



# Street Stories

## Nikula Avenue

GPS: [49.2344263,-122.3906538](https://www.google.com/maps/place/49.2344263,-122.3906538)

Kusti Nikula was born in Ruovesi, Finland on November 24, 1880. In 1899, he came across to the New World, settling first in Marquette, Michigan, where one of his sisters had immigrated earlier.

In 1905, he lived in Sointula (Finnish for “Place of Harmony”) on Malcom Island, where he ran a steam donkey in a logging operation. Later he moved to Vancouver, working as a bricklayer and stone mason. Meanwhile, his brother Jalo and sister Annie had come across from Finland.

In 1908, the three pooled their funds and bought 64 hectares of



Family portrait of Kusti and Senja Nikula with their four daughters: (L to R) Ester, Ellen, Jennie and Helen, 1920.

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uncleared land for \$16 in a wilderness called Stave Falls. They lived on their homestead in a cabin in the woods. Kusti and Jalo walked three and a half kilometers to work each morning, down a skid road to Stave Lake, where they logged. In 1912, the Nikulas built a permanent home on what is known today as Bell Street, where they lived together for several years.

In 1917, Kusti married Senja Myllymaki, a fellow Finn he met at a dance in Vancouver. Eventually the homestead was divided among the three siblings. Kusti received the portion with the house, so the others built their homes. Kusti and Senja would have four daughters and one son, Paul.

Misfortune, however, struck Kusti in 1922 when he was pierced in the arm and back by a hook while loading some logs. After recovering, he went to work again but suffered from epilepsy as a result of his injury. He eventually died in 1941, leaving the house to his son Paul.

Soon the war called Paul overseas, where he served for a year in the occupying forces in Germany. He drove a logging truck until his retirement in the 1990s. In 1953, he married Juliana Cleiren and had four children: John, Gene, Jack, and Rolanda. In the mid-1980s he gave each of his children two hectares from the land his father had left him, upon which they eventually built their homes.

Paul and his sons personally constructed about the last 300 meters of Nikula Avenue – using their own equipment! The pioneering spirit still lives.

Street Stories is provided by the Mission Community Archives, which is operated by the Mission Historical Society. If you have any questions or further information on the Nikula family, please call us at 604-820-2621.

*by David Buss and Val Billesberger*