

## **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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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. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 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 20<sup>th</sup>, 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.

**CLEARING FOREST OFF WEST END, 1886. SUNNYSIDE HOTEL. JOE FORTES. GREAT FIRE, 1886.**

I would be lost in Vancouver today! I might as well be in a foreign country, only that, I might be able to hear my own language spoken. I slash the whole of the West End of Vancouver from Burrard St. west to Stanley Park and from Coal harbor to False creek. *[Of doubtful accuracy. J.S.M.]* It was fire from this slashing that the great fire of 1886, June 13<sup>th</sup> started or, at least got its impetus. My headqtrs. at that date was the Sunnyside Hotel, Mr. Harry Hemlow, Prop. Tom Jackman, Barkeeper and old Black Joe Fortes, porter. We were in those days like one big family. Well on the afternoon afore mentioned we all lost our happy homes. I don't know where the rest of them slept that night, but I slept on the side of Water St. near a pair of big safes that lay in the charred ruins of H.F. Keefer's office. I expect to be over in Vancouver next year 1936 for the 50<sup>th</sup> ann. of the great fire and hope to meet all the old timers that may be left who were there on that memorable day. Let me know if you will have photo.

Yours truly,

*[signed]* Geo. H. Keefer.

**EXCERPT FROM LETTER RECEIVED FROM GEO. H. KEEFER (NOT GEO. A. KEEFER), 4 JUNE 1935, COWICHAN STATION.**

**C.P.R. CONSTRUCTION.**

"I am keeping fit, and feel as well as in the days when I cleared the right-of-way for the C.P.R. into Vancouver. I had about eighty five Stickine Indians on the job, and some of them were quite smart and intelligent; all of them good workers; good with axe and handspike."

J.S. Matthews.

**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH JOHN NEAVE, 1743 EAST EIGHTH AVENUE, 6 JUNE 1938.**

He worked on construction of Shaughnessy Heights in 1911 and 1912.

**SHAUGHNESSY CLEARING. QUILCHENA GOLF COURSE.**

Mr. Neave said: "The first construction camp, in 1910, was cut out of the forest on Granville Street; there were tents right in the forest; then they moved it because too many houses began to come near. They moved it down to Bodwell Road near the B.C. Electric Railway interurban track, where the Quilchena Golf Course is now, in the hollow near the curve of the railway; I was there when we moved, and we cut the camp site out of the forest."

**WILD ANIMALS. RACCOONS.**

"One day when we were clearing, we were digging stumps, blasting them, and there was one which was peculiar; it had a natural groove in it. One of the men put his hand, or arm, right down the groove, and pulled out two young coons. I kept them, put them in my pocket, and, after lunch, phoned the parks board office to know how to feed them; what to feed them on. I had a little trouble explaining that the coons were animals, not men, negroes; the parks board man thought we were crazy, I guess, and wanted information what to feed 'coons' (negroes) on. Finally he 'caught on,' and said, 'Oh, feed them the same as the other kind of coons.'

**KING GEORGE V. SHAUGHNESSY HEIGHTS.**

"The night of the coronation of King George the Fifth, we had five great big bonfires, huge piles of roots and stumps and logs piled with a tall gin pole and donkey engines, and set them afire; five big piles; right where Gen. McRae lives at 'Hycroft' now, and Blake Wilson, on Tecumseh Avenue, on the brow of the hill; you could see them all over Vancouver." (22 June 1911.)

Note by JSM: These bonfires lighted up the whole brow of the hill, and from downtown Vancouver, made a spectacular sight.