

# TIMELINE: THE HISTORY OF VERNON

## INTRODUCTION

The Interior Salish Indians were the first inhabitants of the North Okanagan - mainly traders - a peaceful group - in the winters, they hunted elk and deer and speared salmon - in the summer the women gathered roots and berries. The Interior Indian tribes used to meet at what we know as Vernon today - this was a gathering place for them.

The Indians helped the white men settle in this area - taught the white people how to manage in the wilderness. As more people arrived in the area, the Indians moved onto reserves and became less nomadic.

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- 1860** Luc Girouard arrived in this area from California - he was Vernon's first permanent settler - Seven years later, he acquired 160 acres of land west of Swan Lake and extending into what is presently the city of Vernon - he planted an orchard and became the city's first postmaster
- 1862** Gold seekers passed through Vernon - not much was found - fever lasted about 2 years - Placer Mine at Cherry Creek (near Lumby) had some larger deposits of gold - there was some successful mining
- 1864** Barnard arrived - became a Vernon rancher - bought 6,300 acres of Crown land to breed and train horses - set up the BX (Barnard Express)/ Coldstream Ranch (Charles & Forbes Vernon) sold to Aberdeen - sold part of land to British immigrants for fruit growing
- 1867** O'Keefe and Greenhow were coming through this area from Oregon state - came to seek fortune in the Cariboo - made money - passed through Okanagan stopping to give cattle a rest and to fatten them up on bunch grass (full of nutrients for animals) - decided to raise cattle and to develop large fields of wheat and cattle herds - founded O'Keefe Ranch - built cabin, cleared land, planted grain - operated by O'Keefe families until 1977



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- 1884** Horse racing was the most popular sport. First schoolhouse built cost \$625.00 and had 13 pupils (perhaps compare to today's costs for a new school)  
One year later, this school burned down and another was built using wood from the Postill sawmill which was located near O'Keefe Ranch. Vernon population at that time was 40.  
Bank of Montreal built (brick building behind the present bank)
- 1885** (approx.) The building of the major railroads had been completed in B.C. which left many Chinese looking for new opportunities. Some came to the Okanagan to work.
- 1887** The name Vernon was given to the city - named after Forbes Vernon who owned Coldstream Ranch.
- 1892** Population had grown to 600 - several stores had emerged and 5 hotels - the railway was completed by then - people interested in large parcels of land arrived - mining was growing (gold, silver, zinc - Silver Star named after a Silver Mine) - Vernon had a lakeboat service
- 1893** Park School was built (today this building houses the Science Centre) - this school was used for elementary school pupils until 1907 - it is the oldest school building in Vernon
- 1895** Several mines all near the city were established - Swan Lake Mining Company - White Elephant and Bon Diable - two runs on the Putnam Creek side of Silver Star Mountain are named after these mines (White Elephant and Bon Diablo)
- 1900's** 1st car in Vernon - it came from San Francisco and was owned by Judge Spinix - cost was \$1,000.00 (horses had to be used sometimes to help pull early cars up hills). The arrival of the automobile opened this area up to the world. Gas lights arrived about that time - they were lit every night by a man who was paid 50 cents a night. Lots of orchardists immigrated to this area from Scotland, Britain, Belgium - they had little knowledge of necessary requirements for growing and found the extreme climatic conditions difficult to work with and consequently many became short of labour and money
- 1902** Steam plant was built - provided electricity for lights
- 1904** Samuel Polson arrived - he was a real estate developer from Winnipeg. He was on his way to Vancouver and had been told about the Okanagan Valley. He stopped to look at the area and referred to it as the "garden of Eden". He later donated land for the park and for the hospital. He also purchased 5 big ranches in the area

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- 1905** Telephone line was completed to Kelowna
- 1909** Fire Hall built - horses pulled wagon; Beairsto Elementary School building was constructed - it had the reputation of being one of the finest buildings in B.C.; St. James Catholic Church was built (still standing today - 2601 - 27th Street)
- 1911** Vernon's first movie house constructed - it was called the Empress
- 1912** Train station completed; licence plates were issued
- 1914** Court House on 27th opened. Diesel power was established - Vernon's Electric Power House was the first of its kind in B.C. It was located close to where the Powerhouse Theatre is now
- 1915** Army Camp - a tented camp for training troops - by 1916, there were 7,000 men there for training - more soldiers than residents (3,000)
- 1917** Lord Aberdeen sold his interests in the Coldstream Ranch to Lord Woolavington (Lavington is named after him) In this year, the Coldstream Ranch shipped 800 boxcars of apples and 200 of fruit to a 1 million dollar value
- 1919** Now about 200 cars in Vernon - one of the popular ones - Ford Model T called "Tin Lizzie" cars were painted black because that color of paint dried faster than other colors and it meant they could keep the production line moving
- 1920** (approx.) Japanese immigrants came into the Okanagan, first farming around Fintry on the west side of Okanagan Lake. Some purchased land in the Bella Vista area to farm
- 1926** The first gas engine train arrived - called the "Gallopig Goose"
- 1931** Camp Hurlburt opened
- 1937** Building of the Vernon Civic Arena began
- 1939** Silver Star road went to the top - first car reached the summit; buildings were constructed at the Army Camp

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- 1941** City population was 7,000
- 1951** Parking meters introduced. Safeway, Bus Depot and Vernon Medical Clinic open
- 1953** Kalamalka Lake gets named (it had been called Long Lake until that time)
- 1957** TV arrives to Vernon
- 1959** Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip visit Vernon, Eatons store opens
- 1961** First Winter Carnival celebration
- 1965** Library and Museum under construction; O'Keefe Ranch opens
- 1975** Polson and Village Green Malls open
- 1982** College opens
- 1987** Completion of the Sikh Temple on Mission Hill. Many Sikhs chose this area to settle
- 1988** Morning Star began publication and Beairsto Elementary School became a single track French Emersion School
- 1991** Coldstream Ranch for sale/Kekuli Park opens
- 1996** Vernon Daily News ceases publication after 100 years
- 2001** Vernon Multiplex opens
- 2006** Population 55,418