

## Early Vancouver

### Volume Six

By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.

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*Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1940-1945.*

*Supplemental to volumes one, two, three, four and five collected in 1931, 1932, 1934, 1939 and 1944.*

### About the 2011 Edition

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**CONVERSATION WITH MRS. CHARLES FRANCIS MILLS, WIDOW, 1645 WEST 11<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, WHO, ACCOMPANIED BY HER DAUGHTER, MRS. Z. DIEBOLT, VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS AFTERNOON, AND TALKED WHILE I TYPED, 2 FEBRUARY 1942.**

**GENEALOGY. "DAD" CAMERON.**

Mrs. Mills said: "I have one grandchild only; she is two weeks old; but I had twelve children of my own; seven are living. My oldest girl is in Los Angeles" (Hollywood), "California; she is Mrs. George Boyer; she was Miss Laura. Mabel was my second child, Mrs. Arleigh Pilkey; she lives in Kerrisdale; the third is Miss Alma, now Mrs. Diebolt of Vancouver, and the next was Francis, a boy; Charles Francis, the same as his father; he is in Vancouver, the only son I have at home; William was next, William J. Mills, he is living in New Westminster; and Agnes, now Mrs. Robert Cameron, who lives in Kerrisdale; her husband is a son of the well-known 'Dad' Cameron of the Volunteer Fire Brigade, 1887, and the last is Florence, Mrs. Harold Wood, who lives in Winnipeg. And most important of all is Jacqueline, my granddaughter; two weeks old and the daughter of William Joseph Mills."

**C.F. MILLS.**

"Mr. Mills, my husband, was born in Halifax; his father's name was Charles, too. My husband was a contractor, and I really don't remember what his father did, but I am almost sure he was a stone mason. My own father was Peter MacKenzie, that is, a Scotch MacKenzie, not an Irish one, and my mother Mary Smith, born in Antigonish, Nova Scotia; but Father was born in Scotland, and came to Canada about 18—, anyway, he was married, I presume, I cannot say, in Nova Scotia, anyway, the records would show as it was in the Roman Catholic Church; we still belong to the Holy Rosary Church here, where I was married to Mr. Mills, in the little old first Holy Rosary, and by the Rev. Patrick Fay, the first Roman Catholic priest in Vancouver."

**FATHER PATRICK FAY. HOLY ROSARY CHURCH.**

"The day we went to be married, we went about two o'clock in the afternoon and we could not see anyone there, and Charlie went out in the back to see where Father Fay was, and he was sleeping in the garden; he had forgotten all about the wedding. And that made us almost late for the boat, the old *Islander*, we were going to Victoria for our honeymoon. The wedding took place December 16<sup>th</sup> 1890. We had a hack; two horses, and white horses at that, to drive us to the boat, and not automobiles as nowadays, and all the trimmings, such as white ribbons on the whip, and on the door handles.

"The interior of the original Holy Rosary Church was very plain; there was not much to it; all my twelve children were christened at the Holy Rosary Church."

**PIONEER WEDDING.**

"Then, Charles Francis, born 28<sup>th</sup> February 1901, was the first *boy* christened in the new Holy Rosary" (opened 2 December 1900.)

"But I forgot to tell you about this 'Billy' Edwards" (see that file), "*he had an express rig*; he decorated his horse with paper roses and coloured tissue paper, and followed us down to the boat in his decorated express wagon and horse. He is still living, and was up to see you the other day; he is 83 now.

"Mr. Mills, my husband, was a contractor. I don't think he had anything in view to bring him here, but it was a new place, and he was young, and came west two years before I did. He came in 1888. We were engaged back in Boston, Massachusetts, and when he was settled, I came out to Vancouver.

"I cannot tell you how many places he built in Vancouver; there were scores of them; all houses as far as I recall, but I think one at Squamish, used for a store, but nearly all houses in Vancouver. All down Davie Street, Kitsilano, Point Grey. He was a great hunter; he used to go out with Mr. Abray, the first policeman; he kept the Cosmopolitan Hotel."

**DAVIE STREET.**

"I'll tell you something. I have actually walked from Granville Street on a one-plank sidewalk, walking down Davie Street, and there was only one house, and that house still stands, owned by Mr. Wintemute."

## **ENGLISH BAY BEACH.**

Major Matthews: What were you going to English Bay for?

Mrs. Mills: "To take a dip; go in swimming, of course; had a little grip with our bathing suit in it; they had more clothes on when they went bathing in those days than they do now. I knew old Joe Fortes.

"But I do like Vancouver, and I have always like it, and there is no other place I would prefer to live. With all its rain. The rain doesn't bother me; I go out rain or shine, and I am now 75; born 29<sup>th</sup> March; I shall be 75 next March 29<sup>th</sup>" (1942.) "And I have always been blessed with very good health; never had any sickness to speak of. Hadn't time to be ill with twelve children to look after. Our first home was on Seymour Street, 1300 block; from there we went to Mount Pleasant, corner of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Quebec, next door to Mayor Bethune. In those days there wasn't much up there. Mayor Bethune was on the corner; we were next to him."

## **CONVERSATION WITH MR. TADA ICHI NAGAO, SUITE 4, 157 WEST 2<sup>ND</sup>, WHO KINDLY CALLED, AT MY REQUEST, AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS MORNING, 8 APRIL 1942, FOR A CHAT.**

I offered Mr. Nagao a cigar, and said, "Smoke."

Mr. Nagao: "Some time ago, Mr. Justice Morrison, he and I went to an assize court in Nanaimo. During the recess of the court, the Justice sent the sheriff to me to come to his private room. Well, he was smoking; he said, 'Don't you smoke?' I said, 'Thank you, my Lord.' Of course, I expected him to give me a cigar. But the cigar was not forthcoming. The Justice said, 'Why don't you smoke?' I said, 'I thought you would have given me one.'" (Cigar.) "'Well,' he said slowly, 'I'm very sorry, but'" (holding up a cigar in his thumb and finger) "'this is the only one I've got.'" (And Mr. Nagao laughed. But how like the kindly Chief Justice.) "I knew him pretty well. I liked him; nice old man. I often went into his room and chatted with him; knew him for a long time."

Major Matthews: When did you come to Vancouver, Mr. Nagao?

Mr. Nagao: "November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1886. I came from Seattle, not from Japan. Washington was not a state at that time; Washington was a territory. I came to San Francisco from Japan in 1884. I was born in Japan, forty miles northeast of Tokio, October 4<sup>th</sup> 1866. My father and mother were samurai, that is the same thing in Japan as a soldier family would be in England. You see, we had a civil war in Japan, and that revolutionised the whole system of the country. Before the revolution, the shogun had the entire power to govern my country, and after the revolution, the Emperor was reinstated, and governs the country now. And his policy was to adopt the western ways, so young men who wanted education in a foreign country were allowed to go anywhere. That was why we came out. That was how it came that, about 1884, educated young men, students, came to North America; no labourers at all, and I came with them; I was one of them, and came to San Francisco on a steamer.

"When I got to San Francisco I went to school. We had a mission school there conducted by the Presbyterian Church. I stayed at the school about eighteen months, learning the English language and other things, and then I was sent by a Japanese exporting house in San Francisco to Tacoma, Washington with Christmas goods. We opened a store, and I was in charge of it. Mr. Kai, of Kai and Co., and the store was on" [blank] "near the Hotel Tacoma. I stayed there during the holiday season, and then closed up the store and the goods were sent back, and I went to Seattle, Washington. I stayed in Seattle for a few months, and then came to Vancouver, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1886."

## **HASTINGS SAWMILL. TROUT LAKE. WATER FROM FLUME.**

"Well, you know Vancouver, I suppose. The first place I went to when I got to Vancouver, I came via Victoria as there was no direct line here then from Seattle, I went to the Hotel Europe on Alexander Street. After a time I got a job to work in Hastings Sawmill, of course, it was 1887 when I joined the Hastings Sawmill. I was a young man, strong, and I was a lumber marker. I got a dollar a day with board, and the company gave us the shacks to live in, and we went over to the cookhouse for meals. There was no water works in those days; the company got water for the boiler from Trout Lake. The company built a small flume to get the water from that lake, and when we had it very cold, it was all frozen up, and in that case the company sent the water scow to Moodyville to get water. Trout Lake was much higher than