

## **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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The Man-Holes were dug square with inside boxes framed to suit outlets and intakes. My job was to make the inside boxes at each hole, if the hole was 6 ft. in depth, I made 6 inside boxes as square as I could make them so that no matter which way the box might be turned, it fitted on the others. In some cases there were outside boxes made of 2" lumber where the Holes had a tendency to cave in.

The Concrete Setters cut out holes for outlets and intakes as they poured the concrete. This was a good job, labourers got \$3.00 per day, Carpenter \$4.50, and concrete men \$5.00 per.

I did not see the job finished as I left one day in July with a carload of horses for Kootenay, as my uncle had taken a bit R. Ry. contract to put a road from "Sproats Landing," now Robinson, to Nelson. Since then I have always been lost when I went to Vancouver, the place had changed so much. I knew every foot of the ground at one time, but today I am a stranger in a strange land, and feel more at home in San Francisco than Vancouver. I have been told many a time that I missed my opportunity in Vancouver; well I can't see it that way; perhaps I did, but who knows? I know lots of men who took hold of Vancouver Real Estate and who went broke paying the taxes. My experience shows me that if a smart man, with money, or a pull, might do very well in any boom town, but how many of the real old timers are well off in Vancouver today; I think they can be counted on the fingers of one hand. I am not grieving over any chances I overlooked in Vancouver or any other place for that matter. I learned long ago to let some other fellow do the grieving. My life has been a most interesting one, and I would not loose fond memories for all of Vancouver. So much for this time My good Friend.

*[signed]* Geo. H. Keefer

If there is anything else you would like to know, don't be afraid to ask. G.H.K.

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

Cowichan Bay,  
Sept. 20, 1935.

Mr. Matthews,  
Vancouver City Archivist.

Dear Sir:

Where did we leave off? I have been away on vacation for two weeks and have only come back to earth. However I had a real good time and am back home doing a little early morning fishing in C. Bay. You may think I am a pretty good letter writer, but let me tell you I am about the poorest fisherman this far North.

Everybody catches them but me. On one of my returns home to the wife, I told her I felt just like the "little boy who went to the Sunday School treat, and every one won a prize but him." Which proves to me that "Man and Woman are only children grown up," as the consoling Mother gave me, went a long way to making me feel better.

We have any quantity of fine fish Spring and Co-hoes in the Bay at present and a lot of fine catches have been made, but not by me. I did land a couple of good springs 15 and 20 lbs, and a few smaller ones. I thoroughly enjoy the early morning experience. We have as many as 50 boats out some morning and it is music to hear the reels singing. I think the largest salmon so far this year (caught in the Bay) was 45 lbs. One of these boys gives one a thrill when well hooked and one feels as though they need A-1 tackle.

Well, I think you suggested something in your last letter, which had in some manner been mislaid, however drop me a line I am always most pleased to hear from you.

I am hoping to be over in Vancouver next year. I suppose they will be having a 50 year anniversary of the Great Fire? I want to meet you in person. I realize we have met in spirit, and there is a whole lot of things we will have to talk about that I do not care to put down in writing.

What do you think of Mussaline? I think he is a bull-headed autocrat just spoiling for a fight. Well, I hope he gets all he wants of it; its just too bad; it was not he instead of poor Hughie Long.

Things do not look any too good at this moment, but if the rest of the League have the intestinal fortitude to stand behind Briton, it should not take long to make a Good Boy of Mussaline.

It is just too bad that Bullie like him should be allowed to throw the whole world out of equilibrum.

Well, now, if you have time drop me a line, I am dotting down a line or thought each day towards my "50 years on the Pacific Sloop."

Kindest regards,

*[signed]* Geo. H. Keefer

Read and approved 11 December 1935 by Mr. Keefer, see his letter that date. J.S. Matthews.

**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. JAMES KEIL, 1237 EAST 19<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, WHO, TOGETHER WITH HIS SON, MR. ROLLAND KEIL, SAME ADDRESS, CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES, 25 MARCH 1939.**

Note: Mr. Rolland Keil presented the City Archives with sixty-three 8" x 10" glass photographic plates, taken by R. Broadbridge, commercial photographer, circa 1911-13.

**JAMES KEIL. C.P.R. CONSTRUCTION.**

Mr. Keil said: "I came here in September 1886, just after 'The Fire'" (June 1886) "and from Regina. I had worked in the mountains during the summer, building snow sheds."

**HOTEL VANCOUVER. BANK OF B.C. BANK OF MONTRÉAL. BRICKS. CITY MARKET. CITY HALL. CITY CREMATORY. JOSEPH MANNION.**

"I hauled the bricks for the first brick building on the southeast corner of Hastings and Seymour Street, the Bank of Montréal and the Bank of British Columbia, and, I hauled the brick of the City Market, afterwards the City Hall, on Westminster Avenue; the bricks for the City Market came from Joe Mannion's brickyard on Bowen Island; so did the bricks for the crematory; out on the sawdust road east of Cambie Street bridge." (See photo C.V. P. Dist. 34.) "I hauled both."

**HOTEL VANCOUVER.**

"Then I hauled the lumber for the first Hotel Vancouver, hauled it from a float at the foot of Howe Street; it came from Moodyville; most of the lumber for the Hotel Vancouver came from Moodyville." (See photos C.V. P. Can. 45 and 47, and see "STREET ENDS CASE," 1905.) "Clements was superintendent of the building of the Hotel Vancouver, and Harry Abbott's house, and used to examine every load before it was dumped off, and any load which did not suit him, he would say, 'Take it down to the oil house'; he had an oil house down on the lot near the northwest corner of Dunsmuir and Howe Street, where he built two houses; he had a big fence all around the lot."

**VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE. R.D. PITT. FIRE, MARCH 1887.**

"The fire brigade was all volunteer in those days, and the fire brigade boys lived all over the city; the hall was down on Water Street, and there was a bush fire up around Hastings and Pender, above Victory Square. So the boys started out with the hose reel; we had a fire engine too, the 'M.A. MacLean'; we hauled it by hand; there were no horses" (note: the "M.A. MacLean" was horse-drawn) "and somehow we ran over a man, R.D. Pitt" (R.D. Pitt was real estate agent) "was his name, right on the corner of Carrall and Water Street, and we broke his leg. He slipped and fell, and got in the way."