

Early Vancouver

Volume Four

By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.

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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HASTINGS INSTITUTE AND MOODYVILLE MECHANICS INSTITUTE.

Excerpt, letter, 21 July 1937, Miss Muriel Crakanthorp, Vancouver, to City Archivist, City Hall.

My uncle and [my] mother both remember an Institute in Moodyville perfectly distinctly named "The Mechanics Institute." The sign read "THE MECHANICS INSTITUTE" For Members only. It was in the reading room on the sawdust spit at Moodyville; that was a good many years ago, because my uncle says he would read it when he was a very small boy, and wonder what a "mechanic" was. He is sixty one now, and I suppose it was there long before he could read. Mother remembers it too, and says quite definitely that there was no "Hastings Institute" at Moodyville. There may have been one here [*Hastings Sawmill*]; the reading rooms were often referred to as Institutes.

Mrs. Crakanthorp (mother of the writer, Miss Muriel) is, at present, an invalid unable to write on account of recent injuries to her arm. She was born at Stamp's Mill, Alberni Canal, 26 February 1864, and reached Hastings Sawmill, April 1873, when she was nine, and is now one of the two survivors of the first class of pupils at the first school at Hastings Sawmill, 1873. In 1874 she moved to Moodyville, and remained there until 1892. She is the daughter of the celebrated pioneer nurse, Mrs. Patterson. She is especially well informed on Burrard Inlet family life from 1873 to say 1895, and pages of long conversations with her have been recorded.

[LETTER FROM F.W. ALEXANDER.]

PACIFIC LUMBER INSPECTION BUREAU

725 Henry Building
Seattle, Washington.

June 11, 1936.

Major J.S. Matthews,
City Hall,
16 Hastings St., East,
Vancouver, British Columbia.

Dear Major Matthews:

Please pardon my seeming negligence in not replying to your letters of May 6th and 23rd before. I have been fighting demands of labor unions and when that contingency arises all other work suffers, especially one's personal correspondence.

Replying to yours of May 23rd with reference to Miss Sweeney. I was so young when she taught school I have only a faint recollection of her. She was the daughter of the master mechanic of the Hastings Sawmill, and lived next door to our family. She probably was not as "chic" as our present day teachers, but I question the idea that she was a tough teacher. I do not think she was a full-fledged teacher, that is, holding papers, but she was, if I remember correctly, the first white girl on the south side of the Inlet, and the Sweeney family owned the first cow, the Alexander family being brought up on goat's milk. The young swains at the Hastings Mill vied with each other as to who would milk the cow for Miss Sweeney in the evening, that being one of her duties.

I cannot recall when I first went to school. It was probably when Mrs. Richards, afterwards Mrs. Springer, taught. The first teacher I can fully recall was Mrs. Peter Cordiner, wife of the blacksmith at the mill. I would be pleased indeed to attend a reunion of the old pupils.

Referring to yours of May 6th—I cannot recall the year when Sir William Van Horne first came to Vancouver, but I do remember he met, for the first time, Mr. Thos. Sorby, C.P.R. architect for the Pacific Division. Mr. Sorby was a great admirer of the Queen Anne style of architecture, think some of the buildings are still standing. When he was presented to Van Horne, that gentleman looked him over, gave a sniff, and remarked, 'So you are the damned old fool who

has been filling this town up with small windows." Sorby afterwards lived in Victoria, and made a statement once that he had his lead pencils shipped over the Northern Pacific to get even on Van Horne.

Mr. Galt was in error in stating the Abyssinia or Parthia went up to Port Moody, the Vancouver Dock being built before they started running from the Orient. The only vessels I remember going up to Port Moody were sailing vessels loaded with railroad iron and a few small steamships with Chinese coolies. These, however, went up before the building of the dock at Vancouver. Another proof that the Abyssinia and Parthia did not go up is the fact that the Oriental service was not started until the road was extended from Port Moody to Vancouver.

Yes, I received the invitation, for which thanks. Will try and be a little more prompt with replies when you next write for information.

Very sincerely,

[signed] F.W. Alexander

A PIONEER SCHOOL GIRL'S ESSAY ON VANCOUVER IN 1886.

Original in City Archives, City Hall.

VANCOUVER

Tuesday, Nov. 22, 1886.

Vancouver is a small city situated on Burrard Inlet. About a year and half ago there was scarcely any people here and only a few houses, now it has a population of nearly four thousand. About six months ago the entire city was destroyed by fire started by burning brush. But in those six months it has again regained its former position as a flourishing town. It has a good harbor and a number of ships come here to load lumber for foreign lands. It is expected that Vancouver will be the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railroad.

Lida Bell

The original of this essay was written, 22 November 1886, by Miss Elida Bell, now Mrs. Charles Lister [Lester?] Austin, 980 West 20th Avenue, Vancouver, as part of the class work, in the old Hastings School, Vancouver's first, and, at that time, only school. It stood at the foot of Dunlevy Avenue, within the sawmill property, but at a point now crossed by the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Mrs. Austin was one of the group of fifty-one pupils—the entire school population—shown in the well-known photo of the little white school house; J.W. Palmer, the only teacher. She is the daughter of Edward C. Bell, of Mariposa, California, stepdaughter of D.W. Card of Moodyville Sawmill, and sister-in-law of the late E.E. Austin.

The names of the pupils (forty-eight only) shown in the photograph are as follows:

Hastings Sawmill School

List of pupils, 11 June 1886 (two days before the fire).

As shown in celebrated photograph, taken 11 June 1886, showing teacher and fifty-one pupils on steps in front of little white schoolhouse.

Ada Blair
Edith Cordiner
Annie Stewart
Louise Peck
Lillie Card
Grace Fraser
Lida Bell
Hector Stewart

Harry Alexander
Harold Ridley
Michael Costello
Annie Moore
Lizzie Ward
Laura Heywood
Jennie Pedgriff
Mary Plant

Gussie Belanger
Florence Ballanger
Laura Ballanger
Louie Card
Louis Silvain
Alex Mathison
Dan McPherson
John Kenworthy