

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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Fire, Water and Light Committee:

We would recommend that John Clough be appointed lamp lighter at a salary of \$10 per month to date from the first of March.

R.H. Alexander, Chairman

Report adopted.

Moved by Ald. Oppenheimer, seconded Lockerly.

Page 313 of the same minute book reads as follows:

Council Meeting, April 11th 1887

Fire, Water, and Light Committee:

That a lamplighter be appointed permanently at a salary of \$30 per month, and that the lamplighter employed temporarily be paid for the number of days he worked in March, and that his wages as permanent officer date from the first of April.

R.H. Alexander.

Adopted.

Moved by D. Oppenheimer, Seconded Sanders.

Note: coal oil lamps, not gas.

16 NOVEMBER 1931 - THE GREAT FIRE OF 1886. H.P. McCRANEY. C. GARDNER JOHNSON.

Mr. McCraney told me a few days ago that when the Great Fire broke out at midday on 13 June 1886, his horses, used in making the deep cutting—now that portion of Cordova Street which leads down from the extreme northern end of Granville Street to the C.P.R. stations and docks—were in their stable. Some kind person, whom he never discovered, moved them out of the stable, and placed them in the deep cutting for safety. The removal was not necessary—though it might have been—for the fire did no damage in that section. The horses were found tied to the wagon wheels in the cutting.

A.C. Beck, K.C., told me that C. Gardner Johnson and Mr. John Boulton, our first magistrate, ran before the fire, but were cut off and took shelter in a hollow torn out by the roots of a large fallen tree near the corner of Westminster Avenue and Hastings Street, and covered themselves with sand, gravel and earth. In some manner Mr. Johnson's leg was burned, and when Mr. Beck arrived in September 1886, Mr. Johnson was still in bed in his little shack near the bridge. Mr. Beck said he understood a burning piece of wood fell on the leg.

JSM

EARLY C.P.R. DOCK, 1886.

Mr. McCraney, who cut the above road to the railway, told me that the contract for the first C.P.R. wharf was given to the San Francisco Bridge Company. The bottom of the inlet at the foot of Granville Street was hard, the piles did not penetrate, but the bridge company went on with the work, until one night the whole structure of piles toppled over, and had to be reconstructed.

No photographs earlier than the arrival of the first trains, 23 May 1887, are known to me, but from this, together with previous descriptions given, it is now possible to reconstruct fairly accurately that portion of the shore of Vancouver once known as "The Bluff."

JSM

NOTE ADDED LATER:

5 February 1934

This splendid old gentleman, probably today the foremost painter of historical incidents now living in North America, is practically destitute. He has an office at 602 Province Building, but the odd jobs of illustrating, given him by the *Province* newspaper, are debited against the rent for the office—so he gets nothing from that source, and says, “I have not sold a picture for two years.”

I got \$75 for him last year by wiring a friend at Imperial Oil Limited, Toronto, and, after argument, arranged for him to apply for Old Age Pension, first being sure it would be granted. He got his first cheque (part month of January: \$4.72) yesterday, and will get \$20 a month hereafter. I also got \$25 from a special fund, and Mayor Taylor has promised me \$25 towards the painting of the first meeting of the first City Council; the first dozen figures are now penciled in on the canvas.

And as Mr. Innes says, somewhat bitterly and with disgust, but not without cheerfulness, “Fancy, after fifty years in the West.”

His wife is 68 and will be eligible for extra \$20 Old Age Pension, and he has a family to support—grandchildren whose parents are dead.

J.S. Matthews