

**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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 7 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 7. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

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I was three years old. Then we moved to our new home on the southeast corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Ontario Street. The woods were close at hand, giving cover to bears who occasionally were bold enough to break down a fence and help themselves to raspberries and vegetables. In 1896 my only brother was born. He died in 1942 and was survived by his widow—there were no children. When I was twelve years old we moved to 1357 Pender Street. Father bought the property from Mr. Osborne Plunkett. It was an English type of home—half of it hall—and fireplaces in nearly all the rooms. There was a beautiful sunken garden where we kept our little rowboat. Our favourite pastime was to row to Deadman's Island where we children begged for fish to feed the seals in Stanley Park."

**CHAS. WIEGAND, FURNITURE. FRANK W. HART, PIONEER, 1885.**

"It was in this manner that Father started in the furniture business. Mr. Frank W. Hart, whom you knew, and whose widow is living in Vancouver, was in the furniture business, I believe. At the time of the fire, Father saved some of the firm's business papers but he had to drop a large picture of his father which he was carrying under his arm. The fire made such rapid headway that he had to rush down into the sea. Of course he lost all his possessions. Later, Father was Vancouver manager for Sehl who had a furniture factory in Victoria. A few years after he bought out Mr. Hach's business on Cordova Street. (Mr. Hach died suddenly, I understand, as the result of a fall.) It was not long before my father was operating three different stores of his own."

**RETIRED FROM BUSINESS. VISIT TO BIRTHPLACE IN GERMANY. GAMBIER ISLAND.**

"As a comparatively young man my father retired in 1907. In the same year he sold our Pender Street home (much to our childish grief!) as the surrounding district was becoming rapidly industrialised. He bought a dwelling at 1339 Burnaby Street from which there was a fine view of the sea. Before settling down in the Burnaby Street residence, the four members of the Wiegand family took a six months' trip to Europe, holidaying in Germany, Switzerland, Italy and England. When in Germany, we visited Father's birthplace and the old paternal forestry home at Feldheim."

**FRED KEELING. BRIGADE BAY.**

Shortly after we left Pender Street, my father became interested in Gambier Island when on one of his trips in his sailboat, the *Bosun*. He first bought four hundred and thirty-two acres from Mr. Fred Keeling, who had built a log cabin and started an orchard on a hillside with a glorious view of Mount Garibaldi and the Sound. Later he purchased the Simpson property, another one hundred and seventy-three acres, for at the far end of this lot there is a beautiful little sheltered bay which offered a good mooring place for our boat. This was a great advantage after he parted with the sailing sloop and acquired the *Phryne*, a fast cruising launch."

**LATER LIFE ON GAMBIER ISLAND.**

"Most of Father's later life was spent on this property where he had a comfortable home constructed and surrounded himself with a lovely garden in which was an artificial lake. For a number of years he raised canaries, pheasants, and Belgian hares, and kept deer in a nearby enclosure. His hobby was the growing of lilies-of-the-valley and violets. He is now eighty-eight and wonderfully well and hearty and still a good rifle shot. During the recent war he belonged to the Pacific Coast Rangers on Gambier Island."

**CONVERSATION WITH MR. CHARLES WIEGAND, AND HIS DAUGHTER, MISS ELSA WIEGAND, WHO WERE SO KIND AS TO CALL AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS AFTERNOON, 27 DECEMBER 1946, AND STAY CHATTING FOR AN HOUR OR SO, AND PARTAKE OF A LITTLE TEA AND CAKE AT THE PROPER MOMENT.**

Mr. Wiegand is 88; was born on 29 November 1858, and is very active for the number of summers and winters he has seen; joined in the conversation; ate his slice of cake, looks well—probably due to his daughter's care—and nothing whatever to indicate antique or the worse for wear. We had a very talkative visit; not a dull moment. Miss Wiegand and Mr. Wiegand, when in town, are temporarily living at 3836 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. They still retain their Gambier Island estate. Mr. Wiegand has been in Vancouver over sixty-one years; he arrived on Burrard Inlet, 5 December 1885. Miss Wiegand had with her a copy of our conversation of 28 June last; said she approved of it with one or two slight alterations.

### **1885 IN VANCOUVER.**

Mr. Wiegand: "I arrived in Vancouver in 1885 and for a time I lived at the old Sunnyside Hotel, but two dollars a day was a bit expensive in those days, so I had one of the waterfront characters build me a shack on the beach for \$7.50; it was situated near what now is the foot of Columbia Street."

Note by J.S. Matthews: A panoramic photo of Vancouver waterfront taken in May or before thirteenth of June 1886 by Harry Devine, has been sent to Mr. Wiegand, as it probably shows the shack he lived in. There are several in about that location.

Mr. Wiegand: "I now spend nearly all my time at Gambier Island. I bought D.L. 1780 from Fred Keeling and D.L. 1259 from William Simpson. The two lots cover an area of six hundred and five acres with about three miles shoreline."

Note by J.S. Matthews re Simpson Bros.: There were two Simpson brothers. At one time they were at Hood Point. Mrs. Raley, née Simpson, sister-in-law to Rev. G.H. Raley, D.D., well-known, said, 5 September 1939:

"John and William Simpson were my brothers. William moved to Gambier Island in 1888. Both camped at the corner of Gore Avenue and Hastings Street before the fire of 1886. John was J.P. in the Kootenays in 1907. He died at 712 Rayside Avenue, Burnaby, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1938, aged 78 years." (We do not appear to have information about William.)

### **BRIGADE BAY. CAMP ARTABAN. PORT GRAVES.**

Mr. Wiegand: "The Geographic Board have recently named our sheltered little bay 'Brigade Bay' as the 'Boys' Brigade' have a summer camp close to our boundary line. Our home is about ten minutes' walk from this bay. From the garden, there is a glorious view of Howe Sound with Anvil Island and the great mainland mountains beyond. It is a pleasant walk to Camp Artaban situated at Port Graves at the head of East Bay, formerly Long Bay. Mrs. H.O. Alexander, widow of the late Magistrate Alexander, still resides at her beautiful home 'Shore Glen' on her property next to Artaban."

### **DEER ON GAMBIER ISLAND.**

Major Matthews: Are there any deer on Gambier Island now?

Miss Wiegand: "Yes, many of them."

Mr. Wiegand: "For years I had them as pets. It is necessary to see that our high fences are in good repair or our garden would soon be ruined. They enjoy flowers as well as vegetables."

Miss Wiegand: "They are sometimes dazzled at night by the light of my 'bug' on the trail. On two different occasions, friends of our have actually collided with them."

Major Matthews: Have you considered selling the timber on the property?

Miss Wiegand: "We have had offers but we cannot bear to have the forest spoilt."

Major Matthews: Couldn't they just take the "big stuff"?

Miss Wiegand: "We have seen the frightful mess left after so-called 'selective logging' and so far have turned down their offers."

Mr. Wiegand: "My daughter has inherited the 'wanderlust' from me, and has spent much time living in Europe and travelling to my favourite islands in the Southern Hemisphere. At present we content ourselves with roaming about our island trails and boating along its rocky shoreline."