

MERCER STADIUM



Established 1958
Size 35 acres
location Eighth Avenue & Eighth Street

Ammenities

- **Artificial turf sports field with lighting**
- **Track**
- **Washrooms & changerooms**
- **Two baseball diamonds**

Ammenities

- **Two grass soccer fields**
- **Skateboard park**
- **Ice arena**

The site of Mercer Stadium was reserved as a cemetery in 1861 by Colonel Moody, upon request by City Council. However, as the land formed the headwaters of Glenbrook and was for the most part a swamp, it was deemed unsuitable for this purpose.

The Provincial Government subsequently subdivided this parcel of land in 1914 for a future residential subdivision. In 1925, the city purchased land to established the Loyal Protestant Home at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Sixth Street and in 1933, the City of New Westminster received title to the remainder of the property.

In 1945, famous American town planner Harland Bartholomew produced a series of influential and comprehensive plans for zoning, parks, schools, transportation and a civic center for the city. The Bartholomew plan encouraged the School Board to replace old facilities - the city works yard and former military camp on Eighth Street - and construct new junior and senior high schools adjacent to the site acquired by the City.

Financial difficulties forced the School Board to proceed with a phased plan of implementation, and the Vincent Massey Junior High School opened first in 1948 to relieve the overcrowding of existing elementary and senior secondary facilities.

The City of New Westminster also decided to make the move uptown by taking over a part of the soon-to-be-closed Duke of Connaught High School site to build a new city hall. In 1950, a school sites exchange bylaw formalized the agreement, which included the transfer of the land adjacent to the new high school to the School Board.

The Lester Pearson Senior High School was completed in 1955, but the School Board still struggled with funding to complete the necessary sports fields. As the City had the ability to finance, improve and maintain the site for development of sports and recreational facilities to serve both the high school and the wider community, in 1958 the land at Tenth Avenue and Sixth Street was once again transferred to the City's ownership.

The City proceeded to design a \$150,000 modern stadium and field for track and field recreation. A large covered grandstand was designed to seat 2,000 at the east side of the site along Sixth Street. In 1960 the project's joint management committee named the new facility Mercer Stadium, after Arthur W.E. Mercer, the Chairman of the New Westminster School Board. Mercer had by that time served for over 24 years as a trustee.

Mercer attended the opening ceremonies officiated by Mayor Beth Wood on September 24, 1960. The event was capped by a football match between the Lester Pearson Mikes and the Como Lake Comets, complete with cheerleaders, bands and a cheering crowd of 1,500 fans. The first ceremonial kick-off was made by Bert Adams, the Principal of Vincent Massey High School. The Mikes beat the Comets 14 to 7.



Behind the Name...Mercer Stadium:

Arthur W.E. Mercer

Born: January 26, 1902

Died: September 7, 1978

Arthur Mercer was born in New Westminster in 1902, the son of Edward Mercer of Harbour Grace, Newfoundland. His father operated the Star Shipyard in Queensborough with his brother William.

Star Shipyard constructed wooden and steel vessels up to approximately 170 feet (52 meters) in length and specialized in fishing boats, sternwheelers, tugs and scows for the coastal trade. During the Second World War, warships and other naval craft were constructed for the British, Russian and Canadian navies.

The business continued as a partnership between the two brothers until 1927; the business was reorganized at that time on a limited liability basis after Arthur Mercer and his brother Gordon purchased their uncle's share. The yard continued as a family business until 1970 when it was sold.

Arthur Mercer began his public service when he was elected as a member of the School Board in 1936. He served on the board until his retirement in 1971, including nine terms as Chairman.

Mercer was also president of the B.C. School Trustees Association, on the board of Royal Columbian Hospital, chairman of the New Westminster Pilotage Authority, a member of the Canada Games Board, and one of the founding members of the Douglas College Board.