

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, DURING HER VISIT TO LOOK OVER THE NEW CITY HALL, OF MRS. RUTH MORTON, WIDOW OF JOHN MORTON, FIRST SETTLER ON BURRARD INLET, 2:30 TO 3:30 P.M., WEDNESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 1937.

Mrs. E.E. Buxton, companion to the aged Mrs. Morton, called up in the morning, and suggested that the day being so brilliant an Indian summer's day, the long deferred visit to the City Hall of Mrs. Morton. In the afternoon, Alderman J.W. Cornett, acting Mayor for the day, directed the Mayor's car be sent to Mrs. Morton's apartment, "The Montrose," 1190 West 12th Avenue. Major J.S. Matthews, City Archivist, and Miss Margaret Giles, assistant, rode to fetch Mrs. Morton, who was all prepared when the car arrived. Dressed in black, she looked well, smiling, but as active as would be expected at her age, 90 next 17 March 1938.

On arrival at the City Hall, Mace Bearer Alexander McKay preceded the party (4), and escorted them to the No. 1 Committee Room (The Squabble Chamber) where the Finance Committee (the whole Council, including City Clerk, City Comptroller, Corporation Counsel, etc.) were in session. Ald. Cornett, chairman, halted business proceedings, and announced that Major Matthews, City Archivist, had arrived with a distinguished visitor. Major Matthews then presented Mrs. Morton, who had been seated at the end of the long table. Ald. Cornett replied with a hearty welcome, and requested the City Archivist to show Mrs. Morton everything of interest in the City Hall. Mrs. Morton (seated) in a somewhat feeble voice, responded in three sentences, one of which was "I think Vancouver is the nicest place on *earth*" (much emphasis on "earth"), "I am very glad I came here."

The party then retired, and, escorted by Mace Bearer McKay, Mrs. Morton was shown over the Council Chamber, was seated in the Mayor's chair on the dais for her photograph to be taken, was escorted to the vault, and shown the mayoral insignia; had the gold chain of office slipped over her shoulders, then to the Mayor's office and shown the Mace, and then rode up to the ninth floor to the City Archives, where she rested and chatted with the staff of three (Major Matthews, Miss Giles, and Miss Ethel Glazier, listened.) After about 30 minutes she desired to depart, and was taken home in the Mayor's car.

During her conversation, Mrs. Morton said:

Mrs. Morton: (very slowly and deliberately) "It is all very wonderful; I expected nothing like this; what would Mr. Morton have said.

"I remember Mr. Morton telling me that Mr. Cambie" (H.J. Cambie, C.P.R. engineer) "said to him once, 'Mr. Morton, when you first came to Burrard Inlet, you never expected to have a double track railway in front of your place, did you?' Mr. Morton replied, 'No, I did not expect a double track railway, but I did expect something someday'; there was the harbour, and Mr. Morton felt that someday there would be a change."

Major Matthews: Did Mr. Morton have a barn down on Burrard Street which burned?

Mrs. Morton: "Oh no! There was no barn down there; that barn was over at Sapperton, at the farm. You see Mr. Morton stopped on the property" (West End), "but they" (Hailstone and Brighthouse) "were at the farm; they took turns; there were the cows to be looked after, milked, and they had some nice chickens, but someone had to stop on the property" (D.L. 185); "Mr. Morton lived at the Bay" (English Bay) "and he lived at the inlet" (Seaton Street.) "He used to tell some of the experiences that they went through. He said that many a time he slept under the trees before he got the shanty."

Major Matthews: Did Hailstone and Brighthouse help him build the shanty?

Mrs. Morton: "Oh yes; they helped him build the shanty, but one had to stay on the farm at Sapperton because the cows had to be looked after."

HANGING INDIAN. COAL HARBOUR.

"One day he saw a big crowd of Indians coming out of the woods down there" (Coal Harbour) "and he thought they were after him, and he got his things together, and thought he would go to New Westminster; that was the only place to go, and it was twelve miles, and he kept looking back to see if they were getting any closer, and the last time he looked he saw they had stopped; they all wore a blanket, put a hole in one corner, and put their head through the blanket, and wrapped the rest around

them like a shawl, and the next thing they threw a rope over a lower limb of a tree, and then they fastened it, and they hung the woman.”

INDIAN DRESS.

“So Mr. Morton thought that would have to be *stopped*, and so he went to Westminster and told the authorities, and the next day they came over in a hurry. New Westminster was a small place, just a village, so he told the authorities what he had seen, and he had no more trouble with them” (Indians) “after that.”

Major Matthews: What had actually happened to make the Indians hang the woman?

Mrs. Morton: “It was a klotchman; her husband had two wives” (note: the Indian woman had killed her baby in a fit of jealousy over the other wife) “so next day the authorities told Kapilano they could not do that here, and well, the chief replied, ‘The King George men do that,’ and well, they said it mustn’t happen again. Kapilano lived away down there where the bridge is crossing the Narrows” (Homulcheson, or Capilano Creek.) “Old Chief Kapilano saw that Mr. Morton had no more bother of that kind.”

INDIAN MAIDEN.

“There was another thing which happened to him. I am just telling you what Mr. Morton told me. Mr. Morton could tell stories well, because he had seen them, and had a picture of them in his mind. Mr. Morton and Mr. Hailstone were in the cabin, and the door opened” (note: Indians do not appear to have practised the formality of rapping on a door before entering) “and in walked two Indians and squaw, and so they came in, and Mr. Morton had a bench as long as this table” (note: Joseph Morton, his son, says the bench was outside the cabin, but is probably wrong) “to sit on, and the Indians came in and began talking, and Mr. Morton and Mr. Hailstone did not understand, but Mr. Hailstone was good at taking notes down in a book that he always carried with him. And he took it in such a way that he could get it later, and he put down the sound the Indians said. The squaw took the bench, and put it in the middle of the cabin, and began jumping over it backwards and forwards, and the Indians kept talking.

“Mr. Hailstone said, ‘This is a war dance,’ and Mr. Hailstone took a butcher knife, well, I wouldn’t be sure, but he took a weapon, and they each got in a corner of the cabin, because the Indians were in the doorway, and when the squaw finished one tune” (dance) “they would begin all over again, and after a time they could see they were not understood, neither could talk the other’s language then, and the Indians just went away.

“Mr. Hailstone took his notes over to New Westminster, and the first man he met had a good laugh when they told him what had happened, he said, ‘Don’t you know what they were trying to tell you?’ and they said, ‘No, how could we; we did not understand their language.’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘they were just trying to show you how spry she was, and that she was a good worker and could do everything, and when they’” (the Indians) “saw they could not make you see it, they just went away.’ Mr. Morton used to tell me tales like this, and he would laugh now that it was all over.

“But afterwards he began to learn Chinook, and he could talk to the Indians in their own language, and they were just as pleased to get into conversation with him.”

INDIANS BEST FRIENDS.

“The Indians were the best friends he had, there were lots of mallard in Coal Harbour, and the branches used to come down over the water, and the Indians used to go out in canoes, but before they went they covered the canoes with branches and hid under them, and then they would spear the ducks with a long stick with a fork on the end of it; it would catch the ducks by the neck, and they would twist their necks and break them in the fork, and they used to give the ducks to Mr. Morton, and fish too.”

Mrs. Buxton thought Mrs. Morton might tire herself, and that she had exerted herself and talked long enough, so reluctantly the visit came to an end, and she was driven back to 1190 West 12th Avenue in His Worship’s car; said she had enjoyed herself immensely, and saying “Goodbye,” entered her apartment.

EPILOGUE.

Extraordinary and remarkable almost beyond belief; that this beautiful afternoon we have entertained at a monumental edifice, the new City Hall, situated in a great metropolis ten miles wide by seven long, the

home of a quarter of a million people, one of the great seaports of a the world, and the second greatest in Canada, the wife of the first settler of Burrard Inlet, and of our city, and one who, even herself, saw our beautiful city as a wilderness of forest and swamp.

J.S. Matthews.

Rev. P.C. Parker, executor of John Morton, called at City Archives today, 8 February 1939, and tells me Mrs. Ruth Morton has lost her sight.

J.S. Matthews.

21 FEBRUARY 1938, 8 P.M. – “THE WHITE SANDS OF ENGLISH BAY.”

The telephone rang. A soft voice said faintly, “It is Mrs. Morton. Did you see the *Province* tonight, about the White Sands?” And then she added cheerily, “You have got it right, you have got it right.”

The widow of John Morton, first settler on Burrard Inlet was speaking to me, in reference to an article, “The White Sands of English Bay,” published tonight, Monday, 21 February, on the editorial page of the *Province*. It told of John Morton’s fascination for the white sands formerly at the foot of Denman Street, English Bay.

In no other city in the world could such a conversation have taken place; a conversation with a lady whose husband was the first man to settle, who had slept beneath the branches whilst erecting a first shelter, October 1862, and now a city ten miles wide by seven deep, of towering buildings, beautiful homes, three hundred churches, one hundred parks, and seventy schools.

J.S.M.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. ARCHIBALD MURRAY, WIDOW, 2423 WINDSOR STREET, AND 960 EAST EIGHTH AVENUE, AT CITY ARCHIVES, 11 JULY 1939.

GENEALOGY.

Mrs. Murray said: “I came to Vancouver in November 1889 from Brandon, Manitoba, where I had been for six months. My home town was Owen Sound, where I was educated. Father was James Rainey, and Mother, Mary Ann Cochrane, both originally Scotch, but both Mother and Father came from Ireland as children with my grandparents. Mother was just a baby at the time, and it took six weeks to cross the Atlantic in a sailing ship.

“Both grandparents Rainey and Cochrane settled, at first, in the province of Québec, and their children, my father and mother, moved to Owen Sound, where they thought they could do better. It was all bush and woods when they went there, but, as I recall our Rainey home at Owen Sound, it was one hundred and fifty acres of nice level farm land which Father had cleared; it was quite an old farm, with an orchard bearing fruit; stocked with cattle, and mixed farming. Father had developed it out of the wild.”

CHRIST CHURCH ROTHOUSE. FIRST POST OFFICE.

“I was married to Archibald Murray, November 10th 1891, in the ‘Roothouse’” (basement without church above) “of Christ Church, Georgia Street, by the Rev. Mr. Hobson, the first rector. Mr. Murray was a merchant tailor, had a store at first on Carrall Street, then a small wooden building in front of the Rosedale Dining Rooms on the north side of Hastings between Hamilton and Homer” (Miller’s first Post Office, see photo No. P. Bu. 13.) “Mr. Miller died in Toronto, December 17th 1931.

“Our only child is James Randolph Murray, who married Florence Batterson; he operated the Collingwood Garage, Kingsway, and lives on School Street. They have one child, a son, Clifford Murray, now twenty-one.”