner of East 25th Avenue (later King Edward Avenue) and Thynne, 100 yards south of Kingsway (Levitan & Miller, 1986, p. 65).

Thynne Road, which runs north–south, was so named from 1903 until 1910, then became Dumfries Street.

4. Arthur Wilson started the Cedar Cottage Nursery (**4**) in 1888.

5. Olive Cairns (2009a) recalls a number of Chinese market gardens (**5**) on the east side of Knight, south of Kingsway to 30th Avenue, “because ... the soil was good and there was a stream there” (quoted in Smedman, 2006). The stream was Gibson Creek.

In the mid-1890s, Arthur Wilson died and Cedar Cottage Nursery was divided into building lots.

6. In 1901, George Raywood built his Cedar Cottage Brewery (**6**) at 1404 Kingsway, later known as “Benson’s Brewery.” Beer in bottles delivered to your home for 75 cents per dozen pints. Salmon could be speared from the creek with a pitchfork in 1902. John Benson, one of the original proprietors, lived in a residence on the site until 1944. The site later became the location of a Safeway supermarket.

Safeway had a 20-year restrictive covenant on the site, which delayed redevelopment of the site for many years. King Edward Village, 4078 Knight Street, was developed by Francesco Aquilini and opened in 2008. It contains almost 400 residential units and

has 17- and 12-storey towers. Gibson Creek ran under the development.



Image 3. Photo title: “Cedar Cottage Brewery Southeast corner Westminster and Knight Streets.” Photo taken 1902. City of Vancouver Archives Dist P69. The original caption by Major Matthews, who founded the archives, states: “Nearby was creek in which fish, including salmon were caught. Water from well was pumped by hand to wood stave tank on tower on right. Fuel was cordwood cut from forest surrounding all directions.”

7. Eldridge Drug Store (7), located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Kingsway and Knight, was built on pilings over Gibson Creek. Photograph Image 4, taken in 1909, shows the store. The owner, M. Eldridge, used to go underneath and catch trout for lunch (Levitan & Miller, 1986, p. 64, quoting K. Eldridge from the *MacBride Times*).

Stop 3: 22nd Ave just east from Knight St (1400 block)

22nd Avenue was known as Agnes Road from 1903 to 1910. Many local streets were renamed in a 1910 South Vancouver by-law.

When the railway came to Vancouver, portions of land were divided into so-called “District Lots” (or “DLs” for short) and sold off. Tom Greer owned DLs 746-747 to the south of 22nd, leading off to Famous Foods (1595 Kingsway).



Image 4. Eldridge Drug Store. Photo taken 1909. Levitan and Miller (1986, p. 64). Note the creek's path underneath the store. The road to the left is what was then Knight Road. The road behind the store is William Street, which became East 23rd Avenue in 1911. (The drug store was in District Lot 301.)

Gibson Creek recrossed Knight Street between the lane on the west side and 21st Avenue on the east side.

21st Avenue was known as Montague Road (circa 1909–1910).

Stop 4: 20th Ave just east from Knight St (1400 block)

20th Avenue was known as Gibson Road from April 1910 to December 1910.

Moses Gibson owned District Lots (DLs) 748-750. These were 19 acres of land bounded by Knight Street to the west, 18th Avenue to the north, Bella Vista Street to the east, and 20th Avenue to the south (see map on the inside front cover).

Moses Gibson (1850-1937) was born in Ireland. He immigrated to Canada in 1873, married in Eastern Canada, and came to Vancouver with his family in 1886. He and his wife had 7 boys and 3 girls. Gibson was the proprietor of the Queens Hotel on Water Street. In 1893, Gibson sold the hotel and bought five DLs. Two were in the Riley Park–Little Mountain neighbourhood near Main Street. DLs 748-750 cost \$1,751 each.

Bella Vista Street, which runs north–south, was named in 1911. “Bella Vista” means “beautiful view.”

Moses Gibson set up a dairy farm, known as the Gibson Ranch. It was one of a series of ranches along Kingsway. The land at the time was bush and old stumps, which may have been clear-cut circa 1900.



Image 5. Photograph of Moses Gibson and Samuel Garvin Senior. Photo probably taken in the 1910s when Gibson was in his 60s. Photo courtesy of Vic Gibson, great-grandson of Moses. (The original photo has some scratches that have been digitally removed.) Garvin was a neighbour of Gibson’s with the same occupation. He had his own dairy farm along Kingsway. From 1889-1890, he lived by Jones Creek at Kingsway and Windsor Street (Hamilton, 1957, p. 44, p. 46). The houses in the background are probably on Bella Vista.

8. Moses Gibson and his family lived in a farm house (**8**) at 1215 East 20th Avenue, on the north side of 20th, to the west of the creek. According to Olive Cairns (2009a), the house was built some time after 1893 and existed until Gibson’s death in 1937. The house was surrounded by apple trees.

Gibson was retired by 1911. He sold some/all of the ranch in a 1915 “tax sale” which led to the subdivision of DLs 748-750, except for the south side of 18th Avenue. The Municipality of South Vancouver took full ownership in 1921. Nevertheless,

even in the 1920s, Gibson had a small dairy herd of 2-3 cattle that would roam around (Cairns, 2006). At the time of his death in 1937, Gibson owned just one city lot, the one containing his house.

9. Gibson was an influential local figure. Gibson served as a councillor for South Vancouver in 1893 (Walker, 1999), which only came into existence in April 1892.

Gibson was also in 1894-95 the secretary and one of the first three trustees of the one-room DL 301 School (**9**), which opened on 5 June 1893 (Hamilton, 1986, p. 10). The school, known also as South Vancouver School, was located on the south side of what is now 20th Avenue between Clark and Inverness (Levitan & Miller, 1986, p. 37, p. 52, p. 63; Keeling, 2001).

There is a photograph of DL 301 School from 1897 in the City of Vancouver Archives. The photograph's caption identifies Moses' son, Sam, who was born 11 April 1890 (census data), and hence was 7 or 8 at the time. Long-time KCC resident Theresa McAuley has pointed out that behind Sam stands a boy who is not identified in the photograph but bears a striking family resemblance to Sam. Theresa suggests that the boy is Isaac, another of Moses' sons, born 17 February 1884.

However, in 1895, Gibson resigned from the position of trustee amidst a controversy surrounding the dismissal of the teacher, a Mr. Phoenix. The children were sent to Mount Pleasant School, which was at Kingsway and Broadway (Hamilton, 1986, p. 23).

10. The DL 301 School moved and became Lord Selkirk Elementary School (**10**), located at 1750 East 22nd Avenue. Lord Selkirk was built in 1908 and officially opened in 1911 (Levitan & Miller, 1968, p. 37).

11. Gibson Creek also ran through the homesteaded property of the Hubbards, the grandparents of local resident Olive Cairns. Cairns's grandfather George Wilkinson Hubbard and grandmother Maggie (maiden name Bateson), who were married in England, immigrated to Canada in 1911. The Hubbards built a family home (**11**) at 1226 East 20th Avenue (old numbering), on the south side of the street, just to the east of the creek (Cairns in Smedman, 2006; Cairns, 2009b).

Olive's father William J. Stark and her mother Cora (maiden name Hubbard) married in June 1915 and lived in a house just to the east of Olive's grandparents, at 1234 East 20th (Cairns in Smedman, 2006; Cairns, 2009b).

12. There was a bridge (**12**) on 20th across Gibson Creek in the 1910s (see photograph Images 6 and 7). According to Olive Cairns (2009a), the creek took a turn under the bridge and swung off to the northeast. The turn created some relatively flat ground on which Gibson's farm house stood.



Image 6. Looking north on bridge on East 20th Avenue near Knight Street in about 1914. From left: Jessie Wallace, Cora Stark, Harry Hubbard, Margaret (“Maggie”) Bateson Hubbard, and two friends. According to notes handwritten by Olive Cairns on the back of the photo, it was taken “about 1914” and shows “Gibby’s barn behind them.” Photo courtesy of Olive Cairns.



Image 7. Looking south on bridge on East 20th Avenue near Knight Street in 1915 or so. Notes handwritten by Olive Cairns on the back of the photo state “20th ave off Knight Road. Cora [Stark] on Bridge over Gibson Creek. 1200 Block. 1915 or so. 2nd house ours. 1st house Hubbards.” Photo courtesy of Olive Cairns.

Stop 5: Combined sewer (13) in the road outside of 3576 Dumfries St

13. You can hear rushing water from the combined sewer that has an access cover in the middle of the road (**13**) outside of 3576 Dumfries Street. It has clear water in it. The water is from Davey Creek (flowing from the southeast) Davey Creek ran under Famous Foods (at Kingsway and Perry). The creek was named after the Davey family who arrived from England soon after the Gibsons and lived for many years on what is known today as Fleming Street at 20th Avenue. Davey Creek originated at Jones Park, which was established in the 1940s. The park is located at 5350 Commercial Street (at East 38th Avenue).

Dumfries Street, which runs north–south, was named in 1910. It was probably named after Dumfries, Scotland. A number of other local streets also have Scottish names (e.g., Fleming, Maxwell, Selkirk, and Stewart Streets). According to long-time local resident Lydia Grant, Dumfries was a dirt road in the 1930s. She says there used to be bulrushes at 20th and Dumfries, and many noisy frogs!

14. Tyee Elementary School (**14**), 3525 Dumfries Street, was built in 1973. According to local resident Elsie Lockhart, the site of the school was an undeveloped area from 1949, containing weeds and bushes.

Stop 6: Gibby’s Field (15) on 1400 block of 18th Ave (south side)

15. Gibby’s Field (**15**) is on three City of Vancouver lots at 1454, 1458, and 1462 East 18th Avenue. 1462 is a double lot (66 feet wide instead of the average East Vancouver lot width of 33 feet).

Davey Creek joined Gibson Creek at Gibby’s Field. Note the pronounced contours all of a sudden. You are now in quite a pronounced valley with quite steep sides.

Gibby’s Field contains the last known piece of original creek bed from the once-vast China Creek system. Photograph Image 15 on the back cover, taken in 2007, shows Gibby’s Field and the creek bed.

Here is a brief timeline for Gibby’s Field.

1914-1915: Vancouver Joint Sewerage and Drainage Board constructs extensions to its China Creek sewer line south of 11th Avenue, which includes portions of Gibson Creek. The line contains a 42-inch sewer.

1915: Moses Gibson sold some or all of his ranch in a “tax sale” leading to the subdivision of DLs 748-750, except for the south side of 18th Avenue.

1920s: Olive Cairns, born 1918, described Gibson, who was by now in his 70s,

long-retired, having been forced to sell practically off all his land, as “cranky” (Cairns, 2006) and “a loner” (Cairns, 2009a), even though he had fathered ten children.

Olive Cairns recalls local children calling Gibson by the nickname “old man Gibby.” “Gibby’s Field” takes its name from this nickname. However, the place had other names. Another common name was “Gibson’s Field.” Another name was “Gibbie’s Field,” which was the name used by Iola Panossin and other children when they went to the place in 1954 or so. (The children never spelled “Gibbie” so it could have been “Gibsy” instead. “Gibsy” is as logical a shortening of “Gibson” as “Gibby”.)

In 1924 or so, long-time local resident Florence Anderson, aged about 10, had picnics at Gibby’s Field with her younger brother and sister. The creek was maybe 6’ wide, not deep (Anderson, 2007). It was a magnet for local children. According to Cairns (2006), there were big stumps on Gibson’s property that children would play in.

In 1925, “Gibson’s (Gibbie’s) Field” was one of a fair number of open spaces in Cedar Cottage still in existence, according to long-time KCC residents Gordon Stevens and Velma McKinnon (Levitan & Miller, 1986, p. 7; cf. p. 62).

1930s: Dixon (2001) states that the land was known as “Gibson’s Field” in the 1930s though Gibson no longer owned the land. Gibson’s Field extended to 20th at the time; a “Gully” was here. The vegetation was mainly salal, swamp, and “scrub.” There was some dumping (Dixon, 2001).

Olive Cairns’s brother Douglas caught fish in Gibson Creek at 19th in 1933-34 (Cairns, 2009b).

1940s: The aerial photograph of KCC, taken between 1942 and 1945 (Image 9 in this booklet), shows that Gibby’s Field and much of the path of Gibson Creek (and China Creek) remained undeveloped.

In 1944, the creek still ran though Gibby’s Field for sure, according to Olive Cairns (2007), because she remembers the creek still being there after her daughter was born in 1943.

Circa 1949, Gibson Creek was still open immediately north and south of 19th, and from 18th to 14th Avenue (Macdonald, 1992).

1950s: The creek sustained fish “Up until the 1950’s” (Dixon, 2001) and Gibby’s Field continued to be popular with local children. Iola Panossin used to go down to Gibby’s Field with other children in about 1954. Her mother lived three blocks away at the time (Panossin, 2007). Florence Anderson (2007) reported that her nephew, born in 1948, and his friend, used to cycle down to Gibby’s Field from Dumfries Street and 33rd Avenue.

1970s: Elsie Lockhart (2006) thinks that Gibson Creek only disappeared when Tyee Elementary School was built. The school opened in 1973 and is the first non-market use of land along Gibson Creek and China Creek that you will see on the tour.

2000s: Gibby’s Field was thought to be “unbuildable” because of the local drainage patterns until a geo-technical study in 2000 or so. A citizens group, the Gibby’s Field

Group (2000–2001) quickly formed, with the goals of getting a moratorium placed on development of Gibby’s Field and its preservation as a community greenspace. These goals have been continued by the Gibby’s Field Subcommittee (2006–present). See the Gibby’s Field website (www.vcn.bc.ca/gibbys) for more information.

East 18th Avenue was known as Flett Road from 1905 to 1910. There were four local churches along East 18th as early as 1910.

Fleming Street, which runs north–south, was formerly Fleming Road (1905–1910).

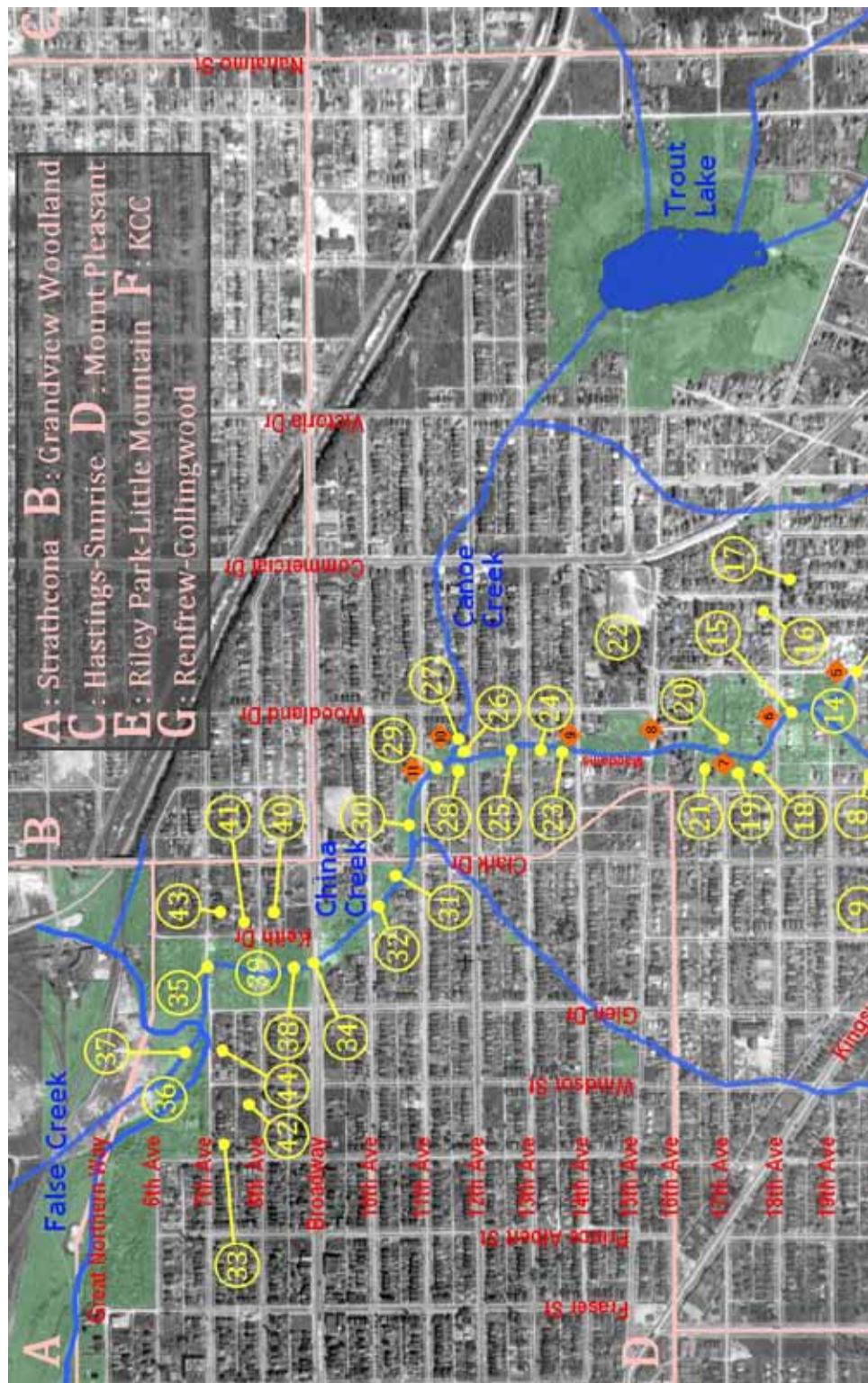
16. Robson Memorial Methodist Church (**16**), 1553 East 18th Avenue (at Fleming), was founded in 1907. It burned down in 1921. St. Mark’s Evangelical Lutheran Church is at the same site: 1573 E. 18th Avenue at Fleming.



Image 8: Photo title: “Cedar Cottage, east of Knight and 17th Avenue 1908.” City of Vancouver Archives CVA 330-11. Annotations added. Note the existence of streets (Dumbries, Bella Vista) before they were officially named.

17. St. Joseph’s Catholic Church (**17**), 1612 East 18th Avenue (at Bella Vista), was established 1911. It was damaged by fire in 1950, rebuilt in 1968 on a new site, burned down in 1980, and rebuilt in 1982.

Historical Walking Tour of Gibson Creek Through Kensington—Cedar Cottage (KCC)



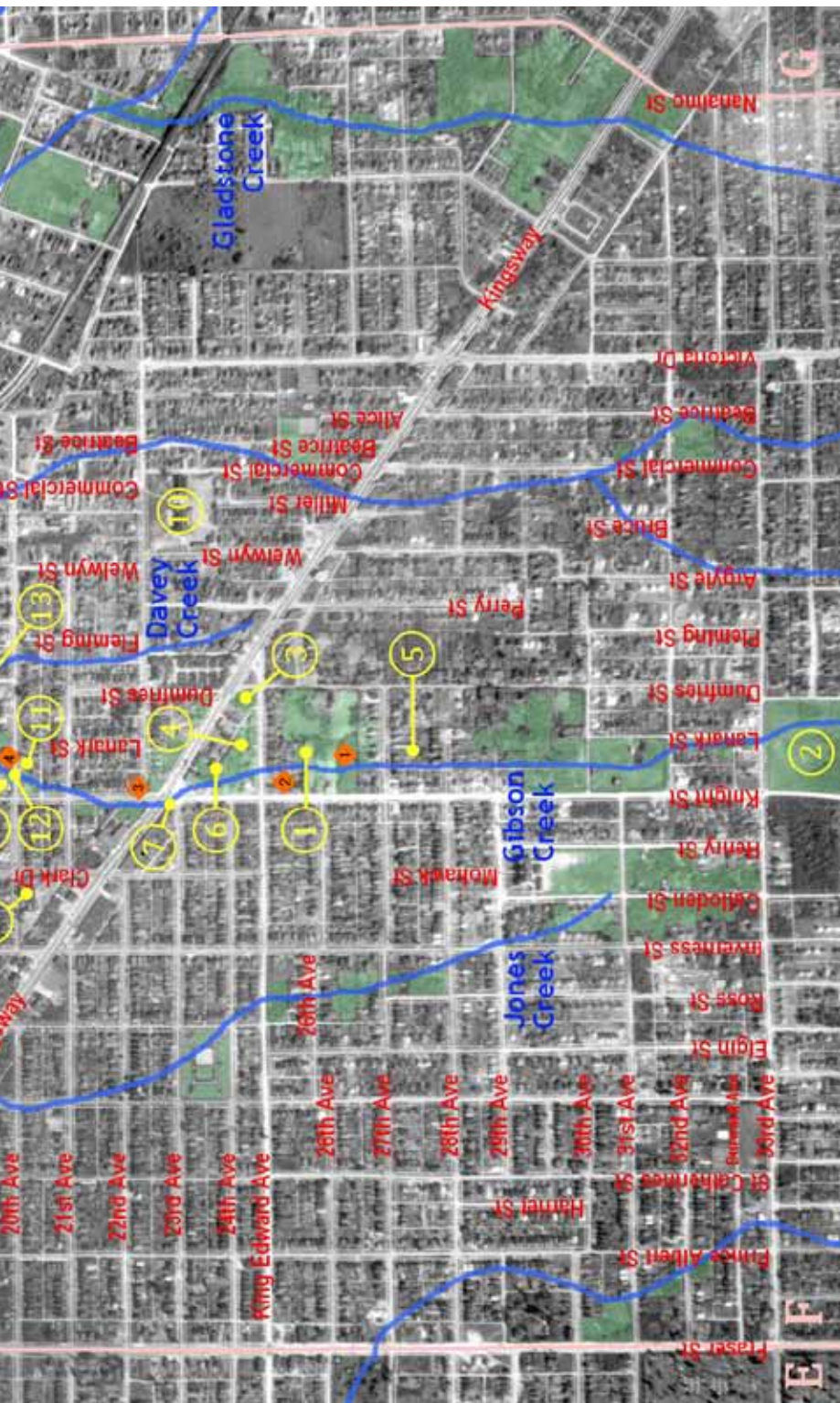


Image 9: Aerial photograph of Mount Pleasant and KCC, 1942-45. Vancouver City Archives VLP 186.6.

Annotations by Dan Fass
November 2009



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18.-19. There used to be a mink farm (**18**) on the north side of East 18th Avenue at Knight Street. The mink farm was behind the current Vancouver Chinese Alliance Church (**19**), at 3330 Knight Street. Long-time local resident Ernie Lockhart says that there were houses on pilings here. Salmon were pitchforked from the creek in the Fall to feed mink in cages at the bottom of property.

Now turn into and follow the lane that heads north from East 18th Avenue. You are now following the sewer, which itself follows the path of Gibson Creek. The sewer can be seen by the orange covers in the middle of roads and lanes. The letters “GVS&DD” on the covers is short for “Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District.”

Stop 7. East 17th Ave (1400 block)

You can now see the impact of the pronounced valley that Gibson Creek followed though, and the volume of water flowing down the hill, contributed not just by Gibson Creek but its tributary, Davey Creek.

The 1908 photograph of East 18th (Image 8) was taken a little west of this point.

20. Long-time local resident Doug Grant says there were “fruit trees” — an orchard (**20**) — here on East 17th Avenue until the “1960s. Maybe 1963.” Note that 19th, 17th, and 16th Avenues break here and only continue again east of Commercial.

21. In front and to the left is the first non-market housing of the walking tour: Hemlock Court (**21**), built 1984. It is located at 1411 East 17th Avenue and comprises fourteen 2-bedroom and seven 3-bedroom townhouses.

Stop 8: East 15th Ave at Woodland Drive

Woodland Drive, which runs north–south, was named in 1902. This is the 3200 block; Woodland Drive continues on the other side of Clark Park as 2900 block. Selby Street was an unofficial name for part of Woodland Drive from 1911 to 1924.

East 16th Avenue. The Municipality of South Vancouver was founded in 1892, six years after Vancouver (1886). It extended from Point Grey to Boundary Road, south of the 16th (and 15th) Avenue city boundary and Hastings Townsite.

East 15th Avenue was formerly Boundary Avenue (before 1913).

The 1907 photograph of Gibson Creek (Image 1) shows the creek at this point.

22. Clark Park (**22**), which has the official address 1500 E 14th Avenue, is on land donated to the City in 1889. Clark Park is the second oldest park in Vancouver (after Stanley Park). It was the first one donated to Park Board, by realtor Ephraim Clark. It was known as Buffalo Park and Clark's Park until it was (re)named Clark Park in 1911.

Maddams Street, which runs north–south, was named Maddams Avenue in 1909, and given its present name in 1914. It was originally a trail. The street takes its name from Charles Cleaver Maddams, who bought five acres on the south shore of False Creek in 1888. He also owned the area bounded by Knight Road, 14th Avenue, Woodland Drive, and 15th Avenue. In the 1940s, two of his sons lived in houses on this land. There were small eels, lamprey, and stickleback fish under the stones in the creek here.

Clark Drive, north–south, was named some time before 1911. It was named after realtor Ephraim Clark; and ran from Powell Street to East 15th Avenue. It continued up to King Edward (and does to this day as a quiet side street).

The Clark–Knight Diversion, formerly Coy Street (1907–1915), was so named in 1947.

Stop 9: Lane north of East 14th, west of Woodland Drive

The sewer continues to follow the path of the creek. The 1913 photo of sewer construction (Image 10) was likely taken just south of this tour stop.

East 14th Avenue: “The area became briefly fashionable around the beginning of the First World War, and prosperous families settled on the hill near Clark Park at 14th and Commercial” (Kluckner, 1993, p. 120).

23. Non-market housing now starts to appear with regularity along the path of the creek. Much was built in the 1970s. The first is Clark Street Apartment (**23**), built 1977, at 1435 East 14th Avenue. It houses 16 families and one senior.

24. The next non-market housing is Soroptimist Lions Manor (**24**), built 1972 at 1444 East 13th Avenue. It provides housing for 24 seniors.

25. The Our Lady of Fatima Parish Church (**25**), 1423 East 13th Avenue, which

serves the Portuguese-Canadian community, is built along the path of the creek, as is its parking area.



Image 10. Photo title: “Sewer tunnel construction at Trout Lake [sic] on 14th Avenue at Clark Park.” Photo taken 1913. City of Vancouver Archives Str P270.08.

Stop 10. East–west lane (west of Woodland Ave, north of East 12th) between 1425 and 1451 East 12th

The second tributary to join Gibson Creek was overflow from Trout Lake, which Huck (1980) referred to as Canoe Creek. It joined Gibson Creek from the east. It did so at the east–west lane between 1451 and 1425 East 12th (see below).

In my view, what is properly called “China Creek” is the stretch of creek from the meeting point of Canoe Creek and Gibson Creek, to its mouth at False Creek. China Creek was open from 11th Avenue (Cedar Cottage Park) to False Creek Flats circa 1949 (Macdonald, 1992, p. 47).

Trout Lake was the only lake in any Vancouver neighbourhood. It was fed by 3-4 creeks. It was a peat bog containing slightly acidic water. Trout, beaver, waterfowl were found here. It was owned by Walter Blackie from 1867 to 1878, known at the time as Blackie’s Lake. From 1878 to 1884, it was owned by Stamp’s mill (founded

1867, later Hastings Sawmill) at the foot of Dunlevy Avenue. Later, it was owned by Aldene Hamber, daughter of Hastings Sawmill owner John Hendry, who donated it to the City of Vancouver in 1926 on condition that it was named John Hendry Park.

East 12th Avenue was the first east-west street in the area after Westminster Road (Kingsway). 12th Avenue used to end here at Woodland Drive, presumably because of Canoe Creek. There were two wooden bridges along this stretch (for Gibson Creek and Jones Creek).

26. 1451 East 12th Avenue was the home of H.H. Stevens (**26**), an early neighbour of the Maddams on the east side of the ravine that used to be here. The house was built around the 1890s. Stevens was in Richard B. Bennett's Federal Government, 1930-1935. The house was still there in 1939.

China Creek was "a wide, fast-flowing stream" (Harris & Proctor, 1989, p. 17) from here. It ran in a ravine, as just mentioned. The creek contained chum and coho salmon, and salmon trout.

27. There is more non-market housing where Gibson Creek and Canoe Creek met. Edward Byers House (**27**), built 1962, houses 37 seniors. It is at 1451 East 12th Avenue, the same address as H.H. Stevens's home.

28. Loyal Orange Manor (**28**), built 1971, is at 1425 East 12th Avenue. It houses 20 seniors and one other.

Ending-point / Stop 11. Sewer cover in the road outside of 1380 East 11th Avenue

29. King's Daughter Manor (**29**), 1400 East 11th Avenue, sits atop China Creek. This non-market housing was built in 1973 and houses 29 seniors and one other.

30. The official address of Cedar Cottage Park (**30**) is 2650 Clark Drive (at East 11th Avenue). The ravine here was used as an early landfill or dump. The Park Board filled in the ravine and created Cedar Cottage Park, a small neighbourhood park, in the mid 1970s.

Jones Creek joined China Creek at approximately the tennis courts in Cedar Cottage Park. It joined from the south-west. Jones Creek was quite a major creek. It originated at about 31st Avenue, at the southern end of the grounds close to Sir Richard McBride Elementary School, at 1300 East 29th Avenue, a couple of blocks west of Knight

Street. It ran in a C-shaped loop through Glen Park down Windsor Street. After about 1890, it formed the property line between the milk ranches of Sam Garvin and Joseph Jones after about 1890. It ran just to the west of Charles Dickens School (along Windsor Street). 12th Avenue used to cross it via a wooden bridge. Gibson Creek ran into China Creek here in Cedar Cottage Park 20-30 metres east of Clark Drive. Jones Creek was put into a sewer in approximately 1911.

Optional continuation of walking tour into Mount Pleasant

The tour crosses into Mount Pleasant at Clark Drive.

31. China Creek passed through China Creek South Park (**31**), which was created in 1922. The park's official address is 1255 E 10th Avenue (at Glen Drive). The path of the creek is indicated by the drainage grates and orange sewer covers.

32. Where China Creek South Park stands, there used to be pig ranches (**32**) along the sides of the creek. These pig ranches may have influenced the naming of China Creek: "Near its banks [up by 12th and Clark] John Chinaman had pig ranches and the boys who went fishing for trout called it China Creek" (Hamilton, 1957, p. 60). Another theory about the creek name is that local landowner Charles Maddams named the creek after those same Chinese hog farmers.

In 1888, Charles Cleaver Maddams bought the waterfront land either side of the mouth of China Creek for \$400. This 5½ acres (2.3 hectares) of land was bounded by the waterfront, St. Catherines Street, 7th Avenue. and Glen Drive.

Maddams established the Maddams Ranch (also known as Maddams Orchard), growing and selling wholesale many kinds of fruit: raspberries, strawberries, loganberries, black, red, and white currants, and especially rhubarb. Maddams Ranch was later the last operating farm in Mount Pleasant.

33. Maddams built the first house in the district in 1888 at 941 East 7th Avenue, also called Maddams Ranch (**33**). The house was "near the corner of St. Catherine's [Street]" and was initially reachable only by skiff (Kluckner, 1993, p. 125). Maddams's daughter E.E. Trites reported finding a couple of First Nations stone tools in the gardens of the house (Matthews, 1945, p. 77).

Broadway was known as East 9th Avenue until 1909.

China Creek ran in a major "ravine, about 200 feet [61 metres] across at street level where it crossed Broadway, and north towards 7th Avenue. The ravine's depth varied

between 30 and 40 feet [9–12 metres], over a distance of some 2000 feet [609 metres]” (Kjorrefjord, 1988).

34. A huge wooden bridge here (between Glen Drive and Clark Drive) used to be known as “the Broadway trestle.” Kids speared salmon and salmon trout under the trestle (see related photograph).

“[China Creek] formed a steep canyon below what is now East Broadway” (Harris & Proctor, 1989, p. 17).



Image 11. Photo title: “Sewer construction at China Creek.” Photo taken 1913. City of Vancouver Archives Str P270.05. This part of the sewer is below the Broadway trestle, showing the depth of the ravine in which China Creek ran.

35. There was another bridge at East 7th Avenue and Glen (**35**). “[H]undreds of large salmon migrat[ed] every year under the bridge at Glen and Seventh” (Harris & Proctor, 1989, p. 14). Schoolboys would “gaff scores of salmon from that bridge” (Ibid.). Charles Maddams and other family members caught chum salmon from the creek at night and boiled them for chicken feed. Norman Freshwater was born in 1905, one block away from China Creek. His older brother “caught a 56-centimetre rainbow trout, probably a steelhead” along the same stretch (Ibid.).

36. China Creek North Park (**36**), originally known as Douglas Park, was created 1922. Its official address is 1001 E 7th Avenue (at Clark Drive). In 1911, the land on which China Creek North Park stands was purchased from Charles Maddams as an

easement for a trunk sewer. The China Creek Trunk sewer was then constructed.

Between 1915 and 1917, False Creek Flats was created. (Maddams probably sold some of his land, including his “waterfront,” to the Great Northern Railway, at this time.)

In 1922, Charles Maddams lost his ranch to taxes. It was turned over by the City to the Park Board in 1922, becoming China Creek North Park. A plan by Rainier Breweries to buy part of the land and build a brewery was abandoned because other breweries pressured the City to not grant a charter.

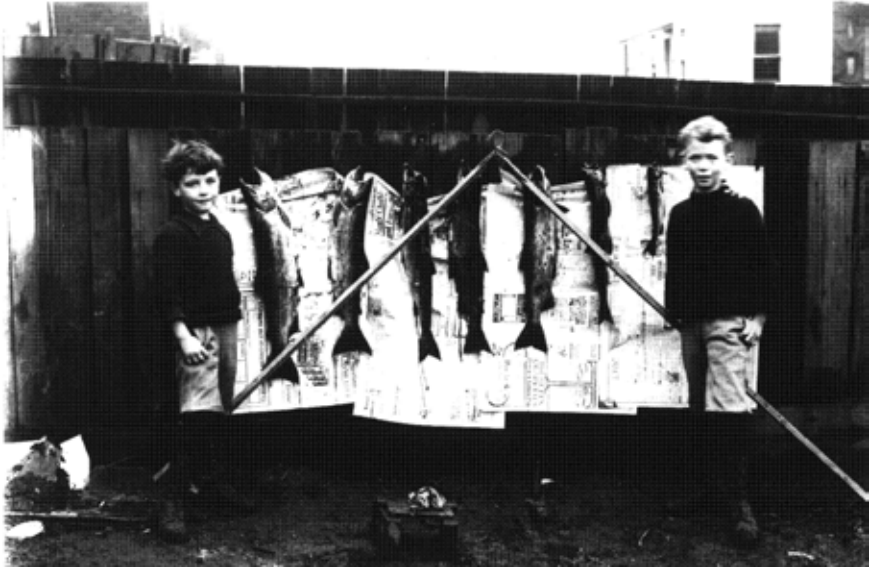


Image 12. The caption for this photograph, written by Norman G. Freshwater, states: “.... the year should be around 1911 or 1912. These fish were gaffed in China Creek between Clark Drive and 7th Ave.” City of Vancouver Archives CVA 588.

Here is a timeline of the loss of China Creek.

In the late 1920s–1930s, China Creek ravine below the Broadway trestle was used by the City as a dump.

In 1941, neighbourhood residents organized against the stench from the dump.

In 1946, the City abandoned the dump and created a new one at 63rd and Kerr (now Everett Crowley Park).

During the years 1948–1952, over 30 headline articles in the *Vancouver Sun* described what remained of China Creek as a hazard, a polluted open sewer carrying outfall from a storm/sanitary sewer at 7th and Glen (see photograph Image 13).

37. In 1951, that “small odoriferous waterway” called China Creek, which wound across Mt. Pleasant’s False Creek Flats, was put into a conduit (**37**).

38. In the early 1950s, the garbage below the Broadway trestle was covered over and a high-sided wooden covered bicycle track — a velodrome (**38**) — was built in time for the 1954 British Empire Games. The cycle track decayed through the 1960s, was restored in the 1970s, and demolished in 1980.

39. In 1983: Vancouver Community College (VCC), formerly at the old King Edward High school site at 12th and Oak, opened on the site of the velodrome.

In 1988, \$250,000 was spent on drainage pipes to remove creek water from the VCC campus.



Image 13. Photo title: “China Creek, East 7th Avenue & Glen Drive.” Photo taken 1950. Vancouver Public Library Accession Number: 81146. This photo shows the outfall from the China Creek Trunk Sewer at East 7th and Glen Drive. Note the woman and child at the mouth of the sewer.

Keith Drive, which runs north–south, first appeared in 1902. 8th and 7th Avenues east of Keith are very steep with non-market housing on the steep parts.

40. China Creek Co-op (**40**), opened 1987, located at 1230 E 8th Avenue (at Keith

Drive), houses 27 families and 8 seniors.

41. Lu'Ma Housing (**41**), 1984, on 8th Avenue but with the official address 1219 E 7th Avenue (at Keith Drive), houses 14 families and 15 others.

42. Anavets (**42**), 1978, at 951 E 8th Avenue (at St. Catherine Street), houses 60 seniors.

43. China Creek Apartments (**43**), 1981, at 1216 East 7th Avenue (at Keith Drive), houses 29 families and one senior.

44. China Creek Place (**44**), 1974, at 1040 E 7th Avenue, houses eleven families and seven others.

Commentary

- Gibson Creek ran through the heart of Kensington–Cedar Cottage (KCC).

KCC is two separate neighbourhoods joined by the City of Vancouver's Community Visions process in 1997. It is bounded by 41st Avenue to the south, Fraser Street to the west, 16th Avenue to Knight Street then along Broadway to the north, and Nanaimo Street to the east.

Gibson Creek links Kensington with Cedar Cottage. It runs roughly north-south down the middle of KCC, from Kensington Heights, under the intersection of Knight and Kingsway — arguably the “centre” of KCC. Moreover, the creek's water and fish influenced the development of homes and businesses through KCC, notably the original cottage which gave “Cedar Cottage” its name.

- The absence of market housing along lower Gibson Creek and China Creek.

There is almost no market housing along the entire path of Gibson Creek and China Creek from East 19th Avenue north. The land use is an elementary school and preschool, Vancouver Chinese Alliance Church, social housing, Clark Park, non-market housing for seniors, Our Lady of Fatima Parish Church, more non-market housing for seniors, Cedar Cottage Park, China Creek South Park, Vancouver Community College, and China Creek North Park.

- Parks and the China Creek system.

Three parks are located along Gibson Creek before it becomes China Creek: Kensington Park, Kingcrest Park, and Clark Park. Three more are along China Creek, the continuation of Gibson Creek: Cedar Cottage Park, China Creek South Park, and China Creek North Park. Canoe Creek came from John Hendry Park. A tributary of Canoe Creek began a little south of 41st and flowed across Brewers Park and Jones Park. Jones Creek passed through Glen Park. So, the creeks covered in this walking

tour (China Creek, Gibson Creek, Davey Creek, Canoe Creek, and Jones Creek) flowed through ten current Vancouver parks. They also flow through eight of KCC's eleven parks. (Gladstone Creek flowed through a ninth, General Brock Park.)

The addition of interpretive signage about Gibson Creek and the other creeks at these parks would allow users of the parks to learn about the natural history of Kensington–Cedar Cottage and Mount Pleasant and come to appreciate better how those parks came into being.

- Other city properties and the China Creek system.

The creeks also passed through many other City properties besides parks. Gibson Creek passed by Tecumseh Annex at 551 East 37th Avenue, Kensington Community Centre, Tyee Elementary School, and Community Montessori Preschool. Canoe Creek is close to Trout Lake Community Centre, and a tributary passed close to Lord Selkirk Elementary School (1750 East 22nd Avenue). Jones Creek passed by Sir Richard McBride Elementary School and Charles Dickens School. China Creek is close to Queen Alexandra Elementary School (1300 East Broadway) and ran under Vancouver Community College Broadway Campus. These properties offer more opportunities for interpretive signage.

- Gibby's Field.

Gibby's Field has remained undeveloped to this day, and contains the only surviving piece of original creek bed from the once-vast China Creek system, through an accident of geography. Because it is located in a pronounced dip at the meeting-point of two major East Vancouver creeks, which creates significant drainage issues for the site, the City has not developed 1454, 1458, and 1462 East 18th Avenue.

Gibby's Field offers the opportunity to preserve something of historical and environmental significance that:

(1) It contains the last original, undeveloped remnant of the entire China Creek system.

(2) It contains the last original, undeveloped remnant of Gibson Creek which, perhaps more than any other single creek, "defines" KCC.

(3) It contains the last original, undeveloped remnant of Gibson Creek which, with China Creek, links many other parks in KCC and Mount Pleasant.

(4) It has a name (Gibby's Field) that has survived in the neighbourhood for generations. It was created by Vancouver's children from the name of Moses Gibson, who also gave his name to Gibson Creek.

Origins of This Booklet

This booklet is adapted from the script used by Dan Fass for several walking tours of Gibson Creek that he gave in 2008 and 2009. The walking tour script was based on a 2006 two-page essay by Dan Fass, which itself was based on the work of others. The essay can be found at the Gibby's Field website (www.vcn.bc.ca/gibbys). A copy is also held by the Downtown Vancouver Public Library.

The main historical sources of the script with respect to Vancouver are Davis (1997), Kluckner (1993, 2006), Macdonald (1992), and Walker (1999). The main sources with regard to KCC are Reid and Lysell (1968) and Levitan and Miller (1986). The main sources with regard to creeks are Huck (1980) and Harris and Proctor (1989).

A number of City of Vancouver online resources aided in research:

- VanMap, a web-based map system of Vancouver (www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/vanmap).
- List of parks at the Vancouver Park Board website (http://vancouver.ca/ParkFinder_wa/index.cfm?fuseaction=FAC.ParkList_ABC).
- List of schools at the Vancouver School Board website (www.vsb.bc.ca/schools/default.htm).
- List of photographs at the City of Vancouver Archives (http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/archives/webpubhtml/qbes/ws_photocombined.htm).
- The Historical Photographs Database at the Vancouver Public Library (<http://www3.vpl.vancouver.bc.ca/spe/histphotos>).

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Image 14: Gibson Creek. Detail from photo title: "Elsie and playmates by Creek, 15th Avenue [Cedar Cottage area]" Photo taken 1907. City of Vancouver Archives CVA 330-3.

Publication Information

This booklet was published in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada in November 2009.

It is available for download at www.vcn.bc.ca/gibbys

Credits

Many thanks to the community and outreach funding afforded by the City of Vancouver through the Kensington–Cedar Cottage (KCC) CityPlan Committee, chaired by Peter Eller and, prior to him, John Buckberrough and Anne Roberts.

Thank you to the seniors that Dan Fass has met and talked with about Gibby's Field and the creeks and history of KCC: Olive Cairns, Florence Anderson, Pat and Cameron Lee, Mary Freeman, and Theresa and Harvey McAuley.

Thanks to Vic Gibson, great-grandson of Moses Gibson, who contacted Dan through the Gibby's Field website, and provided him with information about the Gibson family.

Thanks to members of the Gibby's Field Group (2000–2001) and Gibby's Field Subcommittee (2006–present) who have worked to preserve Gibby's Field as a community greenspace.

Thanks to Vancouver historian Bruce Macdonald for being a consultant on this booklet, and to City planner Kirsten Baillie for her help in the production of this booklet.

Contact Information

To find out more about Gibby's Field, visit its website (www.vcn.bc.ca/gibbys). A contact e-mail address can be found at the website.

To find out more about the Kensington–Cedar Cottage (KCC) CityPlan Committee, visit the KCC Community Visions Program web pages at the City of Vancouver website (<http://vancouver.ca/COMMSVCS/planning/cityplan/Visions/kcc/index.htm>).



Image 15. Photograph of Gibby's Field, 1454-1462 East 18th Avenue. Photo taken in 2007. Photo courtesy of Jeff Nulty. Annotations added.

This historical walking guide retraces some of the path of Gibson Creek, a major creek in the once-vast China Creek system which used to flow into China Creek, and then into False Creek in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The guide shows where three other large creeks joined Gibson Creek to eventually become China Creek.

Gibson Creek provided waters for the original “Cedar Cottage,” Chinese market gardens, and a brewery. Its trout provided lunch for the owner of a drugstore built over the creek and its salmon fed the mink in a mink farm. Along its path is Gibby's Field — three city lots named after “Old Man

Gibby” — the name local children gave to Moses Gibson, after whom “Gibson Creek” is also named. Gibby's Field, which has never been developed, contains the original creek bed. Local citizens are working to keep it as a greenspace (www.yen.bc.ca/gibbys).

The history of Gibson Creek and other East Vancouver creeks provides understanding of how many East Vancouver parks came into existence, and also a variety of non-market housing and educational institutions (Tyee Elementary School and Community Montessori Preschool, and Vancouver Community College Broadway Campus).