

Early Vancouver

Volume Seven

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

2011 Edition (Originally Published 1956)

Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected between 1931-1956.

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.

Copyright Statement

© 2011 City of Vancouver. Any or all of *Early Vancouver* may be used without restriction as to the nature or purpose of the use, even if that use is for commercial purposes. You may copy, distribute, adapt and transmit the work. It is required that a link or attribution be made to the City of Vancouver.

Reproductions

High resolution versions of any graphic items in *Early Vancouver* are available. A fee may apply.

Citing Information

When referencing the 2011 edition of *Early Vancouver*, please cite the page number that appears at the bottom of the page in the PDF version only, not the page number indicated by your PDF reader. Here are samples of how to cite this source:

Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 7 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 7. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

Contact Information

City of Vancouver Archives
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9
604.736.8561
archives@vancouver.ca
vancouver.ca/archives



ROAD RACE AROUND STANLEY PARK CIRCA 1899-1906. RUNNERS.

For the volunteer soldiers of the 6th Regiment, "The Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles."

This was a race for runners held in the evening of Dominion Day, and was from the Hotel Vancouver on the corner of Georgia and Granville streets, around Stanley Park via Brockton Point, Prospect Point, Second Beach, Beach Avenue to Denman Street, along Denman to Georgia, and back to the Hotel Vancouver.

It took place annually for about six or seven years, and then was discontinued due to changing conditions, and the fact that the best runners were growing older and had not been replaced. The race of 1903 and 1904 had a large number of runners; probably 20; and there were cups and prizes. The prize awarded in 1904 was a magnificent huge cup of oak with silver bands. I often wonder what became of it. It may be in the Drill Hall.

At the time, all Kitsilano—which had not been named—was forest; so was Shaughnessy, Burnaby and North Vancouver. Commercial Drive, Grandview, ran through a clearing. Much of the West End was still vacant. There was one unit of volunteer soldiers, which had been the 5th Regiment, Canadian Garrison Artillery, but which had been changed to the 6th D.C.O.R. The artillery had "marching and firing" contests to the rifle range at Central Park. They started at the Court House, now our Cenotaph, marched with all haste to Central Park, fired a few rounds at a target, and the best team of about eight was declared winner. This contest became less interesting as time went on, and was replaced with a road race for regimental runners around the park. And, in the cool of the evening of the national holiday, the road race was very popular, and a large crowd of holiday makers gathered to see the finish. It was quite exciting as the crowd stood waiting at the corner of Granville and Georgia, and there were shouts of "here they come; here they come" as the first leading man appeared over the hill about Bute or Jervis Street, at Georgia.

There was so little to do in Vancouver in those days. No motor cars, no yachts—much; very little mountain climbing; and forest or clearing everywhere. English Bay beach was very small; most of it covered with boulders which cut the feet. It was not easy to find excitement for the evening of a holiday. Band concerts were popular; people stood around and listened.

There ought to be fairly full reports in the old book of military clippings in a cabinet drawer of old military records. They should be in a book about quarto size, 2 inches thick, and black back binding.

J.S. Matthews

1 May 1954.

"The fastest time, 1903, E.G. Boulton, 50 min. 30 secs."

5 DECEMBER 1945 – ELECTRIC TROLLEY BUSES—THE FIRST IN VANCOUVER.

Two minute radio remarks over CKWX, at 12:30 noon, at the corner of Burrard and Hastings streets, when the Mayor, Aldermen, and other civic dignitaries of Vancouver are the guests of B.C. Electric Railway Co., for the first ride in the new electric trolley busses. They are to tour the "West End" to show how the busses operate.

Remarks by Major J.S. Matthews, City Archivist:

This broad busy thoroughfare, Burrard Street, smooth paved, is a fitting point from which to inaugurate a new transportation enterprise. Within the memory of living man, it was a slit in the forest, a mere peephole through the trees, the first survey line which divided up the site of the city and separated the "Brickmaker's Claim," a preemption which we call our "West End," from the remainder of the wilderness.

The high building above us, the Marine Building, 349 feet tall, stands, precisely, on the exact spot where our first settler, John Morton, slept on the ground beneath the towering forest, 16th October 1862, whilst he built himself a shelter; he went to New Westminster for Christmas. He acquired

the whole of the “West End,” 550 acres all the way to Stanley Park, for five hundred and fifty dollars.

Twenty years later a factory on the shore below us extracted oil from Coal Harbour herring, and, too, over this ground the saddest procession our city ever saw took place. The distressed of the Great Fire, which destroyed the first Vancouver, 1886, straggled to the shelter of its sheds for the night following that awful holocaust. A few yards to our left, on a narrow ledge cut in the cliff—the sea was below—the first train, Montréal to Vancouver, linking the Atlantic to the Pacific, came to a stop in 1887.

In 1939 the King and Queen of Canada, the first ever to visit Vancouver, commenced their tour of the City from this spot.

Today we take another forward step in our progress. Our genial hosts are taking us for a tour of Morton’s “Brickmaker’s Claim,” our densely populated “West End,” in the latest transportation contrivance. That excellent corporation, the B.C. Electric Railway Co., and its courteous officials are emulating their progressive predecessors of 1890, who introduced the first electric street cars in the west, and so dispensed with horses which required bedding down at night, and got rid of hay and oats. This time they are dispensing with rails, gasoline engines and gasoline, and are substituting rubber.

STREET CAR DESTINATION PANELS.

The earliest street car signs in Vancouver, that is, destination signs, were painted on a long narrow clear glass panel at the top front of each street car, and at night a light shone through to make it readable.

Then came the large “cardboard” panel, about three feet wide by four deep, placed on both sides of the front end. They were visible for blocks, and one could see what car was coming. They were very good when we had few street car lines, but as we got more and more it became difficult to select suitable colours. They were abandoned, and we returned to the long narrow glass panel overhead.

For a short time, the long narrow pane of glass, mentioned in the first paragraph, conformed to the colour of the cardboard panel; for instance, the lighted sign—at night—showed red for Robson, the same colour as the panel of cardboard in the daytime, which sign was invisible at night.

The signs I recall were:

Davie street belt-line cars	Yellow panel
Robson street belt-line cars	Red panel
Fairview belt-line cars	White panel
Kitsilano—Harris Street Kitsilano—Powell Street	Green and white, diagonal
Grandview (Cedar Cottage) Fourth Avenue to Alma	Red and white, diagonal
Hastings Street Boundary Road Trafalgar and Broadway	White sign with red ball in centre
Victoria Road (from downtown via Main Street, Kingsway, and Victoria Road to about 49 th)	Green star on (I think) white
Pender Street	Forget, but think it was all green