

# Capital Region Profile

Regional Planning Services

CRD "Local Governments  
Working Together"

## Historical Development

Vol. 1, No. 2 - Spring 1996

**c. 300 A.D.** - Straits Salish peoples settle the area around Esquimalt Lagoon

**458 A.D.** - Group of Chinese Buddhist missionaries travel down the coast of North America

**c. 1000 A.D.** - Straits Salish settlement is established at Witty's Lagoon

**1592** - Straits of Juan de Fuca are discovered by a Greek sailor in the services of Spain, for whom they are named

**1778** - Captain James Cook lands at Friendly Cove and Nootka claiming the surrounding land for Britain

**1789** - Don Estevan Jose Marhnez lands at Friendly Cove claiming the surrounding land for Spain

**1790** - Manuel Quimper lands at Sooke Inlet claiming all land from Puget Sound to Cape Flattery for Spain; names Port San Juan, San Juan River, Sombrio River and Jordan River

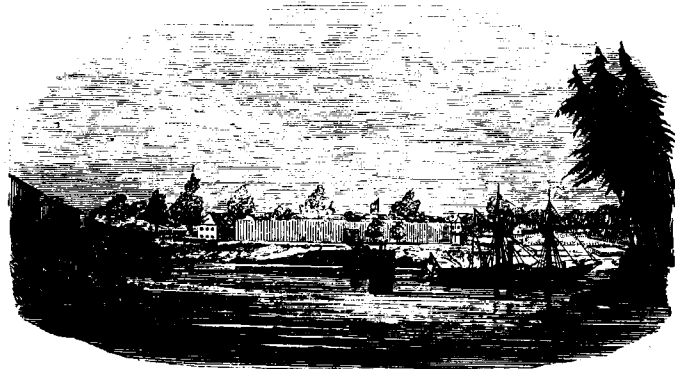
**1792** - All Spanish territories north of Puget Sound are handed over to Britain in the "Nootka Convention"

**1837** - Captain McNeil, skipper of the Hudson's Bay Company's steamer "Beaver" visits the southern end of Vancouver Island for the purpose of establishing a fur trading headquarters in the region

**1840's** - HMS Herald (Royal Navy) charts bays and inlets from Sooke to Esquimalt Harbour under Capt. Henry Kellett; many places are renamed with British names

**1848** - The first sawmill in BC is established at Millstream Creek

**1849** - Vancouver Island is declared a Crown Colony by the British Government



(B.C. Archives Photo No. PDP00222)

*Vancouver's Island: The Hudson Bay Company's Establishment*

**1842** - James Douglas, also instructed to find a suitable site for the Hudson's Bay Co.'s (HBC) trading headquarters, again surveys southern Vancouver Island. Douglas is impressed with the "open-park"-like setting of the Victoria area. Sooke and Esquimalt were considered but the Victoria site was selected

**1843** - James Douglas builds Fort Camosun (later renamed Fort Victoria) on the present site of Victoria for the HBC as its Pacific Headquarters. Farms are established by the Company, providing employment for many settlers

**1846** - An international boundary with the US, generally at the 49th parallel, is established in the Oregon Treaty

**1849** - British Government grants the whole of Vancouver Island to the HBC; in return the Company agrees to bring out colonists and sell them land at reasonable prices

**1850's** - Permanent settlement by English and Scottish emigrants independent of the HBC begins; livelihood centers around farming, stock-raising, and orchard growing

**1850** - Richard Blanshard is appointed first Governor of Vancouver Island

Captain Walter Colquhoun Grant arrives from Scotland and becomes Sooke's first independent settler

**1851** - James Douglas is appointed second Governor of Vancouver Island while remaining Chief Factor of the HBC

**1852** - James Douglas purchases Saanich Peninsula from the First Nations

**1853** - Wife of the HBC chaplain establishes first school

**1854** - Kosampson Village group reserve is set up at Esquimalt Harbour

**1855** - First "squatters" settle in Saanich

Capt. James Grant establishes first steam-powered sawmill on Vancouver Island at Sooke Basin

**1856** - HBC builds first district church in Victoria, eventually replaced by Christ Church Cathedral

**1857** - First settlers arrive in the Gulf Islands; nine freed slaves from Kentucky and Mississippi establish a colony on Salt Spring Island

**1858** - Victoria becomes the outfitting center for the Fraser River gold rush; population

increases from 300 to 25,000 with the influx of hopeful miners; first Chinese settlers arrive after hearing of Gold Rush, establishing Chinatown

**1859** - First Parliament Buildings are constructed in Victoria

**1860** - Demolition of Fort Victoria begins

**1863** - First forest inventory records extensive stands of mature Douglas Fir

**1864** - Demolition of Fort Victoria is completed and property is sold

Regular boat service between Victoria and Gulf Islands begins

Gold is discovered in the Leech River above Sooke, resulting in a brief boom period for Sooke as 3,000 miners move into the area. Construction of a wharf, an improved road system, and a permanent settlement at Sooke results

**1865** - Naval base is constructed at Esquimalt

**1866** - Union of the Crown Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, with New Westminster chosen as the capital

**1868** - Capital of the Crown Colony of BC moves from New Westminster to Victoria

First Saanich Agricultural Fair

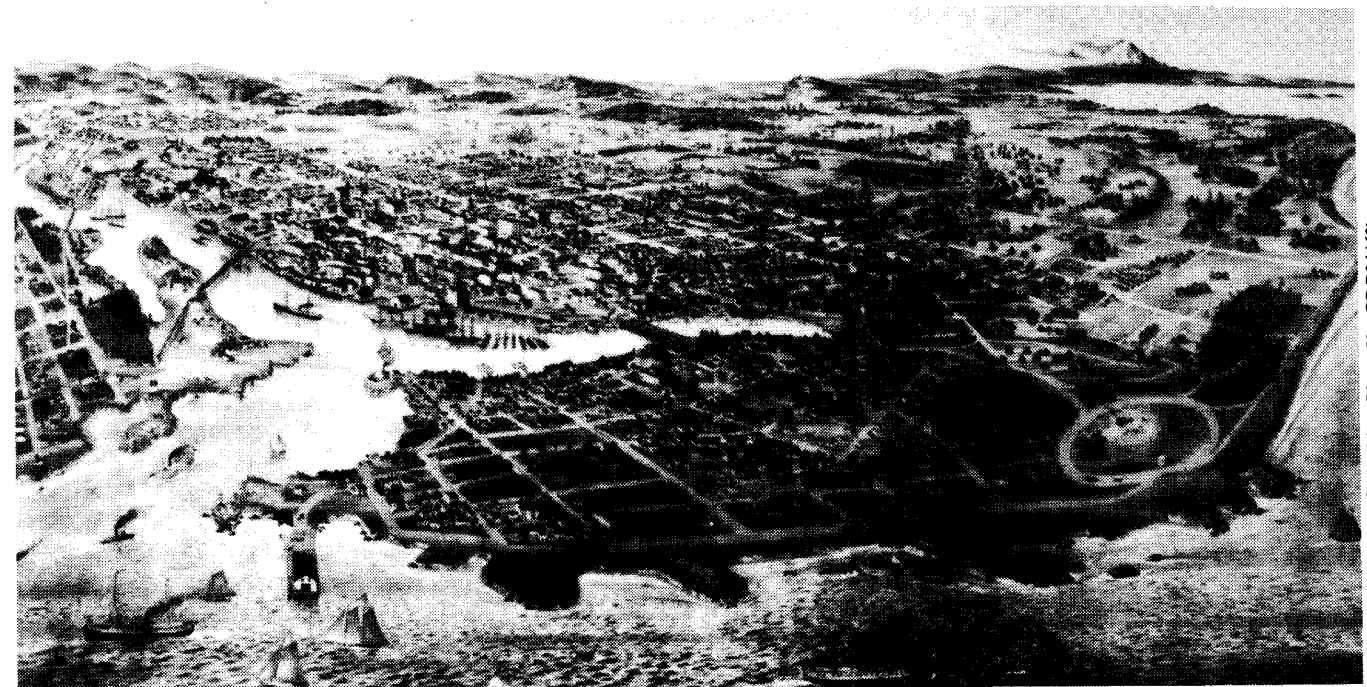
First BC parliament is held

**1871** - BC enters Dominion of Canada

**1882** - Beacon Hill Park is donated to Victoria by the Province

**1886** - Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway opens; Prime Minister Sir John A. MacDonald drives a ceremonial spike in the railroad at Shawnigan Lake

**1889** - Electric transit system is inaugurated; Victoria is the first city west of the Mississippi, the second city in Canada and the third in North America with such a system



(B.C. Archives Photo No. PDF04463)

*Victoria 1889*



*Deluge Fire Hall, Victoria, Yates Street*

B.C. Archives Photo No. A-01605

**1925** - Crystal Garden is completed

**1926** - Completion of the Esquimalt Graving Dock, then the world's second-largest drydock

**1930** - First regular ferry service is inaugurated between Swartz Bay and Gulf Islands

**1933** - First scheduled flights to Vancouver, from Landsdowne Airfield in Saanich

First celebration of All-Sooke Days.

**1939** - RCAF "Patricia Bay Airport" (now Victoria International Airport) opens in N. Saanich

**1941** - Royal Roads Military College is established at Hatley Park

**1957** - Original colonial government buildings and Government House are destroyed by fire

**1961** - Most ferry routes taken over by the Provincial government, and the BC Ferry Service begins operation

**1963** - University of Victoria is established

**1968** - Provincial Museum opens as a Provincial project commemorating the Canadian Centennial year of 1987; now designated as a "Royal" Museum for the quality of its exhibits

**1973** - Restoration of Parliament Buildings begins

**1981** - Gate of Harmonious Interest in Chinatown is completed; first Chinese ceremonial gate in Canada

**1994** - Commonwealth Games are hosted by Greater Victoria

**1893** - Construction of the present Parliament buildings begins (completed 1897)

**1894** - Trains connecting Victoria with the Saanich Peninsula begin operation

**1895** - Coastal artillery installation begins construction at Fort Rodd Hill, now a National Historic Park, completed 1900

**1902** - Hon. James Dunsmuir, member of BC Legislature, coal baron and builder and owner of the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway, establishes Hatley Park at Esquimalt Lagoon and builds a castle, designed by Samuel McClure

**1904** - Construction of fish traps at Sooke establishes it as a major fishing community (traps were closed in 1959)

**1906** - Construction begins on the Empress Hotel (completed 1909)

West Coast Life-saving Trail between Port Renfrew and Bamfield is established as direct result of the wreck of the steamship Valencia, in which many lives are lost

**1914** - Construction of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory

**1917** - Ogden Point Piers open  
Canadian National Railway opens

## Historic Settlement Patterns In The Capital Region

From the earliest days of European settlement, its residents have tended to see the Region as a whole in terms of conducting their daily lives: they are now and were then just as likely to live in one municipality, work in another, use the parks in a third, and shop in two or three more. Outsiders also tend to refer to "Victoria" while meaning the entire metropolitan area.

The urban core has generally developed in a radial fashion away from the site of what was originally the Hudson's Bay Company fort on Victoria Harbour.

Smaller settlements have long been established at Sidney, Sooke and beside Cordova Bay.

Historically, settlements were established on the basis of good harbours, water supply, well-drained land on which to build, and the cooperation and agreement of native residents. More recently, the pattern of settlement has been affected by:

- the establishment of regional transportation routes like the Old Island Highway, Trans Canada Highway, Sooke Road, and Pat Bay Highway, which were followed by linear settlements along and at either end of their corridors;
- the establishment of major facilities, such as the University of Victoria, Department of National Defence operations, and ferry terminals, which attracted both residents and services to develop around these nodes;
- the desire of some individuals to "escape" to a rural lifestyle beyond the fringes of urban

development, resulting in rural large-lot subdivisions in remote (or once-remote) areas including the Gulf Islands;

- municipal land use plans, which over the last 50 years have generally promoted compact urban development surrounding identified nodes and the urban core, preservation of farm lands, and retention of local character.

The result has been a mix of city, town and rural environments, and a diversity of lifestyles which are valued aspects of life in the Capital Region<sup>1</sup>.

"Snapshots" of the region's population distribution are provided in Figure 1, and demonstrate the effects of these influences.

<sup>1</sup> Identified in the Regional Values, Goals and Priorities Project (1993), each rating 3.7 out of 5

### Figure 1 Development of Settlement Pattern

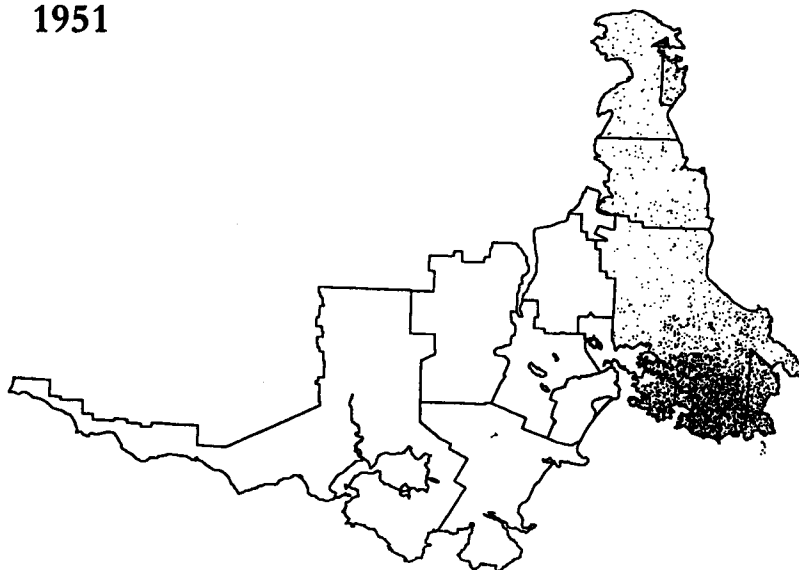
Capital Region, 1951-1991

#### Notes:

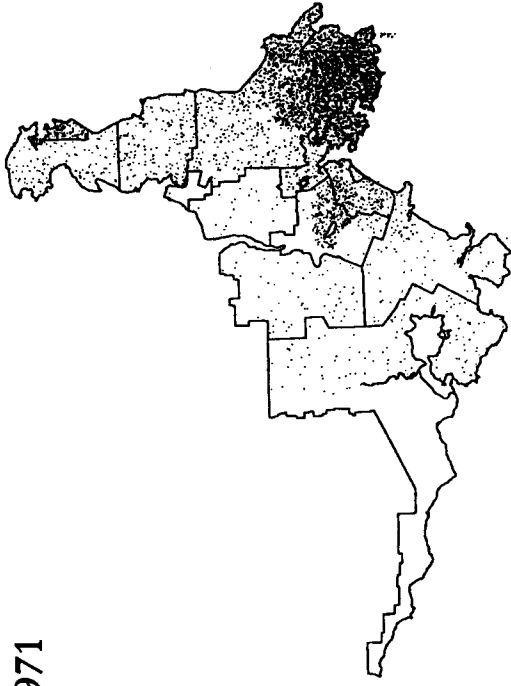
- 1 dot represents 25 persons
- the distribution of dots is random within each municipal census tract and is intended to demonstrate relative density only, not exact location of residences
- 1951 data does not include the Western Communities

Source: Statistics Canada, Census

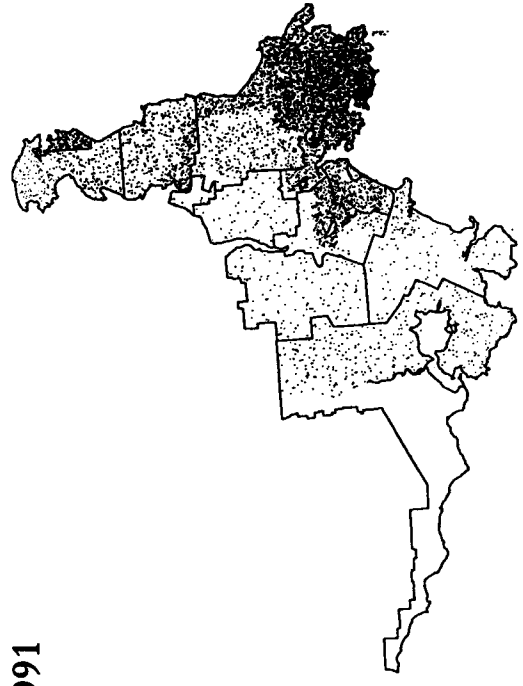
1951



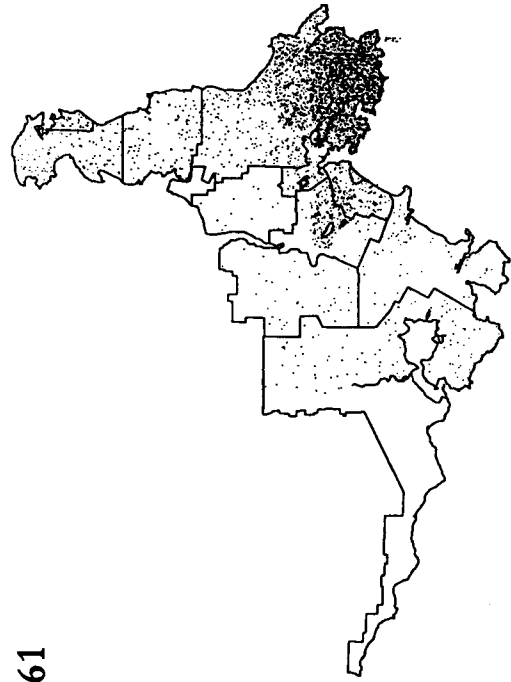
1971



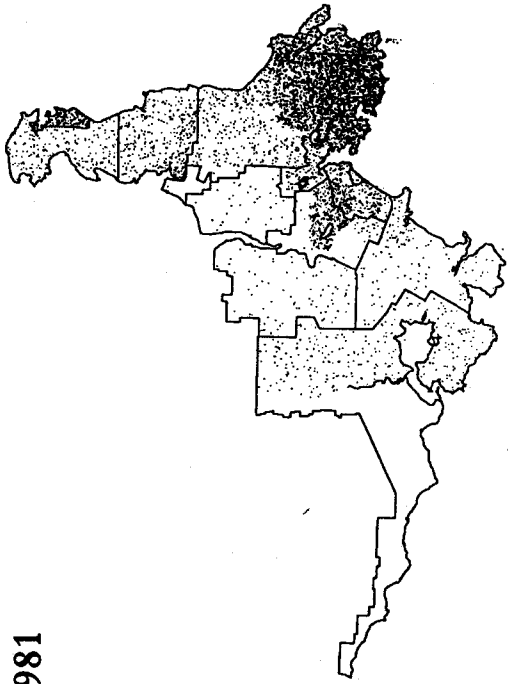
1991



1961



1981



## In The Future...

As the dawn of the 21st Century approaches, the issues facing the Region's residents in terms of the pattern of development include the following:

- Meeting the demand for additional housing, employment and services caused by population increases will require careful consideration of the form of future development if residents' values of lifestyle and urban/rural diversity are to be maintained.
- The Region's residents have expressed concern<sup>1</sup> about the loss of and need to preserve agricultural land, the continued subdivision of land for "acreages" and more intense urban development, and about financial pressures

on farmers which threaten continued viability of farms.

- The high cost of housing in the region is a concern now<sup>2</sup>, and will continue to be in the future. Contributing to housing costs are the provision of utilities and services, extension and maintenance of roadways, and the price and scarcity of developable land (see below) - and all of these costs are affected by the physical form of development.
- Transportation-related issues include the heavy reliance on the automobile and related environmental impacts, viability of a light rail transit or streetcar system, and the cost of major highway improvements.
- Environmental concerns related to the pattern and extent of human settlement

include maintenance of the quality of air and water resources, collection and treatment of liquid waste, and preservation of ecologically-significant or sensitive areas.

- The "scarcity" of developable land will continue: based on projected populations, extension of present municipal plan policies into the future, and the area of developable land which was still undeveloped in 1993, it has been estimated that by 2010, there will be a shortfall of 4,000 single-family lots to meet demand at that point.<sup>3</sup>

These issues, and others yet to be identified, will be addressed in the first stages of the CRD's Regional Growth Strategy, a regional-scale, strategic planning process to be undertaken beginning in 1996.

## Technical Notes and Sources

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., concern over loss rating 4.0 out of 5.0, and need to improve preservation mentioned by 25% of respondents (fourth highest of 12)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; affordability of housing ranked 6th out of 13 with a rating of 4.0 out of 5 as important aspect of life in the CRD; the increasing cost of housing ranked fifth on a list of 11, and improvement in the supply of affordable housing ranked 5th of 12 matters needing attention in the next ten years.

<sup>3</sup> Clayton Research, "Demand Capacity/Land Use Analysis; Population, Housing and Employment in the Capital Regional District, 1991-2010", 1993. Excerpts from this publication may be used or reproduced for inclusion in not-for-sale documents, reports, or business plans, providing acknowledgement is made of this as the source. Reproduction for sale is contrary to copyright law.

Refer to Volume 1, No. 1 for a general description of the Profile series.

Factsheets providing further detail on this topic are available from Regional Planning Services.

### Sources:

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CRD, "Economic Profile 1985"

Photos provided by B.C. Archives & Records Service, Province of British Columbia.

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