



EXOTON

**CPR WATERFRONT STATION
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
601 WEST CORDOVA STREET, VANCOUVER, BC
NOVEMBER 2025**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

RESOURCE NAMES	CPR Waterfront Station
ADDRESS	601 West Cordova Street
MUNICIPALITY	Vancouver
NEIGHBOURHOOD	Downtown
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	LOT 5 PLAN LMP23953 DISTRICT LOT 541 NEW WESTMINSTER THE PUBLIC HARBOUR OF BARRARD INLET
PARCEL IDENTIFIER (PID)	023-166-398
YEARS BUILT	1912-1914
ORIGINAL OWNER	Canadian Pacific Railway
ARCHITECT/DESIGNER	Barott Blackadder and Webster

CONTEMPORARY PHOTO



DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC PLACE

Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) Waterfront Station is a monumental early-twentieth-century Beaux-Arts railway terminal located along Cordova Street on the south shore of Burrard Inlet in downtown Vancouver. Completed in 1914, the building occupies a prominent waterfront site at the transitional point between the historic Granville Townsite street grid and the superimposed Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) grid. The station's horizontal front elevation is distinguished by a grand colonnade of fourteen Ionic columns framed by red-brick wings and strong horizontal cornice lines. Its rear, north, elevation faces the inlet with a series of seven gabled bays and large arched windows. The expansive interior concourse features Ionic columns, terrazzo flooring, and early twentieth-century landscape murals.

HERITAGE VALUE OF HISTORIC PLACE

CPR Waterfront Station is valued as a landmark cultural site significant for its: location on an Indigenous cultural landscape of longstanding use; decisive role in the colonial-era development of Vancouver as the Pacific terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway; enduring prominence within the city's urban form; continuous function as a central transportation hub; distinguished expression of Beaux-Arts architecture as designed by architects Barott Blackadder and Webster; and deep associations with civic identity, collective memory, and the experience of arrival and departure in the city.

CPR Waterfront Station is significant for its location within a cultural landscape that has been part of the territories of the *ᑭᓄᓐᓂᓐ* (Musqueam), *Sḵwx̱wú7mesh* (Squamish), and *Səlilwətał* (Tseil-Waututh) people since time immemorial. Long before the station's construction, the sheltered waters and shoreline of Burrard Inlet formed an important nexus of marine travel routes, landing places, harvesting areas, and village sites that supported longstanding patterns of mobility, exchange, and cultural practice. The south shore of the inlet, where Waterfront Station now stands, functioned as a key point of movement and connection within these networks, making the site a transportation node for thousands of years, long before the advent of the Canadian Pacific Railway. This continuity of Indigenous use and connection contributes an essential layer of significance to the land on which the station was later built.

CPR Waterfront Station is valued for its formative role in Vancouver's emergence as a major Canadian and trans-Pacific centre. The CPR's shift of its western terminus from Port Moody to the Granville Townsite in the 1880s accelerated urbanization, speculative growth, and the establishment of the downtown grid. By positioning Vancouver as the principal Pacific gateway, the CPR shaped early-twentieth-century patterns of settlement, labour mobility, tourism, and commerce. Completed in 1914 as the third terminal on the site, Waterfront Station is significant as an embodiment of national ambitions and the integration of Vancouver into continental rail and steamship networks.

The Station is additionally significant for its landmark urban presence. Situated at the meeting point of the Old Granville Townsite and the CPR-imposed grid, the Station asserts a commanding civic role along Cordova Street and the waterfront. Its monumental colonnade, balanced massing, and strong horizontality anchor key view corridors and define the central waterfront. The building's direct relationship to Burrard Inlet further enhances its landmark character and its function as a prominent threshold between the city and the ocean to the north.

CPR Waterfront Station is also valued for its long-standing function as a transportation hub. Beginning as an Indigenous travel node, the site later became the CPR's primary rail and steamship terminus, connecting Vancouver to national rail systems, regional maritime routes, and global shipping networks. Following major adaptation in 1978, it became metropolitan Vancouver's

principal multimodal interchange, serving SeaBus, SkyTrain, the West Coast Express, and the Canada Line. This continued use highlights the site's enduring association with mobility, exchange, and regional movement patterns.

Architecturally, Waterfront Station is significant as one of Vancouver's most intact examples of *Beaux-Arts* Classicism and early corporate architecture. The location on Cordova Street, adjacent to the entry to Gastown at the wedge juncture between the street grids of Old Granville Townsite and downtown Vancouver, gives the CPR Waterfront Station a commanding presence. Its monumental scale and civic importance establish this as one of the city's most important works of urban architecture. The building was designed by prominent Montréal architects Barott, Blackader and Webster in 1912, and took two years to complete. The massive scale of the structure and its robust use of neoclassical architecture reflects the booming economy of the Edwardian era, a time of vast investment in transportation infrastructure as similar grand railway stations were built across Canada. The *Beaux-Arts* classical exterior architecture provides an imposing civic monument, notable for its symmetry, grand entry colonnade and recessed arcade. The interior concourse is one of the city's most impressive Edwardian-era public spaces, echoing the monumental scale and symmetry of the exterior, with giant order Ionic columns, a deep coffered ceiling, and paintings that depict Canadian landscapes. An important part of the Station's history is marked by the graceful bronze 1921 'Angel of Victory' war memorial by Coeur de Lion McCarthy, which commemorates lives of CPR workers lost during war service, and recalls the central role of the CPR in the movement of troops and supplies across the country during wartime.

CPR Waterfront Station additionally holds lasting value as a civic gateway and locus of collective memory. For generations of immigrants, tourists, and workers, the Station served as a principal point of arrival and departure, embedding it in Vancouver's narratives of mobility, welcome, and commemoration. Its iconic massing remains a defining element of the city's cultural identity.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Canadian Pacific Railway Waterfront Station include its:

- location on Vancouver's central waterfront, at the north edge of the downtown core and adjacent to the entry to Gastown, marking the change in the street grid at the edge of the Old Granville townsite;
 - historic location as the terminus of the transcontinental CPR railway and its connection with the Pacific Ocean at Port of Vancouver, represented by the Incised "Canadian Pacific Railway" sign above the central main entry;
 - ongoing role as the central nexus of regional transportation including water, rail, air, and the transit system;
 - landmark visibility of the front façades from the land side, and of the rear façade from the harbour side;
 - urban form, scale, and massing built into the edge of an escarpment, with three upper stories facing the street, two lower floors facing the water, and a recessed upper floor with a low hipped roof; linear massing of the front facades; projecting central front entry; and rear façade with seven parallel roofline gables;
 - high quality construction materials and craftsmanship, including exterior red brick and terra cotta;
 - *Beaux-Arts* classical design elements including richly articulated façades with vertical pilasters and continuous horizontal cornices at the second and third floor levels; roofline acroteria; prominent central entry colonnade with giant order Ionic columns and recessed entry arcade; continuous balustrades at front and rear; and round arched windows at the ground level street facades and top floor at rear;
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- fenestration, including one-storey ground floor and two-storey rear façade arched metal window assemblies; and regular banks of punched windows;
- interior public concourse that reflects the overall symmetry of the front colonnade with giant order Ionic columns and pilasters, a deep coffered ceiling, terrazzo flooring, wall clocks at each end, clock, and landscape paintings installed in 1916; and
- additional features such as the 'Angel of Victory' bronze war memorial on a granite base.

HISTORIC IMAGES



1904. Notman, William. Land on which the CPR Station would be built [VPL 1867]



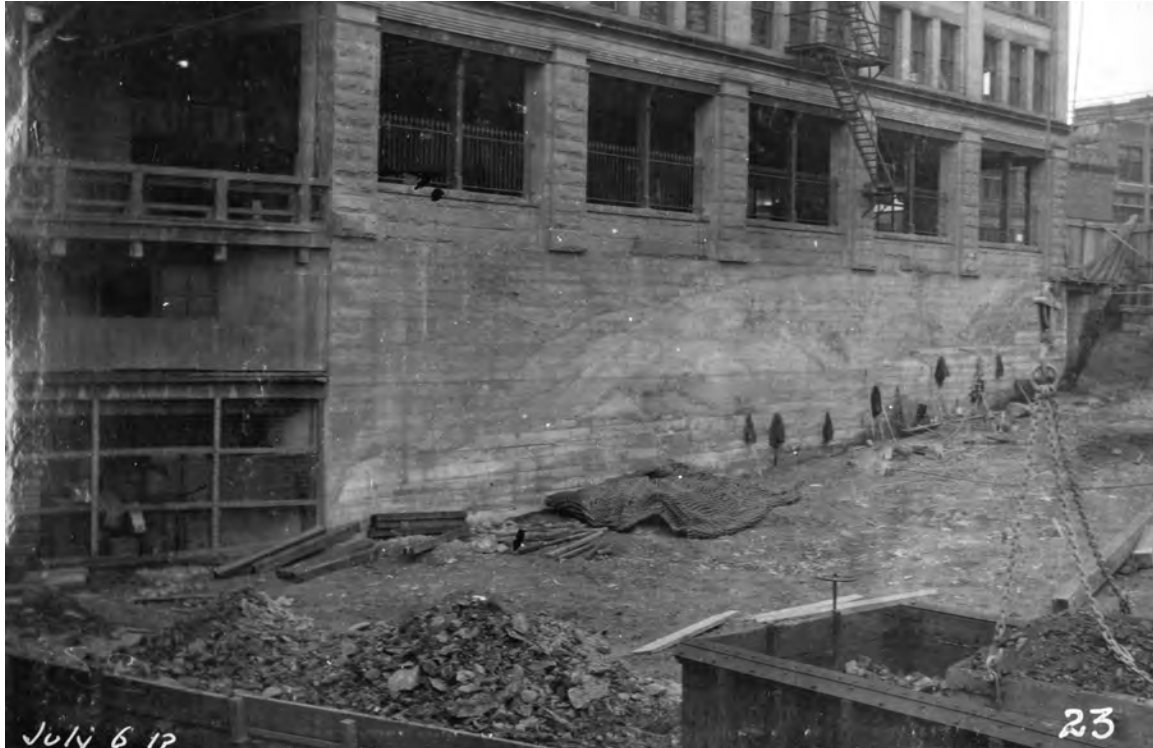
1912. Frank, Leonard. CPR Station [VPL 11439]



1912-06-04. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-5.021]



1912-06-06. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-5.022]



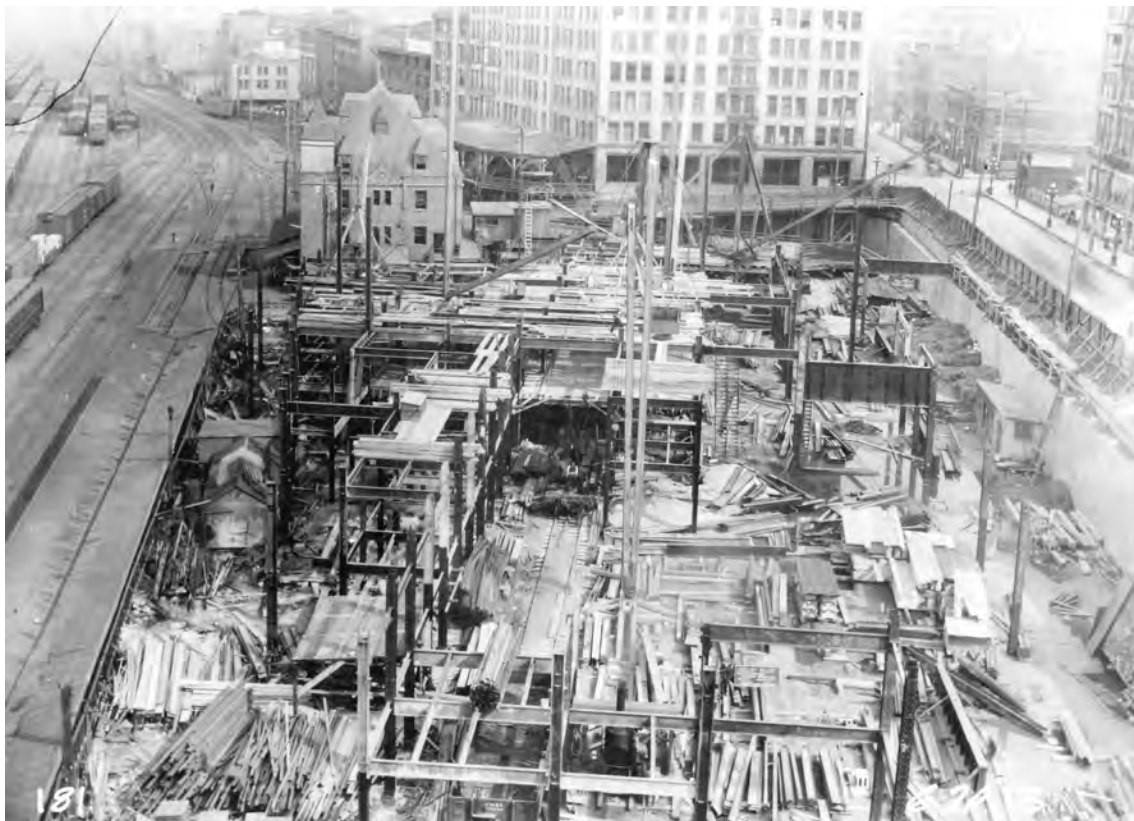
1912-07-06. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-5.018]



1912-07-25. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-5.031]



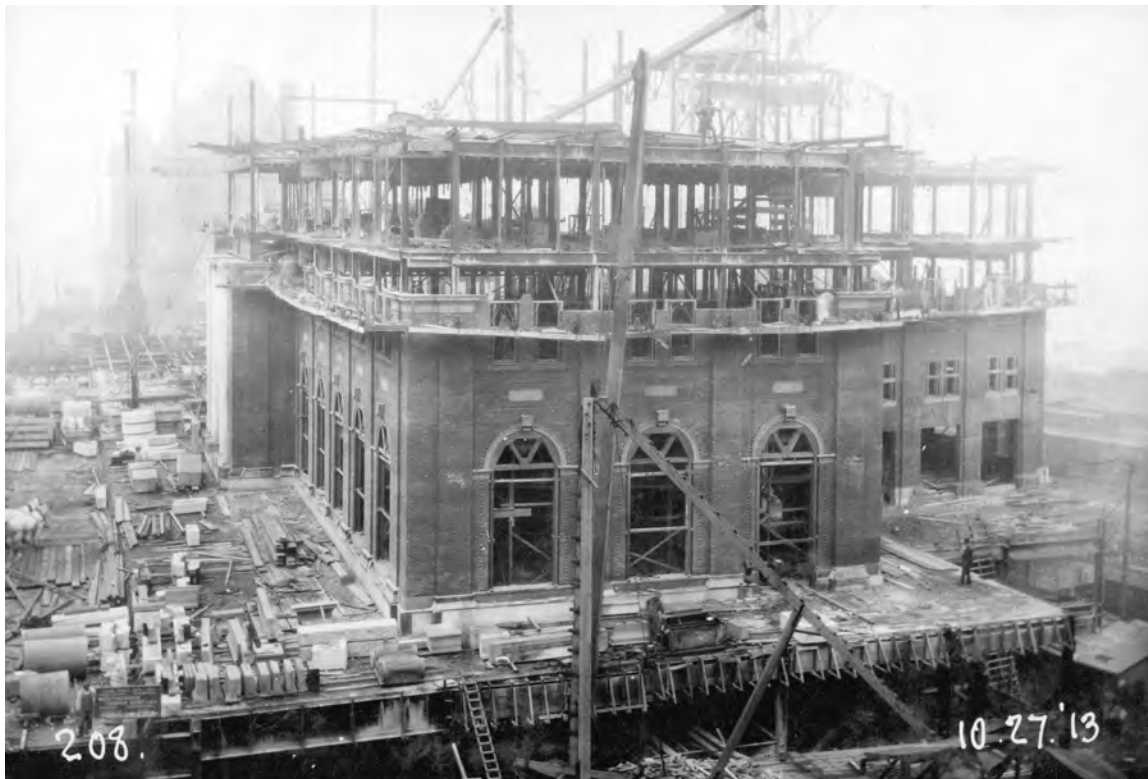
1913-05-30. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-1.155]



1913-06-20. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-1.170]



1913-09-29. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-1.033]



1913-10-27. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-1.044]



1913-11-26. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-1.052]



1913-12-29. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-1.055]



1914-03-24. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-1.062]



1914-03-24. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-1.063]



1914-03-24. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-1.064]



1914-03-24. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-1.209]



1914-07-29. CPR Station under-construction [CVA 152-1.080]



1914-08-22. Thomson, Stuart. Seaforth Highlanders in front of the CPR Station [CVA Mil P224]



1915(ca.) Bradbury, Charles. CPR Station [CVA SGN 1544]



1920s. Dominion Photo Co. CPR Station [CVA 677-164]



1926-03-31. Dominion Photo Co. CPR Station [VPL 22260]



1926-04. Dominion Photo Co. CPR Station [VPL 22279A]



1928. Pacific Airways Ltd. Aerial of CPR Station [CVA 152-111.3]



1931. Canadian Airways Ltd. CPR Station [CVA 1495-8]

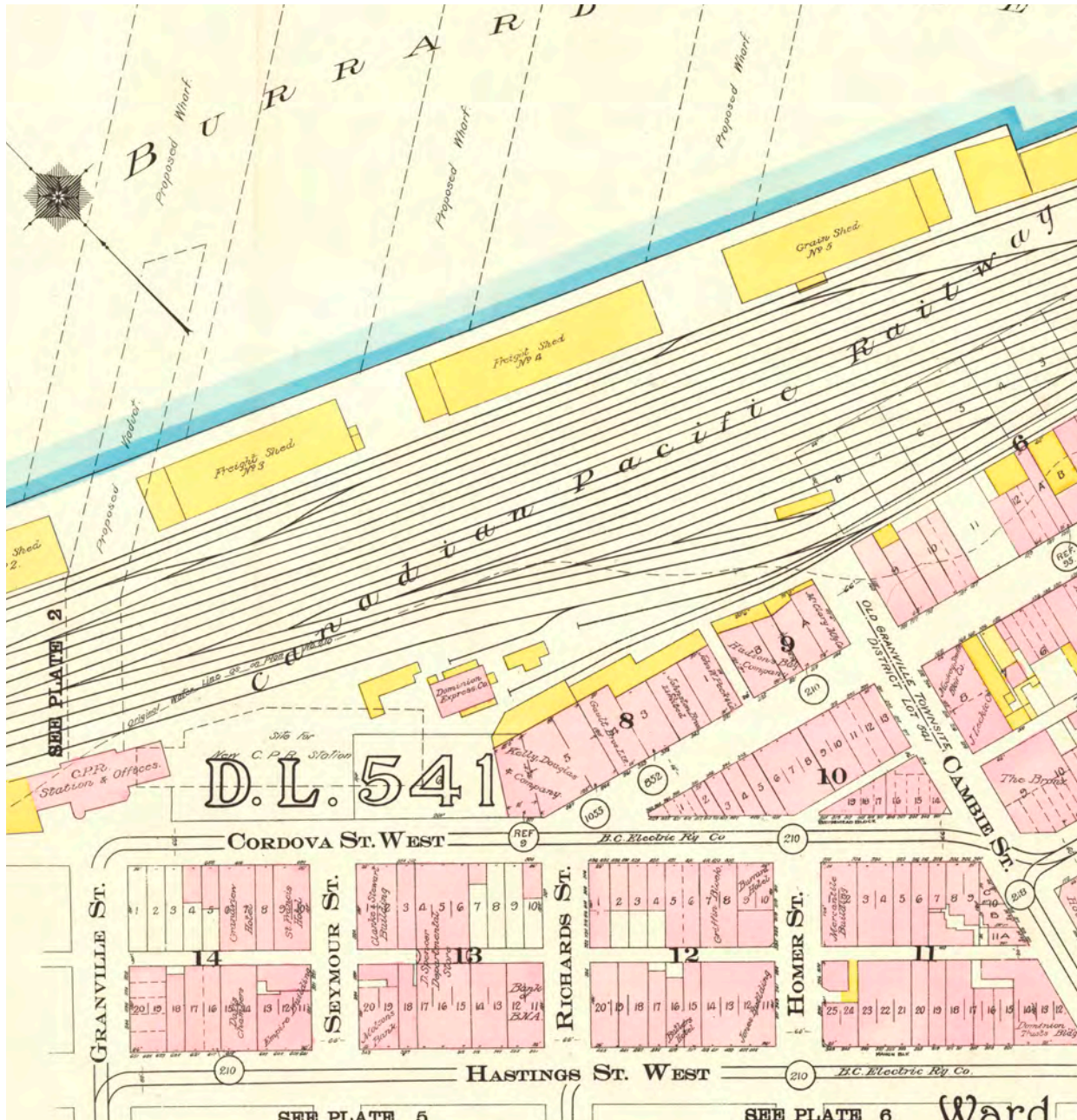


1930(ca.) Crookall, James. CPR Station [CVA 260-305]

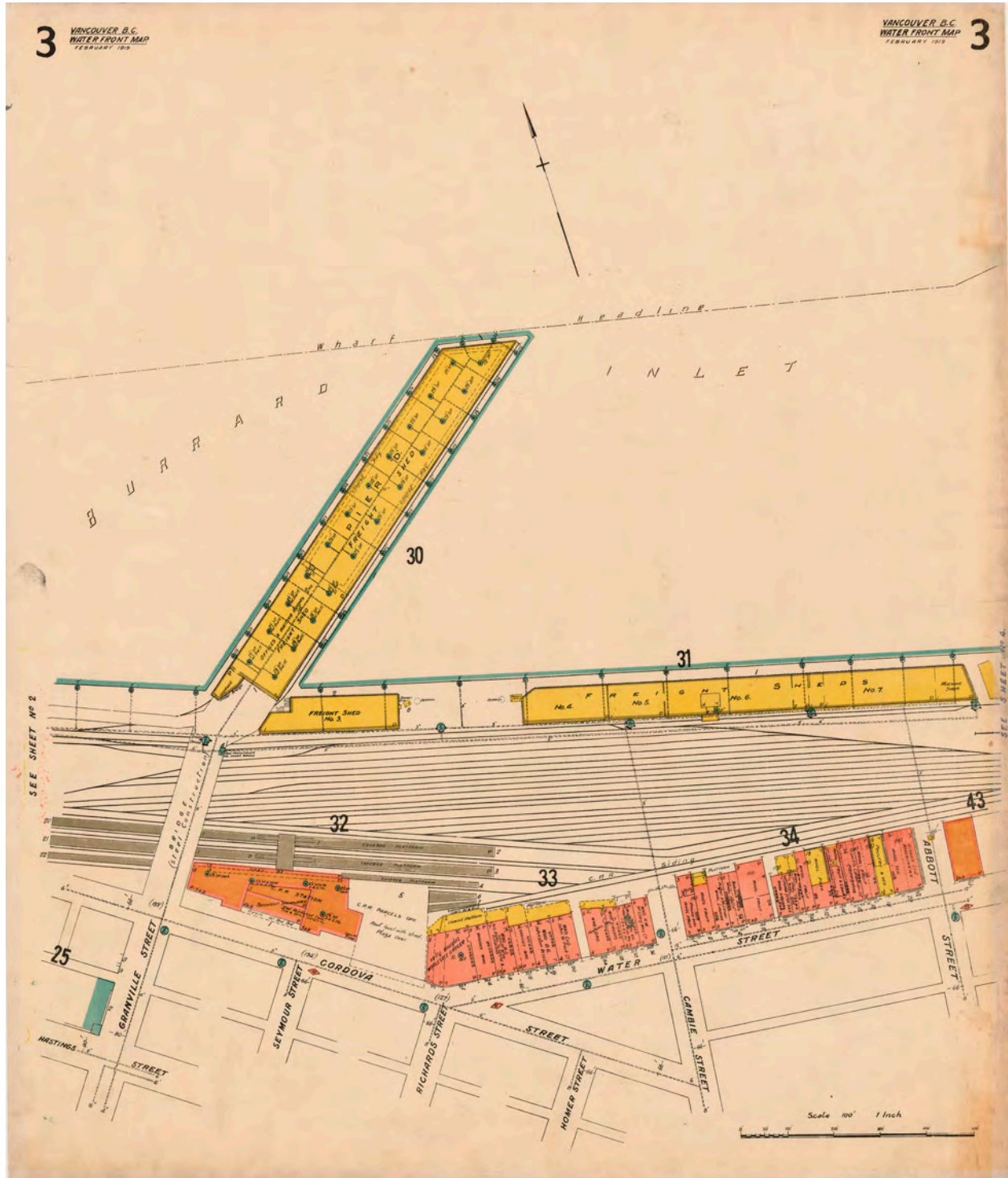


1974-04. Angel of Victory [CVA 1095-01179]

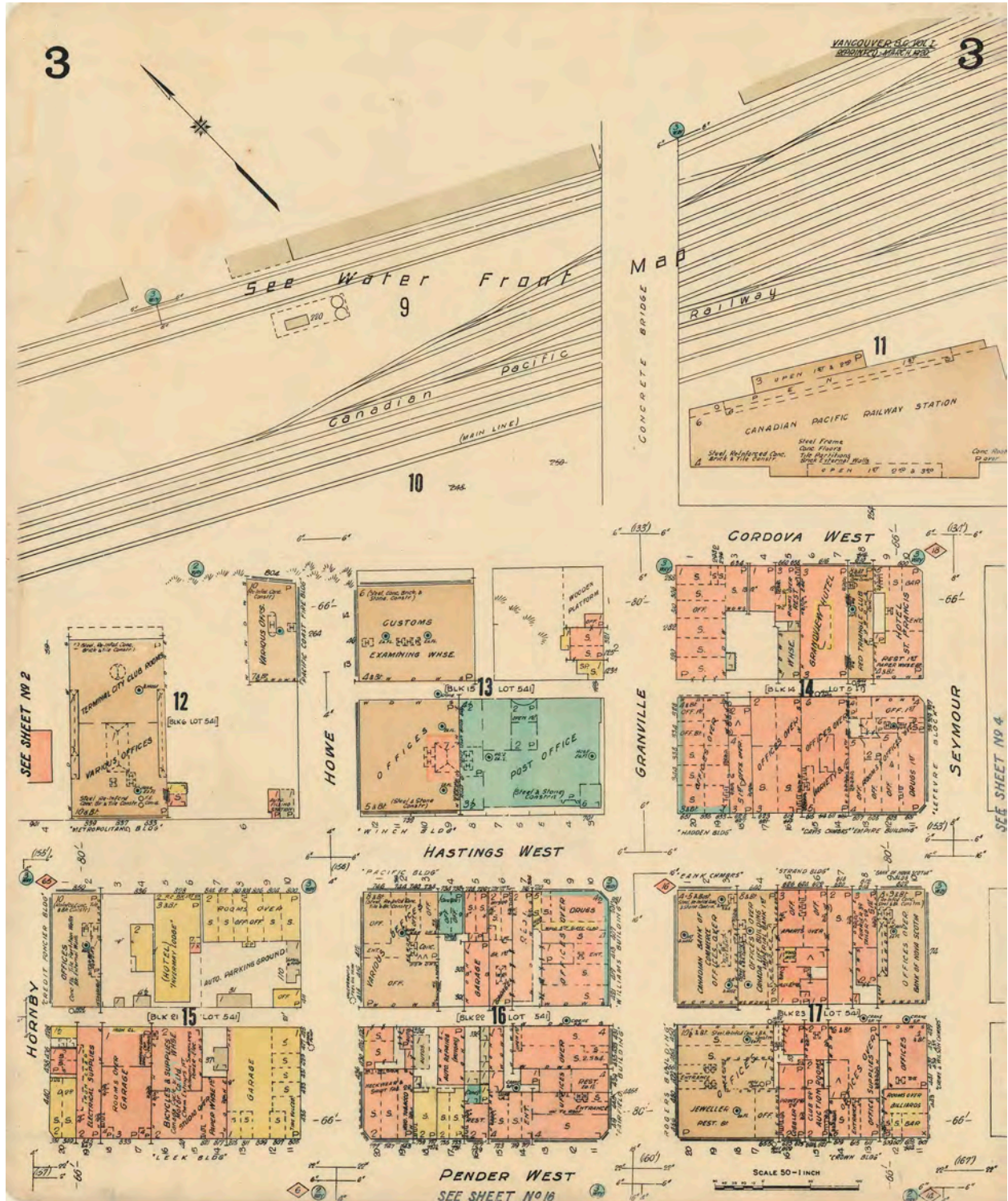
HISTORIC FIRE INSURANCE MAPS



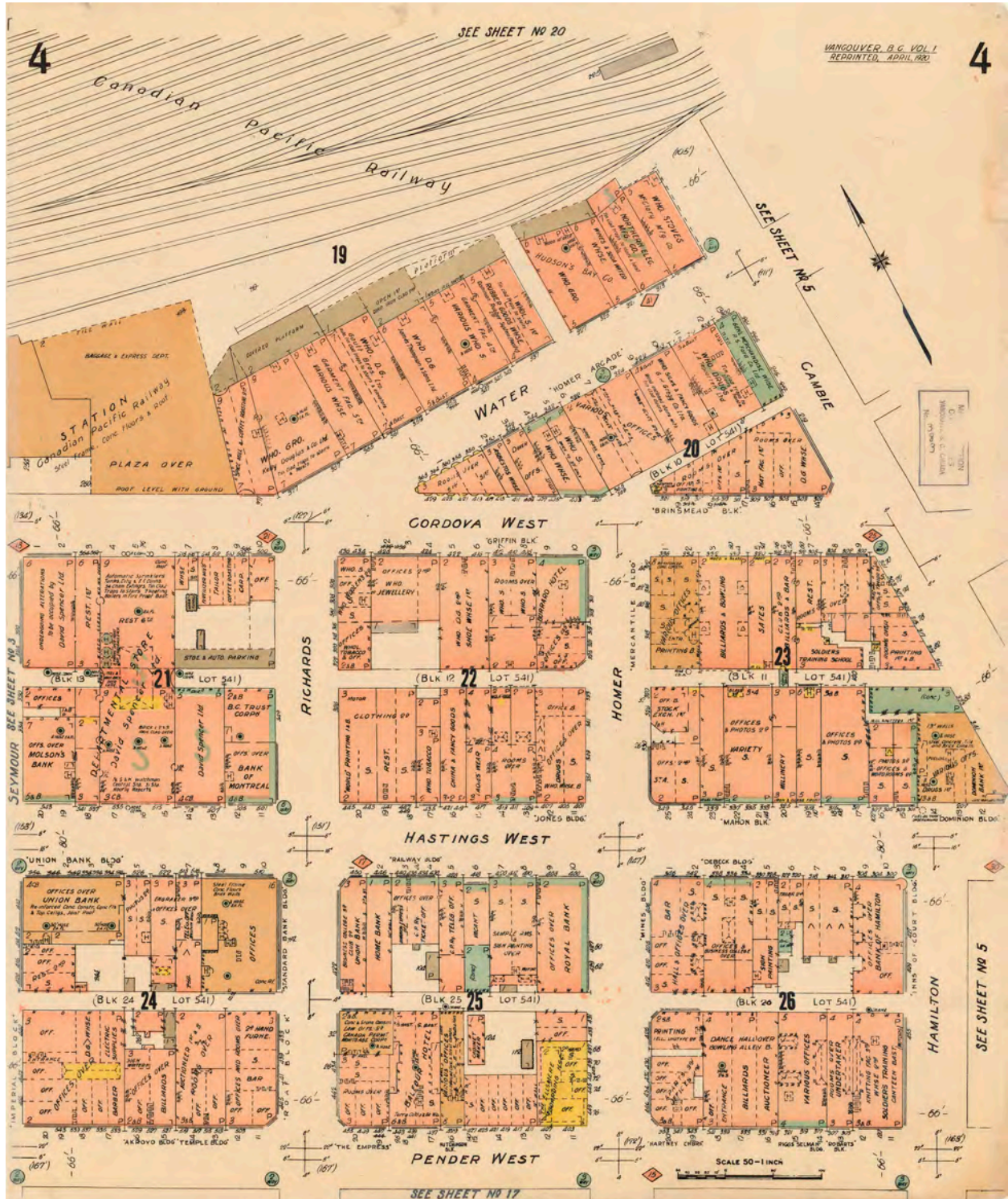
1912. Vol. 1 of Goad's Atlas of the City of Vancouver, BC. Chas. E. Goad, Plate 003 [CVA AM1594, MAP342a.04]



1919. Vancouver Waterfront Map. Mainland Fire Underwriters' Association, Sheet 03 [CVA MAP 382, 1972-581.04]

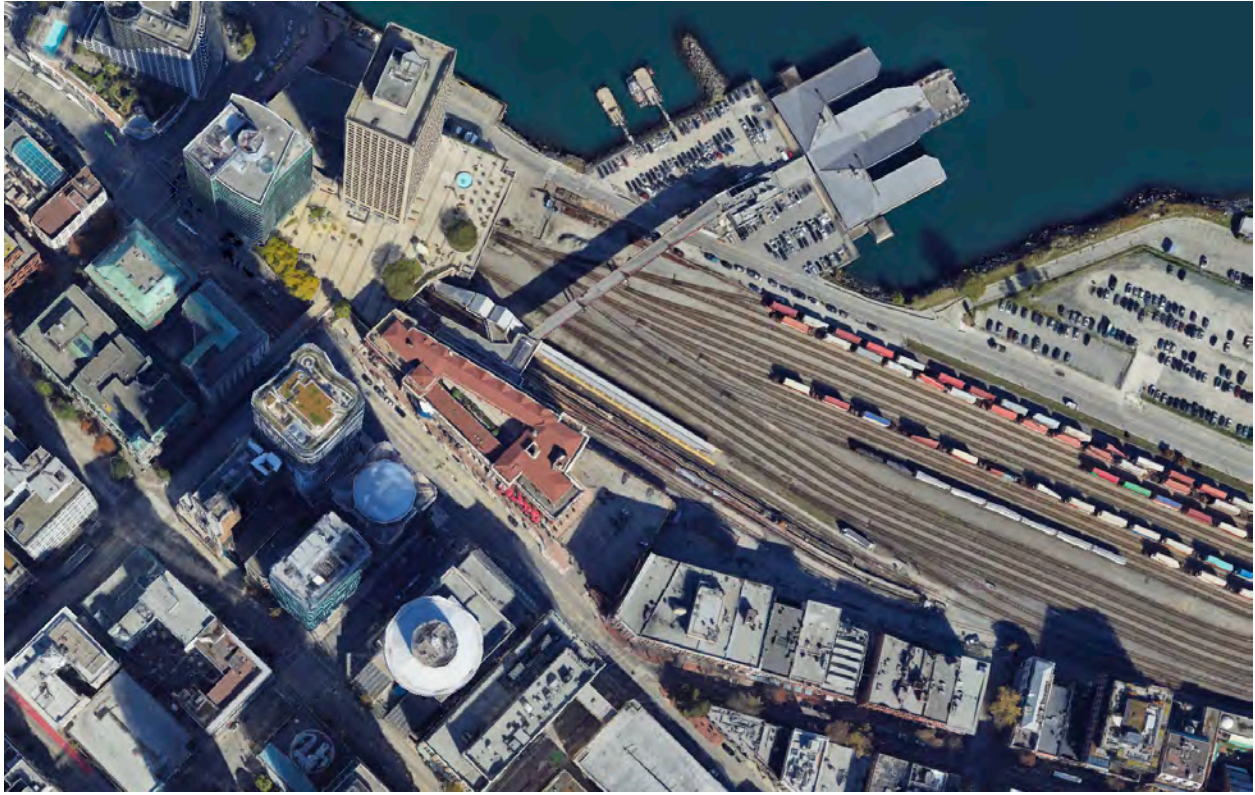


1920. Vancouver, BC. Chas. E. Goad, Plate 003 [CVA AM1594-MAP 383, 1972-582.02]

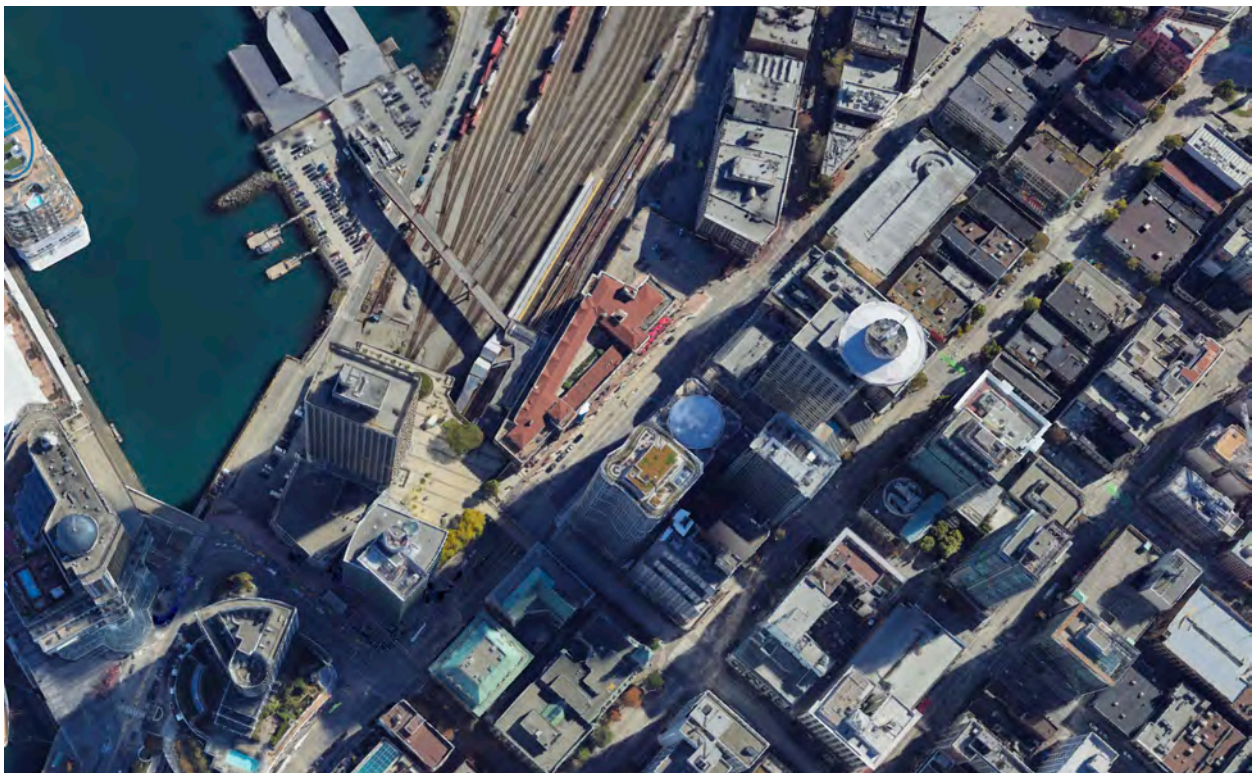


1920. Vancouver, BC. Chas. E. Goad, Plate 004 [CVA AM1594-MAP 383, 1972-582.03]

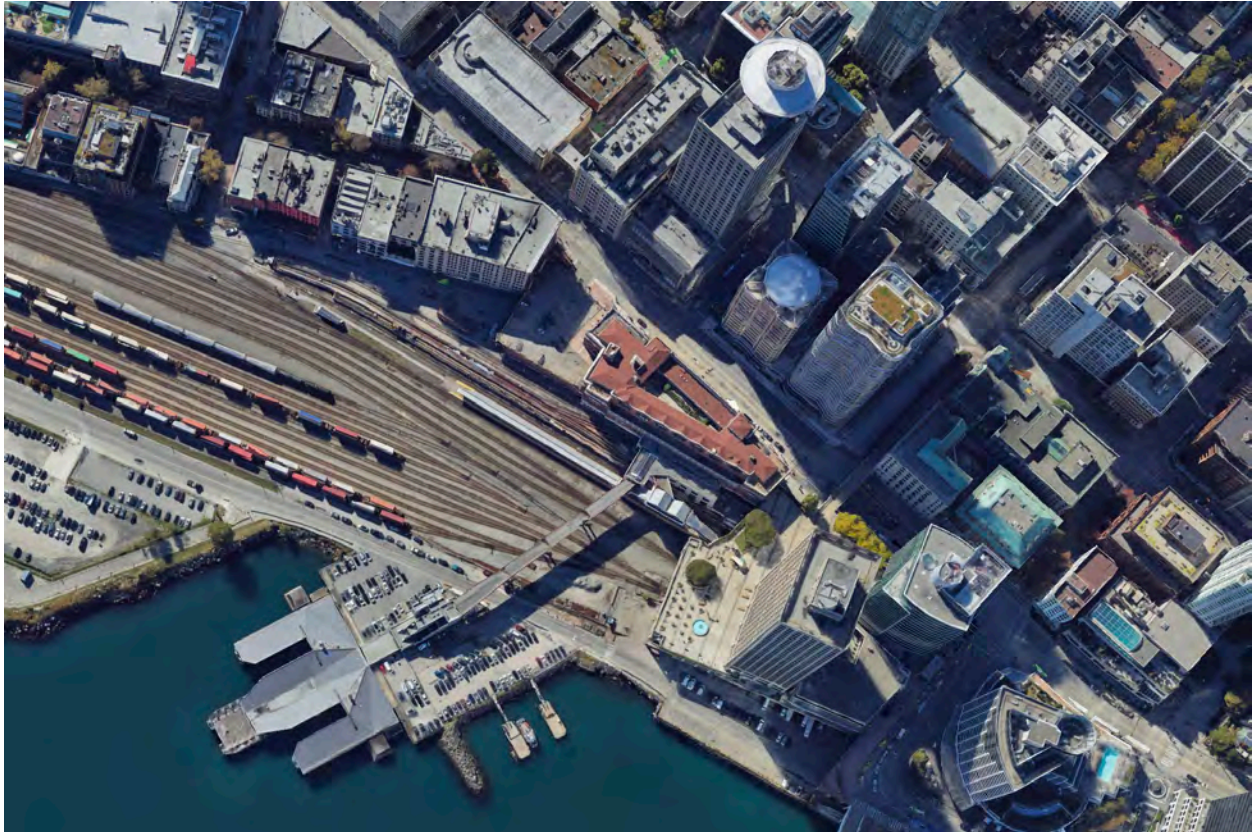
CONTEMPORARY AERIALS



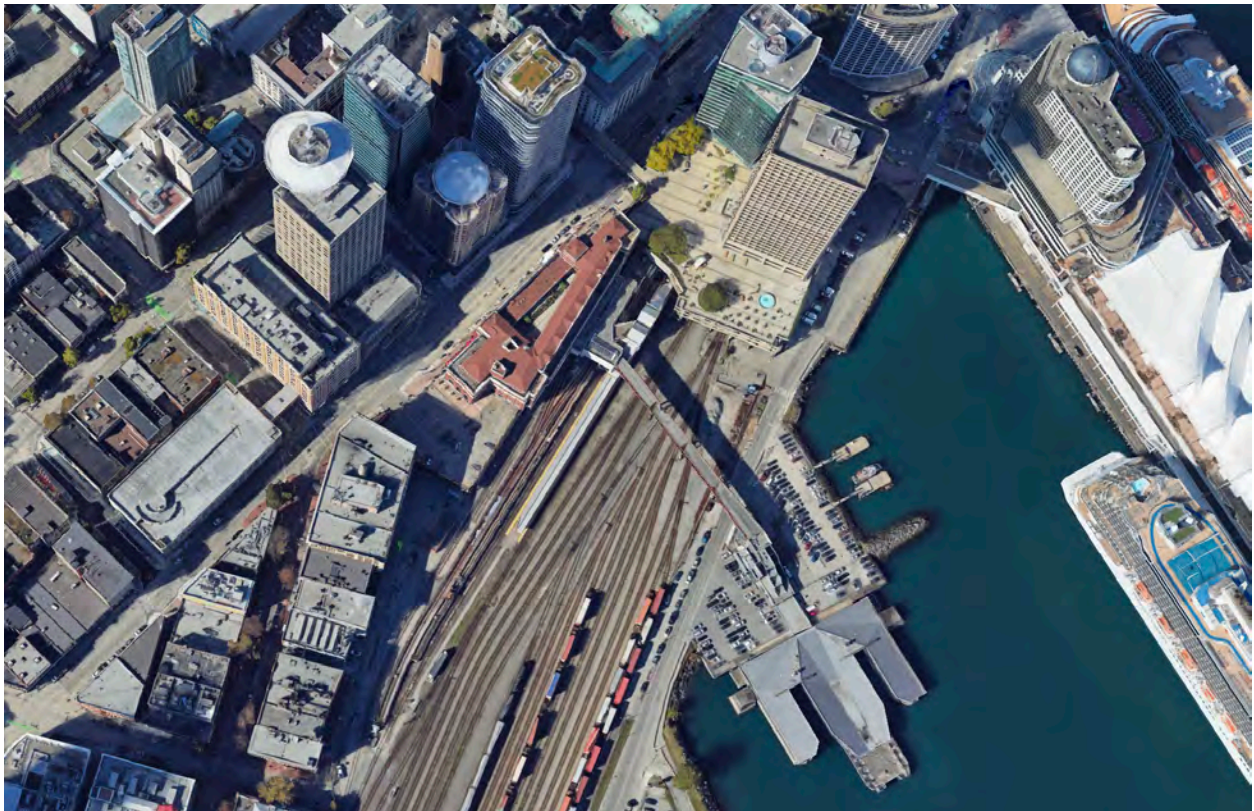
CPR Waterfront Station, looking north, Google Maps, 2025



CPR Waterfront Station, looking east, Google Maps, 2025



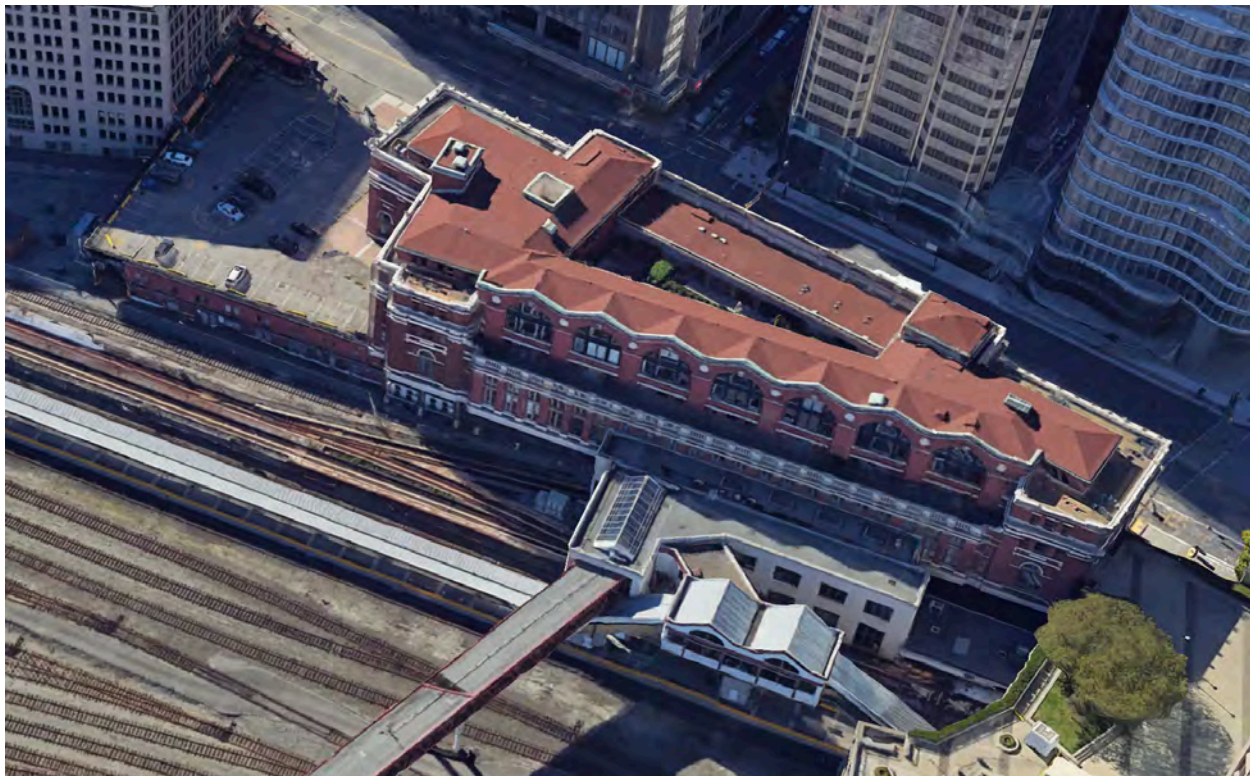
CPR Waterfront Station, looking south, Google Maps, 2025



CPR Waterfront Station, looking west, Google Maps, 2025



CPR Waterfront Station front elevation, Google Maps, 2025



CPR Waterfront Station, rear elevation, Google Maps, 2025

CONTEMPORARY AERIALS



Front elevation of CPR Waterfront Station



West and front elevation of CPR Waterfront Station



West elevation from the Granville Square lookout



Rear elevation of CPR Waterfront Station from the Granville Square lookout



Rear elevation of CPR Waterfront Station from Waterfront Road



East elevation of CPR Waterfront Station



East elevation of CPR Waterfront Station



Angel of Victory war memorial



CPR Waterfront Station from Cordova Street, looking northwest

RESEARCH SOURCES

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- Kalman, Harold. A History of Canadian Architecture; Vol. 2. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1994
- Kalman, Phillips and Ward. Exploring Vancouver. Vancouver UBC Press, 2012
- Luxton Donald, ed. Building the West: The Early Architects of British Columbia. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2003
- 2018. Lemon, Robert. CPR Waterfront Station SOS
- 1974-12-06 Province pg.06
- 1918-05. Construction 11, no. 5
- 1915-03-17 Contract Record and Engineering Review
- 1914-06 Canadian Railway and Marine World
- 1913-05 Construction 6, no. 5
- 1913-01-22 Contract Record and Engineering Review
- 1912-07-18 The Canadian Engineer 23, no.3
- 1912-07 Railway and Marine World
- 1920. Vancouver, BC. Chas. E. Goad, Plate 004 [CVA AM1594-MAP 383, 1972-582.03]
- 1920. Vancouver, BC. Chas. E. Goad, Plate 003 [CVA AM1594-MAP 383, 1972-582.02]
- 1919. Vancouver Waterfront Map. Mainland Fire Underwriters' Association, Sheet 03 [CVA MAP 382, 1972-581.04]
- 1912. Vol. 1 of Goad's Atlas of the City of Vancouver, BC. Chas. E. Goad, Plate 003 [CVA AM1594, MAP342a.04]
- Project Files - Vancouver Post Office - new building, tunnel conveyor, notes Archives / Collections and Fonds
- Project Files - Vancouver Post Office - new building, tunnel conveyor, letters and notes Archives / Collections and Fonds
- Project Files - Vancouver Post Office - new building, tunnel conveyor controls, notes Archives / Collections and Fonds
- Accommodation - Engineering files - Vancouver, B.C. - 5BS - Tunnel and conveyor to C.P.R. Station - Specification Archives / Collections and Fonds
- Accommodation - Engineering files - Vancouver, B.C. - 5B - Tunnel and conveyor to C.P.R. Station Archives / Collections and Fonds
- Accommodation - Engineering files - Vancouver, B.C. - 5B - Tunnel and conveyor to C.P.R. Station Archives / Collections and Fonds 2
- 1996-01-25 Staff report re. Renewal of tunnel lease [COV]