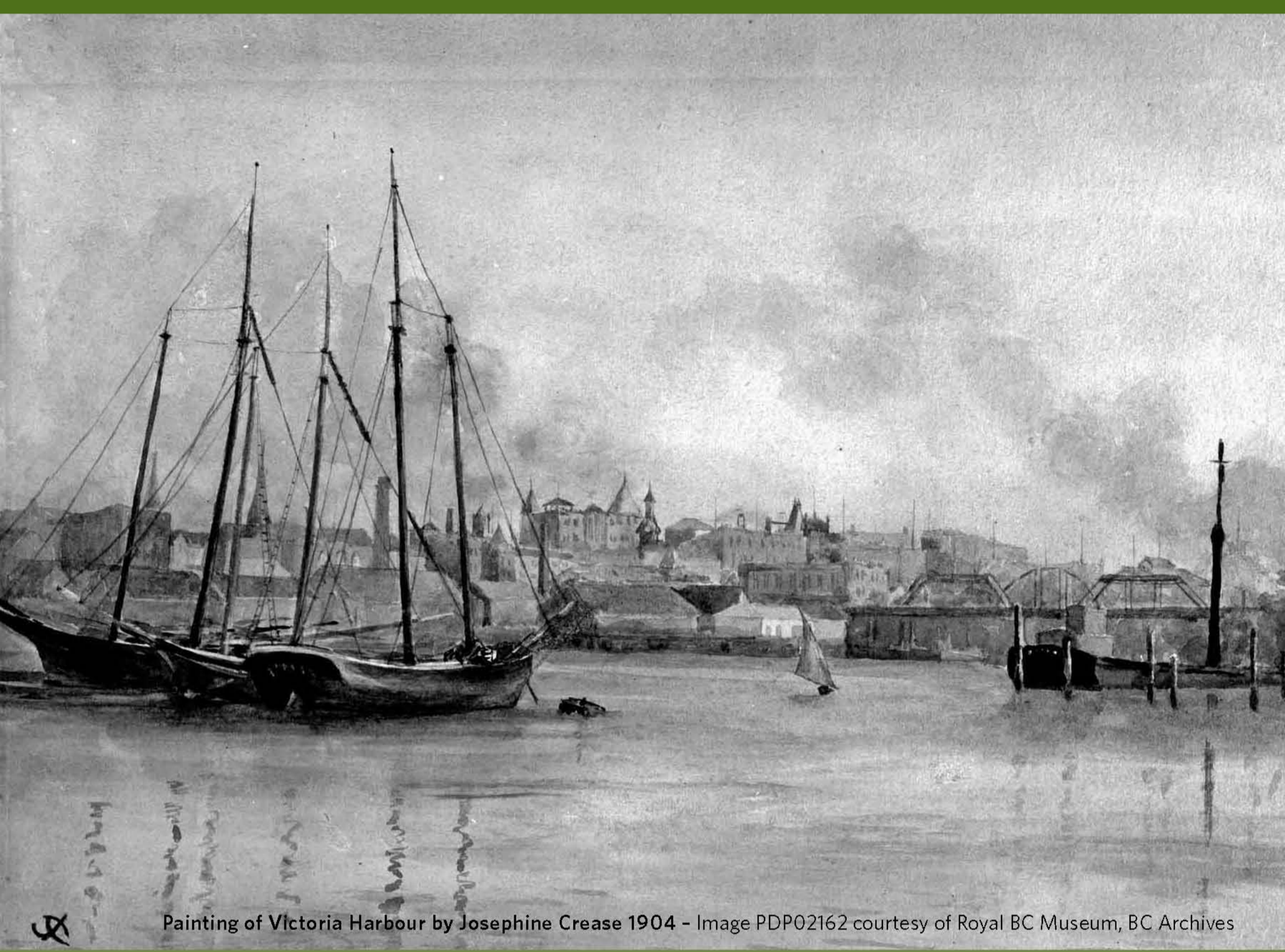


The Working Waterway



Painting of Victoria Harbour by Josephine Crease 1904 - Image PDP02162 courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives

The Pacific coast sealing fleet operated here until the late 1890s. Fish processing and shipbuilding were major industries along the Gorge.

AFTER FORT VICTORIA WAS established as a trading post in the 1840s, industry developed rapidly. The lower reaches of the waterway were filled with sawmills, shipyards, railyards, machine shops, ironworks and coal-fired power generation. From the

late 1800s to the early 1900s Victoria was the busiest seaport north of San Francisco. Manufacturing industries were established in later years building boats and making paint, roofing tiles, lumber and plywood, cement and other commodities.



Decades of industrial activity left a legacy of sediment contamination and a build-up of wood and bark debris on the sea floor. Strong tidal currents spread pollution throughout the Gorge Waterway. Some industrial areas have been cleaned up in recent years and redeveloped for other uses. There are still many marine-dependent industries along the Gorge, and Victoria continues to be a busy working harbour.



Log booms in the Gorge Waterway circa 1890s - Image E-06937 courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives

In the early 1900s, four sawmills operated along the Selkirk Arm of the Gorge Waterway. Logs were brought in by train and dumped into the Gorge from the trestle bridge. Sawmills continued operating here until the 1980s.

