

HSMBC Minute – June 1957

Old Fortifications, Victoria, B.C.

Moved by Dr. Sage,

Seconded by Professor Landon.

That the proposal to have the now disbanded fortifications at Victoria, B.C. preserved as an historic site and developed as an armed services museum be deferred to the meeting of 1958 so that Dr. Sage may be given an opportunity to visit the site and prepare a report for presentation to the Board.

Carried.

HSMBC Minute – May 1958

HS.10-148

Old Fortifications, Victoria.

(Fort Rodd Hill, Belmont and Fisgard Light)

In speaking of the historical significance of these old fortifications Dr. Sage referred to the fact that they were manned during the First and Second Wars and stated that relatively speaking these installations are as important to residents of the West Coast as are those in the Eastern Maritime areas to people there.

Dr. Sage presented the following interim report:

"Victoria, B.C. - Esquimalt Fortification, Fort Rodd Hill

Pursuant to the instruction of the Board I visited Victoria and Esquimalt, B.C., in October, 1957, and inspected the fortifications. At the time I was favourably impressed and had hopes that a national historic park might be created. Subsequent events have made me less certain.

The chief difficulties I have encountered arise from the fact that negotiations have been conducted by federal and provincial Cabinet Ministers and by their Deputies and that there have been serious differences of opinion between the federal and provincial authorities.

British Columbia (cont'd)

Dr. Sage's Report ...

s.14(a)

of a national historic park. It would be possible for the federal government to lease 44.4 acres of the Fort Rodd property to the provincial government or to the Municipality of Esquimalt and/or the City of Victoria for a nominal rent, provided that the Government of British Columbia would undertake to establish and maintain a provincial park. So far the minister of Recreation and Conservation, Honourable E.C. Westwood, has shown no particular interest in this proposal.

The area in question, Fort Rodd Hill, is too small for a national park, but might some day become a national historic park. The argument for and against the creation of a national historic park may be summed up as follows:

Pro:

1. It is the chief fortification on the Pacific Coast of Canada and is comparable as such to the fortifications at Halifax, Quebec, Louisbourg, and St. John's, Newfoundland. Nothing comparable to it exists on Canada's West Coast.

HSMBC Minute - November 1958

H.S.10-148

Old Fortifications, Victoria, (Fort Rodd Hill, Belmont and Fisgard Light).

Dr. Sage described the permanent coastal defences on Fort Rodd Hill as the most elaborate of the principal fortifications on the west coast of Canada. He read from the report of his October, 1958 visit to the fortifications in the Victoria-Esquimalt area and informed the members of a separate proposal received from Victoria favouring the creation of a provincial park to include the Fort Rodd Hill area exclusive of H.M.C.S. Royal Roads.

In the review of his report Dr. Sage covered many points in the historical background of the west coast defences up to the Second Great War. He informed the Board that Fort Rodd Hill, constructed in the years between 1890 and 1898 was the first large scale fortification on the Pacific Coast of Canada and that it formed an important link in Britain's defence scheme until it was taken over by the Canadian Government in 1905. During the two Great Wars, Fort Rodd Hill was manned by Canadian Military Units. British Columbia (cont'd)

Dr. Sage told the Board that he realized that the Pacific defences could not be compared in age with Halifax, Quebec and Newfoundland fortifications, but reminded the members that the centenary of the establishment of the Crown Colony of British Columbia is only now being celebrated. He felt that age was not the point at issue and cited the Alaska Highway, built jointly by United States soldiers and Canadian civilians in 1942 and 1943, as having been declared of national historic importance.

Dr. Sage expressed the opinion that the Victoria-Esquimalt defences were decidedly of national historic importance to Canada and recommended strongly that a national historic park be established in the Fort Rodd Hill area. He heartily endorsed the suggestion made by the Minister that in the event the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada should recommend that Fort Rodd Hill be developed as a national historic park the Province of British Columbia enter into an agreement with the federal government to share equally the costs of a partial restoration of Fort Rodd Hill to the extent of a total federal-provincial expenditure of possibly \$200,000.00.

2. There is no national historic park on Vancouver Island and there are local pressures from Greater Victoria.

3. These fortifications link the efforts of the Royal Engineers and other British Army Units with those of Canadian Militia units, etc.

4. Abandonment of fortifications in 1956 closed an era in the history of west coast defence.

Con:

1. The fortifications are not old enough to have any national historical significance.

2. The undertaking is too costly.

3. There is already a marine museum in Esquimalt, B.C. A new marine museum is planned for Vancouver to be built around the St. Roch.

4. No need for such a park on Vancouver Island. It might interfere with plans for Fort Langley's reconstruction.

In the circumstances I beg to recommend that the whole question be given further study and consideration. I do not anticipate that anything will be accomplished for some time yet, but the proposal has merit and continued investigation now should save time later."

Moved by Dr. Fergusson.

Seconded by Chief Justice Campbell.

That the report on the Old Fortifications at Victoria presented by Dr. Sage be accepted as an interim report and that the subject as a whole be deferred for attention at the next meeting of the Board.

Carried.

The following proposal was considered by the Board and approved as a recommendation:

Moved by Dr. Sage.

Seconded by Dr. Fergusson.

- (a) That the Victoria-Esquimalt fortifications be declared of national historic importance.
- (b) That the Fort Rodd Hill area be declared as suitable for the establishment of a national historic park which would include Fisgard Light but not Cole Island, and
- (c) That the Board approve the terms proposed by the Minister to the Government of the Province of British Columbia.

Carried.

1972-05

Cole Island, B.C.

After considerable discussion on this recurring item the Board agreed, by vote, to recommend

that while Cole Island is not in itself of national historic significance, its juxtaposition to Fort Rodd Hill suggests the desirability of incorporating it within the Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Park boundaries.