

Early Vancouver

Volume Six

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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

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MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH A.P. HORNE, ESQ., WHO FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS AND A FEW MONTHS, HAS BEEN CONFINED TO HIS BED IN ST. PAUL'S HOSPITAL. PIONEER. SUNDAY AFTERNOON, 14 JANUARY 1945.

GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH. SALVATION ARMY. H.J. CAMBIE OF CAMBIE STREET.

Mr. Horne, after we had been chatting for some time, and I had been telling him of General Booth's visit to New Westminster, where, as report goes, he was entertained at dinner by Mr. and Mrs. James Cunningham, together with a small number of the eminent and that, during the dinner, he played with his meat on his plate, and then ejaculated, "Mutton!! Mutton!! Call this mutton. You ought to taste the mutton we grow in England." The story is vouched for by Rev. G.H. Raley, D.D.

"When General Booth was here he stayed with Henry Cambie" (H.J. Cambie, C.P.R. Engineer) "and they tell the same sort of story about his visit to them. He is supposed to have been having afternoon tea, and burst out with, 'Call this tea; this is only coloured water; I like my tea strong; bring me some strong tea.'"

A. ST. GEORGE HAMERSLY. RUDYARD KIPLING.

"But," continued Mr. Horne, "I tell you one in which I was directly concerned, and this is not hearsay.

"St. George Hamersly, he was City Solicitor, but in those days the City Solicitor did not have his office at the City Hall; he has his own private practice, and acted as City Solicitor when they wanted his services. Well, Hamersly had his office on the north side of Hastings Street, between Seymour and Richards, where the Spencer Department Store is now. And it wasn't a very pretentious office. In the outside office he had a sort of bench for people waiting to see him to sit upon.

"I wanted to see Mr. Hamersly, and went into his office. When I entered there was a man sitting up the bench reading a book; he was all crouched up, and had a sort of inconsequential look about him; I sat down beside him and waited. Presently the door opened, and a client of Mr. Hamersly's walked out, and Mr. Hamersly close behind him. As soon as he saw me, he exclaimed, 'Hello Horne, hello Horne, how are you, Horne?'

"So I arose and pointed to the man, who was there before I was, but Mr. Hamersly beckoned me into his office, and I went in and left the man sitting there. Mr. Hamersly said to me, 'I don't know that man; I don't know who he is. Suppose he's someone from the City Hall to bother me.' When I went out, afterwards, the man was still sitting there.

"Next day I was on Hastings Street, and Hamersly called to me across the street; there were not many people on Hastings Street in those days. 'Oh, Horne, Horne. Horne, I want to see you,' called Mr. Hamersly, so I went across the street towards him. When we met, do you know what he said? He said, 'Who do you think that man was yesterday? Rudyard Kipling! He had a letter of introduction to me.'"

THOMAS LAING OF SEA ISLAND.

Conversation with Mr. Thomas Laing, formerly of McRoberts "Richmond Farm," Sea Island; now of 8809 Montcalm Street, Vancouver, who very kindly called at the City Archives, 21 January 1945.

THOMAS LAING. SEA ISLAND. HUGH MCROBERTS.

Mr. Laing: "I was born in West Hartlepool, Durham; some of my brothers are there yet; all coal mines in that country. I came to British Columbia to make my fortune; you see, there were ten of us in the family; we were a farming family from a way back, and to cut up a farm into ten wasn't enough room. So, when I was nineteen, I came to Canada, at first to Ontario in 1884, and I stayed there until 1893. I was single. I hired out to a farmer in Grey County, and stayed with him seven years. In the meantime, after four years, I went back to the Old Country with the intention of staying, but after two months I decided I liked Canada better.

"Then I came C.P.R. to Vancouver by myself, and did better in British Columbia than in Ontario; British Columbia is a great country. I went straight to work on Lulu Island for Mr. Shaw; he was a farmer right at Terra Nova, at the west end of Lulu Island, close to the Terra Nova Cannery. I was with Mr. Shaw a year;

he had about two hundred acres of dairy farm, and had thirty or forty cows, and the milk came right into the city and was sold to the Valley Dairy on Seventh Avenue, Fairview, and then.

“Then I got married to Miss Marian Mackie, sister to William Mackie, who was nephew to William Mackie who preempted D.L. 472; Bill Mackie is living out on Marine Drive now and grows roses.”

McROBERTS’ FARM. CHRISTOPHER WOOD.

“At first I leased a farm from Fitzgerald McCleery; it really belonged to Christopher Wood, but Fitzgerald McCleery had a power-of-attorney, and finally I bought it. It was 110 or 112 acres on what is now known as the Grauer Road.”

At this point Mr. Laing had to hurry away, as he had an appointment.

As told to me,
J.S. Matthews, 21 January 1945.

MR. THOMAS LAING, WHO OWNS A PORTION OF THE OLD McROBERTS “RICHMOND FARM” ON SEA ISLAND, AND HIMSELF A PIONEER OF SEA ISLAND, HAVING GIVEN ME AN OLD SNAPSHOT PHOTOGRAPH, I SUBMITTED IT TO MISS MARGARET McCLEERY, YOUNGEST DAUGHTER OF FITZGERALD McCLEERY, WHEN SHE CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES, 30 JANUARY 1945.

HUGH McROBERTS. McROBERTS ISLAND. SEA ISLAND, FIRST HOUSE.

Major Matthews: Miss McCleery. Thomas Laing gave this to me; he said it was the first house on Sea Island.

Miss McCleery: “Sure it is.”

Major Matthews: Whose is it?

Miss McCleery: “Hugh McRoberts; he built it. Christopher Wood, or Robert Wood, I don’t know which was first, whether Christopher bought and sold to Robert, or Robert bought and sold to Christopher; one or the other, from Hugh McRoberts.

“The house was on the river, just inside the dyke, about a mile and a half west of Eburne’s” (Marpole.)
“On McRoberts Island. It is now owned, that is, the farm is, by Thomas Laing; the house is not standing; they pulled it down. I don’t know who did.”

Major Matthews: Well, when did McRoberts build it?

Miss McCleery: “Well, Mother came out with her sister, Mrs. Christopher Wood, and Amy Wood, and Hugh Wood, who was a baby in long clothes. The house was on Richmond Farm; it was the first milk ranch on Sea Island. Hugh McRoberts’ milk customers were in New Westminster. I have his old milk route book with the list of customers yet. But he raised his cattle on the island, and his beef. He had his slaughter house down there. He had a little boat house right on the river bank, and used to load the beef onto boats—and in a canoe—and take it up to New Westminster.

“There is another picture of this first house on Sea Island in that little booklet on the history of the Presbyterian Church on Sea Island. I took the photo they made it from. But this is a good photo of the first house on Sea Island.”

Mr. Laing told me that McRoberts built the house in 1862.