

## **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



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.

“At that time there was a large creek which came down the hill from the direction of Broadway, and crossed Third Avenue at Cedar Street and Third Avenue, and entered the bay at the foot of Yew Street—about ten yards to the west of the foot. There was another stream which entered the bay about the middle of the beach, and I think it must have been connected with the other, but am not sure, at about the Henry Hudson School. It ran through the muskeg.

“The salmon used to go up both streams when the tide was high, and go up as far as Third Avenue, where the creek ran in a ditch on the roadside. When the Australian boat first came in, the one which inaugurated the All-Red Line, the *Warrimoo* or *Miowera*, the sailors used to come up to see us at -Greer’s Beach, and they were greatly surprised to see the salmon swimming in the ditch under the electric light. At that time Third Avenue was a principal street, and had one or two electric lights; it was the only street which was open north of Seventh, and was open only as far as Vine, where it ran into the forest.

“Between the two streams I have spoken of there was a high strip of land which ran along the beach from about the foot of Yew to half way between Whyte and Creelman streets produced. It was quite narrow, wider at the base than at the point, covered with grass, and with some small bushes, green and luxuriant, very convenient for bathers to dress or undress behind. We used to come down False Creek by canoe, and camp on this high strip of land for a couple of months; others came too, some from Westminster. It would be about 1896 to 1898. It soon got noised abroad, more came, and finally the city authorities stopped it on account of sanitary conditions.”

J.S.M.

### **KITSILANO BEACH.**

The high strip of land—it was not more than two or three feet about the surrounding swamp, though much higher, say ten feet, than the lake which once existed between Maple Street and Laburnum Street—was the old site of Mr. Sam Greer’s home, almost immediately behind the present bathhouse (1931). Ultimately the campers became so numerous, probably about 1904 to 1906, that they formed themselves in streets, and spread half way along the beach. When the Hon. and Mrs. J.W. De B. Farris, afterwards attorney-general of B.C., were first married, and not possessed of the worldly goods they afterwards acquired, they camped on the beach at the foot of McNicholl Avenue, one or more summers.

J.S.M.

### **KITSILANO.**

A gentleman, who has lived many years at 1912 York Street (opposite Henry Hudson School) told me recently, that when he went there first he caught trout, to amuse his little daughter, in a small creek which ran through his garden.

J.S.M.

### **NEWSPAPERS.**

*Vancouver Herald*

*Vancouver News*

*Vancouver Daily Advertiser*

*News-Advertiser*

On 30 March 1887, the *Vancouver News* publishes its last issue, and on Thursday morning, 31 March 1887, the title becomes