

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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CAPILANO WATER PIPES, FIRST NARROWS, VERSUS CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY, R.M.S. ABYSSINIA.

Excerpt, *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, July 1937, "The Trans-Pacific Service," 1887-1891, page 159.

"In November the *Abyssinia* touched bottom in the Narrows, but a diver found her to be unharmed except for a slightly bent propeller. An amusing controversy followed as to whether or not she had struck the watermain, which had been crushed mysteriously the day she sailed."

A PERSONAL NOTE.

Sechelt, B.C.
Aug. 19th, 1937.

Dear Major Matthews:

Pardon the delay in answering your letter as I was away from home—and many thanks for your invitation to have tea with you.

I fail to see where there was any amusing controversy. I can assure you it was anything but amusing; it meant a lot of hard work day and night, until the break was repaired, and strong tides running in the Narrows, often very dangerous; and the people ringing up wanting more water all the time, and lots of them very unreasonable.

I know I was glad when the pipe was repaired as the telephone was constantly ringing by people wanting water.

Yours

truly,

Jane Nickson.

(AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT.)

To the City Archivist,
Major Matthews.

Dear Sir:

It is quite true the "Abyssinia" settled down on the water main in the First Narrows, and broke the water main pipe.

I noticed the water gauge had dropped, and telephoned the Water Works—they sent men out at once, and discovered the ship had broken the pipe, and stopped the water supply—My husband, who was superintendent, then arranged for the water carts; to deliver water, to those people who had no wells—and I supplied my near neighbours with water from our cistern.

After the pipe was repaired, my husband put on the diver's suit, and walked under the Narrows from shore to shore, along the pipe line, to see if all was right, and no more leaks. That was in June 1890.

Yours

truly,

Jane Nickson.

(Note: Mrs. Jane Nickson, widow of J.J. Nickson, mother of T.R. Nickson. J.J. Nickson constructed the Vancouver Water Works pipe system. The water gauge was in their home, 1220 Melville Street. Mrs. Nickson may be slightly in error as to "June," I think November, and Mrs. Oben's account of the rain and cold the men worked in, confirms this. J.S.M.)

GEORGE CARY. POODLE DOG ORNAMENTAL BAR.

The unique Poodle Dog Hotel bar was made of almost every kind of bark, cedar bark, vine maple twigs, moss and fungus, etc., was built by George Cary (see file) for Bert Burton. A photo is in Archives. It was a

unique bar in appearance. The owner's name was spelt out in big letters of maple branch twigs along the front. (Photo N. Hot. 16.)

The "Poodle Dog" was on Cordova Street between Cambie and Richards streets. It was illuminated with coal gas.

ORIENTAL HOTEL. HOTEL BUSES.

The Oriental Hotel was on Water Street close to the famous Regina Hotel (which escaped the fire of 1886), and is said to have had the first *big* hotel omnibus. Prior to that most hotels had busses which met the C.P.R. trains and C.P.N. and U.S.S. Co. boats—then the only things to meet—but they were comparatively small, with a seat fore and aft along the side, and black canvas side and roof; the side flaps could be rolled up in fine weather. The Oriental Hotel had a *big* bus.

Speaking of it, William Edwards, 2576 Oxford Street, (High 1557X) member Pioneers Association, and who used to drive it says:

"We used to haul twenty-five persons in that bus; great big bus, make three trips down to the C.P.R. station; seventy-five from one C.P.R. train. There was not room at times in the house" (hotel) "to accommodate them, but we bunked all just the same. We had little cots, and we used to push the regulars out of their rooms into the hallways, set them up in cots, and keep them there until the rush was over, then let them go back to the rooms the transients had pushed them out of."

CABS. HACKS.

"At that time Charlie Queen had the only hack in town."

The practice of hotels having hotel busses has now (1936) ceased. Taxis have taken their place.