

Early Vancouver

Volume Two

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

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Suntz: a Squawmish village, actually a barren rock, page 442.

Chants: a Squawmish village, actually a rock and cave, page 87.

Chalkunts: a Squawmish village, no such place, page 87.

Koalcha: should be Kwahulcha, not "Coal."

and many others.

"Hill-Tout in Rep. Brit. A.A.S. 1900" is quoted as authority, and appears to have been so used by someone who could not understand Prof. Hill-Tout's phonetics. See Prof. Hill-Tout's Report on the *Ethnological Survey of Canada*, British Association for the Advancement of Science, Bradford Meeting, 1900, pages 472-3.

ALEXANDER McLEAN, OLDEST LIVING PIONEER.

First saw Burrard Inlet, 1858. Died 26 August 1932, 14 days after he gave this story.

As narrated by this venerable gentleman of 81, in the presence of Mrs. McLean, whom he married in 1876, grandchildren and others, at 205 15th Avenue West, 12 August 1932. A jovial, happy pioneer with white hair, beard, ruddy complexion, and stocky, sturdy frame of medium height, he must have been a powerful man once; "not very well" last winter.

"It must have been 1853, perhaps 1854, that Father, who had been the first wood, water and ?" (with a laugh) "whisky too, merchant in San Francisco, decided that he had got money enough, and set sail in the three master schooner *Rob Roy*—she was a good, big boat which could carry 250 cattle—for the north. Port Townshend was already a port; Seattle was just starting. We stopped at Seattle, oh, perhaps two weeks; it was a little bit of a place; they were clearing the forest off—a company had it, and had 250 men there clearing off the forest. The town was down near the flats; they avoided the big hill on the north.

"Well, after we had stayed there a while, we set sail for Whatcom, and stayed there a year or so, built a fine house on the shore and—no, I don't know what nationality Father was, British or American, I imagine American. Anyway, we stayed there a year and then went to Point Roberts where we remained a year or more. Father built a fine hotel and a private house. One day we found seven men dead on the beach, murdered. We buried them, and then set off for Seattle to let the consul know. We slipped off in the dark, father and myself. I was not very big, but big enough to hold a rope. We rowed all the way; it took us two and one half days."

Note: refer "Indian Villages and Landmarks," comment by Chief Matthias Capilano re murders. Haxten, aged Indian woman states one "bad Squawmish man" killed "forty whitemans"; the Indians shot him themselves as an outlaw for he was killing both whites and Indians.

"Then our hotel at Point Roberts was burned down; one of my brothers was burned in the fire; the other brother, Duncan, escaped. Then Father decided on the move which brought us to British Columbia.

"He took the *Rob Roy*, and we started to collect cattle. We got some one place and some another, great fine beasts they were, and then made for the Fraser River with about 250 head on board. As we sailed up the Fraser, I never saw so many Indians in my life; both sides—shores—were lined with them.

"When we were above New Westminster, at a place they call Port Coquitlam now, it was, as I first saw it, a great big prairie, but now it is all covered with trees, some perhaps four or five feet thick. There we put the cattle ashore, but the Indians shot a couple of them, and father decided that that was enough, so we got the remainder which had been put ashore back on board. We had no knowledge that the tide went so far up the river, and had calculated without it, and it was with much difficulty that the shore cattle were got back, through the mud, on board again.

"Just then, Governor Douglas came along in the old Hudson Bay steamer *Beaver*, and he boarded us. He told Father to go to Pitt River, and thither we went. It looked a nice flat prairie country, and the cattle were turned loose.

“But we had not reckoned with the summer flood. The first year the water came up and began to flood the land, then it came up some more, and finally it began to flood the house; the cattle took to the hills. Things looked pretty gloomy; our crop of potatoes was under water. However, the water finally receded; we planted another crop of potatoes and vegetables, and they grew so well that we harvested them, and then Father and others, including myself, set out on a five ton sloop to find a better, drier spot on which to establish. I was just a boy.

“We sailed down the north arm of the Fraser River, and somewhere just near the mouth ran aground, but got off again, and sailed into English Bay. We made for the Narrows; the Indians did not see us, or they might have stopped us; we were careful about that. Up about where Lynn Creek is now, we saw a big, flat stretch of country, but we sailed on, and when we were well up the inlet, turned into another arm. Father was looking to see where it led to, but of course we ran into the end and turned back—there was nothing up there, only hills and woods—so we went back to Pitt Meadows and decided to try there again. We thought for a while to establish with Brighthouse at Sexsmith. There was nothing on Burrard Inlet then; John Morton had not arrived.

“The next year, the floods were not so bad; we stayed there for many years. We had 600 acres at first; afterwards we got another 600. Finally, I sold my share in the estate, went to Kamloops, to” (Blackpool) “thirty years ago.

“The River Indians were not so bad, but the ‘saltwater’ Indians were ...”

Mrs. McLean interjects, “I have heard Mr. McLean’s mother say that she always gave the Indians something when they asked for it; small allowances of tea, sugar, etc. I have heard Mrs. McLean” (senior) “say that she has actually seen the Indians spit in the frying pan when meat was frying in it.”

Question: Did not know any better?

Mrs. McLean: “Did not know any better? Dirty!”

Note: doubtful that the Indians did not know any better; the surmise is that it was to assure obtaining the contents of the frying pan.

Mrs. McLean (senior) had told Mrs. McLean (junior) that she used to wrap some food in a paper and give it to the Indians.

“I don’t know exactly when the Indians ceased putting their dead in the trees,” continued Mr. McLean, “of course, after they stopped the tree burials, they wrapped them in blankets. I remember one time when they were building the C.P.R., I saw a lot of men coming towards what we called afterwards Westminster Junction, now Coquitlam Junction, and wondered what the hell they were doing; they were loaded down with blankets. The beggars had been robbing the blankets off the Indian dead. The Indians used to wrap the dead bodies in about *twenty* blankets—anyway, a lot of blankets—and these white railroad fellows had been digging the Indians up—they were down in the ground about six inches only, and until they got too ‘bad,’ had peeled the blankets off the dead Indians. The Indian houses were all made of cedar, hand split cedar shakes, and a large number of families living in the same house.”

Note: Mr. McLean made some remark about the “Chinamen were here before the white man.” My note is incomplete—he spoke very fast, too fast to get it all down, and now he is dead.

Mrs. McLean said that about a month before they were married in 1876, Mr. McLean and she drove over from New Westminster to the “end of the road” at Hastings (Geo. Black’s). When they got to Black’s there was no room in the boat, and Mr. McLean said he was going to walk to Hastings Mill where there were sports being held, and which they wanted to attend, and she would have to wait until the boat came back (approximately two and half miles each way.) She asked, “How far is it?” and Mr. McLean replied, “Three miles,” and she answered, “Then I’ll walk with you.” When they got to Hastings Mill, they put up at “Alexander’s,” that is the Mill hotel, and, said Mrs. McLean, “I thought it the funniest thing, but the door was made of plain flooring.”