

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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KITSILANO. SALMON IN EARLY DAYS.

In conversation with Mr. William Hunt, an early resident of Greer's Beach (see previous conversations with him), he told me that the pool which was part of the creek which ran along Third Avenue West, finally passing diagonally across the muskeg until it emptied into the sea at the foot of Yew Street, was at the corner of Cedar Street and Third Avenue. He tells me that he has many times seen two or three dozen salmon in that pool struggling to get higher up the creek, and sometimes effecting their purpose. He says it was not an infrequent sight, but a regular one. He says he recalls one occasion about 1900 when he interested some visitors from the Australian Royal Mail Liner *Miowera* or *Warrimoo* by showing them the fish swimming about; they were astonished.

J.S. Matthews

29 OCTOBER 1931 - "PRINCESS LOUISE TREE."

This tree stood on the shore of Burrard Inlet at the foot of Gore Avenue, a tall fir or cedar, for several years a solitary sentinel and sole survivor. Its story is interesting.

JSM

WATER SUPPLY OF GASTOWN.

On mentioning today to Mr. T. Mathews that the story of the water supply of Vancouver could not properly be written without some references to the early water supply of Granville, he told me that our earliest citizens on the low land of Gastown got their water supply from wells. "But the rats," he said, "were an awful pest. You know," he said, "one day we dug a well, and got down about twelve feet by evening, covered it with boards so that no one would fall in. When we started again in the morning there was about a foot of water in it, and twenty-four drowned rats. All the wells, of course, were covered, but the rats used to fall in between the cracks in the board coverings, or in some one similar. They were a nuisance."

GASTOWN.

Mr. Mathews said that the tiny inlet of the sea, which penetrated south of Water Street just west of Carrall Street, did not reach as far as the Alley (lane between Cordova and Water streets) but about part of the distance. It was crossed by a trestle.

The Maple Tree, the famous Maple Tree at the corner was burnt in the Great Fire of 1886.

30 OCTOBER 1931 - VISIT OF DUKE AND DUCHESS OF CORNWALL AND YORK (H.M. THE KING AND QUEEN.)

Had dinner this evening with Mrs. C.A. Worsnop, relict of Lieutenant Colonel C.A. Worsnop (and mother of Lieutenant Colonel C.B. Worsnop, D.S.O., now of 1942 Orchid Avenue, Hollywood, California) who is staying with Mrs. J.W. Whitehead, relict of J.M. Whitehead, late Belgian Consul at Vancouver, and Miss Whitehead. Small party, Mrs. Worsnop, the two Whiteheads, my wife and self, five.

Mrs. Worsnop is to be 81 next month. She is wonderfully active for her age, and from her movements, etc., one would easily pass her for sixty, perhaps 65. I asked her to tell me about the visit of the King and Queen to the Drill Hall in September 1901, which as a young man of 23 I had witnessed from among the ranks of the crowd at the Drill Hall entrance. She said:

"We had the dinner in the Officers' Mess, the same one which you use now. It was a very small affair, just the Duke and Duchess, their personal staff, His Worship the Mayor and Mrs. Townley, and Aldermen and the officers of the regiment. The Mess is small and would not accommodate many. Lady Tupper, Mrs. A.J. Dana (wife of C.P.R. purchasing agent) and myself prepared the

tables for the luncheon. We rented some of the chairs from Weigand or someone, but most of the silver, etc., was from our own homes. I had a beautiful Chinese screen, and I remember how the Queen admired it, and said that she was surprised that she should have come so far to see that beautiful thing, the finest she had ever seen. Of course, it was beautiful; it had been presented to Hub" (Colonel Worsnop) "by Prince —" (naming some Chinese prince whose name I forget.)

NOTE ADDED LATER:

Most likely the great Chinese statesman, Li Hung Chang, who passed through Vancouver in September 1896 (see his file).

Colonel C.B. Worsnop says it was Kang Yu Wei, and that he now (June 1940) has the screen at his home, 1942 Orchid Avenue, Hollywood.

"The table decorations consisted of small individual nosegays of geraniums and maiden hair fern; we chose them because red is royal mourning, and in the centre of the top table was a large bowl of maiden hair fern.

"Then we fixed up one of the rooms for a dressing room for her."

(NOTE ADDED LATER:

Mrs. Grange Holt says "we" is too broad altogether, as Mrs. Worsnop was not one of the ladies who "fixed up" the dressing room. JSM.)

"I have the brush and comb yet, of course, I don't know if she ever used it. We brought down some of our own toilet ware, and Mrs. Grange V. Holt (née Miss Rose Townley) and Mrs. Dana put two silver picture frames, one on each side of the looking glass. Then Mrs. Dana said to me anxiously, 'Now what on earth shall we put in those?' and then immediately answered herself by saying, 'Oh, I know,' and later she came back with two pictures which she had cut out of some illustrated newspaper, of the two princes, the Queen's sons."

NOTE ADDED LATER:

Mrs. Grange V. Holt, née Miss Rose Townley (sister to Colonel His Worship) and the Mayoress Mrs. T.O. Townley (mother of Fred Townley, architect and designer of City Hall, 1935-6) arranged the dressing table.

Mrs. Grange Holt confirms the facts, but says, "I was not presented to Her Royal Highness. Owing to illness, I could not be there, but the details of every happening were told to me, and perhaps I was especially impressed as my eldest daughter was about a week old at the time."

"When the Queen" (Duchess) "came in to the improvised dressing room, she went almost straight to the dressing table, and gave a little start, observed the two pictures. She looked very earnestly, and then cried. Then she sent for me. She said, "I want to give you my heartfelt thanks, and also my husband's. Everywhere I have gone, I have been handed bouquets, and now I am here, and at home. Oh, how I do long to see my boys. None but a mother would have thought of this." She asked who it was who had placed them there, and when told Mrs. Dana, desired to see her, but we told her Mrs. Dana had remained away on account of wearing black" (mourning), "so she asked us to convey to her her thanks. Then she sent for the King, and when he entered she showed him the pictures, and as the tears ran down her cheeks, the King" (Duke) "took her in his arms.

"We had some floral decorations, too, some small bunches of violets; we thought they would be most suitable on account of the royal mourning" (for Queen Victoria), "and she bent over them and said, 'I understand.'

"After the dinner was over she much admired the maiden hair fern in the large central jardinière, and asked permission to take a small root. So we got a small pot and it was sent down to her railway coach."

Mrs. Worsnop's narration of the incidents outlined was so delicately and feelingly conveyed, and with such sympathetic tenderness, that the warmth of Her Royal Highness's emotion seemed to have been preserved in its fullness in her memories throughout the thirty years since. Her Majesty's sensibility to the tender compliment intended found utterance in words and gestures so discriminatingly gentle and heartfelt as to deeply impress all who were the witnesses—the incident must have been a touching spectacle.