

## **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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## **CREEKS OF THE FOREST.**

"Walk your horses across the bridge."

Penrose Cabins,  
Gunn Lake,  
Goldbridge, B.C.  
July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1953.

Major Matthews:

Sir:

Thanks very much for your interesting letter about STREAMS OF THE FOREST.

If a story was written about these creeks, it would not be complete without the use of a few historical words taken from the old signs which were connected with "Creeks of The Forest." Words, unknown to many, forgotten by most, remembered by the few. Even in these modern times, the principle of the words remains the same, are still used. When an army is crossing a bridge, they get the order "Break Step."

Today, the forest which was once Vancouver, the creeks, the bridges and the horses are gone, and in their place long miles of modern smooth paved highway, bright light and neon signs. Many never give thought to that past day when the sons of our early pioneers, wearing knee pants, stood on the banks of our many creeks, with a long pole and large hook, jigging the salmon and catching the trout. In the marshes and swamps were wild ducks unlimited, and the dead ones could be seen hanging in the butcher shops—for sale. I knew hunters who used to shoot ducks for the market. I can remember the hardy men who lived near the banks of the creeks, with their great crop of whiskers and their careless attire. Long years of hardship and toil had wracked joints and etched lines of character in their faces, and, with the use of the faithful old horse, are the founders of our great city.

The few words of one familiar old sign were: "Walk your horses across the bridge" and another was "Keep to the left."

Sincerely,

Rueben Hamilton.

## **EARLY VANCOUVER, MATTHEWS, VOLUMES 1–6.**

There is a deal of information in these six volumes about Vancouver creeks.

There must have been in all 30 to 40 creeks within the boundaries of the City of Vancouver; that is, west of the Municipality of Burnaby, i.e., west of Boundary Road.

J.S.M.

## **CROQUET.**

### **CROQUET BEFORE GOLF.**

What did we do in Vancouver before golf?

We played croquet. At least, those who were a little too rotund for tennis; tennis was a little too strenuous for some of those no longer eager to jump around. There were no golf links. And, further, few knew anything of the game of golf; most had never heard of it. So we played croquet which, in a way, is much the same as putting.

Shaughnessy was still forest. The "West End" was the fashionable residential district, and the socially eminent had good lawns and they played croquet.

Then, once a year, there was a croquet tournament. It was very fashionable. All the “swells” attended, as much for the afternoon tea and gossip as for the games. Sunshades, very pretty, very expensive, were carried by the ladies and the gentlemen wore “boater” straw hats and flannel—white flannel—trousers. The tournament went on for three or four days, mostly in the afternoons. It was very grand.

But, in time, golf came and croquet dwindled. In this year of 1951 I do not know of a croquet lawn in Vancouver, though I feel sure someone has one somewhere. I do not believe there is a croquet club. They keep very quiet if there is. I never see anything about croquet in the newspapers. It seems to be a forgotten game.

Not so in 1900 and soon after. It was exceptionally fashionable for the elite “West Enders.” I repeat, the “West End”—there was nowhere else. Not even Kitsilano Hill, started in 1905, was settled up then. Kitsilano was not even named until 1905. Grandview was a clearing; so was Fairview.

I think the only croquet lawn in Fairview was that of Capt. C. Gardner Johnson at the northeast corner of Alder and Broadway.

J.S. Matthews.

17 August 1951.

**MISS ESTHER J. CUMMINGS (MISS GEORGIA SWENEY’S DAUGHTER), OF SANTA PAULA, CALIFORNIA, 3 MAY 1947.**

Miss Esther J. Cummings, daughter of Miss Georgia Sweney, the first school teacher on the site of the City of Vancouver (Hastings Sawmill School), having informed me by letter and telegraph that she would arrive in Vancouver on Thursday, 24 April 1947 from Seattle, Washington, for a six days visit to the scene of her late mother’s labours, I arranged with Mr. M.H. Burns, manager Hotel Vancouver, to have a room ready for her as accommodation is restricted. I also arranged for an invitation to an executive committee “tea” of the Vancouver Woman’s Canadian Club following their annual meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and also for the Chief Factor, Native Daughters of B.C., Post No. 2, to show Miss Cummings over the old Hastings Sawmill store, Alma Road, now a club-museum, which her mother must have visited many times while she was at Hastings Sawmill 85 or more years ago. Also, she was taken for a drive around Stanley Park, and my own dear wife gave a tea in the Georgian Club. Miss Cummings did a lot of shopping at the Hudson’s Bay Co. store and paid us two visits to the City Archives; so that all in all she must have had a busy and pleasant time. In addition, the weather was bright—no rain and tolerably warm. It is felt that she went away from Vancouver with pleasant recollections of her visit.

And, somewhat strangely, so out-of-the-picture in such matters is the Mayor and the Mayor’s Office, that she did not even call upon them and I doubt if they know she has been, which illustrates the usefulness of the City Archives if they bestir themselves with endeavours to make the visits of historic personages pleasant.

Miss Cummings is an American lady of prepossessing appearance; tall, somewhat inclined to be heavily built; good looking, greying hair, very well and fashionably dressed, and an extremely good conversationalist. She does not take a great deal of interest in public affairs in her native land, but being affluent spends much of her time in the larger cities. She has just completed a tour of the eastern American States, during which she met Sir John Balfour, the new British Ambassador. She tells me that she had not seen her walnut ranch at Santa Paula since October last—save for seven days short visit. She did not know the acreage of her fruit ranch, was a little confused when I asked the acreage and replied that they did not count that way, but by the number of boxes of fruit grown each year. She did, however, say that they had (or rather she had) two thousand walnut trees beside many oranges in the grove. I made a hurried mental estimate of how much in dollars two thousand walnut trees would be at walnuts selling, retail, in Canada at sixty cents per pound. Miss Cummings said that she had twenty-five men working on her fruit ranch at Santa Paula, California.

My assistant brought forth the Sweney relics Miss Cummings had sent us; also the miniature of her mother in its tiny frame. Miss Cummings said the earrings in their plush case had originally been purchased in Persia when her father was there in a sailing ship. This accounts for the ornamentation in