

# The Canadian Pacific Railway and Vancouver's Development to 1900

NORBERT MACDONALD

A city is the outcome of many, many forces and many decisions. Topography, climate, technology, political systems and population all play their part, as do the decisions of thousands of citizens, politicians and businessmen. The relative importance of these determinants can vary significantly. What is of critical importance for one period or one geographical area can be insignificant in another period or place. In this state of constant flux, no single agency can be said to control all development. Yet there is no doubt that a few critical decision-makers can have a profound effect in shaping a city's overall development. If one such agency can be considered critical for Vancouver's development in the nineteenth century, it was undoubtedly the Canadian Pacific Railway. Its impact was especially evident in the boom years of the late 1880s and early 1890s, and while its role diminished after that time, it never disappeared. Whether one considers the city's waterfront, street layout, residential districts, parks, tax structure, real estate prices, economy, politics or social clubs, the influence of the CPR is clearly apparent.

To appreciate this diverse role, one must first consider development in the area prior to the arrival of the railroad. Permanent white settlement in British Columbia began with the establishment of Fort Victoria by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1843, but it was not until the Fraser River gold rush of 1858-59 that significant attention was drawn to the mainland. The rush to the gold fields gave Victoria a surge of prosperity. New Westminster, on the Fraser, also sprang into prominence and was made the capital of the newly established mainland colony. As part of the defence arrangements for the infant capital, a detachment of Royal Engineers hacked out some rough roads to Burrard Inlet about ten miles away, while at the same time the Royal Navy surveyed the entire Burrard Inlet, English Bay region, setting aside a number of military reserves as well as Indian and townsite reserves.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Howay, "Early Settlement on Burrard Inlet," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 2 (April 1937), p. 101. M. A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A*

Except for the reserved lands, amounting to some 5,800 acres, the entire Burrard Inlet area was open for pre-emption. Settlers could claim 160 acres, have it surveyed, and with the payment of \$1 per acre, gain official title. In theory, pre-emption privileges were for genuine farm settlement only, but since the area was heavily forested, most early land acquisition was a speculation that the land would rise in value and could be sold at a profit.<sup>2</sup>

John Morton, William Hailstone and Sam Brighthouse were the first to acquire land. All three were immigrants from Britain who had worked in the gold fields and, though dubbed "These Greenhorn Englishmen" by cynical residents of New Westminster who saw little merit in acquiring such land, together the three men took the necessary steps and in 1862 obtained a Crown grant to 540 acres in what is now Vancouver's West End. They paid \$555.73. While there was no great rush to follow their example, Crown grants were issued periodically throughout the 1860s and 1870s. Most of the grants were for land along the inlet, or in the False Creek region. They averaged 160 acres, but on occasion were much larger.<sup>3</sup>

While these landowners were very conscious of the potential value of their holdings, the real focus of interest and activity on Burrard Inlet was a series of lumber mills which were established in the 1860s. The original mill started in 1863. It was situated on the north shore of the inlet and served a local market in New Westminster, Nanaimo and Victoria.<sup>4</sup> By 1865 it was taken over and expanded by the Sewell Moody Company and began exporting to foreign markets. Two years later, after having acquired extensive timber leases in the area, Captain Edward Stamp established a mill on the south side of the inlet. The lumber operations expanded

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*History* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1958), pp. 189, 193. The government reserves at Point Grey, Jericho, First Narrows, Coal Harbour and Hastings have played an important role in Vancouver's development. While Coal Harbour and Hastings soon moved into private hands, the others have remained in the public domain, and a century later still make up the heart of Vancouver's extensive park system.

<sup>2</sup> F. W. Laing, "Colonial Farm Settlers on the Mainland of British Columbia 1858-1871," typescript, 1939.

<sup>3</sup> The activities of H. P. P. Crease provide an example of the kinds of profits possible. While Attorney-General of B.C. in 1863, he obtained a Crown grant for 165 acres in DL 182 and paid \$310.40. Two years later he purchased the adjoining 165 acres in DL 183 from T. Ronaldson. In 1877, while a judge of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, he sold the entire parcel to Dr. I. W. Powell of Victoria for \$3,500. See B.C. Department of Lands, Registry Office, and Townley MSS, Vancouver City Archives.

<sup>4</sup> F. W. Howay, "Early Shipping in Burrard Inlet 1863-1870," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 4.

rapidly. In 1869 alone, at least forty-five vessels left the inlet carrying lumber to Australia, San Francisco and South America, with the occasional vessel going to Mexico, China, England or Hawaii.<sup>5</sup>

By 1870 a pattern of activity and settlement was established on Burrard Inlet that would not change significantly in the next fifteen years. The entire area was geared almost solely to the production and export of lumber. Besides the main concentration at Moody's and at Stamp's mill, a small cluster of settlement existed at Brighton, some three miles to the east of Stamp's. In addition, scattered camps provided logs for the mills, and a few small establishments produced handmade shingles and specialized timbers for ships. In total, some 300 persons were employed by these various concerns.<sup>6</sup>

In the early years, Moody's mill on the north shore was clearly the largest, but as the 1870s unfolded, the settlement on the south shore gradually inched ahead. Most of the men who worked in Stamp's mill lived in bunkhouses or shacks that they had thrown together. But after "Gassy Jack" Deighton opened a small hotel and saloon about half a mile to the west of the mill, people gravitated to the boarding houses, hotels, homes and stores that gradually accumulated in that area. Whether referred to as Coal Harbour, Gastown or Granville, this settlement was the nucleus of the future Vancouver.

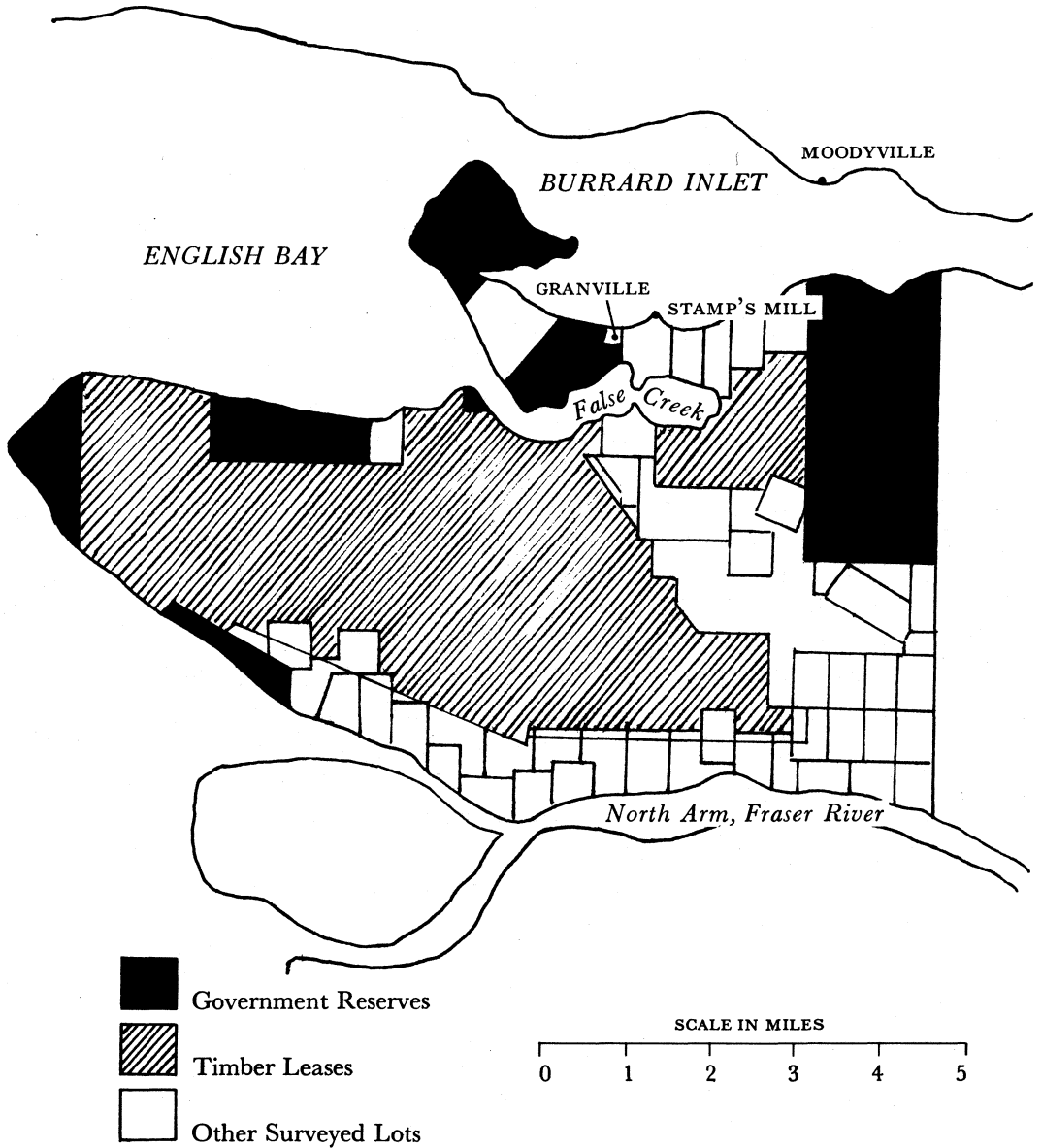
While lumber production rose steadily, population growth was modest. By 1884, Burrard Inlet had about 900 residents of whom some 300 lived in Granville.<sup>7</sup> As in 1870, it was still only a small lumbering village. The cluster of buildings now extended 400 yards along the shore, and the trees had been cleared back some 200 or 300 yards, possibly twenty acres in all. Its population was tiny when compared with New Westminster's 3,000 or Victoria's 8,000 and was not substantially larger than Moodyville or the farming municipalities of Delta, Richmond, Surrey and Langley — all of which had about 250 to 300 residents. *The British Columbia Directory 1884/85* could summarize most of its significant features in just a few sentences.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Most of these workers drifted in and out of the various camps and mills along the coast. The voters' list of the Burrard Inlet Polling Division for 1886 showed that only 177 men met the necessary residential and property requirements. Their addresses indicate the nature of settlement — Burrard Inlet had 73 eligible voters, Moodyville 41, Granville 25, Howe Sound 9, Fraser River 7, Jervis Inlet 6, English Bay 5, Hastings Mill 5, Richmond 3, B.C. Camp 2, False Creek 1. *B.C. Sessional Papers*, 1886, pp. 67-70.

FIGURE 1  
GOVERNMENT RESERVES AND TIMBER LEASES  
IN BURRARD INLET, ENGLISH BAY REGION 1876



Adapted from "Surveyed Lands in New Westminster District 1876," Archives of British Columbia.

Granville is situated at Coal Harbour on the south side of the Inlet. It is a busy little town containing a number of general stores, three comfortable hotels, churches, telegraph office, etc. etc. Two good stage roads connect this place with Hastings and New Westminster, while its water communications to Moodyville and other points on the Inlet is supplied by steam ferry. It is the centre of the great lumber district which produces the supply for Hastings Mills and absorbs nearly all the trade of the numerous logging camps situated on English Bay and the North Arm of the Fraser River. It has a daily line of stages to Hastings and the New Westminster, its distance from the latter place being twelve miles.<sup>8</sup>

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The announcement by the CPR in 1885 that the terminus of the railway would be "in the immediate vicinity of Coal Harbour and English Bay" brought about an abrupt change in Granville's fortunes.<sup>9</sup> Up to this time it had been understood that the main line would terminate at Port Moody, some twelve miles to the east. While there had been many rumours that the terminus would be changed to the Coal Harbour region, businessmen and settlers were understandably reluctant about committing themselves. But with this uncertainty removed, conditions changed dramatically, and the previous trickle of migrants to the area soon became a steady stream of enthusiastic settlers.

The year 1886 was especially memorable. In April, the city of Vancouver was officially incorporated. Just two months later a devastating fire destroyed most of the city, and some twenty persons died. Yet migrants continued to pour in and recovery was rapid. CPR trains reached Port Moody in July, and from there it was only two hours by steamer to Vancouver. Survey crews, road gangs, home builders and real estate agents were busy throughout the year, and by Christmas the city's population had reached 2,000 — more than four times what it had been when the year began. When one realizes that it had taken some twenty years for the community to reach 500, the changes during 1886 were truly dramatic.

It was much the same in 1887. The big event of the year was the arrival of the first CPR train on May 23. It pulled in about one o'clock in the afternoon and virtually the entire city turned out. Businesses were

<sup>8</sup> R. T. Williams, ed., *British Columbia Directory 1884/85*.

<sup>9</sup> *Victoria Colonist*, 14 January 1885. Some investors knew of the decision well before the public announcement. See G. W. S. Brooks, "Edgar Crowe Baker: An Entrepreneur in Early British Columbia," M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1976, especially pp. 190-204 for the activities of a group of Victoria's businessmen who invested substantial sums in Coal Harbour, Burrard Inlet lands during 1884.

closed, city council adjourned its meeting, ships in the harbour were decorated, and the first brigade and city band led a parade of hundreds to the station. After a welcoming address by Mayor McLean, Mr. Harry Abbott of the CPR spoke. He mentioned the many difficulties that the CPR had overcome in order to arrive in Vancouver, but added "Here we are, and here we will remain." The crowd loved it. They were equally excited on June 13 when the CPR liner *Abyssinia* arrived in Vancouver from the Orient. Like her sister ships *Parthia* and *Batavia*, she was a bit slow for the competitive Atlantic run, but this was of little importance to the Vancouverites. What was important was that the city now had a regularly scheduled steamship service to China and Japan and was firmly established as a major depot in the all-British route to those distant lands. It was but one more piece of evidence that Vancouver was destined not only for national but, indeed, international stature.<sup>10</sup>

In a less dramatic way and at a less hectic pace, the entire period from 1886 to 1892 followed the pattern of 1886-1887. During this boom period the city absorbed some 12,000 migrants. City officials supervised the clearing and grading of some sixty miles of streets, provided schools and teachers for 2,000 students, established police and fire departments, and developed water lines, sewers, parks, and hospitals. The city's businessmen expanded the output of lumber and shingles, carried out construction valued at some \$4 million, built a thirteen-mile electric street railway system, created a variety of foundries, machine shops and small manufacturing plants, and installed up-to-date lighting and telephone systems. Year by year the little lumbering village of Granville faded into the background, and a virtually new city was created. While a great variety of individuals and institutions contributed to this process, the CPR was of fundamental importance.

First and foremost, the CPR ended Vancouver's isolation and provided both the means and the reason for moving there. While potential migrants of the early 1880s could always take the Northern Pacific Railroad to Portland or Seattle, and then catch a steamer heading north, there was little justification for doing so since Burrard Inlet contained only a few scattered villages and lumber mills. But as the terminus of a transcontinental railroad and the home port of a trans-Pacific steamship service, Vancouver's drawing power changed immeasurably. Migrants flooded in from Eastern Canada, Britain, the United States and the

<sup>10</sup> *D. News Advertiser* and *Van World*, 23-26 May, 13-16 June 1887, give detailed treatments. See also W. Kaye Lamb, "The Pioneer Days of the Trans-Pacific Service," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 149-60.

Orient. The federal census of 1891 showed that Vancouver had an official population of 13,709. Of these, Ontario accounted for some 3,200, the Maritimes 1,200, Quebec 600, and the Prairies 200. The city also received migrants from rural areas of the province as well as from Victoria and New Westminster, for some 1,400 Vancouverites were born in British Columbia itself. In addition, Great Britain and Ireland added 3,600, China 1,400, U.S.A. 1,200, and Europe 500.<sup>11</sup>

Beyond contributing to population growth, the CPR played a major role in determining the city's street layout and general land-use patterns. The government of British Columbia had agreed in 1884 that in return for the extension of the mainline from Port Moody to Coal Harbour and English Bay, it would grant the CPR some 6,000 acres of land in the vicinity of the new terminus.<sup>12</sup> On 13 February 1886, two significant Crown grants were issued to Donald A. Smith and Richard B. Angus as trustees of the CPR.<sup>13</sup> The first, amounting to some 480 acres, granted DL 541, the former government reserve on Coal Harbour, to the two trustees. This grant included thirty-nine specific lots (about eight acres) in the Granville townsite. The second granted DL 526 (some 5,795 acres) to Smith and Angus. With the exception of some logging roads and rough wagon trails, this immense nine-square-mile tract south of False Creek was largely untouched forest in 1886.

Private owners in the city also made donations. They realized that real estate values would soar if Vancouver got a transcontinental railroad. While it might have been painful to make voluntary contributions to an already large and powerful organization, they undoubtedly saw it as an appropriate move that would help assure future gains. David Oppenheimer, who owned a substantial amount of real estate in the area, played an important role in arranging these private donations to the CPR. Thus while E. C. Baker of Victoria resisted his suggestion, John Morton, one of the original "Three Greenhorns," reluctantly agreed to donate portions of his extensive West End holdings.<sup>14</sup>

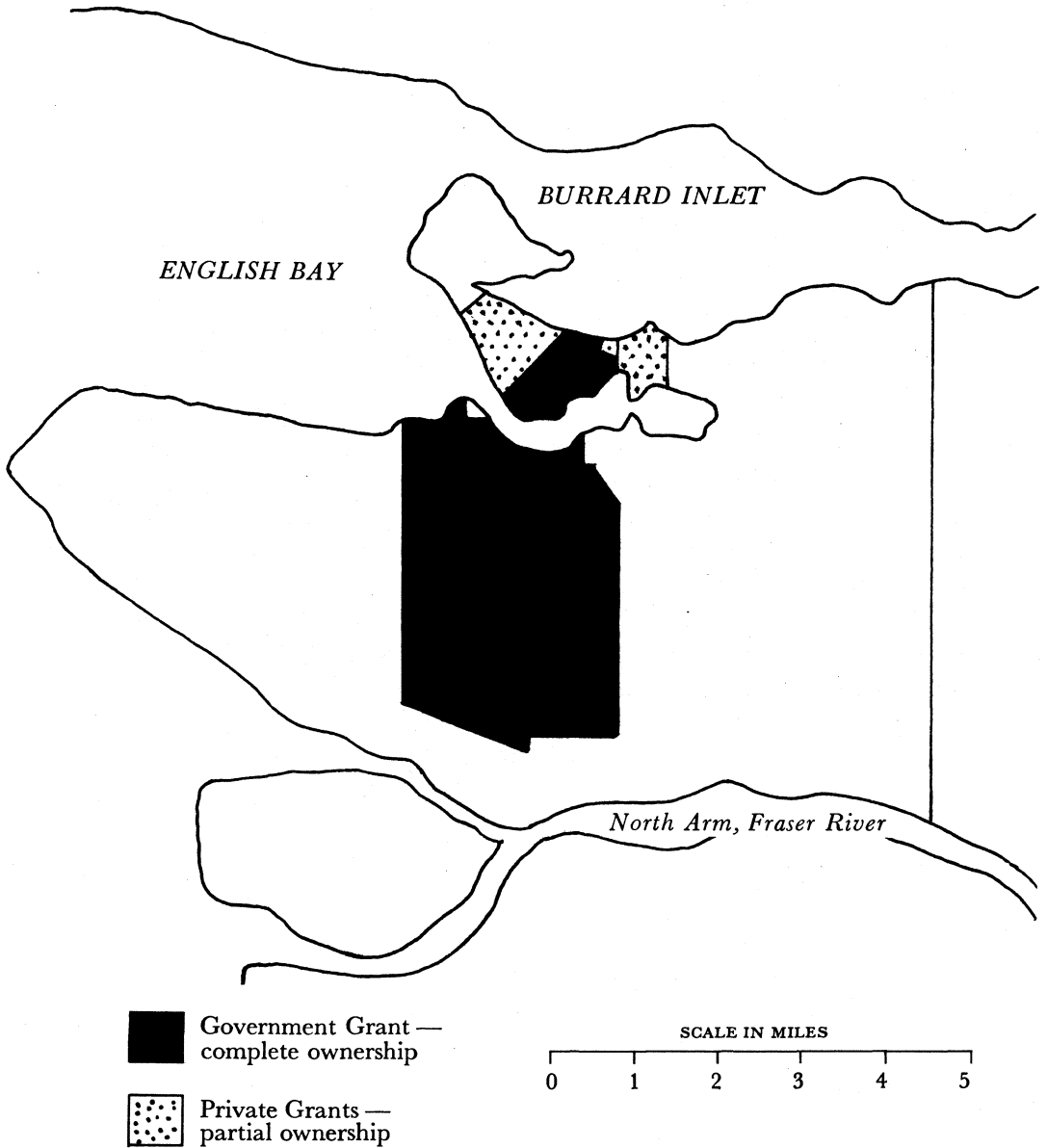
<sup>11</sup> *Census of Canada*, 1891, I:332. See p. 33, n. 55 for explanatory note.

<sup>12</sup> *B.C. Sessional Papers*, 1885, pp. 129-36, 385-86, provides the main details of the discussions between Premier William Smithe of B.C. and William Van Horne of the CPR. Both the government and the railway were anxious to have the main line extended to Coal Harbour, and while the CPR originally sought some 11,000 acres, they later accepted the offer of 6,000 acres. See also *Victoria Colonist*, 14 January 1885.

<sup>13</sup> *B.C. Legislative Assembly, Journals*, 1888, XL-XLI.

<sup>14</sup> Brooks, "Edgar Crowe Baker," p. 202, and J. S. Matthews, "Early Vancouver," II: 91-110 *passim*.

FIGURE 2  
CPR LAND GRANTS IN BURRARD INLET,  
ENGLISH BAY REGION 1886



Adapted from "The Canadian Pacific Railway Agreements with the Government of British Columbia," Archives of British Columbia.



It was generally understood that "the CPR got every third lot," but available evidence indicates that the CPR got about one block in every four in the West End, or some 135 acres in all. Since DL 196 to the east of the CPR's Crown grant was owned by a large number of persons, negotiations were prolonged. But ultimately satisfactory arrangements were made. While Vancouverites often referred to the agreement as the "85 acre steal," the CPR received about one block in six in this district, or some forty acres.<sup>15</sup>

The system of public and private grants to encourage railroad construction was a familiar practice in both American and Canadian cities, yet it is noteworthy that the CPR received much more land in Vancouver than in other western Canadian cities. Winnipeg, for example, contributed a city-built bridge, a \$200,000 cash bonus, approximately thirty acres of land for station and shops, and a permanent exemption from taxation on railway property.<sup>16</sup> In Regina and Calgary the CPR obtained only the alternate sections of land that were bestowed under the original federal charter. Had the Canadian government originally fixed on Coal Harbour rather than Port Moody as the terminus of the CPR, the standard federal land grants would have applied all the way to Vancouver. But the choice of Port Moody, and later extension to Vancouver, meant that special arrangements were made with the government of British Columbia. The CPR was undoubtedly aware of the steps taken by various American cities on the Pacific Coast. Thus, San Diego offered the Santa Fe Railroad some 15,000 acres, while Seattle in 1873 offered the Northern Pacific Railroad a package consisting of 7,500 town lots, 3,000 acres of land, \$50,000 cash, \$200,000 in bonds, as well as use of the city's waterfront.<sup>17</sup>

Regardless of the rationale for these grants, there is no doubt that the CPR's acquisition of 6,458 acres — some ten square miles — in the heart of the future city marked the most significant land transaction in Vancouver's entire history. The CPR immediately became the largest land-

<sup>15</sup> These estimates were made from an examination of L. A. Hamilton, *Map of Vancouver*, 1887, and the *Vancouver Assessment Roll*, 1888.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth*, pp. 70-73. Pierre Berton, *The National Dream, The Last Spike* (paperback edition), pp. 302-04, pp. 321-22. Max Foran, "Early Calgary, 1875-1895: The Controversy Surrounding the Townsite Location and the Direction of Town Expansion," in A. R. McCormack and Ian MacPherson, eds., *Cities in the West: Papers of the Western Canada Urban History Conference* (Ottawa, 1975), pp. 26-45.

<sup>17</sup> See Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, p. 59. Frederick J. Grant, *History of Seattle*, p. 147. The Northern Pacific rejected Seattle's offer and decided to locate the terminus in Tacoma where they had already bought up most of the future townsite.

owner in Vancouver, and in time their plans and decisions would shape the street layout and the general location of the city's commercial, industrial and residential areas. Vancouver's downtown core, with its banks, hotels, offices, depots, department stores and theatres, developed and remained firmly established within the original grant. The location of the CPR's lines, wharves and repair shops helped shape the industrial character of both the inlet and the False Creek area. Similarly, the residential character of the West End and of the vast area south of False Creek was influenced by the grants and subsequent decisions. When Shaughnessy Heights in the heart of this area was developed by the CPR in the early 1900s, it became and remained the city's most prestigious residential area. Similarly, it is no coincidence that the eastern boundary of the grant still marks the unofficial dividing line between the prosperous, established west side of the city and the less affluent working-class east.

The complex job of preparing a plan for the future city fell largely on L. A. Hamilton, the CPR's surveyor, and later land commissioner. He had already surveyed Regina, Moose Jaw, Swift Current and Calgary for the CPR. But Vancouver already had some 2,000 persons on the site, and as the future terminus of the railway played a larger role in CPR thinking than did the prairie cities, Hamilton's task was to utilize effectively the entire ten-square-mile grant. The 480 acres between Burrard Inlet and False Creek were especially important. Although this land accounted for less than a tenth of the total grant, it would be the area for the earliest and most intense development, and judicious placement of CPR facilities was essential. Hamilton also had to take into account the existing streets in the townsite of Granville to the east, as well as those to the west planned by Morton, Hailstone, Brighthouse and others. The fact that the CPR now owned over 1,000 building lots in the adjacent districts merely reinforced the necessity for convenient connection with the core district. Finally, some form of north-south axis had to be created which would facilitate the future development of the nine square miles that lay south of False Creek.

Under the direction of Hamilton, H. Cambie and H. Abbott, all of whom would have streets named after them, the entire area was surveyed in 1885 and 1886. Existing arrangements in the old Granville townsite and the West End determined the location of many streets, but the CPR's detailed plans ultimately shaped the layout of much of the city.<sup>18</sup> The

<sup>18</sup> A "Plan of the City of Vancouver—1886," by H. B. Smith, predates a better known 1887 map by L. A. Hamilton. The earlier map is a detailed, accurate one showing the precise location of various CPR facilities. Smith spent most of his career

placement of the CPR station, office, wharf and Hotel "Vancouver" along the Granville Street axis was especially significant, for it pulled the centre of the city well to the west of the existing townsite. This placement avoided the extensive building and settlement in Gastown, gave the CPR room to develop their own facilities, and also meant that real estate profits would not have to be shared with others. Development around the original townsite continued, and this eastern section was soon identified as a working-class, industrial district. While the western section of the city would be less heavily populated in the early years, it attracted a more prosperous clientele, commanded the highest prices and held the greatest prestige.<sup>19</sup>

As in most western American and Canadian cities, Vancouver's streets were set out on a basic grid pattern. Hamilton would have extended most of the east-west streets in the CPR district directly through to the West End so as to form one unified region. But some West End owners disapproved, and the proposal was scrapped. In the final plan, only the alternate streets were through streets, with the break coming at Burrard, the original boundary between DL 185 and DL 541. The longitudinal axis of West End blocks was east-west, while those of the CPR district were north-south. This break in the street pattern tended to set off the West End as a distinct district, and helped consolidate its residential character.

In the largely untouched area south of False Creek, Hamilton had a freer hand. A numbered system of east-west avenues was established, with the cross streets named after trees — Arbutus, Cypress, Fir, Hemlock, Oak. Granville Street was extended across False Creek to run through the centre of the CPR land grant. While Hamilton's detailed plan carried only to Ninth Avenue, about a half mile south of False Creek, his basic street system would in time be extended all the way to the Fraser River, some four miles farther south.<sup>20</sup>

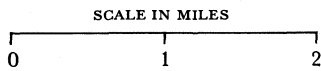
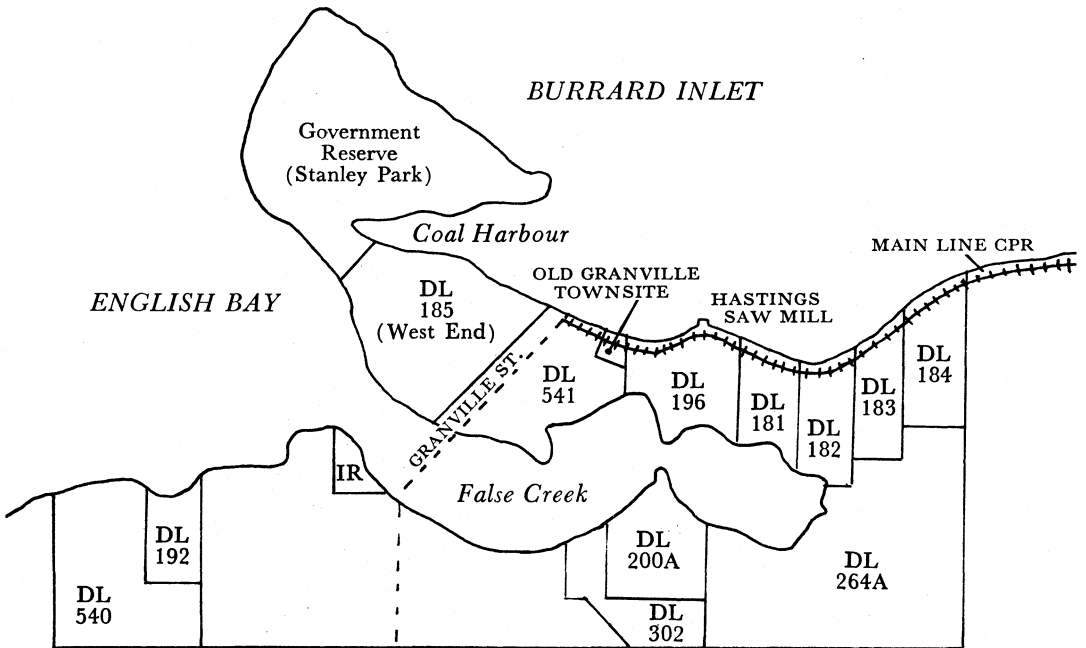
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as an engineer and surveyor with the Vancouver Water Works and assisted Cambie in the early CPR surveys. The 1886 map by Smith is available in the Vancouver City Archives, while Hamilton's 1887 map is in the B.C. Archives.

<sup>19</sup> Early real estate ads clearly indicate the CPR's assessment of their property as well as their long-range plans. Lots on or near Burrard Inlet commanded the highest prices, with a steady decline as one moved south towards False Creek. The only north-south street on which lots were offered for sale was Granville. *Vancouver News Advertiser*, 1 June 1886, 10 February 1887. See *News Advertiser*, 14 November 1888, for early identification of the city's districts.

<sup>20</sup> The Hamilton material is based primarily on letters which he wrote to J. S. Walker of the Vancouver Town Planning Commission in 1929 and to City Archivist J. S. Matthews in 1934 and 1936. Though written some fifty years after the events described, they are invaluable. See Matthews, "Early Vancouver," I: 328; III: 207-08.

FIGURE 3  
VANCOUVER AS INCORPORATED IN 1886  
SHOWING EARLIER DISTRICT LOTS



During the boom years from 1886 to 1892, Vancouver made a rapid transition from primary producing centre to one offering a great variety of goods and services. Whereas the great majority of its workers were engaged in the lumber and logging industry in the mid 1880s, the pattern was sharply different in 1892. By that time Vancouver had a labour force of some 5,000. Of these about 900 persons were employed in retail and wholesale firms; 800 worked in locally oriented bakeries, confectioneries and machine shops; 750 were in the building trades; 500 were in domestic and personal service as waitresses, cooks and janitors; another 300 were involved in local transportation with the streetcar line or drayage firms; finance and real estate employed about 140; and there were 70 professionals. Altogether these locally oriented activities accounted for 65 to 70 per cent of the city's labour force. The typical dairy, bakery or hotel was small, with less than six employees, and only the occasional foundry or machine shop had twenty-five workers.<sup>21</sup>

While the sawmill worker and logger no longer dominated the city's economy, they were still important, and helped sustain much service-type employment. In 1892 Vancouver's nine lumber and shingle mills employed some 900 workers, with the Hastings Saw Mill still the largest. Benjamin Rogers' B.C. Sugar Refinery had about fifty workers, while at the peak of the salmon-canning season local canneries employed 200, but for most of the year operated with small staffs. All of these plants were geared primarily to export markets and together accounted for 20 per cent of the local labour force.

Vancouver's largest single employer was the CPR. The construction of rail lines, wharves, freight sheds, station and hotel had created considerable employment in the 1880s, and this increased with the opening of its trans-Pacific steamship service and the development of its passenger and freight service with eastern Canada.<sup>22</sup> By the early 1890s, some 500 to 600 persons were employed as CPR labourers, mechanics, trainmen, conductors, freight handlers, engineers, janitors and cooks.<sup>23</sup> In a private

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See also Hamilton to Matthews, 27 April 1936 in Matthews, Uncatalogued Material, Vancouver City Archives.

<sup>21</sup> Williams, *B.C. Directory 1892*, pp. 788-90. *Census of Canada, 1901*. Vol. III, *Manufacturing*, p. 326, states that in 1891 Vancouver had 94 manufacturing plants, with a total of 1,084 workers.

<sup>22</sup> Douglas Sladen, "Vancouver, A Great Seaport of the Twentieth Century," Frank Leslie's *Popular Monthly*, May 1890, XXIV, no. 5, pp. 513-22.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, *B.C. Directory 1889*, pp. 254-71, provides a valuable listing of all persons employed in the Pacific Division of the CPR. Of some 1,300 listed, 432 gave Van-

capacity, CPR officials like William Van Horne, George Stephen and Donald Smith all developed properties on Granville Street. The close affiliation of the CPR with the Hudson's Bay Company and the Bank of Montreal encouraged those national concerns to locate on Granville Street, and the federal government, too, chose that thoroughfare for Vancouver's main post office.<sup>24</sup>

While these diverse activities were significant, the CPR's greatest contribution to Vancouver's growth and economic development was an indirect and intangible one. The very existence of its rail and steamship facilities shaped a whole set of expectations about the city's future. Thousands of migrants reasoned that with such transportation facilities Vancouver was destined for inevitable prosperity. The city would surely become the depot for prairie grain exports, as well as the processing and export point of the province's lumber, fish, ores and manufactured products. The fact that grain shipments were negligible in the early 1890s, that the trans-Pacific trade was modest, and that no major national demand existed for B.C.'s raw materials could be ignored.<sup>25</sup> People were convinced about Vancouver's future, and as long as these convictions were sustained, migration continued. In time, Vancouver would become more integrated and dependent on national economic trends. But in its early years, images and expectations were of critical importance, and basic to this entire set of expectations was the CPR.

In the exuberant atmosphere of the late 1880s, with people pouring into the city and with both newcomers and residents alike aware of the opportunities in a booming real estate market, no single organization could dominate the entire field.<sup>26</sup> While the CPR was the largest landowner in the city, it had to share the field with many, many others. The city had some thirty real estate firms, with the Oppenheimer Bros., Ross

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cover as their home address. The 1892 Directory estimated that 600 persons in the city were employed by the CPR.

<sup>24</sup> *News Advertiser*, 23 August 1887, 27 August 1887, 14 November 1888. Goad's *Fire Insurance Map of Vancouver*, 1897.

<sup>25</sup> Between 1887 and 1891, for example, some 85 per cent of the passengers carried were Chinese, in steerage. Tea, silk, rice and general merchandise made up the chief cargoes. Beyond the longshoremen who transferred the material from ship to railway car, or vice versa, the activity created little direct employment. See W. Kaye Lamb, "The Pioneer Days of the Trans-Pacific Service," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 153-58.

<sup>26</sup> A group of real estate firms established the Vancouver Real Estate Board in 1888, with the hope of standardizing fees and regulating the local real estate market. It achieved little and lasted only six months. See Vancouver Real Estate Board, MSS, Vancouver City Archives.

& Ceperley, Berwick & Wulffsohn, Innes & Richards, R. G. Tatlow and C. D. Rand being especially active.<sup>27</sup> Occasionally, groups of investors found it advantageous to incorporate as land companies, since the combined assets made it possible to deal in larger units of land. The Vancouver Land and Improvement Company, predominantly a group from Victoria, was the largest organization of this type. A great variety of individual investors were also active, with Dr. I. W. Powell, C. T. Dupont, C. G. Major and J. Robson being especially prominent. Hundreds of city residents bought lots, sometimes with the idea of building, often as a speculation. Finally, a host of persons outside the city were also interested. Whether living in Ayr, Scotland, Shelburne, Nova Scotia, High River, Alberta, or Orlando, Florida, all were aware of the possibilities of making money in Vancouver real estate.<sup>28</sup>

Land ownership diffused rapidly during the boom years. This was especially evident in the commercial and business district along Cordova, Hastings and Granville Streets, as well as in sections of the West End. But away from this core in the thinly settled districts, a few large owners predominated. While the following lists reveal both continuity and change among Vancouver's leading landowners, the pre-eminence of the CPR is unquestionable.

CPR management followed a cautious, prudent, long-range policy in the sale of its extensive holdings. While they might grumble about the level of taxes on their property, they sold lots only in the city proper during the 1880s and 1890s and held most of their extensive lands south of False Creek for future sale. In the early years especially, buyers of CPR real estate had to meet very stiff terms. The usual requirement was one-third down, one-third in six months, and the balance in twelve months. Discounts of 20 to 30 per cent were offered if buildings were erected on the property within twelve months.<sup>29</sup> According to C. D. Rand, the memories of the catastrophic slump in Winnipeg real estate after the

<sup>27</sup> Many of these bought in public auctions of Crown lands on English Bay in 1886. See *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 19 January 1886 and 17 April 1886. Robert Dunsmuir, Victoria's leading financier, was the largest single buyer.

<sup>28</sup> Material on real estate activity in Vancouver is voluminous. Newspaper advertisements are an ever-present source, but for more precise insight, the Vancouver City Archives has an abundance of excellent material. The Vancouver Assessment Roll 1888, the David Oppenheimer MSS, and the F. C. Innes MSS are especially valuable.

<sup>29</sup> *News Advertiser*, 1 June 1886.

<sup>30</sup> The 1887 data are from Picken's *Vancouver Handbook 1887*. The 1889 and 1891 are from unidentified newspaper clippings, circa March 1889 and circa September 1891, available in Bell Irving MSS, vol. 1 and vol. 5, Vancouver City Archives.

TABLE 1

MAJOR REAL ESTATE OWNERS IN VANCOUVER — 1887, 1889, 1891  
WITH ASSESSED VALUE OF THEIR HOLDINGS<sup>30</sup>

1887		1889		1891	
CPR	1,000,000	CPR	1,700,000	CPR	2,000,000
Hastings Saw Mill	250,000	Van. Improvement Co.	225,000	Van. Improvement Co.	330,000
Oppenheimer Bros.	125,000	Oppenheimer Bros.	150,000	Oppenheimer Bros.	200,000
Brighthouse & Hailstone	100,000	Isaac Robinson	125,000	Isaac Robinson	200,000
Major Dupont	75,000	J. W. Horne	125,000	J. W. Horne	156,000
Dr. Powell	75,000	Dr. Whetham	100,000	A. G. Ferguson	140,000
John Morton	60,000	A. G. Ferguson	100,000	Whetham Estate	125,000
H. V. Edmonds	50,000	Berwick & Wulffsohn	60,000	C. E. Perkins	120,000
J. W. Horne	40,000	H. A. Dewindt	60,000	Street Ry. Co.	110,000
G. E. Corbould	30,000	Town & Robson	60,000	H. V. Edmonds	100,000
C. G. Major	25,000	John Morton	55,000	Van Land & Sec. Co.	100,000
E. Crow Baker	25,000	Sam Brighthouse	50,000	C. T. Dunbar et al.	100,000
W. B. Wilson	25,000	Wm. Hailstone	50,000	Maj. Gen. Twigge et al.	100,000
Royal City Plan. Mills	25,000	H. V. Edmonds	50,000	Waterworks Co. Ltd.	100,000
R. H. Alexander	25,000	I. W. Powell	50,000	S. Brighthouse	75,000
Gilmore & Clark	20,000	C. T. Dupont	50,000	J. Mulligan et al.	75,000
A. G. Ferguson	20,000	C. G. Major	50,000	B. C. Mills	63,000
Dr. Milne	15,000	Jonathon Miller	40,000	P. & W. Thompson	60,000
Abrahams & Co.	15,000	Hon. John Robson	40,000	H. W. Chamberlain	60,000
Jos. Griffith	15,000	H. Bell Irving	35,000	H. Hodden	60,000
E. McKendry	10,000	Springer & Van Bramer	35,000	Hon. F. G. Vernon	56,000
John Dougall	10,000	J. M. Le Fevre	30,000	J. Miller	56,000
Gideon Robertson	10,000	Harvey Hayden	30,000	Berwick & Wulffsohn	50,000
B. Springer	10,000	Hon. L. G. Veron	30,000	H. Abbott	50,000
Wm. Power	10,000	F. C. Innes	30,000	B. W. Crownshields	50,000
		Hastings Mills Co.	30,000	A. G. Delbruck	50,000
		George Turner	30,000	H. Bell Irving	50,000
		A. W. Sullivan	30,000	F. C. Innes	50,000
		J. M. Spinks	25,000	Gilmore & Clark	50,000
		C. D. Rand	25,000	L. A. Hamilton	50,000
		Inman & Thompson	25,000	Bodwell Bros.	50,000
		L. A. Hamilton	25,000	J. H. Ferguson	50,000
		Thos. Dunn	25,000	H. J. Chambers	50,000
		Jos. Griffins	25,000	C. G. Major	45,000
		A. G. Delbruck	25,000	Rand Bros.	45,000
		Gilmore & Clark	25,000	Springer & Van Bramer	45,000
		New York Block	25,000	J. M. Forbes	40,000
		W. C. Van Horne	25,000	H. A. Jones	40,000
		R. G. Tatlow	22,000	George Turner	40,000
		Royal City Plan. Mills	20,000	H. P. McCraney	40,000
		Joseph Mannion	20,000	J. C. Keith	40,000
		McLennan & McFreely	20,000	John Morton	40,000
		H. A. Jones	20,000	Inman & Thompson	40,000
		George Black	20,000	E. Courage	40,000
		J. M. Holland	15,000	W. Hailstone	39,000
		Hudson Bay Co.	15,000	A. Cochrane	35,000
		R. H. Alexander	15,000	J. T. Mahon	35,000
		J. D. Townley	15,000	W. C. Van Horne	32,000
		G. E. Corbould	15,000	J. D. Townley	30,000
		M. Costello	15,000		



great boom of 1881-82 were still very fresh, and the approach in Vancouver was to avoid the kind of "dishonest speculation" that had led to that setback.<sup>31</sup> Whether CPR policies actually retarded the rise in real estate prices is unknown. But it is noteworthy that while prices levelled off, and even slumped after 1893, they did not collapse in the manner of Winnipeg or of Tacoma.<sup>32</sup>

Even with its conservative approach to real estate activity, the CPR sold its city holdings briskly, and profits from land transactions were an important part of the railway's total earnings. The Annual Report for 1888 pointed out that townsites along the line were "contributing handsomely to revenues. At Vancouver alone, the sales from the townsite last year were \$483,984, making a total of \$868,059 since the town was laid out three years ago." The report went on to say that the proceeds from these sales went into the construction and equipment of hotels at Banff and Vancouver. These had "a marked effect in attracting through passengers and tourists."<sup>33</sup>

In the same way that private owners had granted land to the CPR in the expectation that remaining holdings would rise in value, the CPR itself promised sixty-eight building lots to the Vancouver Electric Railway and Light Company if it would extend its tramline to the Fairview, Mount Pleasant districts south of False Creek.<sup>34</sup> This local concern had begun laying tracks in 1889, and the later thrust across False Creek and the completion of the Fairview Belt Line gave the city a thirteen-mile electric street railway system by 1891. The east-west lines on Pender and Hastings, coupled with the extensions along Granville, Tenth Avenue and Westminster, clearly defined the heart of the city and indicated the general thrust of population movement. While the downtown area had a population of some 10,000 when the street railway system was begun, the Fairview Belt Line clearly preceded rather than followed a population buildup. At the time this extension was completed, the Fairview, Mount Pleasant area had only 186 households.

The first large sale of CPR lands south of False Creek occurred on 31

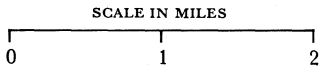
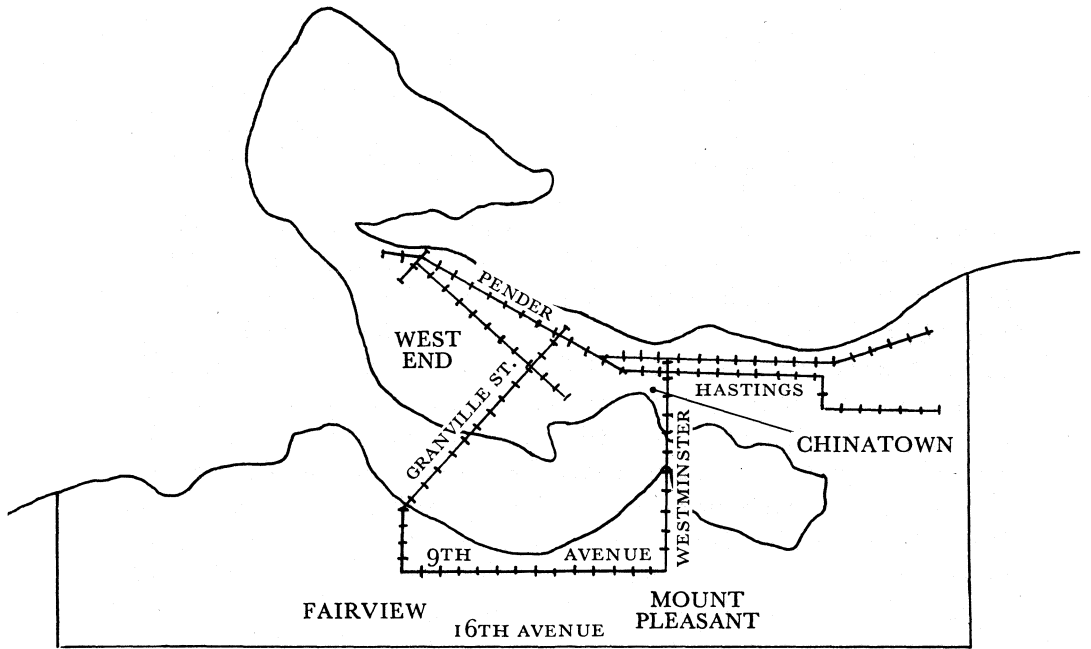
<sup>31</sup> D. Sladen, "Vancouver, A Great Seaport."

<sup>32</sup> Vancouver journalists never tired of pointing out that their real estate market was vastly different from the highly publicized, vigorously promoted patterns of Tacoma and Seattle. See for example *W. News Advertiser*, 4 June 1890, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> *CPR Annual Report for 1888*, as quoted in *W. News Advertiser*, 15 May 1889, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> High construction costs coupled with the thin population and light traffic posed severe financial problems for the tramway company. By 1895 it was in receivership. Patricia E. Roy, "The British Columbia Electric Railway Company 1897-1928," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1970, pp. 22-34.

FIGURE 4  
VANCOUVER'S STREET CAR SYSTEM — 1891



Adapted from B.C. Electric Railway Company papers, 1907, and Harland Bartholomew, *A Plan for the City of Vancouver*, (1929).

July 1890 with a public auction of some Fairview holdings. Beyond the fact that the auction shows the CPR's role in opening up new city districts, and that the company received \$118,000 from the day's activities, the auction also shows the proliferation of landownership in the city and the continued importance of a few major investors.

TABLE 2

CPR LAND AUCTION IN FAIRVIEW DISTRICT, 1890<sup>35</sup>

<i>Lots Purchased</i>	<i>Buyers</i>	<i>Total Lots Purchased</i>
1	49	49
2	14	28
3	7	21
4	4	16
5-9	9	47
10 or more	9	210
	Total 92	Total 371

As can be seen above, a few major buyers played a very important role at this auction. For, while ninety-two buyers purchased a total of 371 lots, a small group of nine buyers obtained 210 lots, or well over half the total.<sup>36</sup> While some buyers undoubtedly thought of building on their newly acquired property, all were aware of the possibilities of an early resale and a quick profit.

In summary, then, there can be little doubt of the ramifications of the CPR on Vancouver's economic life and physical development. Whether one considers the actual migrants it carried to the city, the direct and indirect employment it generated, the sets of expectations it shaped, or the way it determined Vancouver's streets and districts, all were important. Similarly, its real estate prices in Fairview, its wage rates for unskilled labourers, its freight charges for lumber shipments to the Prairies

<sup>35</sup> *Vancouver News Advertiser*, 31 July 1890.

<sup>36</sup> Prices averaged \$300 per lot, but ranged from \$100 to \$900. As a rule, the big buyer sought out expensive lots, while those who purchased only one or two lots tended to choose the less expensive variety. Among prominent buyers were H. A. Jones, F. Granville, C. D. Rand, D. Oppenheimer, H. T. Ceperley, and J. Rounsefel, all of whom were active in Vancouver real estate circles. Many of these men also bought at an earlier government land auction. See *Vancouver News Advertiser*, 25 June 1890.

and its room rents in the Hotel Vancouver all played a part in shaping the local economy.

\* \* \*

Vancouver's politics and municipal activities in the 19th century are still largely unexplored, and any attempt to assess the relative importance of the CPR in this realm must be considered tentative. An examination of local newspapers and council minutes suggests that in the rapidly expanding city of the late 1880s and early 1890s, no consistent political alignments were evident. Controversies abounded, but tended to reflect a great variety of rivalries, jealousies and interests rather than any consistent political grouping. As in the city's economic life, the CPR was a major institution with substantial influence, but it was not all-powerful nor did it dominate city politics. Its impact was greatest in the early years but tended to subside as the city developed.

During these years Vancouver was divided into five wards, with two aldermen elected from each ward and the mayor elected at large. Elections were held annually, but with few exceptions created little excitement or controversy. In fourteen mayoralty elections between 1886 and 1900, two were by acclamation, in two others the winner swept all wards, and on the average only 30 per cent of the eligible voters actually voted.<sup>37</sup> Voting on city bylaws, especially on bond issues to cover a variety of public projects, showed much the same pattern. Most were approved by substantial majorities in all five wards and only occasionally were defeated. Voter turnout in these special elections was lower still. Whether through boredom, indifference or satisfaction with the management of city affairs, the turnout averaged only 10 per cent of the eligible voters.

With annual elections, there was considerable turnover in city council, yet there is no doubt that the CPR was well represented. Between 1886 and 1900, eight different CPR officials served on council, and in only three of those years did council lack a direct representative of the railway. As a rule most of these "CPR Aldermen" lived in or near the West End and served Ward 1.<sup>38</sup> One must proceed cautiously in attempting to assess

<sup>37</sup> See Vancouver's *Voters' List 1888-1900*, and *Record of Elections* to 31 December 1924, in Vancouver City Archives.

<sup>38</sup> "CPR Aldermen" with their railway position and years on council were: L. A. Hamilton, land commissioner 1886, 1887; W. F. Salsbury, treasurer 1889, 1893, 1894; Dr. J. M. Lefevre, physician 1887, 1888, 1889; J. M. Browning, land commissioner 1890; H. E. Connor, freight agent 1892; J. J. Gavin, conductor 1892; H. G. Painter, accountant 1896, 1897, 1898; H. B. Gilmour, machine shop foreman 1899. Identification was obtained primarily from Williams, *B.C. Directory*. The 1889 issue, pp. 254-71, was especially valuable.

the role and influence of this group, for, while they undoubtedly gave the CPR a voice on council, this does not automatically show that they dominated or controlled that body. Most of the day-by-day work of council focused on issues like the clearing, grading and paving of streets, the construction of schools, fire halls, parks, sewer lines and electrical systems, the supervision of police officers and health inspectors, the issuance of licences, and the approval of a variety of expenditures. While these issues might impinge upon the CPR in a variety of ways, they were essentially urban issues of interest and concern to the entire community.

The problem of garbage disposal, for example, might be taken as a fairly representative urban issue faced by city officials. In the early 1880s, when the population amounted to a few hundred, garbage disposal was of little consequence. Most persons either burned their trash, tossed it in the inlet, or abandoned it in any nearby ditch or gully. By 1888, with the population at 8,000, the city health inspector recommended that garbage disposal be centralized and suggested the City Wharf as a convenient dumping ground. Not only was it conveniently located but "the water here is deep."<sup>39</sup> A year later the problem had increased, and the harbour master pointed out that to avoid "unnecessary stench" it was essential that city scavengers throw the garbage "clear of the wharf stringers."<sup>40</sup> Apparently the request was not met, for the right to use this wharf as a garbage dump was withdrawn. After consideration of a variety of alternatives, the city began to rent the wharf of the Union Steamship Company and paid \$30 per month for its use. But garbage soon filled the immediate area, and though invisible at high tide, it was visible, messy and smelly when the tide went out.<sup>41</sup> Even though the wharf was later extended to deeper water, the problem did not disappear. By 1891, with the population at 13,000, council was warned that the garbage would soon "overwhelm us." In April of that year the Union Steamship Company offered to build a scow, capable of carrying fifty tons, which would carry city garbage once a day to deep water in Burrard Inlet. The scow cost \$1,200, the services \$200 per month.<sup>42</sup> This solved the problem for the time being, at least, and little further reference was made to it. The change from simple, inexpensive, pre-urban facilities to the complex, costly facilities required by a heavily populated area could be duplicated

<sup>39</sup> Vancouver City Clerk Incoming Correspondence, (cited hereafter as *Van CCI In Corr*), 1:469.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1290-92.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:3055.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:4618-22.

by many other municipal services. While the CPR might have had special interests, the issue certainly went far beyond the railway's interest alone.

Some evidence suggests covert concessions to the CPR, but it tends to be fragmentary and ambiguous. Thus six of the "CPR Aldermen" served on the council's Board of Works between 1886 and 1892. The city expanded rapidly during these years, and one might assume that in their responsibility for the city's roads, sidewalks and bridges, these men had plenty of opportunities to benefit the CPR. But an examination of early minutes of the Board of Works uncovered little evidence of favouritism.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, occasional spats in council suggest a clear-cut, pro-CPR West End group against an anti-CPR East End group.<sup>44</sup> But it is noteworthy that Harry Abbott, General Superintendent of the CPR and a prominent West-End, was a supporter of Mayor Oppenheimer, who, in turn, was associated with the east end of the city.<sup>45</sup> A controversy in 1888-89 over the placement of the post office is also instructive. This federal choice undoubtedly pleased the CPR, but it was strongly opposed by local businessmen who sought a more easterly location. Yet the argument that followed centred on the relative merits of different locations, with no emphasis on the benefits that a Granville Street location had for the CPR.<sup>46</sup>

While little evidence was uncovered which showed manipulation by "CPR Aldermen" on behalf of the railway, this does not mean that city council was indifferent to the CPR. Rather, during the 1880s council did virtually everything possible to cater to the company's needs and wishes, and gratefully received any favours that the CPR turned over to them. But there was nothing covert about such transactions. Council, editorial writers and the general public were all aware that Vancouver's prosperity resulted from the CPR's completion, and all agreed that any steps that would bind the railway to the city were not only sensible but eminently desirable. In 1886, 1887 and 1888 few would challenge the assertion "What's good for the CPR is good for Vancouver."

With its small population, limited tax base and lack of power or influence, the city was also in no position whatever to bargain with its powerful benefactor. The fact that council had to seek out private donations

<sup>43</sup> Vancouver Board of Works, Minutes, 1888.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, the clash between Alderman Oppenheimer and Lefevre as reported in the *Vancouver News Advertiser*, 19 July 1887, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> *W. News Advertiser*, 14 November 1888.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

of lots for the construction of a city hall,<sup>47</sup> that it had to negotiate with the railroad for the purchase of school sites, firehall locations and park lands,<sup>48</sup> and that it relied on the CPR for a hospital building, as well as for the free services of the company's physician to attend to the city's poor,<sup>49</sup> tells us a good deal about the city's weakness and limited resources. When council instructed the City Clerk to ask the CPR if they would "entertain an offer of exemption from taxation on their workshops, yards, roundhouses, etc.,"<sup>50</sup> there was little doubt of the power-relationship between the two institutions. In due course, council offered some seventy-five acres of land on the north shore of False Creek for CPR's shops and freight yards. All were to be exempt from taxation for thirty years. City electors strongly supported council's action. Like their aldermen, they too were anxious to bind the CPR to Vancouver.<sup>51</sup>

As the 1880s slipped by, the courteous, co-operative, deferential tone that originally characterized city-CPR relations gradually changed, and a more matter-of-fact, businesslike tone became evident. In part, this resulted from Vancouver's increased size and strength, but the sheer number of issues that had to be confronted also contributed. Whether it involved the division of responsibility for the clearing and grading of roads on CPR lands, the need for protective gates at downtown railroad crossings, or the need for a draw in the CPR trestle across False Creek, city officials pushed their case strongly. Some aldermen, irritated by CPR delays, considered it "a waste of time to appeal to them"; other observers insisted that "we are in a position to make our own terms."<sup>52</sup>

By the 1890s, CPR officials were becoming exasperated by what they considered the assertive, self-willed, unappreciative behaviour of "their" city. General Superintendent Harry Abbott reminded council in 1891 that Vancouver property owed its value "almost entirely . . . to the existence of the CPR." Unlike Toronto, where passenger and freight traffic boosted the CPR, the company derived only a "small income"

<sup>47</sup> Vancouver City Council Minutes, cited hereafter as *Van. C.C. Min.* 25 May, 7 June, 28 July, 2 August, 8 August, 15 October 1886.

<sup>48</sup> H. Abbott to T. F. McGuigan, 10 November 1887, in *Van CCL In Corr*, 1:35. L. A. Hamilton to D. Oppenheimer, *Van CCL In Corr*. Additional vol. 1886-1891. *Van C.C. Min.*, 2 May, 7 November 1887 and 2 July 1889.

<sup>49</sup> *Daily News Advertiser*, 10 August 1887, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> *Van C.C. Min.*, 1 November 1886.

<sup>51</sup> *Van C.C. Min.*, 16 November 1886 and 28 February 1887. See also *Daily News Advertiser*, 17 and 24 May 1887.

<sup>52</sup> See for example *Van C.C. Min.*, 26 March, 2 April 1888; 10 June, 27 September 1890; 16 February 1891; *Daily News Advertiser*, 19 July 1891.

from Vancouver business, and the connection there was "immeasurably in favour of the city."<sup>53</sup>

The CPR was especially distressed in 1892 when council authorized, and voters approved, the granting of a \$300,000 bonus to the Burrard Inlet and Fraser Valley Railway. This local line was to go from Vancouver to the U.S. boundary at Sumas, where it would link up with the Northern Pacific Railway. The move essentially meant that the CPR would have to share Vancouver traffic with a major American rival. This was an especially painful blow to the CPR directors, who still considered Vancouver "their" city, and made doubly so by the fact that they claimed to pay 20 to 25 per cent of Vancouver's total taxes. The CPR retaliated by stopping all work on a new station in the city. While the contemplated line was not built at that time, the incident clearly showed that by the 1890s the needs and wishes of the city and of the railway no longer coincided.<sup>54</sup> It also suggested that Vancouver had enough strength and economic clout to proceed as it saw fit. It could not ignore the CPR, but the utter dependence of the 1880s was clearly a thing of the past.

\* \* \*

While Vancouver had definite social and economic distinctions — with blocks in the West End symbolizing the heights and "the Rancherie," a cluster of shacks east of Hastings Mill, representing the depths — the city as a whole did not suffer intense social cleavage. Rather it was a decidedly homogeneous community. At least 85 to 90 per cent of the population spoke English, and while all British immigrants carried their class associations with them to Vancouver, these were somewhat muted in the Canadian environment. Vancouver's population was also overwhelmingly Protestant. In 1891 Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist congregations accounted for fifteen out of eighteen churches in the city. Similarly, property ownership was widespread. In 1887, 582 out of 880 persons (66 per cent) on the voters' list were identified as "owners." By 1894, almost 75 per cent of the 6,285 voters were "owners." Only in Ward 2, where the city's boarding houses and hotels were concentrated, did "tenants" outnumber "owners." This basic homogeneity made for an orderly, stable, secure society with few "outsiders." Some

<sup>53</sup> Abbott to City Clerk, *Van. CCl In Corr*, 9 February 1891.

<sup>54</sup> See *News Advertiser*, 16 August and 21, 25, 28 September 1892. Vancouver's action had clearly shocked and pained CPR officials. Five years later in separate visits to Vancouver, both President Van Horne and Vice-President Shaughnessy referred to this incident. See *News Advertiser*, 8 September 1897, p. 6, and 27 October 1897, p. 6.



idea of the importance of the English-speaking element is evident in the following table.

TABLE 3  
BIRTHPLACE OF VANCOUVER'S POPULATION<sup>55</sup>

	1891		1901	
	No.	%	No.	%
Total Native Born	6,739	49.3	14,452	53.6
Maritimes	1,159	8.5	1,760	6.5
Quebec	639	4.7	772	2.9
Ontario	3,254	23.8	4,920	18.2
Prairies	264	1.9	638	2.4
B.C. and Other	1,423	10.4	6,362	23.6
Total Foreign Born	6,970	50.8	12,558	46.4
England & Wales	2,261	16.5	3,870	14.3
Scotland	783	5.7	1,094	4.0
Ireland	554	3.9	618	2.3
United States	1,174	8.6	2,232	8.3
Europe	505	3.7	1,100	4.0
China & Japan	1,434	10.5	3,388	12.5
Other	259	1.9	256	1.0
Total Population	13,709		27,010	

There were some exceptions to the preponderance of white, English-speaking Protestants, with the Chinese the most conspicuous. Originally introduced in substantial numbers for construction work on the CPR, many settled in the city once the main work on the railroad was over. Here too they were involved in the heavy work of clearing and grading land, and gradually moved into a variety of menial tasks in laundries, hotels, boarding houses and private homes. At a time when the average labourer earned \$2 to \$2.25 per day, his Chinese counterpart received seventy-five cents. Vancouver's Chinatown centred in a few blocks clustered around Dupont Street, not too far from the CPR repair shops

<sup>55</sup> The detailed data are estimates only and are probably accurate to  $\pm 15$  per cent. They were extrapolated from New Westminster District data for 1891, and Burrard District data for 1901, with allowance made for the approximate number of British Columbia-born Indians in those districts. See *Census of Canada, 1891*, I:332; *Ibid.*, 1901, I:418; and *Annual Report Department of Indian Affairs 1892*, 311-15, *Ibid.*, 1901, 158-66.

and the mud flats of False Creek. As in most North American cities, it was largely segregated and considered one of the city's least desirable areas. Whether viewed with compassion, wonder, amused toleration or outright hostility, the Chinese were seen as an utterly inferior breed well outside the main stream of society. Except for a riot in 1887 when local mobs destroyed Chinese living quarters and drove many of them from the city, there was little racial violence in the city, and a comparable outbreak would not occur for another twenty years. But in their editorials, speeches and letters, local citizens left no doubt that Vancouver was a white-man's city and would remain so.<sup>56</sup>

The other non-English element was a sprinkling of Europeans — especially Swedes, Danes, Germans, Italians and Russians — who together accounted for about 3 per cent of the population. Some worked locally and lived with a wife and family, but most were single men who lived in the city's hotels and boarding houses only during the rainy winter months, when they were not needed in the region's logging camps, shingle mills or fishing fleets. The small numbers of such immigrants, coupled with the instability of their living and working arrangements, worked against the development of distinctive ethnic neighbourhoods. With a population of 27,000 in 1901, Vancouver had some 200 Germans, 100 Italians, 100 Russians and 50 Danes — hardly sufficient to preserve unique national cultures.<sup>57</sup>

For the rest of the population, a great variety of social, fraternal, religious and athletic associations made it possible to belong to a group of like-minded individuals and to participate in the broader community. In 1891, Vancouver had thirty-five such organizations. The Masons, Oddfellows, Orange Order, YMCA, Imperial Federation League, Knights of Pythias, Saint Andrew's Society, Vancouver Boating Club and Rugby Club were all active. A crude yardstick of the gradations in local society was provided by a ball at the Hotel Vancouver on 6 November 1889 to celebrate the visit of Governor-General Stanley to the city.<sup>58</sup> Among the 150 invited guests were the mayor, city aldermen, city officials

<sup>56</sup> Local newspapers carry a great variety of reference to the city's Chinese. See especially the weeks before and after the anti-Chinese riot on 17 January 1887. For representative examples, see *News Advertiser*, 5 July, 14 August 1894; 19 January, 15 August 1895; 7 July, 19 September 1896; 20 March, 1 April 1897; 20 January, 28 May 1899.

<sup>57</sup> See Norbert MacDonald, "Population Growth and Change in Seattle and Vancouver, 1880-1960," *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 39, no. 3 (August 1970), pp. 297-321, for detailed statistics.

<sup>58</sup> *W. News Advertiser*, 6 November 1889, p. 7, provides a complete list of the invited guests.

and their wives, as well as officials from CPR, prominent businessmen, military officers and local church leaders, plus a host of real estate agents and shopkeepers. To no one's surprise, the invited guests did not include any carpenters, plumbers, longshoremen or Chinese laundrymen, but the range of guests was nevertheless impressive.

As members of a powerful national organization, CPR officials quickly assured and maintained social prominence on the local scene. When General Superintendent Harry Abbott built a handsome residence in the West End, the entire district was soon identified as the most prestigious area in the city, catering to a host of businessmen and professionals. By 1889, Abbott was also president both of the Vancouver Boating Club (predecessor of the Vancouver Yacht Club) and of the Vancouver Lawn Tennis Club.<sup>59</sup> CPR officials also sponsored the establishment of the Vancouver Opera House and later were some of its leading patrons. Among other social leaders were R. H. Alexander, General Manager of the Hastings Saw Mill, who served as Vice-President of the Vancouver Boating Club. A. St. George Hammersley, barrister and recent arrival in the city by way of the Inns of Court in London and temporary service with the army in New Zealand, headed both the Cricket Club and the Rugby Club. Benjamin Rogers, head of B.C. Sugar, and H. Bell-Irving, prominent fish packer, were also well known. Campbell-Sweeny, resident manager of the Bank of Montreal, served as Vice-President of the Vancouver Lawn Tennis Club. In short, while CPR officials were unquestionably prominent, they shared the stage with many others.

\* \* \*

No single event marked the end of the great CPR boom, but by 1893 it was clearly over. The ensuing depression of the mid and late 1890s was common throughout the United States and Canada, but was especially painful to Pacific Coast cities like Vancouver that had experienced such rampant growth in the previous decade. While migrants continued to arrive at a fairly steady rate and while some house construction and road building went on, it was a pale imitation of the preceding years, and a whole series of glowing predictions about the future had to be revised downward.

<sup>59</sup> See L. A. Hamilton to F. C. Innes, 14 September 1886, in F. C. Innes, MSS, Vancouver City Archives. For a valuable sketch of Vancouver's sporting clubs, see *W. News Advertiser*, 7 August 1889, p. 6. See also D. W. Holdsworth "House and Home in Vancouver: Images of West Coast Urbanism, 1886-1929," in G. A. Stelter and A. F. S. A. Artibise, eds., *The Canadian City* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977), pp. 186-211.

Labourers and craftsmen were some of the first to feel the pinch. According to a report given to the August 1893 meeting of the Vancouver Trades & Labor Council, there was a "large number of idle workmen" — brick layers ("about half their number is idle"); stone cutters ("no prospects of improvement"); carpenters ("about two thirds of their number at work"). As for the printing trade, it "was never worse."<sup>60</sup> Business firms, property owners and city hall also felt the impact of the depression. The locally owned street railway company was taken over by the London-based British Columbia Electric Street Railway Company in 1895.<sup>61</sup> The city itself took over both the privately owned water works and the electric lighting system.<sup>62</sup> Henry Collins, drygoods merchant, city alderman and mayor during 1895 and 1896, was declared bankrupt in 1896.<sup>63</sup> Real estate values slumped, advertisements dropped off, and there were more and more sales of property for unpaid taxes.<sup>64</sup> All of these conditions posed problems for the city hall, for while it had heavy obligations from previous commitments, tax revenues dropped and tax arrears rose sharply.<sup>65</sup>

These were difficult, disappointing years for Vancouver, but a kind of settling down and maturation occurred. The erosion of dependence on the CPR and the assertion of city rights continued, as city officials became more and more aware of their powers. In 1893, they strongly opposed the granting of additional foreshore rights to the CPR.<sup>66</sup> Tax rates on railway property were raised. According to President Van Horne, the level of taxes on CPR property was "unknown anywhere else in the Dominion."<sup>67</sup> City officials also pursued a long and bitter legal struggle with the CPR to obtain the right of public access to the waterfront. Originally, the Supreme Court of British Columbia upheld the city's claim to extend Gore Avenue to the water, across CPR property. But the decision was later re-appealed to the Appeal Court of B.C., the Supreme Court of Canada, and ultimately to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council,

<sup>60</sup> *W. News Advertiser*, 23 August 1893.

<sup>61</sup> *Van CCI In Corr*, 30 April 1895, 8:6966.

<sup>62</sup> *W. News Advertiser*, 3 October, 10 October 1894, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> *Van CCI In Corr*, XI:8809-11.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, *W. News Advertiser*, 25 October 1894, 20 February 1895, and 24 August 1898.

<sup>65</sup> See *Annual Report, City of Vancouver 1925*, for a convenient summary of property assessment and tax data from 1886 to 1925.

<sup>66</sup> *Van C.C. Min*, 17 July 1893, p. 490; *W. News Advertiser*, 26 July 1893, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> *W. News Advertiser*, 27 October 1897, p. 6.

which ruled in favour of the CPR.<sup>68</sup> While this particular battle was lost, the fight with the CPR over the issue of the right of public access was re-opened in 1899 and would continue for years.<sup>69</sup>

In the summer of 1897, newspaper accounts of major gold finds in the Klondike did not cause any immediate stir in Vancouver. But within a year the gold rush to the north changed both the tone of the city's life and the level of economic activity.<sup>70</sup> Wholesale merchants and shipping concerns were the first to benefit, but the stimulus was soon felt by city hotels, the CPR, shipbuilders and lumber producers. Membership in Vancouver's Board of Trade moved from some seventy-five, where it had languished for years, to 150. While city council, individual businessmen, the Board of Trade and the federal government all contributed to the campaign to exploit the Klondike business, it was only after the CPR placed two big, fast comfortable steamers on the Vancouver-Skagway run that the city had the kind of freight and passenger facilities it needed to compete with its American rivals. The gold rush was clearly over by 1900, but these exciting years again showed that while Vancouver's deference to the CPR had utterly disappeared, the importance of that concern for the city was still very much a fact of life.

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While an examination of Vancouver's development in the 1880s and the 1890s leaves little doubt of the important role played by the CPR, a brief consideration of the impressions of Vancouver held by outsiders and by local residents provides an additional insight into the nature of that city. These ideas and impressions may be fragmentary and imprecise, but they give a sense of the entire community that might otherwise be lost.

For American observers, there was not much in Vancouver to get excited about. At best, it was a pale, insipid imitation of its American counterparts. Shortly after the arrival of the CPR in 1887, for example, one Seattle resident noted that it was "a plucky and enterprising city, even if it is not very big."<sup>71</sup> Americans also agreed that the tone and pace of

<sup>68</sup> See "The Corporation of Vancouver vs. the Canadian Pacific Railway," 14 July 1894, in *Van CCI In Corr*, VI:5530-56.

<sup>69</sup> For the beginning of the dispute over the right to extend Cambie, Abbott and Carrall Streets to Burrard Inlet, see *Van CCI In Corr*, XIV, 1899, p. 11044, and *Van C.C. Min*, 12 February 1900, p. 475.

<sup>70</sup> See Norbert MacDonald, "Seattle, Vancouver, and the Klondike," *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. XLIX, no. 3 (Sept. 1968), pp. 234-46, for a detailed treatment.

<sup>71</sup> *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, as quoted by *W. News Advertiser*, 2 October 1887.

life was much slower. To an observer from Oregon, the people of Vancouver "take life easier . . . the ceaseless hurry and worry that characterises so many American cities is almost entirely absent there. The business of the city does not get fairly to moving until 10:00 o'clock in the morning and very little is done . . . after 5:00 or 6:00 in the evening." But, at the same time, "the people are genial" and "seem to believe in enjoying life."<sup>72</sup> The harshest verdict of all came from a visitor from Boston, Massachusetts. "It is the CPR's town. The railroad controls everything, and is about the only aggressive factor, save a few transplanted Americans making what progress they can against British stolidity. It is a splendid town for Englishmen and Canadians but a poor place for Americans." He concluded with the observation that while there was vigorous competition with American cities for trade with the Orient, there was little bitterness or hostility associated with it. Rather a "friendly," "comfortable" feeling prevailed.<sup>73</sup>

Observers from Britain saw a substantially different Vancouver. The relaxed, sedate quality that was scorned by the American was admired by the Britisher. "The people . . . have retained their eastern and English habits. On Sunday the place has an aspect of quiet respectability like that of an English cathedral town."<sup>74</sup> Over and over again the British observer contrasted the orderly, law-abiding quality of Vancouver with the harsh, rowdy patterns that he associated with the American city. To a correspondent of the London *Times*, Vancouver had "never known anything of the roughness of the new towns across the border."<sup>75</sup> Another added that Vancouver "was never like Seattle. There has been no Pacific Coast rowdiness, no revolvering, no instance or need of lynch law."<sup>76</sup>

Vancouverites themselves had yet another viewpoint as to the "real" Vancouver. The conviction that it was a uniquely endowed community, destined for both national and international greatness, was emphasized over and over. Editorial writers, city publicists, Board of Trade officials and real estate promoters never tired of listing the characteristics that assured such greatness. On the day of the arrival of the first CPR train, the editor of the *News Advertiser* touched upon them all: "as the actual terminus of the only transcontinental line under one management, and

<sup>72</sup> *The West Shore*, Portland, Oregon, May 1889, p. 231.

<sup>73</sup> H. Heywood, in *Boston Transcript*, as given in *News Advertiser*, 12 August 1893, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> *News Advertiser*, 6 June 1894, pp. 2 and 7, quoting a London *Times* correspondent.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> D. B. W. Sladen, *On The Cars and Off* (London, 1895), p. 368.

with the company running that line interested in our townsite, as the home port of a line of steamers to China and Japan . . . as the point from which a new submarine cable is to be laid . . . as the centre of the lumbering community unsurpassed on the continent, with immense resources of coal and iron in our immediate vicinity . . . with fertile valleys on one side and the sea teeming with all kinds of fish on the other, we can see nothing that is wanting."<sup>77</sup> This conviction of uniqueness and inevitable greatness received its classic statement by David Oppenheimer, city businessman, alderman and mayor. "At no time in the history of the world," he pointed out, "has there been a city whose prosperity has been so marked or its future promises so bright as the City of Vancouver."<sup>78</sup>

An integral component of the Vancouver self-image was the fundamental importance of its political, social and economic linkage with Britain. While these sentiments were sincerely revealed in times of international tension and conflict, they were decidedly florid at the inauguration of a newly subsidized steamship line, the consideration of an imperial drydock, or the development of a preferential tariff scheme. Vancouverites also emphasized the difference, and indeed the superiority, of their community to American cities. "The class of population which is being attracted to our shores," one particularly chauvinistic Canadian asserted, "is on the average of a far better class than that which is going to the United States. The riff-raff of Europe, the anarchists, the assassins . . . find a more secure and congenial refuge in New York or Chicago than in the smaller but more orderly and peaceful cities of the Dominion."<sup>79</sup> Most were convinced that Americans as a group were a boastful, aggressive, hard-driving lot, lacking in charm or civility. The fact that Victorians viewed Vancouverites in much the same light could be ignored.<sup>80</sup>

From the welter of conflicting testimony as to the intrinsic nature of Vancouver, the body of evidence suggests that it was essentially an orderly, law-abiding community. While city newspapers carried numerous references to thefts, brawls, arrest of drunks and raiding of brothels, it was the details of church suppers, vacation trips, wedding receptions and social visits that dominated the local columns. Vancouver's businessmen worked hard to establish their city, but they apparently lacked the kind of drive and intensity of their American counterparts. One also notes a tinge of

<sup>77</sup> *D. News Advertiser*, 24 May 1887.

<sup>78</sup> Report of the Finance Committee for 1887, as given in *News Advertiser*, 29 December 1887, p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> *News Advertiser*, 1 January 1888.

<sup>80</sup> See *Victoria Colonist*, especially 1886-1888.

complacency and self-satisfaction in the "solid and stolid manner" of its leaders. On the eve of the Klondike gold rush, for example, after four years of depression, the editor of the *News Advertiser* could commend his readers for not rushing off to the gold fields, and add "the citizens of Vancouver have good reasons to be satisfied with the general conditions which are found here."<sup>81</sup>

Such pride grew naturally out of Vancouver's brief and dramatic history. Since the arrival of the CPR, it had been transformed from a small lumbering town into the largest city in the entire province. By 1900 it had not only its transcontinental railroad, but was also the terminus of a regular steamship service to the Orient. With a population of 25,000, it accounted for 15 per cent of British Columbia's entire population. Its up-to-date street railway, three- and four-storied frame, brick and stone buildings, as well as its paved streets, schools, parks, electric lights and telephones, gave it an air of modernity and permanence.

But Vancouver still lacked the size, diversity and tone of a mature city. While 25,000 made for a big city in British Columbia, even Seattle had 80,000 and Winnipeg had over 40,000. When compared with San Francisco, Montreal or New York, it was tiny. Its population was also quite undiversified. Young males predominated, with men outnumbering women two to one. At least 85 per cent of the population were English-speaking Protestants, many of whom were from British Columbia itself. Chinese and Japanese labourers and a sprinkling of Europeans added the only cosmopolitan element. Most of these residents still lived within two miles of the CPR station and wharf, and land farther than three miles from that focal point was largely uncleared. One could identify the city's business core, its residential areas and industrial clusterings, but the outlines of these districts were indistinct and overlapping, with houses, stores, mills and empty lots sprinkled throughout much of the city.

Economically, also, the city was small and undiversified. The CPR no longer dominated city activities as it had in the heady days of 1886, 1887 and 1888, but it was still the largest single employer. The city's many lumber and shingle mills had some 1,500 workers. Hastings Saw Mill, the largest, employed 300 men, but half of these were in logging camps outside the city. Many workers were self-employed or else worked in small shops with six or less employees. Businessmen still catered primarily to local needs, and while they occasionally reached as far afield as the Kootenays, the Yukon and the Prairies, such activities were limited. One

<sup>81</sup> *News Advertiser*, 31 July 1897.



boxcar of supplies per week, for example, represented Vancouver's total business in the Kootenays.

Finally, Vancouver in 1900 still had a relaxed, friendly, small-town quality. Most people knew their neighbours well, and whether one stacked lumber in a local yard, or sold utensils in a hardware store, he knew his fellow workers by name, as well as his supervisor and boss. The personal columns in the newspaper kept its readers up to date on the visits of relatives from Ontario, pleasure trips to Victoria and card parties at the Masonic Hall. One still counted the cars that the CPR steam engine pulled into the station, and it was still exciting to head for the wharf when one of the Empress liners was due. Vancouver was not yet a big city, and the CPR still played an important role, but the utter dependence of the early years was over.