

## **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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managed to get up again and finally arrived at the hotel with his face badly burnt. Then he went out to see if there were any women around who had no place to sleep, and he brought back enough to fill the room and they all slept on the floor. There was great rejoicing when the men who had been fighting the fire met their wives.

I might say that my son Fred Macey was the first boy born after Vancouver got its name.

Yours sincerely,

*[signed]* Margaret Macey.

**MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH WILLIAM HENRY MACEY OF VANCOUVER (BROTHER TO SAMUEL THOMAS MACEY, DECEASED, THE FATHER OF THE FIRST WHITE CHILD BORN IN VANCOUVER), IN THE PRESENCE OF JOHN HAROLD MACEY, OF PRINCE RUPERT, HIS NEPHEW, AND SAMUEL MACEY'S SECOND SON, AT CITY ARCHIVES, 6 MAY 1936.**

**FIRST WHITE CHILD BORN IN VANCOUVER, 31 MAY 1886.**

Mr. Macey said: "Samuel Thomas Macey was my eldest brother, and we are sons of William Couch Macey and Sarah, née Vincent, of the town of Barry, Ontario; Father came originally from Dartmouth, Devonshire. My father went to Toronto when he was twenty-one; when it was 'Muddy York,' and came over the Atlantic in an old sailing ship; no steamers then. Mother came from the next county east of Devon when she was a little girl. They were married at Richmond Hill, near Toronto. Mother was a Methodist, Father what was known as Independent. They had nine sons and four daughters.

"Samuel, my eldest brother, went to Victoria in 1884; he was the only one of our family in British Columbia then. I came next in February 1885. Then, the first week in March 1886, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Thomas Macey, who were married in 1885 in a house in Victoria by the well-known Rev. Pollard, together with Miss Alice Macey and myself, came over to Gastown.

"Frederick Charles Macey was born right over there" (pointing out of the City Archives window, Temporary City Hall, 16 Hastings Street West) "on Hastings Street, north side, between Columbia Street and what was afterwards Westminster Avenue, now Main Street. After the fire, our home stood right up to the level of the street line, and was plastered on its front; in the rear was several shanties as shown here in this map." (Dakin's fire map of Vancouver, November 1889.) "The site is now, I think, about Slater's Meat Market" (119 East Hastings) "but I am not exactly sure. The house, after the fire, was right to the street line, plastered front, one storey, and had shanties in rear."

**THE GREAT FIRE, 1886. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.**

"At the time of the fire, we hardly knew what was going to happen; whether the fire would miss our place or not; it was jumping about. You know what Edward Cook says about the roof of the Presbyterian church being on fire before buildings nearer the fire caught fire. As he says, the fire was travelling irregularly. Our building would take fire far ahead of others; in the roofs; the fire was first catching here, then there; we did not know how it would end. So Sam put his wife's and sister's clothing in a trunk, left the trunk outside, and told his wife to leave the trunk where it was while he went down towards Water Street to see how the fire was progressing, and if it was coming our way. In the meantime, Mrs. Macey took her clothes out of the trunk, and put them back in the bureau, and when Sam came back he said to me, 'You take the baby,' and then told me, his wife, his sister Alice, and Father to go down to the False Creek bridge, which we did. After we had gone, Mr. Macey, not knowing that that the trunk had been emptied by his wife, threw the trunk, which should have been full but which was empty, into our dry well."

**WATER WELLS. DR. BECKINGSALE. A.C. FERGUSON.**

"Dr. Beckingsale lived across Hastings Street from us, and A.C. Ferguson had a house right on the lane behind the present Library.

"After we came to Vancouver we stayed here. As you know I voted at the first election." (He was present at the banquet to the surviving voters of the first election, 3 May 1886, given by the City Council, Hotel Vancouver, 4 May 1936.)

**BIRTH OF FIRST WHITE CHILD BORN IN VANCOUVER.**

“Who was nurse at the time of the birth of Fred I do not know, but Dr. Beckingsale was the doctor; I rather think Alice, my father’s sister, helped.”

**HIS WORSHIP T.F. NEELANDS.**

(His Worship) “Thos. F. Neelands, who was mayor of Vancouver, 1902 and 1903, boarded with us when he came, 1 March 1886, to Vancouver. He was engaged to my sister Nellie in Winnipeg; both are still living, in Vancouver. When Mr. Neelands was sick with typhoid fever, Nellie nursed him. I actually saw Frederick Charles Macey the day he was born in the Macey home on Hastings Street, and that was about two weeks before the fire, because the day of the fire Mrs. Macey was up and about.

“Sam made an arrangement, soon after we came here, with a contractor by the name of Gillies. Gillies owned a lot and Sam made a contract to work out the price of the lot. He had half worked it out when the fire took place, and after the fire Gillies came to him, and said, ‘We have lost everything; I don’t know how I am going to start up again. How about the lot?’ Sam said, ‘I will call that off,’ and gave him the agreement back. Gillies sold the lot to someone and went away, and that was the end of our home on Hastings Street.”

J.S. Matthews.

**FURTHER CONVERSATION WITH WILLIAM HENRY MACEY, 8 MAY 1936.**

**FREDERICK CHARLES MACEY. THE “GREAT FIRE,” 1886.**

Mr. Macey said: “The government sent us over a lot of bell tents, and then the Macey family got about ten dollars worth of lumber, and we built a rough lumber shed down on False Creek, just at the west end of Prior Street, where the B.C. Electric Car barns are now. Mrs. Sam Macey and my sister Alice, who came to Victoria from Ontario, with Margaret” (née Collins), “Sam’s wife, as a sort of chaperone, together with the baby” (Frederick Charles Macey) “lived in the bell tent. Sam, my brother, and myself, slept in the shack. Furniture? We made such as we had and could. The City gave away a lot of stuff; some people got everything they wanted, but we asked for nothing except a little food; we got that.”

**C. GARDNER JOHNSON.**

“About the Fire, and Sam’s escape. He arrived with his face burnt; he was with Gardner Johnson. You look up what Gardner Johnson tells as his experience; Sam, my brother, was the third man who lay down, face in the earth, to escape from the heat of the fire.”

Approved by Mr. Macey, 13 May.

J.S. Matthews.

**[LETTER FROM MRS. MARGARET MACEY.]**

June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1936.  
General Delivery  
Prince Rupert, B.C.

Mr. J.S. Matthews,  
City Archivist,  
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Sir:

Below I am writing further details of my experience of the Vancouver fire as requested by you.

**GREAT FIRE, 13 JUNE 1886. HIS WORSHIP, WM. TEMPLETON.**

When we left the hotel we went to a shack that my husband had built. All we had there was a bedstead made of boards nailed to the wall, a bundle of straw spread on the boards for a