

Early Vancouver

Volume Three

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

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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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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. W.R. LORD, 1076 WEST 10TH AVENUE AND 3885 WEST 38TH AVENUE, VANCOUVER, ON 26 AUGUST 1933, AT THE CITY HALL.

Read and approved by Mr. Lord, 20 July 1934. Mr. Lord is a well known cannery proprietor of Vancouver.

SPRATT'S SALTERY AND OILERY. SPRATT'S ARK. JOHN MORTON'S CLEARING.

"Spratt's herring saltery, just below the cliff and slightly to the west of the foot of Burrard Street—below John Morton's clearing—was built in the fall of 1881; I worked on some of its reconstruction and addition in the fall of 1883 and spring of 1884; put in all the pipe work in the saltery." (See photo No. ?)

(From the *West Shore* magazine of June 1881, page 151, published in Portland, Oregon: "A company has just been organised at Burrard Inlet to manufacture herring oil, and convert the refuse into fish guano.")

ANDREW RUSTA.

"The original building had been erected in 1881 or 1882 by a Scandinavian named Andrew Rusta. Jimmy" (Captain J.A.) "was in it too. Rusta was in the logging business, and wanted oil for oiling his skids on the skid roads; I think that was what gave him the idea of getting oil from the herring; actually I don't know, but I think so. Rusta went 'broke' and got Spratt of Victoria to take over the plant. Spratt enlarged it, and I worked on the reconstruction; went there in August 1883 from the Fraser River, where I had been working for Spratt on a floating salmon cannery—we canned salmon only—known as 'Spratt's Ark.' It had been anchored in Woodward's Slough, and when we had finished canning sockeye that year, the Ark was brought round to Burrard Inlet. It was afterwards used, I think, as freighter for carrying the stone to erect the Parliament Buildings, Victoria. I had been working on the boat, the old *Emma*" (screw) "and so Spratt kept me and I put in all the pipe work in the saltery. Andrew Rusta stayed on as manager after Spratt took it over. It was a fine up-to-date plant."

HERRING SHOALS IN BURRARD INLET.

J.S.M.: What was the reason for building a herring saltery on Burrard Inlet, Mr. Lord? There are no herring there now.

Mr. Lord: "Burrard Inlet was full of herring then. Quantities of them were caught; caught in Coal Harbour—the Indians were the fishermen; purse seines the method; they were between Deadman's Island and what is now the park entrance, all along down where the Yacht Club in Stanley Park is now; that was where we used to catch the herring. At the time we did not consider the catch anything very remarkable, but today it would be considered an enormous catch. The year 1884 was the last year of the herring; no herring came after that year, and the plant was closed down."

HERRING OIL.

J.S.M.: Did you make any oil?

Mr. Lord: "Certainly. That was what it was for principally; the logging camps took most of the oil for their skids."

J.S.M.: Did you have any refuse?

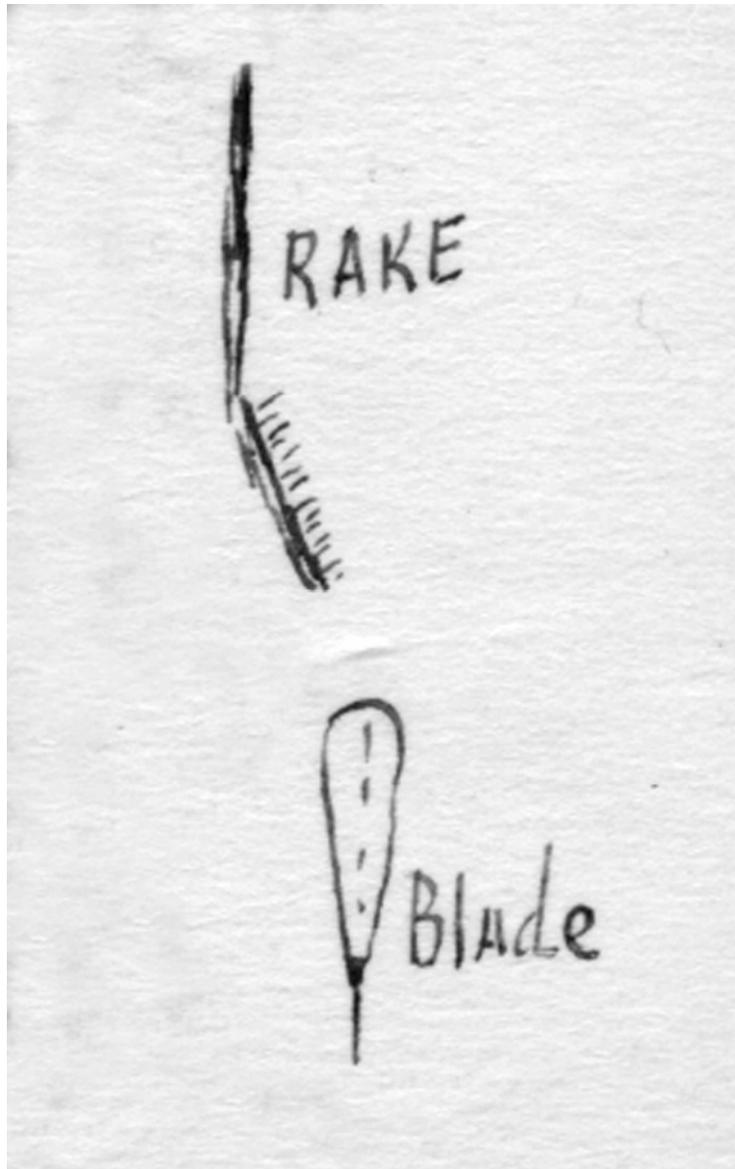
Mr. Lord: "No, there was no refuse; we boiled the oil out of the herring in the retorts, drew off the water, dried the meal, and put the oil in iron drums. We were without a drier; that is, the drier was not completed, and we stored a lot of the meal on the end of the dock; it was piled high, and the smell from it was awful; then when the drier was completed, it did not work, and the meal was dumped in the inlet."

HERRING VERY PLENTIFUL.

J.S.M.: Old Dunc McDonald (see *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2) says that caused the herring to migrate.

Mr. Lord: "That's what some people claim. Yes, herring were very plentiful, and could be got in numbers on a fish rake; the Indians did it regularly. A fish rake was a piece of shaped wood about seven or eight feet long; the top part rounded for a handle and the lower half about three or four feet long, shaped like a knife blade, perhaps three inches wide and with the back of the blade three-quarters of an inch or five-

eighths of an inch thick, then tapering to nothing. A single row of sharp nails, or wire, afterwards sharpened, about one and one-half inches apart, were driven from the thick back of the blade through the three inches to the sharper tapered edge; the blade was not quite straight with the handle; but was on a very slight angle." (Note: Dunc McDonald, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2, says they used a pole *twenty feet* long with spikes in it.)



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FISH RAKE (HOW USED.)

"The method of use was for the fisherman to sit in the bow of the canoe, and stroke from front to back much as in paddling; the curve of the rake brought the nails into the water at a suitable angle for effectiveness; its forced passage through the water also propelled the canoe slowly forward, the herring—or oolichan, I have caught oolichan on the Fraser River in the same way—were impaled on the sharp nails, and as the long rake reached the finished stroke, it was lifted out of the water, the herring shaken off into the back of the canoe; it was a rhythmic procedure; stroke, shake fish off, another stroke, shake fish off, always shake the fish off after each stroke." (See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.)

"The saltery was located where it was because of the water supply from the creek just to the west, the one John Morton drew his water from, and the Red Cross Brewery also did in later years; where the

C.P.R. tunnel enters now. The old building in which Frank Holt now lives" (see *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2) "was built for a mess house; there were four great big water tanks up in the attic to catch rainwater, and also it was pumped up—I forget how—from the creek, which was our only water supply, excepting that which we caught off the roofs; that was the reason the saltery was built at that point of the shore—to get the water. Stairs led up from the saltery to the mess house, etc., above."

CHINESE RIOTS. VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE.

"I was not here at the time of the fire, and do not know what use they put the saltery to then" (see *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2), "but I was here at the time of the Chinese Riots. I was a member of the volunteer fire brigade, and we were all sworn in as special constables, on duty day and night, that is, some on day, some on night; liable to be called at any time. At the time I was working at the Royal City Mill, Carrall Street—my father built that mill—Chas. Ferguson was manager, and was 'baching' with John McAlister, who was blacksmith at the Hastings Mill; he afterwards had a little blacksmith shop down on Hastings Road; I think his daughter is J. Hampton Bole's wife. We were supposed to be in readiness to quell disturbances, but the affair was very short lived. The passenger boats would not take the Chinamen; it was against the law for passenger boats to take an unwilling passenger, or something like that."

HASTINGS STREET SIDEWALK. THE NEW ROAD, OR FALSE CREEK TRAIL (KINGSWAY).

"When I first came here you went to New Westminster by ferry to Moodyville, then continued across to Hastings, and on by stage by the Douglas or Hastings corduroy road; there was no other way; then they built the 'New Road'" (Kingsway); "the old North Arm Road had been built years before I came." (Fraser Avenue.) "The 'New Road' ran slightly east of south from the Maple Tree at the foot of Carrall Street to Hastings Street, about the middle of the block, then turned almost east and crossed under the southwest corner of Hastings and Columbia streets, then turned south again, and passed along the low land almost direct to the False Creek Bridge—passing at one place about where the gas works tank is now. The old False Creek Bridge was here when I came here."

THE NEW ROAD. HASTINGS STREET.

"The New Road" (Kingsway) "served more in the North Arm direction; it was never used until after the fire, never used to any great extent; the Hastings Road was the road commonly used to go to New Westminster.

"Hastings street—between Carrall and Columbia streets, where the temporary City Hall is now—was much lower than the present street surface level; the first wooden sidewalk was on stilts; it was high in the air, perhaps seven or eight feet above the wet land; at high tide it was possible to get wet feet on that low land."

(Note: explanation of low land between False Creek and the Inlet. In Mayor MacLean's annual report for 1886 he says two bridges have been built; one of these was on Dupont Street; perhaps the other was Seventh Avenue. J.A. Matter, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1, says, "I helped bridge Dupont" (Pender) "Street between Columbia and Carrall streets. Water Street between Abbott and Carrall was planked at one time, but the edge of the water was the north side of Water Street.")

PORT MOODY.

"In the fall of 1884, I went up to the Port Moody to be the engineer in Burr's sawmill, and in April 1885 went up to Port Moody, and in the fall went down to Astoria, Oregon, and came back to Burrard Inlet in August 1886; I was not here at the time of the fire. But I did come to Vancouver on July 1st, to the celebration, Dominion Day, 1888. I came over from the Fraser River with my future wife, her brother and sister."

THE SUNNYSIDE HOTEL.

"There was no Sunnyside Hotel before the winter of 1884-1885, for it was that winter that I worked on the building of it." (Obviously wrong. Probably still another addition.) "It was built by Joe Griffiths, afterwards alderman on the first Council. It was leased by Harry Hemlow, later an alderman of the first City Council; he was running it at the time of the fire. Previous to taking over the Sunnyside, he had been associated in business with Ed Gold—not Ed Gold's father, but Ed Gold himself, afterwards Reeve of South Vancouver

or Point Grey. There was no Sunnyside Hotel before the winter of 1884-1885." (See Griffiths, MacInnes, and Hemlow. Also *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.)

DEIGHTON HOUSE.

"On the opposite cover to the Sunnyside was the Deighton Hotel, Gassy Jack's former place, but Alec Johnson was running it then. Then came the road, what we now call Trounce Alley" (see F.W. Hart for origin of name); "anyway, the lane between Cordova and Water streets. Across the road" (Trounce Alley) "was Gassy Jack's shack or cottage, and directly behind it, south, was Mrs. Angus Fraser's house."

WATER STREET. JONATHAN MILLER'S COW.

"In the other direction, along Water Street, next to the Deighton Hotel, was, first, the house where Alec Johnson lived, then Miller's House, with a wide verandah upon which I used to sit. The verandah here, showing a child playing on a rocking horse, is the old verandah of Jonathan Miller's house. Miller's house and the Court House were on the same lot, two separate buildings; behind Miller's house was where Miller kept his cow, in a stable on the lane, or road, as it was then. Next came Mannion's Granville Hotel, then Blair's Saloon, then Sullivan's store, and then a lane running north and south. Across this little lane was Sullivan's restaurant, then Gold's store; Blair's little house ended the row near the corner of Abbott and Water streets, and that was the end of the town. On the northeast corner of Abbott and Water streets was Ben Wilson's store; Calvert Simson, who had been manager of the Hastings Mill store, was with him; beyond Wilson's store to the west, some women lived.

GRANVILLE STREET IN MARCH 1890. SS *ISLANDER*. LULU ISLAND. NO. 2 ROAD.

"I was married on the 26th day of March 1890 at the little church on Sea Island recently burned down. We came up No. 2 Road, which was the only road across the island at that time, crossed the river by row boat, the span of the bridge between Sea Island and Lulu Island was out; the bridge from Sea Island to the mainland was intact, and came on up what is now Granville Street with the wheels of the Steeves' stage up the hubs in mud. The progress was so slow we were afraid we would miss the *Islander* on which boat we were taking our honeymoon to Victoria.

"No. 2 Road on Lulu Island was the first road opened up, then No. 3, then came No. 1 Road."

Mr. Evans, late Evans and Hastings, Pioneer Printers: (interjecting) "I recall one summer's day two of us took bicycles, and were going out to Steveston. Granville Street was just two ruts, about six inches deep and full of dust, and by the time we got to Eburne we were white with dust; we went to some farm house and got a drink of milk; we were just like sheets of white dust." (See Mayor L.D. Taylor, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.)

HASTINGS MILL.

Mr. Lord, continuing: "Hastings Mill ran eleven hours a day, Sundays included and all. Granville was just a logging town. A man who worked that long wanted to go to bed; he had no chance to see anything other than the sawmill." (See Calvert Simson.)

EARLY TELEGRAPHS.

"Edwards, the telegraph man, was related to the head of the Provincial Police Force in Westminster, Moresby; Moresby has a son now a lawyer in Victoria."

HARRISON RIVER. FIRST HOTEL.

"Joe Armstrong built the first hotel at Harrison River; I believe Brown was manager of the Hotel. Joe was no relation to William Armstrong, the Sheriff of Westminster. William Armstrong was father to Thos. J. Armstrong, who succeeded him as Sheriff and who was the man Sam Greer shot through the doorway of his house at Greer's Beach. Thomas, or Tom Armstrong, is about 70 now, and still living in Vancouver. Sam's second wife is still living on Trafalgar Street."

PORTUGUESE JOE.

"Portuguese Joe was in Granville when I came here, but I don't recall him. He was doing something here, but what it was I don't know.

“Calvert Simson, afterwards of the Hastings Sawmill store, worked for Ben Wilson in the store formerly owned by ‘Portuguese Joe,’ the man who shot another Portuguese, escaped, sought refuge on Siwash Rock, and hid there until his hiding place was discovered.

“After they started Spratt’s Oilery at the foot of what is now Burrard Street, Joe was fishing for the market; he sold his fish to the settlers and anyone else who would buy.” (See Jim [Chilaminst] Franks, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.)

(Mr. Lord pointed at figure “8” in photo of etching of Granville, 1882.) “This is the start of the old trail down to the Saltery” (Spratt’s) “at the foot of Burrard Street.

“This etching is taken from a photograph of Granville after 1884; it shows that store; that store was built after I came here; this other one is the one that Calvert Simson was manager of after he left the Hastings Mill store.”

28 SEPTEMBER 1933.

[Conversation with Mr. W.R. Lord, continued.]

RIDLEY’S GASTOWN PHOTO. ANDY LINTON. GEO. BLACK’S. JONATHAN MILLER. BEN SPRINGER.

“I cannot tell you which was the jail; it might have been in this place with the rocking horse on the verandah, but this sort of fence across here is, I think, a platform and runway from the water, to walk up, and bring goods up; Andy Linton tied his floating boat house to it at first, before he moved it farther west after the” (Great) “Fire. You see there was a sort of curve in the beach there in front of the Granville Hotel, and when you came from the Hastings Mill, or on the old *Senator* from Moodyville, you tied up at the Granville Hotel float which went down right in front of the Granville Hotel” (probably before the Sunnyside Hotel was built) “and walked ashore almost into the Granville Hotel door.” (Ridley says this is the wrong explanation; that the “platform” is a fence to stop people falling into the water at night—says there was a low bank there.) Mr. Lord: “Ridley is right, we’re both right.” (See John Murray.) “There was a plank way down the beach to a bit of a float of logs for the boats to tie up to when they came from the Hastings Sawmill store. I remember Gassy Jack used to get his hay from Victoria, and the boat put it off at Hastings Mill wharf, and it was brought over on a bit of a scow propelled with oars to his own float at the foot of Carrall Street. The Granville Hotel float was right alongside—to the west—of Geo. Black’s. George Black’s cottage was next to the Sunnyside; then his butcher shop next. There was a space between the Sunnyside and George Black’s cottage, and, too, there was a sort of lean-to on the west side of the Sunnyside. Jonathan Miller and Ben Springer’s” (manager of the Moodyville Sawmill) “wife were sisters” (which probably explains how Miller came to be constable at Granville.) “One of his daughters, now Mrs. Todd Lees, was about eighteen when I came in 1884, because she used to be very fond of dances. Jonathan Miller had worked in the woods, in Stanley Park, getting out timber.”

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH W.R. LORD, 21 AUGUST 1934.

MOUNTAIN VIEW CEMETERY. FIRST BURIAL.

“Hirschberg committed suicide in the attic of the Leland Hotel; he was the first burial in Mountain View. His grave is on the top of the knoll, it is right close to the fence on what is now 34th Avenue, old Bodwell Road.” (See F.W. Hart and H.E. Ridley.)

COAL. TRAIL TO SPRATT’S SALTERY.

“The old trail from Gastown to Spratt’s Oilery ran along the edge of the top of the bluff overlooking the water, that would be a few yards north of the present Hastings Street West. The coal seams, or rather one of them, was west of the Saltery; just exactly where is hard to say, but about the foot of Bute Street down near the edge of the tide; the tide did not flow over it. I was never there; when I saw it, it was when I was passing in a row boat. I don’t remember any coal prospects down near the Granville Hotel on Water Street.” (See J.H. Scales, etc., also Admiralty chart No. 1922.)