

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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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. ALBERT BURMAN, 18 JANUARY 1939.

Mrs. Albert Burman, formerly Mrs. Robert Mee, widow of the locomotive engineer of the first train to reach Port Moody, 8 November 1885. Mr. and Mrs. Burman graciously called at the City Archives for a chat; they reside at 2946 Ontario Street.

FIRST TRAIN, NOVEMBER 1885.

Mrs. Burman said: "Mr. Mee" (her first husband) "was at the driving of the last spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway at Craigellachie on November 7th 1885; Lewis King, or 'Lew' King, as we called him, was his fireman, and together they brought the first train to Port Moody. Sir Donald A. Smith, Mr. Cambie and Mr. Abbott were on the train.

"Again, in July 1886, Mr. Mee was the engineer of the first passenger train into Port Moody, and Lew King was his fireman; that was the first official passenger train from Montréal." (Note: she is incorrect.)

ROBERT MEE. LEWIS KING. SAM SCOTT. W.H. "BILLY" EVANS.

"Sam Scott was the engineer in charge of the first freight into Port Moody. To me, it is not understood, how Mr. W.H. Evans, who died last year, and who was so feted as the engineer who brought the first passenger train into Port Moody, July 4th 1886, can make such claims to do something it is obvious he did not do. If you will read Howay's *British Columbia*, Vol. III, page 1011, you will see what was printed in that biography both about Mr. Mee, my husband, and Mr. Lewis King, page 1090. You will see there as follows: 'He was present at the driving of the golden (?) spike, and was in charge of the engine which pulled the notable officials to Port Moody, then the terminus.'" (No mention of July 4th 1886 train.)

"It is a strange thing, but it was not until after Mr. Mee's death, that we ever heard of the story of Mr. Evans being the engineer of the first trains. Mr. W.H. Grassie, C.P.R. watchmaker for many years, and still living, was at Port Moody, and says he was not. Then another 'Billy' Evans, who was a marine engineer on the old *Beaver*, he says he was not; my husband never mentioned his name in connection with the train, but on the other hand, he always told me Mr. Lew King was his fireman. It is a strange story. Mr. Mee was born in 1849, and in 1885 must have been 36, a very proper age for a man to be an engineer, but Mr. Evans was born in April 1861, and in 1885 was merely 24 years old, and it seems strange that a railway company would entrust to such a young man the responsibilities of bringing the first transcontinental train into Port Moody."

Note by J.S.M.: An illuminating instance of pioneer disputes as to what actually did take place—due to the imperfect recording of earlier days. Actually, Mr. Mee, engineer, first official train, 7 November 1885. Mr. Evans, engineer, second official train, 7 November 1885. Mr. Evans, first transcontinental passenger train, 4 July 1886.