

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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ARTHUR CURRIE AT THE FLOWER SHOW, DRILL HALL, VICTORIA, CIRCA 1910.

Nov. 17th, 1953.

Dear Hazel:

A letter from an old friend of the 5th Regiment, Canadian Garrison Artillery, Victoria, has reminded me of a little tale which I have never told and, in order to make a record of it, I am writing this to you, and making some carbon copies.

Years ago General Sir Arthur Currie, Commander-in-Chief of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the First War, 1914-1918, was Major Currie, of the 5th Regiment, mentioned above, in Victoria. I was Captain Matthews, of the 6th Regiment, "The Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles," Vancouver, and was in Victoria on a business trip. One evening Major Currie and I met in the new Empress Hotel lounge and sat down to chat. Major Currie, asking what we should do, and as I replied that I had nothing in mind, said, "Let's go down to the Flower Show in the Drill Hall." So we walked over—two or three blocks.

The whole of the great wide floor space within the Drill Hall was a huge mass of beautiful blooms of every kind. They were arranged on long tables—the length of the Drill Hall—with aisles, between which ladies in evening gowns, some slightly décolleté and with sparkling jewelry, looking as beautiful as the flowers, were strolling, some with, some without gentlemen companions. The conversation between Major Currie and myself continued something like this:

Matthews: "What are all these men doing with their hats on at an occasion like this?"
Currie: "Does not look quite right, does it?"
Matthews: "Lets make them take them off?"
Currie: " How?"
Matthews: "Look." (removing my hat)

Currie took his hat off and we both carried our hats, holding them in our hands before us in a grand manner and looking as solemn and sedate as we could. We passed a few gentlemen and then turned around just in time to see one man whom we had passed, snatch his hat from his head and notice that others beyond had removed theirs.

Five minutes later there was scarcely a gentleman in the Drill Hall with his hat upon his head. So that was how Currie and I got a crowd of men to take their hats off.

J.S. Matthews.

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