

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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[LETTER FROM JOHN SHEEPSHANKS TO COL. R.E. MOODY.]

New Westminster,
June 27th, 1860.

Sir:

It is my duty as acting chaplain to the troops under your command to call your attention to the school now established in the Camp.

There are now twenty eight children in regular attendance for four hours daily, except Saturday when there is a half-holiday. They are instructed in reading, writing, arithmetic, singing and the rudiments of the Christian faith. The schoolmistress is a daughter of one of the men, was for some months in one of the Training Schools in England, and under her, the children have already made satisfactory progress; their improvement has been marked especially in general behaviour.

But it is to the payment of the schoolmistress that I particularly wish to draw your attention. These 28 children are the representatives of only 13 families, and it is impossible for their parents unassisted to raise a sufficient sum for the payment of the schoolmistress in this country where the wages are so very high. They are desirous to do as much as they can, and by the monthly school payment plan we shall obtain a little over forty pounds per annum. The pay of the men is good, but since everything here is so very expensive, I do not think that they could do more than this. This is quite insufficient for the salary of the schoolmistress. She could easily obtain more than double this amount either in this colony, or on Vancouver Island, and should she wish to leave, as is by no means improbable, for she is young, and may wish to marry, we would not obtain another teacher unless a salary of double the present were offered. My own belief is that a house with seventy pounds per annum is the lowest remuneration that could be fixed upon.

It is obvious therefore, that we are in need of assistance, such assistance as is accorded by Her Majesty's Government to schools for the education of soldiers' children at home.

I need not point out how undesirable it would be that the care of the welfare of the children of our soldiers which is manifested at home should be slackened out here, where it is of such high importance that they should be brought up in the fear of God, and in principles of loyalty to the Crown.

I write, therefore, to ask you, sir, to take such steps as you may think most fit to obtain a grant from Her Majesty's Government, in aid of the payment of the schoolmistress, and the general expenses of the school.

I may add, that several of the men who have been upon the survey have told me that when they have been stationed in a place where there was no regimental school, they have received extra pay to enable them to discharge the expense of their children's schooling.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

John Sheepshanks,
Acting Chaplain to the
Detachment, R.E.

To Colonel R.C. Moody,
Commanding R.E.

NOTE.

On receipt of the letter of Rev. Mr. Sheepshanks, dated 27 June 1860, Col. Moody appears to have delayed writing to Douglas in Victoria until over three months later, possibly because he wrote the Home Government direct, in England, but there is no confirmation of this. Relations between Douglas and Moody were anything but cordial at that time.

Moody did, however, write Douglas on 2 October 1860, stating that a school building would cost probably forty pounds exclusive of labour, and suggesting that an additional thirty pounds a year be granted, to be added to the forty pounds already being paid by the parents of the children "by the monthly payment plan," for the salary of the schoolmistress.

On the margin of this letter, which is now in the Provincial Archives, is the short curt note in the handwriting of Douglas: "No Funds, J.D."

There is also an earlier letter from Sheepshanks to Moody, which is undated, but written before any school had been opened for the children of the soldiers, asking for one. Moody, having received this previous letter, wrote Douglas on 7 October 1859. (Sheepshanks had only arrived in New Westminster in September of that first year—see *Vancouver Province* of 26 June 1937—so that he got busy at once. Miss Emily Woodman had started her school for the civilian children down in the "Town" before this. The Camp was not at present day Sapperton, but beside the Fraser, in front of the penitentiary of today, and Sapperton arose later.)

This undated letter of Mr. Sheepshanks resulted in Moody writing Douglas on October 7th asking permission to expend up to one hundred and sixty pounds in making provisional arrangements for a school. To this letter there was no response from Douglas.

CONVERSATION WITH TOM MACINNES, AUTHOR, WHO CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES, 11 JULY 1941.

"PORTUGUESE JOE"—GREGORIS FERNANDEZ. DR. T.R. MCINNES.

Mr. MacInnes said: "'Portuguese Joe,' why, I remember him; my father dug a bullet out of him and saved his life. Father said he 'should have let the blackguard die.' Father" (Dr. T.R. McInnes, afterwards Lieutenant-Governor) "and I came over from New Westminster; he had been in the Civil War with the Southerners, and knew all about bullets and such, and when someone shot 'Portuguese Joe,' he came over from New Westminster to Gastown and I came with him. I was nine years old at the time. It was in 1876; it was summer time, about July 1876."

GOLD EARRINGS.

"He had gold earrings; I saw them myself; see Jack Bell, he sailed over from Nanaimo in a little sloop with this 'Portuguese Joe.' He did not die of the bullet wound, and afterwards I used to come over often and I saw him in Gastown. I don't remember very much, I was between 8 and 10 years old then, but I vaguely remember those earrings; it was an old custom with sailor men.

"I know it was 1876 because I was attending the Brothers' St. Louis School, and we were building a house; it was just after we arrived. It was the year that steamer, *Pacific* went down off Cape Flattery and her passengers were lost." (4 November 1875.)

SUNNYSIDE HOTEL.

"Father told me to stay at the Sunnyside Hotel while he went up the beach to 'Portuguese Joe's' store, and I got a fishing line, and the back of the Sunnyside Hotel was over the water, and I fished and caught some whiting and some fish like eels, and little flounders; there were lots of fish in the harbour at one time, all gone now. I thought myself very clever, and took the fish to the Chinese cook, and he cooked them for me."

(Mr. Tom MacInnes was born 29 October 1867 at Dresden, Ontario. Came to B.C. with his father and mother in 1874.)