

## **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. WILLIAM KNIGHT MELLIS, 3228 VANNESS AVENUE, VANCOUVER, FORMER DRIVER OF DAILY STAGE, VANCOUVER-TERRA NOVA, SON OF JAMES AND ISABELLA MELLIS, WHO DROVE BEFORE HE DID; 2 JULY 1940.**

**STAGES. STEVESTON. NORTH ARM ROAD. BIG TREES.**

Mr. Mellis said: "It was" (23 December 1895) "that the tree fell which killed 'Billy' Steves" (Walter Herbert Steves; his widow survives, 1940), "the Steveston stage driver on the North Arm Road, now Granville Street South. There was a big wind storm from the west, and the tree fell from that direction; it was not a big tree, but it was big enough to kill him. It did not injure horses nor passengers, I don't think it even broke a wheel; it fell right across the driver's seat.

"When the accident happened, William Cuckow, Lulu Island farmer, was following in his buggy, I was driving my stage to Terra Nova next after him" (note: Mrs. Willoughby Howell, née Errington, was third; see her narrative), "so that I saw all, and hurried on to get help by telephone."

**SHANNON. SHANNON'S FARM. 57<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE WEST.**

On my way to Shannon's Farm—'Shannon' at 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue West now, on Granville Street—I had to cross seventeen trees fallen across the road; that is, I had to drive over, or go around, seventeen trees before I could get from where the accident happened—right on the top of the hill at 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue, on the very crest, by the gravel pit—before I could get to the telephone at Shannon's. And it was dark, about 4:30 p.m., and a big wind from the west.

"The stage was an ordinary express wagon, two horses. A low, not a high, driver's seat in front, and backing on to it, on the same level, another seat; the passengers on that seat faced the rear. Then there were three more seats on the stage, and, at the back, a drop board; they tied such things as a trunk, or anything else. The stage had a canopy supported on iron rods, and side flaps of tarpaulin material for use in bad weather. And, on the top of the canopy, all around, was a low iron railing so that trunks would not fall off. There were about nine passengers, mostly Japanese."

**THIRTY-SEVENTH AVENUE. GRAVEL PIT.**

"Right on top of the hill, on the summit, was a sort of clearing on both sides of the road; and they had been taking gravel from pits on both sides of the road, and that had undermined that tree, weakened it."



North Arm Road, 1895, now Granville Street South. Looking south. The crest of "Summit Hill", now 37<sup>th</sup> Ave, Shaughnessy. The horses & stage are at (approx) 36<sup>th</sup> Ave. On the dark and stormy night, 23 Dec. 1895, a stage, driven by "Billy" Steves, of Steveston, and conveying about nine passengers, mostly Japanese; several buggies with returning Christmas shoppers followed. The westerly gale uprooted a small tree, and, falling across road, killed stage driver. Horses, stage & passengers uninjured. Published, "WORLD," 20 June, 1896, souvenir edition, under title "On the Road to Lulu Island." The gravel pit was on summit, exactly 37<sup>th</sup> Av. City Archives. 23m. The tree probably stood at No. 5349 Granville St. South, Lot 4, Block 3 & 4, D.L. 526. Another pit was across road, remains visible, 1940, on vacant lot No. 2, Block 911. The fallen tree shown here was not the one which killed Walter Herbert Steves (Billy).

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[photo annotation:]

North Arm Road, 1895, now Granville Street South. Looking south. The crest of "Summit Hill," now 37<sup>th</sup> Ave, Shaughnessy. The horses & stage are at (approx) 36<sup>th</sup> Ave. On the dark and stormy night, 23 Dec. 1895, a stage, driven by "Billy" Steves, of Steveston, and conveying about nine passengers, mostly Japanese; several buggies with returning Christmas shoppers followed. The westerly gale uprooted a small tree, and, falling across road, killed stage driver. Horses, stage & passengers uninjured. Published, "WORLD," 20 June 1896, souvenir edition, under title "On the Road to Lulu Island." The gravel pit was on summit, exactly 37<sup>th</sup> Av. City Archives J.S.M.

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Road to North Arm, 1888, now Granville St south, Shaughnessy Heights, looking  
"The Summit" (37<sup>th</sup> Ave.) Lulu Island farmers, mail stage and load of hay on their way to Vancouver, now Granville St at 37<sup>th</sup> Ave. Poles on east side. City Archives

Item # EarlyVan\_v6\_003

[photo annotation:]

"The Summit," (37<sup>th</sup> Ave.), Lulu Island farmers, mail stage, and load of hay on their way to Vancouver. Telephone poles east side road.

### **STEVES FAMILY.**

"It killed Walter Steves; never touched the horses or passengers; and cost South Vancouver Municipality a lot of money" (for damages.) "Walter Steves had a brother, Freeman Steves, but neither were any blood relation to J.M. Steves, but Walter Steves married J.M. Steves' sister. A Steves married a Steves; at least, that's as I understand it. At the inquest, Wm. Cuckow said that when the tree fell across the stage, the Japanese started to run, and added, 'I thought they would never stop running.' Walter Steves is buried in Mountain View. I am under the impression that this team here" (photo P. Str. 97, N. Str. 67) "is the team 'Billy' Steves was driving at the time he was killed."

(Note: in July 1940, Lot 2, Block 911, D.L. 526, vacant land numbered 5338, shows the remains of a gravel pit overgrown with small trees six inches thick, a little grove; across the street, also vacant land, no signs of gravel show now. This property is Lot 4, Block 3 and 4, D.L. 526, and is numbered 5349. On Lot 3, being the west corner adjoining, is a fine residence, No. 5315, Robert McNair; on the east corner, being No. 5312, on Lot 1, Block 911, a home is being erected by builders, J.L. Northey Co. Ltd.)

### **KING EDWARD AVENUE. 25<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE WEST.**

"Mud? There was lots of it. I have pulled a horse out of it with another horse up where Twenty-fifth Avenue is now. You see, if a horse gets bogged, why, some people put a rope around him, and when the strain goes on it tightens around his heart and kills him. The proper way to pull a mired horse out is put the rope around his throat; then when you pull—with another horse—it chokes him, he struggles, and out he comes."

### **POST OFFICE. TERRA NOVA.**

"My brother was killed by being thrown off, and over the side, on the Granville Street bridge; he drowned, the day the post office contract for the mail was signed, 22<sup>ND</sup> November 1893, for Terra Nova on the northwest corner of Lulu Island, but the Alliance, Terra Nova and Labrador salmon canneries were not there then; they came about 1895."

### **HUGH MAGEE. STAGES RACING.**

"Funny thing happened, I must tell you. Old man Magee lived down 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue, old Magee Road, and he used to race the stage. One day three or four of us were driving into Vancouver about Sixtieth Avenue, and we started to race. Just when we got to about 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue" (Magee Road) "old man Magee was coming out, and he saw us coming.

"He was as deaf as a post, and the old man started to run; everyone else started too. Generally, we used to quit after a while, but this day we didn't; nobody quit. Then, when we hit the Granville Street bridge across False Creek, Freeman Steves, that's brother to Billy Steves, who was dead at that time, he backed out of the race, but when we all got to the draw" (swing bridge) "in the middle, Chief" (of Police) "McLaren was there, and he pinched every one of us. He did not stop us; he knew us all, but the next day we got a summons.

"Now, this is the funny part. I forget who the judge was, but when Magee went into the box in court he said: 'You know, your Honour, I'm deaf, so I'll just tell my story. I was coming out of my road, and you know I have to look around to see what coming, I can't hear, and I saw the stage and others coming, and I thought one of them was running away, so I just put the butt'" (of the whip) "'to my horse, and "started going."

"We all got fined, two fifty each, but he" (Magee) "got off. And it was him who started it."

Comment by Miss M.E. McCleery: "That was the Irish in him."

### **GRANVILLE STREET SOUTH. NORTH ARM ROAD. LYNN BROWN, *KITSILANO TIMES*.**

"When the North Arm Road was finished, the contractors felled a cedar tree across it down near Eburne" (Marpole) "to stop the stage using it until the road had been taken over. Lynn Brown, he owns the *Kitsilano Times* now, went up at night, and sawed the cedar tree away so that, in the morning, the stage could take a bunch of fellows up to Vancouver to go over to Lynn Creek for target shooting. The road ran as straight as an arrow; not a curve nor a bend in it."

Approved by Mr. Mellis, 19 July 1940.