

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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**CONVERSATION (OVER THE PHONE) WITH MR. A.P. HORNE, 4025 GRANVILLE STREET,
PIONEER, 16 MARCH 1954.**

**“THE DIVINE SARAH.” SARAH BERNHARDT. VANCOUVER OPERA HOUSE. C.P.R. LAND
DEPARTMENT. A.P. HORNE. H.J. PAINTER. FRANK ROBERTSON. JOHN MAHON.**

Major Matthews: Mr. Horne, do you remember Sarah Bernhardt (“The Divine Sarah”) being in Vancouver?

Mr. Horne: “Yes. I engaged her. She played at the Vancouver Opera House. The Opera House belonged to the Canadian Pacific Railway and was under the management of the Land Department. Mr. Browning was in charge of the Land Department, and for about a year after I came to Vancouver I was a clerk in the Land Department. Others were Frank Robertson, brother of Dr. Robertson, superintendent of the City Hospital, and also H.J. Painter, afterwards City Assessor. It was our responsibility to get performances for the Opera House, and we engaged Sarah Bernhardt for one of them. She was here two days and one night.”

Major Matthews: When was that? Do you recall what she played?

Mr. Horne: I was with the Land Department for about a year—it must have been in 1891. What she played I don’t recall now. She was very temperamental. I was backstage and saw her go into her dressing room. Her maid was there and she shouted at her maid and threw herself about. Then she went on the stage again and was the mildest lady imaginable. You would not think she had any temper at all. She was rather small, but a wonderful actress. She was *beautiful* as an actress.

Major Matthews: Do you recall if anyone took her for a sea trip anywhere?

Mr. Horne: “Yes. John Mahon did. He had a little steam yacht, of 25 or 30 feet length—nice little thing—no cabin, no canopy, all open; burned wood or coal, I suppose. He took her up the North Arm one afternoon.

Major Matthews: Did they go as far as Granite Falls?

Mr. Horne: “I don’t know.”

Major Matthews: We have a lot of photographs of Granite Falls, taken about 1890 or 1891 by Bailey of Bailey Bros. I have looked them over but I could not say, positively, that any of them are of the Bernhardt boat party. It was a favourite resort for the Vancouver Boating Club.

Mr. Horne: “I cannot remember, but I know John Mahon did take her for a trip up the inlet one afternoon.

“After the performance that evening, she invited us to supper, but we apologised and said we had to close up the evening’s affairs in the office and about the Opera House. Of course, she spoke in French.”

SARAH BERNHARDT AND VANCOUVER OPERA HOUSE.

The Vancouver Opera House was opened 9 February 1891.

EXCERPT FROM CAMPBELL SWEENEY DIARY.

Sept. 21st, 1891. Sarah Bernhardt in “Feodora” and on 22nd in “La Tosca.”

PROGRAMME.

In the “Vancouver Opera House” docket in City Archives is an original programme, printed, on the outside, “VANCOUVER OPERA HOUSE,” a tiny signed photograph of Sarah Bernhardt, and at the base is printed “Mdme Sarah Bernhardt.”

The programme, inside, is printed “Sept. 21st and Sept. 22nd, 1891,” but the cast of characters is for La Tosca only.

We are without a programme for “Feodora.”