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## **Black River disappears in July 1916.**

From July to October 1916, the lowering of Seattle's Lake Washington during the construction of the Lake Washington Ship Canal drains the Black River and causes it to dry up.

The Black River ran out of the southern end of Lake Washington. It flowed south through Renton, and then veered west and merged with the Green River to form the Duwamish River. The point where the Black River merged with the Duwamish was in Tukwila just north of present-day Southcenter Mall, near the site of Fort Dent Park.

Until 1912, the Cedar River emptied into the Black River and became part of the Black River, which then emptied into the Duwamish. In 1911, the Cedar River flooded Renton. The following year the town dug a 2000-foot-long, 80-foot-wide canal to reroute the course of the Cedar to the north so that it flowed directly into Lake Washington, in the hope of avoiding floods in the future.

From July to October 1916, to construct the Lake Washington Ship Canal, Lake Washington was lowered 8.8 feet. By October the water level had sunk to the same level as Lake Union. In the process, the Black River dried up, and the outfall from Lake Washington became the ship canal. This no doubt severely damaged if not destroyed the salmon run that year.

### **A Pretty River**

Clarence Dullahaut, who moved to Renton in 1903, described the Black River in an interview: "It was a pretty river, meandering along. People used to come up the Duwamish from the Sound up the Black to Lake Washington in launches" (Sato, 56). He went on to state that when the Lake was lowered, salmon in the Black River were trapped by the hundreds in pools left in the drying river bed.

The Duwamish tribe had a village located along the Black River for at least 1,400 years and perhaps for thousands of years. The Duwamish were still there in 1916.

### **The Canoes Stood Dry**

Duwamish Indian Joseph Moses stated in an interview with David Buerge, "That was quite a day for the white people at least. The waters just went down, down, until our landing and canoes stood dry and there was no Black River at all. There were pools, of course, and the struggling fish trapped in them. People came from miles around, laughing and hollering and stuffing fish into gunny sacks" (Sato, 57).

## Sources:

Mike Sato, *The Price of Taming a River: The Decline of Puget Sound's Duwamish/Green Waterway* (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1997), 51-57; Suzanne Larson, *History of the Lake Washington Ship Canal* (Seattle: King County Arts Commission, 1975), Introduction, 23. By Greg Lange, August 25, 2000



Black River, 1900s

*Postcard*



Indians camping near the Black River, ca. 1893

*Photo by Carrie Coe*



Captain R. Burrows' Lake Washington farm at the mouth of the Black River, ca. 1900

*Courtesy Homer Venishnick*



Black River after Lake Washington was lowered 8.8 feet, 1916

*Courtesy Renton Historical Society*

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