

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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Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 5 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 5. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

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MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH ENVOY THOMAS JAMES MCGILL AND MRS. MCGILL, NÉE LAURA AIKENHEAD, BOTH OF THE SALVATION ARMY, NOW OF 4586 WEST SIXTH AVENUE, WHO VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS AFTERNOON, 11 SEPTEMBER 1945.

Mrs. McGill came carrying a small parcel and Envoy McGill drew a small book from his pocket.

SALVATION ARMY. TAMBOURINE. GEORGE HODSON.

Mrs. McGill: "This is not my tambourine; it belongs to Mrs. George Hodson, wife of Sergeant-Major Hodson of the Salvation Army Citadel on Gore Avenue; he has been Sergeant-Major for twenty-five years; they live at 4383 West 15th Avenue. Mrs. Hodson gave it to me to bring to you for your Archives. I asked Sergeant-Major Hodson if he had a spare tambourine he could spare, and the next time I saw him he said Mrs. Hodson would give hers. Here it is."

HALLELUJAH LASSIES. TIMBRELS.

"We had an early officer, his name was Archer, he could play the tambourine wonderfully well; the tambourine used to be used on the march and during the testimony meeting. They don't use it much now; the brass band takes its place; but in small towns they still use the tambourine; they use it over at North Vancouver. There is a woman soldier at the Citadel who plays the tambourine every Wednesday night. They used them in bible times. Mariam played the timbrels when they got through the Red Sea, and were rejoicing that the enemy had been drowned and they had escaped; we suppose that the timbrels were the same as the tambourine. I think the word tambourine is American. In ancient days the maidens played the timbrels on the march; in more recent days, the Hallelujah Lassies of the Salvation Army, but they don't do it so frequently now. You must thank Mrs. George Hodson for the tambourine."

SALVATION ARMY SONG BOOK. SALVATION ARMY IN YUKON.

Envoy McGill: "This is my song book, one of the early ones. I bought [it] in Winnipeg about 1890 where I was a Salvation Army Officer. First I was cadet, then lieutenant, then captain, then ensign, and then adjutant. I was adjutant in the Klondike in 1898. I was one of the pioneer Salvation Army party who went over the Chilcot Pass to establish the Army in Dawson, Y.T. The party started in Toronto; I joined them in Winnipeg, and we went by the steamer *Tees* from Vancouver to Skagway, then around to Dyea to get to the Chilcot Pass route for Dawson."

COMMANDER EVA BOOTH. GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH.

"Commander Eva Booth, she was General William Booth's daughter, she was with the party; she was in charge of Canada at the time; it was Commander Eva Booth who actually sent the party to the Klondike. When General Booth was in Seattle before the 'Rush' started, he saw so many people getting ready and heading for the Klondike, so he told his daughter to organise a party and send them north to the gold fields."

SALVATION ARMY, YUKON, 1898. KLONDIKE RUSH.

"The party was in charge of Adjutant George Dowell, and I was second in command, there was Ensign Morris, and Ensign Bloss, and Captain Keenie, and Captain Lecocq, and the two women were Rebecca Hennery and a Mrs. Lieutenant Aitken, who was a sort of nurse. Rebecca Hennery was Staff Captain. We had two detachable canoes, and we, that is the six men and two women, carried our packs and the two canoes, taken apart in three pieces, and we carried the lots over the Pass on our backs. That was the heaviest job I ever had in my life. We put the canoes together and had the time of our life in all those lakes, and the Thirty Mile River, and the Fifty Mile River. It was June; we were three weeks on the way; we must have left Winnipeg some time in the early part of May 1898. At the time it was the most northerly post the Salvation Army ever had, and I know of nothing further north since."

SALVATION ARMY, DAWSON, Y.T. WELCOME AND ESTABLISHMENT.

"When we got to Dawson we got the most amazing welcome. I had composed a Klondike Song; here it is; this is a copy of it; I composed it in Winnipeg. We were without what is called a 'Taking' song, and as I was a fairly good singer, I made up my mind that I would compose a song, and we sung it at all the meetings we had all the way to Dawson. But when we got to Dawson I venture to say there were about five hundred men—hardly a woman in sight—crowded on the main street, which was sawdust, and they lined the river bank. Why! The first collection was something like seventy dollars. We got a wonderful

reception. We had our tents with us, and we put them up on a piece of ground where the police told us to go and place them; the women had a small tent; the men had a big one; both square tents about twelve feet by sixteen feet. There were so many incidents in connection with the Dawson experiences that I really don't know where to start. Well, we went up river to cut logs to build a barracks, and we made them into a raft, but we didn't know much about working a raft. We floated down river, but when we were just about to Dawson we were on the opposite side to what we wanted to be, opposite side to Dawson City. The river is very wide there, and very swift. We managed to get snubbed a few miles down river, and then we took our canoes, and put bolsters across each end of the canoes, and loaded the logs on each side, and two men began to row, and one to steer, and the first thing to do was to cross the river. So we got across and between rowing and towing we managed to get our logs up past the City again, and this time on the bank we wanted them. Then we repeated that operation again and again until we got every log back. We were young and strong.

"The Salvation Army stayed in Dawson for years, and the first officers were followed by a regular succession of others.

SALVATION ARMY, SKAGWAY, ALASKA.

Mrs. McGill: "My husband" (Envoy McGill) "was farewelled from Dawson and sent to open up Skagway, and that is where I came into the picture. We were married in Victoria. I was Miss Laura Aikenhead, and we met in Victoria, and were married in the old Presbyterian Church—it was an Army wedding—we got the use of the church, and Dr. Campbell, Presbyterian minister, married us."

THE SALVATION ARMY AND THE "KLONDIKE RUSH," 1898.

Note: in May 1898, a party of eight members of the Salvation Army, six men and two women, left Toronto and Winnipeg to proceed via Vancouver, the steamship *Tees*, Skagway, Dyea, the Chilcoot Pass, lakes, Thirty Mile River and Fifty Mile River, to establish the Salvation Army in Dawson, Yukon Territory. Ensign Thomas James McGill was adjutant, and, lacking a song with a "swing" in it, he composed his own. It was sung, with gusto, at their meetings en route. Afterwards his party built their own log cabin at Dawson, hewing the logs with their own hands, floating them down river to the site, and then erecting the log cabin themselves. Their arrival at Dawson met with a most cordial and spontaneous welcome from a large crowd, probably five hundred, gold miners.

In August 1945, Envoy and Mrs. McGill participated in the solemn ceremony of the rededication of Hallelujah Point, Stanley Park, 22 August 1945, where Major Matthews, City Archivist, made their acquaintanceship. On 15 September following, Envoy McGill gave Major Matthews a manuscript of the song, McGill's Klondike Song.

MCGILL'S KLONDYKE SONG

Tune: "We're Going Back to Dixie"

When the General was in Seattle
Amid the noise and smoke of battle,
His heart went out in pity for the North,
The Commissioner took in the situation,
And arranged this expedition;
So now we're off to Klondyke for all we're worth.

Chorus

We're going to the Klondyke (repeat)
We're going after sinners in that land
We're happy lads and lassies
We're not afraid of passes
We're going to the Klondyke at God's command.

Here's Dowell, an old-timer,
And Keeney, he's a climber,
Lecocq and Bloss have been on men-of-war.