

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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was later appointed Dominion Gov. Engineer with office at New Westminster and died in harness at that place. He also laid out the early townsight of Vancouver making the first map and the streets were named after old Victoria Celebrities such as Prior, Oppenheimer, Powell, Cambie, Dunlevy, Gore, etc. etc.

FIRST MAP MADE BY H.B. SMITH.

This map was made in Victoria by H.B. Smith assistance to Geo. A. During the winter of 85 and 86.

Now Mr. Matthews as I said Mr. J.W. McFarland may be able to give you data on Carl & Hawks and should you want any information re early days, don't hesitate in communicating with me. I was on all the Construction Wks., carried on by H.F. Keefer and also with Geo. A. Keefer on some of his works.

My father Jno. G. Keefer a brother of H.F. Keefer came from "Thorold, Ont" they came west with the C.P.R. and had numerous contracts.

Will fill in the enclosed Genealogy sheet at my leisure and forward to you.

Yours sincerely,

[signed] Geo. H. Keefer.

30 NOVEMBER 1933 – GEORGE HENRY KEEFER.

756 Cloverdale Avenue, Victoria, B.C., born at Bowling Green, Ontario. Arrived from Ontario to Victoria, B.C. on 30 June 1885. He was a Railroad Contractor. Married 17 November 1914, Vancouver, at Christ Church to Lois Dyson, daughter of Wm. Dyson, Houndle, England. No children.

MEMBERS OF FAMILY.

Five brothers and two sisters all residing in B.C.

PERSONAL SERVICES.

On construction of C.P.R. into B.C. Also on Island Railway (E&N) during construction, Vancouver Waterworks (Capilano). Served three years in Great War in France. Promoted to St. Sgt. from 1915 to 1918 with Canadian Forestry Corps. 242nd Battalion.

FAMILY ORIGIN.

The Keefers came originally from Alsace and Loraine; settled in Pennsylvania during British occupation of the country. The family were divided when the Americans gained their independence. Half the family remained loyal and the others were pro-American. After the war the Loyalists left America and settled at Thorold, Canada, entering the milling and other pursuits, later promoting the first Welland Canal scheme.

HISTORICAL.

The Keefers became very active in commercial and political affairs of the country, and had on many occasions to shoulder guns to protect the young community from the ravages of the Indians, who raided the district around Niagara at intervals.

My Great Grandfather George Keefer had four wives during his life, and was the father of nineteen children.

On two occasions of his marriages, he married widows who had several small children, all helping to make the Keefer family more numerous. Some became Doctors, Lawyers, etc. but the profession which seemed to predominate was Civil Engineering. Thos. C. Keefer, C.E. who got out the survey of all preliminary work on the 1st Welland Canal, was afterwards head of the department at Ottawa. The next generation produced George A. Keefer, C.E. who did most of the

locating of the C.P.R. through the mts., and after construction days became Dom. Gov. Engineer for B.C. stationed at New Westminster.

[LETTER FROM GEO. H. KEEFER.]

756 Cloverdale Avenue
Victoria, B.C.
Dec. 2nd, 1933.

Dear Mr. Matthews:

STEAMER MAUD. CAPILANO WATERWORKS. HASTINGS SAWMILL WHARF.

I have just got time to fill in the document you sent me some time ago. I don't know if I have done so in the manner you wished or no? However, if not you can send me over another one. It was the winter of 85 & 86 that I first set foot on the shore of the present Vancouver, then about changing its name from Granville to Vancouver. I went over from there on the old Stmr. Maud with Geo. A. Keefer and his party of surveyors, to commence the first survey of the Capilano Waterworks. We were all afternoon and night making the trip and landed at Hastings Sawmill wharf the next morning, rather cold and dull weather Jan. 15 or 20th, 1886.

The party consisted of Geo. A. Keefer, chief, H.B. Smith, Assistant, Fred Bodwell, Chairman, Fred G. Little, topographer, and Geo. H. Keefer (myself) Picketman.

SUNNYSIDE HOTEL. ALDERMAN HARRY HEMLOW. JOE FORTES.

We stayed at the Sunnyside Hotel then ran by Harry Hemlow, Prop., Thos. Jackman, Barkeeper, and Joe Fortes, colored porter. We would row over across the inlet in two boats in the morning and take lunch with us. Work all day and row home at nights. Some days it would rain all day and was most disagreeable climbing the mountain through the thick brush, interspersed plentifully with devil-clubs, etc. Vancouver was a veritable mud-hole on the main streets at that time, plenty of men looking for work and the bars doing a roaring business. Later in the same spring we started work on the section of the C.P.R. from Port Moody and to English Bay to the consternation of the Port Moodites.

[signed] Keefer.

[LETTER FROM GEO. H. KEEFER, RECEIVED 4 JUNE 1935.]

Mr. Matthews,
Vancouver City Archivist.

Dear Sir:

OVERSEAS SERVICE.

Some time during our late correspondence you asked if I had a photo to spare to go with my correspondence, etc. etc. I might say that the only one I can give you at the moment is one in uniform, taken in Paris at the close of the late unpleasantness. Should you like to have one I will be most pleased to comply with your request.

C.P.R. RIGHT OF WAY, PORT MOODY TO VANCOUVER, 1886. INDIAN LABOURERS.

Well, sir, as time passes, and as a consequence, we grow older; and see at intervals, the death notices of old timers, and the demolition of old things; it makes one wonder if he or she is not about the only one left. This feeling often comes to me, makes one feel a sort of Wandering Jew. I see an ad. of the death of a dear old time chum of mine a short time ago "Mr. Alf Banham." We were great friends in early days, and went prospecting up the west coast together. I am keeping fit and feel as good as the days when I cleared the right of way for the C.P.R. into Vancouver 1896. [?] I had about eighty five Stickene Indians on the job, and some of them were quite smart and intelligent, all of them good workers, good with axe and handspike.