

# Vancouver and Central British Columbia

## Difficulty of Houses Here Holding Trade of Great Interior—Competition of Edmonton With the Change on Completion of Pacific and Great Eastern.

VANCOUVER grew rapidly and became a substantial trade centre because it was the terminus of the Canadian Pacific, the first, and until a few weeks ago, the only Canadian transcontinental railway. This inevitably made it the trade centre of British Columbia and gave it almost a monopoly on the trade of the British Columbia territory close to the line of the Canadian Pacific and a great part of the trade along the coast.

In recent years the natural growth of this trade territory caused an important increase in the city trade. The great move in real estate and building operations and the extreme enthusiasm regarding the future of Vancouver as a trade and financial centre, and to a lesser extent as an industrial centre, was based, however, in the main, not upon the excellent future prospects for increased development of existing trade territory, but upon the fact that enormous new areas of varied agricultural, mineral and timber resources in British Columbia were about to be opened by the building of the two new Canadian transcontinentals, the Canadian Northern and the Grand Trunk Pacific. The argument and supposition of course was that Vancouver would profit enormously by the opening and development of these new areas. Now the Pacific & Great Eastern is well started, the Canadian Northern is fast pushing to completion and the Grand Trunk Pacific has driven the last spike. This rapid realization of our expectations in the way of railroad construction naturally causes us to take stock in more detail of the actual and especially of the immediate results to be secured from it.

Vancouver from the first controlled most of the trade of the Cariboo trail country and of the Cariboo mines. This at first was particularly important, because the development of the Cariboo mines took place largely before the Canadian Pacific was finished. The trade was already there and Vancouver inevitably secured it. The relative importance of this trade declined because of the rapid development of trade along the coast and in the territory close to the Canadian Pacific. This decline was not only relative, but was an actual decline in trade because the long and expensive haul from the Canadian Pacific at Ashcroft rendered the working of these mines unprofitable after the richest of them had played out. Freight from Ashcroft to Barkerville, the centre of the mining region, seldom fell below six cents per pound, and in spite of the large amount of known gold there the transportation cost precluded extensive development.

However, since 1909 the trade over the Cariboo trail has been increasing by leaps and bounds because of the rush of people to place themselves advantageously and to take up land in the rich areas that were about to be opened by the building of the Grand Trunk Pacific. This historic trail was again crowded with the outfits of pioneers and with eight and ten horse freight outfits. Without doubt it is the last wagon road trade highway on the North American continent. This year it will continue as an important trade route for about eighty or one hundred miles north of Ashcroft on account of the building of the Pacific & Great Eastern on a location that can be more readily supplied through this trail than elsewhere.

This trade over the Cariboo trail is of course temporary, and without doubt this year marks the last of the Cariboo trail as an important trade route. In fact last year the trade of the Fort George country and thence eastward to Alberta was suddenly shifted from the Cariboo trail and from Vancouver to Edmonton by way of the Grand Trunk to Tete Jaun Cache, thence down the Fraser river by scow. There was no possibility of competition by hauling from Ashcroft 165 miles up the Cariboo trail to Soda Creek, and thence 150 miles by river steamer up the Fraser river to Fort George. It was a matter of approximately six cents per pound from Vancouver to Fort George by way of Ashcroft, as against two cents or less from Edmonton to Fort George by way of Tete Jaune Cache. This discrepancy in rates has of course increased with the completion of the Grand Trunk, making a through haul by rail from Edmonton to Fort George and other points along the Grand Trunk.

With the breaking of ice this spring another large slice of Vancouver's trade territory was appropriated by Edmonton. Supplies are now going from Fort George south along the Fraser river by river steamers and by scow to the Pacific and Great Eastern construction camps to Soda Creek, 150 miles south of Fort George, and thence by the Cariboo trail southward as far as the One Hundred and Fifty Mile House, which is only 137 miles north of Ashcroft. This means that this same region which has so long traded with Vancouver will now draw its supplies from Edmonton by way of Fort George. It includes the old Cariboo mining country, of which Barkerville is the centre and of which Quesnel is the main trading point. It also includes the ranching and farming country between Quesnel and Soda Creek, Soda Creek itself, and the One Hundred and Fifty Mile House. This latter is an old established trading point supplying the Horse Fly mining country to the East and a great part of the Chilcotin ranching country to the West.

The importance of the future trade of interior British Columbia cannot be doubted. The interior region between the Rockies and the Coast range comprises a large part of the total area of British Columbia, and by far the greatest part of the level acreage of the entire Province. The extreme importance of this is increased by the fact that it is a country of ample rain fall. There is a very large area of agricultural land within 150 miles of the Grand Trunk to the south. Although the rain fall in the interior gradually decreases from the line of the Grand Trunk southward, yet irrigation is not necessary even without dry farming methods, until a point well over 100 miles to the southward is reached, and farming has been carried on successfully without irrigation at other points still further southward. However, there can be no doubt but that the greater portion of the agricultural land of the entire Province lies north of the Grand Trunk.

Some globe trotter riding on the Canadian Pacific has stated that British Columbia is a "Sea of Mountains," and while this is a fitting tribute to the magnificent scenery along the Canadian Pacific, it has given many the erroneous idea that there are no fertile valleys tucked amongst these same mountains. It gives an even more erroneous idea of Central British Columbia as this is an enormous basin region containing some mountains, it is true, but containing also vast areas upon which one can travel for days upon a comparatively level or rolling bench country. The rougher parts and especially the mountainous portions of this interior basin were partly prospected at the time of the Cariboo gold rush and later. Royalties were paid to the Province of British Columbia upon \$60,000,000 of gold taken from the Cariboo mining region in spite of the handicap of the enormous freight rates. No one who knows this region but will say that it has been barely scratched. The Omineca and Ingineka are also known to be rich in gold. Until the building of the Grand Trunk it was not worth while even to prospect for anything but the richest ore.

Already, however, other metalliferous products are assuming a growing importance to the Hazelton district and the districts immediately north. Two or three of these mines have been opened up and are producing mines. The famous silver lead Standard mine promises to be one of the leaders in production among the silver camps of the country. Other prospects are developing copper deposits, which are known to exist in considerable quantities. The known resources of the interior in coal are enormous, especially the Groundhog districts show extensive deposits of anthracite, and in the Bear River district known high grade bituminous coal has been found in large amounts. In gauging the future development of the central interior the timber resources and the water powers, one of the first of which likely to be developed is the Willow River Canyon, should be kept in mind.

While the present trade is no doubt of small proportions compared with the future trade which such a region will inevitably develop, it is by no means to be made light of now. In fact this trade now amounts to from three to five trains a day from Edmonton into Fort George and from there distributed to railway camps and the population of the country. What this will amount to under more settled conditions, not counting through shipments to Prince Rupert or to Vancouver, is hard to hazard for fear of over-stating the question.