



Nikkei Images

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in this issue...

1

Canning Salmon on the Skeena

3

Nikkei and the "Net"

4

Topaz Reunion Report

5

Steveston: Cannery Row: An Illustrated History

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Canning Salmon on the Skeena

By Sakuya Nishimura and Mitsuo Yesaki



*Inverness Cannery, Skeena River, B.C. — [date unknown]
JCNMAS: 96/156.1.004*

This essay is based on Sannosuke Ennyu's report on salmon canning, part of the Japanese Canadian Collection of Special Collections at the University of British Columbia Library. Mr. George Brandak kindly loaned the original copies for translation. Ennyu's report to the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce is unique, providing a plan view of the Inverness Cannery, plus detailed descriptions and drawings of the equipment used for canning salmon on the Skeena River. We have re-drawn the diagrams for this article, labelling them accordingly. We have also replaced Ennyu's general terms of "persons" and "workers" with the titles used in the Canadian canning industry.

Sannosuke Ennyu was born in Fukuoka

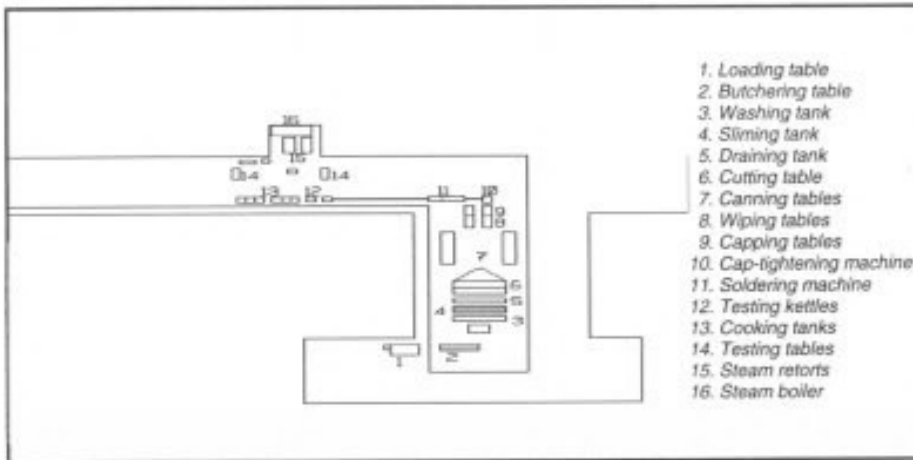
Prefecture, Japan, and graduated from college (most probably the Fisheries College, Tokyo) in March 1894. The Japanese government, eager for information about the developing salmon canning industry, encouraged fisheries graduates to study the canning methods used on the Pacific Coast of North America. The government was willing to pay Ennyu's steamer fare to British Columbia, but unwilling to pay him a salary. He supported himself by working at whatever jobs were available, but was still obliged to submit reports to the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. He worked in the Inverness Cannery during the 1894 sockeye salmon season.

In the 1890s, before mechanization, salmon canning was an extremely labour

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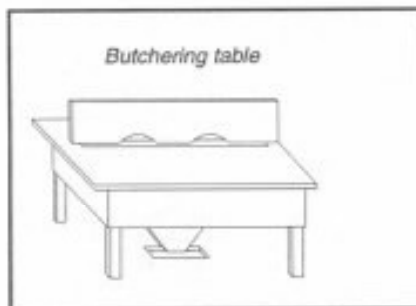


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intensive process, employing large numbers of Native, Chinese and Japanese workers. Salmon were lifted from the fish scow to the cannery wharf in a fish bucket because of the large tidal fluctuations on the Skeena River. The bucket was wired

open the abdomens, removed the guts and cut off the tails. They shoved the heads, guts and tails through an opening in the table and out an opening in the floor into the water under the cannery.

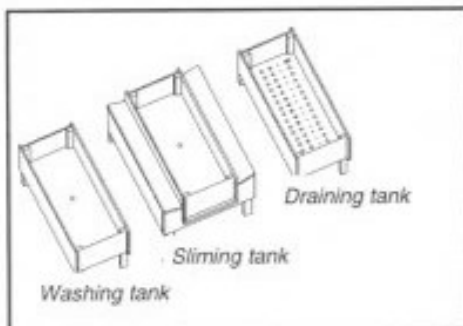


Butchering table



Gang knife

to a steam "donkey" and suspended on a rotating boom. Fish were hosed down with water and sorted by species, then were hand trucked to the butchering tables.



Three "slitters" stood on each side of a table. The slitter in the middle cut off the heads and slid the carcasses to either side. The side slitters cut off the fins, slit

Carcasses were then hand trucked to the washing tank. Five "washers" at the water tank scrapped out the kidneys along the backbones of the carcasses using knives and spoon-shaped scrappers. They washed the carcasses with water hoses. Excess water flowed out of the trough through a drain hole.

The carcasses were then transferred to the sliming tank. Five "slimers" scraped the scales and slime off the fish with knives and washed the carcasses with water hoses. The carcasses were moved to the draining tank to rid them of excess water, and then they were taken to the gang knife.

The gang knife consisted of a cutting board, blades of various sizes, and a lever to manipulate the blades. When the "cutter" pulled the lever, the blades dropped down on the carcasses and

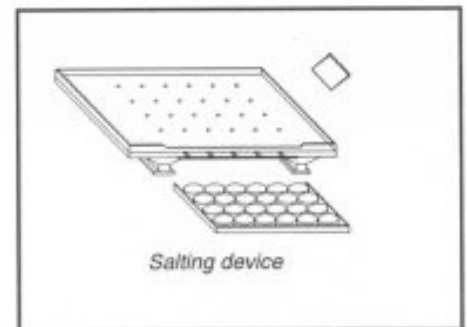
sliced them into steaks. Large fish were cut one at a time, while up to four smaller fish could be cut at a time. The blades were set so that the steaks were cut slightly shorter than the height of the cans.



Collecting table

Two workers pushed the cut steaks onto a slanted collecting table to the right of the gang knife. The steaks were gathered with a wooden rake into buckets at the narrow, lower opening of the table. Workers carried the buckets to the canning tables, dumping the steaks into fish troughs.

Cans were not made at the Inverness Cannery, because of the high cost of fabricating cans in Northern B.C. Formed



Salting device

cans, probably made in another Turner, Beeton and Company cannery in Southern B.C., were shipped to the Inverness at the start of the canning season. Workers filled boxes with 24 empty cans, and took the boxes to the salting device.

This device had a fixed upper board and movable lower board, with a shelf under the boards. The boxes with the empty cans were inserted into this shelf. The upper and lower boards had 24 half-inch holes, which were spaced over the

(Continued on page 6)



Nikkei and the "Net"

By Thomas Quigley

Exploring one's ancestry by using a technology that points to the future may seem to be a contradiction in terms, but the Internet's pervasiveness, speed and practicality render it a natural tool for seeking out information on nikkei. The purpose of this article is to point out some of the Internet sites that might serve as doors into the electronic world of nikkei-ness.

All of the sites mentioned here are from the part of the Internet known as the World Wide Web. The Web is an area of the Internet that contains information that is arranged by subject. The information is created in a format called hypertext, which allows for document text to serve as a link to other related information sources. Users "jump" from one document to another, or from one part of a document to another, by using these created links. Think of an encyclopaedia article that has "See also" references at its end - those serve the same purpose as Web links in cyberspace.

Almost all of the sites we found are resource sites, compilations of many different links, offering the user a variety of electronic choices to explore. The most comprehensive site we found is "Nikkei Nexus" www.najc.ca/nexus, which describes itself as "a resource of world wide web links which are of interest to nikkei-jin living outside of Japan." Sponsored by the National Association of Japanese Canadians, the Nexus gathers the links it presents into different categories: "What's New," "Social and Community Services," "Food and Shopping," "Sports and Martial Arts." Several categories are of note: "Organizations" directs the reader to nikkei groups in Canada, the USA and other countries;

"People" includes links to the personal web pages of individuals all over North America who presumably wish to recognize the nikkei side of their ancestry; "Media" includes links to radio, television and print media which may be of interest to Japanese Canadians.



Similar to "Nikkei Nexus" is "Asian Canadian" www.asian.ca, whose purpose is "to communicate the emotion and stories of a community." As is evident by its title, links relating to the Japanese Canadian community are but one area of this web site. Search the various subcategories for nikkei-related information. For example, "Japanese Canadian" under the category "Asian Canadian Directory Listing" will take you to links for Japanese Canadian organizations, associations, student societies and clubs. "Asian Canadian" is not as extensive as "Nikkei Nexus" - some links have only an introductory page and are clearly in development. Two fun categories are the

"Fan Club" list of famous Asian Canadians, and "Leisure," which includes a trivia contest.

The "MultiNova Project," www.multinova.com/, must be mentioned along with "Nikkei Nexus" and "Asian Canadian". In contrast to the two sites already described, MultiNova is a commercial web site created and maintained by ShinNova Digital Inc. (Vancouver). "MultiNova" provides useful information, links, and a meaningful context for Japanese, Canadian and American related businesses, groups and organizations. Information presented in this resource site initially seems perfunctory ("About Canada" "About Japan" a currency converter and a Japanese-English directory), but exploring the index further under the "Culture" category will take you to "Community Organizations and Issues," which includes links to other Japanese Canadian groups. Follow the "Japanese Canadian National Museum and Archives" link accessed under "Community Organizations and Issues," and check out the interesting "Japanese Canadian Timeline."

Several American web pages provide information about Japanese Canadians as well as Japanese Americans. Representative of these is the "Unofficial Nikkei Home Page" www.kent.wednet.edu/KSD/SJ/Nikkei/Nikkei_homePage.html, based in Washington State. While discussing the Japanese American experience in detail, it also provides a brief overview of the word "nikkei" and a summary history of the Japanese Canadians.

"Nikkei Place" www.nikkeiplace.org has the most extensive web page. A

(Continued on page 7)



Topaz Reunion Report

by Dr. Midge Ayukawa and Karen Kobayashi

Over 900 Japanese Americans who had been incarcerated in the Topaz, Utah detention camp - and their families - gathered from May 29-31, 1998 in San Jose, California. Canadians Charles and Lillian Kadota, Jean Kamimura, Sakuya Nishimura, Eric Sokugawa, and ourselves attended most of the activities and enjoyed ourselves to the fullest. The Doubletree Hotel convention floor was filled with Topaz books, photos and art work, as well as displays by the Japanese American National Museum and the National Japanese American Historical Society.

Thanks to the efforts of Shane Foster, who arranged the Japanese Canadian National Museum and Archives Society material, and Ki Kumekawa (a Vancouver resident and former Topaz internee), who transported it back and forth in his car, we were able to set up an information centre on the Canadian wartime experience. Linda Ohama's video, *Watari Dori*, drew favourable comments when it was viewed along with other, Japanese American, productions.

Eric Sokugawa, who had preceded us and had already explored Japan town, was a great guide for Sakuya and ourselves on the day we arrived. We were privileged to have Sam Itagaki of the San Jose JA Museum open the doors especially for us. The museum is a modest bungalow which was bequeathed to the JA community. According to Mr. Itagaki, the museum is run completely by volunteers, incurs no unwieldy overhead costs, and has no plans for expansion. This is in direct contrast to the national museum project in Los Angeles.

A highlight of the weekend was the panel on wartime experiences of nikkei, at which we had the opportunity to speak. Harry Honda, editor emeritus of the *Pacific Citizen*, told the JA story; Midge, the Canadian; Arturo Shibayama, the Peruvian; Enrique Shibayama, the Mexican; and Evelyn Suzuki, the Australian. John Tateishi eloquently described the

American struggle for redress, and Karen spoke about the lingering effects of the Canadian wartime experiences of older nisei parents on adult sansei children. Karen's talk drew a great deal of reaction and comments.



*Walking tour of San Jose's Japan-town. Karen Kobayashi (left) and Eric Sokugawa (right)
— May 29, 1998*

A luncheon hosted by Chuck Kubokawa, the moderator and the chair of the Topaz committee, was a great opportunity for us to meet with the other panellists. From our conversations during the luncheon, and also from the talks, we learned about the 100 Alaskan nikkei who were sent to Minedoka and the 1400 Australian nikkei who were placed in three camps along with nikkei from elsewhere in South East Asia. We learned that 1800 Japanese Peruvians (selected from 26,000) were sent to the

US to be imprisoned. After the war they could not return to Peru, but many refused to be "repatriated" to Japan. They remained in the US but were unable to become citizens until

1970. According to Enrique Shibayama, a retired businessman from Mexico City, there were 1500 nikkei in Mexico. Two thirds of them lived in Baja and they were relocated at their own expense to the geographic centre of Mexico, 2000 miles inland. During the six- to eight-day journey, two seniors and one infant died.

Following the panel discussion, Chuck presented each panellist with a certificate and Leonard Arlington's book *The Pride of Prejudice*, which is all about Topaz, where 8000 JAs, mostly from the San Francisco Bay area, were detained.

Chuck Kubokawa has offered to attend any similar reunions that we may have in Canada. It would be interesting to put together a panel like to the one that we participated in, so that we Japanese Canadians may also have the opportunity to learn about the experiences and the history of nikkei around the world. ☺

*Dr. Midge Ayukawa and Karen Kobayashi are
Directors of the JCNMAS.*

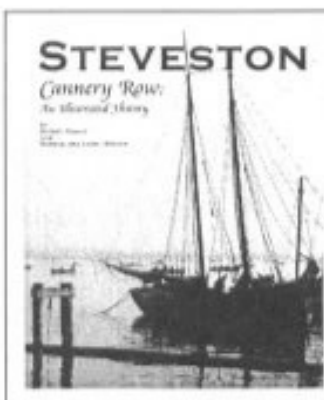


A Review of Steveston: Cannery Row

by Reiko Tagami

The recently published **Steveston: Cannery Row: An Illustrated History**, a collaboration between Mitsuo Yesaki and Harold and Kathy Steves, provides a detailed look at the evolution of fishing and canning methods and technologies in Steveston, from the nineteenth century to the present. The authors also examine the changing population and infrastructure of the Steveston area, paying particular attention to the social histories of specific cultural groups employed in the canning industry – First Nations, as well as Japanese and Chinese Canadian fishermen and cannery workers. The many photographs, maps of the Steveston waterfront, and cannery plans that accompany the text help the reader to visualize the Steveston of years past.

Of particular interest is the account of the experiences of Steveston's Japanese Canadian community before, during and after World War Two. Community organizations such as the Japanese Fishermen's Benevolent Society (*Gyosha Dantai*) and the Japanese Women's Association



(*Fujinkai*), working to improve Japanese Canadian living conditions on "cannery row," built a Japanese hospital and schools in Steveston. Returning to Steveston after the war, Japanese Canadian fishermen joined the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, re-integrating into the fisheries they had been forced to abandon during the evacuation.

Today's Lower Mainland Japanese Canadian community, with its many organizations, associations and projects, might draw inspiration from the cooperative

– and successful – efforts of Steveston's issei, nisei and sansei over the past century. **Steveston: Cannery Row** chronicles the life of a vibrant and unique British Columbia – and Japanese Canadian – community. ♡

Reiko Tagami is a JCNMAS volunteer and the current summer student at the JCNMAS.

Do you remember?



The following words were commonly used in the Japanese Canadian community. Does anyone still use them? Please contact the JCNMAS if you have other commonly used words that might not be as familiar today.

Shaina pochi: shiner perch
(affectionately referred to small children)

Naichi Inletto: Knight Inlet

Aka lakka: Aka (red) lakka (rock cod)

Bekaya: bakery

Kai loppu: kelp

Kunaru: Quesnel

Betania Mine/Beach: Britannia Mine/Beach

Arotobe: Alert Bay



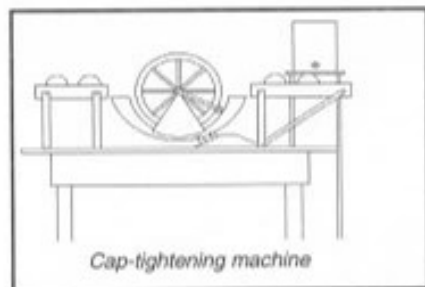
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Canning table

cans in the boxes. With the bottom board pushed in, the holes were closed. The workers spread salt onto the upper board and levelled it into the holes. When they pulled out the lower board, salt dropped into the empty cans. Workers carried the boxes with the salted cans to the canning tables and placed them on the top shelf.

There were six canning tables, each manned by six "fillers". A canning table was comprised of a work table with two shelves above it and a fish trough behind the table. Fillers took the salted cans from the top shelf and fit sheaths over the sharp edges of the cans to protect their fingers. They then pushed the salmon steaks into the cans, cutting the large pieces to fit.



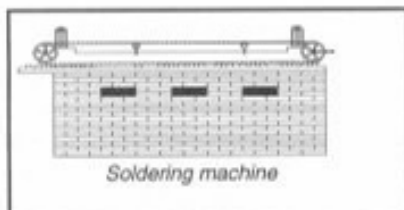
Cap-tightening machine

Cans were filled to about 90 percent capacity and then placed in wooden boxes on the lower shelves. Fillers were paid by piecework - 3 cents for each box of 24 cans. To save time, skilled fillers often worked without the protective sheaths. Each filler had a tally sheet at her work station. The filler boss kept track of each filler's production by marking the sheet each time a box was filled.

Workers carried the boxes with filled cans to the wiping tables. These tables

were slightly inclined so the filled cans easily slid off the tin plate bottoms of the boxes onto the wiping table tops. The workers refilled the empty boxes with empty cans, salted the cans and returned them to the top shelves of the canning tables.

There were two wiping tables and ten "wipers". Five wipers cleaned the cans with pieces of cloth. Five other wipers recleaned the upper edges of the cans and passed them on to twelve "cappers". Two cappers put 1-inch by 2.5-inch pieces of tin on the salmon



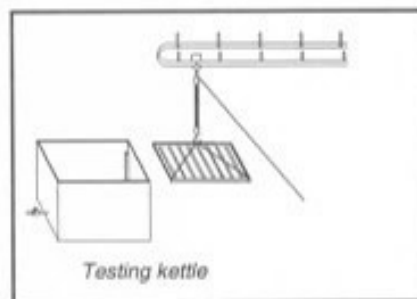
Soldering machine

steaks in the cans. The remaining ten cappers put caps on the cans, with center holes over the pieces of tin. They tapped the caps with pieces of wood to secure them tightly onto the cans. A box containing 64 capped cans was carried to the cap-tightening machine.

Two workers operated the cap-tightening machine, which consisted of a drum and a can track. One of the workers fed the cans horizontally onto the track, while the other worker turned the handle of the cylinder in a counter clock-wise direction. The cans rolled to the right between the drum and the track, tightening the cap firmly against the can body. The cans then rolled along the track over a cotton wick soaked in muriatic acid (hydrochloric acid), which cleaned the joint between the cap and can body. The best flux was concentrated hydrochloric acid and zinc. The cans then rolled onto the soldering machine.

Two workers operated the soldering machine. This machine was comprised of a can track, a continuous chain drive and a solder trough. A fire under the trough kept the solder molten. One of the workers turned the handle of the chain drive in a counter clock-wise direction,

rolling the cans forward on the track. The track was slightly tilted over the solder trough so that a short section of the caps were immersed in the solder. The entire edges were soldered as the cans rolled



Testing kettle

along the trough. The other worker checked the cans and removed excess solder with a small brush. From the soldering machine, the cans rolled down a thirty-foot track and onto a small table. A cold-water shower at the track's end further cooled the cans.

Two workers took the cooled cans and placed them into woven steel trays, 160 cans to a tray. Another two workers soldered shut the holes in the tops of the cans.

Three workers suspended the filled trays on a block and tackle and lowered them into the testing kettle. This kettle had stoppers to keep the tops of cans just below the surface of the boiling water. Another three workers checked the cans for air bubbles, removing cans with leaks, soldering holes and replacing the cans in the tray.

After all leaks were repaired, the trays were taken to the wooden cooking tank. Six trays were stacked in each of three compartments in the tank. Water in the tank was heated by steam piped in at the bottom. The cans were boiled for one hour and ten minutes. The trays were removed from the tank and placed on a counter, where a worker tapped each can with a wooden hammer and removed the faulty cans. Another worker punched a small hole in the top of each can with a pointed hammer to release air pressure. Juice from some cans would spout as high as 3 meters. The holes were soldered

(Continued on page 7)



(Continued from page 3)

national project whose purpose is to create a meeting place where Japanese Canadians can come together in the context of a Japanese cultural and community centre, a seniors apartment residence, a health care home, and the future home of the Japanese Canadian National Museum & Archives, Nikkei Place's web page contains information on the project's history, the names of the current board of directors, updates on the fundraising campaign and excerpts from their newsletter. There are also links to other societies.

Few individual web pages are linked to the nikkei resource sites, with the exception of some links at "Nikkei Nexus." Two that do come up and may be of particular interest are an overview of the Royal Ontario Museum's special exhibition "Five generations: Images of Japanese Canadians" www.rom.on.ca/exhibits/fivegen/, and an oral history, "Wartime Toronto and Japanese Canadians", within an Internet project about multiculturalism in Metropolitan Toronto www.tgmag.ca/magic/mt71.html. At each of these web sites, readers can share in the experiences of others, and add to their

own understanding of Japanese Canadian experiences.

There do not seem to be any Usenet discussion groups or electronic mailing lists that serve as forums for Japanese Canadian issues. As with so much of the Internet, little information is archived, meaning that there is no guarantee that what you see on the Web today will be there tomorrow. The good news, though, is that it is possible to update one's knowledge of what is out there on the "Net" by using search engines to search the Internet for user-specified keywords or concepts. Popular search engines include Yahoo www.yahoo.com, Web Crawler www.webcrawler.com, Excite www.excite.com and Alta Vista www.altavista.com.

We hope that this short article will give those who wish to explore their nikkei ancestry on the Internet some ideas on where to look and what to expect. ♡

Thomas Quigley is an employee of the Joe Fortes Branch of the Vancouver Public Library.

(Continued from page 6)

before the cans cooled, and the trays were then stacked onto trucks on rails, six to a truck. The rails led to the steam retorts.

There were two steam retorts, each of which could hold three trucks, for a total of 2,880 cans. The trucks were pushed into the retorts, and the doors were closed and screwed shut. Steam was released into the retorts and the cans cooked at 240° F, under 15 pounds of pressure, for one hour and ten minutes. After cooking, steam was released from the retorts, the doors were opened and the trucks were rolled out.

A worker suspended each tray on a block and tackle and immersed it in the cooking tank's boiling water. Another worker cleaned the can tops with a brush. The trays were then rinsed with cold water and carried on a small hand cart to the testing area. Workers tested each can by tapping it with a small iron bar. They were able to detect faulty cans by the sound of

the tap. Each can was tested two to three times.

The cans were dunked in a container of varnish and placed in a box to drain off excess varnish. This varnish coating prevented rusting. Labels were pasted onto the cans and then the cans were packed 48 to a box. ♡

Sakuya Nishimura is a JCNMAS volunteer, conducting oral histories and assisting with cataloguing and translations.

*Moe Yesaki is a JCNMAS volunteer and the co-author of the book **Steveston: Cannery Row: An Illustrated History** (see page 5 for review).*



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Events Calendar

August 1 and 2: Powell Street Festival - contact JCNMAS for details about Powell Street walking tour, JCNMAS exhibit.

August 15 (11 AM-): JCCA/VJCY and JCNMAS picnic at Fraser Foreshore Park, Burnaby - contact JCNMAS for more details.

September 27 (11- 4 PM): JCNMAS Annual General Meeting - 511 East Broadway, Vancouver (contact JCNMAS for more details).

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