

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



OFFICIAL WINS CONFIDENCE OF DOUKHOBOR BOYS

Superintendent D. B. Brankin Finds His New Charges Interesting Experiment—Little Rebels Settling Down to Life at Coquitlam Industrial School Under Gentle Treatment.

Sept 25 1932

By J. S. MATTHEWS.

I WAS signing my name on the visitors' register—a surprise visit—at the entrance to the Provincial Industrial School for Boys, Coquitlam, when a voice from behind cheerily exclaimed "Well, well, look who's here." Turning round, there stood Superintendent D. B. Brankin, late of that muddy ditch "Regina Trench," Somme, where as a sergeant, he narrowly missed being decorated with a D. C. M.

"So you've ousted Veregin from his command!"

"Not wholly true," parried Mr. Brankin, "though I am in charge of ninety-two young Douks." Then he began to tell me the story.

SUBTLE TREATMENT IS REWARDED.

"Like most boys, they were a bit unmanageable at first; now they give no trouble. About half are big boys, eighteen and under, the remainder, little fellows. The bigger boys told me, when they first came, that they would not work. My response was that I did not want them to; that I had other boys who would do all the work that I wanted done. I told them that when I wanted anything done I would let them know, and I should expect them to do it, but just then I did not want anything.

"They next told me they would eat only such food as they wanted to eat. I enquired what food they would like; I would get it for them; but I told them frankly that, if they wanted a special menu, different from that of my other boys, that I would not prepare it for them; they would have to do that themselves. The big boys seemed glad enough to do this, and also promised me to look after the smaller ones; so I set them up in a kitchen of their own. Mrs. Brankin had plenty of food of the kind they asked for put where they could get it.

"You see, they will not eat flesh meat, fish, nor eggs; they want raw vegetables, salads, soups and vegetable oils such as olive oil. They are fond of fruit and sunflower seeds. I must say the bigger boys carried out their promises in a manner satisfactory to me.

SCARECROW JOB WAS TOO MUCH.

"We have been bothered lately with birds eating our crops, so we decided to make some scarecrows, and stand them out in the fields. Then I thought of a better plan. I took the bigger Doukhobor boys out on the farm, stationed them at intervals midst the foliage, with orders to stay there, and shoot the birds away. I told them all they had to do was to stay exactly where they were put, and shoot the birds away; nothing more. They were not to work, nor to wander around. The weather was fine and the sunshiny was good for them.

"After two or three days, it chanced I was passing by when one of the boys beckoned to me to come to him, so I went over. The boy said, 'This is foolish.'

"Of course it's foolish," I agreed. "But you don't want to work, and I don't want you to work." The boy answered that they wanted to work, so I told him I would think about it.

BOYS AT LAST BEGGED FOR WORK.

"That afternoon I was again approached: 'When could we start work?' I asked when they wished to start; the answer was, 'at once.' I promised I would consider it further, but the next day I got some benches and told them to sit down on them, which they did—all day.

"But the following day I told them I had decided they could start. They started at once, have been at it since, and work like good boys. They're up at the playground now; come on up, and I'll get them to sing for you."

At the far end of the playground some were playing ball; nearer, others were at marbles. The sun was slowly setting; it would soon be time for them to get to their dormitories. Mr. Brankin called, and a flock of youngsters came running from all directions like chickens to a clucking hen. They ranged themselves into a tightly knitted group; the taller ones in the rear, the shorter in front.

"Boys," said the superintendent with a smile, "these ladies and gentlemen are from Vancouver. I have been telling them how nicely you can sing. I would like you to sing a song or two for them."

SINGING CHARMS THE VISITORS.

There was no hesitation, no accompaniment, no leader, no movement; song just burst forth from well behaved, bareheaded boys, all solemnly singing in splendid rhythm, perfect unison, all save one very little fellow who stood mystified, half hidden midst his taller brethren; shrill also voices carrying song far over the beautiful grounds resplendent in a mass of flowering blooms. We removed our hats; at the conclusion of each hymn all boys reverently bowed their heads.

First it was the "Volga Boatman," then some hymns. They sang and sang until it seemed they must tire, yet with a willingness which clearly demonstrated them to be happy—as circumstances permitted—and to appreciate the kindness, and the tender yet firm discipline under which they live. Their faces showed scarce a smile; faces for boys too solemn, as of children who knew neither laughter nor shouts. At least they ceased, and we went nearer to thank them.

Our words of appreciation were scarcely out of our lips when a chorus of voices exclaimed "You're very welcome, sir." The leading boy singer stepped forward, smiled as we grasped his hand, the group dispersed and straggled off to their sleeping



DAVID B. BRANKIN.

quarters. Even their aversion to marching in four—a military formation—is respected.

It was a touching, hopeful scene; not without an element of sadness that these little chaps, through no fault of their own, should be separated from those they loved, yet convincingly for their good. An examination of their schoolbooks, lying on their desks, showed evidence of very good penmanship, and skill at freehand drawing.

At the other end of the grounds—the Doukhobor children are treated as a distinct and separate unit—the boys of the Industrial School proper stood "at ease," under their masters, awaiting the proper moment for the proud ceremony of lowering the Union Jack at the close of the day. The boys came to "attention," the bugles blew the "Retreat." Slowly the emblem of our land was lowered, inch by inch, the boys' band poured forth the National Anthem. A few sharp commands, "form fours," "quick march," and to "Onward, Christian Soldiers," by the band in front, they marched off to bed; an impressive ceremony, dignified and orderly, features so lacking in the dispersal of the Doukhobor children a few moments previously.

"What do you expect to make of them?" we queried of the superintendent, with our mind on the young Doukhobors.

"Make of them?" responded Mr. Brankin, "well, we have much hope; there's possibilities in most of those boys. But it will take patience and—time."

Item # EarlyVan_v2_141

JUNE 1932 – WHITE SWANS. STEVESTON. FRASER RIVER.

Mr. Joseph L. Graham, whose father preempted a section of land, he said, "close to" the Indian Reserve, Canoe Pass, Fraser River.

"In the early '80s I have seen great flocks, great flocks of them—white swans—on the Fraser River, near Steveston."