

Colonial British Columbia Timeline

- 1774 Captain Juan José Pérez Hernandez drops anchor off the Queen Charlotte Islands, and at Nootka Sound, trading with Haida and Nuuchahnulth who canoed out to his vessel.
- 1775 Spanish captains Quadra and Hezeta land at 57 degrees north (midway up the Alaska Panhandle) and erect a cross, which they saw as a way of claiming territory.
- 1778 British Captain James Cook visits Nootka Sound looking for a Northwest Passage from the west. The crew repairs the ships and trades for furs. Cook's ships travel to Macao where furs are traded for a high price.
- 1785 to 1825 Height of the maritime trade for sea otter pelts on the Northwest Coast.
- 1789 Looking for a route to the Pacific Ocean to transport furs, North West Company (NWCo) explorer Alexander Mackenzie follows the Mackenzie River to the Arctic Ocean.
- 1790 Spain and Britain sign the Nootka Convention, agreeing that both countries have the right to trade for furs on the Pacific Northwest.
- 1792-94 George Vancouver maps the western coastline, proving there was no Northwest Passage.
- 1793 Alexander Mackenzie is guided along an aboriginal trading trail to the Pacific at Bella Coola.
- 1805 American explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark reach the mouth of the Columbia River.
- 1805 Explorer Simon Fraser of the NWCo sets up fur trade posts at Fort St. James at Stuart Lake in New Caledonia.
- 1808 Simon Fraser (NWCo) travels down the river named after him. Rapids make this river unsuitable for transporting furs.
- 1811 David Thompson (NWCo) reaches the Pacific Ocean at the mouth of the Columbia River. Americans have already established a settlement at Astoria in the Oregon Territory.
- 1818 Great Britain and the United States sign an agreement to jointly occupy the region around Astoria in the Oregon territory.
- 1821 NWCo merges into the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC).
- 1824 HBC establishes Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River, in the Oregon Territory.
- 1825 Russia's boundaries settled along Alaskan "panhandle", down to 54 degrees 40'.
- 1828 HBC establishes Fort Langley at the mouth of Fraser River as a supply post.
- 1831 HBC establishes Fort Simpson at the mouth of the Nass River on north coast below Alaska.
- 1830s Increasing American settlement in the Oregon Territory.
- 1839 Puget's Sound Agricultural Company, a subsidiary of the HBC, sets up operations at Fort Nisqually, to provide food for the HBC and for exports.
- 1841 The steamship *Beaver* begins transporting furs along the coast for the HBC.
- 1843 HBC establishes Fort Victoria on southern Vancouver Island on Lekwungen lands. Lekwungen people sell food to the HBC and work on agricultural development.
- 1843-44 Lekwungen leave their village sites in Esquimalt Harbour and Cadboro Bay and move to a site next to the newly created Fort Victoria.
- 1843-45 Hundreds of settlers travel to the Oregon Territory. US politicians campaign on the slogan, 54°40' or fight (the Alaskan Panhandle). The US has its eyes on territory as far north as Alaska.

1844 Wood behind the Lekwungen village catches fire, giving HBC trader Roderick Finlayson an excuse to force the Lekwungen to move across the harbour. It was from this point that they tried to control the trade of other First Nations with Fort Victoria.

1846 In April, the United States goes to war with Mexico over the American annexation of Texas.

1846 British Navy establishes a presence at Esquimalt Harbour near Fort Victoria.

1846 Britain and the United States sign the Treaty of Washington, setting the international boundary at the 49th parallel, and through the Juan de Fuca Strait.

1848 By the end of the war, the United States has annexed about half of Mexico's territory, including New Mexico and California.

1849 California gold rush.

1849 Britain establishes the colony of Vancouver Island, to be managed by the HBC, with a governor appointed by the British Colonial Office.

1849 Richard Blanshard is appointed the first governor of Vancouver Island. Because of conflicts with James Douglas and a lack of real authority, he resigns in September 1851.

1850-54 Douglas signs 14 treaties, or agreements, with bands in Victoria, Saanich, Sooke, Metchosin, and at the north end of Vancouver Island.

1850 Haida people bring gold from the Queen Charlotte Islands to the HBC. Rumours of this gold get out and American miners sail up the Queen Charlotte Islands trying to mine but are turned away by local people.

1851 Douglas, an HBC chief factor, becomes governor of Vancouver Island.

1854 The wheat crop of Victoria is enough to feed the local population, for the first and last time.

1850s Colonists coming to Vancouver Island are required to pay for land. Large landowners are expected to bring their own labourers. Voting rights are based on land ownership. This system models the British class system that requires citizens to pay for local public works. At this time, in the United States, land was free for settlers.

1850s The HBC purchases gold dust from Sto:lo and Nlaka'pamux people who collect it from the Fraser and Thompson Rivers. The HBC hoped to keep this trade quiet, to keep its monopoly over gold. Douglas let local people collect the gold as they had trapped the furs, but HBC sends it to London and makes a large profit. American miners from California move to Oregon and Washington, organizing themselves to fight wars against Indigenous people.

1851-58 Settlement on Vancouver Island: 180 settlers bought land in the southern part of the Island. The HBC sent out 641 immigrants from Britain to the island between 1848 and 1854 to work as agricultural labourers or coal miners. Some did not survive the voyage, or deserted to the United States. They agreed to work for 5 years in the colony, at the end of which they received 25 to 50 acres of land. About 400 of these immigrants stayed in the colony.

1854 Settler population of Vancouver Island is 774 (up from 30, 6 years earlier). People had settled in Victoria, Esquimalt, Sooke, Metchosin, San Juan Island, Nanaimo, Fort Rupert.

1855 A General Assembly is established that is elected by colonists with voting rights. Only 43 settlers had enough land to qualify them to vote (20 acres). They elected 7 members, 5 of whom had strong ties to the HBC. Even though the colony had representative government, the HBC maintained power.

1856 Indigenous population of Vancouver Island is 25,873.

1857 Nlaka'pamux people, on the mainland, expel American gold miners from their territories.

1858 Word of the gold gets out. In April, 400 miners arrive in Victoria on their way to look for gold in the Fraser River goldfields. Over the next decade, about 30,000 mostly male miners trek through British Columbia with gold fever. Most came via the United States, although many were originally from China, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

To regulate the miners, Douglas proclaimed that all gold on the mainland was the property of the British Crown. If someone wanted to mine, they had to obtain a license in Victoria. Douglas appoints gold commissioners. The digging for placer gold started in June of 1858, about 3 miles south of Fort Hope.

In Victoria, a tent city sprang up overnight. Merchants from San Francisco set up shops to supply the miners. About 200 buildings, most of them stores, went up in about 6 weeks. Town lots that had previously cost \$50 or \$75, would now sell for \$1500 to \$3000.

1858 Fraser River War breaks out between invading miners and local Indigenous people. Conflict is resolved by peace treaties, followed by the arrival of Douglas and the Royal Engineers.

1858 Britain establishes the colony of British Columbia on the mainland. Douglas becomes governor of both Vancouver Island and British Columbia, but gives up his position with HBC.

1859-61 Settlers could pre-empt 160 acres of unsurveyed land for free. Before they could purchase the land, they had to "improve" it by clearing the land for crops or animals, building a house, and putting up fences. The resident could then apply for a certificate of improvement, the land was surveyed, and the resident could purchase the land for a dollar an acre. When the policy was first introduced, Indigenous people also had the right to pre-empt land.

1858-64 Douglas instructed the gold commissioners to lay out reserves in the interior of the colony of British Columbia. Reserves are supposed to be placed where local Indigenous people request them, but the reserves are often too small.

1862-63 An estimated 20,000 Indigenous people died from smallpox in British Columbia during this epidemic, including 14,000 people along the coast. In Victoria, approximately 1000 - 1200 Indigenous people died from the disease.

1864 Douglas leaves office, and is replaced by governors Arthur Kennedy on the Island and Frederick Seymour on Mainland British Columbia. Commissioner Trutch downsizes reserves.

1866 Union of the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia.

1866 Indigenous people lose the right to pre-empt land in British Columbia.

1867 Canadian Confederation.

1871 British Columbia joins Confederation with promise of transcontinental railway. The federal government takes control of Indian affairs, but land remains under provincial control.