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**The Rise and Demise of J.H. Todd and Sons, British
Columbia's Enduring Independent Salmon Cannery**

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The Rise and Demise of J.H. Todd and Sons, British Columbia's Enduring Independent Salmon Cannery

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., a British Columbia family-owned and run fish packing company during the years 1881 through 1954. The research presented in this paper outlines the contribution of individual Todd members to both the success and eventual demise of the company. Also examined is the history of the B. C. salmon canning industry, the evolution of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., the role of the company in the broader context of the B. C. fishing industry; and the factors that led to the demise of the company. The research relies on documentary primary sources as well as extensive oral history collection obtained from Todd family members and employees.

Key words: salmon canning; British Columbia fish packers; history of BC fishing industry

JEL categories: N52, N92, Q22

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the rise and demise of one of the British Columbia's commercial fishing industry's pioneer and family-owned fish packing companies. Prior to entering the commercial salmon canning industry in 1881, J.H. Todd, owned and operated wholesale grocery stores in Victoria and Barkerville. Upon moving into the fishing industry, J.H. Todd & Sons' canneries, cold storage facilities, fish traps, and fish fleet provided thousands of British Columbians with employment during its seventy-three year existence. By the 1920s, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. fish packing empire stretched from the Fraser River, to Vancouver Island, and the Skeena River. The company also generated millions of dollars for BC's economy, as well for numerous BC communities.

The history of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. is unique and significant. By 1954, this fishing and packing firm was the oldest privately-held processing company in BC. When other family firms consolidated in two major rounds of concentration in 1902 and 1928, Todd & Sons remained independent. It also differed in comparison to other salmon canning companies because after 1922 it was the only BC fish packing company permitted to operate fish traps in salt water.

Studying Todd & Sons' history, role and involvement in the BC commercial fishing industry, and the key individuals who made it succeed and ultimately fail, adds a missing component to the history of one of BC's most important industries.

The Todd story is a classic example of interplay of structure and agency. On the one side we have the industry structure: the erratic business cycle of the industry which followed the cycle of salmon returns; the 1946 collapse of world markets and subsequent financially crippling large pack carryovers; a unionizing labour market etc. which devastated most of the competition, and on the other side – human agency. J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. prospered where others failed on account of the personal characteristics of their leadership. In this paper, I am going to look at the personal elements that really expose human agency in the BC commercial canning industry.

The British Columbia commercial fishing industry can trace its start back to 1829 when the Hudson's Bay Company first shipped barrels of salted salmon from the Fraser River to Hawaii. The commercial salmon canning industry in BC began on an industrial level in 1870 when a cannery at Annieville, near New Westminster canned Fraser River salmon. Canning in the north, on the Skeena River, began in 1876 with the construction of Inverness Cannery, and in 1882 the first salmon cannery was built in Rivers Inlet. By that time canneries were situated and processing next to all the major salmon producing rivers along the BC coast. The salmon canning industry attracted countless individuals, and syndicates who dreamed of making their fortune. Unfortunately for the majority their dreams would not come true.

Since its inception as a province in 1871 four major primary resource-based industries have existed in British Columbia, and the commercial fishing and the salmon canning industry until quite recently played a very prominent role. The subsequent information dealing with cannery numbers, pack numbers, and numbers of people still able to earn a living in the salmon canning industry will reveal how insignificant, in comparison to the Todd era, the salmon canning industry has become (Figure 1). Three canneries located on the Fraser River processed 27,900 cases of salmon worth an estimated \$204,000 in 1874.¹ The export value of this pack was 19 percent of the total BC exports.² By 1877 six canneries employed approximately 840 shore workers, and 480 fishermen.³ When Jacob Hunter Todd began processing salmon in 1882 twelve canneries in BC produced a pack of 156,000 cases of salmon with an estimated value of \$897,000 (Value of BC Export as Percentage of Total=100%).⁴ From 1870 to 1900 the main staple export of the BC economy was canned salmon⁵. Eighty-two canneries⁶ processed salmon in 1919, employing more than 9,000.⁷

By 1953 the British Columbia commercial fishing industry ranked fourth behind the forest industry, agriculture, and mining.⁸ Twenty canneries operated and produced a total pack of 1,826,588 cases of salmon.⁹ 1953 sales of fish totalled \$65,455,000, salmon being dominant with sales of \$47,936,000.¹⁰ Regarding BC fishing industry employment numbers, 18,000 persons were directly engaged in the industry, this total being made up of approximately 6,000 shore workers and the remainder fishermen and their crew.¹¹ By 1993 the fishing industry generated over \$1 billion in wholesale economic activity with nearly 25,000 employed in the industry, and over 5,900 vessels involved in the harvest of salmon, herring etc.¹²

¹ David J. Reid, *The Development of the Fraser River Salmon Canning Industry, 1885 to 1913* (Vancouver: Environment Canada, Pacific Region, 1973), 76.

² Ibid.

³ Duncan A. Stacey, *Sockeye & Tinplate: Technological Change in the Fraser River Canning Industry* (Victoria: BC Provincial Museum, 1982), 8.

⁴ Reid, *The Development of the Fraser River Salmon Canning Industry*, 76.

⁵ Dianne Newell, ed., *The Development of the Pacific Salmon-Canning Industry* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 4.

⁶ Cicely Lyons, *Salmon: Our Heritage, the Story of a Province and an Industry* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press Limited, 1969) 338.

⁷ Vivien Bowers and Stan Garrod, *Our Land: Building the West* (Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Company, 1987), 362.

⁸ "Brief with respect to a Conciliation Board on Shoreworker Agreements," 12 July 1954, 2, private collection of Mickey Fitzgerald.

⁹ Lyons, *Salmon*, 507.

¹⁰ "Brief with respect to a Conciliation Board on Shoreworker Agreements," 12 July 1954, 2, private collection of Mickey Fitzgerald.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Don Millerd and Jack Nichol, *A Sectoral Strategy for a Sustainable Fish Processing Industry in British Columbia. The Report of the Fish Processing Strategic Task Force*, (Victoria: Queen's Printer, 1995), 2.

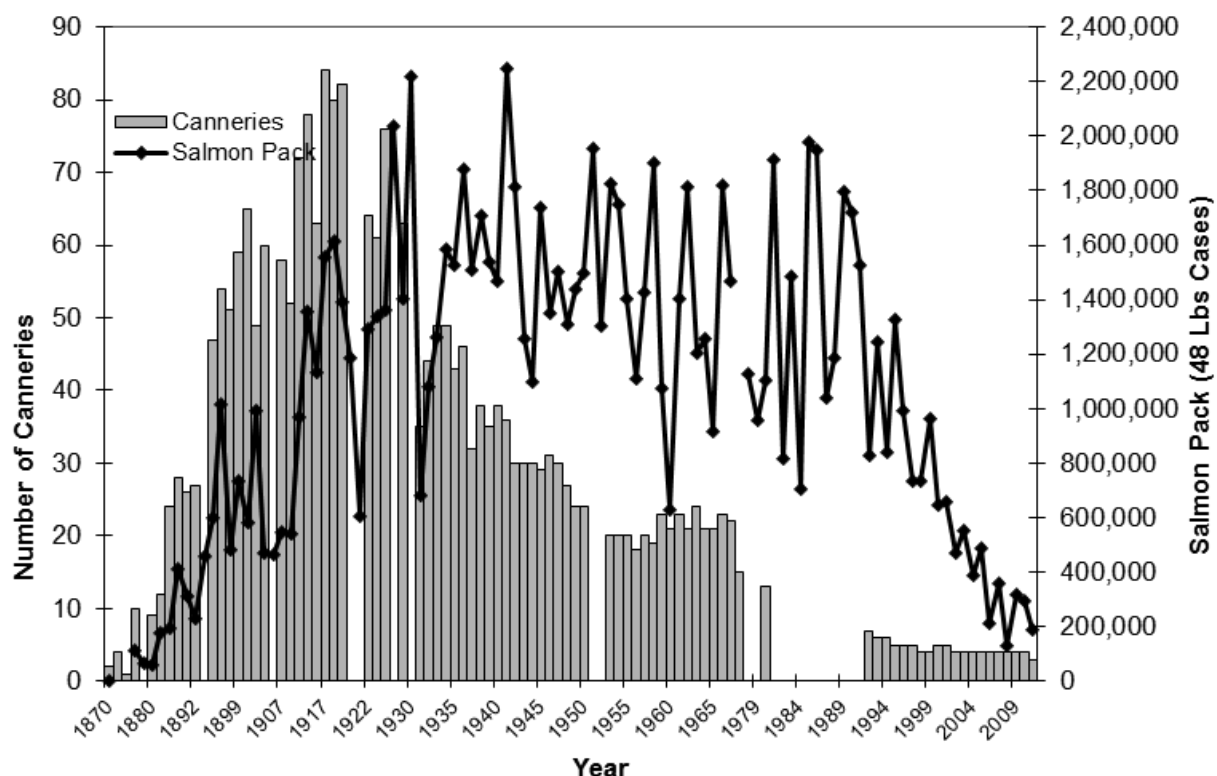


Figure 1: BC Salmon Canneries and Salmon Pack (1870- 2011)

Sources: C. Lyons, *Salmon: Our Heritage and Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries*.

**Note: Prior to 1876 fish were packed in various cans (eg. 1 lb. squats). After 1876 all salmon packs were packed in standardized 48 lb. cases, for instance 96 -1/2 lb. flats.*

Eight canneries produced an average pack of “1 million 48-lb cases of salmon by 1999,”¹³ and “canned salmon accounted for 40% of the total wholesale value of BC’s salmon products, down from 80% in 1955.”¹⁴ By 2011 it was evident that the BC salmon canning industry was a mere shell of its former self and its ‘glory days.’ Only 188,419 cases of salmon¹⁵ were produced worth an estimated \$27 million,¹⁶ less than 1/5th of the BC seafood fishing industry which generated a combined wholesale value of \$1.4 billion (equivalent to .4% of the total GDP).¹⁷ With the decrease in the fishing industry since

¹³ Daniel Francis, ed., *Encyclopedia of British Columbia* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2000), 626.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 626.

¹⁵ British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture, *British Columbia Canned Salmon Pack Bulletin-2011, Bulletin 5-Final* (Victoria, B.C.: Ministry of Agriculture, 25 January 2012). Accessed 17 July 2015. <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/omfd/fishstats/can/2011-final.pdf>.

¹⁶ Carmen Matthews, (Manager, Corporate Statistics & Research, Ministry of Agriculture), email to author, 13 March 2015.

¹⁷ British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture, *2011 British Columbia Seafood Industry: Year in Review*. Accessed 17 July 2015. <http://www.gov.bc.ca/omfd/reports/Seafood-YIR-2011.pdf>. 1.

2000, there has been a noticeable decrease of 66% in the number of workers employed in the industry, from 4,100 in 2000 to only 1,400 in 2011.¹⁸ Today only three salmon canneries still operate, the Canadian Fishing Company's Oceanside Cannery in Prince Rupert, Terry Babcock's Coastwise Cannery in Surrey, and the Nanaimo-based, St. Jean's Cannery & Smokehouse owned by the St. Jean family. The Oceanside Cannery employs between 550 and 700 workers depending on a pink or sockeye season¹⁹; the Coastwise Cannery employs about 10-12 workers²⁰ and the St. Jean's Cannery employs 160.²¹ These numbers reveal how few are still employed in the industry. In 2014, the maximum number of shore workers employed in the salmon canning industry stood at approximately 880. These employment numbers reveal two major points. First, few plants still can salmon, and second, limited work is available. These numbers clearly indicate that the once-powerful BC fishing industry has been steadily declining since the 1950s.

The fishing industry not only provided employment, but gave rise to coastal communities in BC. Towns such as Steveston, Prince Rupert, Ucluelet, and Port Hardy owe much of their existence and identity to the commercial fishing industry. A 1991 report identified approximately one hundred coastal communities that had a substantial involvement with the British Columbia commercial fishing industry.²²

Culturally, the BC commercial fishing industry has always been important for British Columbians. For First Nations communities, salmon has always been of the utmost importance. The salmon canning industry provided employment for First Nations coast wide. Typically the men fished, while the women and children worked at various jobs in the canneries. Asian immigrants and Europeans also worked in various capacities in the industry. Chinese were employed as cannery labourers. The Japanese, many of whom came from fishing backgrounds, primarily worked as fishermen and some inside the canneries. Europeans generally worked as either fishermen, or as cannery workers. Due to the fact that fishing is a seasonal industry individuals such as students, and teachers were able to supplement their incomes. Until the 1990s their seasonal labour was easy to come by, but with the slowdown in the salmon and herring sectors seasonal job opportunities have diminished.

In 1900 the fishing community of Steveston had 15 canneries which processed fish.²³ Today, only two former Steveston canneries still exist, but only as memorials to

¹⁸ Ibid., 19.

¹⁹ Lori Wilson, (Manager of Oceanside Cannery), email to author, 9 March, 2015.

²⁰ Ed Kirsch, personal interview, 8 August 2014.

²¹ Gerard St. Jean, (President of St. Jean's Cannery & Smokehouse), email to author, 2 March, 2015.

²² Don Cruickshank, *A Commission of Inquiry into Licensing and Related Policies of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans* (Victoria: Fleming Printing Ltd, 1991), 98-99.

²³ Mitsuo Yesaki, *A Historical Guide to the Steveston Waterfront* (Vancouver: Peninsula Pub, 2002), 1.

the industry as National Historical sites. Today, the salmon canning industry is a mere shell of its former self, and how much longer salmon will be canned in BC is anyone's guess. This paper captures an era when the salmon canning industry was vibrant, providing employment to thousands, and whose economic contributions helped make the BC economy into a viable one.

My interest in the fishing industry is also personal and stems from growing up in Prince Rupert. In the 100 years since Prince Rupert began as a community, it has been intimately associated with the BC commercial fishing industry, and until quite recently, was known as the halibut capital of the world. Since the commencement of the canning of salmon on the Skeena River in 1876 roughly thirty-five canneries have operated in this region,²⁴ and since that time the salmon canning industry has played a prominent role in the area's economy as well as providing employment for countless thousands down to the present day. With the fishing industry being so prominent, it was not unusual for whole families such as mine to have worked in some capacity in the fishing industry, either as shore workers in one of the local salmon canneries, or as commercial fishermen. Well known fish companies, such as BC Packers Ltd., and the Fishermen's Co-op provided my father, Brian with work as a cannery lineman for a number of years. My younger brother Terry's entire working career has been involved in the fishing industry, both in canneries, and for the past fifteen years as a gillnetter. When I was fifteen, I was brought into BC Packer's Port Edward cannery by my father. During my ten-year seasonal involvement in the fishing industry I also worked for J. S. McMillan Fisheries Ltd., and the Aero Trading Co. Ltd. in the Prince Rupert area. These years ignited a passion for the fishing industry and its history.

Much has been written on the salmon canning industry in BC. Historians have focussed on the large corporations, the environmental and labour history. However, scholars have not focussed on family-run firms, nor the business perspective of family-run companies, such as J.H. Todd & Sons, in spite of the fact that it was one of the top processors in the fishing industry by the start of World War II.

This examination of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., starts from a different place from the existing literature, drawing heavily on interviews on family members, former Todd & Sons employees, and industry insiders. Fourteen individuals were interviewed, including well-known cannery owners, senior fish company executives, including two prominent vice presidents, well-respected cannery managers, cannery employees who have lengthy careers, and a professional sports fishing guide. Many of the interviewees were interviewed multiple times. Moreover, my documentary sources are unique, and varied. For instance, access to J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. minute books housed at the Canadian

²⁴ Joan Skogan, *A River Remembered* (Vancouver: BC Packers Ltd., 1983), 5.

Fishing Company's headquarters allowed me the rare privilege to examine the inner workings of this pioneer fish company. In life timing is everything. I started this project 15 years ago, and since then some whom I have interviewed have died, and the rest are elderly. Such a study would be impossible in a few years from now. The usage of oral history allows a look at the human element, and personal impacts and as such, it offers a perspective on the industry that is seldom seen. By studying J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.'s involvement in the BC commercial fishing industry, and the key individuals who made it successful and presided over its demise, I will add further understanding to the history of the BC commercial fishing industry.

A number of books provide an excellent overview on the BC commercial fishing industry. Cicely Lyon's *Salmon: Our Heritage* (1969) is a comprehensive study for people who enjoy empirical methodology. This book is a treasure chest filled with information dealing with nearly every aspect of the BC commercial fishing industry. Lyons worked as a secretary for BC Packers, and so for all of its strengths, her historical perspective has bias towards that company. Lyon's book contains numerous references to J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., including the sale of the company in 1954 to BC Packers Ltd., and the Canadian Fishing Co. which is of interest. This book also reveals that BC Packers and its management had tremendous respect for Todd & Sons' president, C.F. Todd.

David Reid's 1973 work, *The Development of the Fraser River Salmon Canning Industry, 1885 to 1913*, reveals how the head of Todd & Sons avoided an amalgamation attempt by BC Packers' Association in 1902. The correspondence reveals how frustrated the BC Packers' Association leaders were with the Todds and their position of strength in comparison to other companies that were taken over by BC Packers' Association in 1902. Reid's work clearly indicates that C.F. Todd was a formidable competitor, a survivor and the "Pillar" behind the Todd's fish packing operation until his death, in 1941.

Geoff Megg's 1991 book *Salmon: The Decline of the British Columbia Fishery* brings a union perspective to the history of the industry, balancing Lyon's corporate point of view. He worked as the editor of *The Fisherman*, the United and Allied Worker's union newspaper for a number of years. He touches on numerous aspects of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., confirming that the firm was among the top four in the industry by World War II.

Ken Campbell's 2004 book, *Cannery Village: Company Town*. (2004) brings a rare insider's perspective on the industry. Campbell worked his entire career in the industry with the Canadian Fishing Co. and as a former head of the Fisheries Council of BC. Although much of his book deals with northern BC operations it does cover several aspects of the Todd's fishing operations. In one section, for example, he includes a section on the Hogan family and their running of the Todd's Klemtu cannery. He also deals with Todd's fishing operations in Rivers Inlet, and on the Skeena River as well as with the sale of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. and the splitting up of its assets in 1954.

Victoria based historian Valerie Green's 1990 book *Excelsior! The Story of The Todd Family*, devotes much of its attention to J.H. Todd, and his son C.F. Todd. She reveals how J.H. Todd established very successful businesses in both Victoria and Barkerville. As J.H. Todd was one of the most successful pioneer salmon canners in BC, Green devotes an entire chapter to the family's involvement in the industry. Her book also reveals how the firm developed into one of the "powerhouses" of the industry under the very capable leadership of C.F. Todd.

The Sooke Story – The History and the Heartbeat (1999) is a comprehensive history of the Sooke area. A portion of the book is dedicated to the Sooke Harbour Fishing & Packing Co. Ltd., which between 1922 and 1954 operated as a wholly-owned subsidiary of J.H. Todd & Sons. Sections of the book also focus on the Todd fish-trap operations; but surprisingly little attention is given to the Todd family, which operated fish traps in the Sooke area for over 50 years, and was a major employer in this region.

Masako and Stan Fukawa's 2009 *Spirit of The Nikkei Fleet*, focusses on the role of the Japanese and Japanese Canadians within the BC commercial fishing industry. The authors show how the uprooting of the Japanese fishermen, the top fishermen on the coast had a decisive impact on the BC fishing industry. I will show that their internment dealt a blow to the Todd company when they could least afford it. Not until 1949 were these fishermen permitted to return to the coast, but the majority did not return due to lack of money and the fact that their confiscated fish boats were sold by the Canadian government in 1942. While there was initial public resistance when these fishermen came back to the coast the authors show that canners such as the Todds soon welcomed them back with open arms.

Norman Safarik, author of *Bluebacks and Silver Brights – A Lifetime in the BC Fisheries*. (2012) worked in the BC commercial fishing industry for over sixty years as the owner-operator of a Vancouver fish plant, and as such his insight, knowledge and understanding of the industry is impressive. Particularly relevant is his discussion of the difficulties the fish packing companies faced after World War II. Challenges identified by Safarik include a changing world market, independent fishermen, and a strong union. Furthermore, he discusses the takeover of Todd & Sons by BC Packers Ltd., and the Canadian Fishing Co., and the splitting of the company's assets.

Dr. Dianne Newell's book *The Pacific Salmon Canning Industry – A Grown Man's Game* (1989) examines Henry Doyle's papers to highlight a perspective from one of the most dominant and influential men in the salmon canning industry. In 1902 Doyle master-minded the creation of BC Packers' Association, the largest fish packing company during the twentieth century and the antecedent of BC Packers Ltd. Newell's research identifies the main players, their plants, and the issues that they faced. As Todd & Sons was one of the top canners, Doyle gives very pertinent information on all of Todd's canneries, number of canning lines, number of fishermen, and number of boats. He also

dedicates a sizeable section to how formidable he felt Todd & Sons was as a competitor. He attributes much of the company's success to C.F. Todd, who he identifies as a very shrewd and capable businessman. Doyle's writings reveal that he feared and at the same time respected the Todd firm. He also states that due to its leadership and independent wealth that Todd & Sons would not easily be taken over, unlike many of the fish packing companies of his time. One other point useful to my research is Doyle's discussion of how dominant and very skilled the Japanese and Japanese Canadians were as fishermen.

Henry Doyle, drafted an insightful 400-plus page manuscript in 1957 dealing with the fishing industry entitled *The Rise and Decline of the Pacific Fisheries*, which is at the BC Archives. The manuscript contains an incredible wealth of information on various aspects of the BC commercial fishing industry, including J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. Doyle's career in the fishing industry spanned over 60 years, and he had firsthand and intimate knowledge of the industry. For example, Doyle's manuscript clarifies the mystery as to how C.F. Todd, through shrewd political maneuvering, was able to secure fish trap sites in the Sooke region while other major competitors were not.

W. M. Ross's 1967 "*Salmon Cannery Distribution on the Nass and Skeena Rivers of British Columbia 1877-1926*" deals specifically with canneries in northern BC, and he touches on aspects of the Todd's Skeena River cannery, Inverness. His Inverness canned salmon pack numbers from 1877-1950 show a declining pack in the 1940s due, I believe to the deportation of the Japanese from the coast in 1942 and their slow return to the BC commercial fishing industry starting in 1949.

Patricia Marchak, Neil Guppy, and John McMullan's 1984 *Uncommon Property: The Fishing and Fish-Processing Industries in British Columbia* examines the history and evolution of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., within the BC commercial fishing industry. More importantly, the authors highlight issues that they felt forced the Todds to sell their company.

What sets this paper apart from this extensive literature is that oral history plays a very prominent role. The research was only possible through personal contacts and friendships developed over the past fifteen years. How I was able to meet the people that I did, how I gained their trust, and belief in this research can be attributed to the following: my family's involvement in the canning business, friends I made during this period, and the ten years in the canning business that instilled in me a passion and love for the industry which I feel won over people I interviewed. For years prior to starting on this journey I had been visiting fish plants throughout the province taking photographs, video, and doing interviews whenever possible, and occasionally I was able to gain access to key other key individuals in the industry. An example of just such a meeting occurred in 1999 when Ed Kirsch, a close friend from my cannery days in Port Edward in the 1970s, introduced me to Mr. Don Millerd, his former boss at Great Northern Cannery. The Millerd family's involvement in the fishing industry is legendary and goes back to

1909 when his grandfather, Francis first began processing fish. Don came to my school and did a presentation on the fishing industry, and his family's role in the industry. Don saw the passion and interest I had for the fishing industry and invited me to a luncheon for the 'Movers and Shakers' of the BC commercial fishing industry which happens annually in Vancouver. When I heard that such well known people such as the Nelsons from Nelson Bros. Fisheries, Bruce Buchanan former BC Packers Ltd. president, and Jack Elsey president of Millbanke Resources Ltd. would be in attendance I realized this was a golden chance. After attending for a couple of years of and videoing the luncheons I was appointed the club's 'unofficial historian'. Don Millerd and Jack Elsey knew that I was researching J.H. Todd & Sons and introduced me to various people within the industry who they knew would be helpful. One very important introduction which made this research complete was an introduction to Mr. Don McLeod, senior Vice President of the Canadian Fishing Co. Ltd., which would have not come about had I not have been invited to this luncheon by Don Millerd. Since our first meeting in 2000 Don McLeod has been following the progress of my research. In 2013 I received a call from Don McLeod and he said "Mickey I have opened up the company's vault, and I have found information which will be useful for your research." He went onto say "You need to get over here as soon as possible." Within a couple of weeks I made my way to the Canadian Fishing Co. located at the Foot of Gore Avenue in Vancouver. When Don took me into the company's board room I was overwhelmed to see a variety of documents, including countless Todd's minute books laid out on a table. The access to materials such as the minute books, previously not open to the public, completed the research. This would not have been possible without Don's generosity and belief in what I was doing. It may be a small point, but almost immediately upon meeting Don, a special bond was established, and I believe it is because both Don and I were born in Prince Rupert. Connections such as with Don McLeod as I have shown do not occur over night, and to establish such relationships takes time and perseverance to build.

Although luck played a 'role' in my success as a researcher it was helped along by a method that I used throughout the years. Whenever I met strangers I would mention that I was doing research on the BC commercial fishing industry, and occasionally this led to introduction to key people or important information that I was able to incorporate in my research. One such example occurred when one of my vehicles needed repairs and during a conversation with the shop's owner I mentioned that was doing research on the fishing industry. This conversation eventually resulted in an introduction to his brother, Richard, who was the senior Vice President of BC Packers Ltd. Since that introduction back in 2000 Richard I have become friends, and he has been very supportive of my work, providing me with many answers to questions. My good luck continued as when I informed the owner of the radiator shop that the focus of my research was on J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. he happened to know Mr. Jack Todd and gave me Jack's telephone number. I gave Jack a call back in 2000 and he invited me to his home. Jack and I hit it off; he

believed in my research, and gave me invaluable family albums which dealt with his family's fishing business. Over the years until his death in 2009 I visited Jack's home multiple times.

Jack also put me in contact his cousin Derek Todd who was also involved with J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. during its final years. After meeting with Derek and gaining his trust and support over the years, and after multiple luncheons and dinners, Derek introduced me to his friend, Dick Pollock, a former Todd & Sons' accountant, and the Todd firm's last employee. Since that first introduction Dick and I have become friends as well, and Dick has also been very supportive of my research. It is bizarre how these events worked out, but enthusiasm, hard work, perseverance, and determination, at least in my case play a role in controlling one's luck or destiny. One thing I learned as a researcher is that if an opportunity arises you cannot hesitate, and that you must grasp it or it might never materialize again.

2. HISTORY OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA SALMON CANNING INDUSTRY

The waters off of British Columbia have an abundance of five species of Pacific salmon. Until just after the turn of the twentieth century, sockeye was the primary salmon canned by processors. With the 1913 Hell's Gate slide sockeye numbers plummeted and processors were forced to turn their attention to the other species. Sockeye salmon live four to six years, and weigh between four to seven pounds.²⁵ Sockeye has the highest oil content and the second highest fat content of all species.²⁶ The Pink salmon is the smallest of all the species, and weigh between four or five pounds, although some can reach ten pounds.²⁷ Pinks are only used for canning²⁸ and have a lifespan of only two years.²⁹ Chum salmon live between three to five years, and weigh between ten and fourteen pounds, however they have been known to reach as much as thirty-three pounds.³⁰ During the time the Todd family operated their fish packing business, chum salmon were only used for canning.³¹ Coho live usually live three years and weigh between three to fifteen pounds³² and has a good red meat colour and good fat content.³³ Coho are canned, smoked, and sold on the fresh and frozen market. The chinook or spring salmon live between three to seven years, and they are the largest and fattest of all salmon.³⁴ Spring salmon average about thirty to forty pounds, however there are records of some springs weighing over one hundred pounds.³⁵ This salmon is sold on the fresh and frozen market, and small amounts are canned.³⁶ The largest spring due to their size, fat and oil content are processed as smoked salmon as well.³⁷ Due to a number of uncontrollable and unpredictable variables one could never predict with certainty the returning numbers of salmon. For instance, during years of hot weather and drought, salmon mortality rises significantly as the low waters impede the salmon from successfully reaching their spawning beds. High flooding during the fall also occasionally results in a 'washout' (a disruption of the spawning beds) which can also significantly impact the numbers of returning salmon.

In British Columbia salmon has played an integral role in the lives of First

²⁵ Roderick L. Haig-Brown, *Canada's Pacific Salmon* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, Department of Fisheries of Canada, 1967), 5.

²⁶ *Quality is a Family Tradition* (Vancouver, B.C.: J. S. McMillan Fisheries Ltd.'s booklet, n.d.).

²⁷ Haig-Brown, *Canada's Pacific Salmon*, 6.

²⁸ Lyons, *Salmon*.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Haig-Brown, *Canada's Pacific Salmon*, 7.

³³ *Quality is a Family Tradition*, (Vancouver, B.C.: J.S. McMillan Fisheries Ltd.'s booklet, n.d.).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Haig-Brown, *Canada's Pacific Salmon*, 9.

³⁶ Lyons, *Salmon*.

³⁷ *Quality is a Family Tradition*, (Vancouver, B.C.: J. S McMillan Fisheries Ltd.'s booklet, n.d.).

Nations. Much of coastal First Nation's diet is centered around the salmon. Without the abundance of salmon many First Nations groups would not have been able to develop highly complex and artistic cultures. First Nations had developed sophisticated methods of catching many varieties of fish including salmon and therefore, when Europeans arrived in BC they often sought their expertise in obtaining fish. First Nations groups in the Skeena and Fraser River regions "were the exclusive suppliers of salmon to the Hudson's Bay Company who had a monopoly in what was then a significant trade in dried and salted salmon."³⁸

With the abundance of salmon in BC it is not surprising that the Hudson's Bay Company saw an economic opportunity and developed one of the region's earliest industries. In 1829, the Hudson's Bay Company initiated the BC commercial fishing industry, exporting barrels of salted salmon to Hawaii. An 1891 edition of *Victoria Illustrated* offers an explanation as to why Hawaii (Sandwich Islands) was the market for this trade:

*The Sandwich Islands were then the principal market for the salmon caught in British Columbia waters. The fish were pickled, and then used to provision the whalers, which made those Islands their rendezvous. There being no cattle on either the islands or the coast of the Pacific, the pickled salmon were made to do duty for salt beef.*³⁹

It would be another 40 years before BC canners made the decision to switch from barrels to tins. The canning of food dates from 1795, when Frenchman Nicholas Appert processed food in glass containers and won a contest sponsored by general Napoleon Bonaparte. Bonaparte realized that military success required a well-fed army, and a method to get food to his troops, and thus sponsored this contest. In 1808, Englishman Humphrey Davey further improved upon Appert's process by adding calcium chloride to the water, which raised its boiling temperature to 240 degrees Fahrenheit, thereby ensuring sterilization and making the canning process much safer.⁴⁰ According to Richard Gregory:

The invention of the "canning" process allowed the fishing industry to process (stabilize) larger and larger quantities fish very quickly. The "can" is the ULTIMATE container because once the salmon is in the can all it needs is a label and it can be shipped anywhere in the world and delivered one (1) can at a time to the consumer without any further processing / handling constraints other than to

³⁸ Ron McLeod, *The Native Association – A Success Story* (Vancouver: Loron Consulting, 2002), 5-6.

³⁹ *Victoria Illustrated* (Victoria: Ellis & Co., 1891), 44.

⁴⁰ Leslie J. Ross, *Richmond Child of the Fraser* (Richmond: Hemlock Printers Ltd., 1979), 113.

*keep the can dry so it won't rust....*⁴¹

T. Halliday canned the first Atlantic salmon in North America in 1839 at his cannery in Saint John, New Brunswick.⁴² The first person to recognize a potential canning industry in British Columbia was Dr. Matthew Macfie who spent five years on Vancouver Island. In 1865 he published a book dealing with BC's resources, noting prospects for a future canning industry:

*The prices current of Melbourne show the cost of imported salmon preserved in lb tins to be 1s.6d to 1s8d per lb (wholesale). To a large firm going into the business of catching and exporting salmon in our part of the world, the cost stock would simply consist of the labour of fishing. Yet no house of importance has yet embarked in that lucrative enterprise. At certain times the canons (or gorges) of the rivers are so crowded with salmon, that the navigation of canoes is virtually impeded.*⁴³

The first tins of BC salmon were processed in 1867 by Scot J. Symes out of a former salmon curing facility in Annieville, near New Westminster. He purchased this facility from A. Inglefield in 1865.⁴⁴ Although Symes is generally not recognized as having run a commercial canning operation, he must be credited for introducing BC canned salmon to the world. This fact is supported by *The Victoria Colonist* which wrote on January 15, 1869: "We were favoured with a can of Mr. James Symes' fresh salmon...samples sent were superior to anything received in that market."⁴⁵ Why Symes decided to try his hand at canning salmon is a mystery. What is known is that due to financial reasons he was eventually forced to close his canning efforts in 1869.⁴⁶

The canning of salmon on an industrial level began in 1870 at Annieville on the Fraser River.⁴⁷ This operation was headed by a Scot, Alexander Ewen with three other partners. Ewen, prior to arriving in Victoria in 1864⁴⁸ had salmon trap fishing experience back in Burghead, Scotland. His expertise in the fishing industry is revealed by the following recommendation letter from his boss, John Geils, dated November 10th, 1863:

The Bearer Alexander Ewen Salmon fisher has been in my employment for the last six years in the Capacity of overseer over part of my fishings,...he is thorough

⁴¹ Richard Gregory, personal interview, 29 December 2013.

⁴² Earl Chapin May, *The Canning Clan* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), 107-108.

⁴³ Matthew Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia Resources, 1865* (Toronto: Coles Publishing Company, 1972), 166.

⁴⁴ George North and Harold Griffin. *A Ripple, A Wave: The Story of Union Organization in the B.C. Fishing Industry* (Vancouver: Broadway Printers Ltd., 1974), 1.

⁴⁵ Lyons, *Salmon*, 141.

⁴⁶ North, and Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave*, 2.

⁴⁷ Joseph E. Forester, and Anne D. Forester, *British Columbia Commercial Fishing Industry* (Saanichton: Hancock Publishers Ltd., 1975), 111.

⁴⁸ Lyons, *Salmon*, 142.

*master of his profession in all its Branches....I have every confidence in recommending him as a fit and proper person to undertake the management of Salmon fishing in a considerable extent.*⁴⁹

Alexander travelled to the mainland where he ran a fish curing facility located in New Westminster.⁵⁰ The cannery at Annieville was a rudimentary wooden structure built over pilings. Because the science of canning of salmon was not well understood at this time, the cannery windows and doors were kept closed on the assumption that a draft might spoil the fish.⁵¹ In its first year Ewen and his partners packed 300 cases of one-pound squats (cans), the first sold to the British market.⁵²

In the first nine years of the BC industry all salmon canneries were located on or near the Fraser River in order to take advantage of the abundant salmon runs. For the first few years of the BC salmon canning industry canners followed the lead of Columbia canners and exclusively processed spring salmon,⁵³ as overseas European markets were not particularly fond of the sockeye salmon's dark red colour. It is likely that the European buyers would have been more accustomed to a lighter coloured salmon arriving from the earlier U.S. market. However, the buyers in these markets soon realized that this was just the natural, and desirable, colour of the Fraser River sockeye. Additionally, these fish had a higher oil content, which contributes to the flavour of the fish, and they subsequently opened their markets to sockeye canned salmon.⁵⁴

Due to abundant runs of sockeye salmon in northern BC, a second phase of salmon cannery expansion occurred in 1876, with the construction of Inverness Cannery near the mouth of the Skeena River.⁵⁵ The third phase of cannery expansion began in 1882 in the Rivers Inlet region when Rivers Inlet Cannery was built.⁵⁶ At that time canneries were strategically located to take advantage of the major salmon runs in British Columbia.

Between 1870 and today, well over 200 canneries processed fish up and down the BC coast. Historically a cannery had two roles: first "to handle and process raw fish in accordance with the market requirements; second, to provide the necessary services to the

⁴⁹ J. Geils, 1863 Alexander Ewen Reference Letter. Private collection of Mickey Fitzgerald.

⁵⁰ James Morton, *The Enterprising Mr. Moody, the Bumptious Captain Stamp* (North Vancouver: J. J. Douglas Ltd., 1977), 96.

⁵¹ Peter Chettleburgh, "Overabundance was an embarrassment," *Western Fisheries* (September 1979), 83.

⁵² Lyons, *Salmon*, 144.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ May, *The Canning Clan*, 116.

⁵⁵ Gladys Blythe, *Skeena Canners – British Columbia North Coast* (Victoria: Morris Printing Company Limited, 1991), 115.

⁵⁶ Lyons, *Salmon*, 169.

fishermen from one end of the coast to the other.”⁵⁷

Throughout the history of the BC commercial salmon canning industry a number of cannery operations on the coast were family owned and run businesses. Some of the more notable families during the period of this study, 1881 to 1954 include: the Bell-Irvings (ABC Packing Co. Ltd. 1891 – 1969), the Macmillans (Cassiar Packing Co. 1903-1983), and the Millerds (Involved since 1909 initially as canners and today in other processing areas of the industry). Among these family owned and operated fish packing companies, J.H. Todd and family members stand out as leaders in the industry.

The canning industry since its inception has always being an extremely risky and competitive business, and this is backed by the fact that in the 40 years between 1896 and 1936, 73 companies had tried to make a go of it and had failed.⁵⁸ B. Payne, a former Canadian Fish Co. upper level employee, and Managing Director of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. after it was bought by BC Packers and the Canadian Fish Co. added “In the fish business it is difficult to make profits at any time.”⁵⁹ In order to succeed in this industry, a canner needed to have the necessary capital to build a cannery and to do the annual repairs needed to keep it in top shape. Additional key challenges included: labour supply, constant need for technological innovations, changing regulations and market variability.

Perhaps most important, one could never predict with any certainty the numbers of returning salmon from year to year. In some years it was not economically viable to operate specific canneries. This was particularly true after the devastating 1913 Fraser River Hell’s Gate slide, was precipitated by the Canadian Northern Pacific Railway’s blasting efforts. What made this slide particularly devastating was it happened during the fourth year of the Fraser’s peak sockeye runs when the runs are their strongest. After this slide the sockeye numbers plummeted dramatically; the slide forced canners to switch from strictly packing sockeye to other species of salmon.⁶⁰ It took over thirty-three years before fish ways were constructed in 1946, finally permitting salmon to pass this part of the river. One advantage of this move is that the canning of other varieties of salmon extended the length of the canning season.⁶¹ One source estimated that between 1913 and 1946 15,000,000 cases of sockeye worth \$180,000,000 had been lost.⁶² The unpredictability of returning salmon stocks also added to a canner’s capital costs as he could not predict with certainty how many fish they were going to can, and subsequently,

⁵⁷ “Brief with respect to a Conciliation Board on Shoreworker Agreements,” 12 July 1954, 3, private collection of Mickey Fitzgerald.

⁵⁸ Forester, and Forester, *British Columbia Commercial Fishing Industry*, 130.

⁵⁹ Bob Payne, personal interview, 6 December 2007.

⁶⁰ Dianne Newell, ed., *The Development of the Salmon-Canning Industry*, 159.

⁶¹ Dianne Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada’s Pacific Coast Fisheries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 72.

⁶² Robert Francis, *Opening Hell’s Gate* (n.d.), private collection of Tiny Bing.

how much tin plate (in the early days) or number of cans to order.

Fish stocks were also impacted by a variety of other environmental issues. These include low rainfall levels, which could affect the numbers of fish being able to return to spawn in a river (and limit a canner's intake of fish years later thus limiting their profits) and problematic logging practices which have the potential to damage fish creeks and the ecosystem. The scourge which every canner feared was fire, countless canneries falling victim to fire. The Todds and their fish plants were not immune, two notable twentieth century fires damaging their Richmond and Inverness canneries.

Strategically, it was important for a canner to build his cannery near a river (s) which had strong runs of salmon. A reliable source of fresh water was crucial for every canner, in order to clean and wash fish, and operate a cannery's boilers. Securing a labour force was absolutely crucial to a cannery's success as every phase of operation was reliant on manual labour, and because of this many cannery owners often built their canneries near First Nation's reserves or villages. The Todd's Klemtu, and Empire canneries were such examples. A canner also needed a sufficient number of fishermen to supply his plant. Other cannery owners were constantly attempting to 'lure' fishermen to come and fish for them, and thus it was imperative to retain good fishermen, especially 'high liners' (top producing fishermen). During this period a cannery required between 60-70 gillnetters to supply it.⁶³

Since the start of the BC commercial salmon canning industry in 1870 salmon have been harvested by three methods: gillnetters, trollers, and seiners. Gillnetters generally fish at the mouths of rivers and inlets, and they fish for all salmon species. Gillnetters were very important to cannery owners, supplying much of the product that they processed. The earliest gillnetters were 16 to 18 foot double ended skiffs, usually manned by two men, a net puller and an oarsman. Until the advent of powered driven boats in the early 1900s, gillnet boats were oar and sail powered. Gillnetters fish with a 1200 foot net resembling a fence with corks at the top, and a lead line at the bottom to keep the mesh stretched to catch salmon. When a salmon swims into the net its gills are caught in the mesh and it drowns. In the 1930s a Sointula fisherman had developed the power drum, allowing fishermen to make more sets and catch more fish which meant added pressure on BC salmon stocks.⁶⁴ Gillnetters by the late 1940s had increased in length from 28-30 feet to 36-38 feet.⁶⁵

Trolling for salmon has a long history dating back to when Native fishermen trolled with lures behind their canoes. A troller ranges in length from around 30 to 40

⁶³ Newell, ed., *The Development of the Salmon-Canning Industry*, 107-108.

⁶⁴ Joseph Gough, *Managing Canada's Fisheries: From Earliest Days to 2000*, (Georgetown: McGill-Queen's University Press 2006), 279.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

feet, and is usually manned by one or two men. The troller fishes by dropping down two long poles on either side of its mast, including a number of lines with lures trolling behind. Trollers target salmon such as coho and spring salmon. Because the fish are in pristine shape, unlike gillnet caught fish with net marks, they are usually sold on the fresh fish market for top dollar prices.

The most effective method of harvesting salmon is by purse seining. Seiners are considerably larger than gillnetters or trollers, during the Todd era ranging between 50 to 70 feet in length. Seiners encircle fish with a large net, using a secondary skiff to bring the two ends of the net together in order to trap the fish. When the fish are encircled, a string at the bottom of the net is drawn shut, closing the bottom and trapping the salmon. With the invention of the power block in the 1950s⁶⁶ seine boats were able to make more sets and catch significantly more fish. An example highlighting how efficient the seine fleet had become is backed up by the fact that by the 1950s a few hundred seine boats caught as much as 5,000 gillnetters.⁶⁷ By the time the Todd's left the industry, larger boats with diesel engines, improved technology such as sonar and mechanized drums significantly increased the annual catch. This has led to significant conservation issues that continue to present time.

Getting sufficient labourers to the remote cannery locations was also an issue. An example highlighting just how desperate cannery owners could be for labourers occurred in northwestern BC in 1936, when a major flood stranded First Nations workers, preventing them from reaching canneries located on the lower part of the Skeena River. This situation caused panic amongst the cannery owners in the area until they were able to arrange for an alternate route to get their workers to their plants.⁶⁸ Early canneries also relied on Chinese labour to make their tins, butcher their fish, and until World War II arranging with Chinese contractors to bring them to work in their canneries.⁶⁹

Labour supply was frequently interrupted by strikes. British Columbia's first strike action, in 1881 took place in two Fraser River canneries, and was headed successfully by disgruntled Chinese workers.⁷⁰ Salmon canneries in 1888, in an effort to assert their place in the industry, organized themselves into the B. C. Fisheries Association.⁷¹ This significant move foreshadows future labour tensions that would arise throughout the history of the industry.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Lyons, *Salmon*, 541.

⁶⁹ Forester and Forester, *British Columbia Commercial Fishing Industry*, 125.

⁷⁰ North and Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave*, 2.

⁷¹ Geoff Meggs, *Salmon: The Decline of the B.C. Fishery* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1991), 31.

Throughout the history of the salmon canning industry shore workers from a variety of ethnic groups have played an important role in the success of the canning industry. The ethnic makeup of four ethnic shore worker groups employed at the Windsor Cannery on the Skeena River in 1891 highlights these differences. In late March Chinese men made cans, and Native women hung and repaired gill nets. Japanese shipwrights made and repaired skiffs. Once canning began Chinese butchered the fish, and Native women put the fish into the cans. The cans were cooked, labeled and put into wooden boxes by Chinese. Europeans managed the cannery. This cannery had a crew of approximately 100⁷² (Figure 2). Why the division of labour fell along these lines is likely a complex mix of pre-existing skill sets, interracial prejudice, language issues as well as chosen and enforced segregation. It is no wonder that efforts to unionize in this diverse, seasonal, and racially-mixed industry especially with vast language and cultural differences, took so long. One other barrier which hampered unionization efforts within shore workers groups, and which is not often discussed, is attributed to the cannery layout itself. As explained by Harvey Taylor, who worked in canneries for over forty years, and whose father was a foreman at Cassiar Cannery on the Skeena River, “At Cassiar Cannery the Indians had their living quarters, the Chinese their bunk houses, the Japanese their living quarters, and the white management their separate living quarters.” Harvey added “Due to this layout there was not a lot of intermingling between the people that worked at the cannery.”⁷³

In 1893 Fraser River gillnetters struck due to low prices being paid for sockeye salmon (they demanded 10 cents a fish).⁷⁴ The strike was short lived and in the end, the fishermen did not get what they wanted.⁷⁵ However, this strike was historically important as it established trade unionism in the B. C. fishing industry;⁷⁶ and the fishermen formed the fishing industry’s first organization called The Fraser River Fishermen’s Protective and Benevolent Association of British Columbia in order to fight for their rights.⁷⁷ From 1893 onwards the canners and the fishermen fought over the price of fish, and the fishermen’s weapon of choice was to strike.

⁷² British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), MS 2305 Box 6 File 1 (Ao1469), Alfred Carmichael, 1891 Account of a season’s work at a Salmon Cannery, Windsor Cannery, Aberdeen.

⁷³ Harvey Taylor, personal interview, 17 August 2013.

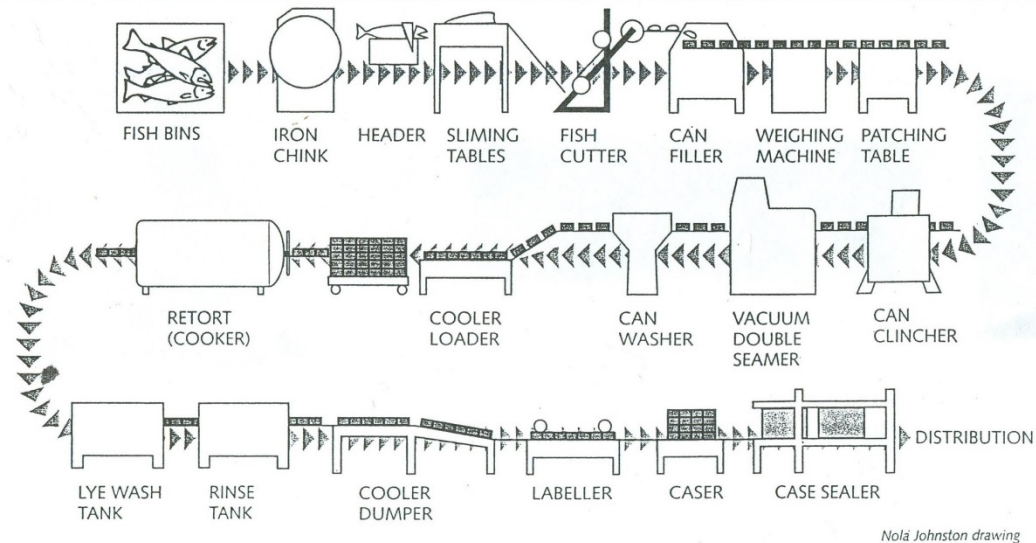
⁷⁴ North and Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave*, 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Meggs, *Salmon*, 42.

⁷⁷ North, and Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave*, 2.

SALMON CANNING LINE, c 1945



- Salmon are brought from the fishing grounds to the cannery by a packer.
- They are brought inside the cannery where they are sorted out by specie.
- Next they are stored temporarily in bins filled with ice and water.
- Then they are put through the “iron chink” where their heads, tails, fins and innards are removed.
- The fish are moved to the “washing / slimming tables” where they are washed, and inspected for any irregularities.
- The fish are sent through the “filling-machines” which automatically puts the fish into the empty cans. A small amount of salt is added to each can by the salter.
- The cans are then weighed by automatic weighing-machine and if any cans are under-weight patchers will add a sufficient amount of fish to bring the can up to its proper weight.
- The cans then pass through the “clinchier” which puts a lid on the cans.
- The cans next proceed through the “vacuum-closing machine” where they are hermetically sealed under vacuum. The cans are properly sealed.
- The cans are placed on trays and sent into “retorts” (huge pressure cookers) where they are cooked at 249 degrees Fahrenheit for approximately 90 minutes depending on can size.
- The cooked cans are checked for any leaks, cooled, labeled, and are shipped to market.

Source: “The Commercial Salmon-Fisheries of British Columbia.” Provincial Fisheries Department, Victoria, B.C., 1947. **Image source:** Francis, Daniel (ed). *Encyclopedia of British Columbia*. Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2000.

Figure 2: The Salmon Canning Process

Since 1893 there have been countless, short-lived attempts, primarily by fishermen, to organize themselves into unions against the salmon processors. Between

1893 and 1945 well over twenty different union groups existed.⁷⁸ There are a number of factors which hampered efforts to unionize fishermen, both historically and in contemporary labour relations. The first factor is the tension, and frequently animosity, that exists between the different fishing groups gillnetters, trollers, and seiners which are competing for the same limited resource. The second factor, involved the diversity of ethnic groups that fished for a living including, First Nations, Scandinavians, Croatians, and Japanese to name a few. An additional barrier to the unionization of the various fishing groups is the issue of trust, or lack thereof. My brother, Terry a Prince Rupert gillnetter explains: “Gillnetters, and ‘company owned’ seiners have issues working together as we compete for the same resource and therefore some animosity exists between us.”⁷⁹

A tremendous amount of racial tension existed during these years, very evident during the 1900 and 1901 strikes on the Fraser River. These two strikes, where white and native fishermen clashed with Japanese fishermen, were classified as being “the most violent of the numerous disputes in the entire history of the fishing industry.”⁸⁰ By that time the Japanese held 1,958 licenses out of a total of 4,722, and other fishermen feared this competition.⁸¹ After the brutal strike of 1900, Japanese set up the Japanese Association to look after their fishermen.⁸² In isolated communities such as Steveston, and Port Essington, where large numbers of Japanese lived and worked, independent Japanese fishermen organizations appeared in the early 1920s. With about 1,500 members the Steveston Fishermen’s Association was formed in Steveston, and in northern BC, the Skeena Fishermen’s Association with about 2,200 Japanese members was established.⁸³

First Nations groups soon followed suit, and in 1922 the Native Fishermen’s Association formed.⁸⁴ From the hardships of the Great Depression emerged the Native Brotherhood in 1931.⁸⁵ This organization, “spoke on all questions confronting Native people.”⁸⁶ Although the genesis of Native Brotherhood arises primary from the fishing industry, it must be noted that it is not a union, but a registered society which is devoted to improving the welfare of its people.⁸⁷ The Fisheries Association of British Columbia

⁷⁸ North, and Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave*.

⁷⁹ Terry Fitzgerald, personal interview, 14 July 2013.

⁸⁰ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979), 157.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² North and Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave*, 3.

⁸³ Rolf Knight and Maya Koizumi, *A Man of Our Times* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1976), 45.

⁸⁴ North and Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave*, 8.

⁸⁵ Meggs, *Salmon*, 155.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ “Brief with respect to a Conciliation Board on Shoreworker Agreements,” 12 July 1954, 6, private collection of Mickey Fitzgerald.

referred to the Native Brotherhood in a 1954 brief in the following manner: "... their representatives are respected by the companies and agreements are made with them similar to those made with the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' Union."⁸⁸

Due to conflicting interests, as well as a variety of social tensions, cannery shore workers never organized themselves into a union between 1893 and 1945. This is not surprising given the massive organizational challenge of bringing the wide range of distinct racial identities that existed within the plants which only operated seasonally. In many ways, it is remarkable that any organization was possible at all. The only outstanding example of solidarity occurred in August 1913, when a one-day strike took place, the shore workers joining the fishermen in their fight to receive a better price for their salmon.⁸⁹ However, it was not until 1945 that all interested parties (including fishermen, shore workers etc.) finally agreed to be members of one union, the United Fishermen and Allied Workers' union.⁹⁰ By 1954 the union had an approximate membership of 8,000 – 4,000 fishermen the remaining balance being made up of shore workers and tendermen.⁹¹ The idea of "an industrial union had become the reality."⁹²

In 1867 Canada's fisheries were placed under the federal government's control by the authority of the BNA act.⁹³ When BC entered confederation in 1871 the province agreed to Dominion jurisdiction over the ocean and its resources, which of course included salmon.⁹⁴ The federal government kept salmon as a common property but defined who was allowed to compete for it, and the conditions under which they could compete.⁹⁵

Six years after BC's commercial fishing and salmon canning industry had begun on May 8, 1876, the Canadian government extended the Fisheries Act to BC.⁹⁶ Between 1877 and 1911 five individuals headed the federal government's fisheries department in BC beginning with A. C. Anderson (1877-1882) and ending with C.B. Sword (1900-1911).⁹⁷ During this period, the fisheries department was significantly under staffed, and not very effective. In one particular area, only two fishery officers, in rowboats patrolled a region of 110 kilometers.⁹⁸

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ North and Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave*, 7.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁹¹ Ibid., 6.

⁹² Ibid., 13.

⁹³ Forester and Forester, *British Columbia Commercial Fishing Industry*, 30.

⁹⁴ Brett McGillivray, *Geography of British Columbia: People and Landscapes in Transition* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 130.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 30.

Until the late 1870s, processors and their gillnet fleets ignored public complaints regarding the amounts of dead fish that were being thrown back, the discharge of offal (fish waste – head & guts) and the numbers of fish that were being caught.⁹⁹ Eventually processors realized that these complaints would catch the federal government's attention and in 1882, canners voluntarily limited cannery and boat numbers.¹⁰⁰ Realization that overfishing was depleting fish stocks, canners appealed to Ottawa to construct hatcheries in an effort to increase salmon numbers.¹⁰¹ In 1884 the Bon Accord hatchery near New Westminster opened.¹⁰² BC had eight hatcheries in operation by 1910.¹⁰³ A royal commission in 1922 revealed that hatcheries were not beneficial for salmon stocks,¹⁰⁴ and by 1937 BC's fourteen hatcheries were closed.¹⁰⁵

In 1901 BC established its own fisheries department headed by J. P. Babcock.¹⁰⁶ Babcock, an American authority who had spent time with the US Bureau of Fisheries, was very much interested in salmon conservation and supported the installation of hatcheries.¹⁰⁷ From 1874 until 1929 there was continual bickering between British Columbia and Ottawa over who controlled the licensing of canneries, and fishing rights but neither government imposed many restrictions. An example of such squabbling occurred in 1908, when BC established its own 'Canneries Revenue Act', which gave it the right to control the licensing of canneries and boats, and of course the revenue that was brought in.¹⁰⁸ Prior to 1908 anyone could obtain a cannery license.¹⁰⁹ Finally the issue of who controlled what was decided in 1913 when the Privy Council ruled that the federal government ultimately had control in these matters.¹¹⁰ From 1918 onwards all restrictions on cannery licensing was lifted, and canners were to 'voluntarily' control the number of boats they used.¹¹¹ This was not effective as more canneries were built, and more boats needed.¹¹² Further reorganization occurred when Ottawa created a singular

⁹⁹ Meggs, *Salmon*, 27-28.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 31.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 28-29.

¹⁰² Ibid., 29.

¹⁰³ Gough, *Managing Canada's Fisheries*, 141.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 170.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 170.

¹⁰⁶ Canadian Fishing Company Archives (hereafter CFCA), Robert L. Payne, *AN ESSAY containing a modest minimum of salient facts regarding The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932* (The Canadian Fishing Co., Vancouver, 1957), 19.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ CFCA, Payne, *An Essay containing a modest minimum of salient facts regarding The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932*, 19.

¹⁰⁹ W. M. Ross, "Salmon Cannery Distribution on the Nass and Skeena Rivers of British Columbia 1877-1926," (Graduating essay in Geography, The University of British Columbia, 1967), 70-71.

¹¹⁰ CFCA, Payne, *An Essay containing a modest minimum of salient facts regarding The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932*, 20.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 21.

¹¹² Ibid., 21.

and separate Department of Fisheries in 1930.¹¹³ Prior to 1930 fisheries was under the jurisdiction of the Department of Marine and Fisheries.¹¹⁴ During the 1930s Dominion fishery officers struggled to regulate fishing along the coast. The main methods of control of the fishery were fishing areas, judgemental use of boundaries and fishing closures.¹¹⁵ Their mandate included patrolling and clearing creeks and rivers as well as monitoring runs and spawning areas.¹¹⁶

The Department of Fisheries struggled with the issue of leadership turnover, until 1952 when James Sinclair became head of Fisheries. Not content just to sit in Ottawa, he came out to the coast, went out on fishing boats, and tackled issues head on.¹¹⁷ His tenure lasted until 1957, and during that time he earned a reputation as a dynamic and well respected minister.¹¹⁸ Sinclair had the foresight to appoint A. J. Whitmore to head of federal fisheries operations in BC.¹¹⁹ One of his first policies was to hire sixty Fishery Officers to set up a close monitoring and control system.¹²⁰ Soon, Whitmore gained the respect of all in the industry. For instance, at one meeting between fishermen and processors, he announced “I am the only man here who’s paid to look after the fish.”¹²¹ During his time in BC he earned the title “architect of modern salmon management.”¹²² The dynamic leadership during this time represents a high point in the history of BC fisheries resource management. Not only were they effectively managing policies but their hands-on approach to leadership gained Sinclair and Whitmore respect and acclaim throughout the industry.

Until 1912 BC canneries used very little automation, with most operations being manually performed. Some of the more notable technological innovations in the industry included steam retorts in 1877 which sped up the cooking process and reduced spoilage due to faulty cooking,¹²³ and the sanitary can in 1912 which made the canning process much safer as airtight cans were less susceptible to contamination.¹²⁴ However, the machine which was to have the greatest impact on the industry was the “Iron Chink”,

¹¹³ Lyons, *Salmon*, 395.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 161.

¹¹⁵ Gough, *Managing Canada’s Fisheries*, 210

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 210.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 223.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 223.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 281.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 281.

¹²¹ Ibid., 281.

¹²² Ibid., 281.

¹²³ Duncan, *Sockeye & Tinplate*, 4-5.

¹²⁴ Dianne Newell, “The Rationality and Mechanization in the Pacific Salmon-Canning Industry before the Second World War,” in *Perspectives on Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Ltd., 1994), 197.

patented by Canadian E. A. Smith in 1905.¹²⁵ This machine revolutionized the North American canning industry as it allowed the canning of fish on levels that were not possible prior to its invention.¹²⁶ The Iron Chink was able to head, tail, and de-fin 60 to 75 salmon a minute.¹²⁷ One Iron Chink replaced a Chinese crew of 30.¹²⁸ The impact of the Iron Chink, the model K version, is still fresh in Dick Pollock's memory some 60 plus years later; Pollock worked as a Todd accountant at Inverness Cannery on the Skeena River in the 1940s.¹²⁹ Pollock pointed out that the Iron Chink actually used more of the salmon than could be achieved by hand butchering.¹³⁰ R. Gregory explains the importance of this:

*Cost of fish is the number one cost for a company. If you have 100 lbs, a packer is hoping to recover 75 lbs out of the 100 lbs per case of canned salmon. What this means is that after a fish is butchered, gone through an Iron Butcher...a canner is hoping to recover 75 to 80 lbs of fish. If it goes below 75 lbs of fish then this is trouble for the canner. This is crucial for any canner!*¹³¹

A 1949 Todd board internal memo noted the financial benefits of a leased "Iron Chink" from the Smith Cannery Machines Co. even with its steep rental charge:

*Statement was given to the Board, showing the saving in fish per case by using the rented type of iron chink at Inverness. In Sockeye this showed a saving in cost per case of \$2.43. The Board was most interested in these figures and thought possibly it might be advisable to rent another of these machines, which cost in the neighbourhood of \$3,000.00 per year,...*¹³²

By 1945, there were also notable technological advances within the fishing fleet. Two of the most important were faster and stronger diesel engines and brine refrigeration. This meant the fleet could travel faster and farther away, and keep their catch in pristine shape. Fishing boats were much larger and therefore, could pack much larger loads. These technological advances helped to "facilitate the shifting of the salmon-packing industry to a small number of integrated, centrally located plants."¹³³ In order to keep up with their competitors in the 1940s the Todds built several larger and faster vessels, including the *C.F. Todd*, a 68' packer, equipped with a 135 h.p. Atlas diesel engine,¹³⁴ and

¹²⁵ Duncan, *Sockeye & Tinsplate*, 21.

¹²⁶ Ralph W. Andrews and A. K. Larssen, *Fish and Ships* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1959), 59.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Dick Pollock, personal interview 29 August 2006.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Richard Gregory, personal interview, 28 December 2013.

¹³² CFCA, J.H. Todd & Sons, Ltd. Minute Book, 15 March 1949.

¹³³ Newell, "The Rationality of Mechanization in the Pacific Salmon-Canning Industry before the Second World War," 183.

¹³⁴ "Coal Harbor Plant Launches Packer For Sooke Fishing Co.," *Vancouver Province*, 7 April 1942.

the *Invercan 4*, a 57' combination seiner and halibut boat equipped with a 75 h.p. diesel engine which enabled the vessel to reach speeds of 10 knots.¹³⁵ In 1941 the Todds converted two former canneries, Beaver and Provincial into fish camps, and consolidated their processing efforts at their newly renovated Klemtu plant.

The problematic nature of the fishing industry requires major fixed investments in the form of canneries and fish boats, but frequently insecure and variable returns. In order to survive this unstable relationship between risk and reward, amalgamation has frequently been a strategy employed among fishing companies. From 1884 until the 1950s there were roughly five major amalgamations. The first amalgamation involved Victoria businessman, R. P. Rithet, and his partner T. E. Ladner, when they established the Victoria Canning Co. Ltd. in 1884 with interests in nine canneries from Friday Harbour on San Juan Island to the Nass River.¹³⁶ The establishment of ABC Packing Co. Ltd. in 1891, by Scottish businessman, Henry Bell-Irving was the industry's first truly notable amalgamation. This nine-cannery syndicate controlled "70 per cent of the Fraser production, making ABC the largest salmon producer in the world."¹³⁷ The third, and largest amalgamation to that point, occurred in 1902 when the British Columbia Packers Association absorbed twenty-nine canneries, twenty-two firms, including the Victoria Canning Co. – the product of the original amalgamation – and in its first year controlled 50 percent of the Fraser River sockeye pack.¹³⁸ The same company led another major amalgamation in 1928, taking over forty-two canneries, their cold storage plants, shipyards, meal and oil plants, boats etc.,¹³⁹ establishing itself as the dominant player in the industry – from this point forward this firm was called BC Packers Limited. The Canadian Fishing Co. asserted its position as one of the top salmon canners between 1923 and 1926, acquiring twelve canneries. The most recent of these amalgamations happened in 1999 when the majority of operating assets of BC Packers and Nelbro Packing Co were purchased by the Canadian Fishing Company and its U. S. subsidiary.¹⁴⁰ R. Gregory, senior vice president of B. C. Packers Ltd. at the time of its end in 1999 presents a rare perspective on this event.

We knew that there wasn't enough fish for the four processors, and that someone was going to go, but I never thought it was going to be BC Packers and its predecessor companies have always been the survivor of consolidation in the

¹³⁵ "New Addition to Todd Fleet," *Victoria Daily Times*, 14 June 1945.

¹³⁶ Leon J. Ladner, *The Ladners of Ladner* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press Limited., 1972), 150.

¹³⁷ Meggs, *Salmon*, 39.

¹³⁸ Duncan, *Sockeye & Tinplate*, 6.

¹³⁹ Lyons, *Salmon*, 374.

¹⁴⁰ Canadian Fishing Company Memorandum, 4 March 1999, private collection of Harvey Taylor.

*past...What happens is the world markets change as resources change. As the economic times changed you saw companies come and go.*¹⁴¹

Today the only major player left is the Canadian Fishing Co. a division of Jim Pattison Enterprises Ltd.

The greatest worry and stress for all canners was the marketing of their pack. Often markets were quite unpredictable. The usual canning markets during this time period were primarily England, other parts of Europe and domestic markets. With the start of World War I came a demand for large amounts of BC canned salmon, especially after the British military added canned salmon as one of its rations for its soldiers.¹⁴² Additionally, new markets for pink and chum salmon opened up in Europe, and the southern United States.¹⁴³ All, however was not completely 'rosy' for canners during this time as they lost crucial labour, including office staff, and fishermen to the war effort¹⁴⁴ Second, essential materials such as imported nets increased in price 50-60 percent as did the price of tin used to make cans, which resulted in additional pack production costs.¹⁴⁵ Still the canning business must have been a profitable one during World War I, the number of canneries peaking in 1917 when 84 facilities processed fish.¹⁴⁶

The decade of the 1920s brought with it a number of difficulties which challenged all involved in the BC fishing industry, including fish packing companies. Issues such as depressed overseas markets, and disappointing runs, instigated both the industry's largest amalgamation to that point in time and two industry-wide recessions. In 1920 the collapse of the Continental Europe Pink and Chum market, along with a terrible rate of foreign exchange, meant that canners, especially smaller processors, had issues marketing their pack.¹⁴⁷ Northern BC Fisheries Ltd. was one casualty of a recession that persisted into 1923.¹⁴⁸ However for a few in the industry the mid-1920s was a time of expansion, for example, between 1923 and 1926 the Canadian Fishing Co. Ltd. purchased 12 canneries.¹⁴⁹ BC processors, who had rebuilt their European Pink market, were dealt another devastating blow in 1927, when the Pinks did not return in expected numbers which amounted to another major recession.¹⁵⁰ These trying times called for desperate measures and processors such as Gosse Packing Co. Ltd., Millerd Packing Co. Ltd. and

¹⁴¹ Richard Gregory, personal interview, 17 November 2000.

¹⁴² Meggs, *Salmon*, 102.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Lyons, *Salmon*, 305.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 310.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 317.

¹⁴⁷ Lyons, *Salmon*, 347.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 348.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 364-365.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 370.

BC Fishing & Packing Co. Ltd. were absorbed by BC Packers Ltd., in 1928.¹⁵¹

The economic challenges of the Great Depression brought the ruin of many a fish packer. The decline in markets, beginning in 1930 led to staggering losses for canneries. Some canned salmon from 1930 was unsold for four years.¹⁵² Every major processor, but one suffered a crisis.¹⁵³ Even the industry's dominant, and most powerful canner, BC Packers Ltd. came very close to going broke in the early 1930s.¹⁵⁴ The only major canner to survive the Great Depression virtually unscathed was J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.¹⁵⁵ B. Payne, one time managing director of J.H. Todd & Sons, explains that they were able to thrive while others floundered because during the 1930s the Todd's did not expand operations, unlike other canners.¹⁵⁶ As a result of retained earnings the Todd family kept its wealth.¹⁵⁷

For BC salmon canners, World War II was for the most part a time of economic prosperity. First, canners had an assurance of unlimited markets such as the United Kingdom and Canada with Japanese and Siberian competition eliminated. Second, war time legislation fixed prices, thereby guaranteeing profits and third, salmon runs were strong to the point that the largest pack in the industry's history was produced in 1941.¹⁵⁸ This is supported by J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.' president, W. C. Todd who noted on March 25th 1942:

*For the first time since we started the Cannery business, as far as the writer is aware, we have not a tin of Salmon at any of our Canneries. The reason for this being, the Government took so much Canned Salmon for England last year, and as they are going to take all the Canned Salmon which we pack in Season 1942, we decided there was no use holding Canned Salmon for Canadian Customers,*¹⁵⁹

A concerned W. C. Todd, in the same memo, wondered about his company's salmon pack going strictly to the overseas market when he states, "Time alone will tell what the result will be, our labels being off the Canadian market this time for how long a period no one can tell."¹⁶⁰

The post war years brought a number of challenges to the BC fishing industry.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 373-374.

¹⁵² CFCA, Payne, *An Essay containing a modest minimum of salient facts on The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932*, 30.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 30.

¹⁵⁴ Ken Druska, *HR: A Biography of H. R. MacMillan* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1995), 161.

¹⁵⁵ CFCA, Payne, *An Essay containing a modest minimum of salient facts on The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932*, 35.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 30.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 30.

¹⁵⁸ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 25 March 1942.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

With the lifting of the wartime embargo on the exports of raw product competition for fish increased and sometimes American processors outbid BC processors. Second, the US placed a 25 percent duty on BC canned salmon, constricting the American market. Then in 1947 and 1948, the British canned salmon market collapsed, shutting off a crucial overseas market. Having ignored the domestic market during the war years, canners now began an advertising campaign to get the Canadian public to consume their product, launching a ‘no name’ campaign stating that canned salmon was nutritious, versatile and cheap.¹⁶¹ By the end of the decade canned salmon still dominated overseas and domestic markets, however, fresh and frozen salmon sales had increased.¹⁶²

Canned salmon is subject to many factors that influence its supply and demand. Since its inception in 1870, the BC canned salmon industry has been burdened with a number of uncontrollable changes, including two world wars and a series of world-wide depressions. The two twentieth century world wars fueled demand for BC canned salmon to feed the Allied troops, however these events also took a heavy toll on the world’s former dominant imperial power and primary market for BC’s canned salmon, Great Britain. As a result of the considerable financial stresses incurred due to World War II, “BC salmon became a “luxury” item in Britain by 1948.”¹⁶³ The collapse of this traditional market, always dependable since the inception of the BC salmon canning industry, ultimately caused the ruination of a number of BC fish packers.

Currently twenty one former and current canneries exist in one form or another. Today only three canneries still can salmon: the world’s largest salmon cannery in Prince Rupert, a family-run micro cannery located in Surrey, and a substantial family-owned cannery/custom processor which primarily processes sports caught fish situated in Nanaimo. Six former canneries now operate as custom processors. All that remains of the once Prince Rupert Fishermen’s Co-op plant, at one time the second largest fish processing facility in BC¹⁶⁴ is a reduction plant (processes fish meal, fish fertilizer and oil from fish and fish offal), and some pilings. Two former iconic canneries now function primarily as storage facilities. Three canneries are slowly being reclaimed by the coastal rainforest. One cannery in Bella Coola now operates as a sight-seeing destination, another is owned by a group of fire fighters, and a former ABC Packing Co. Ltd.’s cannery is unique since 1970 it has operated as a world class sports fishing facility.¹⁶⁵ The last active cannery on the Skeena River is now owned by a young couple who supplement their income by renting out former employee living quarters. Three canneries now earn their

¹⁶¹ Gough, *Managing Canada’s Fisheries*, 278.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ McGillivray, *Geography of British Columbia*, 129.

¹⁶⁴ Forester and Forester, *British Columbia Commercial Fishing Industry*, 109.

¹⁶⁵ W. H. MacDonald, *The Good Hope Cannery: Life and Death at a Salmon Cannery* (Halfmoon Bay: Caitlin Press Inc., 2011), 161.

keep as National Historic sites, and in order to supplement revenue have hosted events such as Antiques Roadshows, weddings, and have been used as back drops for movies.

The majority of the canneries that once dotted the BC coast have either been dismantled or they have been left to return to nature, and all that one can see of many of these once impressive facilities is the odd piling or rusty boiler. With passing years soon all that will remain are fading memories of days gone by. Mr. Ken Olding who worked forty-two years in the fishing industry in varying capacities, lamented the state of the industry today "... and now it is all wiped out! What a shame!"¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Ken Olding, personal interview, 2 February 2014.

3. EVOLUTION OF J.H. TODD & SONS LTD.

The narrative of J.H. Todd, and his family's involvement in the BC salmon canning industry is a classic "Rags to Riches" story. When J.H. Todd came west in 1862 he was not a wealthy man, but through hard work, determination, and perseverance he and his son Charlie were able to build a fishing empire that lasted for seventy-three years. The reasons why the Todds were able to survive for as long as they did in this highly risky and unpredictable industry are complex. Realizing that it was a mistake to focus only on the fishing business, they quickly diversified their business interests into wholesale and retail sales, real estate, and the stock market. This diversification allowed them to accumulate the necessary capital to survive the lean and difficult times of the fishing industry. Their leadership and business savvy elevated their fishing company, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. into one of the top fish processing companies in BC by the start of World War II. Eventually though, a convergence of issues starting in the early 1940s and continuing into the early 1950s, finally forced the family to close the curtain on their business and step off the stage of the BC fishing industry.

John Todd, originally from Omagh, Ireland, brought his family to Eastern Canada in 1820 and found employment as a butler.¹⁶⁷ His son, Jacob Hunter Todd, the founder of the canning firm, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., was born in Brampton, Ontario in 1827. Jacob's entrepreneurial roots can be traced to his youth, when he sold sewing machines.¹⁶⁸ Due to Ontario's poor economy and because "he had heard of the wonderful opportunities...in the western part of the continent,"¹⁶⁹ Jacob headed west to Victoria in 1862. He partnered with respected Victoria businessman, J.H. Turner, and opened a wholesale grocery store, Todd, Turner & Co.¹⁷⁰ In 1863 Jacob, sensing a golden opportunity to strike it rich, headed up to Barkerville where he opened another successful store, J.H. Todd & Co., which sold a variety of goods to miners and mining communities throughout the Cariboo area.¹⁷¹ This store burnt down in 1868; Jacob rebuilt it, and continued to operate it until 1874, when due to a declining Cariboo gold rush he sold the store.¹⁷²

In the mining business it was not unusual for miners to incur debt at a store, putting up one of their claims in payment. One such claim at Lightning Creek made Jacob a great deal of money.¹⁷³ In 1879, Jacob became secretary of the Pioneer Quartz Mill and Mining Co. He also "purchased the interest of one, Ralph Anderson in a mining claim

¹⁶⁷ *Todd Family History*, unpublished manuscript, private collection of Margaret Todd.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ City of Victoria Archives (hereafter CVA) Ainslee Helmcken, "Why J.H. Todd came West," File G.1.017.021.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Green, *Excelsior! The Story of the Todd Family* (Victoria: Orca Publishers, 1990), 12.

¹⁷² *Todd Family History*, unpublished manuscript, private collection of Margaret Todd.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

paying therefor \$50 in cash and \$80 in grub.”¹⁷⁴ After Jacob sold his store in Barkerville he returned to Victoria in 1874, and opened two stores, one a ship chandlers which sold goods to the local sealing fleet, and the second a wholesale grocery store.¹⁷⁵ In 1877 Jacob brought his twenty-one year old son Charlie, into J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. with him,¹⁷⁶ thereby ensuring that he had a competent successor to head the firm. Jacob had two other sons, Jack and Albert, and when he died in 1899 “the business was left in equal shares to his three sons.”¹⁷⁷ Albert’s role during the time he was involved in the family’s fish operations was limited. When he left the fish business in 1910 he focussed on politics as both a Victoria city alderman, and as Mayor of Victoria from 1917-1918.¹⁷⁸ Jack was not involved in J.H. Todd & Sons at all and instead focussed his attention on medicine.¹⁷⁹

C.F. Todd married in 1884 and by 1887 his family consisted of two boys, William Charles born 1885, and Ernest Dain born in 1887. In 1906 C.F. Todd brought his eldest son, W.C. Todd, who was 21 at the time into the company alongside him. Why he decided to bring William into J.H. Todd & Sons and not Ernest, is unclear, but it could be due to William being the eldest son. C.F. helped set up Ernest in Gillespie, Hart & Todd Co., a real estate and insurance firm where Ernest was president.¹⁸⁰ When his brother, William died in 1942, Ernest came in as president of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., and took control of the company (see Figure 3).

Jacob Todd & his son, Charlie Fox Todd, were unusual in comparison to other canners. First they were loners, as was noted by T. E. Ladner who said that even though Jacob Todd operated a cannery on the Fraser, he did not fraternize with other canners.¹⁸¹ Until about World War I, most canners kept their headquarters in Victoria, and shortly after the war relocated their offices to Vancouver; the Todds chose to remain in Victoria.

¹⁷⁴ CVA, Ainslee Helmcken, “J.H. Todd’s purchase of miner’s claim,” File G.1.017.021.

¹⁷⁵ Green, *Excelsior!* 30.

¹⁷⁶ CVA, Ainslee Helmcken, “C. F. Todd entrance into J.H. Todd & Sons,” File G.1.017.021).

¹⁷⁷ Green, *Excelsior!* 148.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁸¹ Leon J. Ladner, *The Ladners of Ladner*, 87.



J.H. Todd - Founder



C.F. Todd

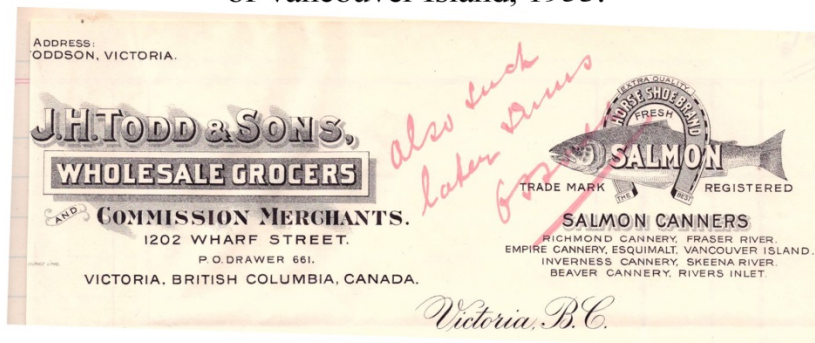


W.C. Todd

Source: Margaret Todd, personal archives.



From left to right: Derek Todd, President Ernie Todd and Jack Todd
Source: "Fish Packer for Over 70 Years." Island Events: Graphic Weekly of Vancouver Island, 1953.



Company letterhead, circa 1910.

Source: Author's collection.

Figure 3: Key Todd family members involved in J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.

Another Todd characteristic, which other canners occasionally made fun of was the family's frugality. In order to survive in this highly competitive industry all canners had to be somewhat frugal, but Jacob and his son Charlie were ridiculed for being extremely cheap. Jacob did not mind this, as is supported by this well-known story: Jacob was outside a Fraser River cannery, and a fellow canner approached Jacob, and said "I hear there is someone over there just as mean and tight as you are?" Jacob replied "Well now, I wonder who on earth that could be?" "Your son, Charlie," replied the other canner. At this point others on the dock laughed at Jacob Todd.¹⁸² Canner H. Doyle finished the story:

*Old Todd's figure straightened and a look of real unaffected pleasure and delight replaced the mask of mirth it possessed...All resentment departed from him and it was patent to everyone present that he felt complimented... If son Charlie had that reputation in Victoria it was well. The lessons he had inculcated had been learned; the fortune he had spent his lifetime in accumulating would be left in safe hands...*¹⁸³

This story reveals Jacob's strong character and how he did not care or worry about what others thought of him. This story may suggest that "mean" and "tight" are not looked as negative characteristics in which case he could be thought of as simply embracing the common, positive social values of a leader: "frugal" and "steadfast."

Due to his drive, foresight and business sense Jacob acquired enough capital to expand into other businesses, such as the BC fishing industry. In 1881, his Horseshoe salmon label, the trademark of his fishing company, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. became the first to be registered in the British Empire.¹⁸⁴ In 1882 he bought the Richmond Cannery which produced fish under the Horseshoe label (Figure 4). The importance of a canner's labels cannot be overstated as it was generally the labels on the cans that caught the attention of the consumer. By the 1880s and 1890s Todd's Horseshoe salmon label was gaining world attention as its tins of salmon won prizes at world fairs such as London's Crystal Palace Exhibition.¹⁸⁵ For many years the company labels were lithographed by the *Colonist* in Victoria. D. Pollock remembers the Vancouver based, Fleetham Services Ltd. doing the J.H. Todds & Sons Ltd.'s labelling of their cans.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Hugh W. McKervill, *The Salmon People* (North Vancouver: Whitecap Books Ltd., 1992), 53.

¹⁸³ BCA, Doyle, *The Rise and Decline of the Pacific Salmon Fisheries*, 153.

¹⁸⁴ Lyons, *Salmon*, 188.

¹⁸⁵ Green, *Excelsior!*, 52.

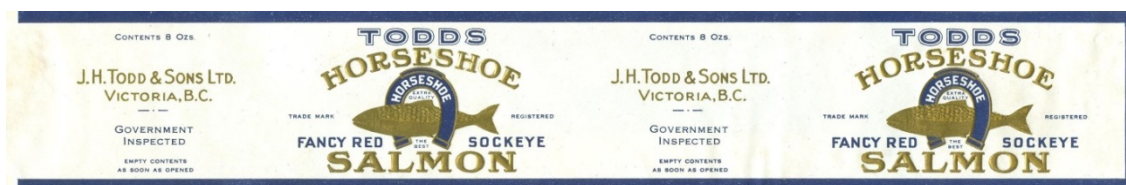
¹⁸⁶ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 29 August 2006.



A very early example of a one pound Horseshoe salmon label (circa 1900).



Early example of label highlighting graphic design and marketing strategies used by Todd company (circa early 1900s).



Hand-packed label for 'specialty pack' indicating a top quality of product (circa 1940s).

Figure 4: J.H. Todd & Sons' Salmon Labels
Source: Author's collection.

Other well-known Todd labels included: “Tiger”, Cohoe, “Sunflower”, Pinks, and “Cute”, Chum.¹⁸⁷ The firm also had a special label, embossed with a gold salmon on a white background that went on hand-packed cans of number one sockeye salmon for gifts to family, close friends or business associates on special occasions such as Christmas.¹⁸⁸ D. Pollock also talked about how proud Todd employees were of the company’s labels, especially the Horseshoe label.¹⁸⁹ Jack Elsey, an acquaintance of mine, and who worked with Nelson Bros. Fisheries Ltd. in the late 1940s promoting Paramount salmon at the retail level told me, “He was discouraged when calling on the trade in Victoria, and Vancouver Island. Horseshoe brand, J.H. Todd’s foremost sockeye label was so prominent a brand, marketing anything else seemed hopeless”¹⁹⁰ (Figure 4).

Like all successful fish packing companies trying to remain competitive in this challenging business a firm had to diversify its fish products. J.H. Todd & Sons expanded their canned fish products to include herring, tuna, clams, clam nectar, and smoked spring salmon (see Table 1). The company even experimented with canning abalone, and a sandwich spread.¹⁹¹ The company’s fresh and frozen products included halibut as well as a variety of ground fish.¹⁹²

A company’s flag was used to identify a company’s packer or their fleet’s boats. J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.’s company flag was typically a white horseshoe with a white salmon running through it set on a red background.¹⁹³ Other variations include a red pennant with no symbols. An interesting side note is that many Todd fishermen, being superstitious, refused to fly the Todd flag with the horseshoe pointed upside down as they believed their luck would drop out. As a result, most Todd’s fishermen, flew the flag upside down with the horseshoe pointed so that their luck would not run out. This angered many a Todd manager.¹⁹⁴

During the seventy-three years that J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was under the family’s control, they owned eleven processing plants in B.C. and one in Washington State. The firm also had two substantial cold storage facilities (Table 2 and Figure 5).

¹⁸⁷ University of British Columbia Special collections (hereafter UBCSC), F.S. Dawson, “Todd’s Salmon Labels,” Todd (J.H.) & Sons Records, Box 1 / A.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 28 August 2013.

¹⁹⁰ Jack Elsey, personal interview, 20 September 2014.

¹⁹¹ UBCSC, F.S. Dawson, “J.H. Todd & Sons’ Fish Products,” Todd (J.H.) & Sons Records, Box 1 / A.

¹⁹² CFCA, Correspondence from Jack McMillan to Eddie Moir, 1948.

¹⁹³ Mickey Fitzgerald, “Todd Flag Flies Once Again,” *Fisherman Life*, April 2002. 34.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

Table 1: J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. Canned Fish Brands

Brands	Product	Can Size
Salmon / Steelhead		
Horseshoe	Fancy Red Sockeye	1-lb Tall
Horseshoe	Fancy Red Sockeye	½ lb
Todd's Brand	Sockeye (Tips & Tails)	½ lb
Todd's Brand	Springs (Red)	½ lb
Todd's Brand	Springs (White)	½ lb
Todd's Brand	Springs (Smoked White)	½ lb
Blue Cross	Fancy Cohoe – Red Salmon	1-lb Tall & ½ lb
Tiger	Fancy Cohoe – Red Salmon	1-lb Tall & ½ lb
Prince Rupert	Fancy Pink Salmon	1-lb Tall
Sunflower	Fancy Pink Salmon	1-lb Tall & ½ lb
Cute	Fancy Keta Salmon	1-lb Tall & ½ lb
Todd's Brand	Steelhead	½ lb
Herring		
Empire	Herring (natural oil & tomato sauce)	1-lb ovals
Tuna		
Todd's Brand	Tuna (Solid Pack)	7 oz
Todd's Brand	Tuna (Flaked White & Dark Meat)	6.5 oz
Clams		
Todd's Brand	Whole Butter Clams	1-lb Tall
Todd's Brand	Clam Nectar	unknown
Abalone		
Todd's Brand	Abalone (small amounts canned)	unknown

Table 2: J.H. Todd & Sons, Ltd. Corporate Structure

J.H. TODD & SONS LIMITED	
Head Office: 1306 Wharf Street, Victoria, BC.	
Subsidiary Companies	
The BC Ice and Cold Storage Co. Ltd.	
The Klemtu Canning Co. Ltd.	
The Provincial Canning Co. Ltd.	
The Richmond Canning Co. Ltd.	
The Sooke Harbour Packing and Fishing Co. Ltd.	
The Western Fishing Co. Ltd.	
Plants in British Columbia	Cold Storage Plants in British Columbia
Richmond, Fraser River	BC Ice & Cold Storage Co. Ltd., Vancouver
Beaver, Fraser River	Klemtu Cannery, Klemtu Pass
Western Fishing Co. Ltd., Victoria	
Empire, Esquimalt	Fish Traps, Sooke
Sooke Harbour Packing & Fishing Co. Ltd.	Coal Creek Trap
Beaver, Rivers Inlet	Gordon's Trap
Provincial, Rivers Inlet	Otter Point Trap
Name unknown, Jarvis Inlet	Sooke Trap
Klemtu, Klemtu Pass	Beechey Head Trap
Inverness, Skeena River	
Plants in United States	
Name Unknown, Anacortes, WA	



Figure 5: Map showing location of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. plants

J.H. Todd purchased the newly built Richmond Cannery from Angus Fraser and a partner in 1882 (Figure 6).¹⁹⁵ This cannery was located on the North Arm of the Fraser River. Will Todd, J.H. Todd's grandson, revealed the precise location of this plant in a 1940 J.H. Todd and Sons, Ltd. Minute Book when he wrote: "This cannery was located on a little island situated between Sea Island and the Mainland west of the Main Highway Bridge."¹⁹⁶ J.H. Todd's Richmond Cannery in its early years was not one of the major salmon processors in BC. In 1885 nine canneries produced 108,517 cases of canned salmon; the largest company produced 23,000 cases, and Todd's Richmond Cannery produced 7,850 cases, which ranked it eighth out of nine processors.¹⁹⁷ Despite its small canned salmon pack, it was said that J.H. Todd ran a very efficient operation.¹⁹⁸ When J.H. Todd entered the BC salmon canning industry in 1882 there were twelve companies which operated twenty canneries along the BC coast, with most being situated on or near the Fraser River.

¹⁹⁵ Lyons, *Salmon*, 168.

¹⁹⁶ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 6 December 1940.

¹⁹⁷ Lyons, *Salmon*, 179.

¹⁹⁸ Reid, *The Development of the Fraser River Salmon Canning Industry*, 12.



Richmond Cannery, Fraser River, 1890.



Inverness Cannery, Skeena River, early 1900s. Operated by the Todds from 1902-1954.



Klemtu Cannery, Klemtu Pass, 1940s. Renovated with cold storage, early 1940s.

Figure 6: Photographs of J.H. Todd & Sons' Canneries
Source: Author's collection.

After purchasing land from Steveston settler E. Gerard, J.H. Todd in 1889 erected his second cannery, which he named Beaver Cannery,¹⁹⁹ the first cannery built in the classic 'L-shaped design' in Steveston.²⁰⁰ In 1905 when the original Richmond Cannery was closed Beaver Cannery was re-named the Richmond Cannery. On May 11th, 1924 the new Richmond Cannery was burnt down and was not rebuilt.²⁰¹ It was converted into a fish camp, complete with machine shop in order to service Todd & Sons' gillnet, troll, seine, and packer fleet. In 1948 the company added a new seine loft – a 120'×60' building, 29' feet high with a 60'×20' wharf in front, and this building was used for the storage of seine nets, halibut gear, and for the manufacture of seine nets.²⁰²

J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was unique in comparison to other BC fish packing companies, holding exclusive trap fishing licenses in the Sooke region for 32 years; the only company in British Columbia and Canada permitted to operate fish traps in salt water.²⁰³ While under Todd ownership these fish traps operated continuously from 1904 until 1954, and were instrumental in helping the firm to become one of the top canning firms in the province.

By 1901, a total of 47 companies operated 73 plants in British Columbia.²⁰⁴ That year 1,236,156 cases of sockeye were processed, and J.H. Todd & Sons canned 41,775 cases (3.4% of the total pack), which ranked it sixth among canning companies.²⁰⁵ The top firm ABC Packing Co. Ltd. canned 174,375 cases, or 14.1% of the total pack.²⁰⁶

In 1902, the shrewd Todds realized they needed to expand their operations in the north and purchased Inverness Cannery on the Skeena River from Turner, Beeton & Co. for \$28,000.²⁰⁷ The acquisition of this cannery was crucial for several reasons. First, its location on the Skeena River gave Todd & Sons access to BC's second largest salmon producing river, as well as to the Nass River, Haida Gwaii rivers and Alaska waters. Second, the cannery had access to a labour force from several nearby First Nations villages. Third, its location on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway offered shipping advantages after the line's construction.²⁰⁸ William F. Sinclair, Chief of Economics and

¹⁹⁹ Thomas Kidd, *History of Richmond Municipality: History of Lulu Island and Occasional Poems* (Vancouver: Wrigley Printing, 1927), 78.

²⁰⁰ Mitsuo Yesaki and Harold and Kathy Steves, *Steveston Cannery Row: An Illustrated History* (Richmond: Lulu Island Printing Ltd., 1998), 17.

²⁰¹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 6 December, 1940.

²⁰² CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 14 March 1949.

²⁰³ Rob Morris, "Years of Bounty: The Sooke Fish Traps," *Westcoast Fisherman*, (June 1993), 46.

²⁰⁴ CFCA, Payne, *AN ESSAY containing a modest minimum of salient facts on The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932*, 4.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Blythe, *Skeena Canneries*, 118.

²⁰⁸ Newell, ed., *The Development of the Pacific Salmon-Canning Industry*, 220.

Sociology, Northern Operations Branch, Fisheries & Marine Service, Department of the Environment points out a fourth and not well-known reason:

*Ownership of the northern plants was vital to the material strength of the new corporations. For the northern canneries had shown historically much larger profits per case than those on the Fraser. Any company, therefore, wishing to control the Fraser River fishery would be financially stronger if it also possessed northern plants.*²⁰⁹

Why did a case of salmon, historically yield more profit in the north than in the south? One piece to this puzzle was provided by J. Ward, a long time northern BC cannery manager, who explained “It is a well-known fact within the B.C. commercial fishing industry that the Skeena River sockeye, is without a doubt the best sockeye found in the province.”²¹⁰

One other reason for the superiority of Skeena River fish is provided by twenty-five year Haida Gwaii Sports Fishing guide, S. Gray who noted “the texture of the flesh is noticeably softer in salmon in the south in comparison to the north. The water temperature in the north is slightly colder which makes the salmon flesh there firmer.”²¹¹ E. Kirsch, a former cannery lineman and filler man, who spent twenty plus years in northern and southern canneries adds further clarity to the issue, noting:

*All the special packs for the Westons, Nelsons and all the ‘big wigs’ were always Skeena Sockeye. These fish were firmer which meant a nicer cut and a better looking fill, which meant there was no fish, no bones, no skin hanging over the edge of the can (when speciality packs were hand packed the fill of the can was always perfect). As a filler man, I would often go into the lab to check on our weigh sheets, and see how our fill was. At times I would see the lab technician opening up a can of sockeye and then pour the oil into a beaker. Skeena River sockeye oil, was bright orange, and... Premium buyers like John West, were looking for the bright orange oil.*²¹²

The Inverness Cannery processed salmon continuously for 74 years (48 years while under Todd’s ownership) prior to being converted to a fish camp for Todd & Sons’ northern fishing fleet in 1951.

After careful examination and study of an Anacortes fish trap operation in 1904, the Todd brothers, led by Charlie (C.F. Todd), decided to venture into the fish trap business at Sooke. Fish traps were effective in very specific locations where large percentages of the Fraser River salmon stock passed close to the shore, and Sooke was

²⁰⁹ Reid, *The Development of the Fraser River Salmon Canning Industry*, Preface, p. ii.

²¹⁰ Joe Ward, personal interview, 26 July 2013.

²¹¹ Spencer Gray, personal interview, 11 December 2013.

²¹² Ed Kirsch, e-mail message to the author, August 4, 2014.

one of the few Canadian locations. Fish traps were expensive to build each year, but once built made the canner independent of fishermen. Needing to process fish from these traps they erected their Empire Cannery in Esquimalt Harbour in 1905 on land leased from the Esquimalt Indian Reserve,²¹³ which ensured access to a crucial labour force. Even so, at least during the early years of the cannery's history, the reserve could not provide enough labour; thus, First Nations women from around southern Vancouver Island were recruited.^{214, 215}

How C.F. Todd was able to secure a license to operate fish traps, a license that the federal government had expressly stated it would not give out, is an interesting puzzle.²¹⁶ Who could C.F. Todd, lobby, or bribe...to do his bidding in Ottawa, a man with both provincial AND federal connections? Edward Gawler Prior, a one-time BC premier (1902-1903) and lieutenant-governor (1919-20) fit the bill perfectly. During his time as premier he barely survived a railway scandal (two of his ministers resigned), and eventually he was forced to step down as premier by Lieutenant-Governor Joly because he had been caught issuing a government contract to his own company.²¹⁷ Henry Doyle, a prominent fishing industry insider, provides more credence to this possibility when he stated:

Just at this time a vacancy occurred in Victoria's representation in the Provincial Legislature and in the course of our conversation Charlie Todd told me he favoured the candidacy of E. V. Bodwell...I returned to Victoria the day after the election and learned that Bodwell's opponent, Col. E. G. Prior, had won the seat and that one of the most active workers for the latter's election had been Charles F. Todd.... Shortly afterwards ugly rumours began floating around Victoria to the effect that Todd's change of candidates had been influenced by the promise of salmon traps locations along the Vancouver Island shores, in Strait of Juan de Fuca. Despite the Ottawa's government's assurances that traps would not be licensed there, it was learned it intended doing so and that certain politically powerful Victorians would be given first pick of the available locations. It was asserted that Todd's switch from Bodwell to Prior was owing to having been

²¹³ "Dawn of a New Local Industrial Era: Empire Cannery. Just Completed at Esquimalt," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 7 May 1905, 1.

²¹⁴ John S. Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press., 2008), 101.

²¹⁵ "Derek Todd reported that his grandfather, C. F. Todd built his fish traps at Sooke in order to get even with two canners who had convinced his father to go in as a partner at an Anacortes cannery, and as a result caused his father great stress and worry: with his traps in Sooke he intercepted fish first before they went through the Anacortes area." Derek Todd, personal interview 18 May 2005

²¹⁶ "Derek Todd, stated that Queen Victoria gave the Todds' exclusive rights to fish with the traps in the Sooke region." Derek Todd, personal interview, 24 November 2000.

²¹⁷ Margaret A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Vancouver: Evergreen Press., 1958), 335.

*promised some of the more favourable locations.*²¹⁸

One could only imagine how this upset Todd's BC's competition. For the Todds the possession of the Sooke fish trap licenses formed a cornerstone of their empire. While there may be additional contributing factors that have been lost to historical records, the recollections of Henry Doyle do offer a compelling possibility as to why C.F. Todd was able to secure these sites when others were not.

After securing permits from the Canadian government on May 2, 1904,²¹⁹ Charlie ordered the construction of traps in 1904. Eventually, five impressive traps were built between Coal Creek and Beechey Head operating every year from 1904 until 1958, except for one year in 1957 (Figure 7).²²⁰



Figure 7: Sooke fish trap sites

Source: "Years of Bounty: The Sooke Fish Traps." *The Westcoast Fisherman*, June 1993.

The Todds also operated an additional trap up in the Alert Bay region.²²¹ Due to winter storms the traps had to be rebuilt every year with the pilings being stored at nearby Whiffen Spit. The driving of piles began in March; about 1600 fir pilings varying in

²¹⁸ Doyle, *The Rise and Decline of the Pacific Salmon Fisheries*, 233.

²¹⁹ Lyons, *Salmon*, 248.

²²⁰ Green, *Excelsior!*, 58.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

length between 30' to 145' were needed, with another 1000 rolls of wire gauge.²²² The five traps varied in length from 600 to 2800 feet.²²³ The most productive and largest out of the five built was the Gordon trap.²²⁴ The cost of putting in these traps annually was approximately \$225,000, and this was even before a fish was caught.²²⁵ Fishing commenced in May and usually ended in mid-October.²²⁶ The traps fished 5 days a week, and closed from Friday 6:00 p.m. until Sunday 6:00 p. m. for conservation purposes.²²⁷ Typically 50 men worked the traps, providing the Sooke community with needed employment.²²⁸

The fish traps were very effective and efficient because of their placement and by their design. Migrating salmon travel close to the shore, and once they encounter the lead instinctively they swim out to deeper water which leads to the heart. From the heart, they would eventually make their way through a narrow gap into the spiller. Once a significant number of salmon were trapped in the spiller, and the tide had changed the trap man shut the gap trapping the fish.²²⁹ A scow would then be brought alongside the trap and the netting would be raised and the fish would be brailed by a large net into the scow. The fish would then be transferred to a waiting packer, and from there to the nearby Empire Cannery or to other markets for processing.²³⁰

To see how a fish trap works see Figure 8. The traps were very effective at catching fish, as is clearly shown by the following quote:

*The Sooke traps rarely took more than 10 to 15 percent of the annual Fraser Sockeye pack. Trap catches throughout the '20s, '30s and '40s averaged around 40,000 pieces with a few seasons breaking the 100,000 mark and even going as high as 130,000 (1941), but never approaching the bumper harvests of 500,000 to 700,000 sockeye that were taken prior to the Hell's Gate slide in 1913.*²³¹

²²² George Nicholson, "They Still Reap the Living Silver Harvest," *Daily Colonist*, August 4, 1957, 8.

²²³ Ibid., 8.

²²⁴ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 3 August 2009.

²²⁵ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 21 September 2002.

²²⁶ George Nicholson, "They Still Reap the Living Silver Harvest," *Daily Colonist*, August 4, 1957, 9.

²²⁷ Ibid., 8.

²²⁸ "Brief With Respect To A Conciliation Board On The Sooke Harbour Fishing & Packing Co. Ltd.," 3 August 1954, 2, private collection of Mickey Fitzgerald.

²²⁹ Morris, "Years of Bounty," 46.

²³⁰ Ibid., 49.

²³¹ Ibid., 48.



Taking salmon from a trap, 1907 (Source: Author's collection)

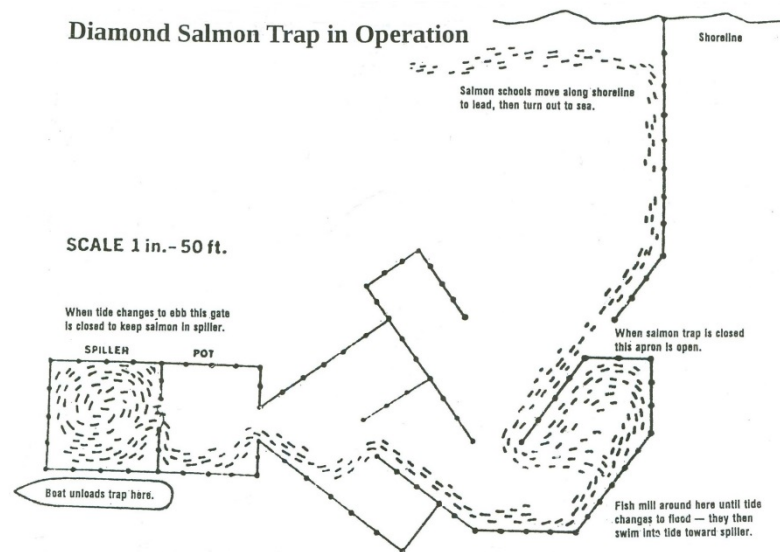


Diagram of fish trap operation.

Source: "The Pot and Spiller." Sooke Region Historical Society, 1997.

Figure 8: Photograph and diagram showing fish trap operation

Fishing by traps was an efficient and economical method of obtaining fish. First, they cut costs; one did not need to employ an expensive fishing fleet to catch ones' fish. Second, fish could be retrieved from the traps on demand. Third, the quality of the fish was unsurpassed. They were not damaged by the nets and the fish did not sit in a

fisherman's boat or a company's packer for days. The fish canned at the Empire Cannery were fresher, and therefore a better product.²³²

Jack Todd, a Todd family president of the Victoria branch of the Western Fishing Co., from 1945 onwards noted:

*The traps provided DFO with a lot of information. We supplied scientific information on the catch as a percentage of the catch was tagged, so they were able to follow up on where they went. Second, a lot of people criticized the traps saying "They took too many fish." but if one was to compare with today's ... they were a very stable way of catching fish, and we didn't catch the fish that couldn't be used.*²³³

B. Payne, who took over as General Manager of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. on March 1, 1955,²³⁴ added that by the end the traps were from another era, and the main tragedy of their passing was the disappearance of the families who worked on the traps.²³⁵ It is important to remember the impact the traps had, not only on the company, but on the Sooke community and its residents as well.

The sockeye and chum salmon taken from the traps²³⁶ were sent to the Empire Cannery in Esquimalt Harbour while springs, coho and any other bycatch, such as halibut, or cod went to fresh fish markets in Seattle, Vancouver and Victoria.²³⁷ In the very early years, mild cured spring salmon were also shipped by the Lindenberger & Co., based in Astoria, Oregon to markets in Germany.²³⁸

There should be no surprise that there was opposition to the Sooke fish traps as these traps were taking fish that other competing fishing groups, primarily commercial fishermen, may otherwise harvest. The first notable opposition to the traps occurred in 1935 when Washington State banned traps altogether. This decision encouraged BC fishermen to begin efforts to abolish the Sooke fish traps.²³⁹ The following major concerns that commercial fishermen had with the Sooke fish traps were brought by representatives on behalf of the fishermen before the Fisheries Committee of the Federal Parliament (1) that former Washington State trap owners would use the Sooke traps in an argument to having their traps reinstated; (2) that the Sooke trap owners would not be satisfied with just five sites, and would want more and that this would mean the complete

²³² Tiny Bing, personal interview, 22 May 2000.

²³³ Jack Todd, personal interview, 10 March 2001.

²³⁴ Lyons, *Salmon*, 519.

²³⁵ Payne, Bob, personal interview, 6 December 2007.

²³⁶ Morris, "Years of Bounty," 49.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

²³⁸ "Dawn of a New Local Industrial Era: Empire Cannery, Just Completed at Esquimalt," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 7 May 1905, 1.

²³⁹ Lyons, *Salmon*, 439-440.

elimination of the fishermen from the industry; and (3) that the traps are the most harmful and wasteful method of taking fish that we have in operation.²⁴⁰ The Todds countered the fishermen's accusation by stating the following: (1) that fish traps operations does not affect the trollers, gillnetters, and seiners; (2) that the traps only take 2 % of the yearly catch, and (3) that if the traps were shut down that the forty-one workers employed in the trap operations would be deprived of employment.²⁴¹ Eventually a commission led by Gordon Sloan was undertaken, and in 1940 his findings were released. Sloan did not feel that the fish traps should be abolished: "the slight benefit to be conferred on each gill-netter and purse seine fisherman ... would be outweighed by the irretrievable loss suffered by the fishermen and the general community of Sooke."²⁴² His report also recommended that the opening to the lead be increased in order to increase escapement during periods when the traps were not fishing.²⁴³

A contemporary account in 1905 described the Empire Cannery at Esquimalt: "220 feet long by 80 feet wide...[with] a warehouse, 150 feet by 50 feet..."²⁴⁴ During peak season it employed roughly 250 people, and with the latest machinery it was one of the most modern canneries in BC.²⁴⁵ What constituted modern machinery in 1905 was an adjustable elevator which brought fish up from the scows, and gang knives which cut the fish in the desired size for the cans being cooked.²⁴⁶ Initially, everything was done by hand, from the making of the cans, to the filling of the cans, to the crimping and soldering the cans, and finally to the labelling of the cans.²⁴⁷ Expectations were that this cannery would produce approximately 1,500 cases of salmon per day on three canning lines.²⁴⁸ The Todds partnered with Mr. William Munsie (his share of this cannery was 1/3), a wealthy businessman from Victoria on this cannery.

In the winter of 1905-1906, the company's fourth cannery, the Beaver Plant located in Rivers Inlet was built to take advantage of the region's salmon runs.²⁴⁹ Soon after Todd's Beaver cannery on the Fraser was renamed the Richmond cannery. The Rivers Inlet cannery processed salmon for thirty five years until 1941 when it was converted into a fish camp to service their central coast fishing fleet. Considerable investments had been made upgrading the Todds nearby Klemtu Cannery into a year-

²⁴⁰ J. Gavin, "Out With Traps!" *The Fisherman*, 26 February 1937, 2.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁴² "Sloan Recommends Traps Stay," *The Fisherman*, 2 July 1940, 1.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁴⁴ "Another Cannery For Esquimalt," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 2 February 1905, 8.

²⁴⁵ "Cannery Commencing: Establishment at Esquimalt to Begin Operations This Morning," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 8 July 1905, 7.

²⁴⁶ "Dawn of a New Local Industrial Era: Empire Cannery, Just Completed at Esquimalt," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 7 May 1905, 1.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁴⁹ Lyons, *Salmon*, 261.

round operation, and from a financial perspective it made sense to consolidate their fish processing efforts there.

The year 1910 was pivotal for the Todds and J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. Charlie Todd took complete control of the fishing side of the business. As Charlie explained in his ledger, “C.F. Todd takes over all four Canneries as they shared (accounts) in our Books...C.F. Todd now owns all interests in the Canneries Labels & Trade Marks, Trap Licenses & Foreshores.”²⁵⁰ The Todds also decided to sell their Victoria stores, a decision prompted by Charlie’s brother, A. E. Todd’s desire to retire from the business.²⁵¹ Charlie made it very clear that he was in complete control of the Todd’s fishing enterprise when he stated, underlining in his ledger in red, that “...William Todd and Ernest Dane Todd are to have no right to take any part in the management of the said business.”²⁵² After 1910, the two brother’s role in the firm was simply as shareholders.

In 1916 a fifth salmon cannery, Provincial Cannery, located in Rivers Inlet was built.²⁵³ This decision proved to be a wise move on the firm’s part as within one season this cannery paid for itself.²⁵⁴ Provincial Cannery was owned by the Provincial Canning Co. Ltd., which was a subsidiary of J.H. Todd & Sons. It was not until January of 1940 that J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. bought all the shares of this company from family and a former company employee.²⁵⁵

Due to the growth of the fish packing firm, and for liability reasons J.H. Todd & Sons, Limited was incorporated on June 30, 1921. The share capital of the company was \$4,000,000, divided into 40,000 shares of \$100.00. The shareholders were six Todd family members, headed by Charles Fox Todd.²⁵⁶, ²⁵⁷ By the 1920s some canners were having difficulties, however not Todd & Sons. C.F. Todd, ever the cautious business owner, “refrained from the competitive race of the 1920s”²⁵⁸ and consequently his firm remained strong. Since its inception as an industry in 1870 the BC fishing commercial salmon canning has been an extremely competitive industry with many players losing, and by the 1920s a few gaining dominance within the industry. By the 1920s the Canadian Fishing Co. expanded its canning operations to include twelve plants.²⁵⁹ In 1928 BC Packers Ltd. became the dominant player when it merged with Gosse Packing

²⁵⁰ C. F. Todd’s Personal Ledger, c. 1900-1912, 26. Private collection of Mickey Fitzgerald.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 25.

²⁵² Ibid., 34.

²⁵³ Lyons, *Salmon*, 311.

²⁵⁴ Derek Todd, personal interview, 24 November 2000.

²⁵⁵ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 8 January 1940.

²⁵⁶ BCA, GR 1402, box n0. 64-35-648, file no. 12415, Incorporation of JH Todd & Sons, 1921.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ CFCA, Payne, *AN ESSAY containing a modest minimum of salient facts regarding The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932*, 6.

²⁵⁹ Lyons, *Salmon*, 364-365.

Co. Ltd., and Millerd Packing Co. Ltd. With this merger this new company, formerly the BC Fishing and Packing Co., now controlled over forty plants.²⁶⁰ Todd & Sons, having multi-plant operations, and access to the family's personal wealth, had independence from broker domination.²⁶¹ Processors often had two options: hire a regional broker, who would exclusively handle all canned salmon sales for that area for a fixed term. However, this limits the processor's flexibility if they are not happy with the broker's work; or a processor could develop their own sales team and be independent, which would give them more flexibility but not necessarily more sales.²⁶²

The Todd's independence from brokers also enabled the company to withstand events, such as an area's failure of one or two salmon runs in a year.²⁶³ By the 1940s J.H. Todd & Sons had hired brokerage firms to market their product. How well the brokers were able to market product had a direct impact on the success and future of a processor. The Todds used several brokers, both domestically and overseas. From the 1940s onward the Todds contracted Swift Canadian Co., based out of Toronto to manage their domestic sales. Brokers for their overseas market included Industrial Sales Ltd., based out of Montreal, and Swift Canadian's representative in Great Britain, Lane & Co., London.²⁶⁴ Corroborating the importance of the brokers for J.H. Todd and Sons during this time, Richard Gregory reflected back on the similar importance that brokers played for BC Packers:

*BCP used a number of different selling structures. We had our own sales and marketing department. In addition to being located at our head Office here in Vancouver / Richmond, we had a number of sales offices in major Canadian cities, Montreal, Toronto, for example. In smaller areas, where the market itself, or our market share was not large enough to support the expense of our own "Full Time" salesmen we would hire a "broker" to sell / handle / represent us in the sale of our product...A "broker" in most cases will represent many different companies and even a wider range of products.*²⁶⁵

In 1922 the Todds amalgamated their Sooke operations with the Sooke Harbour Fishing and Packing Co. Ltd., which was owned by a Port Townsend group.²⁶⁶ The Todds retained the name, and operated this company as a separate entity. After this

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 374.

²⁶¹ CFCA, Payne, *AN ESSAY containing a modest minimum of salient facts regarding The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932*, 6.

²⁶² Don McLeod, email message to author, May 21, 2015.

²⁶³ CFCA, Payne, *An Essay containing a modest minimum of salient facts regarding The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932*, 6.

²⁶⁴ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 28 June 1950.

²⁶⁵ Richard Gregory, email to author, May 19, 2015.

²⁶⁶ Elida Peers, *The Sooke Story-The History and the Heartbeat* (Sooke: Sooke Region Museum., 1999), 152.

amalgamation the Sooke Harbour Fishing and Packing Company's canning operations were moved to the Empire Cannery, located in Esquimalt harbour.²⁶⁷ In January of 1940, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. bought up all remaining shares of this company from one of their employees.²⁶⁸

In 1927, the Klemtu Canning Co. Ltd., a subsidiary of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. constructed Klemtu Cannery, their sixth and last salmon cannery on Swindle Island, in Klemtu Pass.²⁶⁹ Like the firm's Empire Cannery in Esquimalt, Klemtu Cannery was strategically located near the Klemtu First Nation's reserve in order to secure a labour force.²⁷⁰

The Great Depression had a devastating impact on most processors, however the Todds were one of the lucky ones to survive it virtually unblemished.²⁷¹ One example, which explained how the Todds were able to survive during the Great Depression, is shown by an incident labelled 'The Coup' by one author. This 'Coup' was masterminded by the shrewd and business savvy, C.F. Todd. In 1931 due to pressure from the banks, many canners were forced to produce small packs, and in order to maximize profits, can only sockeye salmon.²⁷² How and why this situation occurred is explained by D. McLeod, "The bankers of the day did limit credit lines in difficult times. The canneries may have limited their pack size due to the lack of funds and as a result, focussed on sockeye which had a much better chance of turning a profit."²⁷³ C.F. Todd seized upon the opportunities provided by this unstable period and made a substantial amount of money. The brilliance behind this 'Coup' is described by Mr. Bob Payne, a one-time managing director of J.H. Todd & Sons:

*Todd...was able to purchase raw pinks and chums at distress prices which were sometimes less than the cost of transporting the fish from the grounds to the plants. Through this action...its share of pack increased 16.6% and his costs were insignificant...By this counter cyclical action it further disturbed the chaotic market and simultaneously made substantial profits.*²⁷⁴

In January of 1940, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. bought the remaining shares of the Klemtu Canning Co. Ltd.²⁷⁵ By this time J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. had six salmon canneries

²⁶⁷ Elida Peers, "A Salute To Our Pioneers...Frank Gray." *The Mirror*, 22 October 1975, 4.

²⁶⁸ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 8 January 1940.

²⁶⁹ Lyons, *Salmon*, 368.

²⁷⁰ Ken Campbell, *Cannery Village: Company Town* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing., 2004), 92-93.

²⁷¹ CFCA, Payne, *AN ESSAY containing a modest minimum of salient facts regarding The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932*, 35.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Don McLeod, email to the author, May 21, 2015.

²⁷⁴ CFCA, Payne, *AN ESSAY containing a modest minimum of salient facts regarding The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932*, 30-31.

²⁷⁵ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 6 June 1940.

that processed fish coast-wide. The decision was made in 1941 to consolidate their mid coast processing operations at this facility, and to convert Beaver and Provincial canneries into fish camps. The Todds hired Lew Hogan as their new manager of Klemtu Cannery in January 1942.²⁷⁶ Shortly afterwards Hogan undertook a complete overhaul of Klemtu. Three canning lines were installed as well as a large, modern cold storage and ice plant. This cold storage facility brought additional business from the halibut fishermen and salmon trollers, and live herring bait ponds were set up for the halibut boats.²⁷⁷

After this overhaul was completed Klemtu Cannery was quite unique in that it not only canned salmon but was able to process halibut, herring, abalone, and clams. A small reduction plant to handle their offal was also added.²⁷⁸ With this overhaul Klemtu became a multi-purpose, year-round operation for the Todds.²⁷⁹ According to Jack McMillan a Todd employee and J.S. McMillan Fisheries Ltd. founder, Klemtu Cannery now rivaled B. C. Packers' Namu plant, which was also situated nearby.²⁸⁰ In the 1950 season Klemtu Cannery handled nearly one million lbs of halibut, and fillet freezers were installed, expanding the filleting operation.²⁸¹

In 1944, with the wartime need for canned herring to feed Allied troops, the Todds added four more canning lines at their Empire Cannery to process herring.²⁸² Todd & Sons' Sales Manager, F. Dawson pointed out that during the war 300,000 cases of herring were packed to help the war efforts.²⁸³ "Regarding herring most of our cans went to Italy. It was a '50-50' proposition with the Canadian Fishing Co. We shared the profits and the cost." Pollock added.²⁸⁴

In 1945, in an effort to diversify its processing operations and reduce risk²⁸⁵, the Todds went into partnership with Mr. E. Moir and his Western Fishing Company which specialized in the fresh and frozen fish market. To accommodate this expansion the Todds expanded their Victoria plant, located on Wharf Street, to include an ice house with a 30 ton capacity, and a small freezer. Salmon, tuna and ground fish, such as halibut were filleted and shipped for export, and this facility could handle 2500 lbs of fish daily.

²⁷⁶ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 10 January 1942.

²⁷⁷ Campbell, *Cannery Village*, 92-93.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 92-93.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 93.

²⁸⁰ CFCA, Correspondence from J. McMillan to E. Moir, 1948.

²⁸¹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 25 April 1951.

²⁸² UBCSC, F.S. Fenton, Empire Cannery - Addition of 4 more herring canning lines, Todd (J.H.) & Sons Records, Box 1 / A.

²⁸³ UBCSC, Empire Cannery - Herring Production article, Todd (J.H.) & Sons Records, Box 1 / A.

²⁸⁴ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 12 January 2013.

²⁸⁵ Richard Gregory, personal interview, 30 December 2013.

Depending on the time of year, between 15 and 30 workers were employed.²⁸⁶

In July of 1949 the Directors of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. travelled over to Vancouver to have a look at the BC Ice and Cold Storage plant.²⁸⁷ The Directors were very impressed by “the size of the building, and also the quantity of storage space... This space will take 24,000,000 pounds to fill.”²⁸⁸ The Todds must have liked what they saw in this cold storage because they invested \$490,137.91 in the facility.²⁸⁹ From this point forward BC Ice and Cold Storage Co. Ltd. became a subsidiary of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. D. Todd, a J.H. Todd & Sons’ sales manager noted that in the end, BC Ice & Cold Storage was the one good facility they owned, and that they should have tried to expand operations there.²⁹⁰ One hidden advantage of owning the cold storage plant was that, according to long-time fish company owner N. Safarik, it gave the owner “invaluable information about frozen fish inventories. It was essentially a window into the inventories and business practices of the many independent companies that stored their fish in BC Ice.”²⁹¹

One of the major reasons for the company’s success was due to the fact that the Todds had made sure to diversify their business interests and not just focus on the fishing industry. The Todd families, dating back to Jacob Hunter Todd’s reign were very careful to diversify into a variety of other businesses, including, real estate, real estate management, the logging industry, and the stock market. Their real estate properties, mortgages, and stock investments helped finance their fish business, and made them very wealthy. An example of one of the Todd’s earliest real estate acquisitions took place in 1884 when J.H. Todd purchased 132 acres in North Saanich for \$165.00.²⁹² The wealth that was to be made from their real estate holdings is highlighted by the sale of two Todd properties in 1950. The Todds sold their Georgia Street property in Vancouver for \$150,000, and the sale of their Hudson’s Bay property in Victoria netted the firm \$109,725.00.²⁹³ The Todd families held extensive properties in Victoria, Vancouver, Winnipeg as well as large holdings on Haida Gwaii.²⁹⁴

Further examples of the family’s real estate holdings include, the Kilshaw Building in Victoria owned by Bert Todd, and the Derek Building in Vancouver owned

²⁸⁶ “New Fish Plant Will Open Soon,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 27 May 1945.

²⁸⁷ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 19 July 1949.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 31 December 1951.

²⁹⁰ Derek Todd, personal interview, 28 May 2005.

²⁹¹ Norman Safarik and Allan Safarik, *Bluebacks and Silver Brights-A Lifetime in the BC Fisheries* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2012), 192.

²⁹² BCA, GR307, Crown Grant 154, Volume 22, Land Title & Survey Authority of B.C.

²⁹³ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 19 April 1950.

²⁹⁴ C. F. Todd’s Ledger, c 1900-1912, 28. Private collection of Mickey Fitzgerald.

by Derek Todd's family.²⁹⁵ Today, Derek Todd and his family own considerable acreage around the Pike Lake area, just outside of Victoria.²⁹⁶ Jack Todd and his family at one time owned Sidney Island.²⁹⁷

The Todds also held countless mortgages, including J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. employee mortgages. Long-time Todd & Sons employee, D. Pollock's first house in Oak Bay was financed by the Todds.²⁹⁸ The last Todd president of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., Ernie was also involved in Gillespie, Hart & Co., a real estate, and insurance company. This company took care of insurance premiums which covered plants and buildings belonging to J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.²⁹⁹

The Todds even dabbled in the logging industry, partnering with the R. P. Butchart family in the Cathels & Sorenson operation in the Gordon River region, of Vancouver Island in the mid-1920s.³⁰⁰ In 1949, Ernest D. Todd, J.H. Todd president ordered his staff to look into the possibility of opening a seafood restaurant next to his Wharf Street fish plant.³⁰¹ The Todds established another company in 1952 called "Todd and Food Products Ltd."³⁰² These last two examples high light that the Todds, were not just focussing their business efforts on the fishing industry.

It is very clear that the Todds were major players in the stock market, investing considerable capital in stocks. The variety of stocks that they invested in was impressive and profitable. Their portfolio included: British American Oil Co. Ltd., Imperial Oil Ltd., International Petroleum Co. Ltd., Loblaw Groceries Co. Ltd., Ogilvie Flour Mills Co. Ltd., Imperial Tobacco Company of Canada Ltd., Doreva Gold Mines Ltd., B. C. Cement Co. Ltd., B. C. Telephone Company, and the Ford Motor Company of Canada Ltd.³⁰³ They even owned stocks / bonds in two prominent competing fishing companies, B. C. Packers Ltd., and the New England Fishing Co.³⁰⁴ 1940 records reveal that the Todds had bought stocks in twenty-one Canadian companies, and had invested in ten foreign companies.³⁰⁵ The diversification of the Todd's stock investments reflects devotion to minimizing risk.

The fact that the Todds made sure not only to focus on the fishing side of the

²⁹⁵ Jack Todd, personal interview, 29 July 2005.

²⁹⁶ Derek Todd, personal interview, 15 July 2001.

²⁹⁷ Derek Todd, personal interview, 23 November 2008.

²⁹⁸ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 29 August 2006.

²⁹⁹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 9 March 1949.

³⁰⁰ Documents gathered by Derek Todd detailing the operations of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., source unknown, 1926, private collection of Derek Todd.

³⁰¹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 15 March 1949.

³⁰² CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 30 January 1952.

³⁰³ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 29 February 1952.

³⁰⁴ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 31 December 1940.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

business, which was in itself very risky, but to branch out into other areas such as real estate and the stock market shows the business savvy of the family. This approach made the family financially strong, and put it in a position to survive difficult times like the 1930s, or aggressive takeover attempts from competitors several times in their history. An example highlighting the strength of the firm occurred in 1921 when W. E. Barker, the president of the British Columbia Fishing & Packing Co. Ltd. (predecessor of BC Packers Ltd.) was asked what he thought about approaching C.F. Todd to see if he would sell his business. Barker, already realizing the futility of the idea, replied “Mr. Todd is the one packer who does not have to bother about bank credits.”³⁰⁶ A further example of the family’s wealth is shown by a conversation between H. Doyle and C.F. Todd in his office:

*...he told me his firm made it a point of business policy to always have \$100, 000 in liquid assets...to provide for any unforeseen contingencies or to take advantage of unusual opportunities requiring immediate action. An estate must be large indeed that can afford to set aside from its normal business requirements such a large amount of capital.*³⁰⁷

The Todds and their company, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. had survived both World War I, and the Great Depression in relatively good shape. The reason for this must be attributed to the very competent leadership of C.F. Todd. By the start of the Second World War the company had reached its zenith, and was counted as being one of the top processors in the province. J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. by 1939 directly and through five subsidiary companies, the Richmond Canning Co., the Klemtu Canning Co. Ltd., the Provincial Canning Co. Ltd., the Western Fishing Co., and the Sooke Harbour Fishing and Packing Co. Ltd., had seven plants which canned fish: Richmond (Fraser River) and Beaver (Fraser River); Empire (Esquimalt Harbour); Beaver (Rivers Inlet); Provincial (Rivers Inlet); Klemtu (Swindle Island, Klemtu Pass), and Inverness (Skeena River). In addition, J.H. Todd & Sons operated five substantial fish traps out in Sooke. The number of shore workers, fishermen, and fish trap employees employed by J.H. Todds by this time is estimated to have being approximately 1,500. By December of 1939 J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., was valued at \$3,700,350.95 (see Table 2).³⁰⁸

The Victoria based Royal Trust Co. had a particularly close relationship with the Todds, especially W. C. Todd’s family. At one time W. C. Todd, President of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was a member of the Royal Trust Company’s Victoria Advisory Board while the Royal Trust also held shares in J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.³⁰⁹ After W.C. Todd’s death,

³⁰⁶ Lyons, *Salmon*, 350.

³⁰⁷ Doyle, *The Rise and Decline of the Pacific Salmon Fisheries*, 53.

³⁰⁸ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 31 December 1939.

³⁰⁹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, November 1942.

F.E. Winslow, a Royal Trust Co. manager was appointed as Vice-President of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd on November 5th 1942³¹⁰ and, when he retired, Royal Trust manager B. Phipps replaced him.³¹¹ On December 8, 1942 W.C. Todd's shares in J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. were transferred to the Royal Trust Co., who then set up trust accounts for W. C. Todd's three children, Terence, Mary and Derek.^{312, 313}

While the war years were relatively good years for the BC fishing industry, the post war years were not as kind. With the onset of the late 1940s came one of the most challenging and difficult economic periods for BC canners. England in 1948 and again in 1950 did not purchase a single can of BC canned salmon! The loss of the English market was devastating as canners' warehouses were bursting with product worth hundreds of thousands of dollars that they could not sell. The economic ramification of the collapse of the English market meant that from 1951 to 1953 canners had to deal with the largest pack carryovers in the history of the BC salmon canning history, ultimately crippling a number of canners. Until this time, the Todds and their fish company had been able to survive such ills, but this time it was different as they were put under tremendous pressure, and the company's very future and survival were questioned.

³¹⁰ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 5 November 1942.

³¹¹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 10 March 1949.

³¹² CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 8 December 1942.

³¹³ When Derek Todd's mother died, Bob Phipps attended her funeral, again highlighting the close relationship between the two. Derek Todd, personal interview, 15 July 2001.

4. THE DEMISE OF J.H. TODD AND SONS LTD.

On March 7th 1956, the Todd's involvement in the BC commercial fishing industry was finished forever when, Ernest D. Todd penned the following declaration "I, E. D. Todd, hereby resign as Director and President of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd."³¹⁴ A relationship spanning well more than seventy-five years between J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. and the city of Victoria officially ended when the company, by then half owned by its major competitors, moved its office to 1104 Hornby Street, Vancouver, BC.³¹⁵

Leadership issues, specifically the deaths and retirement of family members, and key managers long associated with J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. figure prominently in the Todd's decision to finally leave the fishing industry and sell their company in the spring of 1954. In a span of fourteen years, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was stricken by four key deaths; two critical family members who built the empire, and two prominent managers. To worsen matters the firm was hit with the unexpected retirement of a managing director who had been with the company for thirty-two years, just four years prior to the company's capitulation. It must have been extremely difficult for a private, family-owned and operated company, never mind any company to survive the loss of key leadership in such a relatively short time period.

In 1937, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. lost its long time and very well-known northern production manager, Robert Johnston. Johnston had been with the firm for over thirty years and had played an instrumental role in developing Todd & Sons into one of the industry's top fish packing firms, overseeing the 1916 construction of Todd's Provincial cannery in Rivers Inlet. Johnston was very well known in northern BC. In the Skeena River area he was known as the "Dean of the Skeena", and on the Nass River he was called the "King of the Nass".³¹⁶ He was also the prominent Inverness Cannery manager on the Skeena for a number of years. Just how devastating his loss was to the firm is supported by Howie Chambers (who worked at Inverness Cannery, and whose father was a long time Todd & Sons employee) who stated: "Seemed like the cannery died with him...They lost their fleet, let it run down, had too many old boats. Bob would never have let that happen."³¹⁷

Just four short years later, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was struck with perhaps its most devastating and crippling blow, when C.F. Todd, the 'Pillar' behind the Todd's fishing empire died. His death shook the company to its very inner core, and the company's future was uncertain after his death.

³¹⁴ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 7 March 1956.

³¹⁵ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 8 March 1956.

³¹⁶ North Pacific Cannery Museum Archives, Port Edward, BC.

³¹⁷ Skogan, *Skeena*, 30.

C.F. Todd had officially stepped aside as head of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.³¹⁸ the year before. In a letter addressed to Messrs. J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., on February 16th 1940, he stated his reasons for stepping aside from the firm “On account of advancing age and inability to give close attention to business, I hereby tender my resignation as Director of the firm of J.H. Todd & Sons, Ltd.”³¹⁹ C.F. Todd, died on December 23rd 1941 at the age of 85.³²⁰ He had been with J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., since 1877, a total of sixty-four years.

The importance of C.F. Todd to the success of the firm cannot be overstated. Under his forty plus years as head of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. it had blossomed from having two Fraser River canneries to owning seven canneries located in: Rivers Inlet, Klemtu Pass, Jervis Inlet, the Skeena River, Esquimalt, along with a plant in Sooke, and five substantial fish traps in Sooke. Through C.F. Todd’s skillful leadership his fish packing business was able to survive in this challenging and competitive industry while many other cannery owners could not. On at least three occasions beginning in 1891, 1902 and 1928, while C.F. Todd was at the helm of the firm, major competitors attempted, unsuccessfully, to take over his company; but due to the strength of the company and personal wealth of the Todds, these attempts were turned aside, unlike numerous others who were taken over. Bob Payne, who became Managing Director, of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. in March 1955, just after the company was bought by BC Packers Ltd. and the Canadian Fishing Co. in 1954, recalled that “Charlie was a very capable operator. He ran the operation. He was someone who survived. He was reputable and capable.”³²¹ By the start of World War II C.F. Todd’s company had evolved into one of the top fish packing companies in British Columbia.³²²

The death of a leader with C.F. Todd’s ability, experience, and leadership qualities would have been crippling for any company. J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., never fully recovered from the void he left upon his death.

Another factor, pointed out by D. McLeod, Senior Vice President of the Canadian Fishing Co. that no doubt affected J.H. Todd & Sons’ future in the industry was after C.F. Todd’s death the Bank of Montreal, which was the primary lender, did not seem to have had the same confidence in the management.³²³

On the morning of February 19, 1942, at a J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. Annual General meeting, Mr. Wm. C. Todd was officially appointed President and Managing

³¹⁸ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 16 February 1940.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 24 December 1941.

³²¹ Bob Payne, personal interview, 6 December 2007.

³²² Meggs, *Salmon*, 153.

³²³ Don McLeod, personal interview, 30 August 2014.

Director of the Company.³²⁴ At the time of his appointment he was fifty-seven years old and had been with the firm since 1906.³²⁵ W. C. Todd had worked with, and under his father for thirty five years prior to his death, and the readjustment to not having him there to guide must have been challenging to say the least. It would have been very difficult for anyone to replace a leader of C.F. Todd's ability and experience.

Much of the pressure of running this large fish packing business now fell on Will's shoulders, and unfortunately he did not possess the leadership qualities of his father. This difference between the two men was pointed out by a Todd employee who knew Will, and when asked "What Will was like as a leader?" He replied "Will was a meek and mild man, a man who was not decisive, and one who could not make decisions."³²⁶ The pressures of leading J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., took its toll on Will, and his health declined. In October of 1942, just ten months after his father's passing, Will died. When asked about his father Will's death Derek Todd said:

*He never told us the bad parts about the business, and how difficult it was. How he had this great empire of fish canneries and the number of workers and there must have been 5 or 6,000 and he controlled all the...it was too much for him, and ... it finally killed him.*³²⁷

In his son's view, the pressures of heading this company were just too great.

J.H. Todd & Sons in a very short period had lost two key family members, who together over a combined ninety-six years had built the Todd & Sons' empire. While Will's inherent leadership qualities may not have equalled those of his father, his inside knowledge of C.F. Todd's business acumen, personal contacts within the industry and his overall experience in the industry, would undoubtedly have been an invaluable asset should he have lived for a longer period. One can only imagine how difficult it was to overcome, not only the personal and familial loss of these two individuals, but also of the collective experience and history. According to Jack Todd, manager of the Western Fishing Co. Ltd., Victoria branch, and nephew to Will Todd:

*Two key players in our operation passed on, C.F. Todd in 1941, and his son, Will in 1942. C.F. Todd was the backbone of Todds, and he didn't take any guff! The death of these two individuals helped to hasten the decline of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.*³²⁸

In 1948, the Todds and their fishing company were struck by another catastrophic

³²⁴ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 19 February 1942.

³²⁵ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 6 December 1940.

³²⁶ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 12 August 2006.

³²⁷ Derek Todd, personal interview, 10 May 2009.

³²⁸ Jack Todd, personal interview, 26 October 2002.

blow with the unexpected and accidental death of one of their most capable cannery managers, Lew Hogan.

In the early 1940s, the Todds made a decision to consolidate their fish processing efforts at Klemtu, requiring a major overhaul of the cannery. The Todds went outside of their managerial pool, and aggressively ‘Head Hunted’, L. M. Hogan a well-respected cannery man in the area to do the job. Hogan was hired by the Todds on January 10th 1942.³²⁹ As part of Hogan’s hiring, the Todds had to agree to purchase Hogan’s Sallery Bay operation.³³⁰ Prior to Hogan’s time as manager at Klemtu Cannery, this plant solely processed salmon. Hogan headed the transition that saw Klemtu Cannery, become the Todd’s main year-round fish processing facility in the central coast region. Then, during a trip on one of Todd’s seine boats, the *Louisa Todd*, the craft rolled over and he drowned. The loss of a manager of Hogan’s caliber would have been devastating to the Todds and their company. Second, replacing a man of Hogan’s ability and experience would not have been easy.

In 1943 L.B. Bing, was appointed Managing Director of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. Bing began his thirty-two year career with J.H. Todd & Sons in 1919, starting as C.F. Todd’s personal aid. Bing remained Managing Director and Secretary of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. until July 11th 1950³³¹ when he tendered his resignation due to prolonged ill health.³³² The pressures of heading the company played a major role in his subsequent retirement from the company.³³³ During his distinguished time in the fishing industry Bing built up an impressive resume, Managing Director and Secretary of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., and of Sooke Harbour Fishing & Packing Company, Ltd., Director of Western Fishing Co. Ltd., and Director of the Fisheries Council of Canada.³³⁴ Once again to lose and replace a man of Bing’s ability, experience and knowledge would have been extremely difficult. L.B. Bing’s resignation would have, no doubt, compounded the management issues facing the firm, particularly after the recent deaths of C.F. Todd, W.C. Todd and L. Hogan.

Between 1937 and 1950, a period of only 13 years the family and its company had been plagued with the deaths and retirement of five key individuals. For any privately, family owned-operated company it would have been extremely difficult to survive and cope with the loss of key leaders/management in such a relatively short period of time. In desperation the Todds turned to Reg Sinclair, their ‘Head Cannery Man of all the Todd’s

³²⁹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 10 January 1942.

³³⁰ Tiny Bing, personal interview, 22 May 2000.

³³¹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 11 July 1950.

³³² “L. B. Bing Retires,” *Western Fisheries*, February 1951, 15.

³³³ Derek Todd, personal interview, 12 August 2006.

³³⁴ “Prominent Men in The Industry,” *The Canadian Fisherman*, April 1946.

canneries’.³³⁵ Unfortunately, by this time Sinclair, was too old to take-over the management of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. in 1950 when L. B. Bing stepped down, preferring instead an advisory position.³³⁶ How the Todds got themselves into this predicament could be due to bad luck and timing, but a good portion of the blame must be attributed to poor succession planning. R. Gregory, former, long time BC Packers’ Vice President believes that the main reason for the demise of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was “That they did not plan for the future leadership of the company, which is unacceptable in good business! You are only as good as your last decision.”³³⁷

The last Todd family member to lead J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was Ernest D. Todd, president from 1942 until the company was sold in 1954.

According to Marchak et al., the “new Todd generation appears to have taken little interest in the fishing industry.”³³⁸ This idea is supported by the son of E. D. Todd, Jack Todd who remarked “My father didn’t really care, or show much interest in the fishing industry.”³³⁹ Often times there is more to the story than meets the eye, and further explanation from Derek Todd adds another perspective explaining why after the death of his father his interest in the company waned. Derek Todd was being groomed to take over the helm of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. from his father, William Todd who headed the company after December 1941. Derek himself also had strong personal ambitions to eventually become the president of J.H. Todd and Sons. However, with his father’s unexpected passing in 1942 everything changed for Derek: “My family could not pay for the succession dues accrued from my father’s death. My uncle, Ernie Todd came in and took control of J.H. Todd & Sons when he bought most of the shares.”³⁴⁰

Jack Todd, Ernie’s son had the same explanation:

*I can only go by what my father told me...when both Charles and Will Todd died, Derek’s mother, couldn’t pay for the inheritance tax, so she turned to my father, Ernest Todd. Derek’s mother sold “Preferred Shares” to Ernest, and then Ernest became president of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.*³⁴¹

Soon afterwards Derek was informed by a Royal Trust Co. manager and close friend of the family, B. Phipps, that Ernie Todd wanted his son, Jack to come in and have a place in the company as well.³⁴² It was very apparent that once Jack came in that Derek was no

³³⁵ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 29 August 2006.

³³⁶ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 21 September 2002.

³³⁷ Richard Gregory, personal interview, 30 December 2013.

³³⁸ Patricia Marchak et als. eds. *Uncommon Property: The Fishing and Fish Processing Industries in British Columbia* (Toronto: Methuen Publications., 1984), 54.

³³⁹ Jack Todd, personal interview, 29 July 2005.

³⁴⁰ Derek Todd, personal interview, 10 June 2009.

³⁴¹ Jack Todd, personal interview, 25 March 2001.

³⁴² Derek Todd, personal interview, 10 June 2009.

longer going to realize his dreams of heading the company. Derek's anger and resentment was still evident some 67 years later when he told me "And it was going to come down to me, and the fishing business was mine! It was definitely mine and nobody else's!"³⁴³ This fact would explain, in Derek's case at least in part, why he no longer had the same ambition, interest or heart in running the company. With the ascension of Ernie to the presidency of J.H. Todd and Sons, Derek's dreams unexpectedly evaporated. See fig. 3 Key Todd Family Members involved in J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.

By 1951 and 1952, the Todds and their fish packing firm, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., struggled with serious economic issues, such as declining markets, and the major headache of large pack carryover, which severely impacted the company financially. In addition, the company was hampered by lack of capable leadership to lead the firm through these difficult times. In desperation, the Todds brought in outside management from BC Packers Ltd. and the Canadian Fishing Co. "to straighten things up."³⁴⁴

The first individual that the Todds brought in was R. J. Gosse, who had a very distinguished career in the BC salmon canning industry. The Gosse family had a lengthy connection with the Todds and J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd, dating back to 1897 when R. J. Gosse's father, Captain R. E. Gosse operated a Todd cannery.³⁴⁵ Captain Gosse also built Todd's Beaver Cannery in 1905, and readied it to process fish by the 1906 season.³⁴⁶ The Todds hired R. J. Gosse in January of 1952 and appointed him Managing Director of the firm in March 1952.³⁴⁷ Gosse, had an impressive track record within the industry dating back to 1928 when he helped create BC Packers Ltd. Gosse was BC Packer's first Managing Director, and he helped to establish the Clover Leaf merchandising program.³⁴⁸ After just over a year with the Todds, Gosse stepped aside, stating that being in charge of both J.H. Todd & Sons & BC Ice & Cold Storage was too much for him, and that he wanted to focus his efforts on the latter enterprise.³⁴⁹

On May 13, 1953, P.E. Paulson, from the Canadian Fishing Co. replaced R.J. Gosse as Managing Director of the firm with a five year contract.³⁵⁰ Paulson, in the short time that he was at the helm of the firm did try his best to improve the company's situation. He hired two new brokers to market the Todd's pack in Canada, but, by this

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Jack Todd, personal interview, 26 October 2002.

³⁴⁵ Lyons, *Salmon*, 264.

³⁴⁶ CFCA. Payne, *An Essay containing a modest minimum of salient facts regarding The British Columbia Salmon Canning Industry to 1932*, 15.

³⁴⁷ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 29 March 1952.

³⁴⁸ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 4 March 1953.

³⁴⁹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 12 May 1953.

³⁵⁰ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 13 May 1953.

point it was too little, too late.³⁵¹ Paulson's tenure as Managing Director of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was brief, lasting just under a year when the company was sold.

It is plain that the Todds and their fish company struggled with managerial issues, and that perhaps a better succession plan should have been put in place. The Todds cannot be completely faulted for having 'no' succession plan as they did attempt to rectify this situation with the hiring of 'outside' people, beginning with the hiring of L. Hogan, an outside man, to head their Klemtu plant in 1942. In desperation, near the end, the Todds, and in a last ditch effort to straighten things up and turn events around did hire R.J. Gosse, and P.E. Paulson, both respectable outside fishing industry men. R. Gregory, also a long time BC fishing upper level management man offered his insight on this issue:

*Same variables and risks faced by all participants, it was how they planned and executed their plans and adapted to change in a timely manner that separated the winners from the losers. Luck played a part, but good management is the key!*³⁵²

Dick Pollock, the last J.H. Todd & Sons' employee when J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was sold in the spring of 1954 when asked "What he thought was the major reason (s) for the demise of J.H. Todd & Sons?" replied:

*The business got hit with two bum years. The Bank of Montreal froze the Todd's pack in Vancouver. How could we survive if the bank wouldn't release our pack? The reason why the bank froze our pack was because we owed them so much money.*³⁵³

The 'Two Bum Years' that Pollock referred to were 1951, and 1952. Indeed they were extremely difficult years not only for the Todds and their fish packing company, but for all BC processors. How J.H. Todd & Sons, a well-financed company had come to be in financial troubles (a nearly \$ 2 million over draught to the Bank of Montreal) can be attributed to the fact that the firm was spending and not selling its production.³⁵⁴ With good fishing, weak sales, and large pack carryover, it is very easy to spend your cash reserves and more. Arguably the Todds could have put more money into the company "but after 2 or more bad years, it is understandable that they were reluctant to take more risk."³⁵⁵ Before discussing why these two years were so devastating for processors it is first important to track and identify some of the issues that led to these years being so problematic for all processors, including J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.

³⁵¹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 10 September 1953.

³⁵² Richard Gregory, personal interview, 30 December 2013.

³⁵³ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 31 July 2007.

³⁵⁴ Don McLeod, e-mail message to author, May 20, 2015.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

By 1947 Great Britain lacked hard currency to buy canned salmon; the newly formed UFAWU, was looking for higher salmon prices and wages for its shore workers, and large salmon packs (1951 and 1952) created a litany of major problems for all processors. Don McLeod, Senior Vice President of the Canadian Fishing Co. reflects on this particular situation:

*During this time, I believe most, if not all, BC fishing companies were having some level of difficulty. You were lucky to have a friendly banker... in difficult times, size does count. Todd's 2 major competitors: BC Packers and Canfisco, were both much larger and had parents with deep pockets. This allowed them to manage through difficult times.*³⁵⁶

The first hints of the difficult years surfaced in 1947, when the British Ministry of Food announced it intended to buy 40% of BC's canned salmon pack, however "Owing to the shortage of dollars...the Ministry purchased only 5%."³⁵⁷ The following year, Great Britain, again because of monetary issues did not, to the shock and dismay of BC processors, purchase a single can of BC salmon.³⁵⁸ England, once again due to monetary problems, did not buy any BC canned salmon in 1952.³⁵⁹ This market drove sales volumes and prices, and even today this is true.³⁶⁰ The negative financial ramifications were enormous and immediate on all canners, as they had a lot of money tied up in product that in years past they would have sold, but now had difficulty selling.

The other factor that impacted all aspects of the BC commercial fishing industry, including the BC salmon canning industry, was the establishment of the United Fishermen and Allied Workers union in 1945. The UFAWU fought for increased wages for shore workers, and for higher salmon prices for its fishermen. If, in the union's eyes the companies did not give fair compensation then it used its most crippling weapon, job action in the form of a strike to obtain what it felt was a fair deal. The President of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., Mr. E. Todd noted the influence of the UFAWU and its negative impact on J.H. Todd & Sons' fishing operations in 1946, when he stated "again very careful consideration must be given to operational costs which have alarmingly increased to the demands of the labour unions."³⁶¹ In 1952 President E. Todd, once again noted his concerns over the prospect of the UFAWU wanting higher wages and fish prices for its members, thereby increasing its operating cost.³⁶²

The Todds and J.H. Todd & Sons survived the years 1949 and 1950 in relatively

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Lyons, *Salmon*, 477.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 482.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 501.

³⁶⁰ Don McLeod, personal interview, 30 August 2014.

³⁶¹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 1946 President's Report.

³⁶² CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 16 June 1952.

good shape as the company had been able to sell substantial amounts of its canned salmon pack to Belgium.³⁶³ All was not as good as it seemed, as there was an ominous sign that the firm was struggling with monetary issues as is revealed in the following:

*Mr. Todd intimated that he considered our gill-net boats at Inverness were certainly out of date and too slow, ... Mr. Bing advised ... and it was thought the most economical method would be to have independent fishermen and the Company not own their own gill-net boats.*³⁶⁴

Jack Elsey, with over sixty-seven years in the BC fishing industry, pointed out two revealing issues from Todd's Director's memo: first, because a processor had to supply their fishermen with nets, gas etc. that he wanted to have the best fishermen possible fishing for him in order to maximize the company's profits. Second, with J.H. Todd's Inverness Cannery's gillnet fleet being 'old and slow', and the company not willing to invest money into its fleet, as a result the good fishermen would not have wanted to fish for the J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., and would have moved on.³⁶⁵ There was definitely something amiss as just a few months later at J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.'s Richmond plant, the plant manager had reported "that no less than nine of his better fishermen had decided to quit fishing and dispose of their boats."³⁶⁶ Was there a connection between the Inverness Cannery situation and what had happened at the Richmond plant?

Signs that the Western Fishing Co. was having troubles were noted in June of 1949 when Todd's managing director Bing reported to the Directors that he was having "difficulty in getting co-operation from Mr. Moir of the Western Fishing Co."³⁶⁷ Bing eventually arranged a meeting with Mr. Moir and was astonished to hear that as of June 30th 1949 that the Western Fish Co., Vancouver branch had losses of \$49,336.54.³⁶⁸ The situation was far worse than first imagined, and that by December 31st, 1949 the Western Fishing Co. had losses which totalled \$100,496.21.³⁶⁹ D. Pollock, a long time Todd employee when asked about the Western Fishing Co. and Mr. Moir replied that E. Moir "was a bad connection."³⁷⁰ And "eventually the Todds got rid of Eddie Moir."³⁷¹ At a Todd's board meeting, in early spring an announcement regarding the future of J.H. Todd & Sons and the Western Fishing Co. was made "The joint operation of Todds and

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 30 August 1949.

³⁶⁵ Jack Elsey, personal interview, 20 September 2014.

³⁶⁶ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 30 November 1949.

³⁶⁷ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 2 June 1949.

³⁶⁸ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 27 July 1949.

³⁶⁹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 8 February 1950.

³⁷⁰ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 29 August 2006.

³⁷¹ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 12 January 2013.

Western Fishing Co. have proved unsatisfactory, it was decided to discontinue this tie-up and operate separately.”³⁷² J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. did continue on with its Fresh and Frozen operations at their Victoria and Klemtu plants.

Jack Todd, president of the Victoria based Western Fishing Company during this period, hinted that they should not have gone into partnership with Mr. Moir when he stated:

*The focus of the Western Fishing Co. was on fresh and frozen fish products. It was a mistake getting involved with Mr. Moir; we had overextended ourselves. And J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. had its hands full just running the canned side of its operations. The canned salmon industry was very competitive.*³⁷³

Don McLeod, senior vice president of the Canadian Fishing Co. offered insight as to why Jack Todd’s statement might have been correct. McLeod noted:

*First, the Fresh and Frozen is a very difficult business. Second, there is a problem with spoilage, as shelf life is limited. Third, facilities were not as good as today. Four, population in the west is relatively small which means a limited market. Five, the quality of transportation for handling fresh products wouldn’t be as good as today. Six, carry cost and cash flow.*³⁷⁴

Todd’s three canneries, Inverness, Klemtu, and Empire, produced a total canned salmon pack of 113,213 cases in 1950. Sales from this pack earned the firm \$2,218,088, however the company was unable to sell all of its pack and at year’s end had unsold inventory valued at \$443,204.80.³⁷⁵ It was noted, by the Todd board, that for 1949, and 1950 that J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. had very substantial canned sales in Belgium.³⁷⁶ Even so, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.’s president, E. Todd commented “It is pleasing to note the improvement in the Profit & Loss Statement covering the 1950 operations as compared to the previous year.”³⁷⁷ In 1950 due to “interest of economy” the decision was made to halt processing fish at Inverness Cannery, and consolidate their northern processing operations at their Klemtu plant.³⁷⁸

Evidence from a Todd minute book sheds some new light on why the Inverness Cannery stopped its canning operations. Processing issues were first discovered at Inverness Cannery in 1947 when the plant only produced a pack of 13,981 cases (the smallest ever), whereas over the last approximately twenty years the average pack was

³⁷² CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, April 1950.

³⁷³ Jack Todd, personal interview, 26 October 2002.

³⁷⁴ Don McLeod, personal interview, 20 January 2013.

³⁷⁵ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 24 April 1951.

³⁷⁶ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 16 May 1952.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

41,000 cases.³⁷⁹ The other factor which affected a processor's pack was unpredictable salmon runs, and in 1950 the pink and chum salmon runs did not show up as expected at the Queen Charlotte Islands,³⁸⁰ and as a result Inverness Cannery ceased canning operations forever on September 2, 1950.³⁸¹ In its final year of production Inverness produced a pack of 18, 473 cases.³⁸² In March of 1951 there was discussion of operating Inverness rather than Klemtu, but with a pending land purchase of Klemtu the Todd & Sons' board feared that if the Klemtu First Nations found out they might cancel the deal, consequently they decided to operate Klemtu, and use Inverness as a fish camp.³⁸³ The directors of Todd & Sons stated that: "Considerable saving in cannery costs should result from operation of only one plant in the north."³⁸⁴ In the 1953 season, an arrangement was made for ABC Packing Co. to custom pack Todd's Skeena River sockeye at their North Pacific Cannery.³⁸⁵

As well, dissatisfaction was noted with their Canadian broker, Swift Canadian because of poor results in selling their canned salmon domestically.³⁸⁶ These were signs that all was not well with the Todds, and their fish packing firm.

In 1951, all processors in British Columbia, including the Todds, experienced the worse crisis that the industry had gone through in its eighty-one history. BC canners processed a canned salmon pack of 1,957,520 cases, the largest pack produced in ten years.³⁸⁷ Due to a shrinking overseas market a large percentage of the pack could not be sold.³⁸⁸ One of the biggest problems "with a large pack carryover is one has thousands of dollars tied up," added D. McLeod, Executive Vice President of the Canadian Fishing Co.³⁸⁹

The Todds sensed the severity of the crisis which enveloped their fish packing company and came up with a strategy to deal with it. First, they consolidated their processing efforts to two canneries, Klemtu and Empire canneries.³⁹⁰ The total pack for the two canneries was 121,903 cases.³⁹¹ In any typical year a pack of this size should have normally meant good profits for canners, however in 1951 canned salmon sales

³⁷⁹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 31 March 1947.

³⁸⁰ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 29 August 1950.

³⁸¹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 6 September 1950.

³⁸² CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 11 October 1950.

³⁸³ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 25 March 1951.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 25 June 1953.

³⁸⁶ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 25 April 1951.

³⁸⁷ Lyons, *Salmon*, 495.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 496.

³⁸⁹ Don McLeod, personal interview, 30 August 2014.

³⁹⁰ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 16 June 1952.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

were disappointing because the Belgium market did not materialize.³⁹² The Todds ended up with a large pack carryover of 50,000 cases of salmon, which they could not market.³⁹³ This was a nightmare for the Todds as they had already laid out a considerable amount of money just in the operation of their plants. For the 1951 season the total cost to operate their Inverness, Klemtu, Beaver, Richmond and Victoria plants was \$2,543,847.88.³⁹⁴ The three most expensive items being: fish, cans and boat expenses. To add to their problems a “softening market, resulted in a very poor profit loss picture for the Fresh and Frozen Division.”³⁹⁵ A sign that J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was not having a good time of it, occurred in the fall of 1951, when the Canadian Fishing Co. approached Todd’s top manager R. W. Sinclair about the possibility of carrying out a joint herring pack at their Empire Cannery. The proposal was turned down as “the board considers it inadvisable at this time to gamble on herring, especially in view of the large holding of unsold salmon on hand.”³⁹⁶ During usual operational years one would have thought that the Todds would have jumped at this opportunity, especially as the two companies had already carried out a joint herring operation at their Empire Cannery during World War II. The president of J.H. Todd & Sons noted his concern about prospects for the 1952 season due to the following reasons:

*The British Ministry order was less than the previous year. Domestic business, while fair, did not come up to expectations. The industry as a whole carried into the New Year the largest inventory on record...with the large inventory of Canned Salmon and possibilities of increased wage demands from cannery workers and increased price for fish from the fishermen.*³⁹⁷

The 1952 season was another difficult year for all canners, as once again they started off the year with large pack carryover due to diminished markets.³⁹⁸ The monetary ramifications of not being able to move ones’ pack were very serious as “interest charges began from both banks and warehouse charges. Most salmon processors had some warehouse capacity, but in years of large packs they required outside storage on public (private) warehousing which would add to the cost of the salmon in storage.”³⁹⁹ noted D. McLeod, Vice President of the Canadian Fishing Co. Regarding J.H. Todd & Son’s pack “we stored all of our salmon at Ballantyne Pier.”⁴⁰⁰ In reaction to these two years, and the economic hardships that followed, the Todds were forced to implement even more drastic

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 7 November 1952.

³⁹⁴ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 26 June 1952.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 14 November 1951.

³⁹⁷ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 16 June 1952.

³⁹⁸ Lyons, *Salmon*, 498.

³⁹⁹ Don McLeod, personal interview, 25 April 2014.

⁴⁰⁰ Derek Todd, personal interview, 24 November 2000.

cost savings measures. First, they consolidated all of their canning efforts to just one cannery, Klemtu. Second, they entered into a joint fish packing deal and custom packing arrangement with two companies, North Shore Packing Co. Ltd., and Queen Charlotte Fisheries Ltd. as a cost saving measure.⁴⁰¹ Having Queen Charlotte Fisheries Ltd. can their pack was a good economic move as explained by Don McLeod, Vice President of the Canadian Fishing Co.

*On a given year, if Todd's were to operate their Empire Cannery they would have had to expend funds in the following: (1) annual maintenance, (2) hiring a qualified crew, and (3) ordering cans, salt and other supplies based on a pre-season forecast by DFO, which from time to time could miss the target by a great deal. This led to a very high risk.*⁴⁰²

It is also important to point out that during 1951 and 1952, salmon prices worldwide decreased.⁴⁰³ D. McLeod, a Canadian Fishing Co. long-time manager believes the financial impact and ramifications of two large pack carryovers in 1951, and 1952 “was the tipping stone for the firm.”⁴⁰⁴ To further complicate matters during the 1952 fishing season, the fishing industry was crippled by five strikes.⁴⁰⁵

By the start of 1952, the Todds, and their firm, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. had amassed an overdraft to the amount of \$1,951,338.58. On March 3rd 1952, the Bank of Montreal, the firm's main backer, seized much of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.'s assets.⁴⁰⁶ This drastic move on the bank's part revealed how serious the situation had become, and that the bank was in control. D. McLeod, of the Canadian Fishing Co. thought: “the Todds were in serious trouble.”⁴⁰⁷ Seized assets included: all canned salmon, totaling 75,266 cases stored at the Ballantyne and La Pointe Piers, in Vancouver, and at a Swift Canadian Co. Ltd. facility in Victoria. At the company's main cold facility, B. C. Ice and Cold Storage Ltd., in Vancouver, BC, all frozen fish stocks including varieties of salmon, black cod, halibut, herring, and clams etc. worth \$239, 130. 88. From two of their canneries, Inverness on the Skeena River, and Empire cannery in Esquimalt Harbour a total of 21,939 cases of salmon were seized. In addition, the following cannery items were seized: all boxes, cans, fuel, oil, etc. labels, materials, nets and fishing gear, salt and

⁴⁰¹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 16 May 1952.

⁴⁰² Don McLeod, personal interview, 30 August 2014.

⁴⁰³ “Brief with respect to a Conciliation Board on Shoreworker Agreements,” 12 July 1954, 9, private collection of Mickey Fitzgerald.

⁴⁰⁴ Don McLeod, personal interview, 25 April 2014.

⁴⁰⁵ Lyons, *Salmon*, 500.

⁴⁰⁶ BCA, GR 1402, box no. 84-0035-0648, file no. 12415. J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. mortgage to secure \$1,951,338.58 in favour of Bank of Montreal, dated 5 March 1952.

⁴⁰⁷ Don McLeod, personal interview, 25 April 2014.

supplies, store stocks, stock-in-trade.⁴⁰⁸

One would believe that for 1952, that an overdraft of approximately \$2 million was a considerable debt, and indicated that J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. faced serious financial problems. Soon after seizing the Todd's assets the manager of the Bank of Montreal, Mr. MacGregor, sent a letter to E. Todd, which stated:

*It is our understanding that all securities were to be deposited and pledged to us as general collateral. If the purchasers complete their obligations as set out in the agreement...the Bank agrees to release the securities listed in Exhibit "A"*⁴⁰⁹

The Royal Trust Co., on behalf of the Todd family, and J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., sent a letter back to Mr. MacGregor which stated "All these securities and shares are deposited with you...to further secure moneys now owing by J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd...that the proceeds of the sale of the securities...shall be applied first in reduction of the said indebtedness of \$1,843,338.58."⁴¹⁰ Examples of some of the assets released included: 1000 shares in both the British American Oil Co. Ltd., and Imperial Tobacco Co. of Canada Ltd. and 240 shares in the B. C. Cement Co. Ltd. (valued at \$24,000) as well as preferred shares of the B.C. Ice & Cold Storage Co. Ltd. valued at \$264,735.⁴¹¹ The importance of B. C. Ice and Cold Storage to Todd's & Sons operations was reflected in a letter written to the Bank of Montreal when it is stated "It is understood...that as soon as the sum of \$1,843,338.58, ... have been repaid all the said shares of the B.C. Ice & Cold Storage Company Ltd. ... will be released to by the Bank to J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd...."⁴¹² It was very apparent the company faced serious problems, but the Todds and their fishing company were not quite finished yet.

A fascinating internal memo written in the fall of 1952 provides some clues as to the Todd's wealth. The memo states "the bank still has substantial margin, and that the Company has many other assets over and above those shown in the bank's collateral with the net value of \$3,178,047.53."⁴¹³ Some of the assets listed included, fixed assets: plants, equipment and boats worth about \$2 million, and an investment of \$490,137 in B.C. Ice and Cold Storage. There was also mention of an additional \$500,000 set aside for the costly advances needed for their fishermen.⁴¹⁴ These numbers reveal that the Todds and their company were financially sound and secure at least for the moment. However, financial pressures were mounting, and just how much longer the family and their firm

⁴⁰⁸ BCA, GR 1402, box no. 84-0035-0648, file no. 12415. J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. mortgage to secure \$1,951,338.51 in favour of Bank of Montreal, dated 5 March 1952.

⁴⁰⁹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 4 March 1952.

⁴¹⁰ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 29 February 1952.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 7 November 1952.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

could endure was uncertain. That the memo was written suggests that the Directors needed assurance that all was well and not to panic.

Another sign that the Todd's fish packing firm was struggling occurred with a May 1952 decision not to process fish at their Empire Cannery for the coming season as a cost saving measure.⁴¹⁵ The Empire Cannery which had processed fish in the Esquimalt Harbour for over forty years never operated again. With the consolidation of all their processing efforts to just one plant, many fishermen may have seen this as a sign that J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was in danger of going out of business, and therefore it was time to go and fish for another company.⁴¹⁶ Consolidation of one's plants had additional consequences, as noted at a Todd board meeting back in 1949. Once a large cannery ceased operations it would be difficult to re-open, and to obtain canning equipment from the American Can Co.⁴¹⁷

Addressing the J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.'s board of directors in September of 1952, top sales manager F. Dawson expressed his concern, declaring that "With the very large carry-over of last year's pack, plus the heavy production this season, the situation is very serious."⁴¹⁸ The firm believed they would be able to sell 25,000 cases of salmon, worth \$625,000 to the U.K. but this did not materialize. Due to too much supply market prices dropped 20-25 percent, reducing sales value of Todd's product to \$800,000."⁴¹⁹ Adding to the firm's problems, production of the Sooke fish traps, traditionally a money maker for the firm, was very poor for the 1952 season to the point that the traps were shut down a month earlier than usual.⁴²⁰ One of the benefits was noted by a board member who added "This would mean savings of wages and boat charters."⁴²¹ It was also mentioned that the company's joint venture with the Whiz Fish Company of Seattle during 1952 produced further losses.⁴²² In learning of the Todd's predicament, long time BC Packer Ltd., executive, R. Gregory pointed out "Nothing Happens in Isolation."⁴²³

In a letter to the Bank of Montreal in March of 1953, the new managing director of J.H. Todd & Sons, R.J. Gosse, revealed that for year 1952 J.H. Todd & Sons had a substantial loss of \$770,740.72.⁴²⁴ He pointed out that the firm had a pack carryover from 1951 of 76,145 cases, valued at \$1,367,679.84, and a total of 153,756 cases of unsold

⁴¹⁵ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 26 May 1952.

⁴¹⁶ Don McLeod, personal interview, 30 August 2014.

⁴¹⁷ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 9 March 1949.

⁴¹⁸ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 4 September 1952.

⁴¹⁹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 7 November 1952.

⁴²⁰ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 23 September 1952.

⁴²¹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 7 October 1952

⁴²² UBCSC, Correspondence from P.E. Paulson to President Ernie Todd, Todd (J.H.) & Sons Records, Box 23, File 22.

⁴²³ Richard Gregory, personal interview, 30 December 2013.

⁴²⁴ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 4 March 1953.

salmon in its inventory.⁴²⁵ He also mentioned that the company lost \$134,018.34 in their Fresh and Frozen operations,⁴²⁶ but identified the company's major problem as canned salmon sales.⁴²⁷ He then went on to say that "The Company has made decided progress to improve its canned salmon sales position by terminating the Swift contract and by beginning to establish a Canadian Sales organization of its own."⁴²⁸

Derek Todd, who was a sales manager for J.H. Todd & Sons, mentioned that after the war "we had to regroup, and we went to Swift Canadian and they said "They'd take 70 percent of our pack of salmon." But after a year or two we found out they weren't selling any fish at all!"⁴²⁹ The Todds had hired Swift Canadian, a brokerage firm, during the early 1940s to handle the sales of their fish products. By the early 1950s it turned out that Swift Canadian Co. Ltd. was doing a poor job of marketing Todd's canned salmon in their domestic market. President E. Todd's dissatisfaction with Swift Canadian is revealed when he stated "Domestic sales through Swift's show a slight improvement during 1950, but still leave a lot to be desired."⁴³⁰ A later memo revealed that the Todds were not pleased with Swift's performance! "It was apparent that sales of Todd's salmon were lagging as compared to Cloverleaf and other brands put out by the larger producers."⁴³¹

As a result of the brokerage's inability to market Todd canned salmon, the Todd's Board gave the matter full consideration from all angles including the deteriorating position of the firm's canned salmon sales in Canada... "In bringing to a close an official association which has been extended over a period of nearly eight years."⁴³² The Todds felt the termination of this contract would put the firm in position to "more advantageously make sales in our domestic market, which produces the best selling prices."⁴³³

Gosse also attempted to alleviate the bank's concern, as Managing Director that he would be able to lead the company into 'safer waters.' He went on to relate his key role in the establishment of BC Packers Ltd., including his role in setting up the well-known Clover Leaf merchandising program.⁴³⁴ Shockingly, just two months later, on May 12, 1953, R.J. Gosse resigned as Managing Director of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.⁴³⁵

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Derek Todd, personal interview, 10 May 2009.

⁴³⁰ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 25 April 1951.

⁴³¹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 21 August 1952.

⁴³² CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 7 November 1952.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 4 March 1953.

⁴³⁵ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 12 April 1953.

Obviously the resignation of a man of Gosse's stature within such a short time frame indicated that things were not boding well for the Todds and their company.

The day after Gosse's resignation, May 13, 1953, the Todds hired P. E. Paulson, a Canadian Fishing Co. man as their new Managing Director.⁴³⁶ The Todd's had not given up yet, as Paulson's contract was for five years ending on May 1st 1958.⁴³⁷ Paulson immediately hired two new agents, Sainsbury & Co., and J. Harold Ritchie & Co. to market and handle the sales of its pack,⁴³⁸ but the situation did not improve, "one reason being the changeover of Canadian Brokers during the year."⁴³⁹ By the time the new brokers were hired it was too late to rectify the situation. Adding to the firm's canned salmon marketing problems was that in 1953, the fishing industry "entered the new season with an exceptionally large carry-over and to this was added a new pack which was much greater than had been anticipated."⁴⁴⁰ In an effort to dispose of their canned salmon pack canners did heavy advertising, and lowered their prices.⁴⁴¹ The fact that all processors were trying to sell their canned salmon at distressed prices, meant further difficulty in Todd's efforts to sell their canned salmon.

By October of 1953, the Todd's board of directors was concerned about continuing poor market sales: "The Board considered the position of the bank was a serious one and enquired as to sales prospects in the near future."⁴⁴² The future in the BC commercial fishing industry for the Todds looked extremely bleak.

In 1951, J.H. Leaver, a Todd manager, travelled to northern BC and submitted a bleak report on the firm's operations:

*The obviously large amounts of money being spent by the three large fishing companies, to provide improved facilities for the fishermen such as excellent new net floats, floating buying stations with showers etc., at the same time continuing their regular and systematic building of gill netters. By comparison our own facilities are most inadequate.*⁴⁴³

The Directors responded "it was agreed that we had not kept pace with the other companies in this regard, not because of any lack of desire on our part to do so, but

⁴³⁶ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 13 May 1953.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ "Brief with respect to a Conciliation Board on Shoreworker Agreements," 12 July 1954, 9, private collection of Mickey Fitzgerald.

⁴³⁹ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 4 March 1953.

⁴⁴⁰ "Brief with respect to a Conciliation Board on Shoreworker Agreements," 12 July 1954, 9, private collection of Mickey Fitzgerald.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 5 October 1953.

⁴⁴³ CFCA, J.H. Todd Minute Book, 27 June 1951.

because of our lack of liquid working capital.”⁴⁴⁴ The directors then listed the three reasons for the company’s financial situation: first, with the death of W. C. Todd, the firm was forced to release money by redeeming W. C. Todd’s preferred shares; second, the instalment of freezing facilities at Klemtu Cannery was costly; and, third, with the company’s expansion into the fresh and frozen business a considerable amount of money was used to buy into both the Western Fishing Co., and the BC Ice and Cold Storage Co.⁴⁴⁵ The directors went on to say that “the last two moves had resulted in a far larger investment than had been contemplated which of necessity forced curtailment in the building of our gill netters.”⁴⁴⁶

This situation reveals that the Todds had over-extended themselves, and they could not, or chose not to inject more money into the firm in order to be competitive with the other processors. Bank of Montreal officials picked up on this decision and asked why the Todds were not showing much interest in putting money into their fishing operations, then why should the bank invest in the company’s fishing operations given the Todd’s reluctance to do so.⁴⁴⁷

The final factor in the decline of the company involves the internment of the Japanese fishermen, and the resulting difficulty in finding a reliable workforce. In 1877 when Manzo Nagano came to the BC west coast he became the first Japanese to enter the BC commercial fishing industry as a gillnet fisherman. The majority of the Japanese who immigrated to BC in the later stages of the nineteenth century had fishing backgrounds, settling in communities such as Steveston, Tofino and Prince Rupert. Within a short period of time salmon canners came to appreciate their hard work and dedication. In the early years canners hired Japanese to cut wood, and then supply charcoal, which was a key fuel for canneries.⁴⁴⁸

In the Steveston area, from 1913 to the outbreak of World War II most washers and fillers in the plants were Japanese women.⁴⁴⁹ Japanese were also known as skilled shipwrights, and the Todds had employed them in this capacity. By the 1950s, they had the Yamanaka Boat Works on their premises.⁴⁵⁰ However, it was as fishermen where many of these immigrants excelled. Many became top producers, “high liners” on the coast, and were sought after by processors. D. McLeod, senior Vice President of the Canadian Fishing Co. and with a career spanning nearly sixty years, explains the

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Don McLeod, personal interview, 30 August 2014.

⁴⁴⁸ Stan Fukawa and Masako Fukawa, *Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet: BC’s Japanese Canadian Fishermen* (China: Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd., 2009), 45.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 63.

importance of a 'high liner' to any company. "Quality fishermen were important to any company, for instance, if the average boat caught 1,800 fish, and a 'high liner' caught 3,000 fish then having a 'high liner' fishing for you was like having two boats."⁴⁵¹ Veterans returning from the Great War (WWI) found it difficult to re-enter the BC commercial fishing industry, because it was near "... impossible to compete with the Japanese fishermen who were 'marvelously skillful' gill-netters."⁴⁵² Walter Wicks, a former Skeena River gillnetter, describes Japanese gillnetters and their abilities as fishermen: "It is true that the cannery management always preferred the Japanese to other groups of fishermen because they brought in the larger catches. They worked night and day."⁴⁵³ Dick Pollock, a former top level Todd & Sons employee remembered:

*They were excellent fishermen... We had quite a few Japanese fishermen. Regarding gillnetting it took the Japanese fishermen to catch the fish. They fished '26 hours' a day! They were such good producers and able fishermen.*⁴⁵⁴

During his time at Inverness Cannery in the 1940s, Pollock recalled that "the Japanese were the main fishermen and that they could out fish anyone!"⁴⁵⁵ During Pollock's time at Inverness one Japanese 'high liner' named Tanaka stood out.⁴⁵⁶ D. McLeod, senior Vice President of the Canadian Fishing Co., has known and dealt with numerous Japanese fishermen throughout his career, and he lists the main reasons why Japanese fishermen were an asset to a fish company. "The Japanese were exceptionally good fishermen. They had a very good work ethic, and worked together. They were important to a company."⁴⁵⁷

Then on December 7, 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, everything changed for Japanese fishermen, many of whom were Canadian citizens. The very next day "some 2090 licenses issued to 1,265 Nikkei fishermen were cancelled and 1,137 vessels owned and operated by them were impounded."⁴⁵⁸ Many of these seized boats were bought by processors, J.H. Todd & Sons purchasing twenty nine.⁴⁵⁹ In 1942 approximately 22, 000 Japanese, and Japanese of Canadian ancestry were sent to internment camps in the interior of BC. Many were shipped back east, and eventually approximately 4000 were sent back to Japan. This must have had a negative impact on salmon processors throughout BC as they lost not only a number of their top producing

⁴⁵¹ Don McLeod, personal interview, 20 January 2013.

⁴⁵² Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*, 106.

⁴⁵³ Walter Wicks, *Memories of The Skeena* (Saanichton: Hancock House Publishers Ltd., 1976), 78.

⁴⁵⁴ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 12 November 2013.

⁴⁵⁵ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 2 September 2002.

⁴⁵⁶ Dick Pollock, personal interview, 12 November 2013.

⁴⁵⁷ Don McLeod, personal interview, 20 January 2013.

⁴⁵⁸ Fukawa and Fukawa, *Spirit of the Nikkei Fleet*, 119.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 129.

fishermen but also hard working cannery shore workers. The Canadian government finally allowed Japanese and Japanese-Canadian fishermen the option of returning to the BC coast on April 1, 1949. Initially, 119 Japanese received 192 licenses out of a total of 17,371, but due to a lack of capital, only 40 fished.⁴⁶⁰ At first, not all fish companies welcomed back these fishermen, because of lingering racism amongst their fishermen who told the cannerymen “You bring those Japs in here, we quit.”⁴⁶¹ J.H. Todd & Sons, right from the beginning were eager to welcome the Japanese fishermen back, as is evident from a Japanese fisherman based out of Steveston who stated “At first I was going to work for Beaver and Richmond Canneries, but on our way back, B. C. Packers approached me and to come to them, not to the others.”⁴⁶² Both the Beaver and Richmond canneries were Todd operations. Perhaps competitors such as B. C. Packers were able to provide them with “more security, more financing, new homes and boats, and a market?”⁴⁶³

In 1950, the Todd’s Inverness cannery on the Skeena River ceased operations after canning continuously for 74 years. Mr. Tiny Bing, son of former Managing Director of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. L. B. Bing, and former Todd employee at Inverness and Empire canneries, attributes this to the fact that the Japanese fishermen did not return in sufficient numbers to this cannery.⁴⁶⁴

By 1954 the only cannery still processing fish for J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. was their Klemtu Cannery located in Klemtu Pass. The family’s other two canneries, Inverness and Empire had been converted into fish camps. Both Beaver and Provincial plants had been converted into fish camps back in 1941, where they provided services to their fishermen such as ice, and use of their net lofts. R. Gregory, being a long time fishing industry manager explained:

*I believe economic and industry rationalization was the reason. Rationalization means smaller, and more efficient canneries operated. One didn’t need all of these canneries. It was difficult to keep qualified people working 12 months of the year.*⁴⁶⁵

The end came in the spring of 1954, when the Royal Trust Co. brokered the sale of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. jointly to BC Packers Ltd. and the Canadian Fishing Co. The company was “finally sold for \$800,000...the entire operation.”⁴⁶⁶ Serious issues such as

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 179.

⁴⁶¹ Barry Broadfoot, *Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame* (Toronto: Bryant Press Ltd., 1977), 379.

⁴⁶² Daphne Marlatt, *Steveston Recollected: A Japanese-Canadian History* (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1975), 72.

⁴⁶³ Richard Gregory, personal interview, 28 December 2013.

⁴⁶⁴ Tiny Bing, personal interview, 15 October 2009.

⁴⁶⁵ Richard Gregory, personal interview, 28 December 2013.

⁴⁶⁶ Derek Todd, personal Interview, 15 July 2001.

management problems, very large pack carryovers in 1951 and 1952, lack of liquid capital, and poor partnerships, pushed the Todds to end their seventy-three year involvement in the BC commercial fishing industry. By the early 1950s it was evident the company was struggling. “Why pour more good money after bad?” Richard Gregory asks.⁴⁶⁷

Without a doubt the Royal Trust Co. persuaded the Todds that it was time to sell their company. The close connection between the Royal Trust Co. went back many years. In the words of Mr. Jack Todd “Mr. Bob Phipps, manager of the Royal Trust Co. played a major role in the workings of J.H. Todd & Sons Limited near the end.”⁴⁶⁸ It was Phipps who approached B. C. Packers and the Canadian Fishing Co. and brokered the purchase of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.⁴⁶⁹ Derek Todd’s statement that “the business was controlled by the Royal Trust Co.” suggests just how involved and how much influence the Royal Trust Co. had over J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.⁴⁷⁰

Although the greater economic and sociological history of a major resource based company like J.H. Todd and Sons is more frequently scrutinized, the wide ranging personal impacts on members of the Todd family should not be neglected. It is easy to say the company owed large amounts of money, had its assets bought etc. but rarely is the human side dealt with, and I feel to give a more complete picture of this story that the human side must be told. Although the Todd's as a family remained financially secure after exiting the fishing industry, the personal impact of the departure persisted for many years. When Derek realized that this paper was going to be written he telephoned me shortly afterwards and said “I want to set the record straight. Can I come over to your house?” The following is a brief summation of how the loss of his long held family business impacted him:

*The bank manager came to our house and said “I’ll give you two months to get rid of the whole fish company, two months. So he went over to Packers and Canadian Fish and made a deal with them and that they’d pick up the assets of the company...and there was nothing left! So they picked up what was left of the company. And it was shocking! It was an insult to the family to lose this business that we had for so long, and the pioneers of the fishing business, and all the loyalty to all the employees that worked there. I felt...my grandfather and father had spent their whole lives in this fishing industry...it was so important to them and for me to come along and in a matter of 6 or 7 years...lose the whole thing.”*⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁷ Richard Gregory, personal interview, 30 December 2013.

⁴⁶⁸ Jack Todd, personal interview, 25 March 2001.

⁴⁶⁹ Derek Todd, personal interview, 23 November 2008.

⁴⁷⁰ Derek Todd, personal interview, 10 May 2009.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

5. CONCLUSION

J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. processed and marketed primarily canned salmon over a seventy-three year period in the BC commercial fishing industry. During that time the Todds owned or were involved in eleven plants, and processed fish from Anacortes, Washington to the Skeena River in northern BC. The company's salmon labels especially the company's flagship label, the Horseshoe sockeye label, was known across Canada, in the United States, and Europe. A unique aspect to the Todd's operations was the fact that from 1904-1954 the company operated five fish traps located in Sooke, and from 1922-1954, the Todds were the only fish packing company permitted to operate salt water fish traps in British Columbia. The fish traps made a considerable contribution to the Todd's fortune during the fifty years that they operated. There can be no doubt that these traps aided the Todd's survival during the difficult and lean times of the fishing industry.

During the first fifty-five years of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.'s time in the fishing industry the company prospered and evolved into one of the province's top processors. It is remarkable that this Victoria based, family-owned and operated company was able to survive in the fishing industry for as long as it did, while so many others did not.

Much of the Todd's business success and wealth was achieved because they did not make the mistake of only focussing on the risky fishing business, but also made sure to diversify into other areas. This included real estate, real estate management, the logging industry, and the stock market. Their real estate properties helped finance the Todd businesses, and kept the Todds in a very secure financial position throughout their time in the fishing industry.

J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. minute books reveal that the Todd's were major players in the stock market, and had investments in a variety of notable companies. These investments enabled the families to accumulate considerable wealth, which in turn helped them to succeed and endure in the salmon canning business industry for as long as they did. The variety of stocks that the Todd's had shares in was extensive, and impressive. Records from 1940 reveal that the Todds had shares in twenty-one Canadian companies, and in ten foreign companies. The Todd's broad diversification placed them in a financially secure position so that they were able to survive difficult times like the Great Depression of the 1930s, or avoid aggressive takeovers from competitors on at least five occasions. Future research in this area may shed light on whether this was a typical financial portfolio for a resource based company during this time or unique to the Todd family.

J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. canned all varieties of salmon, including smoked spring salmon. By the 1940s the firm expanded its canning efforts to include herring, tuna and clams. Todd & Sons' canned salmon products were sold in Canada, as well to foreign markets such as England, Belgium, Italy and the United States. Large amounts of spring

salmon taken from the company's Sooke fish traps were sold to the Los Angeles Smoking & Curing Co. A variety of fresh and frozen fish products including cod, sole, sable fish, and halibut, were sold locally as well as in markets in the United States. J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. by the 1940s had evolved into a well-diversified fish packing company.

However, by the early 1940s the company's fortunes took a turn for the worse. The company persevered for an additional 13 years before it too, like so many others before it, finally succumbed to the issues which have historically plagued the industry. The reasons which finally led to the eventual demise and sale of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. were complex, and varied. My research has identified five major reasons for the company's demise and sale in the spring of 1954. Managerial issues, depressed markets, failed business partnerships, and the loss of key fishermen and labour were the primary factors in the eventual demise of J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.

The first and most important issue was managerial crisis. The death of C.F. Todd and retirement of key management personnel had the greatest impact on the company. The primary reason for the demise and sale of the J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. involves the loss of key family members, and competent managers through either death or retirement. The loss of five key individuals within the fish packing firm between 1937 and 1950 ultimately crippled the firm. By 1950 the company's operations were hampered by lack of competent leadership, and a good portion of the blame for this predicament must be attributed to management, and the lack of a viable succession plan. Foreseeing the inevitable, W.C. Todd chose his son Derek as his successor to the family business. However, this plan was changed as a result of the untimely death of W.C. Todd in 1942. As Derek and his family were unable to pay the necessary succession duties to assume control over the company, E.D. Todd intervened and became president. E.D. Todd's overall lack of interest in the fishing industry would contribute to the eventual downfall of the company. It is possible that if W.C. Todd had not died and the family had more time to prepare the succession plan, the outcome may have been different.

After the deaths of C.F. Todd and his son W.C. Todd, it was very clear that the Todd's fish packing company lacked sound management. Soon afterwards, L.B. Bing, who had been with the company since 1919, was appointed managing director. Bing managed the firm until 1950 when illness forced him to step aside. By 1950 J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd.'s managerial problems were very evident, and the company struggled to find anyone from within their managerial pool capable of leading the company through these extremely challenging and difficult times. The firm's production manager, R.W. Sinclair should have been the logical person to lead the company, but by this point in time he was too old, and wanted to remain in an advisory position. As Richard Gregory stated, it is well understood that a company is only as good or bad as its management, and in the Todd's case this was increasingly evident. Although management was proving to be

problematic from 1941 onward, the decision was made to seek outside managerial support beginning in 1952. In a last ditch attempt, the Todd's reached out to competitors, including the Canadian Fishing Co., for management to help turn the company's fortunes around. Two outside managers came in, and for just over a year and a half they tried everything to save the company but unfortunately the situation was too dire, and they could not turn the company's situation around.

Second, beginning in 1947, depressed and fluctuating world canned salmon markets culminated in the financially disastrous years of 1951 and 1952 when all canners in British Columbia experienced extreme difficulty in marketing their canned salmon pack. The seven final years the Todds and their company were in operation were tremendously stressful financial times, ultimately persuading the Todds that it was time to leave the industry. For eighty years, the BC salmon canning industry's primary market was Great Britain, and in 1947 England only purchased 5 percent of its usual volume. In 1948, for the first time ever the British did not buy a single can of BC salmon. Again in 1950 Great Britain bought no BC canned salmon. The loss of the British market was devastating economically.

The Todds were fortunate during this period, finding temporary relief in the Belgium market for two years before this market dwindled as well. The BC salmon canning industry was dealt yet another devastating blow in 1951 when, once again due to limited markets, canners were burdened with the largest pack carryover ever in the history of the industry. As a result, processor's warehouses were bursting with product that they could not sell, which was a terrible financial burden. Processors had thousands of dollars tied up in a product with no place to sell, and on top of that canners had to pay bank interest rates and charges for the use of additional warehouses. Suddenly what was once an asset became a liability.

Product that should have been earning profits was now accumulating expenses as storage. By 1952, the Todds and their company, which until this point in time had been able to survive and were largely immune to the fickle nature of the industry, now exhibited signs that their fish packing company was in trouble. Just how bad times were at J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. became evident when it was revealed it had a \$2 million overdraft and that its lender had seized much of its assets. Unfortunately for all involved in the BC salmon canning industry, 1953 did not provide much relief. The nightmare reality of an additional year of heavy canned salmon pack, once again put the firm under tremendous, and ultimately fatal, financial stress.

Third, in the 1940s the Todds made two business partnerships, one with a brokerage firm which was hired to market their pack domestically and a second partnership with a company which specialized in the fresh and frozen markets. In 1945 the Todds, diversified their fish processing operations in the fresh and frozen fish market. To facilitate this expansion E. Todd invested considerable money into their Klemtu

Cannery where they did a complete overhaul of the facility, complete with sizeable cold storage. The decision was made to go into partnership with E. Moir, owner of the Vancouver-based Western Fishing Co., which specialized in fresh and frozen fish products. With its diversification into the fresh and frozen fish market, the Todds soon discovered that an additional plant was required. The decision was made to expand their Victoria headquarters to include a plant with a small freezer and ice making capabilities.

Due to growing losses and poor management, in 1950 the Todds decided it was time to end their relationship with Mr. Moir and his Western Fishing Co. Jack Todd, president of the Western Fishing Co., Victoria branch, mentioned that it was a mistake getting involved with this company and that by doing so J.H. Todd & Sons had overextended itself. This overextension, the result of two business arrangements including heavy investment in Western Fishing Co. and the purchase of BC Ice and Cold Storage Co., had left the Todd's financially hamstrung. An internal director's memo from this period reveals that the impact of this investment into the Western Fishing Co. and the BC Ice and Cold Storage Co. tied up most of their liquid capital. This lack of liquid capital was debilitating for J.H. Todd & Son's operations. As was noted by a Todd manager, the company's competitors were fixing up plants and building new boats, while they were saddled with aging infrastructure and equipment.

The broker's role in marketing a processor's fish products was, and continues to be, crucial to any processor's success. From the mid-1940s, Swift Canadian Co. was the Todd's agent, and major distributor, which marketed its canned salmon in the Canadian domestic market. The first indication that the Swift Canadian Co. was not doing a satisfactory job of marketing Todd's canned salmon was noted in 1950 at a J.H. Todd & Sons' board meeting, where it was pointed out that although sales were up, they still left a lot to be desired. Beginning a year later, reports showed that Todd's canned salmon sales continued to lag behind their major competitor, BC Packers Ltd.'s Cloverleaf brand.

Todd's directors were not at all pleased with Swift Canadian Co.'s efforts to market their canned salmon. Swift Canadian Co. was not able to improve Todd's canned salmon sales, and consequently the Todds terminated their contract with this brokerage firm in 1953. Consequently, two new brokerage firms were hired in 1953. Unfortunately for the Todds and their company, domestic canned sales did not improve. This grim reality led to the final chapter and ultimate demise of the company.

The last factor which helped to hasten the demise and sale of the company was the deportation of Japanese and Japanese-Canadians from the BC coast in 1942. The loss of a number of coveted 'High Liners' and shipwrights, as well as skilled labourers, added to the company's woes and contributed to the Todds decision to end their time in the BC fishing industry. With the deportation of these people from the BC coast, all canners lost critical and essential labour including the much coveted 'High Liner' fishermen. A former Todd's employee from Inverness Cannery during the 1940s was asked: "Why did

the Inverness Cannery stop processing salmon in 1950?” He replied, “Because of the loss of the Japanese Fishermen.” Todd records for the period reveal that 1947 to 1950, the last four years that Inverness canned fish, were the worse pack production years in the cannery’s history. Some of the blame for the poor production was certainly the result of natural and endemic issues, including poor salmon runs and an aging fleet of gillnetters. However, the loss of the highly skilled Japanese fishermen is not an inconsiderable factor. A former Todd accountant for this cannery during this period vividly remembers the Japanese as being the best and main fishermen at this cannery.

When the Japanese were permitted to return to the BC coast in April 1949, only approximately forty fishermen returned due to lingering racism, lack of money and lack of boats. These fishermen were not welcomed back with open arms by the majority of processors. Many fishermen threatened to quit if the Japanese and Japanese-Canadian fishermen were asked to return. However, there was one exception to this, and this was J.H. Todd & Sons, as was noted by some of the returning Japanese fishermen. Ultimately this apparent welcoming of the returning Japanese labour force did not benefit the Todds as had been hoped. While the Todds may have been the first to remember the value of these returning workers, the rest of the industry eventually recognized the important opportunity and quickly reopened their doors to capitalize on a valuable asset. While racist sentiment must certainly have lingered, the high skill level of the returning Japanese fisherman could not be denied. Although lingering company loyalty to their former employers may account for some of the returning Japanese not choosing to work for the Todds, another possibility may be attributed to the Todds deteriorating reputation as leaders in the industry.

The Todd story is more than just a story of one family struggling in the BC commercial fishing industry. This is a story of the BC fishing industry as shown through the lens of one family. In many ways the company was typical and their challenges were those of the industry as a whole. Right from the start sufficient capital was a necessity, to purchase a plant, boats, equipment, cans etc. Having adequate labour for both shore workers and fishermen was crucial. Every year a canner never knew with certainty if adequate numbers of fish would return. Even in years with a good salmon run, fickle foreign and domestic markets left a canner with looming uncertainty when it came time to market his pack. An additional pressure in the industry, that is not often talked about openly, is the ever present threat of corporate amalgamation, both amicable and otherwise. These challenges are inescapable regardless of the agency of individuals or any one particular family dynasty. This reality cannot be overlooked and the Todd history is a true reflection of how structure eventually forced the Todds to acknowledge the conditions that eventually caused the demise of the company and their decision to leave the industry.

Although the structure of the fishing industry is a particularly unforgiving reality,

the effect that individual Todd family members had on navigating these treacherous waters cannot be discounted or overlooked. In many ways, the family leadership was equally responsible for both the long term success and the eventual demise of J.H. Todd and Sons. Without this agency, the fate of this significant player in the BC fishing industry may have simply sailed with the tides rather than navigate a course of its own trajectory. In one way the Todd family story is exceptional because they were survivors while many others were not. This story of survival is a recurring theme when looking at the larger history of the Todd family. Through political influence and connections, C.F. Todd managed to secure fish trap licenses. Also, through diversification, as well as shrewd real estate and stock market investments, they amassed the necessary capital to survive this cyclical industry. By the start of World War II, the Todds were able to rise to the top of the BC fishing industry corporate ladder. When the time was opportune, they made the decision to expand their fishing operation, and they diversified their efforts to the fresh and frozen fish markets.

It is important to note two crucial points about the 1954 sale of the province's oldest fish processing firm. First, J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd. still retained value as a company at the time of its sale and the new owners BC Packers Ltd., and the Canadian Fishing Co. continued to operate it for an additional fifteen years.

By 1954 the Todd family was no longer a player in an industry that had been part of the family for seventy-three years. For some of the family, this loss was felt much more deeply than a financial one. Derek Todd spoke for that part of the family when he said he was ashamed and saddened by the loss of the family's dynasty. Derek Todd reminds us that J.H. Todd & Sons Ltd., and perhaps by extension other family-based companies, amounted to more than bottom lines in a ledger. These resilient companies were often the result of invested passion and energy of families like the Todds. The demise of such a dynasty also represented a huge personal loss not only for the individuals directly involved but for the communities of the BC coast.

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