

SAPPERTON TRIANGLE



Established	1934
Size	1 acre
location	East Columbia Street & Wells Gray Place
Ammenities	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Benches• Trees & shrubs• Grass

This small park at the corner of the busy intersection of East Columbia Street and Eighth Avenue dates from the earliest days of the settlement of Sapperton.

In 1859, the first trail from the Royal Engineer's camp was surveyed and constructed past this point as North Road. The trail was built as a military precaution in order to protect the capital city of British Columbia from potential American attack. Colonel Moody feared that the City needed strategic access to Burrard Inlet should the Fraser River freeze and the Americans launch an attack from the south.

Fortunately, the feared American takeover of British Columbia never came, and the trail was used more readily for the survey and settlement of the suburban lands and district lots. William Holmes was the first to receive a land title for District Lot One on the banks of the Brunette River on the west side of the road, while Colonel Moody himself established his own model farm, called Mayfield, on the east side.

The Holmes family and others in the district counted seven hills surrounding their pioneer settlement. One of these hills was crowned by the spot where Sapperton Triangle is located today. In an interview with Charlotte Green, a daughter of William Holmes, local historian George Green recorded that: "Soon as years passed, an open space was cleared on the hill ...and they erected a high flagpole there, from whose halyard flaunted "the meteor flag of England" (the Union Jack), and they called the place Union Hill. Before this, the clear notes of the bugle at 'the camp' beside the Fraser floated on the air as the reveille sounded at the break of day, but now scenes of gala festivities, with bands playing and sports enacted within an encirclement of age old forest, took place at Union Hill. The little mound which secured the foot of the flagpole more securely is still plainly visible in the grassy sward beside the tram station (now Sapperton Triangle), an interesting relic of happy days of yore."

When laying out Sapperton's suburban lands in 1863, the Royal Engineers curiously left Union Hill as an open space at the crossroads of Columbia Street, North Road and Thorne Road (now Eighth Avenue). Perhaps it was this unusual survey which serendipitously created the opportunity for its use by early residents as a park; or, it may have been Colonel Moody and the surveyors' intention. Whatever the reason, the park's early alienation as a legal road right-of-way ensured that it remained property of the crown and title vested with the City.

Union Hill languished for decades in the wilds of Sapperton, at the end of the dusty and unpaved section of East Columbia Street, until the B.C. Electric Railway Company extended the Columbia streetcar tracks there in 1911. The tracks left the road right-of-way on their own private railway corridor through Union Hill to become the new Burnaby Lake interurban line connecting to Vancouver . A small wooden building housed Sapperton Station.

In 1927, when the Parks Commission was formed, the "Triangle" was first mentioned as one of the possible new park sites for development; it was officially listed as a park in 1934. When the city's streetcar system was discontinued in 1937 the triangle became the terminus of the Burnaby Lake interurban line. Permission was granted by the Parks Commission for the use of the site by the B.C.E.R for a bus loop in 1946. In 1953 the final run of the tram line left the site - an island of green space isolated by a growing city and its ever increasing traffic.

Behind the Name...Sapperton:



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**There's only one Corps which is perfect - that's us;
An' they call us Her Majesty's Engineers
Her Majesty's Royal Engineers,
With the rank and pay of a Sapper!**

Extract from the poem '**Sapper**' by Rudyard Kipling
(1865-1936)

From medieval times to the 19th century, one of the prime functions of the engineers attached to field armies was to assist in siege warfare, by either building or destroying fortifications. The term 'Sapper' originates from the act of besieging the walls of a fortress, laying mines in zigzag trenches dug by hand to breach them. These trenches, or 'saps' (an old French word) were dug progressively deeper as they drew closer to the walls. The whole process was known as 'sapping,' and the persons digging them under the authority of the engineers were called 'Sappers.' The rank of 'Sapper' was conferred onto the private soldiers of the Corps of Royal Sappers and Miners on its amalgamation with the Corps of Royal Engineers in 1856.

In 1858, when the Colony of British Columbia was established and New Westminster was chosen as the capital city, the Columbia Detachment of Royal Engineers set up their camp in the eastern part of the city. Among the corps were many Sappers, or private soldiers. The camp became informally known as Sapperton for "Sappers' Town," and even after the disbanding of the corps this section of New Westminster retained this historic name.