

Sapperton houses have tended to be simple in design but solid in construction. However, the area also boasted a number of large and substantial residences. In the past 20 years some of the older homes were removed to make way for modern housing and apartments. However, there are many fine older homes to see in this area, and you will find them to have strong character and feeling.

Streets such as Alberta, Keary, Kelly, Simpson, Carroll, Dixon, and Harvey are good places to start your look at Sapperton houses. It is not possible to mention all of the interesting homes, but some excellent examples are: the W. Sclater house, 467 Cumberland St., 1894; the Archie Hogg house, 362 Hospital St., 1911; the S. Cheal house, 360 Sherbrooke St., 1911; the Dr. McSween house, 433 East 8th Ave., 1912 and 473 East 8th; the houses at 352 and 373 Keary St., 430 and 509 Kelly St.; 407 Fader St.; 431 Garrett St.; 433 Elmer St.; 330 Strand Avenue.; 344 and 347 Alberta St.; and 358 Simpson St.

Sapperton people are proud of their part of the City of New Westminster. When it was suggested many years ago that perhaps real estate would sell better if the community was called North Westminster instead of Sapperton, the move met with strong, instant disapproval, and the name Sapperton was quickly returned. The name Sapperton has an interesting origin, tied into the history of New Westminster and British Columbia.

Sapperton -- The Name

The term "sapper" was applied to the main work force of the Royal Engineers who were sent out to British Columbia, then a very rugged frontier, in 1858. They established their camp on sloping land between the outfalls of two small local rivers facing out over the Fraser to the east. The activities at the Camp were all-encompassing and the efforts and effects of the Royal Engineers were felt, appreciated and encouraged in all aspects of local life. They were here for only the short period from 1859 to 1863, when the detachment was disbanded, their official function deemed at an end.

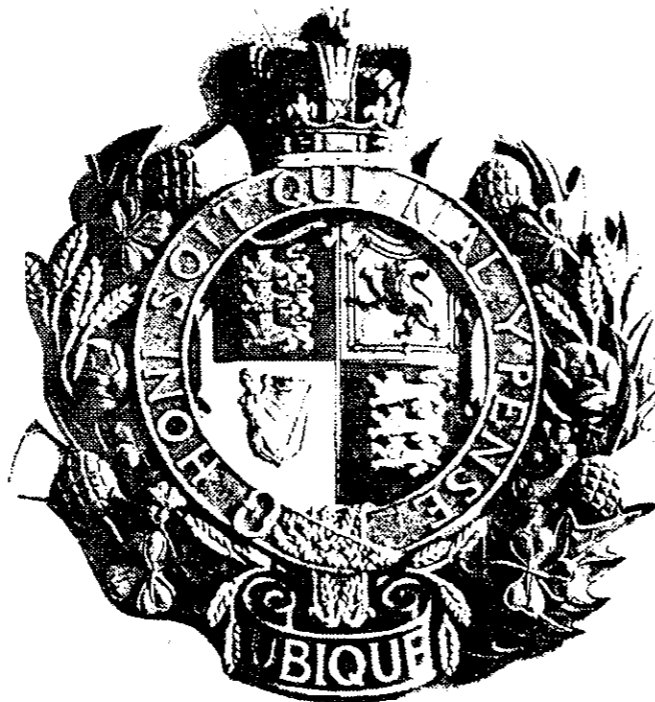
When it came time for the Royal Engineers detachment to leave, a gala dinner was held in their honour, words of praise heaped upon them for their collective efforts, and many tears shed. Many of the Royal Engineers, with their families, chose to stay on in the land they had helped to develop and settle. Today we have a number of reminders of the Royal Engineers and what they accomplished while here, but none is more proudly remembered than the name Sapper, perpetuated in name and character in a part of New Westminster, in Sapperton.

An Early Description of Part of Sapperton

Lady Jane Franklin, widow of the ill-fated Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin, visited the Royal Engineers Camp, in what is now part of Sapperton, in 1861. The following are excerpts from the account of her visit.

"(We) reached the Camp which is beautifully placed upon a sloping ground once covered with pines. We were struck with the appearance of the order in the arrangement of the buildings in the Camp. Every house was of course of wood, but the designs shewed (sic.) all the taste and skill which might be looked for from a party of Engineers."

"...we walked about the Camp, admiring the taste and order which reigns throughout it. All the buildings are different and in thoroughly good taste. Col. Moody's house especially is charmingly designed and stands prominently as the Commanding Officer's should do."



The badge of The Corps of Royal Engineers in 1858 when commanded in British Columbia by LT. Colonel Richard Clement Moody as it hangs in City Hall.

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A
WALKING TOUR
THROUGH
HISTORY

Sapperton

The boundaries of Sapperton tend to vary, depending on the person you ask. For this tour, Sapperton is designated as that area of land northeast of McBride Boulevard, in the City of New Westminster.

Sapperton has officially been part of New Westminster since 1889. The area began to develop into a self-contained community along the road constructed by the Royal Engineers to reach a safe harbour at what would become Port Moody. This road, called the North Road because of its compass direction, is now Columbia St. East in Sapperton but is still North Road in Coquitlam. Another Royal Engineers' road which remains today is Brunette Avenue, originally a river road connecting with the Pitt River trail.

The Fraser River has always been important to Sapperton as it provided an ever changing view, an easily accessible transportation route, and an impetus for local industry. The main industrial area of Sapperton lies between Brunette Ave. and the Fraser River, in the broad flat land surrounding the Brunette River as it flows to join with the Fraser near the foot of Cumberland St. The businesses of this heavily industrialized area trace their heritage to sawmills, most notably the Brunette Sawmill; to fish canneries concentrating on the prized salmon; to machine shops and light industry of all types; and even to a short lived glass business -- the Crystal Glass Company.

Sapperton has also been home to businesses dealing with meat packing, brewing, distilling, and fine woodwork. Many of the smaller stores of the shopping district of Sapperton have a long and proud history in the community. Many of the businesses mentioned still operate today and offer community support.

Ask any Sapperton old-timer what they remember about their town and they will mention names which will mean little to a newcomer but evoke strong and vibrant memories. Sapperton has its own character. You may live in New Westminster, but you are from Sapperton. A visitor might be interested to know that Sapperton had its own theatre at one time; the interurban, an early rapid transit system, travelled Sapperton's main street, and the Sapperton Station on the Burnaby Lake line was here; Shaw Brothers produced great woodwork; the Blackcat hardware seemed to have everything; Shibicky's was the place for fries; and Spot's Cafe was a good place to meet friends for a coffee or a soft drink.

A. Woodlands, 9 East Columbia St., original portion, 1878.

The centre block, a two storey brick structure, was opened as the lunatic asylum in 1878. Of Victorian Italianate style, the building housed individuals suffering from mental illness who, before construction of this facility, were usually confined in gaol. Over the years there have been many major additions to the building complex, particularly in the years 1884, 1889, 1897, and 1904. The facility, which used to be known as No. 9 because of its street address, is currently used for 24 hour residential care of mentally handicapped adults.

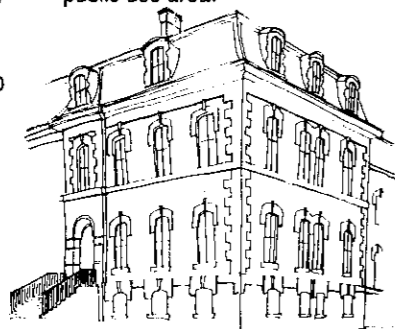
The site traces its history to the early 1860's, when massive work bees cleared an area to be used as a recreation ground, specifically for cricket. The leveled and cleared area witnessed many social events, most notably the first local May Day celebration in 1870, when residents were invited to join in 'all kinds of games, music and dancing on the green ...' May Day is still held in New Westminster each year, continuing the longest such tradition in the British Commonwealth.

England in 1858. A number of towns in B.C. were planned by them (including New Westminster), and many of the major transportation routes of today follow their early surveys. Colonel Moody's residence on the site later became Government House and was the location of the first B.C. Legislature.

The B.C. Penitentiary opened its doors on the site in 1878 in a single block. This original 1878 prison block is the mansard roofed, stone structure about half way up the hill. Another part of the Pen to be retained is the old Gatehouse Administration Building, the castellated structure near Columbia Street, which was built in 1931. The prison closed in 1980, after 102 years of penitentiary service.

If you stand with the Fraser River at your back looking at the former Pen site, you will notice a deep gully to the left. This is known as the Glen and Glen Creek. Years ago salmon and trout actually travelled up this waterway into what are now city residential areas. Over the years this ravine was used as an escape route by prisoners fleeing the penitentiary; it housed a major brickyard; and later was a popular swimming hole. As this

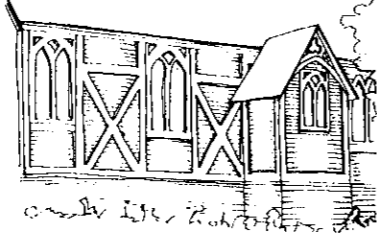
overall site is developed, the Glen is destined to become a public use area.



Incorporated into the residential project will be a commemorative area with a plaque dedicated to the site of the Royal Engineers Camp and an accurately surveyed monument, denoting the location of the Royal

The Columbia Detachment of Royal Engineers under the command of Colonel Richard Clement Moody, was sent from

Engineers' Base Observatory marker, the number one survey point on the mainland of British Columbia.

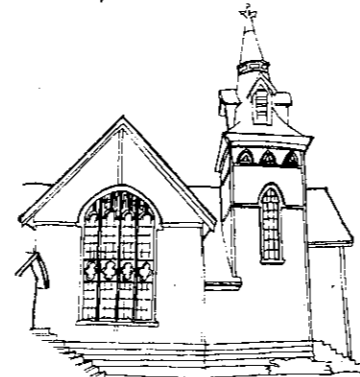


C. St. Mary the Virgin Anglican Church, 121 East Columbia St., built 1865.

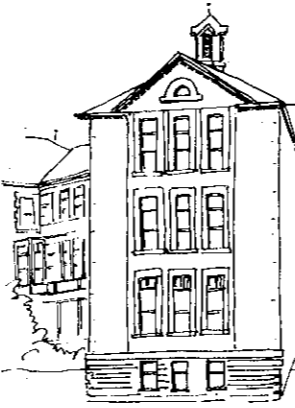
St. Mary's Church, built in the Gothic Revival style, is one of the oldest churches in the province. It draws strong historical importance from the fact that its designer, J.C. White, and its builder, Daniel Richards, were both former Royal Engineers who stayed on in the area when the Columbia Detachment was disbanded in 1863. In New Westminster's early years, St. Mary's was thought of as the fashionable country church. A fire in 1932 necessitated alterations to the interior and the exterior but today much of the simple charm and original structure remain.

As you move up Columbia St. you pass the sites of an early saloon, a Japanese orphanage, Chinese residences and rooming houses for mill workers.

D. Labatt's Brewery is on a site which has been associated with the brewing industry for many years. The first breweries were built here in the 1870s and 1880s with major expansion coming under the ownership of Nels Nelson in the late 1890's. For many years a huge neon Lucky Lager sign surmounted the building and served as a local landmark.



G. Knox Presbyterian Church, G.W. Grant, architect, 1891



E. Royal Columbian Hospital, originally opened in 1862 at Agnes and Fourth Streets, using medical supplies furnished by the Royal Engineers for the founding of a hospital. It was relocated to this site in Sapperton in 1889 in a wooden, three storey structure, with a capacity for 50 patients. Major expansion came in 1912 when a large, imposing brick hospital was built. Over the ensuing years that building was replaced, and the hospital has continued to grow. In 1978 the Health Care Centre opened, and in 1988 the new Emergency wing was completed. Beginning with medical services at the Royal Engineers' camp and the first formal hospital opening in 1862, in 1987 the Royal Columbian Hospital celebrated 125 years of 'Royal Caring'.

F. Sapperton Park This area in the centre of Sapperton has been open land for its entire history. Sometimes referred to as an early military camp, (this is unsubstantiated by research), the 4.98 acre parcel of land was offered for park use by businessman S.B. Buchanan near the turn of the century. Throughout Sapperton's history this park has been the centre of sporting activities, most notably lacrosse, soccer and baseball.

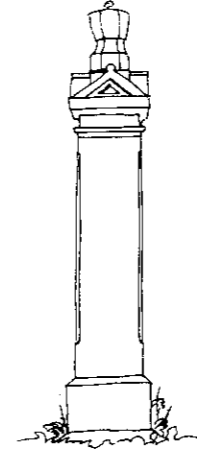
Knox Presbyterian Church was completed in Gothic Revival style by noted architect G.W. Grant, in 1891 and has been a major local landmark since that time. Its large scale is maintained in its steeple, gables, and stained glass windows. For many years the manse stood next to the church facing Columbia St. Adjacent to the church is Sapperton Plaza, opened in 1980.

The area between Sherbrooke St. and Braid St. along Columbia has traditionally been the commercial centre of Sapperton, with a variety of shops and, at one time, its own theatre and bowlerdrome.

H. Hume Park This park site of just over 26 acres was acquired by the city in 1912 from the B.C. Distillery. The area remained basically undeveloped until a more formal park was laid out in 1934 as a project for the unemployed. Early on, the area was referred to as Brunette Park after the Brunette River which flows along its boundary. The park was renamed for Mayor Fred Hume, who proposed the more formal park in the 1930s.



I. Brunette River The Brunette River flows from Burnaby Lake to the Fraser River and has been known as a good fishing river for most of its history. The early Indian population would have known the Brunette well and may have used the flat area of what is now Hume Park as a seasonal fishing camp. The river was named after the predominant colour of its water. The river was also known for its numerous swimming holes. Its lower reaches were surrounded by industry. The Sapperton Fish and Game Club has undertaken the major project of cleaning the river and reintroducing fish into its waters.



J. Fraser Cemetery, 100 Richmond St.

The Fraser Cemetery came into use in the 1870's to replace other smaller cemeteries of that time. The earliest stone in the cemetery is dated 1860, but this marker was moved from an older site in about 1908. The area below Richmond St. is the oldest, made up of such named sections as the Masonic, Oddfellows, and Church of England. The area above Richmond St., not including the older Cathloc section, was added in 1913. There is no longer any segregation, as the entire site is under the management of the city, except for the privately operated Catholic Cemetery. A walk through the cemetery can tell you a great deal about the community. Reading the stones, you can find out how these people lived and died, where they came from and other information. A great deal of local history can be gained from a short walk through the Fraser Cemetery.

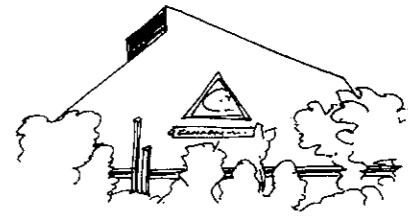


K. Richard McBride School, 331 Richmond St., present school by J.B. Whitburn, 1929

The first school in Sapperton outside of the Royal Engineers' Camp opened in the 1880s at the bottom of Hospital St. Later, a larger, more modern school was opened on Kelly St. It served the community until rapid growth and expanding enrollment brought about the need for a much larger

school. The first Richard McBride School was completed in 1912, designed by architects Gardiner and Mercer.

It served until February, 1929, when it was destroyed by fire. The present school was built on the same site. These schools were named after Richard McBride, Premier of British Columbia from 1903-1915 and knighted in 1912, whose family home was on Columbia St. in Sapperton.



L. Canada Games Pool/Community Centre complex

As you stand next to the Community Centre and look east up the Fraser River, all the land in front of you, the new Glenbrooke subdivision, and the land at your back up to 8th Avenue, was once part of the B.C. Penitentiary. The land was used for agricultural purposes and was cultivated by the prisoners. The Glen Creek was crossed by a bridge near this site. At the far end of the property near 8th and McBride was the first campus of Douglas College.

The former penitentiary garden is now the home of the Canada Games Pool, built when New Westminster and Burnaby co-

hosted the Games in 1973, the city's Community Centre and the Royal City Curling Club. Within the Community Centre is the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame, dedicated to Canada's national sport. The Hall of Fame is open on request. For information call the New Westminster Museum at 521 - 7656.

M. Victory Heights subdivision

Originally planned and developed at the end of the Second World War to provide housing for the returning veterans, the area has developed into a pleasant residential area. Massey Heights nearby was developed in the 1950s

N. Tennis courts/reservoir

Under the large outdoor tennis court lies a reservoir which provides water to the New Westminster area. There were originally two open reservoirs which were converted to one large unit with a capacity of 17.1 million gallons and covered in 1967. The tennis courts were added that same year to take good advantage of the area.

O. Fraser River

From most vantage points in Sapperton you can see the Fraser River. Throughout the seasons, in varying types of weather, the river takes on different colours, textures, features, and feelings which are part of what is Sapperton.

