

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

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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MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH (FORMER) ALDERMAN WALTER HEPBURN, MOVING PICTURE CENSOR, ON A STREET CAR, 19 JULY 1937.

Note: at the time Alderman Hepburn was appointed Moving Picture Censor in succession to Lou Gordon, the first censor, I was astonished that a man of Mr. Hepburn's qualifications should have accepted such a post; the following explains why he did it. J.S. Matthews.

Mr. Hepburn: "No. I was not the first" (moving picture censor), "but the whole thing was a misrepresentation to me on the part of John Hart" (Minister of Finance, Provincial Government.) "I was not anxious to be moving picture censor when I took it over.

"John Hart came to me" (note: Mr. Hepburn was decidedly incensed at the recollection of the incident, and showed it in his demeanor) "and said they were about to put on an amusement tax in B.C. The whole thing was new; they had not had such a tax previously. Hart wanted it started in three weeks, and there was nothing ready; no forms printed; nothing started. I asked Hart how much he wanted me to collect. There was about six months to go on the Provincial fiscal year, and he said he would be well satisfied if I could collect one hundred thousand dollars; actually, I got one hundred sixty thousand dollars, in the first six months.

"Lou Gordon" (first moving picture censor) "had resigned three weeks previously, and no one had been appointed to his place." (Lou Gordon, old newspaper man, and city editor in the *Province*, had resigned in a huff; a very upright man, but independent in his actions, and short-tempered.) "So I got busy, notified the Provincial Police all over the Province" (as to their duties in connection with the collection of the amusement tax.)

"The whole thing was very annoying to me. Hart did not keep his promises. I expected something better than a moving picture censor; the collection of the revenue was what appealed to me. I did not want the job; not at that salary."

(Conversation ended when street car reached my destination.)

Note by J.S.M.: Walter Hepburn, for many years an alderman, and for a period, chairman of the civic finance committee, was a financier by nature, and had sterling qualities in the matter of handling other people's money. He was stern and unrelenting; his methods fundamentally sound, he often said things which were only too true, but which were disagreeable to the ears which did not want to hear the cold "unvarnished" truth, and therefore he was not as popular as he might otherwise have been. It was this characteristic which defeated him in his candidature for the mayoral chair. His methods were sound, but not popular in a community which has never been outstanding in its pursuit of sound financial civic administration. Hence our unfortunate financial troubles of 1937.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. JAMES HERMON, SON AND PARTNER OF THE LATE E.B. HERMON, THE WELL-KNOWN PIONEER CIVIL ENGINEER AND SURVEYOR, OF THE FIRM OF GARDEN, HERMON, AND BURWELL (ETC.), ABOUT 15 MAY 1937.

BURRARD INLET COAL SYNDICATE. COAL BORING. NEWCASTLE. WEST VANCOUVER.

Mr. Hermon said: "This is a map, a tracing on linen, of the subdivision of lots and blocks of the proposed coal town of Newcastle, D.L. 554 and 555, now West Vancouver, or Dundarave, or whatever they call it. It was just a proposal we prepared; it never amounted to anything; you see the streets are all named, too, and sites for City Hall, for churches, etc. But they did put down a bore. I was over there recently, and the iron casing, six or eight inch, of the drill hole is still sticking out of the ground; I think I could find it again if I tried. It is south of the Keith Road, and just west of Third Street, not far from where the First Narrows bridge will pass."

J.S. Matthews.