

CASTLES OF VICTORIA

Robber coal barons, Robert Dunsmuir and his son James Dunsmuir, both built castles in Victoria during the late 1800's and early 1900's. Robert Dunsmuir had started out as an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, but on his own time, and due to his anti-strike mentality, the company let him prospect on land in the Nanaimo area that the company held under an Imperial Crown licence to settle Vancouver's Island. As a result he found a major coal seam and set up his own coal mining company (Wellington Colliery) which propelled him to great wealth. Eventually he also became the owner of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway Company and over one million acres of land on the east coast of the island.

His castle, Craigdarroch, sits near Government House. It was started in 1887 and completed in 1890. Robert Dunsmuir never saw the completion as he died in 1889.



His son, James Dunsmuir, then not owning but in charge of the family empire, decided to build his own castle to the west of Victoria. It is called Hatley Castle.

James Dunsmuir became both the Premier of B.C. and at another time the Lieutenant-Governor. His castle was completed in 1908. In 1910, he sold his holdings in the colliery and coal rights for \$11,000,000 and retired to enjoy his estate and hobbies as well as, shooting, fishing and his yacht.

He died in 1920 but his wife and daughter lived there until 1937 when they both died.

After that, the castle had an intriguing history of uses. For the next three years, the estate was left in the hands of a caretaker. In November 1940, it was purchased by the Dominion Government for \$75,000 to be used as a Naval Training Establishment.

In October of 1942, the castle housed the Royal Canadian Naval College.

In 1947/8, with the admission of air and army cadets, Royal Roads became the tri-service college known as the Canadian Services College Royal Roads. In 1968, the name was changed to Royal Roads Military College.

Subsequently, in 1994, it was announced that Royal Roads Military College would close in the following year. The Province of British Columbia entered negotiations with the Dominion Government of Canada to lease the property and facilities in order to continue its use as a university. In 1995, Royal Roads University was created.



(Photograph by David B. Clark, U.E.)

The gardens at Hatley castle are spectacular. Originally maintained by up to 180 Chinese gardeners, they are now cared for by a non-profit society. The site is frequently used for weddings and for the filming of many movies as there are few estates like it anywhere.

The castle itself now houses the administration of the adjacent university buildings.

The gardens extend to the south and west of the castle and were designed by a noted firm brought in from the U.S. by James Dunsmuir. As always, he used the phrase: "The cost doesn't matter, just build me what I want!"

SOUTH FACE OF CASTLE



(Photograph by David B. Clark, U.E.)

Visit the Victoria Branch website to keep up-to-date on the planning for 2015.
<http://www.uelac.org/uelvictoria/UELAC-Conference-2015-Victoria-BC.htm>

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