

History of Vancouver

COMPARED with the hoary cities of the East that celebrate tercentenaries and the like, Vancouver has no history. And yet the twenty-five years since the baby city first appeared on Burrard Inlet and swallowed the old hamlet of Granville have been crammed with incident. Vancouver grew at first because it was forced to. It had no choice. Now the law of necessity has become second nature and the city grows no more because it must, than because it finds expansion exhilarating.

Ever since that lay back in '86, when it made its first bow to the world, Vancouver has been afflicted with growing pains. These have followed it through the years until now one is inclined to believe them chronic. The marvel of Vancouver lies, not so much in its growth as in the conditions that made that growth a matter, not of possibility merely, but of necessity. When Nature plotted the city's site and its surroundings she did her work with a boyish hand. Everything was flung down on a scale of surpassing magnificence: harbor on harbor; mountain above mountain; island beyond island; the richest of the Canadian provinces behind; the unlimited trade of the Orient before. With such an inspiration nothing was left the city but to follow Nature's law and expand, like the girthy cedars and Douglas firs that once covered its site. The coming of the first ocean-to-ocean railroad gave the needed start, and since then there has been nothing that one could really call a pause. The point that stands out most strongly in the history of Vancouver is the fact that in the whole course of its existence there has been no retrograde movement. The city has never learned to go back. Its course has been one of continual progress. At times the forward march has been slow and difficult. To those in the procession, perhaps, things seemed at a standstill, but the total of the years has shown that no backward step was taken. This fact has been burned into the temper of the people, and to the inspiration of youth has been added the reasoning faith of maturer years. For a city possessing these two, faith and inspiration, the future can hold no terrors.

So far as recorded, no white man made his way to the neighborhood of Vancouver until the year 1793. In the spring of that year Captain George Vancouver, having received orders to find out whether the Strait of Juan de Fuca was really a strait, undertook to examine and survey the coast. His vessels, the "Discovery" and the "Chatham," were left at Port Discovery and the greater part of the work was done in boats. Pursuing his task, Vancouver came, on June 13, to a point which, in honor of his friend, Captain Grey, of the navy, he named Point Grey. The same day he passed through the First Narrows and entered the Inlet which, in compliment to Sir Harry Burrard, of the navy, he called Burrard's Canal. Some friendly Indians met him near the marshy land about the mouth of the Capilano Creek, and having taken leave of these, Vancouver and his party proceeded to within a

mile and a half of the upper end of the Inlet. There they passed the night in their boats. In the morning they departed, not even an Indian canoe escorting them beyond the Lion's Gate.

Seventy years went by, and Burrard Inlet remained almost as Vancouver had left it. Had the great navigator returned he would have found, as he found in '93, the long, lonely expanse of restless, silent water, shut in from the sea by its protecting forest peninsula to the north, the towering mountains, gleaming in the sunshine or glowering in the mist, and about the rugged firs and cedars, less an only than the hills on which they stood. A small boat and a few men, but no great ship and no trader passed in through the New Westminster gate, and Burrard Inlet was left to the herring and the gulls and the little colony of Indians that gathered on the north shore. In 1850 a party came seeking coal and sank some shafts on the south side of the Inlet. Of that party Mr. W. T. Moberly was a member. They left the name "Coal Harbor," and carried their tools and tents elsewhere. Mr. Moberly returned a year later, however, and made a survey of the south side and east end of the Inlet. In 1865 the Hastings mill was established where it stands today on the waterfront near the foot of Dunlevy avenue. It employed a goodly number of workmen, and a village, as the years passed by, grew up about it. The mill employees at first were mostly Indians and runaway sailors; but other men came gradually, and a little town developed to the west of the mill, on a site surveyed by order of Sir James Douglas. This was "Granville," which may still be seen marked "G. T." on maps of the modern city. It occupied those six city blocks included in the space between Cambie and Carrall streets and between Hastings street and the Inlet.

Officially the village was called Granville, but locally it was known as "Gastown," a name it bore in honor of "Gassy Jack," its first man of business. "Gassy Jack," or Jack Dayton, to give him his more prosaic name, was one of the most picturesque characters of the early days, and old-timers tell many a curious tale about him. He came from Westminster some time in the 'seventies, bought a lot on the gore where the Hotel Europe now stands, and set up a saloon. At first he had only a barrel of liquor on a rude stand in a tent; but things prospered with Jack, and the Dayton Hotel went up where the Alhambra is now. The population of the hamlet was not large, only a few hundreds at most, but the majority of the men, as Jack himself was wont to tell them, worked, and worked hard, for "Gassy Jack." Mr. B. H. Alexander, who even in those early days was at the head of the Hastings mill, tells that it was not unusual for the mill to close down for several days at a time while the hands went on great sprees. The mill at this time dominated the whole settlement, for with the exception of a little fishing, it furnished the only industry the place