

Early Vancouver

Volume Five

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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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MACE BEARER ALEXANDER MCKAY.

Conversation with City Archivist Major J.S. Matthews in the City Archives, on the afternoon of 6 January 1937, after Mr. McKay had on the same day, at high noon, officiated as Mace Bearer at the first "swearing in" ceremony of Mayor and Council (eight alderman) in the New City Hall.

Mace Bearer Alexander McKay, born 25 June 1878 at Port Gower, Sutherlandshire, Scotland; joined the Royal Marine Artillery at Portsmouth, England, in 1898, and for eighteen months was ashore there, training as gunner.

He left Portsmouth in April 1900, on the transport S.S. *Jelunga* for the China station. (Admiral Culme-Seymour.)

His next ship was H.M.S. *Barfleur*, from which ship he took part in the Boxer uprising, 1900-1902, including the assault from small boats on Taku Forts and the Relief of Legations at Pekin; was standing up to his knees in snow when word of Queen Victoria's death was received. Next served on H.M.S. *Glory*; four years on China station.

Then "paid off" and returned on transport S.S. *Syria*, reached Royal Albert Docks, London, October 1904, and reported to depot at Eastney Barracks, Portsmouth.

Joined to H.M.S. *Renown*, battleship, converted into a "yacht" for the Royal tour of India by T.R.H. the Prince and Princess of Wales (afterwards King George and Queen Mary), and for twelve months was orderly to H.R.H. the Princess of Wales (Queen Mary), 1905-6.

On the 25 April 1907 in Glasgow, Scotland, he married Matilda Brock, and retired from His Majesty's service.

Reached Vancouver by C.P.R., 10 December 1910.

1910, '11, '12.

After arrival in Vancouver, during real estate "boom," building contractor, built many houses in South Vancouver.

1913.

Joined C.P.R. Investigation Service (C.P.R. Police) under Chief Wunderlin. Took part, as member Provincial Police, aid of civil power, Nanaimo coal strike, August 1913.

JULY 1914.

One of party, as constable, on coal scow which went out to enforce order on S.S. *Komogata Maru*, anchored in Burrard Inlet, with large number of Hindoos on board, who had been refused entrance to Canada, under the immigration laws.

1915.

Left Provincial Police service, and returned to C.P.R. Police as constable. Was in charge of Revelstoke station.

Intention to report back to Navy, in England, for duty, but induced to join C.O.R.C.C. (Canadian Overseas Railway Construction Corps), a strictly all-Canadian Pacific Railway overseas unit formed of all sorts of C.P.R. railway employees. Served as Regimental Sergeant Major, and under Col. Ramsay, helped to form and train the unit at its base in St. John, New Brunswick.

1915-1919.

Regimental Sergeant Major, Canadian Overseas Railway Construction Corps, building railways, etc., in France and Belgium; standard gauge, at Abeele, Poperinghe, Dickebusch, La Clytte, Berges, La Panne, Dixmude, also dugouts for protection against the long range gun fire—immense dugouts—observation towers, light railways, ramps, bridges, and then the same work on the Arras, Albert and Amiens fronts, St. Omer and Audricque.

JULY 1919.

Discharged from C.E.F. at Vancouver, and after three or four days rest, rejoined the C.P.R. Investigation Service.

1920.

About 1920, transferred to the Municipality of South Vancouver Police Department, and continued there until 1 January 1929, when the amalgamation of South Vancouver with Vancouver took place, and was absorbed into Vancouver Police Department.

1935.

In the spring of 1935, during His Worship Mayor McGeer's tenure of office, served as special police officer on the sixth floor, Temporary City Hall, 16 Hastings Street East, outside the Mayor's office, and so continued until 30 November 1936, when the new City Hall was occupied. Then transferred in same capacity to new City Hall.

1936.

About 8 August 1936 appointed (first) Mace Bearer by resolution of City Council, and as such officiated at the ceremony of the presentation of the mace at the Hotel Vancouver, 20 August 1936, and carried the mace at the unveiling by the Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor of London, Sir Percy Vincent, of the statue by Chas. Marega, sculptor, to Capt. George Vancouver, erected before the north entrance to the new City Hall, 20 August 1936.

1937.

Carried the mace at the installation of His Worship George Clark Miller, the first installation to take place in the new City Hall, 6 January 1937.

Transferred from Vancouver Police Department to City Hall staff as "Sergeant at Arms" (cap and shoulder badges), 1 January 1937.

MEDALS.

Boxer Rebellion, 1900
1914-1915 Star,
British War,
Victory Medal.

Coronation Medal, 1937.

1938.

Accepted as member, National Mace Bearers Association, London, England.

1939.

Carried mace at installation, as mayor of Vancouver, of His Worship Dr. James Lyle Telford, M.D., M.L.A., January 1939.

Carried mace before Their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, first reigning sovereigns to visit Vancouver, on occasion of their visit to City Hall, Vancouver, when, in token of their acceptance of the homage of the citizens, his Majesty touched the mace with his hand. His majesty engaged in conversation with Mr. McKay for about two minutes, 29 May 1939.

MR. MCKAY TELLS A LITTLE STORY OF THE ROYAL TOUR.

One night, whilst acting as orderly outside the cabin door of Lady Eva Dugdale, lady-in-waiting to the Princess, he heard calls in an alarmed voice, "Orderly, orderly, orderly," and very nervously opened the cabin door a few inches, peeped in, and heard still more calls, "Orderly," so stepped inside.

Lady Dugdale was gowned in preparation for sleep, in a peach coloured nightgown, which Mr. McKay describes as "a beautiful thing" (it was before pyjamas for ladies were invented) and was seated right in the middle of the narrow upper bunk; her feet under her; clutching a silver slipper by the toe and striking wildly, first here, then there, at something in the bunk. It appears she had been getting into bed when a

mouse scampered from beneath bedclothes or pillow, and she was trying frantically to slaughter it with the slipper, but with no success.

Bombardier McKay gallantly drew his long glistening bayonet and endeavoured earnestly to stab the poor little thing, but the mouse was too elusive, and won the unequal contest with slipper and bayonet, and escaped with his life. Bombardier McKay shamefacedly retreated; his training at Portsmouth Dockyard included bayonet fighting, but the training syllabus does not include mouse contests. Lady Eva went to bed. What happened to the mouse is not recorded.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH PIPE-MAJOR HECTOR MACKENZIE, 2074 WEST 6TH AVENUE, VANCOUVER, 6 OCTOBER 1939.

Photo No. Port. 391, also *Province*, 31 December 1938, front page.

ORIGIN OF SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS.

Mr. MacKenzie, a tall soldierly figure with white moustache, carrying a military cane, and with most genial presence, said: "My name's Hector MacKenzie, Seaforth clan, and that's how the Scottish regiment in Vancouver came to be the Seaforth Highlanders.

"My father was Roderick, and my mother Isabel, née MacLean, of the MacLeans of Argyle, and I was born at Lochcarron, Rosshire, 1 October 1866; I had a birthday last Sunday. Father was a seafaring man, and they had seven children; four boys; all deceased now save three; my brother, D.M. MacKenzie, in business at 560 Granville Street, and one of my sisters, Mrs. Coughlan, and myself. I went to the parish school in Lochcarron; then, as a young man, went to Glasgow; was apprenticed to a large wholesale house; remained with them for years until I left to Canada in April 1902 on the Allan liner *Sarmation*; landed at Montréal; stayed a short time at Winnipeg, and came to Vancouver, September 1902. I came by myself; knew no one here.

"I got my training in playing pipes at my paternal home, and in Glasgow. I did not belong to a band, but I was properly trained, and I got a military training in the Volunteers in Scotland."

VANCOUVER PIPE BAND, 7 JANUARY 1904. VANCOUVER PIPERS' SOCIETY, 22 SEPTEMBER 1904.

"When I got to Vancouver I found there was no one here who was playing the pipes; at least, none who had had any special training; there may have been one or two bagpipers."

Major Matthews: Were you the first pipe-major in Vancouver?

Mr. MacKenzie: "Yes. It soon got around that I could play the pipes; I had my own with me; have them yet, the same set; had them all through the war, in France and Belgium; was in the 1st Pioneers, C.E.F., and of course the Scottish people in Vancouver heard me playing, and I got an idea to form a pipe band in Vancouver; in fact, I think I was requested to do so. I formed the first pipe band, and later it was organised as the Vancouver Pipers' Society.

"Well. The end of it was I got twelve pipers and four drummers together; fine big young fellows, and we practiced down in a hall—we called it the 'Pipers' Hall'—in the 1100 block on Seymour Street, and finally we got our uniforms from Scotland. I ordered the uniforms, Royal Stewart" (a square of the original tartan, presented by Mr. MacKenzie, is in City Archives), "same as the pipers of the Scots Guards; and our first appearance was on a Sunday, when we piped the 6th Regiment, "The Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles" to church at Wesley Church on the corner of Georgia and Burrard streets. Col. J.C. Whyte was in command, Capt. J. Duff Stuart, adjutant, and Capt. the Rev. C.C. Owen, chaplain. The pipe band continued for a good many years, until about the advent of the Seaforth Highlanders. And I will tell you how they came to be 'Seaforths,' and not something else.

"There was a Colonel Davidson down at Ottawa; I knew him, and started writing to him; he was very helpful. He recognised the great deal of work I had done in originating the pipe band in Vancouver, and in attending the meetings which led to the formation of a highland regiment in Vancouver. There was a deal of correspondence between Colonel Davidson and myself, and it was done quietly; we did not want it known what was going on until the organisation was complete, and we had chosen those we preferred to be officers of the new regiment. John Hendry, father of Mrs. Hamber, and one of the Hastings Sawmill,