

## **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**

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**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. R. HOFFMEISTER OF HOFFMEISTER BROS., 1271 GRANVILLE STREET, AND BOUNDARY BAY, AT CITY ARCHIVES, 6 OCTOBER 1944.**

**FIRST DYNAMO IN VANCOUVER. EARLY STREET CARS.**

Mr. Hoffmeister: "I went to school in Clifford, Ontario, but I left when I was 14. After that I got certificates for free hand drawing, for draughting, for mechanical drawings, and I got them by going to night school.

"Then, the way I got interested in electrical things was that they put in an electric street car system at Port Huron, Michigan, and it was a queer sort of street car with a sort of housing in the middle of the car, and the motorman was in the middle of the car. Of course, it excited a lot of interest to see this street run without horses or driver, and people went to see it; they came in from miles and miles in all directions; that would be about 1886 or 1885. I said to myself, 'That's the thing to get into; it's the coming thing.' Then I started to take all the electrical journals and papers I could lay my hands on."

**FIRST GENERATOR IN VANCOUVER. HOWE STREET.**

"I designed it. I made the patterns myself, and then I built it. I used it down at a little shop I had, a little bit of a place on the southwest corner of Davie and Howe Street. The street wasn't opened up at that time. When we built the place, that is, my brother Harry and I, we had to haul the lumber in on a sleigh from down a little mill at the foot of Granville Street, MacKay was the name; it was before Fader's Mill; Fader took it over afterwards and built a new mill, right where Robertson and Hackett is now. Granville Street that time was just a trail up, and so was Davie Street, and Howe Street wasn't opened up at the south end."

**ROBERTSON AND HACKETT. MAJOR LACEY R. JOHNSON. VANCOUVER MANUFACTURING AND TRADING COMPANY.**

"I think Major Lacey R. Johnson, the Master Mechanic at the C.P.R. roundhouse, was the first man to build a house in the West End, away down by the corner of Pacific and Beach Avenue. We supplied all the doors and windows. At the time I was superintendent of the Vancouver Manufacturing and Trading Company; we had a sash and door and furniture factory and made pails and tubs—we had a sawmill in connection with it too" (see photo C.V. P. Bu. 98 N. [blank]), "factory down there at the foot of Burrard Street" (see Goad's Map, folio 23); "we had all that foreshore there between the C.P.R. railway and Granville Street.

"J.M. Browning was interested in the company, and so was E.H. Heaps; it was Mr. Heaps who brought the whole outfit out from Toronto. Then afterwards he went down to Cedar Cove on Powell Street and started a shingle mill. The V.M. and T. Co. had no electric machine or power; it was all steam. Andrew Wallace, the founder of the Burrard Dry Dock, was on the other side of Granville Street, but he had some part on the west side of Granville; we got a lot of stuff for him. He was a great hustler; he'd go to work and take a big piece of timber, and a broadaxe, and he would go at it, and nowadays they go to work and make plans and drawings, but Andy would have the mast made before they could draw their plans."

**HOFFMEISTER BRO. WOOD PULP. PORT MELLON.**

"With that one exception, the Vancouver Manufacturing and Trading Co., in which I had a financial interest, I have never worked for anyone; the little place we started on Howe Street and Davie was our own business. We had lots of work; we used to do all the installations. For instance, for the Canadian General Electric, and the B.C. Sugar Refinery, and the Vancouver General Hospital in Fairview, and the second C.P.R. Depot which had its own electric light plant at the foot of Granville, and then the pulp company at Port Mellon when they first started and organised the company. I made some of the experimental equipment for the first wood pulp made in British Columbia. At first they had a little experimental plant down on Cordova Street, between Cambie and Richards Street. His name was" [blank]; "that's a long time ago."

**NANAIMO.**

"Then I used to do a lot of work for coal at Nanaimo, but we never did much in private houses; it was all in electrical machinery. It was in Nanaimo that I first met J.H. Cocking of the Pioneers here. You see, they had a little steam plant for generating electric current down close to the town. Then they put in a water power on the Millstream Creek, and J.H. Cocking had the work of moving the machinery from the old

plant. We moved that plant; we started at 5 o'clock in the morning, moved all that machinery and had it in running order by 7 o'clock that night, and the town of Nanaimo was lit up, and the people never knew their electric lighting plant had moved. Bill Lewis was the manager. The people of Nanaimo had the light on after five o'clock in the morning, and had it on again in the evening at seven p.m. and in the interval the whole electrical lighting system of Nanaimo had been changed to a new location, and they were none the wiser."

#### **NELSON, B.C. SANDON, B.C. TRAIL, B.C. ASHCROFT, B.C.**

"My brother Fred put in the first lighting plant for the town at Trail; Heinz was the man who started the smelter up there. The C.P.R. took it over finally. Fred also put in the lighting for the town of Ashcroft, and pumping plant for the irrigation ditches there, and the C.P.R. water tower. And then at Sandon, we repaired their generators there; they could never get them to work right. And at Nelson, I looked over their plant, but did no work."

#### **FIRST ELECTRICAL FIRM.**

Major Matthews: Who was the first to establish an electrical business in Vancouver?

Mr. Hoffmeister: "I was the first electrical man in the city, and my business was the first electrical business in Vancouver. But you must remember that there was a company organised before I was here; it was called the Vancouver Lighting Co. or something like that, and they had two little 25 kilowatt generators down in a little bit of a building, wooden, I think, at the foot of Abbott Street. They were Edison type generators. Run on a three wire system, 110 and 220 volts; you see, 110 and 220 volts, and with the three wires you could get either 110 or 220. The idea, of course, was that 220 you could run your wires further out into the city, or you could use it on a motor for work purposes, and the 110 was good enough for lighting dwellings. The street lights were carbon filament bulbs on 110 volts."

#### **CONVERSATION WITH CALVERT SIMSON, STOREKEEPER, HASTINGS SAWMILL.**

##### **HASTINGS SAWMILL FIRE ENGINE.**

"I saw Arthur Hendry today" (13 October 1944.) "He says the old fire engine was broken up. And Harold Ridley told you he had a walking stick made out of it. So I suppose that was what happened to it. It seems one time, Arthur Hendry told me, they had it on a little trolley. But it wasn't a fire engine; it was just a bit of a thing with hose wound around on it. And it certainly wasn't the first fire engine north of San Francisco."

#### **SEYMOUR CREEK GOLD MINING SYNDICATE.**

##### **SEYMOUR CREEK.**

Conversation, 23 October 1944, with A.A. Brookhouse, 1872 Parker Street, who is editor, *Shoulder Strap*, semi-annual journal of B.C. Provincial Police:

"We thought we had a *gold* mine up there; put in a lot of sluice boxes and spent a lot of money; had a timekeeper and seven or eight men. We formed a syndicate, and staked gold claims all the way up the Seymour. There were a few flakes of gold up there, but not enough to make your wife a brooch. Some Australian man came here, and he could talk better than we could, and we formed the syndicate and lost our money. Never got a thing out of it, and found just enough gold to show us what gold looked like. That must be thirty-seven years ago. The only man living now who knows anything about it—he was in with us—is a man named Loutet, or Lewtet; he's over in North Vancouver; he was in the real estate business; I think he was Reeve of the District of North Vancouver one time."