

Early Vancouver

Volume Six

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

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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2. James Lewis, killed in action, Great War, 1914-18.
3. Lilian Ann, Mrs. Ernest G. Abrams, New Westminster.
4. Gordon Nelson, at New Westminster, B.C.
5. Gladys Mary, Mrs. Frank Millican, Trail, B.C.
6. Juanita Christina, Mrs. W. Peters, New Westminster, deceased.
7. Joseph Raymond, married Patsy Hadden, Vancouver.
8. Ruby Evelyn, Mrs. Kenneth McKinnon, New Westminster.

“The birth of Beatrice, one of the few births in the city of Vancouver during 1886, having not been registered, Mr. J.B. Abrams, before leaving, gave me three dollars, the fee exacted by the Registrar of Births, Victoria, for delayed registration. Both application and fee were forwarded, and the birth certificate subsequently received; birth registered December 8, 1939.”

Approved by Mr. Jagger, 22 February 1940.

EARLY SCHOOLS, NORTH ARM, FRASER RIVER, POINT GREY, LULU ISLAND, ETC.

Letter, Mrs. J.A. Wood, née Margaret Sweet, Salmon Arm, B.C., 2 December 1940, to Mrs. Walter Vermilyea, née Ada Sweet (her sister), visiting at Vancouver.

Salmon Arm, B.C.,
Dec. 2nd 1940.

Dear Ada:

I hasten to reply at once to give you any information I can, though that is not very much.

First you are mistaken about father having taught in the Town Hall before I did.

Uncle John Wesley, (Sexsmith) got permission to use the Town Hall for school purposes in Feb. 1881, and at once asked me to take the position of teacher as I had a certificate.

I taught there until the end of June 1882, when I resigned to go back to school in New Westminster, where Mr. Stramberg was starting a High School class after hours in the public school. The only High School in the Province, I believe, was the one in Victoria.

In the Town Hall on Lulu Island we had the use of the Councillor's long table, with a bench at each side and a chair at each end. This with one blackboard was our full equipment.

Mr. C.C. McKenzie (Victoria) was our School Inspector, and I think, also Supt. of Education for the Province.

Yes, I attended the little school on the mainland where Frances taught and we stayed for the school week in Mrs. Sam McCleery's house, but I don't think it was kept up very long, for I also afterwards went to one near Mr. F. McCleery's and boarded with them. I forget the name of the teacher—a married woman.

I don't know anything about a school being held in the old church on the mainland, if Alida taught there, it was before I came to B.C. According to Mr. Kidd the school District was organized in 1877.

I suppose you have by this time made up your mind about your plans. I hope you will write soon and tell me what you have decided. I trust you are feeling quite fit—I was going to say and putting on more pounds, but perhaps you don't want to do that.

We are all quite well here, and were very pleased the other day to hear that Winifred may be able to get home for a few days this Xmas.

Ellis has been sick with the "flu" at the coast but is better now. I heard from him yesterday.

We have had some snow here for nearly a month, which is unusually early.

Must close now as Fred is going down town soon.

With love,

Margaret.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. WALTER VERMILYEA, PIONEER, 1876, WHO IS ON A VISIT FROM ILLINOIS TO VANCOUVER, WHO KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES IN COMPANY WITH HER DAUGHTER, MISS F. EVELYN M. VERMILYEA, ESCORTED BY MR. KENNETH A. WAITES, KING EDWARD HIGH SCHOOL, AND, AFTER CONVERSING FOR AN HOUR OR SO, PARTOOK OF A CUP OF TEA AND CAKE, 2 DECEMBER 1940.

ADA SWEET.

Mrs. Vermilyea said: "I was born at the town of Selby, Lennox and Addington County, Ontario, September 5th 1872, and the first I can remember is the whistle of a train at Toronto; it was about July or August, 1876. We were on our way to British Columbia, and—I was four years old—I did not want to go; I wanted to go back; the whistle frightened me when it blew. We reached San Francisco by train and took steamboat to Victoria; it was very rough, and I was confined to a berth in a cabin all the way; finally we reached Victoria. I don't know the name of the steamer. I was Ada Sweet then, daughter of O.D. Sweet, and Alice, née Sexsmith."

O.D. SWEET.

"Father" (Orison Davis Sweet) "had gone ahead of us about seven months before, and was teaching school at Cedar Hill, Victoria, so that the travelling party consisted of Mother, my brother Kenneth, older than I am, deceased now, and myself; one of my brothers, Clinton, was left behind in Ontario, and came out three years later with my sister, Margaret Sweet. Then after we arrived here, my sister Alice Grace was born at Cedar Hill, Victoria, about 1878, February 16th, making five children in all in the Sweet family. Mother died in Vancouver in December 1916; Father had died previously in March 1907. Both were buried in Mountain View Cemetery. As I said, I arrived in British Columbia in 1876, when I was four years old; my husband, Walter Vermilyea, came later, in 1883.

"Father's people, the first one being Robert Sweete, came from England in the ship *Neptune* in 1618. I do know that my father was born in Jefferson County, New York, and strangely, my husband's father was also born in New York state, in Hastings County. His grandfather in New York was Solomon Vermilyea.

"My father, O.D. Sweet, was a school teacher and inspector, had the post office, telegraph office, drug store, etc., and taught school besides in Ontario."

SEXSMITH.

"Mother was Miss Alice Sexsmith, daughter of Simon Sexsmith and Margaret, née Holcomb, pioneers of Ontario, where Simon Sexsmith had traded in land, etc.—a sheep for an acre. He had three farms there, and on one farm they had a sugar bush, boiled sugar and maple sugar, but I was too young to remember it. I think Mother and Father were married at Selby, Ontario. Some of my grandparents were Church of England, but our family for five generations back had been Methodists."

SEXSMITH OF LULU ISLAND.

"Alice Sexsmith, my mother, was sister of John W. Sexsmith who farmed on Lulu Island. He came out in 1878."

THE SWEET CHILDREN.

"Mother and Father had five children, in this order:

1. Margaret, born in Selby, Ontario; married the Rev. James A. Wood.