

Early Vancouver

Volume Six

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2011 Edition (Originally Published 1945)

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

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. 6 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 6. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

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CONVERSATION WITH MRS. CAPT. PERCY NYE, 639 WEST 11TH AVENUE, WHO VERY KINDLY CALLED AT CITY ARCHIVES, 6 NOVEMBER 1941.

ALDERMAN FRANCIS WILLIAMS. CLAUDE H. WILLIAMS. WATER FROM CREEKS. MCKIE.

Mrs. Nye said: "Mother and I went to live at English Bay in the old Simpson shack at the foot of Denman Street, and after we went there the McKie family went to live in a cottage on Beach Avenue, just west of Gilford Street—right at the end of the old pier—but on the east side of the creek, because we used to go up to the creek to get our drinking water, and so did they. We just took a bucket at a time in one hand; there was a deepish hole where we dipped, or deep enough to dip without getting too many leaves in it. McKie built the cottage; the lumber came by a trail along Beach Avenue; the Smiths were further again west, but the Smiths did not come until after. We were the first residents after the loggers and the Simpsons, but McKie built the first house."

EAST END SCHOOL.

"Mr. McKie was janitor at the East End school, and I suppose it was too far for him to walk all the way to Dunlevy Avenue and Oppenheimer Street, so they moved away, and then the Williams occupied their cottage; one of their sons, John McKie, M.L.A. for Grand Forks-Greenwood, was blown up in a train by the Doukhobors many years later, somewhere up by Nelson, B.C."

COWS AT ENGLISH BAY. JERICHO. KITSILANO INDIAN RESERVE.

"There was no milk delivery in bottles at English Bay in those days, but the Williams had a cow and a calf. One day I went to town; walked right around Beach Avenue and down Granville, and back the same way, and when I got back I got there just in time to see Claude's calf finishing the last of my washing drying on the clothes line; all that was left was the pegs and bits of the washing too close to the clothes line for the calf to eat off. The calf thrived.

"Francis Williams was a tailor working in Clubb and Stewart's men's furnishing store. He resided at his little cottage, and used to go over to the Indian Reserve in False Creek, but we used to call across the water 'Jericho'; it was all Jericho on the other side of English Bay, not just a little piece of it as it is now. Mr. Williams, his wife and sister-in-law, Mrs. Clarke, used to go over and preach to the Indians, and the way they used to let the Indians know they had arrived was that they would start singing on the beach, and the Indians would come out and join them. There was a man named Brown; he was a real estate man, and he started selling acreage over the First Narrows, back of the lighthouse on the north shore, this side of the Point Atkinson Lighthouse; and Mr. Williams bought some acreage there."

Note by J.S.M.: According to Claude Williams, Water Department, City Hall, the location of his father's (Francis Williams) place was twelve acres east of the present Altamont, and was to be a country estate. The proposal was abandoned.

FOREST FIRE IN WEST END, 1891.

"What made him move from English Bay was that the timber all caught fire around his cottage, so he got a scow and moved his furniture onto the scow, and saved it from the fire, and decided that he would take his furniture over to the north side, being that he owned the land there. The place where he established himself is a mile or so from Point Atkinson; the shack was back from the waterfront. They landed right on the beach; there was no float of any kind; there was a creek there for water; nice little gravelly beach. Anyway, Mr. Williams, rowed back and forth to Vancouver through the Narrows almost every day."

NORTH VANCOUVER FERRY.

"Then his daughter used to take music lessons on the pipe organ at St. Andrew's Presbyterian church, and they came over twice a week for that. She used to walk by the trail—I think it is seven miles—to Moodyville ferry when it called at North Vancouver; there was a float of logs at the foot of what is now Lonsdale Avenue, and they would not tie the boat up to the float—it might capsize it, so the prospective passengers had to jump on the ferry boat, and twice Miss Williams jumped in the water and got wet. Brown, who sold Mr. Williams the property, was supposed to have been drowned in the First Narrows, but some people say that he skipped; it appears he did not own the property he sold Mr. Williams, or did not

have any authority to sell it. Miriam Williams married a Mr. Simpson; she passed away in Victoria last week.”

TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL. LABOUR TEMPLE.

“Mr. and Mrs. Williams, their sons Claude and Alfred, all went to live out towards Point Atkinson, and after that the Williams took up a newer home in Fairview, next to the old Alexander Orphanage on Sixth or Seventh Avenue. Then after that he got interested and formed the Trades and Labour Council, and he was the one who got the building built on Dunsmuir Street, the Labour Temple, and then, while he was Alderman, he was the instigator for getting the most lasting piece of road in Vancouver, that on Sixth Avenue; that’s that brick pavement; he fought hard for that bit of road. Then he was defeated candidate for Labour member of Parliament. The son Alfred was a carpenter; I don’t know what became of him, but Claude joined the City Water Department.”

See also *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2, McKie and Williams.

CONVERSATION WITH MR. GEORGE W. JAMIESON, RETIRED PRINCIPAL, MOUNT PLEASANT SCHOOL, NOW RESIDENT 368 EAST SEVENTH AVENUE, 20 NOVEMBER 1941.

See *Province*, Thursday, 23 June 1921, “OLD BELL RINGS AGAIN FOR EX-PUPILS OF MOUNT PLEASANT.” This bell is now in City Archives. J.S.M.

Together with Mr. Kenneth A. Waites, editor, *Vancouver High Schools—The First Fifty Years*, I went to see Mr. Jamieson to ask him to identify the detail of a photograph printed from a 5 x 8 glass negative in City Archives, showing a Chinese funeral passing a building of one storey and three gables—actually three buildings; a fir tree or two also appears on print.

MOUNT PLEASANT SCHOOL. MAYOR T.S. BAXTER.

Mr. Jamieson: (looking at print, holding it to his glasses) “Well, well; my, I’m glad to see this.” (pointing) “This building here on the right was the first Mount Pleasant School they built; when I first went there I taught in this. Then afterwards they put up another, this one the same as the first almost, on the left; a Miss” [blank] “taught there; then afterwards the carpenters put a roof between the two buildings and made a third school room; T.S. Baxter—he was afterwards Mayor—he taught in that, the middle one. This little bit of a tower is out in front.

“Afterwards the children were so numerous we had to use a two-storey building; it does not show here; it was over to the right and north of these buildings; we called it Temperance Hall.

“Then we got four little shacks built off here to the left, the west; a little group, so that we were in eight buildings, but only for a short while. Then the School Board borrowed some money. I told them we were getting along all right, and that I could do very well as we were, but they borrowed the money, built the Dawson School, and the brick Mount Pleasant school, and twenty years afterwards they had not paid the money back. That started debt.”

BEARS.

“You know, there were bears all around that school. One afternoon, after school, I went out, and there on the corner of the road, Westminster Road, were parents with lanterns and guns; they were waiting. I said, ‘What are the guns for?’ They answered, ‘Bears.’ Of course, I suppose the lanterns were for something else, but there was no electric light out in Mount Pleasant houses then. At night you carried a lantern.

“Then again, one afternoon the children all left school, as usual, and presently they all came back; they were whimpering. I asked, ‘What’s the matter.’ They said there was a bear up the road eating berries; up what we call Main Street now.

“Then, one day there was word that there was a bear up Westminster Road. So I got a gun, and went after him. I shot him square in the side; great big hole in his side.”

Major Matthews: There were cougars, too; the last bear I recall up on Mount Pleasant was where the car barns are now at 13th Avenue and Main Street; that would be about 1904. We went after him but he had gone.