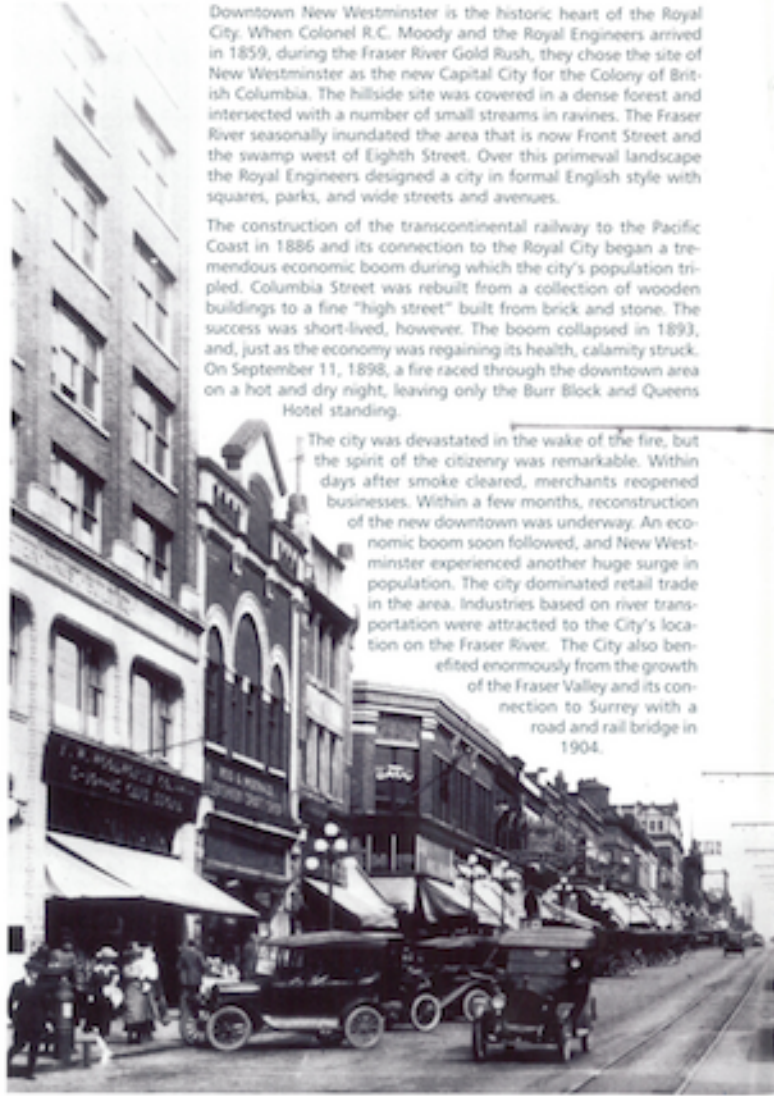


# Introducing Downtown New Westminster

Downtown New Westminster is the historic heart of the Royal City. When Colonel R.C. Moody and the Royal Engineers arrived in 1859, during the Fraser River Gold Rush, they chose the site of New Westminster as the new Capital City for the Colony of British Columbia. The hillside site was covered in a dense forest and intersected with a number of small streams in ravines. The Fraser River seasonally inundated the area that is now Front Street and the swamp west of Eighth Street. Over this primeval landscape the Royal Engineers designed a city in formal English style with squares, parks, and wide streets and avenues.

The construction of the transcontinental railway to the Pacific Coast in 1886 and its connection to the Royal City began a tremendous economic boom during which the city's population tripled. Columbia Street was rebuilt from a collection of wooden buildings to a fine "high street" built from brick and stone. The success was short-lived, however. The boom collapsed in 1893, and, just as the economy was regaining its health, calamity struck. On September 11, 1898, a fire raced through the downtown area on a hot and dry night, leaving only the Burr Block and Queens Hotel standing.

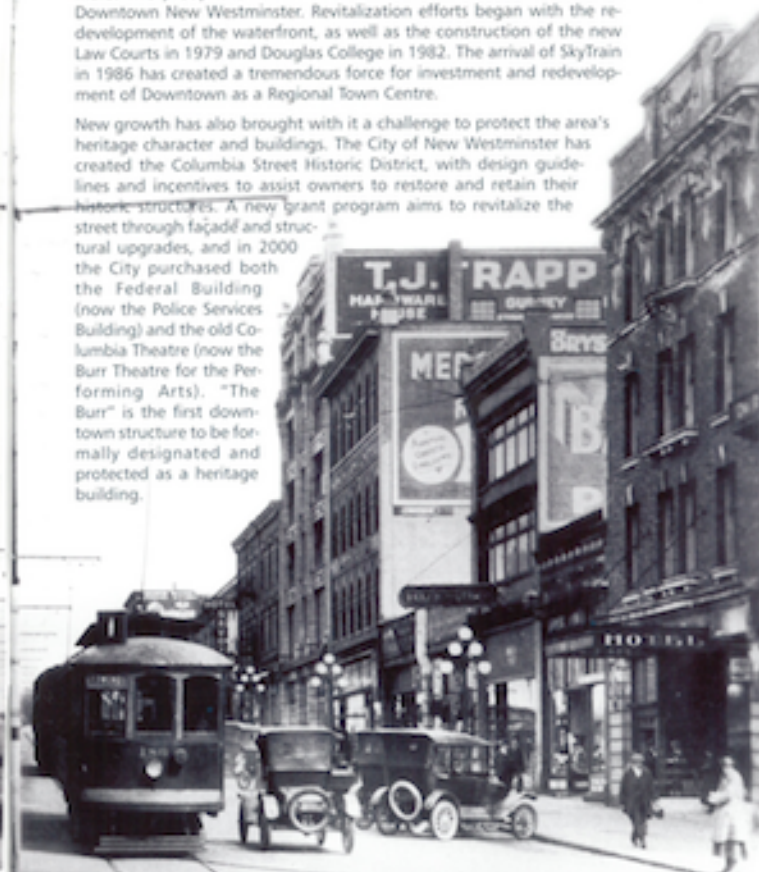
The city was devastated in the wake of the fire, but the spirit of the citizenry was remarkable. Within days after smoke cleared, merchants reopened businesses. Within a few months, reconstruction of the new downtown was underway. An economic boom soon followed, and New Westminster experienced another huge surge in population. The city dominated retail trade in the area. Industries based on river transportation were attracted to the City's location on the Fraser River. The City also benefited enormously from the growth of the Fraser Valley and its connection to Surrey with a road and rail bridge in 1904.



The completion of the first skyscraper in 1912, the Westminster Trust Block, marked the pinnacle of the city's golden Edwardian era. Although the recession and World War I once again stalled development, New Westminster was an established economic force during the boom & bust of the twenties and thirties. After World War II, Columbia Street boasted the highest sales per square foot in the Province, becoming known as the "Golden Mile." In 1959 the Parkade was built to accommodate all the customers, changing the face of Front Street.

The boom in the suburbs was marked by the opening of new shopping malls. This precipitated a dramatic decline in the business fortunes of Downtown New Westminster. Revitalization efforts began with the redevelopment of the waterfront, as well as the construction of the new Law Courts in 1979 and Douglas College in 1982. The arrival of SkyTrain in 1986 has created a tremendous force for investment and redevelopment of Downtown as a Regional Town Centre.

New growth has also brought with it a challenge to protect the area's heritage character and buildings. The City of New Westminster has created the Columbia Street Historic District, with design guidelines and incentives to assist owners to restore and retain their historic structures. A new grant program aims to revitalize the street through façade and structural upgrades, and in 2000 the City purchased both the Federal Building (now the Police Services Building) and the old Columbia Theatre (now the Burr Theatre for the Performing Arts). "The Burr" is the first downtown structure to be formally designated and protected as a heritage building.



Columbia Street looking east from Begbie Street, 1924.

Begin your tour by arriving at the New Westminster SkyTrain Station and walking south on Eighth Street to Columbia Street and Hyack Square. (See map at centre of tour book)

## 1 CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY STATION 800 Columbia Street

This landmark train station symbolizes the importance of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the development of New Westminster. In 1886 the CPR constructed a branch line to this site as part of the transcontinental railway, allowing the Royal City to celebrate its status as the "fresh-water terminus" on the Pacific Coast. The first station and sheds, constructed in 1887, were destroyed by the Great Fire. The existing station was rebuilt in 1899 of local brick and stone at a cost of \$35,000, and designed in the Chateau style that identified CPR architecture across the nation. In 1910 local architects Gardiner & Mercer designed two additional wings for handling increased passenger and freight service.



1905

## 2 B.C. ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY NEW WESTMINSTER INTERURBAN DEPOT 774 Columbia Street

This important building was constructed in 1910-11 by the B.C. Electric Railway Company as the hub for the electric interurban railway system between Vancouver and Chilliwack. Architects Macdure and Fox modeled its design on the Indiana Traction Company's station in Indianapolis, Indiana. Completed at a cost of \$100,000, this handsome Edwardian Classical Revival styled station was engineered in structural steel to permit the addition of two extra stories in the future. Interurban cars entered diagonally through the building to platforms beside a beautiful waiting room finished with marble, B.C. native woods and mosaic tiled floors. In 1937 the streetcar system was replaced with buses, and the interurban system finally closed in the 1950s. The old station was sold to Wosk's Furniture and Appliance Stores Ltd. In 1954 and the station's handsome design has suffered many unfortunate changes over the years.



1928

Continue the tour by walking east on the north side of Columbia Street.

## 3 THE WINDSOR HOTEL 738 Columbia Street

Rushed to completion in 1899 after the Great Fire, the Windsor Hotel was one of the few wooden structures built on Columbia Street in a city paranoid of potential fires. Designed by architects Guenther & Van-Aken in the Victorian Italianate style, the building was a handsome but old-fashioned block on a street that was proud of its modernity. In 1904, owner A.



1912

Vachon advertised room rates of \$1.00-\$1.50, and special rates for theatrical parties. The Windsor Hotel became famous as the first studio for CKNW radio from 1944 to 1950. The station broadcast live to Columbia Street with the use of loud speakers. Although much altered, the hotel retains some later original features such as neon signs from the 1940s marking the separate entrances for "men" & "ladies and escorts".

## 4 WESTMINSTER TRUST BUILDING 709-713 Columbia Street

This was the City of New Westminster's first true skyscraper. Constructed in 1911-12 at a cost of \$200,000, the building was designed by leading architects Gardiner and Mercer. The Westminster Trust and Safe Deposit Co. Ltd. were the original owners and shared this prestige location with 124 business offices and the Westminster Club, which occupied the top two floors. The building's design is based on the Chicago School of commercial architecture, with clearly defined base, shaft and capital areas. The exterior features a cream coloured terra cotta and richly-coloured high fired pressed bricks. Although the building has lost its railed parapet and the store-fronts have been modernized, it remains in beautiful condition, a landmark of the city.



1913

## 5 COMMERCIAL HOTEL 716 Columbia Street

This building incorporates the remainder of the original two storey Occidental Hotel, constructed on this site in 1899 after the Great Fire. In 1913, hotel owners A.O. Hansen and G. Swanson proposed to remake the hotel into "the best in the city" through the investment of \$20,000. The city's leading architects, Gardiner and Mercer, re-engineered the foundation of the old Occidental Hotel to allow for the construction of the larger four storey Commercial Hotel. The building's facade is beautifully articulated in brick, stone and terra cotta, and features decorative brackets, string courses, garlands and geometric insets. Its entrance once sported a wrought iron canopy that supported the hotel's main sign.



1913



## 6 ODD FELLOWS AND MASONIC BLOCKS 701 - 707 Columbia Street

The first block on this site was the massive and stately Masonic & Odd Fellows Block of 1887, designed by architect George W. Grant. It was destroyed by fire in 1891 and the two societies subsequently rebuilt their own blocks on the site in 1892, with Grant again designing for the Masons. The Great Fire (1898) destroyed both structures, but left a good portion of the Masonic Block's foundations and walls intact for re-use. The new blocks were once again designed by Grant, and completed for \$19,000. By 1912 the fraternal societies had moved out and the two blocks were joined in a renovation by realtor F.J. Hart, who renamed the structure the Hart Building. This Romanesque Revival style landmark retains many details from the 1892 blocks, including the arched entrance to the Masonic Lodge (worth the walk up Lorne Mews to view).



1918

## 7 TRAPP BLOCK 668 Columbia Street

Thomas D. Trapp was a pioneer of the City who established an important hardware business, which by 1914 was one of the largest in Western Canada. Trapp's first block at Lorne and Columbia Streets was a landmark until it was destroyed by fire in 1988. This Trapp Block, completed in 1902, was a satellite four-storey warehouse to the main retail space across the street. Architects Gardiner and Mercer redesigned the building in 1911-13 to the handsome seven-storey block we see today, with its decorative white terra cotta facade. In 1929 the Trapp Company hardware division was purchased by Marshall-Wells Ltd., which continued to operate here for many years. It served as the Army and Navy Department store from 1954-1977.



1913

## 8 HOLBROOK BLOCK 660-664 Columbia Street

In 1899 the Holbrook Estate, managed by local businessman and then Mayor Thomas Owens, financed this \$20,000 brick block. Designed by George W. Grant, the building was originally three stories in height and extended from Columbia to Front Street. A fourth storey was later added to the Columbia Street portion of the block. The building operated as two hotels: the Columbia Street block became the Savoy Hotel (later the Best Hotel), while the Holbrook House operated on Front Street. Although the Front Street section of the building has been demolished, the surviving building continues its historic use of saloon and hostelry.



1940

## 9 EDISON THEATRE / PARAMOUNT THEATRE 652 Columbia Street

In 1903 Frank Kerr started the Edison Theatre in a small wood building near Eighth Street, and in 1910 moved into the Dupont Block. It was common at this time to convert existing spaces into theatres, as it was believed that moving pictures would be a short-lived novelty. Admission, five cents for kids and ten cents for adults, would buy continuous movie reels accompanied by an orchestra, with vaudeville acts in between shows. When Kerr died in 1948 the theatre was leased to Famous Players and renovated in 1950 to include a new neon marquee and the Paramount name. In 1983 the theatre was killed by competition and closed. Today the theatre is used for a new kind of burlesque entertainment.



1919



1912

## 10 DUPONT BLOCK 642-650 Columbia Street

George Grant first designed an impressive four storey brick and stone block on this site in 1891 for Victoria investors D.R. Harris and Major Charles T. Dupont. Completed at a cost of \$83,000, the Harris-Dupont Block was one of the landmarks of Victorian New Westminster. After its destruction in the Great Fire, Dupont commissioned Grant to design this \$25,000 replacement. The building featured an exterior of mortar stucco to disguise the fire-ravaged walls of the old block that were used in the reconstruction. The first occupants of the building included H.T. Kirk Hardware, the Liverpool Arms saloon, and the Wintemute Furniture Factory.

## 11 CRESCENT BLOCK 630-638 Columbia Street

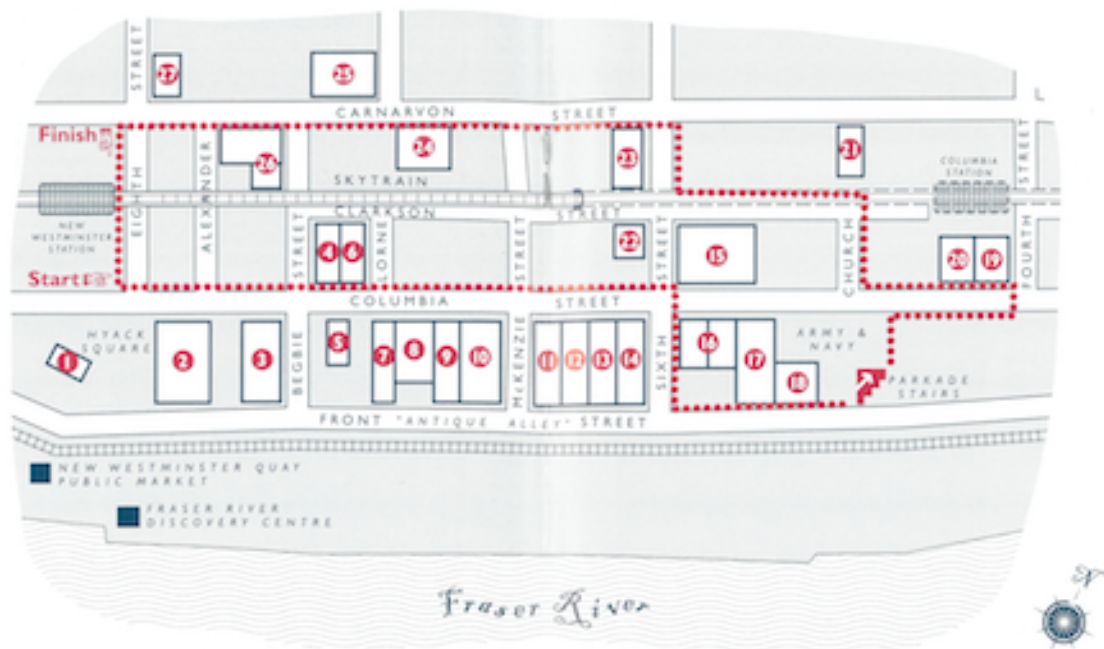
This site was the original location of the Hotel Douglas, built in 1890 and destroyed by the Great Fire in 1898. Major Charles Dupont built this handsome business block in 1904. One of the first tenants included the Crescent Club, which gave its name to the block. Other tenants included Anderson & Lusby, hardware merchants and the Northern Crown Bank, which occupied the corner storefront. In 1926 Percy



1911

Copp opened Copp's Shoe store, still open for business today in the same location. This building is unique in the downtown area for maintaining its original corner entrance and many original details.

# Downtown New Westminster



## Walking the Tour

The entire tour will take between 1½ - 2 hours beginning and ending at the New Westminster SkyTrain Station. If possible, walk the tour during business hours so that you can enjoy the shops, restaurants, and see the interiors of the buildings open to the public.

For more information on public transportation telephone Translink at 604-953-3333

- |                                 |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 CPR Station                   | 10 Dupont Block           | 19 Queens Hotel                  |
| 2 BCER Station                  | 11 Crescent Block         | 20 Burr Block                    |
| 3 Windsor Hotel                 | 12 Hamley Block           | 21 Holy Trinity Church           |
| 4 Westminster Trust             | 13 Cunningham Block       | 22 Cliff Block                   |
| 5 Commercial Hotel              | 14 Dominion Trust         | 23 McLeod Block                  |
| 6 Oddfellows and Masonic Blocks | 15 Federal Building       | 24 Court House                   |
| 7 Trapp Block                   | 16 Ellis Block & C.I.B.C. | 25 Carnarvon Block               |
| 8 Best Hotel                    | 17 Columbia Theatre       | 26 Russell Hotel & Arundel Apts. |
| 9 Paramount Theatre             | 18 Lytton Square          | 27 IOOF Block                    |



**12 HAMLEY BLOCK**  
622-626 Columbia Street

This was once the site of the 1890 Bushby Block, destroyed by the Great Fire. This 1899 block built for owner Wymond O. Hamley, was designed by Victoria based architects J.G. Tiarks and F.M. Rattenbury. Among the first tenants were Thomas Gifford, jeweller; H. Freeman who operated a saloon and bowling alley; and the Steamboat Exchange on Front Street. In 1939 the Hamley Block was renovated and an arcade was installed down the center of the block. Unfortunately, the handsome façade of brick work and stone projections was chipped level and the entire face finished in stucco. In 1963, additional alterations to the building were completed by Millers Jewelers.



**13 CUNNINGHAM BLOCK**  
612-618 Columbia Street

James Cunningham was a local hardware merchant and real estate investor who built on this site in 1889. After the Great Fire, architect G.W. Grant designed this brick and stone replacement block. It extended from Front Street to Columbia and was built for \$18,000. The Cunningham Block distinctly shows the influence of the emerging Chicago School of architecture. It features the use of cast iron ground floor columns, with maple leaf ornamentation, on both the Columbia and Front Street facades. The second floor tri-partite windows show how commercial structures were beginning to be outfitted at this time with the maximum amount of glazing possible.



**14 DOMINION TRUST BLOCK**  
600 Columbia Street

The six storey Douglas-Elliott Block, built on this site in 1891, was the tallest building in New Westminster in the pre-fire downtown. It was not until 1907 that the Dominion Trust Company began construction of a new block using the granite foundation walls of the old building. The block was originally planned for three stories, but was revised mid-construction to include three additional stories and provision for an elevator, if it was deemed necessary for New Westminster's then tallest building. In 1913 the three top floors were converted into the "Hotel Dominion", one of the finest hotels in the city. In 1926 the block found a new life as the city's branch of Spencers Department Store, until 1948 when the company was purchased by Eatons.



**15 FEDERAL BUILDING AND POST OFFICE**  
549 Columbia Street

In 1860 the Royal Engineers built the first Colonial Government offices on this site. In 1883 a brick Post Office was built, and the stately City Library constructed in 1891. These structures were destroyed in the Great Fire and replaced the following year with the imposing Dominion Building as well as a new City Hall. In 1939 a large granite and sandstone Moderne-styled addition was added to the rear of the old Dominion Building facing Sixth Street in anticipation of its planned demolition. Finally, after much delay, the new Federal Building was completed in 1958 adjoining the 1939 addition. Purchased by the City of New Westminster in 2000, it has been renovated for the Police Services Department on the lower two floors. New loft condominiums on the upper three floors, including the addition of a penthouse level were completed by a private developer.



Use the pedestrian crossing at Columbia St. and Sixth St. and walk to the South-east corner.

**16 ELLIS BLOCK & THE CANADIAN IMPERIAL BANK OF COMMERCE**  
548 & 544 Columbia Street

The Bank of B.C. was established in the City in 1862 and was located on this site. The Canadian Bank of Commerce began operations in the Ellis Block at Sixth and Columbia in 1901 after amalgamating with the Bank of B.C. and moving into their 1899 bank building designed by Victoria architects F.M. Rattenbury and J.G. Tiarks. This block remains today as the Ellis Block. By 1910 the bank had decided to build on the adjoining lot, and this imposing "Temple Bank" was designed by Toronto-based architects Darling and Pearson, best known as the designers of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. Despite interior renovations that have robbed the bank of its original character, the building is in remarkable original exterior condition.



**17 COLUMBIA THEATRE**  
530 Columbia Street

The Columbia Theatre was designed by the firm of Townley and Matheson of Vancouver as a motion picture and vaudeville theatre in 1927. It is one of Canada's few remaining atmospheric theatres and recalls a time when theatres were lavish fantasy palaces. The Moorish style visible on the remaining exterior features of terra cotta detailing and "Juliet" balconies was carried into the interior. Murals of romantic scenery, trellis work covered with climbing roses and twinkling stars above gave the effect of being seated in a walled garden. The theatre closed in 1985. In 2000 the building was purchased by the City of New Westminster and leased to the Burr Centre for the Performing Arts, currently fundraising for phase one of an ambitious restoration.



Walk down Sixth Street to Front Street. In the shadow of the Parkade is "Antique Alley", one of the best known antique districts in the Lower Mainland. Turn right on Front Street to visit these stores or continue the tour by turning left.

## 18 LYTTON SQUARE

At the rear of the Army and Navy is a historic spot once known as Lytton or Market Square. It was the location for the city's farmers' market on the waterfront from 1892-1925. In 1926 a new market was built in the square, and in 1949 it was renovated along with the adjacent 1907 Thompson Block and the 1901 Hotel Lytton to become Eatons Department Store. Today the building houses the Army and Navy Department Store, with the two-storey brick Hotel Lytton now a renovated and stuccoed receiving warehouse for the store.

Walk back to Columbia Street using the Parkade stairs, or through the Army and Navy via the escalators. On Columbia St., turn right and walk east to Fourth Street.

## 19 QUEENS HOTEL / GUICHON BLOCK 401-409 Columbia Street

This three storey brick hotel is the oldest remaining building in Downtown New Westminster. Constructed in 1887 to a design by G.W. Grant, this \$16,000 structure was financed by W.A. Duncan, manager of the Royal City Mills. As the city's premier hotel in the Late Victorian era, it was the scene of many social and civic events and the choice of important clientele such as Judge Begbie. During this early period the hotel also gained a notorious reputation since the lobby was always filled with lacrosse players. After surviving the Great Fire, the hotel was renamed The Hotel Guichon after its owner Laurent Guichon. By 1910, the old hotel could no longer compete with newer buildings and was converted into rental apartments. Today, it remains a historic landmark, despite many alterations.



1887

## 20 BURR BLOCK 411-419 Columbia Street

Constructed in 1892 at the height of the Victorian building and investment boom in New Westminster, the Burr Block is one of the architectural jewels of Columbia Street. The original owner was a school-teacher turned property speculator named William H. Burr. The block featured extensive use of unglazed red brick and terra cotta ornament manufactured locally by the building's contractor, Thomas Hemborough. The total cost for the building was in excess of \$35,000. When the boom collapsed, W.H. Burr was driven to despair by his financial circumstances, and shot himself in an upstairs apartment in 1896. The building became famous as the spot where the Great Fire's destructive path was stopped by firefighters after consuming the Begbie Block next door.



1892

Continue the tour by crossing Columbia Street at the pedestrian crossing at Fourth Street and turn left, walk west down Columbia St. to Church Street, turn right and walk up the hill to view the Holy Trinity Church.



1901

## 21 HOLY TRINITY CHURCH 514 Carnarvon Street

New Westminster's founder, Colonel R.C. Moody, laid out the city with this church site as an ornamental feature at its centre. The first wooden church built here in 1860 was destroyed by fire in 1865, and then rebuilt with sandstone by Victoria-based designing architect H. Tiedemann. The Great Fire reached this site too, burning the church, but its thick stone walls remained standing. It was rebuilt once again in 1899 by designing architect G.W. Grant, who reused the original walls and greatly improved the structure with a new stone and a brick tower. The interior boasts beautiful native B.C. woodwork as well as art glass windows. These were designed and manufactured by Henry Bloomfield and Sons, which was established in the Royal City in 1890.

Continue the tour by walking west on Clarkson Street to the intersection with Sixth Street.

## 22 CLIFF BLOCK 28 Sixth Street

The Cliff Block was designed by Vancouver-based architect H.S. Griffith. It was funded by a local group of investors, headed by Ronald L. Cliff, one of the wealthy leading citizens of the Royal City. The structure, composed of Douglas Fir girders on a foundation of brick and granite, was built in 1910 at the extraordinary pace of one floor per week. The block's construction consumed over 350,000 bricks from the local Westminster Brick Works and the Clayburn factory of Matsqui, which provided the façade's high-fired pressed yellow bricks.



1910

## 23 McLEOD BLOCK 50 Sixth Street

Alfred W. McLeod was known as "the insurance man" in New Westminster. A biographical entry from 1913 stated that "He is now erecting one of the most pretentious business blocks in New Westminster." This two storey building was designed by leading city architects Gardiner and Mercer. Its handsome Edwardian Classical Revival-styled exterior was clad in pressed "Clayburn" brick with contrasting tones of red and yellow. This building would serve as McLeod's head office for many years. Much of the building has been stuccoed and the original windows changed or covered, marring this once proud block.



1913



Walk north up to the pedestrian crossing of Carnarvon Street and Sixth Street, continue walking west.

**24 NEW WESTMINSTER COURTHOUSE**  
632 Carnarvon Street

On your way to the Courthouse you will also see the beautiful 1906 Fisheries and Indian Affairs building at 628 Carnarvon St. The Courthouse was designed by G.W. Grant. It was built in 1891, destroyed by the Great Fire, and rebuilt using its original walls. It is a remarkable Romanesque Revival-styled structure that still retains some of its original decorative carved stone panels. Adjoining the building is the 1910 Land Registry Office designed by E.W. Sait. In the new Courthouse square across the street stands the bronze statue of Chief Justice Begbie - "The Hanging Judge".



**25 CARNARVON BUILDING**  
711 Carnarvon Street

This business block was financed in 1912 by L.C. Hill and its architect E.B. Wetenhall. Constructed for \$30,000 in the Classical Revival style, the exterior featured now missing decorative cornices and still visible pressed Clayburn brick. The foundations and walls were constructed to support seven stories, but never carried more than two. The Royal City Glass Company occupied this block from 1926 until the 1980s.



**26 RUSSELL HOTEL AND ARUNDEL APARTMENTS**  
740 Carnarvon Street & 42-48 Begbie Street

The Russell Hotel was constructed in 1907 by timber magnate Capt. E.J. Fader in answer to the city's need for a modern hotel. The Classical Revival-styled building was designed by Vancouver architects Dalton & Eveleigh. Its handsome exterior was constructed with granite and pressed tan brick. In 1910 the hotel was purchased by G.A. Hanky of Vernon, who in 1912 constructed the adjoining upper class Arundel Apartments, designed by Thornton and Davis, architects. This apartment block was designed with beautiful Arts & Crafts style suites, and was once connected to the Russell to allow residents to take meals in the hotel's dining room.



**27 I.O.O.F. BLOCK**  
55 Eighth Street

Built in 1909, this block was the home of the local lodge fraternity of the International Order of Odd Fellows. Designed by local architect and lodge member C.H. Clow, the building was constructed of reinforced concrete and rusticated cement blocks. Note the symbol of the Order, three links of a chain, still intact over a second storey window. Originally the building had three storefronts on Carnarvon with the Lodge located on the second storey. The Lodge Room, with its lofty ceiling and decorative tin paneling, still remains, although it has been altered with new uses.



Use the pedestrian crossing at Eighth Street to conclude the tour at your starting point, the New Westminster SkyTrain Station.



Columbia Street, 1885