

Early Vancouver

Volume Five

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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

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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MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH OTWAY WILKIE, IN ARCHIVES OFFICE, CITY HALL, 13 JANUARY 1936.

SIMON FRASER, 1808.

I showed Mr. Wilkie a map of Vancouver, which I had drawn, had photographed, and pasted in *Vancouver, Fifty years a city, 1886-1936* (frontispiece) showing notation, at one point, "Musqueam Indian Reserve, Here Fraser turned, 1808." Mr. Wilkie commented thus:

"OLD JOE."

"I question it. 'Old Joe,' an Indian—we called him 'Nosey' because his nose had a twist in it—he told me in 1887 or 1888. I stayed all night with him in his cabin; could not get home; his cabin was on McMillan Island; my home was at Langley. I was the mail contractor between Langley and the C.P.R. at the time, so that it would be about 1887. The winter of 1887-8 was very severe, but the mail had to be attempted to be got across the river to the C.P.R.; this time the ice was in the river, but in a dangerous state. I was trying to reach Whonnock from Langley, and was prospecting for a chance to get across the river, and noticed that just at the head of McMillan Island the ice had divided, and left a clear space nearly from shore to shore—the river at that point is almost a mile wide. I got one-third of the way across when I saw the ice coming together, and I made back for the island; just managed to reach the head of the island when the ice came together. I jumped on shore, broke through the ice, got wet, tied up the boat, and started to walk to where the Indians lived. When I arrived at the Indian houses, I met Jason Allard, who was also ice bound, and explained the position to him, and he took me to Old Joe's house, where I was quite comfortable and nice and clean, etc.

"Old Joe and his family gave me a good welcome, fine nice clean bed, slept under one of their own homemade blankets—which was considered quite an honour—and spent the evening with Jason, talking over old days with the Indians, and Joe told us the story of Simon Fraser.

"In one of our talks Walter Moberley told me that the best leveller ever on the locations surveys of the C.P.R. was the late Jason Allard of Fort Langley, who died a few years ago at the age of 83. Jason Allard was on the very early surveys in the mountains; his father was Ovid Allard, Factor or Chief Trader at Yale, Langley, Hope and Nanaimo, H.B. Co. Jason Allard, at one time, was in charge of Fort Colville and Fort Shepherd in H.B. Co. service.

"I was with the Gamby and Marcus Smith party between Yale and Port Moody, and also with Major Rogers' party, surveying the line from Port Moody to Vancouver. On Christmas Day, 1884, we reached where the City Limits are now at Hastings, about dusk, having worked all day Christmas in a snowstorm. We camped at George Black's Hotel, known as the Brighton, alongside what was used for steamers and boats—a floating wharf. The whole party celebrated Christmas there. Major Rogers and his nephew, Mr. Roberts, Mitchell Fannin, first curator of Provincial Museum, Sam Brighthouse, etc., etc. Very cold weather at [the] time, and the Fraser River was frozen solid. A few days after Christmas Day I walked up to what is now Albion in Maple Ridge, and at that time known as Sam Robertson's Farm, and from there walked on the ice to Fort Langley. On my way across the river I met the late Tom Shannon of Cloverdale, in the middle, with a team of horses on his way to his father-in-law's, Sam Robertson."

C.P.R. SURVEY, COMPLETION TO VANCOUVER.

"The survey to Vancouver was finished about March 18, 1885. I met the party returning to Shuswap Lake the day I was married, March 20, 1885.

"My memory of conversations with Rogers is very clear.

"Sincerely,

"Otway Wilkie."