

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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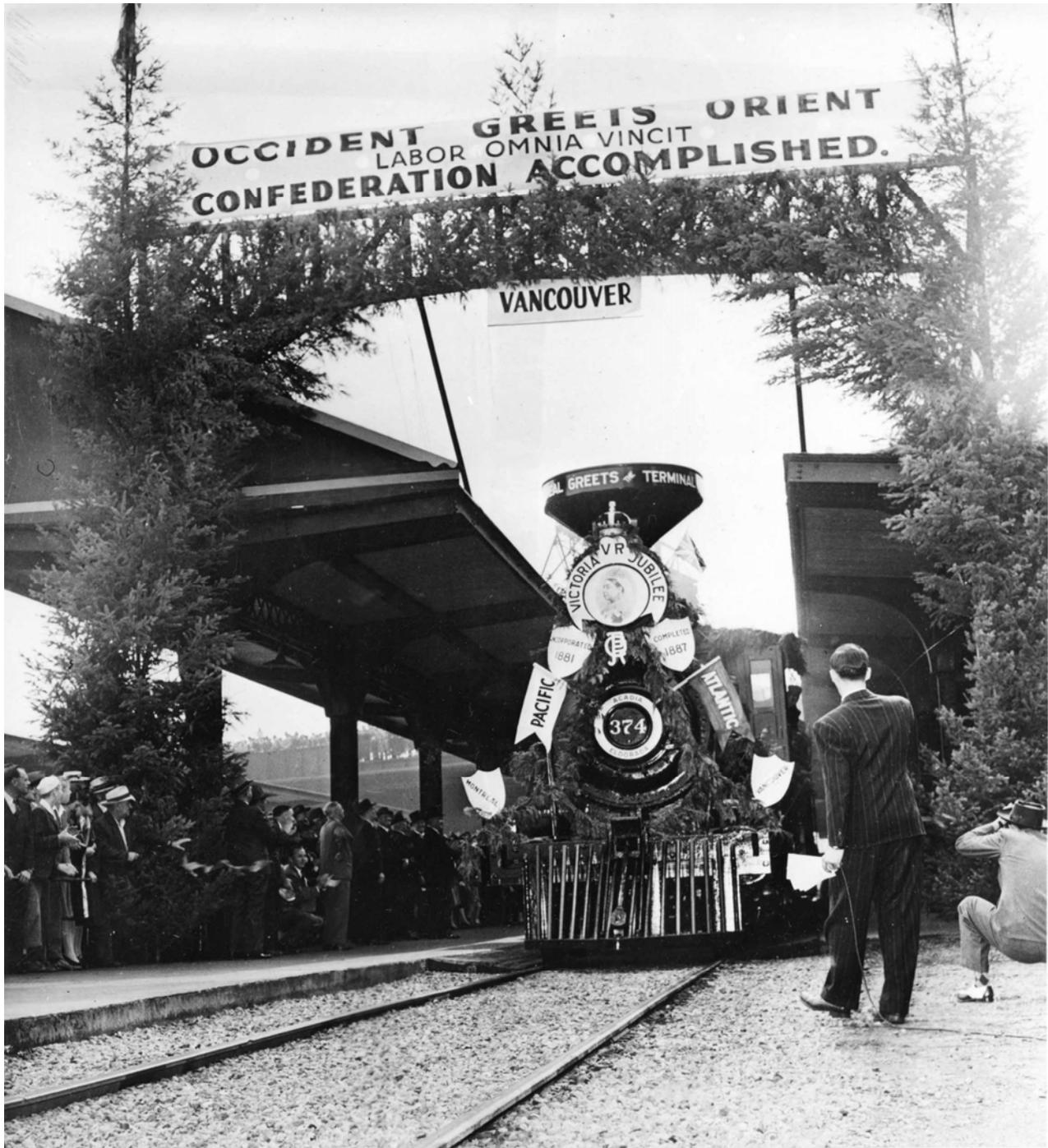
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CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY LOCOMOTIVE NO. 374.

On 23rd May, 1887, it drew into Vancouver, the first trans-Canada passenger train. It passed under an arch of evergreens, cut a blue ribbon stretched across the track, and stopped on a narrow ledge twixt cliff and sea at the foot of Howe St. On 22nd August, 1945, after 58 years, it came again, as the gift of the Canadian Pacific Railway to the Citizens of Vancouver, to be welcomed by a host of pioneers and other citizens, and greeted by the noisy blowing of whistles in the harbour. As a memento of great achievement, it will rest in a public park.

Delmar Portrait Studio.

Item # EarlyVan_v5_047

[photo annotation:]

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PRESENTATION OF LOCOMOTIVE NO. 374 BY THE CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY TO THE CITIZENS OF VANCOUVER.

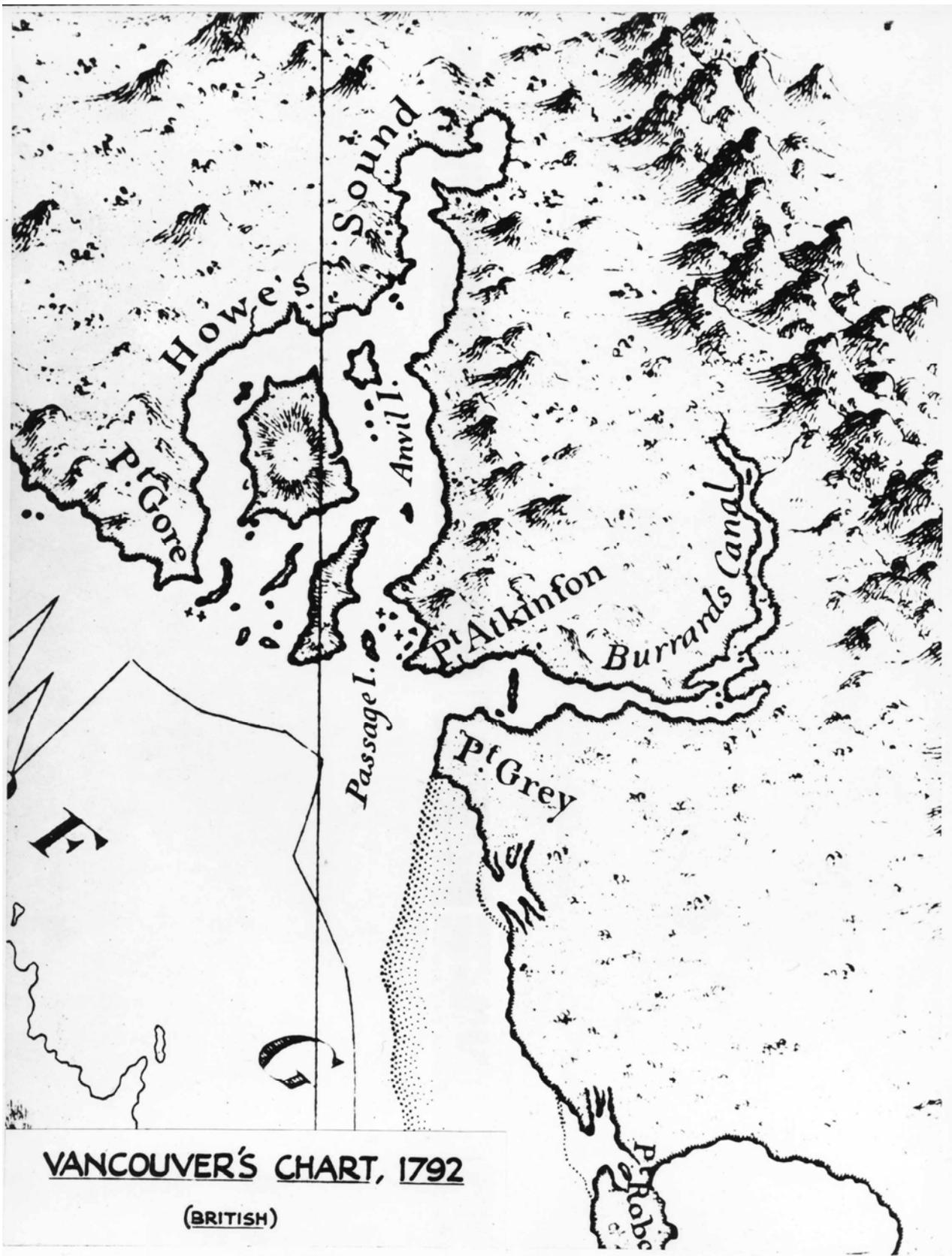
At a complimentary banquet to Charles A. Cotterell, Esq., Assistant General Manager, Canadian Pacific Railway, and other officials, and to two hundred pioneers of Vancouver, given in the Stanley Park Pavilion by the Board of Park Commissioners, Vancouver, 22 August 1945.

THE ADDRESS.

Mr. Chairman, (R. Rowe Holland, Esq., Chairman, Park Commissioners), Your Grace, Mr. Cotterell, Your Worship, Ladies and Gentlemen; with especial emphasis upon those of the Canadian Pacific Railway:

The message which comes to you in this, your Diamond Jubilee year, comes through the medium of the humble spokesman standing before you. It is the sentiment of the multitude; a multitude of men and women, some of whom have gone, some of whom are present here tonight, and others, the countless thousands, of the decades and centuries of a Vancouver as yet unborn. And, not alone of Vancouver, but of all Canada and even beyond; a great host, past, present and future. They are bowing their acknowledgment to that great corporate body, the Canadian Pacific Railway, without which Canada, as we know it today, could not have been. The great railway was the dream of our fathers, men of vision, energy and courage; we are of their blood and their bone, and we, their sons and daughters, are neither unmindful nor forgetful. All that we are and all that we ever shall be, we owe to them. There is but one way in which we can repay our indebtedness. It is that by so conducting ourselves that our posterity, in turn, will be equally indebted to us, and that this is being attempted one has but to observe the ceaseless progressiveness of the Canadian Pacific, ashore and afloat; the sagacious devotion of the Parks Commissioners to their self-imposed tasks; the energetic activity of the Board of Trade, and the humanity to the distressed of the Salvation Army, all of whom have contributed in full to today's delightful celebration.

Through the astute advice of Mr. Cotterell, General Manager in British Columbia, and the generosity of Mr. Coleman, President, and other Directors of the railway, the Citizens of Vancouver have been presented with an old locomotive, Number 374, which drew the first transcontinental passenger train into Vancouver, 23rd May 1887. The old thing is useless; has no value now save as scrap iron, and is none too beautiful to look at. Still, we are going to much trouble to preserve it; it will be placed in a public park; the curious will take pictures of it, and we shall relate its story with pride. We shall cherish it as a symbol and a tradition, for it reminds us of the greatness of great men, great deeds, and great events. It is one of the tools with which "The Builders" created their great work, and to their memory we do not deem it beneath our dignity to bend a stubborn knee in gratitude.



Item # EarlyVan_v5_049

Then the Spanish, in their leisurely way, colonized Mexico, and the Russians colonized "Russian America," our Alaska, and the Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay, gathered furs, ever wending westwards until there was prairie no more; they had reached the Rockies and entered. With the Spaniard creeping up from the south, and the Russians creeping down from the north, soon the twain must meet and if, as some said, there actually was a passage by water across New Britain, as part of Canada was called, the British had better hurry, or they would find their access to the "Western Sea" cut off, and its shores in possession of another nation ... Capt. George Vancouver was hastened off to find out. What Vancouver was attempting when he entered our First Narrows, and was stopped by land at Port Moody, was to sail across by water to our Calgary and our Winnipeg, and so reach Hudson's Bay and England by that short cut. Vancouver went back and reported to the British Admiralty there was no passage.

Meanwhile much had happened. The Battle of the Plains of Abraham gave Canada to the British, and the War of Independence took the New England colonies away, long years before Capt. Vancouver, in 1792, was the first European to peer into our beautiful harbour. In 1492 Columbus had entered the Caribbean Sea on America's eastern shore; three centuries—three hundred long years—elapsed before white faces reached its western one on the Pacific Slope at Vancouver. Of all the hordes of Asia, and the hosts of Europe, and the five million Europeans resident on the Atlantic coast of America, not one pair of eyes, of white, black or yellow man had glimpsed our land-locked harbour, a forgotten haven in an old and densely populated world, and into which, last year, 27,000 vessels, great and small, followed where Vancouver led.

Even a mere lifetime ago, eighty-six years, geographical knowledge was so scant that, in 1859, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada gravely ordered printed, with maps, a proposal to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by wagon road, lake navigation, and passenger steamers running on the Fraser River, two hundred and fifty miles from its headwaters to an imaginary city, called "Albert City," on the site of the present Vancouver on Burrard Inlet. How the vessels were to pass through Hell's Gate and other rocky canyons, where fish only can go, is not explained.

"Much might be sacrificed on the land route," reported Admiral Richards, of Richards Street, "to secure this good anchorage; English Bay is the natural terminus on the Pacific shore." In the Rockies, with unconquerable endurance, that staunch coterie, the stouthearted thoughtful surveyor, and his hardy axeman, stumbled and tumbled, struggling with heavy packs on their shoulders, over peak and into chasm, around rocks and through devil's club, to locate a path wide enough for two rails, through two hundred miles of the most rugged impregnable terrain in the world. All courage is not of the battlefield nor fame of marble halls; these men were men of peace; their conquest was of the wilderness; there is no blood on their escutcheon. Finally, in 1878, the decision was made; Burrard Inlet was chosen as the terminus.

And what of those in the West; in the Crown Colony of British Columbia? Men asked, "Have you seen Bill lately," and the answer came, "No; he went to Canada"; a nebulous place most had heard about; few had ever seen, and some even uncertain where it was, except that it was far to the east where the sun rose, far over the Rockies, and reached by going south to Panama.

"The Builders"—proud title—from general manger, shovelman, powder boss with his black powder and its white smoke, and the locomotive engineer, commenced their labours. "Ned" Austin, Foreman at Port Moody, built a float of logs, lowered a small locomotive from a steamer's deck to it and he and his gang sweated as they dragged it up the beach. They set off to build eastwards to meet Van Horne coming West. Sir William, energetic but most giant, cried impatiently, "Push on; push on," and every mile of steel laid was elixir to his soul. Paul Marmette drew plans for bridges, and James Fagan, last of the old officials made notes; both are with us tonight. Others, Mr. Abbott, Cambie, Hamilton, Salsbury, Dana, Downie, Wilgress, Johnson have passed away, but their kin are here, seated beside you. There is no memorial; no statue bears their names. If you would see their monument, buy a railway ticket and ride upon it.

Finally, one inclement morn, Sir Donald Smith and his few took five minutes off to drive the last iron spike; the mighty effort finished. Sir Donald telegraphed the Queen; Victoria the Good. The

snow came and hid the C.P.R. from sight; there were no trains that winter; no snow sheds; no snow plows. Next spring an army of men shoveled the snow off. Canada, at last, was whole.

Granville, or "Gastown"—now Vancouver—was one block long; a cluster of primitive dwellings ranged about a crescent beach, Water Street from Carrall to Abbott Street, and facing the mountains; behind was the blackberry bramble where countless frogs croaked in the swamp, now Hastings Street. The other three sides of a twenty acre clearing was towering forest along Hastings Street from Victory Square to Pioneer Place. Two men, side by side, stood together; high in the tree tops above them the summer zephyrs gently swayed the branches. "Hamilton!" said Van Horne, "Hamilton, this is destined to be a great city; perhaps the greatest in Canada, and we must see to it that it has a name commensurate with its dignity and importance, and VANCOUVER it shall be if I have the ultimate decision." Hamilton, whose gracious widow died six weeks ago, stalked over to one corner of the clearing, now Victory Square, drove a survey stake with a nail in the top in the ground, and commenced, in the jungle, to lay out the streets and blocks of a new Vancouver; a city on paper; all else was primeval forest. Down came the trees, and the tinderous mass, twenty feet thick, lay drying in the summer sun. "Fire, fire." It was all over in forty-five minutes; a grand but awful sight. That night the first Vancouver lay stark to the bare black earth. "What rebuilt Vancouver?" I asked, and a pioneer survivor answered, "Faith. It was all we had left."

Another summer comes; it is the 23rd of May, the eve of the good Queen's birthday in the Golden Jubilee of her reign. The City Council, formally adjourns—"to meet the train." All Vancouver—there were not very many—is gathering above or below the cliff at the foot of Howe Street. The Indians at "The Mission," North Vancouver, seeing a long black thing twisting its way along the distant shore at the Second Narrows, and hearing the long hooo, hooo, hooo of its whistle, stood and pondered; might it be that their legendary snake, Qoitchetahl, reputed to be several hundred feet long, was coming back. Locomotive No. 374 kept right on, just as it did today, and then ran out on the trestle bridges which spanned sections of the beach. Railway men in overalls can be as gracious as palace courtiers. Pete Righter, engine driver, chivalrously stepped back with a bow and a "Will you take her in, sir." Major Johnson, Master Mechanic, beside him, gently touched the throttle in token. "Jim" Boyd, the contractor, is nervous; his men barely managed to drive the last nail into the new wood plank roadway down Granville Street to the station as the train pulled in. The band is there; only five or six musicians, but still, "The band." And, too, the Volunteer Fire Brigade, resplendent in their new fancy helmets worn for the first time. The Mayor came in the only cab—horse drawn—in town. It was a tense moment; eager eyes watched a distant curve.

[photo annotation:]

First train in Vancouver.

Canadian Pacific Railway. Vancouver, 23rd May 1887. Arrival of first transcontinental passenger train at foot of Howe St. Locomotive No. 374, wood burner, cordwood, in two feet lengths. Engineer: - Peter Righter; Conductor: - Peter Barnhardt. Welcomed by H. Abbott, General Superintendent, C.P.R., and His Worship M.A. MacLean, first Mayor of Vancouver; the band and volunteer fire brigade. Locomotive, 57 feet long, cut blue ribbon as she passed through arch of greenery. Observe that railway ties are not ballasted. Planked approach with gin pole on left leads down to scows bringing lumber for planked streets from sawmills. Bridge is at exact foot of Howe St. Roadway up to Cordova St passes between station building and cliff, but does not show distinctly. Observe big stump of tree clinging to cliff, an indication of the steepness of "The Bluff," and the consequent deep water for big ships, which was the reason for locating the precise terminus at this particular place. Observe the shallowness of the shore beyond. The top of pile driver on left is about Granville St produced. The big dark shed on right is "Local Freight Shed," and above it can be seen hose tower of Fire Hall on corner of Water & Carrall St. The City Hall, on Powell St appears as a large white building above left pillar of arch. The large dark building to left of City Hall is Keefer's Hall on Alexander St. To the left again are the railway trestle bridges and on extreme left, the white store and white cookhouse at Hastings Sawmill. The forest edge is along Campbell Ave, and on south to False Creek. The Presbyterian Church is behind Fire Hall tower. St. James' church is behind City Hall. A tiny tall building, on top of hill, over end of small wharf is "The School" on Powell St. The Volunteer Fire Brigade have two hose reels. The arrival of first trans-Canada passenger train was re-enacted with much ceremony, on the same ground, 22 Aug. 1945, and Locomotive 374 presented by the Canadian Pacific Railway to the Citizens of Vancouver to be placed in a park. From original glass negative, No. 460.

City Archives. J.S. Matthews

"Here she comes; here she comes," they shouted. A few moments and then, the pride of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Locomotive No. 374, wood burner, burst through the arch of greenery over the track, cut the blue ribbon, and stopped on a narrow ledge, a track's width cut out of the cliff; the other side dropped into the sea. Miss Sanders, a little belle in a fluffy white frock, clambered, hands and knees, down the cliff and asked for a posy from the floral decorations on the engine; a kind-hearted trainman plucked them from "374" and said, "Here you are, my dear." The little girl ran off and pressed them in her book and, fifty years later, presented them to the City Archives to treasure forever. Here, Mrs. Ramage, hold in your hands once again, please, the flowers of that great day. Men, who had never seen a train, climbed aboard; sat in the seats to try how they felt; then tried to move them. They tugged and they tugged, but the seats wouldn't budge, so they gave up in disgust; they didn't know train seats are bolted down.

Three weeks later, 13th June 1887, the silence on Vancouver Harbour was disturbed by a weird howl or moan; a new sound; strange and unrecognised in a solitude accustomed to sailing vessels only. Walter Graveley, reading, hurriedly threw down his newspaper and rushed outside to rescue the cat. It was a steamer's whistle, the *Abyssinia*, with the first C.P.R. passengers from Hong Kong, heralding her arrival and the closing of the last gap in the "All Red Route" across the world.

How recent it all is. Frank Plante, first white child born in these parts, sits among us tonight. Elizabeth Silvey, first white child born on the site of Vancouver, would have been here had she lived two months longer; Mrs. Robert Mackie and Mrs. Harry Logan, daughters of Fitzgerald McCleery, first settler, 1862, in Vancouver, now 400,000 persons, honour us with their presence. And John Henry Scales, our earliest resident, who arrived the same year, 1859, British Columbia was named, will address you in a few minutes.

For sixty years, year by year, until this their Diamond Jubilee year, the Canadian Pacific Railway has been improved and expanded by a successive galaxy of brilliant servants until today, with its connections, it encircles the earth. What is the C.P.R.? Not one hundred million dollars; the C.P.R. is men. There is no finer transportation system and there are no finer men. We ride smoothly along; eating meals from spotless linens as we go; tread on soft carpets; or sleep snug beneath the blankets of our berths in warm coaches; giving scant thought to the devoted track

patrol, out ahead—twenty minutes—of every passenger train; all through the dark night and the freezing chill of the blizzard, searching for a fallen boulder or a slide of snow, that we may pass unharmed. Even at this moment, as we sit in brilliance, thousands of faithful servants are at their duty. And as to the future, who dare say what changes and improvements the C.P.R. will yet devise.

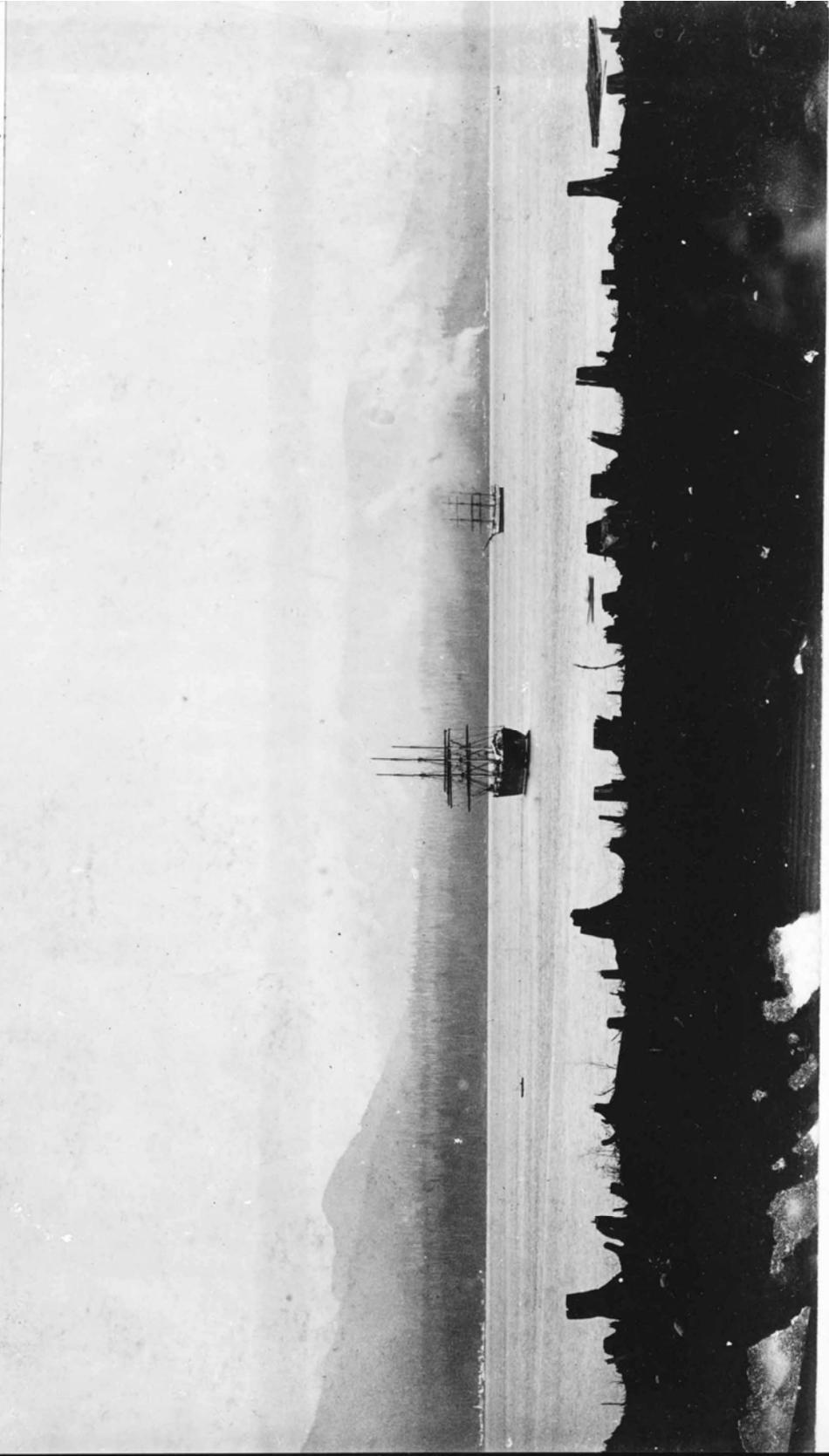
Confederation united Canada in one respect; the great railway united it in another. Montréal, our gateway to the east, was old and grey. Vancouver, a muddy beach in the West, was young and vigorous, waiting with arms thrown wide to welcome the vision and endeavour of British and Canadian adventurous youth; there were no grey hairs in early Vancouver. Who were these pioneers of the railway and of our city. Young men and women of clear minds and pure hearts, sustained by the power of their justice and the patience of their strength; they built, not a fort, but a garden on the shore. In the short span of their single lives, a great metropolis and world port, ten miles wide by five deep, of monumental buildings, luxurious offices, beautiful homes and green lawns, of 150 churches, 100 parks, 70 large public schools, 90 private ones, and nine hundred miles of streets, rose, like a magic thing, out of a wilderness of forest and swamp, the happy home of an enlightened and benevolent people. There is not in history a more splendid page of human achievement. The creation of Vancouver was a contribution to mankind; an incident in the chronicle of the human race, which must, forever, interest the peoples of all nations. It re-oriented world travel and world trade and re-directed the footsteps of millions of all colours, creeds and customs, for all time. It can never happen again. The old "Builders" have almost gone; the younger ones are now at labour.

We must accept the Almighty or deny Him; there are no half measures; it is all or nothing. Did all this just happen by chance—like the wind. Was there no plan? No master architect? Wave not a flag in the street, nor utter boastful shout, but in a quiet closet and on bended knee, remember Him through Whom all things first were made; Who knows when a sparrow falls, and give thanks for our good fortune to Him Who has directed it.

J.S. Matthews
22nd August 1945.

City Archives,
City Hall,
Vancouver, B.C.
August 22nd, 1945.

Canadian Pacific Railway Station, July 1886, site of inc. clearing and stumps. See also C.V.P. Str. 129, N. St. 89, right sector. This is left sector
right sector is P. Can. N. 9. Between Seymour and Richards Sts. Barque "Robert Kerr", refugee ship, great fire, 13 June 1886 at one hot.
panorama of two photos. Smoke of Moodyville Sawmill slab burner beyond. Presented Sept. 1944 by estate of V.A.M. Robertson, pioneer. City Archives, 9577



J. A. BROCK, Portrait and Landscape Photographer, BRANDON, MAN., AND VANCOUVER, CITY, B.C.

Item # EarlyVan_v5_051

[photo annotation:]

Canadian Pacific Railway Station, July 1886, site of in clearing and stumps. See also C.V. P. Str. 129, right sector. This is left sector. Right sector is P. Can. 32, No. 9. Between Seymour and Richards Sts. Barque "Robert Kerr," refugee ship, great fire, 13 June 1886, at anchor. Panorama of two photos. Smoke of Moodyville Sawmill slab burner, beyond. Presented, Sep. 1944, by estate, Dr. A.M. Robertson, pioneer. City Archives. J.S.M.

After great fire, 13 June 1886. Hollow on right now slope down to station from Granville & Cordova Sts. This photo taken from fifty feet west of west side of Howe St. and about 45 feet above inlet, afterwards lawn of H. Abbott, C.P.R. superintendent, and now site of Terminal City Club. First train to Vancouver, 23 May 1887, stopped beneath the bluff on which photographer stood.



Canadian Pacific Railway Station, site of July 1886. Taken from top of high bank known as "The Bluff", - to Indians known as Puckahls, or "white rocks" - at foot of Howe St. Showing C.P.R. right-of-way under construction; the trees on water's edge are at foot of Seymour and Richards Sts. "Princess Louise" tree, in distance at foot of Gore Ave. C.P.R. Wharf, under construction; pile driver at end of Granville St. Building with windows on right at foot of Abbott St. High bank, above a beyond pool, now Cordova St. See companion photos, C.V.P. Wat. 17 and 18, N. Wat. 14 and 24. Brock photo. Presented, 1944, by Estate of Dr. A. N. Robertson, C.P.R. pioneer medical officer. City Archives.

Item # EarlyVan_v5_052

[photo annotation:]

After Great Fire, 13 June 1886. Hollow on right now slope down to station from Granville & Cordova Sts. This photo taken from fifty feet west of west side of Howe St. and about 45 feet above inlet, afterwards lawn of H. Abbott, C.P.R. superintendent, and now site of Terminal City Club. First train to Vancouver, 23 May 1887, stopped beneath the bluff on which photographer stood.

Canadian Pacific Railway Station, site of, July 1886. Taken from top of high bank known as "The Bluff" — to Indians known as Puckahls, or "white rocks" —at foot of Howe St. Showing C.P.R. right-of-way under construction; the trees on water's edge are at foot of Seymour and Richards Sts. "Princess Louise" Tree, in distance at foot of Gore Ave. C.P.R. Wharf, under construction; pile driver at end of Granville St. Building with windows on right at foot of Abbott St. High bank, above & beyond pool, now Cordova St. See companion photos C.V. P. Wat. 17 and 42, N. Wat. 14 and 24. Brock photo. Presented, 1944, by Estate of Dr. A.M. Robertson, C.P.R. pioneer medical officer.

FIRST C.P.R. WHARF, July 1886, foot Howe St. "Robert Ker", refugee ship, Great Fire, 1886



CAN. N. 18 P. 24

J. A. BROCK & CO. Portrait and Landscape Photographers

Item # EarlyVan_v5_053