

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 FRANK PLANTE AND LENA MAYERS, 19 JUNE 1944.]

Conversation with François Plante, commonly called "Frank Plante," first child of European parentage born on Burrard Inlet, at "Moody's Mills," or Moodyville, 13 April 1868, and his sister Catherine Plante, commonly known as "Lena Plante," born on Carrall Street, Vancouver, 18 November 1891, both children of the late Peter Plante and his wife, née Ada Young, or Ada Guinne, daughter of Supplien Guinne of D.L. 319, Marpole, commonly called "French John," or "John Young," whose marriage by the Reverend Edward White, 18 July 1868, was the first marriage by Christian rite solemnised on Burrard Inlet. Frank Plante is a widower, and is the eldest child of the marriage; "Lena," his sister, is Mrs. Capt. George Mayers of Clarke Road, R.R. No. 2, New Westminster, and is the youngest.

Both called together, accompanied by a little girl of about five (not a grandchild) and remained in the City Archives for a couple of hours. They both seemed well pleased with what the Archives are doing to preserve the story of their family, and did not seem to mind in the least when we referred, repeatedly, to their partial Squamish Indian ancestry.

PETER PLANTE. SUPPLIEN GUINNE. "JOHN YOUNG." "FRENCH JOHN."

Major Matthews: Frank I have been to a great deal of trouble with this birth registry matter of yours. It is all ready to mail to the Division of Vital Statistics, Victoria, for registration. I want to read it over to you before it goes. (Takes voluminous papers from envelope addressed to J.D.B. Scott, Director, Vital Statistics, Victoria.) Let me read the whole thing, form 4, form 9, and my long statutory declaration.

(Reading) "Ada Young, born at North Arm, Fraser River."

Mr. Plante and Mrs. Mayers: (together) "No; that's wrong; born at *Fort Langley, B.C.* I think she was 66 when she died."

(After much reading, and much explanation of what is in the statutory declaration by J.S. Matthews.)

Major Matthews: Well, what did you think of it.

Mr. Plante and Mrs. Mayers: "Very good; awful lot of it."

Major Matthews: Shall I send it?

Mr. Plante: "Yes."

Major Matthews: "While I am attending to those people, I wish you would look over this book of photographs of the rededication of Stanley Park last 25th August; you will see yourself in some of the photographs.

Major Matthews: (returning after ten minutes) Well, what do you think of it?

Mr. Plante: "Pretty good; there's a good picture" (pointing to one of himself driving the carriage in which those acting "Lord Stanley" and "Mayor Oppenheimer" are driving, and laughing as he pointed.)

Major Matthews: You want something; tell me.

Mr. Plante: "Lena wants her birth registered, too."

Major Matthews: Oh, so that's it." (Proceeds to get out necessary forms, etc., and after much typing of details from dictation of Mrs. Mayers, who says that her name is not "Lena" but "Catherine," the form 4 and form 9 are finally complete.)

Major Matthews: But I have understood your name was "Lena"?

Mrs. Mayers: "I have always been called that; don't know why, but it's not my name; my name is Catherine; Catherine with a capital C. I was born on Carrall Street, by the Royal City Planing Mills; our house was the only one down in that direction which escaped 'The Fire'" (13 June 1886.) "I am the youngest of the family; there were seven of us all told, but two died; there were five living at that time. I was born on the 18th November 1891, not 1881, but 1891, in the city of Vancouver, on Carrall Street. Frank was the eldest of the family; he was about 24 years old when I was born."

SUPLIEN GUINNE. "JOHN YOUNG."

Mrs. Mayers: "Yes, Suplien Guinne was my grandfather; he died in the Old Man's Home, Kamloops, about 19 years ago; he was one hundred years old. But he always spoke to us of his name as 'Sup-plee-on'; he used to say his name was 'Sup-plee-on'."

Frank Plante: "His papers are up in the Old Man's Home; you ought to write and get them." (Note: the same evening, Major Matthews wrote to Hon. R.L. Maitland, K.C., Attorney-General, Victoria, and a Trustee, City Archives, asking how best it would be to go about procuring custody of the papers.

Major Matthews: Fitzgerald McCleery wrote in his diary about 1864 or 1865, "The Frenchman got the horse."

Frank Plante: "Not the same horse, I suppose, as the old man had, but years afterwards he had a little old sorrel, a little bit of a thing, and he had it for years and years, and used to ride over to Gastown—and get drunk."

Mrs. Mayers: "Fitzgerald's daughter, Greta McCleery I think her name is" (Margaret, the eldest daughter, living in 1944) "used to write his letters for him. He" (Suplien Guinne) "could hardly write his own name, and Miss McCleery used to write his letters for him, to some of his relatives back east" (Québec.) "You speak to her about him. Granddad worked for McCleerys years and years."

Major Matthews: I was talking to her over the phone this morning; she is not very well.

Frank Plante: "We have photos of my father over at New Westminster."

Mrs. Mayers: "And one of Suplien Guinne, too."

Major Matthews: Amazing. I do hope you will let me copy them.

NO DOCTOR, NO NURSE AT BIRTH.

Major Matthews: Going back to your birthday, who was the doctor?

Mrs. Mayers: "No doctor; no nurse. Not in those days. Mother had seven children; I was the youngest; we didn't have a doctor."

"SUPPLEJACK" OR KHAY-TULK.

Frank Plante: "Supplejack was our uncle. He had a herd of cattle in Stanley Park; he must have had about thirty of them, all white-faced Herefords. I often wondered how he got those white-faced cattle. He had two bulls, twins. Supplejack sold one bull team for logging to Gillespie, the logger. I logged with a bull team all over here; out there" (pointing out of the window at Cambie and Ash Street.) "Hauled logs down from Little Mountain, and dumped them in False Creek at the foot of Ash Street, beside your" (Major Matthews) "old cottage, just east of the creek mouth at the foot of Ash Street." (See photo C.V.P. Dist. 2 and 15, N. Dist. 1 and 15, Vancouver, Sc. 83, G.N. 812.)

MRS. ALLISON SHOTTON. 1556 VENABLES STREET.

Frank Plante: "An old lady spoke to me yesterday, and said, 'Do you know how I am?' I said, 'No.' She said, 'I'm Mrs. Allison Shotton; you drove the carriage the day of my wedding.' I told her I had driven the carriage at so many weddings that I couldn't remember them all, but I remembered hers, and couldn't believe that the old lady was Mrs. Shotton; hadn't seen her since. Her wedding was the day, the same day, that I drove Lord Stanley out to the Park, to the First Narrows" (29 October 1889) "when he dedicated it."

CATHERINE, OR "LENA" PLANTE. DELAYED REGISTRY OF BIRTH.

The birth registry papers having been completed, and on phoning Mr. A.E. Lord, City Solicitor, asking if he was at liberty now to take Mr. François Plante's oath to them, declaring that he well remembered his sister's birth in 1891, we went down to the Legal Department, and Frank Plante took the necessary oath, and Mr. Lord attached his seal. The papers were forwarded to the Department of Vital Statistics, 20 June 1944.

After about two hours, Mr. Plante and his sister Mrs. Mayers and the little girl departed. Mrs. Mayers is a fine specimen of womanhood; good looking for her age; shapely features; her complexion shows no sign of any Indian blood; she is most kindly mannered, modest and somewhat heavily formed; she must weigh about 150 or 160 pounds, I suppose; by no means small, nor large, but is a very well-proportioned and motherly woman whom I surmise keeps a very comfortable home for those who look to her. Both brother and sister seemed to have enjoyed their visit, and were quite complimentary on the work being done by the City Archives.

J.S. Matthews.
20 June 1944.

From notes made last evening at the City Hall, immediately they left.

SURVIVORS, 1944. PETITION FOR INCORPORATION.

On the afternoon of 11 July 1944, Mr. W.H. Chase, pioneer, last proprietor of the Deighton Hotel, Granville, otherwise "Gassy Jack's of Gastown," called at the City Archives, City Hall, accompanied by his daughter, Mrs. W.W. Hatfield, and enjoyed tea and cake with Major Matthews.

During the conversation the photostatic copy of the petition was produced, Mr. Chase found his own signature on it, and also that of his brother, Ben. F. Chase. And then the complete roll of names was slowly read out to Mr. Chase. He could recall all of them which most people can recall, and there were others he knew nothing about, just as the rest of us do. So that is fairly certain that a required number of signatures were necessary to the petition, and, it is probable, guests at the hotel were pressed into service to that end. Anyway, there appear to be ten or a dozen names which seem to be unknown to all of us.

And Mr. Chase and I came to the conclusion—and Mr. Calvert Simson, former storekeeper at the Hastings Sawmill, 1884, concurred—that with the exception of Mr. W.H. Chase and his brother Ben. F. Chase, now in California, none of the other signatories are now living.

J.S. Matthews.

CONVERSATION WITH MR. HERBERT WILLIAM MARTIN, PIONEER, OF 744 WEST 8TH AVENUE, WHO TOGETHER WITH HIS SISTER, MRS. J.M. VYE, VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS AFTERNOON, 17 JULY 1944.

I noticed Mr. Martin was wearing the lapel "button" indicating that he had served in the last war, 1914-1918.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION. ALDERMAN ROBERT BALFOUR. BEAVERMOUTH. STONEY CREEK BRIDGE. SURPRISE CREEK. REVELSTOKE. SICAMOUS.

Mr. Martin: "My father, with my mother and the rest of the children, and Alderman Balfour of the first City Council; my father was in partnership with him all the time, came over the mountains just ahead of the Canadian Pacific Railway grade. Father was keeping a boarding house at the end of the steel; we would be ahead of the grade, then when they came up to us, we would move on. Balfour was superintendent of bridge construction; he built the Stoney Creek bridge; at the time it was built it was supposed to be the highest bridge in the world. We started at Beavermouth, just west of Field, and the next stop was at Surprise Creek, and the next was Stoney Creek, and the next Revelstoke, and then where Sicamous is now, and then we stopped at Kamloops. Then we had to cross the river to the opposite bank to where the railway was being built. So we crossed and drove to Yale, and took the old stern wheeler *Rithet*, flat bottom, to New Westminster."

ARRIVAL AT GRANVILLE, 1885.

"We took the boat from New Westminster to Victoria, but they did not like the place and came back to Granville, or 'Gastown,' arriving here October 1885. Then we went into the hotel business, and built the Burrard Hotel at the northeast corner of Hastings and Columbia streets, where the Broadway Hotel is