

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.

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WATER WELLS.

“When we lived on Cordova Street in the 400 block, before the Capilano water came, we got our water from a well owned by Alderman G.S. McConnell on Jackson Avenue.

“There was another well on Powell Street at the Blue Grocery—Patterson’s—it is still standing, in the 400 block. Some places we used a pump; at other places, a pail.

“After the Capilano water came there were several occasions when the water failed; the reason was there was no reservoir in the park then.”

MOODYVILLE WATER. WATER SCOW.

“Then, they used to bring water from the flume at Moodyville Sawmill. They had a great big scow; it was not Spratt’s Ark; some other scow, and it had a steam pump on it, and they filled it with water at the Moodyville flume, and brought it over to the City Wharf at the foot of Carrall Street and pumped it out into the sprinkling cart, or into barrels, and sent out a crew of four or five men to distribute it to the houses. The men used to take the water to the hotels; that was their favourite call; they had as many saloon bars in Vancouver then as they have beer parlors now—I don’t know how many, but I should think about sixty, at one time or another.”

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. EDITH TRITES, WIDOW, OF 1715 WEST ELEVENTH AVENUE, VANCOUVER, DAUGHTER OF C.C. MADDAMS, PIONEER OF 1887, AND HERSELF A PIONEER OF MOUNT PLEASANT, 1890, WHO VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES, 7 DECEMBER 1938.

C.C. MADDAMS, 1887.

“My father, Charles Cleaver Maddams, came to Vancouver from Victoria in 1887. When he got here, he got employment with Harry Abbott of the C.P.R.; then with the Marpoles, and then with the Canadian Pacific Railway, and remained with them fourteen years; he left them in 1901.

“At first we lived on Cordova Street, between Richards and Homer Street. Jonathan Miller, the postmaster, had his post office on Hastings Street right back of us; I remember the Miller boys used to throw rotten apples down at us below.”

TERMINAL BUILDING SOCIETY.

“Mother belonged to the Terminal Building Society; she was one of the first. George R. Gordon and T.F. Neelands, afterwards mayor, belonged to it, too, and Mother won a drawing; I think it was two thousand dollars—you had to pay back so much per month—and with that money we were able to build a home.”

MOUNT PLEASANT, 1890. WATER WELLS.

“After about, I think 1890, we went to live in Mount Pleasant, not exactly, but five and one half acres we bought for \$400 on the shore of False Creek; a triangular piece of land bounded by Seventh Avenue on the south, False Creek on the north, and the present St. Catherines Street on the west; Windsor Street ran into our property, but did not cross it; that five and one half acres is now probably the only section in Mount Pleasant which has not been subdivided. We built a large nine-room house; it was the first house out in that district; that was before the fall of 1890. We got our water from a wonderful natural spring. There was black lignite coal on the beach.”

CHINA CREEK. CHINESE GARDENS.

“Then we went out there first the whole thing was green trees. It was wonderful soil, fine loam, and Father let some Chinamen have the land rent free to clear it, and after they had cleared a section, rented it to them. There were other Chinese gardens just a little further on, across the creek to the east; we called it China Creek, and it is China Creek to this day; there is a big sewer running through there now.” (Note: it was probably a former Indian camping site. J.S.M.)

SALMON. TROUT LAKE.

“China Creek from Trout Lake came down right in front of our place, and ran out into False Creek; we used to go out at night with a pitch fork and spear the salmon in the creek; they were going up to spawn.”

[photo annotations:]

Across False Creek, now Mt. Pleasant, 1887. Probably April 1887. From top of tree, stump or pole at what is now the South East corner of Seventh Ave. and Main St. This is the "New Road," formerly "False Creek Road," latterly Westminster Ave. and Main St., but west of the present location to avoid steeper grade. Seventh Ave. crosses between two nearest poles, part of Seventh Ave. appears in lower right hand corner. House on right believed to be Blair's, first in Mt. Pleasant. Cordwood stacked in tall trees, and beside big burned stump. Surveyors at work, perhaps fixing location Westminster Ave., or making contour map made about that date. Log (two white patches) of tree, fallen across road, cut away to permit passage, beyond which road is corduroy over swampy wet ground where skunk cabbage grows. "Bob" Spinks cottage (white lean-to) is on piles, and over water of False Creek, present location, 1605 Main St. (see photo P.G.F. 6, N.G.F. 1.) W.E. Graveley, conversation, 16 May 1933, says "Bob" Spinks, my partner, Graveley & Spinks, had a house on piles opposite the bivouac; we sold him the land before the "Fire" for \$200. The bivouac was beside the road, east side, just across from Spinks', and what was afterwards Front St. (First Ave.) Those who fled Great Fire, bivouacked here night of 13-14 June, and fed by New Westminster (sandwiches.) Photo illustrates how "The Kink in Main St." originated in trail along top of projecting point of land (observe narrow sidewalk from bridge, south end). Bridge Hotel, north end.

Photo presented, 1940, by Mrs. John Leask, née Hamilton, Collingwood, Ont. (sister L.A. Hamilton.) City Archives. J.S.M. Long black and white building is on N.W. cor. Hastings St. City Hospital, and Regina Hotel immediately before Brockton Pt. Compare with photo Bailey Bros. X 608 "Vancouver from the South." First Baptist Church (white roof) directly over Bridge Hotel.

SEVENTH AVENUE, 1890.

Major Matthews: How did you get there?

Mrs. Trites: "We were living on Cordova Street, near Richards, and, at first, we used to walk down to the Royal City Planing Mills, at the False Creek end of Carrall, and the Planing Mills had a wharf, and Father got a boat, and we used to row right up to our place which was right on the shore. Then, after that, the street cars ran as far as Dufferin Street, now Second Avenue; that wasn't much good to us; then the street cars ran up the hill as far as Seventh Avenue; that is, the top of the hill; no, they did not go to Ninth Avenue at first; just to Seventh Avenue, and then we used to walk along Seventh to our place.

"In the summer it was not so bad, but in the winter months it was muddy. Seventh Avenue was just slashed, so that people could go over it, and team their lumber in to build a house.

"While we were building our home, Mr. Thomas Graham built a smaller home two blocks west of us, on the southwest corner of Seventh and Scott Street; it's standing yet. A year after we went there, a man, Mr. McKinnell, built a home across the street, or road as it was then, which is now Seventh Avenue, between Windsor and St. Catherines. Mr. Graham and Mr. McKinnell were our only neighbours for six or seven years."

CHAIN GANG. LEG IRONS.

"The chain gang never did any work near our place that I can recall, but they did a lot of work in other parts of the city, under O'Grady, making the streets downtown. The gang used to wear an iron ring around their ankles, with two single long links; two of them, and a very, very wide, about five inches, leather belt around their waists to hold the links up. When Father left the C.P.R. in 1901, he had the ranch to go to; the fruit trees were all bearing, and the garden grown up."

MADDAM'S RANCH. RHUBARB.

"It was my father who put in the rhubarb; we must have had fifteen hundred or two thousand plants of rhubarb; you know, five and one half acres will hold a lot of rhubarb; we used to get orders from the wholesale people for sixteen hundred or two thousand pounds—that's a ton—of rhubarb; from the commission merchants down on Water Street; W.H. Malkin and those firms. People used to come from far and near to buy our rhubarb. We used to make rhubarb wine; put it in forty gallon barrels; it was just like champagne, but we were not allowed to sell it; too much alcohol in it.

"Today our old place is about the only five acres in Mount Pleasant, perhaps in Vancouver, which has not been subdivided, but we lost it for taxes. Father borrowed money to improve it until it was eaten up with

compound interest. He was once offered one hundred thousand dollars for it by the Ranier Brewing Company of Seattle, but the city would not grant them a charter, and the deal fell through. It is now owned by a Mr. McCallam” (sic) “in Scotland. We lived thirty-three years in that house—that’s a long time—before we let it go.

“The Great Northern bought our waterfront.

“Father owned 160 acres of land up Lynn Creek; he paid \$800 for it. And, he owned 160 acres at Quatsino Sound, Vancouver Island. He let that go, too. And he owned that block bounded by 14th and 15th, and Woodland Drive and Knight Road; my two brothers live there still, one at 1405 East Fifteenth, and the other at 3029 Woodland Drive. Father owned an eighty acre farm, conjointly with J. Edward Bird, the lawyer; they paid \$26,000 for it, I think, my father put up \$13,000 cash; on the corner of 19th and 7th roads, Lulu Island. My husband’s farm was adjoining it; forty acres; we had it eleven years, from 1911 to 1922. My husband died intestate, and it was mortgaged and the estate had to be divided up, and I did not get much; not after I had paid \$2,500 in bills.”

C.C. MADDAMS, 1887.

“Father, Charles Cleaver Maddams, was the son of George Maddams, who, when Queen Victoria was on the throne, was one of the eight despatch messengers attached to her household; he wore a badge of office under his coat, a greyhound, and that allowed the messengers to go anywhere; that was how my father came into the household of Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria.

“Father used to paint pictures; I have some of them yet; none of Vancouver; all English scenes, and the Princess Louise was very fond of painters, and artists, and took a great interest in him; used to send the best artists to help him, and showed him where he was at fault in his pictures. She gave him a clock, and a stick pin with their coat of arms on—we lost it when we moved from Cordova Street—and some autographed photos; those were stolen.

“Father also told us how the Marquis, and Princess Louise and party, used to go tobogganing on a slide especially built on a high trestle which had four or five feet of snow on it. They had good sport, the servants being allowed to enjoy it too, and Father said they had many a spill at the bottom, and the next toboggan would shoot over them and not hurt anyone.

“While on a visit to Bermuda with the Marquis and Princess, Father collected many beautiful birds, canaries, finches, etc. and metallic butterflies which he preserved and brought back to Ottawa and placed in glass cases. Father was a very good amateur taxidermist, could cure skins, and mounted antlers, and heads of game, and pheasants; a collection of which we had in our old home.

“Another incident which may be interesting was, at that time, the Marquis of Lorne had heard Father could light the turned on gas jet with his bare finger, so he was asked to do this before the assembled guest, in the drawing room at Rideau Hall. Father explained it was best done in very cold weather, and would stand on a fur rug, and rub his feet quickly on it, then touch the jet with his finger, out of which came a blue spark, and lit the gas; this performance always left him a little weak.

“Mother was also in the service of the nobility, and was working in the household of Lord Charles Beresford, at Waterford, Ireland, and that was where they met, and they were afterwards married in England.

“Then Father and Mother came out to Canada with the entourage of the Marquis of Lorne, and Princess Louise, when the Marquis was Governor-General—about 1880—then the Governor-General and the Princess came to Victoria about 1882, and the Governor-General got Father into the household of Lieutenant-Governor Cornwall at Victoria, as a steward, and my mother as housekeeper. Father remained with Governor Cornwall about eighteen months; then they were forming the Union Club in Victoria—all the swells were members. My father got the job of steward, and Mother housekeeper at Union Club—but Father’s health broke down through the long hours at the club, and then in 1887 we came to Vancouver. I know it was 1887 because I recall the first train coming in.

"There are six children in our family; three boys and three girls. Three were born before we went to Mount Pleasant, and three after we went there; five are living today; one is unmarried; and there are five grandchildren.

1. Edith (myself), born in London, England, 19th November 1879; married Humphrey Trites; he died 16 years ago in 1922, and we had three children.
 - a. Frank, born 1912, married Miss Marguerite McCullough, and with one son, aged 4, and one daughter, aged 2½; he works for the B.C. Electric.
 - b. Edith, born about 1914, unmarried.
 - c. Russell, born about 1916, unmarried.
2. Charles, born in Rideau Hall, Ottawa, married Grace Raynor, works at the Sumner Iron Works, Vancouver; no children.
3. Gwendolyn, born on Cordova Street, Vancouver, unmarried.
4. Clarence, born on the Mount Pleasant ranch; killed in a gun accident when 16½ years old, accidentally shot by another boy on the False Creek beach in front of our home.
5. George, born on the Mount Pleasant ranch; a musician; married to Ada Simpson. They have one son, Gerald.
6. Muriel, born on Mount Pleasant ranch; married Wm. Thorburn of loco. They have one daughter, Theresa.

Corrected and approved by Mrs. Trites, 20 December 1938.

J.S. Matthews.

(See photo C. V. P. Bu. 184, 185, 186, 196, 197.)

A MEMORANDUM BY MRS. E.E. TRITES, NÉE MADDAMS, OF CHINA CREEK, HEAD OF FALSE CREEK, JANUARY 1939.

MADDAMS RANCH. RHUBARB WINE. CHINA CREEK.

My father, C.C. Maddams, not only raised all kinds of fruit for a large wholesale trade, such as apples, pears, prunes, plums of all kinds, raspberries, strawberries, loganberries, and the black, red and white currants, but one year a 40 gallon cask of wonderful rhubarb wine which connoisseurs likened to champagne. It was a beautiful amber colour (its natural colour) and had a fine effervescence and sparkle. Among those who praised it was W.H. Malkin of Malkin Bros. Commission Merchants, with whom my father did business. Mr. Malkin wanted to have some more made to sell up north, but found the alcoholic content too high for public sale, so no more was made at that time. One laughable incident in connection with this cask of wine was that my father had to go away on one of his usual trips. He was still on the C.P.R., and as he was to be away two weeks, he told my mother to be sure and lift the bung in the top of the cask or it would burst. Well, my mother forgot all about it for several days, until some of us noticed the sides of the cask bulging out, (an oak whiskey cask at that) and then she was afraid to touch it, and got a neighbour man to try and get the bung out. Well, he didn't try much, as soon as he touched the wooden bung it hit the ceiling of the woodshed with an awful bang, and the froth hit the ceiling, and ran for a time, losing a whole lot of wine. And so for the history of Maddams' rhubarb wine. I can remember a couple of its contents besides the rhubarb were a 100 lb. sack of white sugar, \$3.00 of isinglass to clear it before bottling. There was no colouring used, as they decided to leave it the natural colour; it was a very clear amber and sparkled beautifully when opened.

CIDER. POULTRY. CANADA GEESE.

My father also tried making cider as there was always a surplus of apples in the fall, but he cider wasn't as popular as the rhubarb wine. When we first went in for pure-bred chickens, and had