

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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was into it; and, further, a syndicate of influential men, some of them high in gubernatorial circles, owned Lot 192, and probably wanted a railway there. (See *The Fight for Kitsilano Beach* by J.S. Matthews in Vancouver City Museum.)

Mr. Findlay said today, "One of the first C.P.R. Oriental liners was the *Parthia*. You must realise that steamships in those days were of very low power as compared with those of today. The old *Parthia* could not do more than twelve knots, and in the early days the tide in the narrows was at least two knots stronger than it is today now that it has been largely dredged. The *Parthia* could not get out of the Narrows easily when the tide was coming in; she had to take a run at it. I have myself beaten her out. I recall on one occasion I was out in the Narrows in a row boat trolling for salmon when the *Parthia* came along on her way out. Of course, I knew the tides between Brockton Point and Prospect Point, and took advantage of the back eddies; I could get out almost without rowing at all. On this occasion, I nearly beat her out of the Narrows, and it surprised me at the time that I should do so. The *Parthia*'s twelve knots was the best she could do under the most favourable conditions; under ordinary circumstances, she could not do more than about nine, and the tide at that time ran about nine knots when coming in full and strong, so she was pretty much at a standstill. On this occasion, she failed on her first try, and backed up almost as far as where North Vancouver is, and took a second run at it. The Narrows at that time was not as wide as it is now, and there was not much room for manoeuvring a big steamer. If they had waited an hour or so they could have got out easily in the slack tide. About the only thing to do with a big steamer when she could not 'make it' was to go astern and have another try; there was no room for manoeuvring.

"I forget now whether it was the *Parthia* or *Batavia* which came first; it was one or the other. The *Abyssinia* came later, and for a time did 'land office business.'"

From Mr. Findlay's story it can be surmised that Mr. W.C. Van Horne, afterwards Sir William, would probably have been advised, as early as 1885, by his engineers that difficulty would be experienced with the tides of the First Narrows in getting the low-powered steamers out of Burrard Inlet without delays for suitable tides, and that this prompted him to conceive the idea of docks outside the narrows. (The old map shows docks at Kitsilano.) He could hardly have known that the day was coming when steamers would have the power they now have, the speed of trains, and populations equal to a small city.

JSM

18 OCTOBER 1931 - DUKE OF CONNAUGHT'S OWN RIFLES. LIEUTENANT COLONEL C.A. WORSNOP.

In the summer of 1920 I was walking on Robson Street when I met Lieutenant Colonel C.A. Worsnop (he died 31 December 1920), (*NOTE ADDED LATER*: Colonel C.B. Worsnop says 31 December 1922) one of the officers who organised the first militia unit in Vancouver, No. 5 Company, British Columbia Brigade of Garrison Artillery, and who subsequently was the first officer commanding the famous 6th Regiment, the Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles, a military unit of which H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, K.G., once said, "and I hope that in this respect you will long continue to set an example to the other regiments of Canada." Colonel Worsnop invited me to take a few steps with him; it was a warm summer's day, and he was enjoying the sunshine.

I asked him how it came about that we adopted our regimental title, and he replied in words akin to what follows:

"When General Hutton decided that we must be changed from artillery he offered me a choice of what we should be changed into at a private luncheon we had together in the old Hotel Vancouver. General Hutton sat on one side of a small table, and myself on the other. General Hutton said, 'What would you like to be, Colonel Worsnop, fusiliers or rifles?' I replied at once, 'Oh, I'd prefer to be rifles.' 'Then I'll see what I can do to get the Duke of Connaught to be your honorary colonel,' said General Hutton.

“That was how it was,” continued Colonel Worsnop.

Colonel Worsnop had served in the North West Rebellion with the “Little Black Devils” (90th Regiment) of Winnipeg, a rifle regiment, which would explain in part his preference for the rifle uniform. One has but to refer to the history of the Rifle Brigade to gather why H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught was thought of as Honorary Colonel.

J.S. Matthews

18 OCTOBER 1931 – 7TH BATTALION, CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE. LIEUTENANT COLONEL W. HART-McHARG.

“I can’t understand Hulme,” Major W. Hart-McHarg is reported to have said while in Vancouver, just before leaving for the front with the first contingent from Vancouver to the Great War. “I don’t know why he doesn’t jump at the opportunity. As for me, I have but a couple of years or so to live, and ...” but he did not finish the sentence.

The above incident was related to me by Captain W.H. Forrest, paymaster of the 6th Regiment D.C.O.R., in which Colonel Hulme was officer commanding, Major Hart-McHarg second in command, and myself a company commander. He told it to me after the War, shortly before he died about 1920. Captain Forrest and Major McHarg were close friends; both were renowned rifle shots, and said that the conversation took place just after Colonel Hulme had declined or waived the command, to which as senior officer of his regiment he was entitled, of the first troops to leave Vancouver for the Great War.

But what Colonel Hart-McHarg did not take into consideration was that Colonel Hulme was a man of much judgment, a splendid soldier, and a man who throughout his life would rather serve others than serve himself. He, himself, had no war experience, while right at his hand was an experienced officer, one who had served as a sergeant in South Africa, a man of influence, dignity, ability, and held in the highest respect by all ranks of soldiers and civilians. It was a great sacrifice for Colonel Hulme, a sacrifice for which he has never had credit, in fact, a sacrifice for which he has been blamed by men of lesser reasoning, who asserted that he sidestepped a responsibility. Then again, Colonel Hulme was a barrister with responsibilities to clients which he could not drop at a moment’s notice; he had a wife and three small children. Colonel Hart-McHarg was also a barrister, but he had partners, and was a single man, and had often left his practice for trips abroad. What Colonel Hulme should receive is our plaudits for his selection of Colonel McHarg.

J.S. Matthews

19 OCTOBER 1931 - THE “JUNGLE” OF 1931. HASTINGS SAWMILL. VANCOUVER HARBOUR COMMISSION AND COLONEL R.D. WILLIAMS.

It was a warm heart on a wet day, and Colonel Williams, which started that remarkable humanitarian haven for the destitute and distressed men—many of them splendid specimens, and fully half veterans of the Great War—which spontaneously grew up on the old Hastings Sawmill site during the spring of 1931, and existed throughout the summer until about September. By a strange whim of fate, this odd collection of crude habitations sprung up on that most historic site, the bare scene where once stood the first important settlement on Burrard Inlet, the Hastings Mill, now no more, once the terminus of the historic road, a mere slit in the forest, which led to and from New Westminster and civilisation.

Today the great transcontinental road, the Canadian Pacific Railway passes through it before finally reaching its Pacific terminus a half a mile further on, and it is, or was, this fact which contributed to the establishment of the “Jungle.” Hundreds of forlorn men in search of work were, during 1931, “beating” their way backwards and forwards, first east, then west, on the car roads, in search of work, and as the freight trains passed into the terminals of Vancouver they dropped off at convenient points, this particular one being a popular dropping off point.