

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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Granville and early Vancouver, George Black's was a most popular resort. The afternoon athletic games were frequently followed by barn dances in the evening. Charlie Queen, afterwards alderman, who drove the daily stage, used to take the boys out to Hastings free of charge; there was no charge for the grounds or barn.

"But the Hastings ball ground was very cramped and, as Vancouver grew, too far away for convenience. When the question of grounds for athletics came up, Alderman Hamilton, also C.P.R. land commissioner, naturally wanted the Cambie Street location; Alderman Oppenheimer naturally wanted the Powell Street site. We had a lively time between the two interests, and although we got the Cambie Street grounds first, we ultimately got both.

"The C.P.R. rough cleared most of the Cambie Street grounds; the prisoners of the chain gang, under John Clough, did a lot more; the cricketers and the baseball boys worked hard, too.

"The Powell Street Grounds, being more convenient for practice than Hastings, were at first used for that purpose and the matches played at Hastings."

"SALMONBELLIES" AND SALMONBELLIES.

"It was on the Cambie Street grounds that the famous New Westminster lacrosse players got their sobriquet 'Salmonbellies.' It was given them by an Italian bootblack, a well-known character about town, formerly of New Westminster, latterly of Vancouver, and who, following the usual custom of the days, carried his polishing outfit over his shoulder wherever he went.

"One day in the early nineties, the Westminster lacrosse 'boys' came over to Vancouver for a game with the sticks. Vancouver gathered together a scratch team, and both teams, followed by a straggling crowd of pioneer 'fans,' assembled on the Grounds to play it off. The bootblack was 'rooting' for New Westminster.

"The New Westminster men got the ball down towards the Vancouver goal and tried to rush the net. The bootblack was 'rooting' vociferously, and in his excitement yelled, 'Git there, salmonbellies.'

"The epithet tickled the jocular fancy of the onlookers—everyone heard it—much hilarity followed, especially amongst the Vancouver supporters, and the descriptive nickname fitted so well that it has survived ever since, and has in a measure attached itself to all who hail from the old salmon town. In the earlier days of the salmon industry it was centred largely on New Westminster, and perhaps Ladner's, not on Steveston as it afterwards was."

It was remarked to Mr. Gallagher that, in Vancouver today, there are probably thousands of people who have no knowledge of salmonbellies, and who regard even the use of the word as not entirely polite. It was pointed out to him that, in the prize list for the British Columbia Rifle Association annual prize meeting held in New Westminster in 1877, one of the principal prizes, presented by S.W. Herring Esq., was a half barrel of salmonbellies, an epicurean delicacy well known to our pioneers.

"And he gave a real prize," answered Mr. Gallagher. "The preparation of salmonbellies is a lost art now; the old fishermen at New Westminster knew how to do it; they are too hard now; the old fishermen knew how to keep them soft, and to preserve the fat. Down on the Delta the farmers used to boil them, skim the oil off, put them up in earthen crocks with cinnamon bark and cloves, and carefully cover them over again with their own oil. They kept for years and were delicious."

"TAR FLATS."

"'Tar Flats' was a collection of non-descript huts—and characters—on the shore of Burrard Inlet, beyond the present sugar refinery but not as far as Cedar Cove; a dirty place; a sort of rancherie, and got its name from some vessel."

EARLY STANLEY PARK. L.A. HAMILTON. A.G. FERGUSON.

"Mr. L.A. Hamilton, alderman as well as C.P.R. land commissioner, himself surveyed the first path around Stanley Park, and the present driveway is in almost exactly the same position as his first

path, with one exception near the reservoir where, some years later, an alteration was made. He took his own time to survey the path, and was assisted by some of his axemen," continued Mr. Gallagher.

"The late A.G. Ferguson, contractor under Onderdonk, took a very great interest, with Mr. Hamilton, in Stanley Park, and practically fathered it for, say, ten years. That brings to mind an incident worth mentioning in connection with Stanley Park.

"Mr. Ferguson was an American, and when he was elected a park commissioner, while others were sworn in, he was excused that ceremony. He took such an interest in Stanley Park that, when the annual sum appropriated by the Council for its upkeep and development was exhausted, he himself invariably paid the bills to the end of the year. Being a civil engineer, he gave the grades for grading the roads in the park, acted as park foreman, and practically gave all his spare time to it, the other commissioners being agreeable to leaving it to him. Ex-Alderman Michael Costello told me that one year it had cost Mr. Ferguson five thousand dollars." (Costello was also a park commissioner.) "Mr. Ferguson was a very far seeing man, and purchased some of the finest corners on Hastings Street. Mr. Ferguson had no children of his own, nor had Mrs. Ferguson. Mr. Ferguson left a portion of his estate to his sister-in-law, Mrs. Ceperley, with the suggestion that, when she had no further use for it, it should be left to the city of Vancouver, and this gave us, ultimately, the Ceperley Children's Playground at Second Beach. I believe Mr. Ferguson stipulated in his bequest that the money should be used for a park for children."

NOTE ADDED LATER:

7 December 1939

In conversation with Mr. Vaughn of Ceperley Rounsefell and Company today, I read the page to him. He said, "I knew Mr. Ferguson, and what you have written here is essentially correct so far as I know.

"Mr. Ceperley was an American, so was the first Mrs. Ceperley, and I think Mr. Ferguson was too. Mr. Ceperley afterwards took out British papers.

"The property Mr. Ferguson gave Mrs. Ceperley was where the Standard Bank is now, and also diagonally across the street. He gave her both. Arthur T. Ceperley in the city is a son of Mr. and Mrs. Ceperley.

"Mr. Ferguson was a contractor; that's how he made his money."

THE GRANVILLE HOTEL. TOM CYRS. "LONG BIT," "SHORT BIT," 12½¢ AND 25¢. LIQUOR.

"At Tom Cyrs' Granville Hotel on Water Street, every guest was entitled to an eye-opener—had a drink coming to him—before breakfast. The 'right' was not limited to Tom Cyrs; it was, in fact, the custom of the country.

"The practice was that when a stranger went to a hotel, the first thing he did before going to his room was to go into the bar and, at a convenient moment soon after, he would announce that he was a stranger and would 'the house' (all present in the bar) have a drink 'on him.' One drink cost a 'short bit,' but you could buy six drinks for a 'long bit.' A short bit was ten cents, a long bit twenty-five cents. We had no nickels here for five or ten years after incorporation; they were in the country, but not in British Columbia, and for years after the city was incorporated, the miners coming down from the Cariboo would carry their scales and a poke of gold.

JOHN CLOUGH.

"The truth about John Clough is that he was so fond of the flowing bowl that he frequently got '30 days and costs' for being 'drunk and incapable'; a man was not fined for being drunk, but for being 'incapable.' John was in so often," continued Mr. Gallagher with a smile, "that ultimately he became a 'trusty,' and finally they took him on the staff as 'jailer.' He had only one arm, and rarely, if ever, drove the chain gang wagon with its load of prisoners of the chain gang, himself."