

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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"Then we bought the Vancouver city electric lines, and paid \$85,000 for them, and then the bank closed down on us."

21 DECEMBER 1931 - BURRARD INLET AND WESTMINSTER TELEPHONE COMPANY. CAPTAIN E.S. SCOULLAR.

Continuing the conversation today, Captain E.S. Scoullar said:

"The Burrard Inlet and Westminster Telephone Company was incorporated in 1885, just before Vancouver was incorporated. Joseph (Joe) Armstrong, who owned a half interest, was president up to the day he died; others were Albert Armstrong, Lieutenant Dorman—he was a lieutenant in my 'Westminster Rifles'—and myself; I am not sure, but I think there was just the four of us. After I had been in it for about three years, I sold my share for \$16,000.

"The first line we ran from New Westminster to Port Moody for Onderdonk. In 1886, in the fall, we ran a line from Westminster to Vancouver.

"We brought the line by the 'New Road'" (Westminster Road) "because it was the most direct and the clearer. Douglas Road was like going through a 'cutting,' a slit in the forest, forest on both sides. The 'New Road' was clearer; a fire or something had run through it; the bushes were smaller.

"From the 'New Road' the line came down Westminster Avenue, and then ran to Tilley's, who, after the fire, had a stationery and book store on Cordova Street. There were no private house phones, just one line from Westminster to Port Moody, and one line from Westminster to Tilley's at Vancouver. We charged a toll. Our first agent in Westminster was Chas. Pittendrigh, son of the magistrate.

"We rented our first phones from a telephone company in the United States; we had to pay \$85 for each telephone, and then a royalty each month. Dorman said, 'it could not be done.' So we bought a lot of telephones in Germany.

"There was no phone in Vancouver in June 1886 at the time of the fire; Geo. Black's place at Hastings was not connected with a phone at the time of the fire." (Accuracy of this remark [is] most doubtful.)

"At the time of the fire, it had been a very warm spring; no rain for about two months. The clearing operations were in full swing; the land was covered with big high piles of roots, forty or fifty feet high.

"I was returning from Westminster by the Douglas Road, my wife and I driving a horse and buggy. The fire was so bad that we had to retreat, turned around, went right back, left my wife in Westminster, and came back with my brother-in-law via the 'New Road.' We were alarmed; my brother was in Vancouver, but he had got on a raft and went up to Port Moody on it; there was a westerly wind blowing, blowing great guns.

"There is a point which I would like to make and that is that my building, which was destroyed in the fire, was on the west of the Regina Hotel.

"The dynamite which Mr. McCraney took down to the Hastings Sawmill, we afterwards threw overboard, and it floated around the harbour for a couple of days. You see, the C.P.R. were building the line along the shore from Port Moody, and I was supplying them with large quantities of construction material."

(The B.C. Directory, 1885, states: "British Columbia Telegraphic System, Granville to New Westminster, 25¢.)

(Also see J.Z. Hall and J.W. McFarland re telephone, Westminster to Vancouver, before fire.)