

Early Vancouver

Volume Seven

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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, 8 MAY 1956, OVER THE TELEPHONE, WITH A.M. WHITESIDE, ESQ., K.C., 470 GRANVILLE STREET, BARRISTER, PIONEER, NEW WESTMINSTER.

THE GREAT FIRE, 13 JUNE 1886. "HERE BEFORE THE TRAIN" BANQUET, 7 MAY 1887.

Mr. Whiteside: "I intended to be there, but then, at the last moment, found that I could not do so. I hear the banquet was a great success."

Major Matthews: I asked the chairman, Rowe Holland, to ask all those who were born in Vancouver or vicinity in 1886 to stand up. About ten stood up. Then I asked him to ask those who escaped from "The Fire" to stand up. I had not time to count them before they sat down, but it was about fifteen, perhaps more.

Mr. Whiteside: "I was walking somewhere in New Westminster and looked up. I saw a great column of black smoke ascending to the sky; then it mushroomed out at the top. It was the most remarkable column of black smoke I ever saw. Then, after a short while, the carriages and wagons began to arrive with the refugees seeking food and shelter in New Westminster."

"Then what do you think they did? They despatched a fire engine from New Westminster by train. The train ran up to the junction at Coquitlam, and then on to Vancouver, about twenty-six miles, and arrived after the 'party' was over."

CONVERSATION WITH MISS ELSA WIEGAND, 3836 WEST 23RD AVENUE, DAUGHTER OF CHARLES WIEGAND, WELL-KNOWN PIONEER OF VANCOUVER, WHO VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS MORNING, 28 JUNE 1946.

The celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the incorporation of Vancouver is on everyone's mind, and we are compiling a roll of those who have lived, and are still living, sixty years or more on Burrard Inlet.

EARLY LIFE OF CHARLES W. WIEGAND. BURRARD INLET IN 1885.

Miss Weigand: "Father was born on November 29, 1858, in Schoppenstedt, Brunswick, Germany, where his father, Theodor Wiegand, was principal of the school, registrar of vital statistics and organist and choirmaster of St. Stephen's Lutheran Church. His grandfather on his mother's side was Head Forester of the great forests by Feldheim, some miles from Schoppenstedt. This old gentleman wore a medal won at the Battle of Waterloo, where he was a commanding officer under Blucher. After some years passed, the Wiegand family moved to the city of Brunswick where Father attended the 'Gymnasium,' a well-known secondary school in this part of the country. Much to his family's disappointment, Father left home to be apprenticed to a sailing vessel. Twice he sailed around the world in the good old days when it meant rounding the Horn. The beauty of the Samoan Island made a deep and lasting impression which remained with him through life. However, his real love was Burrard Inlet, where he arrived on December 5, 1885, and decided to stay. Many were the trips he took in a small rowboat up the North Arm of Burrard Inlet. He was on friendly terms with the Indians and soon learned the Chinook jargon. At first he stayed at the now famous Sunnyside Hotel but soon tired of that, and moved to a little rustic dwelling he had built on the seashore between old Granville Townsite and the Hastings Sawmill. He had rather a shock one morning to awaken and find his furniture floating—however, this only happened at extremely high tide. He thought a great deal of the Rev. Fiennes Clinton and attended services at the first little St. James Church."

PRINCESS STREET METHODIST CHURCH.

"My mother was Elizabeth Jane Rogers of Stourbridge, Worcestershire, England. My parents' marriage on June 1st, 1890, was the first which was performed at the old Princess Street Methodist Church. Father was a young widower at this time—there was one child by his first marriage, a little daughter, Mamie, who died in San Francisco where she was living with her mother's relatives." (She died just before arrangements were being completed to have her brought back to B.C.)

BEARS IN MOUNT PLEASANT.

"Father bought a cottage on Keefer Street about a couple of blocks east of Westminster Avenue" (now Main Street), "where he took my mother after their marriage. There I was born in May 1891 and lived until

I was three years old. Then we moved to our new home on the southeast corner of 12th 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 23rd 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.