

**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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**Contact Information**

City of Vancouver Archives  
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9  
604.736.8561  
archives@vancouver.ca  
vancouver.ca/archives



West Vancouver, 1912. Hollyburn, Lawson Ave, now 17th, Dominion Gas wharf, where first West Vancouver Ferry Co's private company, on 25 Feb 1909 boat landed. Gasoline street lamp, before electric light. "Navy Jack's old gravel pit L to R: - John Lawson's house, formerly "Navy Jack's (John Thomas) and first Post Office; Lawson's orchard on "Navy Jack's old property, Lawson's office (white building), Lawson's concrete sidewalk, built and paid for by himself, Lawson Ave, only street 100 feet wide. Behind Lawson's house is his high barn; behind his white office verandah post is Archibald's real estate (afterwards City Clerk, North Van CP). High building on s.w. corner of Marine Drive, is first store + second. P.O. store bldg owned Lawson, operated Ferguson. Lawson, first postmaster. Distant tent used as first "municipal hall", summer 1912, beside it, behind lamp, new "Municipal Hall". Freight shed with log load for freight, bricks and barbed wire on end. J. Ollason's (afterwards Municipal Clerk) real estate office behind freight shed. Old lady lived in white cottage on right, and supplied occasional cop of tea to strangers. Details of description supplied by J. Ollason, his conversation, April, 11th 1939.



Looking up Lawson Avenue Hollyburn BC

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[photo annotation:]

Looking up Lawson Avenue Hollyburne B.C.

West Vancouver, 1912. Hollyburn, Lawson Ave, now 17<sup>th</sup>. Dominion Govt wharf, where first West Vancouver Ferry Co (private company, inc. 25 Feb. 1910) boat landed. Gasoline street lamp, before electric light. "Navy Jack's" old gravel pit. L. to R. : - John Lawson's house, formerly "Navy Jack's" (John Thomas) and first Post Office; Lawson's orchard on "Navy Jack's" old property. Lawson's office (white building), Lawson's concrete sidewalk, built and paid for by himself; Lawson Ave, only street 100 feet wide. Behind Lawson's house is his high barn; behind his white office verandah post is Archibald's, real estate (afterwards City Clerk, North Van'cr). High building on s.w. corner of Marine Drive, is first store & second P.O. Store bldg owned Lawson, operated Ferguson. Lawson, first postmaster. Distant tent used as first "Municipal Hall," summer 1912, beside it, behind lamp, new "Municipal Hall." Freight shed with log float for freight, bricks and barbed wire on end. J. Ollason's (afterwards Municipal Clerk) real estate office behind freight shed. Old lady lived in white cottage on right, and supplied occasional cup of tea to strangers. Details of description supplied by J. Ollason, his conversation, April 11<sup>th</sup> 1939. J.S. Matthews, City Archives.

**CONVERSATION WITH JOHN LAWSON, ESQ., PIONEER, WEST VANCOUVER, 1905, AND HIS DAUGHTER, MISS GERTRUDE LAWSON, AT THEIR RESIDENCE, 680 SEVENTEENTH STREET, HOLLYBURN, WEST VANCOUVER, 8 SEPTEMBER 1949.**

**EXPLANATION.**

Not having spoken to Mr. Lawson since about 1931 (see *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1), and having unearthed two photographs taken about 1910 by Bullen and Lamb, photographers, marked "CLEARING ON THE MARINE DRIVE, HOLLYBURN, WEST VANCOUVER," and "HOLLYBURN GOLF COURSE, WEST VANCOUVER," I sought to visit him at his home, 680 Seventeenth Street, and in return, received a cordial invitation to dinner.

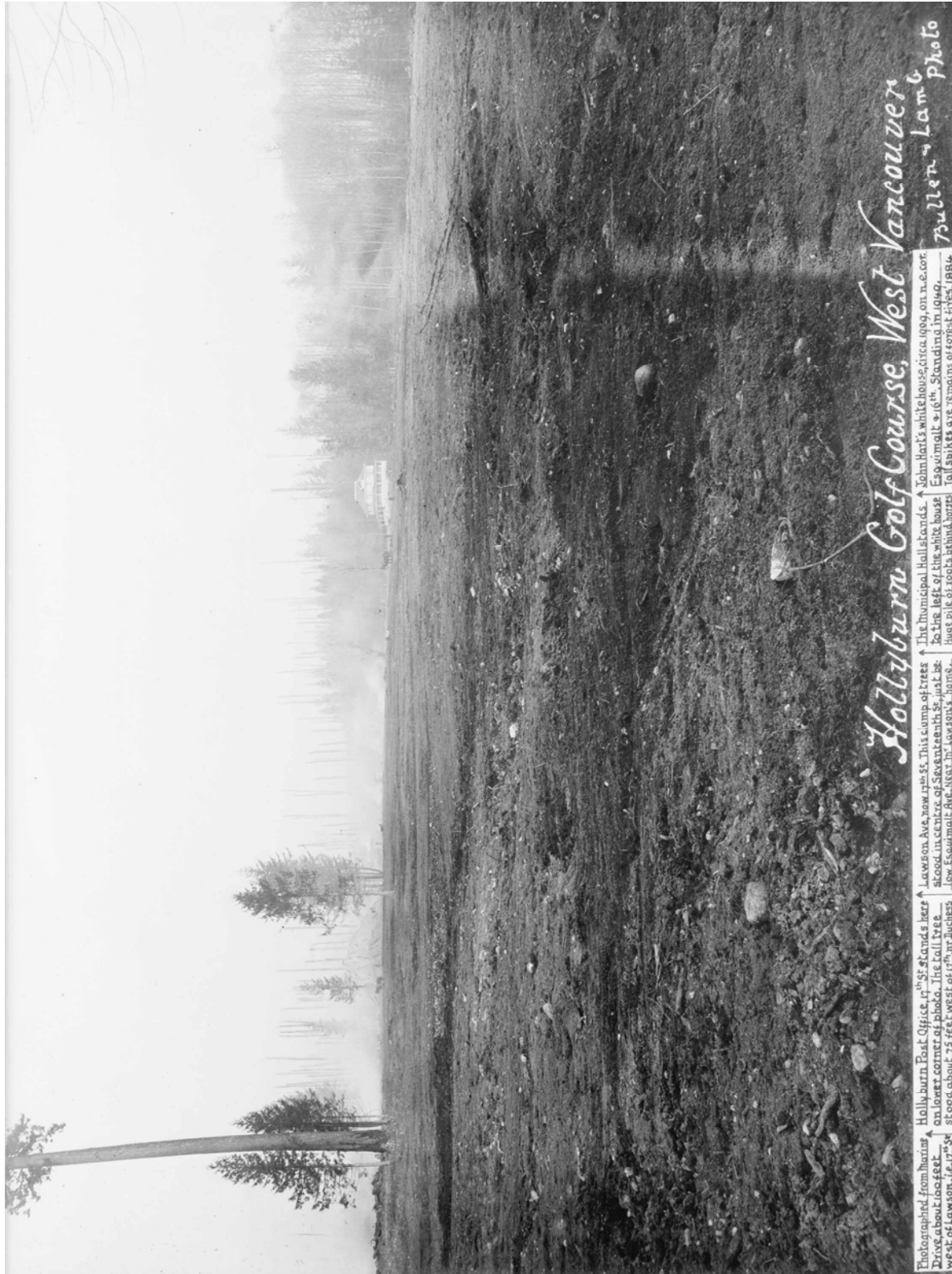
On arrival at his residence, built of granite, and surrounded with flowers, on the southeast corner of Esquimalt and Seventeenth Street (old Lawson Avenue), I found Mr. Lawson, aged 89—he was born at Peel, Ontario, 15 April 1860—midst his flowers awaiting me; for his age he is exceptionally active, and reads the smallest print without glasses, and takes an active interest in current affairs. We entered his home, and seated ourselves in a very large reception room, with open fireplace, and presently his daughter, Miss Gertrude Lawson, a most charming lady who teaches school daily, entered. I opened my papers and commenced by showing Mr. Lawson the photo marked "HOLLYBURN GOLF COURSE."

**HOLLYBURN GOLF COURSE. JOHN HART, PIONEER. MUNICIPAL HALL.**

Mr. Lawson: "The Hollyburn Golf Course was to be from the waterfront back to the north of Haywood Avenue, and from 16<sup>th</sup> Street to 18<sup>th</sup> Street. I owned it at that time, but the cost of clearing and the taxes upset things. It never was used for golf; that must have been about 1910."

Major Matthews: This white house, with five white verandah posts on the front and four on the side, here in the distance, what was that, Mr. Lawson?

Mr. Lawson: "John Hart—not the premier, but a West Vancouver pioneer—built that; I don't know when it was built. Wait till I go and ask Mrs. Hart, his widow; she lives with us." (On his return, Mr. Lawson said Mrs. Hart thought it was 1909.) "Let's go and look at it." (We went out, crossed the lawn, walked down Esquimalt Avenue in front of the Municipal Hall, to the northeast corner of Esquimalt and Sixteenth Street.)



# Hollyburn Golf Course, West Vancouver

Photographed from Marinas Drive about 100 feet west of Lawson, i.e. 175<sup>th</sup> St. Looking north east from corner of Marine Drive (old Keith Road) and Seventeenth street (old Lawson Ave). The twigs shown at the top right hand corner of this photo are part of a tree which stood on the north east corner of Marine Drive and Seventeenth street. The white house, erected about 1909, still stands on the northeast corner of Esquimalt Ave and Sixteenth St. It was built for John Hart, and, in Sept. 1949, is a municipal home for old people. The "Municipal Hall" stands to the left of the white house, upon half a block of land, facing Esquimalt Ave, & between 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> streets. The site was the gift of John Lawson, whose wife's sister was Mrs John Hart. "I owned the land, then," said Mr Lawson, on Sept. 8, 1949. "The golf course was to be from the water front to north of Haywood Ave, and between 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Sts, but the cost of clearing and the taxes upset things." C.V. Out. P. 86 N. City Archives. 8.5.71.

Lawson Ave, now 175<sup>th</sup> St. This stump of trees stood in centre of Seventeenth St, just to the left of the white house. Tail spikes are remains of forest fires, 1884.

The Municipal Hall stands to the left of the white house. Tail spikes are remains of forest fires, 1884.

John Hart's white house, circa 1909, on n.e. cor. Esquimalt & 16<sup>th</sup>. Standing in 1949.

Bullen - Lamb photo

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*[photo annotation:]*

Hollyburn Golf Course, West Vancouver

Bullen & Lamb Photo

Photographed from Marine Drive, about 100 feet west of Lawson, i.e. 17<sup>th</sup> St.

Hollyburn Post Office, 17<sup>th</sup> St. stands here on lower corner of photo. The tall tree stood about 75 feet west of 17<sup>th</sup>, nr Duchess.

Lawson Ave, now 17<sup>th</sup> St. This clump of trees stood in centre of Seventeenth St, just below Esquimalt Ave. Near Mr. Lawson's home.

The Municipal Hall stands to the left of the white house. Huge pile of roots behind horses.

John Hart's white house, circa 1909, on n.e. cor. Esquimalt & 16<sup>th</sup>. Standing in 1949. Tall spikes are remains of forest fives, 1884.

Hollyburn, West Vancouver, 1910. Looking northeast from corner of Marine Drive (old Keith Road) and Seventeenth street (old Lawson Ave). The twigs shown at the top right hand corner of this photo are part of a tree which stood on the north east corner of Marine Drive and Seventeenth Street. The white house, erected about 1909, still stands on the north east corner, of Esquimalt Ave and Sixteenth St. It was built for John Hart, and, in Sept. 1949, is a municipal home for old people. The "Municipal Hall" stands to the left of the white house, upon half a block of land, facing Esquimalt Ave, & between 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> streets. The site was the gift of John Lawson, whose wife's sister was Mrs. John Hart. "I owned the land then," said Mr. Lawson, on Sept. 8, 1949, "The golf course was to be from the waterfront to north of Haywood Ave, and between 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Sts, but the cost of clearing and the taxes upset things." C.V. Out. P. 86 N. City Archives. J.S.M.

Mr. Lawson (continuing and pointing) "That's John Hart's old house. The Municipality uses it now for an old person's home. John Hart married my wife's sister."

The house has been slightly altered by building a fire escape in front; the ornamental trees have grown high but otherwise, it looks the same as it did when erected 40-odd years ago, at which time it was the only house in sight. Today every lot has its home. Mr. Lawson and I then retraced our steps, and, as we passed the Municipal Hall, which is almost opposite his residence, he remarked:

#### **MUNICIPAL HALL, WEST VANCOUVER. D.L. 775.**

Mr. Lawson: "I owned this land around here—D.L. 775. I wanted the Municipal Hall built up here, so I made the Municipality an offer that I would donate the site, and they accepted it. I gave them from 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>, and back to the lane; that is, the block facing Esquimalt Avenue, and the Municipal Hall was built. It was all cleared and in grass. There it is—look at it. But do not run away with the idea that I was a philanthropist. It was, you might call it, a business deal. I wanted the Municipal Hall built there, and was willing to give the land to get what I wanted. My offer was accepted."

#### **"HOLLYBURN GOLF COURSE." EXPLANATION OF PHOTOGRAPH OUT. P. 518, N. 199.**

This photograph was taken from the corner of Lawson Avenue and Keith Road; that is, Seventeenth Street and Marine Drive, looking northeast. Not only is the precise location from which it was taken identified by the angles of the house—the south side much longer than the west side—but by a few twigs of a tree which stood on the northeast corner of Seventeenth and Marine. This tree, leafless in winter, appears—the only one of its kind—in photograph Out. P. 207, N. 89, so that it is clear that this photo depicts the very busy commercial settlement of Hollyburn of 1949 as it appeared forty years previously, and it also shows the site of the present Municipal Hall, slightly to the west of John Hart's white house. The photograph shows two teams of horses dragging roots and stumps to a huge pile of forest debris, perhaps thirty feet high, hoisted into a heap, ready for burning, with a gin pole and donkey engine.

#### **HOLLYBURN POST OFFICE. LAWSON'S FIRST STORE.**

The photograph also shows, in the lower left hand corner, the approximate present site of the present Post Office, on the northwest corner of Seventeenth and Marine; an imposing building of red brick.

Further identification is that the photograph was taken from across the road from Mr. Lawson's old general store on the southwest corner of Seventeenth and Marine. It is a most historic photograph.

**“CLEARING ON THE MARINE DRIVE, HOLLYBURN.”**

Mr. Lawson: (after examining the photo) “This is either Marine Drive at Sixteenth or Seventeenth, or it is at 22<sup>nd</sup> Street. I am not sure which—it is one or the other.”

**EXPLANATION OF PHOTOGRAPH OUT. P. 86, N. 198.**

Captioned as above, “Clearing on the Marine Drive, Hollyburn.” An examination of the actual ground on 11 September 1949 shows this to have been taken from a point in front of the “Hollyburn Golf Course,” at the corner, approximately, of Eighteenth and Marine Drive. This photo shows a road, roughly crowned, bended to the left, and continuing straight on; small piles of roots and stumps, ready to burn, on the left; a group of men and apparently, two boys in the distant smoke of the clearing fires. On both sides are trees, some of those on the left—looking west—being fir or cedar, original growth, while those on the right are alder. On the extreme right is a burned-out cedar spike, fairly tall, with a smaller one and two stumps close by. A very tall “spike” of a tree is also seen. It is quite clear, then, that this photograph is most historic, as it shows the whole of the present busy commercial area of Hollyburn.

**LAWSON CREEK. LAWSON PARK. HOLLYBURN.**

Major Matthews: Where is Lawson Creek, Mr. Lawson?

Mr. Lawson: “Lawson Creek? Why, that's the ‘burn’ in ‘Hollyburn.’ That's the creek from which Hollyburn got its name. About two months ago they named a park in my honour down there—‘John Lawson Park.’ It was a surprise to me. They had a ceremony and I was invited to it, and they told me then. It is at the foot of old Lawson Avenue. Here, read this newspaper account” (*Sun*, Friday, 17 June 1949, page 21, with illustration.)

**LAWSON AVENUE. WEST VANCOUVER RENAMES STREETS. JOHN THOMAS. “NAVY JACK.”**

“Lawson Avenue used to run north and south, and is now Seventeenth Street, but when they renamed the streets of West Vancouver alphabetically, they put Lawson Avenue in its place alphabetically, and it is now away back. Originally, ‘Navy Jack’s’ old cottage, which we occupied, was on the east of the creek, but we moved it to the west side.”

**WEST VANCOUVER TRANSPORTATION COMPANY. REEVES OF WEST VANCOUVER.**

Mr. Lawson: (after reading the biography in the album of portraits of Reeves of West Vancouver) “I don't know what is meant that I superintended the selling of the ferry fleet of the West Transportation Company. What it should say is that the part I played was that they made me president of the West Vancouver Transportation Company. I suggested a schedule, and Robert MacPherson said, ‘If you will stand the deficit you can put on that schedule.’ I replied, ‘All right. I will.’ And I did.”

Major Matthews: Was it much?

Mr. Lawson: “A month before we turned it over to the Municipality, who bought it, I had paid out \$12,000 of a deficit, but the last month things improved so that I had \$500 over and above operating expenses. Then I turned it over as a paying business. We were setting a pace, both in service and fares. There were two pairs of brothers-in-law. W.C. Thompson married my sister, and MacPherson—no relative at all—married John Sinclair's sister.”

**THE NAMED DUNDARAVE.**

“People say ‘Dun-da-rayve’; it is ‘Dun-da-rahv.’ Dundarahv was the home of the McNaughtons. They had to get to it in a two-oared boat. Dundarahv means ‘two-oared boat’ in Gaelic.”

**“HOLLYBURN, THE BEAUTIFUL.”**

This printed panorama of the waterfront of Hollyburn, torn from some old real estate advertising pamphlet, was next shown to Mr. Lawson.

**W.C. THOMPSON. LAWSON AVENUE. "NAVY JACK'S" HOUSE. "NAVY JACK'S" POINT. JOHN SINCLAIR.**

Mr. Lawson: "This photograph, that from which this illustration was made, must have been taken about 1909. This small cottage" (on extreme right) "was Harry Thompson's, son of W.C. Thompson. In the centre is Lawson Avenue. The house by the horses is 'Navy Jack's' old place, afterwards our home. The house, partly concealed by trees, was W.C. Thompson's, and the one on the extreme left near 'Navy Jack's' Point was John Sinclair's."

Miss Gertrude Lawson: (interjecting) "When we rowed over from English Bay, sometimes it was rough, and we were glad to run the boat into the mouth of the creek here." (Shown by a break in the foam of waves washing on the shore.)

**"NAVY JACK," A GRAVEL.**

An interesting feature of the illustration "Hollyburn, the beautiful" is that it portrays the gravel taken from the beach which was loaded onto scows run up on the shore, and floated again at high tide when loaded, from which John Thomas, alias "Navy Jack," took his gravel which has since, until this day, retained his name. "Navy Jack" is a gravel which can be bought by the yard or truck load from any construction material firm in Vancouver. Capt. Cates also took gravel from this "pit."

After showing the ladies numerous photos, papers, etc., and as the hour was growing late, I departed, but not until Mr. Lawson, despite his age and my protests, insisted on accompanying me down hill, in the dark and in the middle of the street—no sidewalks—to the bus stop at Marine and Seventeenth. Mrs. Lawson was in the house during my visit, but was not sufficiently well to appear. I did not see her.

It was a delightful and profitable evening with a pioneer gentleman of much generosity, graciousness and distinction. It is remarkable that he has lived to see his early home in the wilds change into a busy village of banks, moving picture houses, florists' shops, and other retail stores of almost every variety, and through which passes a stream of motor cars and passenger busses.

9 September 1949. J.S.M.

**FIRST ELECTRIC LIGHT, BURRARD INLET.**

**FROM *THE COLUMBIAN*.**

Of 1 February 1882:

"The California Brush Electric Light Company have sent an agent to Burrard Inlet for the purpose of lighting the two great lumber mills there."

Of 8 February 1882:

"Moodyville Mills are lighted with electricity."

Same issue (Wednesday) under heading "Burrard Inlet Items":

"The electric light shone from the Moodyville Mills Saturday last for the first time. It is said to work admirably. The cost, I am told, would be about \$4,000."

Of 11 February 1882:

"The Mayor and Council of Victoria will shortly proceed to Burrard Inlet to inspect the electric light."

Same issue:

"The telephone system in Victoria is now complete ..." "... It only remains to light the city by means of electricity to entitle Victoria to take rank amongst the most advanced communities."

Of 18 February 1882, under the heading "The Moodyville Light":