

# FACES FROM FORT LANGLEY'S HISTORY

## Site Guide



Built in 1827, Fort Langley was a Hudson's Bay Company fur trading post. Located on the banks of the Fraser River, it was once part of a British trade route at the centre of a large population of Aboriginal people.

### Partners in Business and Marriage

Fort Langley attracted Aboriginal people who traded furs and fish for blankets and other goods. To strengthen its position, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) encouraged its men to marry Aboriginal women. These alliances allowed the HBC access to Aboriginal trade networks, and the fort prospered. They also gave Aboriginal families priority access to the European resources for sale at the fort.

### A Trade Off: Losing Money, Winning a Monopoly

HBC Governor George Simpson had a problem. He wanted furs from coastal Aboriginal people, but so did the Americans. The convenience of a permanent trading post (Fort Langley) or a roving one (the SS Beaver) didn't sway savvy Aboriginal traders. They wanted the best deal. Simpson's solution? Drive the price down, way down. The HBC lost money, but they won the trade.

### More Than a Fur Trading Post

While the HBC came looking for furs, the Kwantlen people had other business ideas. Chief Whattlekainum pressed

the Company traders to accept salmon and cranberries. Soon salted salmon was shipped to Hawaii and cranberries to California.

These new products posed a challenge for storage and shipping. William Cromarty, Peopeo and other coopers made wooden barrels to export goods, a key to the fort's success.

Aboriginal workers were hired for the Fort Langley farm. Fort Langley not only became self-sufficient for food and supplied other posts, but it exported produce to the Russian American Company in Alaska. Through this special contract the HBC finally gained a monopoly on the coastal trade.

### Fort Langley: North of the Border

In 1846, the border with the United States was settled. Now that the line was drawn, the HBC needed to keep its trade goods in British territory, north of the border. Fort Langley was ideally positioned as the link between the interior HBC posts and the Pacific Ocean (and ultimately Britain). Soon, fur brigades were coming and going, delivering furs to Fort Langley and leaving with trade goods and provisions for the remote posts.

### Claims, Colony, Country

"Gold!" In 1858, the discovery of this glittery mineral on the Fraser River changed everything. Fort Langley went

from a modest trade and provisioning post to the centre of a gold rush as 30,000 miners came calling.

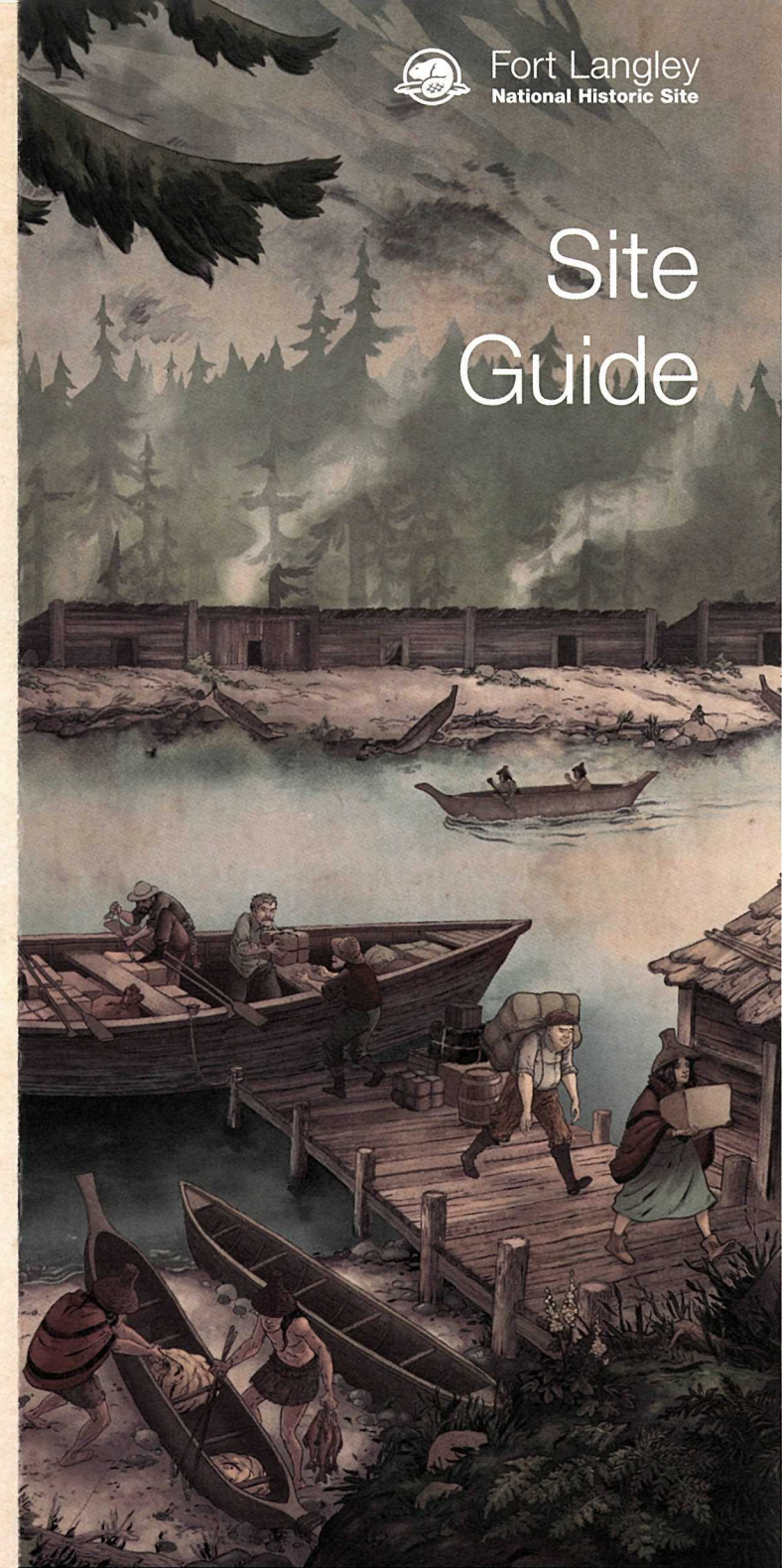
Fearful of an American takeover of the resource-rich region, the British government quickly made a move. Right here, on November 19, 1858, the newly-sworn-in Governor James Douglas proclaimed the Colony of British Columbia.

Eight years later, in 1866, the Colony of British Columbia merged with the Colony of Vancouver Island, with Victoria as the capital. Then, in 1871, British Columbia became a province of Canada.

### Fort Langley: Part of Canada's Heritage

Over time, business at Fort Langley declined as British Columbia grew and changed around it. In recognition of its importance in the story of Canada, Fort Langley became a national historic site in 1923. And in 1931, the one remaining original building was opened to the public.

Starting in the 1950s, many buildings were added to restore the atmosphere of the original fort. Today, Fort Langley National Historic Site is part of a nation-wide family of protected areas managed by Parks Canada. Canada's national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas help tell the story of Canada.





# LOCATION GUIDE

*Note: Numbers correspond with the audio tour. To hear Fort Langley's complete story, pick up your audio tour at the Visitor Centre.*

## 1 Visitor Centre

## 2 Pathway

Imagine life before cars, trains, and buses. You would have arrived at the fort by dugout canoe or a Hudson's Bay Company boat.

## 3 Trade Window

Aboriginal people brought furs and fish to the trade window. Chief Trader James Yale gave good prices to keep them from trading with the Americans.

## 4 Storehouse

Built in the 1840s, the Storehouse is the only remaining original building at Fort Langley. The rest were constructed more recently.

## 6 Cooperage

William Cromarty, Wavikarea and other coopers built barrels that were used to ship salmon, cranberries, farm produce and other goods.

## 7 Bastions Gallery

Even before the fort had houses, Chief Factor James McMillan built bastions and palisade walls. Protecting trade goods was a priority. This gallery was a lookout.

## 8 Blacksmith

Blacksmiths like James Taylor forged iron tools to trade with Aboriginal people. The iron hardware was also used at Fort Langley and other HBC posts.

## 9 Fur Press

Lean on the lever to see how furs were compressed before being shipped to London.

## 10 Exhibits Building

Like the two buildings to the north of it, this was a storehouse. Inside, pretend to be a trader using the trade shop window and props.

## 11 Café

The café is open seasonally. The depot that was once here stored goods awaiting shipment to the interior. Upstairs, a sales shop sold supplies to the employees and, later, to the gold miners.

## Kwantlen First Nation

Kwantlen Chief Whattlekainum positioned his nation to be the fort's preferred trading partner.

## Fraser River

At first, HBC Governor George Simpson thought the Fraser River would be a "highway" connecting interior trading posts with the coast. Then he travelled down the turbulent Fraser Canyon!



## 12 Big House

Home to the fort's managers, this building was reconstructed in 1958, 100 years after the Colony of British Columbia was announced here.

## 16 Kitchen Shelter

Narcisse Fallardeau and his Kwantlen wife Helène served the residents of the Big House from their house and kitchen at this location.

## 17 Farm & Garden

Company clerk William Newton managed a nearby dairy farm as well as a vegetable and grain farm about 6 km south of the fort.

## 18 Gold Panning

In 1858, many prospectors stopped at Fort Langley to buy supplies before continuing up the Fraser River to look for gold. Now it's your turn!

## 19 Bateau

Boat builder Samuel Robertson made bateaux like this one. These sturdy river boats transported furs to Fort Langley from the interior posts and returned with trade goods.

## 20 Servants' Quarters

Young Helen Robertson lived here in an apartment with her brother and sister, her Scottish father Samuel and her Kwantlen mother Julia. Their neighbours included HBC employees from places like Hawaii and Quebec, their Aboriginal wives, and children.

## 23 Saw Pit

Cutting planks was a tough job. Hawaiians like Como and Peopeo sawed all day long, making planks for floors and roofs.

## 24 Visit Conclusion

We hope you have enjoyed this glimpse into the lives of Fort Langley's people. Stop by the Visitor Centre and Gift Shop for more information and to find a meaningful souvenir of your visit.

# FORT LANGLEY

## NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

**oTENTik**  
Overnight accommodations  
reservation.parksCanada.gc.ca

## Open daily year round

23433 Mavis Avenue, PO Box 129 Fort Langley, BC V1M 2R5  
604-513-4777 fort.langley@pc.gc.ca

## Find out about all our events and programs:

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