

Early Vancouver

Volume Two

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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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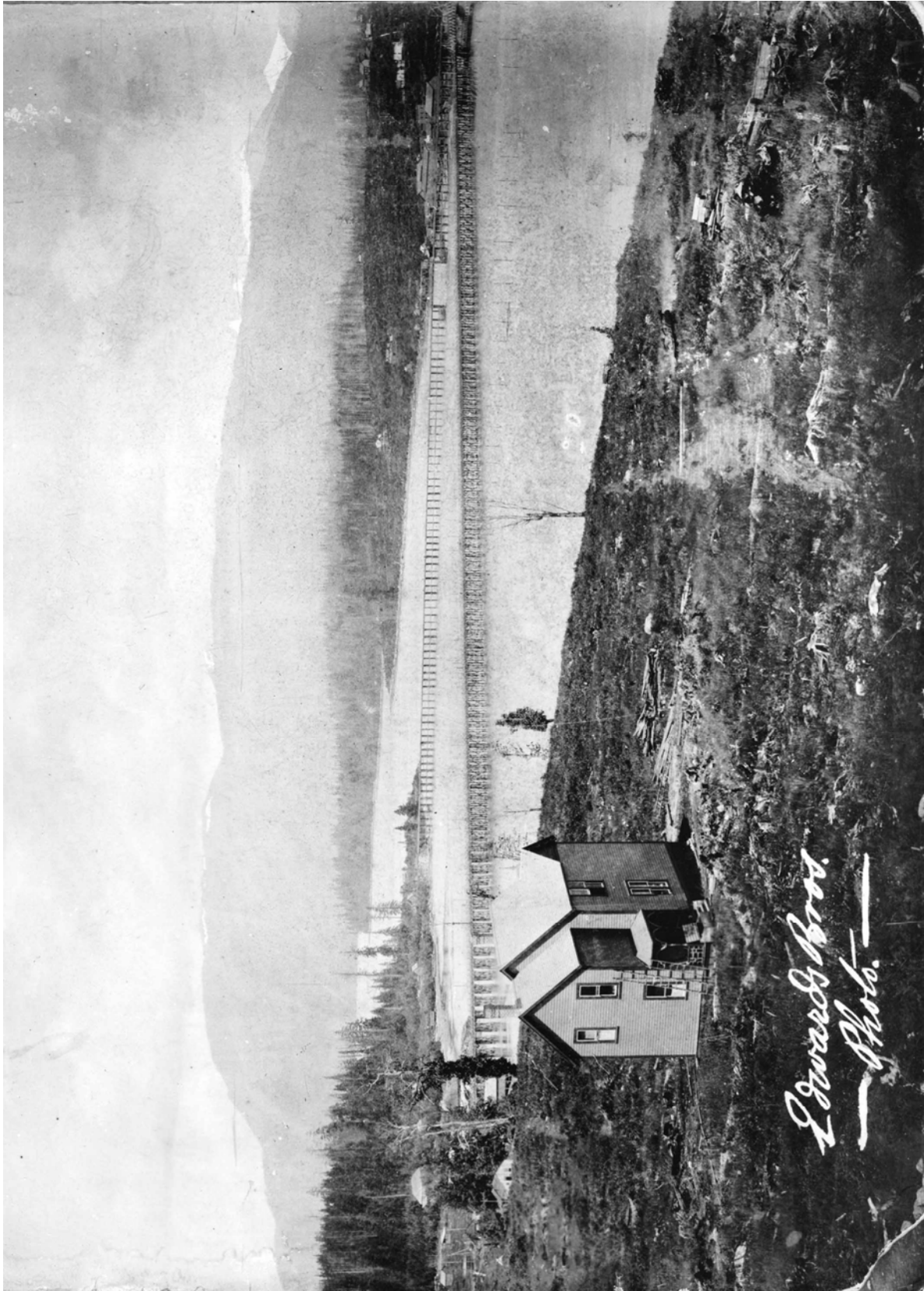
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*Edwards Bros.
— Photo. —*

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THE WEST END IN 1900.

In December 1899 Burrard Street beyond St. Paul's Hospital was a mere wagon trail of mud twisting in and out between stumps; a two-plank sidewalk ran on the west side as far as Beach Avenue. Where Burrard Street crossed Davie Street, the pedestrian jumped down two or three feet into a quagmire of mud, walked across Davie Street which was being opened up, and climbed up again on the other side. Burrard Street down the slope from Burnaby to Beach Avenue was a trail, a wagon's width wide, the centre of which was the bed of a stream of storm water in bad weather, and which left a gutter of varying depth and direction, so that it was difficult for wagons to descend; the trail was strewn with boulders and stone; on both sides the street allowance was stumps and forest debris, young trees, and tangled bushes. Burnaby Street, Harwood Street and Pacific Street did not exist, save on paper; Beach Avenue was a well travelled trail, ten feet wide, overgrown with bushes which hung over the trail, dusty when dry, mud when well wetted; there may have been a two-plank sidewalk, but it is not recalled. On Sunday afternoons, if they were fine, it was well travelled with flashy buggies on their way to and from Stanley Park.

All the area of the southern slope west of Burrard Street was wilderness; the stumps stood where they had been cut off when the trees were felled; the underbrush and debris had all been cleared away and it was possible to walk, or rather scramble over the West End. In the summer of 1900 the writer and his wife went blackberry picking in the direction of Bute, Thurlow or Nicola, on that slope, after the evening meal; they went too far, or sat too long, for with darkness coming on, they could not find their way back. No lights were visible; all was darkness when night fell. This was in early June 1900.

Within fifty feet to the west of the traffic signal at the entrance to the Burrard Bridge, at the corner of Pacific, there were two houses owned by Hugh Magee. Here we lived in the lower one. Other houses were near, but none could be seen for the second growth trees surrounding. Sometimes we wandered back in the trees to watch the birds, or to pick up bits of wood for firewood; chickens laid eggs in the wild land behind; sometimes a Chinaman, with pigtail, following a load of wood, sought the job of sawing it up, and got "two bits" (25¢) a cord for doing it.

Thirty-two years later (14 July 1932) I stood on the same spot—alone—surrounded with 10,000 to 20,000 citizens to witness the official ceremonious opening by provincial, civic and church dignitaries of the splendid three million dollar bridge. Then I walked over, where once I crossed by Indian dugout.

JSM 1 March 1933.

2 SEPTEMBER 1932 – VANCOUVER WEEKLY HERALD. ROBERT MATHISON, KELOWNA.

Mr. Robert Mathison, Doctor of Dental Surgery.

"The first newspaper in Vancouver was a weekly, the *Herald*, I worked there, not on the newspaper, but as job printer. The *News* was James Ross's and was the first daily paper; afterwards, Billy McDougall started the *Advertiser*. I recall that we had to wait three months before we could bring in from San Francisco a heavy paper cutter machine; we wanted to get it up Hastings Street to our printing establishment on the north side between Homer and Richards streets, but Hastings Street was such a mud hole that we had to wait three months before the road was in shape for us to bring in the paper cutter."

BICYCLES.

"I came to Vancouver in March 1886, and in 1887 I had sent out to me a bicycle, one of the old fashioned type, with one big wheel and one small one. An article was published some time ago saying that Mr. Piper had the first bicycle; I wrote to him and he conceded that his bicycle was the first with pneumatic tires, and that it was after I had brought mine."

NORTH VANCOUVER.

"There is a rather good story of how Pete Larson of North Vancouver got his wooden sidewalk to his hotel, the first hotel, I think—I don't think there was any stopping place there before his hotel. You will remember that the first landing stage at North Vancouver after the ferry started was a floating stage on logs with a step ladder arrangement, a gangway with cleats and rails—about four feet wide—to the pile wharf on which was a little wooden shed about ten feet square, without door or window, in which freight