

Early Vancouver

Volume One

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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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“If his land had been of no value, he would have had it yet, and you can quote me as saying so.”

Note: Mr. Mathews is a man of few words and of careful utterances.

“Why, there were, as far as I remember, 4,800 signatures of the petition to have him released from the penitentiary. I helped to get up the petition which went to Ottawa. I got a lot of them, but his daughter, Mrs. Hall, got most; she was a ‘brick’ of a girl. The signatures came from everywhere, Victoria, Nanaimo and New Westminster, as well as here in Vancouver.

“Block 182” (west of Trafalgar Street) “was owned by Hon. John Robson; at least, it was in his name, but it was always understood that there were others associated with him. Hon. Mr. Smythe was one, and some Victoria politicians and some C.P.R. men.” (See *The Fight for Greer’s Beach* in which Sir Frank Barnard, Major Dupont, Hon. Mr. Eberts, and T.H. White, then C.P.R. surveyors, are mentioned.)

“I have always heard that his first wife was a very fine woman, but she was dead when the Greer’s Beach trouble started. His second wife, who was there, was a foreigner, German, I think.”

JSM

11 JANUARY 1932 - 6TH REGIMENT, THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT’S OWN RIFLES 1899-1920. 7TH BATTALION, CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE 1914-1919. 1ST B.C. REGIMENT, (7TH BATTALION C.E.F.) D.C.O. 1920-1930. THE B.C. REGIMENT (D.C.O.R.) 1930. MAJOR G.W. MELHUIH, O.C., 6TH REGIMENT D.C.O.R.

“If the general order issued by the Militia Department in Ottawa in September 1920—in reference to the reorganisation of the old pre-war militia regiments, and their amalgamation with the disbanded overseas battalions to create units which would perpetuate the traditions of them both—was ever carried out in respect to the old 6th Regiment, the Duke of Connaught’s Own Rifles, in Vancouver, then, as the last commanding officer of that old regiment, I have no knowledge of it, nor ever had. I have no recollection of ever attending any meeting of the officers, ex-officers of both organisations for the purpose of selecting a commanding officer, nor have I ever heard of any other officer of the 6th Regiment D.C.O.R. who did. What I do recall is an officer of the 11th Irish Fusiliers—General Odlum’s pre-war regiment—named Daykin, a comparative stranger, coming to my office in the Rogers Building and asking me to sign a letter which he himself had prepared. So far as I recall now, it was addressed to the headquarters M.D. No. 11, Victoria, and it said that Lieutenant Colonel John McMillan, our former quartermaster in the 6th, and also for a time quartermaster in the 7th, was a selection of the officers of the 6th Regiment D.C.O.R. as the commanding officer of the perpetuating unit, now the British Columbia Regiment (D.C.O.R.)

“I was astounded at his effrontery, and indignantly refused to sign anything of the sort. Colonel McMillan had not even returned from overseas; we did not know what he might want or desire, and besides, Daykin was never a 6th officer; he belonged to another regiment, the 11th, and I resented his interference very much indeed. He evidently was supported by someone else, someone in authority.

“Another incident I recall was a telegram which Lieutenant Colonel John W. Warden, D.S.O., O.B.E., V.D., one of our old officers, sent to some friend in high authority at Ottawa, protesting against the treatment being meted out to officers of the old 6th Regiment D.C.O.R., and bluntly stating that he thought it was the work of Brigadier General V.W. Odlum, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., whom I may add was never a friend, nor even fair, to the old 6th Regiment D.C.O.R.

“The proper man to have reorganised the old 6th Regiment D.C.O.R. and 7th Battalion C.E.F. into a new regiment perpetuating the traditions of both, was Lieutenant Colonel Warden, a distinguished and illustrious officer of both units, and who was held in high esteem. But John had no money to speak of, and he told me how he resented General Odlum suggesting to him that the position required a man of means and affluence.

"I am of the opinion that if the order as outlined in General Orders, September 1920 for the amalgamation of the two units, [had] been carried out as Ottawa intended it to be, instead of by some secret subterfuge which put in a commanding officer selected by, presumably, General Odlum and some of his cronies, the subsequent lamentable injustices suffered by faithful officers of the old regiment would never have occurred. The old 6th D.C.O.R. was one of the most splendid regiments in all Canada, but the manner in which its services were rewarded in post-war years do not commend themselves to me. Its esprit de corps was smashed to atoms to no purpose, and no one can point with much pride to the career of its successor during the period 1920 to 1930.

"Whatever General Odlum's judgments in war may have been, his judgments in peace time militia matters have always been mediocre, but in 1920 he had just returned, was at the zenith of popular acclaim, and he expected—and others expected too—he would achieve power and position in political life. His name was even mentioned for provincial cabinet rank, and for the ministry of militia and defence in Dominion politics; he was much sought after, and his wishes pandered to. But whatever it was, I am quite positive the meeting of all officers of both units to select a new officer commanding was never held; surely I should have heard of it if it had been. I was O.C."

16 JANUARY 1932 - "NORTH AMERICAN CHINAMEN." HASTINGS MILL STORE, NOW FOOT OF ALMA ROAD. NATIVE DAUGHTERS OF B.C., POST NO. 1. HONOURABLE S.F. TOLMIE, PRIME MINISTER OF B.C.

At the official ceremony of opening the museum of the Native Daughters of B.C., Post No. 1 at the old Hastings Mill store today, Premier Tolmie said as follows, in part, in reference to the expression, "North American Chinamen." He was speaking of the early days, and had mentioned that his family had occupied the same farm for 72 years.

"Canada was very remote in those days. To reach British Columbia meant a long trip via Chicago and San Francisco, and then an 800 mile voyage up the coast to Victoria. Canadians who came by this long and expensive route frequently had exhausted their resources on the way."

(Re above paragraph, comment by Mr. Gallagher: "All imagination.")

"It was the unwritten law then that no man should buy himself a drink" (at a bar.) "He either bought for 'the house,' for his friend, or if none other were present, then for the barkeeper and himself. Canadians acquired a reputation for 'horning in,' and simultaneously the epithet, 'North American Chinamen.'"

A large assemblage of distinguished pioneers and civic officials, including several ministers of the cabinet, the Mayor of Vancouver, and others were present. Dr. Tolmie's remarks were made in that inimitable style of pleasantry for which he is noted, gave no offence, merely added amusement, for there never was, nor ever will be, a more loyal son of British Columbia and of Canada than he is.

In the days of the (hotel) bar, the treating system was rampant; a man who bought a drink, paid for it and drunk alone was regarded askance as a queer 'guy,' or he was ill and needed it medicinally. New arrivals in the country were not always familiar with the almost unbroken and unwritten law, and sometimes violated it, to the astonishment of the onlookers. In my day, 1900-1917, they came mostly from the United Kingdom.