

Early Vancouver

Volume Two

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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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GASTOWN. HASTINGS ROAD.

Hugh E. Campbell, 10 August 1931. "Hastings Road from Gastown to Hastings Mill was, when I first saw it, quite a good road; there may have been a few planks on it from the Sunnyside Hotel going a short distance eastwards, but not where it began to go up the hill." (A photo, "nigger minstrel" fire brigade, shows part of Hastings Road.) "There was a ditch to let the water run from the south side under it into the inlet; the ditch was about Columbia Street. The shore, of course, ran along outside the road, except just west of the No. 1 Fire Hall, or what was afterwards No. 1 Fire Hall, which stood on the old provincial government lot where the Court House and jail had stood from early days. At that point Water Street was afterwards bridged to cross the lower beach; the shoreline ran back about as far as Trounce Alley between Cordova Street and Water Street."

Note: in 1898 and for some years after, the waters of Burrard Inlet seeped through the fill—on which the C.P.R. railway ran—onto the low land below Water Street. This low land ran from about the foot of Carrall Street to at least beyond Abbott Street—the old Methodist Hall stood on stilts, and so was the sidewalk in front of it. The land of the beach would be from eight to ten feet below the present level of Water Street, and was a stinking hole. In 1933 the only lot on Water Street which has never been built upon is one next door westwards of W.H. Malkin's wholesale warehouse; it has been partly filled in, but is still seven or eight feet below the level of Water Street and is now used for a car storage yard.

GASTOWN, OR BY ITS INDIAN NAME, LUCKLUCKY.

The question might be asked, "Why was Gastown located in the particular spot it was in view of the fact that John Morton, our first settler, located just west of the foot of Burrard Street?" The name "Lucklucky" (Indian) is equivalent to "grove of beautiful trees," and it may be presumed that the little beach with its pretty trees and its small cove, attracted both Indians and afterwards whites. For the Indians before the white man came, it must have been a convenient spot to cut across from Burrard Inlet to False Creek—when they did not use the Campbell Avenue route—for the waters of the creek and the inlet could not have been more than 300 yards apart, and at high tides perhaps much less; at extreme high tide the whole ground was a sopping bog. The whole area from Abbott Street to Columbia Street was very swampy, as several narratives recount. J.A. Mateer (20 July 1931) says, "I helped to pile, cap, bridge and plank Dupont Street" (Pender Street East) "between Carrall and Columbia; the tide came right up to the corner of Columbia and Dupont." Another authority says, "Hastings Street was an awful hole, almost impassable even in summer for a team." W.F. Findlay speaks of portaging canoes, large canoes, across Carrall Street. Mrs. D.R. Reid speaks of escaping from the Great Fire by taking refuge in a ditch with water in it—in June 1886, that is, midsummer and after an extremely dry spring—on Pender Street. At the foot of Columbia Street there was, in 1898, the Champion and Whyte garbage men's yard and office—an awful smelly place on account of the creek water coming to within 30 or 40 yards of Pender (Dupont) Street and the effluvia which arose from the muddy shore. Even after much filling by slab lumber and sawdust from the Royal City Mills, the work of ten years or more, the water of False Creek must have been within 75 or 100 yards of Pender Street at Carrall in 1898, and were deep.

That the Indians had a name for the location shows that it was occupied by them before the white man came; that it bore the name of Lucklucky, "grove of beautiful trees," indicates a pleasant place. Then came the whiteman who settled at Hastings Sawmill. After him came the very early roamers. To the east would be the Hastings Sawmill where they could not very well establish as the mill people would not want them; to the west was Puchahls, or "white rocks" (C.P.R. Station) known as "The Bluff" to early Vancouver pioneers, and on account of its steep cliff and narrow shore, impossible of settlement. The low sheltered picturesque spot on which Gastown was built would be the natural selection, especially as it had a little cove into which canoes could be drawn for safety. Probably there were trails leading across from False Creek to Burrard Inlet; it was the natural point at which to establish.

The Indians state that "Portuguese Joe" was the first white man to start a trading establishment there, at the foot of Abbott Street. The records of the former members of the Royal Engineers show that when they surveyed the townsite of Granville in 1870 there were nine buildings grouped in a crescent along the shore between Abbott and Carrall Street. Corporal Turner, R.E., makes no mention of them on his survey notes of February and March 1863, although he shows John Morton's cabin and Indian huts (at Capilano).

Until further research discloses more authentic information, it might be safely assumed that Granville grew from "Portuguese Joe's" store or trading post on a low lump of land on the shore at the foot of Abbott Street, and that it grew between 1863 and 1870, when it was surveyed by the ex-Royal Engineers, (at least, the 1870 survey of six blocks was, but the proposed extension to the west was by a man, believed to be a Mr. Green) and laid out in lots, as the result of logging operations, Indian trading, the necessity of having some point for government buildings off property privately owned (Hastings Sawmill and others) and the attractions perhaps offered to sailors from the ships at the mill, and loggers, who sought privileges not permitted on the company's property.

EARLY TRAILS.

Chillahminst (Jim Franks), North Vancouver, 2 March 1933. Jim Franks was born at Skwayoos, afterwards Greer's Beach, still later Kitsilano Beach.

"No trail to Jericho from Skwayoos, go beach, no trail. Trail to Gastown from about Granville Street, from about Snaug, go all along through tree to about Westminster Avenue; just little trail, about wide enough one man; don't know just about where go; all long Fairview to Westminster Avenue from about Granville Street.

"Oh, I remember, my father make canoe up on hill above Kitsilano Beach. Loggers just take fir, leave cedar; my father, Chillahminst, make canoe up on hill, have Hudson's Bay file for chisel, stone for hammer. I go up see him; go up log road, meet oxen come down; I little boy, run away, very frightened at oxen come down trail. My father bring canoe down beach, take him out Point Grey, hook sturgeon, oh, big, twelve feet, 'bout four inches thick, very heavy; tow sturgeon to beach, turn canoe over, take stakes" (cross pieces) "out, slide sturgeon into canoe, turn canoe over again when sturgeon in canoe.

"My father tell me he see first whitemans ship up Squamish.

"Two log road up hill from Skwayoos, one go one way, one go other way; little swamp up on top hill, logging road go 'round swamp."