

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

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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seemed against him, and then, just when the railway was coming" (C.P.R.), "just when he was about to reap the benefits of his foresight, he died, in 1886."

J.S. Matthews

The above (revised copy) was submitted to Miss Mary Homer, 13 July for approval, and returned corrected as shown on the original memo. Miss Homer adds: "I have made a few corrections in the account. I am sending you a short account of the English ancestors" (as follows.)

HOMER FAMILY.

The first of the surname on record is Thomas de Homere, Lord of the Manor of Homere, Somerset, England to whom lands in the neighboring county of Dorset were granted in 1338 by Lord Maltravers. Later on in the same century, Thomas De Homere left his native county, and settled in the county of Stafford where he or one of his descendants built the house of Ettingshall. It was in such a state of decay that it was taken down in the year 1868.

Besides the property at Ettingshall, the Homer family owned property in Sedgley nearby. One of the family built the chancel of the old church at Sedgley, and the family burial vault was under this chancel. Through age and dilapidation about the year 1828 the family vault was destroyed.

Edward Homer erected a pew in this church in 1620 which was occupied by his descendants until the church was destroyed. The seat of this pew was accidentally preserved, and came into the possession of the Earl of Dudley, and now forms part of the wainscot of a house belonging to him in the Old Park, at the Wren's Nest, near Dudley. It bears the following inscription: "This sete setop at the proper cost and charges of Edward Homer, anno domini 1620."

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH THE CELEBRATED HARRY HOOPER, 18 AUGUST 1937.

Pioneer of "Gastown," associate of prince and pauper, who is in Vancouver, at the Regent Hotel, from his placer mine on the banks of the Fraser River, two miles from Chimney Creek, twenty-two miles from Williams Lake, twelve miles from the nearest store, two miles from his mail box, where he lives with his three dogs and four cats, but no one else, surrounded by his garden full of vegetables; with his radio; gets six newspapers at a time at the end of the week; hangs beef, port, and mutton in the shed in winter time, and when he wants some, cuts it off; catches the finest of salmon in the river, and salts it down; says that money is worthless; that there is no need for a solitary individual in British Columbia to be "on relief," and says he has washed fifteen hundred dollars of gold out of the hill side since last May—about four months. He wants a road into his place—about two miles of road; he also needs teeth.

We had lunch together in the lunch room, City Hall.

HARRY HOOPER OF GASTOWN AND CHIMNEY CREEK.

Mr. Hooper said: "I am fifty-seven now—on the 28th April 1937—and I was three when I came with Father and Mother to Gastown, so we must have come in 1884." (Note: he also said he was born in 1880.) "We came via Portland, Oregon, then up to Victoria on the *George E. Starr*, old paddlewheel boat with walking beam. Then Father and Mother went over to New Westminster, and then over here; just one child, myself; we lived down about Gore Avenue, near the Hastings Mill store."

GREAT FIRE, 1886.

"There is a lot of bosh talked about the Great Fire; the pioneers did not suffer so very much. It was summer time; you could sleep out under the trees, and the fire did not go past the Hastings Mill much; the fire missed a lot of that locality."

"WEST END."

"I recall my daddy floating lumber down False Creek to English Bay to build houses; took it down in a rowboat from the old Royal City Planing Mills at the south end of Carrall Street; to build those cottages facing on the little park" (Alexandra Park) "where the bandstand is; one at least of them is there yet; it is the first house on Burnaby Street going east from Beach Avenue. There is a board which sticks out, and if

the paint could be removed you would find 'Dover Castle' painted under it; that is the old name we painted on it; just a name for the cottage; the name of the house. That must have been about 1894. There was no road down there then; we went to a cow path from about Burrard and Georgia Street down to Denman, and then afterwards there was a boardwalk on Denman Street, about three feet wide, to the beach at English Bay."

ENGLISH BAY SCANDAL.

"The biggest scandal English Bay ever knew was when a woman went bathing without her stockings. She afterwards sued the Women's Christian Temperance Union for slander; the court records will show that."

KLONDYKE RUSH. CATTLE.

"In 1886, before the big rush to the Klondyke, I drove cattle into Dawson via Telegraph Creek; I was only a bit of a lad then, but the boss brought the cattle along the Cariboo Road, and got together about three hundred; we landed in Dawson with about seven only; that was long before the rush started; the rush started in 1898; they died of everything, weather conditions, hunger, and everything else; it was cold. You will not believe this, but it is true. I have hit a steer on the head, then taken my knife and cut its belly open, pulled out its entrails, and crawled inside to keep from freezing to death; in the morning they had to cut me out. I was no bigger than a minute, and could get inside, and the carcass froze during the night so that I could not get out again. We drove the cattle along a trail which runs for miles and miles along the east bank of the Fraser. We started at the slaughter house at Central Park in 1896, and got to Dawson as spring opened up in 1898. We had all the cattle intact at Telegraph Creek.

"You ought not to put this down, but there was a woman with us, and her husband, and another fellow had a bottle of whisky—just to keep in case it was wanted, and the woman was freezing—so the fellow gave her a drink, and her husband saw him do it. There was a scrap, and well, next morning, the husband was missing and has not turned up yet. What happened I am not prepared to tell you; actually I don't know; I didn't see."

NEW CITY HALL.

"Does Gerry McGeer think he is responsible for the City Hall being here" (in Fairview.) "Mayor Baxter is responsible for that, not McGeer. Mayor Baxter lives, or did live, across the street; he had property there at the time he was mayor; lived there; and it was he who first got the idea; that was away back about 1911. I know it was he who first got the idea; I know all about it because his sons were associates of mine; we were friendly; they sold out their business lately, and are now running a garage and service station back of the Belmont Hotel, at the corner of Nelson and Granville."

(Mayor Baxter's fine residence, northeast corner Yukon and 12th Avenue, faced Strathcona Park, upon which City Hall stands.)

EARLY AUTOMOBILES.

"Armstrong and Morrison had the first automobile in Vancouver; 'Fatty' Armstrong had it; then the next was the 'Rolling Peanut'; the 'Rolling Peanut'; Annand, and Stark, Ernie and Billy, and then the next was Dr. Riggs, and afterwards F.R. Stewart and John Hendry; I don't know which was first, Hendry or Stewart. Hendry's car was a single cylinder—one lung—'Oldsmobile,' he bought it in the fall of 1905 from Stark, when they had the bicycle shop on Hastings Street up by Westminster Avenue, I don't know where it is now, but I think it is out in Hastings Park, at the exhibition. Hendry paid over one thousand dollars for it. I knew it very well, because I drove it. I learned to drive in 1904 with Dr. Riggs' two-cylinder Ford. Dr. Riggs' car was not a fast car; it took about 'two hours,' figuratively speaking, to go around the park."

BICYCLES.

"I remember a funny incident; you remember what a lot of bicycles we had one time. Well, we decided to go out on a riding party to Steveston, and went up the North Arm Road" (Granville Street), "up hill, down dale, and when we got somewhere out on Lulu Island there was a bit of a bridge; no side rails in those days, and Mother Hooper was riding ahead, and she called out, 'I'm going over,' and sure enough she rode onto the bridge all right, and then turned at right angles and went head first over the side into a ditch. I dashed down for she was stuck with her head in the mud, and pulled her out, and then rode into

Steveston and got some clothes, and then she dressed under the bridge, and washed the mud off her face before we could continue on into Steveston. She came home by the stage.”

MAYOR GEO. C. MILLER.

“I have just been down to see George Miller; he’s a real fellow; stuck out his hand and said, ‘Hello, Harry.’”

C.H. Hooper.
17 October 1939.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH CHARLES EDWARD HOPE, ESQ., DEEP CREEK FARM, FORT LANGLEY, B.C., WHO VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS MORNING, 3 AUGUST 1939.

VANCOUVER ART ASSOCIATION, 1890. FIRST EXHIBITION, ART GALLERY. MRS. ANNIE E. WEBSTER, A FOUNDER.

Mr. Hope said, after looking at the catalogue of first exhibition, Lefevre Block, 6th to 11th October 1890, and noticing that Mrs. Webster was secretary:

“She was the whole ‘works’ of that association and exhibition; I was the ‘hanging committee’ of one; that is, I climbed up the ladders, did the hanging of the pictures, and then climbed down again. We did not ‘turn any down’; there were not so many pictures offered us that we could afford to do that. So Mrs. Webster is still alive; I’m glad to hear that; what is her address?” (Mrs. A.E. Richards, P.O. Box 3087, Honolulu, Hawaii.) “Yes, I was the first ‘hanging committee’ of the Vancouver Art Association.

HOPE AND GRAVELEY. W.E. GRAVELEY.

“My old office was across the street, upstairs in a brick building, next door to Mr. F.M. Chaldecott’s” (barrister); “north side, between Seymour and Richards; here it is in this photo.” (See C.V. P. Str. 42, G.N. 14.) “That was the time I entered into partnership with the late Walter Graveley who died last June. I have a very large photograph of Vancouver, taken by Edwards Bros.; it is an immense thing; must have been taken about 1900; if you would like to have it, you are welcome to it.”

Major Matthews: Weren’t you estate agent for John Morton of D.L. 185.

Mr. Hope: “Yes.”

CITY ARCHIVIST’S.

COPY OF LETTER FROM W.M. HORIE ESQ.

2396 York Street
Vancouver.
Nov. 26th 1935.

Dear Major Matthews:

STANLEY PARK ARCH, 1889. ZOO.

We were talking the other morning of the arch erected at the entrance of Stanley Park in honor of the Governor-General, Lord Stanley, who visited us at that time, and after whom the park is named. I have looked up the following facts in regard to the arch which I helped to erect.

We were at it four days, Oct. 23-24-25-26, 1889. The 26th was Saturday, when Lord Stanley arrived but did not come to the park that day. There is extant a picture of the arch as set on two base columns of cedar; one of these is a stump; that on the east side I think, which added greatly to the stability of the arch which was framed of rough 2 x 4 boarded with shiplap on which was nailed rough round sticks of fir and cedar. We worked ten hours a day to push it along; nine hours was being worked generally.