

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

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BEAVERS AND BEAVER DAMS.

"The beaver dam was on Mrs. Winskill's place; we all used to go down there washing; went down there with our coal oil cans for pails, and did our washing in the beaver dam; we used to have to help each other in those days."

BIRTHS. DR. LANGIS.

Mrs. Newbury: "There was no such thing as a telephone; the nearest telephone was down at the Gurney cab stables, down at the foot of the Mount Pleasant hill a mile or more away, and many's the time I have dashed off across roots and stones and sticks until I was breathless, to try and call a doctor, and I remember one time, I was so angry, I couldn't get a doctor, and I had to do the best I could, and then when Dr. Langis did come it was all over, and the child in my arms, and I went for Dr. Langis, and it didn't disturb him a bit. He just said quietly, as though it didn't matter at all, 'Oh, I knew you were here and that everything would be all right.' Dr. Langis might have died wealthy if people would only have paid him. I used to say to him, 'Why do you attend to them if they never paid you,' and he'd say, in his quiet sort of a way, that 'it was all right; it was his duty'; you know his slow, quiet, calm way of talking."

TROUT. DOERING BREWERY. BREWERY CREEK.

"Trout; oh, there were lots of trout in the creek, Brewery Creek I think they called it; just east of Main Street; where Doering had his brewery. Go out in the creek and catch trout for breakfast; all kinds of trout in that creek."

CLEARING THE LAND. HIS WORSHIP G.C. MILLER.

Mrs. Newbury: "The Mayor" (Geo. C. Miller) "was just a kid then, about two feet high; his father used to drive for Mr. Bodwell, of Bodwell Road; the Millers lived in a two-room shack."

Mrs. Hatch: "We all did our own work in those days. I have used a ten-foot crosscut saw; they were building the road around the park in those days, and the men used to start off about four in the morning and walk all the way to Stanley Park; they were making the road, and we were also clearing the land around our own little place too; men and women worked. I used to saw logs, cedar logs, to make cedar shakes and pickets and home-made shingles; pickets for our garden fences, and shakes and shingles for roofs. The men would go off to work and leave us so much to do; tell me what to saw, and I would saw it."

"And my husband was a silver gilder in Toronto, had never done a day's work, comparatively, in his life; never lived in the woods before. We were clearing our land."

WATER WELLS. EARLY WATERWORKS. HOTEL VANCOUVER. EARLY SEWERAGE.

December 7th, 1937
Sechelt, B.C.

To City Archivist

Dear Sir:

Re Water Memorandum

I have to say the office buildings in the early days were only small, and got their water wherever they could; from wells and streams in various parts of the city. One good stream was where the present Post Office, Hastings and Granville, now stands; also everyone kept a good rain barrel.

The Vancouver Hotel had an artesian well, and the water was very good.

Almost all houses had wells, and those who did not have one got from those who had.

Of course, everyone knew the Waterworks was being put in, and they would soon have city water.

The bedrooms all had a washbasin and jug, and the water was carried there every day, and a big tub for bath. And, all dry earth toilets outside the house. Until the sewers were built, there were no water toilets, or bathrooms with running water.

Then, I may say here, that my husband, the late J.J. Nickson, built the first septic tank in Vancouver—at Coal Harbor, which was very successful.

What became of the wells? Some had them properly filled in. Mostly, everyone threw all their rubbish in; tin cans, ashes, until they got filled up. I believe, some of the wells, rats and even cats got in, but mostly the wells were covered with boards; some had pumps, and others, buckets and rope.

The well water that I have tasted came from Mrs. Grant's place on Robson st; a little yellow in color, but very cold and very good. Mrs. Grant was Mrs. Phil Oben's mother.

Hoping this account will help you.

Yours sincerely,

to Major Matthews,
City Archivist
City Hall,
Vancouver.

Jane Nickson

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH ALFRED JOHN NYE, OF LYNN CREEK ROAD, LYNN VALLEY, NORTH VANCOUVER, WHO VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES, CITY HALL, 26 MAY 1939—HIS SIXTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY.

JERICHO. SMELTS (FISH). DALGLIESH OF JERICHO.

Mr. Nye said: "One of the prettiest things in nature I ever saw was out at Jericho beach once. I was out on the beach one summer morning very early, and a cat with six kittens came from somewhere; there were logging camps nearby; it was close to Dalgliesh's place, now the site of the Jericho Golf Club house.

"The cat went down to the edge of the water—over the sand—and fished out a smelt with its paw, and took it to the six kittens, who enjoyed fresh fish for breakfast. The cat went to the edge of the water, and fished out a smelt with its claw. That will give you an idea, too, of the quantities of smelt there at that time."

EAGLES. TROUT.

"I was up the Cheakamus River, Squamish, once, and saw an eagle soaring around about four hundred feet above me; then it dropped like a stone, splashed into the water; a splash of water about twenty feet high went up, and the eagle rose with a large trout in its talons. He carried the trout in its talons, fore and aft, like the fuselage of an aeroplane."

DAISY LAKE. SWANS.

"Again, I was at Daisy Lake, and a flock of fourteen white swans were out on the ice; that was the winter of 1920. I got to within about three hundred yards of them, and then they arose and flew away, and being such a heavy bird, the angle was quite low before they could rise.

"A few days afterwards I counted them again, and there were thirteen; one was missing. I reported it to the game warden; it was investigated, and it was found that an Indian had killed it. Wild swan are protected. I think the culprit was punished.

"This day, 26th May, is my sixty-first birthday."