

Early Vancouver

Volume Seven

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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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"I've learned something, Captain Spalding, thank you. Hey! Jimmie!" calling his son, who was mate. "Here's a half a dozen salmon, put 'em aboard." Turning to me he said, "You help him, sonny."

Jim Laidlaw calls out, "Could you wait a few minutes, Captain, and I'll go to Westminster with you."

"Don't hurry, Jim, take your time; the tide has just started to flood."

Some twenty years ago I was waiting at Woodward's fish counter. A well-dressed English lady was being served by the clerk who held the tail of a salmon in his hand for her inspection. She asked to see one that was in the case which he took in his other hand, held both out. "Which would you say is the bettah?" inquired the lady. "Both the same, lady, in fact they are off the same fish," assured the clerk. "Very well, I'll take either."

After the lady had gone, I asked him why did he tell the lady that two tails were off the same fish—who ever saw a salmon with two tails? "One must be able to size up his customer." That story sounds a bit fishy, Major, but it is so—believe it or not.

Scientists and research have proven how ignorant we were in the past. Piscatorial students, with a smug indulgent smile at my primitive ignorance, assure me that white salmon are superior to red, they have more vitamin A, B, C, D (and perhaps X, Y, Z) than red salmon. It's simply prejudice—if you shut your eyes and ate white salmon you could not tell the difference. Dog salmon the same, for they are one of the most delectable of all, having a most exquisite flavor of their own.

"As for salmon bellies—you throw away the best and keep the poorest part from our proven scientific point. And another thing"—but I walked away, saying to myself "Where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be blistered."

I'll make a bargain with you, Major. You rustle a salt salmon-belly some day. I'll provide potatoes and pick some lambs-quarter [*Indian spinach*] from the clearing. First we'll scrape the salt off—scrub and wash the salmon—let it soak in cold water over night. Next day par-boil it for a few minutes—drain off water, then boil for 15 or 20 minutes. Potatoes should be cooked with jackets on.

We'll sit down to a meal of Siwash chicken.

So long Major,

Yours sincerely,

J. Warren Bell

[LETTER FROM J. WARREN BELL.]

Vancouver, B.C.

My dear Major:

I called on my brother, Ward, at his office in the Hall-Holland Block—B.C. Labor Department, this afternoon. He read your recent letters to me so as to know all there was to be known re "First white children born in the vicinity of Vancouver."

He though your idea was a good one, not for our sakes, but for our children and children's children.

His daughter, Olive, had told him you had written her and she has a photo you can keep if you wish to; also he will ask her to take the Bell Family Bible and leave it with you so as to have a photostat of any information that you may want.

I might suggest your phoning her and find out about this matter so as to avoid delaying you.

Ward handed me his latest bit of poetry, "The Sleeping Beauty." After reading it I told him you would be interested in reading it, coming from North Van's first born.

"Here, send the Mayor this copy with my compliments."

"Put your initials on it," I requested, and added "I suppose you think she has a special interest in you, first white-born on her shore by the sea—but you did not know that you were when you wrote it."

I am sure that you will gladly get any further information from Ward or Mrs. McMahon—just phone or write.

Enclosing "The Sleeping Beauty."

Yours sincerely,

J. Warren Bell

P.S. I had not told Ward about My Memoirs that you compiled. Olive, or he might be interested if they visited you.

J.W.B.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY.

Upthrown from a place primeval
By the thrust of a giant hand
With an eagle's nest on its highest crest
The mighty mountain stands.

Couch of the sleeping beauty,
Rock-ribbed, massive and strong,
By the Lion's Gate where the vessels wait,
Where the sons of the sea belong.

Asleep on top of the mountain
With her face upturned to the skies,
The rounded breast where the snowflake rests
And the seal of God on her eyes.

Asleep, yet guarding the city
And the people by the sea,
Calm and serene as in a dream
She sleeps for eternity.

J.A.W.B.

A poem by the first white child born on the north shore of Vancouver Harbour. James Allen Ward Bell was born at Moodyville, 13 September 1873.