

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 elder Alexander must have been a wonderful man; I never knew him personally, but from what I have heard. He was born in Scotland and went to Australia, and sailed his vessel from Australia to San Francisco." (See fuller details in McLean file.) "Billy Saunders and Dave Bailey, half-breeds, used to tell me about him. He sailed the *Rob Roy* from San Francisco to Puget Sound without any nautical instruments other than a clock; no sextant, or quadrant—that was quite a feat; found his position by dead reckoning. And he had his wife and family with him.

"The account in the *Province* says he had a lot of cattle on the *Rob Roy*, 250 head or something, but I don't think she could carry more than ten or twelve; she was only a little thing; he must have made a number of trips and got a few at a time. They had a lot of trouble with the river water in those days; the Pitt River was not dyked, and the river water and tide was continually backing up; his farm was below the Pitt River bridge on the west bank.

"Old Mr. Alexander had two sons, Donald and Alexander. Donald's farm was highest up the Pitt River, and his house stood well back from the river; the *Rob Roy* was in the mud of the bank in front of his house; Alexander's, or 'Alex's' was further down the river, adjoining, west bank; between that the knob of a hill called Mary Hill at the mouth of the Coquitlam River; the *Rob Roy* was lying nearest Donald's house. The last time I saw her would be, well, about 1896.

"The younger Alexander McLean was born in 1852, and died in Vancouver in the summer of 1932. There is an old Scotch adage that 'Every McLean has a boat of his own,' and the McLeans of Pitt River were no exception; the younger Alex took to sculling; was a famous oarsman, and rowed on the Fraser River against the world's champion sculler." (I think Ned Hanlan. JSM.) "He staked his farm, or rather mortgaged it, and he lost the race and he lost his place" (farm) "and went up to Kamloops, and was ferryman there for some years.

"But the old man, the elder Alexander, must have been a wonderful man from what I have heard."

(Note: and so was the son Alex, whom I knew personally; a fine fellow, indeed, perhaps a bit wild in his youth, but a great athlete, Scotsman, and a venerable figure in his old age. J.S.M.)

Corrected and approved by Col. McMillan, 4 November 1936.

J.S. Matthews.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH J.C. MCPHERSON, PRESIDENT AND MANAGER, MESSRS. PEMBERTON REALTY CORPORATION LTD., REAL ESTATE AND FINANCE, HOWE AND HASTINGS, 17 OCTOBER 1939.

TALTON PLACE.

Mr. McPherson said: "Talton Place was the first properly organised building project in the City of Vancouver; it was commenced in the spring of 1910. It derives its name from Thomas Talton Langlois, a well-known pioneer of Vancouver, and organiser and president of the B.C. Permanent Loan and Savings Company, and Pacific Coast Fire Insurance Co. Talton Place extends from the Vancouver-Marpole interurban track to Cypress Street, and from the old city boundary on the north side of Sixteenth Avenue to the south side" (inclusive) "of Thirteenth Avenue; six city blocks.

"We purchased the property from the Canadian Pacific Railway, paying an average of fifteen hundred dollars per fifty foot lot. The actual site was chosen because of its commanding position, at a point high above the smoke of the city, overlooking English Bay, and at that time on the outskirts of the 'old' City of Vancouver. To the south and west there was practically no development at all; the land lay in clearing and in stumps; a few houses, to the north, scattered on the brow of the hill overlooking Kitsilano Beach. The ground where commencement was made was level, with gradual slope to the north.

"Construction of about twelve houses were commenced on Fourteenth and Fifteenth avenues simultaneously; the concrete sidewalks and curbs laid, and trees and shrubs planted upon the boulevards. The houses which were of the California bungalow type, and very modern at that time, were set back thirty-five feet from the property line; over one million and a quarter dollars was expended in the development of this model residential area.

“Mr. Langlois had visited Los Angeles, where he had seen the activities of the Los Angeles Investment Company who had undertaken, in Los Angeles, a similar construction programme, and in a very large way. Upon his return the Prudential Builders Ltd. was organised, and a large plant started for manufacturing houses—many of them the ‘ready made’ type—at their factory on Dufferin Street, now 2nd Avenue West. I was in charge of the sales at Talton Place from the beginning to the end.

“The houses were good houses; very well built by the ‘ready made’ plan; that is, they were built at the factory, fitted, then pulled down, transported to Talton Place, and the walls re-erected; it was a scheme which, actually, had been originated by the Prudential Builders Ltd. to meet the needs of a host of new settlers establishing themselves in the prairie provinces. The Royal City Mills, E.C. Mahoney, manager, on Carrall Street, False Creek, had the patent on that type of construction. Ultimately, upon my representation to the directors that the houses were too expensive, that type of construction was abandoned.

“We sold vacant lots from \$2,500 for inside lots to \$3,000 for corners. Where homes were erected upon them, and all ready for occupancy, the homes sold from \$6,000 for the lowest, to a brick one on seventy-five feet on Sixteenth Avenue, I sold for \$14,000; many were sold on the installment plan.

“Following the outbreak of the Great War, the Dominion Trust Co. went bankrupt; this similarly affected the National Finance Co., and in turn the Prudential Builders Ltd. The factory on 2nd Avenue West was subsequently destroyed by fire.

“I repeat, it was the first organised attempt of home building in Vancouver, and long before the institution of the Town Planning Commission. There were difficulties and vicissitudes, of course, but today, thirty years after, Talton Place, as a locality, is as neat and picturesque as any similar one I know of.”

Approved, 18 October 1939.

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MISS K.H. MCQUEEN, 1453 LAURIER STREET, VANCOUVER, DAUGHTER OF THE LATE ALDERMAN JAMES MCQUEEN OF VANCOUVER, 30 MARCH 1937.

ALDERMAN MCQUEEN. MAGISTRATE MCQUEEN.

Miss McQueen said: “Alderman James McQueen was born in the township of Beverley, Ontario, Wentworth Co., in 1839, and came to Vancouver in September 1891. In 1873 he married Mary Jane Whetham, and their children were:

Miss Ann McQueen, unmarried.

Miss K.H. McQueen (myself).

[*Magistrate*] George R. McQueen, who is now a Police magistrate at the City Police Court.

“Just the three of us. Father served as Alderman on the City Council, and of course was brother-in-law to James Whetham, Dr. James Whetham, M.D. and executor of his estate. Dr. Whetham died in March 22nd 1891. He had built the Whetham Block on the northeast corner of Cambie and Cordova streets.”

DR. JAMES WHETHAM, M.D. CHARLES WHETHAM. WHETHAM BLOCK.

“My uncle James had extensive interests in and about Vancouver; he was quite wealthy. His brother Charles, Charles Whetham, M.A., of Toronto University, was principal of the first private school for boys, the ‘Whetham College,’ which occupied quarters in the Sir Donald Smith block, at the southeast corner of Granville and Georgia, where Birks jewellery store is now; it was the first private school for boys in Vancouver. Dr. James Whetham is a wealthy man, and it was he who financed the school.”

“NEWCASTLE.” COAL. CAPILANO INDIAN RESERVE. WEST VANCOUVER.

“As you will see by this letter, he received permission from the Indian Department at Ottawa to prospect for coal on the Indian Reserve at the First Narrows, in December 1889.”

Note: “Newcastle” is shown on Admiralty charts as a place on the West Vancouver shore just outside the First Narrows, and as mentioned in the report of 4 March 1890 by Mayor Oppenheimer to the effect that efforts to discover coal there have been commenced. (See Mayor Oppenheimer’s brown book with title outside, *Mayor David Oppenheimer*, Vancouver. JSM.)