

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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FIRST GAS WORKS.

"The meter house, retort house, and the purifiers were all in one brick building, which was the only brick building in the early days on the Company's property, and this must have been the building for which Mr. Rand advertised for tenders for construction in the *News-Advertiser*, July 9, 1887; this building is still standing, and an addition has been made to it."

GASOMETERS.

"Dakin's Map of Vancouver, November 1889, which you have, does not show the gasometers which were just to the east of the brick building, but they most assuredly must have been there, but are not shown. The holes in the ground in which they stood are now used for tar."

As narrated to me by Mr. England.

J.S. Matthews

CITY ARCHIVIST

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. WALTER FREDERICK EVANS, 849 WEST GEORGIA STREET, VANCOUVER, 23 JUNE 1938.

(Mr. Evans, retired pioneer.) Third child, and second daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel Lacey R. Johnson, V.D., first Master Mechanic, Pacific Division, Canadian Pacific Railway, Vancouver; on 23 May 1887, "honourary" engineer at the throttle of Engine No. 374, drawing first transcontinental passenger train into Vancouver; Grand Master, A.F. & A.M. of B.C., 1895-6 (see "Fifty Years of Cascade Lodge," 1888-1938.) Mrs. Evans very graciously called at the City Archives, City Hall, 23 June 1938.

LACEY R. JOHNSON. THE GREAT FIRE, 13 JUNE 1886.

Mrs. Evans said: "As Mother and my brother, now Col. R.E. Johnson of Montréal, and two sisters, Grace and Julia, were travelling westwards on the train, a telegram reached us from Father which read in part, 'Vancouver in ashes' (13 June 1886), 'so we got off at Yale. We had closed up our home at Carlton Place, Ontario, so our furniture en route went to Vancouver. Whilst at Yale, we lived, first, in a furnished cottage belonging to Dan McDougall' (see *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 3), 'later in the Hudson's Bay Company's house, also furnished.

"We remained at Yale, and then came on to Vancouver in Father's railway car, September 3rd, 1887, and lived in it for about ten days on a siding at the foot of Granville Street until our house, 455 Seymour Street" (photo No. P. Bu. 119), "west side, close to Georgia Street, and now part of the site of the Hudson's Bay store, was completed. Father had started to build before the Fire; the lumber was on the ground, but the fire destroyed the lumber; it had to be replaced.

"I recall that when we first went there, there were no buildings near; the view down the slope towards Water Street was unobstructed; then, later, the nearest building was the No. 2 Fire Hall, on the east side of Seymour, south of Georgie Street."

CLEARING FIRES. CLEARING OFF THE FOREST. CHRIST CHURCH.

"I was a child, and I recall how frightened I was at the bush and clearing fires burning all around us.

"This photo" (C.V. P. Bu. 119) "of our first house, 455 Seymour Street; Father is on the steps with my brother Ernest, and I am looking out of the window. I remember it so well. Here is the Durham Block, on Granville Street, where Christ Church held the first service—in the evening—in one of the stores on the ground floor. You know that after Christ Church was built, the sheriff was going to seize the church for debt, and Mr. H.J. Ceperley, W.J. Salsbury, H.J. Cambie, and Father, four of them, contributed one thousand dollars each to 'save it.' I know that Father mortgaged our house to get his one thousand dollars. No, it was never returned to him."

left to right: - Bute St, graded in centre through clearing. Portion of house in lower corner is on northwest corner Nelson & Bute St's. Lot 25, Blk 34 D.L. 185, and No. 1225 Nelson St, in 1944 site of Beverly Apts annex. Mr & Mrs Page Ponsford & four children lived there. All houses lighted by oil lamps. House with gable end and tower is on south east corner Comox & Jervis, lot 7, Blk 36, formerly 1228, now 1288 Comox St. Owner, W.H. Armstrong, of Armstrong & Morrison, standing in 1944, originally wood, re-built about 1897 of stone, and tower removed. Erected prior to 1889. White house with clothes on line is next to north east corner Comox & Jervis, lot 21, Blk 35, formerly 1225, now 1275 Comox St, stand in g in 1944. Built by L. A. Hamilton. (Hamilton St), occupied circa 1889, by nephew, A. Leask, owned & occupied 40 years by Geo D Mackay family, who still, 1944, reside there. Widows dau. House in lower corner is next to north west corner Bute & Nelson, lot 25, Blk 34, formerly 1215, now 1225 Nelson, occupied about 1890 by Mr & Mrs Page Ponsford & family. huge stumps all about. no sewerage, water well, lots of wild blackberries in clearing; in 1944 Beverly Apts annex. Observe 2 backhouses. This photo was taken from residence on north east corner of Bute & Barclay, in 1890-1892, home of W.D. Creighton; in 1893 Wm Skene, 1147 but now 1183, & known as Coniston Lodge Apts. Lot 11, Blk 20. Oil Lamps. House all alone in clearing is on south west corner Comox & Broughton, lot 1, Blk 38, formerly 1402 Comox, later 1079 Broughton, owned by Geo. Stevens and family of seven. No sewerage; water from well; no basement; wood shed; wood cut in clearing, nearest school, "west. School" (Aberdeen), Burrard St. nearest street car Granville St. Heated with base burner in downstairs hall & two small stoves upstairs. Now, 1944, Gainsborough Apts. St John's Church is opposite. Spikes of dead trees, killed by clearing fires, on Comox & Nicola. Description by son, F. H. Stevens, 6010 Willinon Place, Mrs G. D. Mackay, and Mrs Page Ponsford, other nearby residents: - W. J. Trythall; J. W. Campion; T. C. Alcock. Wall bridge; Gibby, Cornish, Humphrey. See photos C.V. P. Dist. 39, N. Dist. 28; C.V. P. Dist. 59, N. Dist. 45. C.V. P. Bo. 228, N. Bo. 89, and close up of Stevens' residence. Photo presented, Jan. 1944, by Mrs Page Ponsford, widow, 1627 Davie St. J. Matthews City Archives.



West End, 1940. Looking west from Barclay St towards Point Grey. English Bay, bathing beach, not visible on right. City of Liverpool clearing Barclay, Comox, Penndrill, Bute, Jervis, Broughton, and Nicola streets.

In 1890, wild animals, especially deer, passed unmolested, to and fro. Trail from town to English Bay bathing beach crossed clearing left to right. Lots of wild blackberries.

Matthews, B. P.

[photo annotation:]

Left to right: Bute St., graded in centre through clearing. Portion of house in lower corner is on northwest corner Nelson & Bute Sts. Lot 25, Blk 34 D.L. 185, and No. 1225 Nelson St., in 1944 site of Beverley Apts annex. Mr. and Mrs. Page Ponsford & four children lived there. All houses lighted by oil lamps.

House with gable end and tower is on southeast corner Comox and Jervis, Lot 7, Blk 36, formerly 1228, now 1288 Comox St. Owner, W.H. Armstrong, of Armstrong & Morrison, standing in 1944, originally wood; re-built about 1897 of stone, and tower removed. Erected prior to 1889.

White house with clothes on line is next to northeast corner, Comox & Jervis, Lot 21, Blk 35, formerly 1225, now 1275 Comox St., standing in 1944. Built by L.A. Hamilton (Hamilton St.), occupied circa 1889, by nephew, A.O. Leask, owned and occupied 40 years by Geo. D. Mackay family, who still, 1944, reside there. Widow & daughter.

House in lower corner is next to northwest corner, Bute & Nelson, Lot 25, Blk 34, formerly 1215, now 1225 Nelson, occupied about 1890 by Mr. & Mrs. Page Ponsford & family, huge stumps all about, no sewerage, water well, lots of wild blackberries in clearing; in 1944 Beverley Apts annex. Observe 2 backhouses.

This photo was taken from residence on northeast corner of Bute & Barclay; in 1890-1892 home of W.D. Creighton; in 1893 Wm. Skene, 1147 but now 1183, & known as Coniston Lodge Apts, Lot 11, Blk 20. Oil lamps.

House all alone in clearing is on southwest corner Comox & Broughton, Lot 1, Blk 48, formerly 1402 Comox, later 1079 Broughton, owned by Geo. Stevens and family of seven. No sewerage; water from well; no basement; woodshed; wood cut in clearing, nearest school, "West School" (Aberdeen), Burrard St., nearest street car Granville St. Heated with base burner in downstairs hall, & two small stoves upstairs. Now, 1944, Gainsborough Apts. St. John's Church is opposite.

Spikes of dead trees, killed by clearing fires, on Comox & Nicola. Description by son, F.H. Stevens, 6010 Willingdon Place. Mrs. G.D. Mackay, and Mrs. Page Ponsford. Other nearby residents: W.J. Trythal; J.W. Campion; T.C. Alcock, Wallbridge; Gibb; Cornish, Humphrey. See photos C.V. P. Dist. 39, No. Dist. 28; C.V. P. Dist. 59, No. Dist. 45, C.V. P. Bo. 228, No. Bo. 89, and close up of Stevens' residence. Photo presented, Jan. 1944, by Mrs. Page Ponsford, widow, 1627 Davie St.

J.S. Matthews, City Archives.

West End, 1890, looking west from Barclay St. towards Point Grey. English Bay, bathing beach, not visible on right. "City of Liverpool" clearing Barclay, Comox, Pendrill, Bute, Jervis, Broughton, and Nicola streets.

In 1890, wild animals, especially deer, passed unmolested, to and fro. Trail from town to English Bay bathing beach crossed clearing left to right. Lots of wild blackberries.

LOST IN THE "WEST END." BEACH AVENUE (1172-6 PACIFIC STREET.) PEST HOUSE. SMALL POX.

"We remained quite a time, three or more years, at 455 Seymour Street, and then moved down to Beach Avenue." (See photo No. P. Str. 27.) "I remember, before we moved, my great uncle, Capt. Richardson, Father's uncle, got lost in the 'West End.'" (Note: a very easy thing to do; the present City Archivist got lost there one night in 1898; if fog, rain, smoke or darkness obscured the landmarks, it was hard to tell—in the clearing—where you were.) "Father and Uncle got lost. They went across the clearing, from Georgia Street down to Beach Avenue, to see the lot we were going to build on at the foot of Bute Street, and wandered and wandered about, until finally he approached a little cottage, and a dog barked, and someone came out and shouted, 'Go away, go away.' It was a pest house. It seems funny to us to reflect upon a man being lost in the West End."

FIRST BOYS BRIGADE.

"It was after 1890 that we moved down to Beach Avenue—our old house, still standing, is now 1172-1176 Pacific Street—that Father organised the first Boys Brigade for Christ Church; I remember their first parade on our lawn there. We, that is, Mother, the ladies of the church, and myself, made the uniforms; little round pill box caps of navy blue with white braid, and they had a white haversack; I forget what else; perhaps they did have a white cross-belt, see photo of them on our lawn."

CLEARING OFF THE FOREST. LOGGING OXEN. "WEST END." BEACH AVENUE.

"Beach Avenue was just a narrow sinuous trail; dust in summer, mud in winter, and forest all around when we went there. One day when we were playing in front of our house—no other houses were near" (see photo No. C.V. P. Van. Sc. 41, West End in 1890) "—when a lot of bullocks, not yoked together, but a loose herd of them, came along the trail; great big strong beasts, a man carrying a big goad was driving them; they were going to drag logs out of the forest west of about Nicola Street, and dump the logs on the beach at what is now the foot of Denman Street.

"You may remember how narrow and how crooked Beach Avenue was; not much wider than a buggy's width; a yoke of oxen abreast almost filled the whole of it; lined on both sides, either with bushes or greenery, or huge stumps, obscuring the sight; it was impossible to see down the trail more than a few yards.

"I was in the garden. Suddenly I heard a man's voice exclaiming in alarm, 'Good Good,' and looking up, there were two men driving about eight oxen along the road; the earth was soft and dusty, and their feet made no noise as they approached. Right beside, in the middle of the trail, my two little brothers, mere tots, were playing; another second or two and the approaching oxen would be on and over them. I grasped one, and pulled him inside the gate; then stepped out and grasped the other, and pulled him away too; how I did it in time I don't know. Great enormous beasts they were, and my brothers just little tots. I suppose the man knew the following oxen, if not the leaders, with their great hooves, would crush the little boys, and go right on without stopping. This photo" (No. P. Log. 4, "Hauling Logs, Royal City Mills, near Vancouver, Bailey Bros. Photo") "reminds me of it."

GENEALOGY.

My aunt Julia Johnson, later" (Rev.) "Mrs. George Austin Charnock, was principal of the Vancouver Collegiate School, 1891, and my aunt Fanny Johnson was assistant, she was Mrs. C.C. Fisher, New Westminster, died in January this year, 1938.

"Mother is now eighty, although quite well, is somewhat frail; she was born December 12th, 1857; Father died in Montréal in 1915, and was buried with military honours; his birthday was June 22nd.

"My brothers and sisters were:

1. James Lacey, died in India in infancy.
2. Miss Grace, unmarried, now in Montréal.
3. Miss Flora (myself), Mrs. Walter F. Evans of Vancouver. My children are:
 - Dr. Lacey F. Evans, Ph.D., Vallejo, California;
 - W. Fred Evans, Vancouver;
 - Mrs. J. Alex Swanson (daughter-in-law, Judge Swanson), Vancouver.
4. Julia, now Mrs. (Major) Lewis Ord, of Nottingham, England, who has children, two sons and a daughter.
5. Col. R. Ernest Johnson, of Montréal, who has children.
6. Benjamin, deceased, age 7.
7. Henry Alfred, deceased, age 4.
8. William, deceased, age 12.

9. Lieut. Arthur, killed in action, age 21, September 1916, European War.

10. Miss Marjorie, now Mrs. R.A. Fraser, wife of Col. R.A. Fraser, Heavy Artillery, Montréal.

Read and approved by Mrs. Walter F. Evans, 25 July 1938.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH WILLIAM H. EVANS OF 2083 WHYTE AVENUE, VANCOUVER, AS HE, NOW AGED 75, DROVE ME HOME FROM A DINNER AT THE HOTEL VANCOUVER GIVEN BY THE HOME OIL DISTRIBUTORS LTD., TO SHOW TO A DISTINGUISHED COMPANY A MOVING PICTURE FILM DEPICTING EARLY BRITISH COLUMBIA.

FIRST TRAIN, PORT MOODY. QUEEN STREET, PORT MOODY.

Mr. Evans said, "I was engineer in charge of the first passenger train to reach Port Moody, July 4, 1886; I was 24 then, 75 now. I picked up the train at Kamloops, and brought her on down to tidewater. We did not stop at Queen Street, Port Moody, but ran down to the wharf about a mile or so further on. The Victoria people got up an excursion boat to come over to meet the train; the excursion boat was lying just across the wharf from where we stopped."

FIRST TRAIN IN VANCOUVER. NORTH BEND EXCURSIONS. EARLY PICNICS. FIRST ENGINE IN VANCOUVER.

"The first passenger train to arrive in Vancouver got here May 23, 1887, and that night I picked up a train of coaches and took a load of excursionists to North Bend" (where there was a stylish C.P.R. hotel.)

"Vancouver was a small place, nowhere to go, and people—those who had money—were glad to get out of town to somewhere. But the first engine to arrive in Vancouver got in long before May 23, 1887; the first track laying engine reached Vancouver in November, 1886."

WOOD BURNING ENGINE.

"The first engine into Port Moody—my train—burned wood, two-foot lengths; we picked it up at different places along the track."

Actual date said to be 23 February 1887. See Jos. W. Cameron. J.S.M.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. W.H. EVANS, 2030 WHYTE AVENUE, KITSILANO BEACH, AT 2083 WHYTE AVENUE (MAJOR MATTHEWS, CITY ARCHIVIST), SATURDAY NIGHT, 12 SEPTEMBER 1936.

FIRST TRAIN. PORT MOODY. 4 JULY 1886.

The following conversation resulted from an item which appeared in the *Province*, Vancouver, Saturday, 5 September 1936, Magazine section, page 5, column 2, which states: "W.F. Fullerton, whose own souvenir is a lump of coal taken from the tender" (on arrival of first train, Port Moody, 4 July 1886.)

In reply to a letter directed to Alderman Fullerton of Victoria by the City Archivist, Vancouver, he replied:

It is quite correct to state that the piece of coal was taken from the tender (by myself) of the first train when she arrived; there was such a rush for souvenirs; my prize was the piece of coal. How coal was carried on the wood tender I cannot say, but it was there alright.

W.F. Fullerton.

CONVERSATION, W.H. EVANS WITH J.S. MATTHEWS.

Mr. Evans: (on phone) "Are you going to be in?"

City Archivist: Yes, come on over.

Later, Mr. Evans: "Mr. Fullerton says he picked up a piece of coal on the tender."

City Archivist: Writes to confirm it.