

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 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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72ND SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS, TITLE.

Major Matthews: Why did they call them Seaforths?

Col. Sclater: "Oh, I don't know; suppose I knew once, but I don't know now."

Note: see Pipe-Major Hector MacKenzie's narrative, 6 October 1939, as to why they were given the name "Seaforth." No evidence has, so far, presented itself to show that the name was especially applied for, and, though I was very active in militia circles—in the 6th D.C.O.R.—neither then nor since has anyone ever mentioned to me why the title was chosen. Col. Leckie, the first commanding officer, was practically a stranger to Vancouver; it is extraordinary that Col. Sclater—so keen to become one of them, and so active at that time—does not know. It would seem that Mr. MacKenzie's explanation is right; perhaps the documents at Ottawa show.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. AND MRS. FRANK J. SCOTT OF R.D. No. 5, WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A., WHO VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES DURING THEIR VISIT TO VANCOUVER TO WELCOME THEIR MAJESTIES THE KING AND QUEEN, 23 MAY 1939.

MR. AND MRS. FRANK J. SCOTT. OBEN AND SCOTT. JOHN OBEN. PHILLIP OBEN.

Mr. Scott said: "We have been coming up to Vancouver for twenty years; at last we have come, to see the King and Queen. Mrs. Scott is American; I was born in Toronto, 20th May 1879; then our family went to Plattsmouth, Nebraska, then moved to Vancouver in the fall of 1887; left it in 1895 for San Francisco, California. John Oben was my father's partner; he was my uncle; so was Phillip Oben; we are staying with his sister, Mrs. C.J. Neville, 3231 School Road, South Vancouver."

Major Matthews: Do you recollect much about early Vancouver, Mr. Scott?

DEADMAN'S ISLAND, LAST BURIAL. EARLY CEMETERIES. CHINESE. WEST END SCHOOL, 1888. MINNIE McCORD. KANAKA RANCH.

Mr. Scott: "I remember the last burial on Deadman's Island. I was just a school boy; went to the West End school which was erected in 1888; that was my first school; Minnie McCord was one of the pupils of the same school; she lived down with her mother, who was half Indian, down on the Kanaka Ranch, about half way between Denman Street and Nicola and the entrance to the park. And I went to school with Mrs. J.Z. Hall. I was standing on Georgia Street when the Chinese funeral went past; that was the last burial on Deadman's Island."

FIGS. DUCKS. WEST END. FALLING THE FOREST. OBEN'S CAMP. KANAKA RANCH.

"The coffin was on a spring wagon, drawn by horses, and followed by another spring wagon with a whole roast pig—or hog—and many roast ducks, and Chinese delicacies, and numerous Chinese in Chinese costume and pigtails. Following the improvised hearse was a Chinese standing on the back end of the rear spring wagon; he was distributing small pieces of thin paper with a Chinese inscription—the name of the dead person on it—to those who were following. I was standing about Nicola Street, at the foot of the hill; I did not follow the funeral, but at that time—this will help you to establish the date—the forest was still standing in the West End from about Nicola Street to Coal Harbour and the park; that is, with the exception of a little clearing about Denman Street where my uncle Phillip Oben had his camp at the Kanaka Ranch."

MOUNTAIN VIEW CEMETERY. DEADMAN'S ISLAND. BRIDGES. PARK ROAD.

Major Matthews: Well, Mountain View Cemetery was opened about January or February 1887; how was it they were not burying the dead Chinamen there?

Mr. Scott: "At that time they would not allow Chinamen to be buried in Mountain View, so he had to be buried on the island. The way I know the date—that it was after the park road was built—is because the first time I ever saw the road around Stanley Park, it was covered with white clam shells, and the funeral was after that."

"In order to get the funeral to the island they had to go at low tide. Afterwards they built a small bridge, a small foot bridge, and—I was a boy—I was one of the first to cross it; I remember them building it. But at the time of the Chinese funeral there was no bridge, but they could walk across when the tide was out; you can do it even today. The first time I ever got onto the island I got there without wet feet; there was a sandy bar across; no wet feet."

LORD STANLEY, GOVERNOR GENERAL. STANLEY PARK.

"I remember Lord Stanley coming and taking a drive around the park, and I was not at the dedication ceremony" (October 1889.) "All the school children in Vancouver were assembled; there were not many of us; and they had a sort of little grandstand in a park in front of the old Hotel Vancouver" (Howe, Granville, Georgia streets) "and we sang songs; I don't remember what they were. Then at the entrance to the park there was an arch with the word 'STANLEY' on it, and they had decorations."

FIRST WATER WORKS.

"I remember the time they put the water pipes across the Narrows and the trouble they had." (Subject inadvertently discontinued.)

FIRST DANCE OR BALL IN THE WEST END. STUMPS.

"The first dance they had in the locality where the old Hotel Vancouver stands today was on top of a big cedar stump; anyway, that was what I was told, and I suppose it was in the daytime. The stump had a great big flat top which would accommodate four couples, or four 'sets,' as they called them, and do the old time square dance. I was told they did it on top of that old stump."

VANCOUVER OPERA HOUSE.

"Then I saw them lay the cornerstone of the old Vancouver Opera House, now the Lyric Theatre."

NORTH VANCOUVER, FIRST BUILDING.

"The first building in North Vancouver was a little holiday resort; they had just a little bit of a building, and a floating landing where the tugs could land." (Probably Tom Turner's.)

COURT HOUSE SQUARE. WILD DUCKS. PHILLIP OBEN. "VERY SWAMPY IN PLACES."

"That piece of ground where the Court House stands was very swampy; I should say, roughly, now bounded by Howe, Robson, Burrard and Georgia; I have seen wild ducks in it; Phillip Oben, my uncle, shot ducks in that swamp."

(Note: see Royal Engineer's survey sketches of 1863 marked "very swampy in places." Also see George Cary, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2, where he says he shot ducks in that swale where the Court House now stands.)

SALMON. HORSESHOE BAY.

"My sister and brother took me yesterday over for a drive to Horseshoe Bay; they wanted me to go trolling salmon, but we did not go, but I told them about catching salmon in the early days there."

WEST VANCOUVER. "BIG BAY." FIRST NARROWS. INDIAN CANOES.

"As a boy, I fished in the First Narrows; just outside the First Narrows—west of Capilano Creek—there was a bay there we called 'Big Bay,' and I used to fish from a small Indian canoe; at that time there were many Indian canoes about the Narrows, and I had to keep the canoe on an even keel, so I would put a good-sized rock in one end of the canoe to hold it down in the water.

"I had a partition in the canoe near the bow, and I kept the rock in that partition, and it was a common occurrence to have to throw the rock overboard, I had caught so many salmon. Used a spoon; all spoon fishing in those days."

CHIEF CAPILANO JOE. INDIAN CHURCH, CAPILANO. FIRST C.P.R. TRAIN.

"I had learned to talk a little Chinook; could converse a little with the Squamish Indians in Chinook. One day I was sitting on a log in front of the old Indian church at Capilano, now deserted and gone to decay" (near Chief Joe's cottage) "and I talked to the old lady" (Indian) "and Chief Capilano Joe. I knew the old man quite well, and he told me of the coming of the first whiteman, and of the first C.P.R. trains. I don't

remember what he told me about the first whitemen coming, but about the first trains, he told me how the whitemen fooled him on the speed of trains. He said, 'I take my musket, and I shoot, and whiteman tell me train go so fast as slug'" (bullet) "'from musket to crane'" (heron.) "'I wanted to see that, so I take my klotch and we got to Port Moody, and wait several days until train come in. When train come in I buy a ticket to Langley. I had my musket with me, powder flask, and then I get on the train.'" (Note: it was a work train with cabooses and flat cars.) "'When train start to move I get frightened, and throw off my musket and powder flask.' Then the old chief grunted, 'Ugh,' and continued, said, 'He not go so fast, and when I come back I look for my musket and he's gone.'

"That was old Chief Capilano."

Read and approved by Mr. Scott, 30 May 1939, who said also that he and Mrs. Scott enjoyed immensely witnessing the procession of King George and Queen Elizabeth.

J.S. Matthews.

CONVERSATION WITH MR. CALVERT SIMSON, FORMERLY STOREKEEPER AND POSTMASTER, HASTINGS SAWMILL.

HASTINGS SAWMILL OFFICE.

"I came here in 1884. The photograph of the Hastings Sawmill sent you by Miss Lawson of Victoria must have been taken in the 'seventies'; it is strange to me. When I came here, Charlie Coldwell, Capt. Soule and Rev. Ditcham were living 'on the hill.'

"The old office burned down in the winter of 1884-5; date according to old Mr. Davidson. I was at the fire; a new office was built; that will explain the slight difference in the office as shown in Miss Lawson's photo and subsequent photos of the office. Charlie Coldwell told me of how the Indians worked so hard to save the books, and that he" (Coldwell) "had a bottle of rum and wanted to give them a 'snort,' but Mr. Alexander, who was a magistrate and knew it was illegal to give Indians liquor, turned his back."

THE GREAT FIRE, 1886.

"The woman, Miss Mary Raymur Lawson, writes about as being so badly burned, was taken out of a well down in Gastown, and carried down to the Hastings Sawmill. She, and boy, got down in a well, and the hot fumes burned the skin off her. I got a bottle of carbolated oil from the store, and took scissors, and slit her dress open right to her chin, right up the middle of the bosom; she was lying on a mattress; I got lint, soaked it in the carbolated oil, and wrapped it around her. The boy got better, but she died."