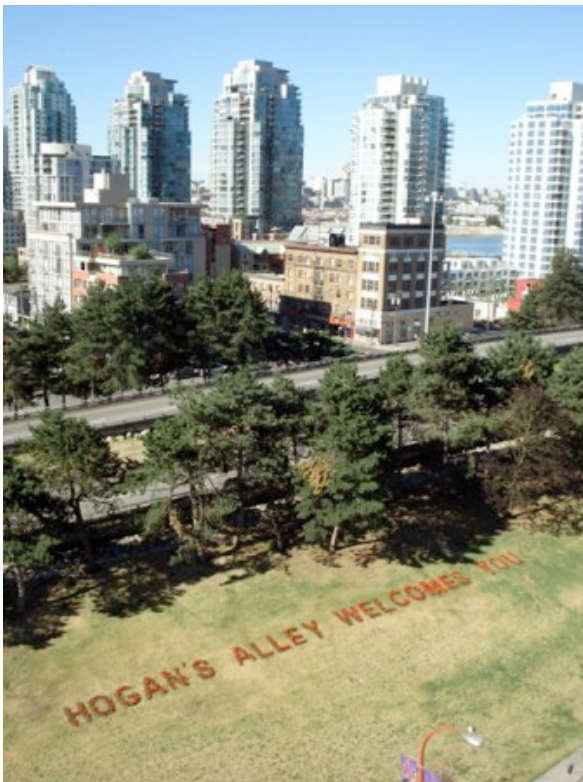


History repeats itself. The People of the Inlet, the Tsleil-Waututh, inhabited the region around False Creek. During contact with European settlers and other migrants, the population of the Tsleil-Waututh was decimated from thousands down to thirteen people. The fact that the City of Vancouver has designated the False Creek Northeast region for further development stings of irony because of the Georgia Viaduct eyesore which serves no purpose, other to remind residents and interested stakeholders about what used to be there. Welcome to Vanrock.

Urban Renewal in Vancouver's East End / Strathcona Neighbourhood in the 20th century destroyed the neighborhood that was known for its music,



nightlife, sense of community and for being the creative, cultural and social hub of "Terminal City". Many Blackmen worked as porters on the trains and lived close to the Pacific Central Railway Station. Before the bulldozers were stopped by the Strathcona Property Owners & Tenants' Association, many African ascended families in the region had already moved out of the area that was designated for "Negro removal" due to city planning schemes for development. As creative director for an organization that focuses on sharing the stories of African ascendants at home in North America and abroad in the

Diaspora, we produce the Hogan's Alley Poetry Festival on an annual basis to pay homage to our ancestors through spoken word art, music, literary performance, and dialogue.



Kevan Anthony Cameron, a.k.a. Scruffmouth, is a Canadian-Jamaican spoken word artist, performer, poet and scribe with the ability to disseminate ancient indigenous knowledge in contemporary forms of creative expression. He is creative director of Black Dot Roots and Culture Collective

(Hogan's Alley Poetry Festival & Pan African Slam), a full member of the Association for Canadian Television and Radio Actors (ACTRA), a seasoned facilitator of spoken word poetry workshops (WordPlay, BeDRoCC Poetry) as well as an international Blackademic. The natural afro dread locks that he rocks remind him to walk his talk. His current project, *Spoken Notebook* is an audiovisual spoken dub enhanced cd with graphic poetry liner notes. He is the co-editor of *The Great Black North: Contemporary African Canadian Poetry*. He lives in Burnaby, BC and grew up in Sherwood Park, AB. Kev likes the colour Maroon. @Scruffmouth

<http://www.frequency.com/video/scruffmouth-black-his-story-invisible/198851594?cid=5-3422>

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Rausenberg w/ Wayde Compton

"The Ballad of Black Matthew" (2014 poem)

Scruffmouth

Hogan's Alley (1994 documentary film) Cornelia

Wyngaarden and Andrea Fatona

http://hogansalleyproject.blogspot.ca/2014/10/video-by-ruby-smith-diaz-from-housing_3.html (2013 short doc)

ESSAY**Hogan's Alley : The Harlem Nocturne**

1920s-1970s Canadian History <http://jazzstreetvancouver.ca/events/17>

As black settlers migrated west from the prairies in search of improved economic prospects, a small black community became established in Strathcona, in Vancouver's culturally diverse East End. The development of this neighborhood was due in part to its proximity to the terminal for the CN Railroad, which was the chief employer for black men at the time. However, the heart of the community was unquestionably a lane casually referred to as Hogan's Alley. This street provided access to the African Methodist Episcopal Fountain Chapel, which was an important social and religious centre for the community, as well as to various nightclubs, gambling houses, and restaurants. These lively establishments earned the area the nickname of "Vancouver's square mile of sin" (Walling), and were subject to intense scrutiny by the Vancouver Police. As dancer, choreographer, and community resident Len Gibson recalls, the "amoral" quarter was eventually declared "an urban blight" (qtd in "Blues"), which continued to decline into disrepair as the black population dispersed throughout Greater Vancouver. In 1972, the construction of an off ramp for the Georgia Viaduct, part of the Urban Renewal Project, "effectively obliterated" (Compton) what was left of the community.

Performer and former Strathcona resident Thelma Gibson-Towns has described the population of this working class neighborhood as "one big family" (Hogan's). She remembers the sense of togetherness and social communion generated by singing gospel music in the church, and notes that she knew all of the patrons who came into the restaurant where she waited tables.

Serving in a "chicken shack," as the black-run restaurants of the neighborhood were known, was one of the few occupations open to the local black women. These popular "joints" were open from 5pm to 5am, and offered a fare of Southern-style fried chicken, potato salad, corn fritters, and navy beans. According to Gibson-Towns, the "chicken shacks" were popular amongst both the longshoremen, who would come in for a hearty evening meal around 6 o'clock, and the late night crowd. After the beer parlors of the area closed, the restaurants essentially became bottle clubs, with patrons socializing and dancing to the jukebox.

The only official, all-black nightclub in Vancouver was the Harlem Nocturne, which was owned and operated by trombonist Ernie King and his wife Marcella "Choo Choo" Williams. As an East End club, the Harlem Nocturne drew the attention of both the police and of "thrill-seeking white Vancouverites and tourists," who were attracted by the area's reputation for "adventure, intrigue, vice, and immorality" (Ross 9). Unable to secure liquor licenses until 1969, venues in the East End operated as illegal bottle clubs, making police raids commonplace. King, however, felt singled out by the vice squad: "No one was harassed more than me. No one. It got to the point they would harass me two or three times a night. Because I was the only man that owned a black nightclub!" (Ross 11).

Today, what little remains of Hogan's Alley has been assimilated into Chinatown, and "bears no mark that there was ever a black presence there" (Compton). However, the legacy of the community continues to live on through the work of groups such as the Hogan's Alley Memorial Project, which is dedicated to "memorializing Vancouver's historic black neighborhood and the wider Vancouver black experience." Its members work to remind the public of 'the need to remember forgotten minorities' ("HAMP").

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ARTICLE

Black pioneers integral to B.C. shume@islandnet.com

A reader takes indignant issue with my "ignorant journalism" -- Ouch! -- of two weeks ago in a column regarding the events of Nov. 19, 1858, when James Douglas proclaimed the colony of British Columbia.

By The Vancouver Sun December 13, 2008

A reader takes indignant issue with my "ignorant journalism" -- Ouch! -- of two weeks ago in a column regarding the events of Nov. 19, 1858, when James Douglas proclaimed the colony of British Columbia.

I didn't sufficiently acknowledge the contribution of black pioneers to the building of the province in the B.C. 150 commemorative edition of The Sun, he said.

There should have been a photograph and more than the two brief references in my piece.

My first editor in this business once told me rather grumpily that when a reader wrote to say I was an idiot, I should begin with the assumption he or she might be right, so here's my attempt at redress.

But let me begin by saying that the B.C. 150 celebration is by nature an awkward, complicated and cumbersome beast. It is not at all suited to the "history on the run" snapshots practised by journalists. Nor is it entirely congruent with the laudatory propaganda heaped upon it by the provincial government -- I'll return to that a bit later.

First, by way of complication, the black history of B.C. predates the events of 1858 by more than 30 years.

It starts not with immigrants from San Francisco who stepped off the steamer Commodore in Fort Victoria in 1858 to be entertained in the home of Rev. Edward Cridge of the Anglican Church, but with the arrival in 1825 of Douglas, the governor of black ancestry who invited them.

'A Note on Black Canadian Communities at home and abroad'

Born in British Guiana in 1803, Douglas was the second child of Martha Ann Ritchie, the "free coloured" daughter of another "free coloured" woman from Barbados, and John Douglas, a wealthy sugar and cotton planter from Glasgow.

His grandmother, says historian John Adams in *Old Square Toes and His Lady: The Life of James and Amelia Douglas*, had become a wealthy woman in the South American colony in her own right. In 1812, before the British outlawed the practice, she owned 30 slaves.

As I say, history can be complicated.

Douglas came to what's now British Columbia as a young, impetuous fur trader.

After a five-year apprenticeship at Fort William on the Great Lakes and at Isle-a-la-Crosse in what's now Saskatchewan, he was posted beyond the Rockies to Fort McLeod in New Caledonia, a community which has the distinction of being the oldest continuously occupied non-native settlement in the province.

He was well educated for the fur trade -- his father had taken him to Scotland for schooling -- and therefore well suited to an industry which was for the most part blind to the ancestry or complexion of its employees.

Marriage between first nations and fur traders had long been encouraged and, despite subsequent stereotypes about the exploitation of aboriginal women by predatory white oppressors, Sylvia Van Kirk's important study *Many Tender Ties* reveals that many of these relationships were both loving and durable.

Certainly Douglas's marriage to Amelia Connolly, the daughter of a fur trader and a Cree woman, turned out that way.

His dark complexion and his Métis wife proved no impediment to advancement and "The Mulatto" rose rapidly, first to top Hudson's Bay Co. official in what's now B.C., then governor of Vancouver Island, finally first governor of the new colony which included most of the present mainland portion of the province, eventually a knighthood and an audience with Queen Victoria.

Exactly where this son of a Scottish planter and a "coloured" Guianese woman, the grandson of a slave owner, developed his vehement antipathy to the institution isn't clear, but he was a fierce enemy of intolerance where he encountered it.

In 1838, writes Adams, outraged by a bigoted missionary cleric who took sanctimonious umbrage at mixed-race marriages in which fur traders were governed by first nations' custom, Douglas penned his credo: "He was adamant ... that all people, regardless of race or status, should have access to medical care; that a person in a privileged position should not make unfounded, defamatory statements; that 'fancy visits' [prostitution], child labour and slavery should not be tolerated; that society should care for orphans; that compassion should be shown at the time of death; that charity should be encouraged; and that people should not condemn a woman who lives chastely with the husband of her choice." This is an astonishingly progressive social vision. It foreshadows the kind of compassionate, open society that much later reformers battled to attain and whose agenda even conservative governments seek to advance today.

In that context, it's not surprising that Douglas both sought to extirpate slavery as a first nations' institution while also signing the first treaties with aboriginal peoples, beginning a process of just accommodation that was subsequently -- lamentably -- abandoned for more than a century by less-enlightened successors. We still seek to complete what Douglas began through the present treaty process.

And it's even less surprising that, as de facto governor of a new British territory north of the U.S. border over which he'd soon exert unilateral sovereignty, Douglas would invite blacks in California who legitimately feared imminent persecution to immigrate to a place where he promised freedom, equality and the franchise as British subjects under the Crown's protection.

'A Note on Black Canadian Communities at home and abroad'

THE PIONEERS ARRIVE

It was this community from San Francisco, fearful of increasingly restrictive and racially discriminatory laws -- in 1858 California was debating whether to legalize slavery -- that accepted his offer.

An immigrant society raised \$2,500, a considerable sum in a time when the average daily wage was \$2, to help defray the travel and establishment costs of the pioneers, who numbered about 400 in 1859.

Among the newcomers, who comprised the first non-British group to enter B.C. intending permanent settlement, was an eloquent, forceful merchant named Mifflin Gibbs, who became one of the colony's first naturalized citizens.

It speaks to the tolerant nature of that early society that Gibbs was promptly elected an alderman to the Victoria city council and was then elected by the council to act as its president, then equivalent to mayor.

Gibbs played a more important role than municipal politics. Along with Amor de Cosmos, J.F. McCreight, Robert Beaven and John Robson, who would serve as four of B.C.'s first eight elected premiers, Gibbs was on the executive of the Confederation League, a group dedicated to B.C.'s entry into Canada as the fifth province, a goal that was realized in 1871.

During the colonial period under Douglas's governorship, black settlers homesteaded extensively on Saltspring Island, among them rancher Louis Stark, who had driven cattle herds over the Oregon Trail. Schools, churches, farms and businesses were founded.

The settlers included freed men from American slave states, escaped slaves and adventurers from the West Indies, said the late Rosemary Brown.

Brown, who served as an MLA from 1972 to 1986, was herself a black immigrant from Jamaica. She was elected a year after B.C. celebrated its 100th anniversary as the Canadian province Gibbs helped bring into being.

In her contribution to *Strangers Entertained: A History of the Ethnic Groups of British Columbia*, a 1971 collection of ethnic histories that University of B.C. professor John Norris intended as "the past that is left out of the history books," Brown observed that although some settlers were "full-blooded Negroes," many were "mulattoes" like Douglas -- a point worth remembering for those who suggest the first governor wasn't really black enough to qualify -- but that "all were well adapted to life in a North American society."

B.C.'S DESCENT INTO RACISM

On Saltspring, a rainbow society quickly emerged. Blacks married whites, blacks married first nations and Hawaiians. Their offspring further intermarried until, Brown said, racial discrimination on the island virtually disappeared. They founded farms, schools and churches.

Then, with Anglo-American tensions running high during a dispute over competing claims to the Gulf Islands, American troops landed on San Juan Island. They were commanded by George W. Pickett, who would serve as a general in the Confederate Army and lead a famous but disastrous charge at Gettysburg during the U.S. Civil War.

B.C.'s new black citizens promptly volunteered to form the fledgling colony's first military regiment, the Victoria Pioneer Rifle Corps, more popularly known as the African Rifles. They drilled and prepared to defend their new homeland against possible American invasion.

They formed the first Victoria police force at Douglas's request and sought to bring order to what had become an unruly frontier boom camp of saloons and flop-houses.

'A Note on Black Canadian Communities at home and abroad'

Unfortunately, the discovery of gold on the Fraser River in 1858 also brought a flood of American prospectors and adventurers. With them came the less savoury elements that are mostly glossed over in our present B.C. 150 celebrations.

Many of these Americans came from the southern slave states. They brought with them both the cruel values which had prompted California to consider legalizing slavery and the influence of suddenly disproportionate numbers in a nascent democracy.

Their ascendance was accompanied by a tide change in social values that marked one of the saddest retreats in the province's history.

After Douglas left office, the treaty-making process with first nations was abandoned. The African Rifles were decommissioned and replaced by a white militia unit that didn't welcome black members.

Prosperous black merchants, who had once been welcomed in society, now were shunned by a prejudiced and arriviste establishment. Even Douglas's recently widowed wife, Amelia, who had once had tea with the Queen, was now marginalized by "polite" society.

Gibbs left the colony and returned to a distinguished career in the U.S. following the emancipation; many stayed but subsided into the background along with other victims of resurgent ethnic and class discrimination.

Since those heady days when early black settlers first laid the optimistic foundations of a civil society, it has taken British Columbia 150 long years to find its way back to the progressive values of tolerance and social justice that they represented.

Yet, find its slow way back the wayward province has. We may still have miles to go before we rest, but do we live in a place that strives to fully become the tolerant, pluralistic society those first black settlers and the many whites who welcomed them dreamed of establishing?

The kind of place where people might aspire to the highest offices in society, commerce or politics regardless of race, religion or ethnicity; a place where we might celebrate premiers, cabinet ministers, lieutenant-governors, governors-general, members of Parliament, members of the legislature, mayors and councillors, artists, athletes and scholars who are black, Asian, first nations, women, Jews, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, the physically challenged.

All these goals have been realized to some degree and among our collective debt for this accomplishment is the one we owe to that first black community and its brave descendants.

So, as we find our way back to the path first blazed by James Douglas and Miffin Gibbs -- and let us never forget the decent, nameless people, black and white, Asian, European and first nations, upon whose shoulders the famous stand -- perhaps that's what we should all be celebrating as citizens, rather than the false glitter of a gold rush which was largely an exercise in rapacity, greed and folly.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?