

## **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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Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> 1934

This splendid old gentleman, probably today the foremost painter of historical incidents now living in North America, is practically destitute. He has an office at 602 Province Bldg, but the odd jobs of illustrating, given him by the "Province" newspaper, are ~~not~~ debited against the rent for the office - so he gets nothing from that source, and he says "I have not sold a picture for two years".

I got \$75 for him last year, by wiring a friend at Imperial Oil Ltd Toronto, and, after argument, arranged for him to apply for Old Age Pension, first being sure it would be granted. He got his first check (part month of January \$4<sup>52</sup>) yesterday, and will get \$20 a month here after. I also got \$25 from a special fund, & Mayor Taylor has promised me \$25 towards the painting of the first meeting of the first City Council, the first dozen figures are now pencilled in on the canvases.

And as Mr. Jones says somewhat bitterly and with disgust, but not without cheerfulness "Fancy, after fifty years in the West"

J.S. Matthews

His wife is 68, & not eligible for extra \$20 old age pension

and he has a family to support - grandchildren whose parents are dead

**17 NOVEMBER 1931 - JOHN INNES.**

I asked Mr. Innes today if Mr. Radford ever published "that article." He replied, "Yes, yesterday, here's a copy." (Copy herewith.) I said, "Is it true?" "Oh, yes," replied Mr. Innes, "it's correct; just a sketch though." I remarked, "What an awful heading!" Mr. Innes laughed heartily. "Ha ha ha," he went on, "in about a hundred years from now they will discover I painted other things as well as Christmas cards."

JSM

Nov. 17th 1931.

JOHN INNES:

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*J. S. Matthew*

THE VANCOUVER STAR, Monday, November 16, 1931

## Cards Produced Here Prove Popular in U.S.

*John Innes, Noted Vancouver Artist, Starts Work on  
New Series of Christmas Paintings for  
Distribution on This Continent*

By JOHN A. RADFORD

John Innes has completed another series of Christmas cards typifying the West and is now drawing a set with a different theme for the season of 1932. His first series sold by the million in the United States.

This Vancouver artist has had a colorful and eventful life. Probably no Canadian artist has painted the West so well, or so truthfully, as Innes, and no artist from abroad has approached him in the knowledge of his subject.

Innes is a pioneer of the West and knows its burning alkali plains, the beauty of its Northern Lights, the lure of its Indian Summer, the biting blasts of its blizzards, the odor of its sage, its trails, passes, fords and mountain reaches.

He knew the plainsman, of early days, the rancher, fur traders, cattle men, big game hunters, railroad contractors and engineers, many of whom deem it an honor to be called his friend.

Innes is proud of our vast heritage, and his first essay into it was before the advent of a railroad and when Red River carts, prairie schooners or horseback was the only conveyance.

### Trained As Engineer

He was born in London, Ontario, only son of the late Dean Innes, D.D., educated at Hellmuth College, where he was a schoolmate of the late B. T. Rogers, of Vancouver. Later he went to England and entered King's College, Sherbourne. The family decided engineering was to be his vocation and the Imperial Service in India, the scene of his activities, but as the only examination in which he was successful was design, drafting and painting, he was allowed to study art.

Living among a group of clever painters and sculptors he made progress, and was fortunate in being permitted entry to the famous

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studios of London. One in particular intrigued him, that of Sir Frederic Leighton, R.A., and he visited the best galleries under able instructors.

Returning to Canada he entered Dufferin Military Academy, leaving there to study engineering under the late Col. Tracy, of Vancouver, then city engineer of London, Ontario. He then joined a surveying party going to the Rocky Mountains, where he made many maps and sketches. The survey completed, he turned to horse ranching and wrangling. His breaking corral and stable were in the old town of Calgary, east of the Elbow River.

#### Established a Ranch

When Calgary became somewhat settled he established his ranch near the mouth of High River, and when the Riel-Rebellion broke out, he sold many horses to the federal government forces, and had an exciting time with his neighbors, the Blackfeet, whom, fortunately for him, refrained from taking his scalp.

When a man who is now a well-known judge was owner of the Calgary Herald, he managed to publish primitive cartoons in that journal. The publisher was sent to jail for contempt of court for his activities, and to this day declares that a grave miscarriage of justice took place, and that John Innes is the one who should have gone to jail.

Men of those days saw enough of Indians and pioneers without having paintings of them on their walls, so his art languished, but not his desire, and as Calgary grew up he was compelled to seek a more promising field for gaining a livelihood.

The Bell Telephone Co. decided to put in an exchange there, and pitched on Innes as the proper person to establish and run the plant. He managed it for more than a year. At the same time he imported an engraving plant and executed much work illustrating the papers.

#### Paper at Banff

The telephone venture was not a financial success for Innes, so he moved to Banff, where, with Charles Halpin, he started a paper called "Mountain Echoes". The returns did not overwhelm him and in fact became an echo. He then joined the government staff engaged in developing the National Park. George A. Stewart, the



**JOHN INNES**

From a dry brush sketch from life by John Ford Clymer, magazine illustrator.

superintendent, being called to Ottawa, Innes was left in charge of the park. A political suggestion was made him that did not appear to him as being in the best interests of the public, so he lost the position for telling the deputy minister what he thought of him.

This occurred in the railroad building days, and it was not long before he was offered a position on the engineering staff of Ross, Mann and Holt, then building the C. and E. branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Here the late James Ross (later Sir James Ross) became interested in the forceful sketches Innes made in odd times on slips of paper. The season having ended, he left railroading and joined the staff of "Prairie Illustrated" as cartoonist and engraver.

#### Stranded in New Westminster

This paper was created for election purposes. The election won, it silently gave up the ghost, so Innes painted and journeyed hither and yon until he received a call to New Westminster to illustrate the Ledger under William Bayley. With the easy grace that characterized the papers of those days it became defunct and Innes was left stranded, with an engraving plant on his hands.

The only thing to do was to launch another publication, and thus the "Hornet" was plunged into the maelstrom of public opinion. The editor was the late A. M. R. Gordon (MacGregor Rose), a particularly brilliant writer. It was in the "Hornet" that his much quoted verses on the Kaiser "Meinself und Gott," were printed. The only thing wrong with the "Hornet" was that the staff had appetites and the advertisers a penchant for delayed payments. So, Innes painted more pictures, some of which sold, many more did not. However, he was awarded a silver medal in 1893 and carries it as a pocket piece.

Toronto lured him away from the wild and woolly west, where he free-lanced, till Mr. Bernard McEvoy (Diogenes), at that time editor of the weekly edition, gave him the position of staff artist and special writer on the Mail and Empire. It was then his pictures began to be shown at the Royal Canadian Academy and Ontario Society of Artists exhibitions.

#### Went to Boer War

But the west was calling, and in 1899 he packed his duffle and hit the trail for Calgary, riding the 69 miles to the B-U ranch for the fall round-up. This trip was productive of many canvases. In the meantime the Boer War broke out and he enlisted in the Canadian Mounted Rifles bound for Africa. While there he made copious notes and sketches which were purloined by some misguided Tommy at Halifax. Upon his return to Toronto he recreated the notes and sketches and they appeared weekly in the Mail and Empire. He received a medal with three clasps for services rendered fighting in hot spots on the veldt.

In 1904 he was elected a member of the Ontario Society of Artists. The following year he was running a pack train through the Rockies in company with the late John P. McConnell (part owner of the old "Saturday Sunset") and John Miller, a prospector.

The trip ended with men and horses on Hastings Street, Vancouver. This episode was the foundation of a great many pictures. Shortly after returning to Toronto he received a call as staff artist for the Hearst Sunday Magazines, New York City, and it was not until 1913 that the west enticed him to return. It was that year he became cartoonist for the Vancouver Sun.

His cartoons of the Great War were widely copied, in the Literary Digest and other journals. In one instance a foreign power ordered several thousand extra copies for distribution.

#### Historical Events

Since the war Innes has been busy and produced many canvases. His pictures of historical events in British Columbia was the gift of the Hudson's Bay Company to the University of British Columbia.

Then came that fine pictorial series the "Epic of the West". These were exhibited in a specially erected gallery at the Hudson's Bay Store on Granville Street. These were purchased by the company and shown in Leipsiz, Germany, last year at the Fur Congress, and met with much favorable comment. They are now in London, England, and were shown by the Canadian

government not long since. His last achievement is the "Epic of Transportation". Twenty-one large canvases, following the growth of the west and the means of transportation from the trail of wild animals to the modern railroad.

Innes is a thinker, etcher, scenic artist, illustrator, cartoonist, choir master, prospector, short-story writer, historical painter, inventor, traveller, soldier and poet.

His life has been full of interest, movement, thrills, ambition, endless hard work amid bitter disappointments. He is one of the most versatile of men and gives freely of his extensive store of information to those who ask it of him and has helped many a struggling artist on his way to success.