

## Stories From The Archives — Como Lake Settlers & Kelly's Trail to Port Moody

Researched By: [Ralph Drew](#), Belcarra, BC, April 2020.  
Source: *The Port Moody Gazette*, Saturday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1884.

Today's 'Como Lake Road' marks the boundary between 'Township 38' and 'Township 39' which was surveyed around 1880. The initial section line surveys were an important prerequisite for settlers wanting to pre-empt 160 acres (one-quarter section) of Crown Land for a homestead as the pre-empted parcel needed to be accurately located and legally described. The surveys also meant cleared paths (survey "cut-lines") along the section lines which quickly became trails used by the first settlers. In the early 1880s, the future 'Como Lake Road' was just a forest path (a surveyor's "cut-line") and the whole area in central Coquitlam was mostly wilderness.

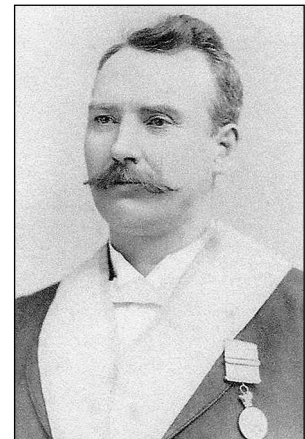
The small lake in central Coquitlam was originally shown as 'Welcome Lake' on maps as early as 1887, first referred to as 'Lake Como' in 1894, and subsequently renamed 'Como Lake' in 1912. There was a speculative "land boom" underway in 1912 and the name-change may have been made for marketing purposes. Various origins have been suggested for the name 'Como Lake' — 'Como', a Sandwich Islander (Hawaiian) who belonged to the party that founded Fort Langley in 1827 (least likely origin); 'Lake Como' in northern Italy; or a compound of 'Co' for Coquitlam and 'mo' for Port Moody (most likely origin).

In March 1882, Lance Corporal John Murray, recently discharged from the Royal Engineers, and a survey party arrived at Port Moody on a scow and began to survey the 'Port Moody Townsite'. When the survey party arrived, there was neither a trail to New Westminster nor a log cabin along the south shore of Port Moody Arm, and on the north shore there was only one logger's shack located at the 'Old Orchard'.

Also, during 1882, Col. John Thomas Scott (1821–1908) of New Westminster and his son-in-law Robert Brenton Kelly (1849–1908) built the 'Caledonia Hotel' at the north foot of Queen Street which they opened in December 1882. It was during 1883 that Kelly built a trail south from Kyle Street in Port Moody up the hill to the surveyor's "cut-line" that defined the boundary between Townships 38 & 39 which would later become part of 'Coquitlam' in 1891. Clarke's Road to the North Road would not be completed until late 1884. In March 1884, the following news article appeared in the local newspaper:

"The energetic settlers in this vicinity [today's 'Como Lake' area] are deserving of great praise for the rapid and permanent improvements noticeable on the several ranches [homesteads]. A good deal of land has been cleared the past winter, and preparations are now being made for putting in crops. During the past week they have been engaged in constructing a road [today called 'Gatensbury'] from the settlement to connect with the trail ['Kelly's Trail', named after Robert B. Kelly] which joins Kyle Street at Port Moody. By this means they will find a ready market for their produce, and at the same time encourage others to settle in the neighbourhood."

— *Port Moody Gazette*, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1884.



**Robert B. Kelly**

In 1891, Robert Brenton Kelly, J.P., became the first Reeve for the new 'District of Coquitlam' and served for five years from 1891 until 1896. Kelly also operated the Coquitlam Post Office from 1891 to 1898. Kelly was born in Galashiels, Scottish Borders, Scotland, in 1849, and in 1880 married the daughter of New Westminster pioneer Col. J. T. Scott. In 1880, Kelly was also one of four trustees who founded the 'Royal City Planing Mills Company' in New Westminster along with John Hendry. Robert Brenton Kelly died suddenly on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1908, at age 59.



City of Vancouver Archives (CVA Hot P19), photograph by J.A. (John Allan) Brock, Vancouver, B.C.

**Col. J.T. Scott's 'Caledonia Hotel' in Port Moody, 1886 — view looking south — the hotel was built on pilings next to the dock projecting north from Queen Street.**

## Caledonia Hotel!

HEAD OF PORT MOODY.

**T**HE PROPRIETOR OF THE ABOVE HOTEL takes pleasure in announcing that the House is now completed with every convenience for the traveling public. THE TABLES are well supplied with every article in season, and THE BAR is provided with a well-selected Stock of

### LIQUORS AND CIGARS.

THE BEDS are well aired, and THE STABLING is extensive and the best of Feed always ready for Horses.

It may be well to remind visitors that this Hotel is within a few minutes walk of the Railway Wharf and Station, and just at the Terminus of the New Road, now in course of construction.

GUESTS may depend on receiving every attention and a hearty welcome from the undersigned, whose long experience is a guarantee of everything being comfortable and satisfactory.

**J. T. SCOTT, Manager.**

Source: Mainland Guardian, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1882.

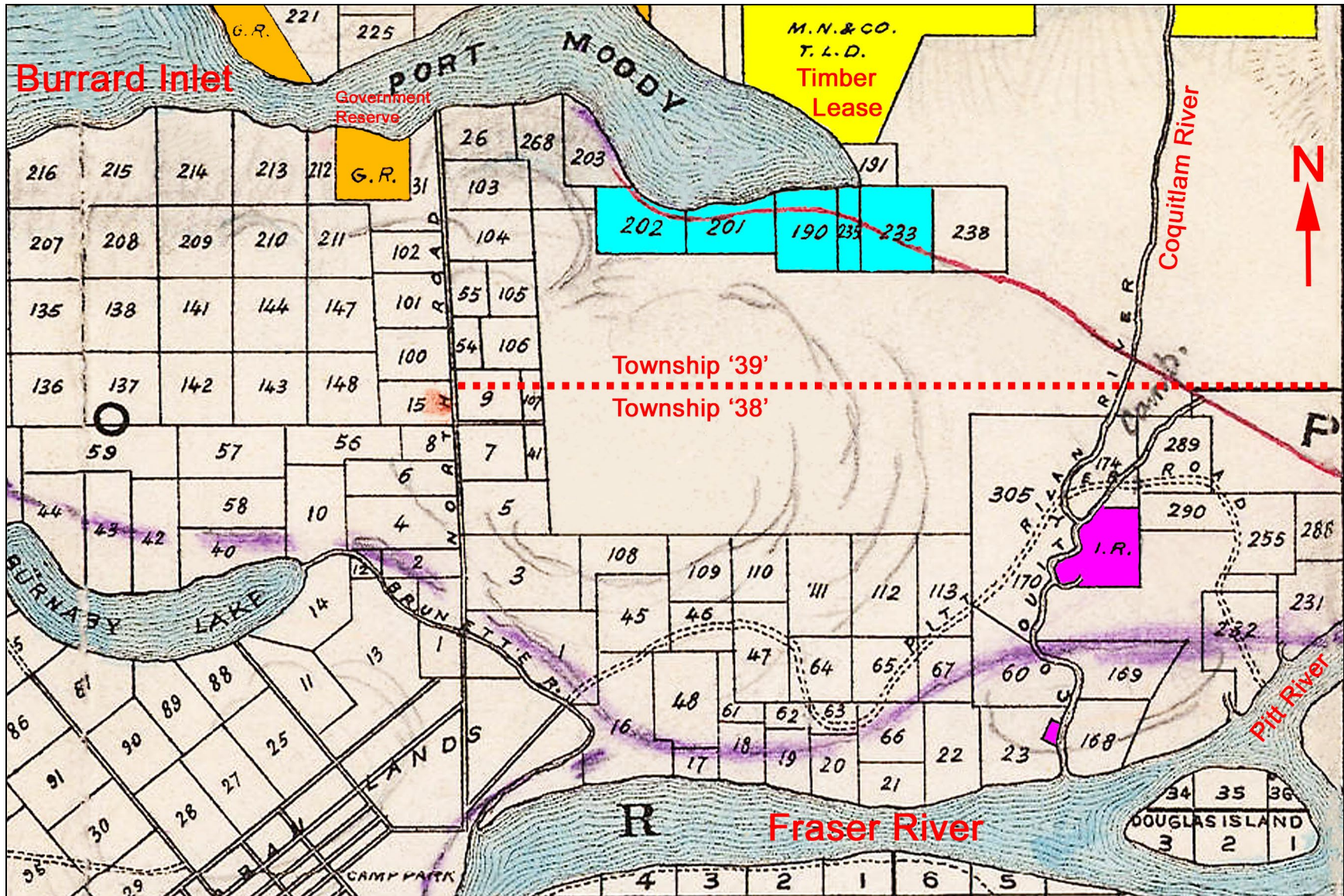
**'Caledonia Hotel' Advertisement — December 1882.**



City of Vancouver Archives (CVA Out P30); photograph by John Wren, New Westminster.

Photograph annotated by Major J.S. Matthews, Archivist, City of Vancouver.

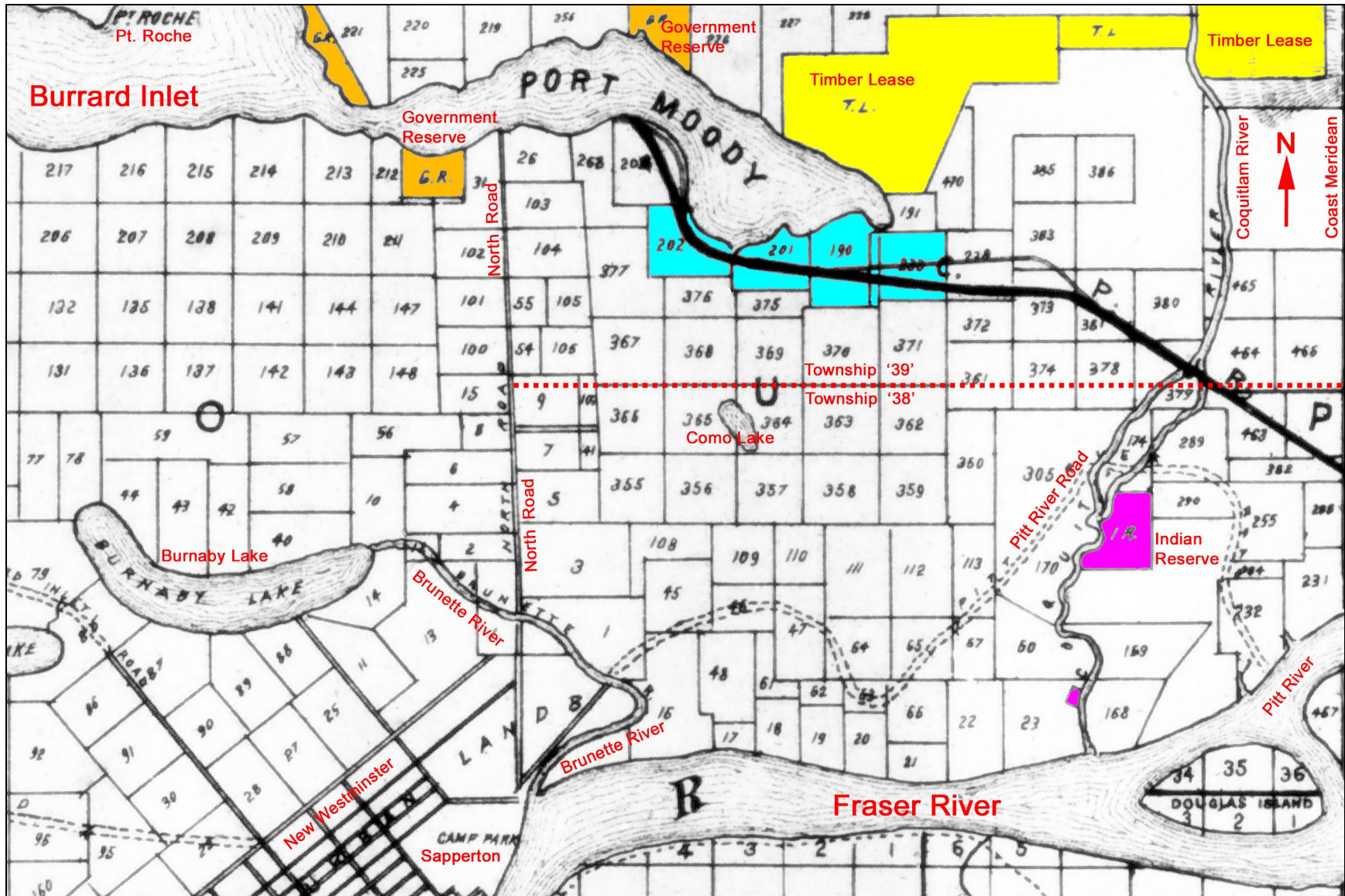
Port Moody, 1883 — (1) Fraser Brothers Hall; (2) Lamont's Restaurant; (3) Unknown; (4) Sandy Annard; (5) Queen Street Crossing; (6) Creek & Trestle; (7) CPR Building; (8) Clarke's Boundary; (9) Elgin House; (10) Tay's Store, Jail Behind; (11) D.B. Grant's, First Post Office; (12) Caledonia Hotel; (13) Eckstein's; (14) Caledonia Hotel Stable; (15) John Murray, Butcher; (16) Chinese Shacks; (17) Railway Wharf; (18) Railway Station; (19) Float Ice.



Source: City of Vancouver Archives (CVA Map 2), published by Hon. Forbes G. Vernon, Chief Commissioner of Lands & Works, B.C.

Map annotated by Ralph Drew.

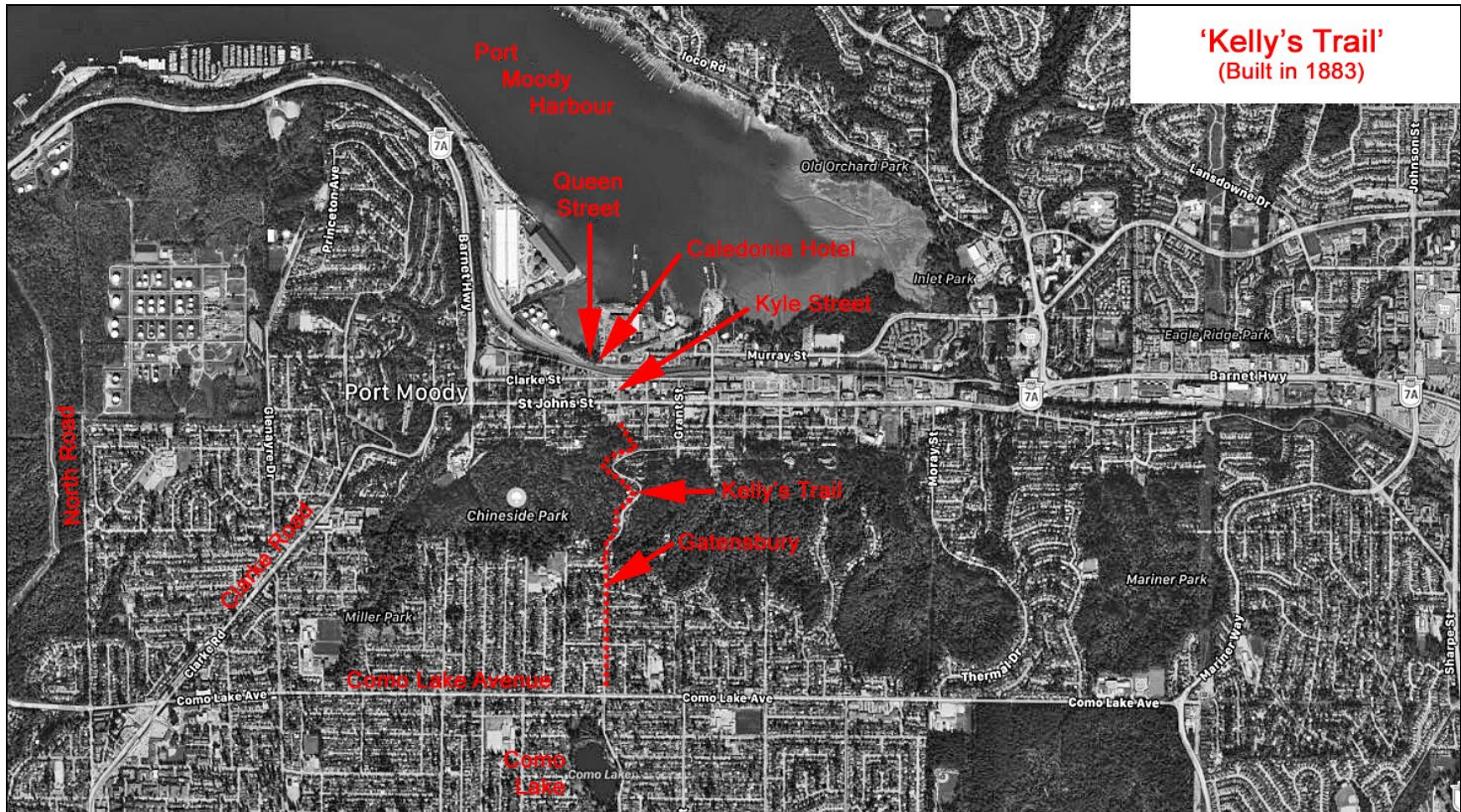
**'Port Moody' portion of the 1876 'Forbes G. Vernon' map of 'New Westminster District' — note the extensive unsurveyed area south of the future 'Port Moody Townsite' (blue-shaded area).**



Source: Library and Archives Canada (LAC NMC-98468), published by Woods & Turner, Civil Engineers, New Westminster, B.C.

Map annotated by Ralph Drew.

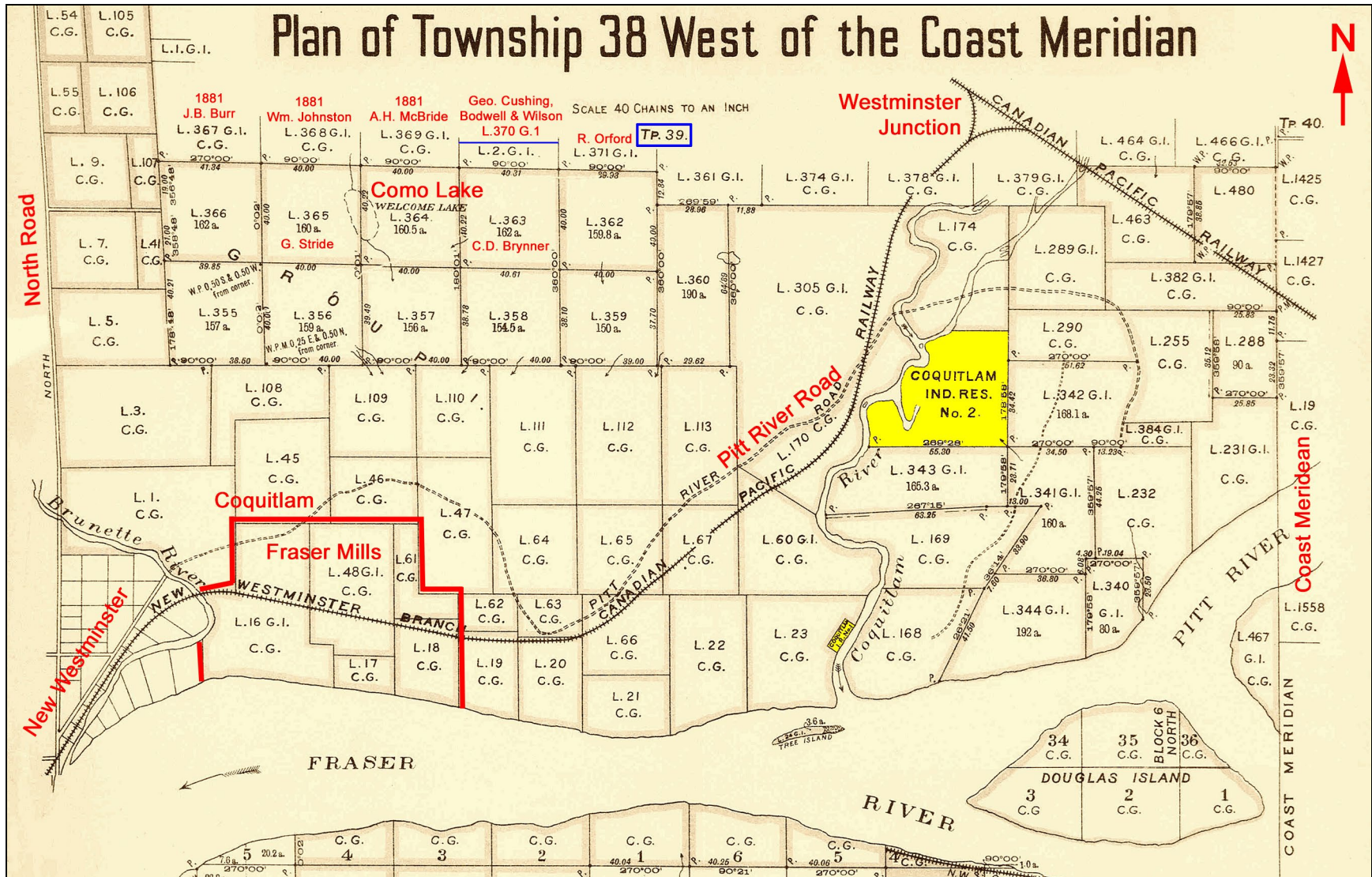
**'Port Moody' portion of the 1882 'Woods & Turner' map of 'New Westminster District' — note that the future 'Port Moody Townsite' (blue-shaded area) is not shown on this map.**



Source: Google Earth Satellite Image.

Image annotated by Ralph Drew.

**Aerial view showing Como Lake, Gatensbury Street, Kyle Street & 'Caledonia Hotel' location — 'Kelly's Trail' connected 'Kyle Street' in Port Moody with 'Gatensbury Street' in Coquitlam.**



Source: Édouard Deville, Surveyor General of Canada (1885–1924), Department of the Interior, Ottawa, Fourth Edition, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1905. Map annotated by Ralph Drew.

**1905 Plan of 'Township 38', West of Coast Meridian — Coquitlam Portion (north of Fraser River).**