

Early Vancouver

Volume Three

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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

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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CONVERSATION WITH CAPTAIN HOLMES NEWCOMB, FORMERLY COMMANDER OF THE DOMINION GOVERNMENT STEAMER *KESTREL*.

EARLY SHIPBUILDING ON FALSE CREEK.

Major Matthews: I have an old photo of the Leamy and Kyle mill on False Creek; it shows two vessels being constructed on the stocks; they tell me one of them was the old *City of Nanaimo* steamer. Do you happen to know what the other one was?

Captain Newcomb: "*Thistle*. I don't know just what she was; not tug; sealing schooner, I think."

EXCERPT FROM *THE KITSILANO TIMES*, THURSDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 1933.

OLD MILL IS DEMOLISHED.

RAT PORTAGE MILL IS BEING RAZED.

One of the familiar landmarks on the West of Granville Bridge is slowly disappearing. Since the fire in the abandoned mill last spring wreckers have been busy taking what good timbers remained in the old Rat Portage mill, and, in the last few weeks, have started to take down the large sawdust burners near the creek-side.

The old company's offices are now occupied by the Finnsson Lumber Co., who have established a retail yard across the street on Second avenue. They are much interested in getting suburban trade, and carry a full stock of all lumber that may be needed by any householder or carpenter. They still use the old Rat Portage Lumber Co.'s phone number Bayview 354.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH ISAAC HENDERSON, OF 1045 MELVILLE STREET, VANCOUVER, 9 JULY 1934.

HASTINGS STREET SQUATTERS. HENDERSON BROS. JOHN B. AND ISAAC. CEDAR COVE.

"My brother John B., commonly called 'Jay B.,' came to B.C. in 1875. He located at Chilliwack, near Popcum, and started to clear 160 acres with his newlywed bride. Got flooded out by the high water and had to build a raft to get wife away. He built about half of the town of Yale. He contracted to keep about 110 miles of the Cariboo Road, Yale to Cariboo, in repair during the building of the C.P.R. railway through the Fraser Canyon. The river rose again, washing out bridges and road. Was given a commission as Justice of the Peace for all B.C. He started the Dominion Sawmills, sash and door and furniture factory in New Westminster, afterwards the Royal City Planing Mills.

"He staked off a sixty-six foot lot on the south side of Hastings Street West, Vancouver, about 1884 or 1885, where the Columbia Theatre stood" (Lots 7 and part of 8, Block 29, D.L. 541) "and just east of Abbott Street South, after a fight with the C.P.R. his claim was allowed. His land was sixty-six feet frontage, which did not coincide with C.P.R. survey ideas; they surveyed the lots in twenty-five foot lots, so he afterwards bought the fraction, nine feet, from the C.P.R. He had quite a fight with the C.P.R. over it; there were four or five others who did the same."

DOMINION SAWMILLS.

"He was at that time manager of the Dominion Sawmills, and he put up a little shack, about ten feet square on the lot, and afterwards learned that an old cedar shake maker had gone to live in his little shack, so John came over from Westminster and made a deal with the old cedar shake maker to stay right there in the shack to hold it, and promised him half. Five or six of them had quite a time establishing their squatters' right. The property was afterwards sold for \$10,000."

(Note: an examination of the land registry records shows that the crown grant for D.L. 541 to the C.P.R. is dated 13 February 1886, and with certain exceptions, one being the old Court House Site—Victory Square—the whole area is granted to the C.P.R. It is therefore obvious that any arrangement re squatters rights was made between Mr. Henderson and the C.P.R.)