

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 125th anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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[photo annotation:]

First C.P.R. general offices and first bank in Vancouver, 1886-7, north side Cordova St. Prov. Archives, Victoria.

OPENING THE FIRST BANK. THE BANK OF BRITISH COLUMBIA. BANKERS NEVER MAKE MISTAKES.

On 19 July 1940, George Frederick Upham, pioneer, who arrived at Granville, Burrard Inlet, now Vancouver, New Year's Day, 1886, who fled the "Great Fire" of Vancouver, 13 June 1886, in a wagon, etc., sauntered into the City Archives, City Hall, and sat down before the City Archivist's desk. (Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.) After preliminary chatter, he said:

BANK OF BRITISH COLUMBIA OPENING. FIRST DEPOSIT. FIRST BANK IN VANCOUVER. DAN MCGILLIVRAY.

Mr. Upham: "I must tell you. The first bank to be opened in Vancouver was the Bank of British Columbia; Dan McGillivray made the first deposit; I know; I saw him do it. And I made the first withdrawal. I'll tell you something funny about bankers."

FIRST WITHDRAWAL. FIRST CHECK CASHED. J.C. KEITH, MANAGER. — HARVEY, BANK CLERK.

"I got a money order for one hundred dollars, and went to Jonathan Miller at the Post Office to cash it, but he couldn't do it, so Miller wrote a note to Mr. J.C. Keith, manager of the Bank of British Columbia which had just opened down in the C.P.R. Offices on Cordova Street, asking him to cash the money order, and he pinned the note to the order, and gave both to me. So I went to the new bank and walked in.

"Harvey, afterwards Loewen and Harvey, was clerk, and Mr. Keith, he was manager; both were behind the counter. I don't know why, perhaps because they were just starting, anyway, Mr. Keith, not Harvey the cashier, reached across, took the money order with the note pinned to it from my hand, and Mr. Keith handed me in return some bills. I counted them; eleven ten dollar bills.

"I said, looking up from the counting, 'I think you have made a mistake.'

"Mr. Keith didn't seem pleased, and said quite abruptly, 'Bankers *don't* make mistakes,' emphasising the word *don't*.

"So I moved a bit; counted the ten dollar notes again—there was eleven all right—and then went back to the counter, and said to Mr. Keith, 'I think you've made a mistake.' After I said that he was even less pleased. I forget what he said; doesn't matter anyway. There was nothing for me to do but go out in the street. So I went out on Cordova Street, looked up and down wondering what to do, and then sat down on the edge of the wooden sidewalk with my feet on the earth—there wasn't any other place to sit—and counted the bank notes again: eleven all right.

"Presently, I got up and went back in the bank, and walked up to Mr. Keith, who was behind the counter, and said, 'I think you've made a mistake.'

"By this time he was fuming; he was 'boiling.' I listened to what he had to say, and it was quite interesting, and then cleared out; it was no place for me to stay.

"That night, Harvey came down to where I was staying, and came up to me, and said, 'You were at the bank today; what was the mistake?'

"I gave him a pompous sort of look, and replied, 'You go right back to the bank, and find out.' And that was the end of it for a time.

"Well, about four months afterwards, I was up at the bank again, and there was Mr. Keith again. He came over to me, and said, 'You were in here before, weren't you,' quite politely. And then he apologised for what he had said.

"So I replied, cheery like, 'Oh, that's all right.' Then I added slyly, 'I don't suppose you expect me to give you back that ten dollars after all this long time?'

"'I should say not,' ejaculated Mr. Keith, with a smile. 'Would not accept it if you did. Come on across the street; let's have a drink.'"

BANKERS DON'T MAKE MISTAKES.