

Early Vancouver

Volume Six

By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.

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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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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. WALTER VERMILYEA AND HER DAUGHTER, MISS EVELYN MAY VERMILYEA, WHO KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES, 12 DECEMBER 1940, TO BRING CORRECTED NARRATIVE OF 2 DECEMBER 1940.

GENEALOGY.

Mrs. Vermilyea presented written information as follows:

Vermilyea.

Grandparents: Solomon Vermilyea and wife, Elizabeth Jones, born in New York State.

1. Son: John C. Vermilyea, born 1830 in Belleville, Ont. Came to Lulu Island, May, 1883. Had 600 acres on Lulu Island, 4 lots on Granville St., built two blocks at 925 and 871 Granville St., and a farm in California which he left because of water expenses (orange grove). All other property lost in 1896 by one mortgage.

Children: Walter, Herbert and Mae.

2. Daughter: Matilda, married Mr. Brandscombe. Their son, David Brandscombe, arrived with his family at Lulu Island a few years after Vermilyeas. For information see Mrs. Sarah Brandscombe, Newport Hotel, Vancouver.
3. Daughter: Mary, married Mr. Willard Garratt. Came to Lulu Island in 1888. Their son, Wilbur H. Garratt lives at 8643 Montcalm St., Vancouver.

John C. Vermilyea married Ruth McTaggart.

McTaggart.

Ruth McTaggart had a sister and brother.

1. Phoebe McTaggart married a Ketcheson. Their son, Royal Ketcheson, old timer, lives now on Lulu Island.
2. Joseph McTaggart, pioneer, had a grocery in West End.

Sons: Luther, deceased, Harry, professor in University of Toronto, Donald, Corporation Counsel, City Hall, Ernest, poet, artist, and Charles, electrician.

GENEALOGY. VERMILYEA.

Mrs. Vermilyea said: "As I told you the other day, in 1883 John and Ruth Vermilyea came to Lulu Island from Belleville, Ontario, bringing with them the three children, Walter, the eldest, Herbert, and Lydia May, the youngest. John Vermilyea had over 600 acres on Lulu Island below the Brighthouse property; he bought it, not preempted; I don't know who he bought it from; it wasn't much when he took over, but it was all hay land, and he built huge barns and houses. He went up to that school we had in the Municipal Hall, and as he was a minister of the Society of Friends" (Quaker) "he held services in the Municipal Hall every Sunday afternoon, or Town Hall we called it. There were no other divine services held on Lulu Island, so that his services were well attended by all denominations.

"He was the only Quaker on the Island, and of course his wife; she wore the regular Quaker costume, with a Quaker bonnet, a grey silk shawl, and grey dress; all the same kind of silk. He preached from inspiration; he did not have any papers; no music, no songs. He just preached and prayed. We all sat around the wall on the benches, and when it came time for us to go, the service over, he just shook hands with *his wife*, no benediction. The shaking of his *wife's hand* closed the service." (Mrs. Brandscombe reports when interviewed that O.D. Sweet held church services and preached and carried on Sunday School before this time, but discontinued the church services when the Quakers arrived, carrying on the Sunday School only.) "I do not know of services held elsewhere on the island at that time."

Major Matthews: Mrs. Vermilyea, Christmas will soon be with us; what about the old Christmases on Lulu Island?

Mrs. Vermilyea: "We took the children, all the school children from all around, and took them to the School House, or Town Hall. Well, we got up entertainments; we had an organ; we had dialogues and songs, solos; you see we all went there in our boats, in row boats up or down the North Arm, often rowing against the tide. That was hard work. Everybody rowed. One time, my husband, Mr. Vermilyea, when he was a boy, rowed twelve miles to New Westminster against the tide to bring a doctor to a sick woman on Lulu Island. She was a minister's wife. But I'll tell you, when the wind and tide are against you, it is hard rowing. The Christmas entertainments were always public ones, rarely in our homes. We hadn't time for Christmas trees in our homes and at the school house too. We had our tables set at home, of course, with ducks and geese and so on for ourselves. My mother went out and collected money from the logging camps and all around to get the organ."

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY.

"We used to take a couple of boats, and the young people went to New Westminster to see the Maypole. We took a boy and a girl on each seat to pull the oars—twelve miles, that's a long way to pull, so we put two on each seat, a girl and a boy on each seat. That's the way we rowed up on a four-oared boat, two seats, a long row. So we would start out about nine o'clock, and it depended upon the tide when we would get there. If the tide was with us, we would get there in a couple of hours, by noon. Then we would just spend the day at the May Queen celebrations, and then we would row back in the evening, singing songs on the way back down the river. I think a lot of the older Fraser River. It was fine with the trees hanging over the water which we had to row around. It is just as valuable to me as the old Swanee River."

GARRIPIE.

"I never saw Garripie; the place was deserted. We would stop there and play on the way to the little white school on the river bank. There was a big pool of water on the Garripie estate, and we would play around there and try to fish. It all seemed to be deserted. There was no one living in it."

NORTH ARM ROAD (GRANVILLE STREET). WILD ANIMALS.

"I remember driving all the way from Vancouver to the river with the old horse, 'Billy,' and I saw a bear on the way. He didn't bother me; he just went across the road in front of me. I just held my breath until he got by. I don't know how far away he was, I suppose a quarter of a mile away. He was below the big hill on the southern slope. I was all by myself.

"There was a man named Lindsay who lived over near Steveston. He was trying to get across the river from Eburne" (Marpole) "on the ice. The river was frozen over, and he fell into the river, and my brother heard him falling. They went out with ropes and planks and they pushed the planks out to him and threw ropes, and they pulled him out of the water on to the plank, and then drew him until they got him on firm ice, saved his life and took him to our house."

O.D. SWEET'S FARM.

"When Father and Mother bought 100 acres up by the Lulu Island Bridge, North Arm, they decorated all the front with shrubs and trees. They had a scow take evergreens from the mainland to our home, all the different kinds, pines and cedars and firs, silver maples, birch and every kind of tree and they decorated up each side of the path.

"He sent away to New York and Child's Nurseries and got many kinds of plants and also small fruits of every kind. He left the farm when he went to Vernon. He died in Vancouver."

VERMILYEA BLOCKS.

"Mr. Vermilyea had a fine farm on Lulu Island also. He mortgaged it to build the two blocks on Granville Street. That was how he lost the farm. They were built too soon. He was ahead of his time."