

Early Vancouver

Volume Three

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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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INDIANS IN FALSE CREEK FLATS.

"I have told you previously of how I lived by the Bridge Hotel on Westminster Avenue at the home of Magistrate Boulton, and how I mistook the flats for a prairie the night of my arrival in September 1886." (See "Cambie Street Grounds," *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1.)

"From the windows of that house I have seen the Indians fishing in their canoes up at the eastern end of False Creek, east of Main Street, in the big basin; used to watch them out of the back window; about halfway up the basin, I should think. They had long poles with nails on them which they used to dip down in the water, and long rakes." (See W.R. Lord.) "I think they got pilchards or herring or some such fish." (See "Herring on Burrard Inlet," *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2, 1933, Matthews; also "Cambie Street Grounds," Vol. 1.)

CONVERSATION WITH GEO. MATHESON, LAND REGISTRY OFFICE, 4 JULY 1933.

AL LARWILL.

"This is a photo of Al Larwill's original shack on the Cambie Street grounds, and that" (seated) "is Al Larwill. Al Larwill came from Chatham, Ontario; 'Niggertown,' they used to call it; all the slaves escaping from the United States found a refuge there. He and his brother built that shack themselves. Vic, his nephew, was a lawyer in Winnipeg, but Al Larwill is dead, so is his brother, I think; the two of them drifted here from Chatham. He lived in that shack for years and years. The Cambie Street grounds was C.P.R. property, and the city leased it. Then when the city bought it, they thought they would have trouble getting him off, thought he would claim 'squatter's rights'—he'd been there so long. The rumour got around to Al Larwill's ears, and he said he never intended making any such claim. They let him stop there; he was to stop there as long as he lived, but he died.

"The shack was at the northeast corner of Cambie Street grounds; the bleachers, just seats, were down at the southeast corner.

"Al Larwill would never allow us to swear. He had a rawhide whip lash, about that" (three feet) "long; it hung on a nail on the wall; he would give us that if we swore."

Query: Did you ever feel it?

Mr. Matheson: "*You bet I did.*" (With emphasis.) "We used to play cards in his cabin; we could play all the cards we wanted, but you daren't bet, not even a cent; he would not stand for betting."

CAMBIE STREET GROUNDS.

"There were bushes in the northeast corner, and all along the east boundary—along Beatty Street. We boys used to lie around in them. Once there was a circus on the Cambie Street grounds. The circus had been to Victoria, came over by boat, and one of the cages, full of snakes, slipped back in the 'chuck'" (sea) "as they were getting it off the boat; they got it again, and brought it up to Cambie Street; then one day, when we were lying in the bushes along Beatty Street—some days after the circus had gone—we were rolling about and one of the boys rolled into a bush, and there was coiled a great big snake, big around as your arm; say, didn't we get out of there."

CONVERSATION, 26 JULY 1933, WITH JOE REYNOLDS, SON OF THE MUSICIAN IN OUR FIRST BRASS BAND.

(See photo of band on Cambie Street.)

AL LARWILL.

"Al Larwill!!! Why, he did wonders for the boys down on the Cambie Street grounds; he just made things go right; kept the boys pure and wholesome, and the boys knew it then; know it now, too."

Query: Did Al Larwill live in a shack?

Mr. Reynolds: "Sure he did. I don't know when he built it. I was in it hundred of times. I came here just after the fire" (June 1886.) "I cannot remember the time when Al's shack was not there. The doorway

here” (photo with Al Larwill seated in chair, and number of lacrosse boys standing and sitting around him) “faced west; the windows looked east—over False Creek direction. It had two rooms. He used to cook his own meals. I never had a meal with him, but I have seen him eating his meals often enough. He used to like a glass of beer to drink with his meals, and had a hole in the floor and kept the bottles down in the earth. When he wanted a bottle he would lift up a board and stoop down, but although we all knew where he kept it, not a bottle was ever touched by the boys—not one.”

Query: Did he have a rawhide whip or clout to manage the boys with?

Mr. Reynolds: “Sure. Carried it around with him. Al enjoyed a game of cards and used to let us play cards, too, in his shack; whist, poker, no bridge then. But he would never let us bet. We had matches for counters. If any boy broke Al’s rules, he was banished from Cambie Street grounds; just banished—that’s all—never to come back.

“Oh, Al Larwill, he did a lot of good; he just ‘made’ the boys. He did wonders. Should put up some commemoration to him. Oh, yes, Al Larwill lived in that shack as long as I can remember.”

REMARK BY MR. MACGOWAN, SON OF A.H.B. MACGOWAN, M.L.A., 23 JULY 1933.

“When they rounded up the lepers that time, and sent them over to D’Arcy Island, Al Larwill was looking after them; guard or something; he left his shack to do it.”

CONVERSATION WITH J.A. MCCONAGHY, 3524 31ST AVENUE WEST.

(A post office inspector at Vancouver.)

“I remember Al Larwill very well. I was born in 1882, was seven when we came here in April 1889. I don’t recall if he was living on Cambie Street grounds then or not; I was too small, but I have been in his shack; just a two-room shack; never had a meal with him, but have seen him eating his meals there; he prepared them himself, he was a bachelor. I should think that would be about 1894; it was the time they had a two-day celebration on Cambie Street grounds; the Westminster lacrosse boys were over.

“The Larwill Lacrosse Cup is in existence, I think, somewhere. I think some of his admirers put it up, but if the parks board would adopt your suggestion that something permanent should be erected to commemorate his remarkable services to athletics in Vancouver, I think it would be an excellent idea.”

CONVERSATION WITH EX-ALDERMAN W.H. GALLAGHER, 5 JULY 1933.

AL LARWILL. FATHER CLINTON.

I showed him a photo of Al Larwill’s shack on Cambie Street.

Mr. Gallagher: “Al Larwill!!!! Why, Al Larwill and Father Clinton were the two best fellows in town. Father Clinton and Al Larwill were great friends; Father Clinton used to go up there and have a meal with him in that shack. One was a man of God and the other a man of, well, call it leisure; he never did anything. I think he must have had money of his own, or someone sent it to him.”

Query: Geo. Matheson says the whip Larwill had hung on a nail on the wall was used on boys who swore?

Mr. Gallagher: “Al Larwill deserves more credit than he gets for the clean, gentlemanly sport we got in the city. To him, more than anyone else, that was due. If a young fellow wanted to go ‘tough,’ well, he simply couldn’t be around Cambie Street; he was hoodoo; he was simply put away—until he decided to change. Al was clean in his language; that was why the parents used to let the boys go up there.

“There was no lock on the door of his cabin; the boys just opened the door and went in; changed their clothes for a game, or put them on again. There was no locking of things up.”