



The first CPR Hotel, located on the southwest corner of Georgia and Granville Streets, opened on 16 May 1888.

The Railway Hotels of Vancouver

THE SETTLEMENT and subsequent development of Western Canada occurred when the railways were built into territory that had previously been remote wilderness. Many of the small communities that had come into existence because of the railway relied on it for transportation, communication, mail service, delivery of merchandise and very often employment. The railway companies provided the people living in those communities with virtually everything needed that they didn't produce for themselves. The only form of transportation other than the railroad was horse and buggy, so the train became their lifeline. Every man, woman and child was familiar with the huffing and chuffing of the huge, powerful, coal-fired steam engines that hauled the trains. The sound that was created went on for 24 hours a day and 7 days of the week. It became an integral part of the way of life in the remote communities. To the young boys, the trains and engines were the ultimate of engineering and power. To the adults, many of whom were employed by the

company, the term "Sleepy R" was the name they gave to the powerful corporation that played such an eminent role in their lives.

The Canadian Pacific Railway Company was the first company willing to make the venture into what they knew would be very difficult and forbidding territory. They faced a huge challenge in building a railroad through terrain that included the Kicking Horse Pass with the steep and dangerous "Big Hill" and the Rogers Pass, which had massive annual snowfalls. Avalanche hazards were a constant problem during construction and in the operation of the railway when it opened. The surveyors were aware of a safer and easier pass through the Rocky Mountains, but it was located many miles to the north and could not be used because the federal government of Canada had insisted that the line be built along the more difficult southern route to assist in maintaining Canadian sovereignty. At the time there was a (real or perceived) threat that the United States might annex some of the territory of British Columbia. The Northwest Mounted Police had established posts adjacent to the 49th parallel and were ordered to provide police protection to the crews working on the construction of the railway. To make the project worthwhile for the CPR, the federal government agreed to make very substantial grants of crown land along the right-of-way as construction proceeded. Superintendent Samuel Benfield Steele of the NWMP was put in charge of security, and construction proceeded.

Because they were planning to take passengers into areas where there was no food or hotel services of any kind, the CPR had to provide hotels, restaurants and local ground transportation for their clients. This fact and the desire that they had to be the very best resulted in the development and construction of a line of excellent quality hotels that became known as the "Châteaux." The grand dining rooms of the hotels were equipped with the very best sterling silver cutlery, linen table cloths and cut-glass crystal. A wide choice of food prepared by master chefs and served by

specially trained waiters made dining a truly pleasant experience. All of the hotels had ballrooms, meeting rooms and commercial sample rooms available for businessmen and commercial travellers. A staff of porters looked after the delivery of suitcases to the rooms. Transportation from the train or steamship was always provided—originally by horse-drawn coaches and later by motor bus. In addition, the CPR acquired a fleet of deep-sea passenger liners, which they named their "Empress Fleet." The vessels were designed specifically for trans-Pacific travel to Asia. The CPR then constructed their own berthing docks for their ships, which were located on the Vancouver waterfront stretching east from the north foot of Burrard Street.

The CPR rail line was completed and opened for business in 1885 when they had reached their goal of the Pacific Ocean at Port Moody, BC. The goal had been achieved, but there was considerable difficulty with the sailing ships of the day navigating from English Bay to Port Moody through the long fjord of Burrard Inlet, so management decided to extend the line to Vancouver. The first train travelled over this new line to Vancouver in May of 1887.

The first CPR Hotel Vancouver was built from plans designed by Thomas Sorby on the recommendation of William C. Van Horne, the General Manager of the CPR. The design was a five-storey brick building. Construction began on July 22, 1886, and the hotel opened on May 16, 1888, a year after the arrival of the first train. The location between Granville and Howe on the south side of Georgia had been chosen because it had the highest elevation in the CPR's townsite, so the view from the hotel would be outstanding. Secondly, the location was at the top of the hill in sight of the CPR's train station and piers. And lastly, the new hotel would be located in the heart of the rapidly developing West Coast business section of Vancouver.

The original hotel had a number of additions over the years (even one by Francis Rattenbury), so that by 1910 it occupied an area of almost 60,000 square feet but

This photograph was taken from the top floor or possibly even the roof top of the first Hotel Vancouver to the northwest with the intersection of Georgia & Howe Streets in the foreground. Situated in the distance are the First Nation's villages of Squatsahs (Deadman's Island) and Paapeak (Brockton Point) in Stanley Park, circa 1890.



in a rather haphazard manner. The CPR directors realized that the time had come to replace it with a completely new building. The new hotel was designed by Francis S. Swales of Painter & Swales, architects of New York. Work got underway in 1913, with Skene and Christie as contractors. The building was finished by 1916 and opened to great fanfare.

The hotel was intended to provide first-class accommodation to businessmen and wealthy tourists, some of whom would be continuing their travel on the Empress Liners. The new Hotel Vancouver was absolutely magnificent in every way. It was a deluxe building with beautifully carved mahogany and oak panelling in the many conference rooms and ballrooms. Each year at Christmas the

The second CPR Hotel located at the corner of Georgia & Granville Streets.



Oak Room, with its beautiful crystal chandeliers, vaulted ceilings more than 20 feet high, and artistic wood panelling on the walls, was prepared for family entertainment with a huge Christmas tree fully decorated and Santa in his red suit and beard passing out favours to the children. The hotel remained an elegant centre for Vancouver socialites from the time that it opened for business. Local citizens as well as travellers were delighted to attend functions at the dining rooms and ballrooms of the very desirable Hotel Vancouver.

The second rail line was the brainchild of railroad baron Charles Melville Hays. It was named the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, and work started in 1905. From Winnipeg the route chosen was northern via Saskatoon, Edmonton, and Jasper and then through the Yellowhead pass to Prince George, with a terminal planned for Prince Rupert. Hays claimed that the route chosen would be greatly beneficial to trade with Asia, because the Port of Prince Rupert was an excellent deep-water port with none of the problems for navigation like the narrows with their rip tides entering the Vancouver harbour. It was miles closer to Asia than Vancouver, where the CPR had their terminal. The grade through the Yellowhead pass was much gentler and thereby more economical and safer in operation and maintenance than the route chosen by the CPR. Hays believed that Prince Rupert would become a larger metropolitan city than Vancouver, Victoria or New Westminster because of the “proximity to Asia” and the vast market potential there for Canadian exports—in particular grain, the best of which was grown in the area served by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. Hays assured his shareholders that the company would build, own and operate its own telegraph line, handle the express, freight, passenger and mail business, and provide the very best of hotels and restaurants. Negotiations were begun to purchase a fleet of ocean liners to sail the Pacific Ocean to Asia and the South Pacific.

Hays asked Francis Rattenbury to design a Château-style grand hotel to be linked to the deep-water steamship docks and form the central focal point of a great city. The hotel would be called The Hotel Prince Rupert and would be equipped to provide the very best of dining, entertaining, and hotel services for the passengers of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and the citizens of Prince Rupert. As the CPR had done in Vancouver, they built their own wharf and terminals in the port of Prince Rupert. A dry dock was completed in 1913, and Francis Rattenbury completed the drawings for the hotel. Hays wanted the buildings to be impressive enough to shine as the



Risk takers pose for a photograph 150 feet above ground during the construction of the second CPR Hotel.

western terminus of his railway. The BC Government constructed a hospital, fire hall and high school. Prince Rupert was now ready for the last spike to be driven at Fraser Lake, which was expected sometime in 1914.

Then two things happened that shattered the dream. Charles Melville Hays had been in London finalizing the funding required for the completion of the railroad and its chain of hotels. He cabled his attorney Lewis Patmore, advising that all was well and complete and he had booked passage on the safest and most elegant liner in the world, the *Titanic*. When the *Titanic* sank, Hays perished. Shortly after the tragedy of the *Titanic* World War I broke out, and the financiers in London rapidly lost interest in a railroad located in a far distant colony of the British Empire. The railroad was completed and opened for business on April 7, 1914, but by 1919 it was apparent that it was not capable of generating sufficient revenue to stay in business. A number of other Canadian railroads were encountering the same problems caused by the war and other pressures affecting the economy of Canada. The Canadian Government decided to salvage the railways that were suffering from lack of funds and create a national railway system called Canadian National Railways.

The management of the newly created CNR decided that it would be far more sensible to route their main line of trains to Vancouver and use the newly created Grandview Cut and the terminal of their predecessor, the Canadian Northern Railway. When this occurred, progress and development in Prince Rupert ground to a halt. The line west from Red Pass Junction became a secondary spur line, serving the small communities from Prince George to Prince Rupert. The CNR had constructed a new terminal in Vancouver on the mudflats of the eastern end of False Creek in conjunction with the Great Northern Railway. An agreement worked out with the City of Vancouver specified that two hotels, a grand hotel downtown and a smaller hotel near the new station, would have to be constructed. They acquired property at the corner of Burrard and Georgia Streets and retained the services of Montreal-based architects John S. Archibald and John Schofield, who had just designed the Bessborough Hotel in Saskatoon for the railway. Their design for Vancouver differed from their previous work and borrowed heavily from the recently opened Royal York Hotel in Toronto. The hotel was almost finished when the stock market crash of 1929 occurred. All work was halted until 1937, when it was announced that King George VI

THE THIRD HOTEL VANCOUVER. Located at Hornby and Georgia Streets, the hotel nears completion in time for the official opening by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (the Queen Mother of Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Margaret) on 29 May 1939.



Opposite Top

This car bumper ornament, made by Henry Birks Jewellers, was one of hundreds of different 1939 royal visit souvenirs.

Opposite Bottom

RCMP Constable Crystal Shostak poses beside a 1939 Royal Tour McLaughlin- Buick, serial #1, outside the Canadian National Roundhouse facility at the West Coast Railway Heritage Museum at Squamish. The 3-ton royal maroon automobile was one of two built by General Motors of Canada for use by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (Queen Mother of Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Margaret) during their Dominion tour of Canada in May and June 1939. The Duke of Kent, a younger brother of the king, visited Canada and drove the car in 1941. Prince Charles and Princess Diana rode in the car into BC Place Stadium to open Expo 86. Finally, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip rode in the car for the opening of the Commonwealth Games in 1994, and their son Prince Edward rode in the car to close the games. This car has carried more British royalty than any other car outside Britain and has been in service for over 70 years.

and Queen Elizabeth were planning a royal tour of Canada in 1939 with a visit to Vancouver.

Construction was resumed on the hotel, and a joint operating agreement was worked out with the CNR rival, the CPR. Both parties realized Vancouver was too small for two grand hotels. The CPR's Hotel Vancouver was closed when the brand-new hotel opened its doors. When the Second World War broke out later in 1939, the old hotel was donated for the use of the Canadian Armed Forces. It was used by the military until 1949, when the property was sold to the T. Eaton Company and demolished. In the 1970s the site became part of the Pacific Centre development.



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Stan Pavlov began selling real estate in 1987 and that year sold more acreage than all the other realtors in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows combined. "I like to work on bigger deals because they are more challenging," Stan says. But he enjoys the diversity in the real estate business and also takes on listings that involve ALR, industrial, commercial, farm and residential properties. Stan would like to thank all of his past clients and has no intentions of hanging up that big-brimmed hat of his yet. He is excited to work with new clients, and with his years of experience, feels he is well qualified and prepared to meet new challenges.

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