

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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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.

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15 OCTOBER 1931 - CITY HALL.

There is a report of the Council Meeting of 8 November 1886 in the minute book of the proceedings of the City Council of Vancouver which is headed to the effect that the meeting was held at the "New City Hall." It would appear to be the first meeting held there, at the City Hall on Powell Street.

JSM

15 OCTOBER 1931 - A.E. BECK, ESQ., K.C.

Mr. Beck was 71 in 1931. His son married a daughter of Sir. Richard McBride, premier of B.C. Mr. Beck told that Sir Richard died poor.

In 1931, the Conservative government then being in power, it was decided to give Mrs. McBride a pension. The opposing political party and others became noisy, and asked, "why should she have a pension, etc., etc." The matter was dropped.

I asked Mr. Beck if she ever got a pension, or what was done. He said, "I have heard nothing, and I don't like to ask. It is a delicate matter."

Mr. Beck was at one time a law student in the office of Honourable Joseph Martin at Portage la Prairie. He came west in September 1886, was responsible for the selection of the Cambie Street grounds, was first registrar here of County Court or Supreme Court, Collector of Votes, government agent, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and was the first official to occupy the old Court House—the first small one—on Victory Square. He was an ardent exponent of Workman's Compensation in 1915 (afterwards successfully introduced) and in 1931 was engaged in an endeavour to bring about Compulsory Automobile Accident Insurance. He was at one time claims agent for the B.C. Electric Railway Company, and was, I think, secretary for the first electric railway and light company. He was very active in 1931, carrying on his profession as a barrister in an office building on Granville Street.

J.S. Matthews

17 OCTOBER 1931 - THE GREAT FIRE OF 1886. THE REGINA HOTEL, WHICH ESCAPED.

"There was a clear space back of the Regina Hotel, a sort of yard or clearing where the earth was free of bushes and branches, said Mr. W.F. Findlay (nephew of Lewis Carter of the Carter House) today. "That was the reason the Regina Hotel escaped; it divided the fire a little. The story told by Mr. H.P. McCraney about the hotel bar and contents being put to suitable use after the fire had passed is true except in one or two details. What really happened was that some of the people saw that they could not get ahead of the fire and reach Hastings Sawmill, so they ran down on the Cambie Street wharf. There they protected themselves as best they could, dashed or splashed water over themselves. The heat was terrific; some got into the water. There was a float down there, and they waded out to it. The *Robert Ker* sent her boats and it was from this float that most of the women and children went; there must have been one hundred and fifty people on the *Ker* at one time, all that the two boats could move before the fire died down or went past. Twelve or fifteen men remained behind; they were worn out carrying women and children to the float. Some of these afterwards went up to the Regina Hotel, and of course the bar was empty. They were exhausted by their work, and, of course, took a little stimulant. The float was a little way out from the wharf, and they had to wade out to their middle."

Who started the fire, Mr. Findlay?

"Frank Gladwin, he had orders to. He's dead now. Five or six men were up there on clearing work; they had a donkey engine, and that drew up the debris, stumps, branches, etc., etc. into a pile. He was told to set fire to it. I wrote a story about it in the *Vancouver Sun* about five years ago as a fire anniversary item, probably June 11th, 12th or 13th, about, say, 1926. I asked him if he set the fire; he didn't deny it, and my story after publication has never been denied."