

Tranquille Development: Past Influences, Current Realities

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From the 1860s through to the early 1900s the Tranquille area of Kamloops was owned and ranched mainly by two families: the Fortunes and the Cooneys. Both of these families did much to help develop the area. The Fortune ranch was sold and turned into a tuberculosis sanatorium in 1907. By the end of the first World War the government run facility needed to expand and so they bullied and manipulated the elderly, widowed Elizabeth Cooney into selling her property. Part of the sale stipulated that the Cooney cemetery would be maintained in perpetuity by the new owners. Since that time the land, including the cemetery, has changed hands several times and fallen into a state of disrepair. Within these modern business deals what role does the historic cemetery play and will it ultimately be maintained as was originally stipulated? An exploration of the history of this property calls its future into question.

The Tranquille site, located on Kamloops Lake, is currently the site of a proposed development but this has been delayed for several reasons. While BC Wilderness Tours would like to turn the land into a luxury resort the city has many fears over this expansion, fears that include pollution and the removal of historic structures.¹ To see the entire picture, particularly the status of some of the historical landmarks, it is necessary to look further into the past.

From 1869² to 1922 the Cooney family owned hundreds of acres of the Tranquille land. The government used underhanded tactics and committed dishonest acts in order to obtain the Cooney Ranch after the death of the family patriarch Charles Thomas (C.T.) Cooney who had done much to develop the area.³ As a means of contrast the sale of the other main Tranquille ranch at the time, belonging to William and Jane Fortune, was conducted quite differently. The personalities of Mrs. Fortune and Mrs. Cooney are basically opposite⁴ and this may have played a role in the differences between the sales. One facet of the Cooney sale was that upon purchase the BC government agreed to maintain the Cooney cemetery in perpetuity. This is a key element which links the Cooney's history to the present day situation: specifically in terms of whether the current owners of the land will keep this

¹ Mark Macdonald, "Too Tranquil at Tranquille?," [Kamloops this Week](http://www.bclocalnews.com/bc_thompson_nicola/KamloopsthisWeek/news/15464856.html), 08 February 2008, www.bclocalnews.com/bc_thompson_nicola/KamloopsthisWeek/news/15464856.html.

² Don Larose, "One Man's Empire," [Kamloops Museum and Archives](#) N68: 3.

³ Eric Norfolk, [Cooney and His Clan](#) (Prince George, British Columbia, 1979), 83.

⁴ Mary Balf, "William Fortune," [Kamloops Museum and Archives](#) 29, 6-10.

agreement. Establishing the current state of the land is an important first step in order to assess this situation.

From the purchase of the Fortune ranch in 1907, through the purchase of the Cooney ranch in 1922 and continuing until 1958, the King Edward Sanatorium, also known as the Tranquille Sanatorium, operated treating tuberculosis patients at Tranquille.⁵ After the closure the site was used as a school for people with mental challenges but was again closed in the 1980s. After this closure some issues arose with the land. In 1987 the City of Kamloops requested the \$70,000 in taxes that the provincial government owed for the Tranquille property. Due to the expenses involved in maintaining police and fire services to the location the government wanted to sell. The property was sold in 1991 to Giovanni Camporese, owner of A & A Foods. Following years of failed development plans and tenant complaints, coupled with a lack of mortgage payments, the government foreclosed in December of 1995.⁶

In September of 2000 BC Wilderness tours purchased the land with the intention of creating a luxury resort that would respect the history and environment of the area.⁷ It remains to be seen what will come of these plans. Within the proposed development plans the Cooney Bay area of the site is considered prime land and will remain undisturbed until the later phases of the project.⁸ Currently the plan is that the Cooney cemetery will not be moved, although its fate has been debated.⁹ Some people are concerned about pollution from Tranquille residents commuting to the city center while others worry about the historical integrity of the site as a majority of the old Sanatorium still stands but in its current state is likely to be demolished. The Cooney Bay area is recognized as valuable; however the history of the Cooney family and their ranch does not seem to have been considered.¹⁰

Charles Thomas Cooney, originally from Ireland, came to BC over land in 1858, four years before the famous Overlanders. He quickly discovered that packing supplies was more profitable than mining and this is how he began to make his fortune. In 1867 he married Elizabeth (Betsy) Allard who was the daughter of a fur trader for the Hudson's Bay Company.¹¹ The Cooney's preempted¹² land on the east side of Tranquille Creek in 1867 and later bought two preemptions on the west side of the creek in 1869. At this time Cooney shifted his focus to building a successful ranch and therefore acquired a ninety-nine year lease on all property between Tranquille and Copper Creek. With Confederation and the coming of the CPR, Kamloops grew and the price of beef rose which made the Cooney ranch profitable.¹³ As the ranch grew so did the Cooney family. Ten children would be born to the Cooney's at their ranch in Tranquille.¹⁴

The Cooney family and their ranch did much to help the development of the area. When the Canadian Pacific Railway was being built through Tranquille C.T. Cooney donated several hundred acres of his land to the project.¹⁵ After the Fortune family had sold their land for use as a Sanatorium it was discovered that the stakes between the two properties had been moved considerably westward thus

⁵ John Stewart, "Tranquille, Part Two," *Kamloops Museum and Archives* 249 (1983): 1-4.

⁶ Gena Crowston, *The Ghosts of Tranquille Past* (Summerland, British Columbia, 2002), 144-8.

⁷ Gena Crowston, *The Ghosts of Tranquille Past* (Summerland, British Columbia, 2002), 144-8.

⁸ Jeremy Deutsch, "Tranquille Tour Calms Council," *Kamloops this Week*, 20 February 2008, www.bclocalnews.com/bc_thompson_nicola/KamloopsthisWeek/news/15794392.html.

⁹ Mark Macdonald, "Too Tranquil at Tranquille?," *Kamloops this Week*, 08 February 2008, www.bclocalnews.com/bc_thompson_nicola/KamloopsthisWeek/news/15464856.html.

¹⁰ Jeremy Deutsch, "Tranquille Tour Calms Council," *Kamloops this Week*, 20 February 2008, www.bclocalnews.com/bc_thompson_nicola/KamloopsthisWeek/news/15794392.html.

¹¹ Mary Balf, "Charles T. Cooney of Tranquille," *Kamloops Museum and Archives* 16, 1.

¹² To preempt land essentially means to settle on unowned land in order to gain the right to purchase it

¹³ Larose, "One Man's Empire," 3-4.

¹⁴ Larose, "One Man's Empire," 5.

¹⁵ Norfolk, *Cooney and His Clan*, 83.

adding several hundred acres of land to the Sanatorium site. Rather than fight this error Cooney quickly deeded the land to the Sanatorium thus helping the site take care of its patients.¹⁶

Due to the large size of the Cooney family C.T. founded a school on the site which was furnished by the province and helped to serve the area.¹⁷ Additionally the Cooney ranch helped to contribute to the agricultural diversity of Kamloops as C.T. introduced a wide variety of fruit, mainly apples, to the area. It is still unknown today from where he obtained these new species.¹⁸

The Cooneys were not the only pioneering family to settle in the area. William and Jane Fortune (appendix 1) also moved to Tranquille in this time period. William Fortune was born in 1835 in Yorkshire, England. Fortune traveled first to Buffalo, New York before arriving in Central Canada in 1857. He worked in Ontario as a tanner before joining the famous Overlanders to travel to the Caribou gold fields. He worked for the Hudson's Bay Company as a packer for six years and it is on one of these trips that he met Jane McWha of Lytton and they married in 1869. The couple preempted 160 acres of land at the mouth of the Tranquille River. It is here that the Fortunes conducted business and lived alongside the Cooney family.¹⁹

At Tranquille both the Cooney and Fortune families took in tuberculosis patients and their families as boarders by constructing tents along the beach front of the Cooney property. The Cooney's daughter Mary Norfolk acted as a nurse when necessary under the supervision of Dr. Irving who would become the first medical superintendent at the Sanatorium.²⁰ At the Fortune ranch patients were left alone aside from a shotgun which they could fire if they required assistance. Both ranches had been taking in patients since at least 1897. Due to its climate Tranquille was a perfect place for tuberculosis patients because at the time the only cure known was rest, proper diet and lots of fresh, air. It was also far enough from the developing city of Kamloops to allay fears of spreading the disease.²¹

The Cooney ranch continued to prosper until the death of C.T. Cooney by pneumonia in 1917.²² According to Cooney's obituary his death left "another gap...in the ranks of the adventurers, who, drawn westward by the stirring tales told of the riches of the gold laden sands of the Fraser River, and the creeks and benches of the Cariboo country, became the pioneers of British Columbia's future prosperity."²³ It additionally states that "[h]e leaves behind him no enemies, but a host of friends..."²⁴

But no matter how well respected he was after his death the wishes in his will were not honored. C.T. Cooney wanted the ranch to stay in the family for all time and had turned down an offer of \$100,000. Despite this, the provincial government quickly began to make plans to obtain the family ranch for use by the Sanatorium which had been built on Fortune's ranch after its sale in 1907.²⁵ Due to increased instances of tuberculosis among citizens and soldiers returning after the First World War the Sanatorium needed more land.²⁶ This was needed to produce food for the patients and the close location of the Cooney ranch made it perfect for this purpose.²⁷

In 1922 Elizabeth Cooney was approached with an offer for the ranch and stock located on it. The exact amount of the deal ranges from \$37,330²⁸, to \$40,000²⁹ to \$47,000³⁰ depending on the

¹⁶ Norfolk, *Cooney and His Clan*, 77.

¹⁷ Norfolk, *Cooney and His Clan*, 29.

¹⁸ Norfolk, *Cooney and His Clan*, 6.

¹⁹ "In the Footsteps of William Fortune," *The Kamloops Daily News*, 9 September 1988, S4.

²⁰ Norfolk, *Cooney and His Clan*, 78-80.

²¹ Stewart, "Tranquille, Part Two," 1.

²² "Charles T. Cooney Suddenly Expires," *Kamloops Standard*, 15 May 1917, 1.

²³ "Charles T. Cooney Suddenly Expires," *Kamloops Standard*, 15 May 1917, 1.

²⁴ "Charles T. Cooney Suddenly Expires," *Kamloops Standard*, 15 May 1917, 1.

²⁵ Larose, "One Man's Empire," 6.

²⁶ Stewart, "Tranquille, Part Two," 3.

²⁷ Wayne Norton, *A Whole Little City by Itself: Tranquille and Tuberculosis* (Kamloops, British Columbia, 1999), 113.

²⁸ Norfolk, *Cooney and His Clan*, 83.

source. Regardless of the amount, Elizabeth was insulted because the family had previously turned down a higher offer. At this point the government began to use other tactics. One official threatened that they would raise the taxes so much that the family would lose the ranch regardless.³¹ This step was taken and the land was reclassified as being worth \$100,000 rather than \$40,000 which raised the land taxes considerably.³² According to the family history Eugene, the Cooney's son, was also offered a job for life if he could persuade his mother to sell the property.³³ Eugene was co-owner and manager of the ranch.³⁴ The final event that led Elizabeth Cooney to agree to the sale was that her lawyer Frederick Fulton suddenly changed his mind and encouraged the family to sell.³⁵ One can only speculate what caused Fulton to change his mind.

In 1922 the family was "forced to sell because of financial and political pressures".³⁶ The government had one more obstacle in obtaining the ranch. It was revealed in the Kamloops Standard-Sentinel that the government purchased 700 acres of ranch land, 140 acres of which was under irrigation; 1,100 acres of freehold and all the water rights to Tranquille Creek were also part of this deal. Unfortunately the deed to the 160-acre homestead was missing. C.T. Cooney had applied for the deed to the land; however it was not received before his death. Under Dominion Land laws property cannot be sold without this patent having been obtained. Despite the fact that the applicant was deceased, the deed was quickly issued.³⁷ The deal was announced as complete in the Kamloops Standard-Sentinel on November 21st, 1922, less than four months later.³⁸

The price paid for the property was reported as \$47,356 for the 580-acre estate, cattle, 1,133 acres of grazing land and fees. As part of the deal Elizabeth could live in the home until her death and her youngest son Eugene would maintain possession for two years after.³⁹ Additionally the government was to maintain the family cemetery in perpetuity.⁴⁰ This facet of the contract ties the Cooney's history to the present situation. Immediately after the sale of the ranch the government prevented the family access to buildings and areas that were a daily necessity. Despite this Elizabeth, now in her late seventies, continued to use her home as a boarding house for people visiting the Sanatorium at a cost of \$1.25 per day. This was made more necessary on November 30, 1922, nine days after the deal was completed, as Eugene Cooney was fired from the above-mentioned 'job for life'.⁴¹ Problems with the arrangement did not stop with this incident.

Sewage treatment had always been an issue at the Sanatorium. A new system was installed in 1925 however it did not solve the problem. In 1927 the sewage was released into Kamloops Lake and in low-lying horse fields. The discharge was distressingly close to the ranch house where the elderly Elizabeth Cooney was residing. Due to these issues Elizabeth attempted to repurchase the land in 1935 but the government refused.⁴² As a matter of interest, the sewage issue was not dealt with until both World War Two veterans and the local Fish and Game club communicated their concern about the

²⁹ Larose, "One Man's Empire," 6.

³⁰ Norton, A Whole Little City by Itself, 113.

³¹ Norfolk, Cooney and His Clan, 83.

³² Larose, "One Man's Empire," 6.

³³ Norton, A Whole Little City by Itself, 114.

³⁴ Larose, "One Man's Empire," 6.

³⁵ Norton, A Whole Little City by Itself, 114.

³⁶ Larose, "One Man's Empire," 6.

³⁷ "Cooney Homestead Deed Was Never Issued From Ottawa, It Is Learned," The Kamloops Standard-Sentinel, 14 July 1922, 1.

³⁸ "Cooney Deal Now Through," Kamloops Standard-Sentinel, 21 November 1922, 1.

³⁹ "Cooney Deal Now Through," Kamloops Standard-Sentinel, 21 November 1922, 1.

⁴⁰ "Mrs. Charles T. Cooney, 96, Passed Away July 24," Kamloops Sentinel, 30 July 1942, 6.

⁴¹ Norfolk, Cooney and His Clan, 84-92.

⁴² Norton, A Whole Little City by Itself, 115-141.

livestock and wildlife that were drinking the tuberculosis infested waters.⁴³ This sale went far differently than that of the Fortune ranch.

The Fortune ranch was sold in 1888 and the new owner constructed an eighteen-room home. They failed however to make their mortgage payments and in 1892 the property was repossessed by William and his wife Jane. They immediately put the property back on the market for \$75,000. A committee from the Anti-Tuberculosis Society came to visit the ranch. They were impressed with the 560-acre ranch however the price was too high. Jane Fortune, who had a mind for business, offered one committee member \$2,000 if he could convince the committee to purchase the ranch for \$60,000. Although the man refused this offer a deal was made. The Fortunes accepted \$58,000 for the property with a donation of one thousand dollars to the Society in 1907.⁴⁴ One source cites that the property sold for \$60,000 and the Fortunes donated \$3,000, either way the sale price was \$57,000.⁴⁵ The story does not end here.

The Anti-Tuberculosis Society could only afford to give the Fortunes \$25,000 outright and the Fortunes charged them 5% interest on the remainder. The Society planned to use the eighteen-room home for the hospital but could not as they found that the walls literally moved beneath the wallpaper with cockroaches. Additionally a large amount of furniture had to be burned as, rather than cleaning it, Mrs. Fortune had re-covered the pieces with more cloth. Meanwhile the Fortunes were collecting \$800 biannually on the mortgage. By 1914 the Society still owed \$20,000. The payments were reduced to \$600 but the interest was raised to 6%. It is likely that the Fortune family collected much more than the original purchase price due to interest charged over many years to the Society and later to the provincial government when they took over operation of the Sanatorium.⁴⁶

Both Mr. and Mrs. Fortune were skilled in business and this could account for the difference between the two sales. William Fortune, along with James McIntosh, built the first saw mill at Tranquille which would later be converted into a flour mill. He also owned one of the first steam ships on Kamloops Lake, "The Lady Dufferin", which was constructed in 1878. Jane Fortune also had a mind for business. She took care of the financial affairs for both the ranch and the mill.⁴⁷ Jane earned the nickname "Lady Jane" in recognition of her strong personality. When her husband was away she ensured obedience from her workers by carrying a horsewhip.⁴⁸ This fact, along with the above stated attempted bribery, leads to the conclusion that the Fortunes were familiar with the shady side of business.

Elizabeth Cooney by contrast was more suited to a hard frontier life. She was the daughter of a fur trader from Fort George and, as evident by photographs (appendix 2), an aboriginal woman.⁴⁹ One example of her lifestyle occurred when her daughter Catherine was one year old. Elizabeth put her in a sand pile to play with a snack of bread with jam. When Elizabeth checked on her daughter later she was shocked to see her infant feeding a rattle snake. As soon as the snake had moved far enough away from Catherine, Elizabeth shot the snake through the head with a shotgun.⁵⁰ Additionally, despite being disabled by an unnamed ailment, Elizabeth continued to maintain her household, including taking advantage of the local salmon run, with little assistance.⁵¹ Crutches can be seen in the background of the photograph in appendix 2.⁵² Her personality combined with her age may have been

⁴³ Norfolk, Cooney and His Clan, 86.

⁴⁴ Norton, A Whole Little City by Itself, 44-6.

⁴⁵ Balf, "William Fortune," 9.

⁴⁶ Norton, A Whole Little City by Itself, 47-83.

⁴⁷ "In the Footsteps of William Fortune," The Kamloops Daily News, 9 September 1988, S4.

⁴⁸ Balf, "William Fortune," 4.

⁴⁹ "Mrs. Charles T. Cooney, 96, Passed Away July 24," Kamloops Sentinel, 30 July 1942, 6.

⁵⁰ Norfolk, Cooney and His Clan, 6.

⁵¹ Norfolk, Cooney and His Clan, 74.

⁵² "Mrs. Charles T. Cooney and Mrs. T.W. Graham." Kamloops Museum and Archives. 531.

a factor in the sale. The fact that she was a widow with obvious aboriginal heritage may also have motivated the treatment she received.

In the end it is clear that although the size of the ranches belonging to the Fortune and Cooney families were similar, the Cooney's received less money for their ranch and under less pleasant circumstances. Additionally the mistreatment of the Cooney family continued after the land purchase had been completed. Due to the prior poor treatment and the condition that the Cooney cemetery would be taken care of in perpetuity by the government⁵³ this family's history should be acknowledged and considered when decisions are being made to develop on land which holds the family pioneer's final resting places.

The cemetery is an important landmark of the Cooney legacy. The cemetery was created in the family's orchard in 1917 when C.T. Cooney died of pneumonia on May 13th.⁵⁴ The Cooney's tenth child Constance died on October 13th of the same year from tuberculosis and was also buried in the cemetery.⁵⁵ The Cooney's fifth child, John, joined his father and sister in the orchard cemetery when he succumbed to cancer in July of 1921.⁵⁶ Elizabeth Cooney lived to be 96 and was buried with her family after her death in 1942.⁵⁷ The family's history has been written by the Cooney's grandson Eric Norfolk who reports in his book that when he visited the cemetery in the summer of 1944 he discovered that irrigation ditches had eroded the land to the point that the caskets of both Charles and Elizabeth were visible. The continued importance of the site to the family is indicated by the fact that in 1976 Eric Norfolk, along with fellow descendent Jean Cooney, placed a plaque in the cemetery for all the past Cooney children regardless of where they were buried.⁵⁸

The cherished family cemetery is now kept under lock and key and the historic Tranquille site is most commonly visited by vandals, teenage party seekers, trespassers and residents curious about its reputation for being haunted. Recently the site was used as a movie set and by the 3rd Battalion of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry; the newspaper article discussing this emphasizes the danger of entering the site due to the state of disrepair.⁵⁹

The Cooney cemetery therefore should be better maintained than it currently is not only due to the fact that it was part of the original 1922 contract but also due to the many contributions of the Cooney family as pioneers in the area. The unfortunate treatment of the Cooney family should not be ignored but rather acknowledged and the respect for all that the Cooney's did to cultivate the current abundance of the Kamloops area should be reflected in how the cemetery is maintained.

⁵³ "Mrs. Charles T. Cooney, 96, Passed Away July 24," *Kamloops Sentinel*, 30 July 1942, 6.

⁵⁴ Balf, "Charles T. Cooney of Tranquille," 1.

⁵⁵ Norfolk, *Cooney and His Clan*, 50.

⁵⁶ Norfolk, *Cooney and His Clan*, 39.

⁵⁷ "Mrs. Charles T. Cooney, 96, Passed Away July 24," *Kamloops Sentinel*, 30 July 1942, 6.

⁵⁸ Norfolk, *Cooney and His Clan*, 88-89.

⁵⁹ Jason Hewlett, "They're in the Army Now Tranquille is the Perfect Setting for Military Training," *Kamloops Daily News*, June 18, 2009,

<http://www.kamloopsnews.ca/article/20090618/KAMLOOPS0101/306189998/theyre-in-the-army-now>.

Appendices



William Fortune ⁶⁰



Mrs. Charles T. Cooney and Mrs. T.W. Graham ⁶¹

⁶⁰ “William Fortune,” The Council of Canadians. <http://www.kamloopscanadians.ca/Candidates2.htm>.

⁶¹ “Mrs. Charles T. Cooney and Mrs. T.W. Graham.” Kamloops Museum and Archives. 531.

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Acknowledgments

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About the Author

Ashlynn Harris completed her Bachelor of Arts degree from Thompson Rivers University in December of 2009. She focused her research on British Columbia during the 20th century. As a CURA student researcher Ashlynn collected the history of the Tranquille area paying particular attention to the Cooney family as she is a descendent. Ashlynn hopes to complete a Masters degree in Library Sciences and continue her research on the Kamloops and Tranquille areas.