

Early Vancouver

Volume One

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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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EARLY FINANCING.

"After the first council meeting civic organisation was more or less complete, but there was no money in the treasury, and the question of finances came up early. There had been considerable preliminary expense, and other expenses, some defrayed privately by public spirited men. The mayor and aldermen had been elected, the civic officials appointed, but there was no money to pay them, not twenty-five cents, nor to defray past or future expenses; there was no assessment roll, nor a single by-law.

“Some money was collected from fines inflicted on disorderly or drunken persons, but they were very small amounts, \$2.50, and went to pay the police salaries. Mr. Baldwin regarded that money as ‘dirty,’ and when delivered to him would finger it gingerly.

“The situation was pressing and desperate, but not forlorn. It was clearly a case for the Chief of Police, and he was told to ‘get busy,’ and doubtless winked the other eye and started to ‘clean up the town.’

“Word was passed around that Magistrate Boulton had signed some warrants for arrest, and then both he and City Solicitor Blake found it convenient to have an engagement in New Westminster. The chief of police actually had been busy, very busy, and had gathered in about twenty malefactors. The important thing for the moment was to get someone to sit on the bench and try the cases in the absence of the police magistrate.

“Mayor MacLean did not approve of the procedure which had been followed, and considerable persuasion was necessary before we could get him to see that the ‘reputation of the city was at stake.’ We implored him to take note that it was the city of which he was so proud, and of which he was the chief magistrate, and that ‘its reputation was at stake.’ Considerable pleading, plus a little invigorating stimulant at the Bodega saloon finished him, and we all went down to the old Court House on Powell Street, and His Worship got on ‘the bench,’ that is, his chair at the end of the table.

“‘T.F.,’ as we called him, the city clerk, read the first charge, the only charge read. Addressing the accused by name, he said, ‘You are charged with —, guilty or not guilty?’ The accused rose to the occasion and circumstances, and pleaded, ‘Guilty.’

“The court was astonished. His Worship’s dignity was already in the ascendant, and the plea of ‘guilty’ sent it sky-rocketing; he thumped his desk and exploded. Fastening the accused with his eye, he thundered, ‘How dare you stand before me and plead guilty to defying the laws of God and man AND THIS YOUNG AND PROSPEROUS CITY.’ He halted a moment, and then abruptly ejaculated, ‘twenty dollars,’ and with a sweeping gesture of his arm, ‘the same for the rest of you.’

“That settled that, and the court rose instantly. About twenty were fined.

“While it is true that Granville had possessed a gaol for perhaps twenty years or more before incorporation as the city of Vancouver, the surveillance which came after incorporation was not possible before incorporation. The malefactors were undoubtedly guilty of an infraction of the criminal code, and the money from their fines was very convenient at the moment to solve the more pressing needs of our civic finance.”

Tom McGuigan said “Birdie Stewart, etc., with keeping a house of prostitution.” Mayor MacLean said, “Birdie STEWART, how dare, etc.,” “of God and nature.”

THE CHINESE RIOTS.

“In the autumn of 1886, Brighthouse and Hailstone let a contract for the clearing of a portion of District Lot No. 185, that is from about Burrard Street to Thurlow Street. Early in 1887, it was snowing at the time, the contractor, McDougall, brought in a number of Chinamen to work. McDougall’s camp was near the corner of Burrard and Pender streets, almost exactly where the Elysium Hotel stands now, where there was a small spring and creek of splendid water—John Morton’s old place.

“The night of the Chinese riots a public meeting was held; the speakers spoke from the verandah of the Sunnyside Hotel. After a few speakers had addressed the crowd, a procession was formed to go up to where the Chinamen had been landed up at McDougall’s camp and drive them out. That would be well on towards midnight; there was snow on the ground; it was quite clear and we could see what we were doing. There were many tough characters among the crowd, navvies who had been working for Onderdonk, hotheaded, thoughtless, strong and rough, and many went along with the procession to try and prevent anyone from being hurt. I was not in the procession,