

SIKH SETTLEMENT IN THE LOWER MAINLAND
OF B.C. (1904-1964)

Geography 449 - Graduating Essay

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INTRODUCTION

During the fall of 1964 the writer heard a talk on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation entitled "The Komagata Maru Crisis". It told about two hundred eighty Sikhs who had tried to enter Vancouver on board a vessel from India. They had been refused entry and the ship was forced out of the harbour under the guns of a Royal Canadian Navy vessel. This talk conjured up images of bearded and turbaned lumber mill workers and truck drivers seen around Vancouver since the writer's childhood. Then, various questions came to mind. How were these boat passengers related to the lumber workers and truck drivers? Why were these people here while the boat passengers were deported? Why were there Sikh temples in Vancouver, New Westminster and Abbotsford? Thus, I became interested in the Sikhs and decided to investigate their contribution to the mosaic of Canadian Culture.

The Sikhs are a religious sect of East Indians which formed from the religions of Hinduism and Islam during the seventeenth century. Although they are not racially different from other inhabitants of Northern India, they consider themselves culturally different because of traditions and customs that have evolved since the formation of their religion.

The nature of Sikh settlement in the Lower Mainland has been determined by social and economic factors.

When the Sikhs first arrived in B.C. around 1904, there was a shortage of labor in the lumber mills. Because most Sikhs are tall, sturdy men they were readily employed in the mills. Later, when their relatives followed, jobs were obtained for them, too, thus establishing the Sikhs firmly in the lumber business.

initial
shortage
labour

However, the Sikhs were subjected to a great deal of prejudice during their early period of immigration. From 1906 to 1907, over four thousand of them arrived in Vancouver. At this time, Vancouver was a city of only thirty thousand people. Because all the Sikhs could not be employed or housed, they became quite conspicuous, and agitation for their removal commenced.

By 1908, laws were passed which forbade East Indians to enter Canada. Because their wives and children had not accompanied them, the Sikhs settled here essentially as a male community. Lacking the responsibilities of a family, they became a highly mobile group following the labor demands of the lumber industry. Although they integrated into the economy of B.C., they remained socially clustered in small groups adjacent to the lumber mills. A more permanent type of settlement pattern evolved in 1920 when their wives and families arrived. Then, some Sikhs started farming in the Fraser Valley.

A change in settlement patterns occurred again after 1951 when more Sikhs were allowed to enter Canada. This time, two different types of Sikhs came: the educated ones who followed professions in the city, and the uneducated ones who worked in the lumber mills or went farming. Both these groups have a scattered settlement pattern throughout the Lower Mainland which reflects the confidence they now have in themselves and the community they live in.

There have been no studies done on Sikh settlement in B.C. until now. Thus, information for this geographic analysis of settlement was obtained in two stages. Firstly, all available material concerning the Sikhs in B.C. was consulted: a few books, pamphlets and in particular, newspaper clippings. From these references all material pertinent to settlement was compiled. Except for the period of the first three years of immigration, such information was usually in the form of brief references to Sikh activities. These small bits of information formed the basis for the outline of the work to be done.

Next, interviews were arranged with four pioneer Sikhs who had arrived in 1905: Saran Singh, Kartar Singh, Naranjan Singh and Ram Singh Bains. The questions were then put to these pioneers in lengthy interviews. These interviews provided the bulk of the information contained

in Chapters two, three and four. The information in Chapter five was obtained in the same way, except that those interviews were with the younger leaders of the community.

The information obtained from written sources as well as from interviews has enabled me to present an analysis of the changing Sikh community on the Lower Mainland from 1904 to 1965

CHAPTER I BACKGROUND TO SIKH SETTLEMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

This chapter presents a very brief outline of the history of the Sikhs before they arrived in Canada at the turn of the century. The purpose of this analysis is to illustrate those factors which moulded the character of the Sikh immigrant as well as those factors which caused him to immigrate. There are two factors in particular to analyze in this discussion: firstly, the Sikh religion which played the dominant role in shaping their personality and customs and, secondly, the Sikh affiliation with the British who indirectly influenced the Sikhs to immigrate to British Columbia.

In the Punjab, the Sikh homeland in northern India, the only religions practiced until the late sixteenth century were Hinduism and Islam. However, many of the natives were dissatisfied with the practices of these two religions. One in particular, Nanak Chand "crusaded against the fanaticism and intolerance which had become the practice of Muslims and against the meaningless ritual of caste and sex of the Hindus."¹

The essence of Nanak Chand's teaching was that there was only one god and that he was not a substantial something or an image of man but an abstract principle of the truth. Guru Nanak (Guru means teacher in Punjabi) gathered a following of dissenters from both Hinduism and

CHAPTER II THE SIKHS IN VANCOUVER 1904-1907: A PERIOD OF DISILLUSIONMENT

Between the beginning of 1904 and the end of 1907 over five thousand Sikhs arrived in Canada. Most of these immigrants came through the port of Vancouver while a smaller number, perhaps ten per cent, disembarked at Victoria. These East Indians came here filled with ideas of becoming rich enough to return to India with competence after several years of work. However, by the end of 1907, there were only about two thousand remaining in B.C., most of whom were residing on the Lower Mainland (Vancouver and Fraser Valley). The majority of Sikhs had left the Lower Mainland without realizing their dreams.

In this chapter we shall examine the reasons why three thousand Sikhs left B.C. and the reasons why the Sikhs ceased to immigrate to this province after the beginning of 1908. There were several reasons. Because too many Sikhs for the amount of jobs available and too many Sikhs for the amount of housing available gave rise to prejudice against them on economic and social grounds.¹

The first seventy-five Sikhs arrived in B.C. in 1904. There is very little known about them except that they found suitable employment and wages far in excess of any they had ever earned in India. Therefore, they wrote to their relatives in India and the colonies informing

them of the good fortune to be had in B.C. Thus, an additional three hundred forty-five Sikhs immigrated to this province the following year.

An impression of a Canadian observing these Sikhs on their arrival in B.C. will give the reader some idea of how ill prepared these individuals were for their venture in B.C. The Sikhs had no doubt been led to believe that B.C. was warm and sunny, because they arrived here clad only in cotton clothing to guard them against the wind and rain. "The water dripping from their rain-soaked turbans falling on their pathetic bundles of possessions that lay beside them"² an observer wrote in the Victoria Times. Nevertheless, these determined individuals did not shrink from their original purpose of finding jobs and earning good wages.

At first, their search for work was not easy. Potential employers regarded these quaint Asians in turbans and beards, as museum pieces. However, a few were eventually given a chance to work in a sawmill in Port Moody. The mill owner was pleased with their performance, so he advised a local newspaper that the Sikhs were very willing and able workers. Other mill owners took the advice of the Port Moody operator, and within a few weeks all available Sikhs were hired. Within a short period of time, Sikhs were well distributed throughout the sawmills of the lower mainland. Once again, reports

initial
hiring

[Port] yes

were sent to India advising relatives of the affluence that they would encounter in Canada.

The following year, 1906, over two thousand Sikhs arrived in Vancouver. The first immigrants did not experience any difficulty in finding suitable employment, because that year, the lumber demand was the greatest ever known in B.C. Moreover, employers had gained respect for the Sikh laborers and thus were willing to hire as many as their mills could absorb.

During the summer of 1906, almost every two weeks a ship would arrive at Vancouver bringing anywhere from two hundred to five hundred Sikhs. Despite the high demand for laborers the mills could not absorb all the Sikhs. Yet, no serious problems arose as positions were readily obtained for the Sikhs in the Interior. The mines in the Cariboo, the railway construction near Grand Forks and the Interior sawmills could hire the surplus labor.

However, by the fall of that year the situation suddenly took a turn for the worse. Hundreds of Sikhs, unhappy with the cold temperature at nights in the Interior, started to leave their jobs there and head for the coast. All that these migrants had taken with them to the Interior was their cotton clothing and a blanket to cover themselves at night. In addition, many of them had been forced to sleep outside in tents, as

shelters had not been erected for them.

At the same time, regular shiploads of Sikh immigrants continued to arrive in Vancouver contributing to the eventual total of two thousand immigrants who would arrive that year. As a result of the new immigration and the return of the Sikhs from the Interior hundreds of unemployed and unsheltered Sikhs were walking the streets of Vancouver. It must be remembered that Vancouver was then a relatively small city; *there* therefore, these unemployed Sikhs would be much more conspicuous than they would be in today's metropolis.

The main problem that faced the East Indians during that winter was to find adequate accommodation. Vancouverites were not prepared to rent their houses to these rather unorthodox people, although even if they had, there still would have been insufficient housing with such a large influx of immigrants at one time. *(prob not)* At first, when conditions became overcrowded the Sikhs found a satisfactory camping ground in Stanley Park, but the city council soon had them moved back to the city centre. (See map page 63) Then, the Sikhs set up temporary quarters at two more locations, both of which were near the sawmills. The first location was on Water Street close to the sawmills of Burrard Inlet. Here, tents were set up by the immigrants with the intention of staying for the winter. The city council,

after much argument, finally decided to erect sanitary facilities for them in their tent village. The other temporary quarters were set up at the corner of Beach Avenue and Seymour Street adjacent to the sawmills at False Creek. Here, an old restaurant was bought and converted into a rooming house, but much to the disgust of Vancouverites, over one hundred fifty people were boarded in it at one time. Across the street from the converted restaurant another tent village appeared.

Unfortunately, the situation worsened in November with the arrival of the steamship "Tartar" with seven hundred Sikhs on board. This influx further aggravated the overcrowded conditions in Vancouver. Jobs were found for only two hundred of the immigrants, in the Interior as railway construction gangs. This time, the city council insisted that employment agencies ensure that the Sikhs go to the Interior properly clothed to combat the cold winter. The remaining Sikhs, however, were still in need of housing. Many of them crowded into old condemned buildings on the east side of the city but, they were soon evicted by the city as housing by-laws forbade people to live in condemned buildings. Thus, the Sikh campsites became even more overcrowded, squalid and unsanitary. However, apart from the sanitary facilities erected on Water Street, little help was offered from Vancouverites. Instead, the city council

Late 1906
Conditions
bad.

and newspapers proclaimed that the Sikhs were unsanitary and therefore, of a low breed and unfit to live in Canadian society.

Finally, Dr. Monroe, one of the few citizens who acted constructively toward the problem, found a solution. He rented an old cannery at Eburne, and installed a few stoves and beds in it for the Sikhs. (See map page 63) They were asked to remain there until jobs could be obtained for them in the spring, but the plan did not develop as was anticipated. Before long, the six hundred Sikhs who had been housed there returned to the city. They gave two reasons for their exodus: firstly, the building was too well ventilated causing them to suffer from the cold winds coming up the Fraser River, and secondly, they wanted to be in Vancouver where the possibility existed of obtaining a job.

Again, the pattern of tents, shacks and unsanitary conditions appeared. This time, the press demanded that Sikh immigration be stopped before Vancouver developed into an oriental tent village! The unions claimed that the Sikhs were lowering the standard of living by undercutting wages despite the fact that the Sikhs ~~had twice gone on strike for wages equal~~ to those of the whites. Employers who had formerly found Sikh laborers satisfactory bowed to public pressure and declared them unfit for sawmills. Some

already →

employers contradicted these remarks, but their answers were relegated to a short statement in the back of the newspapers. Vancouver residents complained of Sikh uncleanness. They were answered by a doctor whose job it was to check the health of all immigrants at the immigration shed. He proclaimed at a public meeting that the Sikhs were the cleanest of all passengers he had checked including Europeans. However, the public didn't hear what it wanted to hear from him and for his information he was hissed at during the meeting.

Regardless of the actions the Sikhs took, they only drew adverse criticism. When they sent delegations to city hall asking for work, as was the custom in India, they were accused of begging and told to behave themselves or they would be deported. They would get out and look for food and work; this aggressiveness annoyed the white citizens. Moreover, their beards and turbans made them an easily recognizable scapegoat for much anti-oriental prejudice, despite the fact that they were Arans and British subjects.

By the beginning of 1907, they had become utterly disillusioned with Canada. As a result, many left for the United States believing that they could find better working conditions there. Others who arrived at the same time accompanied their relatives. Those who could not afford to leave were forced to

stay in Vancouver or, if they had insufficient funds to enter Canada (twenty-five dollars or more), they were deported to India.

However, by the spring of 1907 the situation had become much less chaotic. Jobs were found in Vancouver and the Interior for those who lasted through the winter. When the Sikhs were off the streets and out of sight the protests of the newspapers and public eased.

Unfortunately, however, circumstances did not remain tranquil for long. After the experience of the previous winter one would think that the relatives in India would have been warned of the difficulties that would face them if they left their homeland. One can only surmise that life in India must have been miserable because, before long, more Sikhs were on their way to Vancouver.

That winter was even more difficult for the Sikhs than the previous one had been. Many of the sawmills were forced to close because of poor lumber markets. The steady influx of shiploads of immigrants again aggravated the unemployment situation. However, this year, many white laborers were unemployed while Sikhs who had permanent jobs in the sawmills earned wages. Thus, the Sikhs became targets of racial prejudice on economic grounds. Vivid pictures were conjured up in the papers to convince the public that

this situation would be magnified considerably when millions of "low-bred" East Indians invaded B.C.

In addition to unemployment, the shortage of housing became even more acute than the previous winter. Fifteen hundred Sikhs were housed in an unused government building at Kitsilano Beach. Attempts were made by the employed Sikhs to help their brethren face the hard winter. An old rooming house at the corner of Beach Avenue and Granville Street was bought in order to take care of the destitute Sikhs. However, it was inadequate for hundreds of hungry immigrants still roamed the streets in search of food.

The shortage of food caused some Sikhs to start begging at Vancouver households for food. Housewives were terrified of the strange bearded men. In turn, husbands became enraged. The press backed them up in their protests and demanded protection of the housewife's virtue even though they found no evidence to confirm that their virtue had been harmed.

Again, to escape the intolerable situation in Vancouver, more Sikhs followed their relatives to the United State, especially to California, while others left for Hawaii or India.

The disorder that had resulted during the fall of 1907 prompted city officials and local politicians to petition the federal government that Sikh immigration

come to a halt, as these individuals were a menace to the city. The city argued that the social and economic upheaval that the Sikhs had caused was only a preview of what was to occur in the following years. The federal government was convinced too that East Indian immigration must be halted; however, this could not be done without some difficulties.

Canada, like India, was part of the British Empire; thus, to prohibit Indian immigration to Canada would be to deny loyal British subjects their rights. Furthermore, the British government did not wish to offend East Indians outrightly, as there were already signs of discontent with the British in India. After much consultation between the Canadian and British governments a formula was found to solve the problem. On January 4, 1908 the Canadian cabinet issued an order-in-council stating that immigrants "who have come to Canada otherwise than by a continuous journey from the country of which they are natives or citizens and upon through tickets purchased in that country"³ The only country which this law had any major effect upon was India; there was no direct steamer service from India to Canada. All East Indian immigrants had to change ships at Singapore before proceeding to Canada. Therefore, except for a few isolated incidents, East Indian immigration to Canada came to an abrupt halt.

The white community of Vancouver was satisfied, but on the other hand, the effects of this order on the Sikh community were serious.

The Sikhs were humiliated because, being Aryans, they always considered themselves superior to Chinese and Japanese. However, oriental immigration to Canada continued after the Sikh immigration had been discontinued. Again, the reason lies behind Canada's consultations with the British government. Great Britain did not want to have stern immigration policies that might offend the Chinese or Japanese governments as she had trade treaties with these nations that she did not want jeopardized.

Although the Sikhs were humiliated, this "continuous journey" law had even greater repercussions which positively infuriated them. This policy meant that the wives and children of those men who wanted to remain in Canada could not settle here with them. As a result, the Sikhs in B.C. were forced to remain a community of males until 1920 when the wives came to Canada. This was to have a profound influence on the way in which they adapted to Canada.

In retrospect, it seems that such harsh regulations would not have been imposed on the Sikhs had there been more responsibility and less ignorance on the part of the whites. The Vancouverites, while

constantly criticizing the Sikhs, made little effort to help them. Instead of restricting Sikh immigration to a yearly quota, the federal government waited until public pressure was so strong that they had to completely halt all immigration. On the other hand, the Sikhs in Vancouver made little effort to adjust to Canadian customs, partly because Canadians had been so hostile to them. Thus, a distrust developed between the two groups that would be apparent for many years to come.

- 1 Unless otherwise indicated all the data in this chapter has been compiled from articles which appeared in the Vancouver Daily Province from 1905 to 1908.
- 2 N. de Bertrand Lugrin, "The Far East Comes to Canada", The Victoria Times, 15 Sept., 1951, Magazine Section, p. 3.
- 3 Cheng Tien-Fang, Oriental Immigration in Canada (Shanghai: The Commercial Press Ltd., 1931), p. 145.

CHAPTER III SIKHS IN VANCOUVER 1908 to 1915: ORGANIZATION AND ESTABLISHMENT

In this chapter we shall see how the Sikh attitude toward settlement in B.C. changed. In the early period, 1904 to 1907, the Sikhs came to Canada intending to stay only a short while. However, in the period 1908 to 1915, many Sikhs came to consider their move a permanent one. This latter period of settlement in Vancouver was characterized by a spirit of perseverance and stability as contrasted with the confusion of their first four years in B.C.

By 1907, the Sikhs had analyzed their predicament in Vancouver and decided that they lacked a good leader to help them cope with their dilemma, so they requested a professor at Columbia University, Teja Singh, to come to Vancouver to aid them. Shortly after Teja Singh's arrival, the character of the Sikh community began to change. This man, as spokesman for the Sikhs, became popular in the white society as well as his own; and as a Sikh, earned the respect of the whites thus lending dignity to the East Indian community. He lectured on the Sikh religion and customs to the whites in an effort to erase the boundaries that had arisen between them and the Sikhs due to ignorance.

The first major endeavor of the Sikhs under Teja Singh's leadership was to build a temple for themselves.

The location of the temple was determined by where the majority of the Sikhs were working. "By the year 1908 the bulk of the Sikhs were employed by Rat Portage and Alberta Lumber companies on the south shore of False Creek."¹ As a result, the Sikhs first rented an old building in the district to serve as a temporary temple until they could construct their new building at 1800 West Second Avenue. (See map page 63)

The lumber for the temple was sold to them at cost price by the Rat Portage Lumber Company. This lumber was then hauled by horse and buggy from the mill to the temple site, then an area of uncleared bush. The temple, constructed by the Sikhs, was completed in early 1908.

It is interesting to examine the factors that contributed to the location of the temple. In chapter two it was pointed out that many employers had turned against the Sikhs during earlier periods of white unemployment, while a small group of them had maintained that the Sikhs were good workers. Rat Portage had been among this latter group. Indeed, the company claimed that: "once the Sikhs learned the lumber business ... they were preferred over white and oriental workers."² Thus, the role which prejudice played, in the long run, determined the location of the temple, as the Sikhs would naturally seek jobs in those mills which favoured them.

first
200s
false creek

Once the temple was completed, the Sikhs, under the leadership of Teja Singh, started to plan for their future in B.C. Their first move was to found a financial company to help finance projects which they would undertake. This organization was called "The Guru Nanak *Trust* Mining Company". Its purpose was to gather funds from the Sikhs to invest in projects which would benefit the community as a whole. It would also make loans to individuals to help them invest in private ventures.

The Sikhs had frequently been criticized as being poor potential citizens since they planned on returning to India after they had earned sufficient money to retire. However, after three or four years in B.C. , many of them had decided to remain here as permanent settlers. Thus, they wished to convince Canadians that their original intentions had changed and that they could become good citizens. Therefore, "Teja Singh advised them to invest their money into real estate in order to demonstrate their good intentions to Vancouverites."³ As a result, "They quickly adapted to local *business customs by investing over two million dollars* in Vancouver real estate"⁴ through individual investments, and within three years they owned over fifty houses in Vancouver. The distribution of these houses was not localized in any area; the Sikhs simply invested where they saw a good business venture.

When the amount of money invested is compared with the total number of possible investors one soon becomes convinced of the Sikh's determination to remain in Canada. There were an estimated two thousand Sikhs in Vancouver; thus, each of them would have had to invest one thousand dollars in real estate. This would be just under one-half of the total amount that they could earn in three years.

As will be demonstrated, the results of the individuals' efforts far surpassed any group efforts which were made through the Guru Nanak Mining and Trust Company. An assessment of Teja Singh, the leader of the Sikh community by one of his white adversaries perhaps suggests why the group efforts were not too successful. He is described as "a clever dreamer but a fearfully poor business man".⁵

The first task that the Sikh body proposed to undertake was to solve the unemployment problem. Since most of the Sikhs in B.C. were traditionally farmers, it was decided that the best way they could fit into the Canadian way of life was to become market gardeners. The Sikhs developed three schemes to start farming; however, none were realized. Two of the schemes were proposed, but no land was bought; in the third scheme, they acquired the land but did not settle on it.

The first plan was reported in the Vancouver
Province: "Sikhs to start farms near Chilliwack."⁶

Here, the Sikhs were planning to carry out gardening schemes much the same way as in India. Although nothing is mentioned of the scheme again, it is clear that if the Sikhs were remaining in Canada simply to save money they would have difficulty in doing so as they would have to compete with the orientals who already had market gardens around the edge of the city, and were already well established in this area.

The second scheme the Sikhs proposed came closer to completion than the first. In this instance, they planned to pay 140,000 dollars for one hundred fifty acres of land on the north shore extending from Skunk Cove to the Great Northern Cannery.⁷ The land was to be cut into two-acre tracts and allotted to unemployed individuals for purposes of market gardening, but just as the deal was about to be finalized a city firm, planning to develop this land as a summer resort, managed to acquire the property. There is no information available to indicate the cause of the sudden change in negotiations.

A third plan was then formulated. This time, the Sikhs bought land "somewhere on the Canadian prairies with the intention of settling there as communal farmers".⁸

There, they planned on building their own village, obtaining government permission to have their own police

force, and become farmers who could contribute toward the Canadian economy. They intended to move there as soon as they were able to bring their families from India. But, thirteen years later, when their families were allowed to enter Canada the Sikhs had lost interest in this scheme.

It has been shown that any land that the Sikhs bought was either for farming or for development as real estate. Yet, the Ayran⁹ notes that the Sikhs also bought "one hundred fifty acres of land at a cost of twenty-five thousand dollars" at Eagle Harbor.⁹ This harbor is sufficiently far from the city that in the early days in Vancouver it could not possibly have had any real estate value. Furthermore, the harbor is surrounded by rocks and trees, so it was useless for farming purposes. Why then, did the Sikhs invest such a large sum of money into an apparently useless piece of property? This land was bought by the Guru Nanak Mining and Trust Company soon after the government had implemented the "continuous journey" policy. Here, the Sikhs planned on building a wharf and accommodations to receive their families from India. Then, in order to comply with the "continuous journey" policy, they would charter ships from India, bring their families and relatives to Eagle Harbor and take care of them until they could be properly settled in Canada. With this plan, they would avoid the

problems of lack of shelter and unemployment that had plagued them so in previous years.¹⁰ This clever project, however, like the others, failed to be completed.

There are two reasons why these group ventures failed to mature. Firstly, despite the prosperity that the Sikhs had encountered, many of them left B.C. as soon as they made enough money to return to India. Others were returning for political reasons. After a short stay in Canada, these Sikhs realized that there was a wide gap between the standard of living in India and that in Canada. This they blamed on the British; therefore, they left for India to fight for home rule. Moreover, Great Britain was agitating against Sikh settlement in B.C. "as they were aware of the unrest that B.C. Sikhs were causing in India when they informed their relatives of the differences in the standard of living."¹¹ There is no written evidence to prove that the British government was causing unrest in the Sikh community; however, three of the original settlers claim that this was so. One even claimed that the British had given over fifty thousand dollars for anti-Sikh propaganda in B.C. One must reflect on the fact that the Sikhs were rather insignificant in numbers as compared to the Chinese and Japanese. Yet, most of the prejudice in the newspapers was directed against the Sikhs. Whatever the reason was, the agitation against them helped to make them feel sufficiently insecure not

to realize any large scale ventures, although they planned several.

The proof that the British government had some interest in removing the Sikhs from B.C. lies in the account of the proposed Sikh migration to the British Honduras. In 1908, Canadian Immigration officials approached the Sikh leaders asking them if they would consider moving to the British Honduras at the cost of the Canadian government. They were told that they would find plenty of work there, building railways and serving on the police force. In addition, it was suggested that there "they would not be subjected to the rigorous climate that had proved so unfavorable to them".¹² The Sikh community decided to investigate the proposal by sending three delegates to the British Honduras to survey the possibilities. When the delegation returned they advised against such a move. They claimed that the soil and water were poor for farming and that the price of labor was such that they would soon be reduced to the standards of slaves. This was contrary to the information published earlier by the newspapers. However, the Sikhs had first-hand information about conditions. In Belize, a town in British Honduras, the delegation had met twelve Hindus who had been induced to immigrate there ten years previously.. "Their story was of neglect, ill-treatment and broken promises."¹³ As a result, the Sikhs decided to remain in Canada.

Although this was the last effort that the Canadian government made to remove the Sikhs from Canada, the situation did not remain quiet for long. The Sikhs were still determined that their wives and families be allowed to immigrate. In 1913, the "continuous journey" law was declared ultra vires by a Vancouver magistrate. Because of a technicality in the wording of the law, forty Sikhs were allowed to enter Canada. Although this technicality was soon rectified by the government, the Sikh leaders saw this as a signal to bring over more immigrants. This decision resulted in one of the most dramatic episodes in Sikh history in Vancouver.

Three hundred seventy-six Sikhs from India, Singapore and Hong Kong chartered a ship, the Komegata Maru, which arrived here in April, 1914. For three months the ship sat in Vancouver harbor while a battle was waged in the court to permit entry of the passengers. At one point, the captain of the Komegata Maru decided to set sail for Japan. A riot ensued and two hundred police were called on board to quell it. When attempting to board the ship, they were repulsed by a barrage of debris. Finally, the courts ruled against letting the Sikhs into Canada. Again, a riot broke out on board the ship; this time the Canadian navy vessel "Rainbow" was called in to escort the ship to the straits.

Although the Komegata Maru at last departed from Vancouver, the trouble did not end there. Three local Sikhs had been informers for the Department of Immigration while the Sikhs were fighting for entry of the ship's passengers. As a result, the Sikh community was enraged. Two of the informers were murdered in Vancouver by fellow Sikhs. The third informer afraid for his life, shot his way out of the Sikh temple, killing a Sikh as well as wounding the priest. This informer was found murdered later on in India. Finally, a Sikh murdered the immigration official who had been the confidant of the informers. This Sikh was sentenced to death by a Vancouver court and executed. These deaths widened even further the breach between the Sikhs and whites in Vancouver. The Sikhs claimed that the whites had caused their misery, while the whites discarded the Sikhs as a blood-thirsty lot.

In this chapter, we have seen that the majority of the Sikhs had assimilated economically into Canadian society. However, it must be stressed that they continued to live apart from Canadians, culturally speaking. Canadian treatment of the Sikhs had discouraged the latter from accepting Canadian customs. Instead the Sikhs remained close to the one thing that had always kept them alive as a minority, their religion. With their religion, they kept their traditional dress and customs, preserving their way of life and seldom coming in contact with the

white society except for economic reasons. The majority of Sikhs in Vancouver remained working in the lumber mills as they had always done.

After 1915, there was little change in the Vancouver Sikh community until 1947. For this reason, attention will now be focussed mainly on the Fraser Valley where changes in Sikh activity took place.

- 1 Saran Singh, a Sikh resident of Vancouver since 1905, personal interview with the author at Saran Singh's home, 14 Jan., 1965.
- 2 Vancouver Daily Province, 23 Nov., 1906, p. 18.
- 3 Saran Singh, interview, 14 Jan., 1965.
- 4 The Aryan, Sept., 1911, p.3.
- 5 Henry Stevens, The Oriental Problem, n.p., n. pub., n.d., p. 9.
- 6 Vancouver Daily Province, 5 Jun., 1908, p.1.
- 7 Vancouver Daily Province, 10 Dec., 1908, p. 11.
- 8 Saran Singh, interview, 14 Jan., 1965.
- 9 The Aryan, Nov., 1911, p.5.
- 10 Saran Singh, interview, 14 Jan., 1965.
- 11 Kartar Singh, publisher of a Sikh newspaper intermitently between 1911 and 1930, personal interview with the author at Kartar Singh's office, 29 Dec., 1964
- 12 Victoria Times, 19 Oct., 1908.
- 13 Vancouver Daily Province, 23 Nov., 1908, p.1.

CHAPTER IV SIKH SETTLEMENT IN THE FRASER VALLEY TO 1947

In this chapter, the distribution of the Sikhs in the Fraser Valley will be analyzed under a discussion of Sikh occupations, as their place of residence was largely determined by their place of employment. Almost one hundred per cent of the Sikhs in the Valley were employed in three main occupations: sawmilling, farming and trucking.

After the first few years of Sikh settlement in B.C., it was commonly accepted that they were strong reliable lumber-workers. Wherever new mills were built it was not surprising to find employers hiring Sikh laborers. "From 1908 to 1912, there was a general expansion of lumber markets for B.C. mills because of prairie settlement and railway building."¹ As a result, a new group of sawmills emerged in the Lower Fraser Valley. The response of Sikh laborers to job opportunities in these new mills resulted in three new centers of Sikh population. The first group centered around Fraser mills, while the second group centered around the mills of New Westminster as they slowly expanded production. A third group appeared in Abbotsford when a large mill opened there. (See map page 64)

In the early period of immigration several Sikhs had obtained work at Fraser Mills. As the company

expanded its production, more East Indians were hired. By 1908, one hundred seventy-five of the five hundred employees at this mill were Sikhs.² The lumber company supplied them with a temple and with their own quarters, separate from those of the orientals and whites. The Sikhs had their own cooks too, who prepared traditional Indian meals. Moreover, the Sikh social life centered around the temple. Thus, except while at work, they remained largely unnoticed by the white community.

As early as 1910 there were indications that the Sikh settlement at Fraser Mills was not to be permanent. Their positions were challenged when three hundred French Canadians were brought from Quebec at company expense. They were provided with houses for their families who accompanied them. It was intended that "they would replace the orientals at the mill."³ However, the Sikhs were fortunate as their services were still required because "the mill soon went on a double shift,"⁴ thus doubling the demand for labor. Although none of the Sikhs at Fraser Mills were ever "fired" without a just reason, "the company adopted a policy of replacing Sikhs who died or resigned with white workers."⁵ Finally, by 1945 when there were very few Sikh laborers left in the mill, the temple was torn down.

The jobs of the Sikh community at New Westminster were not so vulnerable, as the Sikhs here did not depend on the policies of one mill. This community grew slowly in response to the growing nucleus of smaller mills around New Westminster. By 1912, there was a sufficient number of Sikhs in that area to warrant the construction of a temple. It was built adjacent to their dwellings on the east end of Lulu Island within the city of New Westminster. Unlike the fading community of Fraser Mills, this one continues to exist even today, because the workers here were employed in many small mills and thus, were not dependent on the employment policy of any one mill.

In 1911, a third nucleus of settlement developed in Abbotsford, in response to the labor demands of a large lumber mill which opened there that year. Here also, the seventy-five Sikhs who were employed in the mill constructed a temple. The temple, build within walking distance of the mill, was on a promontory west of Abbotsford "which was meant to give it an aspect of significance."⁶ By 1932, the mill closed down due to the depression. However, unlike the temple at Fraser Mills, this one remained open to serve the Sikhs who had started farming in the Abbotsford area.

*farming
specimen*

As early as 1915 other Sikhs had also ceased to work as laborers in sawmills. Some of the more ambitious

ones decided that they knew the lumber business well enough to operate mills by themselves. Although there were only seven mills opened by the Sikhs in the valley there were probably about forty owners of these mills. "They were operated on a partnership ^{basis} with shareholders advancing an equal amount of money to the investment."⁷

The management would be left to one man who as foreman would consult the other shareholders before making a decision.

These mills were bought from marginal lumber operators who were on the point of closing down. It can be noted on the map on page 64 that five of these mills were bought during 1915 and 1916. This was an opportune moment for the Sikhs to go into the lumber business on their own. They were able to buy mills cheaply as "the demand for lumber had fallen with loss of the prairie markets at the beginning of World War I",⁸ when railway construction was slowed down. While a white operator could not operate these mills at a profit during periods of low lumber prices, the Sikhs were able to realize at least the cost of operations through long working hours and communal efforts. By 1917, however, the west coast lumber mills experienced a renewed demand for lumber. This time, they gained a grip on the Atlantic coast markets through the opening of the Panama Canal. As a result, all the Sikh lumber

operators gained substantial profits from their investments.

However, even under the most ideal market conditions these mills could not have operated for long. They had only small tracts of land to supply their lumber. These tracts had already been well cleared by the earlier operators in the boom years. The larger tracts of timber had all been bought by speculators or large lumber companies for their future use. Thus, within three years, after making maximum use of the available timber in their lots, most of the Sikh mills closed.

All these mill operators had acquired sufficient returns from their mills to enable them to return to India or to invest in other projects. Three of these Sikhs went to Vancouver Island to investigate the possibilities of opening lumber mills there. On the island they found that large tracts of virgin douglas fir were still available. Along with many small shareholders they build the large mills of East India Lumber Company at Ladysmith and Mayo Lumber Company at Duncan, both of which eventually employed between two and three hundred people. Many Sikhs, desirous of the job security that they would obtain by working for their countryman, left the mainland to work in these mills.

Many of the Sikhs displayed a large degree of mobility moving from Vancouver to the Lower Fraser Valley, then to Abbotsford or to Vancouver Island, by following the job opportunities in the lumber industry. This freedom of movement can be explained by the fact that their wives and families were not with them. Without their families they cared little about establishing themselves in one place.

It has been pointed out that the Sikhs were traditionally farmers in the Punjab, but of the thousands of Sikhs who came to Canada, very few of them became farmers. Why was this so? There are several reasons. In the first place, for a few years after their arrival here, the Sikhs were mainly concerned with earning good wages. The farm was a symbol of a meager existence that depended upon the whims of nature. Good wages and farming, to them, were not synonymous. In addition, "they were tired of farming and of praying for rain or sunshine in the alternating dry and wet climate of the Punjab",⁹ and welcomed the change of occupation. But, after they stayed in Canada for a while, many of them saw that farming in Canada was more profitable and less arduous than in India. Many of them felt the desire to return to farm life, but they decided not to. There would have been no problem in raising the capital to do so, but "they were afraid that if hard-luck caused

their farms to fail then the Canadian government would claim that they were poor citizens and might deport them."¹⁰ (There was a great deal of validity in such fears as Sikhs were often deported for the most trivial reasons.)

But the main reason why Sikhs did not start farming was because they felt that working alone on a farm was simply not bearable if they did not have their wives and families with them.

The map on page 64 shows that the majority of the Sikh farms were started around 1920.¹¹ There is a definite correlation between the date that the Sikhs started farming and the time at which the Canadian government finally decided by an Order-in-Council in 1919 to allow Sikh families to enter Canada.

Nine of the twelve farms shown on the map 64 started during or after 1920. Of the three remaining farms that were established before 1920 one of the farmers had his family with him; another was a part-time lumberman while the third had been working on hop farms near Chilliwack since his arrival in Canada in 1905. Considering that the Sikhs were traditionally farmers, these twelve farmers represent a small percentage of the two hundred Sikhs in the valley.¹² One wonders how many other Sikhs would have become farmers had they been free to settle earlier with their families instead of

becoming well-established in the lumber industry.

A second factor which is apparent on the map on page 64 is that all of these Sikhs were dairy farmers. The reason for this can be traced back to the Sikh customs in India. Although the Sikhs do not regard the cow as sacred, as do the Hindus, they treat these animals with the utmost respect. The cow serves as a beast of burden, as an animal for plowing and as a source of dairy products - an essential part of the Sikh diet. (In fact, it has been estimated that the average Sikh uses fifteen pounds of butter per month in the preparation of his meals.¹³) Therefore, there was a great deal of pride taken by each farmer in trying to outdo his neighbour in breeding cattle of good quality and appearance. Indeed, this cultural trait was manifested in the Fraser Valley "by a Sikh farmer living near Chilliwack who won many medals for the stock which he bred."¹⁴

The Sikh farms in the Valley were clustered in two main groups: one around the Abbotsford area and the other around the Chilliwack area. "Most of the farmers in the Abbotsford area were former workers in the mill at Abbotsford."¹⁵ While working in the sawmill, they had become familiar with the type of farmland surrounding Abbotsford; thus, they settled on that land with which they were most familiar. In addition, the amenities of the temple nearby encouraged them to live near the town.

The same principle applies to the farmers near Chilliwack, although there was no temple there. Sikhs had been working as laborers in the hop fields in the Chilliwack-Agassiz area since 1905. Again, they recognized the value of the soils for dairy farming.

As well as becoming engaged in lumbering and farming, the Sikhs also became occupied in fuel-dealing. In 1927, there were twenty-one Sikh fuel dealers on the Lower Mainland.¹⁶ Some of these fuel dealers, such as Sohan Brothers in Burnaby, operated as many as thirty fuel trucks.

What factors had led the Sikhs to enter the fuel business? We have seen that the Sikhs had two main objectives: to earn good wages and to be independent. Entry into the fuel dealing business enabled the Sikhs to realize both of these objectives. They found that instead of working in the lumber mills, they could triple their wages by selling sawdust and wood chips to householders for home heating. "As early as 1907 some Sikhs were using a horse and buggy to make door-to-door fuel sales."¹⁷ Their close association with the lumber business enabled them to make advantageous contracts for fuel. Then, other Sikhs followed their countrymen when they saw how well they prospered. Soon the Sikhs controlled a large portion of the fuel dealing business on the Lower Mainland.

However, the question arises as to why other ethnic groups did not enter the fuel business if it was so profitable. There are several reasons: firstly, "the Sikhs are proud of their ability for hard work."¹⁸ As a minority group they strived to prove themselves worthwhile citizens by keen application to their jobs. Secondly, and perhaps more important, they were not afraid to gamble on a business venture because even if they failed, they would have never been as badly off as they were in India. Moreover, the Sikhs seem to have had a propensity for the transport industry. "They control the transport systems of many of the bigger cities of India. To the foreigner the Sikh taxi driver is a symbol of the race."¹⁹ These factors coupled with their close association with the lumber business, made the Sikhs the major fuel dealers of Vancouver and the Fraser Valley.

- 1 J.C. Lawrence, "Markets and Capital, A History of the Lumber Industry in B.C." (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1951), p.98
- 2 John Stewart, Early Days at Fraser Mills, B.C., 1889-1912, n.p., n.d.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ram Singh Bains, a Sikh resident of the Fraser Valley since 1906, personal interview with the author at Ram Singh's home, 9 Jan., 1965.
- 5 Naranjan Singh, a Sikh resident of the Fraser Valley since 1906, personal interview with the author at Naranjan Singh's home, 15 Jan., 1965.
- 6 Naranjan Singh, interview, 15 Jan., 1965.
- 7 Saran Singh, interview, 2 Feb., 1965.
- 8 R.C. Lawrence, "Markets and Capital", p. 68.
- 9 Jack Uppal, a Canadian-born Sikh whose father arrived in Canada in 1905, interview at Jack Uppal's home, 7 Jan., 1965.
- 10 Saran Singh, interview, 14 Jan., 1965.
- 11 Information on early farm dates supplied by Saran Singh, interview, 2 Feb., 1965.
- 12 Tien-Fang Cheng in his book, Oriental Immigration in Canada gives the Sikh population in B.C. during 1920 as 1061 (p. 157). Saran Singh estimates that one-half of these Sikhs would be on Vancouver Island. Of the remaining five hundred he estimates that just under one-half of them would be in the Fraser Valley, thus giving an approximate figure of two hundred Sikhs in the valley.
- 13 Rajani Karta Das, Hindustani Workers on the Pacific Coast (Walter de Gruyter and Co., Berlin, 1922), p. 58.
- 14 Karta Singh, interview, 29 Dec., 1964.

- 15 Naranjan Singh, interview, 15 Jan., 1965.
- 16 Compiled from government report, British Columbia Legislative Assembly. Report on Oriental Activities within the Province, Victoria, 1927.
- 17 Jack Uppal, interview, 7 Jan., 1965.
- 18 Naranjan Singh, interview, 15 Jan., 1965.
- 19 Khushwant Singh. The Sikhs Today, p. xv.

CHAPTER V THE CHANGING SIKH COMMUNITY IN THE LOWER MAINLAND 1947 to 1964

When India gained independence from Great Britain at the end of World War II the Indian and Canadian governments held negotiations to determine the status of potential immigrants to Canada. Because India was now a equal partner in the British Commonwealth, official Canadian policies toward her changed. In 1951 the two countries arrived at an agreed quota of one hundred fifty East Indians per year. (This quota was doubled to three hundred immigrants per year in 1957.) The quota was divided into two categories. One-half of the immigrants were to be on a preference quota of those East Indians already having relatives in Canada. The other half was on a non-preference quota of East Indians who could immigrate subject to their ability to maintain themselves in Canada. In addition, the spouses, unmarried children and aged parents of Canadian citizens plus students with visas could now enter Canada.

The preference quota would obviously be filled by Sikhs, as we have seen that most of the East Indians in Canada were Sikhs, but it is surprising to find out that for several years after 1951 the non-preference quota too was filled to a great extent by Sikhs. In addition, "it is estimated that ninety per cent of the

early East Indian students entering Canada on visas
were also Sikhs.²

The reason for the predominantly Sikh immigration can be found by examining the standard of education of those East Indians desirous of entering Canada. Because of relatives who lived in Canada, their educational standards were higher than natives of other parts of India. When the first East Indians came to Canada they soon realized that lack of education was one of their big handicaps. Therefore, they were determined that their relatives in India would not have to experience the same burden when and if they decided to come to Canada. Thus, by 1923 they had sent 193,000 dollars to further Sikh education in the Punjab.³ In addition to these official grants, individual Sikhs also sent money to put their own relatives through school. Thus, when the time came to fill the non-preference quota, a large number of Sikhs were able to compete due to their educational standards. This resulted in predominantly Sikh immigration to Canada.

It should be noted that not all these post-war immigrants have settled on the Lower Mainland. Many of those Sikhs who are professionals and tradesmen are travelling directly from India to eastern Canada. However, there were sufficient numbers settling here, especially in the earlier years of post-war immigration,

to cause marked differences in the Sikh community of the Lower Mainland.

"The group of uneducated Sikhs are following the traditions laid down by their predecessors by finding work in the sawmills."⁴ But some of them have greater aspirations than spending their life time as laborers. As a result, there have been sixteen new farms appear in the Fraser Valley in the last ten years.⁵ However, these new farms differ greatly from the older Sikh farms of the valley.

The older farms are usually about one hundred acres and support about fifty cows. The newer farms range in size from ten to twenty acres and are seldom used for dairying. There are several reasons for the smaller size and different type of farms. It is almost impossible for a Sikh immigrant to buy a large farm since farmland now sells for an average of one thousand dollars per acre in the Fraser Valley.

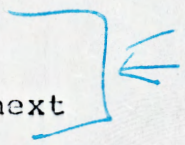
This high price of land has led some farmers to put their land to more intensive uses in order to realize a good return on their investments. Instead of dairying, three of the new farmers are now producing vegetables, and three are producing berries. Another three Sikhs have bought land but are renting it out to other farmers. Three more newcomers have small unimproved farms, and are contributing little to the

dairy industry of the valley. Finally, there are three new farmers around Chilliwack who are engaged in successful dairying. But these farmers are sons or sons-in-law of older successful farmers in the same area, so they have been able to finance large farms.

With the exception of these three farmers at Chilliwack, most of the new farms are operated on a part-time basis. The newer Sikhs are obviously showing an interest in farming but are having difficulty in becoming established. It seems rather paradoxical that when their forefathers had money to farm on a large scale, most of them lacked the confidence; now, when new immigrants have the confidence they lack the proper funds.

The most successful Sikh farms in the Valley are all among the large Sikh farms started in the 1920's. Five of these can be classed as very successful large-scale dairy farms. Of these, four operate trucking businesses. It appears that as the sons or sons-in-law have become old enough to run the farm the fathers have delegated the authority of running it to the eldest son. The other sons then look after the trucking business and work on the farm during busy periods. In this way, each son is given an equally responsible and remunerative position. This saves the father from the problem of dividing up the dairy farm among his sons, as would

have been done in India. It is clear that it would be uneconomical to do since so much money must be invested in capital equipment on modern farms.

The price of land does not please the potential Sikh farmers. As we have seen, most of the new Sikh farmers are unable to operate successfully on a full-time basis. Thus, there is talk of moving to an area where cheap land can be bought and full time farming can be pursued. In fact, it has been hinted to the writer, on several occasions, that we may see a Sikh movement toward the Peace River district within the next five years. 

The Sikh settlement pattern of the Fraser Valley is quite different from the pattern of Sikh settlement in Vancouver. Moreover there is a marked difference in Vancouver between the settlement of the pioneer Sikh and the post-war immigrants. The clusters of settlement on the south shore of False Creek, and in South Vancouver, adjacent to Mitchell Island represent the nucleus of original settlers. These clusters illustrate the Sikh tendency to live in groups close to their work in the lumber mills. On the other hand, dots scattered over the map in Vancouver,⁶ representing the houses of post-war immigrants, illustrate a loose pattern. This is indicative of their confidence in themselves and of the community that they live in. The majority of

these Sikhs are either professionals or tradesmen engaged in various occupations throughout the city. Some of them are lumber mill workers who find no need to live next to the mill. In fact, "Most Sikhs now buy a house, then check to see if any of their countrymen are living in the neighbourhood."⁷

The differences in attitudes between the old and new Sikh communities has been reflected in their religious life as well. Until 1953 the temple committee in Vancouver was comprised of only full-pledged Sikhs, that is, Sikhs who still maintained the five Kakkas. But, by this time there were many young educated Sikhs in Vancouver whose new ideas had led them to shave their beards and remove their turbans. These new Sikhs were not allowed to serve on the temple committee, because they were not considered to be true Sikhs. This caused some agitation among them as they had donated their money and time toward the community and yet had no hand in guiding it. Finally, a majority vote was passed which enabled the non-conformist Sikhs to be elected to the temple committee.

The orthodox Sikhs decided to buy a new temple on Eleventh Avenue where they could follow the traditions of the orthodox Sikh religion. They felt that abandoning the Kakkas would "be a major factor in the disappearance of the Sikh community in the quicksands

of Hinduism"⁸. On the other hand, the younger faction argued that the Kakkas no longer served their original purpose. Sikhism was no longer being persecuted in Canada, nor did it have to worry about the Hindu influence.

Despite the split in the community the two factions are slowly being drawn together for two reasons. Firstly, when it was realized that the government would not listen to two associations on matters of official Sikh business, a new organization was formed: the East Indian Welfare Association, comprising representatives from both groups. Secondly, now that both groups are working together they have joined in plans for the construction of a new temple and community centre. They have taken an option to buy three acres of land near the corner of Fraser Street and Marine Drive. This location, they feel, will be more central for the Sikhs of Vancouver, Burnaby and New Westminster as well as being closer to the Fraser Valley.

The purpose of the community centre also has interesting implications. One of the main reasons for it: "is to give the children a place to get together instead of the parents having to worry about mixed marriages."⁹ The parents do not feel that interracial marriages are beneficial as the married couples would end up not being accepted by either the white or Sikh ✓

communities. On the other hand, they look forward to the day when the interracial marriage will be a common occurrence. In other words, the Sikh community is in agreement with gradual assimilation but, for the moment, they are content to remain in their own community.

- 1 Mayer, in The East Indian Community in Vancouver states that the agreement was concluded in 1947. However, Dr. Pandia, a Vancouver lawyer, who was instrumental in negotiating the agreement in Ottawa informed the writer that it was not concluded until 1950. ✓
- 2 Mahinder Singh Gill, a former Sikh student who entered Canada in 1951 under these circumstances, personal interview with the author at Mahinder Singh's home, 4 Feb., 1965.
- 3 Das, Hindustani Workers, p. 104.
- 4 Naranjan Singh, interview, 15 Jan., 1965.
- 5 Post-war farm data obtained from M. Singh Dhaliwal, a Sikh working with the Department of Agriculture at Abbotsford, personal interview with the author at M. Singh Dhaliwal's office, 19 Mar., 1965.
- 6 Mayer, East Indians in Vancouver, Appendix C, p. 35.
- 7 Mahinder Singh Gill, interview, 4 Feb., 1965.
- 8 Mayer, East Indians in Vancouver, p. 8.
- 9 Mahinder Singh Gill, interview, 4 Feb., 1965.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There has been a discernable change in Sikh settlement patterns and occupations in the Lower Mainland over the past fifty years. These patterns have been a result of changing economic conditions, changing social attitudes and different types of Sikh immigrants arriving in Canada.

The original Sikh settlers who arrived in Vancouver at the turn of the century gave rise to fears among Vancouverites of a flood of immigrants from India. Because these Sikhs had different dress and customs, and because Vancouver was unable to absorb them in employment and housing, their immigration was soon restricted. The immigration restrictions made no allowance for their wives and children to follow them; thus, the Sikhs became an all-male community.

The Sikhs, while attempting to organize themselves under the Guru Nanak Mining and Trust Company, failed on the whole because of poor leadership. Schemes to organize communal farms also failed as the Sikhs did not trust the Canadian Government.

In 1920, when their wives came to Canada some Sikhs started farming. This gives some hint as to how the Sikhs may have adapted to Canada had sudden

immigration restrictions not been placed on them earlier. However, by 1920, most Sikhs had become entrenched in other occupations; thus, there were few farms.

By this time there were only five hundred Sikhs remaining in the Lower Mainland. Most had returned to India. Perhaps, this is what the Canadian Government had hoped for when they abruptly cut off all immigration in 1908. Indeed, the government's attitude toward the Sikhs was definitely clear when they offered to transfer them to the British Honduras.

The settlement patterns of the post-war Sikh immigrants are quite different from their predecessors'. This results from two factors. Firstly, there is a noticable difference in Canadian attitudes towards Sikhs. They rarely raise protests when a Sikh moves next door to them. Secondly, these signs of maturity on the part of Canadians have their counterpart in the changing attitudes of the Sikhs. The turban and the beard have to a large extent disappeared, and the newcomers find jobs and housing throughout the city. Some have attempted farming in the Fraser Valley, but have found difficulty in doing so, because of high initial investment costs.

How have the Sikhs contributed to the mosaic of Canadian culture? Their farms and their houses do not differ from those of their white counterparts. However, because they have adopted well to certain occupations: lumbering, farming and trucking in particular, the whites have come to respect them as equals. Thus, perhaps the main Sikh contribution to Canadian culture has been a breaking down of racial barriers.

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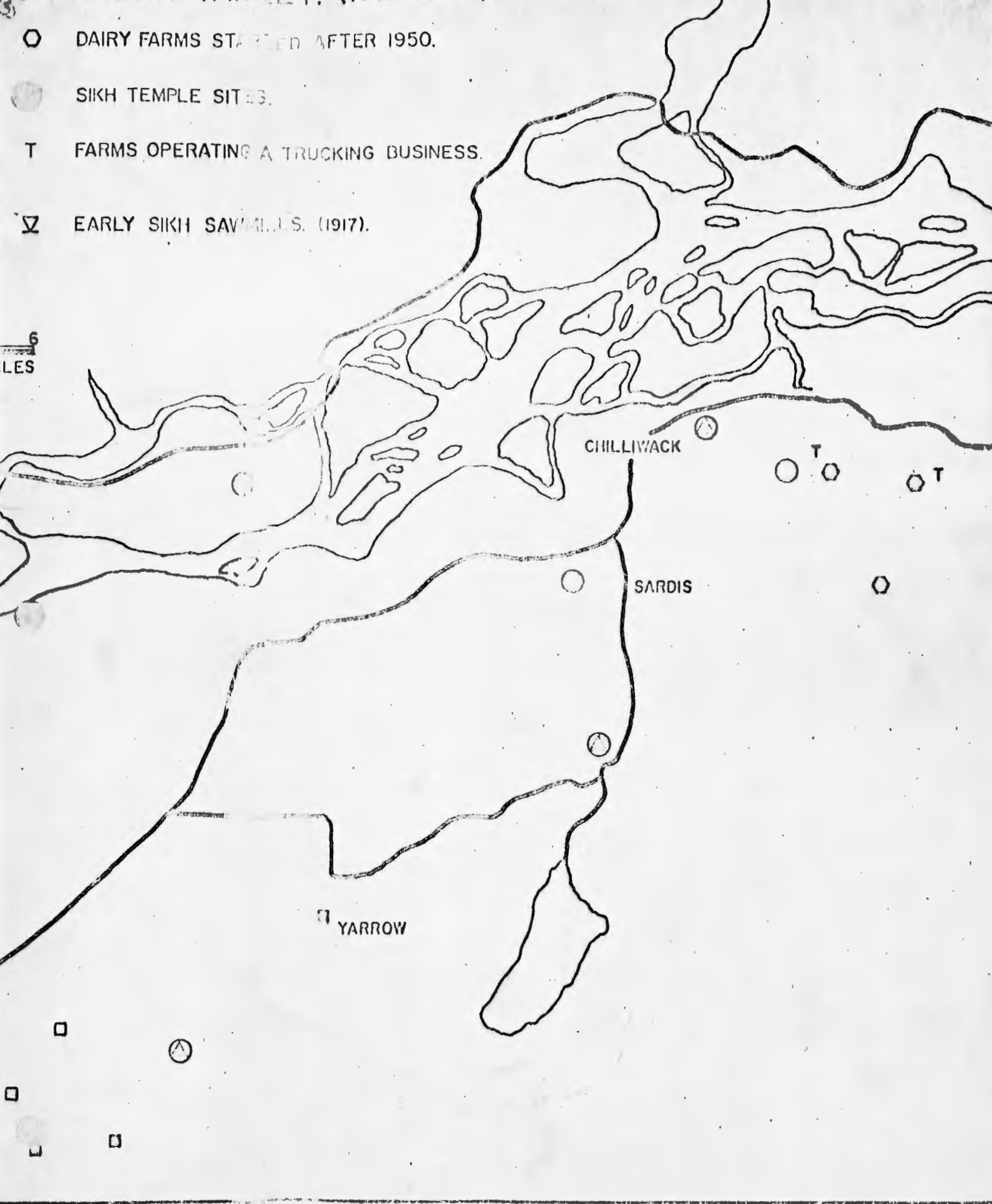
○ DAIRY FARMS STARTED AFTER 1950.

● SIKH TEMPLE SITES.

T FARMS OPERATING A TRUCKING BUSINESS.

▽ EARLY SIKH SAVANILLES. (1917).

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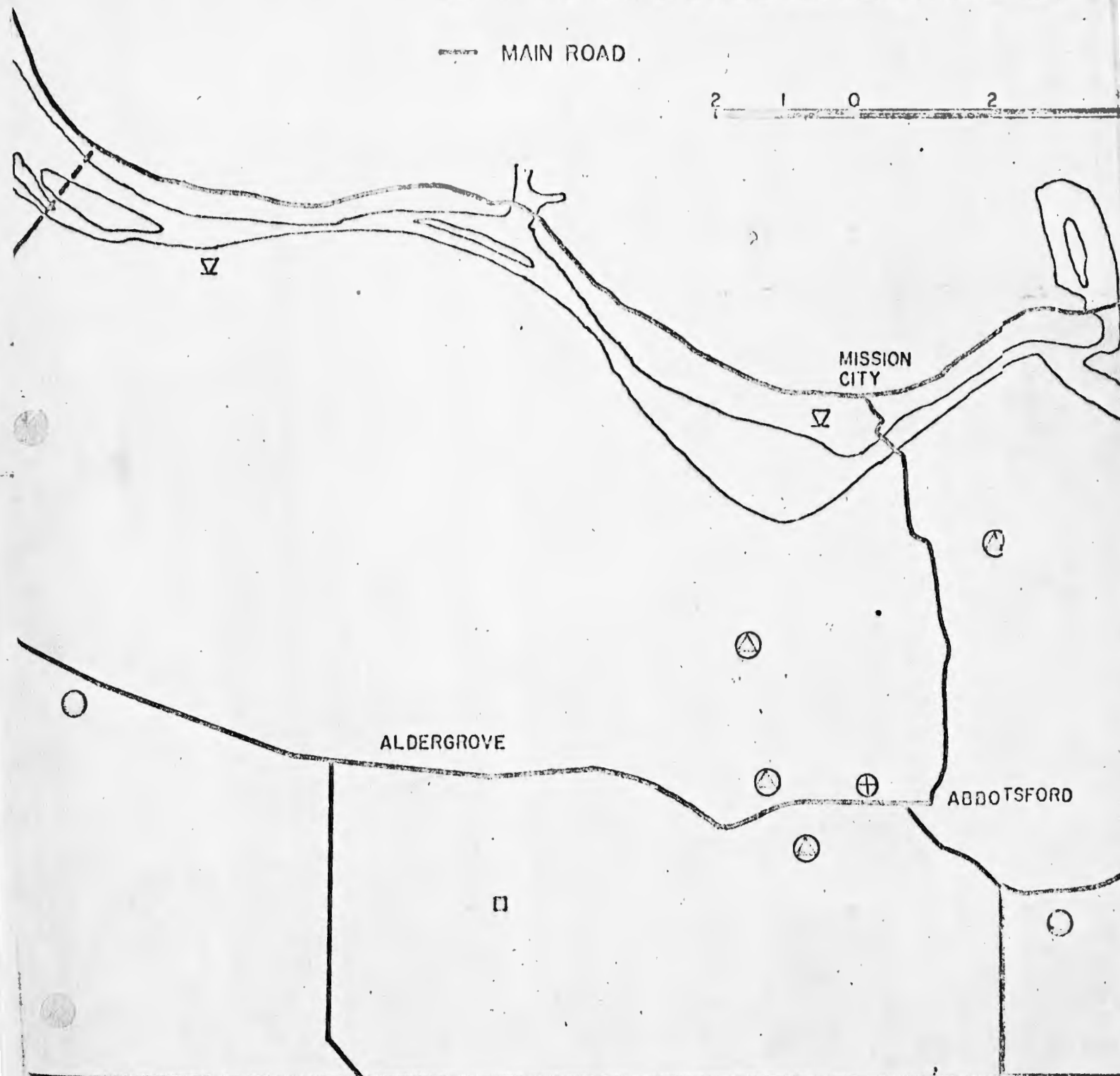


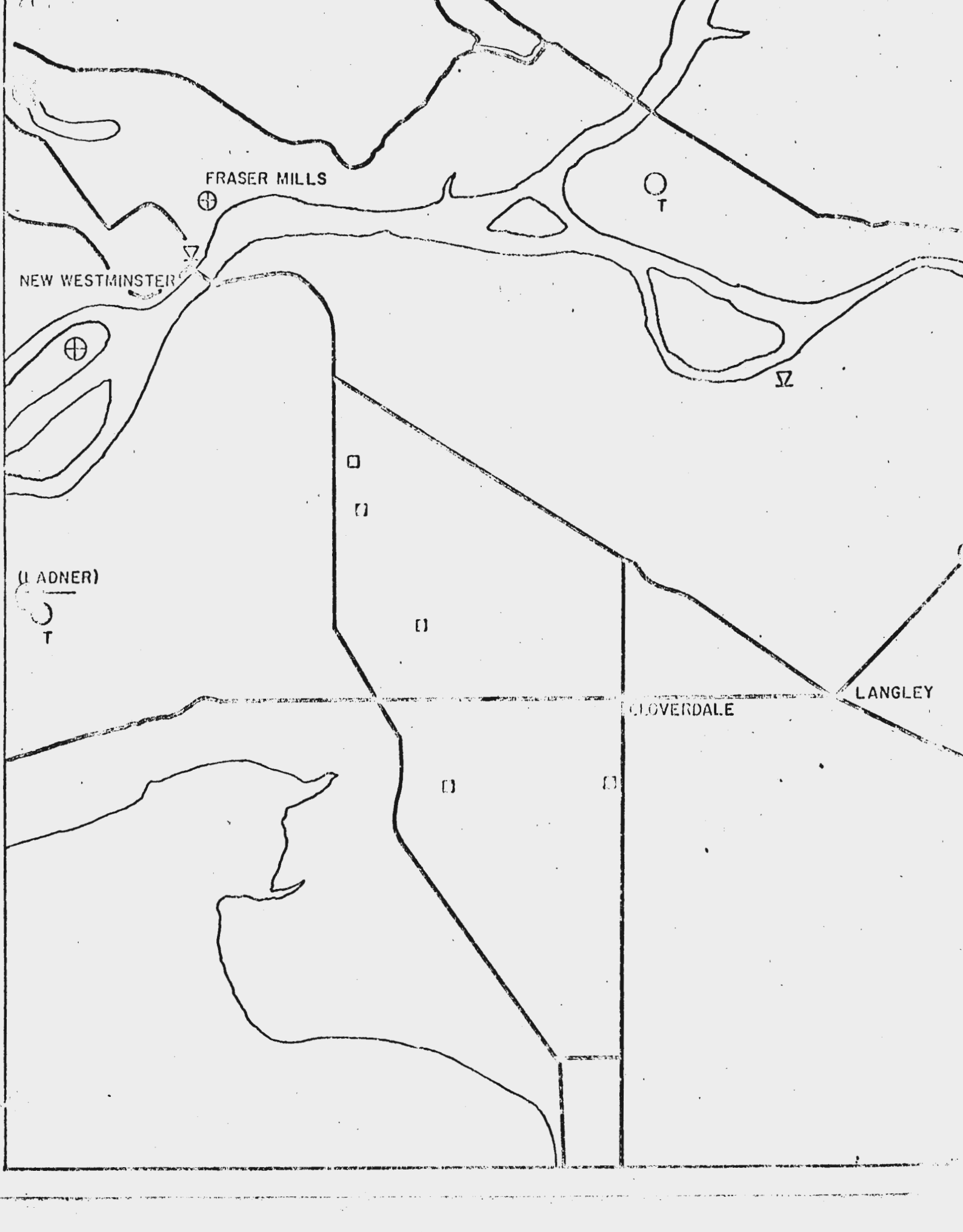
DISTRIBUTION OF SIKH ACTIVITIES

- EARLY DAIRY FARMS-STILL OPERATING. (STARTED 1920).
- ⊙ EARLY DAIRY FARMS-NO LONGER OPERATING. (STARTED
- FRUIT OR VEGETABLE FARMS STARTED AFTER 1950.
- FARMS RENTED OR IDLE SINCE 1950 (SIKH OWNED).

— MAIN ROAD

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FRASER MILLS

NEW WESTMINSTER

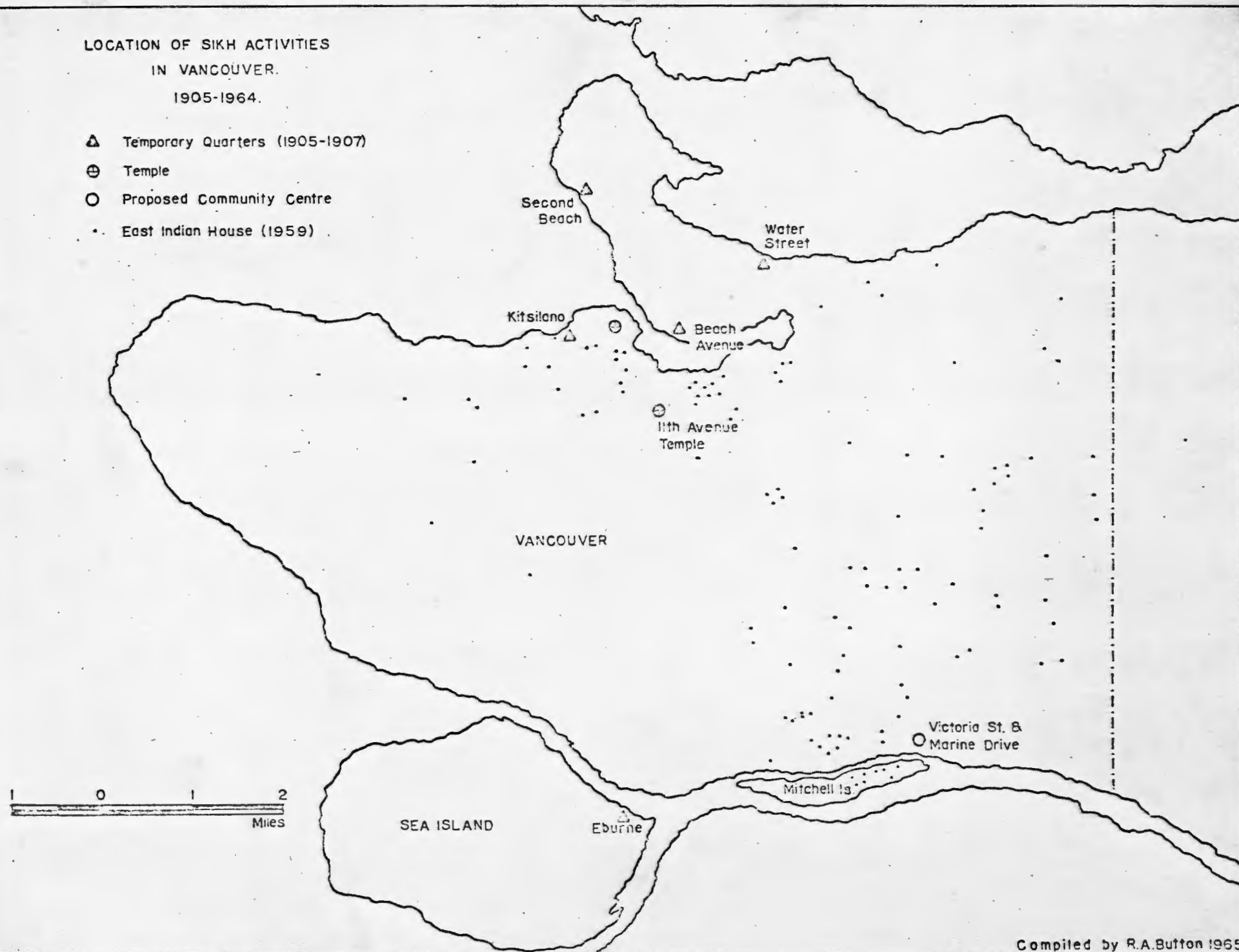
(LADNER)

CLOVERDALE

LANGLEY

LOCATION OF SIKH ACTIVITIES
IN VANCOUVER.
1905-1964.

- ▲ Temporary Quarters (1905-1907)
- ⊕ Temple
- Proposed Community Centre
- East Indian House (1959)



VANCOUVER EAST INDIAN SETTLEMENT PATTERN

