

## **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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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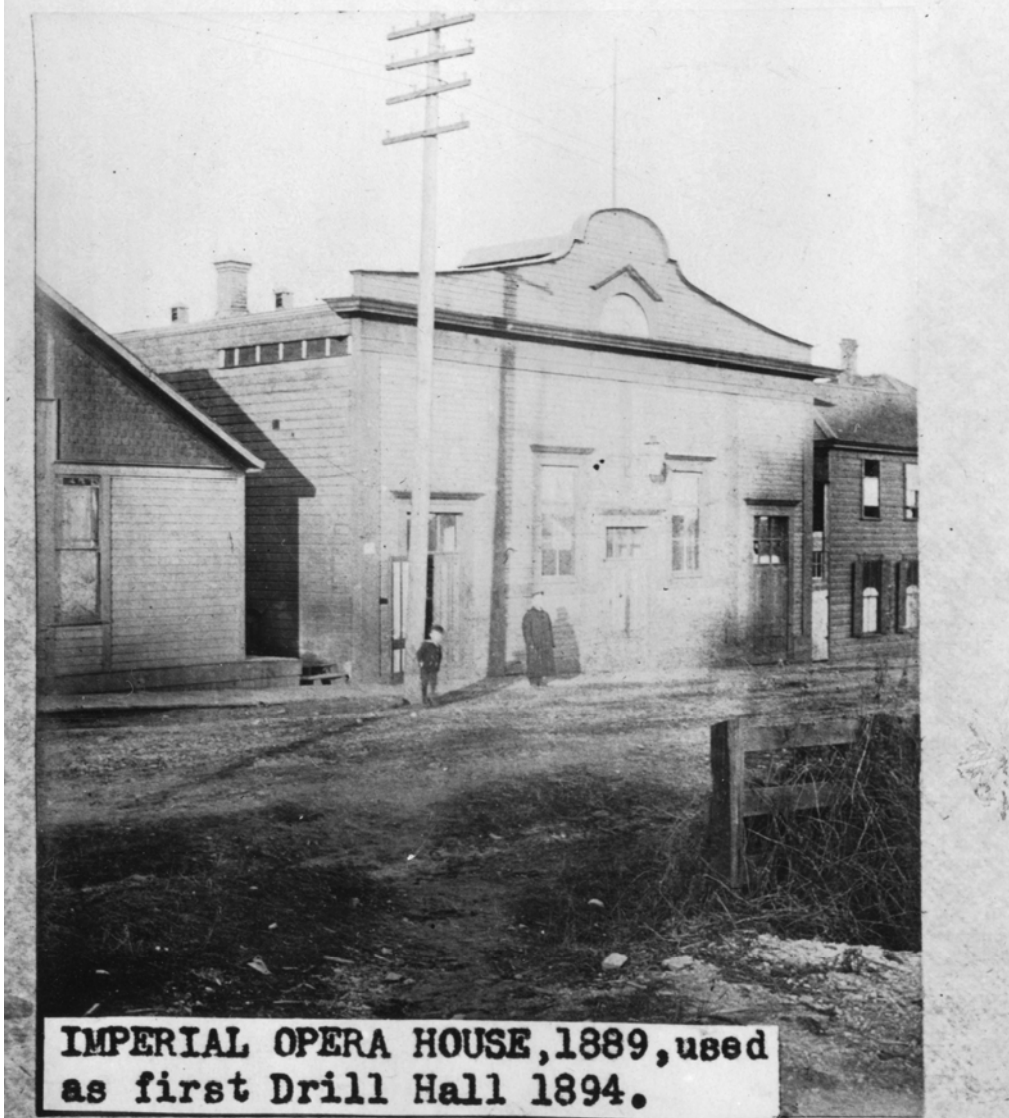
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IMPERIAL OPERA HOUSE, 1889, used  
as first Drill Hall 1894.

x  
The Old Drill Shed  
(Formerly Imperial Opera House)  
now (1932) Shelly Building (part only)  
Foot of Beatty St Vancouver

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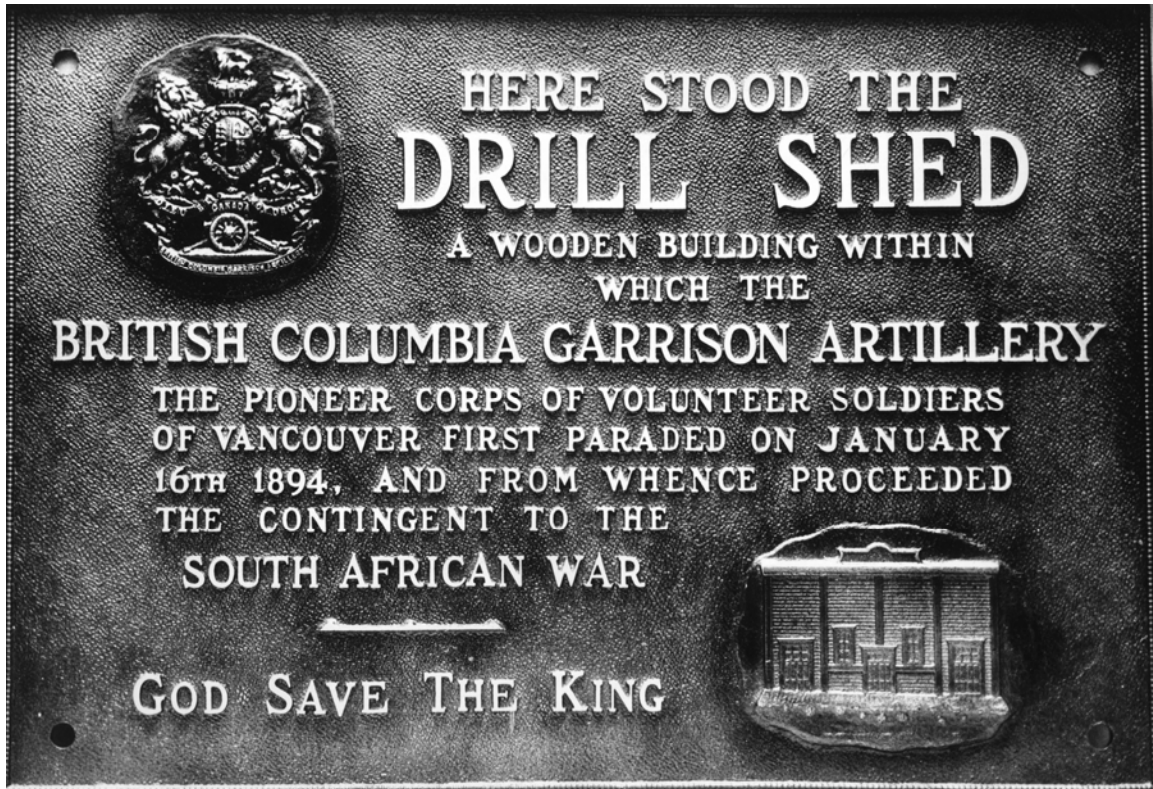
THE LATE CORP. J. Z. HALL.

VANCOUVER'S first volunteer soldier was Corp. J. Z. Hall, who in 1885 journeyed from Gastown to New Westminster through the tall timbers to attend drills. The uniform is that of the British Columbia Brigade of Garrison Artillery, a descendant unit of the historic Seymour Battery of crown colony days. His residence in later days was the well-known "Killarney," Point Grey road, still the residence of his widow, Mrs. J. Z. Hall.

Unveiled at a parade of the entire Vancouver garrison at Christ Church Cathedral on Sunday, Nov. 13, 1932 by Master Gunner J. C. Cornish, First Serj<sup>t</sup> Major in Vancouver. Afterwards, from chancel steps, Brig. Gen. J. Sutherland Brown, C.M.G., D.O.C. M.D. No 11, delivered an inspiring address on the history of Canadian volunteers for 250 years. Corp. Hall's daughter sat in the front row. His Worship Mayor H. D. Taylor was present.



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**30 JUNE 1931 - MOUNT PLEASANT. RIFLES AND RIFLE SHOOTING. 13TH AVENUE WEST.**

I joined the old Sixth Regiment, the Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles, as a private, on 17 March 1903, being the first man sworn in to G Company, when the regiment was enlarged by two new companies. It was the only militia unit in Vancouver at the time.

At that time, Mr. C.M. Rolston, then bookkeeper and salesman of the Imperial Oil Company Limited, afterwards Imperial Oil Limited, of which he was for a quarter of a century or more manager, lived at the corner of Ontario Street and 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

In due course, I was issued a rifle, a .303 Lee-Enfield, and one evening in the summer of 1903, I turned up at his home. We went down 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the west a few yards, set up a canvas target about four feet square, and used 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, firing west, as our rifle range. The rifle was capable of throwing its projectile 2,700 yards, a muzzle velocity of, say, 2,200 feet per second.

At that time, all west of Ontario Street was second growth woods; 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, to the west, was a narrow trail for some 200 or 300 yards, and then melted into a path, finally to disappear altogether.

J.S. Matthews

**THE FIRST DRILL HALL. THE IMPERIAL OPERA HOUSE.**

(Photograph in J.C. Cornish album in Archives.)

The old Drill Shed on Pender Street was, at first, the Imperial Opera House, built in 1889, and it is to perpetuate the site, now occupied by the Shelly Building, formerly the Duncan Building, that the regiments of Vancouver subscribed together for a memorial tablet, not yet unveiled, in 1931. The tablet reads:

“HERE STOOD the Drill Shed within which the pioneer corps of volunteer soldiers of Vancouver, the British Columbia Brigade of Garrison Artillery first paraded, January 16<sup>th</sup> 1894, and from whence departed the contingent to the South African War. GOD SAVE THE KING.”

### **30 JUNE 1931 - POINT GREY SCHOOL.**

The first school in Point Grey originally stood on the site of the present Queen Mary School, but was moved when the Queen Mary was built, and now stands in the 4300 block on the north side of Sixth Avenue West. Queen Mary stands on Fifth Avenue and Trimble Street, and is said to stand upon the most beautiful school site in Canada, originally the old site of the first school. It was a two-storey building (photo, as in 1931, with Miss Violette Russell, one of the first ten pupils, in Archives.) (See N.H. Russell.)

Miss Russell, now of 4406 West Second Avenue, daughter of Mr. N.H. Russell (who died June 1931), an early resident of Point Grey (see *Wild animals of Vancouver*) says that at first they used the lower floor only. The first teacher was Miss Mackenzie—she taught all grades—the second, Miss Shaw. She thinks the school was built twenty-three years ago. Her brother Dudley was another of the first ten pupils.

### **WILD ANIMALS OF VANCOUVER.**

The school was heated by cordwood, and the cordwood pile was the abode of a skunk; the school had to be closed for a day or so upon one occasion when the skunk became too familiar.

### **ANGLICAN CHURCH IN POINT GREY.**

The first church services of the Anglicans were held in the old school, the children’s seats being used as pews. These were the first public services; prior to that, the church services—that is, the very first services of that denomination—were held in Mrs. William Godfrey’s home, as also were the first Sunday schools.