

BRITISH COLUMBIA ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY, LIMITED



THE British Columbia Electric Railway Company, Limited, owns and operates Electric Street and Interurban Railways and Light and Power systems on the lower Mainland of British Columbia, especially in and around the City of Vancouver, the commercial capital of B. C., including all the adjacent municipalities, and North Vancouver on the north side of Burrard Inlet; New Westminster, the old capital of the Mainland, and the Fraser Valley Branch, from New Westminster to Chilliwack at the eastern limits of the Fraser Valley.

The Vancouver Power Company was formed as a subsidiary concern in 1898 for the purpose of generating power by a Hydro-Electric Plant at Lake Buntzen, on the North Arm of Burrard Inlet, and the power developed by this plant is distributed and utilized by the B. C. E. Ry. Co. throughout its Mainland systems.

In addition there are two other branches of the Company's operations on Vancouver Island—the Victoria branch of the B. C. E. Ry. Co., which operates in and around the City of Victoria, the Capital of the Province, and the Vancouver Island Power Company, Limited, organized for the purpose of generating electricity by water power for the Company's services on Vancouver Island.

Beside the above the B. C. E. Ry. Co. owns the Vancouver Gas Company in Vancouver and the Victoria Gas Company in Victoria.

The history of the undertaking has been a marvelous record of almost unprecedented growth, unprecedented even in that most rapidly developing branch of Engineering—Electricity.

Like similar undertakings in other places, the history of the electrical industry in B. C. has been one of growth from small beginnings through various vicissitudes to a position of assured success, but in few places has this growth been so phenomenal or the success so marked as it has in B. C. The installation of electrical plant was inaugurated by the Vancouver Electric Illuminating Co., Ltd., in 1887, and in 1889 a second company, known as the Vancouver Street Railway Co., Ltd., was formed to operate by animal traction, but plans were changed and electrical operation adopted from the commencement of the service.

In the following year (1890) the two companies were merged and the lines electrically operated. In 1890 there was also commenced the New Westminster interurban system and the Victoria (Vancouver Island) system. These were again merged into one Company, known as the Consolidated Railway Co., Ltd., and as such were operated until 1897, when the British Columbia Electric Railway Co., Ltd., was formed and purchased the amalgamated undertakings, which have been run continuously by this Company ever since. In 1905 the Hydro-Electric plant at Lake Buntzen was put into operation.

In 1904 the street railway work of Vancouver City was handled by one 500 k.w. Rotary Converter, whilst to-day in the Vancouver substation alone there are two 2,000 k.w. and one 500 k.w. Rotary Converters, a total of 4,500 k.w., and the Company have Rotary substations in operation on the Mainland at the following points also: New Westminster, North Vancouver, Chilliwack, Burnaby, Point Grey, Cloverdale, Matsqui, Langley, and Sumas. The total capacity of its substations at present is 10,500 k.w., and another substation is now in course of construction at Collingwood East, which will have installed a Rotary Converter of 500 k.w. capacity. Such is the phenomenal development in street railway work alone. In the other branches, Light and Power, the story is the same—one of great and rapidly increasing growth. When it is considered that every part of the plant has been installed to take the place of out-of-date machinery in a short space of six years, it will be seen how great has been the development which has taken place in this "last outpost" of the Empire.

An auxiliary steam plant of three turbine units has recently been added for a stand-by and for emergency cases, giving a total steam capacity of 6000 k.w.

In the lighting branch the Company had in 1904 about 4,600 meters installed on the Lower Mainland, whilst now it has 25,000 meters. In the power load it had in 1904, 1,200 h.p. of connected load, whilst at the end of 1910 it has reached 17,000 h.p.

Close to the shore of the North Arm of Burrard Inlet and four hundred feet above high tide is Lake Buntzen. It was named in honor of J. Buntzen, Esq., Director of the Company, and for several years its General Manager. This lake of 500 acres is fed by the waters of the Eternal Snows, but would be inadequate to supply a plant of this magnitude. It has,