

## **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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Hugh Keefer's safe which lay upside down in the ruins, and which was supposed to hold the pay for the railroad gangs ready for the 15<sup>th</sup> payday.

#### **FIRST CITY COUNCIL. POLICE STATION IN TENT.**

I knew most of the old timers and helped to elect Mayor MacLean, Dr. McGuigan, and Harry Hemlow, and well remember the old maple tree, and the first council meeting after the fire. There was a tent just behind that famous picture which was the city lock-up and when that picture was taken there were a few sore heads with leg irons on them laying in that tent.

#### **GREAT FIRE, LOSS OF LIFE.**

Pat Gannon kept butcher shop next door to the R.R. Dining Rooms; he was my butcher and banker, and a fine old fellow. The only building escaping the fire as I can remember was "Costello's" hotel, half built. I can't quite recall the name at present. The fire killed about fourteen people as far as I can remember. There was a masonic funeral that day and most of the prominent people had driven to New Westminster as we had no graveyard in Vancouver at that time. McCormack, a sub-contractor on the ry had been killed blasting stumps, and they buried him in New Westminster. Tom Sawyers [*sic. Cyrs*] kept the Granville Hotel. Poor Tom was under the impression that he was some relation to the old prize fighter who fought Heenan, hence his many street fights of which old timers well remember. He made one big mistake one day when he undertook to lick Alf Banham the butcher, for Alf just backed him across the street, landing a good openhanded slap on Tom's ears with every slip.

#### **LIQUOR WAREHOUSE.**

Many old timers will also remember Fred Burrows' fighting bulldog. Fred was supposed to keep a wholesale liquor house, but most of the time was spent keeping out of jail over his dog; his dog was something like Tom Cyrs, thought he could lick anything on earth.

I look back with pleasure on those old days for I seem to see only the comic side; they seem to stick out above the more serious ones.

Now, Mr. Editor, if you care to publish my letter of old times in Vancouver you may do so but please connect it up suitably for print, as it is not written with that idea in view; just talk on old times by an old timer.

Yours very truly,

George H. Keefer.

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

Victoria, B.C.,  
756 Cloverdale Ave.,  
Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1933.

Mr. Matthews,  
Vancouver City Archivist.

Dear Sir:

#### **CAMPBELL AVENUE. J.W. MCFARLAND. GEO. A. KEEFER. CAPILANO WATERWORKS.**

Your request of Oct. 27<sup>th</sup> just to hand, having been returned from Taghum. 1<sup>st</sup> question I do not know who Carl, Hawks were but Campbell most probably was after the pioneer Druggist of Victoria now in the Campbell Blk. Cor. Douglas and Fort Streets. Now Mr. Joe W. McFarland of Vancouver might give you the desired information as he was bookkeeper and paymaster in early construction days for Hugh F. Keefer, contractor and who was my uncle.

Geo. A. Keefer was Locating Engineer for the C.P.R. through the mountains under Major Rodgers. Keefers station on the main line was his headquarters and hence took the name. Geo. A. was the promoter and Surveyor of Capilano Waterworks. I worked for him on that Survey. He

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. 242<sup>nd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> Welland Canal, was afterwards head of the department at Ottawa. The next generation produced George A. Keefer, C.E. who did most of the