

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.

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Contact Information

City of Vancouver Archives
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9
604.736.8561
archives@vancouver.ca
vancouver.ca/archives



SOUTH VANCOUVER. ROWLINGS. ELK.

Harry S. Rowlings, son of W.H. Rowlings, who in September 1868 took up land by preemption on the north bank of the Fraser River in what is now known as South Vancouver. 28 May 1932.

“No, I cannot say that I have ever seen any elk around Vancouver, but I have seen any quantity of elk horns. You know, east of Boundary Road, the dividing line between Greater Vancouver and Burnaby, and along the North Arm river front on towards New Westminster, there is a great stretch of low level land. I have seen lots of elk horns there in the early days, some rotten, some broken, some four or five prongs, but not rotten by any means, but I never saw a live elk.”

Query: What do you suppose became of all the elk?

“I don’t know; never heard of any. I went to live on our farm there with father in 1868; I was just four years old. Father came out with the Royal Engineers; he worked on the North American Boundary Commission; he was a non-commissioned officer, corporal, and I have seen him sign his name, ‘Corporal, N.A.B.C.,’ which meant North American Boundary Commission. He had been in the Navy, I don’t know how long, then he joined the army; he had a small pension of a shilling a day from the navy.”

INDIAN RELICS.

“We used to dig up hornbone daggers out there, made of elk horns I think. I could point out the place pretty well, I don’t think it is built on yet. We found them when we were trying to do a little gardening; the soil was good. Then we used to find a peculiar green stone mallet, a sort of green granite; where the Indians got it from I do not know; no stone anything like it anywhere around.

“The place where we found those Indian relics was right on the river bank. About the centre of Lot 258 there is a little creek; it runs into the North Arm of the Fraser River just east of Rowlings station on the Eburne-New Westminster interurban tram line. There is a little island there called Rowlings Island; there are half a dozen little islands in the North Arm of the river named after their first owners. Rowlings Island is just east of Rowlings station, and the little creek comes out right at the west end, opposite the west end of Rowlings Island. Our little garden was right along the creek, close to the river bank, and was just west of the creek on a little piece of flat. The site might be worth excavating for relics yet; I don’t know.”

LOGGING IN STANLEY PARK. GREER’S BEACH. JERICO. GORE AVENUE. MAIN STREET.

“I did a good deal of logging around Vancouver in the early days. Some years before the fire, and when the only buildings were around Hastings Mill, I hauled timber for piling from between Gore Avenue and Main Street—north of False Creek—into Burrard Inlet over a skid road and with oxen. The skid road would be approximately on the site of Gore Avenue as it is now. I hauled timber from Brockton Point, shortly after the Fire in 1886, and also had a logging camp at Greer’s Beach, now Kitsilano Beach, where I cut timber for the mills on False Creek. There was a man named Fader, there were four brothers of them, who had a mill where Robertson and Hackett’s mill now is at the south end of Granville Street—under the Granville Street Bridge, north end—and we paid him ‘so much’ for sawing the logs into lumber. I also had a camp at the south end of Granville Street near Beach Avenue.”

GREER’S BEACH.

“Our logging camp at Greer’s Beach had its dump into the sea right in the centre of the bay, just west of the foot of Yew Street. We put a lot of logs in the water there; we had a smaller dump at the foot of Macdonald Street. That would be about 1890; anyway, it was after the C.P.R. trestle bridge was built, because we used to go to Gastown over that trestle; the trestle was built before the old Granville Street-Third Avenue pile bridge.”

PREEMPTION, SOUTH VANCOUVER. THE LATE W.H. ROWLINGS, FIRST SETTLER IN SOUTH VANCOUVER.

“You see, my father, W.H. Rowlings, now deceased, settled on District Lot 258 on the north bank of the Fraser River in September 1868, and he lived there with his family until his death. My brother W.H. Rowlings, my sister Mrs. P.A. Byrne and myself, we all lived there during childhood. The surviving members of the family are Henry S. Rowlings, born 3 February 1864, Mrs. P.A. Byrne, born 24 February

1866, W.H. Rowlings, born 2 September 1867, all born at New Westminster, and Miss E.J. Rowlings, born on D.L. 258 after we went there, on 24 August 1874.”

OLD TRAILS.

“In those days, excursions were organized occasionally from New Westminster to Gastown, old Granville Townsite, down the Fraser River, around Point Grey, and into Burrard Inlet. The family went on those excursions on a number of occasions. At that time the means of communication from our home to either New Westminster or Gastown was by water. In the very early days there was a trail from New Westminster along the North Arm river bank to Musqueam; then there was a trail from George Black’s at Hastings to Gastown which would accommodate pedestrians only; of course, from Hastings to Westminster there was a road. Just where the trail from Gastown to Jericho ran I am not sure, but there was a trail, and I will tell you how I know; because it started at the south end of the old False Creek Bridge, now Main Street. At the south end of the old Westminster Avenue bridge a man we called ‘Crazy George’ lived in a shack, and I have heard tell that one day some young fellow going to Jericho logging camp took a big board as he went by George’s shack, slapped the side of the shack with all his might, let out a yell, and then ran. ‘Crazy George’ came out with a rifle, fired a few shots, and ran after the young fellow. There would be little in the yarn if it were not for the fact that they said he chased him all the way to Jericho.”

TRAILS.

Also see Canon Sovereign, St. Mark’s Church, Mrs. J.Z. Hall, etc. Also see Volume 3.

NORTH VANCOUVER. MOODYVILLE. SPRATT’S OILERY. HERRINGS. BIG TREES.

“In those days, there was nothing in North Vancouver excepting woods,” remarked Mr. Duncan McDonald of 446 6th Street West, North Vancouver, where he resides with his grandchildren, and who recalls Burrard Inlet in 1873, that is, earlier than any known person now living, for he came as a grown man; such as are known to have been living here then were mere little tots in 1873.

“I was born in the ‘Old Country’ in 1850, and when a young man of 21, that was in 1872, came to the Pacific Coast by way of the Union Pacific Railway to San Francisco, thence to Portland, Oregon by an old steamship, later wandered on to Bellingham, but finding that I was not yet on British Territory, struck off along the old telegraph trail through the forest and on foot by the only route to New Westminster. Ultimately, I reached Moodyville in 1873, and have lived on the north shore ever since. I have worked all my life at logging, many years for the Moodyville Sawmill. I am now 84, have nine grandchildren and fourteen great-grandchildren.

“I think the first settler in North Vancouver was Tom Turner; I know of no one here before him; don’t see how there could have been; he planted the orchard which stood in front of Pete Larson’s hotel on the Esplanade west of Lonsdale Avenue. Mr. Hugh Springer, manager of the Moodyville Sawmill, had a great liking for Tom. Tom was an Englishman and a great gardener. He lived in a log cabin which can be seen in that photograph you have taken in about 1890 of North Vancouver by Bailey Bros., with a flagpole beside it. The location is about what is now the southwest corner of Esplanade and Chesterfield Avenue. I don’t know who Tom was, but he used to go up to Moodyville two or three times a week, and call out, ‘any vegetables today.’ I went up to Mr. Springer one day and told Mr. Springer that Tom was sick” (ill.) “I recall it quite well, because Mr. Springer was smoking a cigar, and somehow the ash of the cigar got into the eye of his little son standing nearby. Mr. Springer hurried down, but Tom got worse and died.”

D.L. 271, NORTH VANCOUVER.

Memo of conversation with Calvert Simson, third storekeeper, Hastings Sawmill, at City Archives, City Hall, 22 September 1939.

“This statement here [in] *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2, by Duncan McDonald of North Vancouver, that Tom Turner, he says, ‘I think the first settler at North Vancouver was Tom Turner’; that’s wrong; and he says, ‘Mr. Springer hurried down, but Tom got worse and died.’ I think that’s wrong too.

“Tom Turner was nephew to William Bridges,” (who preempted D.L. 271) “and William Bridges sent for him to come out from England, and the understanding was that when Mr. Bridges died, Tom Turner was