

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

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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Victoria, cut off the branches, so that what was left were stubs; this was put in the middle of the pit for the bears to climb up. That was the start of the zoo in Stanley Park.” (See Avison, first park ranger.)

PIONEERS’ PICNIC, NEWCASTLE ISLAND, 14 JUNE 1933.

Rev. E.D. Braden, president (whose father built on the first, if not the first house—small cottage—in the east end, after the fire), speaking in the Pavilion: “I won’t keep you long; I don’t believe you want a long ‘sermon.’ Mr. Malkin” (former Mayor Col. W.H. Malkin) “says, ‘No soul is saved after the first twenty minutes of a sermon.’”

C.P.R. CONSTRUCTION.

W.J. Bower, former premier of B.C., to Major Matthews, who had been telling him of Mr. Thos. White’s attendance the day before at the golden wedding of Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Seymour, pioneer druggist, Vancouver.

“Tom White’s a pretty old man now, must have been the oldest pioneer there. Tom White helped locate the C.P.R. with Mr. Cambie; Cambie stayed on with the C.P.R., Tom White left them. Then he located the Canadian Northern” (now Canadian National) “afterwards. D’you ever hear the story about the time Tom White was at North Bend during the construction of the Canadian Northern, and Lord Shaughnessy came along? Lord Shaughnessy says, ‘Hello, Tom, what are you doing here?’ ‘Working,’ says Tom. Shaughnessy says, ‘Yes, but what at?’ ‘Oh,’ says Tom, ‘rectifying the mistakes I made when I located the C.P.R.’”

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL, LORD BESSBOROUGH, AT THE VANCOUVER PIONEERS BANQUET, GEORGIAN ROOM, HUDSON’S BAY STORE, 26TH OR 27TH MARCH, 1934.

During the course of speech: “The secret of happiness in old age is the contemplation of one’s own work, and to see that it is good.”

“FELIX PENNE.”

(Author of “’Tis infamy to die and not be missed,” etc.)

J. Francis Bursill, founder of the “Dickens Fellowship” and Bursill Library in Grandview, was a charming old literary man who had seen many years of newspaper work in London, England, migrated to Vancouver, and about 1926 was a columnist on the *Vancouver Daily Sun* newspaper. He wore a bushy beard, usually in need of brushing, and his inattention to tonsorial detail prompted little jokes, some true, others fiction, on his personal appearance. One of these follows.

As Mr. Bursill emerges from “White Lunch” Restaurant on Granville Street, Mr. Noel Robinson, well-known journalist, passes door.

Mr. Robinson: (halts, smiles and says) “Good morning, Mr. Bursill.”

Mr. Bursill: (his voice had a rather high pitch; i.e., squeaky) “Good morning, Mr. Robinson.”

Mr. Robinson: “Been having breakfast, Mr. Bursill?”

Mr. Bursill: “Yes.”

Mr. Robinson: (whimsically, and shaking one finger at him) “And I know what you’ve had.”

Mr. Bursill: “No. I don’t think you do.”

Mr. Robinson: (still smiling) “Yes, I do.”

Mr. Bursill: “Well, what did I have now?”

Mr. Robinson: “You’ve had eggs.”

Mr. Bursill: "No, I didn't. I haven't had eggs for three weeks."

Another story is that at the start of a journalists' picnic to Bowen Island, and before the vessel left the dock in Vancouver, the burned out stub of a cigarette butt, a fragment of discoloured paper and frayed tobacco—fell from his lips and lodged in his whiskers—it was said, with laughter, that a bush rat would some day jump from those whiskers—and was still so lodged when the boat reached Bowen Island an hour later.

A kindly, good old soul, careless of his appearance, but who wrote probably the most beautiful poem ever composed in Vancouver. He died in almost abject poverty.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH R.D. RORISON OF R.D. RORISON AND SONS, DOMINION BUILDING, HASTINGS STREET, 3 JULY 1934.

ENGLISH BAY CANNERY.

"We purchased the English Bay Cannery in October, 1905, for \$7,350. We purchased it from, according to the deed, dated the 14th of October, George Benjamin Dodwell, Exchange Chambers, St. Mary's Axe, London, Merchant; Oswald May Malcolm, of 27 Lombard Street, London, England; Hubert Cecil Harold Cannon of Vancouver, and Alexander Stewart of Tacoma. The purchasers were actually our firm, but the deed was made out in the name of my son, W.D.S. Rorison. The vendors had had the property mortgaged to the Imperial Bank of Canada. T.H. Calland & Co. were the agents for the vendors, and the first payment of \$700 was made on the 25th of October, 1905.

"The property we bought included the cannery, wharf, and cannery cottages, and lots 31, 32, 33, 34, Block 4, D.L. 540, and lots 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, Block 14, D.L. 540, all excepting a portion of the building known as the 'Fish House,' and the machinery, both of which they intended to move to some other point on the coast." (See photo No. ?)

"The following year, about May, one of the buildings on the south side of Point Grey Road was damaged by fire. The cannery we dismantled in 1906, and used part of the timber to repair cottages on the shore and also to build in part a residence on lots 4, 5 and 6, Block 13, D.L. 540.

"A pile of rusty iron on the beach marked—I believe to this day—the exact spot; it is the remains of cuttings of tin used when making salmon cans, and which was swept through a hole in the cannery floor."

CONVERSATION WITH JOHN INNES, HISTORICAL SCENIC PAINTER, AT HIS OFFICE, 602 PROVINCE BUILDING, HASTINGS STREET, 23 JUNE 1933.

VANCOUVER? WHERE IN HEAVEN IS THAT?

"Some fellow rode up on a horse and blurted out, 'Vancouver has been destroyed by fire.'

"I asked him, 'Where in heaven's that?'

"He replied, 'Oh, some place over the mountains.'

"That was the first time I heard of Vancouver. In 1886, I had a horse range ranch on the prairies, a good many miles south of Calgary, away out on the bald prairie, miles from anywhere. One day this fellow rode up to my ranch house on a horse. Visitors were few in that remote place, so I went over to see who the fellow was, and see what news he had. That was the first time I heard of Vancouver."

1 OCTOBER 1933 – DAVID AND ISAAC OPPENHEIMER.

John Innes, celebrated historical scenic painter, laughed—he is a gay old "sport"—then he chuckled:

"Did you ever hear the yarns they tell about Dave and Ike Oppenheimer. Dave and Ike used to peddle—sure they did—in the Cariboo. They say, one time, Dave took one side of the creek and Ike took the other. They had their bundles of pins, needles and such stuff over their shoulders. They tell the yarn that once Ike went up one side of the creek with his outfit, and a big miner fellow wanted to buy a darning