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“AJT” Taylor and the Lions Gate Bridge

THE NAME OF ALFRED JAMES TOWLE TAYLOR is inextricably linked with Vancouver's Lions Gate Bridge. The bridge may not have been Taylor's original idea (thoughts of connecting Vancouver and the North Shore were aired as early as 1890), but it was he who brought the necessary capital together and revived the project when the time was right.

Taylor, affectionately known as “AJT” to his close associates, was born in Victoria in 1887 to Welsh parents, his father being an Anglican Church deacon. Taylor's formal education ended at age 14, and two years later he was working as an apprentice at the Vancouver shipyards, earning \$5 a month and living in a rented CPR shack at Hastings and Burrard Streets. Hard work, a good marriage, and an engineering degree started Taylor's career. He had fearless ambition and was inclined to risk-taking, provided there was a chance of big rewards. One of his earliest ventures was the formation of a company to operate Dolly Vardon Mines, a rich silver property located near New Aiyansh, north of Prince Rupert. The property was staked in 1910 with cash from Chicago, Boston and New York interests.

Another early project for Taylor's engineering company was the building of the Imperial Oil refinery in Ioco in 1913, followed by the installation of a crude oil processing facility.

In the early 1920s West Vancouver was not more than a small community of 3,000 people, but even then developers saw the potential of connecting the untapped real estate potential on the north shore of Burrard Inlet to downtown Vancouver by a bridge. Taylor was part of this proposal, which was put to a plebiscite in 1927. The proposal was defeated at that time, but Taylor still owned the provincial franchise to build the bridge and decided to look for the necessary capital elsewhere.

He took his family to England and set up a business in London at an address on Rabbit Row near Hyde Park. He had already an important contact in London: William S. Stephenson, a Winnipeg-born Canadian who had become a very successful international entrepreneur with offices in London. The two Canadians set up the Stephenson-Taylor Trust Company and began to woo money from Britain's wealthy elite. Among the pair's group of influential friends was a retired London banker named W. S. Eyre, while Francis J.



A GUINNESS CLOTHES BRUSH. The Guinness family made their first fortune in Dublin, Ireland, in the brewing industry, producing a world-famous dry stout. The family later branched into other investments such as real estate but are better known for the The Guinness Book of Records.



A government aerial photograph taken in the early thirties showing proposed construction of the Stanley Park Causeway, the Lions Gate Bridge, and Capilano Estates (British Properties) in West Vancouver. The second Hotel Vancouver and the Marine Building, the two tallest high-rises in Vancouver's downtown core, are clearly visible in this photograph.

S. Hopwood (Lord Southborough), a prominent member of the gentry, represented a vital link with the Iveagh Trust. This trust was a richly endowed investment fund set up by the Guinness Brewing Company, which was owned by three brothers—Edward C. Guinness (the Earl of Iveagh), Walter E. Guinness (Lord Moyne), and the honourable Arthur Guinness.

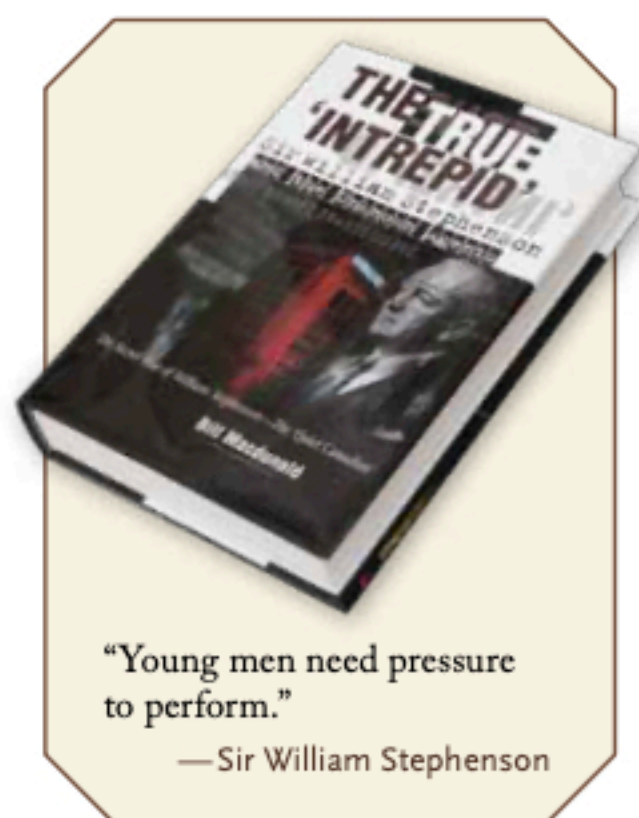
Stephenson, who had been a top fighter pilot during the First World War and was credited with shooting down 26 enemy aircraft, was initially very enthusiastic about the Lions Gate Bridge proposal. Eventually, however, he withdrew to pursue a different project in India. The contact between Stephenson and Taylor was later revived during World War II, which saw the two men working together again.

In the summer of 1930 Taylor and Eyre travelled to Vancouver together, and the Englishman clearly saw the potential for property investment for his and of course the Guinness family interests.

Guinness Family History: a Saga of Ireland

They all stand firmly on the old brewery in Dublin. It was in the 18th century that Arthur Guinness, founder of the line, obtained a lease for 9000 years at 45 pounds a year on the property near St. James's Well in Dublin and there began the manufacture of ale. The business venture was a canny one, because of the heavy tariff placed by Britain on native Irish ale and porter. Guinness had taken the precaution of obtaining a British charter and so was not subject to the tax.

LONDON GAZETTE, 23 DECEMBER 1939



"Young men need pressure to perform."
—Sir William Stephenson

The True 'Intrepid': Sir William Stephenson and the Unknown Agents: The Secret War of William Stephenson—The 'Quiet Canadian' by Bill Macdonald. Publisher: Tim Lawson, Timberholme Books Ltd

Garlanded with fresh spring flowers, Charles Marega's lion sculpture sits on guard at the south entrance of the Lions Gate Bridge. Similar smaller lions adorn the top story of the Marine Building in Downtown Vancouver. Over the years, vandals have managed to break off a portion of this lion's right ear.



Upon their return to London the British Pacific Properties Company was incorporated, with Taylor and Eyre being made directors.

On the sea voyage back to London Taylor met an old friend, Henry H. Stevens, Member of Parliament for South Vancouver. Stevens had real estate interests in the Lower Mainland as well as an option on 2,000 acres of West Vancouver land located between the 750-to-1500-foot elevations west of the Capilano River. Taylor learned that the cash-strapped West Vancouver municipality was also holding another larger tract of land that was also available at a rather attractive price. This property, totalling 4,000 acres, rose well up the face of Hollyburn Mountain and stretched all the way to Horseshoe Bay. The newly created British Pacific Properties Company acquired the entire parcel of land, some of it for as little as \$20 per acre.

Taylor correctly speculated that this chunk of real estate would become very valuable once the North Shore would be connected to Vancouver. Consequently he spent years arguing with government and marine authorities until eventually, with the support of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King and after having managed to raise the \$6 million needed for construction plus another \$4 million for land development, the bridge project was given the green light on 30 April 1936. Mayor William Harold Malkin turned the first sod on the 7th of July that same year, and the bridge opened for traffic on 14 November 1938. The cost of the project came to \$5,959,600, in other words: just under budget. On 29 May 1939, during a royal visit to Canada, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (the mother of Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Margaret) presided over the official opening.

During the building of the bridge the British Properties Company took over the 21-storey Marine Building on Burrard Street at Hastings. Due to the Depression, this art deco gem was sold off by its original owners at less than half the construction costs.

Taylor converted the observation deck into a penthouse apartment for himself, his wife, and their two daughters, but his wife didn't like the height, and the family moved out. Possibly inspired by the Rockefeller Centre in New York, Taylor used the 19th floor for an office, which featured an art deco-style interior with 18-foot ceilings and 12-foot-high windows with majestic views of the bridge construction and the Lions Mountains. He had a pair of lion statues installed off his balcony, smaller replicas of the pair that had been sculpted for either end of the bridge.



The Entrance to the Lion's Gate Bridge from the Stanley Park side of Burrard Inlet in 1939.

During the Second World War Taylor was the technical advisor to the British Ministry of Production in London and Washington, DC. He spent considerable time in New York, where he worked closely with his former business partner Stephenson out of the Rockefeller Center. Stephenson—later Sir William Stephenson, known as the Quiet Canadian and the Man Named Intrepid—by this time had become the Chief Intelligence Officer, Western Section, and was the go-between between England's Prime Minister Winston Churchill and United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Atlantic convoys were one of his responsibilities. Stephenson was responsible for the development of the 160-acre Camp X located near the Toronto–Kingston Highway along the north shore of Lake Ontario. Taylor's brother, a construction contractor in Toronto, had clandestinely purchased the farm for the Canadian government. Camp X was a secret wartime training centre for spies and counter-spies. Stephenson recruited many young Polish women from the boroughs of the City of New York to go to Camp X for training to

The original builders of Vancouver's downtown Marine Building ran into financial difficulties due to the Great Depression and sold the art deco—edifice to British Properties at far less than it had cost to build.



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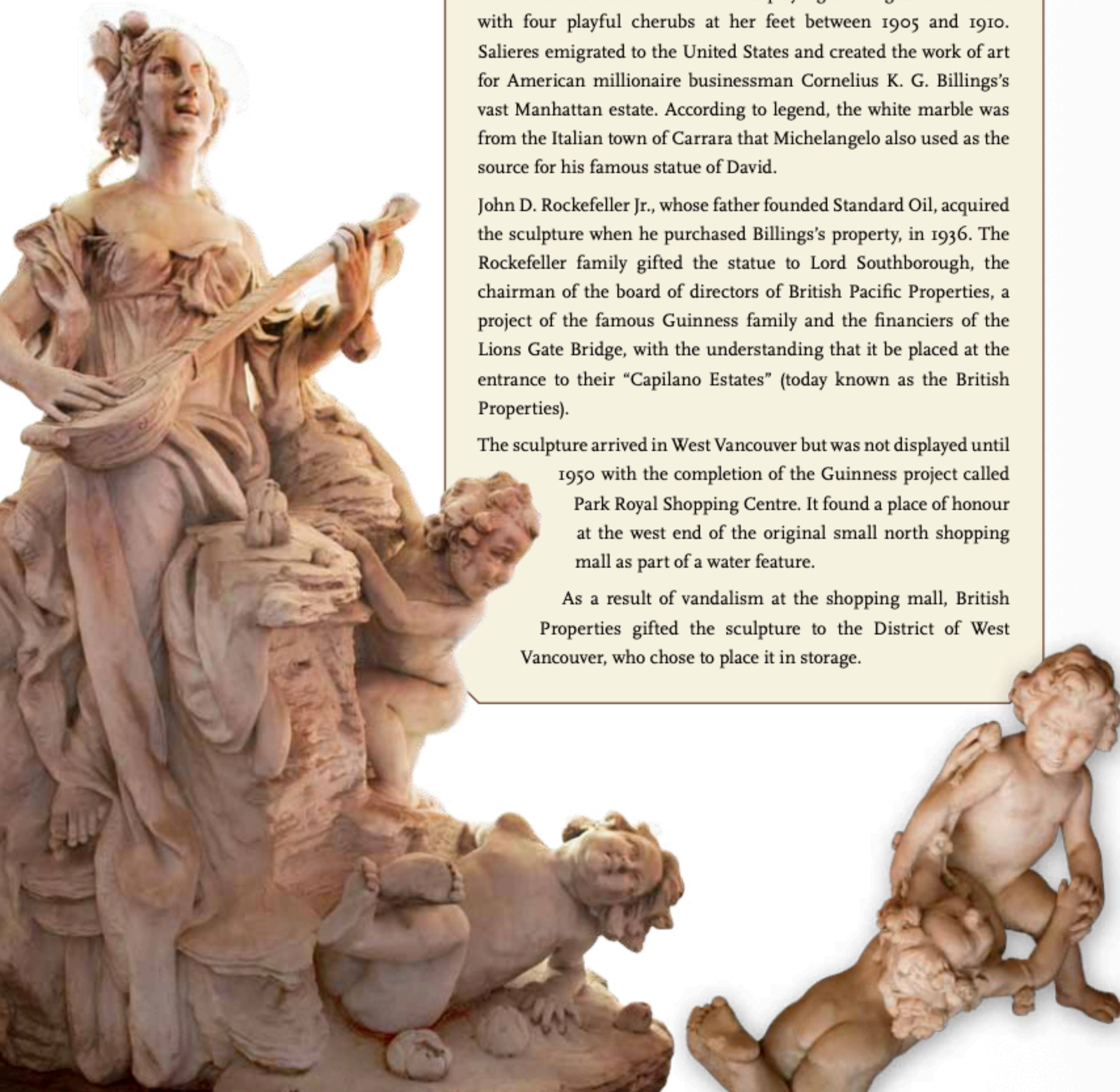
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A Muse strums a lute, while four playful cherubs frolic at her feet. This sculpture, made of Carrara marble, is from the same quarry from which Michelangelo carved the famous David. The sculpture was on display at the Park Royal Shopping Centre for several years but because of vandalism has been in storage at the West Vancouver works yards for the past 20 years.



The Salieres Sculpture

by Norma L. Young
fine arts appraiser

The beautiful 9-foot-tall marble sculpture represents Music, as a serene female seated on a rock plays a stringed instrument with four playful cherubs at her feet.

Sylvain Salieres, a French sculptor, carved this beautiful 9-foot-tall serene female seated on a rock and playing a stringed instrument with four playful cherubs at her feet between 1905 and 1910. Salieres emigrated to the United States and created the work of art for American millionaire businessman Cornelius K. G. Billings's vast Manhattan estate. According to legend, the white marble was from the Italian town of Carrara that Michelangelo also used as the source for his famous statue of David.

John D. Rockefeller Jr., whose father founded Standard Oil, acquired the sculpture when he purchased Billings's property, in 1936. The Rockefeller family gifted the statue to Lord Southborough, the chairman of the board of directors of British Pacific Properties, a project of the famous Guinness family and the financiers of the Lions Gate Bridge, with the understanding that it be placed at the entrance to their "Capilano Estates" (today known as the British Properties).

The sculpture arrived in West Vancouver but was not displayed until 1950 with the completion of the Guinness project called Park Royal Shopping Centre. It found a place of honour at the west end of the original small north shopping mall as part of a water feature.

As a result of vandalism at the shopping mall, British Properties gifted the sculpture to the District of West Vancouver, who chose to place it in storage.

afterwards be dropped into their native land to spy for the Allied forces. Taylor's children would later never talk about their father's involvement with Stephenson, as they had been sworn to secrecy. They, like the other 750 Canadians working out of the Rockefeller Center, all were, like their boss, "Quiet Canadians."

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An industrialized False Creek, circa 1940.

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 British Properties | 6 Woodward's Building |
| 2 Hudson's Bay Company | 7 Beatty Street Drill Hall |
| 3 Marine Building | 8 World Building (later Sun Tower) |
| 4 Simpson's Building | 9 Western Bridge & Steel Fabricators |
| 5 Dominion Building | 10 Salt Building |

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The development of British Properties and the building of the Lions Gate Bridge.

- 1 British Properties
- 2 Lions Gate Bridge
- 3 Stanley Park Causeway
- 4 Hotel Vancouver
- 5 Marine Building
- 6 Hudson's Bay Company



Opposite Top

This car bumper ornament, made by Henry Birks Jewellers, was one of hundreds of different 1939 royal visit souvenirs.

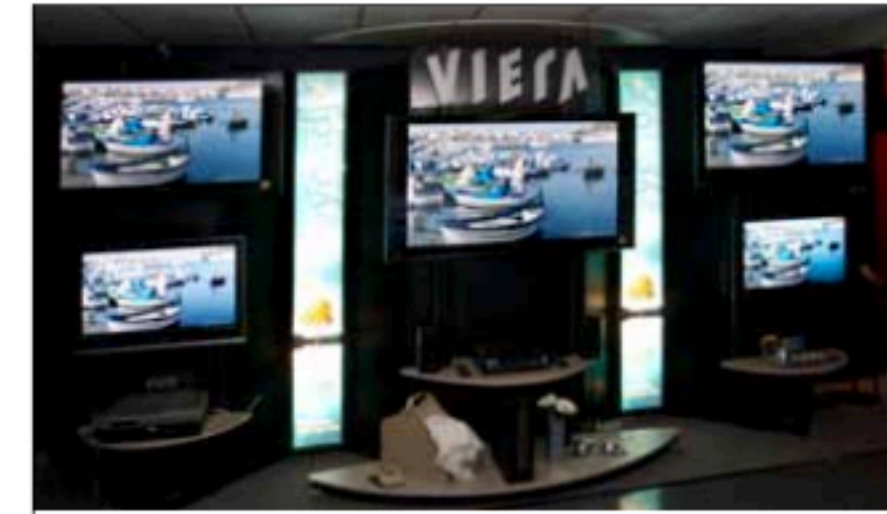
Opposite Bottom

RCMP Constable Crystal Shostak poses beside a 1939 Royal Tour McLaughlin-Buick, serial #1, outside the Canadian National Roundhouse facility at the West Coast Railway Heritage Museum at Squamish. The 3-ton royal maroon automobile was one of two built by General Motors of Canada for use by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (Queen Mother of Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Margaret) during their Dominion tour of Canada in May and June 1939. The Duke of Kent, a younger brother of the king, visited Canada and drove the car in 1941. Prince Charles and Princess Diana rode in the car into BC Place Stadium to open Expo 86. Finally, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip rode in the car for the opening of the Commonwealth Games in 1994, and their son Prince Edward rode in the car to close the games. This car has carried more British royalty than any other car outside Britain and has been in service for over 70 years.



and Queen Elizabeth were planning a royal tour of Canada in 1939 with a visit to Vancouver.

Construction was resumed on the hotel, and a joint operating agreement was worked out with the CNR rival, the CPR. Both parties realized Vancouver was too small for two grand hotels. The CPR's Hotel Vancouver was closed when the brand-new hotel opened its doors. When the Second World War broke out later in 1939, the old hotel was donated for the use of the Canadian Armed Forces. It was used by the military until 1949, when the property was sold to the T. Eaton Company and demolished. In the 1970s the site became part of the Pacific Centre development.



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