

**Early Vancouver**

**Volume Three**

**By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.**

**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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 3 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 3. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

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Mayor.

(In Sir John's own handwriting, at foot of above telegram)

M.A. MacLean Vancouver City B.C.  
Dominion-Government will contribute five thousand dollars.  
John A. Macdonald.

To Sir John MacDonald

No. 306. 14 pd. Via Sumas  
Time 12.01  
Ottawa, June 27, 1886

Message received please accept our unbounded thanks for your most generous and timely assistance.

M.A. MacLean.

All time Ottawa time.

### INTERPRETATION OF LETTER

Phone Green 698

P.O. Box 230

Office: 616 Sixth Avenue W.

F.W. HART  
Real Estate and Merchandise Broker

We Build, Buy  
Sell and Rent  
Houses

Prince Rupert, B.C. Sep. 4-33.

City Archivist *[as I read it. J.S. Matthews]*  
City Hall, 16 Hastings St. East  
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Sir: Yours of Aug 31 at hand. Re the photo found *[1A]*; that was my hearse; it was built by Nash and Co. of --- and took the first prize at the Toronto fair that year. I bought it after seeing it at the Exhibition.

Queen Bros. kept it for me at their livery stable opposite the Hudson's Bay Co., now corner of Granville and Georgia Streets; the Stanley Park stables was Georgia Street *[1]* with one or two blocks of the Medical Building now. --- *[2]* kept by William Harvey who moved to Trounce Alley directly behind my place on Cordova street near the corner of Carrall street. My undertaking establishment stood beside my store, near the Bodega in Trounce Alley. I named it Trounce Alley; it kept the name in my time.

I knew Mr. Oben very well; don't remember the widow. You say she said she "recalled a funeral down Cordova street with the coffin on top of a load of carrots" which I most emphatically deny. There was no cattle on Mount Pleasant or anywhere near it or farms or gardens between the city and the cemetery; there is absolutely a mistake, with all due respects to Mrs. Oben. *[3]*

Many funny things did happen in those early days (here is one.) A first I had to bury Indians and Chinamen in Deadmans Island. --- *[4]* New Westminster, when I used the hearse of Fales and Co. of New Westminster and Victoria. We shipped *[bodies]* direct to Victoria. *[5]* The City got a site, but done nothing to get it ready. I called on the City Council often to prepare the ground. So at last the mayor got tired of my coming, and began to call me down. After the ground was ready I had no funerals, finally a suicide case. *[6]* I turned to Mayor and said, "I could not get anyone, but finally got a volunteer."

Here is another one.

The lumbering business was the only industry, and the loggers were our principal source of ready cash.

One day a logger got killed, and the Boss brought the body to my parlor for a funeral. He said he was busy, and could not stay, but said, "Give him a first class funeral, and I'll pay you."

Well, I had just got the new hearse; the funeral was advertised to take place at 2.30. [7] My bookkeeper was my assistant funeral director. My upholstering shop was upstairs with about five or six men; the finishing room was the next floor above; that with two men. The time was up at 2.30 with no mourners, not anybody but the minister there. So I told the boys to dress up with the bookkeeper to take the funeral, and my men as pallbearers. We had one buggy, the hearse, and two closed hacks, all ready to go on my saying so. That day I had the famous Kerry Gow Dramatic Company coming to play that night at Hart's Opera House; they were due at 3 p.m. that day. I kept in stock six or seven silk or plug hats, and I dressed up my bookkeeper and the drivers in top hats as well as myself. Three o'clock came, and the company came to my store. We had had splendid advance sales sheet and the company was well pleased. After I had showed them that, I said, "Come this way please"; they followed, eighteen or twenty. The store was 120 [feet] deep to the rear, then through an oil cloth room, and then the parlors. I was ahead, and as soon as they came I bowed them to sit down; in the centre of the room was the casket. The minister stood at the head, and my boys were ready, and I nodded to the minister to begin. He did. We were through in a few minutes. Then I got the ---

I told them there was an oyster supper waiting for them after the show.

That night we played to \$1000, and more the next night. Years after I met them in Spokane and engaged them to open my opera house in Rosslund. They told me they were the same company that I played in Vancouver, and that the string [?] had grown or changed very much.

So I think that Mrs. Oben has told that story so many times and so long, each time a little different; so I think it might be this way. The hearse might have been taken and no name be used, and the Stanley Park Stables might have been used instead of Queen Bros. As far as the load of carrots, the only carriages we had then was stage coaches; used to go to "town" [New Westminster] and they might have some carrots in the bottom of the carriage.

I can tell you some funny things on the Trail of '98, but not here.

Yours truly,

F.W. Hart.

I may go to have to get my eyes attended to, if so I will call on you.

1A & 1. Stanley Park Stables was eastern land corner, Georgia Street between Granville and Seymour with hearse in front.

2. Probably "It was afterwards."

3. Jim McGeer had a milk ranch out there, Jonathan Miller had a farm (Chinese gardens on Heather Street and 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue), now a park.

4. "The white men I buried at" he probably means.

5. By boat. Mountain View Cemetery now.

6. No one died; not many people here (City).

7. Photo outside Stanley Park Stables in City Archives of "new Hearse." This will indicate date that photo was taken.

**13 SEPTEMBER 1933 – COMMENTS ON READY MR. HART’S LETTER, 4 SEPTEMBER 1933.**

Mr. Frame, former storekeeper, Hastings Sawmill store: (laughingly) “He had hacks down at the boat to drive the dramatic party up to his place, and then he ‘waltzed’ them into the funeral.”

Mr. W.R. Lord, well-known early cannery man: “Hirschberg was the man who committed suicide.”

**RECORD OF BURIAL, CITY HALL RECORDS.**

“M.N. Hirschberg; 62 years; Born Hamburg, Germany; Died Vancouver, March 31, 1895; Buried ---, 1895; Bursting of Blood vessel; No Doctor; Ch. of Eng.; Married; Buried in Cascade Lodge, No. 12 Plot.”

Not same man as first burial.

S. Hirschberg, proprietor, Leland Hotel committed suicide, 28 January 1887, and it was his burial which opened Mountain View Cemetery.

Phone Green 698

P.O. Box 230

Office: 616 Sixth Avenue W.

F.W. HART  
Real Estate and Merchandise Broker

We Build, Buy  
Sell and Rent  
Houses

Prince Rupert, B.C. Sept. 18, 1933.

J.S. Matthews, City Archivist,  
Vancouver.

Dear Sir:

Yours of the first instant to hand. Thanks for the bouquets and the fine letter you write. I write the opposite to fine, on account my sight is poor and lazy.

The name of the piece the dramatic company played was "Kerry Gow."

Jonathan Miller's ranch on the North Arm was not there so early, and Jim McGeer's milk ranch was not on that road, but was established on the new road which I call the extension of Granville Street. [*Note: he means Westminster Avenue.*]

I don't know how you could get a notice of the four that was killed on the North Arm Road for there was only one killed. [*Note: four killed, 26 December 1889—see Memorial card, Rowling's papers.*] Lawson, one of the most prominent young men in that county, they are now [*the family*] is now relations of my relations.

Frame of Hastings Sawmill can't place, but Billy [*W.R.*] Lord, I'll never forget. He was in his teens then. He used to sing a song, "I'm not as young as I used to be." He would act and sing it so fine that he would make us all laugh. He is a good boy yet, although I don't remember seeing him much since. I remember his father, a good staunch cannery man.

#### **TROUNCE ALLEY.**

Trounce Alley I believe was taken from an English naval office in Victoria. I happened in visiting some years later, when my old friend the late John Weiler asked me to go with him to Trounce Alley to cigar store and factory of cigars and get a good cigar. I being young then did not know much about cigars. He, Mr. Weiler, told Mr. Kurtz to give us a good cigar. He and Kurtz handed me a "Kurtz After Dinner." Oh, my, how surprised I was to get a big fine cigar its equal and size and quality I had never seen before. He said, "Take another," which I did. I talked so much about it when I got back to Vancouver that the boys said, "Hart of Trounce Alley" said so.

Trounce Alley in Victoria was the most important alley in Victoria then. Trounce Alley in Vancouver was the most important Alley in my time in Vancouver. Trounce Alley in Victoria was made into a street since. I [*don't*] know if the name got changed.

I suppose you will have heard about the time we mired down in going to the [*Mountain View*] Cemetery with four horses on the new hearse. Everybody got out to walk across the Tea Swamp. It was a funeral of the first alderman, Alderman Humphries, and a masonic funeral. It was all right until we reached the Tea Swamp, then things began to happen. The road had been corduroyed and the timbers had slipped out of place, so one of our horses fell between the corduroy or timbers; then the front wheel went down. I was scared the horses would pull it [*hearse*] to pieces, and it cost 10 or 15 hundred dollars, but the story told afterwards was great.

If there is anything else you want to know I'll tell you.

F.W. Hart.

Prince Rupert, B.C. Oct. 6, 1933

Col. J.S. Matthews,  
City Hall,  
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Sir:

**FUNERALS.**

Re "carrot funeral" we only sold the casket, don't know anything about the funeral. The style of the country was then, the people would buy their own caskets, and take care of the funeral themselves.

**SUNNYSIDE HOTEL.**

Re the "MacInnis" furniture. The hotel Sunnyside was leased and run by MacInnis. I bought the thing as a whole. I built a table all the way from their side door to my back door about 200 feet long. Sold the outfit to natives and citizens include Che Chacos. The hotel was re-leased by Harry Hemlow and I furnished the whole hotel with new goods throughout.

I've tried to locate the photo I had in view to send you but failed to find it. I have several others including the Rev. Thompson, first Presbyterian Minister in Vancouver and no doubt it will be useful as historical.

**TEA SWAMP.**

Re Tea Swamp. I too have seen it since it was macadamized, which makes a wonderful transformation. I can't see my own writing so I'll have to have treatment. Meanwhile I beg to remain,

Yours truly,

F.W. Hart.

**13 NOVEMBER 1933 – MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH FRANK W. HART, OF VANCOUVER AND PRINCE RUPERT.**

(See letters, photographs, etc.)

(Mr. Hart called, accompanied by Acting Mayor, Alderman Miller, an old family friend.)

"The way I came to Vancouver was this. I was born in Galesburg, Illinois, U.S.A., in 1856, so that I am now 77 years old. There were two colonies at Galesburg, one was Swedish, the other spoke English. My father's name was Hjort, which is Swedish for 'stag deer,' but the priest said no one knew how to pronounce Hjort, no one knew how to spell it, and he said he would change it to Hart, which is the same thing in the English tongue. I won't bother you just now, I'll tell you later about my early life, but I left home and then the trouble began, fighting Kansas Indians, and finally I landed up at Walla Walla, Washington, where I worked for a man in the furniture and undertaking business. I noticed how things were done, and that was how I got into the same line of business here in the early days.

"In the last days of 1884, I left Walla Walla for B.C. and went to Semiahmoo Bay by a little coaster; that was the only place on the coast we knew in those days. We made for Hall's Prairie (it was not called Hall's Prairie then, but some other name—I forget it—it was about half an hour from the beach—Hirst was the government representative there, and he still is something like that there) where I had a brother, and then during the first days of 1885 walked to Westminster. Times were stirring at Port Moody in 1885; the railway was building, and I tried to get into business there, but I could not get in; had not enough money; things were on a bit of a boom, so I decided to come on down to Granville, and squatted on a piece of the shore between Carrall and Columbia Avenue, and built a store about 150 feet from the Maple Tree on the water side of Alexander Street—not in the town site" (of Granville.) "I don't know who the land belonged to; never enquired, just squatted. I cleared the site for my store by cutting down the big trees, firs, cedars, and some alder and maple. There were no other buildings, except the St. James' Church, east or west of