

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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DOUGLAS PARK. CHINESE GARDENS.

“On a Saturday afternoon, we ‘kids’—I was just a little fellow—used to fish for trout, and caught them, twelve inches long, in the creek which started up in the swamp, and ran across 22nd Avenue, and wound its way about, and came out right behind the old Shaughnessy School on the corner of 25th Avenue and Oak. It ran past there, and crossed Oak Street, and we used to fish in it behind the Chinese Gardens, now Douglas Park, and catch trout; there was a big pool, and when we fished it out, we went over to the Capilano River and caught more, and brought them over in tin cans; we were going to restock our pool, but it never worked; it was just a boy’s dreams.”

WILD DUCKS. HEATHER STREET AND 33RD.

“There used to be a swamp east of Heather Street, and south of Thirty-third Avenue, and it was full of ducks; there used to be hundreds of them. I don’t know what year was the latest they were there, but I know it was as late as 1915.”

POST OFFICE. HEATHER STREET.

“There was a little Post Office, Barker’s, in those days at the corner of Heather and Sixteenth Avenue, on the southeast corner.”

HEATHER STREET AT 25TH. DEER. WILD ANIMALS.

“Tupper Street ran as far as 24th; so did Ash Street; behind was just a trail; in between, south of 24th, was a hollow full of bushes; green bushes and lots of them, thick together, and a pool. Twenty-fifth Avenue was on top, and south of that was a clearing.

“Between 24th and 25th was a tangle of logs; washed there in a pile by a flood; and there was a pool of water. We youngsters, of a Saturday afternoon, used to go up there and wait; very quiet, and watch the deer come out of the bushes and graze about the pool, or drink, or just walk about.”

EARLY AEROPLANES. CANADA AIRCRAFT. DOMINION AIRWAYS. YARROW AIRCRAFT.

“The plane which fell into English Bay and drowned young Mr.” (Brenton, I think was his name) “was afterwards hauled out to English Bay; I helped. We took it to the Dominion Airways, who had a bit of a place at the corner of Stephens and Fourth Avenue, and repaired it; it was all smashed up, but we fixed it up, and it is still out on Lulu Island, but I don’t think it flies now; it is too old. The Dominion Airways amalgamated with the Yarrow Aircraft people of Victoria, and then that firm went bankrupt, and that was the end.”

Read and approved by Mr. Ashthorpe.
18 January 1939.
J.S. Matthews.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH WALTER V. BAINBRIDGE, 25 SEPTEMBER 1939.

Walter V. Bainbridge, of “Bainbridge’s” and Bainbridge Avenue, Burnaby, now of 4419 West Fourth Avenue, who very kindly called at the City Archives this afternoon. A most agreeable gentleman, of medium height and weight; his hair turning white, but quite active and alert.

WALTER V. BAINBRIDGE.

Mr. Bainbridge said: “I came to Vancouver in July 1898, from Newcastle-on-Tyne; came through the United States, New York, New Orleans, Texas and California, up the coast to Seattle, and Victoria; single then, and looking for adventure and pleasure. My father was Cuthbert, and mother was Margaret Bainbridge, of Newcastle-on-Tyne; both died when I was a child, and were buried at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

“I was born on 2nd January 1873, so I was about twenty-five when I reached Vancouver. I was eager to do some big game hunting—bear, etc.—that’s why I came to Vancouver. Then I went up to Chilliwack, and visited some of my old school fellows from the Leys School, Cambridge, and did some hunting on Harrison Lake; bear and so forth. Then I made three trips to England, and on my return someone told me about Burnaby Lake.”

D.L. 44. BURNABY LAKE. "BAINBRIDGE'S." BAINBRIDGE AVENUE. GOVERNMENT ROAD.

"I knew nothing about Burnaby Lake, so I went to see; walked along such roads as there were; went down to the lake shore at one point, then at another. I was searching for a site, and ultimately got the best on the lake. It was on District Lot forty-four. It was close to the City of Vancouver, was high up and dry; good loam soil, close to the Great Northern Railway which passed in front of it; had a southern exposure, and from a twelve foot well we afterwards got the purest of water.

"In 1904 I purchased twenty-five acres from an American, through E.E. Rand, Real Estate agents, paying ninety-five dollars an acre. The shore of Burnaby Lake was its southern, and Government Road its northern boundary, and what is now Bainbridge Avenue was one hundred yards to the west.

"It was covered with tremendous timber; one log alone contained seventeen thousand feet, although he top was knotty, and the logger was allowed 15,000 feet only by the scaler. I cleared two and one half acres, and, to give you an idea of the size of the timber growing there, it took one whole box of powder to blow one great stump, and the explosion addled all the eggs on the farms across the lake; I was awfully sorry about the unfortunate affair. Then, in 1904, I built the house, the one here in this photo, C.V. P. Out 212."

WILD ANIMALS. DEER, A NUISANCE. STRAWBERRIES. BEAVER.

"In 1905 I put in one and a half acres of strawberries, and in 1906 or 1907, the gross receipts from the little place, strawberries only, 385 crates, was nine hundred dollars. I rented it later, and my tenant got the same yield. At first I did not fence the two and a half acres, but eventually was forced to put up a very high plain wire fence to keep the deer out; the deer were an awful nuisance; they would eat the strawberry leaves.

"It must have been 1905 or 1906 that the beaver colony established themselves on the lake shore in front; at night we would hear the loud 'flap' as the beaver struck the water with their flat tails. I used to get castorium and rub it on the rowlocks of my punt, on my hands and boots, and, at night, drift silently in the punt among the beaver, and watch them playing, just swimming around. Castorium is a secretion from the beaver, and it makes them excited."

BURRARD STATION. ARDLEY STATION.

"Another colony of beaver gave a lot of trouble to the Great Northern Railway by damming their ditches near the old 'Burrard' station on their line, now 'Ardley.' Those colonies of beaver may have been the last in these parts, but I do not think so, as I have heard rumours that there is a colony there yet.

"Ultimately I sold the place to the National Finance Co., it was during the real estate 'boom' days, and I sold for an average of seven hundred and twenty-five dollars an acre, and, after some little trouble, got the cash. Government Road was planked, fourteen feet wide, about 1912; as shown in this photo" (No. C.V. P.213) "this is my house, here on the edge.

"In 1910 I was married in England; Mrs. Bainbridge is living, but there are no children."

BIG TREES. FOREST FIRES.

"I have spoken of the big fir stump which took a box of powder to blow. Many cedar trees were over ten feet, but the 'cream' of them had been taken away even before I went there; their stumps showed where they had been; no forest fire had ever traversed that region. There was one cedar log so big that, when it was felled, and lay on the ground, one could not climb up on top of it; we had to go around the ends."

BURNABY MOUNTAIN. JOHNSON ROAD. A SKID ROAD.

"Went north from the Brunette River up Burnaby Mountain, and Connor's logging camp was up there; the camp was right across the present Johnson Road, and close to the camp, right on the Johnson Road right of way, was a fir tree twelve feet in diameter."

Major Matthews: How do you know it was twelve feet; did you measure?

Mr. Bainbridge: "No. But Mr. Connor, the boss logger, pointed it out to me especially, and said it was twelve feet, and so big that it would not pass through the Brunette River dam, so they left it. The road foreman, constructing the Johnson Road, blew it up; it was in the way and he destroyed it.

“A man called Armitage told me that, when they were putting in the Capilano water pipes, they found a cedar thirty feet in diameter, and said to be the biggest cedar tree in the world. It was right on the line of the water pipe—water pipe has to go straight—and they could not go around it, so they blew it up.”

NOTE BY CITY ARCHIVIST.

No logger I have ever met—and I have met scores—has ever told me of a tree larger than ten or twelve feet in diameter. Every effort has been made to find some authentic record of a supposed giant tree cut down near Vancouver; we have never been able to find anyone who ever saw it. The illusive tree, twenty-five feet in diameter, officially stated to have been cut down by George Cary—the only George Cary—did not exist, according to George Cary, who says he never cut such a tree, nor heard of anyone who did. A freak bole on a steep hillside might have grown. It has long been assumed that a barroom joke, or some lumbermen outdoing each other in boasting has, by repetition, become “fact.”

J.S. Matthews.

27 DECEMBER 1940 – BIG TREES. NORTH VANCOUVER. LONSDALE AVENUE.

In November 1940, there was presented to the City Archives six photographs of North Vancouver, in 1896, showing Geo. H. Dawson, B.C. Land Surveyor, laying out the central sections of the present City of North Vancouver; one of these photographs shows a survey peg, bearing the mark “Blk. 109,” which is about Victoria Park, at the junction of Keith Road and Lonsdale Avenue.

Another photograph, C.V. P.Tr.17, of the same group of six, shows Mr. Dawson concealed, all save his head, in the hollow centre of a standing dead tree, much charred by fire, out in the clearing. Assuming that Mr. Dawson’s head is six inches wide, then the diameter of the stump is:

On ground level: twenty and one half feet (20½) diameter.

At five feet above: eighteen and a half (18½) feet.

The photograph may, or may not, show the widest diameter; the tree may be even wider, as the photo was taken facing west, to conform with the angle of the sun’s light.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. BALFOUR, WIDOW OF THE LATER ALDERMAN ROBERT BALFOUR, ONE OF THE ALDERMEN OF THE FIRST CITY COUNCIL, 1886, OF VANCOUVER, 17 MARCH 1936.

Mrs. Balfour lives at 1421 West 15th Avenue.

Mrs. Balfour: “We built a great big hotel, three storeys, at the corner of Columbia and Hastings Street, and when ‘The Fire’ came we just ran; we went out of it with nothing but our clothes on our backs three weeks after we started; it stood I think where the Broadway Hotel is now.”

GREAT FIRE. BURRARD HOTEL.

“My husband was born in either Michel or Wingham, Ontario, and then went to Manitoba; then we came out to that high bridge, Stoney Creek, I think they call it, built for the C.P.R. We drove all through the mountains; first we came as far as the end of the track, Stoney Creek high bridge; we lived in a long cabin the engineers had built in the bottom of the valley; we drove west in an open wagon, just an open wagon with our mattresses and baggage on top, and it rained all the way. We stopped at cabins; they were about a day’s drive apart; we drove on the road bed, and when we reached Revelstoke, stopped there a month. There were no homes in Revelstoke then, just frame buildings at Revelstoke, and we had to build the bunks we slept in along the wall.”

C.P.R. MOUNTAIN. CONSTRUCTION.

“Then we drove down to Eagle Pass Landing” (near Sicamous.)

“Then we went down to Hammond by rail, in an old caboose, and oh, my, it was terrible; just like riding in a rocking chair. We got to some place—I don’t know where it was but it was a lovely little house—they had a Chinaman cook, the first Chinaman I had ever seen. Did you ever have tomato preserves? Well, he