

## **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.

### **Copyright Statement**

© 2011 City of Vancouver. Any or all of *Early Vancouver* may be used without restriction as to the nature or purpose of the use, even if that use is for commercial purposes. You may copy, distribute, adapt and transmit the work. It is required that a link or attribution be made to the City of Vancouver.

### **Reproductions**

High resolution versions of any graphic items in *Early Vancouver* are available. A fee may apply.

### **Citing Information**

When referencing the 2011 edition of *Early Vancouver*, please cite the page number that appears at the bottom of the page in the PDF version only, not the page number indicated by your PDF reader. Here are samples of how to cite this source:

Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

### **Contact Information**

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



“One day, I don’t just recall when, we were having a calathumpian parade or something, and all the parsons in the city took part. They were to ride in carriages, and Father Clinton got in with them. We went after him; he was seated in a buggy. We shouted, ‘Hey, aren’t you coming to pull the hose reel?’ He got down out of the buggy, deserted the parsons’ brigade, and took his proper place at the hose reel.”

(Above was read to Mr. J.A. Mateer, who confirms it as correct.)

*NOTE ADDED LATER:*

Mrs. S.H. Ramage, 27 September 1937: “Mr. Schetky is perfectly correct; that was the start of the “Coffee Brigade.” I was only in my teens then, but when they got back from the fire, we were there awaiting them. Oh, we had good times in those good old days.”

J.S.M.

### **3 JULY 1931 - THE GREAT FIRE OF 1886. FATHER CLINTON.**

“When the big fire broke out” (13 June 1886), “I was over at the Indian Mission,” continued Mr. Schetky, “across the Inlet in Arthur Sullivan’s sailboat; just for a sail; we left about half past one, and it took us about half an hour to go over to the Mission—a good breeze. We had just got there, and signaled for an Indian to bring a canoe, and Sullivan had just got ashore, when someone came running along the shore, and said the city was on fire; we started right back.

“The fire looked as though it was Joe Manion’s place, and Sullivan had his mother stopping there; we raced back, and although she was a half decked sailboat, she was shipping water over the bow. Presently Sullivan said there was nothing for it, but we had to take in sail, so I took in the jib, and with some help, managed to put two reefs in the main sail, and even then I have heard it said that it took us just twenty minutes from the Mission to Hastings Mill.

“We tried to make for Carrall Street, but the wind was so strong it blew us down to the Hastings Mill, and we landed on the slab pile”—at this point, Mr. Schetky pointed to the smoke coming from the slab pile on the point, where for many years the Hastings Mill burned their slabs—see photo, “Before the Fire”—“and went through the Hastings Mill yard. After we got through, the first thing we saw was Father Clinton on top of Mr. Alexander’s house throwing water on blankets which had been laid on the roof to catch the sparks. The fire had run right up to Mr. Alexander’s house. There were four little cottages just close to Mr. Alexander’s house, with white roofs. They do not seem to show in this photo. It looks as though this scratching has scratched out Mr. Alexander’s house. And then, whether it was the big stump, or a change of wind, I do not know, but the fire went off in a southerly direction for a space, and then came back. It just curved around Mr. Alexander’s house, burned up three out of the four cottages, and left Mr. Alexander’s house, and one of the cottages—the one Joe Coldwell” (or Caldwell) “lived in—untouched. Mr. Alexander’s house was just before you came to the mill property.

“Harry Hemlow was keeping the Sunnyside Hotel at the time of the fire.

“It was just after that parade that we had a fire up here, just about fifty yards or so from this office,” continued Mr. Schetky, whose office is in the Royal Trust Building, Pender Street West, when I showed him a photograph of soldiers in procession on Cordova Street, Dominion Day, 1887. “We had quite a scare for a while. They were clearing land at the corner of Howe and Pender streets, and the fire got away from them; the clearing was all dry debris; it burned some houses.”

Mr. Schetky was shown the photograph of the arrival of the “First train in Vancouver.”

“This little tower is the tower of No. 1 Fire Hall after the fire. The building stood on Water Street, south side, about fifty feet west of Carrall Street, next to the Alhambra Hotel.”

(Note: the tower can be seen about one and three quarter inches to the left of the right edge of the photograph, and in line with the top of a tall thin black stump.)

"The night of the Great Fire, I sat in a chair in the Hastings Mill store all night, and the next day took my books and \$600 in cash, and went over to New Westminster and put the money in the bank."

"My uncle, Lewis Carter, of the Carter House, told me that, when the fire broke out, he was halfway up Mount Pleasant" (up Westminster Avenue on Mount Pleasant), "and started to run back. He ran a long way, then walked to regain his breath, then started running again, and got as far as the corner of Cordova Street East and Main Street" (Westminster Avenue), "and then turned west down Cordova Street slope. The wind was so strong that he could hardly make headway. He got as far as Carrall Street, but the fire prevented further progress and he turned and went down Hastings Road with the crowd." – W.F. Findlay, Mr. Carter's nephew.



"I think the building  
in rear is the old  
Regina Hotel, or  
Oriental Hotel; most  
likely the Regina.  
W.F. Findlay

The sign "POST OFFICE" in window

North side Hastings St between Cambie and Homer St  
almost at foot of Hamilton St

Item # EarlyVan\_v1\_0044