

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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Mr. Evans: "Well, I cannot say he didn't. He might have picked up a diamond; I could not deny he picked up a diamond; he might have, but where the coal came from I don't know. Those engines all came from Montréal, and there might have been a piece of coal on her.

"I took over at Kamloops and brought the" (first) "train into Port Moody. You see, the company took over from the construction people on July 1st; the company arranged to have *some* power of their own when they took over; there was some power; some engines, delivered at Yale before July 1" (1886.) "I was assigned to engine No. 371 at Yale on July 1st, and sent back to Kamloops to pick up the first train, so the length of time No. 371 was in British Columbia before she reached Port Moody would be three days, and I was on her all the time. A bit of coal might have come with her from Montréal. I don't say it didn't, but I saw no coal on her; she was a wood burner; her grates were for wood; she was always a wood burner.

"He says there was a rush for souvenirs. Well, I don't know what they got in the rush; there isn't much about a railway engine you can pick up for a souvenir. Someone might have taken a cordwood." (Two foot lengths.)

"Another thing. About driving the 'last spike.' I was there and saw it driven, and—well—there wasn't any diamonds on it, either."

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. WILLIAM H. EVANS OF 2030 WHYTE AVENUE, KITSILANO BEACH, VANCOUVER, 25 FEBRUARY 1937.

Who was kind enough to come across the street to 2083 Whyte Avenue and spend the evening with me, and tell of old railway days. Among other things, Mr. Evans brought the first train into Port Moody, 4 July 1886. He looks well and strong, and says that Mrs. Evans is "quite well," and busy.

FIRST TRAIN, VANCOUVER, 23 MAY 1887.

I read to Mr. Evans part of an article by Judge Howay of New Westminster in the *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1937, which states in part, page 15: "on Burrard Inlet two decades before William Evans brought the first transcontinental train to Coal Harbour."

Mr. Evans said: (slowly and with deliberation) "Well, it would be hard to call Port Moody Coal Harbour," and then went on to narrate.

"I saw the first train from Montréal to Vancouver as it passed through Port Moody. I came into Vancouver the night of the 23rd May 1887—that is the night of the day the first train had arrived at the foot of Granville Street, Vancouver—with a train of empty coaches, oh, say, four or five coaches, empty ones, to be used for taking the excursion out to North Bend on the next day, 24th May, Queen Victoria's birthday, and that was the year of her Golden Jubilee. North Bend was a sort of tourist resort for Vancouver; there was quite a nice hotel there, in the Fraser Canyon, and pioneers of Vancouver used to go up there for a weekend holiday, etc., etc., so on that day, being the Queen's birthday, they took an excursion of Vancouver people up to North Bend to see the line."

THE "LAST SPIKE" TRAIN, NOVEMBER 1885.

"The truth about the train which brought Sir Donald Smith from Montréal at the time he drove the last spike is that it was not *November the seventh, 1885* that he drove the last spike at Craigellachie, *but was November the fifth*. You cannot change it now; it is recorded all over the world that he drove the last spike on November the seventh, and that the train arrived at Port Moody on November the eighth, but the fact is he drove the last spike on November the fifth, and the train reached Port Moody on November the sixth, 1885, and the officials just stepped across the wharf to where the *Princess Louise* was lying and went on to Victoria. The last spike was driven at nine twenty-two, on the morning of November the fifth, but don't try and change it now."

(Subsequently, after reading rough draft submitted for approval. Mr. Evans: "I'm not going to start a controversy, but I know I am right; I wrote Matt [blank] about it, and he agrees with me. He had records, but he has lost them.")

Mr. Evans must have made a mistake. W.O. Miller, despatcher at Yale, thinks so. J.S. Matthews.

Evans admits his mistake now, 17 October 1937. J.S.M.

“The locomotive of Sir Donald’s train was No. 148, car 77, and the coaches ‘Saskatchewan’ and ‘Metapedia,’ not ‘Tepidia’ as reported in some newspapers. ‘Bob’ Mee, Robert Mee, was the engineer. I don’t know who his fireman and crew were. That was the official train from the east.”

SECOND TRAIN AT DRIVING OF LAST SPIKE, NOVEMBER 1885.

“But the facts are that there were two trains at the formality of driving the Last Spike: one official train from the east, and another train from the west; both trains met at Craigellachie, and the one from the west followed the one from the east down to the coast. Both trains reached and stayed at Spence’s Bridge that night, and both trains came on to Port Moody the next day; it was a daylight run, so that the track could be seen by the officials, etc.

“I was the engineer of the second train, the one which had gone east to Craigellachie to where the two ends were to meet, and which train followed Sir Donald’s train from the east down to Port Moody.

“The crew were: engineer, W.H. Evans; fireman, George Taylor; conductor, Jim Trodden; brakeman, Jack Clancy and Jack Whalen.”

PRIVATE TRAIN ARRIVES PORT MOODY FROM MONTRÉAL, 27 JUNE 1886.

Mr. Evans continued: “I don’t know anything about [the] private train which is said to have brought a small party including Mrs. Abbott and Mrs. Dr. Lefevre through in Mr. Abbott’s private car a week previously to the first transcontinental train.” (See conversations Mrs. Dr. Lefevre, and *Vancouver Herald*, Friday 2 July 1886.)

FIRST TRANSCONTINENTAL PASSENGER TRAIN, MONTRÉAL TO PORT MOODY, 4 JULY 1886.

“The first passenger train arrived at Port Moody on July 4th 1886 at 12 noon exactly.” (Note: Locomotive 371, car “Honolulu,” etc., etc., 2907 miles in 136 hours, one minute; reported as one minute late.) “I was in charge of that train. The crew were: engineer, W.H. Evans; conductor, P.A. Barnhart; fireman, George Taylor; brakeman, Jack Madigan.”

City Archivist: You say 12 noon; the newspapers report 12:01, one minute late.

Mr. Evans: “We weren’t late; his watch was out; one minute out; we were on time, and on time exactly.”

FIRST TRAIN FROM NEW WESTMINSTER.

“I don’t know anything about the train which is said to have come into Vancouver from New Westminster via Coquitlam on the morning of the 23rd May. You say it brought forty passengers and arrived at 9:08 a.m. I don’t know anything about that train.”

FIRST TRANSCONTINENTAL PASSENGER TRAIN, VANCOUVER, 23 MAY 1887.

City Archivist: Mrs. Lacey R. Johnson writes me from Westmount, Québec, that she helped decorate the engine which brought the first transcontinental train into Vancouver, and that she did so at Yale. John Ems says she’s a little out; he says the train was decorated at North Bend, which was a divisional point, and I think she is “out” too. John Ems says the shops at Yale were burned, and there was nothing there then.

Mr. Evans: “I think she is wrong too; it must have been North Bend. The crew of that train were: engineer, Peter Righter; fireman, George Taylor; conductor, Pete Barnhart; brakeman, Jack Madigan and Kirby. I don’t know who was baggage man; you say Kavanagh; perhaps so, I don’t know.”

City Archivist: Mrs. Lacey Johnson writes me that both she and her husband were on the train, she as a passenger, and Major Johnson, master mechanic of the Pacific Division, in the cab. She writes me that as the train drew into Vancouver, Peter Righter stepped back, and motioned to Major Johnson to take the throttle and take the first train into the station. A very gracious act, don’t you think?

Mr. Evans: (smiling) “Just like Pete.”

FIRST WORK TRAIN ARRIVES VANCOUVER, NOVEMBER 1886.

"The first work train which came into Vancouver, came in November 1886, when they laid the track; I don't know now just how far west it got but English Bay. Some of the crew were: John Scott, engineer; Jim Doig, conductor."

(I question the month. JSM.)

EARLY CONSTRUCTION. C.P.R.

"You see, the C.P.R. was constructed west from Yale, and east from Port Moody, and they met at Deroche, one and a half miles east of Nicomen" (see narrative in *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 3, of A.E. Austin) "they made the connection between the both ends in January 1884. Then they ran a train up as far as the Cisco bridge; mixed freight and passenger, baggage car, mail car, two coaches and the rest of the train was freight."

DUKE AND DUCHESS OF CORNWALL AND YORK TRAIN, SEPTEMBER 1901.

"There were two trains; the first brought Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and the second the Royal party. Put this down:

"First train, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Kamloops to North Bend: engineer, W.H. Evans; conductor, Jack Ward. North Bend to Vancouver: engineer, Bob Mee; conductor, Jack Ward.

"Second train, Duke and Duchess. Kamloops to North Bend: engineer, E.J. Hosker; conductor, Alex Forrest. North Bend to Vancouver: engineer, 'Duke' McKenzie; conductor, Alex Forrest."

CORRECTIONS BY MR. EVANS (AS PER HIS MANUSCRIPT 15 MARCH 1937) MADE AT A SECOND VISIT TO 2083 WHYTE AVENUE.

C.P.R. CONSTRUCTION.

"In 1883, the Company" (as distinct from the C.P.R. which took over on 1 July 1886) "sent me from Yale to Hautier station about two miles west of Lytton to install the engine and boiler in a sawmill which they were building for the purpose of cutting bridge timbers for the construction.

"I went from Yale to Boston Bar on a train" (then the end of the track.) "I took a steam boat from there to Tilton Creek, about two miles east of Keefers, and from there to Hautier station in a freight wagon.

"After getting through there, I was sent to Nicomen, a stage stopping station at that time, but now Thompson station on the C.P.R., and installed an engine and boiler in another mill which they were building for the same purpose in a ravine where the Thompson station now stands."

STEAM BOAT ON FRASER RIVER.

"The steam boat mentioned was built at what was known as 'The Big Tunnel'" (about three miles east of Spuzzum), "and was warped up the river to Boston Bar. Great difficulty was experienced in getting it through Hell's Gate. It took five weeks for this. After some different captains had met with failure, a Capt. Smith from Oregon was secured, who succeeded. This boat made one trip as far as Lytton, and owing to different eddies and swift waters, and the boat getting on the rocks, no further attempt was made to get to Lytton, and the run was confined to between Boston Bar and Tilton Creek, although there was considerable difficulty also experienced on this run owing to the swift water.

"The officers on this run were: Captain Smith, captain; Charles Lambert, mate; Capt. W.H. Holmes, lineman; Jim Burse, chief engineer; Cris Pitchler, purser."

STEAMER KAMLOOPS.

"After the track was extended east, there was no further use for this boat, and it was dismantled at Keefers in 1884, and the machinery taken to Kamloops and installed in a boat and run on the Shuswap Lakes for the Inland Navigation Co. After through there, it was taken to the Kootenay Lakes, and installed in the steamer *Kamloops* for the C.P.R."

(signed) "W.H. Evans."

Read and approved by Mr. Evans, 15 March 1937.

J.S. Matthews.