

184 Mount Benson: 1924

This one and one-half storey residence built in 1924 for Archibald Charles Van Houten is a very good example of a late Craftsman bungalow, a popular style among Nanaimo's entrepreneurial and professional class during the 1920s. All the elements of the Late Craftsman style are expressed by the horizontal massing; large, open front verandah supported on twinned columns; side, jerkin-headed gable roof with front jerkin-headed gable that projects over front verandah; wide lapped wooden siding with a bell-cast at the bottom of each wall; and multi-paned, double hung wooden sash windows.



Who lived at 184 Mt Benson?

1. **Archibald Charles Van Houten and Mary Octavia Dawson 1924-1940**
2. **John Trevor Dudley and Annie Eileen Gerhart 1942-1953**
3. **John Alfred Webster Gorosh & Gladys Morris Peterson 1954 -1972**

1. ARCHIBALD CHARLES VAN HOUTEN & MARY OCTAVIA DAWSON 1924-1940

Archibald Charles (A. C.) Van Houten was born Jul 13 1872 in Salt Lake City, Utah the son of John Van Houten (1825-1879) and Mary McGregor (1845-1887). Although born in 1872, Archibald wasn't actually baptized until Nov 19 1877 in Nanaimo and on his baptismal certificate, his father's last name is unknown and his mother is using only her maiden name.¹ Thus begins the curious story about A. C. Van Houten's father, John Van Houten.

Archibald's mother, Mary McGregor was born Jan 29 1845 in Ayrshire Scotland the daughter of John McGregor (1811-1866), a Scottish miner, and his wife Mary. The family arrived at Fort Victoria on May 31 1849 from Scotland aboard the *Harpooner* having been indentured to the Hudson's Bay Company for up to five years. The miners initially were deployed in trying to establish a coal mine at Fort Rupert on the north east coast of Vancouver Island. When that failed, John McGregor and family ended up in San Francisco looking for gold and then back to Nanaimo on Sep 4 1852 working again for the Hudson Bay Company.²

In 1856, after John had an altercation with George Robinson resident manager of the Winthuysen Inlet coal mine in Nanaimo, the McGregor family moved to Sooke. John McGregor purchased 180 acres of land in Metchosin District on Oct 6 1857 and built a family home they named Oakwood. The following year, another 100 acres from the adjoining property were added to their estate. In 1861, their eldest daughter, Mary, was married at Oakwood to John Van Houten who was supposedly from Hawaii.³

Where John Van Houten really came from, we truly don't know. Some say he was originally from Germany and there is no evidence to affirm that he came from Hawaii. In answer to a question about his father's origins in the *1921 Canada Census*, son Charles noted that his father came from Holland.

¹ BC Archives Microfilm Number: B 16231

² <http://www.nanaimoarchives.ca/transcripts-recordings/historical-transcripts/barraclough-william-wharf-and-bastion-streets/>

³ Kilts on the coast: the Scots Who Built BC by Jan Peterson page 147

We do know, however, that John Van Houten would get caught up in that moving social entity which was the gold rushes of the mid-1800s. The California (1848), Australia (1852), Fraser River (1858), and the Montana, Nevada, Idaho and Cariboo (1862) rushes all occurred within a span of fewer than 20 years and they were soon followed by the silver strikes of the 1870's in Arizona and Nevada. The first and most successful prospectors were often those with previous mining experience and so those flocking to these various rushes encountered many of the same friends and acquaintances. Perhaps John Van Houten had been in Australia in 1852 which is why he might have ended up in Victoria via Hawaii. Sailing from Australia to San Francisco presumably included a stop at what were then called the Sandwich Islands. Born in 1825, John would have been 27 years old at the time.

Or perhaps, Van Houten arrived in Victoria from San Francisco via New York and Panama having made his way previously from either Germany or Holland to North America. An A J. Van Houten, for example, was a passenger on the steamer *Tennessee* which departed Panama on Apr 25 1852 arriving in San Francisco 14 days later on May 10 1852.⁴

When gold was discovered in California in Jan 1648, there was an immediate rush of emigrants wanting to reach the west coast in a hurry. Until the completion of the Central Pacific-Union Pacific Railroad out of Sacramento in 1869, Panama offered the shortest land journey between the Atlantic and the Pacific with ships regularly departing from New York to Panama. The principal drawbacks lay in the climate and the hardship of travelling about 60 miles across the isthmus as well as the insufficiency of ships on the Pacific to carry passengers from Panama to San Francisco. Until a railway was completed in 1855, the east-west transit across the isthmus was by native dugout canoe and then overland by mule over old Spanish trails taking four to eight days. By this route, it would take about 50 days to reach Vancouver Island from New York as long as passengers were not detained in either Panama or San Francisco. Sailing around Cape Horn took about five months.

We do know that Mary and John Van Houten's first child, Eva Ann Van Houten was born on Aug 31 1862 in Victoria BC so that places the couple in this city at least up to that date.⁵ John also tried to run a butcher shop at Government and Johnson Streets in Victoria. Unfortunately, that didn't last long as he filed a notice in the *Daily Colonist* dissolving the business on Mar 21 1861.

NOTICE.

THE CREDITORS OF MR. JOHN VAN HOUTEN, of Government Wharf, and Johnson streets, (Butcher), are requested to meet at Mr. Drake's office on Government street, on THURSDAY 21st inst., at 3 o'clock, P. M., for the purpose of inspecting the state of his affairs and to take steps for the liquidation of their demands.

Mr. T. DRAKE,
Solicitor for Mr Van Houten.

m20 2t

British Columbia experienced two big gold rushes, one in 1858 on the Fraser River and the other in 1862 in the Cariboo district when gold was discovered in the middle basin of the Quesnel River around Keithley Creek and Quesnel Forks, just below and west of Quesnel Lake. In each case, tens of thousands of men (and a few women) sailed north from California, where that gold rush was coming to an end landing in Esquimalt Harbour. Governor James Douglas ensured British sovereignty over gold claims by requiring all prospectors to have a license and charging 10 shillings or US\$5 for it. On Jul 13 1862, John Van Houten purchased mining licence #9524 in the Cariboo's Williams Creek area.⁶

⁴ Louis Rasmussen, San Francisco Ships Passenger Lists, Volume 3, page 186

⁵ 1901 Canada Census

⁶ <https://issuu.com/pgcitizen/docs/barkerville>

In the meantime, Mary Van Houten's parents, the McGregors sold their property at Metchosin in January 1863 to a Hans Helgesen who renamed it Sherwood Farm and returned to Nanaimo, where John went back to work in the mines now owned by the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Company. John McGregor died Jan 12 1866 at 55 at his home on Front Street.⁷

The Cariboo gold rush lasted just until 1867 but by then Van Houten had left the Cariboo and surfaced in the US where their next child, Ernest McGregor Van Houten was born Jun 25 1865 in Walla Walla Oregon. In the summer of 1860, rich gold prospects were discovered on a tributary of Oro Fino creek in the Nez Percés country within territory now in the state of Idaho. In 1861, several thousand men flooded into the area many of them retreating from the Cariboo. Walla Walla became a booming center for provisions, equipment and animals.

By 1866 with gold reserves diminishing in Oregon, the Van Houtens moved about 300 miles south to Idaho City where son Walton John Van Houten was born Aug 8 1866 and daughter Rosine Van Houten on Aug 1 1867. Both children would not be baptized until Aug 5 1869 in Boise the new capital of Idaho some 40 miles west. Originally known as "Bannock", Idaho City was settled in Dec 1862 early in the gold rush to the Boise Basin region of southern Idaho. By 1864, with over 7,000 residents, it would become the largest city in the Pacific Northwest, eclipsing even Portland Oregon.



The *Daily Alt* out of San Francisco reported that: *On Sundays the miners swarm into town from their camps, and render the day exceedingly lively, especially as they purchase most of their supplies then, and do their drinking for the week. Society is rapidly improving here, owing, doubtless to the influence of women, a large number of whom are here and perhaps to the promptness and vigilance of our officers, who leave no stone unturned to ferret out and bring justice offenders against law and order.*

By the 1870's the Boise Basin would decline as the richest of the placer deposits had been worked out so it was time for the Van Houtens to move on. Next stop was another 350 miles south to Salt Lake City, Utah where Mary Belle Van Houten was born in 1869 and Archibald Charles Van Houten in 1872.

Salt Lake City was at the cross-roads of the westward trek and it became a vital trading point for speculators and prospectors travelling through to the California gold rush. The beginnings of commercial mining started in Oct 1862 with the arrival of experienced prospectors who happened to be soldiers under Colonel Patrick E Conner. In 1863 the first formal claims were located in the Bingham Canyon area, and this spurred further exploration. Discoveries soon followed in Tooele County and in Little Cottonwood Canyon in 1864. With the development of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 came the transportation network necessary to elevate Utah's mining efforts from small-scale activity to larger commercial enterprises. However, a scarcity of water and gold that could be panned meant that claims were abandoned and disappointed prospectors left the district. It wouldn't be until 1889 using a newly developed cyanide leaching process that the gold would be successfully recovered.

⁷ Kilts on the Coast by Jan Peterson

By 1872, John Van Houten and Mary McGregor now had six children: three sons and three daughters: Ernest, Walton, Charles, Eva, Rosine and May Belle. For ten years, they had been trekking across the country looking for the pot at the end of the rainbow. But John Van Houten had one more pot to look for and it was another 800 miles south.

In 1879, a silver vein was discovered at Goose Flats near present day Tombstone, Arizona and John just had to join the rush. It's not known whether Mary and the children went with him or they returned to Nanaimo. It's probable that they returned to Nanaimo because eldest daughter Eva married Charles Coldwell on Jul 1 1879 in New Westminster. We do know that by Oct 27 1879, John Van Houten was in Tucson Arizona where he signed a promise to pay \$200 to an Edward Hudson. He somehow became interested in the infamous Brunckow Mine near Tombstone notorious because the mine's namesake had been killed by his workers in 1860. This was not a safe place to be.

On Nov 9 1879, Van Houten had a run-in with some miners or claim jumpers at the Brunckow silver mine. What precipitated the disagreement is lost, but Van Houten was brutally beaten in the face with a rock until he died from a skull fracture without disclosing his attackers. Two men, James Cassidy and Frank Stilwell, were charged with the murder but acquitted for lack of evidence. Two years later, on Mar 18 1881, Stilwell made the mistake of being seen in the area when Morgan Earp was shot in the back while playing pool with his brother Wyatt. Wyatt Earp made sure that Stilwell was a dead man and John Van Houten was avenged. Houten is buried in the Tombstone Boothill Graveyard.



During probate hearings, Mary Van Houten hired the local law firm of Haynes, Lucas & Street to plead her case for a return to her of John's estate given that she had no income of her own. The estate of less than \$500 consisted of a rented room for 19 months on Meyer Street in Tucson along with an interest of unknown value in several mining claims. Probate was finally completed in Apr 1880.⁸ In Arizona, John had been referred to as Colonel Van Houten but it is not known where the rank came from. Some noted that it predated the American Civil War and might have come from his "native Germany".⁹ The mystery continues.

Mary Van Houten and the family settled in Nanaimo and she appears there in the *1881 Canada Census* as a widow at the age of 36, with five children living at home: Ernest 17; Walton 15; Rosine 14; May 12; and Charles 9. Daughter Eva Van Houten Coldwell, aged 19, was living with her husband Charles and 1 year old baby Charles A Coldwell in New Westminster. Charles Coldwell Sr was a mill foreman at Hastings Mill and seventeen years older than Eva. He would become a Vancouver alderman in 1886.

The family could now settle down to a relatively normal life. In 1881, school boy Charles Van Houten was a successful prize winner of a book given by a prominent citizen. Other prize winners of the day included his schoolmate Albert Planta. In 1890, Charles



⁸ 1879-1880 Probate of John Van Houten's estate in Pima Arizona. Case file: 195-218

⁹ <https://issuu.com/pgcitizen/docs/barkerville>

and brother Ernest were part of the Nanaimo volunteer fire brigade hose reel racing team. On Dec 17 1884, Rosa Van Houten married Walter E Blackett in Nanaimo.

Sadly, Mary McGregor Van Houten died on Dec 8 1887 in Nanaimo. The picture of her with her mother, Mary McGregor (seated), daughter Eva Coldwell (on the right) and grandson, Charles Coldwell must have been taken just before she died.¹⁰



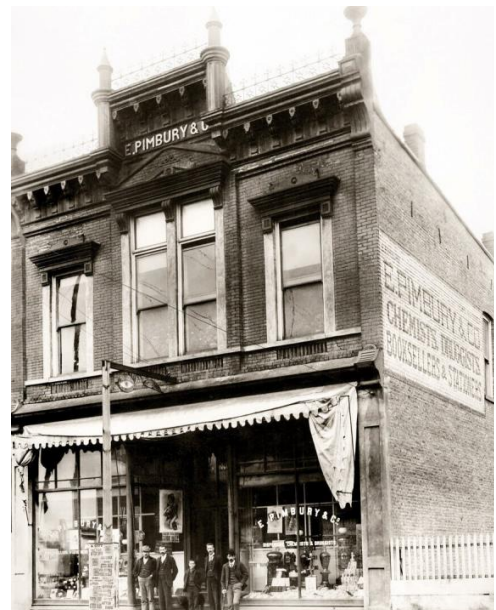
By 1891, all the Van Houten brothers were gainfully employed in Nanaimo. Ernest, now 27 appeared to be a partner with Edwin Pimbury in a druggist and stationery business on Commercial Street. Charles at 19 was employed at E Pimbury & Co as a clerk; and Walton John, aged 20 seemed to be in partnership with an Albert Edward Randle in the hardware business on Victoria Crescent. Walton John and sister May Belle as well as brothers Charles and Ernest were living together at 49 Albert Street.



Edwin Pimbury (1834-1909) was born in Hyde, Gloucestershire. He apprenticed in the drug business in England but unable to purchase a business there, he left England in 1855 and travelled to Maine, Wisconsin, California, Arizona, Victoria, Duncan and finally Nanaimo where he established a retail business selling drugs, books and stationery. In 1890, Ernest McGregor Van Houten joined him as a partner. Pimbury also represented Cowichan as MLA in the provincial government from 1875 to 1882.

Commercial telephone service came to Nanaimo in Aug 1887 motivated by telegrapher J.A. Callaghan who had seen it successfully implemented in Victoria. He discussed it with some of the leading citizens of the day including businessman A.R. Johnston and druggist E. Pimbury who agreed to invest \$1.80 each for 12 telephones and a switchboard. In 1889, E. Pimbury's telephone number was 3 out of a total of 47 subscribers.

In 1889, Pimbury engaged architect Elmer H Fisher from Seattle to design a new building for his business at 29 Commercial. A drawing of the building was published in the magazine *West Shore* in 1889. Fisher (c1840-1905) was best known for his work during the rebuilding of Seattle after it was devastated by fire in 1889. After his reputation was damaged by personal scandal in Seattle, he relocated to Los Angeles in 1893 where he only had modest success as an architect before returning to carpentry, passing away in 1905. The picture of Pimbury & Co taken in the 1890s has several people standing in front of the building presumably including Mr Pimbury and the Van Houten brothers.



¹⁰ Kilts on the Coast: The Scots who built BC by Jan Peterson

The next decade was a busy one for the Van Houtens as on Nov 26 1892, Walton John Van Houten married Elizabeth Wilkinson in Nanaimo. On Dec 10 1892, May Belle Van Houten married Henry Albert Simpson in Nanaimo; and, on Dec 5 1896, Ernest McGregor Van Houten married Essie Hannah Keddy in Nanaimo. Sadly, Ernest, passed away on May 4 1901 in Victoria at just 36 years old. He had travelled to California a few months before for the benefit of his health and died on the return journey just as he landed at Victoria from Walla Walla, Washington. Charles, who had gone to meet him, brought the remains up to Nanaimo on the evening train.¹¹

In the *1901 Canada Census*, Charles Van Houten is now actually lodging with his boss, Edwin Pimbury at 58 Commercial Street presumably because all of his siblings are now married and living elsewhere. Charles officially calls himself a druggist and is earning \$600 per year. Edwin Pimbury's annual earnings are \$840 plus another \$500 in "other".

On Jun 22 1904, Archibald Charles Van Houten married Mary Octavia Dawson in Nanaimo. Charles was 31 and now officially a chemist, and Mary was 22. Mary Dawson was born Oct 6 1883 in Quebec, the daughter of Henry Dawson (1846-1904) and Jane Elizabeth Gibson (1844-1927) who were both born in England but married in Canterbury New Zealand on Jul 27 1870. In 1879, after the birth of several children, the family appears to have emigrated to Cookshire, Quebec 30km east of Sherbrooke where Mary was born. By 1891, the family of 10 children had moved to Nanaimo where Henry Dawson was a teamster. Unfortunately, Mary's father had just passed away on Jun 4 1904 at the age of 58.

Another unfortunate occurrence was the passing of Charles' grandmother, Mary McGregor in 1905 at the age of 85.¹² Then Edwin Pimbury died on April 6 1909 at 75 years. Both of them had certainly lived a full life as pioneers of the west coast. In the *1910 Henderson BC Directory*, Charles Van Houten is now the proprietor of E Pimbury & Co Druggists on Commercial Street.



According to signatures on medical prescriptions, from 1914 to 1923, there were two physicians in Nanaimo who handled the majority of patients: Dr. W. F. Drysdale, who served as the Medical Health Officer of Nanaimo until the mid-thirties, and Dr. MacPhee.¹³ Drug stores J.B. Hodgins and Van Houten's offered their services to the general public. By the early 1920's, expansion and competition demanded an eye/ ear/ nose/ throat specialist W.E.J. Ekins and an additional drugstore Terry's, a branch operation from Vancouver. Concern for health in general was a rather new phenomenon of the late nineteenth century. This concern was reflected in numerous prescriptions, a majority of them prescribed specifically for women. Lysol, for example, was obtained by prescription and used by many women as a douche as well as for other disinfecting purposes.

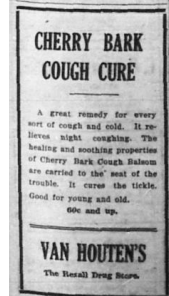
Pharmacy was in a transitional stage in Nanaimo. More products and services were available to the public than ever before. Patent medicine brand name products that had something to offer everyone were advertised in the local paper, such as Beecham's Pills and Rexall Nerve Remedy. In 1911, AC Van Houten announced that he had made an important connection with three thousand retail druggists throughout the US and Canada who had formed a co-operative company for the purpose of producing a line of medical

¹¹ Vancouver Province, Monday, May 6, 1901

¹² BC Archives Registration Number: 1905-09-048265

¹³ BC Historical News – Summer 1993: A Tale Told by Prescriptions by Cindy Whitmore

preparations which they “recommend, absolutely guarantee and back up with their own names and personal reputations.”¹⁴ This was the selling of the Rexall brand to the populace and there were three hundred of these “Rexall Remedies” to choose from.



The Spanish Influenza struck Nanaimo like the rest of Canada with lightning speed in 1918 and in November of that year, there were 76 deaths from all causes in Nanaimo as compared to the average number of 18. Prescriptions show that remedies sought were a mixture of superstition, tradition and a hope in modern medicine. During prohibition which started in late 1917, various forms of alcohol became very popular as a requested cure for influenza.



"Nanaimo on a busy day." Canadian Souvenir Post Card. Published for A. C. van Houten, Nanaimo, B. C. Warwick Bro's & Rutter, Limited, Publishers, Toronto. View looking north up Commercial Street from the 200-block and into the 000-block of Church Street (right) in Nanaimo, BC on Vancouver Island.

Business was booming and Charles engaged architect Alexander Ernest Henderson (1873-1927) of Vancouver to design a new retail store for his business at 16 Commercial Street which was right at the corner of Terminal Avenue and next to the Strand Theatre and Fletcher’s Music Co Ltd. In the 1950s, it was occupied by F. W. Woolworth & Co Ltd variety store and eventually demolished for the construction of the Nanaimo Conference Centre which opened in 2008. Charles’ residence at that time was at 40 Robarts Street.

Built in 1909, the Van Houten Block was a good example of the type of modest, vernacular Edwardian era commercial building that once predominated in Nanaimo’s downtown core. It was the sole surviving example of this style on this block of Commercial Street. This classic, symmetrical style was very popular after the exuberant eclecticism of the Victorian era. Business was going so well that, in 1912, Charles owned one of 57 cars in Nanaimo as did his brother, Walton John Van Houten who was now living in Vancouver.



In 1918, Charles and Mary welcomed their son, Charles William Van Houten.

In 1919, Charles became the consular agent for the United States in Nanaimo and fulfilled that position for 14 years. The first consular post of the United States to be established in western Canada was at Victoria, in what was then the Colony of Vancouver Island. The first consular officer was appointed by President Lincoln on Nov 11 1861 and the office opened officially on April 14, 1862. Among the reasons why the Consulate was established was the large number of American citizens who had been attracted to the region following the discovery of gold in the Fraser River Basin in 1856. There were also rumors that a group of Confederate sympathizers were active in the area. Today, American consulate services outside Vancouver are provided via a travelling “pop-up consulate” to accept passport applications, reports of births abroad, and provide notarial services and voter registration information for US citizens. The last one to visit Nanaimo was on Jan 24 2019.

¹⁴ Nanaimo Daily News: Jul 22 1911

In the *1921 Canada Census*, the family is still living at 40 Robarts Street and Charles is 48 and wife Mary is 39. Son Charles William is 3. Living with them is a servant, Mary Clark age 17.

In 1924, Charles and his family moved into their new house on 3rd street at the corner of Vancouver Avenue in Townsite. Today, the address is 184 Mount Benson. They would live there until 1940.

In 1926, a group of local businessmen decided that Nanaimo needed a new 'modern hotel' that would make Nanaimo a "favourite stopping place for a better class of travelling people". Modern meant elevators and telephones. They formed the Nanaimo Community Hotel Limited and looked for subscriptions for the \$220,000 they needed to finance the project. The company had 26 directors formed from the who's who of Nanaimo businesses including pharmacist A.C. Van Houten. To further distinguish it from other establishments in town, there would be no liquor served. The Hotel Malaspina opened Jul 30 1927. In 1937, Charles Van Houten was still on the hotel's Board of Directors. In 1938, artists Edward John Hughes, Orville Fisher and Paul Goranson created several mural projects for the hotel one of which was rediscovered when the building was being renovated in 1996. The painting of the Malaspina Galleries was saved and restored and is on display in the Nanaimo Conference Centre.



This view of the Hotel Malaspina is from the harbour. The hotel opened July 30, 1927, and a new wing was added in 1940.

In 1940, Charles retired from the pharmaceutical business and he and Mary moved to Vancouver where they lived at 3993 West 37th Street. Charles and Mary had just the one child, Charles William Van Houten born in 1918 who became an accountant. He would marry Helen Des Brisay in Vancouver on Dec 3 1943. She was the daughter of Alexander Campbell Des Brisay. C W (Bill) Van Houten died 1986.

Archibald Charles Van Houten died on Jan 30 1945 at the age of 72. He was noted as a member of the Kiwanis Club and an enthusiastic fisherman and hunter no doubt honed from his travels as a child in the western United States. He was survived by his wife, his son, his brother Walton living in California and his sister Rosine also living in California. His wife, Mary Octavia Dawson Van Houten, died Jan 4 1960 in Vancouver.

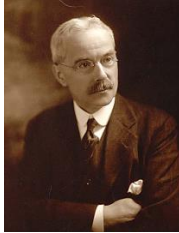
2. JOHN TREVOR DUDLEY & ANNIE EILEEN GERHART 1942-1953

John Trevor Dudley was born Jun 17 1895 at Trehafod, Pontypridd, Glamorgan, Wales the son of James Dudley (1863-1943) and his second wife, Margaret Ann Evans (1870-1959). His parents had married on Jul 7 1890 in Pontypridd and like pretty much every other male in his village, James Dudley was a coal miner. His parents decided to emigrate to Canada and on May 22 1898, John Trevor Dudley arrived at Quebec aboard the Vancouver when he was just 2 years old with his mother and an older sister. His father had emigrated in 1896. By the *1901 Census of Canada*, the family was settled in Nanaimo. Picture is of James Dudley and family. In the back from left are: Hubert, Katherine and John. In the front from left are: Beatrice, Margaret, James Dudley, wife Margaret Ann Evans and Florence.



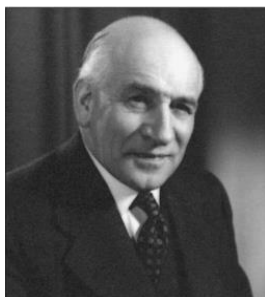
In the *1911 Canada Census*, John T Dudley, age 16, is working as a clerk earning \$650 a week. According to the *1910-1911 Henderson's Greater Victoria City Directory*, mother Margaret Dudley is a dressmaker and the family is living on Prideaux Street. John enlisted with the 103rd Battalion in Nanaimo and served in France with the 54th Canadian Infantry Battalion in WWI sailing out of Halifax on Jul 23 1916. He sustained a gunshot wound to his left foot and spent some time in a Calais hospital in 1917. He was discharged on Feb 28 1919.

In the *1921 Canada Census*, John Trevor is 26 years old, and working as a salesman for a wholesale grocer. The family is living at 24 Prideaux Street.



The wholesale grocery firm John Dudley worked for was W.H. Malkin Company founded in 1895 in Vancouver by brothers, William Harold (pictured), James Frederick, and John Phillip Malkin. William Harold Malkin was one of Gastown's great entrepreneurs. Originally from the pottery town of Burslem, Staffordshire, England, he first landed in the prairies but left there in 1895 and upon arriving to the burgeoning city, saw opportunity at every turn. Partnering with his brother Fred, the Malkins worked hard at the Osmund Skrine Wholesale Produce Store, staying focused on the greater potential that was to be found. The Kootenay's were deep in a mining boom and the mighty Klondike gold rush was growing to feverish levels. These industries needed large volumes of groceries and supplies.

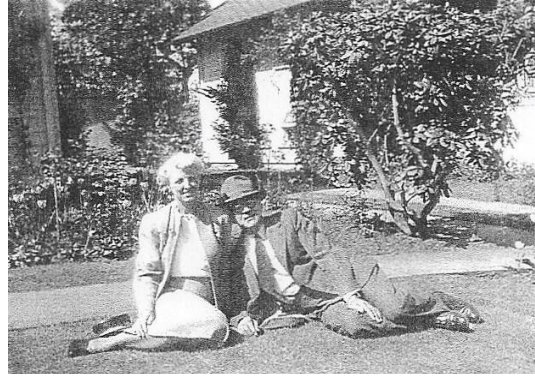
Gastown was both perfectly situated and ripe for production to expand and the Malkin's knew their plans could strike gold. Jolted into action, they bought Osmond Skrine Produce in 1897, changing the name to W.H. Malkin & Co. Wholesale Grocers, Tea Blenders and Coffee Roasters. The young company went on to add preserves, pickles and import spices to their product line and quickly become one of Vancouver's most important import businesses. Quality Malkin products could be found in every household as well as in the packs of hopeful prospectors heading for the Klondike. Within 8 short years, William Malkin had built three warehouses on Water Street in Vancouver. W H Malkin served as Mayor of Vancouver from 1929 -1932.



In the *1921 Wrigley's British Columbia Directory*, George S Pearson was the managing director of Malkin-Pearson Co Ltd wholesale grocers, confectionery and tobacco of Nanaimo with offices in Lubbock Square (pictured). He had been in that position since at least 1918. In 1920, George Pearson and 23 other local businessmen started the Nanaimo Rotary Club and he was its first president. George would also represent the Nanaimo area as a Liberal in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia from 1928 to 1952. The Pearson Bridge over the Millstone River is named after him.

On Sep 1 1923, John Trevor Dudley married Annie Eileen Gerhart from Vancouver. Eileen was born in Sep 28 1901 at Hull, Quebec the eldest daughter of Henry Franklin Gerhart (1871-1937), a millwright, and Lillian Thomas (1878-1953). Her parents had married Apr 13 1897 in Muskoka where Eileen's father was a farmer. Annie Eileen Gerhart was a teacher at the time of her marriage. She and John Trevor Dudley would have three sons: Gordon Gerhart Dudley (1924-2009); Dr John Howard Dudley (1928-2010); and Robert J Dudley who were all raised in Nanaimo.

John Trevor Dudley spent the rest of his working life with W. H. Malkin. He would move his **family to 184 Mount Benson in 1942** when it was still called 3rd street and remain there until his retirement in 1953 when he is listed as “unemployed” on the Voter’s List. The picture is of John Dudley and his wife, Annie Gerhart, possibly on the lawn of 184 Mt Benson.



John Trevor died on Feb 11 1965 and Annie Eileen Dudley (Gerhart) died a month later on Mar 26 1965 in the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital. She was 63 years of age. Their address at the time was 259 Pine Street where they had moved to around 1962.

4. JOHN ALFRED WEBSTER GOROSH & GLADYS MORRIS PETERSON 1954 -1972

John Alfred Webster Gorosh was born Dec 4 1926 in Vancouver, the son of John Gorosh Sr (1888-1973) and Dora Elizabeth Webster (1904-1990). His father, John Gorosh Sr, was born Sep 27 1888 in Latvia, son of Abraham Myer Gorosh and Anna Feiga Yoffe and came to Canada around 1900, settling in Vancouver where he became a furniture merchant.

Abram Gorosh (b 1843) and Khana-Feiga Yoffe (1861-1927) were married Feb 4 1891 in Varaklanu, Rezhitsa, Vtebsk, Latvia. At the time, Abram was a widower, age 48 and Khana-Feiga Yoffe was 30. Abram had previously been married at Riga in 1878 to Khana-Sarah Feishk.¹⁵ Some of his children, like John Gorosh Sr would have been with his first wife. The children of Abraham Gorosh were:

1. Samuel or Simon Gorosh (1885- Jun 21 1915);
2. John Gorosh Sr (1888-1973)
3. Louis or Leo Gorosh (1891-1935)
4. Sarah Gorosh Reed b 1892 (not verified)
5. Jacob Isaac Gorosh 1894-1965)
6. Eva Gorosh Ontman (1899-1997)
7. Celia Gorosh Levin (1900-1989)

In the *1911 Canada Census*, John Gorosh Sr, 24, merchant, is a lodger in Vancouver with his brother, Louis Gorosh and they own their own furniture store. In the *1913 Henderson’s Directory of Vancouver*, Louis and Samuel Gorosh are noted as running the Cedar Cottage Furniture store while another brother, Isaac was a watchmaker at Koenigsberg Jewelry. They all lived at 852 Union Street in Vancouver. In the *1917 Henderson’s Greater Vancouver City Directory*, John Gorosh is with the Pacific Furniture Company while sisters Celia and Eva are employed by Guarantee Tailors. They are all living at 1166 Georgia E in Vancouver. In the *1920 Henderson’s Vancouver Directory*, both John and Louis are now working for Pacific Furniture Company and they are living at 306 Vernon Drive.

In the *1921 Canada Census*, John, 26, and brother Leo (Louis), 30, are still at 306 Vernon Drive in Vancouver and living with their widowed mother, Anna Gorosh, 61, and possibly sister Sarah, 29, married to a John Reed, 32. Both John Gorosh Sr and brother Leo are still in the furniture removal business.

¹⁵ Latvia Marriages and Divorces Database: https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/jgdetail_2.php

On Sep 3 1921, John Gorosh Sr, 33, married Dora Elizabeth Webster, 21, of Nanaimo at Whatcom, Washington.¹⁶ It's not known why the couple went to Whatcom County which is in the northwest corner of Washington state bordering on the Lower Mainland. John's sister, Celia Gorosh Levin was living in Bellingham at the time. Dora was born in Nanaimo in 1904, the daughter of Thomas Webster, a coal miner born in England in 1875 who had immigrated to Canada in 1890; and Dora Elizabeth Cook (1883-1963) born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. They had married about 1900. Thomas Webster might have died around 1912 as he disappears from the Nanaimo directory at that time. The children of John Gorosh Sr and Dora Elizabeth Webster, all born in Vancouver, were:

1. Frederick Robert Gorosh (1927-1978)
2. John Alfred Webster Gorosh Jr (1926-2020),
3. Audrey Gorosh Bodger (1934-2020)

In the *1922 Henderson's Greater Vancouver Directory*, brothers John Sr and Louis are still proprietors at the Pacific Furniture Company. On Nov 11 1927, John Sr's mother, Anna Gorosh died in Vancouver at the age of 71.

By the *1930 British Columbia Directory*, brother Jacob is a chiroprapist; Louis is a merchant; and John Sr is with BC Furniture Mart. By the *1934 Sun British Columbia Directory*, John Sr is now the proprietor of BC Furniture Mart; Jacob is a fully trained foot specialist with a larger advertisement in the directory; and Louis has now retired at the age of 56. On Nov 10 1935, Louis Gorosh died in Vancouver at the age of 57.

At some point, probably as a result of his brother passing, John Gorosh Sr decided to move to Nanaimo where in the *1937 British Columbia and Yukon Directory*, he is the manager at Angell's Trading at 426 Fitzwilliam. Angell's Trading is now home of McLean's Specialty Foods. As told by the family, John Sr, looking for better economic prospects, by 1935 had moved the family to Nanaimo, taking up their first residence in the rear of a second-hand furniture store at 426 Fitzwilliam St. The family business also sold cast iron kitchen stoves, and teenaged John Jr had the job of carrying the heavy deliveries.¹⁷

Built in 1926 for local second-hand goods merchant, Hyman Angel, Angell's Trading Building represents the style of the majority of commercial buildings constructed during the interwar period in Nanaimo. A simple, functional building, it takes full advantage of its sloped site to bring light into the exposed basement and accommodate loading facilities at the rear. The oversize front windows designed to showcase merchandise further emphasize the building's functional quality. Character defining elements include all the elements of a vernacular commercial building as expressed in the simple form and massing; rear loading facility; horizontal lapped wooden siding; storefront transom windows; central recessed entry; and raised front parapet.



The building was designed and built by Alexander Forrester (1868-1949) who was active as an architect in Nanaimo from 1908 to 1926. Born in Scotland, he emigrated to Canada from Utah in 1890 and settled in Vancouver where city directories record him as a carpenter. After 1905, he began to style himself as an

¹⁶ Washington US Marriage Records 1854-2013 for John Gorosh and Dora Webster, Sep 3 1921

¹⁷ John A W Gorosh Obituary, Oct 6 2020

“architect” with an office in Nanaimo. Typical of many men of his time, Forrester, in addition to his busy construction business, was very active in civic affairs, serving both as alderman and school trustee for many years. He died in Nanaimo on Apr 25 1949.

In 1942, after 6 years of cramped living behind the store, Dora laid down the law and the Gorosh family moved to a much bigger home at 352 Wesley Street. John Jr attended John Shaw High School, and joined the Nanaimo Fire Department while still in Grade 11. He slept at the fire hall most nights for several years.

On Feb 19 1949, John Gorosh Jr married Gladys Morris Peterson, the daughter of stepfather Clayton Peterson and Kay Peterson of 625 Wentworth Street. The wedding’s master of ceremonies was Fire Chief James Anthony who toasted the bride, suitably replied by the groom.¹⁸



Gladys was born Mar 10 1931, in a log farmhouse near Kelliher, Saskatchewan. Since the rural school she attended did not teach beyond Grade 8, she left the family farm at 13, to join her mother in Nanaimo, expressly to continue to Grade 12. She was a very motivated and keen student, and loved her years at John Shaw High School and the many lifelong friendships she made there. As a teenager working at her first job in the Hudson Bay Company store on Commercial Street, she caught the attention of a handsome young fireman, John Gorosh. Their first date was skiing at Forbidden Plateau with a group of friends. They would have three children: John Jr (III); Paul; and Carol Gorosh.

In 1949, the Gorosh family was still living at 352 Wesley Street and on the *Voter’s List* of that year, John Gorosh Sr is manager of a second-hand store and John Gorosh Jr is a fireman. By the *1953 Victoria City and Vancouver Island Directory*, the J Gorosh Co Ltd has been formed with John Gorosh Sr as president and John Gorosh Jr as secretary-treasurer. The company is still in the business of second-hand furniture and salvage and continues to be located at 426 Fitzwilliam.

Again, according to the family, by the late forties, John Gorosh Jr had started a scrap metal yard at Fitzwilliam St. and converted a 1922 Brownhoist front shovel into a crawler crane for loading scrap iron into railcars, first at Selby St., then at Wellington. Since the steel mills did not want scrap autos in those days, John took thousands of them anyway, and stacked them neatly, four high, creating an iconic local landmark.¹⁹

In 1954, John Jr’s scrap business, now gone, progressed into the Gorosh crane rental business that exists today, through the hands of son John (III) and now carried on by grandson Steele Gorosh. Steele started working at the company while in high school doing cleanups and errands, graduating to repairs, operating cranes, and now does something of everything as President.

In that same year, 1954, according to the *Victoria City and Vancouver Island Directory*, John Gorosh Jr and wife Gladys moved to 184 Mt Benson. They would live here until at least until 1972.

The business took John, his crews and his cranes to hundreds of industrial and construction sites on Vancouver Island. He was proud to employ some of the best operators in the business, and relied heavily

¹⁸ Nanaimo Daily News, Feb 25 1949

¹⁹ Nanaimo Daily News, Feb 25 1949

on their expertise. For more than 65 years, these cranes have been an integral part of Nanaimo history and the company has earned a reputation for reliable and quality service. As noted by grandson, Steele:

“My grandfather started out with a scrap metal company in Nanaimo in the 1950’s and bought his first crane in 1954,” Steele explains. “His first crane was actually an old front shovel (the predecessor to an excavator) that was built in the 1920’s. He cut the bucket off, built a boom for it and turned it into a crane.”²⁰

In the meantime, Gladys applied great enthusiasm, endless energy and creativity to everything she did, whether it was her various jobs: manager at Northbrook Mall, (60’s), where she persuaded the Harlem Globetrotters to drop by for a visit, her busy Ski Shop on Fitzwilliam Street, (70’s-80’s) where she delighted in fitting out whole families with used ski gear, Woodward’s – Sporting Goods Dept. (80’s) or secretary at Gorosh Cranes (50’s-90’s) or any of her other passions: swimming, snow skiing, water-skiing, travelling, entertaining, and boating with friends.



John Gorosh Sr died on Aug 7 1973, age 86 in Nanaimo. He was an active member of the community and served as past master of Ashlar Lodge number three; AF and AM, BCR of B.C. Keystone chapter number eight; R.A. Bethlehem Perceptory number 69; Gizeh Temple Colville Lodge of Perfection; Victoria chapter of the Rose Croix; Nanaimo chapter of the OES number 43, Nanaimo; Trinity Shrine WSDJ Nanaimo Shrine Club; and an affiliate member of Caribou Lodge number four. His wife, Dora Elizabeth Webster Gorosh passed away on Apr 12 1990, age 85. She was a long-time member of Nanaimo Chapter No. 43 of the O.E.S.

Edna Gladys Gorosh died on Jun 14 2020, aged 89, and John Alfred Webster Gorosh Jr passed away only 3 months later on Oct 6 2020 at the age of 94. John Gorosh Jr was an avid skier and passionate about gourmet dining, with The Chaine de Rotisseurs, and cruising the “Dixsea I” through the Gulf Islands with the Wardill family.

²⁰ Nanaimo Daily News, Feb 25 1949