

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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from the swell. When it is calm, then water is full of phosphorus, and, as soon as they see you, they shoot off like balls of fire.

“When we came back from the Yukon we bought 150 feet on the south side of Second Avenue in the 2200 block; that was in 1899. At that time we were the farthest west occupied block on Second Avenue. There was with us Murchie, the tea man, Coe or Miller and Coe, the china people, and his father, and, I think, afterwards, H.H. Williams, a retired man, came on First Avenue.”

J.S.M.

3 MARCH 1931 - CITY HALLS. POLICE STATION. WATER STREET. GASTOWN.

H.P. McCraney, one of our first park commissioners, says that before the fire, the Police Station was on the south side of Water Street, just west of Carrall, and that it was there that the City Council first met. As he had much to do with Council affairs he ought to have knowledge.

Immediately after the fire, he says, they went to the famous tent, which stood on the northeast corner of Carrall and Alexander streets, almost over the water, and across from where the Sunnyside Hotel stood. From there they went to the Oppenheimer Building, a single storey brick building on the east side of the lane corner on Powell Street, between the C.P.R. English Bay line and Carrall Street, still standing, and now occupied by Henry Darling and Sons, Paints and Stains, 28 Powell Street. The City Offices were located there while the new City Hall on Powell Street was being built. A peculiarity of both Oppenheimer buildings—one on southeast corner Powell and Columbia—is that they were fitted with iron shutters and fastenings; the only building so fitted, so far as is known; evidently in fear of another fire such as 1886.

Alderman L.A. Hamilton, says Mr. McCraney, tells a story about this building, and the new City Hall on Powell Street. It is explained that the Oppenheimers were most influential men, and much of what they desired to be done was effected; for instance, the original very crooked street car line was built to suit them as property owners; they were large landowners, had a large wholesale grocery business, and two of them were on the City Council. The single storey brick building had a sign, their business name, “OPPENHEIMER BROS” over it, left untouched during the few months used as a City Hall.

Hamilton was walking east on Powell Street one day when a man stopped him; a notorious wag. The man asked him where he was going. Hamilton replied, “Up to the new City Hall,” pointing up the street. The wag looked up at the big sign and said, “Why didn’t you take your sign with you when you moved?”

J.S.M.

3 MARCH 1931 - KITSILANO BEACH. GREER’S BEACH. ELK. SALMON.

“As I was telling,” continued Mr. Hunt, “one day, it must have been about 1900, I went for a stroll along Greer’s Beach, towards the ‘Hotel Site.’ At that time I was living in the 2200 block on Second Avenue, and came down what was left of the old skid road. Whether this road was connected with the log dump I do not recall, but the old log dump was on the beach in front of what is now Tatlow Park. (It was not connected.) All the timber from what is now Kitsilano came down into that dump.” (Not quite correct.)

“To get along the beach I had to go when the tide was low, because when the tide was in, the water backed up the sloughs which ran in a southeasterly direction as far as Maple Street or farther. On reaching a point at what is now the foot of McNicholl Avenue, I turned into the swamp to examine the standing timber, and noticed that the wind had blown down a tree, about eighteen inches in diameter. It was on the edge of the swamp, and to its roots still clung about eighteen inches of moss and earth which had come clean off the hardpan, bringing with it about six inches of elk dung, well preserved, and not broken up. The upturned root would be probably ten feet high by fifteen wide, and the whole bottom of it was covered with this elk dung.