Riverside Hotel | Courtenay & District Museum, 972.241.3

Union Street (now 5th Street) | Courtenay & District Museum, P90-16a

Original City Centre (East Side of River) | CDM, 992.9.10

Comox Creamery & William Carroll | CDM 2008.75.30

Heading West Toward Union Street Bridge | Unknown

Courtenay Hotel | Courtenay & District Museum, 984.30.1

Courtenay River (Slough Entrance)

Logging Railway Crossing 5th Street | Courtenay & District Museum, 2003.251.72

McPhee's Store (now Kona Hostel) | Courtenay & District Museum, P25-160

100 COURTENAY
1915 \ 2015

In the Beginning…

The earliest settlement of the Comox Valley began along the Courtenay and Tsolum Rivers with farms along the delta and on the Upper and Lower Prairie Roads. The business area that grew around the Courtenay House supplied the needs of this farming community. The first development on the west side of the river was in 1872 when Pidcock established his mill. In 1874, a bridge was constructed across the Courtenay River connecting settlements on the east and west sides. Twenty years later, Joseph McPhee would begin to develop a tract of land on the west side, planting an orchard of 1,000 fruit trees. In anticipation of residential housing, McPhee opened a General Store up from the bridge along the road to Cumberland.

In 1901, the Comox Co-operative Creamery was established which gave farmers a further reason to cross the bridge to the west side.

Within the next ten years, Courtenay, now spanning both sides of the river, was becoming a commercial centre that attracted new entrepreneurs as well as businessmen from Cumberland who saw an opportunity to establish a second store along Union Street. In 1912, with the anticipated arrival of a train connection to the rest of the island, the growing Courtenay community experienced a "building boom" with new residential houses built in McPhee's development called "the Orchard" as well as new subdivisions such as the Terminal Addition.

In 1913, the Courtenay Electric, Light and Power Company formed by private citizens negotiated with the Canadian Collieries Company to purchase electricity from the Puntledge Power Station which had been established two years earlier. Public versus Private ownership of utilities sparked a heated debate among the residents. It would be the catalyst for discussion on the Incorporation of Courtenay. Would water come into the community by a private contractor or by public subscription? At a public meeting, after much discussion, 33 rejected the idea of Incorporation with only 11 wanting to pursue it further.

In 1914, Courtenay, still Unincorporated, had a population of 600 yet there was a large commercial district and many amenities which supplied residents with all their needs. On May 5, 1914, an application for Incorporation was presented to the Provincial Government. When the matter was discussed at a meeting of the Provincial Executive, the application was opposed by Courtenay citizens who were against Incorporation.

In September the debate was settled with the announcement by His Honour, Lieutenant-Governor Wilson Paterson that Letters of Patent permitting Incorporation for the City of Courtenay had been issued for January 1, 1915.

The events of the summer of 1914 changed the future of the community: the country was at War, the train had finally arrived, and Courtenay was about to become a City.

Life at the time of incorporation:
- New residents and visitors could stay in one of 3 hotels & 3 rooming houses
- Communications were done through the telegraph office, telephone exchange or post office
- Banking was done at either the Royal Bank or Canadian Bank of Commerce
- Children went to school in a two room school house & high school students met in a rented room above the building supply store
- Comox Logging and Railway ran a train which went over the Puntledge River and through town on its way to the booming grounds north of Royston
- Agricultural supplies were obtained through feed stores and the Creamery with its elevator and grain store
- Condensory Milk Company operated a plant on Mill Street next to the Puntledge River
- There were 4 livery stables, 3 blacksmiths, and 3 automobile garages and a Department of Highways Works Yard
- Sunday service was held in the Presbyterian and Anglican churches
- Medical services included 2 medical doctors, 2 dentists, and a pharmacy
- Other professional services included 3 lawyers, an auditor, and an accountant
- A hardware store, engineers, one surveyor, 3 painters, 2 plumbers, a coal distributor, oil supplier, sand & gravel supplier, a septic tank service and 7 real estate offices supported the building boom
- For personal needs there were 2 ladies wear stores, a men's clothing store, a dry goods store, emporium, 5 tailors, 4 dry cleaners, laundry house, photography studio, 2 shoe-makers and a barber
- Food & refreshment could be found in 3 restaurants, a liquor vendor, 2 soda pop works, 4 bakers, 2 butchers, 3 grocers, and a confectioner
- 2 local newspapers kept people apprised of local events

McQuillan's Livery | Courtenay & District Musuem, 972.72.1

E&N Railway Station, 1919 | Courtenay & District Musuem, 972.233.1

Early Downtown West Courtenay | Courtenay & District Musuem, P90-230e