

Mrs. Wallace Hunter, Teacher

Interviewed May 17, 1972.

722 Westminster Hwy.

Born Elsie Esplen, April 6, 1905, New Westminster.

Father, Captain New Westminster Fire Department, persuaded by Uncle to move to Vancouver - start dairy business corner Cambie and Broadway - there 6 years - Elsie started at Model School.

-to Marpole, 63rd and Granville; 1911, there till married - 1947 moved to Richmond. February 1924, Elsie started teaching Steveston School at 18 yrs. - all Japanese class grade 3 - segregated - some pupils 14 years old - knew no English - 3 room school, site present Legion.

To teach English - put on act to demonstrate - later 2 more rooms built - Elsie moved to main building - loved teaching - taught 38 years same school.

1924 School Exercise - outside in fields - very athletic - boys and girls played baseball - marbles - skipped - Japanese games (describes one) - ceremony for choosing sides by action of hand - singing voices lovely - twice Japanese pupils performed on Children's Radio program - once had Japanese songs - Japanese loved concerts - held old Opera House - did drills - perfectionists performing - May 24th big day - folk dance, bicycle drill - many had bikes - early school (1924) cold winters - many came long way on dyke - few absentees - keen on education - Japanese parents strict - no discipline problem until much later - pupils went to Japanese school daily after English schooling - several years one blond girl went to Japanese class with Japanese girlfriend - result blond girl was interpreter war trials in Japan, married American Officer Elsie regrets not learning Japanese language.

-at school insisted pupils use <sup>English</sup> Japanese language on playground.

Anecdote re pupil humor: action "eye" related - incident re Steveston

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School windows, shows Japanese hidden humour - enjoyed fun with pupils - very keen in sports - Steveston reputation in inter-school sports - still corresponds with former students - all say evacuation was best thing that happened - close knit in Steveston community, Japanese druggist, doctor - when separated east have done well.

-sad at time of parting - at trains.

First teaching how arrived: caught tram Marpole at 7:20 a.m., got to Steveston School at 8 a.m. - had lessons prepared, work on blackboard - earliest caught return tram 4 p.m. had such good times with school teachers afterwards often stayed till 6 p.m. - depression - no teachers got married - like one big family - went on picnics -week-ends together.

Pay: 1924: got \$108 monthly first - school board reduced salaries - hers to \$35.00 -one teacher salary reduced 20% - went on years. Tram fare was 25 cents each way - 50¢ a day.

-eventually teacher bought car - commute by car - fun on tram - 2 teachers from N.W. transferred at Marpole to Richmond.

-social time on tram - everyone waved.

At Christmas - teachers got gifts by each Japanese pupil in class - Japanese ornament, tea sets treasures - night before holiday teachers together made parcels candies nuts oranges for each pupil - school concerts many years - well attended - great deal of work.

Sports Days special early June - whole school divided into 4 houses - made own banners - pupils in costumes - preceded by Mounties - marched through Steveston to School - very exciting - keen competition.

Elsie married Wallace Hunter - Retired 1962 - former pupils and parents presented her silver tea service with 113 names on card.

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