

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 125th anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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Contact Information

City of Vancouver Archives
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9
604.736.8561
archives@vancouver.ca
vancouver.ca/archives



After dark, the two strings of canoes, with lanterns lighted, were towed to and fro over the waters of the Inlet, passed, re-passed, and circled around. The canoes were fairly large. The bands on the warships were playing, the sea was glassy smooth, the crowd watching lined the shore and Water Street. I have never seen a better display on our harbour, before or since.

"We paid the Indians a small sum."

JSM

3 DECEMBER 1931 - KERRISDALE. STREET CARS. 41ST AVENUE WEST.

Generous, hospitable Kerrisdale! Had Carlyle lived there, midst those great hearted pioneers, stout men supported by that subtle encouragement which women give, he would have hesitated before giving expression to his famous phrase, "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless millions weep."

"I helped to build the 41st Avenue car line twenty years ago," Mr. Clampitts, the Kitsilano car conductor told me. "At first, we had a little 'dinky' car which ran 'jerkwater' from the Interurban" (Eburne to Vancouver) "to Dunbar Street. It was a wild kind of place then, but those people who lived there were the kindest people I ever knew. I remember one time, it was Christmas, the folks in some house—I forget just which one—brought us out a Christmas dinner, and we, the conductor and I" (the motorman) "ate it in the car. They had it all fixed up on a silver tray, with white napkins, silver napkin rings, silver jugs, turkey dinner, and hot mince pies. Another Christmas, we had five turkey dinners sent out to us by residents along the street car line, and we ate them in the car. I know I got 28 cigars on one day, and the conductor got 25. You remember Alvo von Alvensleben, the German, friend of Kaiser Bill? Well, Taylor, he ran night shift; he never troubled to take lunch. Every night, they never missed, Alvensleben sent him out his lunch, and," (with emphasis) "a glass of wine."

There was something very beautiful about those pioneer days; the going was rough, the inconveniences many, but there was a sweet wholesomeness to those sincere souls who led the way into that primitive region, a tender sympathy, a simple faith, which has left memories which grow fonder and fonder as the days pass.

JSM

3 DECEMBER 1931 - THE ECHOES OF THE REAL ESTATE BOOM. 54TH AVENUE EAST.

There is a street in South Vancouver, between old 53rd and 55th avenues, shown on maps—it was never actually a street or road—as Lalande Avenue. It was two blocks long from Westminster Avenue, in D.L. 652, and divided in twain four city blocks once owned by Mr. Lalande and associates; probably twelve or thirteen acres in all. It was about 1908 or 1909.

They cleared it of forest at a cost of \$2,000; the streets were not graded. Then they were offered and refused \$120,000 for it. Later, they had, as the decline came, to mortgage it for \$20,000, and finally lost it altogether. Then the mortgagees lost their \$20,000, and still later the property reverted to the Municipality of South Vancouver for taxes unpaid. The trees, second growth, grew up again.

Today it is a civic park, the property of the new amalgamated city of Vancouver, and part is used for park board nurseries and greenhouses.

The original possessor, or one of them, Mr. Lalande, now, 1931, makes a most modest living in a small and obscure real estate business of humble pretence, on Pender Street and Homer Street corner. (See Miss Annie Morrison, Volume 3.)

These personal tragedies have not been without their compensating benefits. It is by such personal misfortunes that Vancouver has, in part, retrieved the stupid improvidence which failed to reserve, from a vast tract of empty wilderness, adequate areas for churches, parks, schools

and public playing grounds. The temporary affluence of many land owners was false; the value did not exist; the figures were visionary; their perspective had no more substance than foam on beer.

JSM

CLOUGH AVENUE (SOUTH VANCOUVER), AFTERWARDS 61ST AVENUE EAST.

Mr. Clough, nephew of John Clough the lamplighter of Vancouver (1887) was a friend of the above Mr. Lalande.

MAIN STREET (FORMERLY WESTMINSTER AVENUE.)

Mr. Lalande was active in changing the name. His contention was that there were too many Westminsters—Westminster Avenue, Westminster Road, New Westminster, the city. Alderman Hepburn, an old-timer, bitterly opposed the change of historic old names, but the “boomsters” were riding gloriously on the crest of a great real estate wave; the soberer heads were disdained as fossilised; and when Alderman Hepburn publicly stated that those who sold lots “on Grouse Mountain” were “criminals” who ought to be in jail, a mighty howl arose, and had undoubtedly much to do with his defeat in a contest for the mayoralty. He was a splendid alderman, an astute financier, had served as an alderman for many terms, and deserved a more gracious reward.

JSM

EARLY AEROPLANES (APPROXIMATELY 1906 OR 1908.)

One of the earliest of aeroplanes in Vancouver was that possessed by Fred Clark, who bought the plane, and Art (Arthur) Lalande (son of the above), who supplied the engine. It was a British military Arvo or Alvo machine, fitted with bicycle wheels, and was purchased in St. Louis, Missouri, knocked down, shipped to Vancouver, and put on pontoons made by the Vancouver Shipyards in Coal Harbour. The propeller was enormous, and a foot wide. It never flew. The plane was burned when Hoffar’s boat house was destroyed by fire; the engine, being elsewhere, was saved, and afterwards put in a motor boat. All this as related to me by Art Lalande, who says he does not know where Fred Clark went to.

JSM

3 DECEMBER 1931 - KITSILANO BEACH, POST OFFICE.

The first post office at Kitsilano Beach was established at the time the Canadian Pacific Railway subdivided the area lying at the back of Kitsilano Beach, probably because at that time there was no mail delivery in that section, and its earliest residents had to go to town for their mail. It was located in a little store called “The Popular” run by a Mr. Green, just around the corner from Cornwall Street and on Yew Street.

The second postmaster was Mr. Yates, who retained it from 1912 to 1927, in a little store just west of Yew Street on the south side of Cornwall, where he sold confectionery and played chess.

The third incumbent is a postmistress at the same place, same business. I am informed that it was never known as Kitsilano Post Office, but as Sub Post Office No. 4

4 DECEMBER 1931 - HIS GRACE THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF NEW WESTMINSTER. COLONEL THE MOST REVEREND A.U. DEPENCIER, O.B.E., D.D.. 62ND OVERSEAS BATTALION, C.E.F. (“HULME’S HUSKIES.”)

Colonel Hulme tells me that when, early in 1915, he was given authority to raise the 62nd Overseas Battalion, he was completing the establishment of officers, and gave thought to the question of a regimental chaplain. One of the earlier overseas battalions had been unfortunate in the selection of a chaplain who had made himself “avoided” by too strict ideas on cigarettes,