

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.

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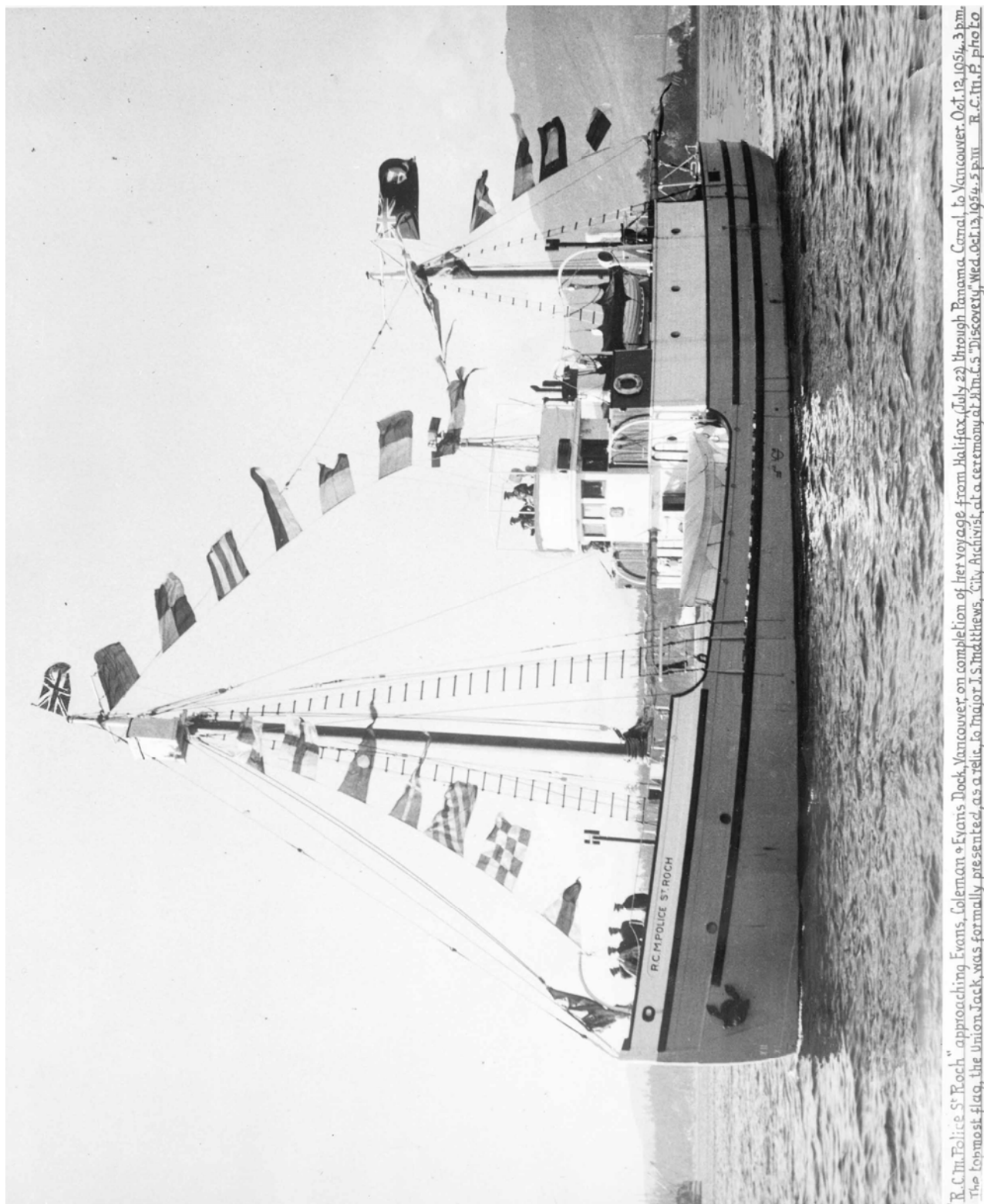
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"R.C.M. Police St. Roch" approaching Evans, Coleman & Evans Dock, Vancouver, on completion of her voyage from Halifax, (July 22) through Panama Canal to Vancouver. Oct. 12, 1954, 3 pm. The topmost flag, the Union Jack, was formally presented, as a relic, to Major J.S. Matthews, City Archivist, at a ceremony at 4141.5 "Discovery" Wed. Oct. 13, 1954, 5 pm. R.C.M.P. photo

Item # EarlyVan_v7_066

[photo annotation:]

"R.C.M. Police St. Roch" approaching Evans, Coleman & Evans Dock, Vancouver, on completion of her voyage from Halifax, (July 22) through Panama Canal, to Vancouver. Oct. 12, 1954, 3 p.m. The topmost flag, the Union Jack, was formally presented, as a relic, to Major J.S. Matthews, at a ceremony at H.M.C.S. "Discovery," Wed. Oct. 13, 1954, 5 p.m. R.C.M.P. photo

AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE AUXILIARY SCHOONER *R.C.M. POLICE ST. ROCH* BY THE DOMINION OF CANADA TO THE CITY OF VANCOUVER, COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL, VANCOUVER, TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 1954.

Major Matthews, City Archivist:

The story can commence from a sentence in a letter written by Captain Vancouver soon after he discovered and named our harbour. May I read from his original letter:

"We arrived here this day month all in high health and spirits having truly determined the non-existence of any water communication between this and the opposite side of America; hence I expect no further detention in this hemisphere."

Columbus hoped to reach Asia by sailing the other way, but found his passage blocked by land, that is, the north and south American continents. Later, a man climbed a mountain at Panama and saw an ocean on the other side; the problem was how to get a ship into it. Finally Magellan got through, but so far to the south that the passage was of scant use, so men tried the north. For three hundred years men tried to penetrate the Arctic ice. Almost every nation sent out exploring expeditions, British, French, Dutch, Russian, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian; between the years 1500 and 1800 about seventy attempts were made. All failed; scores of ships were lost and hundreds of sailors did not return. The British tried by approaching from the west. Captain Cook was sent to examine the "Western Sea," but found there was no sea; it was mountains. We call those mountains "British Columbia."

Then Captain Vancouver was sent to find a waterway through our mountains, and entered our First Narrows in his search. There was no passage by which he could sail from the Pacific to the Atlantic. So he wrote the sentence I have just read, and went back the way he had come. Again the British tried from the east, and in one expedition Sir John Franklin lost two ships and about 160 sailors. What became of them was never known. The North West Passage was not found.

The only way by which the Atlantic could be linked to the Pacific was by a railway, and a wilderness of forest at the terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway became a world port. Then, in 1928, two men, Clarence and Hubert Wallace, who, as boys had played in the clearing we call the "West End," built a little ship at the Burrard Dry Dock and called it the *St. Roch*. Our men drew her plans; her hull was our own Douglas fir; the Burrard Iron Works made her engine; her crew lived here, and she sailed away. Christmas, 1940, we sat by our warm firesides and heard you, sir, (Superintendent Larsen), tell us you were imprisoned in ice and would be for months. Two years later he reached Halifax, proving that it was possible to cross Canada by water; that Captain Vancouver was wrong, and the gallant *St. Roch*, with a mere 150 horsepower, became the first vessel ever to pass from the Pacific to the Atlantic around the north of America. Next year she came back the same way, the only ship ever to make the return trip. Then she went to Halifax via Panama and became the first to circumnavigate the North American continent; and now she has come again, the first to circumnavigate in both directions.

Other cities wanted the *St. Roch*. Rockcliffe Park, Ottawa, was considered, but she is ninety feet on the waterline and twenty-five feet beam; too long and too wide for the railways. His Worship, our Mayor, made representations, and the Dominion cabinet agreed that the proper place for her to rest was where she was built, and the proper custodians the men who built her. And, as an indication of official and public opinion, when the Mayor proposed and the Aldermen agreed, on behalf the Citizens, to defray our share of the expense, not a single dissenting voice was raised; the press applauded, and one editorial read, "The *St. Roch* comes home."

Other famous ships are preserved as relics. Nansen's *Fram* is ashore at Oslo, Norway, a great glass case over her to protect her from the weather. Nelson's *Victory* is at Portsmouth, high and dry; Amundsen's *Gjøa* sits in a bed of imitation ice at Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, and the *Cutty Sark*, with her tall masts and rigging towering to the skies, is in a park at Greenwich, London, put there at a cost of \$250,000 raised by voluntary subscriptions from shipping men the world over. Last June the Duke of Edinburgh officiated at the formal opening ceremony. The Indian dugout canoe, in which Voss of Vancouver sailed the world, is beside the Parliament Buildings, Victoria.

Six years ago Sergeant Larsen sat at a desk in this City Hall and laid a paper upon it, remarking "there's that manuscript I promised," and the City Archives printed 6,000 copies. Those pamphlets are in the schools of five Canadian provinces, in the naval colleges of the British Isles, and the libraries of the United States. One was translated into the Italian language and printed at Rome.

A granite monument, symbolising her exploits, is in a park at Regina, and a tiny model is in a museum. The names *St. Roch* and Larsen will rank forever with such names as Columbus, Magellan, Cook, Vancouver and Amundsen. Long after those in this Chamber this afternoon have passed into dust the school children of Canada will be taught the story of the *St. Roch* and her crew.

Our interest in northern Canada has been so awakened that last June the Duke of Edinburgh visited it, and a new ministry, the Ministry of Northern Affairs, has been created at Ottawa.

We of Vancouver are a maritime people; our home is the sea and the shore. During the last war we built one hundred 10,000-ton cargo steamers; our yachtsmen own one thousand pleasure boats; thirty-two thousand ships, great and small, passed inwards through the First Narrows last year. Captain Vancouver in his *Discovery* was the first to peer into Burrard Inlet, a lonely unknown haven in an old and densely populated world. Larsen succeeded where he failed. Now comes the powerful *Labrador* quickly crashing across from sea to sea. All honour to them all. So long as we have such stout ships at the *St. Roch*, and such fine men as the Royal Canadian Mountain Police, there is no fear for Canada!



The "St. Roch" Comes Home

October 12, 1954

An appeal is being launched to assist in the preservation and maintenance of the historic Royal Canadian Mounted Police schooner "St. Roch" in the same way as Nelson's flagship "Victory", at Portsmouth; the "Cutty Sark", at London, England; Nansen's "Fram", at Oslo, Norway, and Amundsen's "Gjoa", at San Francisco all are kept.

The "St. Roch" was built at our Burrard Dry Dock in Vancouver in 1928, by our own men, and of our own British Columbia materials. She has been presented, as a Canadian national relic, by the Government of Canada to the Citizens of Vancouver as trustees, as it was felt that the proper place to preserve her was the place where she was built, and the proper custodians, the people who built her. The Citizens of Vancouver have accepted this responsibility.

Her preservation is a national tribute to the skill of Canadian naval architects and shipwrights, and to the resourcefulness and gallantry of the men of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who sailed her.



The "St. Roch" In The Ice

The "St. Roch" was the first ship ever to pass from the Pacific to the Atlantic around the north of America, 1940-1942. She succeeded where Captain Vancouver failed, 1792. She was the first ship ever to make the return voyage, Vancouver to Halifax, then back to Vancouver by the North-West Passage. Her many voyages since 1928 have greatly contributed to the development of the northern domain of Canada.

She was the first vessel to circumnavigate the North American continent, and both ways, west to east and east to west, through Panama Canal.

Her last voyage ended at Vancouver on October 12, 1954, when she arrived from Halifax via Panama, and was accorded a public welcome in which H.M.C.S. "Labrador", another famous ship, took part. At a formal ceremony in the Council Chamber, City Hall, she was accepted, as a national trust, by the Corporation and Citizens of Vancouver.

It is planned to raise the "St. Roch" from the water, and place her, covered from the weather, in the famed Stanley Park. Ultimately, it is hoped, a marine museum building for the Port of Vancouver, will be erected around her.

The St. Roch Preservation Fund

Interim Trustees: His Worship F. J. Hume, Mayor of Vancouver
Major J. S. Matthews, V.D., City Archivist

Bankers: Imperial Bank of Canada

Auditors: Audit Department, City Hall.

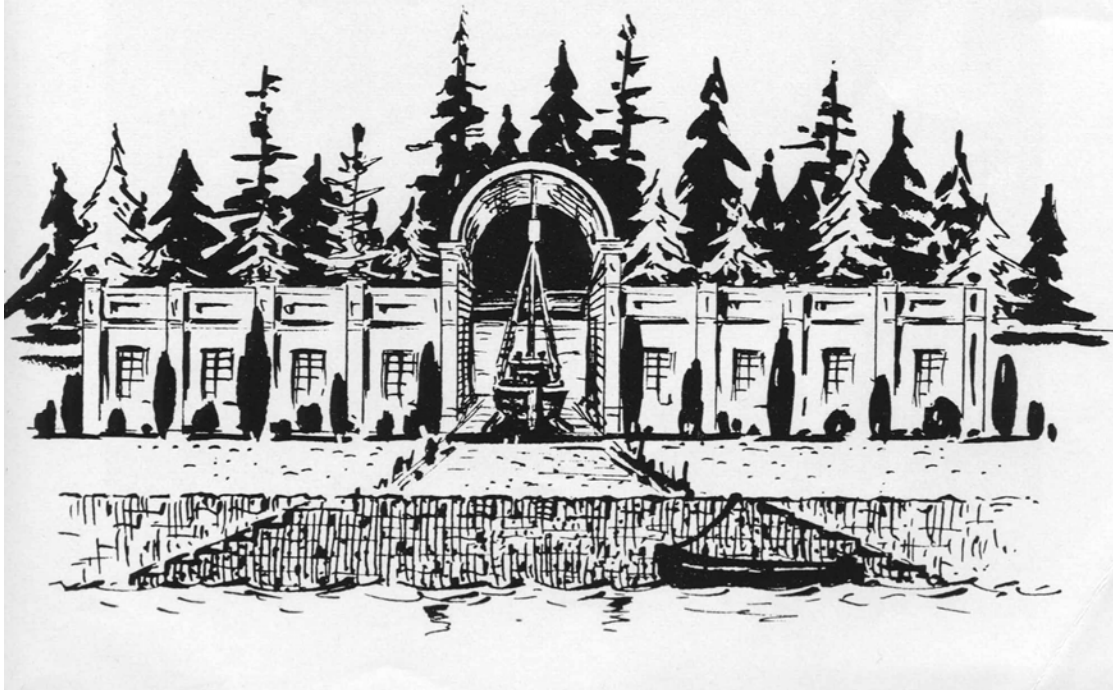
As offers of money towards the cost of her preservation were being received, it became provident to accept them, deposit them in a chartered bank, and create an interim trusteeship. This has been done.

The exemption of contributions from income tax has been authorized.

All interested are invited to send donations, or write the

ST. ROCH PRESERVATION FUND
CITY HALL
VANCOUVER 10, B. C., CANADA

City Archives,
City Hall,
Vancouver 10.
January 17, 1955.



Item # EarlyVan_v7_069



*Burrard Shipyard, North Vancouver, where the "St. Roch" was built, 1928
Aero Surveys Limited, Vancouver*

Item # EarlyVan_v7_070

City Archivist
MAJOR J. S. MATTHEWS, V.D.

Assistant Archivist
MRS. J. G. GIBBS



CITY ARCHIVES
VANCOUVER 10, CANADA
INST., 1933

CITY HALL

October 28th, 1955.

ST. ROCH PRESERVATION FUND

THE MAYOR'S FUND

The preservation of the *St. Roch* as a Canadian National relic has been entrusted by the Government of Canada to the Citizens of Vancouver, where she was built of Canadian materials and manned by the men of Canada. The exploits of the *St. Roch* and her crew must, for all time, interest the peoples of all nations.

His Worship the Mayor has been authorised to raise funds for her care and custody, and His Worship has promised to raise, by voluntary contribution, \$42,000 in 30 days.

Complete plans have been prepared to dry berth the ship at Kitsilano Point in a position which can, in time, be made a most beautiful location.

The "St. Roch Preservation Society" has been incorporated, and hopes, ultimately, to create a marine museum for the western coast of Canada, with the *St. Roch* as the main attraction. The Centennial of British Columbia will be celebrated three years hence—in 1958—and such an institution would be a fitting permanent memorial.

Contributions are exempt from income tax. A start has been made, and donations have already been received from all parts of the Dominion.

An immediate response is needful if His Worship The Mayor is to keep his promise of 30 days. His own personal contribution is five hundred dollars (\$500).

All interested are invited to send donations—

ST. ROCH PRESERVATION FUND

CITY HALL

VANCOUVER 10, B. C., CANADA