

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BURNABY

Burnaby was an expansive land of tall trees and wilderness when the earliest settlers came to the area around 1850.

In 1887, the Canadian Pacific Railway extended its route into Vancouver from the Port Moody terminal – which brought substantial traffic between New Westminster and Vancouver. The result? A new tramline was built to connect the two centres... through Burnaby.

As the traffic through Burnaby began to grow, so did its population. In 1891, the population of the area was about 200, most of whom were employed in the agricultural and logging industries.

Despite the fact that these pioneers were paying property taxes to the new provincial capital of Victoria, they were seeing no local benefits. As an unincorporated area, Burnaby was not entitled to a share of government funds from these property taxes.

That same year, a group of community-minded neighbours jointly applied for a municipal charter that would guarantee their taxes went to local roads and services.

The municipality received its charter of incorporation on September 24, 1892. (However, Burnaby didn't officially achieve "city" status until 1992, one hundred years after being incorporated.)

At incorporation, the area's citizens unanimously chose to name it after Robert Burnaby, a legislator, speaker, Freemason and explorer who had explored the region around Burnaby Lake in 1859.

As a merchant and businessman, Robert Burnaby was actively involved in community affairs and helped develop much of the west coast. (In all, he has given his name to a city, a park, a lake, a hill, a Vancouver street, a mountain range in McKenzie Sound, an island and a narrows in the Queen Charlotte Islands.)

By 1896, Burnaby had its first park along with a store, post office, two schools and a church. Within five years, the population in South Burnaby had doubled to 400. The opening of the Barnet Mill in North Burnaby in 1900 started a second settlement in the area.

Now, more than 100 years later, Burnaby has blossomed to a diverse and multicultural population of more than 200,000.

The city's economic base has also shifted away from logging and agriculture to become a growing urban centre representing a variety of services and industries.

In fact, Burnaby is home to several major technology firms, such as Electronic Arts, Creo, Ballard Power Systems and Telus. Other industries in Burnaby include retail and personal services, movie and TV studios, industrial estates and major post-secondary institutions (British Columbia Institute of Technology and Simon Fraser University).