

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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Major Matthews: Is what Mrs. Nickson and Ralph (T.R. Nickson) said true.

Mrs. Oben: "Every word of it exactly; it's true." (emphatically)

COL. TRACEY, CITY ENGINEER.

Mrs. Oben: "The city" (of Vancouver) "served J.J. Nickson a dirty trick. After all that Mr. Nickson had done—after building the Capilano water system, all the trouble and difficulty he had; after putting it successfully under the Narrows, a difficult thing as it was the first time it had ever been done; after he had done so well—the city sent east for another man to take charge, Colonel Tracey, and put Mr. Nickson under him. Of course, Mr. Nickson would not stand for it and left at once; left the city's employ, but it was a shabby way to treat him."

(Note: Mr. Nickson afterwards became a successful contractor.)

ABYSSINIA'S ARRIVAL.

Mrs. Oben: "I don't recall exactly it if was the *Abyssinia* I saw come in; perhaps it was not, but it was daylight, and there was a crowd of people down to see her steam in; that great big policeman, chief Stewart, was down there, and the people wanted to go on the dock, but he would not let them, so we stood on the cliff and watched from the foot of Granville Street, on Cordova Street. The reason he would not let them on the wharf was not on account of the crowd; there wasn't so many as that, but because the wharf was rickety."

Note: the first wharf, built, if memory serves, by the San Francisco Bridge Co. (as both were) fell down, or a portion of it did. The sandstone at "Puchahls," i.e., "white rocks" in the Indian tongue, was the cause; the piles had not penetrated properly, and during construction, a portion of the wharf "fell down," according to old timers, which probably means that it got out of true perpendicular owing to high tide, or something.

J.S. Matthews.

BRIG.-GEN. VICTOR W. ODLUM, C. B., C.M.G., D.S.O. ("COME BOYS, DON'T SAY ODLUM, CALL ME GENERAL.")

"He was a man with so firm a jaw that, once he had shut it, he couldn't open it himself. We are not likely to forget the 'rum' incident of 1916."

J.S. Matthews.

COLONEL W.W. FOSTER, D.S.O.

A short history of Col. Foster, by J.S. Matthews—"Foster fosters Foster's."

Gen. Odlum: (to Major Matthews) "Why wasn't Foster a success as O.C." (Officer commanding, the British Columbia Regiment, D.C.O.R.)

Major Matthews: Too cold (austere).

As a sergeant in the old militia unit, No. 6, Co. B.C.B.G.A. and later in its successor, the 6th D.C.O.R., Sergeant Foster was not popular; he shirked the work, but always turned up, smart and shining, for a ceremonial parade; he was smart; he was in the militia but not of it. He found his true level in 1935 when he was appointed Chief of Police. Honourable enough for an officer, but imagine Col. Worsnop, Col. McHarg, or Major Tite, accepting such a post. Worsnop's red face would have blushed redder; he would have exploded at the mere suggestion of his name; McHarg would have guffawed, long and loud, and Tite would have merely looked at you, and turned away; the severest rebuke of all.

J.S. Matthews.