

**Early Vancouver**

**Volume Three**

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

**2011 Edition (Originally Published 1935)**

*Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1933-1934.*

*Supplemental to Volumes One and Two collected in 1931-1932.*

**About the 2011 Edition**

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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



driven cattle over the False Creek Road lots of times; we used to drive cattle all night so as not to meet anyone; we used to start at one a.m. in the morning, and reach Granville about six a.m.; we did that so as to avoid meeting anyone on the road. Cattle will always follow a horse leading them; but if we had a buggy or anything on the road, it would have been awkward on a road no wider than a narrow hallway; or the cattle might have scattered in the woods.”

#### **FALSE CREEK BRIDGE.**

“There was a bridge at the head of False Creek, where Main Street is now; it was built on piles, but the deck was poles laid crosswise, and you bumped across it. Many a time I have swum my horses across False Creek at that place.”

#### **FALSE CREEK TRAIL.**

“The False Creek Trail” (from Main Street to Marpole) “was built so that the farmers out Lulu Island way could get their produce to market, and save them the water trip around Point Grey; not always practical in bad weather. Those farmers were Brighthouse and Scratchley, Mole, Magee, McCleery, and Kilgour, etc.; that was why False Creek Trail was cut, so that they could get their produce in to the Hastings Mill and Granville.”

#### **POST OFFICE. FIRST ROYAL MAIL.**

“Bill Bristol used to take the mail from New Westminster up river to Fort Yale in a canoe. Then, when the first mail came in by railroad to Port Moody, Bill brought the mail by train to Port Moody and I met him there, and brought the mail on to New Westminster and gave it to Postmaster Tait.”

Before leaving, Mrs. Murray treated me to a glass of her own exquisite home made blackberry wine, and, as it was New Year’s Eve, the cordial felicitations of Mr. and Mrs. Murray sent me on my way with those happy recollections of their generous hospitality, so commonly found among our real pioneers. It was my last visit for 1933. J.S. Matthews.

#### **EMIGRANT SOLDIERS GAZETTE.**

Mr. Murray told me that, in the *Emigrant Soldiers Gazette*, published on the *Thames City*, there is a fine poem about the object of their trip and the land they are bound for. He says this poem is sung to the tune of “Bonnie Dundee.”

A sister, Mrs. Sarah Kyle, died 6 May 1934. An account of her life appears in the *Province* of 7 May 1934.

#### **COPY OF MEMO FROM OTWAY WILKIE, JULY 1931 – “IN VANCOUVER BEFORE FIRE.”**

“Hugh Murray in Vancouver, Gastown, in 1872. Only four families there then. Came to B.C. with Royal Engineers, a child. Otway Wilkie.”

#### **19 SEPTEMBER 1934 – MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH EDWARD EVERETT AUSTIN OF 980 WEST 20<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, VANCOUVER, WHO UNLOADED THE FIRST C.P.R. LOCOMOTIVE UNLOADED AT PORT MOODY, OCTOBER, 1883.**

“I was born September 17<sup>th</sup> 1859, at Richland Center, Wisconsin, the son of Hiram and Mary Austin. Father was born in Vermont in 1824; Mother in Tennessee, an old American family, farmers; I was educated at a rural school of a sort; no railways in that part of the United States then; wagon transportation only. I left Richland Center just after the great Chicago fire, about 1872, and went to Iowa to learn the machinist’s trade” (Burlington railroad), “then went to the I.O.U.X.” (Soo City Line), “then on Kansas Pacific as machinist, then to Marshall, Texas, braking, then to Houston-Texas Central, also braking, then back north about 1878 as machinist on St. Paul and Pacific, now Great Northern Railway, then down on Milwaukee Line, and then to San Francisco, and up the coast to Yale seeking adventure.”

#### **“OLD CURLY.”**

“‘Old Curly,’ all shot to pieces, came up to Emory’s Bar on the deck of a river boat, I think the *Western Slope*, and I repaired her in the Yale shops; not much of a machine shop at that time, but I got her repaired and ran her. She had been operating on the building of the sea wall at San Francisco for the same people who were building the C.P.R. western end, i.e., D.O. Mills, Stanford, Huntingdon, and

Crocker; they were the original Central Pacific and Virginia Truckee crowd, and were building the San Francisco sea wall. They had no further use for the 'Old Curly' there, so they sent her up to the Yale contract.

"She was called 'Old Curly' because of a fellow by the name of Macgowan, a machinist at Yale. On the contract she was at all times known as 'Emory,' or 'No. 2,' but on one occasion, when Macgowan was working around her, something happened and she started to move, and came nearly 'catching' him. He was a great bar room artist; would get himself thoroughly purged with lots of rye—he was a great judge of rye—and that would start him talking, and when he got started talking you couldn't stop him telling over and over again how that 'damned Old Curly came near killing him.' He repeated it so often that finally she became unofficially known as 'Old Curly.'"

#### **EARLY RAILWAY ENGINES. "YALE," "LYTTON," "WESTMINSTER," "SAVONA."**

"Engine 'No. 1' was named 'Yale'; 'Old Curly' was the second engine on the Yale contract; 'No. 1' was the first. 'No. 1' was from Virginia Truckee, and a very different model; she was a 'Mogul,' as also were Nos. 3, 4 and 5. 'Curly' was the only one of her class. She was built by the Union Iron Works of San Francisco about 1869, but the 'Curly' in Hastings Park is much altered in appearance to what she was originally. She was remodelled by the lumber company at Mud Bay." (See Percy DesBrisay.) "The 'Yale' was landed at Emory's Bar before the 'Curly.' Bert Miner was engineer on the 'Yale.' I think Daly took charge of the 'Curly' for a month or so, and then she was tied up for repairs. I worked on her, completed her repairs, and ran her on the construction line east and west of Yale for about a year. Then I went on to the 'No. 3,' and that was the 'Westminster,' and ran her until I came to Port Moody to look after the setting up of 'No. 5,' or the 'Lytton.' 'No. 4' was called the 'Savona,' and was landed at Port Hammond." (Note: "Savona" station was called "Van Horne" at first.)

#### **LANDING OF THE "LYTTON" AT PORT MOODY.**

"The 'No. 5,' or 'Lytton,' was brought up from San Francisco on a steamer, and arrived at Port Moody in October 1883. I met her. We landed her on a raft of logs, and then, at high tide, the raft was towed up to the mud flat near the western end of the town, about where the Elgin Hotel was afterwards built." (See *Port Moody Gazette*, 1883.) "We built a runway for her from the raft to the shore, and the rails, which at that time were laid on the grade as far as what we called the 'Summit'; that is, the top of the hill just west of Westminster Junction. She was knocked down, when she arrived, but in due course I put her together, got up steam—she was in fine shape mechanically—and ran her three or four miles to the 'Summit.' She was 'headed' west, ran backwards when going east, and was employed for a time in laying steel to the point of connection of the line being constructed westwards from Yale; the point of connection was a flat place about a mile and a half east of Nicomen."

#### **NICOMEN.**

"At the point of connection there occurred a rather notable incident; we turned 'Lytton' around with a turntable, with a crowd of graders equipped with crow bars. We ran the 'Lytton' out on the far end of a short piece of disconnected track, and then 'slewed' one end of the track around as far as we could; then ran her back to that end, and by continuing the process, finally got her headed east, and joined the disconnected section of track to the main line. We 'pinched' her, track and all, around. The turning movement took place on the day of the connection of the two ends; one from Yale in the east, the other from Port Moody in the west; that is 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1884."

#### **FIRST THROUGH TRAIN TO YALE FROM PORT MOODY.**

"Then, having completed the turning movement, we ran back to Port Moody, and on the following day, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1884, the first through train left Port Moody for Yale." (See account, *Inland Sentinel*, 24 January 1884.)

#### **CISCO CANTILEVER BRIDGE ACROSS THE FRASER RIVER.**

"The elite of Victoria all came to Yale for the opening of the bridge across the Fraser at Cisco. We fixed up seats on flat cars, at Yale, and loaded them on to that, Onderdonk, and all the rest together. It was a great crowd, a great day, and fine weather; all kinds of eatables and drinkables; we started off from Yale with myself at the throttle, and I took the first train across the Fraser and Cisco bridge. Then on the other

side, beside the track, the ladies and gentlemen had a picnic; no speeches that I can recall, but they most certainly had a jolly time, and then we started back for Yale.”

### **ACCIDENTS.**

“Considering the work, there were few accidents in the building of the C.P.R. Engine ‘No. 4’ killed her engineer about three or four miles west of Hammond, near a bridge, left the track, and turned over. The new earth fill of a bridge approach sometimes sunk, the track consequently inclined upwards from fill to bridge, as in this case, then they ‘hit’ it too swift, and engine ‘took to the woods.’ Of course, trains were very light, and traffic was very light, and—so was the power. In those days, a five or six coach passenger train was a good sized train; today we have fifteen or sixteen coach passenger trains.

### **SNOW SHEDS, 1886-1887.**

“You must also not forget that in the winter of 1886-1887 there no trains at all for months” (this is denied); “it was a complete block with snow in the Rockies and Selkirks covering the tracks, for miles and miles, ten feet deep, and the trains did not get through until some time in March; nothing, not even on foot, so far as I know, crossed that gap.

“Then, about say March 1887, a whole ‘regiment’ of men started from Port Moody under ‘Fatty’ Armstrong—afterwards of Armstrong and Morrison, Vancouver—with shovels to shovel the snow away from the track. They had good going until they got to between Sicamous and Revelstoke. There was no such thing as a rotary snow plow, but they had lots of power; that is, they had lots of engines, but in those days an engine could not do very much as compared with the engine of today; a few cars, and a two or five percent grade, was all ‘she’ could manage.

“As I have told you, the engines as they arrived were numbered, and afterwards named. The following is the list as I recall it.”

### **EARLY RAILWAY ENGINES.**

“No. 1. Landed at Emory’s Bar.” (See file “George Munro,” May 1881.) “Known as ‘Yale.’

“No. 2. Landed at Emory’s Bar. Known as ‘Old Curly.’ (“Emory.”)

“No. 3. Landed at ? Known as ‘Westminster.’

“No. 4. Landed at Port Hammond. Known as ‘Savona.’

“No. 5. Landed at Port Moody, 19 October 1883. Known as ‘Lytton.’ (Ex S.S. *Victoria*.)

“Then, after the connection east of Nicomen was made there came another lot of engines, all new Baldwin standard type locomotives, and my recollection is that they were all landed at Port Moody.

“No. 6. Called ‘Nicola.’” (Landed 21 May 1884, ex. schooner *Courser*, duty \$3,786.)

“No. 7. Called ‘Kamloops.’” (Landed 21 May 1884, ex. schooner *Courser*, duty \$3,786.)

“No. 8. Called ‘Shuswap.’” (Landed 22 December 1884, ex. S.S. *Beda*, duty \$4,020.)

“No. 9. Called ‘Columbia.’” (Landed 22 December 1884.)

“That completed the locomotives at that time; nine in all.”

### **PORT MOODY IN 1884. ELGIN HOUSE AND CALEDONIA HOTEL. KELLY’S HOTEL.**

“When I first went to Port Moody it was more of a wilderness than is shown in this photo, No. ?, which John Murray gave you. The first I saw of Port Moody was in October 1883 when I went to take over the ‘Lytton’ engine, No. 5, so that this photo of Port Moody must be after that, as the Elgin House is show, and the Elgin House” (see *Port Moody Gazette* which says the Elgin House was opened about 15 January 1884) “was built after 1883. Colonel Scott’s Hotel was the Caledonia Hotel; I stopped there. His daughter was Mrs. Bob Kelly, who was the Kelly of Kelly’s Trail mentioned in the *Port Moody Gazette* of December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1883.”

### **NORTH ROAD.**

"There was no wagon road to Port Moody at that time. The only way to get to New Westminster was by the North Road via Bonson's Hotel at the end of it on Burrard Inlet. The North Road was, at that time, passable, but no more than passable, for a wagon. We used to stop at Bonson's overnight, and take a row boat to Port Moody in the morning."

### **THE GREAT FIRE.**

"On the afternoon of the Great Fire at Vancouver in June 1886, three others and myself rowed down from Port Moody; Vancouver was still burning when we arrived."

### **ONDERDONK.**

"Mrs. Onderdonk was a Miss Hillman before she married Onderdonk."

"I ended my railroad career when leaving the services of the Canadian National Railway in October 1928 after serving them as master mechanic for 13 years in British Columbia. This completed some 55 years R.R. service, and 47 years service in B.C., now retired and living at 980 West 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver. I married Miss Ida Macdonald at Revelstoke; we have no children. She still survives."

Read and approved by E.E. Austin, 15 October 1934. Also by T.C. Young, Jasper, Alberta.

### **MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. PERCY DESBRISAY, 1206 MAPLE STREET, KITSILANO BEACH, 18 APRIL 1934.**

#### **"OLD CURLY" IN HASTINGS PARK. LOGGING.**

"This printed reproduction of 'Old Curly' hauling a train of logs on iron rails, and with the title, 'Train of Logs, Royal City Mills Camp, near Vancouver, British Columbia,' was cut a good many years ago out of a magazine. It shows 'Curly' as she was originally, and not as she is now in the Hastings Park. This photograph was taken—I speak from knowledge, for I am the man in the whitish shirt leaning against a log behind the big stump—up on the ridge about two miles south of Cloverdale on the Pacific highway, about two miles west of the Pacific highway, and at the head of Kensington Prairie. The Royal City Planing Mills, New Westminster, logged off all that territory back of Mud Bay."

"Bob Harvey was the engineer, and is looking out of the cab window; he is now" (1934) "driving the switching engine for the Great Northern Railway, Vancouver."

"'Curly' in Hastings Park is not the same 'Curly' as I knew, as much of her is new; she was repaired so many times. She has a new boiler, most of the remainder is new, but it is the same old bell and the same old frame. Pictures taken of recent years published in the newspapers show 'Curly' as she is in Hastings Park, but that is not the original 'Curly.'"

"The original photograph from which this illustration was made was taken about 1894. At this time this was the only logging train in B.C., and all six cars of logs on hand-made trucks (no deck loading). Oxen were used in the woods, and hauled over skid roads to the landing. The water trough in the illustration, and also the hay, is for feeding the oxen."

"At first the logs were hauled to the Nicomekl River, and there boomed and towed over to New Westminster; later 'Curly' hauled logs over the Great Northern Railroad to Port Kells, and there they were boomed and towed to New Westminster. 'Curly' was taken north to Bear River in 1906, and kept in constant use 'til the year 1927. When this illustration was taken, wood was used for fuel; much later she was converted into an oil burner, and still later changed back to wood."

"The engine was bought in 1887 or '88 by the Royal City Planing Mills from Andrew Onderdonk, who had used her on the construction of the C.P.R."

"I was with the B.C. Mills and Royal City Planing Mills from 1886 to 1929."

(The last four paragraphs are copied from Mr. DesBrisay's own handwriting. Also see F.W. Alexander, Calvert Simson, and W. Frame. J.S.M.)