

From the Vancouver Oral History Project Interview Transcript No. 18

Interview with Mrs. Omèra Paré

This excerpt has been edited for clarity

Cheryl Pierson: Tell me about Maillardville, when you first got here, what you thought of Maillardville.

Mrs. Omèra Paré: (laughter) Oh dear ... well, it was just a small village, wooden sidewalks, and from what is Marmont to where the overpass is, where the freeway on the boundary at Westminster and Coquitlam, that was all bush except for two houses on your left as you walked towards the freeway and just a couple of houses on your right. There was all wilderness and then there was, right there at the boundary between Westminster and Coquitlam, was what they called Swift's Packing House which, sometimes the stench from there would just kill you. And then, once in a while, you'd get the smell from the distillery which is on Braid Street, a couple of blocks from there, and I ... there's no change of the houses in Maillardville, the center itself, except now they've torn down the old convent behind the church, you know, the square. The houses are all more ... might be one or two houses, yes the lots were very big. Fifty years ago, where one house was built on a lot 85 by 250 feet or more, now most of these lots are subdivided into three lots. Many of these older homes still stand, but have been modernized in and out.

Miss Pierson: So you went to the convent that was by the church in Maillardville then. How did you get in from New Westminster to Maillardville all the time?

Mrs. Paré: Streetcars ... We'd take the streetcar and get off at ... down King Edward ... be about ... not quite a mile walk up to the convent.

Miss Pierson: You had to walk a mile.

Mrs. Paré: Yeah, the streetcar would turn right down there at King Edward. We'd take the streetcar where the Lougheed and the King Edward meet which is the road that goes from Brunette down to the mill.

Miss Pierson: And did you have to ... was there a sidewalk all the way down there?

Mrs. Paré: That wooden sidewalks all through ...

Miss Pierson: What about the road in the middle, between the sidewalks? What was that like?

Mrs. Paré: I guess it'd be gravel, in those days.

Miss Pierson: What did that cost you, to take the streetcar from New Westminster out here? Remember?

Mrs. Paré: Twelve cents. Well, I think the school children would come for half price ... be five cents or seven cents, and then, after that, later on in years, you could get tickets and you could travel return for fifteen cents.

Miss Pierson: So, you took a year of schooling here and in Maillardville ...

Mrs. Paré: Yes, we moved to Maillardville and then we moved. And then, two years after, we moved back to Westminster, near St. Mary's Hospital.