

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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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.

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.