

## **Early Vancouver**

### **Volume Five**

**By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.**

**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**

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"Capt. Sacret is on the Hudson's Bay steamer *Silverpalm* now."

Unrevised, J.S.M.

Note: a postcard photo of the wedding automobile shows Earl Grey and three ladies, with Stark as driver, in front of the "Hollow Tree" in Stanley Park. (See photo C.V. P. Trans. 27.)

**MEMO OF CONVERSATION (PHONE) WITH MR. J. FRED SANDERS, 1232 WEST FIFTEENTH AVENUE, VANCOUVER, 25 FEBRUARY 1937.**

Son of Alderman Edwin Sanders, member of City Council, 1887, and 1895 (by-election), and brother to Mrs. S.H. Ramage, 2415 Alder Street, Vancouver.

**ARRIVAL, FIRST TRAIN, VANCOUVER, 23 MAY 1887.**

Mr. Sanders said: "I was born in Winnipeg, April 30<sup>th</sup> 1882, and came with Father and Mother to Vancouver, via Portland, Seattle and Victoria in March 1886. Father was an alderman on the Council of 1887.

"I was only five years old at the time we went down to meet the first train to arrive in Vancouver, and don't remember very much about it, except that Father often impressed upon us that we had been there, and had witnessed the inauguration of a great Imperial service. My sister, Mrs. Ramage, was with us when we met the train, but my wife was not. She was not here then."

**FOR ILLUSTRATIONS.**

See *British Columbia*, Biographical, Vol. IV, page 556 and 612 for illustrations of Mr. Edwin and Mr. J. Fred Sanders, and narrative.

**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH JOHN HENRY SCALES, TODAY THE CITIZEN OF VANCOUVER WHO SAW BURRARD INLET EARLIER THAN ANY LIVING PERSON, ONE OF THE CHILD PASSENGERS OF THE *THAMES CITY*, APRIL 1859, OF 3520 MAIN STREET, VANCOUVER, AND WHO VERY KINDLY DROPPED INTO THE CITY ARCHIVES, CITY HALL, AND REMAINED CHATTING FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS, 14 JANUARY 1938.**

Note: Mr. Scales is 84, came alone by street car, looks a picture of health, a clear facial complexion with tinge of colour, a mustache almost but not quite white, and slightly drooping at the ends; considerable hair almost white, a tolerably firm step for a man of his age, and a happy smile.

He tells me Mrs. Scales is not so well; has been confined to her bed since just before Christmas; overdid it—they have been married fifty-three years—but is a little better today.

**FOREST FIRES. THE BLACK TRAIL.**

Major Matthews: Mr. Scales. You were born on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1854, so that you must have been nearly five years old when you arrived, and ought to remember things pretty well; what forest fires can you recollect about here?

Mr. Scales: "Between here and Westminster? Well! That fire that came through there, I think started up near Port Moody, and came through back of New Westminster, at the back of the town; it cut around the place where the Royal Columbia Hospital is now at Sapperton; burned two houses down and passed right through at the back, between Westminster and Burnaby Lake; you can see the marks there yet; the tall black tree stumps, high ones, along there by the interurban, the Vancouver-Central Park interurban electric railway line; the fire passed right through there; it took everything before it, timber and everything; *it was an awful fire.*" (See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 3, "Black Trail.")

"Father had a piece of property about two and a half miles out of town" (Westminster) "on the road to Port Moody, out Burquitlam way, just about where the road turns off at an angle to go to Port Moody. You go past Sapperton, down the hill, across the bridge over the Brunette, up the hill; there was a stream at the back running into the Brunette. We were kids; Mother, Father and the four of us children were out there—it was before George was born" (note: George is supposed to have been born June 24<sup>th</sup> 1865 and, it is

said, has been getting his Old Age Pension, which starts at 70, for about two years); “we had a log cabin; I think the old log cabin is there yet.

“We kids saw the fire coming; we were scared; Father had a dry well, and we were all ready to get into it; Father was going to put us down the well until the fire went over us, but it went past us. Mother and Father were fighting the fire in a fern patch close to the house; I was only a bit of a kid at the time, but I remember seeing the fire coming towards us from Port Moody way, and it got past us, and we were there for *three days* before anyone could get out to see if we were all burned up, or not. It was just the family living there, Mother, Father, and the four children. We never heard how it started; somebody cutting wood or something, I guess.

“I don’t know exactly what year that was, but Father took that property up just before the Royal Engineers went back to England” (October 1863) “and it was before we came to Burrard Inlet. The reason we came to Burrard Inlet was because Father had his thumb poisoned, and his hand was in a sling for nine months, and he had to give up; he had Mother and the children, and could do nothing” (no work.) “I remember the incident well enough; Father had the empty well, and we were all ready to get into it ... I was twelve when we came to Burrard Inlet, so that the big fire must have been 1865 or 1866.”

#### **FOREST FIRES. JEREMIAH ROGERS. TRACTION ENGINES. JERICO.**

“Then, I remember the fire that old Jerry Rogers started out at Point Grey; it was the first year that he went out, I think. We had a road tractor engine out there, a steam tractor, the one that was brought out for the Cariboo road but was a failure; great big things with one wheel in front; he got that running.

“He put on a spark catcher after that fire, so as not to start any more fires. They got the fire out afterwards, beating it, but it got pretty serious down in the timber there at Jericho.”

#### **INDIAN CANOES. CANOE VOYAGES. SEATTLE, WASHINGTON.**

“I have never been out of this country since I came, excepting for six weeks when five of us went ‘crazy’ and took a canoe from Nanaimo for Seattle. It was the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, some year, I remember well enough it was the 10<sup>th</sup> March because, after it was over, we thought what a silly thing to attempt at that time of year, and it took us nine days to get there. There was in the canoe George Sage, Joe Sage, Elijah Ganner, Jimmy Hawks—the only one living, in Seattle now, I think—and myself. Five of us, all about 20 or 25, in a canoe. We started out in the canoe, and got so far out in the straits we could not turn back; then it got dark, so dark we could not see each other in the canoe; and then it started to rain, oh my, how it did rain; and all at once a great big wave picked us up and landed us flop on a sandy beach; just dropped us, canoe and all, on the beach.

“We did not know where we were, so we felt along in the darkness with our hands and found a ledge of rock about as high as we could reach, and we kept on walking backwards and forwards along the bit of beach in front of the ledge—we could not go any further either way—until daylight came; we had struck some island. We did not know what had become of the canoe; not until next morning when we found it, buried all but an inch or two of it, in the sand; we lost all our food; lost everything, and there were five of us in the canoe. We had got into some bay; it was down where the San Juan Islands are. I shall never forget that experience.

“So we dug the canoe out of the sand and went on to Seattle; the most foolish thing I have done was to go off on that trip in a little canoe like that, but those were the days; the days when horses on milk wagons didn’t make a noise when they went up the street, and when the only butcher shop on Burrard Inlet was a floating one.” (George Black’s boat.)

#### **SEATTLE IN EARLY DAYS.**

“Seattle was a little place then; there was hardly any Seattle. I was down there recently with Mother” (Mrs. Scales) “and we wanted to go out to — Street. Mother said I ought to know where it was; she said, ‘You’ve been in Seattle before.’ Well, so I had, but it didn’t look like that then. All I can remember was two hotels, the New England and the Occidental; don’t think there was another. And when we asked where we could get some amusement, they said, ‘There was a dance hall up on the sawdust’; there had been a sawmill there. So we went up and looked in, but didn’t think much of it; we backed out. If you wanted to go to Lake Washington, you had to go through a deer trail.”

### **GEORGE SCALES.**

"George was not with us when the forest fire took place back of Sapperton, but he was with us when we came to live on Burrard Inlet; but he was a little fellow. I'll tell you how small he was. Avis, my sister, was chopping wood with a little axe, and George kept pushing his hand in, and snatching the chips, and she warned him not to, but he kept on, and at last the axe struck his finger, and cut it off by the thumb, and we had to take him to New Westminster before we could get a doctor; there was no doctor here then, and he nearly died before we got him there because we had to take him by boat to the 'end of the road'" (Hastings) "and then over the trail to Westminster; I told you about that before."

### **GLADSTONE INN.**

"I'll tell you how you can find out about the Gladstone Inn because there are two boys" (men) "who used to run it living out on Welwyn Street, Cedar Cottage; Thomas and Bob Curry." (4080 Welwyn Street.)

We were becoming weary of talking, so Mr. Scales and I went down nine floors in the elevator, walked out of the great building, the City Hall, and the venerable old pioneer, today the earliest living man to see Burrard Inlet, got on the Fairview street car, and he went home, east to his home in Mount Pleasant, while I went west to Kitsilano Beach. I had been talking, across my desk, to a man who first saw this great city, spreading ten miles wide by seven long, as a towering wall of green forest lining a sinuous shore; who had seen Burrard Inlet when three small huts stood alone in the trees on the site of our busy mercantile section stretching from Carrall Street to Burrard Street. Men will not again see so extraordinary an epoch as that through which John Henry Scales has lived. I had been talking to one of "The Early Builders" of Vancouver.

J.S. Matthews  
15 January 1938.

### **MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. JOHN HENRY SCALES (SON OF JOHN SCALES, R.E.) WHO CAME TO BRITISH COLUMBIA ON THE *THAMES CITY*, 12 APRIL 1859, [ON] 28 JUNE 1938.**

Mr. Scales called at the City Archives for a chat; he looks well; hair getting very white now; carried a crooked cane, smoked a pipe, and climbed to the tenth floor to see Dr. Raley's Indian curios, with agility.

#### **ROYAL ENGINEERS SURVIVORS OF *THAMES CITY*.**

Mr. Scales: (to Major Matthews) "Those who came on the *Thames City* still living. There's Hugh and John Murray, and John McMurphy, Arthur Herring, and Mrs. Wardle, and Mrs. Turnbull and myself; that's seven."

#### **LOGGING OFF THE FOREST. NORTH VANCOUVER. LONSDALE AVENUE.**

Mr. Scales: (to Miss Margaret Giles) "Father took us over to live in what is now North Vancouver for two or three years; there was nothing much to do in those days, so for something to amuse ourselves, we used to watch the logs come down a long run way where Lonsdale Avenue is now. One day while I was watching, a large log came shooting down at terrific speed and struck the water with a great splash before it got clear away; another one came down the slip, hit the first log end on as it was rising up out of the water. The speed was so great that as they hit each other, they split into pieces, and huge splinters flew in all directions. It was a wonderful sight, and not likely to happen again."

#### **WHALES IN BURRARD INLET.**

"We used to go across from 'Gastown' to the North shore in a canoe. One day my sister and myself were going across, she was pulling and I was paddling. We got half way across, when we noticed several huge whales coming towards us; she told me to pull as I could get along faster; I don't know yet how we ever managed to get across safely, but we managed to get there, but we weren't in any hurry to come back. The whales used to come up the Inlet all the time, you would see them spouting up water; they would go up to Port Moody and back."

Note: the period Mr. Scales refers to is thought to be 1873-1874, perhaps before that, not later. JSM.