

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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Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 5 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 5. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

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BIRTH OF FIRST WHITE CHILD BORN IN VANCOUVER.

“Who was nurse at the time of the birth of Fred I do not know, but Dr. Beckingsale was the doctor; I rather think Alice, my father’s sister, helped.”

HIS WORSHIP T.F. NEELANDS.

(His Worship) “Thos. F. Neelands, who was mayor of Vancouver, 1902 and 1903, boarded with us when he came, 1 March 1886, to Vancouver. He was engaged to my sister Nellie in Winnipeg; both are still living, in Vancouver. When Mr. Neelands was sick with typhoid fever, Nellie nursed him. I actually saw Frederick Charles Macey the day he was born in the Macey home on Hastings Street, and that was about two weeks before the fire, because the day of the fire Mrs. Macey was up and about.

“Sam made an arrangement, soon after we came here, with a contractor by the name of Gillies. Gillies owned a lot and Sam made a contract to work out the price of the lot. He had half worked it out when the fire took place, and after the fire Gillies came to him, and said, ‘We have lost everything; I don’t know how I am going to start up again. How about the lot?’ Sam said, ‘I will call that off,’ and gave him the agreement back. Gillies sold the lot to someone and went away, and that was the end of our home on Hastings Street.”

J.S. Matthews.

FURTHER CONVERSATION WITH WILLIAM HENRY MACEY, 8 MAY 1936.

FREDERICK CHARLES MACEY. THE “GREAT FIRE,” 1886.

Mr. Macey said: “The government sent us over a lot of bell tents, and then the Macey family got about ten dollars worth of lumber, and we built a rough lumber shed down on False Creek, just at the west end of Prior Street, where the B.C. Electric Car barns are now. Mrs. Sam Macey and my sister Alice, who came to Victoria from Ontario, with Margaret” (née Collins), “Sam’s wife, as a sort of chaperone, together with the baby” (Frederick Charles Macey) “lived in the bell tent. Sam, my brother, and myself, slept in the shack. Furniture? We made such as we had and could. The City gave away a lot of stuff; some people got everything they wanted, but we asked for nothing except a little food; we got that.”

C. GARDNER JOHNSON.

“About the Fire, and Sam’s escape. He arrived with his face burnt; he was with Gardner Johnson. You look up what Gardner Johnson tells as his experience; Sam, my brother, was the third man who lay down, face in the earth, to escape from the heat of the fire.”

Approved by Mr. Macey, 13 May.

J.S. Matthews.

[LETTER FROM MRS. MARGARET MACEY.]

June 4th, 1936.
General Delivery
Prince Rupert, B.C.

Mr. J.S. Matthews,
City Archivist,
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Sir:

Below I am writing further details of my experience of the Vancouver fire as requested by you.

GREAT FIRE, 13 JUNE 1886. HIS WORSHIP, WM. TEMPLETON.

When we left the hotel we went to a shack that my husband had built. All we had there was a bedstead made of boards nailed to the wall, a bundle of straw spread on the boards for a

mattress, two sheets, one pillow and two quilts. This was much better than the floor in the hotel. We got a cook stove from the relief and groceries from Mr. Templeton. He did all he could for everyone. Our table was a board nailed to the wall in front of the window and we had a bench to sit on. We were there only a short time when the tide came up so high that the water came through the cracks in the floor, so after the fire we were flooded out for awhile, but after the tide went back it did not bother us again while we were there. A neighbor gave me a rocking chair which was a great comfort to me with a young baby. She also gave me a mat to put under my feet. I never appreciated a white rag so much in my life as I did at that time. The shack we lived in was built where the street car workshops are now standing. A little while later my husband went back and built a house on the same lot we lived on before the fire. My husband being a plasterer we had the house plastered inside and out.

FIRST TRAIN. INDIAN CANOES.

I saw the first train come in to Vancouver, and had a ride on the street car the first day they ran.

Fifty years ago there were very few places to go for pleasure. We enjoyed going down to the waterfront near where the C.P.R. station is built now. We used to sit on the logs on the beach where we would watch the Indians parade with their war canoes. [*Note: Dominion Day festivities.*]

When I think of Vancouver as it was fifty years ago in its rough state without even a pretty flower to look at, and as it is today, such a beautiful city and all made by hard working men, I can hardly realize it.

I sure would love to be there this summer to celebrate in the Jubilee, but, owing to financial circumstances, I am afraid I won't be able to make it.

I am enclosing Birth certificates and Statutory Declarations as requested.

Thanking you for your courtesy,

I remain,
Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Margaret Macey
[*signed*] (Per Mrs. J.H. Macey)

P.S. There is a slight mistake on the Statutory Declaration. The age should be 79 instead of 80.

(Note: Mrs. Margaret Macey, wife of Samuel T. Macey, mother of Frederick Charles Macey, first boy born in Vancouver after incorporation as a city.)

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. WILLIAM MACKIE (WHO REACHED GRANVILLE, B.I., 7 MAY 1882) ON THE C.P.R. PRINCESS JOAN, EN ROUTE TO NEWCASTLE ISLAND ON THE VANCOUVER PIONEER ASSOCIATION ANNUAL PICNIC, JUNE 1937.

(Capt. W.J. Twiss, president, 217 present, wet day. Mr. Mackie very active despite his years, and took in most that was going.)

GENEALOGY.

Mr. Mackie said: "I was born May 12th 1858—you can remember that, King George VI's coronation day—at Leslie, Fifeshire, Scotland, a little place half way between the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Tay; so I am 79. My father was Thomas Laird Mackie (his mother's name was Laird); Father had a brother William, my uncle, an old Cariboo and Cassiar miner—I had two uncles in the Cariboo gold rush; their father—my grandfather—was Capt. George Mackie, who had a little coasting schooner on the British coast before there were railroads. I don't know who my great-grandfather Mackie was, but his uncle was John Mackie who was at Waterloo, and who cut the piece of red silk from Emperor Napoleon's carriage on the field of battle; the piece I gave you in the old silver watch. My mother and father afterwards came to British Columbia over the C.P.R. line, after it was built, of course, but I was the first of our family to come out; I