

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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Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

Contact Information

City of Vancouver Archives
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9
604.736.8561
archives@vancouver.ca
vancouver.ca/archives



planted; everything was to be ready. Actually, it was the first thing of the sort in Vancouver to be attempted on anything like a pretentious scale. The Prudential Builders Ltd. was bankrupt some years later, and still later the B.C. Permanent Loan was absorbed by the Canada Permanent Loan Corporation.

All houses built about this period had wide verandahs—the motor car was rare, people spent their summer evenings on the cool, wide verandahs, content with the peaceful pleasure of watching passers-by, watering the lawn, and playing the gramophone in the open air. Then the motor car came, and verandahs shrunk to porches.

The houses of Talton Place were known as “California bungalows,” all two-storey, single exterior, wide verandah, massive steps and verandah pillars of manifold design of heavy appearance, actually mere boards, railings to match, angular roofs. Stucco was almost unknown. (The first stucco house in Kitsilano was Major Matthews’ little cottage on Kitsilano Beach, 1158 Arbutus Street.)

The interior was generally of “mission style,” with beam ceilings, panelled walls in the living rooms; the “den” with fireplace, was extremely popular. The rooms were large for at that time the “breakfast alcove” and the “dinette” had not been attempted; large houses of two storeys were in demand.

Electric fixtures did not include the floor plug, nor the wall light; the vacuum clearer was generally screwed into a light socket. The lights were of the central ceiling type, drop candelabra; electric bulbs were carbon bulbs, of 16, 32 or higher “candle power”; then came the tungsten bulb; finally the nitrogen bulb. Bathtubs still stood on feet; the Pembroke baths were available but being very expensive, reserved for hotels and the more expensive mansions, but the old galvanised bathtub of early Vancouver was no longer installed. The kitchen was large, usually in white enamel, the dining room large, the living room small, as compared with living rooms of the 1920 to 1930 period. The “cooler” was without refrigeration. It was not until 1925 that “Kelvinators,” and afterwards “Frigidaire,” etc., were timidly introduced, and buyers were shy. The post-war period developed a demand for a one-floor bungalow, with an enormous living room, a tiny dining room, and a cabinet kitchen. The old style house became a “drug upon the market”; the garage replaced the woodshed and chicken house of the 19th century, as also the wide verandah of the early 20th.

“Talton Place” was very proud of itself at first, and very select; the novelty wore off, and it dropped to commonplace, still beautiful with its boulevard of graceful trees, planted by its creators.

J.S. Matthews

15 JULY 1931 - DEADMAN’S ISLAND. HOSPITALS. EARLY PEST HOUSE. SMALLPOX.

“The first pest house,” said Mrs. J.Z. Hall, of “Killarney,” Point Grey Road, and a daughter of Sam Greer of Greer’s Beach (Kitsilano Beach), “was actually merely a pest shack. Deadman’s Island was put to good use in the early days as an isolation island for contagious diseases.

“I think it must have been in 1892 that we had the smallpox scare in Vancouver. It was supposed to have come in by the “Empresses” from the Orient, for hardly anyone who had anything to do with the *Empress of China*, *Empress of India*, or *Empress of Japan*, the C.P.R.’s first yacht-like liners, escaped it. It was a terrible July; yellow flags were everywhere; no one who went through it will forget the scare we got.

“Houses were quarantined back and front—there was no getting out of them; people were quarantined all over the city. We lived on Nelson Street—I was Miss Greer then—Nelson Street was very sparsely settled, so was Robson Street, but there were cases on Robson Street. One young man, I recall, decided to help Mr. Hanna, the undertaker, contracted the disease and died.

“It was the custom to put those stricken in an express wagon, and with the driver ringing a bell to keep people away, warning them, the load of sick, frequently girls from Dupont Street, who had

been visited by the sailors from the Empresses, would be driven down to the dock, and taken by boat to Deadman's Island, some said, 'well named for such an undertaking.'"

HOSPITALS.

"There is a reference in the *News-Advertiser* somewhere, I forget where, to the effect that the man who displayed especial diligence at the fire at the hospital be given \$25. It would seem to indicate that the first Hospital in Vancouver was burned down."

NOTE ADDED LATER:

No. It was not.

JSM

GRANVILLE STREET.

Extract, *Daily News-Advertiser*, 12 July 1887.

A communication from William Powers (to City Council) asked that immediate steps be taken to grade, and macadamise Granville Street from Cordova Street to Robson Street, and to build wide sidewalks from Cordova Street to False Creek. Referred to Board of Works.

Extract, same newspaper, 17 July 1887 (U.B.C. Library).

The Board of Works at their meeting, Friday afternoon, decided upon grading Granville Street the full width as far as the C.P.R. Hotel, also to lay ten foot (board) sidewalks on both sides of the street, and to lay one ten foot sidewalk from the Hotel to False Creek. This much needed work will be a great improvement to the vicinity, and will tend to increase the value of the property.

In the winter of 1886, the skids of the old logging road down Granville Street were still in position, see W.H. Gallagher. Later a two-plank sidewalk ran in front of the Hotel Vancouver, see Mrs. J.Z. Hall.

Mr. Geo. L. Schetky spent the night of the Great Fire of 1886 (June 13th) in a shack at the corner of Robson and Granville streets used by a Mr. Jerry Rogers whilst clearing the forest from the West End. Mr. Schetky escaped from the fire on Water Street, made his way to False Creek via Westminster Avenue, and took trail through the clearing to the corner of Robson Street.



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