

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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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.

Contact Information

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



GREER'S BEACH. CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY TRESTLE BRIDGE. LELAND HOTEL. JOHN INSLEY.

"I fixed up the top floor of a three-storey building near the corner of Granville and Hastings Street; south side Hastings, where the Canadian Bank of Commerce is now—not on the corner, but close. Fixed it for John Insley. No basement, six by six" (6" x 6") "cedar posts in the ground. All the big houses in the West End were built that way. I did not fix the basement."

MAYOR DAVID OPPENHEIMER.

"John Insley came to me and said that he wanted me to fix up the attic. That was what we called the third floor. He said that His Worship the Mayor, David Oppenheimer, was going to occupy it. So I put in a bathroom. While I was working up there he, the Mayor, and his wife and two children came up to look it over several times; little children they were then."

CHRIST CHURCH "ROOTHOUSE."

"I was married in the basement of Christ Church Cathedral—it was not a cathedral then—fifty-eight years ago, April 21st, 1891. My wife came from Truro, Cornwall, England. We had two daughters and one son, eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Mrs. Martin passed away third February this year, 1949—we had been married 58 years. I came here in 1888, from Truro, Cornwall. My dear wife fell down stairs on a rainy day—third November 1948—and died the 3rd February afterwards. She was not very big—she weighed 95 pounds. The Rev. H.B. Robson married us. We were the third couple married in the 'roothouse.'"

As told to me as we sat chatting.

J.S. Matthews.

CONVERSATION WITH WILLIAM HAMILTON MASON, PIONEER, ALDERMAN 1889, 1890, NOW OF 1380 WEST 45TH AVENUE, VANCOUVER, WHO VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES, 26 APRIL 1951.

We apologised to Mr. Mason for omitting to send him an invitation to the banquet given by the Parks Board, 9 April 1951, to all those pioneers resident here in 1886 or earlier.

ALDERMAN W.H. MASON.

Major Matthews: When did you come here, Mr. Mason?

Alderman Mason: "In March 1886. I had been living in Olympia, Washington, and came over to Victoria by boat, then over here. I forget the boats' names. I was born across the river from Charlottetown, P.E.I., 2nd April 1862. My parents were George and Sophia Mason. I had five brothers and four sisters. I have brothers still living on the old homestead at Charlottetown, and the other lives in Montréal. Two of us came to British Columbia—my oldest brother Oliver and myself. His children are now living at 1380 West 45th Avenue. That's where I live with Oliver's daughter. She is Mrs. T.S. Parr. He worked for years with the B.C. Electric. I married Miss Marjorie McLeod. Her father was a farmer on Sea Island. We were married in the Methodist Church in Rossland in 1897. She died in Vancouver about 25 years ago. We had no children. Yes, I'm 89 now."

CITY HALL, POWELL STREET. CHIEF OF POLICE STEWART. MAYOR DAVID OPPENHEIMER.

"Chief John Stewart was Chief of Police here in early days, and I was chairman of the Police Committee. I was a young man of 26. That was in 1889. We ordered his books audited, but that night someone broke into the City Hall on Powell Street and stole the books. That ended the audit—there were no books to audit."

STREET ENDS CASE. CARRALL STREET. CITY WHARF.

"We tried to buy the street end at the foot of Carrall Street, where the old 'City Wharf' stood alongside the Sunnyside Hotel, but we didn't get it, and 15 or so years afterwards the City lost its street ends case and lost the wharf. It was put to a vote of the citizens and they turned it down when they voted. The owners were the Canadian Pacific Railway, and all they wanted was one thousand dollars. It is hard to believe, now, that the City Council put a proposal to the electors that the City should acquire the Carrall Street end

for a mere thousand dollars, and that they should turn it down. William Templeton was the main leader of those who opposed. David Oppenheimer was mayor at the time. David was a wonderful man. His brother was on the Council too—Alderman Isaac Oppenheimer.”

FIRST CITY HALL DESKS.

(Note: there are two of the original desks of the first Council Chamber, 1886, in the City Archives.)

Alderman Mason: (looking at one of them) “This is one of the old desks we used.”

In the Mayor’s office, where the *Province* photographer was waiting, Alderman Mason had his photograph taken with Mayor Hume and Major Matthews. It appeared on the first or second front page of that newspaper that evening.

In 1955 (when he died) Alderman Mason was the earliest living alderman. J.S.M.