

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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"The *Beaver's* ship's bell and ship's binnacle were removed from the wreck by Capt. Marchant, her master when she went ashore at Prospect Point, by order of my father, who owned her, and a bell was removed by the boy, Ralph Nickson" (son of J.J. Nickson, superintendent of construction, Capilano Water Works) "and subsequently given to the Vancouver Merchants Exchange, as you say, by his mother, Mrs. Nickson of Sechelt, is not, I know it is not, her ship's bell, but the bell from the dining saloon, which was rung at mealtime by the steward."

Note: the inscription—see photo N. Bo. 19—beneath the bell which hangs in the Vancouver Merchants Exchange, reads in part: "S.S. *Beaver*. First steamer on Pacific" (should be North Pacific) "etc., etc. ... The above relic—the bell from the *saloon*—was presented to the Exchange by Mrs. Nickson, etc."

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. HORI WINDEBANK, WELL-KNOWN PIONEER OF MISSION, B.C., WHO IS ON A THREE DAYS VISIT TO VANCOUVER, AND CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES TO CHAT, 30 SEPTEMBER 1936.

Mr. Windebank was born at Burton, Hampshire, 5 August 1852; is now 84 years of age. He states, "I always had money," but added to it as a successful boarding house proprietor in Australia, and returned to England, "They were advertising Manitoba so much that I returned this way" (trans-Canada) "and stayed." He came to Canada in 1882, was steam boating for a time on the lake at Winnipeg, then went to Assiniboia, and finally in 1886 came to British Columbia, settling at Mission, where he still lives, and among other things, owns one thousand acres of land all planted or in cultivation.

Mrs. Windebank, née Jane Barter, daughter of "an old sea captain" in the Old Country, died mid-summer 1936, and is buried at Mission. They were married at Portsmouth, England, and had been married fifty-eight years. There are no children, but an "adopted" (not legally adopted) daughter, Miss Chomat (pronounced Choma), who has been with them since she was a little girl; that is, 42 or 43 years, and Mr. Windebank states, "I have just been making a new will, and she takes 'what's left' when I go."

MISSION CITY, B.C.

Mr. Windebank, whose white hair still covers his entire head, and whose beard is also snow white, said: "I went to Mission when they were clearing the townsite. When I went there, there was only one building, and J.W. Horne, well known in Vancouver in early days—you know of him—owned it. I rented the building from Horne. J.W. Horne had purchased the townsite from Tretheway; it was the old Tretheway homestead or preemption. Of course, there were plans drawn. Merchon" (sic) "and Timberlake were the real estate agents, and Jack Leatherdale—he is some relation to Inspector Leatherdale; maybe he is the same man; he's on the police force of Vancouver now—was clearing the townsite. I had made a little stake—not very large—in the North West, so rented the only building and started a hotel. Then I wanted a license, but the people around there said they did not want anything like that; they wanted their town kept pure; but, however, I got the license, and some of those who had opposed it were my best customers. After I got the license they forgot how very strong temperance people they had believed themselves.

"Then, later, there was a special sale of land. A train, a special train, came with prospective buyers from Whatcom; they call it Bellingham now; a big train of people, and there was the usual real estate excitement."

JOHN MORTON OF BURRARD INLET.

"You have heard about Morton having a farm at Mission, on the river bank below the bridge." (See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2, Joseph Morton.) "I was nearly buying his Mission ranch. I started in Mission about 1889, and after a couple of years I got the original hotel license; Morton and I got especially friendly. I owned the butcher shop, and he had cattle to sell. I always found him fair to deal with; very fair; quite strict, though, but fair. I recall one smart fellow wanted to buy some cattle from him, but he started to brow beat the price down.

"He came to me and told me he could 'do nothing' with Morton, and asked me to act for him. I told him it was not much use trying to beat Morton down in a price; he knew what price he wanted, and that was the end of it. So I went down and I bought the cattle for the fellow easily enough, and at Morton's price. Morton asked the price he wanted for a thing, and that was all there was to it."

JOSEPH MORTON. ELIZABETH (LIZZIE) MORTON (MRS. THORTON OF SARDIS.)

“But what I was telling you about was Morton, and the ranch. I often wondered what was the ultimate disposal of the ranch.” (Note: it was sold by Morton’s executors.) “You know all about Joe” (Morton’s son.) “As I said, Morton and I became very friendly; we had been speaking about Joe, at least, he had. It was just before his” (John Morton’s) “death. Well, about Joe. Morton told me he had offered Joe the ranch at Mission if he could go and live on it, but Joe wouldn’t. Mind you, I was friendly with Joe, too. Joe was afterwards longshoring down here in Vancouver.

“I had been dickering with Morton about buying the ranch which he had offered to Joe if he would come up and live on it. Well, what do you suppose Morton told me Joe’s answer was. Morton told me Joe said, well, it was something pretty rude and vulgar.

“So Morton told me he was going to deed the ranch to Lizzie. I often wondered if he did.”

SECOND MRS. JOHN MORTON.

“I don’t know for sure, but I think Mrs. John Morton, his second wife, who is still living, was governess, or something like that, for Morton’s before his first wife died.”

FIRST WATER WORKS, MISSION. FIRST ELECTRIC LIGHT, MISSION. FIRST COLD STORAGE, MISSION.

“Off and on, I have run almost every kind of business at Mission. Hotel, bar, postmaster, butcher, farmer, I put in the first waterworks, the first electric light, the first cold storage, I have been a little of everything, and am now the ‘Mission Gas and Storage Co.’”

The especial object of our call was to hear of Dr. William A. Briggs, O.B.E., D.D., M.D., F.R.G.S, a neighbour and esteemed friend of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, and the whole evening was devoted to a discussion of the life and endeavours of this distinguished benefactor of Vancouver, whom Mrs. Wilson tersely described as “a charming gentleman and a clever man.” Dr. Briggs presented the City Museum with a remarkable collection of Siamese relics, principally china and crockery, etc. (See Dr. W.A. Briggs file.)

Approved by Mrs. Wilson as correct as to fact, 24 September 1937.

J.S. Matthews.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH (EX-)ALDERMAN C.H. WILSON AND MRS. WILSON, AT THEIR LARGE RESIDENCE IN EXTENSIVE GROUNDS AT 3200 WEST KING EDWARD AVENUE (FORMERLY 25TH AVENUE), DUNBAR HEIGHTS, FRIDAY EVENING, 17 SEPTEMBER 1937.

Mrs. Wilson graciously called for Mrs. Matthews and myself, and upon our arrival at her home, we found the Misses Campbell, daughters of the late Roderick Campbell awaiting us. Mr. Wilson is of the firm of Crowe and Wilson, 441 Seymour Street; his former partner being the late Senator S.J. Crowe, also an alderman of Vancouver.

Mr. Wilson came to Vancouver 4 July 1886. In 1900 he purchased twenty acres in a swamp west of the old North Arm Road, now Fraser Avenue, from the Provincial Government, paying two thousand dollars for it, and ultimately sold it for twenty-one thousand dollars. In consequence, Wilson Road, now 41st Avenue, East and West, came to be named in his honour; and in addition, Wilson Heights, Wilson Hill, and Wilson Heights Church. He was an alderman of the old City of Vancouver in 1902, 1903, 1904, and 1905.

Alderman and Mrs. Wilson were married at Christ Church, Vancouver, in 1906.

Prior to making a tour of Australia and New Zealand in 1913, Mr. and Mrs. Wilson had acquired their estate of five acres, a delightful spot on the “very” crest of Dunbar Heights, and at a time when all that area was either forest or forest clearing. One thousand dollars per acre was paid for the land, and during their absence in Australia on tour, a gardener was busy on the site of their future home; the gardener lived in a hut of cedar shakes which had been the shack of an old logging camp at or near the corner of Balaclava Street and 25th Avenue, and at the end of a corduroy skid road leading down by easy grades through the forest to salt water near the English Bay Cannery on Point Grey Road (west of Bayswater