

## **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**

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Queen's birthday; my father was 'mad' when they called in Vancouver; he said they should have called it by its original name, 'Gastown.'"

**"DUTCH PETE."**

"'Dutch Pete' lived in Stanley Park, over on the south side of Brockton Point, just opposite Deadman's Island; this big" (sic) "house with verandah over water, and fir tree beyond, here is his house; then there were two other families there."

At this point, Mr. Theo. Bryant of Ladysmith, son of Rev. Cornelius Bryant, minister, Methodist Church, Water Street, who left Granville in 1881, arrived, and was introduced to Mrs. Buss; they conversed on mutually interesting matters, and after Mrs. Buss departed with her baskets, he said: [blank].

**MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH ALASTER HAVELOCK CAMERON, WHO DECLINED TO STATE WHERE IN VANCOUVER HE LIVED, 17 MAY 1935.**

**SEYMOUR CREEK TRAIL TO CARIBOO.**

"I came to Hastings Sawmill on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1875, and that year worked on the building of the Seymour Creek Trail to Cariboo. The trail was built with the idea of getting cattle out that way from the Cariboo, but only four bands of cattle, about three hundred head to a band, ever came out that way; the trail was cut twelve feet wide, and graded three feet in the centre and covered with mattox" (gravel, etc.) "for the horses and cattle to walk on."

**BIG TREES.**

"The biggest tree I ever saw in British Columbia—it was a cedar—was, as near as I could judge, nineteen and a half miles up the Seymour trail; it was on a flat as you approach the rise of the creeks to the summit and benches; and on a flat, about two hundred yards down from the trail towards the river. I would have run the trail by it had I noticed it early enough. I put a small tape line around it, as high as I could reach, and it was sixty-three feet around, and about sixty feet before it forked; a cedar, of course. Maybe there yet if it has not been burned. No, never heard of George Cary.

"The next year, 1876, I worked building bridges from Hope to Princeton, and the next spring hewed timbers for the first bridge across the Fraser at Lytton."

(Note: Mr. Cameron, very elderly, does not inspire my confidence in matters of figures. He probably did see a very big tree; there was one in Stanley Park, a cedar, reputed to be fifty feet around. The big tree on George Street was about forty-eight or –nine.)

**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. J.D. CAMERON, FORMERLY MRS. CHARLES BURNS, 1732 KITCHENER STREET, ONCE KNOWN AS 1732 BISMARCK STREET, GRANDVIEW, WHO KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS AFTERNOON, 31 OCTOBER 1938.**

Former Mrs. Burns, now also widow of Mr. J.D. Cameron, who died 7 September 1938, is one of the "real" pioneers of Grandview, and especial interest attaches to the family, as their name is associated with the *earliest mention of the name Grandview*. She is approaching her seventieth birthday. She married J.D. Cameron, 22 May 1924 or 1925. He died at Victoria, 7 September 1938.

**CHARLES BURNS. ROYAL CITY PLANING MILLS. ST. LUKE'S HOME.**

Mrs. Burns said: "Mr. Burns, my husband, was born in Co. Antrim, Ireland; his father, David, a joiner; his mother, Jennie, and he came to New Westminster when he was about nineteen. In Westminster he was working for John Hendry, and then came over to take charge, as foreman, of the Royal City Planing Mills on Carrall Street, when those mills were first opened.

"I was born August 9, 1869, and came from Ipswich, Suffolk, about July 1887, and before I married, was employed in St. Luke's Home, Vancouver, and then, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1889, I—my name is Muriel Alice Norman, daughter of Daniel and Matilda Norman—married Mr. Burns at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria; Canon Beanlands was the clergyman."

### **GRANDVIEW, 1892.**

“The way we went to live in Grandview—what they call Grandview now; it was without a name then, so far as I know—was that we were paying sixteen dollars a month rent for a house on Barnard Street. Then the Royal City Planing Mills reduced all wages, and that made Mr. Burns furious, and he left them; he was without work for almost twelve months except an occasional odd job; and the little place—without a number then, but 1732 Kitchener Street now—was advertised for sale; three rooms and a cedar shake kitchen lean-to. There was a water well, but no electric light, sewer, sidewalk, and the road was a trail from the Vancouver-Westminster interurban.”

### **WATER WELLS. CLEARING OFF FOREST. SEWERAGE.**

“Where Kitchener Street is now there were great big logs, three, four, or five feet through—dozens of them—lying all over the place, crossways on top of each other in heaps; cedar, fir, all sorts; there was lots of wood. Our fuel cost nothing, but to saw the logs.

“Then we had chickens, hens, and later we had a cow, but not at first; when we did get the cow she rambled out in the clearing, and many a time they have stopped the interurban electric car to put her off the track.

“We had a wonderful well, beautiful water, clear, pure and cold. Then, when they put the Capilano water in, at first they just gave us a tap out at the front of the house.

“At first, we had only one lot; I think we paid \$375 for the lot and the three-room cottage with shake lean-to, and one hundred dollars down, and the rest on small time payments. Later, we bought the next lot, but those were the real estate boom days, and we had trouble getting the deed. Then, when the sewer came, we put in the sink, and after a time when we could afford it, we put in the bath; before that we used a great big tub—a huge thing of wooden staves about twenty-four inches high—and bathed in front of the kitchen stove; it was quite a ‘business’ on a Saturday night when there were four or five youngsters.”

### **BREAD.**

“I baked my own bread all my married life, and everything else the family had to eat, and brought up as healthy a ‘bunch of youngsters’ as anyone ever saw, and what is more, they are all good children, and never gave me the least trouble.”

### **HENS. VANCOUVER-WESTMINSTER INTERURBAN.**

“I had a lot of hens, and my husband used to get home from the Royal City Planing Mills by the six p.m. interurban car, and I used to arrange it so that, the minute he got in—the car used to run every hour, and lay on the switch, it was single track railway, at First Avenue and Commercial Drive, and in those days the grocery stores, but not the butchers, used to stay open—I would go in on the interurban, and take perhaps twelve dozen eggs with me—I used to go irregularly, whenever I wanted to do any shopping—and Mr. Hogg, who had a grocery store on Westminster Avenue, would send a man to put the groceries on the car for me, and I caught the seven p.m. interurban back home.”

### **GRANDVIEW. SMITH’S STATION.**

“I don’t know much about Smith, who they say had a sign, ‘Smith’s Station,’ but there was an elderly woman named Smith—she was a music teacher, with a frail looking husband, tall, dark; and once in a while she would come into my place when it was cold in the morning, and stay for a while. The Smiths used to live in a house—you see, in the early days, there was nothing but woods; and when you looked from my place to Victoria Drive, it was all trees, and logs lying on top of one another, and burned; an awful place—and the Smiths lived in a tallish narrow house, I think it was where Grant Street joins Victoria Drive now; it is hard to tell; it was all clearing then. In those days the only roads open were Park Drive” (now Commercial Drive) “and Victoria Road.”

### **BEARS. HENS.**

“When the second girl was a baby we had a lot of hens, and they used to lay out in the clearing, and one day there was a terrible noise, and I looked out of the kitchen window just in time to see a bear getting over a log with one of my hens in his mouth.

“Mr.” (Joseph) “W. Cameron, Mrs. Fred Rolston’s father, and my husband, they came up to hunt the bear, and they got some syrup, and poured it about—they were going to attract it that way—of course, they had guns, and you know where Professor Odlum lived” (Grant Street), “well, a Mr. Cronk owned all that piece of property out to Victoria Drive, and I called to him to come over, and he did, and found ‘all kinds’ of hen’s bones and wings and feathers.

“The hens used to sit on their eggs out in the bushes, out in the clearing, and once we set a hen’s nest out in the woods, and we knew when they would be hatched because we knew when we set her. Well, one day she was gone, and we looked at the eggs, and they were chipped; the chickens were just ready to come out, and the hen had been taken right off the nest, and the eggs were dead. We suspected it was the bears which had done it.”

### **HOME BURNS.**

“At the time our home burned, Grace, our fourth child, was about a year old, and it was a Saturday morning, and the three children were playing outside, and it had been a very dry summer, and lots of fires around, there was a lot of burning in the clearing going on then, and there was only a stove pipe chimney in our cedar shake lean-to kitchen, and I had started the fire to get lunch ready, and I heard some crackling above me on the roof, so I went out, and here was the smoke curling up from the roof. I got a bucket of water, and a dipper, and I got a ladder and climbed up, but had not the strength to put it out; I was too weak.

“Mr. Cronk lived close by, and there was a long log which ran over to his place, which we used to walk along the log to go there, and I told Willie to go over and tell him, but I could not get that boy to go; he kept on calling, ‘Come out, come out, Mother, come out, Mother, you’ll get burned,’ but finally he went, and Mr. Cronk came but it was too late; the fire was too far gone.

“The fire cleaned up about everything; all we had left was taken to town in an express wagon. It was noon, and they stopped the passing interurban car, and the passengers all got out, and helped to pack stuff out of the house.”

### **HENS.**

“We must have had one hundred and fifty hens, and they all took to the bush, and roosted in the trees.

“So, we came right in Vancouver, and rented a house on Westminster Avenue, and we were there from August until the following May, when we built our new house on the same property. At first, it was a pretty little house of five rooms, on two big lots, and then we put on two more rooms upstairs—making seven in all—and now I am there all alone, with my son, and it is too much for me, but although I own it—have paid endless taxes on it—I cannot sell it. No one wants an old house now, without a basement—I have a base burner stove—all the women want new houses; but seven rooms is too much, and I am approaching my seventieth birthday.”

### **SCHOOLS.**

“When my children started to go to school they had to go down to the East End School, now Strathcona School, and they had to walk; a good long walk, too—over a mile, rain or shine. They had to walk the ties on the interurban track and bridge to Campbell Avenue.”

### **ST. LUKE’S HOME. SISTER FRANCES.**

“I worked at St. Luke’s Home on Cordova Street before I was married; it was one of the first hospitals; I had been there two years all but two months, when I was married. Sister Frances was just like a mother to me; all through my married life I always took her some mince pies, a pudding, and a cake at Christmas. She used to ‘talk,’ and lay down the law to everybody, but I did not mind it. She was awfully good to me.

“I was Church of England, but Mr. Burns was Presbyterian, and that is how the children came to be baptised in the First Presbyterian Church.” (See Baptismal Registry, First Presbyterian Church.) “Baptism does not do them any harm if it does not do them any good, and some churches insist upon it, or you do not ‘belong.’”

### **PETERS ROAD. NORTH ARM ROAD. EBURNE.**

"Mr. Burns was an invalid from about a week before Christmas 1894. He had a fall in the Royal City Planing Mills; fell backwards, and bruised his spine; and in those days there was no compensation, or anything of that sort; there was nothing; he went back to work, and it was five years, and then had ten acres, this side of Eburne, Peters Road they called it; it is now about 64<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Granville Street; we built a cheap house, and put up some chicken houses; were there several years; we had our own cow. One corner of our property ran close to interurban tram line.

"I noticed the other day that Capt. John McDowell died" (17 September 1938); "he was an alderman; and I noticed that he died on the twenty-fourth anniversary of Mr. Burns' death" (1914.) "He was the last of the pallbearers to pass on.

"When he left the Royal City Planing Mills, he was without employment for a year; then the manager, Mr. Ferguson, asked him to take his old job again at the old pay, and he did so until his health gave out from the fall he had at the mill."

### **PORT ESSINGTON, 1905 OR ?**

"In 1905" (?) "Mr. Burns went to Port Essington to take charge of the mill there, owned by Mr. Cunningham. He was feeling so much better, and Mr. McDowell knew Mr. George Cunningham at Port Essington, and suggested Mr. Burns was just the man he wanted up there, and my husband thought he would go up there; the children, he said, wanted clothes, and so on; his stomach was so much better. He went up in May, and a month later wrote that I would have to go up; he had been living at a hotel. So I sold up, and took all the children up to Port Essington. We were there two years.

"Owing to his ill health, we came back to Grandview in 1908, and then we moved back to Eburne until we sold the ten acres which was beside the interurban tracks on Peters Road.

"We muddled along until Jennie passed 'entrance' at school; then she went to Pitman's Business College, and the second girl also took a business course."

### **PETERS ROAD. RIVER ROAD.**

"Then the real estate boom came, and we sold the Peters Road property for \$12,500; we had paid \$2,000 for the land.

"We bought seven acres, got a horse and buggy, and built a house on River Road, now Marine Drive, near the foot of Ontario Street, where we were when his eyesight began to fail, and we moved back to town, as three of the children were coming in every day for business. We thought it better for the children, so we moved back to 1732 Bismarck Street, which we have always owned and sometimes rented."

### **GRANDVIEW.**

"While at Grandview he dropped down and broke his right arm, and did not do a tap of work after that. There was not a dollar from anywhere in those days, and until the children started to work, there was nothing" (coming in.) "My eldest girl started to work at fourteen years and four months, and Willie passed 'entrance' at school and went to a trade as carpenter when he was sixteen; and the second girl went to work when she was under sixteen."

### **DEATH OF CHAS. BURNS, 1914.**

"We moved in November, and Mr. Burns died the following September, 1914."

### **GENEALOGY.**

"Our children are:

1. William Norman, the eldest, born at Cambie Street, February 21<sup>st</sup> 1890. Willie died unmarried in his 32<sup>nd</sup> year, buried in Vancouver.
2. Jennie May, born July 24<sup>th</sup> 1891 at Barnard Street; she was six months old when, in January 1892, we went to live in Grandview. She is now Mrs. J.A. McDonald of Abbotsford, and has three children.

3. Marion Alice, born June 17<sup>th</sup> 1894; she is now Mrs. R. Newton Hopkins, West 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver, and has three children. Mr. Hopkins is in H.M. Customs.
4. Margaret Grace, now Mrs. E.R. Wakefield, farmer, near Sumas, and has one adopted son and one adopted daughter. Born 17<sup>th</sup> August.

All above baptised at Vancouver.

5. Myrtle Agnes, now Mrs. Wm. Chambers, Renfrew Street, Vancouver; has one boy and twin girls. Born 11<sup>th</sup> August.
6. Charles Lloyd. Lloyd lives with me, is unmarried, and has a gas speed boat, the *Black Hawk*. Born 27<sup>th</sup> July.
7. Muriel Vera, the youngest, now Mrs. Henry Vincent, at Powell River, and has two daughters. Born 18<sup>th</sup> August.

The three last baptised at Port Essington.

“Marion, Margaret, Myrtle and Lloyd, all born at 1732 Bismarck Street. Vera was born in Port Essington.”

Mrs. Cameron signed original as correct, 9 November 1938.

J.S. Matthews.

**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. AND MRS. JOE W. CAMERON, 1903 BAYSWATER STREET, KITSILANO, WHO VERY KINDLY INVITED ME TO CALL THIS AFTERNOON, 6 DECEMBER 1937.**

Both Mr. and Mrs. Cameron are active, considering their age; Mrs. Cameron's hair is pure white; Mr. Cameron, clean shaven, rather grayish. Mrs. Cameron received me most graciously, and I presented her with a tiny rose, just plucked, and told her I had brought it to prove to her that “roses in December” in Vancouver is a positive truth. Later in the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Fred J. Rolston, the latter her daughter, joined us to tea and cake. Mrs. Rolston is very well known in Vancouver as a most public-spirited woman, and recently contemplated “running” in the civic election for Park Commissioner, but retired at the last moment. Mr. Rolston is an official of the Mutual Life Assurance Company of Canada.

**EARLY TRAINS. C.P.R. CONSTRUCTION. EARLY BIRTHS. FIRST ENGINE IN VANCOUVER.**

Mrs. Cameron said: “We came to Vancouver in November 1886. Our home was originally at Campbelltown, New Brunswick; we lived on a farm at Charlo, N.B.; we were married at Charlo 28<sup>th</sup> July 1879, so that we shall, I hope, soon celebrate our diamond wedding. Then, Mr. Cameron got the idea he could do better in the new west, and, while I remained at home for perhaps a year, he went to Neche—on the Pembina River, close to the Canadian border, North Dakota.” (Addressing Mr. Cameron) “How long did you stay there?”

Mr. Cameron: “About two years.”

Mrs. Cameron: “He was in the carriage business; partners with a Mr. Ford. I went there too, and was there about a year, and then there was a Mr. May” (sic) “and he got the idea to come to Vancouver, so we all decided to come. We went to Winnipeg, and came west on the new Canadian Pacific Railway which had been opened five months before as far as Port Moody. We arrived at Port Moody, and stayed at the Winnipeg Hotel that night, and the next morning at 10 o'clock, we left on the old *Princess Louise* for Vancouver, and it was raining when we got here.

“But the following morning” (with emphasis) “was a *beautiful* morning; the steam was raising from the wooden sidewalks, and I said, ‘Thank goodness, we’ve found heaven.’”

Major Matthews: Do you expect to find steam raising in heaven?

Mrs. Cameron: “Well,” (laughing) “no, not exactly, but it was so nice and warm; Dakota was so cold. Mr. May went into the butcher business; there were two other butchers then, Gostry and Von Volkenburg; Mr. May made a third.”