Victory Square

To you from failing hands we throw,  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.

1860s – 1889  
**GOVERNMENT SQUARE**

Victory Square began as a piece of dense forest and was kept aside as provincial property during a survey of February 1886. Ten weeks after the city’s incorporation, the Great Fire of June 13, 1886 swept the area clean of logging debris.

1889 – 1912  
**THE COURTHOUSE YEARS**

In 1889 a provincial courthouse was erected and the periphery was planted with maple trees. The building lasted until 1912 when it was demolished for a new site on Georgia Street. In 1900 this now growing financial area began a military association when a bonfire set by Boer War celebrants damaged the freshly laid wood-block pavement at the intersection of Cambie and Hastings.

1914 – 1918  
**“NO MAN’S LAND”**

As Canadian casualties mounted in WWI a movement began to set the area aside as a war memorial. In May 1917 alongside an army recruiting marquee, a giant Evangelistic Tabernacle was erected. It covered most of the square and was dismantled that July. During the summer of 1918 veterans, raised money for war widows and dependants by constructing a realistic front line trench, complete with sandbags and barbed wire. On March 12, 1918 the city leased the square from the BC Government for 99 years.

1918 – 1924  
**SETTING UP A WAR MEMORIAL**

Two years after the Armistice of 1918, Government Square was renamed Victory Square by the city and provincial governments and two civic organizations began raising funds for a cenotaph. Finally, in April 1924, the Cenotaph was unveiled to 25,000 people and since then has been the centre for all November 11th Remembrance Day services.

1924 – PRESENT  
**A CONTINUING FOCUS**

Although no longer the centre of the city, Victory Square has since been a focus of protests, particularly during the Depression era when the unemployed rioted then camped out here. Others have followed. A 2002 major renovation included a new layout, benches, and lamp standards with helmets as shades. The “soldier” lights stand at attention around the Cenotaph and at ease throughout the park.

**BUILDINGS SURROUNDING THE SQUARE**

1. The Dominion Building 1908-10  
2. Imperial Bank 1897-98  
3. News-Advertiser Building 1905  
4. Oddfellow’s Hall/Lyric Theatre 1906  
5. Central School 1890  
6. Province Newspaper Office & Editorial Building 1908-09  
7. The Flack Block 1899