

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.

Copyright Statement

© 2011 City of Vancouver. Any or all of *Early Vancouver* may be used without restriction as to the nature or purpose of the use, even if that use is for commercial purposes. You may copy, distribute, adapt and transmit the work. It is required that a link or attribution be made to the City of Vancouver.

Reproductions

High resolution versions of any graphic items in *Early Vancouver* are available. A fee may apply.

Citing Information

When referencing the 2011 edition of *Early Vancouver*, please cite the page number that appears at the bottom of the page in the PDF version only, not the page number indicated by your PDF reader. Here are samples of how to cite this source:

Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

Contact Information

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



street railway and the electric light company were distinctly separate; neither had anything to do with the other.”

THE STREET RAILWAY.

“When the street railway was formed, R.P. Cook became president. He was Dr. Lefevre’s father-in-law.

“In the spring of 1889, I commenced operation in building the first street railway in Vancouver. The first track was laid on Granville Street, a little north of Pacific Street, perhaps a hundred feet north, where the slope runs up to a level. We started just at the level so that the horses may have an easy start when they pulled. The track was to run from bridge to bridge through the town. At that time, the Granville Street vicinity was mostly stumps, although down in Yaletown, a couple of hundred yards east or so, there was quite a little settlement. For the history of Yaletown you had better see Hugh Gilmour, who was Master Mechanic there; he came from Yale when the shops were moved down by the C.P.R.

“We continued to build for a horse-drawn tram system, and got down as far as the old Vancouver Opera House, between Robson and Georgia streets, where the first switch was put in. There was another switch on Powell Street, and another on Main Street (Westminster Avenue).” (There was another switch on Hastings Street between Homer and Richards.) “However, just at the time the track reached the switch at the Opera House” (C.P.R. owned), “a retired lawyer from Omaha, a Mr. McKee, whom I have already mentioned as represented by Mr. H.T. Ceperley, arrived on the scene, and bought up considerable stock of the company, a control of the interest. They had about \$30,000, and with his \$30,000 making \$60,000, it was decided by the directors that there was sufficient funds on hand to convert the project into an electric street railway.”

THE ORIGINAL ELECTRIC LIGHT COMPANY AND THE STREET RAILWAY AMALGAMATE.

“It was then decided to take over the original electric light company. The street railway shareholders were given two shares for one, and the electric light company shareholders one share for one of the old company. You will find it in the minutes. The two companies were amalgamated, and I think were called the Vancouver Street Railway Company Limited.

“When it was decided to electrify the railway, a contract was given to F.S. Osgood of Seattle, who was representative of Thompson, Houston Electric Company of Boston, Massachusetts—they had a big plant at Lynn, Massachusetts—for the equipment.

“At this time, a bond issue was created to be used for the purpose of electrifying, and afterwards extending the line around 9th Avenue, and making improvements to the electric light system. Among such improvements was the adoption of the arc light for the streets, and the disappearance of the ‘glow worm’ lights.

“The construction of the track was completed in the fall of 1889, but it was not operated. The delay was on account of the slow delivery of the equipment. It was finally opened in May 1890 with a bit of celebration. We had four or five street cars, little bits of things; one is in the grounds of the Vancouver Exhibition Association at Hastings Park now.” (First car ran 26 June 1890; see elsewhere in the book.)

“Vancouver was growing, and growing fast, but the line could not pay. There was not track enough, so an arrangement was made to extend the track around 9th Avenue, and form a belt line. The Canadian Pacific Railway, through their land agent Mr. Browning, made a grant of lots for taking the road around to make a complete circle. I had built the track from bridge to bridge on the north side of False Creek; Dan McGillvary got the contract to build it on the south side from bridge to bridge. That completed the well-known ‘belt line,’ and belt line it has remained ever since—the principal line of the B.C. Electric Railway.