

Early Vancouver

Volume Four

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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

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**EXCERPT FROM LETTER, 1 JULY 1935, FROM GEO. H. KEEFER, COWICHAN BAY, WHO
CLEARED THE RIGHT OF WAY FOR THE C.P.R. FROM PORT MOODY TO VANCOUVER, AND
CLEARED THE FOREST OFF A PART OF THE “WEST END” WITH “CHINESE” McDUGALL.
BRIDGES. FALSE CREEK BRIDGE. KITSILANO TRESTLE. CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY.**

“I finished the clearing of the right of way on June 12th 1886, loaded up my camp outfit on a scow, and moved to Vancouver, tying up at Andy Linton’s wharf, etc. etc.

“On Sunday morning, 13th, McDougall and I and a brother of mine, walked down the grade from Abbott street 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 slashing of the Brighthouse estate.”

Note: the 85 Stikine Indians had been working on the right of way.

**17 JUNE 1935 – BUILDING THE CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY FROM PORT MOODY TO
VANCOUVER, B.C.**

Excerpt from letter Geo. H. Keefer (not Geo. A. Keefer), 4 June 1935, Cowichan Station.

“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 Stikine Indians on the job, and some of them were quite smart and intelligent; all of them good workers; good with axe and handspike.”

[LETTER FROM GEO. H. KEEFER.]

Cowichan Bay, B.C.,
June 20th 1935.

Mr. J.S. Matthews,
Archivist,
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Sir:

JOHN “CHINESE” McDUGALL.

Yours of 17th inst. to hand and many thanks for news of old timers etc. I was very sorry to hear of John McDougall death, you will know later on why.

HUGH F. KEEFER. ONDERDONK CONTRACT.

In 1885 on July 5th, I landed in Victoria, B.C. hailing from Dufferin Co. Ontario. My uncle Hugh F. Keefer having sent for me to assist him in his extensive R.R. construction on the C.P.R. and E. & N. On arrival in Victoria I met H.F.K., who had just completed a thirty six mile contract at Savanos Ferry, B.C., and other contracts on Onderdonk’s mountain section of C.P.R. My uncle had just secured a three mile contract on the E. & N. on Vancouver Island. I formed a partnership with John McDougall (later known as Chinese McDougall) and we took a subcontract of clearing the three miles along Shawnigan Lake, completing the job in October. During the winter of 85 & 86 I joined George A. Keefer’s survey party, and some time in Jan. or Feb. we went over to Vancouver on the old steamer “Maud” and commenced the survey of the Capilano Waterworks.

**CAPILANO WATERWORKS, PORT MOODY TO VANCOUVER, 1885. C.P.R. RIGHT OF WAY. GEO.
BLACK’S. HASTINGS.**

During the winter H.F. Keefer went east and secured the “Vancouver extension contract” from the C.P.R. McDougall and I taking the right of way contract, “from Port Moody to English Bay,” also “one mile of the grading about Hastings Park and running back to near Hastings Saw-mills.” McDougall looked after the grading while I took chg. of the Right-of-way. Men were plentiful at the time, but, the grading took a lot of men, and I had an opportunity to get a bunch of Indians through their Chief “Stickeen” John a very fine intelligent Indian and a good christian. John and I became great friends, and he proposed putting his tillicums to work clearing, I fell in with the idea

at once, for one reason. While men were too shifty, that is, they wanted too much variety and went from one job to another, all looking for the best of it. So when the Indians arrived; no less than eighty five appeared with all their outfit, men, women and children. They camped on the point near the Second narrows, and in a day or so I had them all strung out along the right of way chopping, sawing and burning, etc. etc. I had a camp of white men as well, just east of Hastings (then called Geo. Blacks.) where I made my headquarters. I finished the right-of-way, June 12th 1885, and was thankful that I had those Indians, as fast, or faster, than I could get a bit of clearing done some grading contractor would be opening up cuts and getting started. I was pushed as it were, and was so glad to get it finished. I spared no expense to get done and out of the way.

“C.P.R. TOWNSITE.” BRIGHOUSE ESTATE.

During the right-of-way interval McDougall and I took a contract from C.P.R. for slashing what was then known as the C.P.R. Townsite and Brighthouse Estate, running from Burrard Street west to a line opposite the entrance of Stanley Park and from Coal Harbor to False Creek. [*Note: not strictly correct; see Oben’s contract. J.S.M.*]

We put a camp just west of the entrance to Stanley Park, and put the McPhee Bros. in charge of this work starting at the camp and falling everything along Coal Harbor, and gradually working towards False Creek.

MCDUGALL AND KEEFER. J.W. MCFARLAND.

The eastern part of the townsite was slashed by a Mr. Patterson of New Westminster, and his contract reached from Abbott Street or thereabouts up to Burrard St. The grading along the waterfront was done by “Fred Little,” an old time walking boss for “H.F. Keefer” on the Mt. division of C.P.R., then from Hastings Mills to Hastings park by “McDougall and Keefer,” (that’s me); from Hastings east for a mile was done by J.B. Harrison of Victoria, B.C., then Harkness and McCormick had a few miles, while the Port Moody End was done by “McFarland and McGinty,” a brother of J.W. McFarland now of Vancouver; everyone of these men are gone by myself, and I think McDougall was the last one to go. I think I can safely say that of all the men who are responsible for putting the Ry., into Vancouver, J.W. McFarland and myself, are the only ones of those good old fellows that is left. J.W. McFarland, at that time was bookkeeper and paymaster for H.F. Keefer, and had been in this capacity during the work in the Mts.

Slashed means to down all standing timber left after the loggers have taken all the big merchantable timber. G.H.K.

L.A. HAMILTON. “CHINESE” RIOTS. SUSPENSION OF CIVIC CHARTER.

McDougall and I took the slashing contract from the C.P.R. through H.F. Keefer. Mr. L.A. Hamilton was then in charge of C.P.R. affairs. The work started some time in May 1886 and was finished some time in September. At the finish of the slashing McDougall and I dissolved partnership, as John was going to take a contract of clearing and close cutting of the Brighthouse Estate that did not appeal to me. I considered the price too low. McDougall had conceived the idea of subbing this work to Chinamen, and did so, this is what, led up to the “Chinese” riots of the fall and winter of 86 and 87, and got John the sobriquet of Chinese McDougall. The R.R. work was mostly all done and Vancouver was full of men, some out of work, and some not wanting work. This element took exception to Chinese doing the clearing, and under the guidance of a good intentioned old gent by the name of “Pitt,” these men held indignation meetings and took it upon their shoulders to send the Chinamen back to Victoria, where they came from, and at the same time, declaring Vancouver was to be a non-Chinese city. Well, they rounded up the celestials with no great care. I can see the picture yet, of these poor chinks with their rice sacks and big baskets and balancing poles, all heading for the wharf; they were coming out of the blackened timber and brush from all directions, and some of them were coming on the toe of a boot. They were herded on the wharf, and you can just imagine the pow-wow. Old Tom Sawyers passed around a hat [*Cyrs*] and got a silver collection with which to pay their fares back to Victoria. The gang at one time was about to go looking for McDougall, and would have sent him along with the pig-tails, but it got spread around that McDougall was already in Victoria, things quietened down for a time but the Chinese contractor, in Victoria, sent a hoard more chinks via

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 23rd, 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 1st 1935.

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

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

Yours of the 23rd 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 1st 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 15th 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 15th and this favor was my own.

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

On Sunday 13th 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