

# CONNAUGHT HEIGHT'S PARK



<b>Established</b>	<b>1976</b>
<b>Size</b>	<b>1.85 acres</b>
<b>location</b>	<b>Nineth Avenue &amp; 22nd Street</b>
<b>Ammenities</b>	

- **Two tennis courts**
- **Large playground**
- **Benches & picnic tables**
- **Mature trees**
- **Open grassy area**

New Westminster's Connaught Height's neighbourhood has a unique story rooted in its unusual early history.

Comprising a section of land on the far western edge of the city surveyed by the Royal Engineers in the 1860s, Connaught Heights was known as District Lot 172. When New Westminster established its civic boundaries in the 1880s, it incorporated only its original city and suburban lots. The district lots were left for the Municipality of Burnaby to incorporate into its limits when it was established in 1892. However, District Lot 172 was not incorporated into the new municipality of Burnaby, possibly because its owner may have objected.

A simple act of exclusion thus left this portion of land outside any municipal jurisdiction for over seventy years. Though the owners of the property paid taxes directly to the Provincial Government, they received very little improvements as a result.

In 1911 the landowners subdivided the land into residential lots conforming to the established street grid of New Westminster. The subdivision also enabled construction of the new "Connaught Hill Cut-off" by the B.C. Electric Railway Company, which was building a new interurban electric tramway to lessen the grade on its Central Park line, connecting the Royal City with Vancouver. The "Connaught Hill" station at Tenth Avenue provided the new subdivision with its local name.

As residents moved in to the area, they began to complain bitterly about their lack of amenities. The Provincial Government relented, and road improvements were made under the direction of the Minister of Lands (and city MLA) A. Wells-Gray. The government began to set aside lands in the 1940s to establish a school and park site for area residents.

The area became part of the New Westminster School District, and the Connaught Heights School was constructed there in 1963. However, very little changed in terms of the area's services until finally, in 1968, Connaught Heights was incorporated into the city limits.

In 1974, \$1.25 million in federal, provincial and city funds were made available for improvements under the Neighborhood Improvement Program. Connaught Heights received \$312,000, 25% of the available funds. The residents of Connaught Heights, through their Citizens Planning Committee, recommended the development of a community centre and park at their old park site. The recommendation was approved, closing the BC Hydro right-of-way between Ninth Avenue and London Street, and the parcel at the south-east corner of London Street and Ninth Avenue. The three parcels were then consolidated to provide the needed land at a cost of \$105,000.

Through the cooperation of New Westminster City Council and the School Board, Connaught Heights Elementary School was altered to increase the floor area by 3, 500 square feet. The \$178,000 addition included an extension to the gymnasium and provision of a multi-purpose room for community recreation purposes.

The park portion of the complex, covering 1.67 acres, cost \$115,000 to construct, and consisted of two tennis courts, an adventure playground and a passive area from which active play could be observed. The sale of land where Connaught Heights Community Hall stood provided the balance of money needed for this neighborhood improvement project, which Mayor Muni Evers officially opened on June 17, 1977.

## Behind the Name...Connaught Heights Park:



H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught

Born: 1851

Died : 1942

Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught, was the third son of Queen Victoria, and the first member of the Royal Family to become Governor General of Canada. After his term at Rideau Hall, the Duke returned to military service for the remainder of the war. The Duke of Connaught spent a long life in retirement and died in 1942 at the age of 91.

Connaught Heights took its name from the Connaught Hill cut-off and station established by the B.C. Electric Railway Company in 1911. Officials of the B.C.E.R. had hoped to time the official opening of the line with the visit of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, Canada's Governor General on September 21, 1912. However, the new line would not be completed until December 2, 1912.

Instead, the Governor General traveled to New Westminster from Vancouver over the old Twelfth Street line in a special "Connaught" Car designed for the trip. On the way, the car stopped briefly in Burnaby at Edmonds, where 500 school children waited to greet him before he traveled to New Westminster to be greeted by a formal Guard of Honour and ceremony.