

Early Vancouver

Volume Four

By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.

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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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[LETTER FROM H.L. EDMONDS.]

WHITESIDE, EDMONDS & SELKIRK
Barristers & Solicitors

Suite 217 Westminster Trust Bldg.,
New Westminster, B.C.
November 22, 1934.

J.S. Matthews, Esq.,
City Archivist,
Room 1016,
Temporary City Hall,
16 Hastings Street East,
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Sir:

Replying to yours of November 22nd with reference Fairview and Mount Pleasant, I beg to advise that I have no knowledge of how those names were arrived at. Many years ago my father, the late Henry V. Edmonds, owned an undivided one-half interest in Lot 200A. This was subdivided into lots and each side selected certain lots. I believe the late Dr. J.W. Powell of Victoria was one of those interested in the other undivided one-half interest of that lot. In addition to that my father owned the whole of Lot 301 and he subdivided that and named the streets. I cannot recall the names of any of them, except the one you mention "Sophia" which was named after a cousin of mine, still living in London, England. If I had a map and could see the names I could probably tell you more, but all my records, including maps of Lot 301, were destroyed in the fire here in 1898.

Sometime when I am in the Land Registry Office in Vancouver I will try to remember to look up the old subdivision map and after so doing, if there is any further information I can give you I will be very glad indeed to do so.

In addition to the site my father gave for the Mount Pleasant School he gave a site for the Anglican Church, which Church was named St. Michaels by my mother, who had been requested by the committee to select the name.

Yours very truly,

[signed] H.L. Edmonds.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. WILLIAM EDWARDS, OF 2576 OXFORD STREET, WHO, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS DAUGHTER, MRS. FRANCES BLAIR, CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES FOR A CHAT, 2 FEBRUARY 1939.

CHAIN GANG. LEG IRONS. TOM CYRS.

Major Matthews: Mr. Edwards. You wrote on the "Historical" page of your genealogy sheet that the first man arrested in Vancouver was tied to a tree. Who was he; how was it done?

Mr. Edwards: "Tom Cyrs, of the Granville Hotel. And the tree was what remained of the old Maple Tree after the fire; I arrived two days after the fire. They tied him to a chair at first, but he kicked over the chair; then they chained him to the tree; it was on the opposite side of Carrall Street to the tent they used for a City Hall. The old tree had been badly damaged in the fire. Which reminds me of a thing which would look very queer now. I have seen Tom Cyrs walking up the middle of Water Street with a buggy whip over his shoulder, and a horse, just a loose horse—no head rope or anything—following him. I have seen Mrs. Keefer do the same thing on Cordova Street; whip in her hand, and a horse following like a dog; they said she was a cousin to Jesse James."

RIVER ROAD. MARINE DRIVE.

Major Matthews: You have also written that you were the first to drive out to Eburne (now Marpole) on the old skid road; what does that mean?

Mr. Edwards: "If you drove out North Arm Road, now Fraser Avenue, and turned west, there was a skid road leading down to Eburne's; in one place there was a tree across the trail; I unhitched the horse, and lifted the buggy over." (Note: he's mistaken, because on 14 June 1886, Mr. Fitzgerald McCleery drove in with eggs to the burned city.)

LOGGING OFF THE FOREST. JOHN LOVAT. DOUGLAS PARK. FAIRVIEW.

"There was a skid road ran up the hill there" (looking out of the City Hall window.) "It left from the corner of Ninth Avenue" (Broadway) "and Ash Street, and came out at the other end of Heather Street. The only house up there was Lovat's; he had a milk ranch; twelve or fifteen cows; grazed them out in the old pasture there; it's now Douglas Park."

Major Matthews: It used to be an elk pasture; after that Jerry Rogers pastured his logging oxen there on Sundays; his camp was there.

Mr. Edwards: "The last time I saw Lovat he had a tent up right at the entrance to his place; it's a street now; there was no street then. He was about eighty-five; he had his daughter with him; he had been a Cariboo miner; went back into the Cariboo again when he was eighty; then he came back and lived in the tent."

LOGGING OFF THE FOREST. WEST END. BEACH AVENUE.

"I helped to log off the forest at the west end of the 'West End'; we had our camp at what is now about the corner of Chilco and Nelson streets; it was the Brighthouse property; some of the logs we put in Coal Harbour, and some in English Bay; it depended upon the slope of the land; some went to Moodyville Sawmill. Our supplies came out to the camp by express wagon, and by Beach Avenue; it was the only street opened in the west end of the city."

HASTINGS SCHOOL. S.S. YOSEMITE. HASTINGS MILL WHARF.

"I got here two days after the fire; came up from Victoria on the old *Yosemite*, and got off at the store wharf at the Hastings Mill; it was the only wharf we could get off at then, and school was close by. I counted the children coming out of school; there were twenty-one."

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA.

"I came to Vancouver then because I wanted to see the fire. I was teaming in Victoria; drove a cart for the transfer company there. I got to Victoria by boat from Portland; came by train from Winnipeg; had worked on the construction of the C.P.R.; left there about 1883; that was the time of the flood; the big real estate boom was in 1882."

HORSE RACES. ALEXANDER STREET. HOWE STREET.

"The first horse races in Vancouver was on Alexander Street; that would be in 1887; they raced on Alexander Street for a couple of years until they opened Howe Street. The only horse I can remember racing on Alexander Street was a horse called Coquitlam" (probably owned by George Black); "but there was about eight horse racing; distance about half a mile of dirt road of the worst kind; then would run from about Gore Avenue eastwards; the crowd did not turn out very well; perhaps 300 people watched.

"Then they used Howe Street; it was the first street west of Granville Street opened up; and the same horses would race there; a bunch of the same seven or eight horses; race on Howe Street from Georgia to Helmcken Street; wild cayuses."

THE FIRST CIRCUS. R.H. ALEXANDER'S RESIDENCE.

"The first circus in Vancouver was quite a big circus. I don't know the name, but Barnum, or something. There was a triangle on the corner of Alexander and Gore Avenue; it was the property next to R.H. Alexander's house, a sort of clear space there; maybe it was an old pasture or something. But it was quite a good show."

FIRST STREET CARS.

"I rode on the first street car. Rode from the corner of Powell and Westminster Avenue to Drake Street and back again; five cent fare; Carmichael conductor; he kept the first five cent fare, and had it on his watch chain."

DOMINION DAY, 1887.

"The celebration on Dominion Day, 1887, was on Water Street; Water Street; Abbott Street, and about there, and Carrall. Water Street was built on piles, and a planked over roadway; at least in front of Tom Cyrs' Granville Hotel, and Von Valkenburg's butcher shop was planked and on piles, and Marshall's barn alongside of it on piles. We had a parade, and a tug of war, right on Water and Abbott and Cordova and Carrall; it was the only place you could go. George Black led the parade."

WATER WELLS.

"We lived in a house on Westminster Avenue, on the west side, just north of Powell; the back of our house almost touched the city gaol. That was where my daughter, Mrs. Blair, was born; she is our eldest. I don't know exactly where we got our water from; it might have been from a well, but my recollection is that we caught the rainwater." (See photo P. Trans. 13, laying street car tracks; house on left with verandah.)

SMALL POX RIOT. POLICE. JACKSON T. ABRAY.

"At the time of the small pox, Jackson T. Abray, the policeman, was the best policeman I ever saw. The people wanted to get off the Victoria boat, but he stood right in the gangway and stopped the whole five hundred of them; just one man, Abray.

"They took pot shots at him with chunks of coal. The man with the mail who tried to get by, Abray bowled him over with a blow of his fist."

DESTRUCTION OF THE H.M.S. *EGERIA*, OFF OLD MOODYVILLE, BURRARD INLET.

The *Egeria*, sold by the British Admiralty, later used as a training ship for the cadets of the Navy League, a financial failure, and finally sold to the wreckers. She lay at anchor off Moodyville flats, North Vancouver.

A telephone message was received from a hardware firm in North Vancouver asking that four steel barrels of something be sent down to a dock along Alexander Street. An order clerk, a Mr. Chandler, of the Imperial Oil Limited, wrote the order on an order pad, and sent the order sheet out into the warehouse; the order was filled with four steel barrels of *gasoline*; the writing was *gasoline*, and gasoline was shipped. It will never be known whether the hardware firm ordered gasoline, but whatever they ordered, whatever the clerk wrote down, they actually required *kerosene* (coal oil); who made the mistake will never be known; it may even have been the wreckers themselves; the hardware firm may have concealed the fact. Gasoline, according to law, is shipping in barrels painted red; coal oil in barrels painted blue. Gasoline is stenciled "GASOLINE." All four barrels were properly painted and named in stencil; the invoices read "Gasoline."

The barrels were taken by small boat to the *Egeria*, partly dismantled; all valuable material had been removed; it was proposed to burn her for the metal in her wooden hull, etc. The four barrels were emptied by pouring their contents in the now empty hold; then a match was thrown in. A terrific explosion followed.

The clerk was subsequently tried for manslaughter. It was proven that the labourers on the *Egeria* were foreigners, and could not read English words. An extraordinary verdict was rendered: "*NOT GUILTY, but be more careful in future.*" The writer was an official of the Imperial at the time; it was before September 1920.

J.S. Matthews.