

## **A Road To Burrard Inlet — North Road & Douglas Road**

Researched and written by Ralph Drew, Belcarra, BC, September 2012.

Colonel R.C. Moody, RE, worried that an invading American army could blockade the Fraser River and cut-off supplies to New Westminster, capital of the new Colony of British Columbia. To prevent this, Colonel Moody had a military trail built in early 1859 from the Royal Engineers' Camp at New Westminster, extending northward to ice-free Burrard Inlet. A British Admiralty Chart, drawn by Captain George Henry Richards in 1859, shows a trail from the Royal Engineers' Camp to the head of Burrard Inlet. This very early route antedated the 'North Road', but was soon superseded by it and fell quickly into disuse. In 1859 Colonel Moody also had a trail built through the forest from New Westminster "due north" to Burrard Inlet. (This trail also served as a north-south 'base line' survey from which subsequent land surveys were referenced by the Royal Engineers.) Thus, 'North Road' was the first 'road' built in the new Colony of British Columbia. However, it wasn't until mid-1861 that the 'road' was sufficiently cleared to accommodate wagon traffic. North Road today is the boundary between Burnaby and Coquitlam.

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### **From 'The British Columbian', February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1862.**

Our connection with Burrard Inlet [North Road] has recently attracted considerable attention, owing, no doubt, to the temporary interruption of the navigation of the Fraser [River] this winter. It is proper therefore that the people should consider the best means of connecting it [Burrard Inlet], as a harbour, with this city [New Westminster] by a short and thorough road.

The North Road, starting from the R.E. [Royal Engineer's] Camp [at Sapperton], striking the Inlet at Port Moody; is all very well as a military road, for which it was made; but we are inclined to the opinion that for commercial purposes, it is scarcely the thing. It starts from the Camp, in several places, on a very steep grade, and terminates at the extreme head of the inlet, thereby causing vessels something like 8 miles [12.8 km] of needless sailing. [Most ships at the time were still sailing vessels.]

The continuation of Douglas Street is, we think beyond a question, a proper site for a commercial connection with the Inlet. It starts from the very centre of the city, has an easy grade all the way, a distance of 5 miles [*sic* 10 miles, 16 km], and intersects the inlet at a point close to the sea [New Brighton, just west of the second narrows], of very easy access to vessels, affording excellent anchorage, and one of the finest harbours on the coast — perfectly accessible to the largest ships afloat — while at the same time this road would pass through a very fine farming district.

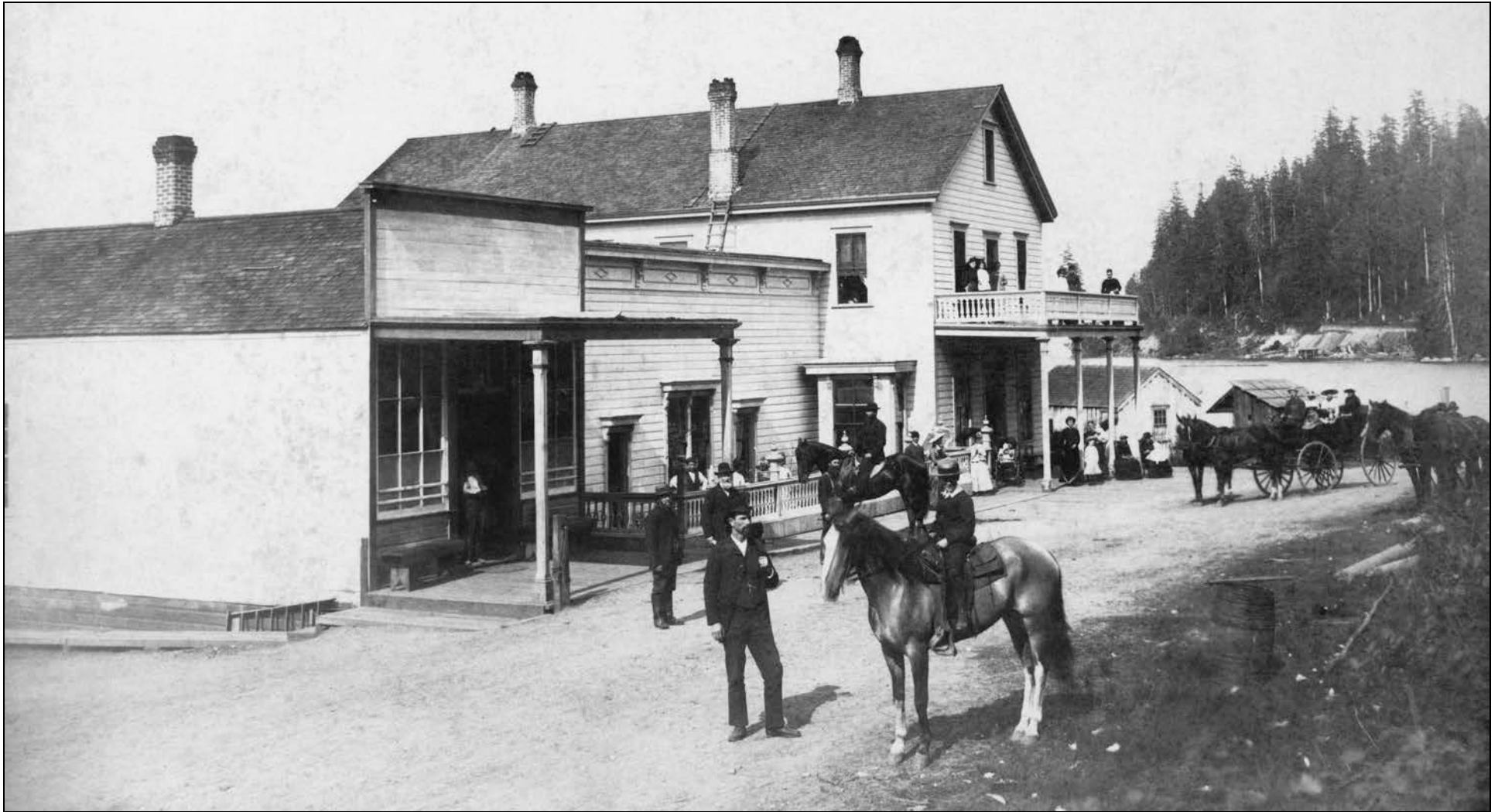
We are glad to know that the Chief Commissioner [Colonel Moody] is favourable to this road. And when we take into consideration the deep property interest he has in the North Road, his magnanimous sacrifice of private interest to the public good, in this matter, not only speaks well for him, but adds great weight to the claims of the Douglas Street road. We trust Colonel Moody will use his influence to have this important work prosecuted as soon as possible.

And while upon this subject, we would point out what we conceive to be a great mistake in the manner of constructing our main roads: that of merely cutting down the timber which stands upon the 18 or 20 feet of the roadway about to be made. The allowance for all important roads should not be less than one chain [66 feet]; and the forest should be at once cut down the entire width, even if the road is only to be 18 feet. This is important for two reasons: to prevent trees falling across the road, and to open it up to the free action of the sun and wind, without which we can never have dry roads. [In the 1860s 'roads' were only rough, dirt wagon trails which became very muddy during rainy weather.]

It would be infinitely better to have a roadway thus cleared with a mere trail, if need be, along the centre, than to have an 18 or 20 foot road turnpiked: hemmed in from the genial rays of the sun by the dense forest on either side. We would respectfully submit these suggestions for the consideration of the Chief Commissioner, and hope to see him move shortly in the matter of the road to Burrard Inlet.

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In 1865, the Colony of British Columbia upgraded the old native trail to a stagecoach road (Douglas Road) and the New Brighton Hotel was built as a seaside resort for holidaying residents of New Westminster. The hotel served as the first customs, revenue, telegraph and post office on the inlet, and became known as "Road End", or "Hocking's", "Maxie's" and "Black's" over the years after the different hotel proprietors. In 1869 'New Brighton' was officially renamed 'Hastings Townsite', after Rear-Admiral George Fowler Hastings, Commander-in-Chief of Britain's Pacific Station from 1866 to 1869.



*City of Vancouver Archives (CVA Dist P13).*

**Hastings Townsite on Burrard Inlet, 1886 — New Brighton Hotel (two-story building).**



*City of Vancouver Archives (CVA Dist P17).*

**Hastings Townsite on Burrard Inlet, 1884 — Looking west from George Black's (New Brighton Hotel) wharf.**



*City of Vancouver Archives (CVA Str N7).*

**Douglas Road, 1895 — Near Rayside Avenue in Burnaby, north of Deer Lake, looking eastward — ‘Old Road’ on the right.**