

## **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.

### **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. 2 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2. 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



### **TENT ON CARRALL STREET. GREAT FIRE PHOTO.**

“That tent, the white tent in the well-known photo of Vancouver the day after the fire is in the middle of Cordova Street. That stump, the nearest one, is still there, on the right of way of the C.P.R., east side, between, about half way between Carrall and Cordova Street, a few feet north of the lane. It stood exactly as it was in the photo until last year, then someone cut the top off for fire wood, but the lower part is still there, the only stump left on the peninsula, as far as I know. I own the lot the second stump is on. I paid \$700 for the first lot; at first my taxes were \$11.90; now they are \$800.”

### **THE GREAT FIRE OF 1886. GRAVELEY AND SPINKS.**

“When the fire took place we were up Mount Pleasant. I said, ‘It looks to me that the place is on fire.’ We came down the hill, crossed the old wooden bridge over False Creek, and came on down the old trail which slanted from Carrall Street across Hastings and struck Main Street about where the gas works is. We met a horse and wagon coming along furiously. It was loaded with household furniture and mattresses. We went on, and got as far as my office, got out one or two books, ledger, cash book and so on, then we cleared out pretty quick, and then, strange thing I so well remember, I turned the key in the lock. I tried to get my trunk, etc., out of the Sunnyside, but the Sunnyside went up like a puff. Then I took a nice metal sign painted in black and gold, ‘Graveley and Spinks,’ and slipped it under my arm; I will tell you more about that later.

“As we passed the Burrard Hotel, and the three-storey building opposite,” (north east corner of Hastings and trail) “I passed Balfour the proprietor; he was an alderman. He was up to his neck trying to get a lot of children out of danger and said, ‘Give me a hand with these children.’ I took one child up on my shoulders and started off for False Creek.” (See note below.) “When I came back there were three or four dead bodies under the Burrard Hotel; they had evidently crawled under the hotel to save themselves, and had been burned to death.

“The next day a man came to me and said, ‘I have some papers belonging to you.’ I said, ‘Where did you get them,’ and he replied, ‘On the beach.’ They were a bundle of deeds, agreements of sale, tied closely together, and had been in my trunk in the Sunnyside Hotel, and when that burned they must have been sucked out in the fierce air blast caused by the fire. I have them yet, all stained with mud, and including the deed to the first lot sold by the C.P.R.”

### **THE REAL ESTATE SIGN.**

“As we were escaping I put the sign down behind a stump and when I came back it was gone. I thought it queer that anyone should want a sign with my name on it; not a sort of thing other people want. I looked at the ground, and there was my sign all right, but it had melted; that will give you an idea of the heat of the fire.”

### **HIS WORSHIP MAYOR MACLEAN. THE FIRST COUNCIL.**

“M.A. MacLean was a broad visioned man, generous to a fault, and a man of whom Vancouver should be proud to have had for its first mayor. Well, judge for yourself; he was victorious over Alexander in the election, and Alexander was a well-known and influential man. Yes, I do think that our first aldermen were men of great heart and understanding, and,” (significantly) “better than some we have had since.”

Note above: two of these were Alderman Balfour’s children; the other two those of his wife’s mother (Mrs. Martin who died 1932.) Alderman Balfour’s widow still lives, 1932.

Note: the leading remarks of Mr. Graveley serve to illustrate the controversy “East End versus West End”; see W.F. Findlay, who states that the great question was “which way will the city grow?”

### **THE FIRST CITY COUNCIL.**

Ex-Alderman Harry Hemlow, so far as is known one of the two surviving members of the first City Council, the other being ex-Alderman L.A. Hamilton, in Toronto. Mr. Hemlow resides at the Martinique Hotel, Granville Street, has been there several years, is very deaf, in poor health, financially depressed, complains of poor memory. He died a month after this interview, in March 1932.

"I came to Vancouver in the spring of 1886—before the fire—at the time of the fire I was running the Sunnyside," (hotel) "John McInnes had it before I did; the old registers were burned in the fire. The old ones would have shown a wonderful list of famous names for it was the 'swell' place of Granville. It may be that the Marquis of Lorne and the Princess Louise, Queen Victoria's daughter, did stay there; I don't recall. During my incumbency many well-known people were guests at the Sunnyside.

"My permanent guests included Father Fay," (Roman Catholic) "Father Fiennes-Clinton," (Anglican) "Rev. Mr. Thompson," (Presbyterian) "Alderman L.A. Hamilton, Mr. and Mrs. A.G. Ferguson, Mr. and Mrs. A.W. Ross, M.P., and brother-in-law to Mayor M.A. MacLean, Mayor and Mrs. MacLean, Harry Abbott, C.P.R. superintendent, C.D. Rand, E.E. Rand, Mr. Terlew, private secretary to Mr. Abbott, and a whole lot more. I had a lot of photos of early Granville, but they were all burned in the fire when I was living on Hornby Street—such a pity.

"I have read your story," (Mr. W.H. Gallagher's in *Early Vancouver*, 1931 issue, dated 30 December 1931) "and it seems all right to me; what a remarkable memory he has. There is one thing I am uncertain about. Did the first meeting of the first City Council take place in the old Court House? I thought it was in Ed Blair's hall. Ed Blair's hall was about six doors west of the Deighton Hotel; Johnson was running the Deighton at the time of the fire, and Ed Blair's hall was at the back of a saloon on Water Street; a biggish hall where we used to have dances. The Court House was a mere bit of a place.

"I was away at Portland at the time the well-known photograph of the 'City Hall' in a tent was taken; that is why I do not appear; I was the only one absent.

"The reason Mayor MacLean had his office" (see notice in newspaper, and *Early Vancouver*, 1931) "on Abbott Street in 1887 was that he was in the real estate business, and had his office there. I don't know where we went after we left the tent, but Col. Powell, Major Dupont, and Mr. Oppenheimer gave the lots to the city to build the City Hall on Powell Street. I put that through the Council, and when the city moved to the Market Hall, the old City Hall afterwards on Main Street—a man named Dawson from England, and another were the architects of the Market Hall—their heirs sued the city, but the city beat them. I was asked to give evidence for the defence at the trial, but when I told the city solicitor that it was a 'dirty deal,' he said to me, 'Well, in that case I don't suppose you want to appear for us?' It seems to me the deed of gift read, 'for city purposes'; it was always intended it should be 'for a city hall.'"

Mr. Hemlow was quite feeble, but I ventured to remark, Why did you become an alderman for the first council? "For a bit of a lark," was his answer. He died a month later, March 1932.

Note: Ferguson Point, Stanley Park, is named after the A.G. Ferguson mentioned above; they were close relatives of the Ceperleys of Ceperley Playgrounds, Second Beach, and rumour is that it was really Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson's money which the Ceperleys afterwards donated to create the playground.

## **THE FIRST CITY TREASURER AND TAX COLLECTOR, G.F. BALDWIN.**

William F. Findlay, 12 April 1932.

The late Mr. Findlay, together with his wife, were fatally injured four days later in a motor car accident on the Granville Street bridge. Mr. Findlay arrived Vancouver 22 October 1887; both were pioneers; their remains were cremated. The funeral was asserted to be the largest private funeral ever held in Vancouver. The author, formerly a yachting companion of both, ceased to count after 500 had passed the remains lying in state; many hundreds did not enter the chapel.

"Did I ever tell you how G.F. Baldwin, our first city treasurer, tax collector and everything else, came to get the position. Well, on the afternoon of 4 April 1886, he was reporting for the *Victoria Colonist* covering the proceedings of the Legislature in the Press Gallery, and that afternoon an act incorporating Vancouver into a brand new city was passed, creating a city, of course, without a council, officials, finances, or anything else.

"On going back to the *Colonist* office, he first wrote up the Legislative proceedings—they had reportorial staff of three only at that time—then wrote out his resignation, and took the boat to Vancouver. Just who

he approached I do not know, perhaps M.A. MacLean, one of the candidates, perhaps both; anyway, he was appointed and held the position for many years.” (Until 1920, i.e. 35 years.)

#### **OUR EARLY WATER WORKS. MAYOR DAVID OPPENHEIMER.**

“I remember listening, as a boy, to a very interesting conversation, about 1888, between my uncle Lewis Carter of the Carter House and Mayor Oppenheimer. A by-law was being submitted to the people for \$80,000 for the proposed water system. Eighty thousand dollars was a lot of money for a small population to assume, and Mayor Oppenheimer took it upon himself to personally interview the rate-payers. He came to the Carter House, and I stood by and listened to the conversation which followed.

“My uncle said that he admitted it would be advisable to have the water, but so far as he himself was concerned, he was independent, he had his own well, and the water had served him for several years. ‘I am not an engineer,’ he went on, ‘but I do know something about it. How are you going to get the pipe across the Narrows?’

“‘Flexible joints, float it on logs, and then sink it,’ answered Mayor Oppenheimer.” (They did not adopt this method, but dragged it. See Phillip Oben who confirms this.)

“‘Do you think it can be done?’ said Uncle. ‘Won’t it cost too much?’ Then followed an instance of Mayor Oppenheimer’s determination and remarkable farsightedness. ‘I know it,’ he asserted, and then with still further assurance added, ‘I know it, and without much cost too.’

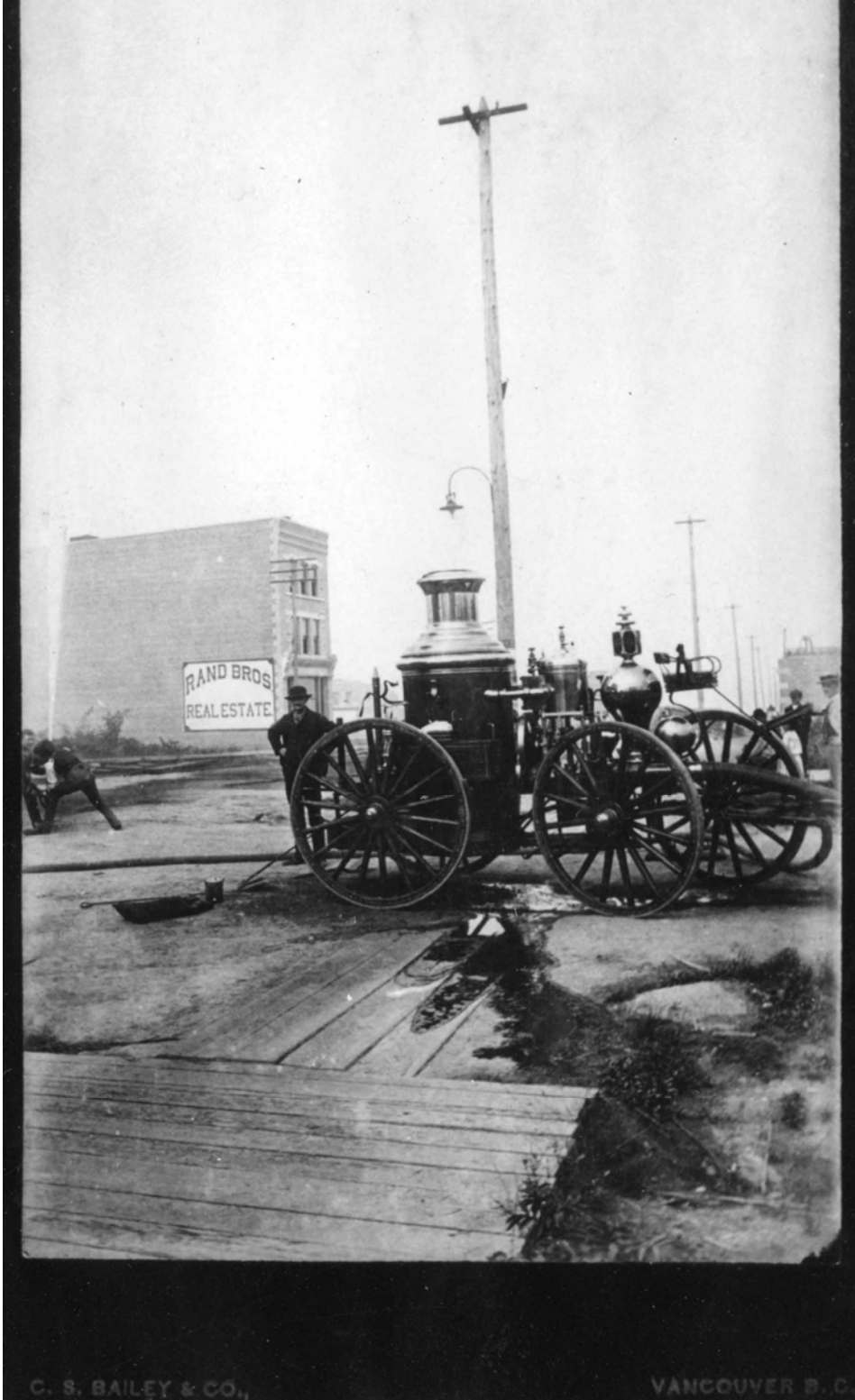
“Uncle interjected, ‘The pipe will be on the bottom; supposing some vessel out of its course strikes it?’

“‘That chance is one in one hundred thousand,’ retorted Mayor Oppenheimer, ‘and we shall have to take a chance on that.’ Then he went on, ‘Of course, the day will come, and that day will be within fifty years, when they will bring the water underneath the Narrows in a tunnel. The population will be so large that conditions will warrant it.’

“‘Well, you may be right, at that,’ I heard Uncle Carter reply.”

Note: the conversation was prompted by the starting of the tunnel, not yet, February 1933, fully completed and ready for opening and use—less than 45 years, not even 50 as prophesied.

GRANVILLE ST at Dunsmuir 1889-1890  
Pumping from water tank before  
water system installed.



C. S. BAILEY & CO.,

VANCOUVER B.C.

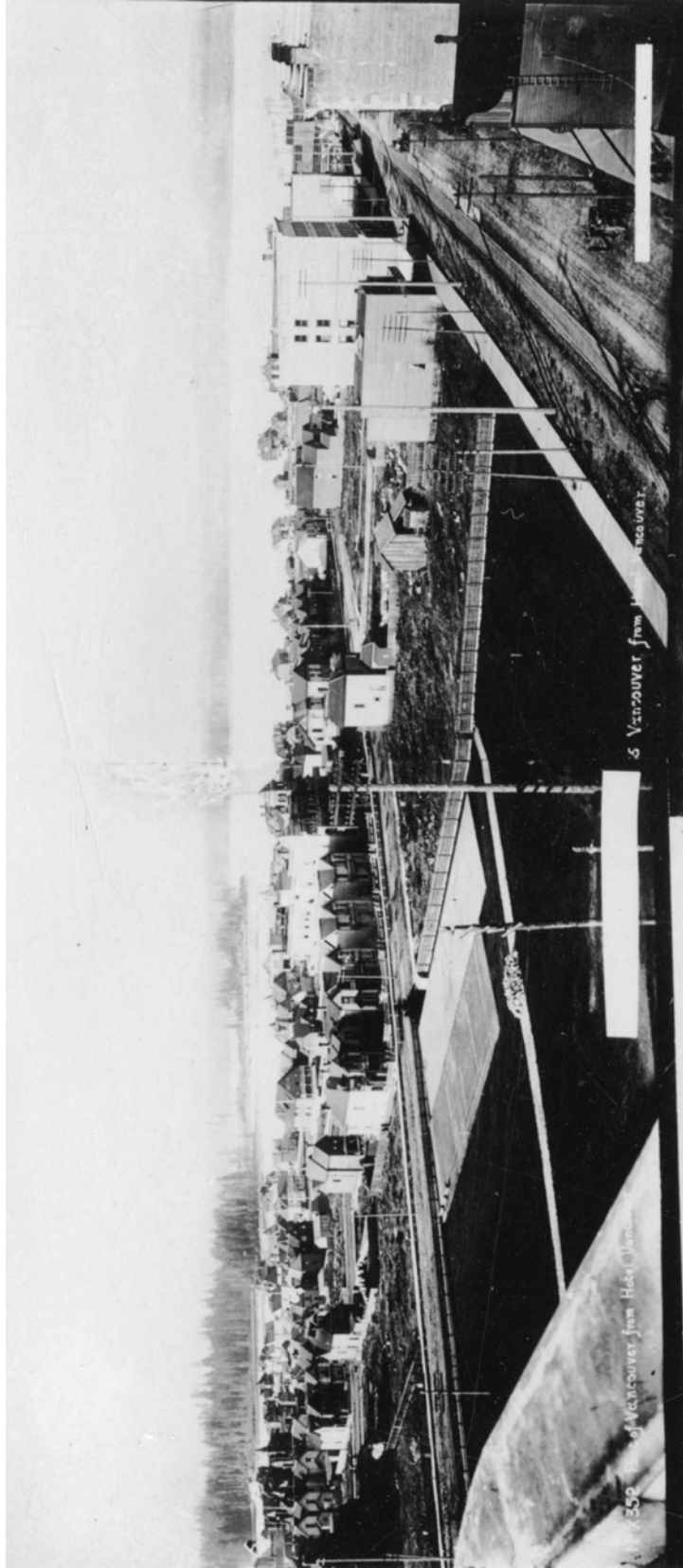
Item # EarlyVan\_v2\_095

A wilderness where grew  
THE HEART OF VANCOUVER



The crest of the hill midst a confusion of forest debris. Excavating the foundations for the first Hotel Vancouver, Granville and Georgia St, 1886. (Courtesy H.J.Cambie Esq)

Item # EarlyVan\_v2\_096



Item # EarlyVan\_v2\_097



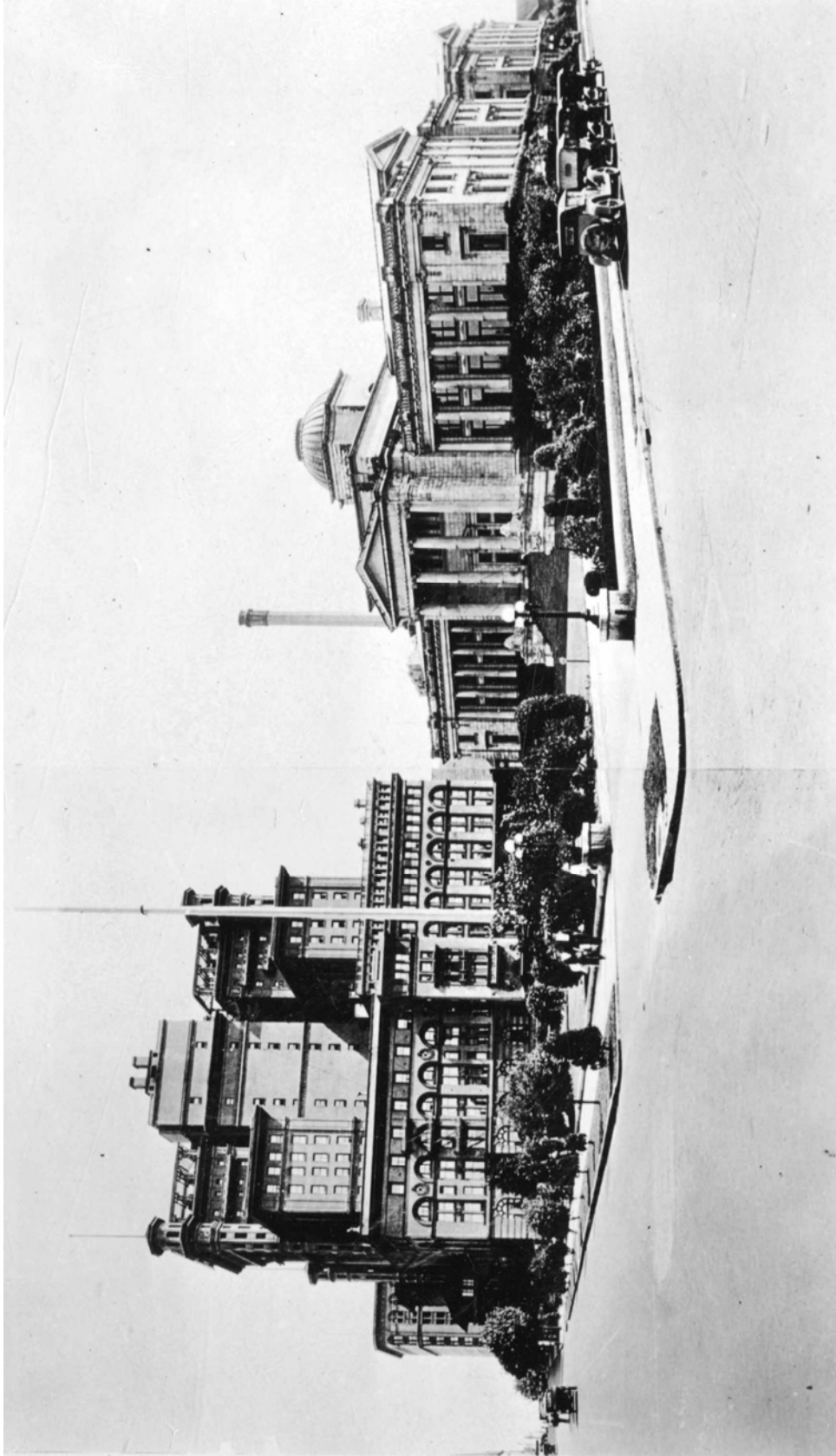
"Why did they build it AWAY OUT  
in the clearing?"

Trees in West End.

Corner Granville and Georgia St., S.W. corner

Item # EarlyVan\_v2\_098





Item # EarlyVan\_v2\_099

### **CLEARING AWAY THE FOREST. THE GREAT FIRE.**

“To use the old term ‘boulder pin clearing’ was the system adopted for clearing, for sweeping down, the forest. Anything up to a foot, or eighteen inches, was cut half through at the front; anything from five or six inches in diameter up to a foot or eighteen inches diameter would be cut half through, and then a big one, a big tree, let down on top; and the ‘boys’ were pretty clever; they could put a falling tree almost anywhere, almost drive a stake with it. You can imagine what it would be like if you went into Stanley Park, and Stanley Park in its densest part is not dense; too many trees were taken out by loggers; and then fell ten or twenty acres with one sweep.

“Now add to this a hot summer or spring, and after a couple of months drying, a fire got into it, and you will get some sort of an idea of what sort of a fire there was here on 13 June 1886.”

### **HOTEL VANCOUVER. EAST END VERSUS WEST END.**

“That’s quite true; the everlasting argument was, ‘Which way would the city grow?’ For instance, in the fall of 1886, Uncle Carter undertook to buy the lot on which the Templeton Block stands at the northeast corner of Hastings and Carrall streets. I think the price was \$1,250, and he intended to buy, but overnight the price jumped \$200.

“Then again when the Hotel Vancouver was built in the exact location it now occupies, there were expressions of much astonishment such as, ‘Well, why are they building it *away* up there on the hill?’ Much emphasis was put on the word *away*.”

### **CLEARING THE FOREST DEBRIS AWAY.**

“At the time of the fire there was a huge pile of debris back of William Dicks Limited, present store on the northeast corner of Hastings and Homer Street; it straddled the lane below it. They were using a tree which had been toppled as a gin pole—Uncle Carter estimated its height at 80 feet—and with the assistance of a ‘donkey’ engine were piling the roots and logs into a towering heap. That was where Gladwin was working when the fire started, and, Sunday, too.”

Note: Gladwin, since dead, is asserted by Mr. Findlay to have been the man who actually set fire to the pile, having received orders to that effect. J.S.M.

### **THE SMALLPOX SCARE. THE FIRST MASTOID OPERATION.**

“Dr. Langis is right about the smallpox scare. I remember the excitement which old Captain Rudlin of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company’s steamer *Charmer* created when he tried to land a smallpox case at the C.P.R. Dock. There was quite a fuss. The police authorities would not let him tie up, nor land at the C.P.R. Dock, nor the Hastings Mill. He attempted to tie up at the C.P.R. Dock without success, then moved to the Hastings Mill and tried to tie up there, and I vividly recall the dash through town of the civic authorities; they commandeered the Carter House bus, and swore in special constables, and dashed off through the town to prevent his landing at the Hastings Mill. Then he cast anchor in the stream, and finally landed at Hastings. I think the matter was referred to in the pulpits the next day as an ‘attempted outrage.’

“Dr. Langis performed the first mastoid operation in Vancouver. He was without proper instruments, and so they say, went down to Tom Dunn’s hardware store, purchased a couple of the best chisels, tested them for quality, started in, and finished a successful operation.” (See if Dr. Langis mentions this in *Early Vancouver*, Matthews, 1931.)

### **C.P.R. CAR BUILDERS AT YALE.**

“My Uncle, Lewis Carter, crossed the continent five times, the first time in 1872. He was, for three weeks, on the survey line, the surveying of the route, of the C.P.R. from Port Moody to Vancouver. He had charge of the C.P.R. car building shops at Yale for two and one half years; they built freight cars there, and some of the first turntables. In the last years of the shops there they were turning out six freight cars, mostly box cars, per day, and in this connection I will tell you something to illuminate your story about the medicine ditches.” (See *Early Vancouver*, Matthews, 1931.)

### **HARRISON HOT SPRINGS. INDIAN MEDICINE DITCHES.**

“Uncle told me, and I also heard it from one of the Agassiz boys of Agassiz, that in the early days the Indians and the prospectors did a lot of the same sort of thing at what is now Harrison Hot Springs; he

said he did it himself lots of times. He and his partner carried two barrels of flour, six bags to the barrel, into the Cariboo, going in via Fraser River, Harrison River, Harrison Lake, and the trail; their plan was to carry two bags as far as they could see, and the walk back rested them for the next effort. It was while on these journeys that they did what I will tell you about.

“The Harrison Hot Springs was, at that time, just two little streams out of the mountain running down into Harrison Lake; one of these, which was a sulphur stream, had considerable volume; the smaller stream was potash. Even in those days the value of a sulphur stream to relieve rheumatism and similar ailments was well known. Both Indians and prospectors took the potash waters internally in the firm belief that they were of much value in stomach and kidney troubles. In those days, of course, there was no hotel or bathhouse at the springs, but necessity provided impromptu bathtubs for those wishing to take the ‘cure.’

“The method was to draw up the canoe close alongside the sulphur spring, unload its contents, beach it in the soft mud, weight it down with a couple of good sized boulders—there was plenty around—and then dip the canoe full of hot water. A canoe of water would be of considerable weight, and a canoe means life, or death, so that their owners were careful of them, but the soft mud supported the outside.

“The water is cooler now, it used to be 165 F, now it is about 160 F; you used to be able to cook an egg in about five minutes. Then, after filling the canoe with hot sulphur water, they dipped in a little lake water to bring it down to 152 F or so, and after spreading a blanket, or tarpaulin if they possessed one, over the top of the canoe, the bather got inside and remained there 20 minutes or half an hour, and as the water cooled the partner would add a little more hot water. This went on winter and summer; the springs were easily marked by the clouds of steam arising from the hot water, and which could be seen for miles. In the spring months, when the traffic was heaviest, it was sometimes necessary to get in an advantageous position, so many were taking the treatment of just having a hot bath, before the canoe could be got close enough.”

#### **WILLIAM HAILSTONE, SAM BRIGHOUSE. THE WEST END OF VANCOUVER.**

“I understand that William Hailstone parted with his half interest, or what ever interest he had with Sam Brighthouse for a twenty dollar gold piece, several sacks of flour worth about five dollars, and a cayuse with a string halt, worth perhaps \$25; you could buy lots from them for \$10 or \$15. Hailstone logged off the West End, or perhaps rather more correctly, sold some logs off his place. He got tired of the game, and ‘pulled out.’”

#### **VANCOUVER ROADS IN 1887.**

“My first ‘impression’ of Vancouver came in the form of a big bump on the back of my head. I arrived by train, 22 October 1887, and took Uncle’s bus to the Carter House; an open ‘express’ conveyance with seat longways on both sides, a covering supporting with iron stanchions, and canvas flaps for the sides to let down in rainy weather, and drawn by two horses. The Vancouver roads were very poor for somewhere on our way up the incline to Cordova Street or down to Water Street, the bus gave a big bump, I bounced out of my seat, my head banged the stanchion of the covering, and left a big bump on the back.”

The above is an uncorrected memo of a conversation at Mr. Findlay’s home one evening; no opportunity offered to have it corrected before his death four days later. JSM.

Copy by  
W.J. Moore Photo Co  
Vancouver.



Famous hostelry, 166 Water St, replaced earlier Carter House destroyed in great fire 1886 two weeks after opening, first three story building in Vanc'r. Demolished 1921-2. quartered police enforcing suspension city charter, Chinese Riots 1887. On verandah, Mrs (Margaret J) Carter, 3rd from left: C.E. Taggart, 4th Chas E Doering, 5th Lewis Carter, owner, 7th John L. Carter, brother. Copyright W.F. Findlay, 244 E 11th St.

For further details see conversations with pioneers for 1931. Note 5 tele phone wires. Verandah removed, in early years after erection. Mr Carter wife of proprietor and sister to W.F. Findlay's another. Hotel was considered a "good family hotel", and had splendid view of water and mountains from front windows. Erection of this building commenced on Monday, day after great fire of Sunday, June 13, 1886  
J. S. W.  
1932.