

**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**

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### **WEST END, EARLY HOMES. H.J. CAMBIE.**

"The first house to the west of Granville Street was built by Mr. H.J. Cambie, C.P.R. engineer. It stood on the southeast corner of Georgia and Thurlow streets. The second house was built by Mr. Wilgress, another C.P.R. official, on Georgia Street. I built the third house—it was on the west side of Burrard Street—between Georgia and Robson. Afterwards they put a garage there, and it was moved to Melville Street where it now is."

### **ST. ALICE HOTEL. HARRISON LAKE.**

"The St. Alice Hotel at Harrison Lake was built by Fred and Jack Brown. One of them married Miss Agassiz of Agassiz, B.C. The first time I ever saw it, about 1889 or 1890, was when we went up the Fraser River in a steam launch on a fishing trip. We went up the Harrison River, and slept in the Hotel; there were a lot of workers, carpenters, plasterers, etc., at work, and just in front of the Hotel we caught so many trout we kept them all eating trout."

### **COMMERCIAL BLOCK. COLUMBIA STREET.**

(See photo No. ?) "The Commercial Block was built and owned by D.E. Brown, brother to Sir George McL. Brown, now European agent in London for the C.P.R."

### **WHEELBARROW RACE ON CORDOVA STREET.**

"I remember this. Dave Douglas was brother to C.S. Douglas, afterwards mayor. This old gentleman with big beard is old Captain Mellon who, together with Mrs. Mellon, started the Art, Historical and Scientific Society, now the City Museum." (See photo No. ?)

## **MEMORANDUM OF FURTHER CONVERSATION WITH WALTER E. GRAVELEY, 17 APRIL 1934.**

### **CITY HALL IN TENT. FIRST POLICE COURTS. JAIL.**

"You know that photograph of the City Hall in the tent. Just in front of it is a telegraph post. They used to tack notices on to it, and around the post was a logging chain they used to handcuff the prisoners to; the prisoners sat on the ground. They used to chew tobacco and wiled away the time by squirting tobacco juice to hit a fly on the notices on the post—which they often did; they were 'experts' in those days. There was a big long slit in the tent, and sometimes, when there was no fly in sight, they had a 'shot' at that slit instead. The tent had a splash of brown tobacco stains on both sides of the slit, where they had missed. Of course, if Magistrate Boulton was inside trying a case, probably some old drunk, well, it was just 'too bad' for magistrate and prisoner."

### **CAPTAIN WILLIAM WEBSTER. UNION STEAMSHIP COMPANY OF B.C.**

"I don't know very much about him. He was a big man. He has a wife, I think. My partner, Charles E. Hope, 3900 Heather Street, had something to do with the settling up of his estate."

## **MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH ANDY LINTON—NOW STOPPING AT THE IVANHOE HOTEL, VANCOUVER—AT CITY HALL, 20 SEPTEMBER 1933.**

He spends each winter in California.

### **BOAT RACES**

Major Matthews: (showing him Bailey Bros. photo No. ? of his old floating boat house at the foot of Carrall Street, the old City Wharf, and four sailboats with sails set) What's this about?

Mr. Linton: (pointing to the largest) "That's the *May*. I owned and built her; right here on the float. In one year I won over \$500 cold cash with that boat right there on the inlet. I won \$100 in the first race, yes, Dominion Day sports; that's the best picture I have seen; looks familiar doesn't it? That hulk out there by Deadman's Island is the old *Robert Ker*; that's where the races used to be, every night; from my boat house around the *Robert Ker* and back; outrigger racing boats, every night."

Major Matthews: Alex MacLean and Bob Johnson? (See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.)

## **UNION STEAMSHIPS CO.**

Mr. Linton: "Yes, MacLean; Bob Johnson came later. That's the old Union wharf, foot of Carrall Street; well, no, not exactly old Union wharf, but, well, let's see, five or six men, our early men about the city, built it, and it fell down; they loaded it with brick" (see Geo. L. Allen, Vol. 2) "and it fell down. Then some of them dropped out of the bunch, and then David Oppenheimer bought it, and gave it to the City; we used to call it the City Wharf until the C.P.R. took it." (See old maps, foot of Carrall Street.)

## **CARRALL STREET.**

Major Matthews: What are all these piles floating about?

Mr. Linton: "Piles!! Piles!!!! There was always piles floating around. That's the old beach where those piles are tied; about where the Evans, Coleman, Evans wharf is now; there was always piles floating about; fellows would go and pick them up and bring them in. Firewood? Yes."

## **YACHTS.**

"These are the four boats I had in the races. The *May* was the largest, and the *St. Patrick* next, the *Laurleen* and then the little cat boat. I did not name them; I had a painter, and he used to paint a name on them; the *St. Patrick* was launched on St. Patrick's Day, so he called her that; don't know where he got the name *Laurleen*. I won \$275. I won the first prize with the *May*, the first prize in the second race with the *Laurleen*; I'd have done better, but they had a greasy pig catching competition on the shore, and that attracted the attention of those sailing the boats. Walter Graveley sailed the *May* the first time she raced. This" (Burrard Inlet) "is the quietest harbour in the world. Why, sometimes for a whole three months we would never put a reef in those sails; and another thing, we have the prettiest rain in the world in Vancouver; straight down; nice softly falling rain; some places it blows slanting and strikes you.

"You see those mountains" (towards Indian River and Lake Beautiful.) "Lots of snow on top in summer; for ten years the snow never left those mountains in the summer; then we had a big Chinook, and it all went. There is about a month of warmer weather here in Vancouver now than we had in 1884; it's getting warmer all the time; why it used to freeze across up at Port Moody and so did the Fraser River." (Mr. Linton spends his winters in California with relatives.)

Mr. Linton: (continuing—looking at photo of steamer beside wharf—Bailey Bros. photo No. ?) "That's the same old wharf as in the other picture—afterwards Union Steamship wharf—and the old *Skidegate*—I built her boat there" (pointing to her upper works.) "I think she went down in False Creek, left her bones there; I heard she did; don't know just where. And that's the old *Senator*. Where did the passengers go? Why, anywhere they could get; inside in the captain's cabin here in the front, and in the cabin at the stern."

## **INDIAN CANOES.**

Major Matthews: Who is this Indian in the swell uniform in this canoe? (Bailey photo No. ?)

Mr. Linton: "Don't know; some racing day; probably Dominion Day sometime; it might be Jimmy Harry of North Vancouver—he was chief, or something, of the Seymour Creek Indians, I think. We had some great Indian races; Indians came from all over the Coast; they got cash for prizes, but I never too much interest in canoes; I had too much to do. The float was a busy place on those days; everyone in town was crowding on to it or about it; after the Fire it was the only landing place, except the Hastings Sawmill."

Major Matthews: When did you come here, Mr. Linton? Why?

## **ANDY LINTON'S BOAT HOUSE.**

Mr. Linton: "In 1884. I was the oldest of the family; raised on a ranch, born in New Brunswick, near St. Andrews, on farm; learned boat building; if you are any good you never learn all about boat building. I have no relatives here in Vancouver; all in California, one brother and the families of four sisters; Humbolt Bay, Eureka, California; I'm over 82 now. I had travelled all over the coast, 'worked' all the way up the coast from San Francisco, was over at Moodyville working; then I took chances. I realised that if I wanted to do something, I'd got to take chances, so I came over to 'Gastown' and started to build boats. Then I built the float, and then after the Fire, the people did not build their boats again; the float did not burn; it was the only landing place after the Fire except the Hastings Sawmill; there was a new 18-foot boat on

the float, and when the fire started, a policeman—I will tell you more about him presently—and I launched the boat. There was a lot of cedar planks for culverts laying about, and the people crushed and crowded on to my float and pushed off; there was a scow outside. You see, the day of the fire was a beautiful day; there was a pottlatch or something over at The Mission” (North Vancouver) “and all my boats were out over there. I had about half a dozen sailboats, and the people saw the fire, and came back from The Mission, and the greatest powwow of” (Indian) “canoes all came over. The wind was so strong it blew the sailboats down the inlet; they landed all the way down to Cedar Cove, wind blew them down there. Then they jumped out and” (indignantly) “left my boats; just jumped out and left them.”

### **THE GREAT FIRE.**

“While the fire was going on a great big canoe with five men and a Chinaman were crossing from Jervis Inlet on their way to Victoria, and the storm blew them into English Bay, and they came on in through the Narrows and landed at my float. They had been from Victoria to Jervis Inlet in a cabin dugout, to look at a copper mine up Jervis Inlet, and had eaten all their groceries and landed at my float with a whole camp outfit, axes, spades; they had been starting the mine in a small way. Then when they landed at my float they said, ‘No use taking all this “junk” back to Victoria; better get rid of it.’ So I told them the first thing they had better do was put a price on it. I got the cooking stove.”

### **WHISKY.**

“Then that night, when the fire and things had calmed down a bit, I went up to the Hastings Sawmill Store, and got some supplies; I had had nothing to eat; I had to go up; so I got \$9.30 worth of supplies, got the cook stove going on the float, and there was free feed for everybody there for eight days; I had quite a queue waiting in line; then the restaurants were going and I stopped; but just next morning after the fire, two policemen—never mind who they were—but one was the one who helped me launch the eighteen-foot boat when the fire started—well, the two policemen came along and said I could sell whisky free on my float; it would be ‘all right,’ but I said, ‘Nothing doing.’” (Shake of head to indicate too much trouble and grief would follow from inebriated men on a float.)

### **WATER WORKS. ICE.**

“There was no water; no water in town when the fire was over. A brother of mine had gone over to False Creek; I thought he was lost; so after the fire—just as soon as the ground had cooled so that you could stand on it—I started out to find my brother, to see if I could see him anywhere. I climbed a little mound, at the foot of Carrall Street, but, to my surprise and alarm, I slipped off it; I was standing on ice; I was on top of what had been the ice house. So I went back to the float and got a couple of tin buckets, and those two tin buckets full of water were the first water works in Vancouver after the fire; then after a bit we dug holes and later on water came in on scows. There wasn’t much water—there was too much drinking” (whisky.) “The old ice house had been near where the Deighton House was.

“That night” (Sunday) “there was a great pow-wow. The” (C.P.R.) “railroad was graded in patches up the inlet” (towards Port Moody) “and those fellows working up there came to town to see what the fire had done—it was Sunday anyhow—and, you know, there was a bit of a spit ran out into the water—bare patch; no timber on it—run out in the water between Carrall Street and what is now the Evans Coleman Dock, at the foot of Columbia Street, and there was a barrel of whisky there, and no water in town, and the Indians and everywhere were there and they were ladling it out by the pail; pure stuff.”

### **ALDERMAN JOSEPH HUMPHRIES.**

“It was dusk or nearly dark, and Joe Humphries, he was an old Cariboo miner, and an old man then, with long flowing whiskers—he was alderman, and the town was black, and the night dark—no light anywhere, and I don’t know just how he arranged it all, but he arranged it—with a young fellow; the two of them; they just sneaked up in the dark, and the Indians and fellows on the bare bit of spit could not see them coming in the dark. Then the young fellow just waltzed in on the party with the axe and stove in the head, of the whisky barrel, and then upset it, dumped it on the ground. Oh, ho, but wasn’t there a pow-wow” (hullabaloo) “then. No, nothing happened; whisky all gone.”

### **SUNNYSIDE HOTEL.**

“The old Sunnyside—the one which was burned—was out on the street, a whole ten feet or more out on the street; there was basement in it; the bottom” (floor) “of the Sunnyside was just a little above high

water. Harry Hemlow was keeping it then. He had just got in a boat load of supplies from Victoria; it was landed at the Hastings Sawmill from the Victoria boat, and he had gone over to the mill store and got it, and brought over the most valuable stuff first, and put it all in the basement. The old building was really a new building; it had not been painted yet, and was dry as a bone; just now, and say, didn't she go" (burn), "all the bottles popping. I was on the float and could hear them; don't know just what it was that did it, but it would just take a piece of the building and blow it right out in the air, more like a blast. Out on my float the miners were taking shovels and scooping up water out of the inlet and throwing it on the boat house." (See W.E. Graveley narrative re recovery package of deeds including one of first lot sold by C.P.R., blown out of Sunnyside and recovered on beach next day.)

### **GREAT FIRE.**

"Just to show you what the heat was like. In the basement was a two-wheel warehouse truck; it melted the cast iron in the wheels, and there was a fellow had some jack screws in the basement; it melted the iron in the jack screws which he had.

"Just a bit after the fire was over a sloop came up to off where the Sunnyside had been, a sloop from Birch Bay, down the" (Puget) "Sound, loaded with potatoes, stores, and new stuff—and there was always whisky and coal oil in barrels about, and the sloop anchored off the Sunnyside and it was dark and they were singing, and the barrel of whisky was on the dock outside. Along came some Indians in a big canoe and sneaked up whilst they were singing; the Indians crept up slowly, and quietly, and the crowd on the sloops were singing, and the Indians were getting closer, and I was watching, and the sloop crowd singing. The Indians pretty near got that barrel off the deck" (in the dark) "but they tried three or four times but did not get it. All they had to do was tip it off the deck into the water, and they would have got it, but the sloop's crew was too smart."

### **DRUG STORE.**

"The drug store business started on my float after the fire. Dr. Beckingsdale carried down all his stuff to my float as he cleared out when the fire came down on us; he set up in the middle of my boat house." (See W.H. Gallagher, Vol. 1, 1931.)

"Next morning I came up from my float to Carrall Street, and there on a log, right there in the square" (Maple Tree Square) "—there was always logs around; you had to have them; saw them up for firewood—was Cordiner and Griffiths of the Sunnyside, and some other fellow sitting on a log. I said to them, 'You fellows got to get busy; you want to get right to work and fix things up, or if you don't the trade will all go up Cordova Street.' They said, 'We've got no money.'

"I said, 'Coldwell'—he was foreman down at the Hastings Mill—"told me there was seven million feet of lumber down there, culls, piled up there down on the" (Hastings) "'wharf, but could be got for \$2.50 a thousand.'" (Significantly.) "You would not call it 'culls' these days."

(Note: the lumber trade of Burrard Inlet was entirely foreign; the lumber shipped was of exceptional high grade, such as to establish the fame of 'Oregon pine' throughout the world; the finest trees only were cut in those days, and naturally 'culls' to an immense amount would follow; the Hastings Sawmill fire dump burned for thirty-five years without cessation—the Hastings Mill fire burning was a landmark which was always distinctive on the landscape of the inlet shore, even to the day it ceased to operate.)

### **BONDS AND DEBENTURES.**

"They repeated, 'We've no money.' I said, 'You don't need money; there's some way they have down in San Francisco, I've heard of where they have a frontage tax or something.' I said, 'You go down and see Alexander at the Mill.' So they went down, and Alexander sent them over to Judge Bole in New Westminster—before they leased the ground. Anyway they got what they wanted. I was the one who first suggested putting the town" (Vancouver) "in soak" (borrowing) "and they've never let up keeping it in soak ever since, but it kept the sports and business down in that part of the town" (Water and Carrall streets) "for five or six years."

### **THE OLD SUNNYSIDE. THE NEW SUNNYSIDE (BEFORE THE FIRE).**

"They built the new Sunnyside right over the top of the old Sunnyside, and the new Sunnyside wasn't quite finished when it was destroyed in the fire; they had not painted it. There was the *small* Sunnyside

when I came here in September 1884; it belonged to Joe Griffiths, he built it; he died. Joe Griffiths was an old lumberman. MacInnes and Mrs. MacInnes were keeping the old hotel when I first came.” (Note: Dr. D.F. MacInnes of Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia, is a son; Mrs. MacInnes still lives in Cape Breton, 1933.) “MacInnes’ lease was up or something; I think there was an auction sale, and F.W. Hart” (see F.W. Hart) “bought all the ‘junk’ when they started in to renovate the hotel; then Frank Hart went down to the Hastings Sawmill and got some lumber and brought it up in a boat and started in to make furniture. That” (pointing to Bailey Bros. photo No. ? of Stanley Park Stables, Georgia Street, with hearse in front) “is Frank Hart’s hearse; he was the first undertaker, wasn’t he? I think he was; yes. Griffiths took the Sunnyside back, and I’m not sure, but I think Harry Hemlow was the next leaser. The Sunnyside was almost finished at the time of the fire.

“The contractors for the rebuilding of the Sunnyside ‘skipped out,’ and neglected to pay their men and accounts.” (Note: the photo “Granville,” December 1885 or January 1886, donated by Mrs. A.W. Ross to the Native Daughters, Post No. 1, Vancouver, and now well known, shows scaffolding around the enlarged Sunnyside.)

### **BELLINGHAM.**

“They hired a boat from me; said they were going to the North Arm of the Fraser to see about putting up a barn, and neglected to come back. We followed them to Seattle after our boat. We walked to New Westminster, then to Blaine, walked all along the beach, climbed over logs, and worst walk I never had; never forget that; then we had to wait until the ferry started in the morning, sat in a chair in the hotel all night. We found out from the Indians that they had called in at Becker’s Spit for food, so we walked along the beach, crawled over logs, took the ferry to Semiahmoo, and then started to walk to Bellingham; got half way and stopped at a farm house. We found they had got food at Bellingham, and had left the boat at Seaholme, and had then got on the passenger steamer and gone on to Seattle. It was no use going after them; we could not bring them back for stealing; it was not then an offence you could bring them back to Canada for; so we sailed the boat back to Mud Bay, sold her there, and walked back to Granville. It was a pretty wild experience, walking along the beach to Bellingham.”

### **GRANVILLE.**

(Mr. Linton looked out of the window of the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, City Hall, over the dirty roofs of one hundred downtown buildings.) “A whiteman’s home doesn’t look very fascinating from above, does it? But the old waterfront of Granville was pretty; lots of trees between the houses.”

### **GOLD HOUSE.**

“The ‘Gold House’ was a place of charm; I don’t know what it was about that place; something fascinating about the outside, and inside too; it would just hold you; I don’t know what it was, whether it was the windows or the arches; it was just a common building, but it held you. The warships would play their searchlights about at night and flutter all over the place, and then they would come to a stop on the Gold House, and stay there.”

### **PORTUGUESE JOE.**

“Portuguese Joe? Oh, yes, I knew Portuguese Joe, fine old fellow, he came in a ship, he was raised somewhere in those islands off the Coast of Spain; Madeira Island or Canaries or something; he was not running a store in my time; he was loading ships; used to land at my place; went to live in Stanley Park, and then I think he went up Pender Harbour; nice old fellow. Hamilton made a botch of surveying Vancouver; fancy making a lane for the main” (Hastings Street) “street.” (See Hamilton’s explanation.)

“I left the foot of Carrall Street about, let me see, 1907, and went to the end of Main Street, and about 1911 had to leave there, and went to just west of the end of Main Street, and” (shaking his head) “lost \$10,000 there; that was a bad move. I eat at the old Oyster Bay” (restaurant, corner Cordova and Carrall) “for sixteen and a half years. I have no relatives in this city.”

### **GREAT FIRE.**

Someone has told me that there was no hesitation about rebuilding Vancouver after the fire. One man is reported as pouring water on embers to permit construction to start. J.S.M.