

## **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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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New Westminster, and they trekked over with their effects during the night, and were busy at work some time before they were noticed. They were rounded up again a second time, with less ceremony than the first time, and sent back again to Victoria; then the powers at Victoria (who were at that time jealous of the young upstart-town of Vancouver) clapped on the screws, placing Vancouver under Martial Law, and the Chinamen finished the contract in the end. I never knew how John McDougall came out financially on the job, some had it that he made good, but I never could find out. He eventually went back to the Cariboo country where he had done well in the early part of the eighties. Dear Matthews; if this interests you I will be pleased to give you lots more of the same kind of experiences, etc. etc. On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, I will be 70. I am surprised at Joe McFarland, they have to chloroform him yet. I am enclosing a photo of myself, taken in Paris at the close of the Great War, where I spent three years of real excitement.

*[signed]* Geo. H. Keefer.

**[LETTER FROM GEO. H. KEEFER.]**

Cowichan Bay, B.C.,  
July 1<sup>st</sup> 1935.

Mr. J.S. Matthews,  
Vancouver City Archivist.  
Dear Sir:

**F.W. HART. CAPILANO JOE. SUNNYSIDE HOTEL.**

Yours of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June (My Birthday) to hand, and I am reading each paragraph and answering all questions as they come up; to the best of my knowledge. I knew F.W. Hart very well, also Capilano Joe, the latter worked on the Survey of the Capilano Waterworks along with the G.A. Keefer party, which consisted of Geo. A. Keefer, Chief, H.B. Smith; assistant; Fred Bodwell and Fred Little, Chairmen; and yours truly Picket-man; the axe men we picked up from Vancouver and two Indians. We stayed at the Sunnyside Hotel with Harry Hemlow, rowing over each morning in two boats and back in the evening. We surveyed up to the intake, or a little further, took soundings across the 1<sup>st</sup> Narrows, returning to Victoria after the job survey was through. You speak of Oben. I don't seem to remember this man at all. Yet it seem I ought 'to.'

**GEO. BLACK'S.**

Your photo of bridge at Geo. Blacks is quite a familiar scene to me, and is just the construction dump-car bridge and not the permanent R.R. Bridge. The shacks to the right were Chinese shacks, and slaughter pens of some of the early Butchers of Vancouver, I think, Coughtry.

I finished the clearing of the right of way on June 12, 1886. Loaded up my camp outfit on a scow and moved to Vancouver, tying up at Andy Linton's Whf.

Pay-day being on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month, I went to H.F. Keefers office and drew some money, giving each of my whitemen \$5.00 apiece, at the same time reminding them that Payday was on the 15<sup>th</sup> and this favor was my own.

**C.P.R. FALSE CREEK BRIDGE. BRICKHOUSE ESTATE.**

On Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> morning McDougall and I and a brother of mine walked down the grade from Abbott St. to False Creek Bridge at English Bay. We went to look for a suitable camping ground to put the Indians on, as I was going to put them on the slashing of the Brickhouse estate. I might say right here that the slashing and clearing that we did, was that part know as the "Brickhouse Estate," known as "West End"; this may clear up some misunderstanding. You ask if I have any proof of that date. Viz. The finishing of the R. of way, (Well I guess yes.) The very next day Vancouver burned. All my white men who were sober enough ran for my scow at the Sunnyside Hotel, where their belongings were on the scow. When the fire got so bad that they saw the town was gone, they pushed off with the scow, which drifted before the wind and came up against the Hastings Sawmill Whf. saving my camp outfit, scow and all, if this is not proof

enough I can give you some more, but I don't care to put this proof on paper but will save it for the time I meet you in Vancouver, when we can have a good wa-wa. I got the contract for the Brickhouse work early in May, and that work and the Right of Way was going at the same time. McPhee Bros., ran the camp on the slashing for us; camp was at or near the entrance to Stanley Park.

#### **C.P.R. HOTEL VANCOUVER. CHINESE RIOTS.**

At this time re the C.P.R. Hotel it was only a hole in the ground, they were excavating the basement, and this was in 1886 the slashing was all through on the Brickhouse Estate in 1886. The after contract that McDougall did the Chinamen, and which was responsible for the Riots, was commenced in the late fall of 1886 and carried on into 1887. I was not a party to that contract and can't say positively just when it was completed. Re the Riots. The second time the Chinese were returned to Vancouver the indignants met the boat at the Whf. and would not allow a Chinaman to land. They even turned the hose on the boat. They were finally landed at New Westminster and tricked over in the night, a week or so after things had quietened down; then came the second riot; this time is when some of them were more or less rouged up and brought on Martial Law. I saw most of these happenings with my own eyes, as in those days, youth like, I wanted to see it all, and, there was very little I missed. I am reading the "Track of Destiny" in the McLeans magazine; am very much impressed, *[sic]* as I know most all of the characters from Van Horn down to Big Mouth Kelleys. I have crossed words with Kelleys in a few stiff poker games. I knew Dan Mann, Hugh and Sandy Well, also Major Rogers and his nephew—Ale Rogers. I also knew Irish Nell Regan and many more R.R. celebrities not mentioned as yet in the narrative. One armed Bradshaw, who was a track layer, is sure to be mentioned in it later on, also Dan McGilveray; by the way Dan, was a father to me. He was always doing me some good turn. I was with him in the Rainy River Country up to the time or just prior to his death. I can safely say that of all the prominent old R.R. Character's, Dan McGilveray looms up uppermost in my mind. "There was a Real Man," too bad he had to die; small-pox got him, as I said in my last letter it seems to that all these old C.P.R. magnets are gone but me, and I feel good enough to build another C.P.R. those days are gone for ever. I was most pleased to have John McDougall's snap shot, it is just as he was when I knew him; that is not a recent picture by no means as I met him in Nelson years after and he was a much older looking man. I had a long letter from just two years or so ago; John told me about a claim he had in Cariboo that went \$80 to the pan when discovered in early days.

(Note: his letter, 11 December, says "old time gambles and real 'tough guys' on early construction of C.P.R. were the 'Kelleys.'")

Well, Matthew's old friend, What relation are you if any, to Tommy Matthews, Real Estate man of Vancouver? He is another old friend of mine.

I spent from 1890 to 1901 in the Kootenay, having helped to build the R.R. from Robinson (then Sproats Ldg.) to Nelson for C.P.R.; a great no. of the old C.P.R. magnets came through that way. I belong to the old timers of Nelson also. I suppose the old timers of Vancouver will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Great Fire next year. I hope to be there. I also hope to see you and have a heart to heart talk over things in general. I am a Great War pensioner and the wife and I can just manage to make ends meet on \$40.00 per month, Vets. allowance. Can't afford to go places on that as nothing else in sight these strenuous times one has to keep quiet.

Yours very truly,

*[signed]* Geo. H. Keefer

P.S. Do you want the Photos back again? You have my permission to do as you see fit with any of my letter. G.H.K.