

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



The Burrard Street Bridge and Kitsilano Indian Reserve

BURRARD STREET BRIDGE crosses, 1931,
old Indian village. Last ragged
survivor of great forest (right)



The only stump now standing relic of a great forest

First Avenue

CEDAR ST ENTRANCE TO BURRARD ST BRIDGE, AUG 14, 1931

Item # EarlyVan_v1_0063



Item # EarlyVan_v1_0064

12 AUGUST 1931 - THE INDIAN RESERVE. KITSILANO. BURRARD STREET BRIDGE. CORNWALL STREET. CEDAR STREET. BIG TREES.

A tall, ragged remnant of a forest monarch, a black monument, hollow and jagged, of a bygone day, stood before us today as we watched the noisy steam shovel, huge grunting, groaning leviathan, ripping up earth, stones, bushes and rubbish, as it tore its way out of what has been for so many years a primeval oasis in the centre of a densely populated city. They are making the approach from Cedar Street to the new Burrard Street Bridge; north of First Avenue West is the Indian Reserve, once a forest, but now very largely covered—where not utilised already for industries—with small tress, salmonberries, mountain ash, willows, maples and wild cherries.

The old black stump, a great sliver reaching perhaps seventy-five or a hundred feet into the sky, is a memorial of the once great forest which covered Vancouver; the only remaining, and last, relic within the old, the first city limits; sole survivor of the silent vacuum of our unknown past.

At the corner of Cedar Street and First Avenue West, and also at the corner of Cornwall and Chestnut, Mr. Rowland Towers, the photographer of Kerrisdale, he who photographed the internment of the German fleet (*internment*, not *surrender*—four ships a day), took photographs each way, four in all. On Cornwall at Chestnut Street, two urchins trundled a motorcar tire in the middle of the street; a few more months and the whirl of heavy, speeding traffic will sweep dashingly over that spot. Progress must be denied no longer.

Our old Indian friends, their canoes, their baskets, the pandemonium of the potlatch, even the silence of the old cemetery, all have gone. No longer will the young lads of Kitsilano hunt coons,

play Indian, climb for crow eggs in the old Reserve; the kok-kok of the cock pheasant has already gone.

Soon they will chop down the black, old fragment, the last of many thousands of forest monarchs out of whose dark and mighty depths grew this magic city.

JSM

NOTE ADDED LATER:

30 December 1931. I notice it has gone. JSM

12 AUGUST 1931 - HOLLYBURN. WEST VANCOUVER. "NAVY JACK'S." SCHOOL. POST OFFICE. THE FIRST HOLLY TREES. MR. AND MRS. JOHN LAWSON.

Paid a visit to Mr. and Mrs. John Lawson, now resident at 22nd and Bellevue Avenue, West Vancouver.

When I arrived before 9 a.m., he was busily at work at the Post Office, now on corner of Marine Drive and 17th Street, and he informed me that, as was his practice, he had been on duty since before 6 a.m.; not a minor achievement for a man over 71. He was the first post master at Hollyburn, and so continues to this day. Mr. Lawson was born on 15 April 1860. He received me with marked courtesy.

I asked Mr. Lawson how he ever came to settle on that part of the shore of Burrard Inlet, now known as West Vancouver, etc., etc., but at that time quite unnamed saved for the sobriquet "Navy Jack's," sometimes "Navy Jack's place," and far beyond, another named point "Skunk Cove," now Caulfields. Mr. Lawson then related that he had joined the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1887, served first as brakeman, then conductor, and after twenty years service had retired. At that time, 1905, he was living at 1023 Pacific Street in the city, a muddy road not long opened up from Burrard Street West, and a chance remark of his brother-in-law (Mrs. Lawson's brother) one day, "I wonder what's across on that shore from Prospect Point?" brought the answer from Mr. Lawson, "I've been wondering that myself."

So the next morning, both got up early, got a boat, and started to cross. They knew nothing of the swift currents of the First Narrows, but were driven by them outside the Narrows in the general direction of the north shore, finally landed and took to the woods. They found a logging trail which had been graded for the Moodyville Logging Railway, but it had never been finished—no rails had been laid, although the ties lay all around, and there were half a dozen flat cars in the bushes. It looked as though they had been there some years. The whole place was badly overgrown. "We struck out," said Mr. Lawson, "up the trail, and soon came to the Old Keith Road, equally badly overgrown. It had been built about 1890 or 1891.

"We continued along the old road until we reached about here" ("here" meaning the corner of 17th Street and Marine Drive), "when we came to a fence, an old one, and my brother-in-law or I remarked, 'Here, what's this?' We investigated, and found Navy Jack's house. We went down to the shore."

What was Navy Jack's proper name? I asked.

"John Thomas. Navy Jack had gone up to Barkerville, and died suddenly. We afterwards found that J.C. Keith held the property. He had got it through lending two thousand dollars to Navy Jack, and finally it fell into his hands. Navy Jack married an Indian woman, and his daughter, Mrs. Williams, a woman of able mind, is living on the Indian Reserve now. You must see her.

"I felt when I saw this place that I had never seen a spot on this earth that I would so well like to make my home," said Mr. Lawson, with feeling emphasis, and then, as we subsequently walked over the actual location of his early efforts, and his recollections passed back of the years to the