

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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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.”

CAMBIE STREET GROUNDS. JOE FORTES. CHAIN GANG.

“Al Larwill and the little fellows cleared the most part of Cambie Street. Why, the fires would be burning there until midnight! There was just a sort of little clear space in the centre” (see *World* panorama, 1890); “all the rest was stumps; it was cleared up towards Cambie Street; down by Beatty and along there was all stumps. I remember the old darkie, Joe Fortes, used to be up there helping, and when it was time to go back to the Bodega” (saloon) “where he worked, to sell beer, he would have to hurry, so he did not have time to wash his hands when he got there. When I was on the Council I got the chain gang sent up there, and they pretty nearly finished what was left of the clearing to be done.”

Query: George Matheson told me this was the shack Al Larwill lived in.

Mr. Gallagher: “So it was, at first, for the first couple of years or so. But they added to it. At first it was 200 feet from Beatty Street, but they kept shoving it back and back ‘til they got it almost to the edge of Beatty Street in the corner. The shack they pulled down wasn’t the shack they put up; it had been moved two or three times, added to, altered, twisted around.” (Note: this explains the altered position in picture of naval review on Cambie Street, Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, 1897.) “He was there a long time, fifteen years, anyhow. I remember they put a little verandah on it, and Al and his friends used to sit out there and smoke; this is it here in the corner.” (See photos of Queen’s Jubilee parade, 1897, sailors marching.)

VANCOUVER ATHLETIC CLUB.

“Al Larwill had more to do with the building of the Vancouver Athletic Club, the building on the northwest corner of Dunsmuir and Smythe streets—the one they afterwards sold to the Navy League” (now and for years past used as Drill Hall for Vancouver Regiment) “—than the men who put up the money. He worked for it day and night, never let up; it was more due to him than anyone else that the building was finally erected. And when war was declared, eighty-five percent of the young fellows in that club joined up, and all the directors but two or three.”

W.L. TAIT’S SHINGLE MILL. RAT PORTAGE LUMBER CO.

Re W.L. Tait’s shingle mill, on the water’s edge, corner of 3rd Avenue and Centre Street (Granville Street), beside the old 3rd Avenue bridge. Afterwards site of Rat Portage Lumber Co. (destroyed by fire in May 1933.)

“Tait’s little portable mill? He didn’t build it; he just set it on the ground; he was head sawer, tail sawer, and everything else. When the saw took a cut you had to wait two or three minutes for the boiler to get up steam before it would take another cut.”

CONVERSATION WITH W.M. HORIE, RE W.L. TAIT’S MILL.

Mr. Horie: “I remember Tait’s little shingle mill; he had a little old boiler you could move away in a wheelbarrow. He cut shingles over there; I came here in May, 28th May 1889, and I’m not sure, but I think I seem to recall them starting it.”

BREWERY CREEK.

There seems to be confusion as to where Brewery Creek was, or which of two was the proper Brewery Creek, similarly as there is respecting the “North Arm Road,” of which in all, there were three, the first “North Arm Road” being from Westminster to Point Grey, afterwards River Road, now Marine Drive; the second one was the “Road to Granville,” afterwards “North Arm Road,” still later Fraser Avenue, and a third one, now Granville Street, commonly so called about 1900.

The proper Brewery Creek was the creek coming down Mount Pleasant Hill just east of Main Street (then Westminster Avenue), and on which creek was the Brewery of Doering and Marstrand, 7th Avenue. (See Tea Swamp.)

A creek which some say was known to them as Brewery Creek is one which got its name from the Red Cross Brewery on Seaton Street, now Hastings Street West, which brewery got its water from the creek, as did also Spratt’s Oilery in the early 1880s, and also John Morton before that. (John Morton is reported