

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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C.P.R. TAKES OVER TELEGRAPH LINES.

Query: What is the meaning of the notation "via Sumas" on those Great Fire telegrams between Sir John A. Macdonald and Mayor MacLean of Vancouver?

Mr. O'Neill: "Our telegrams were accepted by the Western Union Telegraph at Sumas, at the boundary; we were a government telegraph line; that was before the Postal Telegraph built their line to the international boundary. Afterwards, early in 1897, the Canadian Pacific Railway took over the government telegraph lines. New Westminster was a busy little office. There was a line down to Ladner's from New Westminster, which made delivery from Ladner's, and to that district including the salmon canneries on the river bank. I don't remember whether the line from Vancouver to Moodyville via Hastings was a cable or wire stretched over the water; I don't think there was a line to Eburne; I don't recall any."

Footnote by Mr. O'Neill, his letter, 1 May 1934, from Victoria: "Very good, Major. We shall let it go as it is. With our kindest regards, Maurice O'Neill et al."

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. G.C. HODGE, 884 BUTE STREET, VANCOUVER, 22 JANUARY 1934.

BURRARD INLET AND NEW WESTMINSTER TELEPHONE COMPANY.

"I came here on 7th April 1891. J.J. Banfield and I slept in the same bunk all the way out on the train. I came to Vancouver for the first two or three months and then went over to Westminster to take over from Geo. Pittendrigh the management of the Burrard Inlet and New Westminster Telephone Company; Mrs. Geo. Pittendrigh was one of the first girl operators—she was Hattie Fowler; she has all the old telephone books for years and years.

"The first telephone operator here" (Vancouver) "was King; he worked for Tilley in the old bookstore, and it is through him that I get my information."

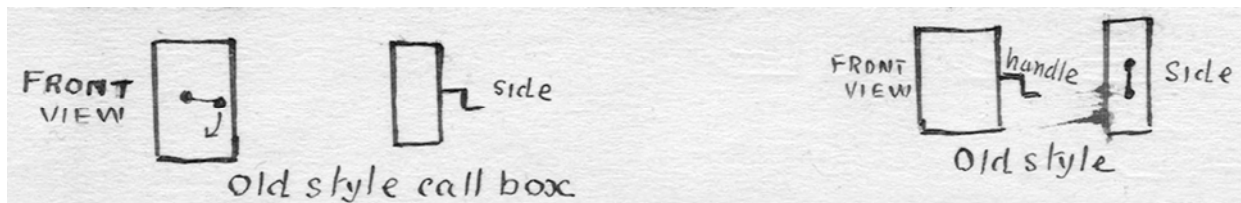
FIRST TELEPHONE SWITCHBOARD. MOODYVILLE TELEPHONES.

"You know about the so-called *first* switchboard in Vancouver they have up at the B.C. Telephone Office. King told me that was not the first switchboard in Vancouver; it is the Moodyville switchboard. There used to be a cable run across to Moodyville from the Hastings Sawmill."

J.S.M.: From the Hastings Sawmill? Not from Hastings?

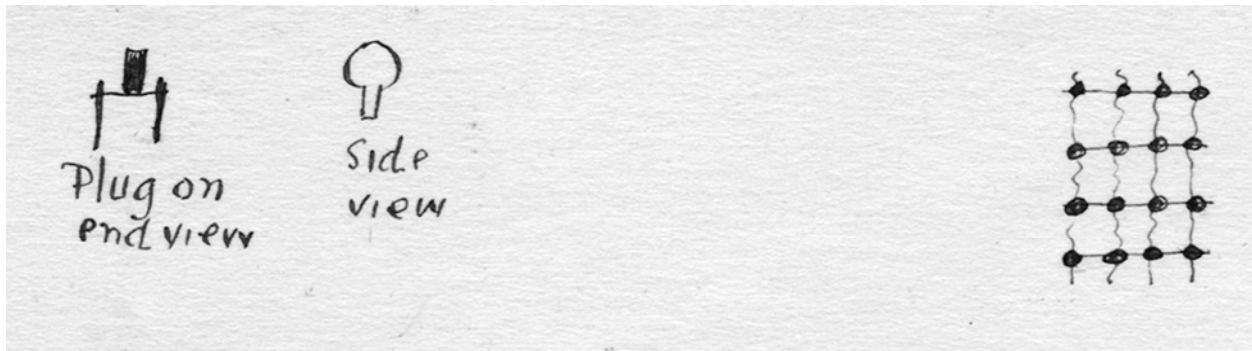
Mr. Hodge: "From the Hastings Sawmill; they would have had to run the line all the way back to Hastings, then across, and down through the brush on the other side to Moodyville. That cable was afterwards taken up and used at Nelson, the first cable across the lake at Nelson.

"No, the *first* switchboard in Vancouver is not at the B.C. Telephone Co.'s office. I think you'll find the *first* switchboard in Vancouver in the middle of Burrard Inlet. The one the B.C. Telephone have was the Moodyville switchboard. The first Vancouver switchboard was dumped into the centre of the inlet, about 1900, together with a very valuable lot, for historical purposes, of old telephones, and old equipment, cleaned out of the basement of the old Lefevre Block, northwest corner of Seymour and Hastings streets (Empire Block). I was in the Upper Country at the time it was done. There were a lot of old transmitters with cork diaphragms, and old magneto bells with the handle in the front and in the centre; you know afterwards they were on the side" (see diagram) "but these were in the centre. I am almost sure that in that bunch was the old Gilliland Board, which, *I would* say, was the *first* board in Vancouver."



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"You know the board was like this, and the plugs like this." (See diagrams.)



Item # EarlyVan_v3_030

"The first thing was he rang out, then you rang back. Then he took down his receiver, then you said, 'Hello, what do you want?' He would reply, 'I want Jim Brown.' Then you would put your plug up there" (pointing.) "Then you would go along to Jim Brown's line, and ring him, and he would ring you, and then you would say, 'Tom Jones wants you'; then you would put the plug in here" (pointing.) "At Peterboro we had 100 phones, and honest to goodness that switchboard would take up from here to there." (About six feet.)

HASTINGS ROAD TELEPHONE. HASTINGS.

"The Hastings Road telephone was the first one, No. 10 iron wire, strung on split rail posts; the next one which was built came by the 'New Road'" (see Capt. E.S. Scoullar, who is incorrect) "by Joe Armstrong. That was just about the time I came with the company, manager of the N.W. and B.I. Telephone Co. The N.W. and B.I. Telephone line came by the 'New Road'" (Kingsway.)

FIRST RADIO.

(See also J.J. Nickson.)

"I equipped what I claim was the first radio in these parts. You see there was some kind of an opera or some theatrical company, at New Westminster. So I rigged up a dozen or so receivers in the rafters, and the people at the other end listened in on their receivers. That must have been in 1893, because in 1894 they put the cable across the Fraser and connected up with the U.S. telephone lines. The way I knew is because Joe Armstrong ordered the cable and then strung it across the river, and the flood came and washed it away, and Joe Armstrong had about seventeen cat fits, and had to get another. So it must have been after that that I did the same thing again. Another theatrical party came, and I did the same thing again, and that time I got the music and such right through to Seattle."

POINT GREY ROAD.

Query: What about the telegraph line along the Point Grey Road to Victoria?

Mr. Hodge: "I think the Point Grey Road must have been an Indian Trail. It would have been impossible for the Indians to get along the beach from Jericho" (E-yalmo) "when the tide was in, and they must have had a trail along the top of the bank, and of course, when the line to Victoria, the telegraph line, was put in, it would be natural for them to follow the old Indian trail. Then, if, as you say, Maurice O'Neill says Edwards, the first telegraph operator, used to go out on his horse to repair the line, he would naturally go along the trail, and the chances are that when the line was built they followed the Indian trail anyway; it would be easier. Then, when the trail was widened into a trail wide enough for a wagon, it would be widened where it was easiest, and it would be easiest where it had been travelled and more or less open. I think that is why Point Grey Road—the old one which we knew—is so crooked."

20 JANUARY 1934 – MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. G.C. HODGE OF 884 BUTE STREET, VANCOUVER.

Who called to get information respecting early football in B.C. on which he is writing an article. As he was leaving, hand on door, he said, and then returned:

STANLEY PARK. GOLF. FIRST GOLF PLAYED IN B.C. WESTMINSTER.

“But I’ll tell you where the first game of golf was played, and who played it. It was played by Sandy MacFarlane” (A.R. MacFarlane), “his brother, Bob MacFarlane—I think he spells it ‘lane’—and myself, on Moody Square, Westminster, in 1891. Sandy used to be secretary of the St. Andrew’s Golf Club, a famous golf club at St. Andrew’s, Scotland, and when he left they—the club or someone—presented him with those clubs, and he had three more, and three gutta-percha balls. Sandy and I dug the holes with a table knife, and used salmon tins for the holes, and cut the grass all around with a pair of scissors. I had played in the Old Country, and Bob, being Sandy’s brother, knew something too; we were all players. So I got my clubs from Edinburgh—I brought them out with me. I was manager of the Burrard Inlet and New Westminster Telephone Co. at the time. Then a lot of people got interested.

“We ordered some clubs from Musselborough, just outside Edinburgh; the fellows wanted to play, so we got Johnnie Reid, of Reid and Currie, to make some cleeks. They were all handmade; that is, the iron part, and the shafts were made cut of hickory out of an old wagon pole which had been used by the Sappers and Miners in the building of the Cariboo Trail. Perhaps the only one of those in existence today is the one which belonged to Judge J.A. Forin, which he presented to the Spokane Golf Club. The shafts were not much thicker than the steel ones of today, and they would ‘whip’ like springs.

“Then Vancouver started; the first games were at Brockton Point, and we used to have to play over two fences; wonder how they would like *that* today!”

J.S.M.: What was your club named?

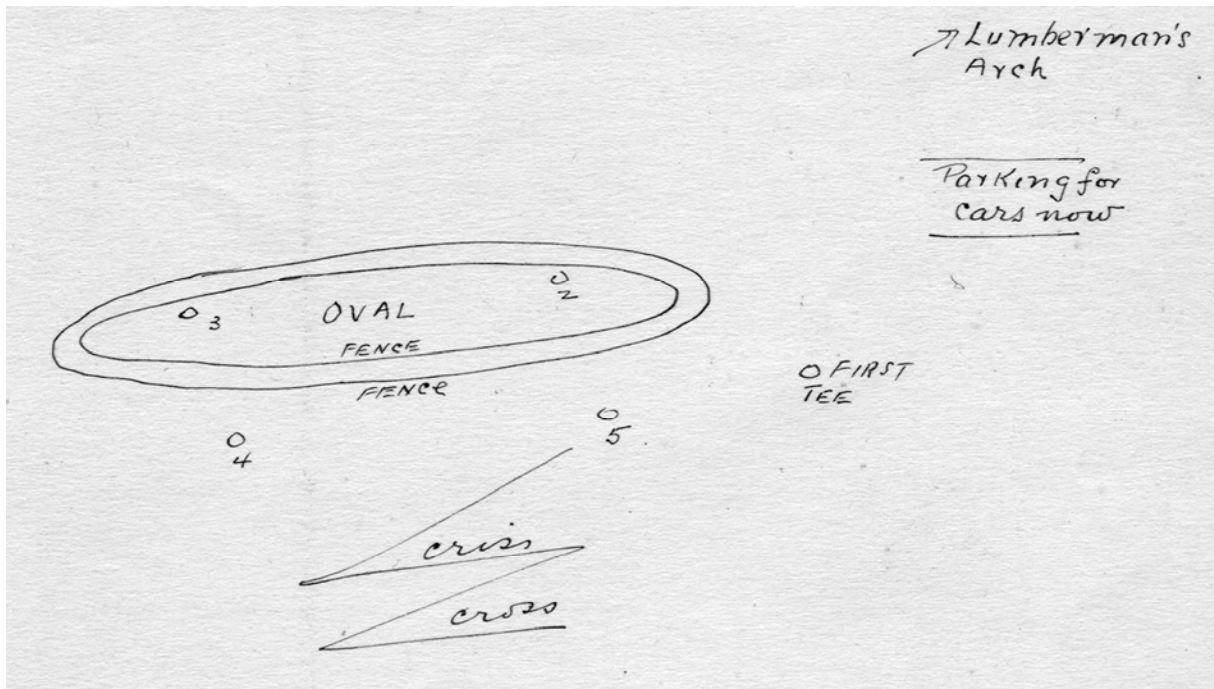
Mr. Hodge: “Oh yes! Westminster Golf Club. Bob MacFarlane was president, Sandy MacFarlane was vice-president and captain; I was secretary-treasurer, groundsman, club repairer, and golf ball remodeller, and we used girl caddies for which we paid the girls ten cents a game until somebody raised the price by paying the best looking girl two bits a game. We could not get any boys to caddy; they were too busy playing lacrosse—at its height then—they” (the boys) “used to take a huge delight, if your ball went anywhere near where they were playing, in picking it up and playing a game of catch with it, and the worst offenders of all were the present Hon. Wells-Gray, Acting Prime Minister, and L.A. Lewis” (Brunette Sawmill Co. afterwards) “who was a great lacrosse player. L.A. said any fool could hit that thing, so at the risk of getting a club broken I let him have two or three shots before he could hit the ball twenty feet, and then he said, ‘that was a heck of a game.’ Then I said to him, ‘L.A., I’m going to make a Scotch prediction to you, that some day you will be playing this game, and you will get so enthused over it that you will give up business to play it.’

“L.A. Lewis quit business many years ago, and I believe can be seen any day now playing on the Coquitlam Links. He held the senior golf championship of the province one year. He got to be a great fiend at it; worse than I ever was. Rather funny me predicting that.”

J.S.M.: Did you say something about golf at Brockton Point?

Mr. Hodge: “Sure we played over two fences. I would say that was the first inter-club golf match in B.C.; I should judge 1892, no, more likely 1894. The tee was over by the First Narrows side of Brockton Point, and the first hole was over two fences, and high ones too. You had to be careful, you had to get over two fences, and not go over the third—see diagram—I don’t care how good a player today may be, I defy him to make that shot. I made it once in three—more by good luck than judgment.

“The first regular golf links in Vancouver was Jericho, then Shaughnessy. Coquitlam, I think, came next, then Point Grey, or Marine Drive, Hastings Park, Quilchena, Langara, University, I think in the order named, but am not absolutely positive. Stanley Park comes in somewhere, and Fraser Avenue last—if it is ever completed.”



Item # EarlyVan_v3_031

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. JONATHAN ROGERS, OF ROGERS BUILDING, GRANVILLE STREET, 5 JULY 1934.

Mr. Rogers was a passenger on the first train into Vancouver.

COLUMBIA STREET.

"When I built the Commercial Block" (see photo no ?) "on Columbia Street between Powell and Oppenheimer streets, west side, a brick and stone building, butting on to the C.P.R. track at the rear, I had difficulty in getting a solid foundation; I cannot remember the exact particulars; it may have been sand, but Arthur Sullivan, the half-negro organist at the Methodist Church, and whose mother was a very early resident of Gastown, remarked to me at the time that he used to paddle a canoe through from Burrard Inlet to False Creek at that point." (See photo No. ?)

"L.A. Hamilton built and owned the little building" (see photo No. ?) "with a blunt steeple at the southeast corner of Hastings and Granville streets, where the Canadian Bank of Commerce now stands. The Rogers Building, built in 1911-1912, was the first ferro-concrete building in Canada."

GEORGIA STREET TRAIL.

"The first house on Georgia Street, west of Granville, was H.J. Cambie's, on the southeast corner of Thurlow. They were getting logs out of the West End at the time it was built, and the lumber for its construction was taken down a narrow winding trail through the stumps; probably an old logging trail; Georgia Street did not exist when Mr. Cambie built."

HORSE RACES. GRANVILLE STREET.

"In the spring of 1887 they were rushing the clearing of Granville Street from the Hotel Vancouver down to Davie so as to be able to hold the horse races on Dominion Day.

"I think Dr. LeFevre's house was on the west side of Howe Street. Mr. Abbott's was across the street on the corner of Howe and Hastings streets; A.G. Ferguson's was on the corner of Hastings and Hornby streets, where the Metropolitan Building is now; then there was quite a clear space until you reached J.C. Innes' on the corner of Burrard Street.