

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

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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THE FIRST BITUMINOUS ROCK PAVING. DONALD (DAN) MCGILLIVRAY. ARMSTRONG AND MORRISON.

Rough note, in pencil, from W.C. Ditmars, for many years associated with Messrs. Armstrong and Morrison, contractors, etc., etc.

Dear Major. This is a letter from Mr. Robert Armstrong, re the subject of the first paving in Vancouver. He was on the job and knows about it. Please return when through.

D.

Sardis, September 1st, 1945

Dear Will:

Your letter of August 30th received this morning, and was pleased to hear from you. I should have written you before but I was under the weather with lumbago in my back so only write when I have to, but I am pleased to say I am around again, and can drive a car and it doesn't bother me at all.

Now about the street paving. There wasn't any done in 1891; we started in the spring of 1892. Hugh Campbell was with us then; we started just where you said at the west end of Cordova street. Hughie Campbell was with us then; he was on the fire department. In 1891 we paved Cordova from Granville to Carrall street; Hastings street from Cambie to Granville, Cambie street from Hastings to Water; Abbott street from Hastings to Water, and Carrall from Pender street, or as it was called at that time Dupont to Water street.

Yes; the yard was at the south west corner of Carrall and Hastings streets, and the bituminous rock was heated in a big tank with a steam jacket; there was so many pounds of steam in the jacket, and so many pounds of steam in with the rock. The curb stone was all granite, and was all hand cut in the same yard on the west side, just along the C.P.R. track. As you say, the hot bituminous rock was hauled to the work in steel lined dump carts with heavy canvas covers to keep the material hot until it arrived on the job.

The above covers one page in handwriting; the next page was not sent to us by Mr. Ditmars.

20 OCTOBER 1945 – FIRST WHITE WOMAN ON BURRARD INLET.

Memo of conversation with Mrs. J.G.L. Abbott, of 1559 Beach Avenue (over the phone), daughter of Mr. and Mrs. R.H. Alexander, of the Hastings Sawmill.

FIRST WHITE WOMAN ON BURRARD INLET. MRS. R.H. ALEXANDER.

Mrs. Abbott: "Mother often used to tell me, she was the first white woman here. She was all alone at Hastings Sawmill." (Note: R.H. Alexander, afterwards manager of the Hastings Sawmill, married Miss Emma Tammadge of London, England, at Victoria in 1867. He came to Vancouver in 1870, and, while there is a chance there was some white woman here before 1870, it is very unlikely. In 1870 all that area at the back of Hastings Sawmill was a few acres of fallen forest, lying in wild confusion as it had crashed down; there was no clearing of any sort.