History

British Columbia was one of the last frontiers of discovery in North America. In 1774 Spaniards under Juan Pérez Hernández were probably the first Europeans to see the coast of BC. They did not land, but Pérez claimed the region for Spain. Four years later James Cook took his 2 British ships into Nootka Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Within a few years British traders came by sea and developed a flourishing fur trade with coastal native peoples.

In 1789 Spain and Britain disputed ownership of West Coast North America. The Spanish had established a trading post at Nootka Sound and seized British ships there. This Nootka Sound Controversy was settled by the Nootka Conventions of 1790-94, which gave equal trading rights to both countries but did not determine ownership.

British claims were strengthened after 1792 when ships under George Vancouver carried out a careful 3-year mapping of the coast from Oregon to Alaska. Vancouver named many of the bays, inlets and coastal landform features. In this period of worldwide European colonialism, there was no concern among European governments and businessmen that this area was already occupied by native peoples.

In 1793 the first European report about the interior of BC was made by the NORTH WEST CO fur trader, Alexander Mackenzie. He entered the region from the East via the Peace and Upper Fraser rivers, exploring westward across the Chilcotin Plateau and through the Coast Mountains to the long inlet at Bella Coola.

Two other members of the NWC, Simon Fraser and David Thompson, explored other parts of the interior early in the 19th century and opened fur trade posts supplied from Montréal - the first permanent settlements in the province. In 1808 Fraser reached the mouth of the river which now bears his name, and Thompson found the mouth of the Columbia River in 1811, after exploring the river routes of southeastern BC.

For about 50 years, while eastern North America was being occupied and settled by agricultural people and dotted with commercial cities, the mountainous western part of the continent remained little-known territory on the fringes of fur-trade empires.
controlled from eastern cities.

During the first half of the 19th century, the British-owned HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY controlled the western fur trade, including the area of present-day Washington and Oregon. As American settlers moved into the southern part of this region in the 1830s, they refused to recognize the authority of the British company.

Conflicting territorial claims (the US claimed north to lat 54° 40´) were settled in the 1846 OREGON TREATY, establishing the southern boundary of BC along the 49th parallel, except for Vancouver Island. In anticipation of this result, the HBC moved its headquarters to newly established FORT VICTORIA in 1843.

In 1849 the British government granted Vancouver Island to the HBC for colonization, and in 1851 James DOUGLAS, an official of the company, became governor of the colony. In 1856 Douglas established a legislative assembly for Vancouver Island (periodically called Vancouver's Island). At midcentury the only non-native settlements in what was to become British Columbia were fur trade posts on the coast, such as Victoria, Nanaimo and FORT LANGLEY, and in the interior, such as Kamloops, Fort (later Prince George and FORT ST JAMES.

**Development**

This quiet period of history ended in 1858 when gold was discovered in the sand bars along the Lower Fraser River. The ensuing GOLD RUSHES brought thousands of fortune hunters, mainly from the California goldfields, but also from other parts of the world. Many came by boat from San Francisco, crowding into inadequate facilities in Victoria to buy supplies and receive permits.

Prospecting proceeded upstream along the banks and bars of the Fraser River during 1858. The town of Yale was established as a transshipping centre at the south end of Fraser Canyon and the eastern end of water transport from the Fraser River mouth. Gold seekers walked the tributaries of the Fraser River and major finds were made east of Quesnel.

The boomtown of Barkerville arose at the western edge of the Cariboo Mountains as the chief service town for the Cariboo goldfields. At its peak in the early 1860s Barkerville probably held a fluctuating population of about 10 000, making it the largest settlement in western Canada.

In order to establish government and maintain law and order around the goldfields, the British established the mainland colony of British Columbia in 1858 under the authority of James Douglas, who remained governor of Vancouver Island. The new settlement of NEW WESTMINSTER, located slightly inland on the north bank of the Fraser River delta, was proclaimed capital of the new colony in 1859. This administrative centre controlled river traffic entering the Fraser River en route to the interior. In the early 1860s the amazing feat of building the CARIBOO ROAD along the walls of the Fraser Canyon was accomplished in order to move supplies to interior settlements.
With gold production declining and people leaving, the British government united the 2 colonies in 1866 to reduce administrative costs. New Westminster was the capital of the combined colony for 2 years before protests from the older capital, Victoria, resulted in the seat of government being moved there in 1868. The resulting physical separation of the capital from the majority of the people and economic activity on the mainland created later communication problems for the region. Many government services and offices had to be duplicated on the mainland.

After 1867 the British colony on the West Coast debated whether it should join the new CONFEDERATION of eastern provinces known as Canada. In 1871 the 12 000 non-native residents of BC agreed to enter the Dominion of Canada on the condition that the federal government build a transcontinental railway to link it with the East. The new province was to wait, rather impatiently at times, for 15 years before the CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY reached the southwest coast.

The union with Canada was an unhappy one at first. The new province ran heavily into debt; the cost of governing a large mountainous area with few people was very high and revenues from resource users were low. More than one-third of the province's white residents lived in or near Victoria. Even by 1881 the white population of 24 000 was less than the estimated 25 000 Native people.

The hoped-for expansion of trade with East Asia did not develop immediately with the completion of the CPR in 1885. But the railway did bring people to the port of Vancouver and by 1901 that city had surpassed Victoria in population. Vancouver's population of almost 27 010 in 1901 had been achieved in 15 years, whereas Victoria had only 23 688 people after 58 years of occupation.

Entrepreneurs came to British Columbia around the turn of the century to exploit the province's vast resources. A salmon-cannery industry was established along the coast. Sawmills were in operation all around the shores of Georgia Strait and particularly along eastern Vancouver Island. The first pulp and paper mill was completed at Powell River in 1912.

The major expansion of the forest industry came, however, after WWI, when the opening of the Panama Canal gave access to markets around the north Atlantic region. BC attracted a different type of settler from those who settled on the land on the Prairies and across eastern Canada. A need for capital and access to natural resources for export were more important than ownership of farmland.

In the 1890s the major resource development and settlement in interior BC centred on the mining activity in the Kootenay region of the southeast. Prospectors, mainly from mining camps in western Montana and Idaho, moved northward along the valleys and discovered gold and base metals in the area west of KOOTENAY LAKE. Mining camps arose in the Slocan Valley, at ROSSLAND, near Grand Forks and elsewhere. NELSON became the main service, supply and administrative centre, with a population of about 4500 in 1911.

Railways extended northward into the region from the US, and the CPR built a line westward through the Crowsnest Pass in 1899 to bring coal from FERNIE to smelters
in the mining centres. By about 1914, however, many of the mines had closed and some towns were abandoned, although other mines opened in later years. The extension of the Kettle Valley branch of the CPR to the coast during WWI came after the peak of mining activity in the Kootenay region.

Agriculture brought settlers to the south-central interior. At the time of the Cariboo Gold Rush, ranching was established in the grassland valleys and rolling basins across the southern interior plateau. Irrigation was developed early in the century west of Kamloops and in the northern Okanagan Valley. Irrigation for orchards that spread south from Vernon aided settlement projects for returning soldiers after WWI (see VETERANS’ LAND ACT).

The building of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway west from Edmonton through the Upper Fraser, Bulkley and Skeena valleys in 1907-14 was intended to give Canada a second gateway through the mountains to the Pacific coast. Prince George then became a minor sawmill centre, with rail access eastward to the growing housing market in the Prairie provinces. But the port and rail terminal at Prince Rupert never developed the anticipated volume of traffic, partly because there was little need for incoming freight. The small town remained mainly a fisheries centre, with continuing hopes.

Resource-based activities suffered serious economic decline in BC during 1930-45 because of the loss of world markets. After about 1950, however, the improved transportation system did much to integrate the interior resource economies and settlements with coastal collection, processing and management centres.

Appropriately, the theme of Expo 86, held in Vancouver, was transportation and communications. Thousands of Canadians migrated to BC, attracted by the mild climate and perceived economic opportunities, joining thousands of other immigrants from Asia. These people were not only labour and management for the growing commercial and service occupations, they were also consumers of goods, services and entertainment. In the 21st century, BC is one of Canada's most prosperous and fastest-growing provinces.

**Pérez Hernández, Juan Josef**

Juan Josef Pérez Hernández, naval officer, explorer (b c 1725 at Majorca, Spain; d 2 Nov 1775 off Calif). Pérez served as a pilot and marine officer in Spain's Pacific trade between Mexico and the Philippines and in the Spanish expansion into Alta California. He was curious about the unknown northern coastline and his request to explore it coincided with the Spanish government's desire for information on Russian penetration southward. In 1774 he sailed aboard the frigate Santiago with orders to reach at least 60ºN lat. Pérez was the first European to explore the Queen Charlotte Islands and to approach Nootka Sound, but unfavourable weather prevented him from landing to take formal possession for Spain. Although he reached only about 55º30´ lat and left some missions unfulfilled, he collected important data that served future Spanish mariners. Pérez was second officer in the 1775 expedition commanded by Bruno de Hezeta, but he died at sea.
Cook, James

James Cook, explorer (b near Marton, Eng 27 Oct 1728; d at Kealakekua Bay, Sandwich Is [Hawaii] 14 Feb 1779). The greatest navigator of his era, he served as master of the Pembroke at the siege of LOUISBOURG (1758) during the SEVEN YEARS' WAR. He charted part of Gaspé and helped prepare the map that enabled James WOLFE's armada to navigate the St Lawrence River. He was a painstaking surveyor, and was chiefly responsible 1763-67 for mapping the intricate and treacherous coast of Newfoundland, which England acquired at the end of the war; he had charted part of its east shore in 1762, including St John's harbour.

Cook revolutionized Europe's knowledge of the South Pacific in his great circumnavigations 1768-71 and 1772-75. In July 1776 he began a third voyage, to search for a NORTHWEST PASSAGE. He sailed east across the Pacific and anchored in NOOTKA SOUND, on Vancouver Island (29 March 1778). His men repaired his ships and carried on a lucrative trade with the Nootka for otter pelts. He departed 26 April 1778 and sailed into Bering Strait in search of the passage, retreating in the face of a wall of ice. He was killed in the Sandwich Islands in an altercation with the local people.

Cook was not the first to explore the NORTHWEST COAST, but he and his men were the first to reveal its attractions, particularly the FUR TRADE. Among those who followed was George VANCOUVER, who had sailed with Cook on his second and third voyages.

Nootka Sound Controversy

The Nootka Sound Controversy involved the competing claims of Spain and Britain for control of trade and navigation on the NORTHWEST COAST and in the Pacific Ocean, 1789-94. Spain claimed the Pacific as its exclusive territory by right of the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). Britain argued that navigation was open to any nation, and territorial claims had to be backed by effective occupation. In July 1789 Esteban MARTÍNEZ, Spanish commandant at NOOTKA SOUND, seized several British merchant ships. John MEARES, part owner of these ships, reported the seizure to his government in his Memorial of 30 April 1790. Britain demanded compensation and threatened war, but Spain declined to pay compensation and prepared for war, hoping its long-standing Bourbon ally, France, would provide assistance. France, undergoing revolution, refused.

Under the terms of 3 conventions Spain was obliged to accede to British requests and compensate the British for their losses. Under the third Nootka Convention (11 January 1794) Spain and Britain recognized each other's rights of trade at Nootka Sound and in other Pacific coast areas not already controlled by Spain. Subjects of either nation could erect temporary buildings at Nootka, but not permanent garrisons or factories. Neither nation could claim exclusive sovereignty. Nootka Sound was to be maintained as a free port by Spain and Britain, and to be open to other nations. On 28 March 1795 both countries completed their withdrawal from Nootka Sound. The controversy ended in symbolic victory for British mercantile and political interests.

Vancouver, George
George Vancouver, naval officer, explorer (b at King's Lynn, Eng 22 June 1757; d at Petersham, London, Eng 12 May 1798). Vancouver was with James COOK on his expeditions to the South Seas (1772-75) and the NORTHWEST COAST (1776-80). In 1790 an expedition was planned to explore that coast. Preparations were delayed by news that the Spaniards had seized British property at NOOTKA SOUND but were resumed, under Vancouver's command, after a convention had been signed with Spain in Oct. Vancouver was charged with 2 missions: to receive back the properties alleged to have been seized at Nootka and to explore the coast from California to Cook Inlet, Alaska. He reached the coast in Apr 1792. In Aug he met the Spanish commissioner BODEGA Y QUADRA at Nootka; negotiations were friendly but futile, and the matter of the seized properties had to be referred to London and Madrid. The summers of 1792, 1793 and 1794 were spent exploring the coast, including the intricacies of Puget Sd and the whole of the mainland coast of BC. The intervening winters were spent in the Sandwich Is [Hawaii]. After his return to Eng in Sept 1795 he set about revising his journal, published in 1798 as A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World. In it he claimed with justice that his survey, one of the greatest of its kind, had removed "every doubt" about the existence of a NORTHWEST PASSAGE to the Atlantic "within the limits of our researches."

New Caledonia

New Caledonia ("New Scotland"), was a name given in 1806 to the central and highland plateau area of BRITISH COLUMBIA by Simon FRASER, a partner, trader and explorer in the NORTH WEST CO. Fraser had never been to Scotland, but the BC interior reminded him of his mother's descriptions of the Scottish Highlands. New Caledonia became a trading department or district for the NWC, and had its headquarters at Fort St James, built in 1806 on Stuart Lake. Nearby were Forts Fraser and George, the latter at the junction of the Nechako and Fraser rivers, from which Fraser began his celebrated exploration of the river, named after him, that drained New Caledonia to the south.

Other names for the central interior appeared on maps at this time: the Americans called it Oregon; Capt George VANCOUVER called it New Hanover; and British fur trader James Colnett called it North West Georgia. However, the NWC's dominance of the FUR TRADE of the BC interior, until the 1821 merger with the HUDSON'S BAY CO, assured the continuance of the name New Caledonia.

In 1858 legislation was introduced to create a crown colony to bring British law and authority to an area undergoing a GOLD RUSH and rapid population expansion. Colonial Secretary Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton called the region New Caledonia; however, the French possessed a South Pacific colony called New Caledonia, and to avoid confusion or resentment the name was changed to British Columbia. Queen Victoria made this choice, and New Caledonia became British Columbia on 2 August 1858. Thereafter the earlier term gradually disappeared from general use.

Oregon Treaty

The Oregon Treaty, signed on 15 June 1846 between Britain and the US, describes the boundary between BNA and the US west of the Rocky (or Stony) Mountains. A compromise between the American desire for a boundary with Russian Alaska at 54°40½ N lat to the Columbia River mouth, the treaty set the boundary at 49° to the middle of the channel.
between the mainland and Vancouver Island, thence through the middle of the channel and
Juan de Fuca Strait to the Pacific. But the "middle of the channel" could have followed
either Rosario Strait or Haro Strait between the Strait of Georgia and Juan de Fuca Strait
and and between them lay San Juan Island which was claimed by both Britain and the US.
The Americans landed troops on the island in 1859. The boundary through the strait thus
remained in doubt until 1872, when it was referred to the German emperor, Wilhelm I, for
arbitration. The settlement favoured the US claim, ie, Haro Strait.

Fort Victoria

In 1842, James DOUGLAS of the HUDSON'S BAY CO selected the port of Camosack (the
harbour where Victoria now stands) as a new fur-trade post - eventually to replace FORT
VANCOUVER as the company's Pacific headquarters and to bolster the British claim to
VANCOUVER ISLAND. Known first locally as Fort Albert, the original intention was to name
the site Fort Adelaide, but on 10 June 1843 it was officially christened Fort Victoria after
Queen VICTORIA. The OREGON TREATY of 1846 effectively terminated Fort Vancouver as
Columbia district headquarters, and in 1849 it was superseded by Fort Victoria. The crown
colony of Vancouver Island was also established in 1849 and Richard Blanshard, who
became its first governor in 1850, resided at Fort Victoria. VICTORIA townsite was
surveyed adjacent to the fort in 1851-52 and during the FRASER RIVER GOLD RUSH of
1858 its population soared. Fort Victoria eventually became an anachronism and by 1864
its last remnants had disappeared.

Fort Langley

Fort Langley, established 1827 on the FRASER RIVER, 32 km east of VANCOUVER near
present-day LANGLEY, BC, was important in the province's development until the post's
abandonment in 1886. Part of a network of trading posts established by the HUDSON'S
BAY CO on the Pacific slope, it was initially a fur trade post but soon became a provisioning
and administrative centre for the company's Columbia District. The old fort was abandoned
in 1839 and a new one was built 3.5 km upstream. After a fire, it was rebuilt in May 1840.
The fort operated a large farm, initiated fish packing and became a commercial centre for
the colony of British Columbia. By the time it became a national HISTORIC SITE in 1923,
its buildings were crumbling. But beginning in 1955 several buildings were reconstructed,
and Fort Langley is now an important tourist attraction.

Douglas, Sir James

Sir James Douglas, fur trader, governor of Vancouver Island, 1851-63, and of British
Columbia, 1858-64 (b at Demerara, British Guiana 15? Aug 1803; d at Victoria 2 Aug
1877). A resourceful, energetic and intelligent man, Douglas helped the HUDSON'S BAY CO
become a trading monopoly in the North Pacific. As colonial governor he initiated British
rule west of the Rocky Mountains, and as the founder of settlement, trade and industry, he
is remembered as "the Father of BC."

A "Scotch West Indian," Douglas was the son of "a free coloured woman" and a Scottish
merchant. He was taken to Lanark for schooling when he was 12. At age 16 he was
apprenticed to the NORTH WEST CO, and entered the HBC's employ on the merger of the 2 companies in 1821. In 1826, while attached to Fort St James in the New Caledonia district, Douglas accompanied Chief Factor William Connolly on the first annual fur brigade to Fort Vancouver. On 27 April 1828, after the custom of the country, he married Amelia, Connolly's part-Indian daughter, confirming the marriage in 1837.

George SIMPSON, governor of Rupert's Land, who met Douglas at Fort St James in 1828, described him as "a stout, powerful active man of good conduct and respectable abilities," but one who became "furiously violent when aroused," a tendency which brought Douglas into conflicts with the CARRIER Indians and caused Connolly to obtain his transfer in 1830 to Fort Vancouver to serve under John MCLoughlin. There Douglas became chief trader in 1835 and chief factor in 1839. In 1842 Douglas accompanied Simpson to Alaska to negotiate with the Russian American Co. In 1843 Douglas began constructing Fort Victoria on the southern tip of Vancouver Island to replace the northern coastal forts.

Anticipating the eventual withdrawal of the HBC from Fort Vancouver after the British accepted the FORTY-NINTH PARALLEL as boundary in 1846, he had a new brigade trail blazed on British territory from New Caledonia to Fort Langley on the lower Fraser River. Fort Victoria, where the furs from the interior were transshipped, became the main Pacific depot in 1849. The fear of American expansion northward caused Britain on 13 January 1849 to lease Vancouver Island to the HBC for 10 years. Douglas, the supervisor of the fur trade since 1845, was appointed HBC agent on the island.

The British government selected for governor Richard Blanshard, a barrister willing to serve without salary. Blanshard arrived at Fort Victoria in March 1850 to find his residence not completed. Remaining on shipboard, he sailed northward. Blanshard was shocked by the HBC's harsh discipline of striking miners at the Fort Rupert mine and accepted local fears of an Indian attack. Douglas would brook no interference with his Indian policy, which now was based on mutual confidence. Blanshard soon resigned and departed in August 1851.

Without pleasure or satisfaction, Douglas learned on Oct 30 that he had been chosen Blanshard's successor. His worries were great; it would be difficult to reconcile the conflicting interests of governor and company official; the only revenue available for public buildings, schools, a church and road was from liquor licences; and qualified men were in such short supply that he appointed his own brother-in-law, newly arrived from Demerara, as chief justice of the Supreme Court. Blanshard had appointed a Legislative Council in 1851 and in 1856 Douglas was instructed to establish an Assembly for the island. He was opposed to universal suffrage and believed that people really wanted "the ruling classes" to make their decisions. Property qualifications for the franchise and for membership in the Assembly were set so high that only a few landowners could qualify.

The first evidence of impending change on the Pacific seaboard came on Sunday 25 April 1858, when a boatload of boisterous miners from California, the first wave of 25 000 newcomers, arrived on their way to search for gold on the Fraser sandbars. Douglas had taken the precaution of claiming the land and the minerals for the Crown. Now he began to license the miners and, to stem an invasion, to stop foreign vessels entering the river. For this action, which seemed designed to protect the HBC monopoly, he was reprimanded.

With the gold discovery, Britain decided to cancel the special privileges granted the HBC
until March 1859. A new colony on the mainland was created by parliamentary Act. Douglas was offered the governorship on condition that he sever his fur-trade connections. He would be given extensive political power since it seemed unwise to experiment with self-government among men "so wild, so miscellaneous, and perhaps so transitory." In November 1858, no longer a fur trader and the rights of his old company west of the mountains having been extinguished, Douglas, who was still governor of Vancouver Island, was inaugurated at Fort Langley as governor of British Columbia.

Douglas expected that a location near Fort Langley would be chosen for the colony's capital. But for military reasons Colonel Richard Clement Moody in January 1859 selected a steep, heavily timbered site (New Westminster) on the north bank of the Fraser. Douglas was concerned about the cost involved in laying it out. He also preferred Victoria as an administrative centre and as his place of residence. His visits to New Westminster were rare, and despite the grant of municipal self-government in 1860, the citizens demanded a resident governor and political reform.

As governor of BC, Douglas was chiefly concerned with the welfare of the miners. He relied on his gold commissioners to lay out reserves for the natives and thus eliminate the threat of warfare, to record mining and land claims, and to adjudicate mining disputes. For the gold colony he devised a land policy which included mineral and pre-emption rights. His water legislation met the needs of the miners who employed rockers and flumes.

During the winter of 1858 he had used voluntary labour to make a pack trail to the mining area above the Fraser gorge. By 1862 he was planning to finance by loans (about which London was not fully informed) a wagon road 640 km long following the Fraser to distant Cariboo, where gold nuggets had been found (see CARIBOO ROAD). It was extended in 1865 to Barkerville, an ebullient mining community.

Perhaps because of sensitivity over his and his wife's background, Douglas had developed a singularly aloof manner. Some of his old friends complained about his pomposity. New associates complained about his despotism. New Westminster merchants complained about having to pay customs duties. The effect was cumulative. Douglas's term as governor of Vancouver Island was up in 1863; since BC was about to be given a more liberal type of government, it seemed to London an opportune time to retire him. Praise for his work and his talents and the award of a KCB softened the blow.

**Fraser River Gold Rush**

In 1858 at least 30 000 gold seekers flooded the banks of the FRASER RIVER from HOPE to just north of LILLOOET in British Columbia's first significant GOLD RUSH. Although short in duration, the Fraser Rush had a significant impact on the area's NATIVE PEOPLES. It also caused the nonsovereign territory of Britain known as NEW CALEDONIA to be quickly established as the colony of British Columbia in order to deal with the massive influx of foreign miners.

Unlike the CARIBOO GOLD RUSH (1860-63), which attracted many Canadians, the Fraser Rush was an extension of California MINING society. Yale, formerly a Hudson's Bay Co post, was quickly transformed into a cultural centre typical of 1850s San Francisco.
The Rush
By 1858, placer mining in California had depleted free GOLD and miners accustomed to the glory days of the California Rush were marginalized by capital intensive hydraulic mining. A large unemployed class leapt at the chance to join the rush to the "New Eldorado."

The richest discoveries of fine flour gold occurred between Hope and Yale in the FRASER RIVER CANYON. This region was controlled by Americans who provoked conflicts between whites and aboriginals prior to the assertion of British sovereignty from the adjacent colony of Vancouver Island. All aboriginal lands of southern BC were invaded by large companies of miners that triggered the Indian Wars of Washington and Oregon, and by extension the Fraser River War of 1858.

Through diverse overland and maritime routes north, it was this rush that broke the back of full-scale aboriginal resistance, particularly among the CENTRAL COAST SALISH, Interior SALISH and southern populations of the CHILCOTIN. Above Yale waterfalls and steep canyons prevented steamers from further ascending the Fraser River. Miners excluded from the dominant culture in the lower Fraser, such as the CHINESE, Chileans, Hawaiians and other ethnic groups, established diggings beyond Yale.

Cariboo Gold Rush
Cariboo Gold Rush BC's most famous GOLD RUSH to the remote, isolated Cariboo Mts region occurred between 1860, when prospectors drawn from the FRASER RIVER GOLD RUSH discovered free gold on the Horsefly R, and 1863, when international publicity given to news of the rich payload found near bedrock at BARKERVILLE in 1862 drew a large and diverse mix of miners, gold-seekers and adventurers into the former fur-trading territory of the CHILCOTIN and CARRIER. The most promising discoveries of free gold were made at Williams, Lightning and Lowhee creeks, but the former proved the richest; hence it became the centre of mining operations for the district. Here (125 km SE of Prince George), in a canyon with a narrow, steep-sided and isolated creek bed, a trio of supply, service and administrative towns - Richfield, Camerontown and, the only one to outlast the mining boom days, BARKERVILLE - were established.

Barkerville's deep placers and rich hillside deposits were worked from 1864 to the 1930s. This required the use of expensive and complex technology, including hydraulic monitors which directed jets of water to wash the gold-bearing hillsides into sluice boxes, and the development of a more permanent mining community. Placer gold production in the Cariboo approximated $50 million, about one-half the BC total since 1858.

New Westminster
New Westminster, western Canada's oldest city, was the mercantile centre and the transportation hub on the mainland during and after the FRASER RIVER and CARIBOO gold rushes, but never displaced VICTORIA's overall dominance, due to the latter's easier access to ocean shipping. In 1868, the Legislative Council chose Victoria as the permanent capital of the recently united colonies of BC and Vancouver Island.

Although New Westminster secured a Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) branch line in
1886, the completion of the main line to Vancouver in 1887 further relegated it to secondary rank. Nevertheless the city remained an important freshwater port, a major lumber producer, a salmon canning centre, a commercial centre for the Fraser Valley and an administrative and service headquarters with such institutions as the County Court, the BC Penitentiary, the Provincial Mental Hospital and the Royal Columbian Hospital. The city also secured rail links to the United States via the Great Northern Railway and Fraser River Railway Bridge (1904); to the eastern Fraser Valley via the BC Electric Railway (1910); and to eastern Canada via the Canadian National Railway (1915).