

Shaughnessy Heights



Richard Marpole, the general superintendent of the CPR, was instrumental in the development of South Vancouver's Shaughnessy Heights and Marpole districts.

IN 1907 RICHARD MARPOLE, the general superintendent and executive assistant of the CPR, decided to begin subdividing a large tract of land lying on a hill south of False Creek into an attractive residential district for the city's more affluent citizens. It was named "Shaughnessy Heights" after Thomas George Shaughnessy, the second president of the CPR and later Baron Shaughnessy. As the city's largest landowner and real estate developer, the CPR took great care to make the neighbourhood reflect the wealth and status of Vancouver's more affluent residents. The exclusive neighbourhood attracted many former residents from the West End's "Blue Blood Alley."

The railway commissioned Frederick Todd, a Montreal architect, to lay out the huge development into generous $1/5$ to $1\ 1/2$ acre lots. The architect was inspired by the work of Frederick Law Olmsted—the man who designed New York City's Central Park. The CPR land developers spent \$2,000,000 preparing the site before allowing any of the lots to go on sale. Workmen put in sewer lines, paved sidewalks and roads. The developers protected the exclusive character of the district by insisting that homes cost five or more times than homes in other areas of the city. A typical early Shaughnessy home had up to 20 rooms filled with opulent Edwardian furniture, silverware, and other household items to reflect the owner's wealth and status. As a symbolic show of a homeowner's brave domination over Mother Nature, some households had rooms filled with hunting trophies that included moose, elk, deer and grizzly bear from expeditions up the coast and into the interior. These homes had reception rooms, music rooms, ballrooms, and parlours of every description and family members summonsed servants by using in-house call boxes that signalled their location. Often Chinese labourers performed domestic duties in the many mansions. These "Asiatic houseboys" earned \$10 to \$30 a month and lived in basement rooms that were labelled on architectural blueprints as "Chinaman's Quarters."

Before the automobile, drivers in horse-drawn carriages drew up under porte-cocheres and dropped guests off at the main entrance to be ushered into huge furnished halls. Ironically, the back doors of these homes were usually much busier than the front entrances with deliveries by tradesmen.

In order to bring potential homebuyers to the posh part of the city, the railway's real estate promoters extended the BC Electric's Interurban to the new elite subdivision that included a tennis club, lawn bowling club and later the Shaughnessy Heights Golf Club.

The developers divided Shaughnessy into three parcels and developed it in phases. The first phase centered on "The Crescent" that surrounded Shaughnessy Park. Once that area filled in, the CPR began to develop areas further south that they called "Second Shaughnessy" and "Third Shaughnessy."

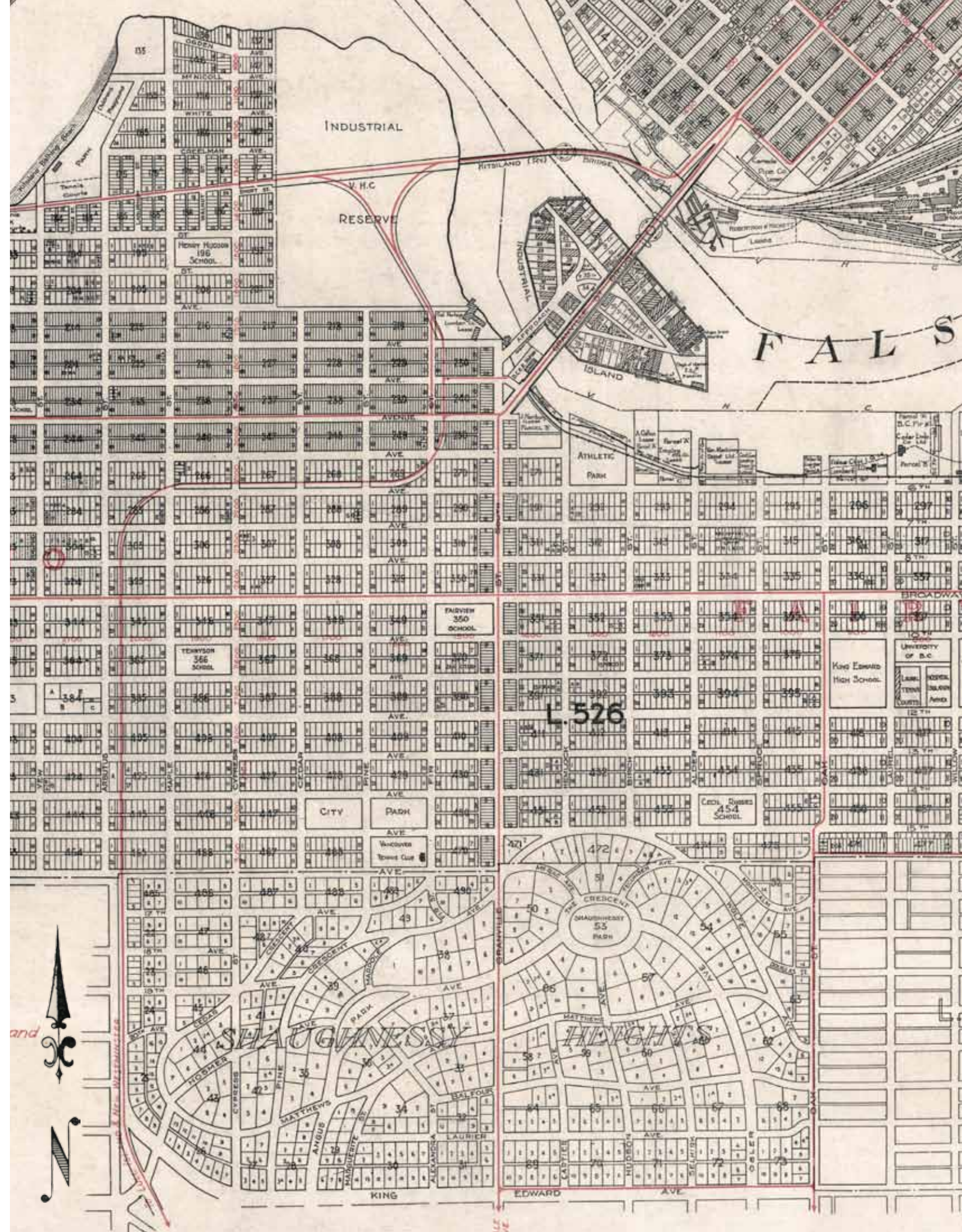
Major Matthews wrote:

The throwing open for settlement of the first section of Shaughnessy Heights, reputed at the time to be the most wonderful residential section of Vancouver's future, unsettled all previous ideas of where a fine home should be built. The buggy was disappearing, the motorcar was coming; distances were less formidable an obstacle than formerly. The broad verandah was still a necessity but rapidly nearing its end; the scene so long of evening parties, of Sunday afternoon parties, of sunshine and fresh air in the summer days, was about to disappear—it would soon shrink into a mere porch.

From 1911 through the twenties, Shaughnessy Heights was Vancouver's most exclusive residential district. Unfortunately World War I temporarily halted growth in Vancouver. The depression of the 1930s resulted in the CPR repossessing home after home, and for a time the area came to be known as "Mortgage Heights." The Tait House, valued at \$75,000 in 1920; sold for \$7,500 in 1939.

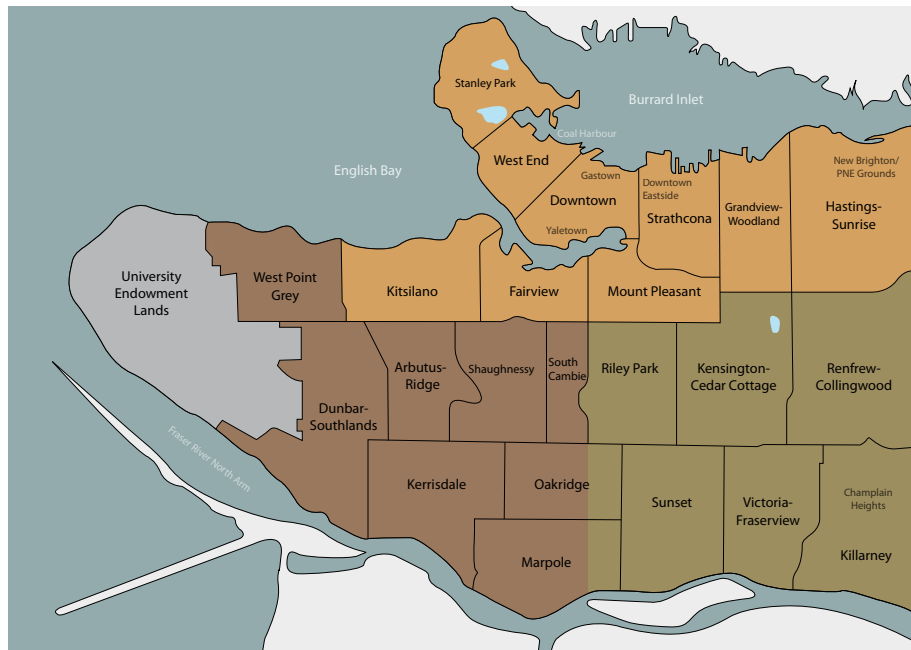
M. P. Cotton Co. Ltd. building roads in Shaughnessy Heights (Cypress Street & Matthews Avenue).





Above
M. P. Cotton Co. Ltd. gravel bunkers at Shaughnessy Heights (Matthews Avenue & Granville Street). The men in the foreground left to right: John Neave (with dog), unidentified, Mr. Mulhern, William Johnson and Charles Cockering.

Right
In 1929 the municipalities of Point Grey and South Vancouver amalgamated with the City of Vancouver. This map, produced a few years after amalgamation, shows the approximate boundaries between the three municipalities.



Opposite
A 1923 map showing the development of Shaughnessy Heights, the Industrial (the former Kitsilano First Nations) Reserve, and the new man-made Granville Island.



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West 41st Avenue

Arbutus Street

King Edward Avenue

Granville Street

West 16th Avenue

Oak Street

Shaughnessy

1 Vancouver International Airport 2 Shaughnessy Golf Course 3 Kerrisdale
4 Glen Brae House 5 Rosemary 6 Shaughnessy Park 6 Highcroft