

accessible only upon the completion of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway in 1914, held for a still further period from commercial exploitation by the Great War, and now requiring the completion of the Pacific Great Eastern railway and the establishment of transpacific shipping lines from Prince Rupert to enable its development to be prosecuted in a thorough manner. To the historian, however, it is the "Old British Columbia," explored and occupied previous to any other mainland part of the province.

Fur trading and gold mining blazed the way for the occupation and settlement of British Columbia and the fields of these earliest activities lay in this, the central part of the province. Fort MacLeod, on MacLeod lake, has the distinction of being British Columbia's earliest establishment and dates back to 1805. It is thirty-eight years older than the capital, Victoria. Fort St. James, on Stuart lake, and Fort George, at the confluence of the Fraser and Nechako rivers were established in 1806 and 1807, and were thus also over a quarter of a century old when the Hudson's Bay Company established a post on the site of the present capital city. Prince Rupert is the newest sea port on the coast, yet Fort Nass at the mouth of the Skeena and later Fort Simpson (Now Port Simpson) were important coast posts before the days of either Victoria or Vancouver.

Alexander Mackenzie, the first white man to reach the Pacific overland, travelled across the province and back again entirely within this central belt in the year 1793. Over one hundred years ago trade routes by canoe and train were well established throughout this district. The Skeena and Nass rivers on the coast, the Fraser, Nechako and Stuart in the interior, and the Parsnip, Finlay and Peace flowing easterly were well travelled avenues of trade while the Yellowhead pass had witnessed a century of travel by foot before the first train rushed through.

Original surveys for the Canadian Pacific railway led through this pass and had they been adhered to conditions would have been reversed with respect to the southern and the central parts of the province. The building of this transcontinental railway brought in an influx of workers and settlers along its route which, unfortunately for the central districts, was located well to the south and crossed the Rockies by the Kicking Horse pass. About the Pacific terminal of this great road has grown up the city of Vancouver and for nearly fifty years the benefit of this railway has been in favour of the development of the more southerly parts of the province.

The building of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway, however, which takes the route of the Yellowhead pass, Fraser, Nechako, Bulkley and Skeena rivers to meet the coast at the newer city of Prince Rupert, brought to the central belt upon its completion in 1914 the advantages that the more southerly parts received by the completion of the Canadian Pacific railway in 1885.

No sooner had this transcontinental railway been completed than the great European war broke out, thus practically paralyzing the expected development along its route and holding in abeyance for five or six years longer the settlement of its adjacent territory.

Possibly there may be advantages in these circumstances. At the conclusion of the war Canada finds herself burdened with a heavy debt and facing a serious problem in the re-establishment of a large army of men. The raising of funds with which to meet her obligations and the finding of homes for thousands of men present a