

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

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NAMING OF COAL HARBOUR. DISCOVERY OF COAL.

Copy of letter from Captain Geo. Henry Richards, R.N., commanding H.M. Surveying Ship *Plumper*, to His Excellency James Douglas, C.B., Governor of British Columbia. (Photostat Provincial Archives, No. 12968.)

H.M.S. "PLUMPER"
Replied to 30 June / 59. S.C.

H.M. Survey Ship "Plumper"
Burrard Inlet
14th day of June 1859.

Sir,

I have the honor to acquaint you that having reason to believe from native report, as well as from the geological formation exhibited over certain portions of the coast of this inlet, that coal existed, I desired the Senior Engineer, Mr. F. Brockton, to direct his attention to the investigation of the subject, during the ships sojourn here on surveying duties, which resulted in Mr. Brockton acquainting me on the 12th instant that an apparently extensive vein occurred on the Southern side of the inner harbour, about a mile and a half within the first narrows.

Having visited the spot and satisfied myself that sufficient could be procured with facility to test practically in our furnaces under steam, I dispatched a boat and procured in the course of a few hours over two tons; it has been used in the ships galley (Grant's patent distilling apparatus) with success, and I shall shortly take an opportunity of giving it a further trial in the steam furnaces.

I have intimated this discovery to the Lieutenant Governor, Colonel Moody, R.E., and sent him specimens of the coal, and as it appears to me that it may exercise a considerable and possibly an immediate influence on the prosperity of the new town of Queenborough, on the Fraser, within such an easy distance both by land and sea of this fine Port, I have thought it right to apprise your Excellency of the facts without delay, and I send the "Shark" to Esquimalt for this purpose; she will also carry to you specimens of the coal, with the fossiliferous sandstone in which it is embedded.

I beg to enclose you also a report on the subject furnished me by Dr. Wood, the Surgeon of this ship, who made as full an investigation as time and circumstances would permit. I fully concur with him in the belief, that extensive coal measures exist here, not only in the single position already examined, but generally throughout this capacious Inlet; as I write I receive undeniable evidences of their existence in the outer harbour and I would add my belief that the working of the coal will be attended with but inconsiderable labour or expense.

I have the honour to be Sir
Your most Obedient Servant

Geo. Henry Richards
Captain

His Excellency
James Douglas C.B.
Governor of British Columbia.

Rough memorandum, penciled at bottom of page:

30th June 1859

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 14th instant communicating that you had discovered Coal on Burrard Inlet, and forwarding to me some of the specimens you had procured. I beg to return you many thanks for your promptness in affording me this information and I shall take an early opportunity of bringing the subject to the notice of H.M. Government.

H.M. Surveying Ship "Plumper"
Burrard Inlet, British Columbia
14th day of June 1859

Sir,

Having been requested by you to report upon a coal bed lately found by the Officers of H.M.S. "Plumper" on the South shore of Burrard Inlet, yesterday visited by me, I beg to submit the following short statement of my observations.

Upon the beach at low water, coal is found cropping out for a distance embracing the two points of high and low water, these croppings proceed from a vein of coal some 4 or 5 inches in thickness superficially covered by a thin layer of shale, and with an underlying stratum of the same character, grey sandstone rock forming the roof.

Beneath the underlying or second layer of shale another vein of coal is seen, which commencing with a thickness of seven inches increases to fifteen inches at a distance horizontally of seven feet, dipping at an angle of 15½ degrees to the Southward, running with the super-adjacent layers of shale and sandstone North and South, this vein has an underlying layer of claystone; beneath this point, from the limited means at command, water from the surrounding slopes rapidly filling the pits made, investigation could not be directed, but I imagine sufficient evidences were thus far obtained as to prove the presence of the true coal measures and the probability of an extensive coal deposit.

Selected samples of coal taken from the second seam presented all the outward characters of English Newcastle, it burns freely in a common furnace, and produces little smoke.

In the overlying sandstone or roof a considerable number of beautiful vegetable fossils are found mostly leaves of exogene belonging to the orders of Mastworts and Willow-worts.

In conclusion I may observe that indications of coal are likewise observed about 100 yards from the line of cropping I have described in the sandstone cliffs, which are here 7 or 8 feet in thickness covered by a deep vegetable mould, in the shape of small seams of coal firmly embedded between layers of sandstone.

I have the honour to be Sir
Your most Obedient Servant,

Chas. B. Wood
Surgeon

Captain George Henry Richards, R.N.
H.M. Surveying Ship "Plumper."