

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

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ST. MARK'S CHURCH (ANGLICAN), KITSILANO.

W.J. Wenmoth, letter from Anyox, B.C., 8 December 1931

History of St. Mark's Church, Kitsilano:

How often it happens that the dissensions in a church are by the Grace of God, turned to good account, and cause a spreading of the work.

In 1906 Holy Trinity Church at the corner of 7th Ave. and Pine, now on the corner of 10th and Pine [*old church is now Orange Hall*] was the only Anglican church west of Granville Street. The parish extended from Kitsilano Beach to the Fraser River, and from Granville Street to Point Grey.

There was trouble in Holy Trinity; financially, of course. The stipend had not been paid in full for many months, and now it was proposed to increase the stipend to enable the rector to buy the house in which he was living. At a hurried-up meeting in the Rector's house, it was said the proposal was adopted. But it caused considerable dissatisfaction, and fourteen good families withdrew from Holy Trinity.

The next year the Rev. William Tuson came on a visit to West Fairview. [*West Fairview: a name applied to the area west of Granville Street to Trafalgar Street before the name Kitsilano became common. JSM 1933.*] Mr. Tuson was a superannuated clergyman of the Episcopal Church of the United States; he came from Spokane, Wash. He was accompanied by his wife and three children, Will, Nettie and Ada. Mrs. Tuson had a very prepossessing appearance and a lovely nature. She impressed everybody with her amiability, and unfailing good nature; she was an ideal wife for a clergyman. Nettie had her mother's good looks, but both girls were quiet and shy. After his serious illness here, Rev. W. Tuson returned to Spokane where he shortly afterwards died. Nettie is married and living in Nevada, and has now two children. Ada is still at home with her mother.

Mr. Tuson came to that particular part of West Fairview [*corner of First and Maple*] because he had four brothers living around that section. Naturally he called on the rector of Holy Trinity, and Mr. Tuson gave out that he had the consent of the rector to start a mission. The building on the corner of First and Maple was put up by the Tusons. Mr. Tuson approached some of those who had withdrawn from Holy Trinity, amongst whom were Messrs. Acheson, F. Bentley, G. Blakely, Cawsten, Esten, and W.J. Wenmoth. They were a little doubtful at first as to Mr. Tuson's standing. He showed no written permission from the rector of Holy Trinity, and he had no license from the Bishop of New Westminster. But when the building was up, and the opening service commenced, some of those who had not heard the old service for months came forward, and the little hall was well filled. Mr. Tuson used the Anglican prayer book. Mrs. Tuson was at the small organ.

NAMING OF ST. MARK'S.

During the following week a meeting was held to name the church. St. Stephen's was mentioned, and St. Nicholas'. Mrs. W.J. Wenmoth suggested St. Mark's. The last church they had attended in the Old Country was in Bush Hill park, north of London, and it was doing very successful work among the men and boys of a densely populated district. This church was called St. Mark's, and it might be a good omen to call this church the same name. A vote was taken. St. Nicholas got one vote, St. Stephen's four, and St. Mark's fourteen.

A meeting was called to formally hand over the mission to Christ Church. There were present the Ven. Archdeacon Pentreath, the Rev. C.C. Owen, rector of Christ Church, Messrs. Bently, Esten, Cawsten, and W.J. Wenmoth.

The Archdeacon asked Mr. Owen if Christ Church was willing to take charge of the Mission. Mr. Owen replied, "I haven't been asked yet." The Archdeacon began, "Well, if I—," when Mr. Owen cut in with, "It must come from the congregation, Mr. Archdeacon." As people's warden, Mr. W.J. Wenmoth, on behalf of the congregation, then formally asked Mr. Owen to take charge of St. Mark's. Then Mr. Owen replied, "With your permission, Mr. Archdeacon, I shall be glad to do so." Mr. Owen gravely shook hands with all present.

And thus the little orphan church found a mother.

Letter, W.J. Wenmoth, Anyox, 24 November 1931.

I have put in [*above*] how the mission came to be handed over to Christ Church. You cannot call Mr. Tuson a “rector of St. Mark’s.”

I always had charge of the Sunday school, and continued to do so after Christ Church took it over. I cannot understand how Holy Trinity [*overlooked in a preparatory sketch of the history of St. Mark’s submitted to Mr. Wenmoth for correction*] has been overlooked. We were in its parish all the time; we knew it, and were not allowed to forget it.

The few times that Mr. Gilbert took the services we had not been taken over by Christ Church, and when Mr. Owen did take charge, Mr. Sovereign and Mr. Day took it in turns to take the services. H.J. [*Gilbert*] may have taken the evening service.

SELECTION OF SITE OF ST. MARK’S CHURCH, CORNER WEST 2ND AVENUE AND BALSAM STREET.

The way the site was discovered was very simple. Our boundary on the east was Vine Street. So we went up the hill to Vine on Second Ave. Then we had to build not less than two blocks from the boundary. So we went another two blocks west, and came to the site.

Why Mr. Tuson put up that church building at his own expense we could never understand.

Note: the little old building at the corner of 1st Avenue West and Maple Street was a tall narrow structure, probably twenty-five feet wide by fifty long, with basement on the ground level—wet soggy ground—and the body of the church reached by a flight of steps up the front from Maple Street to the first floor. There was no access from the basement to the upper floor or church proper. When the services were held, the procession of the choir, etc., formed in the basement, and with every solemnity, equal to that of a cathedral choir, moved out from the basement onto the three-plank sidewalk on the street, and proceeded up the steps into the church. After discontinuance as St. Mark’s, the church was used by Seventh Day Adventists Conference for a year or two; it is now, 1932, a private dwelling of a sort.

In the year in which the earlier St. Mark’s was instituted a waste of wilderness spread over what is now a densely settled area. The original St. Mark’s was a tiny edifice of wood, erected in 1908, on the fringe of settlement then known as West Fairview, a designation now never heard. It was built by the Rev. W. Tuson, a superannuated Episcopal clergyman of the United States at his own expense and initiative. Of the original structure, the crosses which adorned its roof are the only relics known to have been incorporated in the new church, the present St. Mark’s at the corner of 2nd Avenue West and Balsam Street. The original building still stands, 1933, at the corner of 1st Avenue West and Maple Street, greatly altered, scarcely recognizable, and now a residence.

WEST FAIRVIEW IN 1908.

A considerable settlement had long existed at the southern end of a long narrow wooden bridge on piles which spanned False Creek from Granville Street (north side of creek) to Third Avenue. In the earliest days, before the bridge was built in 1888, there was a plot of green grass, a great maple tree near what became Third Avenue, and a logger’s hut, and not far to the west was the Indian settlement. Then came Tait’s Mill, a small sawmill on the shore exactly where the bridge reached Third Avenue, and a few feet to the west of it; the mill was in operation in 1888 at the time the first bridge was built. Higher up the hill, about where Seventh Avenue is now, was a logging trail which led towards Kitsilano Beach, and was traversed by such pedestrian traffic as there was going in that direction.

Later, after the pile bridge was built, and connected by road, a new road, to Eburne, Third Avenue was opened up, and ultimately became the principal thoroughfare leading to the west, the only thoroughfare for many years, and connected with Point Grey Road, a sinuous trail a few feet wide which started somewhere about Yew Street—or east of Yew Street—and more or less followed the shoreline westward; east of the City Boundary (Trafalgar Street) it passed through stumps, etc.; west of the City Boundary it entered the forest.