

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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CONVERSATION WITH MR. (AND MRS.) DUKE MCKENZIE, 1154 BURNABY STREET, VANCOUVER, B.C.

DRIVING THE LAST SPIKE, CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY.

“What’s this you say? The Last Spike? A gold spike, set in diamonds? Read it in the paper. What part? Must have been in the funnies. What yarns these historians do invent. The next thing they’ll have Sir Donald” (Lord Strathcona) “driving the last spike in a helmet and plume, a coat of mail, and a band playing ‘Springtime in the Rockies.’”

Then Mr. Duke McKenzie, who lives on Burnaby Street now, but who actually saw the last spike driven at Craigellachie in '85, laughed heartily.

“What really happened was this. I was there, and saw. We were on the work train which ran ahead of Sir Donald A. Smith’s special train carrying the rails, ties, etc., for closing the gap. A bit of a gap between the two ends from the east and the west had been left open for the official closing, and we had the material for doing this on our work train.

“Then we laid the rails down, and Sir Donald, surrounded by officials and the train crews, drove the last spike, and the official train passed over the gap, and the work train followed and went to Sicamous.

“After Sir Donald had driven the last spike, he chucked the sledge hammer on the ground beside the track and walked off to board his train again. Mike Sullivan, who was a sort of superintendent around here, picked the sledge hammer up, ran after him, and handed the hammer to Sir Donald, who took it, smiled and climbed on board his train with the sledge hammer in his hand. Mike got a nice cheque afterwards as a gift.

“But about this ‘last spike’ and the diamonds,” and again Mr. McKenzie smiled, “there must be ‘millions’ of last spikes in existence. People were getting ‘last spikes’ away from there for weeks afterwards.”

(From *Province*, 7 December 1933, by J.S. Matthews.)

LOGGING TRAILS. WEST END.

Mr. and Mrs. Duke McKenzie went to live at 1156 Burnaby Street—now 1154 and 1156—in October 1898; at that time all that part of the “West End” was “in the rough”; they picked blackberries around in the stumps; the maple trees on Burnaby Street in front of their home—big trees now—he got “out in the clearing,” and planted them himself. A two-plank sidewalk led to their home; the old log trail came down from northeast, passed about 1143 Burnaby Street, and under their home at 1156 Burnaby Street, and continued on down to the water; it had once been used to haul the logs out of the “West End” forest. The first house on Burnaby Street was Martin’s, now 1143 Burnaby Street. They have no children.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH OTWAY JOHN JAMES WILKIE OF NEW WESTMINSTER, 26 MAY 1934.

Mr. Wilkie served for many years on the Provincial Police Force, served in the Boer War, 1899-1902. (Photograph No. ? taken in 1884.)

THE COMING OF THE RAILWAY.

“The survey part surveying the lines of the C.P.R. from Port Moody to Granville, finished the line on Christmas Day, 1884, in a heavy snow storm. It had been snowing hard all day, but we were anxious to finish up; we were told that haste was necessary. At the conclusion of our day’s labour, just as it was getting dark, we reached a bluff of land about half a mile or more east of George Black’s Brighton Hotel at Hastings; this was the boundary of the city limits.” (See amplification, next page.)

“We all got into our boat, a large clinker-built boat about 20 feet long and capable of carrying twelve or fourteen men, no masts, just cars, which was on the beach, and made our way to Black’s at Hastings, where the celebrated our Christmas dinner. Among the jolly party was Major Rogers” (Rogers Pass), “in charge of the survey, who was staying at the hotel, and Jack Fannin, afterwards curator of the Provincial Museum at Victoria.

"The survey party consisted of the Chief" (Major Rogers), "Mr. Roberts, who was in charge of the survey party, Clarence Mitchell, on the transit, a Mr. Rogers, nephew of Major Rogers, leveller, two chainmen, two picket men—I was the front picket man, a Mr. Newbury—his mother was an Italian and his father a colonel in the English army; he went back to Sicamous—who was rodman, four axemen, George McLaughlin being one of them—he was around Vancouver for years afterwards; a party of about fifteen in all.

"You must remember that the only road along the shore of Burrard Inlet at that time was the road from Granville to Hastings, so that we went up and down in a boat, big enough to carry this large party and their baggage. We reached the bluff at the city limits just about dark—it was snowing heavily, and had been all day—and went west to Black's for our Christmas dinner. Sam Brighthouse, Jack Fannin, Major Rogers, all joined in. There was no Mrs. Black, but his daughter, a very pretty girl, just going to school in Germany; another daughter was drowned in the Coquitlam River, Queen's Birthday, 1883; she had been in the convent."

ALICEVILLE.

"Before we made our headquarters at Geo. Black's we had been camped in Johnson's hotel, uncle to Johnson of the big boot store, at the end of the North Road. Aliceville is named after Mrs. Tovey, who was John A. Webster's daughter.

"The photo you have copied is in the same clothes as I wore in 1884. When on duty I wore a flannel shirt." (See photo No. ?)

PROPOSED PAINTING.

"If the 'Coming of the Railway' is painted in oils, bear this in mind, that all east of George Black's was dense primeval forest; for two of three hundred yards west of George Black's there was clearing, and from there on to the Hastings Mill there was a fringe on the shore, more or less cleared in places. The shore beneath the bluff where we ceased the survey was covered with boulders, and our boat was on the shore. Then there was the little bridge just east of Black's. There was only one float at Black's, no wharf, just a float running out in front of Maxie's kept in place by piles. When the party was working, the front picket man with a red and white picket like a barber's pole, went first, then, between him and the transit, were the axemen. If you put an Indian in the painting, have him with bare feet, a blanket, and hair down to his shoulders; you might put in a Kloutch, too, or a canoe."

NEW BRIGHTON HOTEL.

"George Black's hotel had a cottage roof. The back of it, close to the beach, part perhaps actually over the water; the front faced on Hastings Road and had a verandah."

NORTH ROAD AND SCOTT ROAD.

"The base line of all the Royal Engineer surveys is the North Road and the Scott Road."

THE COMING OF THE RAILWAY.

"The rest of the line to Coal Harbour was finished about 18th or 19th of March, 1885; I recall the date so well because I was married on the 20th, and on that day met Major Rogers and party at New Westminster as they were returning to Sicamous, taking with them the big boat used on the Burrard Inlet survey. The city limits of which I speak were the present city limits, that is, the division between Burnaby and Old Hastings Townsite, not the city limits of Vancouver in 1886."

WILD ANIMALS. COUGARS. WOLVES. HASTINGS ROAD.

"The stage between Westminster and Hastings has been known to pass as many as twelve wolves in a pack; all in one pack, altogether; even in my day, they used to be howling around. The biggest cougar I ever heard of as being killed on the Mainland was poisoned about 1876 by Kenneth Morrison at Fort Langley; it was carrying off a calf, and was subsequently poisoned and measured eleven feet three inches from tip to tip, but this one was beaten by one shot at Sooke on the Island by Peter Curran in the early '90s. It measured eleven feet six inches. Curran was one of my men when I was in charge of the hunt for the notorious Indian Gun-a-noot. He is now a guide on Telegraph Creek."

Read and approved by Mr. Wilkie, 16 July 1934. J.S.M.

**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. OTWAY WILKIE OF NEW WESTMINSTER, 16 MARCH 1934,
AT CITY HALL, VANCOUVER, B.C.**

EARLY RIFLE RANGES. ROYAL SAPPERS AND MINERS.

"I saw Mr. George Turnbull before I came over this afternoon, and he confirms that Mr. Thos. Deasy of Saanich says that the first rifle range in New Westminster was down the Pitt River Road near the Brunette River—he says he can just barely recollect it. It lay almost east and west; the firing points, or whatever they used as such, were in the west, and they fired towards the east, across the Brunette River, into the bank, where the targets were placed, from about the foot of what is now Braid Street." (See Thos. Deasy, letter, December 1933 or January 1934.) "Turnbull says that Mr. Deasy is wrong in a subsequent letter, 1 March 1934, where he says that the first rifle range was near Queen's Park; that range was used afterwards." (The targets were east of the river, on the hillside.)

PEELE BUTTS.

(Refer Deasy letter.) "Peele Butts, Mr. Turnbull says, he often shot over. They ran north and south, and were just to the east of what is now McBride Boulevard, between the boulevard and the ravine; remains of them are there yet."

MARTINI-HENRY RIFLES. MILITIA ARMED WITH SNIDER.

"There was one or two Martini-Henry rifles in Westminster in the early days—as I know them—J.C. Brown had one, and Peele had the one presented to the B.C. Rifle Association by the Lord Mayor of London, but those were the only two. The militia were armed with the Snider."

BROWNSVILLE RIFLE RANGE.

"The Brownsville rifle range lay north and south, about, and you went into it just at what is now the southern end of the Fraser Railway bridge, but in those days we went over by boat, the 'K.D.K.' ferry, or some other way, and we fired south into the hills." (See photo No. ?)

CENTRAL PARK RIFLE RANGE.

"Turnbull says the first range was the one down by the Brunette on the Pitt River Road; then the Peele Butts, then the Brownsville, and afterwards the Central Park, then the Richmond." (The Moodyville Range was semi-private—V.R.A.)

ENSIGN ADAM JACKSON.

"Ensign Adam Jackson, who appears so conspicuously as a rifle shot in early Westminster rifle matches, etc., was a Tasmanian; great big fellow, six feet, and a nice man; every body liked him, a great favourite. His wife was killed by the Tasmanian natives, and then, so the story goes, he started in to 'clean up' the Tasmanian natives, and the Tasmanian Government sent him away. He was in charge of the Royal Columbian Hospital for a time; his son operated the hotel up the Capilano—about 1925 I think, may do so yet—the one above the Suspension Bridge."

MARQUIS OF LORNE. PRINCESS LOUISE (TREE.) 19 NOVEMBER 1882.

"An old directory, Williams, I have, says that the Marquis of Lorne visited Granville on November 19, 1882, I think, which reminds me that he also went up to Langley for snipe shooting, but it does not say anything about that. Like his trip to Granville, Princess Louise did not go with him. When the word reached Langley that a vice-regal party was coming there was great scurrying about; hunting up pillow slips and sheets, borrowing them, to provide for the party's beds. In the hurry, carrying the bed linen, etc., from other homes, some was dropped, and the Marquis coming along soon after, picked it up himself off the ground, lying where the women folk in their hurry had dropped it, and carried it in himself."

CONVERSATION, OTWAY WILKIE, WESTMINSTER (CONTINUED) – 17 MARCH 1934.

ANDREW ONDERDONK.

"A very unassuming man, slender of build. Mrs. Onderdonk was the most modestly dressed woman in Yale. There was plenty of dressing up with the womenfolk in Yale; all the engineers' wives vied as to who

could dress the best; you know the sort of thing which goes on in a small community of officialdom, but Mrs. Onderdonk dressed very plainly. Their home is now the All Hallow's School, Yale." (See photo No. ?)

On reading this to W.H. (Bill) Evans, an early C.P.R. engineer, "Onderdonk was a 'gentleman'; always neat, well dressed, and courteous. I cannot recall him wearing a beard. Afterwards he built an overhead railway in Chicago, and did construction work on Welland Canal. All his family are dead now, I am told, excepting his daughter Eva. Onderdonk's father was a bishop, I believe, down in Pennsylvania."

CANNON SHOT, SHELLS. BRITISH NAVY.

Query by J.S.M.: Mr. Wilkie, what do you think about these shells—cannon shot—they are constantly picking up? They have got another, a fourth, over at Port Mann this week.

Mr. Wilkie: "Ricochets. This talk about the Royal Navy firing at trees in the forest is all nonsense to my mind. The officers of the navy were humane men, they would never fire all over the place at trees; too many Indians about in those days. They were shooting at floating targets, the regular form of marine target, and you know how, once in a while, a shell will ricochet on the water, rebound at a tangent, and, maybe, ricochet again once or twice or three times, just as flat stones do when boys throw them over water pools to see who can make the most skips. Each time at a greater tangent; that's how those things landed in the woods. The naval officers would never shoot at a tree." (Note: Thos. Deasy, letter, 1 March 1934, says "It was the custom, in the early days, for men-of-war to practice by erecting targets on the trees.") "How would they know what their marksmanship was? Too dangerous, too, to the natives; Indians everywhere; why you know old Alex McLean told you that when he came to the Fraser River with his father in 1859 that he never saw so many Indians all up and down the banks between the mouth and Pitt River. Why, the Indians towed the ships up river to Langley; Samuel Robertson, who arrived in B.C. in 1838, told me that they did. No; there was a lot of humanity about the British naval officer; there was no firing when Indians were about."

(Note: a marine target is a float, or two of them towed on a long tow rope behind the towing vessel and the object is to hit—a splash marks the place—in line between the foremost and rear float. To hit the target is bad marksmanship; it destroys it, which means making another one to replace it.)

SPARS FOR THE NAVY. HASTINGS SAWMILL.

"Which reminds me. The spars for the navy had to be hewn, not sawn; that was in the specifications the navy made. So the Hastings Sawmill used to saw the slabs off, and then hire men to hew them so as to make them appear that they had been hewn; they had a gang with jack planes rubbing the saw marks off. Mr. Stanley, of Jardine, his father was one of the planer gang; highest paid men in the mill; got \$90 a month."

HASTINGS, THE NAME.

"I asked John McMurphy, he is the son of the sergeant major of the Royal Engineers, if he knew how Hastings got its name. I don't know how correct his reply was, but it is that the first owner was a man named Hastings; he was a captain or something, he thought."