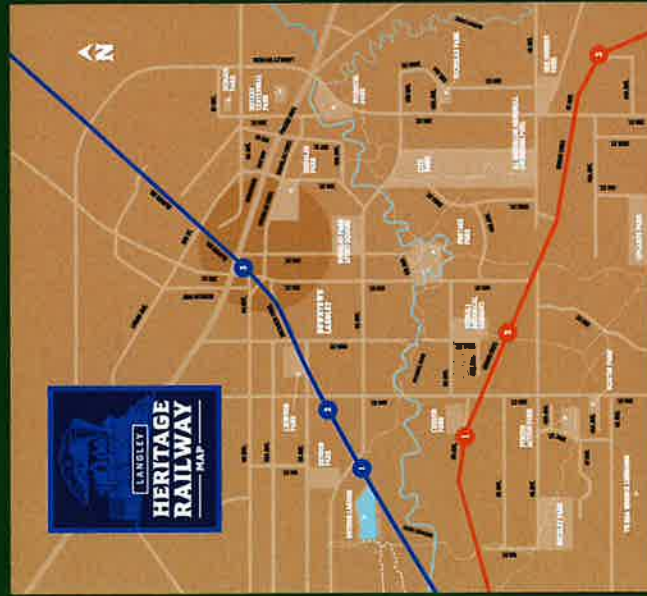


# NEIGHBOURHOOD HISTORY LANGLEY PRAIRIE STATION



Of the twelve British Columbia Electric Railway interurban stations on the Fraser Valley Line in Langley Township, only two were in what would become Langley City, the Hunter station and the Langley Prairie station which was the major station in what became Langley City upon incorporation in 1955.

Two brothers, Adam and William Innes, bought land in the 1870s at the junction of Smugglers Trail (now Glover Road) and Yale Road (formerly the New Westminster and Yale Road, now Fraser Highway in most part). The spot became known as Innes Corners.

Innes Corners grew gradually and significant transportation improvements made the Langley Prairie area a commercial hub for the region. In 1874, Yale Road was extended from Hope to New Westminster and made passable for buggies in much of the Fraser Valley. By 1910, the B.C. Electric Railway's Fraser Valley Line - between New Westminster and Chilliwack - was built through the settlement to carry produce to the Vancouver market and bring reliable and rapid transit to the Valley. When the post office was built in 1911, Innes Corners was renamed 'Langley Prairie', after Thomas Langley, a Hudson's Bay Company director. When B.C. Electric tracks arrived at Innes Corners in spring of 1910, the station which would become Langley Prairie was briefly named Berry.

A cabin-like station which was built at this site burned down on May 21, 1928 along with the freight shed behind it. The "Great Fire of Langley Prairie", destroyed most of the community's buildings; only some apartments and the Vancouver Milling and Grain Company's outlet on Fraser Highway were spared. By July 1928, a new station and freight shed were built at a cost of \$50,000.

From this site there was a station to the west, Hunter (200th and Michaud Crescent), and the Norris station (Glover Road and Mufford Crescent) to the east. The pictures show the original Langley Prairie station and new station. The diagonal sidewalk is where both stations were originally.

The B.C. Electric Railway operated its passenger interurban service in Langley between 1909 and September 30, 1950, when the service was terminated in a significant ceremony at the Langley Prairie station involving B.C. Electric officials and politicians from the communities in the Valley that were served by the Fraser Valley Line.

The arrival of the B.C. Electric Railway significantly impacted the growth and development of Langley City (originally known as Langley Prairie). The demise of the B.C. Electric Railway's passenger service originated with the introduction of cars and trucks and new roads making rail service uneconomical. The tracks were removed in the early 1980s.

The Langley Prairie station is now the site of the Langley City's Timms Community Centre's parking lot. The B.C. Electric Railway tracks from the Surrey border to Glover Road, that went through Langley City, were torn up as part of the City's Revitalization Project during the early 1980s as the provincial government had funded a diversion around the core of the City to reduce conflict with downtown traffic and pedestrians order to facilitate rail traffic to and from Roberts Bank and the coal terminal there. The Langley Prairie station is now the site of the Langley City's Timms Community Centre's parking lot. The B.C. Electric Railway tracks from the Surrey border to Glover Road, that went through Langley City, were torn up as part of the City's Revitalization Project during the early 1980s as the provincial government had funded a diversion around the core of the City to reduce conflict with downtown traffic and pedestrians order to facilitate rail traffic to and from Roberts Bank and the coal terminal there.

Electric power for the interurbans on the Fraser Valley Line was provided by five substations: Cloverdale, Coghlan, Clayburn, Sumas and Chilliwack. The power came from Bunzen Powerhouses #1 and #2 in the first two decades, and then from Slave Falls, Alouette and Ruskin in 1909, 1924 and 1929, respectively. Only Coghlan and Sumas Substations (on the side of Vedder Mountain) still exist as concrete structures, as Cloverdale was demolished in 1974 while Clayburn and Chilliwack still exist as B.C. Hydro substations. The substations were built to boost power by supplying 600 volts of direct current to the trains via a system of poles and wires strung along the rail line. Each motorized interurban car had two single poles, one at each end providing power to the four 125 hp. electric motors.

The catenary system that supported the Fraser Valley Line was altered after 1950. Power poles that were 100 feet apart were taken down as electricity was no longer required for the interurban / electric freight trains.

This interurban line was a hydro-powered electric railway that provided transportation from Vancouver to Chilliwack. It was deemed rapid transportation during its time.