

## **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**

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### **Contact Information**

City of Vancouver Archives  
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9  
604.736.8561  
archives@vancouver.ca  
vancouver.ca/archives



### **13 JUNE 1931 - EARLY STEAMERS OF VANCOUVER. NORTH VANCOUVER AND MOODYVILLE FERRY. S.S. SENATOR. UNION STEAMSHIP COMPANY WHARF.**

"At the time I came here in 1891," Mr. Edwards, formerly of Edwards Brothers, photographers, told me today, "the only way to go to Moodyville was by the old *Senator*; I think she was the first ferry boat to the north shore, unless we include the *Sudden Jerk*, a boat I never saw, but which I am told ran from Hastings to Moodyville, which got her name from the way she ran into things, and which is reputed to have blown up when her boiler exploded while her engineer was up at Geo. Black's, Hastings, having a drink in the bar. This photograph is of the old Union Steamship Company wharf, and this is the *Senator* tied up to it. The *Senator* had been running for years before I came in 1891, and I think she is still somewhere in the harbour. Hugh Stalker was the master of the *Senator*, very obliging; if he saw a passenger coming after he had left the dock he would turn back, and sometimes turn back a second time if he saw still another coming.

"I think the *Sudden Jerk* blew up on account of a lack of a safety valve on her steam."

My own recollection of the *Senator* (the writer came to Vancouver 3 November 1898), was of a trip to Moodyville. At first we did not stop at North Vancouver; nothing there to go for, but afterwards she ran to North Vancouver, landed at a "T" wharf floating on logs and anchored. We used to take over horses and buggies, but the horse had to be taken out of the shafts, and the buggy and horse placed crosswise on her deck. There was a shelter for about twenty passengers. For a short while she ran to both North Vancouver and Moodyville. She was undoubtedly North Vancouver's first ferry boat, regular ferry boat. Later the *St. George*, named after Mr. St. George Hammersley, and built at the south end of Granville Street (under the north end of the Granville Street Bridge) replaced her.

J.S.M.

### **EARLY STEAMERS. S.S. SENATOR. S.S. PEARL. S.S. CHARMER AND PREMIER. S.S. PEARL.**

The *Pearl*, mentioned in the *Daily News-Advertiser* of 2 July 1887 as bringing passengers for the celebration of Vancouver's first civic holiday, 1 July 1887 (See "Vancouver Celebrates Her First Dominion Day," 28 June 1931) was a small steamer of which the shipping office of the Vancouver Customs have no record; they report very imperfect shipping records were kept in the early days.

The above paper reports on 6 July 1887, page 4, as follows, "The steamer *Pearl* arrived yesterday with a cargo of fruits and farm produce from North Arm" (of Fraser River), and on July 8<sup>th</sup>, "The steamer *Pearl* was beached near the Hastings Mill for repairs."

Of the paddle wheel steamer *Amelia* which also brought passengers for the famed celebrations of Dominion Day 1887, Mr. Parkin of Nanaimo, whose mother came out to Nanaimo on the celebrated *Princess Royal* (see oil painting in Bastion, Nanaimo), and who is today, 1931, one of the only two surviving passengers of that voyage, and who is one of her family of seventeen, said:

"The *Amelia* came from Sacramento River, California; my father was part owner; he lost all he put into her. She was brought up to compete with the stern wheeler *R.P. Rithet*, which was, so I am told, charging exorbitant freight rates. She ran between Victoria and Nanaimo. As an example of what followed the arrival of the *Amelia*, passenger fares from Nanaimo to Victoria dropped to twenty-five cents fare for the trip, and I think that at one time meals were 'thrown in free.'

"Afterwards, there was some sort of a settlement, it is supposed. She" (the *Amelia*) "broke down on a trip to Victoria, and lay on the beach at Cowichan Bay, where I imagine she still is; some said she was purposely wrecked. She exhausted her steam into her smokestack, and "roared" at each lift of her walking beam.

"During her life at Nanaimo, she acted in many capacities. I remember seeing her go out to the sailing vessels here at Nanaimo, etc., with water, and then helping to unload the ballast from their

holds by using her steam power. The sailing vessels which came for coal were glad to have steam to help them unload their ballast. You could scarcely believe it, but I have seen as many as ten or twenty sailing vessels in Departure Bay waiting to load coal.”

The “roar” of the river steamer is now a thing of the past. At each dip of the walking beam, the steam escaped up the smokestack, and a loud “shish shish shish” roared with rhythmic regularity every two, perhaps three seconds; a long plume of white, not black smoke—they burned wood usually—trailed behind. The “shish” of the roar could be heard for a mile.

The *Pacific Express* mentioned as having brought passengers to the Dominion Day 1887 festivities at Vancouver was not a steamer, but a C.P.R. train from Montreal; the *Atlantic Express* was from Port Moody to Montreal. The newspaper *Vancouver News and Daily Advertiser* of 31 March 1887 states, “The *Pacific Express* brought nearly 100 passengers yesterday, many of which remained in Vancouver,” refers, probably, to passengers from Port Moody brought by the *Princess Louise*, en route to Victoria, to Granville Street wharf.

The old *Charmer*, once *Premier*, a historic vessel which “absconded” from Seattle, and never ventured in U.S. waters again, was tied up to the wharf at the new C.P.R. recreation park at Newcastle Island, Nanaimo, during 1931. Poor old thing! What a palatial, luxuriously furnished liner we once thought her to be; today she looks poor and decrepit beside the *Princess Elaine* and *Princess Joan* on which we journeyed, June 10<sup>th</sup>, to the Vancouver Pioneers Picnic, at Nanaimo.



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