

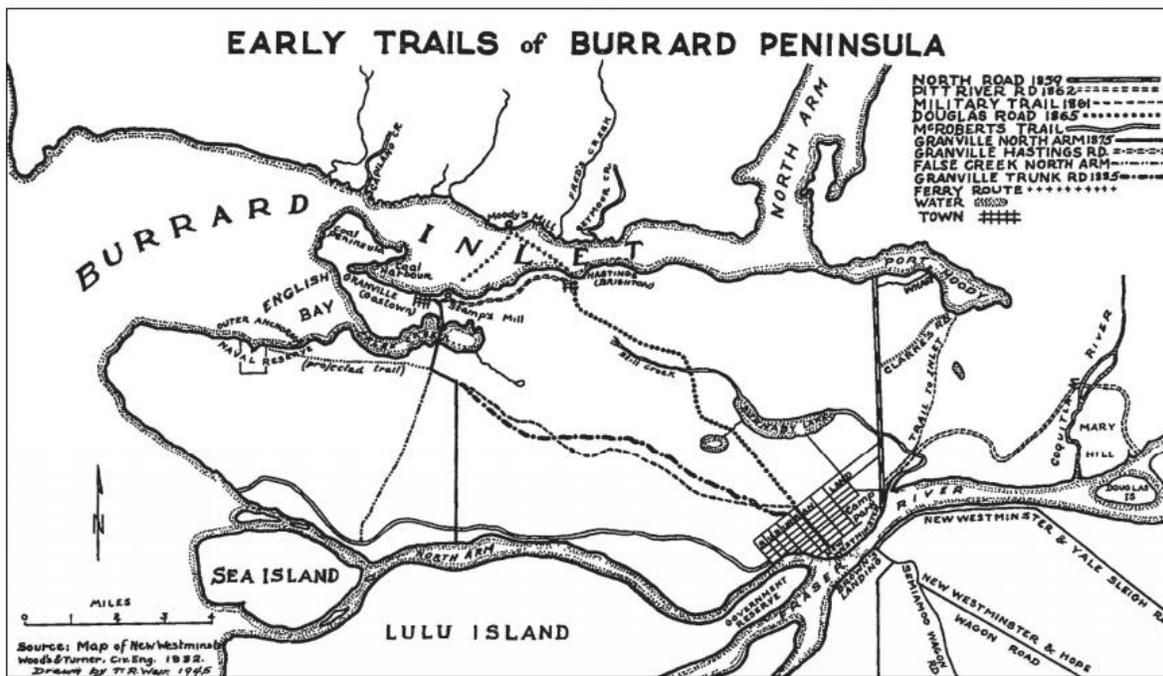
The Birth of A Community: Grandview, 1860-1935

By

Jak King

In The Beginning

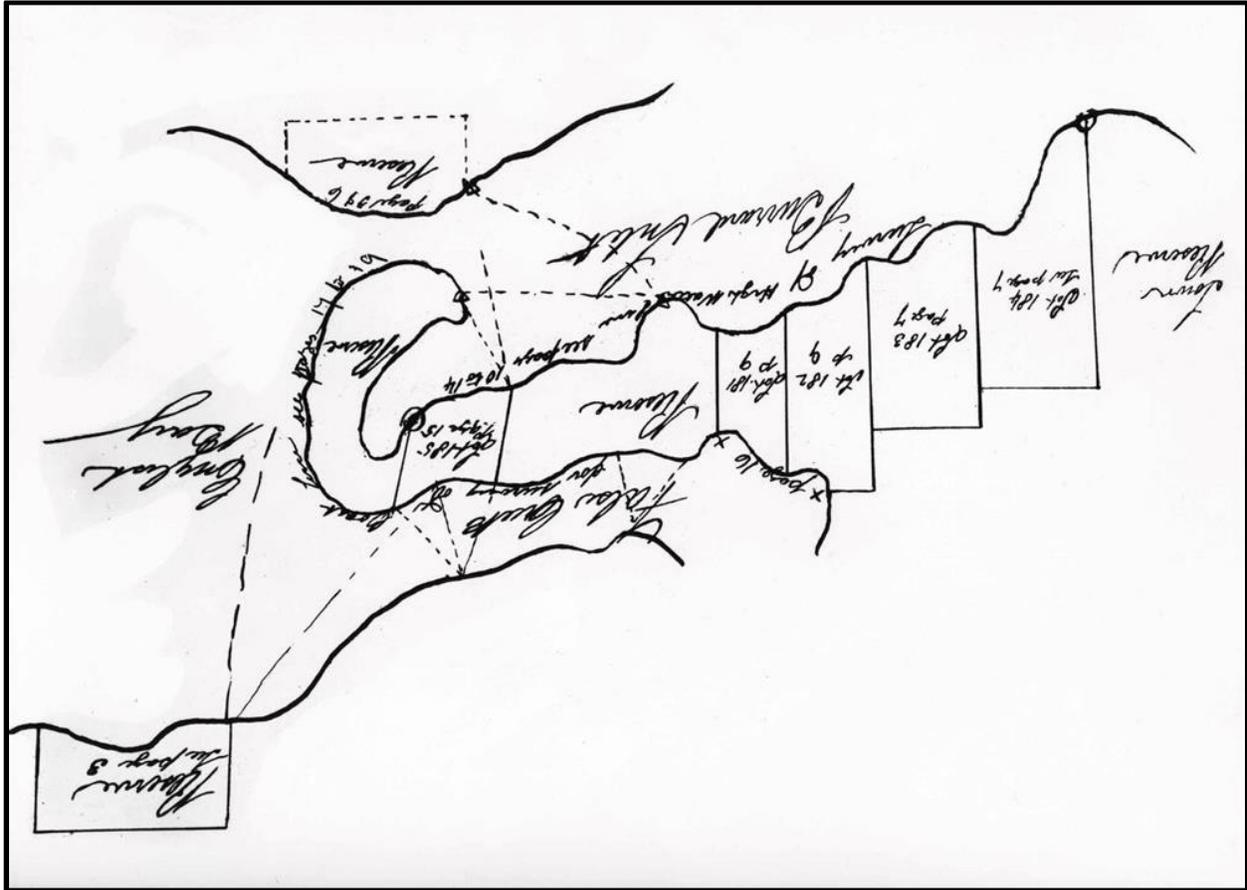
It was the railway that would eventually make the decision and settle on Vancouver as the major city on the coast, but the background had been laid well before. It could even be said that Grandview itself was discovered as part of the British Royal Navy's voyages of exploration in the 1790s. The naval officers who followed in Captain Vancouver's wake, and who made the name of Burrard Inlet well-known in Admiralty circles, saw the possibilities offered by our glorious stands of trees, including the enormous cedars that ranged over Grandview's hills and ran down to the sea at Cedar Cove. The rapid development of an arms race of sailing technology in the nineteenth century called for ever stronger and ever longer masts and planks. One of the first industrial enterprises on this part of the coast was what became Hastings Mill, created specifically to serve this need.



Early Trails of Burrard Peninsular -- based on the "Map of New Westminster" by Woods & Turner, 1882

But before the mill was even a speck on a map, the Lower Mainland of British Columbia was dominated by the newly-established city of New Westminster, south and east on the Fraser River, and capital of the Colony. At that time, Burrard Inlet was viewed merely as a military problem, as a potential invasion route

for any attack by foreigners against New Westminster. The government saw the need for defensive measures to be taken, and it was on this behalf that a party of Royal Engineers under Lance-Corporal George Turner came up to the Inlet during February and March of 1863 to begin a survey. Acreage for what was to become the Hastings Township site had been laid out previously. Starting from that point and moving west along the Inlet, they laid out District lots 184, 183, 182, 181, and another western township site that would soon house a village called Granville.¹



Royal Engineers' map, rotated to place north at top

By November 1863, the Royal Engineers were needed elsewhere in the Empire and had sailed away, their four-year tour of duty over; but the results of their work remained behind them. These four District Lots still form part of the northern boundary of Grandview today. Each of these lots was taken up within a few months of the survey, though no actual settlers appear for some time thereafter. As Howay reports:

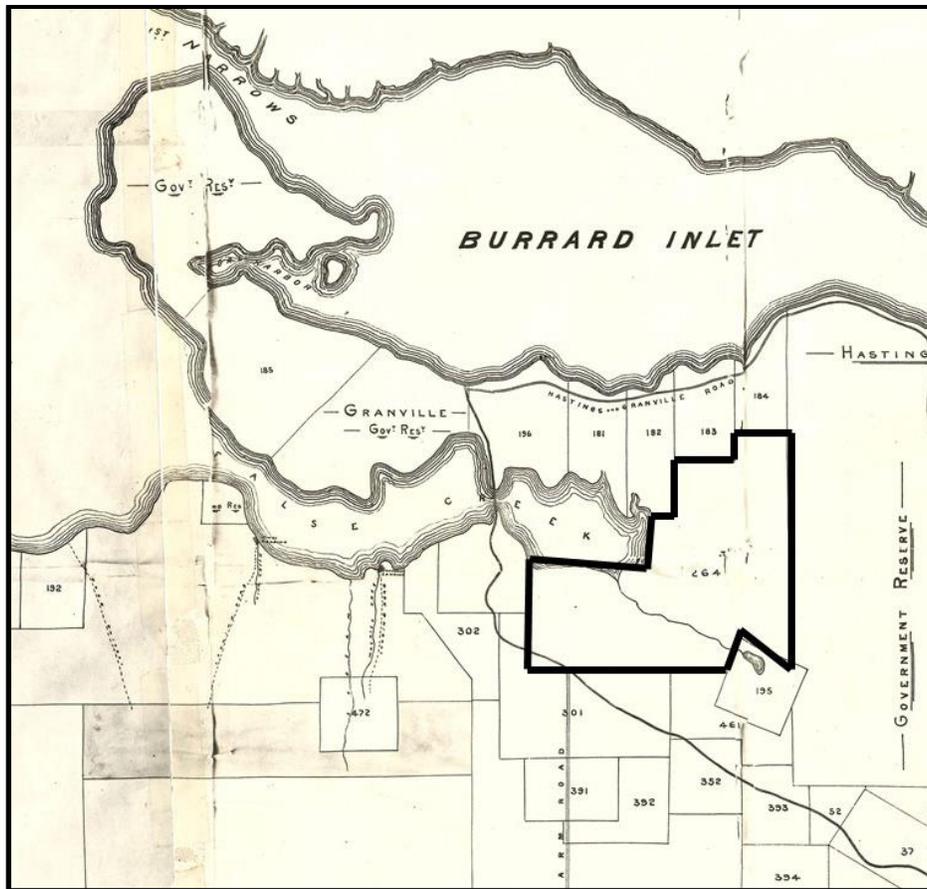
“Lot 184 was granted in January 1864 to John Graham, a clerk with the Government treasury. Lot 183 was granted in October 1863 to Thomas Ranaldson who in early 1865 conveyed it to H.P.P. Crease, later Justice Crease. Lot 182 was granted to H.P.P. Crease in October 1863.”²

Under the Pre-Emption Act of 1860, the entire Burrard Inlet was available for pre-emption. As MacDonald explains it:

“Settlers could claim 160 acres, have it surveyed, and with the payment of \$1 per acre, gain official title. In theory, pre-emption privileges were for genuine settlement only, but since the area was heavily forested, most early land acquisition was a speculation that the land would rise in value and could be sold at a profit.”³

More immediately germane to Grandview’s future was the document which came to be known as the Hastings Mill Lease and which was signed by Commissioner Joseph Trutch on November 30, 1865. Captain Stamp’s group, the British Columbia and Vancouver Island Spar, Lumber & Sawmill Company paid a little over 244 pounds sterling in exchange for the timber rights on huge swathes of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. They received more than 5,000 acres on the south shore of English Bay, almost 3,000 more acres on the north arm of the Fraser, 2,000 on Howe Sound, and the right to select another 1,200 acres at a later date.⁴

After technical difficulties concerning the delivery of vital parts from England, the mill didn’t make its first official cut until 18th June 1867. That was a happy day no doubt, but there were not many of those to come. By 1869 Stamp and his mill were in dire financial straits and he was forced to sell by court order. Major Matthews records that the mill and its timber rights were “finally sold on February 23rd 1870, to the agent of Heatley and Company of London, England, and the name was changed in August 1870 to Hastings Sawmill Company.” At about the same time, they exercised their rights to the 1,200 acres of timber rights they were owed under the Hastings Sawmill Lease. The land chosen was District Lot 264a, which included all of Grandview down to Trout Lake and south of False Creek into Mount Pleasant (outlined in a heavy border in the map below).⁵



Position of DL 264a in Vancouver

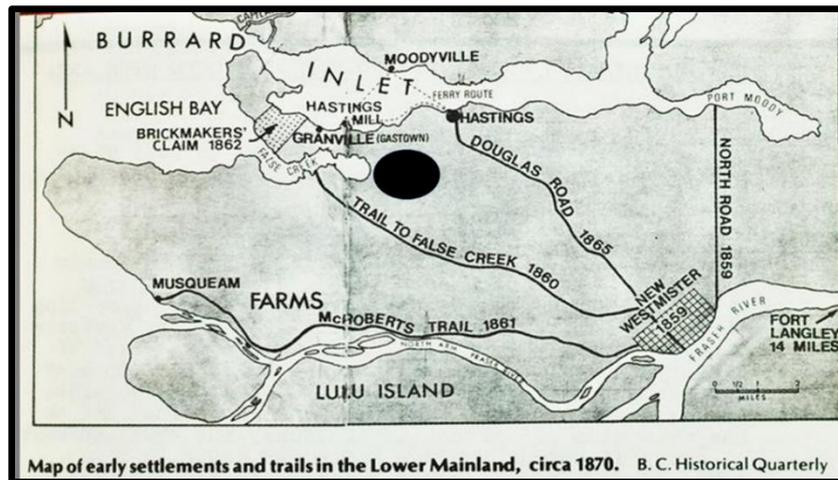
The company, first under San Francisco ownership and then under the local management of John Hendry, spent the next twenty years clear-cutting the huge timbers that decorated the hills, moving the logs down skid roads to both False Creek and Cedar Cove. At the same time, ownership of the lands themselves changed hands in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons.⁶ Several decades after the events he was describing, Walter Graveley gave the following statement to Major Matthews which vividly illustrates the business dealings of the day. It is worth quoting at length:

“The Hastings Mill people owned all that land, 264 A, at the head of False Creek, Grandview now; the Hastings Mill was practically owned by San Francisco people, Victoria and San Francisco anyhow. Ross got an option on a lot of that property for Powell, Oppenheimer, Dupont and ourselves, Innes and Graveley; Ross had no money, but was given one fifth interest. What about J.C. McLagan and the property placed in Ross’s name in trust for us? ‘Us’ was J.C. McLagan and Gideon Robertson; we had all known each other in Winnipeg. Then one day Van Horne got off the steamer from Tacoma at Victoria and A.W. Ross was with him. A sheriff tapped Ross on the shoulder as soon as he touched the wharf. It was a most awkward situation for Ross; he had come up on the boat with Van Horne and here he was under arrest as soon as he landed. Some clergyman in Australia had entrusted some funds to him for which it was said he had not accounted. It was a week or so before we found out. When we did we went to a lawyer, had him draw up an assignment—I have the document yet—and conveyed to us his interest. The outcome

was that Oppenheimer and Dupont got out of the trouble, but in getting out, Ross gave our property, 1,400 or 1,500 acres in what is now Grandview, as security for their advances to him personally.”⁷

In 1889, when John Hendry took over sole management of the mill – for “considerations,” said the *Vancouver Daily World*, that “exceeded a quarter million dollars by a considerable sum” – the newspaper also predicted that this would mean “an increased demand for residential property in the east end of the city, which unquestionably is to become Vancouver’s manufacturing quarter and densely settled portion of the city.”⁸

But before that could happen, a number of obstacles had to be managed, most of them geographic. The following map shows the major trails in the Lower Mainland in 1870.

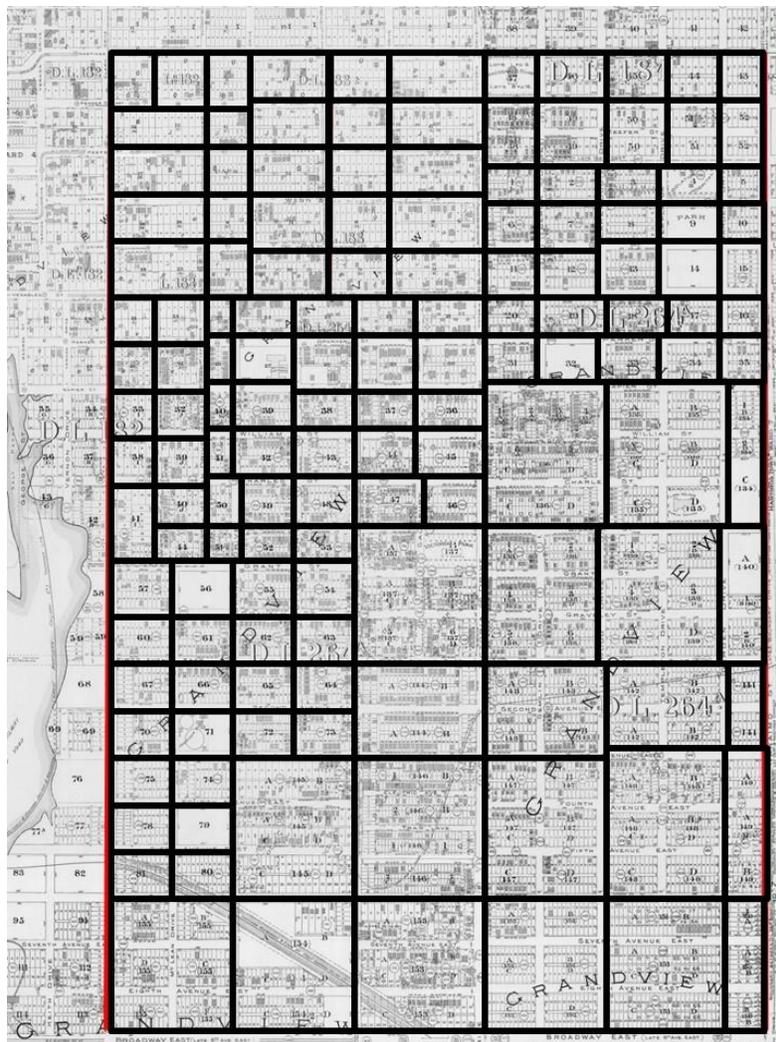


The routes used to transport goods and people to and from New Westminster and Burrard Inlet bypass what will become Grandview – shown on the map as a black circle; they travel east of the district along the Douglas Road and then west along the inlet; or they travel south and west of Grandview on the False Creek Trail. Grandview proper is riddled with steep hills, especially those rushing downhill to False Creek from a high point running along Victoria or Lakewood. They were useful to the loggers as skid roads carrying their fallen timber to the waterline; but they made everyday travel difficult and wearisome. It is no surprise the early trails avoided them so far as possible. Even the flume that delivered such famously pure water from Trout Lake to the Hastings Mill site on Burrard Inlet avoided most of Grandview, cutting west from the lake across to a point around Clark Drive where it swung north and headed downtown, always west of Grandview.

Grandview’s geographical difficulties were compounded by the positioning of the False Creek Flats between Grandview and Vancouver. The Flats have always presented a barrier to eastward expansion: first, when the shallow muddy waters lapped the small cliff at Clark Drive; later when they were filled as far west as Main Street but left barely used; and even today, when after decades of debate and discussion we have not yet come to a conclusion as to the best use of these lands that sit so critically in the heart of Vancouver and make direct access from city to suburb so difficult. Grandview’s geographic isolation, and the “Grand Plans” constructed to deal with it, will play a significant role in the development of the neighbourhood’s consciousness as an independent community over the years.

The ambiguity of being part of the inner city but not quite within in it, is displayed graphically in the following map, which shows the surveyors' breakdown of the heart of Grandview into development blocks. The boundaries of the map are the boundaries of the Grandview core with which this book is concerned – Hastings Street in the north, Nanaimo Street to the east, Broadway to the south, and Clark Drive to the west. Victoria Drive is the straight north-south street that divides the map in two.

It must be remembered that when this plat or town plan was laid out, no roads or streets or houses actually existed. Granville -- not yet Vancouver -- lies off our map to the northwest. The surveyors have reasonably assumed that population growth in the city will include an expansion south and east into District Lot 264a. They have therefore, laid out small urban blocks spreading out from the northwest for a certain distant. But then they switch to a pattern of larger blocks based more formally on the rural quarter-section model.



The surveyors' blocks into which the core of Grandview is divided.

But Grandview will go on to surprise those early planners and quickly, too, once it got started. Before then, though, there was a decade and more of false starts and promises, of railway lines and speculation, of smallpox, and a tiny band of pioneer settlers in their isolated shacks amongst the trees. We'll tell those tales in the second part of the Birth of A Community.

False Starts

From the late 1880s into the middle 1890s, there was the occasional spark of interest in developing Grandview as the next expansion of the still-tiny Vancouver. However, at the same time, both Mount Pleasant and Kitsilano were beginning their development, and those two suburbs proved easier to manage in terms of geography, at least in the short term. What waves of interest did involve Grandview in these years tended to occur as a result of external forces: the offer of parkland, the development of an interurban railway, and an outbreak of smallpox.

One hopeful beginning, for example, was the offer of land for a park which might encourage travel to the district even if not actual development. In 1888, E. J. Clark, a prosperous Toronto dry-goods merchant and realtor with interests in Vancouver, “young but enterprising” as the *Vancouver World* described him, offered to donate land in Grandview for “an athletic park.” The land comprised the south half of Block 170, a total of some seven and one-quarter acres west of Trout Lake, between what is today East 14th and East 15th Avenues. The offer was accepted in November 1888, but the deal was stalled by the political stalemate that hampered all the operations of Vancouver City Council at that time, even though Clark had also offered \$1,000 towards clearing the land. After some legal wrangling – the issue being future liability – the offer was accepted and, in his New Year’s address for 1889, Mayor David Oppenheimer expressed the City’s gratitude for Clark’s “liberal” gift.

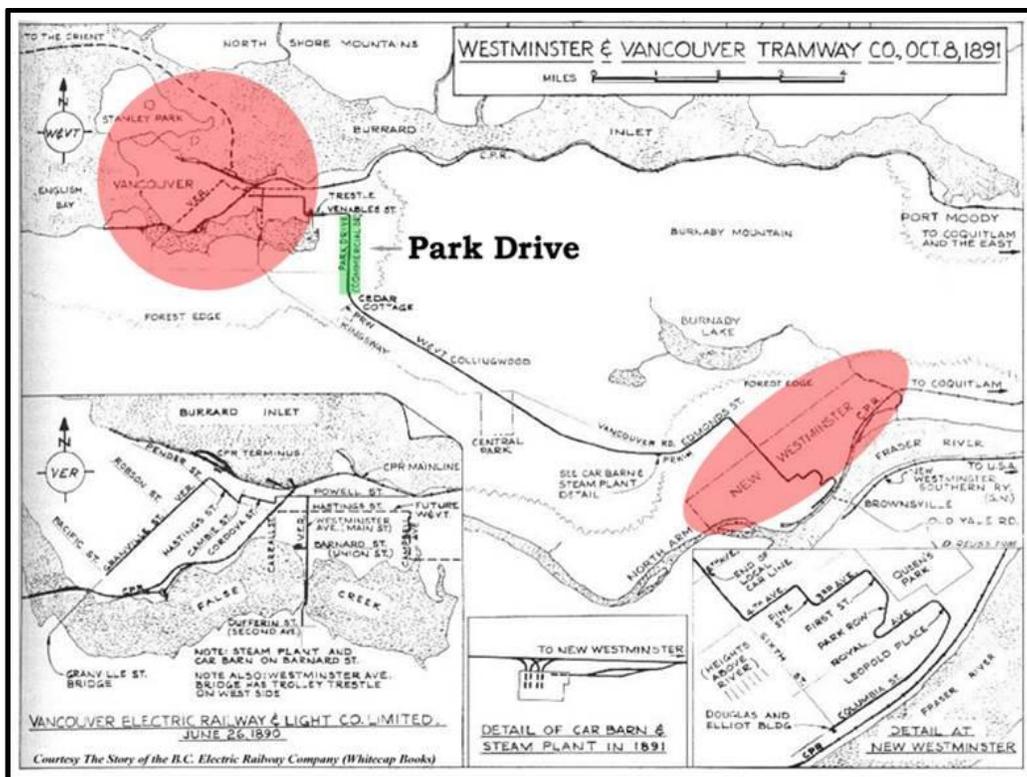
Not all the aldermen were happy with having to deal with a new park. However, even though the City Engineer estimated a cost of only \$150 per acre to clear – a sum more than covered by Clark’s cash donation -- and “a large number of people” opined the Engineer, “would be glad of the Park as a breathing space”, Aldermen Whelan and Brighthouse, in the minority, thought another park “unnecessary at present.” Eventually, the opponents were defeated and the conveyance was signed. The site, subsequently named Clark Park after its donor, was originally known as South Park. Shortage of funds available to the Park Commissioners and, perhaps, a certain lack of interest in a spot so far from the city, meant that South Park was largely neglected. However, in an end-of-1891 report in the *World*, it was noted that “the clearing in South Park has been completed and the seeding done.”⁹

The importance of the South Park donation to the early history of Grandview lay mainly in the trail that city workers cut to reach the Park. The trail, and it was nothing more than that at the beginning, ran south from a point on Venables Street where a logging skid road ambled north to Burrard Inlet. The trail would be known as Park Drive which was later renamed Commercial Drive and became Grandview’s main street. The existence of the Park Drive trail was also a key factor in the route chosen for the Vancouver to New Westminster Interurban Railway, the next attempt to open up the neighbourhood.

It has often been claimed, inaccurately, that the laying of the interurban tramline between Vancouver and New Westminster in 1891 brought about the growth of Grandview. The tramline was, after all, as much a

real estate boondoggle as it was a public transit utility. The *News Advertiser*, for example, strenuously opposed the line, openly suggesting that it was a real estate scam. And another contemporary observer confided that "there was a strong suspicion in many minds" that an effort to enhance real estate values was a more important factor to the original investors than was the improvement in communications. Such suspicions may have been triggered when, after some perhaps shady real estate deals were completed, Vancouver's usual suspects – Israel Powell and David Oppenheimer and Charles Dupont – ended up with options on the Hastings Mill land that lay in the railway's path. A. R. Ross, Walter Graveley, John Hendry, and others were also involved. And it was this same coalition of owners along with British money that took on the interurban project. Unlike the *News Advertiser*, the *Vancouver World* supported the line precisely because of their involvement. It editorialized: "The gentlemen who comprise this company are among the best and most enterprising citizens of Vancouver and New Westminster." Both points of view may have been correct and honestly held because this was a period when the conjoining of public need and private profit was a vital element in the breaking of new ground.¹⁰

The company engineers were busy from June 1890 surveying a variety of lines between the two cities. In August the following year, City Council finally approved the route into Vancouver from Cedar Cottage. The route would follow Park Drive, turning west on Venables Street, onto Campbell Avenue and thence along Hastings Street to the terminus at Carrall Street.



Once the trains began running in the fall of 1891, the service was an immediate success, being well-filled with passengers on trips in both directions. During the 1890s, several thousand must have passed through Grandview on their way to Vancouver or New Westminster. But the line had little immediate effect on Grandview itself. There were no stops in Grandview; passengers wishing to visit would have had to walk north from Cedar Cottage, or east from the stop at Largen's blacksmith shop at Glen Avenue on Venables.

Neither walk would have been comfortable, what with the stumps, and puddles, and heavy brush that wouldn't be cleared for another decade and a half.¹¹

Although still “in the woods,” blocks and lots in Grandview had been offered for sale since the late 1880s. The *Vancouver World* had declared as far back as 1888 that “The east end will be the manufacturing portion of the city, and property there will always command a good price.” There was even a significant investment bubble in 1891 and 1892 when speculators were sure the interurban would make Grandview the next big thing. Acreages in blocks that had been marketed at \$600-\$1,000 in 1889, were being offered for \$5,000 or more in 1891. But the speculation quickly cooled and prices fell below pre-interurban levels.¹²

There were also other pressures on the City to make Grandview land more accessible for development. In March 1890, City Council received a letter from F.S. Timberlake and others petitioning for the “opening of streets between lots [DLs] 183 and 184 from Hastings Street to the intersection of Ninth Avenue, thence westward to the intersection of Westminster Avenue [Main Street].” The relevant streets to meet this request would be Victoria and Park Drives. In April 1890, during budget discussions, Alderman Fox suggested adding \$2,500 to the estimates to open up at least one of these streets. Alderman Browning noted that the Board of Works had thoroughly considered the question but that the streets ran through a forest not even slashed. The Board had decided there was no immediate need. However, Alderman Fox persisted and Alderman McLeod agreed. He said “there were many who wanted to go into 264a to improve their property, and the least that could be done was to give them a street. He seconded Ald. Fox’s motion. Next year, he said, the assessment on that property could be doubled, and the street would not really cost the city anything.” Alderman Horne chimed in that “he knew several [who] would build now if they could get material in there.” After much discussion, a motion was passed to add \$2,500 to the estimates “for the opening of the first street east of the South Park, from the southern boundary to Powell Street.”¹³

The first street east of the Park was Park Drive. However, in July the Engineers reported they were too busy to survey the street properly. Therefore, a motion was made to open up Victoria Drive instead as it had been properly registered already. However, Alderman Carroll objected, noting that “the Aldermen did not themselves know where this street was situated and none lived on it, while people were petitioning for streets to their dwellings and could not get them.” Other aldermen insisted the road was needed and finally the motion passed.¹⁴

Beyond that, Grandview is rarely mentioned in the newspapers or at City Council for the balance of the decade. It was a forested wilderness, forgotten in the rush to develop other suburbs. When the City needed an isolation hospital to deal with a smallpox outbreak in the summer of 1892, no-one questioned the location chosen for it at what would later become Templeton and East Georgia: the northeast corner of Grandview was as isolated as you could get within city limits.¹⁵

The failure of Grandview to expand rapidly in the 1890s was likely a disappointment for the land owners and realtors who had high hopes for the interurban, but they did prosperously well enough in Cedar Cottage and Central Park to allow the few intrepid Grandview pioneers who did show up to rest in the wilderness for a while longer. It is to these early settlers that we turn next.

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- ¹ F.G.H. Brooks, “*Vancouver’s Origins*” (unpublished thesis, UBC, 1952, p.24.) Note that the map has been turned upside down so that N is at the top. Stanley Park is the large “C” shape, with False Creek flowing beneath. DLs 181-184 run along Burrard Inlet. Military reserves are established in what become both Kitsilano and North Vancouver.
- ² F.W. Howay, “*Early Shipping in Burrard Inlet, 1863-1879*” (BC Historical Quarterly, v.1 #1 January 1937), p.104
- ³ Norbert MacDonald, “*The Canadian Pacific Railway and Vancouver’s Development to 1900*” (BC Studies #35, Autumn 1977), p.4
- ⁴ Details at Alan Morley, “*Vancouver: From Milltown to Metropolis*” (Mitchell Press, Vancouver, 1961) p.36-37
- ⁵ Matthews, “*Early Vancouver*” (1931-1956), Vol VII, p.282
- ⁶ The early pre-emptions and leases in DL 264a can be followed through, inter alia, F.W. Laing, “*Colonial Pre-Emptions*” (1940, at CVA HD 309.L3); Matthews 1931-1956, Vol 3, p.207-8, Vol 7, p.282, 295-6; Morley 1961, p.36-37; *Vancouver World* 1889 Sep 12, p.4; and various indentures included in Walter Graveley Fonds, CVA, AM 147, Box 512-E-3, Folder 9.
- ⁷ Matthews 1931-1956, Vol III, p.207-208
- ⁸ “*Vancouver World*”, 1889 Sep 12, p.4. It wasn’t all plain sailing. In an interview with Major Matthews, Calvert Simpson recalls Mr. Sweeney of the Bank of Montreal saving the company from collapse: See Matthews 1931-1956, Vol 7, p.285-286
- ⁹ The details of Clark’s offer and the Council’s hesitations can be followed, inter alia, in the *Vancouver World*, 1888 Nov 6, p.4; Nov 28, p.4; 1889 Jan 7, p.4; Mar 12, p.4; Aug 19, p.4; Aug 27, p. 4. Clearing completed: *Vancouver World* 1891, Dec 30, p.8
- ¹⁰ “strong suspicion”: George F. Gibson interview with Matthews, CVA AM 54.013.06209; *Vancouver World* editorial at 1890 Jul 25, p.2. The *World* called the *News-Advertiser*’s views “vile and evil”: *Vancouver World* 1891 Aug 8, p.4.
- ¹¹ Engineering surveys: The Truth quoted in *Vancouver World*, 1890 July 29, p.4; approved route and stops: Henry Ewart, “*The Story of the BC Electric Railway*” (1986, Whitecap, Vancouver), p.19-20; “immediate success”: see for example *News-Advertiser* 1891 Oct 16, p.6; Oct 24, p.6.
The Vancouver streetcar company was given the right to operate on the section of the interurban from Cedar Cottage to the City but did not take up this right until 1905.
Ewart is the best general account of the electric railway, but Major Matthews’ interviews with W.D. Burdis, H.P. McCrabey, and Capt. Scouler are full of fascinating detail, especially on the financing and land issues.
The legal issues that delayed the interurban’s entry into Vancouver are outside the scope of this work but the newspapers for the first two weeks of August 1891 make for interesting reading.
- ¹² East End as “manufacturing portion”: *Vancouver World*, 1888 Nov 28, p.4. For speculative price increases, compare R.G. Tatlow’s ad in *Vancouver World* 1889 Jan 2, p.2 with ads by H.A. Jones in *News-Advertiser* 1891 Oct 1, p.6.
- ¹³ The Council discussion was covered in detail in *Vancouver World* 1890 Apr 9, p.1,4; qv *Vancouver World* 1890 Mar 25, p.4
- ¹⁴ *Vancouver World* 1890 Jul 15, p.4
- ¹⁵ Vancouver had been using Deadman’s Island as an isolation area. However, there were legal issues that forced them to look elsewhere. They wrote to E.J. Clark asking if he would agree to using his parkland but he didn’t respond in time: *Vancouver World* 1892 June 15, p.4; July 12, p.1