

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 MR. JAS. OLLASON, 103 29TH STREET, WEST VANCOUVER, FOR SIXTEEN YEARS, 1915-1930, MUNICIPAL CLERK, CORPORATION OF WEST VANCOUVER, AT CITY ARCHIVES, 19 JUNE 1937.

FIRST NARROWS BRIDGE. WEST VANCOUVER.

Mr. Ollason said: "I'll tell you this. If I had not been Municipal Clerk during the years 1925-1930, there would be no First Narrows bridge. It is possible that there may have been some mention of it before that time" (see A.P. Horne narrative; also G.G. Mackay) "but I never heard of it. I was the first to actually promote it, and to keep it going from January to December 1926, when the plebiscite killed it.

"What gave me the first idea was that we had so much tax sale lands which had come back on our hands." (Note: subsequent to the real estate boom, and the Great War.) "We got some eastern people to agree to take some two million dollars worth of tax sale lands in return for the bridge. Then David Morgan, he was reeve, went over and saw Mayor" (L.D.) "Taylor of Vancouver, and that was where Mayor Taylor first got his idea; he gets credit for promoting the bridge; it makes me laugh.

"Then, another thing. At the time the bridge *did* go through, and when they had the big meeting," (Reeve) "Leyland was up on the platform, and the crowd were clapping and cheering him, and he was saying wonderful things. Well. After the meeting was over, and we were all standing outside the entrance to the Hall, David Morgan put his hand on his" (Leyland's) "shoulder, and said, 'Leyland, you know it's a surprise to me that you'" (Leyland) "'could stand up there" (on the platform) "'and take all that applause, and never say a word about the one man" (Ollason) "'who did the most to get that bridge started and put it through.'"

J.S. Matthews.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. J. OLLASON, FORMER MUNICIPAL CLERK, WEST VANCOUVER, WHO KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES, 11 APRIL 1939.

HOLLYBURN, B.C. JOHN LAWSON. WEST VANCOUVER. WEST VANCOUVER FERRY CO. ELECTRIC LIGHT.

Mr. Ollason said: "The photograph which you have captioned, 'Looking up Lawson Avenue, Hollyburn, B.C.' is explained this way." (Photo No. P. Out. 207.)

"The plank wharf is at the foot of Seventeenth Avenue, and was the Dominion Government wharf, where the West Vancouver Ferry landed before it was moved to Ambleside. I forget the name of the first ferry boat; I think it was the *West Vancouver*, perhaps not, but the next was the *Sea Foam*. The West Vancouver Ferry Company was formed about 25th February 1910. Both boats were insufficiently powered, and when there was a good strong tide, had not the power to get out and in the Narrows, and used to lie in the shelter of Prospect Point awaiting a favourable opportunity. At the end of the wharf you see a lamp standard with a goose neck; that is a gasoline light—there was no electric light, and before we got any, we had to get the Dominion government inspector to threaten the B.C. Electric Co., and tell them that they could not export power to the United States at Sumas, etc., until local needs were supplied, so the B.C. Electric Railway Co. drew up a hard agreement which made the municipality responsible for the payment of all light bills. They thought they would lose money on account of insufficient demand, but it paid from the start after it was installed."

HOLLYBURN WHARF.

"On the right is a small floating wharf; that is the freight wharf; you can see bricks and barbed wire on the end of it, and the shed at the end is to put the freight in. To the right of the freight shed is a little cottage behind the piles—an old lady lived there, and it was a sort of tea room for summer visitors."

JOHN LAWSON'S OFFICE. J. OLLASON'S OFFICE.

"Lawson Avenue is 100 feet wide; the only 100 foot wide street in West Vancouver. On the west side of Lawson Avenue is a concrete sidewalk from the wharf to Marine Drive; John Lawson built that himself, and paid for it himself, and the building in the centre with two windows, and a door in the middle, is John Lawson's office. Across the street is my office; I was in the real estate business; I built that building, and it is still standing. I sold it."

ARCHIBALD, CITY CLERK. FIRST STORE, WEST VANCOUVER.

“Behind John Lawson is a small white building not wholly visible—before you come to the store. It was a real estate office belonging to Archibald, afterwards City Clerk at North Vancouver. Further back, the high building on the corner of Marine Drive and Lawson Avenue is the first store in West Vancouver; the building belonged to John Lawson, and the store was run by Ferguson, of the Ferguson Transfer, now in Vancouver; he was proprietor, and ran it, and had to move out when John Lawson moved the post office in there, and he was pretty annoyed about that, too.”

“NAVY JACK.” FIRST MUNICIPAL HALL IN TENT, 1912. FIRST MUNICIPAL HALL. WEST VANCOUVER INCORPORATION.

“The orchard is on ‘Navy Jack’s’ property, the original settler, whose property John Lawson acquired in some way, and on the extreme left of the photo is the original ‘Navy Jack’ house, improved by John Lawson. John Lawson had good horses, and the building behind his house, one with a window in the gable, and a chimney in ridge, was his stable and barn. Over my office can be seen a tent; that is the first ‘Municipal Hall,’ used in the summer time, and until the first Hall was built. They used the tent in the summer of 1912. The big building—touching the lamp—is the new Municipal Hall, probably just finished. After West Vancouver became incorporated, their first Municipal Office was in the basement of the Trustee Building, on the southeast corner of Homer Street and Cordova.”

GEORGE HAY OF WEST VANCOUVER. J.B. MATHER OF WEST VANCOUVER.

“George Hay, in those days a very prominent man in West Vancouver, and J.B. Mather, were partners, and they owned the Trustee Building. I worked in the basement. I went over to North Vancouver City Hall, and transcribed the tax roll of West Vancouver district of North Vancouver—which extended from all the way to Point Atkinson—and then, when they were incorporated, I told them I wanted to be Municipal Clerk, but Charles Nelson was reeve, and Charlie told me they were all ‘green’ at civic affairs, and to have a green city clerk would be worse still. Nelson told me they had secured a thoroughly competent man, George Peit” (sic) “for Comptroller, from South Vancouver Municipality, but they had no sooner got him in office than they wished they did not have him. I was appointed assistant clerk, April 1915.” (Something wrong here.)

MEMO OF CONVERSATION, OVER THE PHONE FROM HIS OFFICE AT OAKALLA PRISON FARM TO THE CITY ARCHIVES, WITH WALTER OWEN, ESQ., WARDEN, OAKALLA PRISON FARM, 4 OCTOBER 1938.

STANLEY PARK. BURIED TREASURE.

(Note: in the early part of 1922, the Union Bank, at Ladner’s, was held up by three international robbers, and \$83,500 of negotiable bonds stolen. Two years later, “Smiling Johnnie” Reid, one of the robbers who had been captured, and who, in various places, had been responsible for the theft of one million or more dollars, confessed, and offered to show the police where much of the loot was hidden. Accompanied by Assistant Superintendent Owen of the B.C. Police, he journeyed to Stanley Park and dug up eighty thousand dollars worth of securities near the entrance.)

(See *The Shoulder Strap*, Vol. 1, p. 19, published by B.C. Provincial Police, September 1938.)

Mr. Owen said: “The small grip or valise was buried at a point beside a forked cedar tree of very deformed shape, which grew approximately one hundred yards west of the end of Nelson Street; there was a lot of very heavy timber thereabouts at that time; the bag was down about eighteen inches in soft, damp, muck earth. When the valise was lifted, the bottom of it tore away, and a four pound jam tin, one of those cans with tight lid, rolled out into the bottom of the hole; it contained. The can was about the width of the bonds, and the bonds were neatly rolled up, and fitted nicely inside the can. They were quite dry, clean and unsoiled; the Ladner bank stamps were clearly legible. I saw the valise dug up. At first, he could not locate it, but finally struck it.”