

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 125th anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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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





ROAD TO NORTH ARM. Early '90s.
Asserted to be Granville st. hill
Shaughnessy Heights.

Item # EarlyVan_v1_00103

EARLY STREETS.

"The C.P.R. opened up and rough graded, all at their own expense, a number of the streets west of Cambie Street; they had no interests east of Cambie Street. The summer of the fire, 1886, they opened up and rough graded Cordova Street, Hastings Street, Pender Street, all west of Cambie Street, and in the spring of 1887, opened up Granville Street from water to water, from the Inlet to False Creek. They did not clear it the full sixty-six feet, but made a passable road leaving the stumps on both sides. From Burrard Inlet to the Hotel Vancouver they laid down a good planked driveway, ten or twelve feet wide. There were some other streets which they opened up and made passable.

"Later the C.P.R. opened up what is now known as Granville Street South, clear through from False Creek to the Fraser River at the North Arm; of course, it ran through their own land. There was no road on Granville Street South, nor anywhere near it, before the C.P.R. opened it up; south of the creek there was not even a bush trail."

THE FIRST HOSPITAL.

"The first hospital was at the foot of Hawks Avenue, in the angle of Alexander and Powell Street. It was owned either by the C.P.R. or the construction people and consisted, in April 1886, when I came, of a small wooden building and some tents. There were a lot of accidents during construction days; some of those who died were buried on Deadman's Island. The first hospital the city built was a tall wooden building on Beatty Street; the second hospital was the brick building on the corner of Cambie and Pender streets, now used as a City Relief office. The old building of wood was torn down, I think, at the time the Rotary Clinic was built.

"The hospital on Powell Street was kept going for quite a time, two or three years, after the C.P.R. line was completed. Dr. Lefevre was in charge; he kept it going. They were very good at that hospital; if you had money, you paid; if you were without, well, you got the best of treatment in either case.

"Then there was some criticism, and the criticism caused its closing."

THE FIRST COURTS.

"It was Chief Justice Matthew Begbie who held the first court in Vancouver after the fire, the case of Sullivan, held in the old Sullivan Hall on Cordova Street, built on the east end of the sixty-six feet on which the old Atlantic Hotel used to stand.

"Jonathan Miller, constable and jailer before the fire, postmaster after it, acted as clerk of the court on several occasions. In 1887, Mr. C. Gardner Johnson was registrar of the County Court. Mr. Johnson was brother-in-law of John Boulton, our first magistrate, and in consequence was kept busy, too busy, with the appointments he received. He was also a special constable with myself and others to keep law and order after the fire.

"The first court house, of course, was just around the corner from Carrall Street, on Water Street, and was where our first City Council met. It was burned in the fire. Just when it was built I cannot say; it may have been built by the Royal Engineers, or by the government; old maps show a jail and customs house there in 1870, and it may have been the original customs house, and built in crown colony days.

"No. 1 Fire Hall, afterwards demolished, stood there in early years."

OUR EARLY SCHOOLS.

"In the early days the provincial government built our schools and paid our teachers. The first school was, as is well known, at Hastings Sawmill; the second school, that is, our first city school, was on Cordova Street about two blocks east of Gore Avenue, built and paid for by the provincial government. Some agitation resulted in school trustees being appointed, but even then the provincial government furnished the money for two or three years, say, up to 1888 or 1889, and, quaintly, our teachers got five dollars per month less salary because they were teaching 'west of Yale.'

"The third school was on the site of the present Central School, a long low wooden building about the middle of the block and close to Hamilton Street, and one storey. Of that block the city owned the Pender Street half; the C.P.R. gave the other half, that next Dunsmuir Street, where the school board offices are now, for a high school site. The gift was in the form of a letter, and for many years the city had no title to that property other than that letter, a fact which I pointed out to the civic authorities a few years since, when they secured a proper title, as a result of my pointing that out to them.

"The C.P.R. was very good to Vancouver in the early days. The Townsite Commission, R.B. Angus and Lord Strathcona, were both big minded men; they fathered us; for instance, the C.P.R. paid their taxes, before they were due, when we were out of finances to meet city expenditures."

THE CAMBIE STREET GROUNDS. HASTINGS. GEORGE BLACK'S.

"The first ball games, cricket and baseball, etc., were played at George Black's at Hastings. George Black's Brighton House, a very early hostelry, was standing twenty years ago and was on the shore of a wide bay just north of Hastings Park where the Hastings Road, from New Westminster, reached the water. When the C.P.R. was built the line circled around George Black's hotel; the Hastings station was almost exactly opposite the hotel. It was of two storeys, stood perhaps 150 yards from the railway, and the surrounding land sloped gently down to the shore. Two shallow hollows with streams flanked it, one to the east and one to the west, and it was surrounded by considerable land, partly cleared, partly in small bushes.

"Adjoining were two or three acres of rough lawn, and it was there that many early games were played. At the eastern end of these grounds was a barn dance hall, and in the days of later