

Nanaimo Harbour: Past, Present, and Future

John Dunham

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[tape starts suddenly]

Mr. Whalley

Well, it gives me very great pleasure in introducing the speaker this evening. Because the speaker and myself were born within 20 miles of one another in England. So, that really is something. [laughter] Of course at different times. [laughter] But Mr. Dunham has done a lot of work on the, and he had a number of photographs of the harbour and his maps, which really most of us have examined. And I'm sure we're looking forward to a very instructive lecture this evening. I'd like to call on Mr. John Dunham.

[applause]

John Dunham

Thank you very much Mr. Whalley. Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen, when I was asked to talk about Nanaimo harbour: past, present, and future, I had a few qualms. And these related back to when I first came to Canada, in that I used to think that nothing was old until it was at least two or three hundred years old. Then, as I, as we lived in Nanaimo a little more, I became aware of the fact that this area had started its own history within the last 100 or 110 years, and that these were things about which people were still talking, and not something gathering fungus, shall we say, in the archives in London, or something that was so old that all you could go by were records, and you couldn't really appreciate the truth in these records. But in Nanaimo you had something people knew something about; they or their parents before them were directly connected with these things. And history was actually in the making in Nanaimo. And I have become, as a result of being asked to talk about Nanaimo, a lot more deeply involved in what happened in the last hundred years than I ever thought I would be.

But, I am supposed to talk about Nanaimo harbour: past, present, and future. And in describing Nanaimo harbour over the last century, I think the most important thing is the change in the physical characteristics of the harbour. Now, Nanaimo has made this change from an important coal exporting centre through to a wood products exporting centre, and it's made this change very smoothly indeed. And with only a relatively short period, in the Depression and the war years following the Depression, of sort of a slackness in the economy.

Now, tonight I would like to describe both by specific instances and in general terms, this physical change that has taken place. Starting from the beginning of the coal era, when Cameron Island was an island in fact, and when the Ravine almost made another island out of what is now the downtown business section. When the coal wharves were established in the main part of the harbour, as we know it today, then through to the wharf developments in Departure Bay and on Newcastle Island, and at Brechin Point. Then, the fishing industry developed, and then the coal exports gradually declined, but the ferry traffic started to increase between this island and the Mainland. And also, as a result of population growth, small boat activity, pleasure boat activity increased, with the growth of this population. And the lumber and the pulp exporting facilities gradually became established to take the place of what is now a non-existent coal trade.

You'll find in Nanaimo that wharves were constructed in various parts of these harbours, for a specific purpose. They were used for this purpose, they served their purpose, and then they were destroyed, and new wharves have taken growth in other parts of the harbour, built for other purposes. Now, if you bear this in mind during my next few minutes, I think it will enable you to relate the specific events that I talk about against the pattern that has taken place in the harbour.

I think that three acts of both federal and provincial parliament in this country have had the strongest bearing on the harbour development and on the history of the harbour. To start off with, the British North America Act of May the 16th, 1871, took the public harbours from direct control of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, as it was then, and placed them under the control of Canada. Prior to this they were under the control of Great Britain. This meant that any development in the future was going to be done by either private enterprise with their own money, or by the federal government, the Canadian federal government, with tax revenues.

Now to start with, the Canadian federal government spent their tax revenues on harbour development in such relatively smaller ports as Nanaimo, with such things as aids to navigation, buoys, lighthouses, and things like this. And this progressed fairly well, I think, until about 1924, although a lot of use, and I'll show this later on, was made of parts of the harbour of Nanaimo and [above the harbour here?] without federal knowledge or approval.

06:04

[tape recording is of very poor quality, mostly inaudible]

...As there were [inaudible] along the...

...as it relates to...

...there were several wharves that were existing in Exit Passage, as it was known then, without having federal approval for the use of these wharves and whatsoever.

06:17

1924, after a lot of discussion, the government of the Province of British Columbia, and the federal government signed an agreement which was going to be known as the Six Harbours Agreement. Now, this Six Harbours Agreement stated in effect that the harbours of Victoria, and Esquimalt, and Nanaimo, Alberni, Burrard Inlet, and New Westminster, were public harbours within the meaning of that act, and would still be administered by Canada. But the other areas outside these particular places in the harbour would be administered in the future by the province and not by the federal government.

Now, they only kept a certain portion of this harbour federal. And, just a small, it's easiest possibly to share on this one, the area as you will know it today, is an area from the old Canadian Fish Company wharf, which is now operated by British American Oil, down through Newcastle Passage, the main body of Nanaimo harbour proper, to a line from Gallows Point, across to just south of where the *Princess of Vancouver* wharf is.

All the areas to the north of this, in other words, Departure Bay, around the outsides of the islands, and the area now known as the Mud Flats and Northumberland Channel, these were within the jurisdiction of the province. And so we have the situation in Nanaimo, as we have in

other harbours, whereby if you sail a vessel, a small vessel through, through the passage, you're crossing from one type of harbour administration to another type. And you're crossing a theoretical line in the same way as you go across the equator, or a tropic, or the Arctic Circle, or something like this.

8:09

And, the last federal act that I think had a certain amount of bearing on this harbour was the creation of the Nanaimo Harbour Commissioners Act on December the 9th, 1960, which gave control of a certain area in the harbour to the commission, for administration, management, and control. Now, this I'll talk about later on, but very roughly, it runs from halfway between Horswell Bluffs and the lagoon; a line across from there, to Malaspina Point on Gabriola Island; and encompasses all the water in here; going down to Dodd and False Narrows in Northumberland Channel. Now, part of this you'll realize, was old federal, and part of this, was old provincial. But I'll do a little bit more, if I may, about the harbour commission, when I start talking a little bit about the more modern developments in the harbour.

If I can now, I'll get down to specifics. I don't think there's much point in my talking about the discovery of coal. This has probably been discussed so much by your society, and as far as the harbour development is concerned, I think that the coal in relation to harbour development is the quantities exported, the wharves that were built, and what happened, and so on and so forth. But, in delving back into the harbour development in Nanaimo, I am forced, of course, or I was forced, to do a little bit of research into coal.

One small thing that comes out here, now someone was talking before this about differences in dates and getting your facts right, but I read something about the first shipment of coal being 32 tons of coal from onto a vessel called the *Honolulu Packet*, which happened in 1852, I think. And the price of this coal was \$320. In other words, \$10 per ton. People these days talk about the increased cost of living, and prices going up, and so on and so forth. By September 1853, the price of coal had already gone up to \$11 a ton. The prices for coal, surprisingly, in the early days were quoted in dollars. Whereas in a fur trader's record I was reading some time ago from about the same time of the century as this, he was still quoting in pounds, shillings, and pence.

As far as the harbour, and the people getting to know something about the physical aspect of the harbour was concerned, I think the first person that really took an interest, or the first people that really took an interest, were the commanding officers of the vessels *Plumper* and *Satellite*. Who you see, the two vessels over there, and you see the two commanding officers. There was a Captain Richards and a Staff Commander Pender. They actually, these two vessels, were up here assisting the United States Boundary Commission in the establishment of the 49th parallel, and by chance, they came into Nanaimo.

Now, the two black and whites, or rather the one black and white of the harbour, was done by Lieutenant Commander Mayne, and it's very interesting. If you look at the names of the officers who were on these vessels at this time, you see how well they fit into streets or harbours or something like this. Everybody liked to hear their name used for something. So you have a Mayne for Mayne Island; a Captain Richards for Richards Street; a Captain Pender for Pender Island; a Captain Bull for Bull Harbour; a Captain Bedwell for Bedwell Harbour; and a Captain, now the English word is Prevost, and whether they in French Canada they say "pray-voh", I don't know, but his name was P-R-E-V-O-S-T, and I believe there is a mountain named after him.

In 1858, when these vessels came in to Nanaimo harbour, there was already a coal wharf in existence at this particular time. In 1862, when the H.M.S. *Hecate* came in, and Captain Richards prepared the first actual chart of the harbour, this showed one, two, three, sets of coal wharves. And in this chart, if you notice, in 1862, the Ravine almost came up to what is almost Comox Road now. It came to, I suppose, between where the I.X.L. Dairy is, on the one hand, and Morrison Welding is on the other hand.

In this harbour, pardon me, during the coal era, it was realized there was a lot more wharves than there are now, and in consequence, there were a lot more ships coming into this harbour, than there were then. The number of vessels, unfortunately was never, nobody ever kept track of the things, there was no collector of customs or anything like that. In the early years, the mine records are not available, and what federal records that have been kept have under a new, and very unfortunate policy, I'm afraid, been put under so many years of destruction and we're going to lose a lot of these old federal records of harbours apart from Nanaimo if we're not too careful. Nobody seemed to worry about statistics in the old days, and *The Free Press* didn't come out until 1874, so it's hard to determine until about 1874, exactly how many tons of coal were going out of this harbour, and indeed how many vessels were coming in.

14:17

But if I can skip from coal and from Nanaimo, to New Westminster just for a second, although coal was the main export from this area, lumber didn't really develop until the late 1940s. The first export of lumber from British Columbia was in 1864 when a shipment was sent from New Westminster down to Australia. The first record I've been able to find as far as coal export is concerned is in 1865, when 32,818 tons were exported to California. Now, you will find as I read through further statistics that the majority of the coal exported, and when I say exported I mean from Canada to a foreign country, not to, not across the straits to Vancouver. The majority, 50% at least, of the coal, was going to San Francisco. Up to 75% in some years was going to the United States, in other words other ports apart from San Francisco.

There was a very small mail service running between Victoria and Nanaimo in 1866, the *Sir James Douglas* was running on this service every fortnight. *Sir James Douglas* is now the name of a Canadian Coast Guard ship, a lighthouse tender, and is still, the modern one, is still performing quite a valuable service to this town.

I think everything seemed to start as far as the harbour was concerned in 1874. The city, of course, was incorporated in 1874. Going back to statistics again, I guess I'm using an awful lot of those, someone I've read said December the 24th, somebody I've read said December the 26th, 1874, so you can fight this one out between you. But, because of the traffic coming into the harbour, and it was necessary to start distinguishing certain obstacles for entrance. And the first one that was built was Entrance Island lighthouse, which was built in 1874. They were also building in Victoria at this time, the steamer, *Maude*, who was going on the Nanaimo-Comox-Victoria run. Vancouver wasn't too much; it was Nanaimo-Comox-Victoria run in those days. And because of the development in coal shipping, they appointed the first collector of customs in Nanaimo in 1874, a Mr. Peck.

In that year, the Departure Bay mines exported 23,700 tons, and the Vancouver Coal Company exported 32,319 tons. This is 55-56,000 tons. 56,000 tons of coal then is the equivalent to about 14...38 million feet of lumber in the present day market. And this was 95 years ago.

The following year, they appointed the first harbour master in Nanaimo, a Captain John Sabiston, whose documents were signed by the Duke of Westminster, who was then the Governor General of Canada. They probably did this because in January of this year, the harbour froze over, and so they thought they'd better get a harbour master who can do something about it. And also in '75, they let the first contract, took out the contract, for the bridge across the Ravine at Bastion Street. And they were also during this year enlarging the Hirst wharf, which had been built around about 1867, I think.

Captain Sabiston had his chance in 1876 because in January the 26th, 1876, the harbour did freeze over, all the way from Protection Island, right way through here into Departure Bay. And there are records of coal sleighs in Departure Bay running. This would have been a little awkward for the wooden hull vessels, as they had at then of course, because you know what a sliver of ice is the equivalent to a very good sheet of very fine steel, and will cut through a wooden hull without any trouble, any trouble whatsoever.

So, we have had now, I suppose, 10 years of coal export. And regrettably, without any definite figures that anybody can put forward about the harbour growth. But I would imagine that the harbour prospered, and the city was in the same way, as say Virginia City during the times there, or Alaska, later on. When people enjoyed themselves and there was a great whoop-de-doo in [non-working?]

The first vessel, first sea-going vessel, that was built in Nanaimo was known as the *Nanaimo*, and it was launched in the Millstream. And the carpenter, actually I suppose he was a shipwright, but the carpenter's name was a Mr. C. Carpenter. Whether Carpenter Rock, which is just here, off the mouth of the Millstream, was named after him, I do not know. But this is the first record that I've been able to find of a sea-going vessel being built in Nanaimo. It wasn't for another 60 years before they went into sea-going vessels of any size in Nanaimo, and this was in the Second World War years when mine sweepers were built down at the shipyards in this area.

There had been many smaller vessels running up and down the Island, and not talking at the moment about the *City of Nanaimo* or the *Robert Dunsmuir*, or the *Joan*, at this particular time, but other vessels that had been running, and in coast shipping. And these interests amalgamated in 1883, and they formed what is now, what was then, the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company. They had nine vessels, and this later on, was to be taken over by CPR, and was the beginning of the B.C. Coast Steamships, as it was.

Records of 1880 and 1882 start recording vessels: one, an American vessel, the *Thresher*, wrecked on Gabriola Island; and another in 1882, the *Idaho*, a steamer, who damaged the Johnson wharf. Now, the *Idaho* suggests an American named vessel as well. Just because it was 1880, it didn't mean to say that this sort of thing would never happen again, and just as a comparison, I'd like to show you something that happened in 1961, and the very-well manned steamer named the *Chinook* [laughter] was ground on Snake Island.

I'd like to, in a minute, I'll talk about a description of passage between Nanaimo and Vancouver, which is very interesting in regard to weather. I don't know whether vessels were loading full loads or not in these days when they were going south. But a couple of records I did pick up from the 1880, from 1880 itself, showed that they were starting then to think about economies in ship transportation. For example, a ship, not a steamer, but a ship named the *Austria*, towed by a steamer named the *Beaver*, took 2,300 tons of coal to Acapulco.

Another ship, not a steamer, named the *Turley*, towed by a steamer named the *Tacoma*, took tons of cargo, unnamed, unnumbered, down to San Francisco. They weren't using them to sail down themselves. They would fill the ship with coal, they would fill the steamer with coal, and they would go down in tandem, one pulling the other. This would save time and money to the ship owner, and this of course is always is to be a thing to be greatly hoped for.

22:27

As shipping became so important with a number of vessels, it was noticed that there were certain obstacles in the harbour. Some of these obstacles had to be removed immediately, some of them were a little later on in the removal. But, the first obstacle that was removed, and it doesn't show on the chart because it was so well removed, was a rock known as Nicol Rock, which was situated off the coal wharves, outside Cameron Island. And this was destroyed by blasting in 1888.

Something that has nothing at all to do with the city, to do with the harbour, which was so interesting, is a report in the city council minutes of 1888, of August the 16th, which said this: "the city workmen went on strike on account of uncomplimentary references made about them at the council meeting." [laughter] It was happening even in those days.

The federal government, as Canada had been looking after harbours since 1871, decided that it was time to establish a boundary between water and shore. In other words, a high-water mark, a high-water line. So, in about 1890, they undertook the first legal survey of the harbour of Nanaimo. Now, this, what I'm running my finger on here, is 1964.

But, one was done, the first one was done in 1890, and the plan for Nanaimo harbour was Plan 584. And from this first legal survey that was made, all other harbour surveys and harbour plans derive. Because you had to establish where an upland owner, a riparian owner's land finished, and where the Crown's water started. And the Crown owns from high-water mark out, the upland owner owns to high-water mark. So it was necessary to do this. This affects, especially in the present day, water leases, the filling of certain areas in the harbour.

By 1889, exports in this harbour were running into the hundreds of thousands of tons. 1889 itself: 419,000 tons, from the Nanaimo Colliery, the Wellington Colliery, the East Wellington Colliery. They were principally going to California, also going to Oregon, Alaska, Hawaii, China, Japan, and a place called Petropavlovski [Petropavlovsk], as I would presume was in Siberia.

The Inspector of Mines report for 1889 said this: "The coal in this colliery was in good demand up until the last two months, when the mines had to stop work, owing to there being no ships to take away the coal." Now, this is 1889. Within about 10 years, you'll find instances of 10, 11, and 12 vessels, lying at anchor in Departure Bay, waiting to go alongside the wharf to load. But in 1889, there was more coal than there were ships. In Departure Bay in 1889, they erected a [large?] wharf there. And they stated that they could take large ships at any stage of the tide, in this wharf, at this wharf.

25:57

In 1891, when the population was 4,509, a Captain Rogers built a ferry called the *City of Nanaimo*. Now, the *Robert Dunsmuir* ferry had been running before this, on a New Westminster-Vancouver-Nanaimo service. She'd been carrying passengers and then coal from Nanaimo to Vancouver, and I understand that she was known as the "*Dirty Bob*" in those days.

The ferry *Joan*, had been running to Vancouver. I had heard the story before, Phil Piper told it to me again tonight, and so I will repeat this to you, regarding the miners who were working at Protection at this particular time, underneath the harbour as such, who could tell the time by the wheels of the ferry going over. I would have hated to have been in a position like this. But they did, and more glory to them.

They had established aids to navigation in this harbour by this time, and even though they had a harbour master, he didn't have any patrol boat, and there wasn't any coast guard service, or anything else like this. So, the late Harry Freeman used to look after the lights, and the aids to navigation, after school. Even going out to Entrance Island once a week, to look after this system.

By 1893, the exports, [we now say exports] to foreign countries: in excess of 550,000 tons. The company had built a wharf on Protection, 400 feet away from the shaft for easy handling. They loaded their first vessel, the *Montserrat*, 300 tons. But the good thing to remember about this, is that on March the 9th, they loaded a vessel called the *General Fairchild*, and she loaded the first full cargo of coal from the mine. This is the beginning. Later on, I'll explain a little bit about ships coming in now, going to specific ports to load full cargoes at one port. Or going possibly to two ports, saving time, money, expense, for everybody concerned. They did this in 1893, as far as coal was concerned.

As the population was slowly growing in Nanaimo, the people that worked in and around the waterfront started to take an interest in the water as a means of recreation. And so, in 1897, saw the formation of the yacht club in Nanaimo harbour. Our exports then were in excess of 400,000 tons of coal, still, San Francisco was the main place, with Alaska, Hawaii, Japan, and China.

1898, they increased by 50% to 631 [631,000] tons of coal. If you can imagine 631 [631,000] tons of coal, but this was a one yearly export between the New Vancouver Coal Company and the Dunsmuir interests. The inspector said, the superintendent said that shipping facilities in this port were excellent. And the depth was such that anybody could lay alongside safely.

They [thought?] these days about fast loading. In 1898, a vessel, the *Titania*, running from Nanaimo to San Francisco, loaded a full cargo of 6,000 tons of coal in 12 hours. Which is 500 tons an hour.

The, in Departure Bay on the north shore...north actually...it's a funny north, north actually is this way. But I presume you would call it the north shore, or the northwest shore, there were three wharves, they, I think I have a couple of pictures. They were T-shaped wharves, in other words, the wharf went out this way and the ship berthed on a head running along here, you remember the [inaudible], the ship was lying here. They said there that they had over 27 feet of water at low tide, and the rate of loading per tip, I suppose, was 150 tons per hour, and they could do 200 tons if they were pushed.

It was around 1898 when [thick?] people, who were interested in things other than coal in the harbour, first started to push for a biological station. It took eight years to appropriate the money, this is normal, well, I think, with the federal government, because it wasn't until 1906 that construction started, and 1908 that the biological station came into effect, with the irreverent G.W. Taylor as the first director.

In one month alone in 1898, exporting from this port: 58,000 tons of coal. In 1901, the Coast Navigation [Canadian Pacific Navigation Company], which had been the amalgamation of the little ferries, the little steamers that had been running around the Island, were purchased by the CPR, and thus became B.C. Coast Steamships. They had then in this operation 14 vessels. This *Titania* that I was talking about, broke the record in 1902 on the run between Nanaimo and San Francisco.

You were starting to see then, in Nanaimo, just after the turn of the century, the very beginning of an interest in fish, not the biological station, but the commercial side of the fishing industry became apparent in the Nanaimo harbour, just about then. People were starting to think a little bit about going off the Island, because in 1903, they were modernizing the B.C. Coast Steamship fleet, and added the *Princess Victoria*.

1904 saw the beginning of this chart as it is today, as it is used by current B.C. coast pilots coming into Nanaimo harbour. This harbour, it was a reproduction of a former admiralty chart, but it was resurveyed by Commander Parry and his assistants at the Royal Navy. And with additions, and amendments with regard to lights, buoys, etc., a few wharf changes, this chart of 1904 is the main basis on which this harbour now is logged.

In 1904, saw the establishment of the coal mine here at Pimbury Point, with a wharf, I believe I have a picture of this too. The depth of water at Pimbury Point, when I was with the ferry company, I sounded off this area, and within a few feet of the land itself, she goes down sharply to 40-45 feet. Beautiful, deep water, for even modern day vessels, let alone vessels 63 years ago.

1905, the coal companies were taking a different attitude as far as letting people know how much coal they exported. They were refusing to give individual amounts, and all we can say is that the Vancouver Island mines exported to the United States 427,000 tons; 50% of this U.S. export was to California.

At this time, something very good was in effect that I'm afraid, can't be done now. We tried to do it, and at the moment we can't. But in those days, Nanaimo enjoyed the same terminal rates as Vancouver and Victoria, which gave a differential as far as cargo was concerned of \$4 a ton. This meant that cargo coming on to the Island, could be specified as coming to Nanaimo and would come, and you would receive it for the same price as the person in Vancouver, or the person in Victoria. This, try as we may, we cannot do in 1967. The reason we can't do it in 1967 actually is because there is not sufficient quantity of general cargo coming in to warrant putting a ship into the port to discharge. Otherwise, I think we might be able to do this.

The fishery was getting a little more established now. 1905, there was six firms interested in the herring industry situated up in this part of the harbour, employing 150 men. Within five years, there were 43 firms employing 1,500 men. Their capital outlay at this time was estimated at being something like \$215,000.

An article in a magazine, *The Hub*, published in 1910 by the Citizen's League. Now, this I would like to read you. It has to do with Nanaimo and Nanaimo harbour:

Nanaimo is the nearest point on Vancouver Island to Vancouver city, less than 40 miles away. The trip being made back and forth every day by one of the CPR ferry steamers. The route between Vancouver and Nanaimo is so direct and the entrance to the harbour so ample, that this trip is made every day, rain or shine, in calm and stormy weather, or

whether it should be clear or foggy. Not once during the past 20 years has the daily trip between Nanaimo and Vancouver been interrupted because of the weather conditions, and the conditions of travel are so safe that no accident has ever occurred.

This was in a day when aids to navigation and such were minimal: when in fog, you used your whistle and you got the echo back from the shore and this told you how far away; you sniffed to decide whether you were close to land or whether you were still far away at sea; you went by experience more than by a radar box; and 20 years, this didn't happen. I'll show you a picture again, in 1962, [laughter] equipped with the most modern aids, in fog; it happens.

Underneath this picture, there was a caption, which said this. And I wish it's true today. It was true then; it's not true today. "Nanaimo harbour, where the world's greatest ships can enter." And then, they could, because then your depths were good enough coming through here, your depths were good enough coming through here. You didn't have to worry about the Middle Bank, as it was called then, McKay Channel was good to get through this way, or Meakin Channel was good to get through this way. You could do it then, the ships weren't drawing that much. Now, I'm afraid, this does not apply. You could go down here to Harmac, but you couldn't come into Nanaimo harbour proper.

37:08

The federal government, who as I'd said, had been now charged with the responsibility of looking after these harbours, had saved themselves a little bit of trouble in some respects, and this trouble has borne out very badly, as far as the future development of the harbour is concerned. In that they, in the years 1909 and 1911, quitclaimed certain property that they owned in the harbour to private individuals. In 1909, they quitclaimed an area here fronting Rosehill Street, which they gave actually then to the city, and the city in turn gave to Nanaimo Yacht Club. In 1911, they quitclaimed this area here, fronting what has been always known as, and always will be known as the Madill property, although they gave it to somebody else, I think, by a different name in 1911. This meant that the people who they gave this land, and land underwater, had it in perpetuity, nobody else could do a thing about it. Mr. Coburn, actually, in 1911 received that.

This is very bad, and now the federal government realizes that this is bad, because no development can take place by the federal government, unless the private owner gives his permission, in any part of the harbour that has been quitclaimed. The CPR, of course, received a very large amount of Crown grant. And I don't want to go into the question of land grants or railway grants, or anything like this, but it has been proven that this is not a good thing to do. Now, in the modern day, the federal government will not even sell land underwater. Whether it be filled, or whether it not be filled, for development, in case there is a potential use that can be put forward for the good of Canada, and not for the good of a particular individual. But this sort of thing did then happen, I'm afraid.

In 1910, your population in the city was now 10,000. Your exports were going down just a little bit, your exports of coal then were [only] 370 odd thousand tons. Still sufficient though, to create a good, thriving community, and steady vessels coming into this harbour. But people were thinking more now about travelling, and in 1911, the *Princess Mary* left Nanaimo on her first trip on the Nanaimo-Comox-Vancouver service. Still bringing Comox into this area.

1912, you see the establishment of your Japanese fish canneries in Departure Bay, and in Exit Passage, and also on Newcastle Island. A little bay in there, is known as Saltery Bay, there's

no saltery, but it probably always will be known as Saltery Bay. There are still pilings in existence, upon which some unwary little chap with a small boat runs occasionally. From the old, established salteries at that time. And 1912 saw the inaugural run of the Nanaimo-Vancouver service with the *Princess Patricia*.

Once the ferry started, then of course the telephone company had to come into the act, and in 1913, they laid the first submarine cable, telephone cable, between Nanaimo and Vancouver. In 1913, of course, also saw a very large explosion, with the steamer *August [Oscar]*, who blew up off Protection Island.

[unidentified audience member]
The *Oscar*.

William Barraclough
The *Oscar*.

John Dunham
Oscar? I'm sorry, I've got my words around there. *Oscar. Oscar*, thank you.

They had mine troubles in 1913, and because they had mine troubles, it meant that they had harbour development and harbour export troubles. Very little was talked about this, as far as lumber export records, coal export records that I can find. Except that during the war years, of course, the area was used for the fueling of H.M. ships and U.S. naval vessels, as some many years ago, the Nanaimo coal had been accepted by royal naval engineers as being very suitable for their vessels.

So, after the First World War, production is good. 1923 they had the highest year of coal production in Nanaimo. But the vessels were now turning to oil. This was a consequence of the First World War, and so although production was terrific, the demand for export coal is getting lower and lower.

In 1924, saw this Six Harbours Agreement that I talked about, where the area was split up, with the federal government retaining this portion, and the province having the area all around. This brings up a very little thing, and I'm glad in one way that Alderman Parker is not here tonight, and sorry in another way that he is. Because bearing on this Plan 584 that was drawn in 1890, according to the federal government, the area running up Commercial Inlet, round here, through the area known before as the Ravine, now as Terminal Avenue, was part and is part of the federal harbour, as it was turned over in 1924, and as it is known today. In other words, to put the thing very simply, the Nanaimo Harbour Commission controls Terminal Avenue. But this is not, this will be fought, I would imagine, in years to come. I have seen a plan in Ottawa that shows this thing very, very clearly. And if the federal government and the province, who don't exactly like themselves at this particular time, ever get into a discussions with regard to the transfer of lands in this harbour, and then you can be sure that some questions will be asked about what is now Terminal Avenue, about the actual ownership.

Now, the small boating aspect comes into fore commercially in the harbour. Tugs are starting to run around the harbour, used for not internal purposes, say ferrying miners across to Protection Island with the vessels, pictures of who are over there, the *Alert*, the *We Two*; I don't have one of the *Mermaid*, I'm afraid. But, logging is starting, and so they are starting to move logs up and down the coast. A company comes into Nanaimo in 1926 called the Gulf Islands Transportation Company, gentleman that possibly many of you possibly know is a Captain W.Y. Higgs, who

started this off. He started off with two tugs in those days. And in 1936, he changed the name to Nanaimo Towing, at that time had 11 tugs and a derrick.

These tugs, diesel and gasoline powered, that he had, were capable of towing between eight and 16 sections of logs. Your modern day tug tows between 50 and 75 sections of logs. So, you can imagine that the business was a little slow and they had to use an awful lot of tugs to do the same total work. Although, of course, there wasn't the amount of lumber then being cut to warrant this export.

Your ferry traffic is still increasing as the years go by. In 1928, the *Princess Elaine* joins the service. The mines are closing down, East Wellington, I believe, closed down in 1828 [1928], but the freight and the passenger movement is increasing between Nanaimo and the Mainland. And in 1930, Vancouver Barge Transportation Company are incorporated. And they run from what was known as the Hirst wharf, which is the wharf that was built by the harbour, bought, sorry, by the commission some time ago, for the development that we have since done in the inlet. And Vancouver Barge Transportation ran their service from there.

In 1930, the CPR added the *Joan* and the *Elizabeth* to the service, in view of the traffic demands that were current at that particular time. The railway company, I think, must have really liked Nanaimo, because the following year, they bought Newcastle Island. And they established, of course, the wharf on the island for the excursion traffic that took place then, coming across from Vancouver to Nanaimo, and then going across to the island for the picnics that they had then.

Gulf Islands Transportation Company in the same year, 1931, established the Gabriola ferry service with the old ferry, *Atrevida*. I don't know whether she was old then, but she ran for 30 years after 1931, and was still working by, operating by Captain H.C.R. Davis at that time.

We get now into the Depression years, in which there was very little coal exports to talk of. I don't know whether this was because of the Depression, to give some work in Nanaimo harbour, or not, but they first started to talk about an assembly wharf in Nanaimo, and they made the first plans towards this wharf. Because in 1835 [1935], they did some dredging off the area which is now the Assembly wharf, being off in this particular area here, and dredged land, which they [built] up these sections here.

47:44

[tape stops and restarts]

I think when I was talking about the Berth A dredging I said 1835, I meant of course, 1935. [I've been building this thing up, dredging.] But they did dredge from this area here to create the land at the back of what is now the Assembly wharf. I think I have some pictures over there of the dredged area in '37, '38, and '39 with the, when the Assembly wharf first became established.

In '35, they dredged for this project 480,000 cubic yards for \$73,000. Now, I'll just give you this as a comparison, because when we dredged the third berth in Nanaimo in 1964, we took out just a little more: 523,000 cubic yards, and it cost us \$480,000. The prices had gone up a little bit. [laughter]

The Department of Transport were becoming more and more interested in their part of the harbour, and had been realizing that a lot of construction had gone on in this area, without their

prior knowledge. Oil companies were the most noticeable, in that they had built wharves in the early 1920s without permission. So, the department came in in 1936 and decided that these chaps that had been using this water without consent, first of all had to take out a water lease on the property, and then they had to pay back rent. And this is what they started to do. They backdated some leases at least to Imperial Oil, which has since been transferred to Standard, back from '36 to 1927. They backdated another lease, on which Shell Oil now sits, back to 1921. And made them pay the rates right up. They weren't paying much for water leases in those days anyway, but it was [an expression of] the principle of the thing and not the amount of money involved.

You had the situation then, in the harbour, where about 1937, where land has been created here; there are still ferry wharves here; and a general cargo wharf here; and smaller wharves and floats down through the channel. They hadn't had a good survey in this harbour since 1904, when Captain Parry came in. And so in 1937, they again surveyed the complete area of Nanaimo harbour, which is noticed on the coloured chart at the back there.

One of the surveyors, interestingly enough, on this survey in 1937, was a Mr. R.B. Young, and he is now the, and still, the regional hydrographer for British Columbia, and his interest is in the whole charting of the whole coast of Vancouver Island, and also the coast of the mainland of British Columbia as well.

Your coal, I think now, is gone, very nearly gone. The lumber mills are starting. Small mills are coming into existence, in Nanaimo, and around Nanaimo. People are starting to talk about the export of lumber. And so, they had built this, they had reclaimed this area here, extensively, to put a wharf in. They had built a bulkhead, to make it, to create the wharf, a landing place. And in 1938, saw the establishment of the Nanaimo Assembly wharf as such. With the wharfinger company appointed in March to run this for the Department of Transport. They had one berth; they had one crane; they had a slipway; they had a warehouse; they had 13.7 acres of land in this area for lumber storage. And they achieved an agreement with the railway company, where the government were allowed to put a spur in from the main E&N tracks, runs through here, down this way, going alongside the Assembly wharf.

You will see pictures there, in one of the booklets I have. The third berth booklet. The first few years of the Assembly wharf, they were doing mainly scow loading. Not too many ships came in in the first couple of years, up to the wharf. Scows were being loaded, scows were taken to another port, where they were loaded onto ships, or they were used in B.C. lumber production.

52:29

I think Number One Mine closed about 1938, I'm not too certain about this.

During the war, the town got back on its feet, I believe, to a certain extent. Because of the war, a lot of troops came in, a lot of people were used to build a camp up here. And around about 1942, they started to build minesweepers, in the area where the Madill property is, or was.

Ferry boat traffic after the war, surprisingly enough, CPR [quoted] a fine service, and I'm not [saying] this with any, no detriment to the company at all, but they were running a fine service of two ferries per day, and five ferries per day in July and August.

If I can jump this thing suddenly from about 1946 to 1956, in 1956, there were 21 ferries a day between Nanaimo and Vancouver. And in 1956, these ferries carried 302,000 cars; 51,800 trucks; and over a million and a quarter people. In one year.

The commercial fishing business after the war became a part of Nanaimo harbour. The fishermen were living here. They weren't living up close to the fishing grounds, they were living in some centre, and went from this centre to the grounds to do their fishing. So, in consequence, wharfage was needed for them. They had a little bit of wharfage in the channel; the fish companies had wharves in the channel, but they still needed more.

So, in 1947, they deepened Commercial Inlet, as it was then, to 10 feet, and constructed a new set of floats for the increasing number of commercial fishermen that were coming in. Also in '47, they first started to talk about a local port authority, in Nanaimo. At that time they thought Nanaimo would be possibly part of the National Harbours Board system. They didn't really know, but they started to talk about it.

1948, and I have a copy of the paper over there, showed two big announcements which started the new growth of Nanaimo harbour. The CPR announced that were going to spend, to start with, a million and three quarter dollars, coming up to four million. And MacMillan Bloedel announced they were going to start, going to spend 12 million dollars. One to build a new two berth terminus for their ferries to Vancouver; and the other in the construction of a pulp mill, with pulp for export.

These, I think, were the two big things that started the modern day Nanaimo as you know it. There was still mines, I think statistics say there were 400 miners working at this particular time. Canadian Colliery's wharf was still being used for export. They were also doing something then, they were transshipping coal from Alberta through Nanaimo, to Japan, using the Nanaimo wharves as the export wharf.

Somebody came up, a Mr. Cowie, in 1948, with a very good article in *The Free Press*, regarding the dredging of the Middle Bank. The Middle Bank is the area best shown, I suppose, by pointing out to you here. Where at this particular time, there was nine feet of water at low tide. You had the McKay Channel running on the north side of the Middle Bank, going down to Newcastle Island Passage, as it's known now; Meakin Channel, being the channel that came on this side of the Middle Bank, coming down here to the Assembly wharves.

Now, whether he knew anything or not, I don't know, because the following year, in 1949, they started. And I believe they took over a year doing this. They started to take the rock off the Middle Bank. This cost the federal government \$666,000. And they took it down from the nine feet of draught there was to 24 feet at low tide.

Most of this was rock. 110,000 cubic yards of it was rock, 4,000 yards of it was just a fill material. So this means any further development to deepen Nanaimo harbour proper has to be done by blasting. And as this was in the shape of a mountain, you took off the top portion, 110,000 cubic yards for so many dollars, if we take off the next portion, to go down to about 35 feet, it's going to be twice the yardage at four times the cost. This makes development, I'm afraid, in Nanaimo harbour proper, for really deep sea stuff, improbable. The development has to go somewhere else, and this is, if there is nothing to carry on with.

In 1950, they, the new CPR terminal was ready for operation. It's very sorry, a very sorry fact, that 12 years later it becomes obsolete. This is just a change in the time. I first came to

Nanaimo in 1950, not to live here, but on a ship, to load lumber at what was then the Nanaimo Assembly wharf, the one berth. I'd been travelling the world for about seven years before this, and I was a little, shall I say, astounded, and possibly dismayed with Nanaimo in 1950. Little knowing that within three years, I'd be back living here and running the ferry boat operation. But, this is what happened.

This was the time when there was no Simpson's-Sears, of course, and the sports ground was still there. I had my first glass of ten cent beer in a hotel called The Globe, and we smoked five cent cigars with a wide stub on the end, [often?] the radio officer and I, but anyhow, this is by the way.

Ah, lumber export was going on, 1950, when I came here, they exported about 50 million feet over the Nanaimo Assembly wharf. 1952, the Harmac pulp wharf opened, the mill of course had been in production before this, but they opened the wharf for exports. The company did not like then, and still does not like particularly, to have its export figures announced, for purely good business reasons. But in 1952, the Assembly wharf had 84 ships, and exported 63 million feet of lumber. This would be the equivalent of about 88,000 tons of lumber. Now you bear this 88,000 tons with the 400 and 600 thousand tons of coal that we were talking about some 60 years prior to this.

The Island had grown; Nanaimo had grown with it. And something else that I think helped Nanaimo grow even more was the establishment in 1953 of a brand new ferry company in opposition to Canadian Pacific Railway. This was Black Ball. And a second vessel was added on this run in 1955. The *Kahloke* came first in '53, the *Chinook*, [inaudible] *Chinook* came in '55. The *Princess of Vancouver* came on the run for the railway company in 1955, capable of carrying boxcars. Population of this time around about 23,000. Ferry traffic, I've already dealt with.

1:00:22

Because of the lumber mills in the area, and their need for wood, and the fact that there was not sufficient land on which to store logs, it was necessary to find somewhere else in the harbour to keep your logs. This started off with the log towing practices in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but built up to a size in the middle '50s, where it was necessary to start using this area here, commonly known as the Mud Flats for log storage.

Now, presently, there are 665 acres of land underwater in the Mud Flats leased to companies for log storage. This is out of a possible use of approximately 1,200 acres in this area. And this, to my way of thinking at the moment, is the best use to which the Mud Flats can be put, at the moment. Later on, I'll talk about the future a little bit.

The town grew. Lumber export grew, coal export grew. By 1957, we were talking about 67 ships to the Assembly wharf. Lumber export had gone down to 51 million feet, but they were still shipping about 100,000 tons of coal, from Harmac.

In 1958 though, they added a second berth at the Assembly wharf, and together with another six acres of lumber storage that they created by the dredging for this. And in 1958, 1959, and again in 1960, there was very serious discussion going on between interested groups in the city, council, chamber of commerce, and individuals, regarding the formation of a harbour commission.

In April of 1959, a petition went forward to the Honourable George Hees, who was the minister at that particular time. The submission is over there. In December of 1960, the customs at that time had recorded 3,000 registrations, sorry, not registrations, licenses for small boats in the Nanaimo area proper, over a period of years. 3,000. That's not to say that there are 3,000 vessels licensed in the harbour now, but this was the number of licenses that had gone on in the past. So, we're getting up in to what is reasonably a very modern day, modern day looking at this.

I look at this tape, and so I won't go into reasons for the establishment and finances of a harbour commission. The main things to make a harbour commission work are: local incentive; the fact that the federal government turns over the assets to the commission to run; and you have to have good prospects for future development - you have to see a revenue in the harbour whereby you can support yourself, because contrary to the thoughts of many in Nanaimo, I'm afraid, and maybe it's the commission's fault, maybe it's my fault: the commission does not exist on tax monies.

The revenue that the commission makes is [ploughed?] back into the port. If we don't have the money to do a job, we ask the federal government for it. We put up a very good argument, and they lend us the money, and we pay it back at a reasonably [?] rate of interest. I'm talking about five and a half percent as opposed to six. Over a relatively short period of time. They will do things for us like dredging for nothing, but as far as building wharves, building floats in Commercial Inlet, we do that with our own money or we borrow from them, and we pay it back. So, when people say, "That's my patrol boat running around" - it isn't. That patrol boat was paid for by somebody in Liverpool, somebody in Genoa, somebody in Sydney, Australia, who bought the lumber that went out of Nanaimo on the ship. He is the actual payer for it.

In '61, they rebuilt A berth, it was about time - it had been built in 1937, with a brand new warehouse. In '63, going along very quickly, they opened the lumber berth at Harmac. They had established a new packaging....what's the? #3? Warehouse? Wood room #3. Wood room #3, and so they opened a berth in connection with this, for lumber export.

By 1964, 5,000 small boats had been licensed in the port. In 1965, the port's exports were thusly: we'd imported 14,000 tons of salt-cake; we'd had 141 ships to the Assembly wharf, and 192 ships to the two wharves at Harmac; we'd exported 129 million feet of lumber from the Assembly wharf, together with 10,000 tons of coal; Harmac had exported in that year 145 million feet of lumber, and 175,000 tons of pulp. If you work these million board feet into tons, and add it to the pulp tons, now in 1965, you're up to the export capacity that you were in 1898, when you exported 600,000 tons of coal.

In 1963, business was booming at the Assembly wharf, we started to talk about getting a third berth for the harbour. This came through in 1965. This is where the harbour sits today. The small boat traffic is confined to the Newcastle Island Passage, and I think will stay there. I think, in the future, the oil companies, and the mill, certainly the mill that is down there, will come out. The main body of the harbour, because of the entrance here, will not develop as far as any deep sea work is concerned. Your deep sea export area, your industrial area, is going to go down here. Where it is going to be the Mud Flats.

The reclamation of land by reclaiming, you create deep water. You establish your industrial sites, in this particular area, and the industrial business will move from the Bowen Park area down to the south end of town.

I'd like to talk about modern ships and how they are saving time and money now by not [bobbing] around to five or six ports on the coast to load lumber, but coming in to one or two ports to load a full cargo. This is happening and has happened at Harmac, both with ships coming in for a full cargo of pulp, from Harmac; full cargo of lumber. At the Assembly wharf, we have an operation now with a certain company whereby ship loads at Tahsis and comes to Nanaimo. Between these two ports she loads a full cargo, and away she goes. This is the freight handling saving way. It is cheaper for the shipper, cheaper for the buyer, and this will happen in the future, in Nanaimo, I'm sure. You'll see less ships at the Assembly wharf, but you'll see a monthly export figure that is going to be a lot higher, possibly, than it has been in the past. These ships need deeper dredging. It's easy here, the bottom is good and solid.

1:07:44

[tape stops and restarts]

As we dredge to create berths for lumber exports though, we need more land. And the dredge spoil is put behind a gravel dike and additional land is created. This is the first step in development of industrial land to the south of the Assembly wharf, when we dredge, hopefully, in 1969, towards a fourth berth in Nanaimo, we will obtain enough dredge spoil to create another 26 acres of land. This will take us down to the northerly boundary of the Indian reserve.

As we need approximately a million feet, one acre of land for a million feet of lumber, if we are going to have ships taking, as they are doing now, up to 10 million feet of lumber per ship, from the port, we consequently need, say, 10 acres of storage area to prepare for the ship. An additional 26 acres of newly created land will give us a total of 56 acres at the Nanaimo Assembly wharf. Now, we can put about 40 acres of this to good use. The other area then, can be used, possibly, for industrial expansion. And if the Department of Indian Affairs continue with their ideas for the removal of the band from Number 1 Reserve, and the replacement of this band in the other reserves, turning Number 1 area over to industrial expansion, then I can foresee that the whole area, from the *Princess of Vancouver* slip down to Mayo Lumber Company, could be industrial land with deep water berths alongside.

In so far as the remainder of the Mud Flats are concerned, these have to stay as log storage areas for the present time, until somebody can devise an efficient and economical way of dry land log storage. When this is accomplished, then the whole area of the Mud Flats could, by the construction of a large dike or rock fill, rock wall, along one side, or along the top of the Flats, be turned into industrial land. You would have a situation then, possibly in 30, 40, maybe 50 years' time, whereby the 1,200 acres of the Mud Flats would be something like 200 acres of deep water and 1,000 acres of land.

The newer ships that are coming now, apart from taking the larger cargoes and needing the deeper draught that they do, are also loading faster, and you are getting unitization of packages, of pulp for example, the new ships with what are called Munck cranes are capable of lifting 16 tons to the hoist. This means that 64 bales of pulp, 64 500 pound bales of pulp, are loaded at once, as opposed to the two bales or four bales that are swung onboard now with conventional gear.

The same thing is happening with lumber, whereby instead of one package of lumber weighing possibly 2.7 tons, or maybe the two packages together 5.4 tons, are taken onboard a ship in one lift. You are getting modernized equipment, capable of lifting between 12 and 16 tons of lumber in one lift into the ship. This means that where the ship before would come in for

possibly three million feet and would take six days to load it, you can now load three million feet of lumber, half as many men as previously, in a day and a half, instead of six days.

The newer type vessels that may come to Nanaimo, may not, but you'll certainly see them on the Pacific coast, these are the ships known as LASH ships [lighter aboard ship] and link ships. Your LASH ship is a vessel that has lighters onboard ship. These lighters are fully loaded; they are placed onboard the vessel; the vessel steams along the coast, to certain ports where it could not before enter because of draught. The lighters will then be lifted off the ship into the water, and towed ashore. Other lighters that are already ashore either with cargo or empty will be towed back to the ship, lifted back onboard again, and the ship will proceed onto the next port. This means that cargoes then, will be able to go from, be exported from, or be imported into, smaller ports along the coast where deep draught vessels have not been able to get in the past.

Your link ship, which is something revolutionary, but architects, naval architects, are already studying this. This is a vessel where you have six, eight, ten compartments. Each compartment is self-contained and is capable of floating by itself. You will then have a bow compartment and a stern compartment, the stern compartment will hold the propulsion gear and the navigational gear. A vessel, with say, one bow, eight compartments in the stern, will sail up the coast, they will get to outside a particularly port, the bow will then come off, two compartments will come out, these two compartments will be towed into the port. They will put the bow back on again, and a ship with a bow and six compartments, and a stern will then go up to the next port. And this selfsame thing will happen. As I say, these plans are already being studied by naval architects.

In so far as the LASH ships are concerned, the lighters onboard ship, one American company, I believe it's Pacific Far East Lines, have already let tenders for construction of these particular vessels. And you'll probably see them on the high seas by the end of 1969. I don't think you'll see much of this in evidence in Nanaimo, but you'll certainly will see them on the Pacific coast.

Nanaimo may have a future as a container port, but if we do, I think it will be in a small way. And it will mean then, that Nanaimo will have taken precedence over Victoria as an importing centre. Nanaimo, city itself, will be a distribution centre, containers of general cargo will come in to Nanaimo, and the cargo will be transshipped by truck up and down the Island.

This is happening, of course, in Vancouver, and I believe they are making plans in New Westminster. It may be some years yet before they do consider Nanaimo as there is an efficient service both by ferry, barge, and plane between the Island and the Mainland. And some companies may not consider it feasible to use Nanaimo, or any other Vancouver Island point, as a container centre.

This then is the concept of the future of Nanaimo: with a development of marinas and pleasure boat facilities down through Newcastle Island Passage; the main body of the harbour staying pretty well as it is at the moment, with particular emphasis possibly being placed on the Madill area around the arena; the development of commercial moorage in the harbour for your fishing vessels, then your ferry complex, CPR ferry complex, seaplane complex, and a larger, ever larger Assembly wharf with land to the south of this for Assembly wharf use and industrial use; and looking forward to the use of possibly 75% of the Nanaimo River Flats, one day, as an industrial land area, built up by dredging or by natural filling, natural accretion of land, and possibly in the same way that they've done it in Holland.

I think this just about concludes my story on Nanaimo harbour: past, present, and future. I must admit that I now know an awful lot more about Nanaimo harbour than I'd ever thought I would do, and it's been very interesting to go through the archives, and to talk to people in Victoria, and in Nanaimo about past events. There is a fine history in this harbour, and I hope that the developments continue in the years to come.

I would like to thank Mrs. Harry Freeman for a lot of the information that I have used tonight. She was a great assistance to me in talking about work that Harry had done in this area. And I would also like to thank Mr. Art Martin for the use of a lot of pictures from the terrific collection that he has of maritime marine scenes around, in this area. I trust that the Nanaimo Historical Society, for whom I have recorded this story of Nanaimo harbour will find the tape of interest in the years to come, and I personally would like to hear the tape again in a few years' time to see how correct my predictions might be. Thank you very much.

[recording ends]

1:18:07