

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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"We were there for seventeen years and one month, and never had an accident or disaster. Bit by bit, the taxes, which had started at \$230 on the 50 acres grew to \$779.58 for 1936. I held the fifty acres to the last, less the Pacific Great Eastern right of way, and the Marine Drive right of way; Marine Drive reach us in 1926, and after that we could drive to town.

"I had a boat building shed, or shop, where I built boats—don't forget, I am still able to do cabinet work—I built nine row boats during the seventeen years we were there; I used them for hire."

KEW BEACH. "CHULKS."

"I'll tell you something about Kew Beach. On the southwest, or south side, there is a boulder about fifteen feet in diameter, and it is sitting in a niche about twelve feet wide, wider at the top than at the bottom; it is about thirty-five feet deep from the top to the bottom, and this boulder sits in the top of the great crevice.

"Well, on the east side of Vancouver Island—this is an Indian legend in connection with this rock or boulder—there was once a great Indian tyee, and to show his power, he took this boulder in his sling, and was going to throw it at Mount Garibaldi, but he hit the wing of a raven, and the boulder dropped short, and landed in this niche of rock. That story was given to me by Andy Paull, secretary, Progressive Native Tribes of B.C., one day when he was up at Kew Beach."

A.J.T. TAYLOR.

"Finally, in September 1936, A.J.T. Taylor, who as you know was one of the principals in the building of the First Narrows bridge, took such a fancy to the location that he offered me a good price for about twenty-four acres west of the P.G.E., and the remainder I still own."

Major Matthews: What became of the beaches and cottages?

Mr. Trotter: "Mr. Taylor bought all of the waterfront, including the beach; he tore down all the cottages, excepting three, and the remaining three he lined with lumber, and used them for some private purpose. The beach is now private property, and is not used by other than members of the Taylor family and their friends."

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MISS MARGARET ELIZABETH MCCLEERY IN THE CITY ARCHIVES, 18 APRIL 1941.

She was resting, very tired, after a trip to New Westminster in connection with the plans for a proposed subdivision on both sides of South West Marine Drive at Macdonald Street, very close to the two old McCleery houses and the barn (6750 Macdonald Street and 2650 S.W. Marine Drive.)

FITZGERALD MCCLEERY.

Miss McCleery said: "Father did not come to British Columbia for gold; he came to get freedom. You see, in those days in Ireland they had to ask permission to cut down a tree; Father had heard of a place called the Peace River; that's where I'm going as soon as I can get this subdivision matter fixed, and almost 80 years after my father started on it but never got there. He said he was going some place where he could down a tree, or plant one if he wished to, without asking permission.

"You see, it was this way. My father showed me when we were in Ireland in 1910, and we went and visited his old home. As a boy he got a job, and when he came home that night his mother asked him what he had been doing. He said, 'Carrying liquor upstairs on a tray.' He had been carrying drinks to a man's wife; she was addicted to liquor, and her husband had sent her up liquor on the tray, and Fitzgerald did the carrying upstairs. Father told me his mother said him, 'Fitzgerald, you are not going to work there again,' and Fitzgerald said, 'That's settles it; I've heard about a place called Peace River, and I want to go there.'

"Samuel said he wanted to go too, but Samuel was younger than Fitzgerald and he was frail; he always, all through his life, suffered from bronchial trouble. So it was decided that Samuel could go too, and Fitzgerald was to look after him. So his father, my grandfather, borrowed one hundred pounds on a field of flax, \$250 each, and when Father and I were in Ireland, Father took me to see that field of flax—sixty

years after, it was still growing flax, which shows that they know how to feed their land and not bleed it, for flax is very hard on land.”

HUGH MCROBERTS.

“They started from Belfast, and left England from Southampton, and when they got to Victoria, that was the first they began to understand about gold. In Victoria they heard of a man named Hugh McRoberts, and Father told me that when he heard the name Hugh McRoberts, he remarked to the person he was speaking to that he had an uncle by that name who had gone to Australia, and the person replied, ‘I think it’s the same.’ But Father did not know Hugh McRoberts was here until he found him here.

“Father and Samuel first met Hugh McRoberts, their uncle, in New Westminster. The two brothers continued on up to the Cariboo; they walked all the way, and when they got there Fitzgerald was earning six dollars a day, but Samuel was ailing and could not work, and it was taking three dollars a day to keep Fitzgerald, and three dollars a day to keep Samuel, so that would never do, so they decided to come back to New Westminster, and walked all the way back. On the way back, the bible, which his Sunday School teacher had given him, and which I have given to his grandson, Harry Fitzgerald McCleery Logan, my sister’s only son and child, fell out of their pack and rolled down the cliff, so they climbed down after it.

“And that was how my father and uncle spent the first year after they arrived in British Columbia.”

[FITZGERALD MCCLEERY.]

On the evening of 28 April 1941, I dined at the home of Most Worshipful Brother A. McC. Creery, 5337 Balsam Street, and after the dinner one of his life-long friends, Mr. A.P. Horne, 4025 Granville Street, of Horne, Taylor and Co., West Pender Street, came in and we all chatted.

FITZGERALD MCCLEERY. HIS WORSHIP C.S. DOUGLAS. A.P. HORNE.

Mr. Horne: “You remember C.S. Douglas; he was Mayor, and in the real estate business. Well, Douglas told me that he went to old Mr. McCleery, Fitzgerald McCleery, and told him he could sell his farm down on the North Arm for two hundred thousand dollars. Douglas told me what was said; it went something like this.

Mr. Douglas: “I could sell your place for \$200,000, Mr. McCleery.”

Mr. Fitzgerald McCleery: (puzzled) “But what would I do with \$200,000?”

Mr. Douglas: “Well, at six per cent it would bring you in twelve thousand a year; that would be one thousand a month.”

Mr. McCleery: “But what use would a thousand a month be to me? My family don’t need more than fifty dollars a month to supply all we require; what use would a thousand dollars a month be to me?”

On the morning of 9 May 1941, Miss M.E. McCleery, “Greta,” youngest daughter of Mr. McCleery, was in the City Archives, and I repeated the above to her, and asked if she had ever heard of it, and if it was true. “Greta” was very near to her father, who called her his “right bower.”

Miss McCleery: (laughingly) “Sure, it’s true. Yes, I’ve heard that before. Of course it’s true.”

And then she went on laughing. A splendid woman; a real chip off the old block.

In the afternoon I called at the home of Mrs. Fleming, 6551 Sperling Avenue, to see Mrs. McCorvie, a very old lady, daughter of Mr. Christopher Lee, who was on the council of New Westminster in the very early days, and I mentioned Mr. McCleery.

Mrs. McCorvie: “Yes, I remember Mr. Fitzgerald McCleery very well; they used to walk, Mrs. McCleery too, all the way from their farm away down the North Arm, up the trail to New Westminster, to church.”