

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 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. 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



Province, June 10, 1933

An Appreciation

By J. S. MATTHEWS.

A YOUNG matron, babe in arms, fled terror-stricken through the stumps of Pender street, and cast herself headlong into a shallow ditch of water beside what is now the C. P. R. freight sheds; strong arms—her husband's—threw a wet blanket over them. Both escaped death. The holocaust of 1886, which destroyed our first city, passed above them as they lay, burning as it went, through the blanket, and singeing hair from the child's head. That was almost fifty years ago.

The child grew, and is now a well-known matron of Kitlano; the mother, beloved and gracious lady, a pioneer of Gastown from 1884, died recently; full of honor and of years; her name, once on many lips, somewhat forgotten. Nothing especially remarkable, perhaps, at such an age, and in a land where good women are as common as blossoms in spring.

+ + +

But wait. This woman was a soldier's friend, and soldiers, like children—and dogs—have long memories for kind friends. She was of that legion to which all soldiers bend a grateful knee; akin to Florence Nightingale, only different; that great galaxy of devoted Canadian women, some rich, most poor, many unknown, who helped—actually helped—in the Great War. She was a knitter of socks. Those there were may be who will smile—such plebian wear—but such as do are not soldiers, and smile without knowledge.

With her own wrinkled fingers—she was about seventy then—this good friend knitted eight hundred single socks—four hundred pair—enough to outfit the battle strength of many a worn battalion; one half sock for each day of the war. She knew nought of the big raw blootches, torn and angry, after a hot day's march, of the bleached foot, bloodless, white and stinking after a week of wet boots, nor the misery of fitful slumber on frozen ground with feet cold as lumps of ice.

But her great soul felt for men she had never seen or heard of; her feminine intuition sensed the need, and patiently, faithfully, day in day out, she knitted socks, warm socks, more socks, eight hundred socks. And the men wondered, but never knew, who were the angels who sent the socks.

+ + +

Few realize in full the part the women played. The secret of the C.E.F. was its quality. First, every man was a volunteer, and secondly, the wholehearted support of those who stayed behind—and the women. Their little package of remembrance which came, a stick of chewing gum, a box of cigarettes, a pair of woollen socks, hand-made by loving hands. In such the "boys" found comfort; the generals, and the field officers, saw the greater meaning; subtle messages of affection and encouragement. Throughout that long-drawn strife, gentle hearts aplenty were crushed to tears, but there was no whimpering; soldiers can not fight their best if the women wail, and battles are won by morale, not by guns.

The good lady's name? There were others, too, in cohorts; thanks be to them all, God bless them. This one was Mrs. Reid, the late Mrs. Duncan R. Reid, first lady school trustee, 1898, of Vancouver; who passed away last month.

Item # EarlyVan_v2_103



MRS DUNCAN R REID, aged 85 (1932)
First Lady School Trustee, 1898-9
Knitted 400 pairs socks during War.

*Mrs Duncan Roderick Reid, first lady school board trustee, 1898-1899
Taken in 1932-aged 85.*

Item # EarlyVan_v2_104

MRS. DUNCAN RODERICK REID. FIRST LADY SCHOOL TRUSTEE. SOCKS FOR SOLDIERS, GREAT WAR.

A tall stately lady of dignified carriage, gowned in white, a crown of snow white hair, and, despite her 85 years, firm of tread and figure erect, straight almost as an arrow, invited me to her home. She was busying herself with flowers upon the lawn when I arrived at her daughter's residence, 3263 West 2nd Avenue (Mrs. W.E. Draney) one summer's afternoon, 28 July 1932. She is a pioneer of 1884.

A compilation of the average height and weight of our pioneer men and women, an impossibility at this late date, would unquestionably have proven them to have been, with rare exceptions, a body of tall, well built people of powerful physique. Mrs. Reid must have been a splendid specimen of feminine physique in her young days; even today she is an apt portrait of that mental and bodily vigour which found expedients for all the difficulties of pioneer problems.

OLD GRANVILLE IN 1884.

"Old Granville, said Mrs. Reid, (née Christina Campbell) "I first saw in October 16th 1884; a very small place in the trees. Mr. Reid and I, with the children, arrived here from Prince Edward Island. My children at that time were Jemima and Mary Belle (Minnie); those born here afterwards were Alexander Campbell and Frederick James.

"At first we went to live in a shack in the bushes owned by Mr. Coldwell. It was somewhere back of Water Street, probably on or near where Abbott Street is now; we had to take what shelter offered."

(Note: the Voters List of 1886 shows Mr. Chas. V. Coldwell as owner of the southwest corner of Abbott Street and Water Street.)

PENDER STREET IN 1884.

"Later, in 1884, we built a two-storey house, pretentious enough for those days, but most modest by present day standards, on Pender Street, west of the C.P.R. crossing recently removed now that they are using the new tunnel. That was before the C.P.R. line from Burrard Inlet to the Roundhouse was built. We picked our way to our home down a little track or trail running twixt bushes, over roots and stones, finally to stoop to pass under the trunk of a great fir which lay prostrate across the trail almost right at our door. The trail went from what is now Hastings Street, then like Hastings Street and Pender too, unnamed, close to—after it was built after the Great Fire—the C.P.R. Hotel; a hotel facing north on Hastings Street midway between Carrall and Abbott. Mr. Reid afterwards sold the property to McLennan, McFeely for a hardware warehouse site. "

WATER FROM WELLS.

"We drew our drinking water from a well on the lot, and we cut our wood for cooking on the same lot, too; our own lot.

"You must remember that I am speaking of forty or more years ago, and it is difficult to recall with exactness."

Interjection: Excepting the Great Fire.

Continuing, "Excepting the Great Fire; while life lasts we shall never forget that."

THE GREAT FIRE.

"It was all over in forty-five minutes. It started somewhere 'up on the hill,' up in the direction of the Hotel Vancouver, and swept through like a flash. We had become more or less used to the smoke of the clearing fires, and did not take much notice of it; perhaps that was how it was that we got so little warning. I was dressing the eldest child for Sunday school at the Presbyterian Church, on Cordova Street and lane west of Westminster Avenue," (Main Street) "which the Rev. Thompson, the pastor, had dedicated the Sunday before.

"It was a Sunday afternoon, Mr. Reid was lying down upstairs, I was dressing the child, when a stranger came to the door and we were told that we should be burned out in ten minutes. Pender Street was, well, I suppose you would call it 'graded'; that part of Vancouver was very wet and swampy; anyway, there was

a ditch beside the rough roadway to our house, and we all got into that ditch, children and all; Mrs. W.E. Draney was one, and myself too, and Mr. Reid covered us with blankets as best he could; that saved us, I think. The fire practically passed over us; the truth is awful to contemplate even now; but it is a fact that great holes, the size of a dish pan, were burned in those blankets as we lay in the ditch under them; Mrs. Draney's hair was partly burned from her head; she was just a child then; about 18 months old. We were saved by Mr. Reid and the stranger wetting the blankets in a deeper part of the ditch and changing them as quickly as they could. Mr. Reid's hat and coat were burned off him. Men were actually burned to death within a few yards of where we lay. The ground was very dry."

RELICS OF THE FIRE.

"Our house was completely destroyed; we saved nothing except an iron saucepan; we have that yet, a family heirloom to be handed down to posterity, probably," (and Mrs. Reid smiled) "the only saucepan saved from the Vancouver fire. Mrs. Draney wants to have it gilded with gold, but I say, 'No,' it must be preserved as it is, but I would not mind them engraving its history on it so that its identity might not be lost. Oh, yes, we saved the sewing machine too; I think the slippery varnish prevented the sparks and flames from catching. All Vancouver, well, perhaps not all, but a good many, afterwards used that sewing machine for sewing tents and clothes, etc.

"They say that the Regina Hotel was the only building which escaped destruction. That there were others on the outskirts is well known, but one which I have never heard mentioned as escaping destruction was the single little shack occupied by a sick old bachelor just a few yards west of our house; he used to come over and get a little yeast from me, now and again, to make his bread.

"A print dress, just a flimsy thing, was all I wore as we hurried into the ditch, and one slipper, that and, what odd things one may do in a moment of intense excitement, a silk umbrella. When the fire went down we made our way through the smouldering embers to Mr. Peter Cordiner's home at the Hastings Mill, and when I arrived down there I had my silk umbrella under my arm. Poor Dr. Beckingsale, he saved nothing excepting two, not just one, but two small hatchets; how he came to make that choice I do not recall, but others did equally as odd things.

"We stayed at Mr. Cordiner's home until our house was rebuilt."

SURVEY OF C.P.R. LANDS.

"Mr. Reid, my husband, was one of the group of men who surveyed the C.P.R. grant, that is, broadly speaking, lands between English Bay and Hastings and Burrard Inlet and the North Arm of the Fraser, but the work I most especially recall was the survey of the centre of the city. So far as I now recall the survey party included L.A. Hamilton, and who did, I think, private surveying afterwards; John Leask, brother-in-law to Mr. Hamilton, and whose widow is still living at Collingwood, Ontario; D.R. Reid, my husband, who was head lineman; C. Gardner Johnson, afterwards well known in Vancouver as Lloyd's Agent; and an officer in the old 6th Regiment, D.C.O.R., Jack Stewart, afterwards Major-General in the Great War; 'Dad' Cameron, fireman in charge of the fire engine of the fire brigade; Louis, a Frenchman who was axeman; Archie McCrimmon, axeman; nine in all, I think.

"Mr. Jack Leask, whilst engaged in blazing survey lines between Carrall Street and Westminster Avenue" (Main Street) "in the heavy timber, got lost, and a survey party spent all afternoon in searching for him."

THE INDIAN (METHODIST) CHURCH. ST. JAMES CHURCH ON BEACH. METHODIST PARSONAGE.

"I have no recollection of any Indian church, not in my day; I do not see how there could have been in 1884." (Note: a statement which indicates that the Indian church erected in 1875 was no longer a prominent institution.) "In 1884 we held our prayer meetings in the living room of the Methodist parsonage, the only parsonage at that time, and our Sunday services in the Presbyterian denomination, but in 1884 the Presbyterians here were too few to form a congregation; the Anglicans were the only denomination strong enough for that; so when we went to church, as you may call it, we all went to the Methodist services held in the Public School at the Hastings Mill. The Rev. Joseph Hall was minister. I recall the Methodist parsonage very well; a two-storey building facing the water and close to the shore, verandah both back and front, the whole enclosed in a small clearing on the water's edge. We went along a narrow trail and entered from the front door on the water side; the stable was west of the parsonage; beyond the stable I cannot recall anything save trees and bushes. Afterwards the first Methodist Hall was

built east of the parsonage, and was destroyed in the Great Fire. If there had been a church building, what necessity would there have been to hold the services or prayer meetings in a sitting room at the parsonage or the school at the mill?"

(Note: the Indian church was actually there, and was destroyed in the Fire. See Theo. Bryant, son of Rev. Bryant.)

"The little English church" (St. James; see panorama of Vancouver before the fire, and also Hastings Road photo) "stood about the foot of Columbia Avenue." (Rev. Ditchan, and afterwards Father Clinton.)

"I don't know what became of the little Indian church; perhaps the Indians gradually lost interest in the Methodist denomination. You see, the Roman Catholics were at North Vancouver on the Indian Reserve; the ornaments and ceremony of the Roman Catholics might have had a stronger appeal to the Indians than the less formal services of the Methodists; perhaps the Indian congregation had gradually dwindled; perhaps the absence of a permanent Indian missionary, and the presence of a permanent minister to the white population of Methodists had something to do with it, and so the Indian congregation gradually dwindled. I should not like to say that the Rev. Mr. Hall converted it into a stable, nor do I recall the erection of the stable. The stable was not a large building, but large enough for two cows and a horse and a hayloft." (See Mrs. Emily Eldon.) "If the Indian church stood west of the parsonage," (Note: it did.) "something must have happened to it."

BURRARD INLET CONGREGATION OF METHODIST CHURCH.

It was explained to Mrs. Reid that Land Registry records show that on 12 April 1877, lots 14 and 15, Old Granville Townsite, on which the parsonage and hall stood in 1886, were conveyed to seven trustees of the Burrard Inlet congregation of the Methodist Church of Canada, and that the names of William Soule and Peter Cordiner were among the seven.

"William Soule," said Mrs. Reid, "was Church of England; Peter Cordiner was Presbyterian. The Rev. C.M. Tate is probably quite correct in saying that it was necessary to accept as trustees of the Methodist church proper by persons who were not Methodists; there were insufficient numbers of men of responsibility to act as trustees. Peter Cordiner was a splendid man, and it would have been quite like him to sink any particular preference which he personally may have had in the general interest."

THE FIRST LADY SCHOOL TRUSTEE.

"It was on January 13th 1898 that I was elected the first woman school trustee on the Vancouver School Board. An act had just been passed by the Provincial Legislature which permitted women to sit on school boards, and I was asked to offer myself for election. I had been a resident of Vancouver longer than most women, had taken a more or less active part in church, political and civic affairs, and when friends asked me to offer myself I acceded to their request. That the invitation was generally approved of by the electors—men at that time—is proven by the fact that I was elected at the top of the poll. I served two years, but I cannot say that I particularly enjoyed the experience. I had something to do with the obtaining of the Sir William Macdonald endowment for manual training for schools, was among the first advocates for the teaching of domestic science in schools, and with the affiliation of the Vancouver High School" (Cambie and Dunsmuir) "with McGill University, and was appointed a governor of the college."

SOCKS FOR THE SOLDIERS. GREAT WAR.

During the Great War, Mrs. Reid, then aged between 67 and 71, was president of Ward 3 branch of the Red Cross Society, and herself knitted hundreds of pairs of socks for soldiers. Her daughters state she knitted over four hundred pairs (equal to almost one pair every four days), an achievement surpassed by one person only in Vancouver.

FIRST BOY BORN IN VANCOUVER AFTER IT BECAME A CITY.

"My son, Alexander Campbell Reid," said Mrs. Reid, "was the first boy born in Vancouver after it was incorporated as a city."

Mrs. Reid was born in Belfast, Prince Edward Island.

Read to, and approved by Mrs. Reid, August 1932. JSM.

MANUAL TRAINING IN SCHOOLS.

Mrs. Reid writes, 6 March 1933: "About 1898, I saw through the daily papers, that Sir William Macdonald, the tobacco king, a native of P.E.I." (her husband was a P.E.I.-er) "was endowing a manual training school in the capital cities of each province. I being a native of P.E.I. and on the school board, wrote him saying that Vancouver was much bigger than Victoria. He replied and sent a pamphlet saying that he would be very pleased to give it to Vancouver."

AFFILIATION WITH MCGILL UNIVERSITY.

"About the same time, a number of our High School students" (old High School on Dunsmuir Street) "were ready for university, and their parents could not afford to send them away. So I, as school trustee, along with my other colleagues, started arrangements with McGill which was very shortly completed, and enabled the students to take two years course at home. This was the time that the late Dr. McGuigan and myself were appointed governors."

Christina Reid.

EARLY LACROSSE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Conversation with James A. Smith, moving picture censor, and Mrs. Smith, at their residence, 5826 Sperling Avenue, Vancouver, 14 May 1932.

"It must have been about the 21st or 22nd May 1888," said Mr. Smith. "We, that is, my brother David and I, had arrived in Vancouver from Winnipeg on the previous 5th April, and had started a little store where we sold carpets on Water Street, north side, opposite the Carter house—the back part of the store was over the water of the inlet—the rats used to climb the piles at the back and reach the platform—when Mr. A.E. Suckling, sobriquet 'Bony,' now of the Vancouver Breweries Limited, and Mr. J.B. Simpson, sobriquet 'Simmy,' came and asked if we would play lacrosse. I had known Mr. Suckling, had played lacrosse with him in Winnipeg, and he knew that both Dave and I could play; all three of us were keen lacrosse men in Winnipeg. Mr. Suckling had been arranging a game with some men in Victoria, and on the Queen's Birthday that year we went over to Victoria and played, to my belief, the first game of lacrosse played in British Columbia. Mr. Suckling was undoubtedly the father of lacrosse in British Columbia. The game was played on Beacon Hill, and we won.

"At the time the Victoria people were without a lacrosse team, and it was as a result of Mr. Suckling's endeavours that this game was played; he had been in correspondence with Mr. W.G. McKenzie, at that time of Victoria, afterwards manager of the old hardware firm, Wood, Vallance and Leggat Ltd., here.

"On Dominion Day that year the Victoria team came over from Victoria to Vancouver, and played a return game. This time they won, but sometime in the fall we again went to Victoria, and by winning that game, became the first lacrosse champions in British Columbia.

"At that time the Westminster people took little or no interest in lacrosse, at any rate, they had no lacrosse team. I forget the exact date but sometime the following spring we went over to New Westminster and played against a team gathered together somehow on a couple of lots; I don't just know but it was near a judge's residence. I doubt if the 'field' was larger than 100 feet by 100 feet, and there were a number of small stumps scattered about it. We had to loan the Westminster team two or three men so that they could play, and also some equipment. From that time on, lacrosse prospered in New Westminster; the Westminster boys took to the game; the thing grew. Among those whom I recall was Jack Whyte, afterwards Lt. Col. J.C. Whyte and warden of the Penitentiary; and W. Cullen, the King's Printer; whole families took to it, for instance, there were the Peele boys, the Giffords, and the Rennies."

Query: What killed it?

"Professionalism; lacrosse thrives as an amateur game only."

Query: Is there any truth in the story which A.E. Beck tells that the New Westminster lacrosse team got the nickname "Salmonbellies" on the Cambie Street grounds?

"Well, we named them that, and I presume that was how it was; very likely."