

**Stories from the Archives —
Burrard Inlet ‘Powder Wharf’ Supplied Indian Arm Quarries**

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Burnaby historian George Green ⁽¹⁾ makes reference to a “powder magazine” and shipping wharf located on Burrard Inlet in North Burnaby as early as 1903. Being next to the CPR railway line, this was a logical location for supplying blasting powder to the granite quarries on the North Arm of Burrard Inlet. Both the quarry at Granite Falls ⁽²⁾ and ‘Keefer’s Quarry’ ⁽³⁾ on Croker Island had been in operation since 1886, the CPR quarry ⁽⁴⁾ at Bishop Creek had been in operation since 1887, and the granite quarry at Deep Cove ⁽⁵⁾ began operation in 1909.

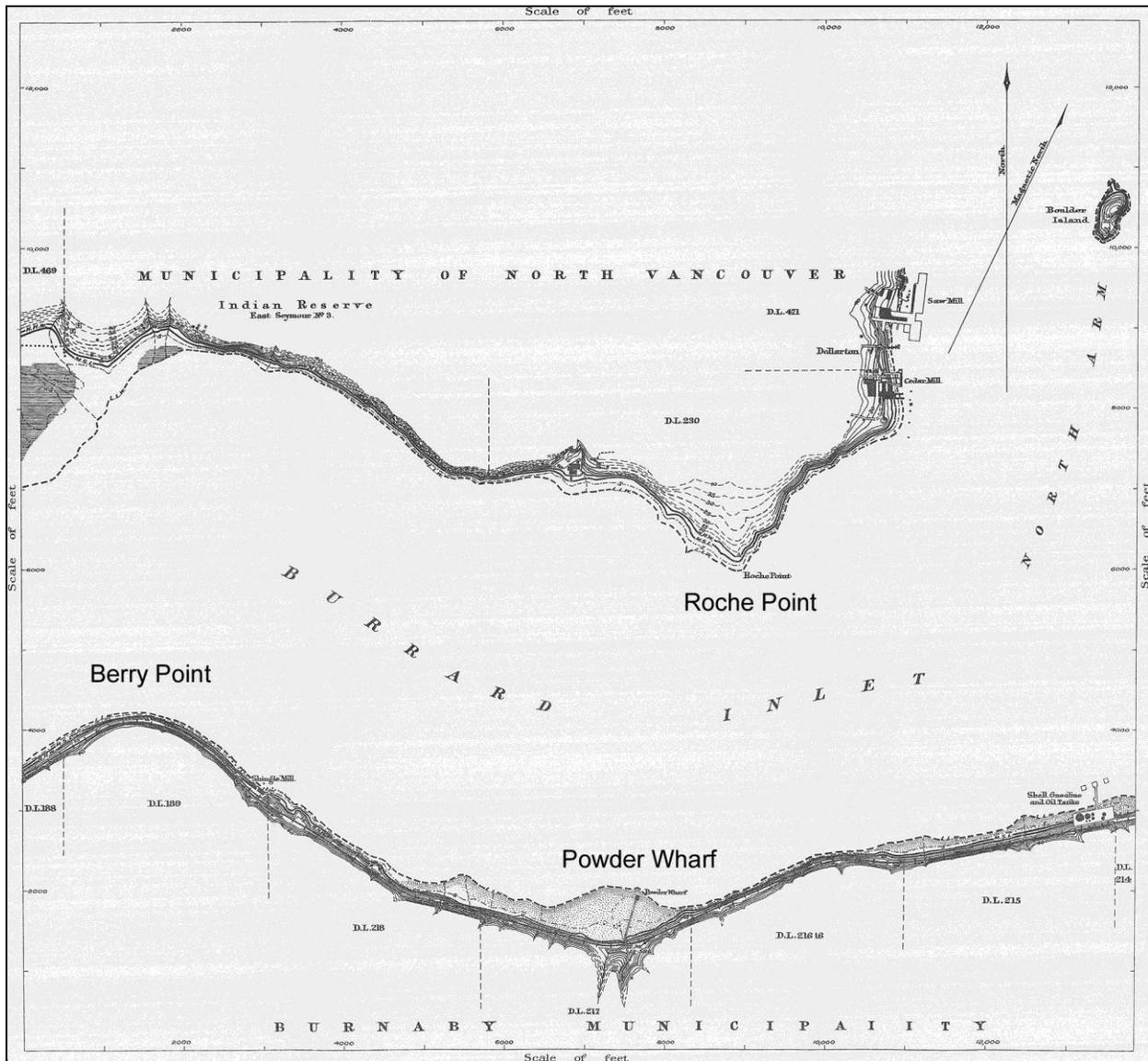


City of Vancouver Archives (CVA 260-1081).

‘Hamilton Powder Company’ magazine on Burrard Inlet in Burnaby, circa 1918 — view looking north toward the North Arm (Indian Arm) & Belcarra (upper right) — note the railway siding and the access to the wharf under the CPR tracks.

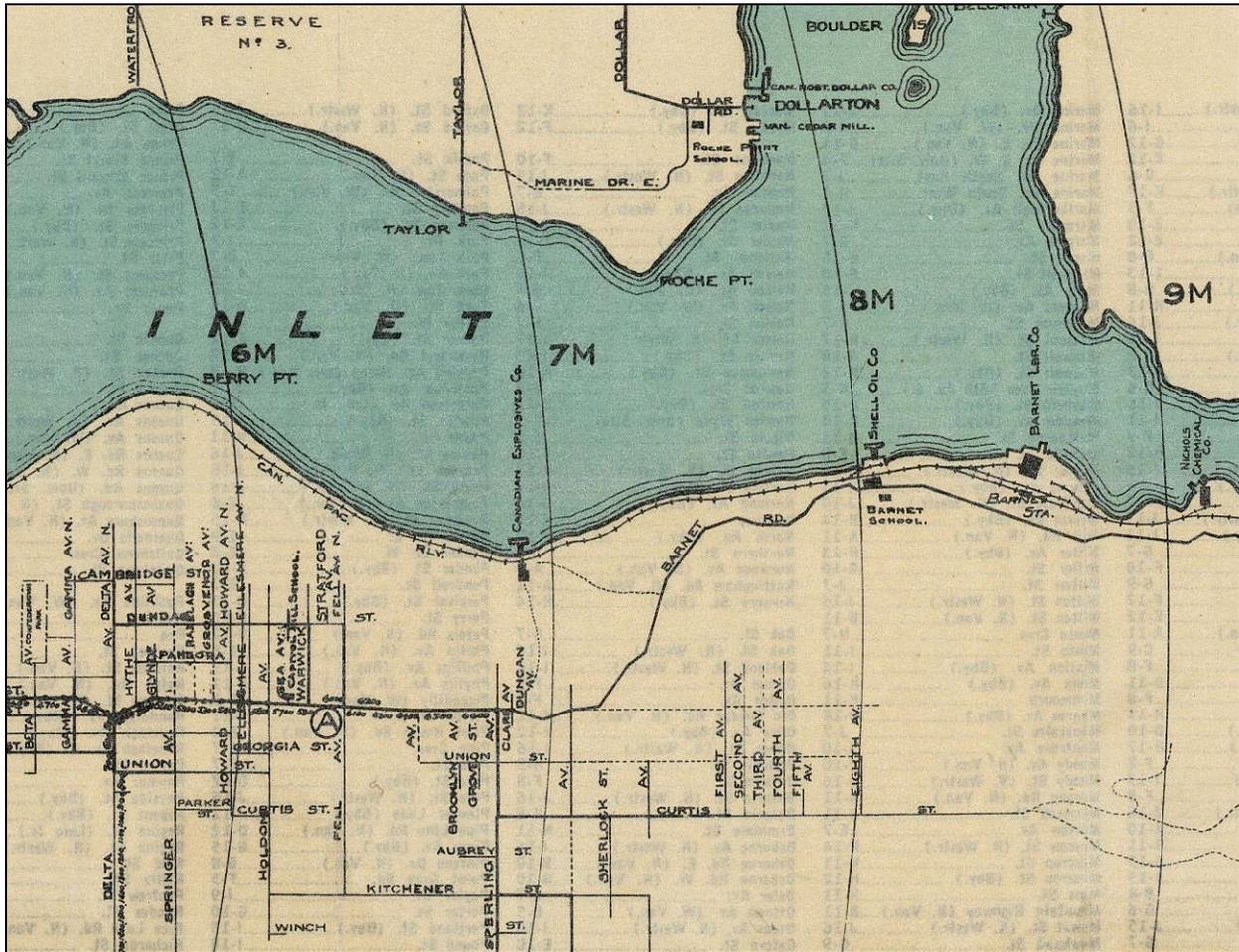
The oldest direct ancestor of what would become 'Canadian Industries Limited' (CIL) originally started in 1862, then known as the 'Hamilton Powder Company'. The company was created to buy the assets of the former 'Canada Powder Company', which had formed in 1852. Their major product was black powder, used for blasting. In order to provide the massive amounts of explosives needed to build the 'Canadian Pacific Railway', a new dynamite factory was opened in McMasterville, Quebec. Other black powder plants were acquired in Quebec and the Maritimes and, in 1890, the company opened the first explosives plant in the far west, at Departure Bay near Nanaimo, British Columbia. ⁽⁶⁾

The "powder magazine" facility on Burrard Inlet in Burnaby was originally identified ⁽⁷⁾ as 'Hamilton Powder Company'; on a 1929 map of Greater Vancouver the facility was identified ⁽⁸⁾ as 'Canadian Explosives Company' (CXL); on the 1932 and 1945 maps of Vancouver Harbour the facility was identified ⁽⁹⁾ as the 'Canadian Giant Powder Company'; and a 1948 aerial photograph ⁽¹⁰⁾ of the site shows that the "powder magazine" and wharf were no longer present.



City of Vancouver Archives (CVA Map 1157, LEG1153.057).

1921 map of Burrard Inlet showing the location of the 'Powder Wharf' in Burnaby.



City of Vancouver Archives (CVA Map 212, LEG1339.1).

1930 map of Burnaby showing the location of the ‘Powder Wharf’ (center) — note the trail leading to the magazine immediately north of Spurling Avenue.

In 1903, a logging skidroad ran up the ravine from where the railway siding and “powder magazine” were located on Burrard Inlet. The logging operations were then located west of ‘Pole Line Road’, now called ‘Spurling Avenue’, and Hastings Street had just been opened from Boundary Road to ‘Barnet’. ⁽¹⁾

Starting in 1913, the passenger ferry ‘New Delta’ would depart from Vancouver and stop at the various wharves along the Burrard Inlet shoreline to pick-up workers destined for the loco oil refinery across from Port Moody, and return them again in the evening. ⁽¹¹⁾⁽¹²⁾ One of the several stops made by the ‘New Delta’ included the ‘Powder Wharf’ in North Burnaby.

For many years, the local residents in that part of North Burnaby would walk the trail to the ‘Powder Wharf’ to fish for crab and flounder which were plentiful off the wharf. ⁽¹³⁾ The trail was also used by the residents of ‘Crabtown’ on the shore of Burrard Inlet to access the streetcar and shops along Hastings Street. Squatter shacks proliferated along the Burrard Inlet shoreline during the 1930s Great Depression, which provided cheap accommodation. The ‘Crabtown’ shacks were built on decks supported by pilings that were sunk into the sand. Many of shacks were neat, brightly decorated, attractive and clean. The squatter shanties were eliminated in the early 1950s.



City of Burnaby Archives (CBA 204-711).

Skidroad trail to the 'Powder Wharf' on Burrard Inlet in Burnaby, 1911.



City of Burnaby Archives (CBA 204-708).

**'Crabtown' squatter's shanty in Burnaby, 1911 —
located on Burrard Inlet just west of the 'Powder Wharf'.**



City of Burnaby Archives (CBA 204-441).

'Crabtown' squatters' community on Burrard Inlet in Burnaby, 1930.

References:

- (1) George Green, 1947, "History of Burnaby", Section 9, pages 132 & 133.
- (2) "First Shipment of Stone from the North Arm of Burrard Inlet", Vancouver Daily News-Advertiser, Friday, August 13th, 1886
- (3) "Keefer's Quarry, North Arm, Burrard Inlet", Vancouver Daily News-Advertiser, Thursday, July 29th, 1886.
- (4) "CPR Surveys Granite Quarry on North Arm of Burrard Inlet", Vancouver Daily News-Advertiser, Tuesday, June 14th, 1887.
- (5) "Deep Cove Quarry to Ship This Week", Vancouver Daily Province, Friday, July 2nd, 1909, page 16.
- (6) Canadian Industries Limited, Wikipedia On-line Encyclopedia:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Industries_Limited
- (7) "Railroad Fatality Near the 'Hamilton Powder Works' in Burnaby", Vancouver Daily World, Friday, August 8th, 1913, page 4.
- (8) "Map of Greater Vancouver & District", 1929, City of Vancouver Archives, Map 41.
- (9) "Map of Vancouver Harbour", 1932 & 1945, Vancouver Harbour Commission, City of Vancouver Archives, Maps 222, 229 and 960.
- (10) Aerial Photograph of Capitol Hill and Westridge Area, *circa* 1948, City of Burnaby Archives, CBA 478-004.
- (11) "Pioneer Tales of Burnaby", 1987, Part III: 1911–1920, George Pendygrasse, page 206.
- (12) "Pioneer Tales of Burnaby", 1987, Part III: 1911–1920, Bob McManus, page 197.
- (13) "Pioneer Tales of Burnaby", 1987, Part IV: 1921–1930, John Boberg, page 413.