

Vancouver's World Building

LOUIS DENISON TAYLOR commissioned the construction of the World Building a few blocks north of the Beatty Street Drill Hall for his newspaper business. The American entrepreneur had arrived on the west coast in 1896 after fleeing an investigation into wrongdoing in Chicago. He tried his luck in the Klondike but eventually settled in Vancouver, where he first established himself in newspaper distribution. In 1905 Taylor and some associates purchased the *Vancouver Daily World* from the widow of John McLagan and the small daily grew to challenge the larger *Vancouver Province*.

The 17-storey building, completed in 1912, was best known for its green dome and for the nine semi-draped “muses” or maidens that supported a cornice halfway up the building. The bare breasts and the sensuous poses scandalized the city’s prudish elite. Upon completion, the World Building became

the tallest building in the British Empire. A previous record holder had been the Dominion Building located a few blocks away.

The newspaper man’s editorials paved the way for his entry into politics, and he was elected Mayor of Vancouver 1910–11, 1915, 1925–28 and from 1931 to 1934. Taylor fought for women’s rights, an eight-hour working day and Vancouver’s first airport.

In 1924 Taylor got into financial difficulties and sold the building to Bekins, a Seattle moving company, and their huge neon sign went up on the roof of Vancouver’s tallest building. The *Vancouver Sun* newspaper purchased the building in 1937, and it was renamed the Sun Tower.

Taylor had a “live and let live attitude” that, when he became older, didn’t sit well with many of the self-righteous anti-everything factions in the city. This caused him to lose his last attempt at retaining the mayor’s spot to lawyer Gerald Grattan McGeer. The lawyer-politician accused “LD” at age 77 of being both outdated and corrupt.

Taylor contested subsequent elections but without any success. A few days after the eighty-year old politician lost his last election, a group of well-wishers led by prominent lawyer Angelo Branca, later a BC Supreme Court judge, created a trust account in Taylor’s name. The “pension” lasted the rest of L.D.’s life.

Above
A 1923 photograph from the World Building looking west although labelled north.

- 1 Vancouver Block
- 2 Second Hotel Vancouver
- 3 Hudson’s Bay Company
- 4 Holy Rosary Cathedral
- 5 Vancouver Central School

Opposite
Commissioned by Taylor, the owner of the *Vancouver World* newspaper and later the longest serving Mayor of Vancouver, the Sun Tower was the tallest building in the British Empire when completed in 1912. Originally called the World Building, it surpassed the Dominion Building in height.

