

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 125th anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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KWE-AH-KULTU. WHEE-WHY-LUK. SUM-QUAHT.

"Kwe-ah-kultu; that's the way to say it; he was at Whoi-Whoi. Johnny Whee-why-luk, Chief at Musqueam; don't know who Sumquaht was, but say 'Sum-kwa-ht.'" (See conversation, Mrs. James Walker, 17 July 1939.)

CARIBOO TRACTOR. JERRY ROGERS' STEAM TRACTOR. LACROSSE BALL.

(After looking at photograph received from Provincial Archives, of photo marked "Steam to Cariboo, the British Columbia," photographed from illustration in *Colonist*.)

Major Matthews: That's not like the drawing you made for me of the tractor Jerry Rogers had in the woods out Kitsilano and up Little Mountain.

August: (puzzled) "They's fixed it. They must taken the front wheel off, and put two wheels on. But the rubber here is cleats; it was solid rubber tire all around the wheels, not cleats, on the one Jerry Rogers had. I think they must have fixed it down Hastings Sawmill, but don't know. I took the rubber for the lacrosse ball I gave you from old junk as was lying on the beach at foot Macdonald Street" (English Bay.) "They put the engine on a scow, and took it away; they were through logging. After that, oxen were used, and mules and the skid road—it was cheaper. They took the engine to the Hastings Mill. I don't know what they did with it."

(Note by J.S.M. If Ayatak is grandson to "Old Man" Chief Ki-ap-a-la-no, and "Old Man" told Ayatak he saw first white man come down Fraser River when he was a boy, about four feet high, how could he be the chief who welcomed Capt. Vancouver as is frequently asserted by Matthias Joe.)

EXCERPT, *PROVINCE*, 7 OCTOBER 1938.

MAN WHO CAME HERE SIXTY YEARS AGO DIES

**WHILE THE SHIP WAS IN VANCOUVER HE EXPERIMENTED WITH
RUNNING AN ELECTRIC LIGHT WIRE FROM VESSEL TO SHORE**

James Willcox, 82, a resident of Vancouver for fifty-nine years, and believed to be one of the first men to experiment with electric light here, died today, at his home, 367 East Broadway. Mr. Willcox first came to British Columbia in 1879 as a member of the crew of H.M.S. *Triumph*. Survived by three daughters; all in Vancouver.

LETTER, JOHN C. ANDERSON.

Novato, Marin Co.,
California, U.S.A.
Saturday, Oct. 15, 1938.

Mr. J.S. Matthews.

My dear sir:

H.M.S. TRIUMPH. ELECTRIC LIGHT. FIRST SEARCHLIGHT.

Your letter I received today Oct. 14, 1938, and I was very glad, sir, to hear from you, to me it was like a voice from the deep. Now in regard to your question about landing electric lights ashore at Vancouver. It fairly gets me, Mr. Matthews, as to how that could have possibly been done? I do know the "Triumph's" first commission was about that time of 1879. And the second commission of the "Triumph" was from New Year's day 1885, till Dec. 1887, making three years when we left Esquimalt for home. The "Swiftsure" was the ship to relieve the "Triumph" on both occasions. Now, sir, I fully understand that when we commissioned the "Triumph" in January 1885, that she had just installed a 28,000 candle power search light on the superstructure deck, and we were told that we were the first ship in the service to have one. We were not wired at all for lights in the ship; only wired from the dynamo, to the light on deck. We burned candles all

through the ship. The amount of material in those days to build a dynamo would fill a big space in the engine room, laminations, plates of pure iron about the thickness of ordinary sheet tin, and I guess thousands of them laid together into big blocks of pure iron. Then we installed a 40 H.P. engine to run the dynamo, there was a gun boat load of material to it, what a difference today, eh!

Now Mr. Matthews, this talk does not answer your question at all, and it leaves us both to wonder if they got lights ashore in those days. How was it done? It can easily be done today alright by hooking on to a dynamo, and then having wire covered with water proof insulation to dip over board to lead to shore. They have lights attached to the divers' suits, sure, to let them work with lights below in water, but, in 1879, it is a question. None of the ships in those days had electric wiring, and we were first to have a search light in 1885. And the special class of torpedo men only attended to the running of it. At the first trial of it they were glad to shut it down and get away from it. So that is in days long gone by, sir.

CANDLES LIGHTED BY TALLOW DIPS.

Now the lamps on the mess deck were all hung to throw their light below the hammocks, where they were strung up to the beams overhead. These lamps were fitted with a spring socket that held the candle; when you entered a candle you compressed a spring, and a cap went on top of the socket, and a quarter turn held the candle and the spring down. As the candle burned, the spring would keep the flame at the top of the socket cap. The candles are about one and a quarter inches dia. and six inches long. These candles were all mould made, not dips. My grandfather, was a candle maker of the old type of candles called dips; when I was a little boy on a Saturday, being out of school, I used to go and see him making dips over a big tank of hot tallow, and over the tank was about twelve rods like broom handles, and they all hung apart about four feet above the hot tallow, then they would cut the wicks by allowing the length of wick to be long enough by doubling it over the rods to form an eye, then cut the parts to suit the length of the candle to be made. There is about four dozen wicks on each rod and the wicks about two inches apart. There is a small rope pulley for to lower and hoist the rods into the hot tallow and they dipped the rods in the tallow till it covered the wicks up to the eye on the rods. They made the candles to suit the sale of them. After they cool off from being dipped, they take on another coat of tallow until they get the weight of candle wanted to sell. So that is where in making they call them dips.

{Letter continues on H.M.S. Condor at bombardment of Alexandra, etc.}

I will remain obediently yours,

John C. Anderson.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH GERALD ASHTHORPE, 8020 SHAUGHNESSY STREET, NOW AN EMPLOYEE OF THE IMPERIAL OIL LIMITED (PAINTER), VANCOUVER, 17 JANUARY 1939.

SHAUGHNESSY HEIGHTS. FAIRVIEW. DOUGLAS PARK. TROUT. DEER.

Mr. Ashtorpe said: "I was born in April 7th 1907, and came to Vancouver with my father in 1909, so that anything I say must be qualified by my age; I was just a 'little kid' when we went to live up in Fairview, on 19th Avenue, between Ash and Tupper Street."

D.L. 472 SCHOOL.

"I used to play around the school in a private house on the northeast corner of Ash Street and 19th Avenue; Miss H.M. Hesson was the teacher; she limped; it is now numbered 599 West Nineteenth Avenue; a bit of a one and a half storey cottage; we used to swing under the front steps; there was swing under the steps. Then I went to the old Shaughnessy School on the corner of Oak and 25th Avenue; you have photos of both the old schools on 18th and 19th, which were used before Shaughnessy School was built."