

**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**

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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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**Contact Information**

City of Vancouver Archives  
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9  
604.736.8561  
archives@vancouver.ca  
vancouver.ca/archives



Yours sincerely,  
[signed] R. Mathison.

Kelowna, B.C.  
June 25, 1936.

Dear Major:

Hell is just a few doors away from me too but some air stirring helps a lot.

Thank you for the photo of 1886 proof and year of "Telegram" being issued, and for several copies of the "Province" with the 1886 program.

I'll try some of these days and give you something for your "Telegram" file.

**J.W. HORNE. TELEGRAM.**

J.W. Horne was the first financial backer, the others came in later on. My father was in Toronto when the order for type, etc., was received by Bob Patterson of Mitter and Richard, and he said it was wanted by express, and that would amount to over \$600.00. My father told him to send it, and anything else Horne wanted up to \$300,000.00, as he was good for it. As a matter of fact Horne at that time had property in Ward two alone amounting to \$320,000.00 as I jotted down the various amounts he mentioned to me in talking on Sunday evening.

I was "ad" man on the "Telegram" when it quit.

Yours sincerely,  
[signed] R. Mathison.

**MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH DR. ROBERT MATHISON, DENTIST, OF KELOWNA, B.C., WHO IS IN VANCOUVER ATTENDING CONVENTION OF PACIFIC COAST DENTISTS, HOTEL VANCOUVER, AND VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES, 4 JULY 1938.**

**FIRST BICYCLES.**

Dr. Mathison said: "I came to Vancouver in March 1886, and worked on getting out the first newspaper, the *Herald*. In 1887, the first bicycle in Vancouver was sent out to me; one of the old-fashioned type with one big wheel and one small wheel. An article was published once saying that Mr. Piper had the first bicycle, so I wrote to Mr. Piper, and he conceded that his bicycle was the first one with pneumatic tires—Dunlop tires, we called them—and that he had brought his out after mine."

**THE FIRST MONTHLY CALENDAR.**

"I got out the first calendar in Vancouver; you have one of the originals of them in my file. There were no calendars in Vancouver in the early part of 1886, so, after I went into the job printing business—that was after I left the *Herald*—I sent to Toronto to the firm where I had formerly worked as a job printer, and told them to get me out something for the rest of the year; the year was half over, 1886, so they prepared a calendar with six months on it, July to December 1886 only."

**MAYOR TEMPLETON'S DEATH. MAYOR OPPENHEIMER'S GERMAN ACCENT.**

"William Templeton lost his first electoral contest for mayor with David Oppenheimer; he made a bad mistake. There was a meeting, and he was last to speak; he imitated Mayor Oppenheimer's German accent; you could just feel the meeting grow cold; he tried to recover himself later, and did, but it was too late, he lost the election over that. Mayor Templeton's death was due to the excitement and disappointment of his defeat, in the election, and an overdose of sleeping potion."

### **KNIGHTS OF LABOUR. R.H. ALEXANDER.**

"I was asked to attend the meetings of the Knights of Labour, and did attend one or two, but, what cost R.H. Alexander the first election for mayor of Vancouver—he lost to Mayor MacLean—was that at one pre-election meeting of electors he said, we have enough 'days of labour' without 'Knights of Labour.'" (Note: also *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1, Gallagher narrative and elsewhere re "North American Chinamen.")

### **A MEMORANDUM WRITTEN BY DR. ROBERT MATHISON, D.S., OF KELOWNA, FOR REMARKS AT BOARD OF TRADE LAST LUNCHEON, CLOSING OF OLD HOTEL VANCOUVER. DR. MATHISON WAS SOLE CHARTER MEMBER PRESENT OF BOARD OF TRADE, 17 MAY 1939.**

#### **ALDERMAN NORTHCOTT. "C.P.R. TOWNSITE." BIG TREE. HOTEL VANCOUVER.**

The first Sunday I was in Vancouver, which was near the end of March 1886, Joe Northcott (later Alderman Northcott in Vancouver's first City Council) and I went for a walk to see a big tree which had been felled and lay diagonally across to where the Hudson's Bay store is now, and in so doing passed over the site of the Hotel Vancouver. We had gone in over a trail about where Granville Street is, and on returning we walked on fallen timber to about the corner of Homer and Cordova streets, only now and then stepping on the earth.

#### **PRINTING OFFICE. HASTINGS STREET. L.A. HAMILTON.**

I built a 12 x 25 foot shack on Hastings Street where Morris' tobacco shop is now, and opened a job printing office July 23, 1886, three days before I was 21 years old. My first job was Post Office box receipts and my second, agreements for Sale of Land for the C.P.R., given me by Mr. L.A. Hamilton, who was Assistant Land Commissioner.

#### **FIRST BICYCLE IN VANCOUVER.**

In March, 1887, I had my old high wheel bicycle sent out from Ontario—the first in Vancouver—and on my first trip down to the centre of things, corner of Carrall and Cordova streets, the *Daily Advertiser* had a local saying Bob Mathison came in from the country today on his wheel. He is a "daisy on wheels"—a slang expression of that time. When I built on Hastings Street there were only two buildings west of me—C.P.R. office building on the site of the present station and a bakery on Granville Street, half a block south of where the Post Office is now.

#### **FIRST CELEBRATION. QUEEN VICTORIA'S JUBILEE.**

Vancouver's first celebration, the Jubilee of Queen Victoria was held July 1 and 2, 1887. The day after it was over Mr. L.A. Hamilton came in and asked me for my account for printing for the committee of which he was Hon. Treasurer, saying they were getting short of funds and he thought I should have my money.

Other C.P.R. officials for whom I have kindly thoughts were Captain Webber, who brought Mr. Jim Fullerton, who succeeded him as Vancouver's only Mormon—ship's husband to the China and Japan line, and told him of the satisfactory work I had done for him.

#### **CHINAMEN. GOING TO SAN FRANCISCO.**

This was always a good account, particularly in 1888 when the C.P.R. boats were bringing ship loads of Chinamen across and taking them to San Francisco before the U.S. Exclusion law went into effect, as many special printed forms were needed.

D.E. Brown of the passenger department and Mr. Salsbury and William Downie also put considerable work in my hands.

#### **HOTEL VANCOUVER OPENING.**

When Hotel Vancouver opened I printed the dinner menu each day for a couple of months, but gave it up as it was inconvenient having to have my one press available for this job each afternoon.

The Dominion Government built the line from Port Moody to Savanas Ferry and gave it to the C.P.R.