

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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GEORGIA STREET TRAIL.

“After the Georgia Street Trail was cut, the land was comparatively clear of trees below Georgia Street; nothing like this photograph. Beyond the bunkhouse, further west, a half-breed woman—she had two daughters, and her husband was a ne’er-do-well white man—lived; the city evicted them, and there was a great to-do about it. They were squatters; had a garden there, and a little shabby sort of house. Mr. Oben’s bunkhouse was fifty or sixty feet long, but while the white men drove the oxen, it was the Chinamen who did the work; at one time, there must have been 150 Chinamen there; I remember, because they were always playing tricks on them, and some times in the middle of the night someone would strike the gong outside the cookhouse” (big steel triangle) “and get them all out of bed on the pretense that the place was on fire.”

CLEARING THE FOREST OFF THE WEST END. BULL PUNCHERS.

“Then there was a great runway for timber coming out of the woods; it shot out into the water; but below Georgia Street was all cleared land. I used to go down into the woods south of Georgia Street to see the oxen; I had never seen oxen being driven in the woods and I got into a ‘spat’ with one of the bull punchers. The bull punchers had a long pole with an iron spike on the end, with which they prodded the oxen when they thought it necessary, and I saw one bull puncher do this and bring the blood, and I told him what I thought of his cruelty; so they ordered me out of the bush, and told me to stay out.”

J.J. NICKSON. CAPILANO WATER WORKS.

“Before the work of clearing was finished, that is, the clearing of the trees from the brow of the hill to Stanley Park, Mr. Nickson came over from Victoria in connection with the Capilano Water Works, and went to live on Melville Street as our neighbour” (see T.R. Nickson), “and Mr. Oben and Mr. Nickson became very friendly; that was how Mr. Oben got connected with the water works and made the famous trip to Capilano.” (See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.)

CAPILANO WATER.

Joseph W. McFarland, secretary, Vancouver Water Works, called for tenders for construction of dam and weir at Capilano River on 23 December 1887. Some months later the contractor threw up his contract, and the work was completed by others.

The water first flowed through pipes under the First Narrows at ten minutes past eleven on 25 March 1889. (See *News-Advertiser*, 26 March 1889.) There is a very long report, and a very complete one, several columns long, of the whole history of the Water Works in the *News-Advertiser* about this time.

CONVERSATION, JUNE 1933, WITH J.W. MCFARLAND, FORMERLY SECRETARY, CAPILANO WATER WORKS BEFORE SALE TO CITY OF VANCOUVER

After telling him of W.F. Findlay’s recollection of Mayor Oppenheimer’s conversation with Lewis Carter re Capilano water pipes under First Narrows: (See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.)

“No, Bill Findlay’s wrong. How could Oppenheimer be advocating the Capilano Water System? Oppenheimer was mixed up in the Coquitlam Water Works scheme, which was defeated. Mr. Findlay must have been confused, or you have been, or some other explanation applies. I don’t know. What I do know is that when I cleared out our offices and sold Mahon, McFarland and Mahon to the Royal Trust Co., that I gave all my early newspaper clippings, etc., etc., to the City Engineer at that time; and they never said thank you. They were wonderfully complete plans. The early engineers surveyed all the watersheds; they even went up as far as—what’s the name of that lake the B.C. Electric Railway Company have been doing development works on? The Allouette, that’s it; they surveyed all around for water. All that work was done long before the Greater Vancouver Water Board came into existence. We had a charter to build a tunnel under the Narrows.” (Note: the above-mentioned papers are now in the Vancouver Public Library.)

C.P.R. S.S. ABYSSINIA.

"I lived in the cottage shown in the photograph of Vancouver, 1886, as not being burned in the fire. While I was in the cottage, one night, I heard a moaning sort of howl, and went outdoors to 'murder' a supposed cat, but it was the C.P.R. *Abyssinia*, the first steamer to the Orient, coming in. We were not accustomed to such noises in those days.

"The above cottage was on Dunlevy Avenue, just below Powell Street. That was the 'swell' residential district in those days. Those who lived there were R.H. Alexander, R.G. Tatlow, C.E. Hope, Henry Bell-Irving, John Boulton, Thos. F. McGuigan, Mayor MacLean, and—myself."

ST. JAMES CHURCH AND THE PRINCESS LOUISE TREE.

"St. James Church was at the foot of Westminster Avenue. The Princess Louise Tree was just west of the corner of Gore Avenue. Those buildings behind are tenement buildings, on Powell Street, I think. Single men paid \$5 a month for them, and eked out a living; a loaf of bread and some fish, or clams.

"F.W. Hart's place was on Alexander Street, about where the Europe Hotel is now; one of those shacks on the beach east of the Sunnyside is my office. My Chinese servant saved my laundry; it was clean, just come from the laundryman. He took it down to Hastings, but it got dirty, and had to be rewashed; for a time I was the only man in town with a white shirt."

CONVERSATION WITH MR. THOMAS RALPH NICKSON, OF STANLEY PARK MANOR, VANCOUVER, 5 OCTOBER 1933, AT CITY HALL.

J.J. NICKSON. VANCOUVER.

"My father, John Joseph Nickson, was born in Runcorn, Cheshire, near Liverpool, England, and left there, together with his family, consisting of my mother and three children, for British Columbia in 1885, travelling from Liverpool to New York on the S.S. *Baltic*, thence via Northern Pacific Railway to Portland, thence to Tacoma, and from Tacoma to Victoria, where he arrived in the month of April 1885. The family consisted of my mother," (née Miss Jane Allen of Birkenhead, Cheshire) "an elder sister Catherine Louise, myself" (Thomas Ralph) "and a sister Lindsay. My father was educated at the Liverpool Institute, Liverpool."

ESQUIMALT AND NANAIMO RAILWAY.

"On arrival in Victoria, he secured a subcontract under Bell, Larkin and Patterson, to build the bridges and trestles between Victoria and Shawnigan on the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway then under construction, and built all the wooden bridges from Victoria north to Shawnigan. He had been a bridge contractor on railways in England. My uncle, Thomas Ralph Nickson of Liverpool, a civil engineer, and formerly a partner of my father's in England, came out to Victoria, but he did not like the construction of the bridges after he had seen the drift bolts—said there was not enough iron in them—and returned to England where he became associated with Messrs. Lever Bros. of Port Sunlight, building their Sunlight Soap Plant there, and laying out their townsite."

VICTORIA WATER WORKS.

"My father next secured an appointment as superintendent of construction of the Victoria Water Works system, which procured its water from Elk Lake. He was not impressed with the source of supply of water, contending that the water from Elk Lake was of poor quality, but other plans were too costly—there was not enough money to go further away for better water—so the Elk Lake plant was built. He superintended the laying of all the steel pipe, with lead joints; employed by the City of Victoria, of course, that was about 1886."

VANCOUVER WATER WORKS.

"In the fall of 1888, my father was appointed by John Irving of Victoria, Superintendent of the Vancouver Water Works Company, and then we moved to Vancouver. We came over to Vancouver on the old *Princess Louise* and went to live in a small shack built on land which my father had purchased from the C.P.R. The exact spot is now 1270 Melville Street. It was a cheap board and batten cabin of two rooms, without garden or anything of that sort, and surrounded by enormous stumps of cedar and fir trees in all