

## **Early Vancouver**

### **Volume Two**

**By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.**

**2011 Edition (Originally Published 1933)**

*Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1932.*

*Supplemental to volume one collected in 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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## **15 AUGUST 1932 – CREEKS. C.P.R. RESERVE.**

Mrs. (Major) J.S. Matthews, née Nursing Sister E.E. Edwardes, R.N. and one of the first nurses to graduate, about 1902, from the old Vancouver General Hospital on Cambie Street at the corner of Pender Street:

“When off duty we used to take walks. I recall one night two of us went along Richards Street. Somewhere about Nelson Street we crossed a little bridge, beneath which a small torrent of water ran towards False Creek. It was dark and raining, and we nearly broke our necks.”

(See *Early Vancouver*, 1931, Matthews, Gallagher’s construction camp at time of fire, 1886.)

## **IMPERIAL OIL COMPANY LIMITED.**

J.S. Matthews: In 1902, and perhaps for some years later, a small creek of water came down practically where Nelson Street runs, and emptied into False Creek about Hamilton Street produced. At that time the C.P.R. lands—C.P.R. Reserve—south of Smythe Street and east of Homer Street, was in scrub bushes, 10 to 20 feet high, with patches here and there of grass. At that time the Imperial Oil Company Limited were doing an enormous coal oil business, both cases and barrels—wood barrels, for it was before days of steel barrels and tank wagons and bulk deliveries of petroleum products—and these were shipped in very large quantities by rail and steamer, for at that time British Columbia was largely dependent upon kerosene for interior lighting; the gasoline engine for generating electric power for small plants was not unknown, but very rare; practically all farms, and all small towns, canneries, etc. used coal oil. This company had a complete monopoly of the petroleum business in the whole of British Columbia—such opposition as they had was on lubricating oils and greases, and their only warehouse west of Nelson was at Vancouver, corner Smythe and Cambie, where they had one storage tank for coal oil, about 30 feet high, 30 feet diameter; no storage at all for gasoline—an odd barrel was received from the east once now and again, what other small amount came was in cases for the use of drug stores and dry cleaners.

The delivery of the kerosene oil was made from the warehouse to the wharf and freight shed of the C.P.R. by gooseneck wagon carrying about 75 cases (80 lbs each) and drawn by two horses over a macadam road (Cambie).

On Sundays the horses had been kept in the stable, until one day about 1902 the foreman conceived the bright idea of renting the C.P.R. Reserve to run them out on Sundays, give them fresh air and a bit of grass. He made some private arrangement with the C.P.R. and paid—out of his own pocket—ten dollars a year for the use of the ground, and agreed to keep up the rude wooden fence which ran along the boundary from Cambie up Smythe to Homer, thence south along east side of Homer to nearly Drake. On the False Creek side the fence ran in a circular manner beneath the embankment of the C.P.R. which in turn followed the curve of the shore. The horses got water from the little creek mentioned above. The whole scene was quite pretty in summer, a sort of wild shrubbery. The arrangement continued for two or three more summers.

The shoreline of False Creek came very close to the Imperial Oil Company Limited’s warehouse—less than 100 yards from Smythe Street.