

The International Woodworkers of America Archive

At the Kaatza Station Museum and Archives

The Wilmer Gold Photo Collection: Diversity, Labour Activism, and Community in the Cowichan Valley

👤 [hjohn89](#) 🕒 [December 1, 2022](#)

📌 [History of the Cowichan Lake](#), [History of the IWA](#), [Labour History](#)

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The finding aid for the Wilmer Gold Photo Collection is now available online through our website. Although the photos themselves are not yet available online, an inventory of what is available at the museum can be viewed [here](#), and inquiries sent to

kaatzaarchives@shaw.ca. This blog post contains just a small sample of the 1,500-photo collection. Plans to make the collection fully available digitally and online are in the works so watch this space!

The collection is on permanent loan to the museum from United Steelworkers Local 1-1937. We are incredibly grateful to union officers Pat Kinney and Brian Butler for their support.

In many ways the pièce de résistance of the I.W.A. Collection, the Wilmer Gold Photo Collection is a vivid insight into 1930s and 1940s forest industry operations and their diverse workforces. A long-time resident of Youbou BC, [Wilmer Gold](#) roved Vancouver Island logging and milling operations during the 30s, 40s, and 50s. His photos, unique for their in-the-field high quality, provide an inimitable insight into the diverse crews, practices, and landscapes that were integral to the expanding forest industry.



Wilmer Gold in 1910, Julia Margaret Gold in 1970. Gold Family Collection, Kaatza Museum and Archives.

Wilmer's wife and life partner Julia Margaret Gold also played a central role in the production of the Gold Photos. According to their granddaughter, as narrated to museum

staff, Julia was responsible for developing photos that Gold took in the field, and hand coloured many of the photos he sold.

As part of their efforts to collect and preserve documentation of forest industry and woodworker history, International Woodworkers of America Duncan Local 1-80 purchased the collection from Gold in 1983. In 1990, **veteran faller Allan Lundgren** volunteered to care for the 1-80's historical archive, and is primarily responsible for the collection arriving at the Kaatza Station Museum in 2007.

Diversity in the Forestry Workforce:

One popular stereotype of forest workers is that they are and were mainly white. However, Gold's photos contest this idea, demonstrating how diverse both falling and milling crews were in Cowichan during the 1930s and 1940s. South Asian Canadians, Japanese Canadians, Chinese Canadians, as well as folks from Indigenous Nations near and far, played a central role in the industry.



N339 – Japanese employees of Hillcrest Lumber Sahtlam, with family, in 1935. Wilmer Gold Photo Collection, Kaatza Station Museum and Archives, ©USW 1-1937.



N275 – Youbou #1 Planer Day Shift, I.T.M. Youbou Sawmill, 1939. Wilmer Gold Photo Collection, Kaatza Station Museum and Archives, ©USW 1-1937.

Gold's photos, and other items from the I.W.A. Archive, have been used in a wonderful recent project by the BC Labour Heritage and the University Fraser Valley South Asian Studies Institute. ***Union Zindabad!***, which was released as both a book and a virtual exhibit, charts the key role played by South Asian folks in the British Columbian labour movement. The Kaatza Historical Society is excited to soon have our own section on the ***South Asian Canadian Digital Archive***, as part of our new partnership with UFV SASI.

Cowichan Lake Region a Hotbed of Labour Organizing in the Late 30s

Gold's photos also capture several influential I.W.A. organizers during their early days as members of logging crews. Lake Logging, a camp at Rounds BC, was a particular epicentre for I.W.A. action due to the fact that management hired labour activists despite them being on a blacklist.

The first president of I.W.A. Local 1-80, Fred Wilson, the second president, Owen Brown, and eventual union officers and staff Archie Greenwell, Oke Olson, and Ernest Boulet, were all employees. As a result of this focused concentration of organizers, Lake Logging became the first unionized logging camp in B.C. in 1934.



N1150 – Willamette Cold Deck, Lake Logging Rounds, 1937. Wilmer Gold Photo Collection, Kaatza Station Museum and Archives, ©USW 1-1937.

Gold also took several iconic photos of the I.W.A Women’s Auxiliary, which had active chapters in both Lake Cowichan and Youbou. **Lake Cowichan Auxiliary founder Edna Brown** later became President of the I.W.A. British Columbia District Council Women’s Auxiliary. Her personal records and organizing materials can be viewed in the **I.W.A. Archive’s Local 1-80 Fonds**, alongside early logbooks and minutes from early logging camp unionizing endeavours.



I.W.A. British Columbia District Council Women’s Auxiliary, Meeting in Lake Cowichan, 1944. Wilmer Gold Photo Collection, Kaatza Station Museum and Archives, ©USW 1-1937.

Documenting the Cowichan Lake Region Community:

Gold's photos go beyond documenting the participants of the forest industry, and also provide a window into the vibrant community activities of the region. As a resident of Youbou, he regularly attended community events such as Lake Days, and documented them accordingly. These photos show the labour that working-class people in the region put into celebrating community in those days.



N1757 – Gurdev Hari crowned “Lady of the Lake”, 1950. Wilmer Gold Photo Collection, Kaatza Station Museum and Archives, ©USW 1-1937.





N1724 – Remembrance Day, Cowichan Lake, 1945. Wilmer Gold Photo Collection, Kaatza Station Museum and Archives, ©USW 1-1937.

If you recognize people in these photos, please comment below! High resolution image prints are available for purchase from the Kaatza Historical Society – email

kaatzaarchives@shaw.ca for more info!

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