

## MARCUS COX (1873 – 1945)

In 1967 when Donald Waite visited Alvin at the head of Pitt Lake for the first time, he met Bill (William Edward) Keillor and his wife at the Alvin fish hatchery. In their conversation Keillor mentioned Marcus Cox, “an Indian prospector who had once been married to a German princess. The pair eventually split up. She spent the remainder of her life in Vancouver reading tarot cards for a living while he managed to make enough working an old mine to pay for his grub.”

Keillor made these rather denigrating remarks more than twenty years after the death of Marcus Cox and it is doubtful that he had ever met him personally. Cox would have been forgotten were it not for Donald Waite’s notes on his first visit to Alvin. In his lifetime there was nothing that distinguished Marcus Cox from other prospectors exploring the area and after the Second World War, when the press revived and swept up the myth of the legendary gold of Pitt Lake, Marcus Cox was no longer alive to tell his part of the story.

It is not known when Marcus Cox came to Pitt Lake, but in 1911 the Canada Census shows him living there. He was then a 38-years-old bachelor. After the opening of the post office in 1915, the BC city directories started including Alvin showing Marcus Cox as a resident, a farmer and miner, until the year after his death in 1945, at the age of 72 years. He probably spent most of the winters outside Alvin.

Marcus Cox was born in Silverdale on the Mission side of the Stave River. His father, after whom he was called Marcus, was of Irish descent and born in Quebec. Marcus Cox Sr. is listed in the 1881 Census but the names of his First Nation wife and their children are not shown. Their two sons, Gabriel (born February 1870) and Marcus (born April 1873) seem not even to have known the name of their mother.

In 1889 Marcus Cox Sr. married Nancy Steward from Ontario. Ten years later he passed away in Silverdale, age 67 years.

The first record of the existence of Gabriel and Marcus is the 1911 Canada census showing Gabriel settled in the Sumas region and Marcus at Pitt Lake.

In July 1916, in Bellingham, Washington, Marcus Cox, from Alvin BC, 43 years of age, married Martha Frederika d’Autier née von Mecklenburg, from Buffalo, New York, 43 years of age. Her father was Swedish by birth and her mother Prussian (German). The name von Mecklenburg hints at Swedish nobility.

The couple stayed in Bellingham at least until 1921, Marcus probably spending the summers in Alvin. In April 1917 their daughter Wilhelma Greta Cox was born. There are no records of a separation. She stayed in Whatcom County for the rest of her life. She and her daughter are both buried there.

*Fred Braches, September 2020*

## **Marcus Cox – claims**

Adam Palmer found two documents relating to claims in the upper Pitt Lake area registered in the name of Marcus Cox. His request for information on this prospector resulted in the above notes.

The claims of Marcus Cox were at Canyon Creek (Boise Creek) in 1928 and at Scott Creek (Vickers Creek) in 1929. The relevant parts of the documents follow.

### *Report of the Ministry of Mines, 1928*

The discovery of a new ore-body has been announced, but its importance has not yet been proven. Under the management of W.H. Wooley, the affairs of the company are apparently being efficiently handled.

Altogether there are twenty-one claims staked in a block of three claims wide and seven claims long, and owned by Marcus Cox of Vancouver. They are situated 5 miles up Canyon creek from its confluence with Pitt river at a point nine miles up the valley at the head of Pitt Lake. There is a good wagon-road for 4 1/2 miles up the valley to within half a mile of the Dominion Government hatchery; this half-mile was washed out some years ago and never rebuilt. The main trail extends on up the Pitt valley, on the east side of the river, for 20 miles beyond the hatchery. Assistance was procured from the Department of Mines toward improving the 5 miles of the trail up Canyon Creek to the cabin on the claims.

The mineral-bearing formation is a wide belt, 4000 ft or more, of light-coloured, pyritized feldspathic rock, schistose in places, enclosed in the Coast Range granodiorite. The minerals are pyrite and molybdenum, occurring both separately and in combination in small quartz veins, which strike in all directions, and also in small veinlets of pure sulphides. Chalcopyrite is conspicuous by its absence. So far as exposed, there is not enough molybdenum the probability of commercial quantities. A sample taken of mineralized quartz exposed on the bank of Canyon creek by a shot tunnel and some open cutting gave: Gold, a trace; silver, a trace; molybdenum, 0.35 percent. On a small tributary creek about a quarter of a mile from the main creek a sample was taken from a number of small pyritized quartz seams, giving: Gold, \$4 to the ton; silver, 0.4 oz. to the ton; molybdenum, 0.16 per cent. A sample of solid pyrite assayed only a trace of gold and silver.

Further prospecting on this belt might discover more encouraging showings than so far exposed. I am informed that an English company using molybdenum is willing to explore the property.

### *British Columbia Department of Mines / Summary of Mining Operations in the Province of British Columbia for six months ending June 30th 1929*

A number of claims have been staked by Marcus Cox at the head of Scott Creek [Vickers Creek], emptying into Pitt Lake near its head. I am informed that a company is being organized to develop these claims on which some good chalcopyrite ore has been found. ... A trail to the Cox claims, 14 miles up to the head of the lake, has been completed and exploratory on the molybdenum-showings will be started.