

## **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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Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

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### **C.P.R. HOTEL. CITY HALL AND POLICE.**

"McPherson put up a big barn of a place opposite Pat Cary's on Hastings Street. I remember his sign, 'RAISED FROM THE ASHES IN THREE DAYS.' The day after the fire, I saw a burned out hotel keeper selling whiskey from a bottle on his hip pocket and a glass in his hand, his counter being a sack of potatoes. The night of the fire, June 13<sup>th</sup>, I slept on the ground near Hugh Keefer's safe which lay upside down in the ruins, and which was supposed to hold the pay for the railroad gangs ready for the 15<sup>th</sup> payday. I well remember the old Maple Tree and the first City Council meeting after the fire. There was a tent just behind that famous picture which was the city lock-up and when that picture was taken there were a few sore heads with leg irons on them laying in that tent. Pat Gannon kept butcher shop next door to the R.R. Dining Rooms; he was my butcher and banker and a fine old fellow. The only building escaping the fire was the Costello hotel, half built. The fire killed about 14 people as far as I can remember. There was a Masonic funeral that day and most of the prominent people had driven to New Westminster as we had no graveyard in Vancouver at that time. McCormack, a sub-contractor on the railway, had been killed blasting stumps, and they buried him in New Westminster. Tom Cyr kept the Granville Hotel. Poor Tom was under the impression that he was some relation to the old prize fighter who fought Heenan, hence his many street fights of which old timers well remember. He made one big mistake one day when he undertook to lick Alf Banham the butcher, for Alf just backed him across the street, landing a good openhanded slap on Tom's ears with every slip. Many old timers will also remember Fred Burrows' fighting bulldog. Fred was supposed to keep a wholesale liquor house, but most of the time was spent keeping out of jail over his dog; his dog was something like Tom Cyr, thought he could lick anything on earth. I look back with pleasure on those old days, for I seem to see only the comic side."

Geo. H. Keefer, Taghun, 22 March 1932.

### **CLEARING AWAY THE FOREST OFF VANCOUVER. THE GREAT FIRE. H.P. McCRANEY.**

Memorandum of conversation with Mr. H.P. McCraney whilst asking him to review certain records made, 3 May 1932.

"Those clearing the slashing and stumps 'up on the Hill,' above Cambie Street just before the Fire, did so by hand labour; there was not a logging engine in the country at that time. Hector Stewart's father, that is, Chief of Police Stewart, brought in the first donkey engine; no gin pole, no 'donkey' those days, just horses and oxen. There were six or eight contractors up on 'the Hill'; all had fires burning and there was, as George Cary says, a lot of smoke.

"The wind did not come up from the southwest as Mr. Gallagher says; it came from the west and blew the fire right through the town; it must have done so; the fire did not go south of Harris Street." (See Mrs. Ruth Morton, Rev. C.M. Tate, Theo. Bryant.)

"At the time of the fire, Cordova Street was corduroy road up towards Westminster Avenue; there was a woman burned up there, about Gore Avenue, I saw her body. Then there was an old man who jumped down his well and suffocated. My lumber yard was down on the edge of False Creek, where the B.C. Electric car barns are now; it escaped.

"At the time of the fire, I had a camp up where the General Post Office is at the corner of Hastings and Granville streets. We had a contract to cut the road through from Water Street along what is now Cordova Street to where they proposed to build the C.P.R. station, and down the slope to the site; the same slope is there yet.

"A line of trees was straight down Burrard Street at the time of the fire. I know, for I had the contract for clearing the slashing and stumps from Burrard Street to the C.P.R. tracks and from Georgia Street to Dunsmuir Street. I took the contract to clear it the day after the fire. I tendered for the slashing job the fall before, but did not get the job then. The slashing was right up to Burrard Street, all along up to the C.P.R. grant boundary; no fire had been in it. West of 'the Hill,' that is, west of the clearing operations, and east of Burrard Street right back south, was a dense mass of fallen trees.

“You see, I had two contracts; the first to put in a road down the cliff to the C.P.R. Depot, and the second to clear the land between Robson and Georgia” (probably means Dunsmuir and Georgia) “and Burrard Street and the C.P.R. right of way on False Creek; consequently, I know what there was rather well. Andy Forbes, father of Mr. Forbes of the Forbes Realty Company, had another contract for something, and saw the big tree on Georgia Street fall.”

### **COCOS ISLAND.**

“The *Eliza Edwards*, the vessel Captain Nye speaks of, went to Cocos Island searching for treasure in June 1892. Captain Duncan McKenzie, Captain Simon F. McKenzie, both dead, and Captain William McKenzie, living, all went on her.”