

Early Vancouver

Volume Seven

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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.

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8 MAY 1956.

Mrs. James Nixon, daughter of Kenneth C. Campbell, who worked on construction of C.P.R.:

MOUNT PLEASANT. 29TH AVENUE EAST. SOPHIA STREET. WATER FROM WELL.

Mrs. Nixon: "When we moved to our place on Sophia Street, just off 29th Avenue East, Mount Pleasant, my husband dug a twenty-two foot well, and we pulled our water up with a rope. Wonderful water. All our neighbours got their water from our well, and pulled it up themselves. We had to go to 15th Avenue for our mail."

CANNON SHOT.

On 21 September 1954, Mr. George Donovan of 3698 Cambridge Street, Vancouver (and of Donovan Ltd., 449 East Hastings, typewriters) called at the City Archives, bringing with him a heavy cannon shot, twelve inches long, five inches diameter, slightly rusted, and weighing probably forty pounds. It has copper driving bands, and the marks of the grooves (when fired) are cut into the copper.

Mr. Donovan said:

"This shot was ploughed up at Ladysmith about 1952, by a man whose name I cannot recall but which I will get for you. His little farm is about half a mile north of Ladysmith, above the main road about four blocks; he was just ploughing a field. He was just ploughing along, when the plough unearthed it. He took it to his basement. I was stopping at the Europe Hotel in Ladysmith, and he gave it to me.

"Then about a year ago I phoned you and asked if you wanted it, and here it is.

"The contour level where it was found would be about seventy-five or one hundred feet and distant from the sea about half a mile."

16 NOVEMBER 1948 – THE CHAIN GANG, VANCOUVER.

From the *News-Herald*, Vancouver, 12 November 1948, article, "When Vancouver was young," by J.K. Nesbitt.

Assistant jailor J[ohn] Clough returned from flying visit to England ... even the chaingang men were glad to see their kindly but strict guardian back ...

It should be explained that it was the custom of the time to put prisoners to work on public buildings, and each day, in charge of a guard, they marched through the streets, all chained together, the chains making great clanking noises as the men marched, and people stood on street corners to gawk at them.

The author of the article is quite in error, because:

1. It was not the custom of the time *to put prisoners to work on public buildings*.
2. They were not *marched through the streets*.
3. They were not *all chained together*, there were no chains.
4. There were no *"great clanking noises as they marched"*.
5. People did not *stand on street corners to gawk at them*.

THE FACTS.

The chain gang was composed of short term offenders for minor offences, such as drunk and disorderly, sentenced to three, seven or fourteen days, by the Police Magistrate, hard labour, usually loggers, sailors accustomed to hard work. "White collar" men, or those not physically strong, were never on the chain gang. These strong men climbed up on a farm wagon equipped with cross seats, in rows, and sat down facing the two horses drawing the wagon. John Clough, or his successor O'Grady, was on the driver's seat. About 8:30 a.m. each morning (but only when the weather was fine), the wagon moved off from the Powell Street City Gaol, and, avoiding the principal thoroughfares, was driven very slowly, at a walking

pace, unhurried, to some remote area on the outskirts of settlement where the City Engineer wanted a street or lane in the virgin clearing, formed by "crowning," or some stumps taken out. Their "chains" consisted of two ankle cuffs, two links about 18 inches long and a ring, and in addition a stout leather waist belt to which the ring was affixed. The links connected the ring to the ankle cuffs. When walking, the links were suspended from the waistbelt and ring and the links lay inside each leg, perpendicularly, so that it could scarcely be seen as the trousers hid it. When at rest, seated on a log or root of a stump, the waist belt was unfastened and the links thrown on the ground, so that no weight of iron whatever was felt by the prisoner. There were no chains, and there was no noise of clanking as there was nothing to clank.

Clough and O'Grady both carried rifles but there is no record of either one ever having used one. O'Grady and Clough were very lenient; would allow prisoners to smoke freely once beyond general sight; would leave the "gang" to go to a nearby home for water to make hot tea for lunch at noon; gave the gang a rest period of 10 to 15 minutes about 11 o'clock, and again about 3 p.m.

No one stood on street corners to gawk at them. Even when necessity compelled the passage of a main thoroughfare, the chain gang wagon, with its load of men all seated together, went by so inconspicuously as to be scarcely noticed by sidewalk pedestrians, and, even if it was noticed there was little to indicate it was not a gang of workmen going to or coming from their work.

It is unreasonable to suppose that unskilled labourers were put to work on public buildings, as stated, because prior to the abolition of the chain gang in 1907, the City of Vancouver hadn't public buildings where unskilled labourers could work, and, even if they had, men of the character of the men of the chain gang were unsuitable for such work.

The chain gang was sufficiently useful that it was retained for more than 21 years. Frequently, men arrested and sentenced were improperly and scantily clothed when they joined the gang, but were properly clothed when they left it. John Clough had seen to that. Mr. Clough was, originally, a member of the chain gang himself, but made himself so useful that he was sworn in as city jailor.

J.S. Matthews
City Archivist

City Archives,
Vancouver.
16 November 1948.

CONVERSATION WITH F.M. CHALDECOTT, ESQ., PIONEER, WHO CAME TO VANCOUVER 1 MAY 1890, NOW OF 1174 WEST HASTINGS STREET, AT THE VANCOUVER CLUB, ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, 18 AUGUST 1948, WHEN I HAD THE HONOUR TO BE HIS SOLE GUEST AT AFTERNOON TEA; WE TALKED FROM 3 TO 5.

Mr. Chaldecott, in whose honour Chaldecott Park, Chaldecott Street, and Chaldecott Road, now West King Edward Avenue, are named, is now bent with the years, walks in a stooping position, but is very alert, and his hand writing very steady, and much more legible than that of many persons half his age. But time has taken his vigour physically; he does not rise until noon; visits the Vancouver Club in the afternoon; goes home soon, and, as ever, is extremely polite. He sat smoking a cigarette, on and off, until at 5 p.m. I was reluctantly compelled, on account of sickness at my home, to leave him.

SAM BRIGHOUSE. WM. HAILSTONE. JOHN MORTON. D.L. 185. WEST END.

Major Matthews: You were solicitor for Mr. Brighouse, weren't you, Mr. Chaldecott?

Mr. Chaldecott: "Brighouse, Hailstone and Morton owned District Lot 185; that's the 'West End'—west of Burrard Street—and they nearly lost it for non-payment of taxes. Of course, the amount of money owed was small when compared with sums of today, but if the taxes were only one hundred dollars, and you had not got the hundred dollars, the position is no different. So they borrowed money to pay the taxes. Charles E. Hope, he's up at Deep Creek Farm, Fort Langley, now, was agent for the Yorkshire Mortgage; not Yorkshire Guarantee, which was a different thing altogether, and I was appointed solicitor. The