

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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CONVERSATION, ON VANCOUVER AND “GASTOWN,” WITH CALVERT SIMSON, 1870 BARCLAY STREET, FORMER STOREKEEPER, HASTINGS SAWMILL, WHO DROPPED IN TO THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS MORNING FOR A BRIEF VISIT, 28 NOVEMBER 1945.

VANCOUVER STILL “GASTOWN.” GRANVILLE, B.I. LANTERNS.

Major Matthews: What did you do for light at night in those days, Mr. Simson?

Mr. Simson: “When we went out at night we took a lantern. When we went out visiting we took the lantern with us as part of our visiting paraphernalia. So that we could not get lost in the bushes coming back again. But, of course,” said Mr. Simson, jocularly, “there were so many ‘shining lights’ in Gastown in those days that really the lantern illumination was not actually necessary.”

Mr. Simson, continuing: “Vancouver has not changed any—it is still ‘Gastown.’ It is still a talking community—lots of ‘hot air’ rising up.”

HASTINGS INSTITUTE.

22nd Dec. 1947

HASTINGS INSTITUTE

Dear Mr. Simson:

I have just been making—as my own typist at home in the evening—several copies of your letter to me on this subject, April 23rd 1945; you had been looking up some old book, and give, in your letter, certain library fees charged Jerry Rogers, C.B. Sweney and others. Sweney's daughter was in to see me last summer; very rich woman in California.

In the “B.C. Historical Quarterly” just received there is an item about libraries; that on page 183 about the Burrard Inlet libraries is copied from Howay's article in the same quarterly in 1937; both of which are sketchy, and, in my opinion, all wrong.

The “Hastings Institute” was so named as a compliment to Admiral Hastings in or before March 1869; before that it was the “London Institute.” But, in or on Jan. 7th 1869, a book was given “To the Library of the British Columbia Mill Co.” In 1887, a pile of books lay on the cookhouse table. Mr. Alexander offered them to Father Clinton, and he, with Carter-Cotton and H.P. McCraney, took them and formed the Vancouver Reading Room on Cordova St.

“The Mechanics Institute,” “Moodyville,” was never the “Hastings Institute.” It was opened, so [they] say, Jan. 23rd 1869, though there have been organisation meetings in late 1868. I have never heard that any of its books reached our Public Library, but I do know that when they were clearing the site of the old Moodyville Mill about 1905, Mrs. Harris saved two books from a huge pile they were burning up to get rid of them.

Did I ever give you the photo you wanted?

With best wishes

Most sincerely,

J.S. Matthews
CITY ARCHIVIST

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