

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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MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH T.W. HERRING OF NEW WESTMINSTER, 16 FEBRUARY 1936.

Who, on Saturday, 15 February, attended a reunion banquet at the Hotel Georgia, Vancouver, of the surviving members, Westminster and Vancouver, of the British Columbia Brigade of Garrison Artillery, of which No. 5 Company was the first military unit in Vancouver. Mr. Herring came to New Westminster in 1858 with his father from Bellingham—gold rush days. He is thought to be about the last of the Seymour Battery.

SCHOONER *ROB ROY*, 1859 FRASER RIVER. ALEXANDER MCLEAN OF PITT MEADOWS. T.W. HERRING, NEW WESTMINSTER, 1858. SEYMOUR BATTERY.

Major Matthews, City Archivist, and Archivist, Old Garrison Artillery Association: What became of McLean's *Rob Roy*, the old schooner?

Mr. Herring: "She went to pieces on the river bank up on their place at Pitt Meadows; I can see her there yet (in my mind); her old deck sticking out."

Major Matthews: How long was she? A hundred feet?

Mr. Herring: "Only a bit of a thing; not a hundred, about seventy five. McLean sailed her around the Horn by dead reckoning." (Mr. Herring smiled a knowing smile, insinuating that such seamanship was quite a feat.) "I have a captain's certificate myself."

Note: the *Rob Roy* and her owner, Alexander McLean, and his son of the same name, are interesting people of Vancouver, Westminster, and Bellingham. Both were in Burrard Inlet in 1858 or 1859, and settled at Pitt Meadows before that. (See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.)

(Note: well, 75 feet? What would she want with three masts; how could she carry 250 cattle. J.S.M.)

WEST VANCOUVER BUILT A SHIP.

From the "False Creek Archives" (J.S.M.)

The schooner *Holy Terror* wasn't a privateer; nor a pirate; she was awful, but not that bad.

Built in the early '90s on that beautiful shore now called West Vancouver, the *Terror*, for short, was never more than a hope about sixty feet long, and her end was tragic. She never felt the wild waves waving; was a love that was lost; somebody built a fire under her, and she went heavenwards—in smoke.

"Holy Joe" designed the *Holy Terror*. That wasn't his name, nor hers, but was what the neighbour squatters called both when Joe wasn't listening. Joe built her too, himself; out of timbers and planks which drifted onto his beach below his cabin out Point Atkinson way, and, in earlier days, there was plenty of such flotsam about. Joe belonged to the Salvation Army, and being both nautical and thirsty by nature, got soused by the salt seas when he rowed through the Narrows—no ferries then—"up town" for grub, and soused on shore when he got here; after such a trip Joe had to be "saved" all over again.

For a living, Joe burned charcoal for the soldering pots of the salmon canneries of the Fraser river. Then he got an idea—a splendid idea—"I'll build me a little schooner," said he, to take charcoal over, and for "general trade" on the gulf. It was a noble ambition. Time, and the waves, brought material to his beach, and when the hull was ready for a tiny steam engine—no gasoline in those days—Joe's pioneer tillicums admitted admiringly that the *Terror* was a beautiful shape, and kept straight faces; her lines curved, in spots, as the lines of that rocky shore. When "Holy Joe" wasn't looking, his pals grinned, and dubbed his ship the *Holy Terror*.

Then one day Joe came uptown, to Andy Linton's float at Carrall Street, for more groceries or something, and when he got back the *Terror* had vanished; there were enough ashes to fill an urn as big as a barrel, but Joe was just callous.

With her one and only venture, West Vancouver's aspirations as ship building centre withered, perhaps for all time; one such experience was too shocking. So they put a ship on their civic coat of arms.

It's historic.

Inspired by "She Never Saw the Sea" (very sorrowful), *Province*, 29 May 1937, Ronald Kenvyn in "Over the Foreyard."

W.A. Grafton, conversation, 20 May 1937, says "Holy Joe" built *Holy Terror* at Kew Beach.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH THE MISSES MARY S. AND ETHEL LOUISE HOMER, OF 114 PARK ROW, NEW WESTMINSTER, 7 JULY 1937.

Daughters of the late J.A.R. Homer, Esq., M.P., distinguished pioneer statesman, and in whose honour Homer Street, Vancouver, has been named.

J.A.R. HOMER. HOMER STREET.

Miss Mary Homer said: (whilst Miss Ethel listened) "Father was born in Barrington, Nova Scotia, I presume about 1827, for he was 59 when he died in 1886. His family were United Empire Loyalists; that fact is recorded in a printed book, a family history, in my possession, and I have been told so many times by my mother. The book is still in my possession, mostly personal family matters rather than state affairs.

"The Homer family apparently consisted of two brothers in Massachusetts before the War of Independence; they were East Indian merchants and ship owners; commercial people; two brothers, one of which remained in the United States, and the other migrated with the United Empire Loyalists to Nova Scotia. They were originally from Ettingshall, a manor house in Staffordshire; that was where the original Capt. John Homer came from. Ettingshall was probably older than the time of Elizabeth; it was taken down in 1868. My father's uncle, and also his cousin, were members of the Nova Scotia parliament; his grandfather was Joseph Homer, J.P., Collector of Customs.

"My father" (the late J.A.R. Homer) "went to England from Nova Scotia; then he went to California in the mines, and then, before he married, he went to B.C. in 1859; then back to Barrington, Nova Scotia, where he married my mother, Miss Sophia Wilson, in 1859 or 1860" (Church of England.) "Mother's father was a ship owner. The day Father and Mother were married they started for B.C. via Panama; they lived in Victoria for a few months, and then settled in New Westminister."

LUMBER FOR AUSTRALIA.

"I am not sure, but I think he had the first lumber mill in New Westminister. He sent the first ship load of lumber to Australia; he wanted to introduce Canadian lumber into Australia; it was the first cargo that ever left for Australia. It was not a successful business speculation, and he lost a lot of money over it.

"He was a member of the first legislature of B.C. at the time when the capital was at New Westminister; this is a photo of him standing at the top of the steps on the legislative building; he is the third from the top.

"Father had eleven children; only four are left; my sister, Ethel Louise, and my sister Mrs. R. Eden Walker" (Vancouver) "and my brother Charles William of Victoria, and myself.

"Father was a great friend of Sir John A. Macdonald; you see what Sir John wrote my mother when Father died in 1886. Here is another letter signed 'Fred Seymour'; it is dated December 23rd. Governor Seymour sent her a Christmas box at Christmas; you see it is dated December 23rd, that is, 1868.

"Father owned a lot of land on Front Street, New Westminister; his mother left him some money, too, a small fortune.

"You see, Westminister was to have been the capital, and he figured much on that, and then they moved the capital away to Victoria, and that was ill for his fortune. He built the first hardwood finished house in New Westminister—California redwood—it is standing yet.

"While the capital was at New Westminister he was high sheriff; there are a lot of papers in Victoria about that, reports that he signed, etc., etc., but the change of capital and the Australian misfortune pretty nearly ruined him, and for a while he lived in Victoria, and three years in San Francisco before returning to B.C., then back to New Westminister, and entered the commission business. He lost two fortunes; the fates