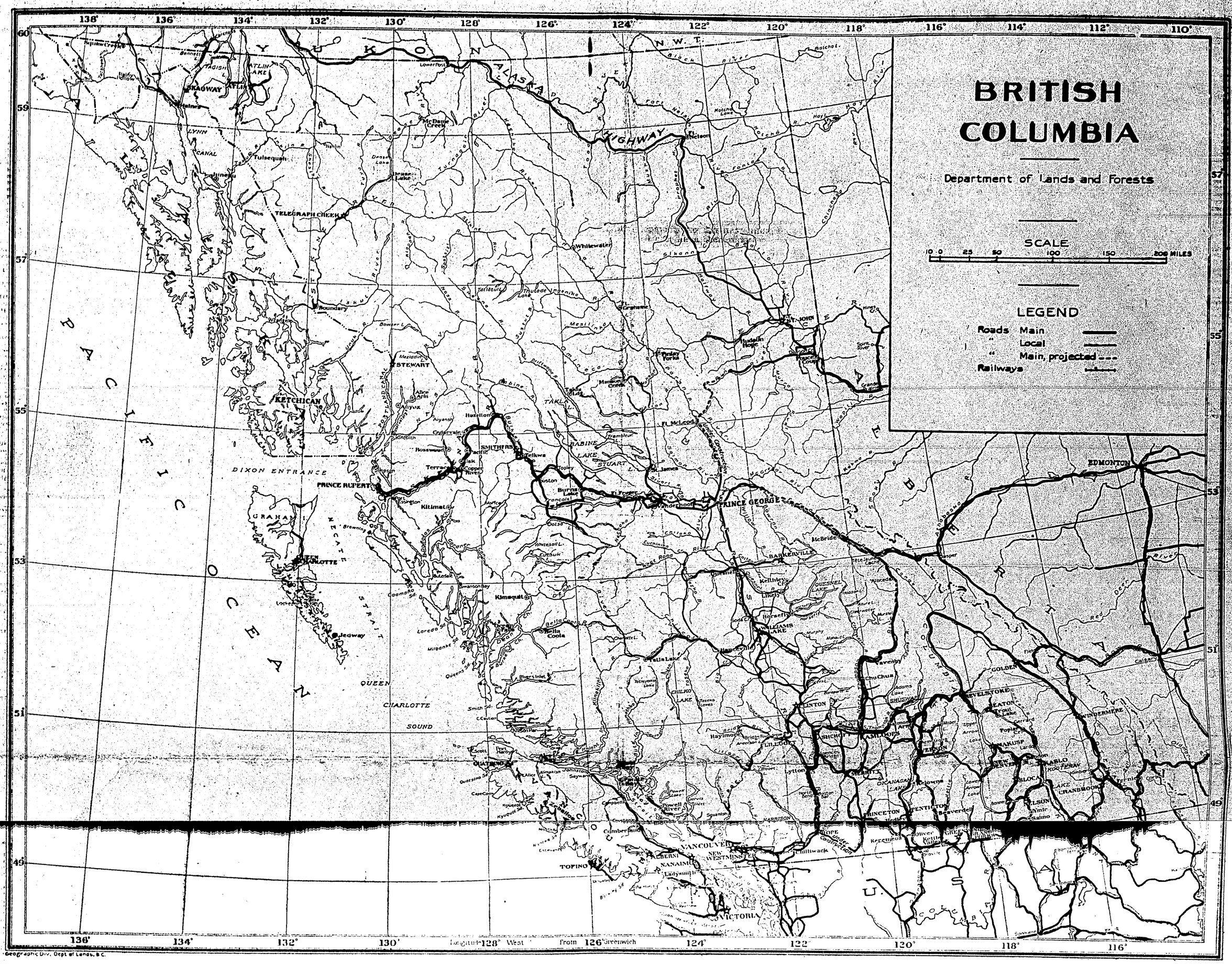

Future bright for sprawling B.C. with emphasis on great untapped north

While the overall record of British Columbia's first 100 years is one of steady growth and progress Prince Rupert's history is one of great hopes, early setbacks, revival of ambitions, a period of civic poverty, emergence as a major city and high optimism for a bigger and better destiny than was ever dreamed anticipated.

With the opening up of the vast areas to the north and east, plans for hydro power and smelter on the Nass River, oil on the Queen Charlotte Islands, development of the Rocky Mountain trench, and a marine highway to Alaska the city's future looks as bright as the province's as a whole.

The story of Prince Rupert began after the turn of the century. In 1905, 12,000 Canadians competed for a $250 prize offered by the Grand Trunk Pacific for a name for its new terminal city. A Winnipeg girl chose Prince Rupert, promoter of the Hudson's Bay Company and its first governor in 1670.

Prince Rupert owes its existence to the railway which was later to become the Canadian National.

Before Kaien Island, at the mouth of the Skeena, was chosen as a railway terminal, there was nothing there to be called a settlement.

In 1902, Charles M. Hays, who died when the Titanic sank, was manager of the Grand Trunk Pacific. He promoted a rail line from North Bay to Port Simpson. His enthusiasm resulted in a construction start westward from Winnipeg in 1906. Decision was reached to start from the west at Kaien Island rather than at Port Simpson. In June that year, the first piles were driven for a landing platform for machinery and supplies, shipped often around the Horn. The first steel was laid at Rupert in 1908. The centre had a population of 200 living in tents. There were three canvas settlements, Knoxville, Baconville and Vickersville.

Churches went up in 1907 and 1908, the Anglicans and Methodists beating the Presbyterian and Catholics, who still met in tents. A school was established and two small hotels. Then businesses were established, including the newspaper, the Empire. First sale of lots was in 1909. The town was incorporated and elected its first council under Mayor Alfred Stork in 1910.

On the council with mayor Stork were F. H. Mobley, William P. Lynch, V. W. Smith, G. R. Naden, A. A. McIntyre, A. R. M. Barrow, John H. Hilditch and T. D. Pattullo who later became a member of the B.C. Legislature and premier of the province.

But the route of the railway along the Skeena was so rough, there were still no trains. The first train didn't arrive until August 5, 1914. Meanwhile sternwheelers plied the river, and in June 1910 the Grand Trunk Pacific Steamship Company placed Prince Rupert on the shipping route then serving Victoria, Vancouver and Seattle. Fishing, lumbering, mining and latterly the Columbia Cellulose Co. Ltd. plant contributes to Prince Rupert's livelihood. But its potential worth in world trade routes has never yet been fully utilized.

Port Simpson, an Indian village on the Tsimpsean Peninsula 25 miles north of Prince Rupert, lost out when the railway chose Prince Rupert. Port Simpson had been the site of an HBC fort as early as 1834 —nine years before the founding of Fort Victoria.

There was no Indian settlement there when the fort was established, but gradually they moved their houses until Port Simpson had a population of 2,300. The fort had been moved from the mouth of the Nass River when the Russians objected to the company trading on the Stikine which emptied through the Alaskan panhandle to the sea.

A Methodist Church which would seat 800 was built at Port Simpson in 1874, and also a school. A fishing village famed for its totem poles, survives.

Most B.C. centres owe their existence in part to the gold fever which swept B.C. in the last half of the 19th century. Observatory Inlet was visited and christened by Capt. George Vancouver in 1763. He reportedly explored the Kitsault River, which flows into Alice Arm, and landed parties cooked over coal found there. But though Alice Arm's history is one of mineral development, no further finds of coal ever have been reported.

Mining started in the Alice Arm area about 1900. High grade ore was located at the Dolly Varden silver mine and a 17-mile railway was built to bring out the ore. Cost was so great the contractors ended up owning the mine which was worked between 1919 and 1921. Logging succeeded mining, but this too dwindled by 1928. Alice Arm almost died. Re-opening of the Torbrit Mine in the 50s convinced the handful of population to hang on.

A power development on the Nass and the general re-awakening of the north has raised hopes for the area again.

Not so Anyox, the town that was there, 95 miles north of Prince Rupert on Observatory Inlet, 18 miles from Alice Arm, was laid waste by three big fires after the population of 2,600 was entirely moved out in 1935.

Anyox, derived from the Indian name Hidden Water, was first explored by white men in 1898. They were led there by three chiefs from Port Simpson who had heard of a mountain of gold. The Hidden Creek claims were established. Granby Company became interested in the copper finds and paid $600,000 for an 80 per cent interest in 1910.

The company then expanded $13,000,000 in a mine, town, smelter, dams, powerhouses, con-

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See — FUTURE

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