The mayors of Vancouver:

When Larry Campbell takes office as Vancouver’s mayor on Monday, he will be the 37th man to put his stamp on the city. Today, John Mackie takes a look back at the leaders of the last 116 years, and the colourful campaigns that brought them to office.

The election of Fred Cope (b. 1860, d. 1892) in 1892 was one of early Vancouver’s biggest headlines and business news. He was elected by acclamation for his key role in building up Vancouver’s vital trades and manufacturing industries, as well as building new civic structures needed for the growing city. The election was bitter, with Cope’s supporters retorting that their candidate was the only mayor who could keep the city from being flooded. The election was also notable for the presence of the Ladies’ Christian Temperance Union, which threatened to boycott any hotel that would serve women who voted for another candidate.

The election of William McGuigan in 1898 was fought in with a three-way race with Alexander’s 225 votes to Cope’s 242, and Collins’ 244. Vancouver city council at the time had 24 seats, so only the top three candidates were invited to run for mayor. The election was considered a squeaker, with Collins coming in just 2,000 votes behind Alexander. The campaign ended up in a rematch in 1910.

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The 1922 election was fought under a somewhat bizarre "proportion representation" voting system. Votes cast off the top and second choice for mayor were whoever received a majority. Until a majority was reached, the candidates on the bottom of the ballot were eliminated, and their second choice votes divided up among the remaining candidates. It took four ballots to elect James Tisdal (b. 1880, Bromley, England). He was on a business-friendly platform of "economy with efficiency."

Charles Edward Tisdal

The proportion representation system was retained for the elections in 1923 and 1925 and Charles Owen (b. 1888, Shrewsbury, England) was chosen on the Progressive platform of "stand for necessities before fads and futility of two reckless charges, costly investment analyst and alderman Art Phillips (b. 1953, Montreal) led the CITY TEAM, who discarded its "Legally Smart" slogan in the 1973 race. Phillips was more low-key than his predecessor, but he was also more successful. He promised to make the city financially viable, and that promise was kept, with the city finishing in the black.

Charles Owen

William Reid Owen

On Jan. 1, 1929, Vancouver amalgamated with Point Grey to form a city with a population of 215,499 people. The first mayor of the new expanded city was William Malfin (b. 1885, Staffordshire, England). He was a Vancouver pioneer who was wholesale grocer by trade. His platform was a "crimeless city" and he won the election by a landslide, gaining 58.9 per cent of the vote. He was a close 1929 rematch by 640 votes.

William Malfin

William Malkin

With the city swelling because of the Great Depression, Gerry McGeer (b. 1888, Wenwin, Ore., 1947), went out of town to operate a reform platform. McAlester pledged to end decades of slydrking and build a new city hall, promised to have a "crimeless city" with three months of ari election and argued for constitutional reforms that would alter the crippling financial structure and devolution of social services. He won by a landslide, gaining 58.9 per cent of the vote, and he won the majority again, but died in office.

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J. James Telford

JAMES LYLE TELFORD (b. 1889, Valence, Ont., 1960) was a Fair Commonsense Candidate slate and got the same influx of votes. The biggest controversy of the election was the teacher's strike in the provincial legislature that there had been financial harmony between Gulf Pivett's provincial Liberal government and the builders of the Pattullo Bridge. Consequently, the Victoria Daily Colonist predicted that the Michael Halsen Spener split with the famous Liberals would prove ill-advised, with all votes to dispose the "impossible great at the city hall."

Edward Tisdal

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