

Early Vancouver

Volume Four

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2011 Edition (Originally Published 1944)

Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1935-1939.

Supplemental to Volumes One, Two and Three collected in 1931-1934.

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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Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 4 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 4. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

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“A man called Armitage told me that, when they were putting in the Capilano water pipes, they found a cedar thirty feet in diameter, and said to be the biggest cedar tree in the world. It was right on the line of the water pipe—water pipe has to go straight—and they could not go around it, so they blew it up.”

NOTE BY CITY ARCHIVIST.

No logger I have ever met—and I have met scores—has ever told me of a tree larger than ten or twelve feet in diameter. Every effort has been made to find some authentic record of a supposed giant tree cut down near Vancouver; we have never been able to find anyone who ever saw it. The illusive tree, twenty-five feet in diameter, officially stated to have been cut down by George Cary—the only George Cary—did not exist, according to George Cary, who says he never cut such a tree, nor heard of anyone who did. A freak bole on a steep hillside might have grown. It has long been assumed that a barroom joke, or some lumbermen outdoing each other in boasting has, by repetition, become “fact.”

J.S. Matthews.

27 DECEMBER 1940 – BIG TREES. NORTH VANCOUVER. LONSDALE AVENUE.

In November 1940, there was presented to the City Archives six photographs of North Vancouver, in 1896, showing Geo. H. Dawson, B.C. Land Surveyor, laying out the central sections of the present City of North Vancouver; one of these photographs shows a survey peg, bearing the mark “Blk. 109,” which is about Victoria Park, at the junction of Keith Road and Lonsdale Avenue.

Another photograph, C.V. P.Tr.17, of the same group of six, shows Mr. Dawson concealed, all save his head, in the hollow centre of a standing dead tree, much charred by fire, out in the clearing. Assuming that Mr. Dawson’s head is six inches wide, then the diameter of the stump is:

On ground level: twenty and one half feet (20½) diameter.

At five feet above: eighteen and a half (18½) feet.

The photograph may, or may not, show the widest diameter; the tree may be even wider, as the photo was taken facing west, to conform with the angle of the sun’s light.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. BALFOUR, WIDOW OF THE LATER ALDERMAN ROBERT BALFOUR, ONE OF THE ALDERMEN OF THE FIRST CITY COUNCIL, 1886, OF VANCOUVER, 17 MARCH 1936.

Mrs. Balfour lives at 1421 West 15th Avenue.

Mrs. Balfour: “We built a great big hotel, three storeys, at the corner of Columbia and Hastings Street, and when ‘The Fire’ came we just ran; we went out of it with nothing but our clothes on our backs three weeks after we started; it stood I think where the Broadway Hotel is now.”

GREAT FIRE. BURRARD HOTEL.

“My husband was born in either Michel or Wingham, Ontario, and then went to Manitoba; then we came out to that high bridge, Stoney Creek, I think they call it, built for the C.P.R. We drove all through the mountains; first we came as far as the end of the track, Stoney Creek high bridge; we lived in a long cabin the engineers had built in the bottom of the valley; we drove west in an open wagon, just an open wagon with our mattresses and baggage on top, and it rained all the way. We stopped at cabins; they were about a day’s drive apart; we drove on the road bed, and when we reached Revelstoke, stopped there a month. There were no homes in Revelstoke then, just frame buildings at Revelstoke, and we had to build the bunks we slept in along the wall.”

C.P.R. MOUNTAIN. CONSTRUCTION.

“Then we drove down to Eagle Pass Landing” (near Sicamous.)

“Then we went down to Hammond by rail, in an old caboose, and oh, my, it was terrible; just like riding in a rocking chair. We got to some place—I don’t know where it was but it was a lovely little house—they had a Chinaman cook, the first Chinaman I had ever seen. Did you ever have tomato preserves? Well, he