

## First Ascent of Mount Seymour — How ‘Pump Peak’ Gott Its Name Researched and written by [Ralph Drew](#), Belcarra, BC, August 2024.

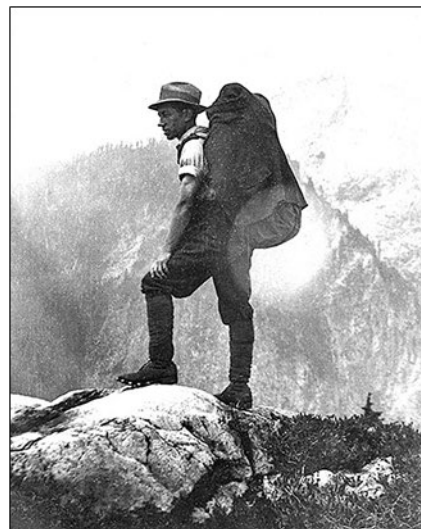
‘Mount Seymour’ is a triple peak overlooking Metro Vancouver and is a part of the North Shore Mountains, rising to the north from the shores of Burrard Inlet and Indian Arm to a summit of 1,449 m (4,754 ft.). ‘Mount Seymour’ is named after Frederick Seymour (1820–1869) who succeeded James Douglas as governor of the ‘Colony of British Columbia’ (mainland portion only) from 1864 to 1869. The name is used to refer to the ridge, although the main summit is one of several, known as ‘Third Pump Peak’.

Mount Seymour was most likely first climbed by indigenous mountain goat hunters. The first recorded ascent was on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1908, by a ‘B.C. Mountaineering Club’ party comprised of Charles Chapman, William Gray, Fred Mills, G. Harrower, and Frank Harold Smith. Chapman detailed the first recorded ascent of the mountain by keeping a detailed journal and using a boxy ‘Kodak Folding 4A’ camera. Three peaks on the Mount Seymour massif were explored, the last being nicknamed ‘Third Pump Peak’ from Smith’s remark that a storm-riven stump near the summit looked like a pump.

Although the first recorded climb of ‘Mount Seymour’ was made in 1908, Mount Seymour was virtually unknown to most of the residents of Vancouver and vicinity until the late 1920s. In 1929, members of the ‘Alpine Club of Canada’ explored the mountain as a potential skiing area and the following year (1930) applied for a 21-year lease covering the primary skiing terrain; however, the 1930s Depression years forced the club to drop the lease.

In the summer of 1908, Charles (‘Chappy’) Chapman and five friends made the first official ascent of ‘Mount Seymour’. The black and white photograph (below) shows Chapman at base camp near a tent, holding the large-format ‘Kodak Folding 4A’ camera at his side.

Chapman and friends took the ferry to North Vancouver and then a trolley to the end of the Lynn Valley line. At which point they had to walk over a rough road that led to the head of Lynn Canyon.



**Charles Chapman standing on ‘Pump Peak’, 1908**  
*(NVMA Chapman family fonds)*



*Source: North Vancouver Museum & Archives, Chapman family fonds.*

**Charles Chapman at base camp on ‘Mount Seymour’ with his large-format ‘Kodak Folding 4A’ camera.**

In his memoirs, Chapman recorded: “Descending to the creek [Lynn Creek], we forded it, took a trail past Rice Lake and the old [water] intake, forded the Seymour [River] and made for the mouth of the great gully which descends from the north side of the main peak, whose snow filled depths are a prominent landmark from Vancouver.”

In one journal entry, Chapman noted his team brought-up “two pounds of bacon and one pound of sugar, along with a Dutch oven to cook it.”

Chapman’s journal continues: “We gained the summit at about ten a.m. After building a cairn, we strolled over to the middle peak and reached the amphitheatre below the third peak. On the ascent of the third peak, they noticed a decayed stump — it looked like a pump complete with spout and handle.” — see adjacent photograph. When speaking of the climb later, the third peak was generally referred to as “Pump Peak”. The name stuck and remains to this day, an example of how a casual remark may perpetuate such an unsuitable and mystifying name.

‘Mount Seymour Provincial Park’ — an area of 35 square kilometres — was established in 1936. The ski area and facilities opened for skiing in 1938 under the ownership of Harold Enquist, with a cafeteria and ski rental. A few years later, in 1949, the ‘Government of British Columbia’ bought the ski area, and Mount Seymour was operated by the provincial government as a “recreation area” — land set aside for public recreational use. The Government did not have the experience to run a ski area, so they issued Enquist the first “park use permit” to operate the area. When the permit expired in 1951, the government found a concessionaire, who was put in charge of running the lifts, ski school and cafeteria. The government retained overall ownership until 1984, when it privatized the operation as part of a cost-cutting measure, and gave control of the ski area to the commercial entity and private operator, ‘Mount Seymour Resorts Ltd.’ Through this transfer of ownership, the mountain changed from being a “recreational area” to lands requiring a “park use permit” which allows ‘Mount Seymour Resorts’ to provide commercial recreation services, including summer or winter activities.

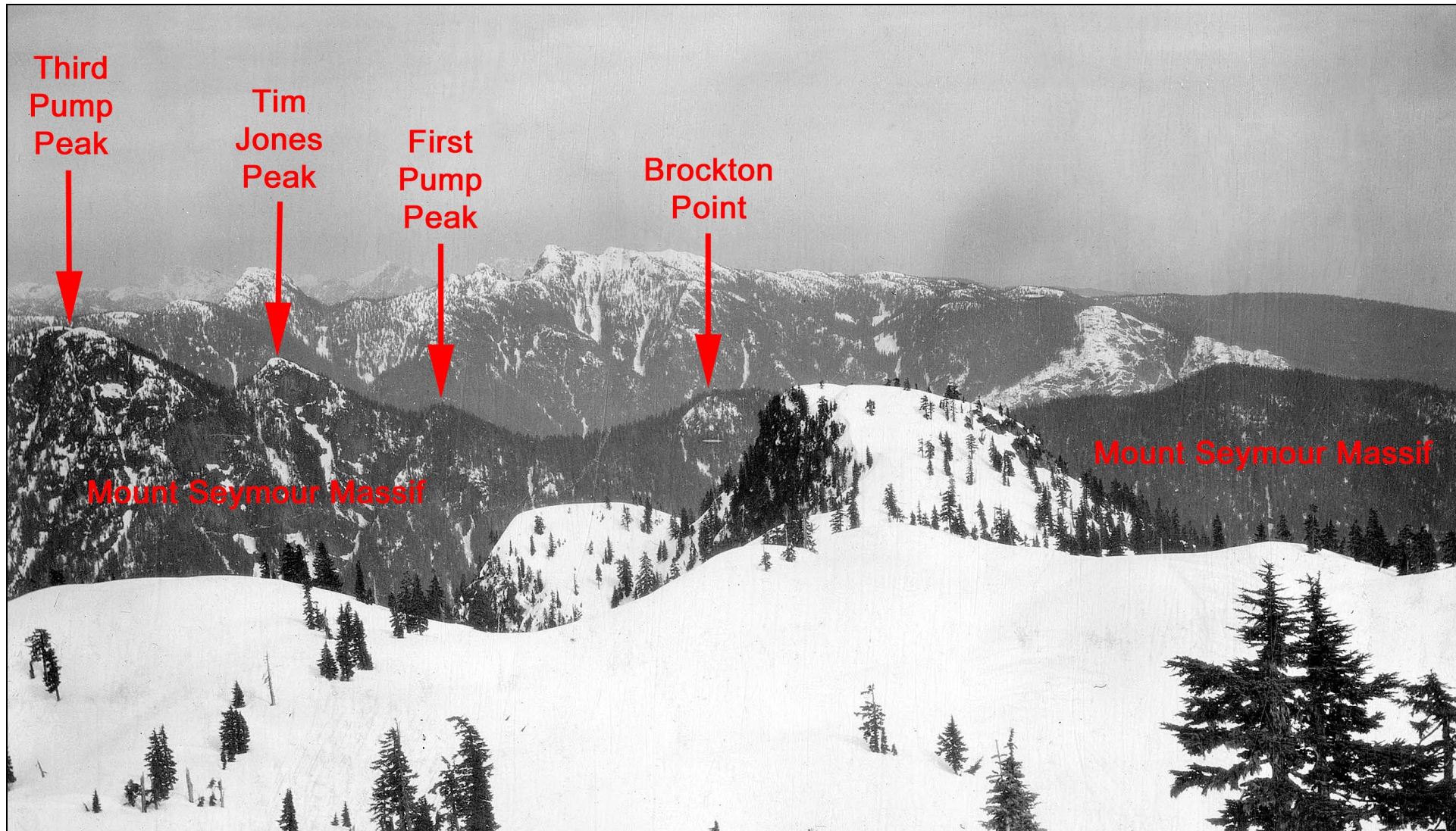


Source: North Vancouver Museum & Archives, Chapman family fonds.

**‘Third Pump Peak’ on ‘Mount Seymour’ —  
photograph by Charles Chapman, 1908.**

**Sources:**

- (1) “First Recorded Ascent of Mount Seymour: How Pump Peak Got Its Name”, 2010, North Vancouver Museum and Archives, [Video Transcript](#).
- (2) Michaela Garstin, [“North Shore siblings climb in their grandfather’s footsteps”](#), North Shore Outlook, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012.



City of Vancouver Archives (CVA M-4-17).

Photograph annotated by Ralph Drew.

**Profile of 'Mount Seymour Massif' showing the three peaks of 'Mount Seymour', circa 1920 — view looking east from 'Goat Mountain'.**