

Early Vancouver

Volume Seven

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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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He and his son built the boat on the beach. I took considerable pleasure selecting the lumber and advising economy in many ways. It was not a craft one could be proud of, but it answered the purpose. His bill for the material was as low as I dared make it without hurting the old man's feelings.

He and his son loaded all their belongings in the cabin foreward and sailed away before a westerly breeze in the direction I told them would take them to Howe Sound—no compass or charts. I never heard of or saw them after; until ten years later I had occasion to go to Howe Sound to inspect some logs for J.S. Emerson and upon landing at the wharf I met my old acquaintance who gave me a most hearty greeting—invited me to his house where I met his wife and daughter.

That evening he told me the story of landing in the little bay I had described to him. "I have been here ever since—thanks to your advice."

Gibson was a fine character, good citizen. His path was not strewn with roses—it had many thorns and rough spots, but he did make a home for his family.

Dear Major

I thought you might be interested in Gibson as he was well known in Vancouver.

I have written how it happened he located at what is now known as Gibson's Landing.

J.W. Bell.

Received the story unsigned, 18 October 1946 from my good friend, John Warren Bell, pioneer, Burrard Inlet, 1871. J.S. Matthews.

Note: since June 1947 "Gibson's Landing" has been known as "Gibsons." A.W.

BIG TREES.

31st Oct. 1946.

To Major J.S. Matthews,
Archivist,
Vancouver, B.C.

Your enquiry about what I know about the "Big Fir Tree" which has been illustrated, discussed and written about in our local press of recent date is not worth comment or discussion.

I remember seeing the same picture many years ago. Who had it, or how long ago I cannot say. It was being shown among the crowd as a "Fir Tree"—Who fell it? and where? were the questions asked.

"Here, DeBeck," he said, addressing my uncle Ward, "You're an old-timer and should know—tell us about it."

"What the heck are you trying to pull off now? You know as well as I do that it is not a fir. Who ever saw bark that thick on a fir? Besides, it's stringy. Twenty-five feet in diameter alright—but it is not a fir. You can pull such stuff on cheechakoes, they like it—but you know very well no fir ever grew that large. You know it is a redwood tree of California. I have worked in the redwoods—have seen them larger—much larger. The drinks are on you—come on, boys, he tried to put over a foolish one."

That's about the size of it, Major. It was a joke they tried to spring on the boys and it fell flat.

Periodically that same picture appears in Lumber Journals and now we have located where it grew? "Lynn Creek" "fell some time about 1895?"

LOGGING WITH OXEN.

Cottrell logged with oxen up Lynn Creek Valley in 1871—My folks lived there at that time and being loggers cruised the whole of Burrard Inlet.

MOUNTAIN GOATS.

In later years I cruised the valley as far up as the mountain goats live and never saw or heard of such a sized tree of any species. For years I was scaler, cruiser and log buyer in B.C. and Washington. One of the finest and largest fir I can recall was the one that grew where the Burns Block stands. Cuts from that tree stood at the C.P. Ry. Station for show purposes. Others were shipping to Eastern Exhibits. Its photo and size you have. I have heard of reports of fir trees being fifteen feet in diameter. That is quite possible—but twelve feet is the largest butt I recall having scaled in the log. Ground measurement is quite different from butt or stump measurement which varies from three feet and up from the ground. That makes a great difference in the diameter. That's about all I know about the Big Fir—nothing—a hoax.

J. Warren Bell.

AFTER SEVENTY YEARS.

By John Warren Bell, pioneer.

In his usual abrupt voice Major Matthews, of the City Archives, phoned me and asked if I knew an old-timer, Mrs. Crakanthorp, who lived on Burrard Inlet in the early seventies.

"No," was my answer, "never heard of her." "I want you to meet her," he resumed. "Come up to the Archives on Wednesday, at 3:00 p.m. Good, I'll be expecting you. That's all—good-bye," and he hung up the phone.

Crakanthorp! Crakanthorp! Who in the world is Mrs. Crakanthorp? I pondered. The Major must have gotten his dates mixed, for I knew or heard of all the people on the Inlet in the early seventies as I had come up on the steamer "Beaver" from Victoria in 1871. I will see Mrs. Crakanthorp—someone who came to Vancouver after the fire, when a child, I'll bet—early seventies! The Major is all mixed up in his dates.

Promptly at five minutes to three p.m., I strolled up to the City Hall. Just ahead of me was a little old lady accompanied by a young lady, well-dressed, alert and attentive. Not very young for I noticed a few grey hairs among her abundant black tresses. I also noted her clear, fresh, natural complexion and her vivaciousness. The elderly lady was neatly dressed in black, skirt a little longer—with more of a reserve in her demeanor, yet a natural confident air. A dear sweet old lady like those I remember in my youth.

They also went to the City Hall and took the elevator. Not caring to appear to be following I took the next elevator going up.

I was admitted by the young lady in attendance and saw the ladies sitting at the Major's desk.

"Come here Mr. Bell—let me introduce you to Mrs. Crakanthorp and her daughter—you are all old-timers."

"How do you do, Johnny," she asked as she smilingly extended her gloved hand. "Do you know me—do you remember me?" I exclaimed, as I retained her hand in mine.

"Certainly I remember you and your sister Emelene, your brother Ward, your mother, aunt Nora (Mrs. Hughes) and all the DeBeck family. I am one of the Patterson girls—you remember them of course."

"Sure I do, there were three of you—all pretty with black eyes and black hair. Yes, I remember you by your eyes just the same twinkle as they had or one of your sisters, you were so much alike."