

# VANCOUVER: THE RISE OF A CITY

WALTER N. SAGE

**T**WO cities in the British Empire celebrated their golden jubilees in 1936, Johannesburg, South Africa, and Vancouver, Canada. The one is the metropolis of the Rand, the gold city which has become the economic capital of the Transvaal; the other the western gateway of the Dominion, the metropolis of British Columbia. The Lord Mayor of London visited Vancouver and unveiled the statue of Captain George Vancouver which stands in front of the new city hall. Johannesburg celebrated its jubilee by a great Empire Exhibition. In each case a city had arisen from practically nothing at all to a commanding position in its Dominion in the brief space of fifty years. The rise of Johannesburg is to be accounted for by the presence of gold mines in the Weitswaterrand. The growth of Vancouver is due chiefly to geographical and economic causes. It is an all-year, ice-free, tide-water port at the terminus of two transcontinental railways.

The advertising campaign which formed part of the golden jubilee celebrations has probably made Vancouver better known; but even now many people, even in Canada, have little definite knowledge of the young giant of the Pacific Coast. There are still "old timers" within it who remember when the first clearings were made, not only in the suburbs but also in the centre of the city. In the Jericho Country Club are photographs of oxen engaged in logging operations at Jericho Beach less than half a century ago. One resident of the University Hill district remembers logging on the University site in 1879. Even after the west end had become the fashionable subdivision in the 1890's, Kanakas (Sandwich Islanders) were still living on the beach at Coal Harbour, only a few hundred yards away. Only a few years ago the Indian squatters were ejected from Stanley Park, and the squatters on the Kitsilano Indian reserve have recently been told that their eviction will take place on March 31, 1937. One can still find a few Indian dug-out canoes, not as exhibits, but used by those Indians who have made good their claim to squatters' rights, their ancestors having been in possession before 1862.

Last August, when Chief Matthias Joe of the Squamish nation unveiled the new totem pole in Stanley Park, the gift of the Squam-

was opened up by the Canadian Pacific. Later additions have been made since the Great War, but the railway has not yet exhausted all its acreage. The Canadian Pacific also obtained control of most of the city's waterfront. The railway company lost no time in entering the Trans-Pacific trade. In 1887 it established a regular service with three steamers, the *Batavia*, the *Parthia* and the *Abyssinia*, and in 1890 it entered into a contract with the British Government to carry the mails to China and Japan. The first three "Empresses" on the Pacific run, the *Empress of India*, *Empress of China* and *Empress of Japan*, began to operate in 1891. They were for years the queens of the Pacific.

A visitor to Vancouver arriving by train is usually struck first by the beauty of the scenery, and then by the more prosaic lumber piles and grain elevators. Even after coming through the majestic peaks of the main chain of the Rockies and the thrilling canyons of the Fraser, the tourist is impressed by the soft beauty of the gnarled old Coast Range and the delicate tones of the light and shadow on Burrard Inlet. But Vancouver cannot live on its scenery, and must depend upon its lumber, fish and grain trades.

Even before the foundation of the city, the lumber trade of Burrard Inlet was important. At first it was local lumber which was shipped, the gigantic Douglas firs and white and red cedars which stretched down to the water's edge. Then, when the local supply was exhausted, lumber was towed down to Vancouver in huge rafts. The residences of Vancouver are chiefly of wood. Brick is conspicuous by its absence. Sawdust is a popular form of fuel. Originally the refuse from the sawmills satisfied the demand for sawdust, but now it is said that sawmills are cutting up inferior lumber to produce fuel sawdust. Coal and wood are often burned together in furnaces. In some quarters there is a prejudice against "salt water wood" which has come down the coast, and in favour of "fresh water wood" which has been brought down the Fraser and has never been in salt water.

Vancouver is the headquarters of the chief fishing and fish packing companies. It was in 1867 that James Symes began experimentally to preserve salmon in hermetically sealed cans, and in 1870 Alexander Loggie and Company established the first cannery in British Columbia at Annieville, about three miles below New Westminster. By 1882 there were thirteen canneries on Fraser River, mostly between New Westminster and the mouth. In 1936 the B. C. Packers, which puts up about one-third of the total salmon pack of the province, produced 36,182,976 tins of salmon and pilchards. It is a symptom of the times that the

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president of the largest lumber exporting company in British Columbia has recently been made president of the B. C. Packers Limited.

The rise of Vancouver as a grain port is one of the phenomena of Western Canadian development since the Great War. When the first grain elevator was constructed in 1914, it was nick-named "Stevens Folly", because it owed its existence to H. H. Stevens, M.P. During the war some trial shipments of wheat through the Panama Canal proved successful, but the grain trade did not really commence until 1921 when 1,251,070 bushels were despatched from Vancouver. This increased in 1922 to 14,463,883 bushels, to 53,240,516 bushels in 1924, to 97,561,716 bushels in 1925 and to its highest point, 105,006,925 bushels, in 1932. Since then there has been a rapid decline, but recovery seems to have set in. Vancouver is the leading grain port of Canada. This great increase in grain shipments would not have been possible if the struggle over freight rates, fought by British Columbians against eastern Canadian and American interests, had not resulted in a more equitable distribution. The late Honourable John Oliver, Premier of British Columbia, and Gerald G. McGeer, K.C., M.P., former Mayor of Vancouver, were the leading figures in this controversy.

Vancouver's hinterland now reaches across the Rockies to the prairies. In addition, most of British Columbia is tributary to it. The Kootenays still feel the pull to Calgary and Spokane, and the north line of the Canadian National Railways is linked up with Edmonton, but all of Vancouver Island from Ladysmith and Nanaimo north is in the Vancouver orbit. Wheat is shipped to Vancouver from as far east as Regina.

Financially, too, Vancouver is the centre for British Columbia for the Canadian chartered banks, trust companies and mortgage and loan corporations. Local directors sit on the boards of several of the leading financial organizations in Canada, even though attendance at board meetings necessitates crossing half a continent.

The Hudson's Bay Company came into Vancouver soon after its incorporation as a city, and the company's retail store holds a proud position. The Hudson's Bay Company's fur depot for British Columbia and Western Arctic has been located in that city since 1920. David Spencer Limited, a large departmental store, which started in Victoria and has branches also in Nanaimo, New Westminster and Chilliwack, has by far its largest store in Vancouver. Woodward's Limited, which has a branch in Edmonton,

is a Vancouver product, and owes its foundation to the efforts of W. C. Woodward, an Ontarian who might be termed the Timothy Eaton of British Columbia.

One of the noteworthy features of the city's business life is "Industrial Island", an area reclaimed from False Creek and filled with small industrial plants which serve a local need. In addition the leading eastern Canadian industries have warehouses or branches which distribute throughout British Columbia.

Vancouver, however, is already not merely an economic metropolis, but has become as well a recognized educational, intellectual and artistic centre. The school system is at present undergoing important changes, and is becoming recognized as one of the most progressive in Canada. The University of British Columbia, although only 21 years of age, has already established a reputation for sound scholarship and research. Its graduates hold positions in the public service, in the professions, and in academic life from end to end of North America. The Vancouver Art Gallery has a well selected collection of Canadian and modern British art. The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra is a recognized institution, and the British Columbia Musical Festival stands high. The Public Library, although inadequately housed and still suffering from the effects of the depression, is one of the most useful institutions in the city. The City Museum and the small but growing City Archives both deserve mention. The hospitals have a high reputation, the work of the Vancouver General Hospital being recognized all over Canada.

The citizens of Vancouver have been drawn from all corners of the world, but they possess one common attribute, the love they bear their city. The Oriental community has, on the whole, ceased to be a very thorny problem, and seems in a fair way to become a real factor in the municipal life. During the golden jubilee celebration the Chinese exhibition, which contained an outstanding collection of Chinese antiquities, was a marked feature. Athletically, too, Vancouver has made its mark. Its athletes have competed at the Olympic games and one of them, Percy Williams, brought home an Olympic crown.

Vancouver, in short, is one of the outstanding cities, not only of Canada, but of the Pacific Coast of North America. All this has been accomplished in one half century, despite alternations of booms and depressions. It would seem that it is now recovering from the debacle of 1929 and is preparing for another boom. Much has been done, more remains to do, but Vancouver faces her second half century with justifiable confidence.

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