

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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“Holy Joe’ used to burn charcoal there. He came to the” (Point Atkinson) “lighthouse one Sunday waiting for the steamer Agnes to come and take his charcoal to the canneries in the Fraser River” (for soldering cans), “and along came the Agnes, and he got on board, and went down with her to his charcoal, and when they got there it was a blazing mass. He had sacked it, and there must have been some hot coals in it, and the wind got up, and he did not have a sack; his whole winter’s work gone. It took him all winter to make that charcoal; there must have been four hundred sacks.”

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH W.A. GRAFTON, 542 WEST 63RD AVENUE, FORMERLY OF GRAFTON COVE, NORTHWEST “CORNER” OF BOWEN ISLAND, AND GRAFTON LAKE, BOWEN ISLAND, 8 JUNE 1937.

WEST VANCOUVER. KEW BEACH. “HOLY JOE.” HOLY TERROR, SCHOONER.

Mr. Grafton said: “‘Holy Joe’ built the boat Holy Terror about 1890, at what we call Kew Beach now; she was quite a good sized hull; about sixty feet long. He was a charcoal burner, and he was going to use her for carrying charcoal; anything at all. He didn’t get the machinery; he had her all ready for the machinery, but some ‘kind’ friend put a fire under her, and burned her up while he was in town” (Vancouver) “getting ‘grub,’ and when he came back she was gone. Nelson, of Nelson or Eagle Island, married an Irishwoman who had a brother Pat. Pat and ‘Holy Joe’ were bad friends, and it was whispered that Pat knew something about the fire. Pat took a shot at ‘Holy Joe’ over something, and put a hole through the plank on which Joe was seated.

“Joe built the *Terror* out of planks and slabs which drifted up on his beach; there was lots of such stuff floating about in those days.”

(Note by J.S.M. And a nuisance it was too; always causing trouble. One would see it floating in the tide, go after it, drag it to the shore, and tie it up on the beach with a string until he had time to cut it up for firewood. It might break loose; a neighbour would see it, and tow it to his place, and then the first neighbour would come along and see it being sawed up, and there would be a row.)

FLOWLANDER. ERWIN. NELSON. MCINNIS (?). NAVVY JACK.

“In 1887, the residents of what is now West Vancouver occupied about four cabins. Going west out of the Narrows, the first was ‘Navy Jack’; then King had a cabin next along the shore, but it was mostly unoccupied; then Flowlander was at Skunk Cove on weekends in his cabin; then the next was Erwin at Cypress Creek; then Nelson at Nelson Island, and McInnis at Copperhouse Point; that was all.”

CYPRESS CREEK. CYPRESS PARK.

“Walter Erwin called Cypress Park Cypress Creek. Erwin named it that on account of a number of men going in there, and cutting a lot of cypress cedar, which they expected to float out and ship to New York, but the creek was so rocky that when they started to float it out it all broke up and slivered. That was long before I came in 1887; it was even before Erwin was there, but Erwin told me about it, and why it was called Cypress Creek; there was so much cypress in it.”

LIGHTHOUSE PARK. F.W. CAULFEILD.

“Mr. Ollason” (Municipal Clerk, West Vancouver, 1915-1930) “amuses me.” (Statement that Caulfeild deserves all the honour that can be given him.) “What really happened was that when Mr. Caulfeild subdivided Caulfeild he told prospective purchasers that the foreshore was reserved in perpetuity for park purposes—I think it was in the agreement—for their benefit. But, after he had sold a lot of home sites, etc., he deeded the foreshore to the municipality, and thereby got out of paying taxes on it.”

PILOTS. CAPTAIN KETTLE.

“Capt. Kettle was not a pilot; he was a boatman; he never was a pilot. Ettershank was the first pilot; he had been around English Bay for years, but the first I recall was Capt. Urquhart; the next was Capt. Babbington; then Capt. Robertson, and Ettershank followed him. Then came Capt. Jones, and afterwards Capt. Johnson—he married Hugh Lynn’s sister of Lynn Creek; then came Patterson, and afterwards Bridgeman.”

NAVY JACK.

“Miss Wynn, who married Jones of the Tent and Awning company—the old man—kept house for Navy Jack; then she went to keep house for Jones, and afterwards married him.”

GRAFTON LAKE. WHITE WILD SWANS.

“The white swans used to look very graceful on Grafton Lake, Bowen Island; usually there were three or four of them.”

SEALING SCHOONERS. IONA ISLAND.

“The sailing schooners built on False Creek were the *C.D. Rand*, the *Thistle*, the *Beatrice*, and the *Vancouver Belle*” (Capt. Harvey Copp); other vessels built there were the *Britannia*, the *Queen City*, the *St. George*, and the *Iona*.” (Mr. Grafton omits the *City of Nanaimo*.) “I think Magee married a girl by the name of Iona and named the island in the Fraser after her; actually I don’t know.”

J.S. Matthews.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH W.A. GRAFTON OF 542 63RD AVENUE, 18 SEPTEMBER 1938, TO WHOM I HAD PHONED TO SAY THAT I HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING THE GEOGRAPHICAL BOARD TO CONFIRM THE NAME OF GRAFTON LAKE, BOWEN ISLAND, NAMING IT IN HONOUR OF THE GRAFTON FAMILY.**GRAFTON LAKE. GRAFTON BAY. TROUT LAKE, BOWEN ISLAND. TERMINAL LAKE.**

Mr. Grafton said: “Well, Grafton Lake was its first name; why they changed it so many times to Trout and Terminal, I don’t know. But I’m glad it’s Grafton Lake now.”

POINT ATKINSON LIGHTHOUSE. WELLWOOD.

“Wellwood was the first lightkeeper; I don’t remember him; then came Erwin; but I think there was a man before Wellwood; actually don’t know. Wellwood left because he could not stand the wash, wash, wash, of the waves on the rocks.”

WORLCOMBE ISLAND. PASLEY ISLAND. WHALE ISLANDS.

“We used to call that little group of islands the ‘Whale Islands,’ because they used to land whales there. In 1887, Harry Trim used to have a whaling station there, on Worlcombe or Pasley, but he could not make it pay. I saw the remains of it once when I stopped there. Then he went down to Westham Island, and made himself a lovely little place; his sons are there yet. He had a little schooner he used when he was whaling, and in 1914, when I was passing Westham Island, I saw her drawn up, high and dry, on his place on Westham Island.”

COWAN POINT.

“Harry Lee was the first settler at Cowan Point; then came Seymour.” (See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 4, Simson.) “They say he was a cousin to Admiral Seymour.”

PORT GRAVES. LONG BAY. EAST BAY.

“Port Graves; we used to call it Long Bay; then there was Centre Bay, and West Bay. The first two settlers at Port Graves, or Long Bay, were A.R. Davis—he died long ago—father of Davis of Snug Cove, Bowen Island, and Harry Myers; he cleared out. There was a creek at the head of Long Bay which divided them. Both made little cabins of lumber; both set out orchards, and both cut shingle bolts.”

BEAVER. ETTA WHITE. MERMAID. LEONORA. SENATOR. SKIDEGATE. NELLIE TAYLOR. MAGGIE.

“The *Beaver* used to give us a tow when we were coming up in our row boat from Bowen Island. She was pretty slow, and her paddles made quite a splash. There was really only five tugs on Burrard Inlet then. The *Etta White* was the Moodyville towboat, and the *Mermaid* was the Hastings Mill boat; the *Maggie* was up on the beach, near the store at Hastings Mill; she was done; just a hulk. The *Mermaid* had to take a scow, a small scow, load of wood along with her, she burned so much wood, and she had a big square sail; it all helped to tow the logs; Capt. Bridgeman, the father of the mayor of North Vancouver, was on her. She did practically all the work for the Hastings Mill, except when they hired a tow; then they would

get the *Leonora*, the *Skidegate* or the *Senator*. And then, there was a little open steamer, no deck on her, the *Nellie Taylor*, she ran opposition to the *Senator* on the Moodyville ferry.”

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH W.A. GRAFTON, 542 WEST 63RD AVENUE, VANCOUVER, FORMERLY OF GRAFTON BAY AND GRAFTON LAKE, BOWEN ISLAND, 1887, AND SKUNK COVE PILOTAGE, NOW RETIRED CITY HALL EMPLOYEE, 4 MAY 1939.

DOG FISH OIL. COD. SKATE. SHARK. HERRING. SNUG COVE. MULES.

Mr. Grafton said: “I used to fish for shark and dogfish; there was more money in shark than in dogfish; used to sell the oil to the Hastings Sawmill store—it’s good lubrication oil—and also to the loggers to grease the skids to help the oxen draw logs on the logging trails; those days it was all oxen, except Moodyville, they had a couple of mules. I used to get twenty-five cents a gallon for it. It takes twelve to fourteen dogfish to make a gallon of oil, that is, using the livers only, but a shark liver will yield five or six gallons. We used to have one hundred hooks on a line, each one baited with a herring; used to catch all sorts of fish on the hooks; cod fish were no good in those days, you could not sell them; too many of them; we used to save what we wanted, and give them away.”

HALIBUT.

“Halibut! Two were all I ever caught. One time I caught a little one on the line, about ten pounds, right in Snug Cove, Bowen Island; I remember it because it was so unusual. Another time I caught one out in the gulf, off Pender Harbour; it was calm, no wind, but that was a good sized one; it was feeding on crabs; there were crabs in its belly. I don’t know about any halibut bank between Bowen Island and Nanaimo; maybe there was.”

POTATOES. DOG FISH OIL. FISH MANURE.

“I had a sixty gallon sugar kettle, at Grafton’s Bay and at Snug Cove, and boiled the fish livers down in a covered place on the beach. I put the fish refuse on the ground in the garden, or ploughed it in my land; we put so much on the garden that I lost all my potato trade. I used to bring my potatoes to town, and so much fish on the land tasted the potatoes. I had regular customers, but they said they did not like their fish and potatoes mixed, and I lost all my trade.

“We would put six hundred hooks—big cod hooks, about three feet apart—on a long line. Then we would coil it in the boat, a Fraser River fishing skiff, and go out off Bowen Island; tie one end of the line to the shore, so that the fish would not take it away, and anchor the other end out in the sea.

“And a herring on each hook. We had a one hundred and sixty fathom herring seine of our own; we could only fish for herring when the herring were running; herring were ‘thick’ in those days; ‘thicker’ when they were spawning; Vancouver Harbour was full of them.”

RAT FISH. SHARK.

“We used to put the line down in the evening, and pick up about daylight in the morning; that was the first thing to do. We got all sorts of fish on the line; quite a few rat fish; they looked like a rat, with teeth sticking right out; we got dogfish, skate, cod, shark. The mud shark used to bite the bellies out of the cod while the cod were on the hook, and the shark would get fouled in the line; the hooks would be in his body. The most sharks I ever caught in one night was four; usually one to four; they were big; the liver alone would fill a ten gallon keg. You see, we used to tie a line to their tails, and tow them ashore, and tie them up to the trees, and when the tide went out, would get busy and cut the livers out.”

BRICKS. CHINESE. DAVID OPPENHEIMER. JOSEPH MANNION.

“The Chinamen making bricks in Oppenheimer’s brickyard and Mannion’s brickyard at Bowen Island—both yards had Chinamen working in them—used to come down and cut off the shark fins for a delicacy.

“We hauled in the line in the morning, and it would have on it, perhaps, one hundred dogfish. We put them in the boat, took them ashore, cut the livers out, left the livers stand for about three days to get the oil out, and then put the livers in the kettle, what the kettle would hold; boil them and skin the oil off. Do that several times. It depended on the livers how much oil you got; if the livers were good and fat you would get more.”

LOGGING OFF THE FOREST. THE GREASER. DOGFISH OIL.

"You see, in those days, the greaser—the man who greased the skids, or, alternatively, sanded on the down grade—had a cabin to himself; nobody could live with him; too much smell. The greaser would go down the skid road with his dogfish oil in a can, and a swab, and with a wave of his arm and swab, would slap the oil on the skids, first one way, then another, and the oil would splash all over his clothes; he smelt."

SALMON. R.V. WINCH. HERRING.

"Then we used to troll for a salmon; fine fish; and get the magnificent sum of four cents, from Dick Winch, of Winch and Bower.

"My brother and I used to put on twelve hooks each—we used a threaded herring on the hooks—on a six foot line, and catch a fish every time; great big salmon, oh yes."

GRAFTON BAY.

"Of an afternoon we would threadle up—run a line right through a herring's tail and out of his mouth—and we would have a double hook set right in his tail, and then we would start out at Grafton's Bay to fish. Grafton's Bay was a great place for spring salmon in the winter, and we would fish only at sundown and sunrise, and between us—my brother and myself—we would get anywhere from twenty to twenty-five fish, as a rule. Once a herring is mauled by a salmon, no other salmon will touch it, so we had a lot of spare sets of twelve herrings set ready to change the line after each fish was caught.

"You see, catching night and morning, we would take them up to Vancouver right after our morning catch."

Major Matthews: Did you send them up?

Mr. Grafton: (emphatically) "I should say not. Either row or sail up; depended on the weather; if there was wind or not; sometimes we made flying trips, sometimes slow and long.

"You see. If we got eight cents for a spring salmon, and he weighed thirty pounds—we have had them as high as forty—the catch would be worth quite a bit."

DEER. GROUSE. HOTEL VANCOUVER. A.R. COUGHTERY. BOWEN ISLAND.

"You see, I used to sell all the fish and game—deer and grouse—to the Hotel Vancouver at first, or to Coughtery, the butcher, and then I changed over to Dick Winch" (Winch and Bower.) "The biggest lot I ever sold to Winch was thirteen deer and sixty-seven brace of grouse all shot by my brother and myself on Bowen Island, and in two days; deer were 'thick' then. Winch gave me sixty-eight cents a brace for the grouse, and five cents a pound for the deer.

"You could sell the deer only at the opening of the season. After that, you could not sell them; the market was glutted; they did not want them. After the Comox started running, they brought in too many from up north, but you could always sell blue grouse."

S.S. COMOX. UNION STEAMSHIP COMPANY. GAMBIER ISLAND. GRAFTON LAKE. KILLARNEY LAKE. TROUT.

"There were no willow grouse on Bowen Island or Gambier Island, but there were plenty of willow grouse on the mainland. Some of the blue grouse weighed five pounds. And you see, in Grafton Lake the trout were as thick—there was nothing else but trout in Grafton Lake—they were eating each other; I used to catch trout with the tail of another sticking out of his mouth. But that did not last long; too many fishermen came there, and they would take away as many as they could carry. Those days have gone forever.

"In Lake Killarney—the next lake—the fish were mostly all suckers, or the proper name for them, graylings; we called them suckers, and the trout in Killarney Lake were very soft; the lake was shallow, and the water got very warm."