

Early Vancouver

Volume Five

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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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HIS WORSHIP GERALD GRATTON MCGEER, MAYOR OF VANCOUVER, 1935 (AND 1936).

Mr. McGeer is the son of James (Jim) McGeer, a pioneer farmer of a preempted farm at the corner of Kingsway and Fraser Avenue, known as the "Tea Swamp"—an old elk pasture. He conducted a milk business. (See *Early Vancouver*, vols. 1, 2 and 3, Matthews.)

Reeve W.B. Russell, Reeve of South Vancouver Municipality in 1916-1917, says in part (see his genealogy sheet), 2 May 1935:

"As a boy, I peddled milk same as 'Gerry' did when he was a boy with holes in his pants and no boots on his feet. Gerry and I were apprenticed to our trade at the same time, and worked together in the old B.C. Iron Works at the foot of Dunlevy and Heatley Avenue."

CHIEF JUSTICE AULAY MORRISON.

In a speech at the annual banquet of the officers of The British Columbia Regiment (D.C.O.R.):

"I love even the name" (with emphasis on *British*) "*British* Columbia."

CHARLES E. TISDALL, FORMER MAYOR OF VANCOUVER. JOHN INNES, SCENIC PAINTER.

John Innes loved to joke, even when he was ill in bed, as he was from September 1934 to March 1935. Mr. Tisdall was a pioneer gunsmith, afterwards had the first and the finest sporting goods store in Vancouver, but was always noted for his economy.

"Bill Barnes," said Mr. Innes, "was City Hall reporter on the *Province*, and in that capacity was able to do Mr. Tisdall, while he was a mayor some years ago, several favours. Bill decided to go on a fishing and hunting trip, and somehow Mr. Tisdall got to know about it. Anyway, Bill got a letter from Mayor Tisdall saying he wanted to see him before he started on the fishing trip. Bill conjured up visions of something good; thought he was going to get a cheque 'for past services' to help with the expenses, and provide a bottle or two to keep the cold out. So Bill goes down to the Mayor's office in high glee and expectancy.

"What do you suppose His Worship handed him?" chuckled Mr. Innes.

J.S.M.: Cannot imagine.

"A sporting goods catalogue," laughed Mr. Innes.

PIONEER ICE, AND "WHISTLING TEXAS."

By the City Archivist.

"Texas," warmhearted, smiling, queer identity, got his sobriquet from cold ice; Texas Lake natural ice; and before they made it artificially; before frigid air.

Pioneer Granville, now Vancouver, lived well, and liked it; nature provided ice for summer cooling. When the first Vancouver was melted, June 1886, by an angry blast of flame, a mysterious black mound remained on Water Street beside what had been the celebrated Sunnyside Hotel. A man scaled that low mound to scan the distance for a missing brother; then slipped and fell, his hands pawed the charcoal; and, astonished, he got a bucket and drank. Those pioneers who first ventured back into the still burning embers, quenched the fierce thirst of their parched throats from that same mound; the second Vancouver's first water supply was melted ice in buckets.

As the hotel icehouse was consumed by fire, its sawdust lining had fallen in flame upon a deep shield of damp sawdust beneath which the icy blocks were stored, and thus protected from a heat so intense that iron office safes turned into molten amalgam, and silver coins into lumps of metal.

In the years before the first artificial ice plant was established, ice came in carloads by the new railway from Texas Lake near Yale. The TEXAS LAKE ICE AND COLD STORAGE CO. LTD., the first in our city, had its icehouse on Pender Street beside the first C.P.R. roundhouse of wood, with its long row of water barrels on the roof—just behind the present B.C. Electric interurban depot; access from the narrow road