

## 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. AND MRS. REINHART HOFFMEISTER OF BOUNDARY BAY, AND 1271 GRANVILLE STREET, VANCOUVER, WHO VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS AFTERNOON AND REMAINED TO CHAT FOR AN HOUR OR MORE, 28 SEPTEMBER 1944.**

**CARIBOO CAMERON.**

Mrs. Hoffmeister: "Cariboo Cameron was my cousin; my mother and his mother were sisters. My mother was Miss Jessie MacBain, of Bainsville, Glengarry, Ontario, and she was the daughter of Squire John MacBain, of the same place. Mother became Mrs. Dr. J.T. MacPherson, D.D.S., L.D.S., of Lancaster, Ontario" (in Glengarry.) "Cariboo Cameron's wife was her older sister; her name was Margaret, but they always called her Peggy; there were two sisters. Cariboo Cameron's mother dropped dead in Montréal the day D'Arcy McGee was shot. My mother died in Edmonton, Alberta, about 1918. Cariboo Cameron died out here, I think. I was just a tiny girl when Mother used to tell us about this. My sister is the widow of Rev. Mr. McGugan, of Chalmers Church, here in Fairview" (Vancouver); "she lives in Crown Crescent, Point Grey—her phone is Alma 0718-Y—she may have a photo of Cariboo Cameron. I can see him as plain as anything with his great flowing moustache."

**HOFFMEISTER BROS.**

Mr. Hoffmeister: "There were seven Hoffmeister brothers; William was the oldest; all sons of Henry Hoffmeister and his wife Catherine, née Price; all the boys were born in Ontario. There was William, Harry, Fred, Reinhart, Louis, George and Jacob" (or Jake.) "Our home town was Clifford, Wellington County, Ontario. Father was of German descent. He came here from Hamburg when he was 14 years old; that is, he came to Canada. His father used to be an international lawyer, that is, my grandfather; he could speak six languages.

"The first one to come to Vancouver was Harry; he came here the year of the Fire, 1886; he just wanted to come to a new country. He followed the woodworking business; we followed the house building and contracting; we were brought up on that; Father used to make all the coffins for that district.

"Then, on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1888, I came here, single at the time, and I came from Port Sanlac" (sic) "Michigan, where I had been an engineer in a flour mill. When I was in the flour mill I started to study electricity; I used to take all the electrical newspapers I could get hold of.

"William, my eldest brother, was engineer on the Lake boats, and then he worked for the Edward P. Allis Co., at Milwaukee, installing machinery, and he built the flour mill at Port Sanlac, Michigan. Then he worked for the Pullman car works in Detroit for some time, too. Then he came out here about 1893; that makes three brothers out here, Harry, myself and William.

"Then I went off to the World's Fair at Chicago in 1893, and when I came back, Jake came back with me; that made four. Then George came. I think he came the same year from Wellington County. Fred must have come out here about 1890, and went down to San Francisco, and was superintendent of the San Mateo Railway for some years. He was slated to be the superintendent of the B.C. Electric Railway Co. here, but his wife died in the east, and he did not take that position. Then Fred got a position with the Canadian General Electric, and he installed the Soulinges Canal plant, Québec. Then he installed all that stuff down at Niagara Falls, for the Canadian Development Company. And then he had the Beauharnois plant.

"Then the next was Louis; he came out in 1894, and that is the lot. Mother came out and died here, and is buried in Mountain View Cemetery, and Father died down in Los Angeles, California. William died here and Harry died here."

**HOFFMEISTER BROS. BRIGADIER HOFFMEISTER.**

"Hoffmeister Bros., who had the garage on Pender Street West, comprised Harry and George, and I think Fred had an interest in it, too. I think they were the first motor car dealers in the city; they handled the Marmon" (sic), "the Dominion, and the E.N.F." (Flanders), "and the Detroit Electric."

### **FIRST ELECTRIC MOTOR CAR. T.A. FEE.**

"They sold the first electric car sold in the city to T.A. Fee. Harry and George are dead; Fred is down at Niagara Falls now.

"Louis, at first, worked for Robertson and Hackett, sash and door, and then afterwards at the Rat Portage Lumber Co., and ran the planing mill there, and then he was with the False Creek Lumber Co., running the planers there. Louis died about a year ago.

"Louis is the father of Brigadier Hoffmeister, who has distinguished himself in recent months in Italy; he has command of a division."

(Note: his rank is, I think, correctly, Major-General.)

"All that are living now is Reinhart, that's me, and Fred and Jake. Jake is working for me yet, on Granville Street; he has been with me since 1903."

### **CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.**

"Harry did not marry; George did not marry; Fred has one daughter; Louis has a son, the general, and a daughter; she is Mrs. French, he is down with the fish company here. Jake has one daughter, she is married, too, Mrs. Thornloe, or Betty, of Portage La Prairie. And I have one son, Frank Cameron Hoffmeister, working at my place, 1271 Granville Street."

Mrs. Hoffmeister: "I used to be up at Fort St. John." (I think she said four years, but I was interrupted and did not catch it clearly.) "We did all kinds of things up there. You see, I am the second Mrs. Hoffmeister."

### **FIRST GENERATOR.**

Major Matthews: What about the first generator, Mr. Hoffmeister?

Mr. Hoffmeister: "I've written it out for you. Here it is." (Hands over a sheet written in pencil, as follows.)

Vancouver,  
September.

Dear Major Matthews,  
City Archives,  
City Hall.

I received your letter August 21<sup>st</sup> 1944. In referring to A.W. Bullmer's letter. I have some corrections to make.

The first generator I built in Vancouver was in 1888. I landed in Vancouver 1<sup>st</sup> April 1888. I started my electrical experiment when I was steam engineer in Riley's Flour Mill in Port Sanelac, Michigan. I started to design the first 500 generator, and made the patterns, and had the castings made by the Gould Iron Works, Detroit. I also built my lathe to do the machine work. In March 1888 I decided to go west, so I landed in Vancouver. I brought the lathe and castings with me, and finished the generator here. I am keeping it as a souvenir.

The second generator I built for Sam Nixon; he was engineer at Robertson and Hackett Sash and Door factory on Seymour street. He used it to light up the engine room. When he went back to England he took it with him. Castings were made by Ross and Howard Iron Works.

After that, I designed a 500 watt D.C. motor for Trythall's & Son printing shop. As his business expanded, I installed a larger motor. Now I have the original motor in the shop. I also built a number of electro plating generators.

### **WHITE LEAD.**

Then there was a syndicate formed to make commercial white lead.

This is the 1000 amp—10 volt generator Mr. A.W. Bulmer refers to.