

**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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Howard DeBeck and told him, and he released me from the bargain, and I got \$1 more on 500,000 feet, that is \$500 more. Howard DeBeck was [a] man of fine principals. I had a fruit farm at Penticton next to his and could not look after it. I told Howard to pick the best of the fruit, use what he could, and let the rest rot; there was no written bargain, but one day I received, most unexpectedly, to my astonishment, a cheque for \$100.

“The photograph of Bailey Bros. No. 679, and this other one captioned ‘Ox Team Hauling Logs, Royal City Mills Camp, near Vancouver.’ I imagine this must be of the camp the Royal City Mills had on the north arm of the Fraser about one mile east of the Boundary Road; ‘Wintemute’s Place,’ we called it; it was owned originally by Mr. Wintemute of New Westminster. Its exact site was almost exactly where ‘Spotty’ McGregor’s ranch on Marine Drive was some years ago; about a mile west of the Rosehill Farm which was five miles east of our place. The Royal City Mills had another camp at Mud Bay. Bob Preston, who preempted Kitsilano Beach in 1873, was in charge of all the Royal City Mill’s camps.”

#### **OX TEAMS.**

“You will observe, in this photo, the biggest log is foremost, and as the logs trail off, they get smaller and smaller, the smallest being the last log. The reason the biggest log is put first is that there is always a ‘slack’ between logs, and when the ox team pulls, they give an initial big jerk which starts the first and heaviest log, and the momentum of that heavy weight moving jerks those behind, and so starts the whole ‘turn of logs’—that’s the name for a string of logs—moving. The oxen know, and brace themselves for one successive jerk. A ‘rollway’ is where the logs are dumped into the water.”

#### **GORE AVENUE AND BROCKTON POINT.**

“Other small logging jobs I had once was hauling piles down a skid road almost exactly where Gore Avenue is now—I think they were for some cannery—that was the winter before the Great Fire. Frank Perry, now of 1550 Charles Street, old time logger, worked with me. Then I hauled spruce at Brockton Point; when they cleared the athletic grounds at Brockton Point, I hauled with horses the spruce trees they had felled to the shore.”

### **MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH HENRY S. ROWLING, 4 JUNE 1933, AT KITSILANO BEACH.**

#### **WILD ANIMALS. ELK.**

Major Matthews: Bill Hunt, who lived down near Kitsilano Beach in 1897 or about that, told me about a lot of elk dung he found in the torn-up roots of a hemlock which had been blown down; what do you make of it? (See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1, 1931.)

Mr. Rowling: (slowly) “Preserved, eh? I don’t know where the elk went, and never asked the Indians. My recollections of the Indians is not of the pleasantest; I did not care for them. I think my dislike was caused by the fact that they had big scabs on their necks; there were cracks in the scabs; the scabs were broken open, and you could see the white pus in the cracks; most repulsive; the result of their association with white men, I imagine. We found a *tremendous lot* of old elk horns over on the little flat prairie east of D.L. 258 where we ran our cows, embedded in the grass; the wild grass had grown up, died down, each year, and the elk horns were old, and embedded in the dead grass.” (Note: also found them in the swamp around Deer Lake, around the swamp at Kitsilano Beach. See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.)

#### **WOLVES AND COON, COUGARS, LYNX.**

Major Matthews: Sam Greer shot a wolf in his garden back of the bathhouse (Kitsilano Beach), great big timber wolves. (See Hall, Vol. 1.)

Mr. Rowling: “Oh, yes, I have seen the timber wolves crossing the ice on the North Arm, but we did not have much trouble with wild animals. Might have lost an odd cow now and again; the cougars, they are sly animals—you never see them—they might have taken a pig or so, and the cats, the lynx—there were lots of cats around, plenty of them, they might get a chicken or a duck, or a little pig, or the coons might have, but they did not bother us much. The cats” (lynx) “have no fight in them, but you can blow a hole in a coon and he will still fight; a cat thinks he’s dead when a shot hits him, and just lies down dead. I remember one time a lady came along and said a cougar was killing her ducks, and Peter Byrne and

another man went into the house and got two rifles, and went off after it, but Priscilla (Mrs. Byrne, my sister) said, 'You just take the old shot gun; it's a cat.' So I took my shot gun, and after a time I saw just a form of a cat in hiding in a bunch of grass, I fired, and went and got the cat. A neighbour said to me, 'I cannot find a hole in him.' I answered back, 'Oh, he just died; died of fright,' and my neighbour answered, 'Do they do that?' I nodded, and he believed it.

"Cat and coon skins were no good; you could not sell them; but you could sell deer skins. We had a little garden across on Lulu Island and one morning we were coming home to dinner, crossing the river in a boat, when I saw a deer. I said to my friends, 'Let's go get him.' They said, 'No, let's go to dinner.' So I went off by myself; deer can swim pretty fast, but you can row faster; but you've got to be careful, hit them with a club on the head, that stuns them, or they will try to climb in your boat, and might upset you. So I skinned the deer, and wrapped it up in a clean sheet and took it up in the boat to New Westminster. I went to see the butcher, and he asked me if I could get him any deer, and I said I thought I could. He said that the people who brought him deer brought them in all covered with blood and dirt and people would not buy them. So I said to him, 'I've got one in my boat now,' and we went down to look at it. He gave me six cents a pound, and it dressed 153 pounds, that was \$9.00, and he gave me \$1.50 for the skin, so that was \$10.50 for a day's work, not bad, in days when you worked eleven hours for a dollar."

### **LOG HOUSE.**

Query: What did [your] old home look like, as you first recall it?

Mr. Rowling: "Our original home on D.L. 258 was a house of logs, no photo of it exists so far as I know. It was on the trail, now Marine Drive, on the same location, practically, behind this fence of stone and ornamental iron railings." (See bird's-eye view or drawing by J.S.M. Panoramic sketch by J.S.M.)

### **GRAPES.**

"There was a grape vine running over our cedar shake house; our second abode; it ran all over the house; over the roof, and we had the greatest lot of grapes you ever saw; there must have been 'tons' of them; you could not sell them all. Mother made a lot of wine, and jam. You know in the summertime they were always making preserves on the stove in the kitchen, and the heat rose up and passed through the cedar shake roof, and the same in winter too, I suppose, and the house faced south and was protected from the wind, and that vine was rooted on the west end, and it just grew wonderfully. You know, it was queer, but you could just plant a slip of something, a black currant slip, or something, between the roots of an old tree stump, and it would grow like anything.

"Down below the log cabin and cedar shake house, along the river front, we planted parsnips. The river would flood in summer, inundated the shore, but the water will not hurt parsnip; they survive it, and then we would turn the pigs in; put up a fence around a patch and turn the pigs in, and they will root for themselves, and when they had finished one patch, we moved them to another. We cultivated right down to the river in front of the house, but in the west field at to the east of the cabin, there was a strip of wild grass along the shore, oh, say fifty feet wide."

### **INDIAN CAMP. FIREWOOD AND CEDAR BOARDS.**

"East of the log cabin was a field, about one acre with a zigzag fence around it, below the trail to Westminster, and between that and the little creek was just a sort of forest, second growth like, small stuff, we had been cutting firewood, new fence posts, and cedar for building there; down as far as the little creek; the little garden patch was a natural clearing, an old Indian encampment, between the two creeks; a zigzag fence ran east and west parallel to the river, and about 300 or so feet back from the river, the garden extending from little creek to big creek."

### **TEA SWAMP.**

Query: Do you know where the Tea Swamp on the North Arm Road was?

Mr. Rowling: "Oh, yes; just at the foot of the hill, about 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue; a little bush about two or three feet high; I could not stand the stuff; they used it for tea sometimes, but I could not stand it.

"Father got a pension of a shilling a day; he got his toes frozen when he was working on the North American Boundary Commission laying out the boundary between the United States and Canada." (See

*Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.) "I never quite understood what the Royal Engineers had to do with that boundary.

"I made a lot of money three times, and lost it again. I have just joined the Old Age Pensions Association. I had a farm up in the Okanagan; I lost that during the war for taxes. I had a five-storey building on Hastings Street—down by Jackson Avenue; I paid \$25,000 for the lot, and put up a \$55,000 building; mortgaged it for \$40,000 to put up the building, then I had a second mortgage for \$9,000 and a third for \$13,000, and took the 750 acre farm in the Okanagan" (Kelowna.) "I think it was for the balance of my equity when I sold. But during the war, if you had a clear title house, you could not borrow \$500 on it, so I lost the farm. I will be 70 in February next, and am going to apply for the Old Age Pensions. They won't have to pay it long, I think. I started logging at 16, have worked pretty hard, lot of out in the open in wet clothes, and that sort of thing; trouble with my heart, liable to die at any time; but I have no fear; I'm ready any time. My wife, of course, is about 25 years younger than I am; I think she was 21 and I was 46 when we were married on St. Valentine's Day, 1910, at Wesley Church.

"I married Miss Mary Houston, daughter of John and Kate Houston of Vancouver—still living—at Wesley Church, Georgia Street, Vancouver, February 14 (St. Valentine's Day) 1910. Our children were William Henry Rowling, and Mayo Mary, now Mrs. H.C. Duggan."

### **MEMORANDUM OF FURTHER CONVERSATION WITH HENRY S. ROWLING, ABOUT 27 JUNE 1933.**

#### **LAND SALES.**

"You had better alter that part of my story where I said that the land scrip Father bought was applied on adjoining sections; I think the land scrip he bought was applied on sections on Lulu Island, and that he sold them afterwards; I don't know.

"A man named Brown—no, not Ebenezer Brown, a Brown, I think, who had been a Royal Engineer—helped Father build that log cabin, or it may have been Brown's military grant, and Father bought D.L. 258 from him. You see my brother Jim and I were minors, and not recognised. I squatted on Lot 330, Jim squatted on D.L. 331, but when the auction sale took place we bid them in; nobody bid against us; just good-naturedness; we wanted them because that was where the little natural pastures were, where we ran our cows. Father squatted on D.L. 329 himself, that is, to the west of D.L. 258, but I am not quite sure of the number of the district lots from memory, I think I'm right. Father had two fractional sections across the river on Lulu Island, and he traded these with we two boys, and we gave him a clear deed; we just exchanged, and he took D.L. 330 and 331."

#### **JAMES (JIM) MCGEER, FATHER OF GERRY (HIMSELF) MCGEER.**

"You see, when these sections were put up for auction squatters had sometimes done a lot of improvement work on them. Neighbours recognised this, and just did not bid; of course, there was nothing to prevent them bidding; if they had bid there was no legal way of preventing them getting the property, but when the auctioneer put the section up for bidding, they said nothing, kept quiet, and of course it went to the man who had done the improvements and who wanted it. I remember the time Jim McGeer, Gerry McGeer's father, had his place put up for auction. It was the first piece put up at the sale, the piece out Kingsway way, where Jim had a milk ranch. The auctioneer said, 'I will ask you to consider that Mr. McGeer has done a lot of improvement work on this property. Of course, it is your privilege to bid on it if you want to; if you do I cannot help it, but I ask you to consider the point.' Then he added, 'I don't know what he wants with the old "gravel pit" anyway, but he's in the milk business, and there is a nice stream running through it.' They never could leave Jim alone; always making some sort of a joke about him or his milk." (See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1, Matthews, 1931.)

#### **EXCERPT FROM LETTER, 18 JULY 1933, FROM THOMAS DEASY, JASMINE AVENUE, MARIGOLD P.O., SAANICH, B.C., TO J.S.M.**

"I also know Mr. Rowland [Rowling]. He was proprietor of 'The Retreat' Saloon at 'The Camp' during the days of the Royal Engineers. He was one of them. He had two daughters, fair haired girls."