

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

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MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH CALVERT SIMSON, 9 OCTOBER 1936.

THE GREAT FIRE, 1886.

Mr. Simson said: "Sunday morning I went over to the 'Mission,' now North Vancouver; in those days there weren't many places one *could* go; so we went for a sail. We started to come back for lunch; then the wind got up very strong. We made for Hastings Sawmill, but when my companion jumped ashore on the float he took the end of painter; the other end wasn't made fast, so the boat drifted off, and I had a time getting it back. Whilst doing that I saw the St. James' Church, on the beach, catch fire. I don't think it could have been five minutes until it was gone completely."

ST. JAMES CHURCH. HASTINGS SAWMILL STORE.

"That night the store sold out entirely of crackers and cheese; we had the store open night and day for several days. Some slept that night under the mill, some in my sail boat; some in the store, some in the open."

TUG MAGGIE.

"I have never been able to discover when the tug *Maggie* was built, but when I came in 1884, she was a wreck on the beach just in front of the cookhouse, north of the mill store. She gradually rotted away."

DOGFISH OIL. LOGGING CAMPS.

"Whilst storekeeper at the Mill Store, I used to buy dogfish oil for the logging camps, four gallon coal oil tins; paid one dollar a tin for it. They used it on the skid roads, swabbed it on top of the skid—the bark was peeled off, and it soaked into the wood; then, when the big heavy logs were drawn over by the oxen, the pressure would squeeze the oil out, and the log drew along easier."

LYNN CREEK. HUGH LYNN.

"As to cost? Well, the total cost for grub for the men, and feed for the oxen, both added together, would equal the cost for the dogfish oil; say, perhaps, \$500 per month for each camp—I used to buy 300, 400 or 500 tins at a time from Jack Green; he was on Savary Island, and used two crutches. Hugh Lynn, the son of Lynn, the Royal Engineer, and who lived there, murdered Jack Green, and a man named Taylor, and got hung for it."

LITTLE MOUNTAIN. JERICO.

"Really, there were two large logging camps only, one at Little Mountain and the other at Jericho. The one at Little Mountain was low down in the float which I think they now call Douglas Park, where the Chinese had a garden afterwards; that was so that the oxen could be turned out to graze in the old elk swamp."

FIRST NARROWS.

"I think this is all wrong about the *Cornelis*" (wrecked, Howe Sound, August 1871) "being the only vessel to ever pass out of the First Narrows under her own sail" (without a tug.) "I met Davidson, the old saw logger, yesterday, and he told me he had seen a full rigged ship coming in under her own sail."

(Note: John Henry Scales, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 3, also mentions an "only vessel ever to sail in or out under her own sail." Evidently, it was a sufficiently rare event to excite comment. JSM.)

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH CALVERT SIMSON, ABOUT 6 DECEMBER 1936.

EAGLE HARBOUR, WEST VANCOUVER. EAGLE CREEK, WEST VANCOUVER. EAGLE ISLANDS, WEST VANCOUVER. PREEMPTIONS, WEST VANCOUVER.

Mr. Simson: "August Neilson took up a preemption down at Eagle Harbour, then Ainslie Mouat, and Ed. Caufield, not Caulfield, engineer at the Hastings Sawmill, started to build a sawmill there; they put all their money in the foundations, and had nothing left for the mill; they put in strong stone foundations; elaborate. That was how it was I used to go down there every Sunday; the three of us in my sailboat; there were some rocks down there, and there was always three or four eagles on them; that's how it got its name; the eagles were fishing, bald-headed eagles, at least, bald-headed when they got old, not when they are young."

POINT ATKINSON LIGHTHOUSE. WALTER ERWIN. "NAVY JACK." CYPRESS PARK.

"Walter Erwin staked 'Navy Jack' when he went up to Barkerville prospecting or mining or something. Walter was lighthouse keeper; he got a medal for long service. Erwin owned Cypress Park; he had a preemption; Bailey, the photographer, afterwards got hold of Cypress Park."

COWAN'S POINT. BOWEN ISLAND.

"The man who started Cowan's Point was the man who preempted it. I don't know his name now, but he afterwards mortgaged it to A.G. R.A. Seymour, M.A., of Oxford. Seymour got some money from England, and thought a mortgage would be a good way of investing it, but he finally had to take over the place to protect his money. Mr. Seymour occupied it for a time; grew a few apples; used to bring them out in a row boat—bare feet and hatless and all—for a passing steamer to pick up and take to Vancouver; Seymour never washed, and he could swear perfectly.

"Later, Geo. H. Cowan, M.P. for Vancouver, acquired it, and it got called 'Cowan's Point.'"

Read and approved by Mr. Simson, 16 April 1937. J.S.M.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH CALVERT SIMSON, FOR MANY YEARS STOREKEEPER AT THE HASTINGS MILL STORE; LIVED ACROSS THE ROAD FROM THE STORE, IN A COTTAGE; 14 DECEMBER 1937.

HASTINGS SAWMILL SCHOOL. C.P.R. CONSTRUCTION. EARLY TRAINS.

Mr. Simson said: "The Hastings Sawmill school was pulled down; it wasn't moved; it was pulled down either before or after—I don't recall—the C.P.R. graded their right of way; the school was on a slope, and they had to level that off; then, to the west, there was a high bank down to the shore; that was thrown down; the C.P.R. did considerable work grading and levelling around that curve."

EARLY WATERWORKS. CAPT. CATES. S.S. ABYSSINIA.

"Yes. There was a water scow; not 'Spratt's Ark,' but a water scow; that was how Capt. Cates got his start; he used to take the scow over to Moodyville, fill it out of the spout from the flume—good water from Lynn Valley—and tow it over to the" (sailing) "ships for ballast and fresh water; I think he got five dollars for watering a ship; the steam tug pumped it."

Major Matthews: What about the water scow tying up at Hastings store wharf, and water being filled in wagon to take up town?

Mr. Simson: "I don't recall that; perhaps it was when the *Abyssinia* broke the water pipes and cut off the supply of water to Vancouver."

GASTOWN FLOATING WHARVES. JOSEPH MANNION.

"You see, there were three floats on the beach, now Water Street, of Gastown. Joe Mannion of the Granville Hotel had one; Ben Wilson had one at the foot of Abbott Street, and the Sunnyside had one at the foot of Carrall Street. Farmer, I think his name was Dan Farmer, had a small scow and long sweeps, and he used to load it down with supplies at the Hastings Mill store wharf, and then row it over to Gastown; piled high with supplies; he would call at the Sunnyside float and put off their stuff, then at Mannion's and put off his, and then at Wilson's and put off his; then he was through. Just row the scow up alongside the float when the tide was right, and unload. That was one way Gastown got its supplies in from our mill store wharf."

JOS. MANNION. GRANVILLE HOTEL. BURRARD INLET POST OFFICE.

"The stage brought the mail from New Westminster as far as George Black's at Hastings, and left it there at the official Burrard Inlet Post Office. Then, and this was the annoying part, the stage came on to the Hastings Mill and Gastown without the mail for these points.

"The mail went by boat over to Moodyville, and then by boat over to Hastings Mill.

"The Gastown outward mail was put in a little private bag kept at Joe Mannion's, and brought down to the store; and went back to Joe Mannion's where it more or less sorted itself."