

## Early History of Royal City

THE May Day Festival, which has been a cherished institution in New Westminster for fifty years, was transplanted direct from England and the fact that, of all British Columbia centres, except those that have adopted it in recent years, New Westminster has kept this festival so faithfully, points to the strong influence of the home land implanted here by the men of the Royal Engineers corps, who founded the community that is now New Westminster.

On the 17th of October, 1858, there sailed from England on board the clipper ship *Thames City*, a company of Royal Engineers under the command of Capt. H. R. Luard, R.E., the contingent consisting of 118 non-commissioned officers and men, 31 women and 34 children. After a tedious passage around Cape Horn, the party arrived at Esquimalt on April 12, 1859. At Esquimalt the party was joined by Colonel R. C. Moody, Capt. J. M. Grant, Capt. R. M. Parsons, Lieut. A. R. Lempriere and Lieut. H. S. Palmer, also Dr. Seddall as medical officer. They were immediately embarked on the *Eliza Anderson* and were sent forward to their future home—the camp of Queensborough, as New Westminster was then known, and from that date what is now a flourishing city and the centre of the agricultural district of the Fraser Valley owes its advancement.

On the arrival of the party, the camp, due to its change from New Langley, or Derby, was found to be incomplete and only a small portion of the site cleared. A number of the party found accommodation on board the Hudson Bay Company brigantine *Recovery*, which was lying at anchor opposite the camp site, the remainder going under canvas.

At the time, the only signs of human habitation were a crude jetty, a saloon conducted by T. J. Scott, late of Port Moody; a butcher shop conducted by the late Robert Dickenson; a grocery by W. J. Armstrong and a bakery by Philip Hicks.

The summer of 1858 found the Engineers busily engaged clearing the camp site, constructing barracks, married men's quarters, and a church (St. Mary's Anglican), while time was found to survey the city site. Parties were sent out on survey work, the most notable work being the first and most difficult section of the Yale-Cariboo waggon road and the Hope Mountain Trail. The Engineers also formed the gold escort from the Cariboo country. They built the first school house; they designed the first British Columbia Coat of Arms and the first postage stamp used in the colony; they built at their own expense, a reading room, library and theatre, in which many interesting entertainments were held during the winter months, as will be remembered by many old residents.

The name of Queensborough caused some dissatisfaction, and the matter was submitted to the late Queen Victoria, who named the city New Westminster.