

The History of Langley

Compiled by Chas. E. Hope, from data supplied by His Honor Judge Howay, Mr. Lockyer of Hudson's Bay Co., and Mr. Schofield, Provincial Librarian, to all of whom grateful thanks are extended.



THE recent history of Langley is fairly well known to everyone. Langley, the geographical centre of the Lower Fraser Valley, the richest pasture land in Canada, served by three transcontinental railways, the longest interurban electric tram line in Canada, running through the whole length of the valley; and the Fraser River, navigable to the head of the valley. It is also becoming well known as a high-grade stock raising district, particularly in Holsteins.

Among the British Columbia municipalities Langley has the distinction of being one of the few, if not the only municipality in the western half of Canada which had a substantial balance in the bank at the end of the financial year (1916).

Langley is noted on the coast as the most successful exhibitor at the Fall fairs, and has a far larger percentage of "wins" to its credit for the best "District Exhibits" than any other municipality in the Province. It has almost reached the time when, if it is known that Langley is exhibiting, other districts keep out. There is probably no section in Canada with better transportation facilities so near to what should be one of the best local markets in the Dominion.

But it is not so much its recent history, however, that gives Langley a claim to distinction above all other districts in Western Canada (not only in British Columbia), but its very early history.

The early history of Langley Municipality, or district, is really the early history of Western Canada in its most striking points. White settlement, contrary to the usual understanding, did not start from Winnipeg and work west; it started from Langley and worked east. The first white man on the mainland of British Columbia, of whom we have any historical record, was James McMillan, who left Astoria, or the Columbia River, in 1824, coming north through Washington and entered British Columbia near Blaine, passing through Langley Prairie by portage from the Nicomekl to the Salmon River. He came by water all the way and portaged over from the one of these rivers to the other, and then came down the Salmon to the flats surrounding what is now known as Langley Fort. He came here to find a suitable site for a fort on the Fraser River. This fort was built in 1827, and was in charge of James McMillan until the arrival of Governor Simpson, in October 1828. He was succeeded by Archibald McDonald, who remained until the spring of 1833.