

Early Vancouver

Volume One

By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.

2011 Edition (Originally Published 1932)

Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1931-1932.

*A Collection of Historical Data, Maps, and Plans Made with the Assistance of
Pioneers of Vancouver Between March and December 1931.*

About the 2011 Edition

The 2011 edition is a transcription of the original work collected and published by Major Matthews. Handwritten marginalia and corrections Matthews made to his text over the years have been incorporated and some typographical errors have been corrected, but no other editorial work has been undertaken. The edition and its online presentation was produced by the City of Vancouver Archives to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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Contact Information

City of Vancouver Archives
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9
604.736.8561
archives@vancouver.ca
vancouver.ca/archives



(Hastings Road). It has a little picket fence around it, a dark porch, a belfry; and is, in the photo, about three inches to the right of a large tree on the shore. It was entered from Hastings Road.

Its exact location has not been determined, but would be about the foot of Main Street lane.

10 AUGUST 1931 - THE GREAT FIRE OF 1886. GASTOWN. DOUGLAS ROAD.

Mr. Hugh E. Campbell, now of 2848 Birch Street, Fairview, was in Vancouver "before the fire," and was for many years identified with the fire brigade. Mrs. Campbell is a pioneer of Sea Island, and her narration of her early days is interesting. (See elsewhere.)

"I was in the Sunnyside Hotel, at the northwest corner of Water and Carrall Street, when the fire broke out. I heard shouts of 'fire, fire,' and ran out into the alley" (Trounce Alley) "and put a horse in one of those 'one-horse' butcher carts we used in those days, and drove up to E.S. Scoullar's" (see Captain Scoullar and our first Dominion Day celebration) "who had his hardware and sheet metal store just about where Edgett's is now on Water Street (155 Water Street), about half way between Abbott and Cambie Street, on the south side. I put six or seven boxes of dynamite in the cart, and drove off, and ended by putting it on the Hastings Mill wharf, and then came back, but I got back a very short way. Mrs. Alexander said not to put the dynamite there, but I did it; I told her that they could throw it overboard if it became necessary to do so." (Note: which they did, and it floated about the harbour for some days.) "Some other heavy wagons started to go down to Scoullar's, but they got nothing.

"The fire started between Homer and Granville, perhaps Hamilton and Granville streets, along about Hastings Street. The C.P.R. were clearing the land, and the fire got away from them. There were 'a hundred' fires burning; people were clearing the land.

"The fire took the direction of Pender, Dupont streets, and all north of those streets, and ran as far as perhaps Prior Street. It missed the Royal City Planing Mills.

Query: What stopped it?

"The wind went down. To give you an idea of the strength of the wind, the hulk Robert Ker was anchored up by Deadman's Island, and she dragged her anchor and drifted down to the Hastings Sawmill. Then there was a big tree on the shore about the foot of Columbia Street, between Father Clinton's church and the Maple Tree; the wind blew that down, and it fell across the road from Gastown to the Mill. You can imagine the gale that blew.

"I spent the rest of the day helping people down Douglas Road, about as far as the present sugar refinery."

Mr. Campbell then drew a sketch of Gastown before the fire.

PROVINCIAL GAOL.

Mr. Campbell continued. "The first provincial gaol was on the site of the old No. 1 Fire Hall, and was burned down in the fire of 1886. After the fire, No. 1 Hall was built on the south side of Water Street, about fifty feet from Carrall Street, and next to the Alhambra Hotel, built in 1887. When the city moved the site of the No. 1 Hall to the present site at the corner of Gore Avenue and Cordova Street, they tried to sell the site, but found they did not own it—it belonged to the provincial government."

WATER TANKS.

"The water tank at the corner of Dunsmuir and Granville Street, for use in fighting fire, was a huge affair. It was only ten feet deep, about, but it was at least seventy-five feet long and thirty feet wide, and held a tremendous lot of water."