

## **Early Vancouver**

### **Volume Five**

**By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.**

**2011 Edition (Originally Published 1945)**

*Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1936-1945.*

*Supplemental to volumes one, two, three and four collected in 1931, 1932 and 1934.*

### **About the 2011 Edition**

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**10 SEPTEMBER 1935 – MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. RUTH MORTON, WIDOW OF JOHN MORTON OF THE “BRICKMAKER’S CLAIM,” 1862, NOW WEST END, ONE OF THE FIRST THREE SETTLERS OF BURRARD INLET, NOW RESIDING IN MONTROSE APARTMENTS, 1190 WEST 12<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, VANCOUVER.**

**MRS. RUTH MORTON.**

I phoned Mrs. Morton for permission to call this afternoon. She said in return, “Half past two,” cheerily, but in a somewhat failing voice. Mrs. Morton lives alone in a small suite, and has an attendant, a Mrs. Buxton. Her relative in Vancouver, so far as I know, is the childless widow of her stepson, Joseph Morton, corner Arbutus and York streets, the only son of John Morton, and a stepdaughter, Mrs. Thornton, at Sardis, who has children. She has several other relatives.

On my arrival, Mrs. Morton, a little lady dressed in black, greeted me most cheerily and with a charming smile; she was as bright as a cricket. No one would guess that she will be 88 next March 17<sup>th</sup> (St. Patrick’s Day), 1936. She must have been born in 1848. I told her she looked like a girl in her teens; she laughed. We sat down and she commenced to talk. She said:

“I was 22 when I left England, but first came to British Columbia from the United States in 1884. Ruth Mount was my maiden name; Sheffield was our market town. How old do you think I am?”

I replied that I did not like to answer such a question, but guessed about 82.

“I was 87 last March 17<sup>th</sup>; I shall be 88 next March, that is 1936.”

I remarked that we had lived in a wonderful age. What period of history, if she had her choice, what period in the world’s time, would she have chosen to live her life in preference as more interesting; so full of event and invention; chloroform, dynamite, telegraph, telephone, gramophone, radio, bicycles, motorcars, aeroplanes, submarines, the development of the steam and electric railroad, the disappearance of sailing ships and their replacement by ocean leviathans of great power and size; the disappearance of the forest, and the building of great cities in their place; the creation of a great empire, and that most wonderful of all adventures, the Great War.

Mrs. Morton: (who speaks slowly, with deliberation, befitting her age)

**“VANCOUVER, THE NICEST SPOT ON EARTH.”**

(Sweetly) “This is the nicest spot on earth. Yes, it is nice to look back. Yes, we have seen many changes.” Then, after a pause, and with conviction, “I think this is the nicest spot on earth.”

I reminded Mrs. Morton about our conversation three years ago (1 July 1932) when I took her to the opening of the Burrard bridge by Mayor Taylor, and afterwards to tea at the Hotel Vancouver, and of her telling me then of coming to Granville with Mr. Morton by the Douglas Road from New Westminster, and watching pigs digging for clams on the Water Street beach, and the crows following them, picking up the bits, while Mr. Morton tried to get a boat to take her to see the white sands of English Bay where he first landed. She smiled again. Why, I asked, did Mr. Morton call the “West End” the “City of Liverpool” when he had it surveyed into lots in 1882?

**CITY OF LIVERPOOL. “BLACKPOOL.”**

“He” (Mr. Morton) “used to tell me, that was when we lived down on Denman Street, that ‘I call this my little Blackpool.’”

Liverpool, I corrected.

“No, Blackpool,” replied Mrs. Morton, “Mr. Morton used to say to me, ‘I call this my little Blackpool.’”

(Note: Mrs. Morton is evidently not familiar with the fact that the survey plan of Lot 185, i.e., West End, in the Land Registry Office, Vancouver, shows the West End as the “City of Liverpool, 1882.”)

How did he think of Blackpool, Mrs. Morton?

"I suppose," replied Mrs. Morton, "because he had been in business in Blackpool" (England) "before I married him in 1884; in business with his first wife" (see Joseph Morton in *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2) "but Joseph was born in New Westminster, and his mother died next day."

I knew Joe very well, Mrs. Morton, before he died.

"Yes, it was such a pity," said Mrs. Morton, "he got so erratic; he used to talk to such a lot of people about his affairs." (Note: Joe, John Morton's only son by his first wife, died in the New Westminster Asylum for the Insane.) "It was such a pity."

Where did Mr. Morton go after he arrived in the early 1860? I asked.

"He was twice up the Cariboo," continued Mrs. Morton. "He was the only one who would stay on the property" (D.L. 185), "Hailstone and Brighthouse would not." (Here Mrs. Morton digressed a little and was hard to follow.) "They had to measure their own land. I think it was Judge Begbie who said they would have to survey their own land." (She probably refers to the practice, in vogue in early days, of staking off what land a settler fancied—in a land of too much land—getting a surveyor to make a plan or map of it [see Joseph Morton, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 3, also re Deadman's Island], taking it to the Land Registry Office to be registered, and such was the shape and form of the land granted or deeded.)

#### **MORTON'S CABIN.**

"They" (Brighthouse) "had a livery barn, and a farm at Sapperton, sold butter and eggs, but Mr. Morton was the only one who would stay on the clearing at Burrard Inlet. He told me that he asked if it was necessary for them all, the three of them, to stay on the land, but the man" (official) "said 'No,' so Mr. Morton only stayed; he was the only one who would, and he lived in the log cabin" (see Joseph Morton, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.) "Joseph told me that one day when he was walking with his father down by the Blue Ribbon Tea Building near the corner of Burrard and Hastings streets, that his father called his attention to a little rise" (a knoll of land) "and Mr. Morton said to Joe, 'Do you see that? That was where we put our little cabin.'"

#### **ENGLISH BAY BEACH AND MORTON. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN VANCOUVER.**

"As I told you before," went on Mrs. Morton, "Mr. Morton always wanted to show me the white sand at English Bay. The first time we drove over in 1884 we got no farther than Carrall Street, but once afterwards we came over and had tea at the Baptist church, the First Baptist church, a little bit of a place, the first one" (note: it was afterwards Lewis and Sills' hardware store, opposite the old City [or Market] Hall on Westminster Avenue), "it was on Westminster Avenue, they call it Main Street now; I think Mr. Kennedy was the pastor; he did not stay long; he was there just a little while; well, we had tea, and it was arranged that the next day we should all go with a horse and rig, and see the white sands, but the roads were so bad we could get as far as Haro Street only; the road was so bad. The way I know it was Haro Street because it was the foot of the rise of the hill; my, but it was rough. There we all got out, and scrambled along; we passed under the trunks and roots of fallen trees, and over them we climbed, until finally we got to English Bay, and I saw the white sand. It was a struggle to get there, oh, rough, rough."

#### **MORTON AT MISSION.**

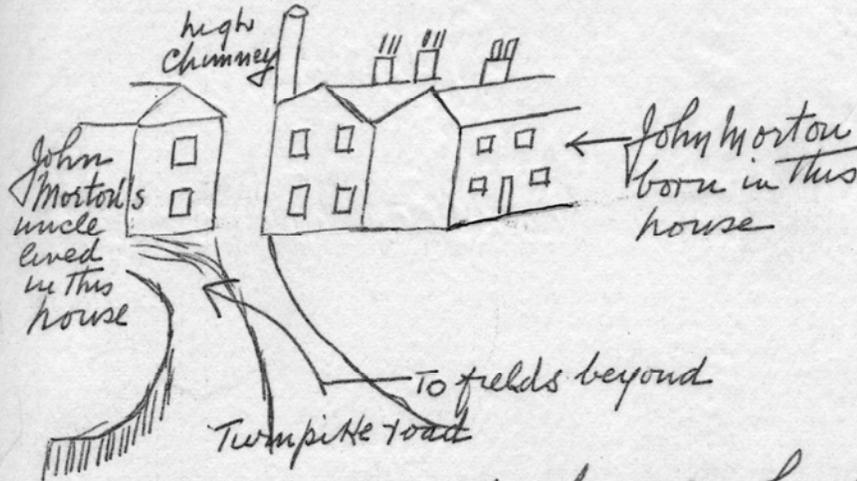
"As I told you, I married Mr. Morton in 1884. We were married in a sort of temperance hotel, 'The Farmers' Home,' in New Westminster; it was just across and just below from the Anglican church. He had bought a farm at Mission in 1883, and the next day, Rev. Ebenezer Robson, he was the Methodist minister who married us; his brother was John Robson, the premier; the next day we all went up the Fraser" (river) "together—John Robson was on the boat with us—to Mission, you see, we had to go up and down by boat; the railroad was only as far as Hammond then—and we stayed there until we went to England.

"It was in 1888 that we went to England the first time. He had bought the farm at Mission in 1883, and in 1888 we went to England leaving a man and a woman in charge of the farm; we were to stay in England five years, and we stayed that length of time all but one winter. Hailstone wrote that things were 'bad' here in B.C. and that we had better come back, so we came back in 1892. The old farm house at Mission, our old farm house, is still standing."

“We left the farm to come to Vancouver in 1899. Mr. Morton put up two cottages—we had those two houses down on Denman Street” (on northwest corner Denman and Morton streets, where he had landed in 1862); “they were where the Morton Rooms were—on Morton Street; they call the building a lodge or something now; on Morton Street at English Bay; the houses were built on Denman Street; we moved them twice and they now face on Pendrill Street; there is a vacant lot between Denman and Pendrill. Then, three years after, in 1902, we went to England again. In 1909, we went to California and stayed the winter.

“There is a small book somewhere, if I could find it, about Salendine Nook, two and a half miles from Huddersfield, Yorkshire, which gives the history of the Morton family. The Mortons went to Salendine Nook from Scotland. They came to England from Scotland at the time of the religious persecution, and had lived in Salendine Nook for 400 years. Mr. Morton’s father, and his father before him, were potters. This is a painting of the pottery factory. His uncle lived in the left hand house; Mr. Morton was born in the right hand house; in between you see the tall factory chimney; Mr. Morton built that before we went to England the first time. This is the turnpike road, and beyond are the fields. His father left him a portion of land near the pottery, I don’t know how many acres, just on the rise behind, it is called ‘Laund Hill.’ It was left to Mr. Morton by his father as his portion of his inheritance. I think the pottery works were left to my husband’s brothers; there was a group of houses left to his brother.”

and his father's father before him were  
potters This is a painting of the pottery.



My husband built the chimney when we  
went to England the first time, 1888  
at Salendine Nook, Huddersfield, Yorkshire

Scratch sketched by me of a painting  
of John Morton's home in Mrs Morton's  
apartment, 1190 - West 12<sup>th</sup> Ave

To go with conversation of 6<sup>th</sup> Sept 1935

J.S. Matthews

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[drawing annotations:]

and his father's father before him were potters. This is a painting of the pottery.

high chimney

John Morton's uncle lived in this house

John Morton born in this house

To fields beyond

Turnpike road

My husband built the chimney when we went to England the first time, 1888 at Salendine Nook, Huddersfield, Yorkshire

Scratch sketched by me of a painting of John Morton's home in Mrs. Morton's apartment, 1190 West 12<sup>th</sup> Ave.

To go with conversation of 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1935.

J.S. Matthews.