

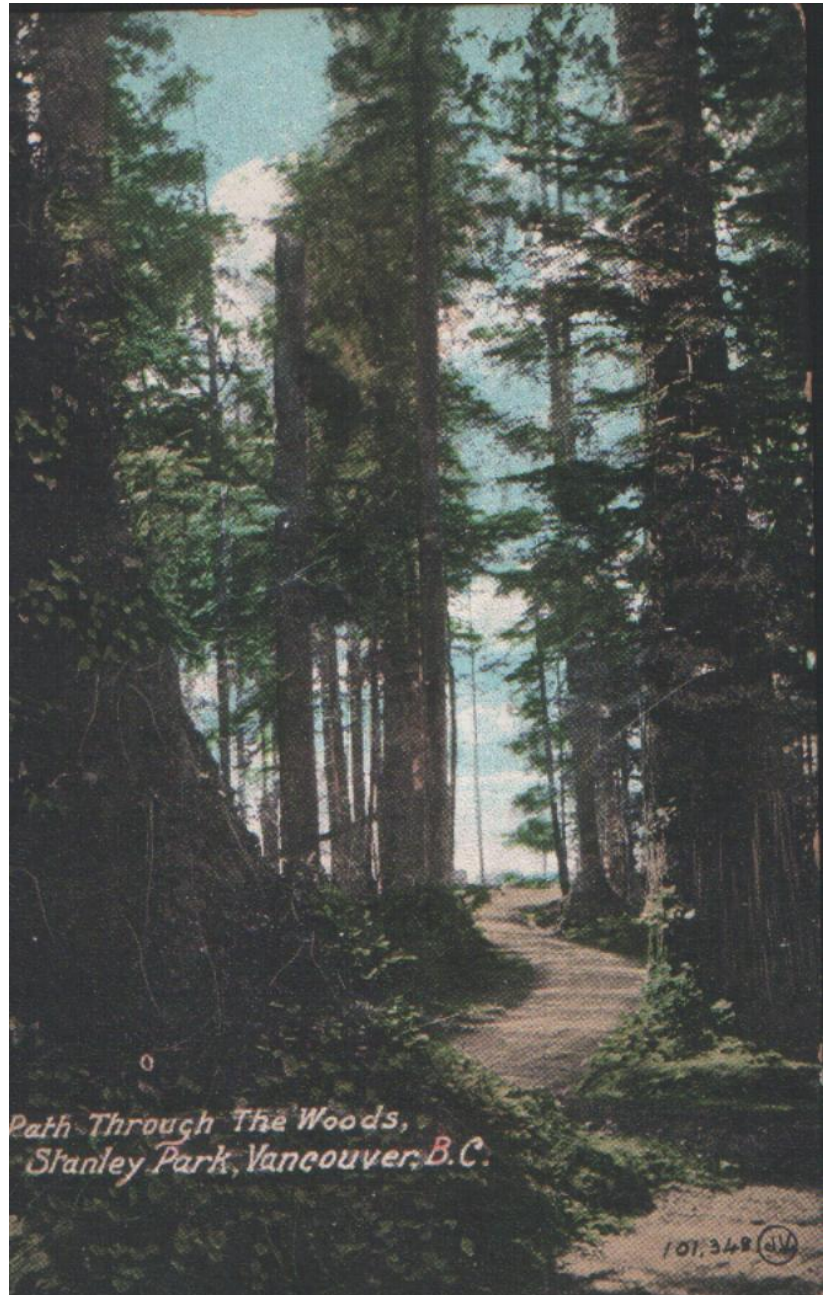
Historical Overview of Stanley Park

Stanley Park is synonymous with Vancouver, like Central Park to New York City or Golden Gate Park to San Francisco. Millions of tourists pass through the Park every year to admire the spectacle of many hectares of dense forest on the doorstep of one of Canada's largest metropolises.

While the natural splendour of the Park is remarkable and often leaves visitors with the impression that they have witnessed a sample of undisturbed British Columbian wilderness, the forest of Stanley Park disguises a rich, complex history of change and disturbance. The landscape of Stanley Park is a dynamic hybrid of nature and culture, and its history brilliantly demonstrates this interdependence between people and their environments.

Human beings have lived on the peninsula for millennia and have interacted with the natural environment that forms Stanley Park. Three separate local First Nations lay claim to Stanley Park as ancestral land and archaeological evidence suggests a human presence on this peninsula dating back more than 3,000 years. Some of the trees and stumps within the Park still bear evidence of human modifications that pre-date European colonization. Long before Spanish and British navigators charted the waters of Burrard Inlet in the mid-nineteenth century, the region's aboriginal population inhabited the area for generations and had established village sites, known as Whoi Whoi and Chaythoos, on the Stanley Park peninsula.

Contact with European peoples transformed the human presence on the peninsula and further modified its ecology. Some colonists chose to marry into and live among the aboriginal families, and forged new settlements at Brockton Point in the 1860s. These colonists brought with them the plants and animals of the Old World. Alien species of animals, including horses, cows, pigs, and chickens, joined their human owners as new residents of the peninsula. European peoples also introduced new industrial technologies and methods for exploiting natural resources, especially through lumbering. From the 1860s to the 1880s, Europeans selectively logged the Stanley Park peninsula, modestly transforming the landscape in previously unknown ways.



Postcard dated 25 March 1908 from author's collection.

By the mid-1880s, with the anticipation of the completion of Canada's first transcontinental railway and increasing European resettlement of the land surrounding Burrard Inlet, the burgeoning new city of Vancouver decided to reserve the western peninsula of the municipality as an urban park. This decision to create Stanley Park did not eliminate the human presence from the peninsula, but in fact increased human interventions and interactions with its natural environment. The earliest park advocates sought to construct a space with a naturalistic appearance, but one that was a union of art and nature. The city and Park Board worked for decades to evict residents in order to reconstruct the landscape as a beautiful wilderness park. This, however, required active management and alteration of many of the messy natural characteristics of the landscape, including insect and disease ridden trees, muddy tidal flats at Coal Harbour, and bothersome crows and owls.

This tidy condition, of course, has been subject to the capricious power of natural forces beyond the purview of human control, none more evident than the impact of violent windstorms on the landscape of Stanley Park in the twentieth century. Stanley Park has been ravaged on many occasions in its history by powerful windstorms that have left the forest in a tangle of fallen, broken, and uprooted trees, most recently in the winter of 2006-2007. Upon each such occasion, Vancouverites and their Park Board have worked to restore the landscape to its previous naturalistic appearance, as can be observed today.

The relentless, devastating winds that tore through Stanley in 2006 should remind us of the continued influence of both natural and cultural forces upon this dynamic landscape. As visitors to our city drive through the Park and walk its trails, hopefully they learn something about the history of our interrelationship with this natural environment. Stanley Park's history very effectively demonstrates the social and biological interdependence of people and the natural environment. Perhaps by recognizing this interdependence in such a relatively small space as Stanley Park, we can envision a better way of living within a global environment.

By Dr. Sean Kheraj, Department of History, University of British Columbia

HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF STANLEY PARK

16,000 - 11,000 BCE to 1791	Coast Salish ancestors arrive to North America from Asia
	Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Tslil-waututh (Burrard Band),and Xwméthkwiyem (Musqueam) First Nations people use Stanley Park as a seasonal hunting and gathering place.
	Established village sites, known as Whoi Whoi (Xwáyxway) and Chaythoos, exist on the Stanley Park Peninsula
1791	Explorer Jose Maria Narvaez conducted the first exploration of the peninsula and Burrard Inlet.
1792	Captain Vancouver was first to write about Stanley Park (as an island) after spending one day here.
1850'S	Small areas of Stanley Park's forests were first cleared by early settlers.
1860's to 1880'S	Stanley Park's forests are selectively logged for timber or clearcut for settlement. Most of today's trails in Stanley Park owe their start to logging, where they began as skid roads.
	Settlements exist near Brockton Point and the first introduced species enter the park.
	Settlers along Burrard Inlet use Deadman's Island, along with Brockton Point, as a burial ground and cemetery.
	In the late 1880's Deadman's Island is used as a quarantine site for smallpox victims.
1886	Vancouver becomes a municipality.
	Stanley Park is a marine base for the Royal Navy.
	Great fire destroys Vancouver and South part of Stanley Park.
1888	Federal government hands over 400 hectares of logged forest land to be officially opened as Stanley Park by Mayor David Oppenheimer.
	Park Drive is first constructed in the Brockton Point area.
	The first road was paved with the shells from Coast Salish middens in the Park.
1889	The Park is dedicated by Lord Stanley, the governor general.
1890's	The first Vancouver Park Board is elected.
	Original Brockton Point Lighthouse goes into service and athletic grounds are declared open.
	Bison Ranch exists near what is now the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club.
	Sand is added to English Bay Beach. Up to that time you had to walk through bushes to get to it. A large rock on the beach separated men and women bathers.
	Henry Avison - Stanley Park Superintendent 1888-1895.
	The Stanley Park Zoo began when park superintendent Henry Avison captured a black bear and chained it to a stump. Many more animals would become part of his collection.
	Nine O'clock gun arrives and replaced the practice of setting off a stick of dynamite at nine o'clock each evening to either indicate closure of fishing or to allow ship captains in the harbour to reset their chronometers.
	Original Prospect Point Lighthouse goes into operation.
1899	Most of the buildings at Whoi Whoi (Xwáyxway) are vacant.

1900's-1920's	Bandstand in Stanley Park constructed eventually the site of Malkin Bowl.
	Second Beach established.
	First part of the seawall constructed at Second Beach.
1907	The arrival of beavers to the 'Pond' which inspired the body of water's current name, Beaver Lake.
1908	The federal government renews its lease of Stanley Park to the City of Vancouver for ninety-nine years.
1909	Eight pairs of Eastern grey squirrels are given to the Park as a gift from New York's Central Park
1910	Insect infestation defoliates parts of the park and measures are taken between 1910 and 1960 aimed at controlling insect and fungus infestations, as well as to 'improve the overall appearance' of the forest.
1910	Fire control becomes a priority and a network of trails for hydrants and water delivery systems were run through the park.
1911	Beaver Lake becomes a major recreational area after a perimeter trail and outflow weir are built.
1916	Lost Lagoon created into a man-made fresh water lake.
1916	A fish hatchery was constructed at Beaver Lake by the Vancouver Angling Society that stocked the lake with salmon and trout fry for the next 30 years.
1916	Dogs off-leash becomes an issue and are reported to have negative impacts native birds including grouse, which later became extirpated from the Park.
1918-1919	Dead and dying trees in "the entire area surrounding Beaver Lake" and the "entire area behind the playground at Second Beach" were cut down and burned.
1920-1924	More roads and trails were added for fire control purposes.
1920	Third Beach established in Stanley Park.
	Pipes allowing saltwater to flow into what is now Lost Lagoon are shut off turning it into freshwater only.
1921	The Stanley Park Rose Garden was established by the Kiwanis Club and there are now over 3500 plants on display.
1921	The great blue heron colony is first reported at Brockton Point.
1923	Sexwalia "Aunt Sally" Kulkalem, the last person living at Whoi Whoi (Xwá'xway), passes away. Her land is sold to the Federal Government.
1930s	Non-native mute swans introduced into the park.
1933	The conifer dominated forest composes 87.6% of the forest cover.
1934	A windstorm severely damages Stanley Park.
1934-1938	Development of the Stanley Park Causeway and Lions Gate Bridge. One of the largest changes to the forests ecology and hydrology came when this crossing was created, which literally split the park in half.
1938	Beaver Lake is documented to be 6.7 ha in size.
1938	For the Queen's Jubilee, water lilies (<i>Nymphaeas spp.</i>) were introduced into Beaver Lake.
1940's	Cornerstone laid for the HMCS Discovery on Deadman's Island. Base for the Royal Canadian Naval Reserve.
	Miniature Railway in Stanley Park goes into operation.
1940	Ongoing forest regeneration program begins.

1950's	The first water park opened.
	Rowboat rentals exist at Lost Lagoon.
1956	The Vancouver Aquarium Opens.
1960s	The azaleas and rhododendrons in the Ted and Mary Greig Rhododendron were part of an extensive collection obtained from Ted and Mary Greig of Royston Nurseries.
1960s-1970s	The heronry moves to Aquarium area; Maximum number of nests recorded was in 1978 (44 nests).
1962	A storm in October 1962, the remnants of Typhoon Freda, levelled a six acre tract behind the children's zoo, which opened a new area for the miniature railway . In total, approximately 3,000 trees were lost in that storm.
1970's	Stanley Park zoo is a big tourist attraction.
1970s	The number of globally significant population of western grebe's (<i>Aechmophorus occidentalis</i>) peaked in the Park. They numbered between 2,000-15,000 individuals.
1970s	Eastern Grey Squirrels that were introduced to the Park in 1914 are now well established in surrounding municipalities.
	The first barred owls in the park were observed by members of Nature Vancouver (then called the Vancouver Natural History Society).
1970	One of Stanley Park's largest western redcedar trees is featured on the cover of National Geographic magazine.
1979	The conifer dominated forest seemed to have dropped down to 70.5% from 87.6% in 1934.
	Last records for the Pacific chorus frogs or red-legged frogs in the Park.
1980s	Coyotes first arrived in the City of Vancouver although they had been in the surrounding areas since the 1930's.
1980	Final portion of Stanley Park Seawall is completed.
	The forested areas of the park were thought to have decreased by 25% since 1930.
1984	Water lilies in Beaver Lake are said to have covered approximately 50% of the lake
1987	The first description of veteran trees in Stanley Park was written by Randy Stoltmann.
1988	There is an estimated 90 pairs of Pelagic Cormorants nesting on the Prospect Point Cliffs.
	The park is designated a National Historic Site of Canada by the federal government.
	The Stanley Park Zoological Society is incorporated as a charitable society on Feb 5.
1989	A forestry management plan is created for the Park Board by Macmillan Blodel.
	Forest inventories showed 80% of the forest was dominated by conifers.
	Beese and Paris noted that up to 50% of the mature forest volume (made up of western hemlock) was infected by dwarf hemlock mistletoe.
Late 1980s	Local naturalists start noticing declines in seabirds around the Park.
1990's	In 1994, Vancouver voters decided to phase out the Stanley Park Zoo. It closed completely in December 1997 after the last remaining animal, a polar bear named Tuk, died at age 36.
1990	The Capilano River hatchery begins releasing coho fry into Beaver Creek.
	A record number of waterfowl recorded for English Bay and Burrard Inlet IBA at 17,412 individuals.

1994	Stanley Park Zoo is closed completely in December after the last remaining animal, a polar bear named Tuk, dies at age 36.
1995	The Stanley Park Ecology Society is formed (previously the Stanley Park Zoological Society).
1997	The Beaver Lake has shrunk to 3.9 ha from 6.7ha in 1938.
	Last evidence of pelagic cormorants nests nesting on the Prospect Point Cliffs. . Prior to 1980, pelagic cormorants nested at Siwash Rock, and then moved to the cliffs below Prospect Point (Robertson and Bekhuys, 1995).
1998	The Salmon Stream near the Vancouver Aquarium, a demonstration stream is stocked with pink, coho and chum smolts.
	Most of the raccoons in the Park were killed off by a naturally occurring disease canine distemper virus which quickly spread through the population.
1999	The new Causeway expansion.
	Juvenile coho end up in Beaver Lake.
2000	The \$ 2 million BC Hydro Salmon Stream Project is completed.
	The Co-existing with Coyotes program was created to meet the needs for information- sharing with the public and long-term management of urban coyote issues.
2001	Coho begin been returning to the BC Hydro Salmon stream in small numbers.
	The great blue heron colony moves to Park Board office area; Total nests = 6.
	Several scaup (a wintering duck) are found dead in the Lagoon and necropsies show they are loaded with <i>E.Coli</i> , <i>clostridium</i> , and <i>salmonella</i> bacteria.
2002	Regular monitoring of Heron Colony begins. Total nests = 18, Total trees = 7.
	The Community Garden and the SPES Native Plant Demonstration Garden are constructed.
2003	Regular monitoring of Heronry by volunteers; Total nests = 21, Total trees = 5.
2004	SPES begins monitoring the Eagles nests in the Park.
	The only report of a garter snake seen in the Park in recent years.
	SPES staff begin monitoring of the Heronry; Total nests = 70, Total trees = 10.
	SPES began removing English Ivy from in Stanley Park.
	An outbreak of rabies virus in a skunk family in the Park drew attention to the problem of wildlife feeding.
	A record 43 coho salmon return to the BC Hydro Salmon Stream in Stanley Park.
A beaver takes up residence in Lost Lagoon.	
2006	December 16th windstorm levels 10,000 trees.
2007	Park Board renews its lease for Stanley Park with the federal government for \$1.
	The Prospect Point Eagle pair build a new nest after in a large snag after their original nest was blown down in the 2006 windstorm.
	The Restoration Plan for the windstorm cleanup is approved by the Park Board.
	VCC instructors noticed the first giant pink sea star and a concurrent decline in numbers of the purple sea star (<i>Pisaster ochraceus</i>).
	The Stanley Park Ecology Society Conservation Programs division is created.

2008	Several of the park's trails are widened during the restoration, including Cathedral Trail and Siwash Trail. 'Wildlife friendly' culverts were installed on Cathedral Trail, and new swales and culverts were added to Siwash Trail to improve drainage.
	The Prospect Point eagle pair builds another new nest, this time in a nearby old growth Douglas-fir tree (just north of the previous location).
	About 20,000 conifer seedlings are planted in 15 blowdown areas.
	Three carved gateways by Coast Salish artist Susan Point are installed at the Brockton Point Visitor Centre.
	The arrival of a beaver into Beaver Lake for the first time in nearly 60 years.
	The Canadian Wildlife Service performs toxicology studies on eggshells at the heron colony.
	The road and trails near the Prospect Point lookout area (which was opened up during the 2006 windstorm) are altered to create better traffic flow.
2009	A mason bee 'supercondo' is installed in the Rose Garden. Wood duck and swallow nest boxes are also installed in Beaver Lake and Lost Lagoon.
	A lone American martin is seen by local naturalists.
	Higher than normal levels of great blue heron nest predation is observed. Racoons reduce nesting success to only 51%.
	The Pipeline Road eagle's nest falls apart.
	A Conservation Officer destroyed a coyote in conflict near the Stanley Park service yard at the request of Vancouver Park Board and the Co-existing with Coyote program.
	The Dining Pavilion pair of eagles successfully laid eggs and were observed incubating them for over a month, but the eggs did not hatch.
	In June the Park Board approves a new Forest Management plan for Stanley Park.
	Some very small turtles (possibly hatched in the park) are seen for the first time in the Lagoon.
	After living successfully in Beaver Lake for many years, green frogs made their first appearance in the Lost Lagoon in September.
	During a heatwave at the end of July (up to 33.9 °C), particularly intense alga blooms occur in the Stone Bridge area at the southwest corner of Lost Lagoon. The effect was so remarkable that the bloom received extensive media coverage.
2010	The first ever State of the Park report for Stanley Park is created by the Stanley Park Ecology Society.
2020	Hatfield Consultants Ltd. estimate that Beaver Lake will completely fill in.