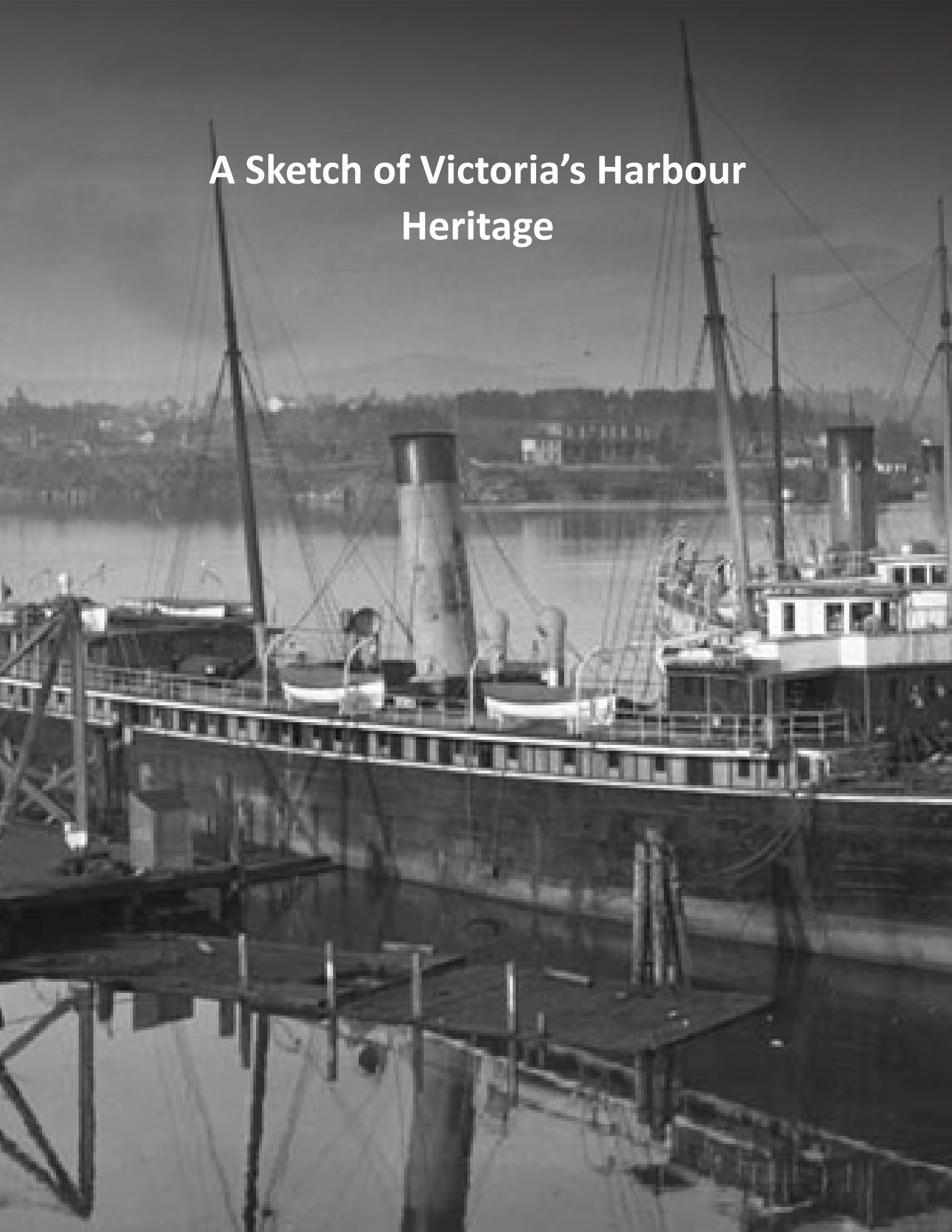


A Sketch of Victoria's Harbour Heritage



A SKETCH OF VICTORIA'S HARBOUR HERITAGE

SITUATION BRIEF # 47

Contributor: D. Pendergast

Forward

The construction of the Hudsons Bay Company trading fort in 1843 on the banks of "Camossung", what we now call Victoria Harbour brought massive change to a tidal inlet and inland waterway which had been a carefully managed a food and materials resource for thousands of years. Crab and mussel beds where the Empress stands today, oysters and clams in the upper Gorge, runs of herring and salmon in season, camas bulbs and salmon berry on the foreshores, eel grass meadows and kelp beds in the shoreline swales of the upper waters were cultivated and intensively managed by generations of Coast Salish people. According to an HBC official, Joseph McKay, the Songhees name for the area on which the fort would be built was "Ku-sing-ay-las" – a place of strong fibre. The word itself refers to a local plant species, Pacific Willow, the inner bark of which was used in the production of fishing nets and lines.

At first Lekwengan people from the surrounding villages clustered in the vicinity of the Fort on the eastern shore of the harbour. Gradually family villages were established along Rock Creek Inlet north of Fort, the shores of James Bay to the South. The West side of the Harbour, directly across from the Fort, would

become the Songhees village. Ritual burial sites were established at Laurel Point, and small islands (Colville, Coffin and Halkett) in the Inner and Upper Harbour.

As the trading and supply activities at the Fort intensified local Indigenous peoples from along the post joined local residents for periodic stays. From the first relations between locals and visitors where not always peaceful and then more intense conflict was to arise between Settlers and First Nations particularly as the white population grew in response to the establishment of the Colony of Vancouver's Island in 1849. Temporary camp sites were established by local Indigenous people around the old Johnson Street Ravine and then the main habitation was established in 1844 – what is now remembered as the Old Songhees village. After 1853, Indigenous visitors, mostly from the north, established camp sites in Rock Bay and around portions of the outer and inner harbour. Pressure on the Indigenous population to concentrate on the harbour's west-side expanded the village. By 1846 a substantial cluster of large plank houses had emerged.

Over time the Songhees Village would accommodate a hospital, school, church, balloon-frame houses and plank big houses. The Lekwungen speaking people called Songhees Point Pallatsis (the place of cradles). As both men and women entered the local wage economy, accumulating wealth supported a rich cultural life featuring craft production, potlatches and welcome celebrations for visiting traders. But with this growth came the seeds of its ultimate destruction.

Over its first 50 years the Old Songhees Village responded to rapid economic and demographic growth (the Douglas Treaties of 1850, Crown Colony status (the amalgamation of the Crown colonies in 1866, confederation with Canada in 1871, completion of railways - Canadian Pacific Railway to Vancouver in 1885, Esquimalt & Nanaimo in 1886,) the promise of a Panama Canal - actually completed 1914). The growth also spurred the industrialization of Victoria's

Inner Harbour. All this led finally to an agreement with the resident Lekwungen people to sell their village site and move to a new reserve on the upper Esquimalt Harbour adjacent to the Esquimalt Nation reserve in 1910/11.

Seven monumental bronze spindle whorl sculptures (“Signs of Lekwungen”) were commissioned in 2008 from Coast Salish artist Butch Dick to mark sites of cultural significance to the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations which are now overlaid by Downtown Victoria. The “Unity Wall” on the inner side of the Ogden Point breakwater features an extended multi-piece mural “bridging between two cultures”. Commemorative totem poles (actually celebrating Victoria’s hosting of the Commonwealth Games in 1994) and an interpretive plaque at the beginning of the Westsong Walkway briefly outlines the story of the once-thriving village on the Harbour’s edge.



Victoria Harbour looking at the HBC Warehouse Complex from the Songhees Reserve 1864

Introduction

The Canadian Pacific Railway’s 1887 decision to establish their western rail terminus on the mainland’s Coal Harbour meant Victoria was no longer Canada’s primary west coast port. Increasingly, shipping bypassed the island and the harbour’s rate of change slowed. Spared of the need to adapt to modern high-capacity cargo-handling machinery, the elegance of the harbour’s Georgian/

Edwardian heritage has been preserved, much to the delight of residents and the millions who annually enjoy the harbour's elegant window into yesteryear.

Stronghold on the Pacific

Victoria harbour's initial cultural contribution to Canada's history can best be understood with a glance at a North American political map. Under American President Polk's rallying cry of "54.40 or Fight" expansionists saw an opportunity to claim the entire west coast of North America from their Oregon Territory north to the Russian Alaska border.

Aware of this expansionist momentum, and with the support of the British Government, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) established its Pacific fur trading fort in 1842 on the shores of a convenient harbour penetrating the southern tip of Vancouver's Island. For some 16 years Fort Victoria's 400 residents served the Company's lucrative fur trade. They were mainly dependent on supplies shipped from Britain, south across the Atlantic then either around the Horn or across the isthmus' of Panama's wagon road, then up to the harbour's palisaded Fort Victoria. In modern terms, the fort was the equivalent of today's International Space Station.

The names of the Fort's founding families have since been commemorated on hundreds of bricks defining the footprint of the fort's northeast octagonal bastion and palisaded perimeter.

The issue of possession was resolved in 1846 when the Oregon Treaty established the 49th parallel as the international border, dropping south to include all of Vancouver Island within the Empire. After three further years of HBC management in 1849 the British Government declared Vancouver's Island a British Colony, naming Richard Blanshard its first Governor. His stay was brief and he was soon replaced with the HBC's Chief Factor, James Douglas. It was Douglas'

indomitable leadership that would ensure British success in the region.

As we shall see, the province of British Columbia and her cities of Vancouver, New Westminster, Hope, Yale, and Lytton among others, would owe their initial existence and success exclusively to Douglas' management, Victoria's harbour traders, and its steamboat fleet.



J. D. Pemberton's 1850s Map of Victoria Harbour

Immigration

The Fort's tranquility was shattered as word flashed around the world of the 1858 gold discoveries up the mainland's fast-flowing Fraser River system, followed soon after by the Cariboo rush.. Within a year, well over 20,000 men and women determined to seek their fortunes, had arrived in the harbour. Approximately a third were Chinese who established Victoria's Chinatown, the oldest in Canada and was second only in size to San Francisco's in North America. In 1995 Chinatown was designated a Canadian National Historic Site.

The Kanaka, (Hawaiian for "human being") arrived first from Fort

Vancouver in “Oregon Territory” where they had been employed as tradesmen and navigators by the HBC. They established their own community, Kanaka Row, on the north shore of the now infilled upper reach of James Bay

With the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, all British citizens were assured of their civil rights. Such was not the case in California when Governor Douglas, of mixed race himself, welcomed some 800 San Franciscan Blacks to the harbour in 1858. They would play an important role in the development of Colony as skilled tradesmen, merchants and farmers.



The second of 50 plaques mounted at the south curve of today's Inner Harbour

Construction

As trade enriched merchants, steamboat owners, and professionals, many commissioned the architect John Wright to create commercial buildings along Wharf, Government, Fisgard, Pandora, Johnson and Yates Streets. Today many of those buildings serve as a characteristically colourful portion of the city's Old Town restaurant and retail district.

While his first commission (1859) was the collaboration with colonial engineer Herman Otto Tiedemann Fisgard Lighthouse, he went on to design Wharf Street's iron-front Wells Fargo Building (1861) and the masonry Dickson



Map by Denton Pendergast: The darker yellow indicates harbour infill while light yellow defines the harbour's natural shoreline.

Campbell Building (1862). Wright adopted a Renaissance Revival style featuring arched wall openings detailed with low relief pilasters on the street fronts. His Government Street three-storey brick facade of the St. Nicholas Hotel with its arched second-floor windows and ornate Italianate cornice established the commercial idiom for Victoria's Old Town which remains a dominant feature to this time.

Much of Wright's architectural legacy has been designated and preserved in Victoria. Though the offices of Wright and Sanders moved to San Francisco in 1867, in 1879 Wright returned to consult on the Esquimalt graving dock scheme. As commerce grew, harbourside wharfs, docks, and jetties were constructed to provide water access for numerous marine-based enterprises. While most of the original wharves have been replaced with marinas, many "Old Town"

shops, warehouses, hotels, bars, and workshops remain, vibrantly repurposed reminders of the city's tumultuous trading heritage. The remains of the HBC's warehouse's great arched stone wall below Bastion Square hints at the volume of the harbour's early trade. This remaining two-storey wall stands as an important historic feature along today's Inner Harbour shoreline.

Governance

The massive early immigration into the harbour led to the 1859 establishment of the Colony of Vancouver's Island. A year later the colony of British Columbia was established. The two amalgamated into the single colony of British Columbia in 1866. Then, in 1871 with entrance into Confederation, the Colony became the Province of British Columbia. Through each stage of its political evolution, the harbour's shoreline remained the site of regional governance.

The Colonial Administration Buildings, Victoria's first public buildings, were constructed in 1859 to administer the Colony of Vancouver's Island then in 1860 the Colony of British Columbia as well. The six curiously eclectic combination of Chinese pagoda/Swiss-cottage/Italianate architecture quickly earned them the nickname of The Birdcages. Overlooking the Inner Harbour from its south side, symbolically and tranquilly remote from the clamor of the town's commercial district to the north shore of James Bay's tidal waters The Birdcages presided over the ever increasing harbour traffic as Victoria expanded along with the reach of governance.

Among the earliest projects to be administered from the Birdcages were the construction of both the mainland's Douglas and Cariboo Wagon Roads. Both built to improve access to the Cariboo gold fields. The two were the forerunners of the province's modern highway system.

Three years after becoming the capital of Canada's most westerly province, the Dominion Government established its presence with its mansard-roofed Customs Building. Continuing to overlook the harbour as a nationally designated historic site. As the import/export business continued to boom, the building's operations were moved in 1897 to the harbour's second largest and most impressive structure to that date, the new Victorian Second Empire styled Dominion Post Office and Customs House. A section of the building has recently been carefully restored while the original Post Office wing has been replaced with a condominium complex echoing the form and some architectural elements of its predecessor.



Dominion Post Office Victoria 1987

In celebration of the colony's new identity as Canada's most westerly province, the Birdcages were replaced in 1893 with architect Francis Rattenbury's imposing new Provincial Legislature, appropriately executed in the "grand Renaissance" style.

To accommodate the harbour's growing passenger and cargo traffic, Canadian Pacific Navigation (CPN) commissioned Rattenbury to design their

original 1904 steamship terminal on the Inner Harbour. The building was rendered as a larger version of the half-timbered mansions he was designing for many of the day's wealthy Victorians. The terminal opened in 1905 to great celebrations.

An 1861 Pemberton map of Victoria showing lot plans for development indicates the existence of the first wooden bridge linking Government Street traffic to the government side of James Bay. A more substantial 1869 replacement served the purpose until the permanent James Bay Causeway, built with granite quarried and shipped from Nelson Island, was completed in 1906. Subsequent to the causeway's construction, the bay's tidal flats beyond were drained and filled in (see map above). While creating more viable land, it deprived the Songhees of important oyster and crab beds, and the Kanaka community of a number of enterprises which benefited from the tidal flush.

Since, 50 uniform bronze plaques have been mounted on the Causeway seawall, each commemorating a significant harbour accomplishment or event. Among them are four celebrating intrepid Victoria sailors who have solo circumnavigated the globe. Another of the causeway plaques commemorates the fastest of history's legendary tea clippers, SS Thermopylae that made Victoria her home port during her later years. Since the 1930's members of the city's Thermopylae Club have continued to serve and support the harbour's heritage and her long maritime traditions in her name.

International architects Arthur Erickson and Norm Hotson, as part of a large harbour improvement scheme, designed the Lower Causeway to provide water-level access to the harbour. This scheme also provided an important performance venue in the heart of the modern city. Its Inner Harbour Floats welcome yachtspersons from around the world while providing the annual home for the Victoria Classic Boat Festival. It is now managed by the Maritime Museum

of British Columbia and draws some 100 of the region's heritage vessels along with 10,000 of their admirers.

Francis Rattenbury won the Empress Hotel design commission in 1908. Its placement at the head of James Bay behind the newly built Inner Harbour causeway wall followed his grand scheme to place a number of monumental institutional buildings to command the Inner Harbour along with his earlier Parliament Buildings.

Upon purchasing Canadian Pacific Navigation (CPN), the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) renamed their coastal steamship line the British Columbia Coastal Service (BCCS). The need for a new headquarters to accommodate ever-increasing demand from coastal traffic led to Rattenbury's commission to replace his previous terminal. With assistance from Percy Leonard James, in 1926 he added the neo-classical "temple to Neptune" flanked by Ionic colonnades along its north and south sides to complete his monumental trio of Inner Harbour buildings. Continuing to preside over the Inner Harbour they remind residents, and millions of visitors each year, of the vitality of the harbour's maritime history.

Industrial and cultural growth required migration north along the Inner and Upper Harbour shores and in the 1860s gave rise to the city's first hotels and an entertainment district north of Chinatown. They were a home away from home for mariners whose whaling, sealing, fishing, and transportation fleets crowded the Upper Harbour shoreline. Many of those redbrick Victorian hotels, saloons, brothels, and theatres lining Store, Johnson, and Yates Streets east to Government Street have been restored as a mix of light industrial and artist's studios. The old Pantages Theatre has undergone multiple restorations to become today's MacPherson Playhouse.



Yates Street in the 1860s Painting by Sarah Crease (1826-1922)

As harbour trade continued to enrich its merchants, steamboat owners, professionals, and civil servants, they commissioned architects to create additional elegant Inner Harbour commercial buildings along Wharf, Fisgard, Pandora, Johnson and Yates Streets. Today they serve as a characteristic and colourful portion of today's shore-front restaurant and retail district. Many of their substantial residences continue to grace the city's skyline.

Fuelled by Nanaimo coal provisioning the Royal Navy's Pacific Fleet, and also supplying communities as far south as San Francisco, the Dunsmuir family achieved "robber baron" status. While their father, Robert Dunsmuir built Craigdarroch Castle on the Rockland escarpment from where he could appropriately overlook all of Victoria, scions of the family commissioned the estate mansions, Burlieith and Ashnola on the Gorge. With the passing of the family enterprise, son James outdid his father with Hatley Castle, a country house and estate fronting on the Esquimalt Lagoon. Hatley Castle, now a National Historic Site, served as the Canadian Armed Forces western Staff College prior to becoming the home of Vancouver Island University. It's well maintained Japanese

gardens attract visitors year-round.

Point Ellice House, completed in 1864, for gold-commissioner Peter O'Reilly, is a single-storey Victorian Italianate residence and carriage shed. Its extensive gardens of the period border the entrance to the Gorge Waterway in what was once among Victoria's most fashionable residential neighbourhoods. The house and grounds, another harbour-front National Historic Site, is open to the public. The home showcases the possessions and the life style of a well-to-do Victorian family.

Shipbuilding

After purchasing permits and supplies, every prospector's greatest desire was to cross the Strait of Georgia's tidal waters and travel upriver to their mining claim. The overwhelming demand for transportation sparked the harbour's shipbuilding industry. Newly established shipyards on long-lost Major Bay and on Laurel Point built the growing fleet of increasingly sophisticated steamboats, each commissioned by opportunistic captains like John Irving and William Moore. While superb lumber was plentiful, steamboat engines had to be sourced first from England, then from San Francisco. Eventually the Albion Iron Works, founded in 1862 on the banks of the Upper Harbour was able to manufacture both marine and stationary steam engines, boilers, and plumbing. Steam power became homegrown.

Captain Irving's locally built deep-hulled sidewheelers provided transportation across the Strait's tidal waters to link with the growing fleet of the shallow-draft sternwheelers competing hammer and tongs to carry prospectors further and further up the fast-flowing Fraser. All were fuelled with Dunsmuir coal.

Recognizing the potential for additional profits, harbour merchants soon

followed the prospectors across the Strait to establish Fraser River supply depots that would, over time, grow into the Fraser River communities of Vancouver, New Westminster, Hope and Yale, among others.

As the successive gold rushes waned, new coastal economies beyond the mouth of the harbour demanded an ever-widening range of the harbour's enterprises. Shipyards diversified to build fleets of fish boats to supply the North Pacific's rich marine harvests and provision the growing numbers of canning settlements nestled in sheltered inlets along the rugged coast. New packet coasters provisioned the settlements and delivered their tens of thousands of cans of fish down to the harbour for export. Steam-driven tugs slid down harbour ways to shepherd rafts of rainforest logs of unheard-of size to the harbour's sawmills for dimensioning. Most were then floated to the Outer Harbour for export, though enough were retained to supply Victoria's constant building boom and to construct more vessels including the Upper Harbour's coastal



One of the Mabel Brown five-masted schooners. Victoria City Archives

whaling fleet and over 100 black hulled pelagic sealers, all serving harbour-side processing plants. The Upper Harbour's contemporary Celia Cove Park continues to exhibit artifacts from the Cameron-Genoa Mill, last of the harbour's sawmills, the construction site for six five-masted 240' auxiliary schooners project managed by Robert Pym Butchart in support of the British Empire's World War I effort.

Over the last century and a half the harbour's shipyards have launched hundreds of significant vessels. From her original goldrush steamboat fleet to Victoria Machine Depot's (VMD) World War II contribution of 25 ships including 5 Flower-class corvette destroyers, 14 dry cargo ships, 5 tankers, and a provisioning ship.

In 1960 the Province commissioned VMD, offspring of Victoria Iron Works, to construct her first two vehicle ferries, the MV Tsawwassen and the MV Sidney, in the Outer Harbour. The pair were the forerunners to the world's largest scheduled ferry fleet of 39 vessels carrying 22 million passengers and eight million vehicles each year. VMD followed the ferry construction with a number of notable projects, finally closing in 1994.

The Black Ball Line's M.V. Coho, the model for the first of BC's ferries, has served as Victoria's vital vehicle and passenger link with Washington State since late 1959. Originally the Puget Sound Navigation Company, its business origins can be traced to New York and Liverpool in 1816 and the Peabody Family's trans-Atlantic sailing packets.

More recently, in 2001, the *Sail and Life Training Society* constructed the *Pacific Grace* in the harbour. She is among the last Canadian-built Grand Banks schooners, along with their 111-foot Pacific Swift, also built by the Society. SALTS has introduced over 1,700 young people annually through their sail and life training Program.

The harbour's most venerable shipyard, established before 1873 on Point Hope continues the harbour's long maritime tradition as Point Hope Maritime. Inshore from Ogden point on the Outer Harbour a small boat manufacturer, Whitehall Reproductions, custom builds a 100 year-old rowboat design in 18 variations. These are sold all over the world and have established their own racing classes.

Agriculture

Craigflower Manor and Schoolhouse, dating from the HBC's original farming initiatives at Fort Victoria under the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, were built in 1845/6. Both the manor and school houses are now National Historic Sites on the Gorge Waters, commemorating the roots of both the island's educational and agricultural systems. Produce from Craigflower farm was transported south down the Gorge Waters to the harbour, then the locus for all the trading activity. As nutritional demand grew in both the Vancouver Island and the mainland colonies, Island agriculture expanded. The original HBC farms were soon joined by a number of private enterprises, both Indigenous and Settler owned, primarily on the Saanich Peninsula. Then with expanded Black and Kanaka settlement, farms were established on the Gulf Islands. Distribution of fresh produce throughout the region further contributed to the wealth of the harbour's merchants, rail, and steamboat owners.

A Shadow

Though few at the time noticed, the future's cold shadow first fell across the harbour in 1865 when William Irving, Victoria's most successful steamboat entrepreneur, relocated his fleet's headquarters from Victoria to New Westminster on the mainland. Nonetheless, success continued to follow success

both along the harbour shore, and in her growing satellite communities.

Victoria's R.P. Rithet purchased the Outer Wharf in 1881, extending and twinning it to accommodate his expanding Hawaiian grocery import business. The expansion increased the harbour's deep-sea import/export handling capacity and facilitated a new wave of immigration. It began with the *SS Tynemouth's* 1862 landing of two hundred and seventy passengers, including sixty-two British working-class women hoping to find husbands among Victoria's predominately male population.

Within a year, Canada established her first Pacific quarantine station at William Head, 25 kilometres southwest of the harbour. Once medically cleared, thousands of immigrants from India and the Orient were transported over the years to Rithet's Piers where, upon crossing the street to the country's first west coast immigration office, they were issued their landing papers then spread eastward across the country to enrich their own lives and new homeland with their cultures, intellect, and labour.

The Princess Liners

The colony's coastal economy benefited from the 1883 consolidation of the harbour's disparate coastal packet fleet into the more reliable Canadian Pacific Navigation Company's (CPN). Operating out of Victoria, their fourteen vessels served 72 coastal locations on seven scheduled routes. The northern service nurtured canneries and logging camps, allowing a number to establish themselves as permanent communities.

Subsequent to the Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) 1901 purchase the CPN fleet was modernized as the British Columbia Coastal Service (BCCS), headquartered in the harbour's previously mentioned Steamship Terminal. The BCCS' coastal *Princess* pocket liners were the life lines and cultural pride of

the coast, offering amenities similar to those aboard ocean liners, though on a smaller scale. For nearly a century the BCCS' total of 45 passenger ships, 11 freighters, tugs, and barges served coastal communities.

The wave of immigration crested in the 1920's after CP established the world's first scheduled trans-Pacific service with a new fleet of three 456 ft. transitional ocean liners, the RMS *Empresses of Japan, China, and Russia*.

The decade earned Victoria its reputation among travelling royalty, movies stars and the just plain wealthy for its elegance. Travelling aboard a CP's *Atlantic Empress* liner from Southampton to Montreal, the British were joined by well-to-do Canadians and Americans aboard luxurious transcontinental CP passenger trains, staying at the company's palatial railway hotels as they travelled across the country, and through the Rockies to Vancouver. There they had three further options.

From rail's western terminus they might take a *Princess* liner north, or embark on the "Triangle Route" aboard a *Princess* carrying them across to Victoria for a stay at the Empress Hotel prior to sailing on for an exploration of Seattle before returning to Vancouver. Their third, and most complex option was to continue on the company's "All Red Route", embarking upon one of the company's *Pacific Empress'* for a grand tour of the "Orient".

The U.S. Postal Service, quick to take advantage of the regular trans-Pacific service, established that country's first western airmail route. Mail destined for Japan, China, and Russia was collected in Seattle then flown to Victoria by seaplane for trans-shipment to one of the *Empress's*. American bound mail was collected and flown south for delivery across the U.S.

The harbour was now a hive of activity. The Outer Harbour seeing an average of 75 steamships arriving or departing each month. While the Inner Harbour *Princesses* docked at the steamship terminal, Grand Trunk's pocket

liners, headquartered at Prince Rupert, moored across the way. Coastal freighters, barges, and tugboats were joined by sailing yachts setting out from the Victoria Yacht Club's first clubhouse. It would soon add the honorific "Royal" to its name. All the while local Canoe Club and Songhees canoes, along with all sorts of other sundry pulling boats, wove between the traffic and errant logs.

Increasing activity on the Rithet's Piers complex soon prompted James Bay's farmers to subdivide their land, creating the James Bay neighbourhood, Victoria's first subdivision with modest workman dwellings constructed close to the piers. More elegant Victorian Italianate "villas" rose closer to the Parliament Buildings.



Inner Harbour ca 1912

The Tide Turns

As the mainland's Coal Harbour rail terminus slowly drained Victoria of much of her maritime trade, harbour business owners were faced with either moving across the Strait, downsizing to a regional business, or closing doors. Those that remained adapted the harbour's port facilities to their needs. In response to the opening of the Panama Canal, the city invested in the massive granite breakwater at the mouth of the harbour in 1916, following it two years later with the Ogden Point's twin deep water piers. Leased to Grand Trunk

Northern (Canadian National), for the transshipment of grain, lumber, fish products, and freight, their operations were administered from their Upper Harbour railhead located on the site of today's Railyards townhouse subdivision, set back from the shoreline of the Upper Harbour.

The Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway (E&N), a Dunmsuir family enterprise completed in 1876, the railway carried passengers and freight and produce up and down island from their southern round house and maintenance complex on the west side of the Upper Harbour, on what had formerly been the Old Songhees Reserve. Lighter yard-engines then hauled cars across the original trestle crossing to unload passengers at their terminal before carrying island freight north along Store Street to service the 15 industrial sidings in their Albion Ironworks Yards. With growing traffic, and to allow Upper Harbour access to larger vessels, the trestle was replaced in 1923 by the steel bascule (fixed-trunnion) blue lifting bridge designed by Joseph Strauss Engineering Company of Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge fame. An advanced-design bascule lifting-bridge replaced it in 2017.

Map by Denton Pendergast
The rail plan of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo's Victoria rail service.



In 1931, to initiate the harbour as a seaplane port, the distinctive Art Deco tower atop an Imperial Oil gas station was erected at the north end of the Inner Harbour's causeway to service two new popular transportation technologies, the automobile and the seaplane. Crowned with a sister of the world's most powerful spotlight of the day, the Sperry Beacon, (developed to celebrate Charles Lindberg's historic flight across the Atlantic) the tower remains a major landmark on the harbour, which has since become one of Canada's busiest seaplane ports.

Today

By the 1950's the growth of the automobile culture slowly spelled the beginning of the end for both CP and CN's coastal liner services. From BC Ferries' Victoria headquarters, the decision was made to construct their first two ferries at the Victoria Machine Depot's Outer Harbour facility. Today, the corporation maintains the largest passenger ferry fleet in North America with 36 vessels serving the 47 B.C. coastal locations.

Internationally, the Black Ball Ferry Line's MV Coho, proud of their 200 years of maritime passenger services, still connects Victoria to Washington State's Port Angeles while the Victoria Clipper regularly provides transportation from the harbour to Seattle.

The western headquarters of Canada's Coast Guard, responsible for patrolling 25,725-kilometres of coastline, is located on the site of the old Rithet's Piers, while the harbour based maritime pilots annually guide thousands of ships of every description into and out of Vancouver's harbour and up the Inside Passage.

Since the days of Sarah Crease, the Fort's first documenting water-colourist, through to Emily Carr, eighth member of Canada's Group of Seven,

creatives of all descriptions continue to be drawn by the region's natural and built beauty. A very unique piece of natural heritage, an internationally recognized Federal migratory bird sanctuary, was created at the harbour entrance in 1923.

The Royal British Columbia Museum & Archives located on the harbour, and the Victoria-based Maritime Museum of British Columbia diligently collect, collate, and preserve the province's historic artifacts and documents.

The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, established in 2002 to preserve and develop the viability of the working harbour now oversees all aspects of its sustainable growth including the vital Ogden Point Piers that welcome over a million cruise ship passengers each year to the harbour's vintage elegance. The Victoria and Esquimalt Harbour Society currently representing over forty member businesses, and ecological, scientific, and educational organizations, including the University of Victoria, all working to promote sustainable harbour business and maritime research.



Pacific Swift berthed in the Upper Harbour, Victoria Sail and Life Training Society 2022.

Over the years the federal, provincial, civic, and First Nations' governments have developed a working partnership through GVHA for the harbour's economic and environmental development.

Paradoxically, where once tens of thousands flocked to the harbour seeking transportation to the mainland, now millions visit each year to appreciate and enjoy the harbour's civilized elegance. Voted Canada's best small city in in 2022, Victoria continues building on the success on her harbour's cultural foundation of adaptability, enterprise, and an elegance unique in all the world.

Observations

- The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority's program of interpretive signage placed along the harbour walkway needs to be extended throughout the harbour lands as an educational tool in daylighting the many fascinating stories imbedded in the thousand-year history of the harbour
- While the Songhees people are long gone from their harbour-side village site their important contribution to history of the harbour needs to be explained and celebrated
- Interpretive programs which bring to life the human history of Old Town should tie their social and cultural themes to the harbour industries.
- The commemorative bronze plaques along the street-level balustrade of the causeway tell the story of the harbour through the vessels and personalities that called it home. They would provide an excellent opportunity for a geo-locational digital interpretive program.
- The intangible heritage of the harbour expressed in on-going industries such as ship building, events such as celebratory arrivals and boat races, wild-life habitat such as that preserved in the migratory bird sanctuaries is as

important as the tangible heritage of building and monuments observable today.

Resources

Victoria's Greatest Story www.victoriaharbourhistory.com (Pendergast) for a more comprehensive look at the harbour's rich and complex history. (visited 19/1/2023)

J. D. Pemberton Maps of Victoria Maps and Sketches <https://web.uvic.ca/vv/student/gardening/Surveying/Maps/map2.html> (visited 19/1/2023)

Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary <https://vicharbourbirds.ca> (visited 19/1/2023)

The Victoria Heritage Observatory <https://victoriaworldheritage.org> "Situation Brief", series, an analysis of Victoria's heritage: the following:

- The Lost Minority: Hawaiian in Victoria <https://victoriaworldheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Brief-43.-March-8.pdf> (visited 19/1/2023)
- First Nations Land Uses and Knowledge Systems Underpinning the Development of Victoria <https://victoriaworldheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Brief-7.-Sep-20.pdf> (visited 19/1/2023)
- Exploring the Heritage of Victoria's Maritime Connections Through a Public Exhibition Programme <https://victoriaworldheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Brief-12.-May-26.pdf> (visited 19/1/2023)
- Jewel in the Crown: the Gorge Waterway as a Cultural Heritage <https://victoriaworldheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Brief-24.-July-3.pdf> (visited 19/1/2023)