

Social Studies 10

Unit 6 Readings

British Columbia: Colony to Confederation

Pages 1-26

- What role did the gold rush play in the creation of the British Columbia colony?
- Why did British Columbia agree to enter Confederation? What events led to this agreement? Under what conditions did British Columbia agree to become part of Canada?

The Pacific Coast in the Early 1800s

The central Pacific coast of North America was disputed territory at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A boundary treaty, signed by Britain and the United States following the War of 1812, had established the 49th parallel of latitude as the border between Canada and the United States. But the treaty only covered territories extending as far west as the Rocky Mountains. Beyond the Rockies, both Britain and the United States claimed the coastal area lying north of California. This disputed area was known as the Oregon Territory. In the absence of an agreement between the two rivals, the territory was left open to settlement. Most of the settlers came from the United States.











Fur trading companies from the United States established posts along the Columbia River as early as 1808, but by 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company had taken control of the area. However, American fur traders and land developers continued to encourage settlers from the United States to come to the fertile lands of the Columbia River Valley. Most of this settlement took place around Fort Astoria, operated by the American Fur Company at the mouth of the Columbia. Soon, these American settlers in the Oregon Territory began to pressure political leaders in the United States to annex the Pacific Northwest.

The Americans had effectively established a claim to the area through settlement. John McLaughlin, the man in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company's Columbia Department, was ordered to build a new fort to counter the American presence. The new trading centre was to be located at the junction of the Willamette River and the Columbia, 150 km upstream from Fort Astoria.

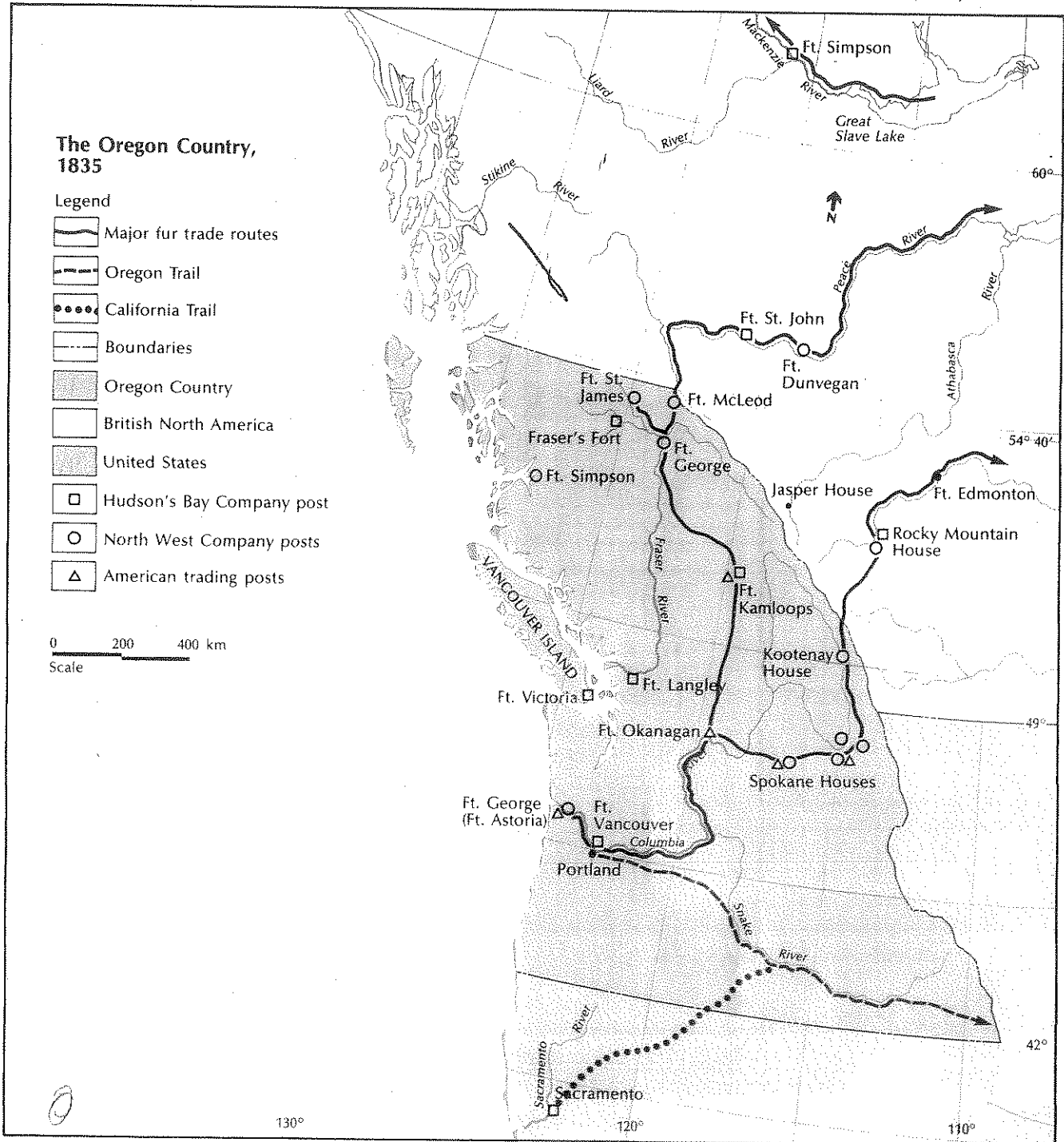
Fort Vancouver, the name given to this new post, was to be the main shipment point for the Company's fur trade in the area drained by the Columbia. It was also to be the centre of the British fight against American expansion in the West.

The Oregon Country, 1835

Legend

-  Major fur trade routes
-  Oregon Trail
-  California Trail
-  Boundaries
-  Oregon Country
-  British North America
-  United States
-  Hudson's Bay Company post
-  North West Company posts
-  American trading posts

0 200 400 km
Scale



The Company encouraged British settlement and the establishment of farms in the Columbia Valley. These settlements would not only provide supplies for the fur traders, they would offset American colonization in the region. Hudson's Bay Company traders worked aggressively to dominate the fur trade in the area.

The Hudson's Bay Company governor, George Simpson, took other actions on the west coast to counter American expansion. In 1827, he had McLaughlin send men north to build Fort Langley on the Fraser River. As well, Simpson ordered the establishment of trading posts along the Pacific coast just south of Alaska to compete with American fur trading ships operating in the area. Despite these moves, Simpson still feared that further waves of American settlers might sweep into the area. His fears were well-grounded.

A treaty negotiated by the Russians and the Americans in 1824 had divided the coast into a series of trading areas. The southern limit of Russian fur trading in North America was set at 54° 40' north latitude, (just north of present-day Prince Rupert). South of this latitude, trading was to be jointly controlled by Britain and the United States. However, the British government, which had not taken part in the negotiations, did not recognize the Russian-American fur trade treaty.

In 1844, James Polk campaigned for election as president on a promise to gain for the United States all of the area under joint British and American control. He threatened to go to war if necessary to obtain this territory. Polk's campaign slogan was "54-40 or fight." Polk won the election, but chose not to fight. Some historians have suggested that Polk did not really want to obtain control over the entire Pacific Northwest. His slogan, they believe, was just a campaign ploy.

In the negotiations that followed Polk's election, the British hoped to see the boundary set at the Columbia River. But, as a result of Polk's threat, the Americans were able in 1846 to have the boundary between British and American territories in the Northwest set at the 49th parallel, 500 km north of the Columbia. However, all of Vancouver Island would remain British. This agreement became known as the Oregon Boundary Treaty.

1. What actions did the Hudson's Bay Company take to ensure British control over portions of the Pacific Northwest?
2. In your own words, explain the meaning of "54-40 or fight."

Fort Victoria

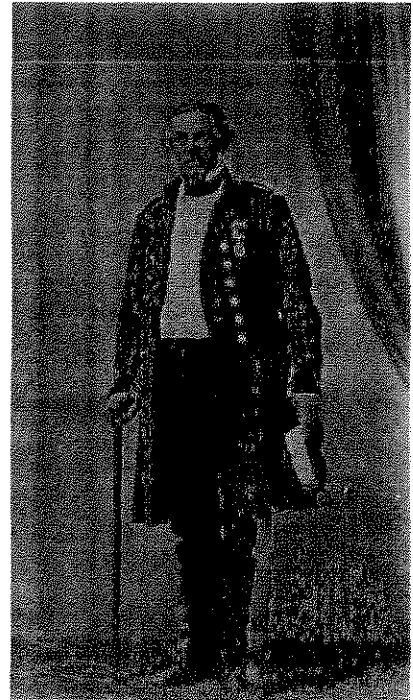
George Simpson had suspected that the lands along the Columbia would become part of the United States, and that the Company would lose both the Oregon fur trade and also its main access route, the Columbia River. Fort Langley, on the Fraser River, was the first site chosen for the Company's new headquarters, to replace Fort Vancouver. However, the route through the Fraser Canyon proved too difficult and dangerous for use by the fur traders. As a consequence, Simpson turned his attention to Vancouver Island as a possible site for the new trading post.

The man sent out by Simpson to select this site was James Douglas. As you will see, Douglas would come to play a key role in the region's history over the next two decades. Some historians have called him "the father of British Columbia." The child of a West Indian mother and a Scottish merchant father, Douglas was described by his contemporaries as a mulatto, the Caribbean equivalent of Métis. At age sixteen, he came to Canada to work as a clerk-apprentice for the North West Company. He stayed on to work for the Hudson's Bay Company after the two companies merged in 1821. Simpson described Douglas as "a stout, powerful, active man of good conduct and respectable abilities." At Fort Vancouver, Douglas became the chief Hudson's Bay Company trader in 1835 and chief factor in 1839. Three years later, he travelled north to Vancouver Island to select the site for the new fort.

The site of the new headquarters would have to have the following qualities: a well-protected harbor, fertile soil and abundant stands of timber. Douglas recommended one such location based on a report made by Captain W.H. McNeill, skipper of the Hudson's Bay Company steamboat *Beaver*. In 1837, McNeill had explored the southern end of the island and reported that he had "found an excellent harbour, of easy access with good anchorage, surrounded by a plain of several miles in extent, of an excellent soil."

In the spring of 1843, the Company's managers approved a resolution calling for construction of a post, to be called Fort Victoria, at the site chosen by Douglas.

Under Douglas' direction, a crew of Hudson's Bay Company men and Native workers set about building Fort Victoria. When they were finished in 1844, Fort Victoria looked much like any other fur trading post. The fort was surrounded by a rectangular stockade one hundred metres by ninety metres, with an octagonal bastion or tower at one corner. Inside, there were eight buildings, including



Sir James Douglas

THE SITE FOR THE NEW FORT

James Douglas submitted the following report to Governor George Simpson on July 12, 1842:

... At Camosack [the name of an Indian village, now known as Camosun] there is a pleasant and convenient Site for the Establishment [fort] within Fifty Yards [forty-six metres] of the Anchorage, on the Border of a large tract of clear Land, which extends Eastward to Point Gonzalo at the South-east extremity of the Island and about Six Miles [ten kilometres] interiorly being the most picturesque and decidedly the most valuable Part of the Island that we had the good Fortune to discover...

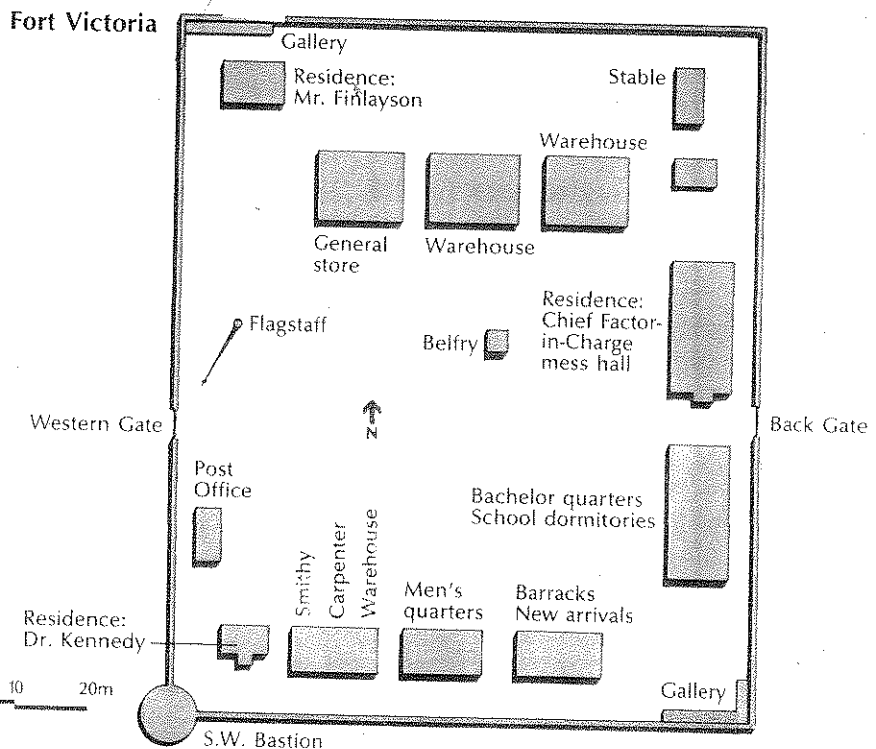
Being pretty well assured of the Capabilities of the Soil as respects the Purposes of

Agriculture, the Climate also being mild and pleasant, we ought to be able to grow every Kind of Grain raised in England... We are certain that Potatoes thrive and grow to a large Size, as the Indians have many small fields in cultivation, which appear to reward the Labour bestowed upon them, and I hope that the other Crops will do as well...

As a harbour it is equally safe and accessible. An abundance of timber grows on it for home consumption and exportation...

1. Summarize the reasons why Douglas thought that Camosack would make a good site for the new fort.
2. List the resources found at the site whose commercial potential Douglas identified in his report and letter.

Fort Victoria was built with an eighteen foot (5.5 m) stockade and an octagonal bastion in the southwest corner for defence. Galleries, platforms for soldiers to stand on to see over the stockade, were built in other corners.



warehouses for furs and other goods, a trading store, accommodations for the traders and quarters for the officers of the Company stationed there. Later, a house for the chief factor would be built inside the fort as well.

Slow but steady expansion of the fur trade on Vancouver Island marked the first five years of Fort Victoria's existence. The Hudson's Bay Company traders soon learned that the area's richest resources were not furs, but forests and fisheries. As well, they discovered deposits of coal on the Island. Several decades would pass, however, before these resources would draw significant numbers of settlers to Vancouver Island.

The farming community around Fort Victoria grew slowly, despite the rich soils. Grants of land were given to retired Hudson's Bay Company employees who wished to start farming. They soon were able to earn a good living supplying the fort and the steadily increasing number of British naval ships that were coming to explore the area.

1. What events led to the founding of Fort Victoria? Who chose the site?
2. What characteristics were necessary for the site of a major trading post and fort?

Creation of the Vancouver Island Colony

Two events in the late 1840s served to focus British attention on Vancouver Island. The first was the signing of the Treaty of Washington in 1846, commonly known as the Oregon Boundary Treaty. This treaty defined the 49th parallel of latitude as the boundary between the United States and the British territories west of the Rockies. The second was the annexation of California to the United States in 1848. The British government feared that its resource-rich territories along the Pacific might be the next to fall to the Americans and their "manifest destiny."

George Simpson's fears of American expansion had not been reduced by the Oregon Boundary Agreement of 1846. If anything, they had become stronger. He believed that American settlers from the Columbia River and Puget Sound regions would move north into the thinly populated and poorly defended British territories on the Pacific coast. The British government shared Simpson's belief

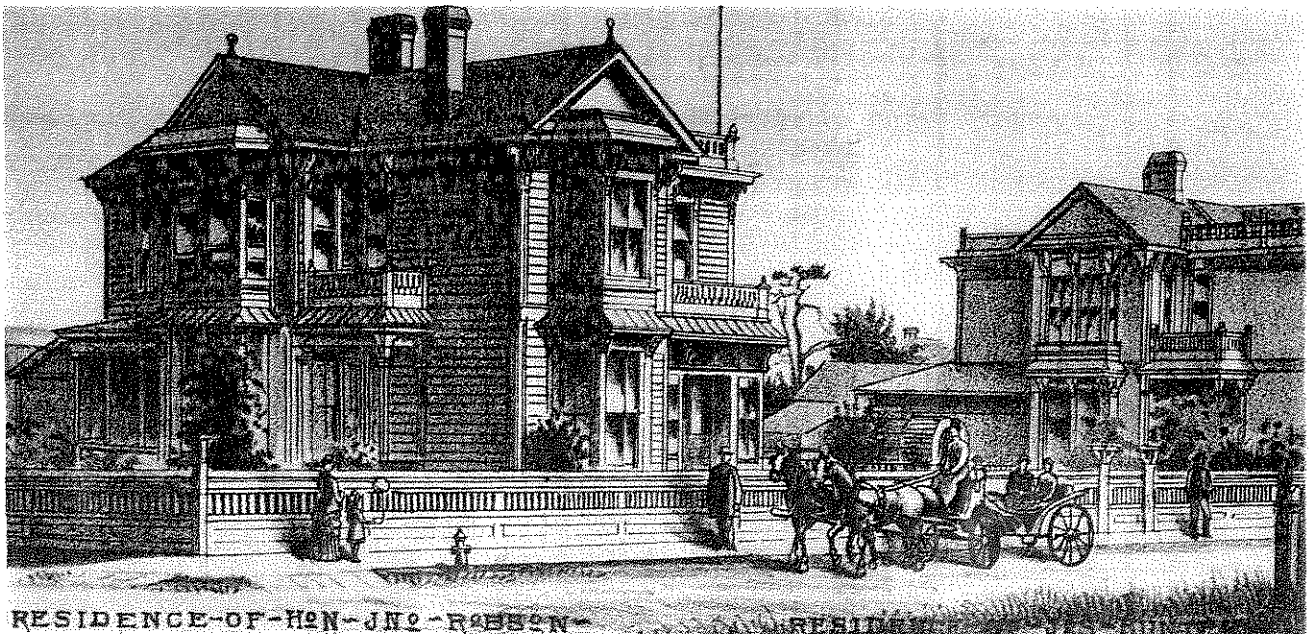
that more effective occupation of Vancouver Island was needed to defend its claim to the region. In January 1849, Vancouver Island was proclaimed to be a crown colony, with Fort Victoria its capital. The British government issued a special royal charter to the Hudson's Bay Company, giving it a monopoly on trade and commerce on the Island. This charter was similar to the one given the Company in 1670, but it had one important difference. The Company was to actively encourage settlement, something it had once opposed in Rupert's Land. Now, however, the Company had a strong motive for encouraging settlement. Its charter stated that if no colony had been successfully established within five years, control over Vancouver Island would revert to the British government. Under the terms of the charter the Company was instructed to sell land on the Island to British settlers. It would be allowed to keep 10 percent of money earned from such sales. The rest was to be used for public works such as roads, bridges, and wharves.

In 1849, Fort Victoria became the centre of the Hudson's Bay Company's west coast operations. In that year, James Douglas was transferred from Fort Vancouver, now in the United States, to Fort Victoria. He arrived before the newly appointed governor of the Vancouver Island colony, Richard Blanshard. Blanshard arrived to find that he had no salary, no officers and, above all, no power. He quickly learned that the only authority in the Vancouver Island colony was the Hudson's Bay Company. The real power was in the hands of the chief factor—James Douglas. After less than two years of bitter struggles with Douglas over control of the new colony, Blanshard resigned and returned to Britain. He was replaced by James Douglas.

Settlement of the colony began in earnest after Douglas became governor. Douglas wanted to encourage settlers who would be willing to work hard. He suggested that grants of 80-120 ha (200-300 acres) should be given free of charge to families wishing to settle on Vancouver Island. But the British government had a different view of settlement. Once again, the old memory of the humiliating loss of the American colonies surfaced. The British decided that to prevent a similar situation on Vancouver Island, the best system of settlement for the new colony would be one that recreated the class structure of England. Settlers were required to purchase a minimum of twenty acres (eight hectares) at one pound per acre. Any settler buying one hundred acres (forty hectares) or more was required to bring five workers or three married couples with him to the colony. In this way, the colony was meant to be peopled by "the

better class" of Englishmen, those who could bring servants with them to work the land.

When Douglas arrived in 1849, the colony had only fifteen settlers. The largest and longest established farms belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company and its employees. But the colony was quickly changing its fur-trading origins. Town plans were being laid out for Victoria and for a naval base at nearby Esquimalt. Fine homes were built for the colony's "leading citizens." In them, the manners of British country society were maintained, replacing the rougher social graces of the fur fort.



By the early 1850s, there were schools and churches in the colony, formal dances and polite social evenings. At the same time that these elements of British society were being introduced to the colony, many prominent British Columbia families were being founded as young English gentlemen married the daughters of the fur traders and their Métis or Indian wives.

The growth of the colony was spurred by the discovery of new resources in the form of lumber and coal. Equally important was the sudden appearance of a rich market for the colony's products close at hand. Gold was discovered in California in 1849. News of the gold rush reached Victoria in the form of a shipload of miners who

This engraving of homes in Victoria was made in the 1880s, but gives a view of what the leading citizens were striving for as they constructed the community. Why were bricks and stone not common as building materials for homes?

had come to the colony seeking provisions and supplies. Their arrival marked the beginning of a period of economic boom for the colony as regular steamship service between California and Vancouver Island was established. The Hudson's Bay Company now added to its profits by selling supplies to the prospectors who often paid for their purchases with gold nuggets.

The colonists also found a ready market for lumber in the fast-growing mining communities of California. Commercial lumbering operations began at Sooke in 1850. One enterprising settler, Captain Cooper, brought with him a small iron schooner in pieces. When the *Alice* was reassembled, Cooper began a highly successful business shipping sawn timber to San Francisco. So completely export-oriented were the Island's timber merchants that local residents had trouble getting building supplies.

Despite this boom the colony grew slowly. By 1852, there were fewer than 450 non-Native settlers on Vancouver Island. In that year, the Hudson's Bay Company established several large coal mines in the area around Nanaimo, north of Fort Victoria on the east coast of Vancouver Island. Coal was a major natural resource in the mid-nineteenth century. Steam was replacing sail as the source of power for the world's shipping fleets, creating a great demand for coal. Miners were brought out from Britain to work the mines, bringing the non-Native population of Vancouver Island up to more than 1000 by the mid-1850s. Soon settlements were springing up around the mines at Cumberland, Wellington and other places near Nanaimo.

In 1858, however, the discovery of gold on the mainland briefly but dramatically overshadowed the coal mining industry on Vancouver Island. The gold rush was about to bring a sudden influx of settlers to the region and would cause the Hudson's Bay Company to lose control over the colony.

1. How did the annexation of California by the United States increase fears of American expansion into British controlled territory?
2. According to the Royal Charter of 1849, what obligations did the Hudson's Bay Company have on Vancouver Island?
3. Furs were the natural resource that led to the establishment of Fort Victoria. What other natural resources contributed to its growth?

Hudson's Bay Company was, in their view, a long out-dated carry-over from mercantilism.

1. Using your atlas, find Victoria, the Strait of Georgia and the Fraser River. How long a trip is it from Victoria Harbour to the mouth of the Fraser? to the junction of the Thompson and Fraser rivers where gold was first discovered?
2. What problems did the prospectors face in getting to the gold fields from Victoria?
3. Suggest the impact that the arrival of 25 000 miners in one year would have on the environment of an area that was largely wilderness. What impact would there be on the Native people of the area whose way of life was based on fishing in the river for salmon? on the economy of the region?
4. Why was Governor Douglas concerned about the arrival of the gold miners?

The Founding of the Mainland Colony

The Fraser River gold rush did more than just spur the growth of the Vancouver Island colony. It led to the creation in 1858 of a second crown colony, this one on the mainland. The new colony was created to ensure the maintenance of law and order in the gold fields. It was also to reduce the growing fears of American annexation of the mainland.

A song, popular in Oregon at the time, announced the Annexationists' sentiments:

Soon our banner will be streaming,
Soon the eagle will be screaming,
And the lion-see, it cowers,
Hurrah boys, the river's ours.

At this time, there were more American than British residents in Victoria and on the mainland as well.

Britain's new colonial secretary, Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, wanted to provide the new colony with sound leadership while reducing the influence of the Hudson's Bay Company. He offered James Douglas the governorship of both Vancouver Island and the new British Columbia colony. There was one condition attached to the offer. Douglas would have to resign from the Hudson's Bay Company. He did so, to serve the Crown with the same determination and loyalty that had marked his thirty years of service to the Hudson's Bay Company.

Ceremonies marking the official establishment of British Columbia were held at Fort Langley, the colony's first capital, on November 19, 1858. The colony's only judge, Matthew Begbie, was sworn in by Douglas. Begbie, in turn, read Her Majesty's commission naming James Douglas as governor of British Columbia. Ironically, Douglas' first official duty that day was to read a proclamation revoking the Hudson's Bay Company's exclusive right to trade on the mainland. Governor Douglas and Judge Begbie, along with Colonel Richard Moody, Commissioner of Lands and Works, would be the three most important figures in the public life of the young colony. They faced the very large task of bringing good government, law and order and public works to the 25 000 settlers and miners in the remote and rugged colony.

The early character of British Columbia was shaped largely by two forces. On one hand were the miners, on the other Douglas, Begbie and Moody. The miners were a mixed lot, in Begbie's words: "Englishmen (staunch royalists), Americans (Republicans), Frenchmen very numerous, Germans in abundance, Italians, several Hungarians, Poles, Danes, Swedes, Spaniards, Mexicans and Chinese." There were also Native miners, and even Hawaiians too. British Columbia's multicultural character was established right from the earliest days of the colony.

In their ethnic diversity, the miners were joined by two common bonds: their rugged individualism and their burning desire to get rich through their efforts in the gold fields. Douglas and his public servants, for their part, sought to establish an orderly and well-governed society along British lines.

Matthew Begbie played a key role in the attempt to bring law and order to the rough-and-tumble communities of the gold seekers. He travelled many thousands of kilometres on horseback, making his lonely circuits through the frontier colony, holding court in tents, bunkhouses and even saloons. Begbie soon earned the respect of the miners and settlers. His approach to the administration of justice earned him a reputation for being fair but often unorthodox. The British government, in particular, was concerned about the speed of Begbie's trials. Some American settlers were upset by Begbie's insistence that the full protection of British law be extended to Native peoples, Chinese and other non-white ethnic groups. He learned three Native dialects, and held trials in the Native languages. He also organized Native courts, in which tribal chiefs would judge cases in which only Natives were involved.

Begbie's blunt comments to defendants and the juries who tried



Sir Matthew Baillie Begbie

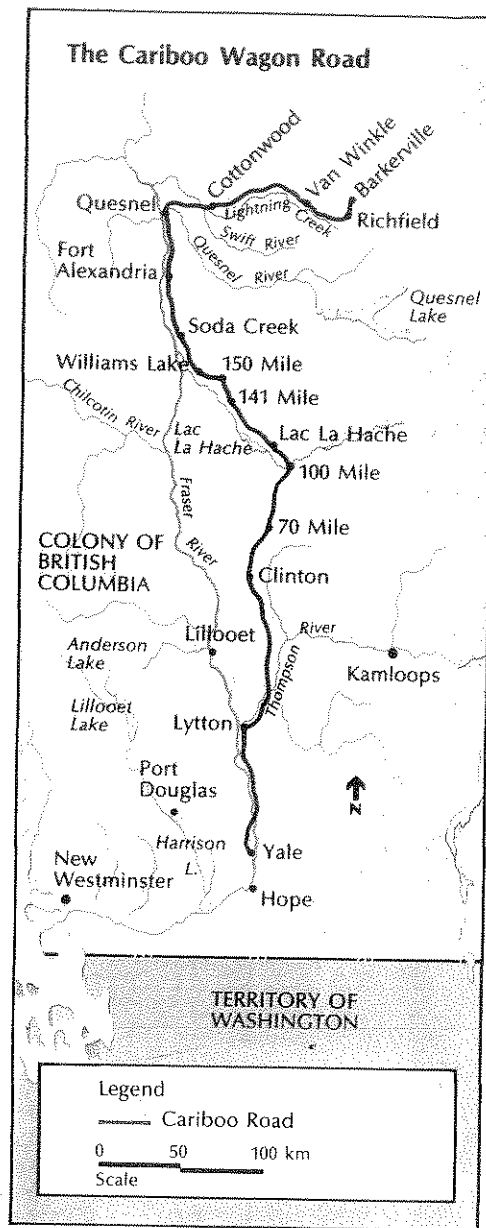
them were frequently quoted in the colony's newspapers. In 1865, the *Cariboo Sentinel* reported how Begbie handled juries which returned verdicts he did not like. According to the newspaper, Begbie threatened to "lock the jury up until they had come to a conclusion which he might conceive to be correct."

Colonel Moody and his Company of Royal Engineers had the task of creating roads and other public works to serve the colony. They were also given the responsibility for building a capital city and a seaport for British Columbia.

The Royal Engineers' greatest accomplishment was the construction of the Cariboo wagon road through the rugged Fraser Canyon. In 1860, more gold was discovered in the Cariboo region, north of the Fraser gold fields. These new fields, especially the ones discovered at Williams Creek in 1861, proved to be far richer than those along the Fraser. At Barkerville, the mining town that grew up along Williams Creek, a single panful of gravel could produce as much as \$1000 worth of gold. By comparison, most workers in Victoria at this time earned two to three dollars a day.

These rich gold deposits were located in isolated areas beyond the coastal mountains. A road was needed because of the high costs of supplying the mining communities by horseback along narrow mountain trails. In 1862, therefore, Douglas ordered the construction of a wagon road up the Fraser Canyon and into the Cariboo. While civilian contractors built most of the road, the Royal Engineers constructed the most difficult parts. From Yale to Boston Bar, the road had to be blasted out of solid rock walls. Hanging down the cliffs on ropes, workers drilled holes in the rock and set the dynamite charges. To Douglas' delight, the Cariboo Wagon Road, 600 km long and 6 m wide, was completed in less than four years.

1. What two purposes was the mainland colony to serve when it was created in 1858?
2. Explain what role each of these people played in the new mainland colony: James Douglas, Matthew Begbie, and Richard Moody.
3. The song verse on page 169 refers to an eagle and a lion. What do these symbols mean?
4. Explain why the Cariboo Wagon Road was vital to the economic health of the new colony.



The Cariboo Road from Yale to Barkerville was built between 1862 and 1865. Why did the government undertake such an expensive project?

Choosing a Capital for British Columbia

The decision about where to locate a capital and a seaport for the new colony brought Douglas and Moody into conflict. Along with most of the residents of British Columbia, Douglas assumed that the capital would remain on the south side of the Fraser at Fort Langley, known this time as Derby. He had selected a site for the seaport on the north bank of the Fraser across from Annacis Island, some 30 km from the Fraser's mouth. For his part, Moody had decided even before leaving England, that the capital should be located on the north side of the Fraser River. Such a location, argued Moody, would better protect the new capital if it were attacked by the Americans. Following an inspection tour of the river, Moody recommended that the site chosen by Douglas for a seaport be used for the new capital as well.

Moody's reasoning was militarily sound but politically unpopular. Many Victoria investors had bought land around Fort Langley in anticipation of the capital's construction there. They expected that land values would rise significantly when the capital was built. Now, those lands would be worth less than the speculators had paid for them.

Douglas eventually accepted Moody's recommendations, announcing in July 1859, that the colony's capital and seaport would be on the north side of the Fraser. The city to be built there would be named New Westminster after Westminster, the site of the British Houses of Parliament in London.

Moody further upset Douglas with his plans for the new capital. His sketches showed fine squares and plazas, broad avenues and magnificent buildings. Douglas rebuked Moody, saying: "I would suggest to you that the colony itself must first become great and flourishing before we can undertake works on a scale of magnificence." By the end of 1859, after Moody had already spent £15 000 on surveys, not a single street had been laid out.

The following year, however, construction of the capital city was well underway. Homes, churches, offices and commercial buildings were being constructed. They were practical frontier buildings, not the elegant European-style structures that Moody hoped to see built in New Westminster. The city was incorporated in 1860 and responsibility for local improvements passed out of Moody's hands to the new town council. When Moody left the colony in 1863 to return to Britain, his plans for a magnificent capital city existed only on paper.



Colonel Richard Clement
Moody

The Cariboo gold rush brought prosperity to New Westminster. It was easier and less costly to supply the gold fields from the new capital than from Victoria. New Westminster quickly found itself in a strong and sometimes bitter rivalry with Victoria. In particular, the mainlanders resented the fact that Douglas and most of his senior officials lived on the Island. They were further upset when Douglas declared Victoria a free port, so that importers bringing foreign cargoes into Victoria no longer had to pay customs duties. This gave Victoria merchants a great advantage in competition for the gold rush trade.

The commercial rivalry between Victoria and New Westminster would continue for more than half a century. It ended only when Vancouver established itself as the leading commercial centre of the province at the beginning of the twentieth century.

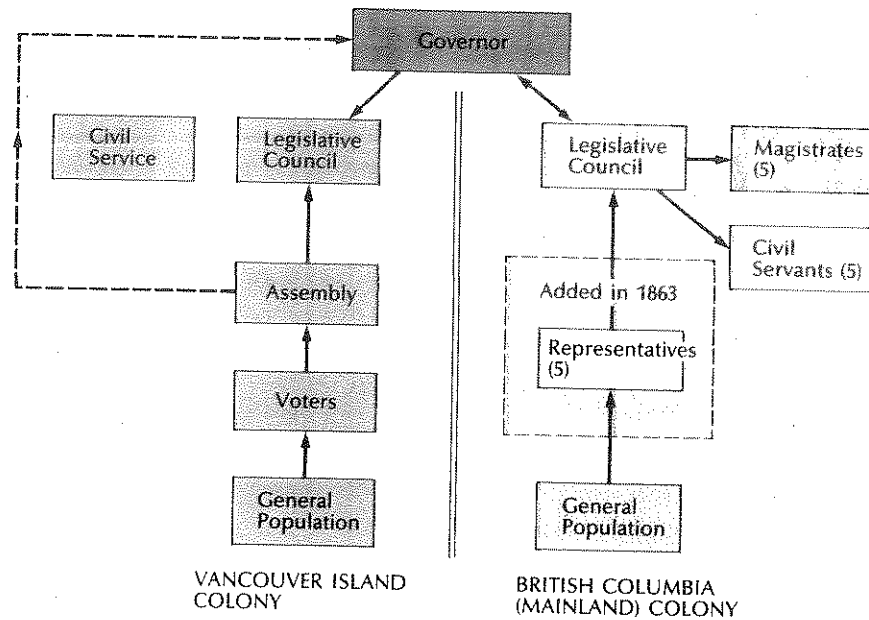
1. What was Moody's reason for wanting a capital located on the north side of the Fraser River?

The Struggle for Responsible Government

The two colonies on the Pacific coast differed in their forms of government. In 1856, after protests from the colonists and pressure from the British Colonial Office, Douglas had reluctantly created an elected Assembly for the Vancouver Island colony. But without responsible government, the Vancouver Island Assembly had little power. The right to vote was limited to property-holders. As a result, fewer than forty of the 450 residents of the colony were entitled to vote or run for the Assembly. Most of the power rested in the hands of Douglas and his appointed Legislative Council.

The British Columbia Act of 1858 made no provision for an elected Assembly on the mainland. There, all power rested with Douglas and his appointed Legislative Council, most of whom were Hudson's Bay Company officers. A small reform group began almost immediately to demand changes in the way the mainland colony was governed. The reformers were led by John Robson, publisher of the newspaper *The British Columbian*. Robson's supporters were mainly New Westminster merchants who had come from the Canadas and the Maritimes. They wanted British Columbia to have an elected Assembly with responsible government, as recently achieved by the other British colonies in the East.

Organization of Government
1858-1863



Amor de Cosmos (William Alexander Smith)

The reformers believed they had a legitimate complaint. The British Columbia Act of 1858 gave Governor Douglas the authority to make any laws he wanted. In three years he raised taxes three times. In spite of Robson's vigorous campaign through his newspaper, the reformers found little support among the miners who liked and trusted Douglas. The taxes he raised helped to build better roads and other services needed by the miners.

A reform movement emerged on Vancouver Island as well. As was so often the case in Canadian history, it also was led by a newspaperman. He was William Smith, publisher of a Victoria paper, *The British Colonist*. Smith had changed his name to Amor de Cosmos, which he mistakenly believed to be Latin for "lover of the universe."

Amor de Cosmos was harshly critical of the government. Douglas took little heed of the elected Assembly's decisions and referred to it for none of his. Virtually every piece of important legislation during the period 1856-1863, was made by the governor and his Legislative Council. De Cosmos protested strongly against Douglas and what he called the "family compact" of senior Hudson's Bay Company men who ruled the colony. He demanded the establishment of responsible government along the lines of that achieved by Joseph Howe, for whom de Cosmos had worked, in Nova Scotia.

Douglas ignored the reformers: he had little time for politicians or reformers demanding change. Douglas disliked politics. He was a man of action who wanted to see his colonies grow and prosper, secure within the British Empire. He saw himself as the father of British Columbia, and made plans for its economic growth and territorial expansion. Unfortunately, his public works projects cost more money than the colony was raising through taxes. To meet these costs, the colony's government had to borrow money. The mounting debts led the British to doubt his ability as governor.

In 1863 the British Columbia Act was due for a five-year review. Up to this time, the Colonial Office had ignored the reformers, who had sent four petitions to London complaining about Douglas' high-handed rule. But now it began to pressure Douglas to hear the reformers out. Accordingly, Douglas created a partially elected Legislative Council for British Columbia. But this was not responsible government: two-thirds of the Council would still be appointed by the governor.

In 1863, the Colonial Office decided that it was time for Douglas to retire. It did so by announcing that, beginning the following year, each colony would have its own governor. Reluctantly, Douglas resigned. His last official act as governor was to attend the inaugural meeting of the partially elected Legislative Council on January 21, 1864.

On the eve of his retirement, Douglas was knighted by Queen Victoria. Sir James Douglas, as he was now called, and his wife were treated to rounds of banquets and speeches of praise as they waited for the new governors to arrive. Douglas returned to private life in Victoria, proud of his accomplishments in building roads and bringing law and order to the gold rush frontier.

1. The Vancouver Island colony had an elected Assembly, but did not have responsible government. Explain how this was possible.
2. Under the terms of the British Columbia Act of 1858, how was the mainland colony to be governed? How did this differ from the system of government on Vancouver Island?
3. What reforms were Amor de Cosmos and John Robson seeking for the colonies? Why?
4. What event in 1863 changed the way the two colonies were governed? Did it satisfy the reformers' demands for responsible government?

Union of the Two Colonies

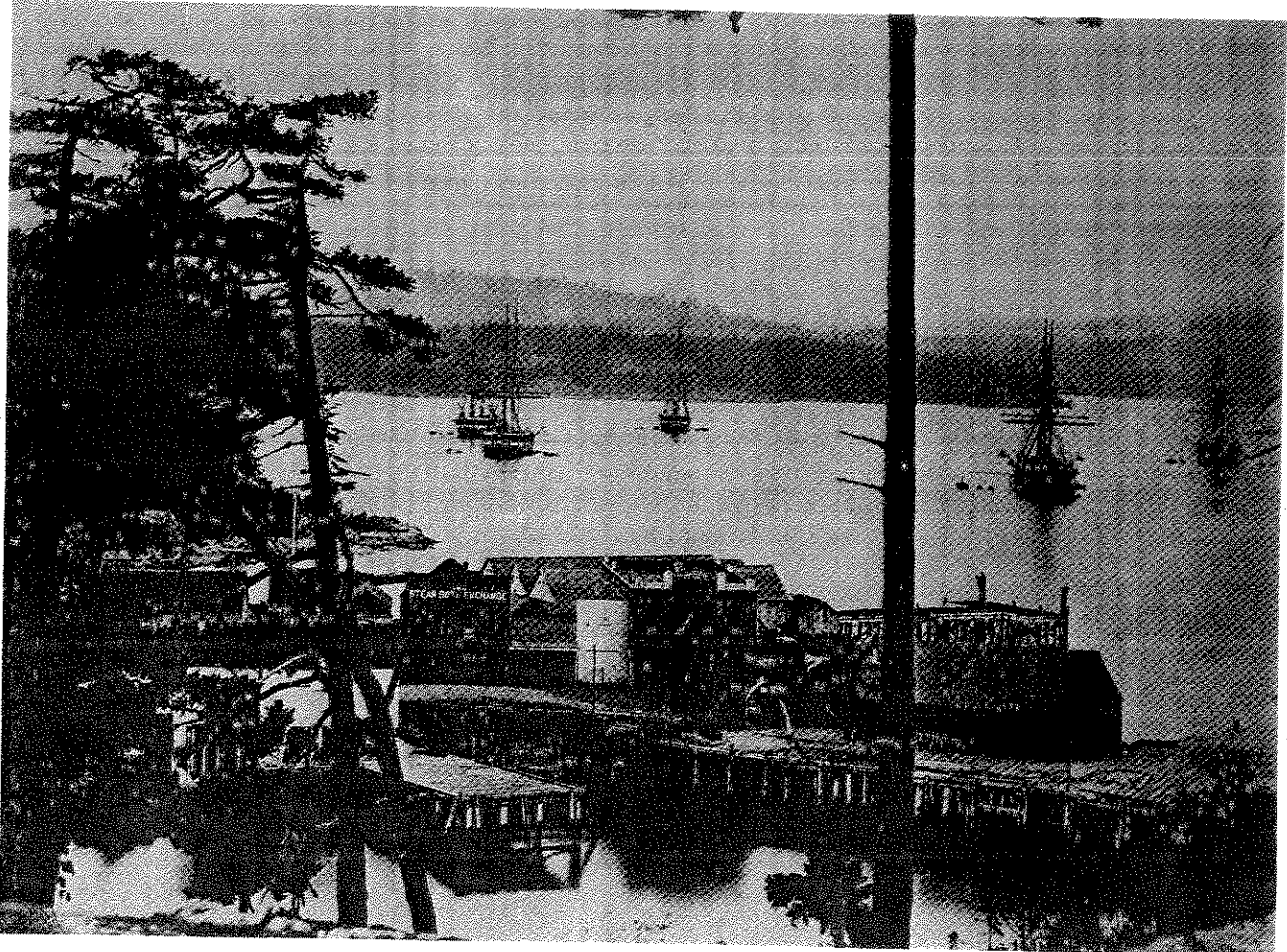
As governor of both the Vancouver Island and British Columbia colonies, Douglas had ruled the two as if they were one, despite their different populations and economies. Now, the two governors who followed him, Arthur Edward Kennedy on Vancouver Island and Frederick Seymour in British Columbia, arrived to find their colonies facing great economic difficulties.

The British Columbia colony had borrowed money to build the roads into the gold fields. To repay these loans, it badly needed to raise money through taxation, but the miners were doing everything they could to avoid paying taxes. Despite the fact that gold production was increasing, the colony's revenues were decreasing.

On Vancouver Island, Governor Kennedy faced not only economic but also political problems. He found himself in conflict with elected members of the Assembly, including Amor de Cosmos. The members fought against some of his proposals, such as taxes on income and real estate, measures which would have cost them personally. Kennedy did gain some popular support in areas of the Island other than Victoria, where residents in the past had felt neglected. He managed to have the Royal Navy establish its major Pacific base at Esquimalt, assuring the coal mines at Nanaimo of a major market.

Less than a year after his arrival, Kennedy appealed to the Colonial Office in London for assistance in dealing with the colony's problems. His requests were ignored. The colonial secretary had begun to consider forcing Vancouver Island to join the mainland in a united colony. Running one colony rather than two would be much less expensive for the British government because only one set of government officials and offices would be required. Some of the Vancouver Island legislators recognized these economic advantages, but they wanted to be able to preserve their colony's own identity in a **federal union**. They wanted Vancouver Island to be a separate province, with its own elected Assembly, within the united colony. In the midst of a worsening economic depression on the Island, the idea of a federal union was dropped. Such a move would be too costly given that the tax revenues of both colonies were dropping as the gold rush came to an end.

In January 1865, Amor de Cosmos rose in the House of Assembly and called for the immediate and complete union of the two colonies. To test public support for the proposal, he and another legisla-



A view of Esquimalt Harbor taken around 1867.

tor then resigned their seats, forcing by-elections to be held. They ran their by-election campaigns solely on the issue of the proposed union, winning easily at the polls. A year later, the British Parliament approved a bill uniting the two colonies. On November 19, 1866, the union was officially proclaimed. As one newspaper editorial described it, British Columbia had "married its debt of \$1 002 983 to that of Vancouver Island, a mere child of \$293 698." The united colonies were given the name British Columbia.

The most vigorously debated question in the newly united colony was where should the capital be located, Victoria or New Westminster? Seymour, who had been made governor of British Columbia, put the question to the House of Assembly. Assembly members in Victoria, such as John Helmcken, argued that the Island city should

be the capital. Even though a majority of the Assembly's members were from the mainland, the Islanders, led by Helmcken, won the debate. In 1868, Victoria was proclaimed the capital.

1. What was the British government's reason for promoting union of the two colonies?

British Columbia and Confederation

July 1, 1867, passed by largely without notice in Victoria and New Westminster. In Victoria, disheartened businessmen were more interested in the possibility of a union of British Columbia with the United States. In September 1866, they had issued a public statement calling for the union of British Columbia with the United States. Such a move, they believed, would bring them access to growing markets along the west coast of the United States.

Amor de Cosmos sought to head off the annexationists. He introduced a motion in the House of Assembly aimed at joining British Columbia to the rest of British North America. His motion called on the British government to ensure that the British North America Act, then being debated in the British Parliament, would allow for the eventual inclusion of British Columbia in Confederation.

Governor Seymour had already sent a similar request to the Colonial Office. He received a reply telling him that consideration of British Columbia's entry into Confederation would have to wait. Rupert's Land, still held by the Hudson's Bay Company, would have to be incorporated into the new Dominion before British Columbia, otherwise, British Columbia would be geographically isolated from the other Canadian provinces.

British Concerns about the Pacific Colony

It is doubtful whether British Columbia would have joined Confederation on its own initiative. The divisions in the colony were too deep to allow compromise or agreement among the various factions. But, by the late 1860s, a number of external forces were pushing British Columbia toward Confederation. In the end, it was the wishes of the British government, rather than the colonists themselves, that brought about British Columbia's entry into Con-

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federation. In the words of a Colonial Office document, the British government now believed the "political and economic interest" of both Britain and British Columbia "would be best advanced through union" with Canada.

British Columbia's location on the Pacific was important to Britain, which had considerable economic and military interests in both the Orient and the islands of the Pacific. Britain was facing strong competition from Russia, the United States and France. The Pacific region was a long way from Britain for purposes of either defence or communication. It was in Britain's interest to have a strong naval outpost on the Pacific, such as the base at Esquimalt. However, the British government was concerned about the costs of maintaining and defending the far-distant British Columbia colony. It did not want to pay for the administrative costs or the increasing debt of the colony. Union with Canada would offer an easy, safe and cheap way to solve the colony's problem.

During the period 1867-1870, the pro- and anti-Confederation forces in British Columbia vigorously debated the idea of union with Canada. While this was going on the economic problems of the colony continued. Fires wiped out Barkerville and the business district of Victoria. The gold rush was over, and the production of the gold fields was dwindling. The non-Native population of the mainland had dropped to about 11 000, about a third of what it had been at the peak of the gold rush. There was little agreement as to the solution of these problems, as factions organized behind three separate options: to stay a British colony, to join Confederation, or to seek annexation to the United States.

The chief spokesman of the anti-Confederation forces in British Columbia was J.S. Helmcken. He did not want to see the traditional ties between the colony and Britain broken. As a prominent member of the House of Assembly, Helmcken argued forcefully against union with Canada. Loyalty to Britain aside, Helmcken had four objections to Confederation. He felt that the distances involved were too great to make Confederation work, given the transportation and communication systems of the time. He feared that British Columbia would have little political influence in the proposed union, and therefore it would be forced to follow policies set in eastern Canada. Third, he was very concerned that British Columbia's fledgling industries could not compete with established firms in the East. Helmcken further argued that Britain's withdrawal from the colony would leave British Columbia isolated and defenceless on the Pacific coast.

Helmcken's strongest support came from the residents of Vancouver Island, including most of the senior government officials in Victoria, among them the governor, Frederick Seymour. The anti-Confederationists lost a key supporter when Seymour died in 1869.

The strongest voice heard in support of British Columbia's entry into Confederation was that of Amor de Cosmos. The feisty and eccentric newspaperman was the leader of the opposition party in the House of Assembly. There, he was as passionate an advocate of Confederation as of responsible government. In fact, the two causes were linked in his mind. Amor de Cosmos saw Confederation as the means of achieving a fully elected and responsible government for British Columbia. His strongest support came from the mainland area of the colony, despite the fact that de Cosmos himself lived in Victoria.



Sir Anthony Musgrave

The new governor of British Columbia, appointed after Seymour's death, was Anthony Musgrave, a strong advocate of Confederation and a former governor of Newfoundland. A friend of Sir John A. Macdonald, he shared Macdonald's enthusiastic vision of a great Dominion that would extend from sea to sea. Musgrave arrived in the colony ready to bring about its entry into Confederation. But he would have to use a great deal of diplomatic skill to get all sides to agree to British Columbia joining Canada.

Confederation was the key issue in the British Columbia election of November 1868, which resulted in a further deepening of the division in the colony. The anti-Confederation forces swept every seat on Vancouver Island. Even Amor de Cosmos was defeated. On the mainland, the pro-Confederation forces were triumphant.

The division in the House of Assembly was further complicated by the colony's system of government. The British Columbia colony still did not have a government that was truly representative. The colonial officials, who were also part of the government, were all British. The pro-Confederation forces saw them as the major obstacle to union with Canada.

A vote on a resolution calling for entry into Canada was taken at a meeting of the colony's Legislative Council in December 1868. The motion was defeated by senior colonial officials, who held appointed positions on the Council. These officials feared that Confederation might bring financial hardship on them through loss of their lucrative positions. As employees of the British government, they had no assurances that the Dominion or the new province would employ them.

CONFEDERATION, FOR AND AGAINST

The following excerpts summarize the views of the various factions in British Columbia in the late 1860s.

Anti-Confederation

We are a Colony of England; and I don't know that many people object to being a Colony of England; but I can say that very many would object to being a Colony of Canada...

No union between this colony and Canada can permanently exist, unless it be to the material and pecuniary [financial] advantage of this colony... Therefore, no union on account of love need be looked for. The only bond of union outside of force—and force the Dominion has not—will be the material advantage of the country and the pecuniary benefit of the inhabitants...

Confederation so far as it has at present gone, is only an experiment. It is absurd to ally ourselves with a people two thousand miles [3200 km] away, without any settlements in between, with no communication except through the United States.

[Excerpts from speeches made by J.S. Helmcken 1868-1870.]

Pro-Confederation

Shall we hesitate to accept our destiny? Canada wants us, and she is willing to pay our debt, spend a million making our end of the railroad, give us full powers of self-government, and send us population. The cry of the government at Ottawa is "From the Atlantic to the Pacific." Shall we be content to be as we are, struggling under crushing debt... or shall we join the Confederation and be free, prosperous, wealthy?

[A speech to the electors of the District of Yale by F.J. Barnard, April 9, 1868.]

Annexationist

We view with great alarm the intention of Her Majesty's government to Confederated this colony with the Dominion of Canada. Such a move can only deepen our economic depression for the following reasons:

- It cannot open to us a market for the products of our mines, forests or waters.
- It cannot bring us population (our greatest need). The Dominion itself suffers from a lack of people.
- In view of these facts, we request that you try to get Her Majesty to consent to the transfer of this colony to the United States.

[Adapted from a petition to the President of the United States, signed by 104 Victoria merchants, November 1869.]

1. List some problems that the British Columbia colony was facing at the time its entry into Confederation was being debated.

2. Summarize the positions of each of the following groups regarding British Columbia's entry into Confederation:
 - (a) Anti-Confederationists
 - (b) Pro-Confederationists
 - (c) Annexationists.
3. Why did senior civil servants in the British Columbia colony oppose Confederation? What might Governor Musgrave have done to overcome their opposition?

Confederation Achieved

It was Governor Musgrave who engineered a solution to the divisions in the colony over Confederation. In fact, when the Colonial Office had appointed Musgrave governor of the colony, it had instructed him to do everything possible to get the colony to agree to Confederation. Musgrave knew that he had to overcome the opposition of both the government officials and the Vancouver Island faction led by Helmcken.

To win over this first group, Musgrave worked out a system of pensions that would allow any colonial officials not hired by the Dominion to retire in comfort. The governor's action enraged many of the government officials, who now felt betrayed and abandoned by the mother country. Many applied for transfers to other colonies. Others, like Judge Matthew Begbie, decided to stay and support Confederation.

The Annexationists in Victoria unintentionally helped Musgrave's cause. The petitions and letters from the Victoria merchants asking for union with the United States angered several colonial officials, among them Attorney General Henry Crease and Commissioner of Lands and Works Joseph Trutch. Both men had opposed Confederation. The Annexationist petition led them to change their position. If it was a choice between union with Canada and union with the United States, they much preferred the first choice. On March 9, 1870, these two men introduced a motion in the Executive Council calling for union with Canada.

Musgrave still had to win over the Vancouver Island faction led by Helmcken. To do so, he chose Helmcken and two of his allies to form a delegation that would go to Ottawa. This delegation would call for the federal government in Ottawa to assume the colony's massive debt and to undertake construction of a transcontinental railway. Both of these moves had been unanimously approved in the

Legislative Council of the British Columbia colony. Therefore, while in Ottawa, Helmcken and the B.C. delegates would be able to claim that they were speaking for the entire colony, not just for one faction.

The warm and favorable reception given the British Columbia delegates in Ottawa surprised them. The Canadians were prepared to accept all of their terms, including a guarantee to start construction of a transcontinental railway within two years. Macdonald's cabinet promised the British Columbians that the railway would be completed within a decade.

Amazed by their success, the delegates returned home. They appeared to have gained more than they had asked for. In the election of November 1870, supporters of Confederation were elected in every riding. The following January, the negotiated terms of union were approved unanimously by the Legislative Council. The agreement between Victoria and Ottawa was sent to London for approval by the British government in April of 1871. The British quickly approved the union. July 20, 1871, was set as the date for British Columbia's entry into Confederation.

Crowds gathered in the streets of Victoria and New Westminster on the night of July 19, 1871. Fireworks lit up the night while bands played and politicians cleared their voices in preparation for their speeches. At the stroke of midnight, a roar went up from the crowd, cannons were fired and a new era began in the history of British Columbia.

In the midst of all the excitement, few people seemed to realize that politicians are often better at making promises than at keeping them. As you will see in the next chapter, the building of a railroad across the continent was one such promise easier made than kept.

1. Name the two key terms of the union with Canada negotiated by the British Columbians. Why were these terms important to them?

Summary

British Columbia was the sixth province to join Confederation. Originally part of the Hudson's Bay Company's western operations, this region, unlike Manitoba, experienced colonial status within the British Empire before joining Canada.

The westward expansion of the United States forced the Hudson's

Bay Company to shift its centre of operations on the Pacific coast northward to Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island. In 1849, continued fears of American expansion along the Pacific saw the British create the Vancouver Island colony under the leadership of Governor James Douglas. The Hudson's Bay Company was given monopoly over trade on Vancouver Island. In return, the Company was required to bring settlers to the colony. While it had been founded on the fur trade, the Vancouver Island colony developed on the basis of its coal and timber resources, its farmlands and its location as a commercial centre.

In 1858, the discovery of gold along the Fraser River brought hundreds of would-be miners to the mainland and prosperity to Victoria's merchants. Most of the miners were Americans, adding to British fears of American expansion. Again, the British responded by making the area a colony. Colonial status ensured that law and order were effectively maintained when a second gold rush took place in 1860.

Under the strong leadership of Governor James Douglas, both colonies enjoyed political stability and economic prosperity during the gold rush period. However, the lack of responsible government resulted in opposition by people such as John Robson in British Columbia and Amor de Cosmos on Vancouver Island. Responsible government was not achieved until British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871.

Political and economic problems arose as the British Columbia gold fields were exhausted. Douglas' ambitious public works projects had left the British Columbia colony deeply in debt at a time when the colonies were experiencing an economic depression. Merchants in both Victoria and New Westminster faced sharply reduced markets for their products after the miners left. In 1864, two years after Douglas' retirement as governor, the two colonies were united. This union, however, failed to bring an end to economic problems facing the colony.

At the same time, Britain was growing increasingly concerned about the cost of keeping its isolated colony on the Pacific coast. Following Confederation in 1867, several attempts were made by the British government to get British Columbia to unite with Canada. However, opposition among the residents of Vancouver Island, and the fact that Rupert's Land was still owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, delayed this union until 1871. The terms of union negotiated by the British Columbians included a promise that a transcontinental railway would be built within ten years.