

## **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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It was on the Cambie Street grounds that the famous New Westminster lacrosse players first got the sobriquet "Salmonbellies." It was given them by an Italian bootblack, a well-known character about town, formerly of New Westminster, latterly of Vancouver, and who, following the usual custom of those days, carried his polishing outfit over his shoulder wherever he went.

One day in the early 1890s, the Westminster lacrosse boys came over to Vancouver for a game with the sticks. Vancouver gathered together a scratch team, and both teams, followed by a straggling crowd of pioneer "fans" assembled on the Grounds to play it off. The bootblack was "rooting" for New Westminster.

The New Westminster men got the ball down towards the Vancouver goal, and tried to rush the net. The bootblack was "rooting" vociferously, and in his excitement yelled, "Git there, salmonbellies."

The epithet tickled the jocular fancy of the onlookers—everyone heard it—much hilarity followed, especially among the Vancouver supporters, and the descriptive nickname fitted so well that it has survived ever since, and in a measure has attached itself to all who hail from the old salmon town. In the earlier days of the salmon industry, it was centred largely on New Westminster, and perhaps Ladner's; not on Steveston as it was afterwards.

Originally, the Cambie Street grounds sloped from Cambie Street to Beatty Street, and was levelled piecemeal, a little at a time from year to year. In 1902, it was still in its natural slope, with a small grandstand on the eastern side, perhaps 100 feet long. It had been completely levelled prior to 1914, and the long grandstand erected. Later the present dressing shed was erected, before the War.

There is a minute in the Council meetings of 1887 prior to April 25<sup>th</sup>, mentioning the securing of Block 105 D.L. 196 and Block 110 D.L. 181 (on False Creek shore between Jackson and Heatley Avenue, and flanked by Grove Crescent) which refers to these blocks being investigated for a park site. Mr. T. Mathews, a pioneer, says there was a pretty little space there, partly cleared, on the shore (See Sentell Brothers. Also first official map of Vancouver, 1886.)

Mr. A.E. Beck once told me that the first international game of baseball on this coast was played on 27 June 1887, at the time of Queen Victoria's first Jubilee celebrations, at Victoria, and between the Victoria "Amities" and the "Williamettes" of Portland, Oregon. He played third base.

Illustrations suitable for Cambie Street grounds can be found in the City Archives, as follows:

- First cricket team. First City Brass Band.
- Naval parade, Diamond Jubilee, 1897.
- 29<sup>th</sup> Battalion going overseas, 1915.
- 102<sup>nd</sup> Battalion dismissing, 1919.
- 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment D.C.O.R. 1900 to 1920.
- The B.C. Garrison Artillery, about 1898.
- Trooping the colours, The B.C. Regiment, 1925.

The Military Records are in the Vancouver City Museum.

*NOTE ADDED LATER:*

Not now but in City Archives.

## **14 NOVEMBER 1931 - THE LAMPLIGHTER OF VANCOUVER.**

Page 265 of the minutes of the first City Council of Vancouver contains the following:

Council Meeting, Feb. 28<sup>th</sup> 1887

Fire, Water and Light Committee:

We would recommend that John Clough be appointed lamp lighter at a salary of \$10 per month to date from the first of March.

R.H. Alexander, Chairman

Report adopted.

Moved by Ald. Oppenheimer, seconded Lockerly.

Page 313 of the same minute book reads as follows:

Council Meeting, April 11<sup>th</sup> 1887

Fire, Water, and Light Committee:

That a lamplighter be appointed permanently at a salary of \$30 per month, and that the lamplighter employed temporarily be paid for the number of days he worked in March, and that his wages as permanent officer date from the first of April.

R.H. Alexander.

Adopted.

Moved by D. Oppenheimer, Seconded Sanders.

Note: coal oil lamps, not gas.

### **16 NOVEMBER 1931 - THE GREAT FIRE OF 1886. H.P. McCRANEY. C. GARDNER JOHNSON.**

Mr. McCraney told me a few days ago that when the Great Fire broke out at midday on 13 June 1886, his horses, used in making the deep cutting—now that portion of Cordova Street which leads down from the extreme northern end of Granville Street to the C.P.R. stations and docks—were in their stable. Some kind person, whom he never discovered, moved them out of the stable, and placed them in the deep cutting for safety. The removal was not necessary—though it might have been—for the fire did no damage in that section. The horses were found tied to the wagon wheels in the cutting.

A.C. Beck, K.C., told me that C. Gardner Johnson and Mr. John Boulton, our first magistrate, ran before the fire, but were cut off and took shelter in a hollow torn out by the roots of a large fallen tree near the corner of Westminster Avenue and Hastings Street, and covered themselves with sand, gravel and earth. In some manner Mr. Johnson's leg was burned, and when Mr. Beck arrived in September 1886, Mr. Johnson was still in bed in his little shack near the bridge. Mr. Beck said he understood a burning piece of wood fell on the leg.

JSM

### **EARLY C.P.R. DOCK, 1886.**

Mr. McCraney, who cut the above road to the railway, told me that the contract for the first C.P.R. wharf was given to the San Francisco Bridge Company. The bottom of the inlet at the foot of Granville Street was hard, the piles did not penetrate, but the bridge company went on with the work, until one night the whole structure of piles toppled over, and had to be reconstructed.

No photographs earlier than the arrival of the first trains, 23 May 1887, are known to me, but from this, together with previous descriptions given, it is now possible to reconstruct fairly accurately that portion of the shore of Vancouver once known as "The Bluff."

JSM