

The Blakemore Commission Inquiry Commenced in Nelson on August 29, 1912

Transcripts from Second Session in Grand Forks

Witness: Neil McCallum - Columbia City/Grand Forks Real-Estate Agent

A few preliminary explanatory notes:

There is some concern and even possible confusion about the court record references to "McHardy" in the following transcript. The Hardy brothers were well known settlers at Grande Prairie, but they were rarely if ever referred to as McHardys. Mr. McCallum on the other hand had a business partner by the name of McArdle, and the two may have sounded alike to some extent in the ears or mind of the court recorder. There has not been a Grand Forks McHardy purchase otherwise reported in the local papers, although the large Hardy acreage was reportedly purchased by the Doukhobors later in 1919. In the West Kootenay region, the Doukhobors did however purchase a McHardy ranch in Crescent Valley.

McCallum confirms that the first of two Grand Forks purchases were negotiated by himself (though likely with partner James McArdle) with Verigin, Sherbinin and Zebroff, for the Coryell-Murray property, also confirmed by Zebroff's own testimony. The second purchase agreement was with Verigin alone, likely for Frank Coryell's property, both purchases reported in the papers..

Q. Were you here when the Doukhobors came?

A. I was.

Q. What kind of land did they acquire when they came here?

A. As far as my judgment goes, the first piece of land they bought here was a very good piece.

Q. And what was that?

A. The Coryell Murray ranch.

Q. What other property did they acquire shortly afterwards?

A. The following season they acquired the McHardy place.

Q. How much?

A. First one hundred and sixty acres, and later on about two hundred and twenty.

Q. What was the nature of the land they bought from you and McHardy?

A. It was all on the side hills and most of it very rough land.

Q. What kind of land did the Coryell Murray and Vaughan and McInnis land consist of?

A. There was about two hundred acres or more of nice level land in a high state of cultivation.

Q. There is more than two hundred acres of the Vaughan, McInnis and Coryell under cultivation?

A. That has been purchased afterwards.

Q. Well, how much of that land is good, level land, the Vaughan and McInnis place?

A. I would say five or six hundred acres altogether.

Q. The last witness says he only knows of one case in which they purchased rough land up the north fork and developed it; do you agree with that?

A. I do not know anything about their holdings on the north fork.

Q. You had some business dealings with them?

A. Yes.

Q. Were they satisfactory?

A. Why, yes, they were satisfactory as you usually expect, in some of their payments they were a little behind but not more than you generally see in any dealings with any party.

Q. Whom did you deal with?

A. Mr. Verigin.

Q. All your dealings with Mr. Verigin?

A. Yes.

Q. Does he represent the whole colony here?

A. I do not know.

Q. Do you not know who represents the colony here in a business way?

A. No.

Q. In all their business transactions?

A. He has done all the business with me.

Q. You say you sold some land to them; who was the grantee of that land?

A. In the first deal there was three parties. Mr. Verigin, Mr. Sherbinin and Mr. Zebroff. In the second deal just Verigin.

Q. Do you know who holds all the land out here, who is the registered owner?

A. We are still the registered owners. The deeds have not been made yet.