

June 17, 1938.

H. R. MacMillan, Esq.,
President, B. C. Packers Limited,
Vancouver, B. C.

Dear Mr. MacMillan:

Your letter of June 9, requesting an immediate report upon the early history of the various canneries listed in your inquiry dated April 14 was awaiting me when I returned from a trip to the Interior.

I have been able to secure some details about the seven canneries which are earliest in date, as follows:

ALERT BAY. The original salmon cannery was first operated in 1881 by the Alert Bay Canning Co., which was owned by S. A. Spencer and others. The first season's pack consisted of 5500 cases.

Alert Bay was named in 1860 by Captain Richards after H. M. screw corvette ALERT, 17 guns, which was built at Pembroke in 1856. H. M. S. ALERT was on the Esquimalt Station in 1858-1861, and again in 1865-1869. In 1869 the officers of the ship carried out a resurvey of the bay.

RIVERS INLET CANNERY ("R. I. C."). The first cannery was first operated in the season of 1882. It was then owned by the Rivers Inlet Canning Co., but in 1890 was operated by the British Columbia Canning Company. The first season's pack (1882) consisted of 5635 cases of canned salmon, and 60 barrels of cured salmon.

Rivers Inlet was named Rivers Channel by Captain Vancouver in 1792, after George Pitt, first Baron Rivers of Strathfieldsaye, Hampshire. A descendant of the House of Pitt was a midshipman with the Vancouver expedition.

LOWE'S INLET. The cannery here was first operated in the season of 1890. It was run by the Lowe's Inlet Canning Co., which was owned by R. Cunningham & Son and John Rood. The first season's pack consisted of 6000 cases.

Lowe Inlet was named about 1844 by Captain Dodd, of the old Hudson's Bay steamer BEAVER, after Thomas Lowe, sixth son of Dr. John Lowe, of Coupar Angus, Perthshire, Scotland. Thomas Lowe was born in 1824, and served on board several of the Hudson's Bay ships, and at several of the Company's trading posts. He was later a member of the firm of Lowe Brothers, commission merchants, in Victoria, and retired to Scotland in 1872.

NAMU. Cannery first operated in 1895, apparently by R. Draney, who is listed as its owner in 1896. (The name Nama Canning Co. appears on the entry for 1895, and the season's pack is given as 144,000 one-pound tins.) The cannery was later operated by Draney Fisheries Limited, the last season under their management being 1918. It was operated by the Northern B. C. Fisheries Limited during the seasons 1919-1923, and by the Gosse Packing Company Limited in 1924-28. The latter concern was absorbed by the B. C. Packers as from the 1929 season.

BRUNSWICK (Rivers Inlet). The first cannery here was operated in the season of 1896, and was owned by the Brunswick Canning Co. It was sometimes referred to as "Brunswick III", as the Company also had canneries at Steveston and Cance Pass.

The name Brunswick comes from the name of the Company, which had a cannery on the Fraser as early as 1893.

WADHAM'S (Rivers Inlet). E. A. Wadham operated a cannery on the Fraser in 1883, and his cannery on Rivers Inlet was first operated in 1897.

The cannery was, of course, named after its original owner.

CLAXTON. This cannery was opened in the season of 1897 by the Royal Canadian Company. In 1898 it was operated by the Victoria Canning Company, and in 1900 by Wallace Brothers. I believe that the Wallace Fisheries Limited were absorbed by the B. C. Packers before the operating season of 1928.

H. R. MacMillan, Esq.,

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After 1900 the old records seem to be much less detailed and complete, and I have been unable so far to trace the history of the later canneries accurately. The official returns are given by company instead of by cannery, and it will be necessary to consult the list of cannery licenses for each season in order to ascertain when certain of them were first operated. These lists have not been published, and are not accessible at the moment; but I hope to be able to secure them at a later date.

Meanwhile various officials and old-timers have given me the following opinions as to when and by whom certain of the other canneries you listed were built:

EGCOLE - by Butterfield & Mackey, during the War.
KILDONAN - by John and Peter Wallace.
WALKER LAKE - by B. C. Packers, about 1927.
QUATHIASKI - by W. A. Anderson.

You will be interested to know that I find that there is a considerable amount of information available about the canning industry in British Columbia in the 1876-1900 period, and that I should be able to compile a fairly complete account of it when I have the time to do the required research.

Yours very truly,

Provincial Librarian
and Archivist.