

## **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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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“At the time, we cleared this four acres we were living at the old Nelson Street home to which we had moved when we left Greer’s Beach; driven off it. We went out there to camp each summer for four summers in succession. To get to it, we went along the Point Grey Road from the foot of Balsam Street—at that time the only road open going to the west—turned up an old skid road at Bayswater Street, and proceeded thence by a forest trail, thick with blackberries in summer. The Point Grey Road, especially along that short stretch between Balsam and Trafalgar, as you approach Mr. J.H. Calland’s early home, was a dusty trail in summer, not a wagon’s width wide, for the salmonberry and other bushes brushed both buggy wheels as we drove along. It was hard for a pedestrian meeting a rapidly driven conveyance on that narrow track to get out of the way without jumping into the matted undergrowth; there were no big trees, those had been cut away, but the second growth had, during several years, grown up again.

“In winter, the same track was so deep in mud as to be almost impassible.

“From Granville Street to Balsam Street, the route traversed was, after crossing the old Third Avenue Bridge via Third Avenue, and a more or less sinuous trail from about Cedar Street.”

The entrance to this forest clearing was like emerging from dark into daylight; the forest trail from Point Grey Road was black and gloomy. On one occasion, the writer went through it, crossed the clearing, and went on in search of a lot which he owned at the corner of Broadway and Macdonald—which the previous owner had bought for \$15, for which he paid \$215, and which he sold for \$630—but got lost in the forest, and after an afternoon’s struggle to get out, finally emerged somewhere on Alma Road.

In the photograph, Mrs. Hall is standing beneath the dam, preparing for a swim; in the background is the Chinaman’s shack, to the right is the hay barn, to the left the log crossing to the camp; it is hard to realise that the forest background is now the paved street, Fourth Avenue West.

The Halls kept two cows and a horse, grew many vegetables; there was plenty of fish in the creek. The great danger in summer was forest fire; one night, they had to move in a hurry to escape it. Theirs was a popular visiting home, for the Halls, then as now, kept open house. Then too, Point Grey Road was, in those days, one of the few trails where one could stroll. Kitsilano Hill, that part now so known, was then a barren waste of stumps without a single house; a wide swamp spread from the Henry Hudson School to the Beach, and was full of skunk cabbage, and the home of muskrats.

Traces of the old Bayswater ravine still remain, though most have now, 1931, been obliterated by filling in with rubbish and earth.

#### **VANCOUVER GAS COMPANY LIMITED.**

Extract, *Daily News-Advertiser*, 9 July 1887 (U.B.C. Library).

The VANCOUVER GAS COMPANY LIMITED

Tenders will be received up to June 9<sup>th</sup> for construction of brick building on company’s grounds.

Signed  
C.D. Rand,  
Secretary,  
Victoria, B.C.

#### **10 JULY 1931 - SQUATTERS. HASTINGS STREET. PENDER STREET.**

“When the first talk was that the C.P.R. was coming to Granville,” said Mr. H.P. McCraney, “it was known that the Provincial Government was going to give the Canadian Pacific Railway all the lots in Granville which had not been sold. Several people then squatted on lots and got them for

nothing. Possibly they had been there for some time; some had not, but squatted just the same. Of course, this was all in old Granville Townsite, around the lower portion of Hastings and Pender streets. Mr. Orr, the member of parliament, squatted on one lot, and built an office on it, but the C.P.R. came along, and when Mr. Orr came down one morning, he found his office in the middle of the street. So he started to build it again, but the C.P.R. men pulled it down, so Mr. Orr decided that the C.P.R. had more men than he and desisted. He did not get his lot. It was all swamp there at that time, a muskeg full of croaking bullfrogs; they were really toads. All around the corner of Hastings and Abbott streets, where Woodward's Limited is now, was low land. Some of the squatters got their lots."

### **CARRALL STREET.**

"At high tide, the water of False Creek and of Burrard Inlet came very close together; only a narrow strip of land separated them," said Mr. W.F. Findlay, member of the Pioneers Association, an old newspaper man—*The World, Province, News-Advertiser* and *Sun*—and a nephew of Lewis Carter (see Voters List, Vancouver, 1886) who built and owned the Carter House, an early hostel.

"My uncle, Lewis Carter—my mother was his sister—was one of the surveyors of the line of the C.P.R. from Port Moody to Vancouver. He once told me that he had once taken a big Indian canoe, capable of holding three and a half tons cargo—a big canoe—and he (Mr. Carter), three or four Indians, and two surveyors—a regular survey party—had carried it across from Burrard Inlet to False Creek at high tide, via what is now Carrall Street, to save half a day's paddling, and bucking tide necessary to go around through the Narrows." (Also see F.R. Glover's statement in "Vancouver Celebrates First Dominion Day, 1887" herein.)

### **10 JULY 1931 - CHINESE RIOTS. JOHN MORTON. EARLY WATER.**

"You have heard of the Chinese Riots in February 1887," said Mr. H.P. McCraney, a very early pioneer and civic administrator, now living at the corner of 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue West and Cypress Street. "The time the police came over from Victoria because the people of Vancouver had driven the Chinese out of town." (The people of Tacoma did similarly.) "Well, the Chinese went to their camp which was just where the Elysium Hotel is now on Pender Street, south side, close to Thurlow Street, where there was a splendid spring of water. The spring was under exactly what is now the west wing of the hotel. R.G. Tatlow, afterwards a well-known B.C. finance minister, park commissioner, and after whom Tatlow Park is named, owned the lots and lived there. I lived next door. We used to get our water from the spring before the water was laid on. There was a skid road which came out there. Spring water was a valuable acquisition before the water pipes were laid." (See fire brigades, water tanks, wells.)

Answering a query: "Perhaps so, perhaps that was why John Morton located there. It was beautiful cold clear water. The people used to get it to water their cattle." (John Morton was Vancouver's first resident.)

"Oh, I will tell you a real story about the Chinese Riots some time. You see, I had the contract to clear the land at \$300 an acre, and John McDougall came in and offered to do it for \$150. He brought the Chinamen. I suppose it was a certain amount of selfishness on my part. He is still living at Quesnel."

J.S.M.

### **10 JULY 1931 - THE GREAT FIRE OF 1886. H.P. MCCRANEY.**

"The manner in which the Regina Hotel, which was in the path of fire, escaped was this," said H.P. McCraney, a very early pioneer of Vancouver, one of our first park commissioners, a former alderman, and who laid our first street car tracks.