



Sturgeon Slough, North East Richmond – by Terry Slack

We will still stay in Richmond, but we will go to East Richmond. The Tree Island South Slough on the North Arm is historically famous for many large sturgeon. The Slough was known as the Great White Sturgeon Slough. In 1876, Henry Roland, who was an old settler in Richmond and in Vancouver, reads a story of his experiences on the North Arm with sturgeon. I think it is interesting that we should read his story because it takes us way back to 1876 – so let's just go through what he had to say. Mr. Roland says this:

“To make ends meet I would hire out by the day to fisherman. I fished on the North Arm at a place called Sturgeon Slough for salmon, and I also caught many very big sturgeon. But I turned them loose as there was no sale for sturgeon. The cannery in New Westminster, and its boss cannery man would not buy them because they had white flesh.”

So that is kind of interesting that there was no interest in killing the sturgeon in those days because the flesh was white. But later the sturgeon became saleable and Mr. Roland said they were profitable because they brought 10 cents a pound and many of the North Arm sturgeon would be 400 or 500 pounds, and that was a lot of money to the fisherman in those days. The float bladders of each sturgeon at the cannery were used to manufacture Ising Glass, a ground up white powder that was used to clarify wine. So they sold the flesh, but the most important part at the sturgeon cannery in New Westminster was this Isinglass. This is the material in the skin of the sturgeon which they could dry, grind up, sell and use for the clarification of red and white wines in Europe. So, it was something that made the fish valuable.