

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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Squamish

sh, Mar. 14—1936.

P.S. You ask how it was that the tree was being burnt down; it was a new settler that wanted it for fire wood, and was told that the easiest way to get it down was by burning it by auger holes, which used to be a very common practice of felling large timber; you probably know how this was done; in case you don't. A two inch hole was bored into the tree about two feet, then another above it, at an angle to meet the lower hole, hot coals were dropped in the upper hole and the draft from the lower hole would drive the fire into the heart of the tree; large trees often burn for a week or more before falling.

W.M.

See *Early Vancouver*, vols. 2 and 3. Also Rowling file.

This accident happened somewhere near the foot of Victoria Road on Southeast Marine Drive. The old name for Marine Drive was River Road; still earlier, North Arm Road. Read *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 3.

[LETTERS FROM WM. MASHITER.]

Squamish, March 14—1936

J.S. Matthews Esq.

Dear Sir

I must really try and write you a few lines to thank you for your kind letter of Dec. 12. It is rather a hard task for me to write as I have not much education. I was delicate till about twelve years old, then took charge of our little farm doing most of the work so there was not much time for study. What a lot of old faces your letter brought to mind. Bishop Dart, my father in law went to school under him in England, he came and spent a week with me shortly before he died. Rev. Cliton [*sic. Clinton*], Father Fay, the merry priest, the good natured Dr. Bell Irvin, J.C. Keef [*sic. Keith*] the first banker in Granville, Mayor McLean, Dave Oppenheimer, stern Judge Begbie, stern on the bench but with a kind heart, A.W. Vowell, the wild Irishman when roused, but one of the finest men I ever traveled with, many a hard days snow shoeing we have had together. D. Burdis, Wm Shannon, and a host of others all have passed to the unknown, soon in the course of nature I must follow. I came to Squamish in 1890 took charge of the Magee ranch and opened a general store and stopping place in 1894, got married in 1904, sold out, and wife I spent the summer in England, returned in fall to our little place here where I am now living. I lost my wife in 1925, and a niece has kept house for me ever since. What little money we had we invested in Vancouver, that and what we made off our place kept us very comfortable till the hard times came, then as you know rents interest loans could not be collected and I could not make enough to pay the taxes so most of my hard earned money is gone, but I have the best of health which is much better than money, and if I was fifty years younger I would strike out for the Peace river, and start all over again, but at 87 that is not to be thought of.

Yours

Sincerely,

[signed] Wm Mashiter.

Squamish, March 31, 1936.

My dear Mr. Matthews:

THE GREAT FIRE, 1886. SQUATTERS IN GRANVILLE, B.I.

Your kind and most interesting letter of March 22nd duly to hand, thanks very much for it. I can quite understand you being very busy with Jubilee work, the willing horse gets lots to do at such times. You ask about the shack I spoke of I don't think I can possibly be mistaken in the location I gave you, viz. south east corner of Hastings and Abbott street. Our two houses were on the north east corner of Hastings and Abbott and I can picture in my mind's eye the little shack

right opposite the door of the house I live in. The old man was holding down one of the Squatter claims, not for himself, he was representing some party, I don't know who. I took no part in the incorporation of the city of Vancouver, do not know how they raised the money, I have never been much of a public man and as I told you we sold out soon after the fire and I worked a good deal on the Fraser till 1890, when I came here. So Mrs. Eldon is still living. I must try and see her if I get down to Vancouver this year which I hope to. It is some five years since I have been a night away from home. I had many a good meal in the Strathie restaurant. Sorry to hear Dr. Brydone-Jack is so sick, rather strange I was looking for Capt. Scoullar's address the day before I saw his death in the paper, and Mr Tisdall gone as well. I got quite a shock when I heard over the radio he was dead. I hardly ever went to Vancouver without having a hearty handshake with him. All my people are dead. I am the last of the line, the name dies with me. How I should enjoy a few minutes talk with you. I may look you up this summer if I get to Vancouver. What a lovely poem you sent me. [*J. Francis Bursill's "Tis infamy to die and not be missed."*] I am fond of poetry. I must try and memorize it for it might be useful at some of the meetings I preside at. Rather strange that a poor educated man like me should be called on so often to act as chairman at all sorts of meetings, one reason given me was that I do not weary the people with long speeches; I could not make a long speech if I tried, but I have a good clear voice which can be heard at the far end of the room.

Again thanking you for your kind letters.

Yours sincerely,

[signed] Wm. Mashiter.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. WILLIAM MASHITER OF SQUAMISH, NOW AGED 87, WHO IS ON A VISIT TO VANCOUVER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL YEARS, AND WHO CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES, CITY HALL, HASTINGS STREET, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS NIECE, WHO LIVES WITH MRS. J. GREGG, 1152 WEST HASTINGS STREET, SEY. 821, SEPTEMBER 1936.

Mr. Mashiter looks very active for his age, and says that this summer he cut, then raked, then stacked, all his own hay, had a couple of students help him throw it on the wagon, but put it in the barn himself; a remarkable feat for one so aged. He formerly had a store at his farm, one mile from the Squamish dock, but has discontinued it.

CORDOVA STREET. FRASER AVENUE (CEMETERY ROAD.) MOUNTAIN VIEW CEMETERY.

Mr. Mashiter said: "I was here before the 'Fire,' and when the C.P.R. came through some of us who had 'squatted' got their lots, but I was grouped together with others, and they did me out of mine; Vancouver did not treat me very well. I had been in Oakland in the land boom, then heard of the boom in Seattle, and went to that, then finally heard of the boom in Vancouver, and came on up, but afterwards left Vancouver, and went to Squamish; lost most of my property for taxes when the depression came after 1930, but still have some property in Vancouver.

"Talk about mud. Why, Cordova Street from the C.P.R. Depot up the slope was worse than the road from the dock at Squamish ever was; it took two horses all they could do to haul 600 pounds up that slope; and, out the cemetery road" (now Fraser Avenue) (see F.W. Hart) "it took four horses to haul a coffin out. Why, we couldn't even get lumber out to Mount Pleasant."

MOUNT PLEASANT.

"A man with a wife and eight children wanted me to build him a shelter, anything that would do to shelter them, he wanted it quick, so I built it out of cedar shakes; you could not get lumber out there for the mud. So I just took a cedar tree and split shakes; he told me on a Saturday night to build it, and I had it finished by Wednesday night; just three rooms, not much of a place, but it was a shelter, and I got the shakes right there on the ground."