

Early Vancouver

Volume Six

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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

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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MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH COLONEL GEORGE E. WALKEM AT HIS RESIDENCE, 5775 SPERLING STREET, KERRISDALE, WHERE HE SPENDS HIS AFTERNOONS AWAY FROM THE OFFICE, RESTING, 17 NOVEMBER 1944.

He came here in 1898, and is not as young as he used to be. Mrs. Walkem received me graciously on arrival. His home is just such as one would expect; the Union Jack flying in the garden, the drinking pool for birds on its pedestal, and the flowers just as he surrounds his offices at the Vancouver Machinery Depot on Sixth Avenue, and the Gulf of Georgia Towing Company's office at the foot of Granville Street, False Creek. I received from them two large parcels of papers, books and photographs left to be given me by Mrs. Colonel L.W. Herchmer, R.C.M.P., and later Mrs. Walkem brought us tea and toast beside a blazing open fire place. We talked a lot.

Colonel Walkem: "Before I came here, 1898, I was down in Tacoma, Washington, working for the" (I think he said the Tacoma and Columbia River Railway.) "I worked for them for three months at ninety dollars a month, that was two hundred and seventy dollars, but I never got it. So I came up to Vancouver. I had relatives up here, two of them, but I didn't want to bother them. All I had was about two dollars.

"So that evening I had dinner at the Hotel Vancouver—seventy-five cents—and next morning I had a twenty-five cent breakfast, and nothing to eat the rest of the day. Thank goodness, that was the only time ever in my life I had to beg for a meal.

"So I went into that restaurant on Cordova Street run by Boehlofsky" (F.A. Boehlofsky, of the Boulder Salon on the corner of Cordova and Carrall Street) "and as I went in there was a waitress at the door with a napkin over her arm, and I asked her where I could find the proprietor, and she pointed to a man. I went up to him, told him I was without money, wanted something to eat, but I suppose he had dozens of such applicants and he did not grant my request. So as I was going out, dejected, the waitress at the door said to me, 'What did Father say,' so I told her. She replied, 'You go and sit down there at that table,' and I did, and she brought me as fine a meal as one could wish for, and after that she took one of those tickets for 21 meals and punched it for one meal and gave it to me.

"So the next day I got a job in the machine shop of the B.C. Electric Railway at three dollars a day, and after working two days I asked for my time, and got my time check for six dollars. The office of the B.C. Electric Railway was then on the corner of Cambie and Cordova Street" (see photo C.V. P. Bu. 171, N. Bu. 104) "and I went up there and a man came to the counter and took my time check. It was Charlie Rummell, afterwards well know in the B.C. Electric service. He looked at it, asked some questions such as, 'What's this; this is only for two days,' and wanted to know why I was quitting after two days. So I told him I did not want to owe for meals, and got my six dollars. He told me to go back and work, and I stayed with the B.C. Electric for three years, and had my meals at Boehlofsky's all that time."

J.S. Matthews,
17 November 1944.