

Early Vancouver

Volume One

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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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THE FIRST DISTURBANCE.

“Then came the first disturbance in the City Council of Vancouver: who was to be the poundkeeper? Who was to look after stray horses, cattle and dogs? At the time I could not understand what all the discussion and indecision was about, which grew stronger and stronger until finally decision was deferred until a later date, when Mr. Hemphill, father of Mr. Hemphill of the Hemphill Auto Schools, and who did not want the appointment, nevertheless got it, and we, all of us, got our drinks at the Sunnyside Hotel across the street. The cause of the disturbance was then revealed: it seems there was a wager as to who would get the appointment of poundkeeper, and with ‘drinks for the crowd’ as stakes.

“Alderman Harry Hemlow in Vancouver, and Alderman L.A. Hamilton in eastern Canada, still survive.

“I do not know who prepared our first civic charter, but the records would show. It might have been ‘Jimmie’ Orr, M.P.P., who lived at Ladner’s and represented all the great district surrounding, including Granville, in the legislature. Mr. Blake probably had something to do with it.”

MAYOR MACLEAN.

“Mayor MacLean was a Scotchman, and dearly loved to represent the city at any function. He was a fluent, forceful speaker, and had a good grasp of the future, municipally speaking, and proud of his part in laying down the foundations of our city. He was one of the few—it seems to me the only one, out of many—who, in those early days, envisioned the growth of our city, our harbour, and especially our foreign trade, as it has actually taken place. He had travelled much, which few of us had done, and that, perhaps, may in part account for it. He was as honest as they are made, and very conscious of the high responsibility to which he had been elected, as well as proud of it.

“To give you an instance of his kindly character, I will recount an incident which occurred on Dominion Day 1886.

“The Indians of North Vancouver came over from the Mission to pay their respects to the new city of Vancouver. His Worship met them on the floating wharf at the foot of Carrall Street, and after their chief had delivered their message of goodwill, His Worship responded with a warm welcome. He referred to them as ‘native Canadians,’ and reminded them that it was their brothers who had upheld the British in North American wars.

“His address was inspiring and intensely patriotic, and thenceforth the Indians of the Mission were very proud of the City of Vancouver and its mayor.

“Poor as Mayor MacLean was, he worked, and worked hard, without a dollar of salary for the first year, and even furnished his own desk and postage, but the second year he was furnished with an office at the old City Hall on Powell Street.” (See his daughter’s explanation re Great Fire, 1886. 8 February 1932.)

“Mayor MacLean was not paid a salary, nor was his successor, Mayor Oppenheimer, but in the latter’s case a small amount was set aside to cover his entertaining expenses, but Mayor Oppenheimer used very little of it, and when his year was up, a small unexpended balance was returned to the city from the grant which had been made. His custom was to give his card with a few brief notes on its back to whomever he was indebted, and Mr. Baldwin would make out a cheque in payment.”