

Whiskey Flats and Moccasin Flats: Road Allowance Communities

Whiskey Flats and Moccasin Flats were two Metis road allowance communities that were built on the floodplain along the Yukon River in Whitehorse, Yukon. They date back to 1942 at least. These people were concentrated on government land and unused property belonging to the largest private company operating in Whitehorse. Whiskey Flats where many people who were viewed by the town as “problem families” were located, was eventually bulldozed and cleared for a city park.

J. R. Lotz describes the situation:

During the boom period when the Alaska Highway was being constructed, squatting was common in the lower townsite itself. Six or seven shacks were located on one 50 x 100 ft. lot, and squatter dwellings occupied alleys and street allowances. The first squatters noted as such were a group of Indian and Metis who, in June 1942, moved on to land owned by a large company. Over the years all squatters were evicted and by 1960 all except one (whose house burnt down in 1961) had moved out of the subdivided part of the townsite. In effect, they were driven to its margins on to low-lying parts of the river flat, to areas lying under the unstable Whitehorse Airport Bluff, and to swampy, uncleared land outside the city limits. They moved, or were moved, to land that is usually considered unsuitable for building, owned either by the Crown or by a large private company. Each squatter area had distinctive features that marked it physically, socially, and even economically as a neighbourhood. In effect the squatter areas formed a series of small discontinuous settlements peripheral to the main townsite. The inhabitants of each small settlement tended to work together for common ends such as resisting eviction, repairing roads and building recreational facilities for children. They also tended to have little knowledge of the inhabitants and conditions of other squatter areas. (Lotz, 1965: 176)

References:

Buckstar, R.G. “The Squatter on the Resource Frontier.” *Arctic*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1970: 203-204.

Lotz, J.R. “The Squatters of Whitehorse: A Study of the Problems of New Northern Settlements.” *Arctic*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1965: 173-188.



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