

## 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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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### Contact Information

City of Vancouver Archives  
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9  
604.736.8561  
archives@vancouver.ca  
vancouver.ca/archives



### **KNIGHTS OF LABOUR. R.H. ALEXANDER.**

"I was asked to attend the meetings of the Knights of Labour, and did attend one or two, but, what cost R.H. Alexander the first election for mayor of Vancouver—he lost to Mayor MacLean—was that at one pre-election meeting of electors he said, we have enough 'days of labour' without 'Knights of Labour.'" (Note: also *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1, Gallagher narrative and elsewhere re "North American Chinamen.")

### **A MEMORANDUM WRITTEN BY DR. ROBERT MATHISON, D.S., OF KELOWNA, FOR REMARKS AT BOARD OF TRADE LAST LUNCHEON, CLOSING OF OLD HOTEL VANCOUVER. DR. MATHISON WAS SOLE CHARTER MEMBER PRESENT OF BOARD OF TRADE, 17 MAY 1939.**

#### **ALDERMAN NORTHCOTT. "C.P.R. TOWNSITE." BIG TREE. HOTEL VANCOUVER.**

The first Sunday I was in Vancouver, which was near the end of March 1886, Joe Northcott (later Alderman Northcott in Vancouver's first City Council) and I went for a walk to see a big tree which had been felled and lay diagonally across to where the Hudson's Bay store is now, and in so doing passed over the site of the Hotel Vancouver. We had gone in over a trail about where Granville Street is, and on returning we walked on fallen timber to about the corner of Homer and Cordova streets, only now and then stepping on the earth.

#### **PRINTING OFFICE. HASTINGS STREET. L.A. HAMILTON.**

I built a 12 x 25 foot shack on Hastings Street where Morris' tobacco shop is now, and opened a job printing office July 23, 1886, three days before I was 21 years old. My first job was Post Office box receipts and my second, agreements for Sale of Land for the C.P.R., given me by Mr. L.A. Hamilton, who was Assistant Land Commissioner.

#### **FIRST BICYCLE IN VANCOUVER.**

In March, 1887, I had my old high wheel bicycle sent out from Ontario—the first in Vancouver—and on my first trip down to the centre of things, corner of Carrall and Cordova streets, the *Daily Advertiser* had a local saying Bob Mathison came in from the country today on his wheel. He is a "daisy on wheels"—a slang expression of that time. When I built on Hastings Street there were only two buildings west of me—C.P.R. office building on the site of the present station and a bakery on Granville Street, half a block south of where the Post Office is now.

#### **FIRST CELEBRATION. QUEEN VICTORIA'S JUBILEE.**

Vancouver's first celebration, the Jubilee of Queen Victoria was held July 1 and 2, 1887. The day after it was over Mr. L.A. Hamilton came in and asked me for my account for printing for the committee of which he was Hon. Treasurer, saying they were getting short of funds and he thought I should have my money.

Other C.P.R. officials for whom I have kindly thoughts were Captain Webber, who brought Mr. Jim Fullerton, who succeeded him as Vancouver's only Mormon—ship's husband to the China and Japan line, and told him of the satisfactory work I had done for him.

#### **CHINAMEN. GOING TO SAN FRANCISCO.**

This was always a good account, particularly in 1888 when the C.P.R. boats were bringing ship loads of Chinamen across and taking them to San Francisco before the U.S. Exclusion law went into effect, as many special printed forms were needed.

D.E. Brown of the passenger department and Mr. Salsbury and William Downie also put considerable work in my hands.

#### **HOTEL VANCOUVER OPENING.**

When Hotel Vancouver opened I printed the dinner menu each day for a couple of months, but gave it up as it was inconvenient having to have my one press available for this job each afternoon.

The Dominion Government built the line from Port Moody to Savanas Ferry and gave it to the C.P.R.

### **C.P.R. CONSULTATION. ARBITRATION.**

In 1888 an arbitration was held at Hotel Vancouver in connection with this, Railway Company claiming it was not up to the standard of railway building for that time. Experts from other continental lines were witnesses and the result was the government put up 3½ million dollars to remedy matters. Nelson Butcher, (who was afterwards official reporter for the Railway Commission) had the task of taking the evidence in shorthand, and supplied the arbitration officials with a copy of the proceedings of each session on the following morning.

### **EVIDENCE. VAN HORNE.**

He was to make typewritten copies and had a staff of eight on the job. He made an extra copy on his own initiative and later had it bound into four volumes and presented it to President Van Horne. The following New Years he received an annual pass good over any part of the C.P.R. system and this came each year as long as Van Horne was president.

### **BANQUET. HON. EDWARD BLAKE.**

A banquet was held while the Arbitration was on, and Hon. Edward Blake was one of the speakers. When the question of building the C.P.R. was before the House at Ottawa, Blake thought it was folly to build through British Columbia, as it was a "Sea of Mountains." At the banquet he took it all back by saying he had enjoyed his trip across the mountains of Manitoba and the North West Territories and particularly across the plains of B.C. According to Nelson Butcher, he was speaking at times at 300 words a minute.

### **[LETTER FROM R. MATHISON.]**

Kelowna, B.C.  
June 9, 1936.

Dear Major Matthews:

There was no argument between Mr. C.J. Piper and I about bicycle matter just friendly letters.

I'm enclosing his which you may keep. Get in touch with him and get his up to now mileage. You should find him extremely interesting. Mr. Piper sent some photos of busy Granville Street to the "Province" about January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1930, which were published in the Magazine Section, and referred to him as having the first bicycle in Vancouver. I wrote to Mr. Piper saying, I hoped it would not take all the joy out of life for him, but I was of the impression I had the first "bike" in Vancouver—in March 1887.

I had the nice letter of his which is enclosed, and he also wrote the "Province" to the same effect that his was the first pneumatic tyred bicycle in Vancouver and his letter was published in the next week's magazine section. To make a good story of it someone started the article by saying it had taken all the joy out of life for me having him claim to have the first "bike."

In the summer of 1936, the "Sun" [*unknown date but page 18*] published the enclosed picture of Mr. Piper and his "Bike" and I wrote and congratulated him. The letter was addressed to 4931 Hastings St., East, but came back to me, so I then sent it c/o the "Sun," and received his letter of September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1936.

I bought my high wheel bike in 1883. Front wheel fifty inches in diameter. It was a "Liverpool," and cost fifty dollars (\$50.00) Hard rubber tyres about an inch in diameter. I had it shipped out to Vancouver in March 1887, and on my first trip down town (from Hastings St.) the "Daily Advertiser" had an item saying "Bob Mathison came in from the country today on his wheel." "He's a daisy on wheels"—a slang expression of that time.