

## 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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. A.A. McCORMACK OF MITCHELL ISLAND, NORTH ARM, FRASER RIVER, FORMERLY NO. 703853, 102<sup>ND</sup> BATTALION, "NORTH BRITISH COLUMBIANS," C.E.F.**

He lives on the north side of the island, just east of the bridge, and called at the City Archives, City Hall, 30 October 1941, carrying an ox yoke.

On the evening of 25<sup>th</sup> October previously, at the annual reunion of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Veterans, Major Matthews, formerly an officer of the 102<sup>nd</sup>, asked Mr. McCormack if he knew where he could get an ox yoke, as he wanted to save one of these relics of oxen, logging, and the lumber industry on the site of the city of Vancouver. Mr. McCormack said he thought he knew of one which had, for some years, to his own knowledge, been lying in an old shed on Mitchell's Island. He promised to try and get it.

**A.A. McCORMACK. OXEN. LOGGING. MITCHELL'S ISLAND. MITCHELL'S ESTATE.**

Major Matthews: Good morning, gracious, what's this coming.

Mr. McCormack: (smiling) "Well, here it is."

Major Matthews: Where did you find it?

Mr. McCormack: "It was hanging in Mr. Mitchell's woodshed, where it has been hanging for twenty-five years. I went there fifteen years ago, and it was there then when I first went, and Mr. Mitchell told me—he's dead now—that he had not used it for thirty-five years; that would be fifty years now. Mr. Mitchell died in 1930 or 1931."

Major Matthews: Where are the bows?

(Note: the bows are the "U" shapes which pass down both sides of the ox's neck and under his throat, and hold the yoke in place.)

Mr. McCormack: "The original bows? I don't know where they are; I expect they are lost.

"Yesterday I went to the executors of the Mitchell estate, they are Mr. Mowatt, Mr. Alexander Mowatt, and Mr. Robinson. Mr. Mowatt was in his office; he is of the Mowatt Transfer Co. on Beatty Street; Mr. Robinson is at the corner of Main and Marine Drive; he keeps a store and garage there. I asked for permission to remove it, and bring it here, when Mr. Mowatt granted; I did not see Mr. Robinson, he was not in when I called. Mr. Mowatt was very glad to let the City Archives have it."

Major Matthews: Well, who shall we say presented this?

Mr. McCormack: "Well, I suppose it is presented, really, by the Mitchell estate, but it wouldn't have been if you hadn't spoken to me the other night, and I brought it in this morning—in Mitchell's [Mowatt's] passenger motor car. He has just gone on to his office."

**THE STORY OF THE YOKE.**

"Mr. Mitchell told me that he" (Mr. Mitchell) "bought a yoke of young cattle, and broke them in with this yoke, and while he was breaking them in, they ran away and swam down the river with the yoke on the two of them together, and he went after them with a boat and led them ashore. He used it for ploughing and clearing land on Mitchell's Island.

"The yoke is made of soft maple; he told me he made the yoke himself from a tree growing on his island. His son, George Mitchell, lives at the corner of No. 5 Road and No. 20 Road; Mrs. Alex Mowatt was George's sister; she died some time ago. Mrs. Tipping is another sister, and Mrs. Waldo, another sister, lives in California, and there is another sister but living in Los Angeles, Mrs. Widdows. Gerald Mitchell, George's brother, operates a large farm on Nicomen Island. There are a lot of grandchildren of the 'original' Mitchell."

### **A.A. McCORMACK.**

"I came here in 1887 from Saskatchewan; we went there from Plantagenet, Ontario in 1883, mother and fathers, brothers and sisters, ten of us moved to Saskatchewan; there are two of us left now, my sister, Mrs. Lipsay of Merryfield, Saskatchewan. Climate brought me here to Vancouver. I worked on the construction of some of the buildings here, for instance, the Van Bramer Block on the northwest corner of Cambie and Cordova; also a small store where McLennan and McFeely is now. I was working for Oakes and Callo, but the Van Bramer Block construction was under a Mr. Dixon, now of Dixon and Murray, on Eveleigh Street."

### **KITSILANO, 1890.**

"The series of six logging photos which you have here of a lot of logging scenes in that valley back of the English Bay Cannery are interesting." (C.V.P. Log. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and N. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.) "It was operating when I came here, and *was the first steam logging railway in British Columbia.*"

### **FIRST LOGGING RAILROAD IN BRITISH COLUMBIA. KITSILANO. POINT GREY. CLAY CLIFFS.**

"I think Jerry Rogers operated it for the [blank], I don't know where exactly. I was often up there. The first time I found out what the tide meant; I was hunting ducks out Point Grey, and the tide came in, and marooned us under the clay banks, just beyond Jericho, the tide came in and we could not get along the shore to come back; the cliffs dropped straight in the sea, the mud banks, and we had to climb the cliff by hanging on to the roots of the trees. We had not gone in a boat; we went hunting along the shore, and the tide keep crowding us up to the bank, and when we turned to come back found that the tide had shut off our retreat, and we had to climb the banks, and come back through the woods to Sam Greer's farm at Greer's beach."

### **SAMUEL MITCHELL (BROTHER OF ALEX. MITCHELL OF MITCHELL'S ISLAND).**

"Samuel Mitchell, brother of Alex. of Mitchell's Island, still lives on No. 19 Road, Lulu Island. He is married, and has a son who runs the farm, and an unmarried daughter."

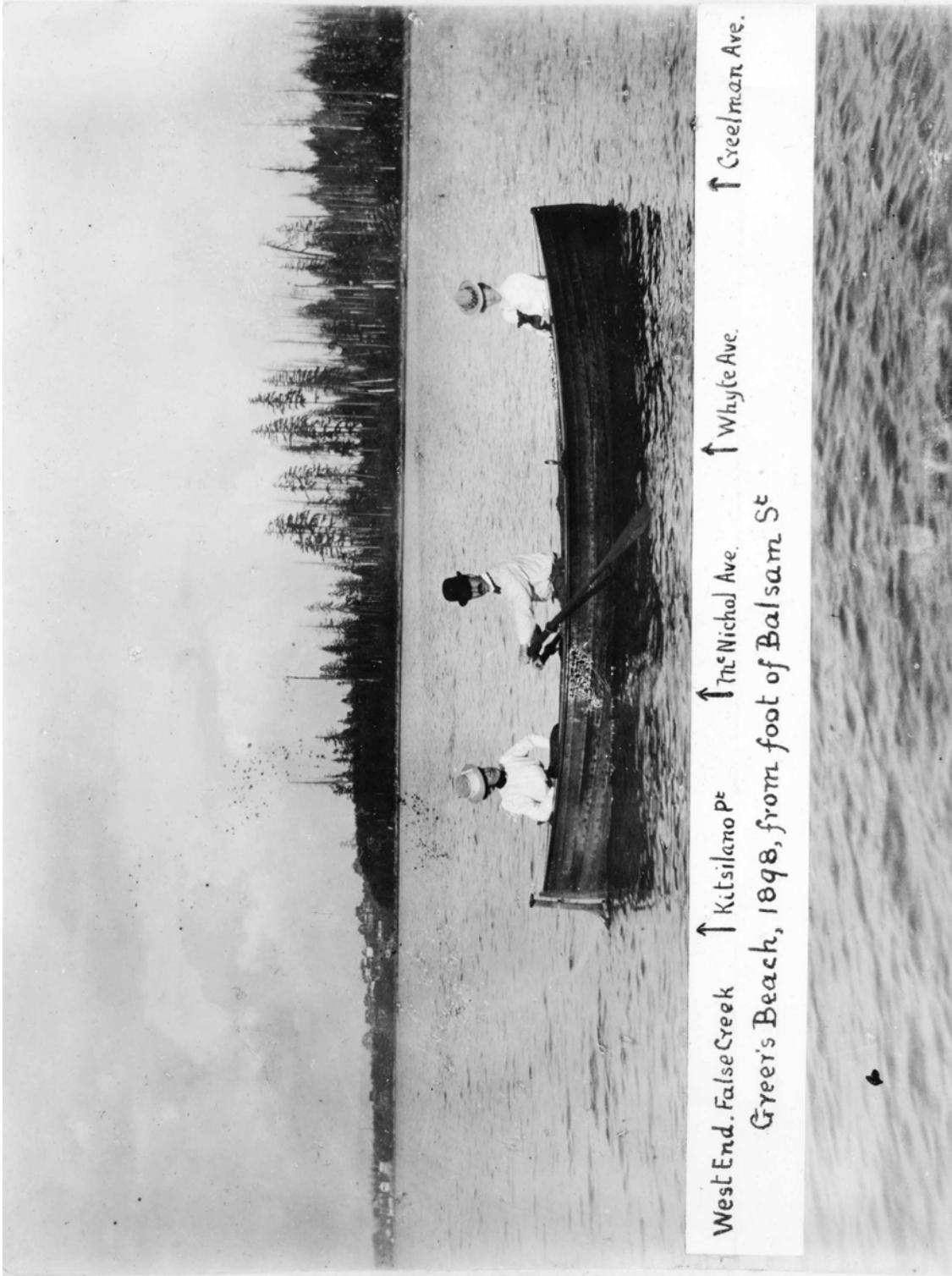
### **GENEALOGY.**

"In 1918 I married Miss Clara Higgins, daughter of W.H. Higgins, Baptist Church, and she is living, but has not been out of bed for five or six years; is an invalid; we have no children. I have to keep a nurse with her all the time."

### **KITSILANO FOREST.**

"Kitsilano was very heavily timbered."

Mr. McCormack, who stated it was "McCormack," and not "McCormick," as some members of his family spelt it, looked at his watch; said it was 11:30 a.m., time to go, and went. A very kindly pleasant gentleman. He remarked, "The day you attacked Regina Trench" (21 October 1916), "twelve of us were building an observation post for General Odlum about a mile back, near the Sugar Refinery on the Bapaume Road. We couldn't see the attack; there was too much smoke. A moving picture man was up there to take pictures, but he came back and said he could do nothing; there was too much smoke" (smokeless powder, too.) "He said that 'Anyone who came out of that was lucky.'"



Item # EarlyVan\_v6\_011

[photo annotation:]

West End. False Creek    Kitsilano Pt.    McNichol Ave.    Whyte Ave.    Creelman Ave.  
 Greer's Beach, 1898, from foot of Balsam St.