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### *Some Brief History On*

#### *White Rocks Famous Hillside & Marine Drive*

The completion of the Great Northern's coastal line marked the beginnings of the resort communities of White Rock and Crescent Beach. Easy access, via the railway to the wide expanse of beach encouraged growing numbers of New Westminister and Vancouver residents to acquire summer cottages in the communities. The rapid growth of each of these centers was also dependent to some extent on expanding local logging and milling operations.



The rock that the resort community of White Rock was named after. This is located between West Beach and East Beach below the intervening hill. This picture was taken in 1911 and at that time cottages were built on the beach.

White Rock marks its beginnings from the opening of the sea-shore rail line, and the Dominion Government's designating White Rock as a port of entry for customs and immigration purposes in 1908. In 1910 a New Westminister syndicate took over the original town site and began the promotion and sale of lots.



Early development was along the road bordering the railway. The hill side showed the aftermath of local logging operations as well as a forest fire. Hughes' General Store is in the foreground. Summer cottages are scattered on the hill side.

The rapid expansion of summer cottages on small lots along the slopes and beach frontage of Semiahmoo Bay reached a peak in 1911. Development was centered on the area immediately behind the Great Northern Station which in 1910 was located at the foot of Oxford Street, but by 1913 the present station about one-quarter mile east of the original one was completed.



This picture taken in 1911 shows the summer cottages built behind the Great Northern Station along the present Elm Street. Many of these homes were owned by prominent New Westminster and Vancouver families.



The business community located opposite the Great Northern Train Station along Marine Drive. Both pictures are from the 1920's and are taken near the foot of Martin Street near the approach to the pier. Note the hill side is largely undeveloped.

The Fox and Hunter shingle mill began operating in the vicinity of the present Marine Drive and High Street. By 1911 a number of prominent Vancouver and New Westminster people had established summer cottages about the core. 1912 saw the opening of the fifty-room White Rock Hotel located on the hill east of the community core. The community's second hotel was constructed in 1914 opposite the Great Northern Station. It was destroyed by fire in January 1931.

White Rock had its present pier built with Federal funds and it was officially opened on November 14, 1914. It was built to provide a deep-water wharf facility, and extended 1,616 feet from shore. However, its primary function was, then as it is now, to serve as a tourist facility for pleasure boats, for a promenade, and for fishing and swimming. Since its construction it has acted as the focus for White Rock's summer tourist activities.



The pier at White Rock became a focus for all marine and recreational activities. This picture was taken about 1917.



The White Rock Pier with its floats became the focus of activities. Floats provided temporary moorage for local boaters, while the local swimming association taught many local children how to swim as well as water safety.

In 1913 the construction of the Campbell River Mill caused another mild land boom in the east end of White Rock in the area north and west of the mouth of the Little Campbell River.



This picture was taken from the top of the hill in front of the White Rock Hotel, on Dolfin Steet, looking west. It shows the growing summer business district developing along what was known as Balmer's Beach. The picture, taken in the 1920's, shows the Campbell River Saw Mill pier. At this time buildings were allowed on the beach.

The building boom resulted in the creation of a second focus of community activity. The opening of Pacific Highway brought improved road access and in the 1920s the area between the East and West developed areas - Balmer's Beach (East Beach) - developed as tourism increased. Access via the newly cemented Pacific Highway brought many more summer tourists and seasonal residents.



Balmer's Beach or East Beach emerged as a summer tourist focus with the opening of the Pacific Highway. People had access to the beach from the Highway and Campbell River Road. This picture was taken in the 1940s, looking east near the bottom of the hill.

White Rock continued to grow both as a summer resort and as a permanent residential area. The creation of the White Rock Water Works in 1913 and the provision of electric power in 1915 from the Campbell River Mill greatly influenced the attraction of more year-round residents.

The development of private summer cottages on small lots along the slopes and beach frontage of Semiahmoo Bay characterized White Rock in the late 1920s

and early 1930s. It was during this period that the community's resort role was firmly established.

The closure of the Campbell River Mill in 1927 brought a great change to the community. The population dwindled to about 400 permanent residents and many homes were left vacant as mill workers and their families moved out. The Great Depression brought even more difficult times to the resort community. The 1930s saw people migrating to the west coast from the prairie provinces, where the general depression was made worse by drought conditions and repeated crop failures. Many of these prairie people came to White Rock where inexpensive and available housing made the community an attractive haven. By 1937 the permanent population had increased to about 1,000. Many summer cottages had thus become permanent homes. The number of summer homes had continued to decline, until they now form a very small percentage of the community's dwellings.



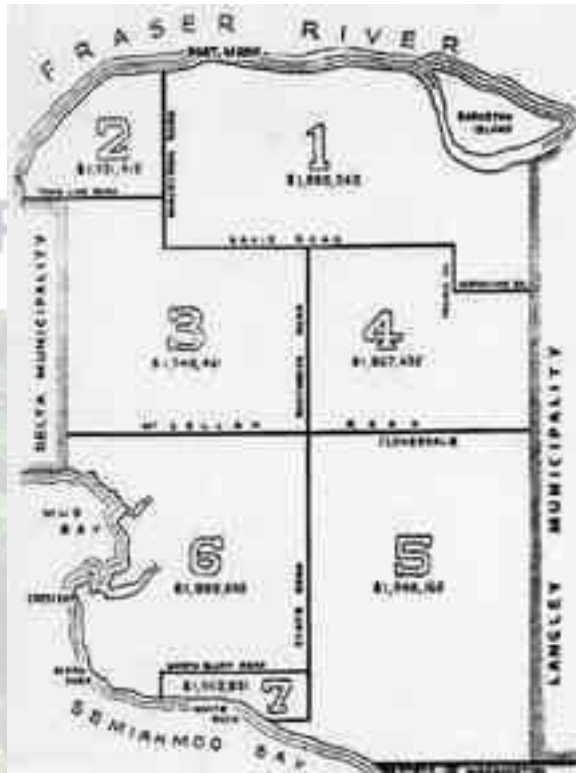
A view of early White Rock's community core. The picture is looking east showing Washington Avenue about 1923-24. The buildings include a dance hall, store, the GNR station and the pier.



A view of the same community core in 1940. This area is immediately behind the Station.

The improvement of roads and the widespread adoption of the automobile have been responsible for White Rock's resort role changing to a day-use or at best a weekend summer recreation role. The community is now only thirty to forty-five minutes from the metropolitan core and has emerged as a residential and retirement community. With the expected population growth of the Lower Mainland, there will be greatly increased demands on White Rock's beaches and other recreation facilities.

In the 1950's the rapid growth of North Surrey saw the District increase its spending in that region to provide basic amenities. The White Rock area felt that it was being neglected in favour of the burgeoning north, and by special Provincial warrant the City of White Rock was created on April 15th, 1957.



This is the map that defined the boundaries of the City of White Rock. This is a map of the wards of Surrey between 1947 and 1957. The wards were designed to have approximately equal assessed value of property, which is why more densely urban White Rock covered a much smaller area than the other wards. When the people of Ward 7 voted in 1957 to secede from Surrey, it was the boundaries of that ward that became the boundaries of the new city.

Source: Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley

