

## **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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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.

"The Regina Hotel stood at the southwest corner of Cambie and Water streets. Some workmen were clearing land in the neighbourhood where the fire started;" (Ed Cosgrove had a contract for the clearing, he said.) "the wind was so strong that it drove the fire straight before it; that was how it left two wings untouched, the wing on the north with the Hastings Mill, and the wing on the south a small settlement over towards the south end of Westminster Avenue Bridge; the fire just cut straight through.

"Those houses which escaped destruction were in the Westminster Avenue direction; up near the bridge which at one time crossed False Creek on Westminster Avenue, now Main Street, near the Canadian National Railway station. One of the houses belonged to John Boulton, the police magistrate, another to A.R. Costrie, the butcher, a third to T.J. Janes, driver of the New Westminster stage line, who is still living. My lumber yard was saved, and there were three others in that section whose houses were saved.

"On approaching the Regina Hotel after the fire was seen to be no longer controllable, the workmen who had been clearing the land found that the occupants of the hotel had gone. They took nothing with them; they just *went*, and without much reflection either. The workmen noticed that it did not seem impossible to keep the fire away from the hotel building, so took shovels, covered up with earth what fires they could, put wet blankets on the roof, subdued the fire burning near the building, and so saved it. Then they entered the building, found it deserted; the bar was open and deserted, so they simply helped themselves. Some were not as moderate as they might have been, and had rather an enjoyable time.

"The Regina Hotel can be seen in the photograph "Vancouver after the fire," a solitary building in the far background.

"As the fire came nearer, I decided to move out, and took my trunk down to the wharf at the foot of Carrall Street where there was a shed on floats. I asked the man on the float if I may put my trunk on it; he replied, 'yes,' so I did. The floating shed stood on logs. I tried to drag my trunk around the corner of the shed, but there was insufficient room, so we tried to turn the float around for protection from the fire, but the wind was so strong we could not do it. Things were getting desperate, so I put my trunk in a canoe, but as I got in after it, the canoe turned over—the trunk was top-heavy cargo—and dumped trunk and me into water twenty feet deep.

"The trunk floated away, and then drifted onto the beach, where I secured it again.

"I think the shed shown in the background of the well-known picture of the City Hall, a tent, and four policemen in front—Vancouver's first force—is the same shed."

#### **14 JULY 1931 - RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF VANCOUVER.**

Prior to 1886, the residential area of, before April, Granville, after April, Vancouver, was simple. It had but one street, Water Street; all the remainder were woods and forest.

After 1886, after the railway came, the residential areas divided. The best residential area was probably, at first, and just after the fire, to the south of the Hastings Sawmill, centering around Cordova Street East, Dunlevy Avenue, etc., and then later, when the railway came, along the Bluff, upon the top of the cliff overlooking Burrard Inlet, from Granville Street to Burrard Street, gradually straggling along Seaton Street, Pender Street, etc., to the junction of Pender Street and Georgia Street. Here the C.P.R. Railway officials gathered, and their friends, though some went still farther westward to near Stanley Park. There were, strictly speaking, no houses east of Granville Street and north of Pender Street; that section developed into a business area from the start.

Gradually, the district surrounding St. James Church on Cordova Street became less popular for prominent families. One or two well-known names built beyond Denman Street, others selected points on Beach Avenue, then the only street running along the southern slope of Vancouver, from Granville to English Bay. A few gathered about the district near the corner of Burrard and Robson streets, some on Georgia Street, both west and east of Burrard. A poorer class of