

Early Vancouver

Volume Two

By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.

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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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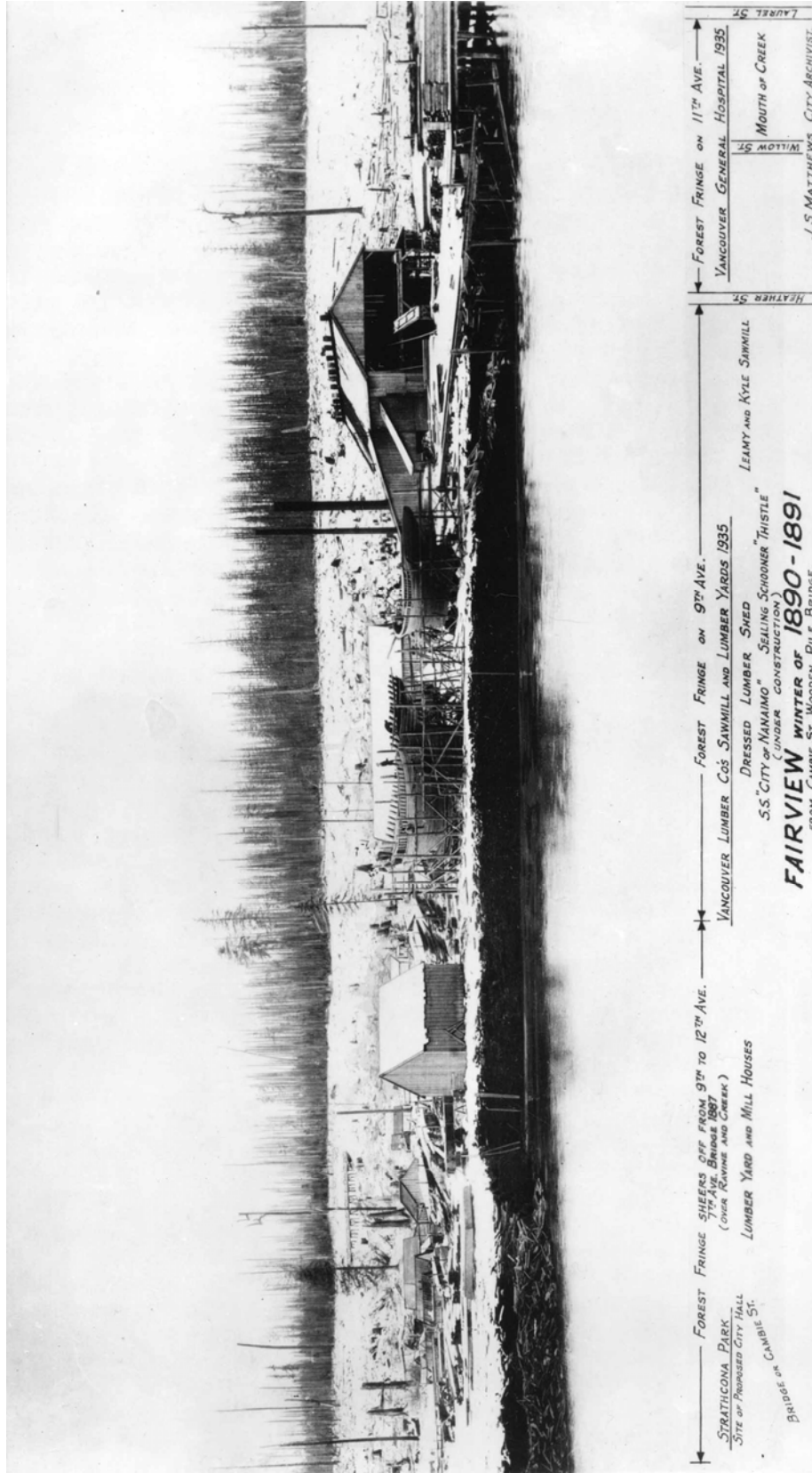
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Item # EarlyVan_v2_124



← FOREST FRINGE SHELTERS OFF FROM 9TH TO 12TH AVE.
 STRATHCONA PARK
 SITE OF PROPOSED CITY HALL
 BRIDGE OF CAMBIE ST.

← FOREST FRINGE ON 9TH AVE.
 VANCOUVER LUMBER CO'S SAWMILL AND LUMBER YARDS 1935
 DRESSED LUMBER SHED
 S.S. "CITY OF NANAIMO"
 (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
 LEAMY AND KYLE SAWMILL
 S.S. "CITY OF NANAIMO"
 (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)
 SEILING SCHOONER "TRISTLE"
 WINTER OF 1890-1891
 FROM CAMBIE ST. WOODEN PILE BRIDGE.

← FOREST FRINGE ON 11TH AVE.
 VANCOUVER GENERAL HOSPITAL 1935
 WILLOW ST.
 MOUTH OF CREEK
 LAUREL ST.

J.S. MATTHEWS CITY ARCHIVIST.

Item # EarlyVan_v2_125

FALSE CREEK IN 1899. LEAMY AND KYLE SAWMILL.

In 1899-1902 the whole triangle east of Cambie Street, bounded on the north by False Creek, on the south by Sixth Avenue, and its base line being the shore from the Cambie Street bridge to the mouth of a small creek which was west of Ash Street, was an unfenced area of small bushes, twenty to twenty-five feet high, mostly elms and willows, etc., etc., interspersed with green patches of grass, save and except at the northwest corner, near the bridge, where the idle old Leamy and Kyle mill stood surrounded with the remains of a lumber yard, old board roads, and sawdust strewn bare ground; a derelict mill. A small cottage, the watchman's, stood near a bridge which crossed a creek 125 yards from Cambie Street; beyond the bridge a ten foot wagon trail meandered through bushes past another small cottage on the shore, and in it Captain H.C. Ackroyd, of Innes, Richards and Ackroyd, an officer in the 6th Regiment "The Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles," lived with his wife and fancy collie dogs. Continuing on by this narrow trail, a final cottage of clapboards, painted white, see photograph, three rooms, tin bath, no chimney, stood on the edge of a cliff twenty-five feet high above a creek mouth, and distant 150 feet from Sixth Avenue, which was opened up, but overgrown so that little remained other than a trail for a wagon, deep mud and impassable in winter, dusty in summer. This trail along Sixth Avenue led back to Cambie Street, or as it was then called, Bridge Street.

The last cottage, the white one, was occupied by Mr. J.S. Matthews, wife and three children, the latter playing in the trees or in the Indian canoes in the creek. They kept a cow, which ran through the woods and fed from the little green patches of grass, or down the slope in front of the cottage to the log boom, where there was a little wharf. (See photograph.) The sewerage from this cottage ran down the cliff by a wooden chute. In the rear, just beside Sixth Avenue, was a chicken shed where 100 to 200 chickens roosted; all around was primeval undergrowth. Across the creek, which between the two high banks was perhaps 100 to 200 feet wide, was a wilderness of second growth, stumps, berry bushes, as far as the Granville Street bridge; no recollections place any houses below Seventh Avenue; along the shore was boulders, mud and roots of great trees. In the winter time great flocks of ducks infested the waters of the creek, and were shot from the shore, but they were poor eating—too salty and fishy—they were mallards, hell divers. The fishing was good. The cottage had been the home of the manager of the old mill; it was a primeval but very pretty place, a regular summer cottage in the trees and grass patch. It will be seen in the photograph; the houses at the rear of the picture face north on Sixth Avenue. A deep ravine, down which the creek flowed, ran back beyond Broadway, and has not been, even yet, 1933, completely filled in. In 1899-1902 the Ninth Avenue (Broadway) street car line was a single track line which cavorted over hummock and hollow beside a trail, called Ninth Avenue, from Mount Pleasant to Fairview once every twenty minutes; occasionally one could shoot a pheasant above or below Ninth Avenue.

Mr. Matthews rented the cottage for five dollars every three months from the B.C. Land and Investment Co. (E.B. Morgan and Major J. Reynolds Tite.) With a Guernsey cow, many chickens, their own vegetables, fish caught from the sea, their own butter, an occasional bird, wood cut on the shore from logs which drifted in, they lived very pleasantly—a family of five—on a salary of forty dollars a month received from the Imperial Oil Co. Ltd.

FALSE CREEK IN 1899-1902.

Across the creek from the Leamy and Kyle mill standing derelict was the C.P.R. yards and roundhouse. A deep bay ran to within 100 or 150 yards of Smythe and Cambie streets. A few solitary fir trees still remained on the edge of the shore, the C.P.R. tracks circled the bay, and it is to this fact that the circular form of these tracks is today due.

On Cambie Street South, one small grocery store did a miserable business; it stood on the west side between Sixth and Seventh avenues. Bridge Street (Cambie Street South) was a narrow road twenty feet wide, with macadam surface in bad repair. On Sixth Avenue, between Bridge Street and the ravine, were three houses on the south side and west of Ash Street—none east of Ash Street—one of these, the one next to the ravine, was occupied by the father of Major Geo. W. Melhuish, afterwards commanding officer of the 6th Regiment D.C.O.R. North of Sixth Avenue, between Bridge and the ravine, all was second growth trees.

The two streams, the one just west of Ash Street, and the other just west of Bridge Street, were quiet "respectable" brooks, especially after a rain. The more easterly one was twenty feet wide at the mouth and overhung with bushes.

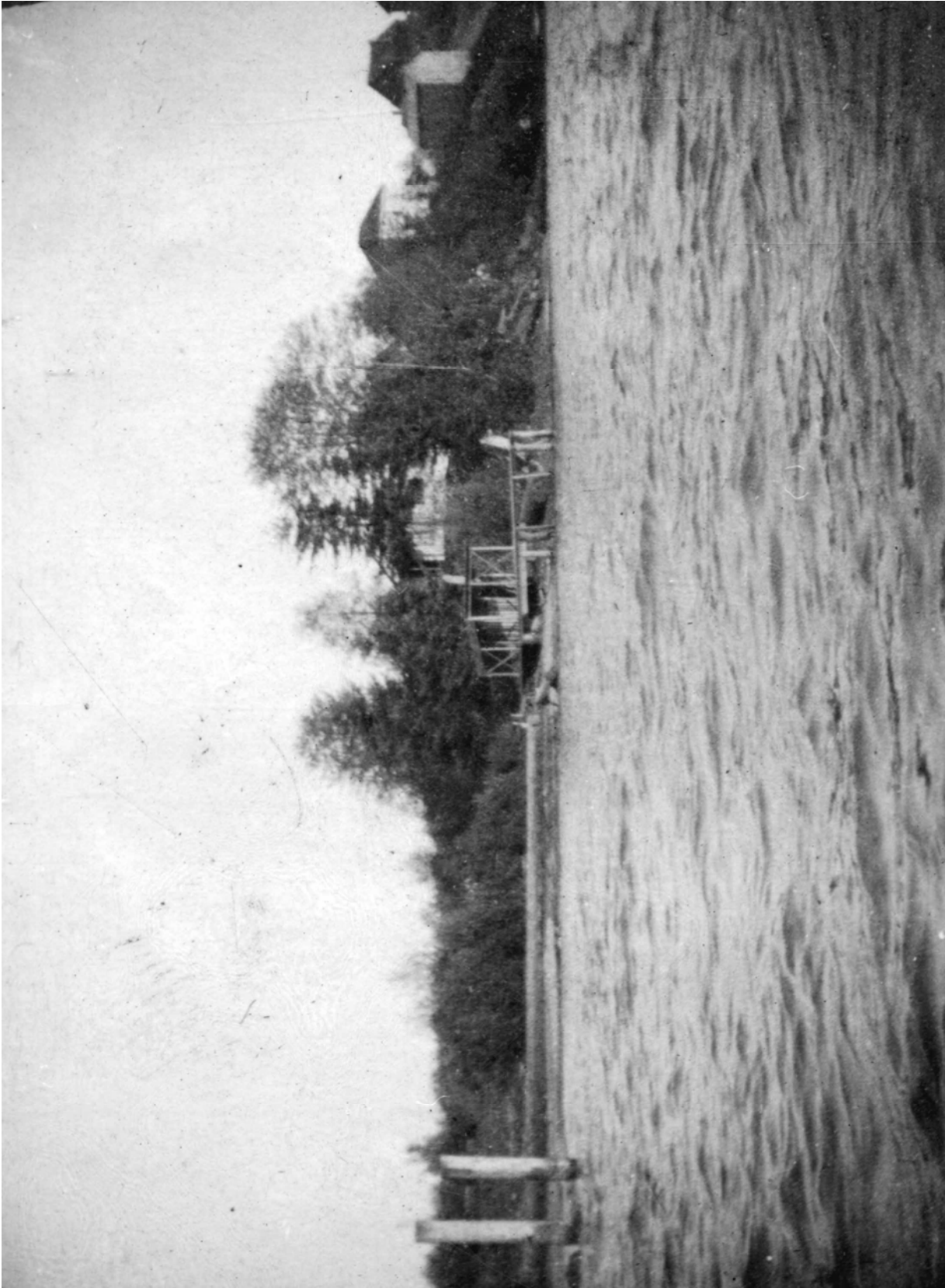
The whole area spoken of was wild, ragged shrubbery.

To the east of Bridge Street all was equally wild, but a wet sopping swamp from about 5th Avenue down. It was overgrown with trees in which boys with air guns or shot guns went shooting owls, etc., etc., for the "fun" of shooting.

South of Ninth Avenue (Broadway) and west of Bridge Street, the whole area was a wilderness of stumps and second growth.



Item # EarlyVan_v2_126



Item # EarlyVan_v2_127

LEAMY AND KYLE SAWMILL, FALSE CREEK.

This small photo was taken in 1899. It was reported at that time to me that the small house—a clapboard structure of three rooms built on posts, with tin bath, and sewerage running down the bank into the salt water by means of a wooden shoot (or chute)—was formerly the residence of the manager of the old Leamy and Kyle mill, which stood 100 yards west of the Cambie Street bridge, the old wooden one.

The two piles shown on the left are the western extremity of the log boom used for logs supplying the mill.

This mill was closed down for many years. During 1899 and 1902 it was idle; how long previously and how long exactly afterwards I do not recall, but I should judge it changed hands and started up some time about 1908. It is on the exact site of the present Vancouver Lumber Co., 1931, mill. The yards in those days were very small—much smaller than now.

There was no railways connection for many years after 1899-1902.

The site of the house is to the west of Ash Street, and north of Sixth Avenue West about 50 yards.

On the right of the picture it will be observed that the sea runs into the land. In 1899-1902 this arm ran for perhaps 100 yards into the land, and a stream entered it almost exactly under what is now Sixth Avenue West. The stream came down a ravine, 50 or 60 feet deep, from up near the hospital. Both banks of the small arm of the sea were very steep, and 30 to 40 feet high on both sides. *To the west*, across the creek mouth, was a waste of small bushes as far as Granville Street. My recollection is that there was nothing in the way of buildings until Granville Street Bridge (Third Avenue Bridge) was reached. The shore was mud, beneath a cliff rising and falling along the shore to a height of 10 to 20 feet. Above the hill ran up steeply in an incline, and was a delightful place to go for a ramble, and in the summer pick huckleberries, salmonberries, and shoot pheasants.

To the east the whole triangle, some 20 acres perhaps in extent, and bounded by Sixth Avenue West, Cambie Street, and the shore of False Creek, was small bushes, elm trees, willows, etc., etc., interspersed with green patches of grass upon which cows were tethered, as it was not fenced. A "dirt" road ten feet wide ran from the house in the picture in a sinuous direction towards the old Cambie Street bridge—a much shorter bridge than the present one—and the road crossed a small creek about half way to the bridge by a wooden trestle bridge. It was a pretty trail, lined closely on both sides with thick bushes which brushed both wheels of a buggy or wagon as it rolled along. In front of the house, and to the east was a large green patch of grass, roughly cleared of stumps, and studded with big handsome elm trees (seen in the picture). The cows and horses grazed around. The house lay empty for a long time, until in 1899, J.S. Matthews, his wife and three babes went to live there. They paid the B.C. Land and Investment Co. (Capt. J. Reynolds Tite and E.B. Morgan) five dollars a quarter (of three months) rental. They kept a Guernsey cow, many chickens, grew their own vegetables, caught fish in the sea, shot ducks, made their own butter and so on, cut their own wood from logs which drifted up on the shore, and lived very pleasantly and comfortably on a salary of forty dollars a month. They used Indian canoes. The children's health was excellent in such surroundings. Half way between the house and the bridge was another similar cottage, perhaps slightly better, in which a quite wealthy man lived with his wife, Capt. H.C. Ackroyd, an officer of the 6th Regiment D.C.O.R., and a member of the firm of Innes, Richards and Ackroyd.

J.S. Matthews
1 July 1931

7 JULY 1931 – LEAMY AND KYLE MILL, FALSE CREEK, CONTINUED.

The small creek, which entered False Creek perhaps 150 yards west of Cambie Street was, in 1899, concealed between overhanging bushes which lined both banks. At the mouth it was twenty feet wide, very sluggish, but narrowed and ran faster as it went back in a southerly direction. It came down a deep ravine which at one point crossed the corner of Ninth Avenue and Cambie—it did not cross Cambie, but was just a yard or so to the west. It was perhaps forty, perhaps fifty feet deep, and was afterwards filled in with excavation earth. It will thus be seen that in a short distance of perhaps two blocks to the west of Cambie Street, two quite respectable streams of fresh water entered False Creek.

In 1899-1902, False Creek was a haven for ducks in the winter time. There were literally hundreds, perhaps thousands of them; all kinds from butter balls to mallards and hell divers. They could, at times, be shot from the verandah of the small house in the picture. They were poor eating, being too fishy.

The fishing in the creek was good.

Across the creek, on the C.P.R. yards side, a deep bay ran to within one hundred yards of Cambie Street. A few solitary fir trees stood on the low cliff. The shore circled around, winding off in a southerly direction, and circled around the C.P.R. Roundhouse.

Up the creek was a shore similar to that in the west, just mud, and behind it a vacant space, almost without a house as far as Westminster Avenue, and covered with small trees and bushes—second growth.

On Cambie Street, then a narrow road without macadam, but with a five foot board sidewalk, was a single store. It was a small grocery store, just a yard or so above Sixth Avenue, and did a very small business.

In the Leamy and Kyle lumber yard was a watchman's cottage—all around was sawdust. The cottage stood by the creek with the trestle bridge.

In 1899 there were three houses between Cambie Street (on Sixth Avenue) and the creek shown in the picture. Sixth Avenue was opened up from Cambie to the creek. Then came the ravine with the creek at the bottom, and beyond that as far as Granville Street—sometimes in those days called Centre Street—was just a vacant area of wild shrubs. The block and a half of Sixth Avenue was a mere trail, passable in summer, deep in mud in winter, and rarely used. One of the occupants of the three houses (the one in the picture in the rear) was the father of Major Geo. W. Melhuish, afterwards officer commanding the 6th Regiment D.C.O.R. and for many years manager of the Rogers Building, Granville and Pender streets.

J.S. Matthews