

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.

Copyright Statement

© 2011 City of Vancouver. Any or all of *Early Vancouver* may be used without restriction as to the nature or purpose of the use, even if that use is for commercial purposes. You may copy, distribute, adapt and transmit the work. It is required that a link or attribution be made to the City of Vancouver.

Reproductions

High resolution versions of any graphic items in *Early Vancouver* are available. A fee may apply.

Citing Information

When referencing the 2011 edition of *Early Vancouver*, please cite the page number that appears at the bottom of the page in the PDF version only, not the page number indicated by your PDF reader. Here are samples of how to cite this source:

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



D.L. 315. McCLEERY ESTATE.

On 4 December 1947, Mrs. Margaret Elizabeth Mackie (née Miss “Greta” McCleery, wife of Robert Mackie, 8058 French Street, Marpole, and youngest child of Fitzgerald McCleery, first settler on the site of the City of Vancouver), sold 16.39 acres bounded by 55th and 57th avenues and Carnarvon and Macdonald streets to the City of Vancouver for use as a park site. She received \$8,195.00.

Mrs. Mackie uses the City Archives as her City Hall office, and while waiting for her check, went to sleep in an arm chair placed across the other side of my desk. She slept well for twenty minutes; we were very quiet, and she awoke herself. She was very tired.

She told me that *twenty-one acres remained* of the *original McCleery farm*. “Just enough for a nice barn,” she laughed.

McCLEERY’S DIARY, 1863-1866.

Vancouver, B.C.
29th March 1948.

Dear Mr. Hardy:

“Greta,” now 68, alias Mrs. Robert Mackie, youngest child of Fitzgerald McCleery, pioneer 1862, is a woman for whom I have an admiration approaching veneration. She must have been beautiful in her youth; today she is bent and faded. She has the keen conception of the fundamentals of life; a pioneer farmer’s daughter, Margaret Elizabeth McCleery, now Mrs. Robert Mackie. If there was no other way of getting beefsteak, she’d kill the ox herself.

Greta brings me a loaf of bread and a pound of her own butter; the bread fresh out of the oven. But she does not always do what I tell her. She got an idea some years ago that she wanted to exhibit her historical treasures, begged an empty room in the City Hall, got the janitor to put up rough tables, and spread all manner of things upon them—one being a tiny diary about the size of a small New Testament. She would leave the door open—anyone could go in. I remonstrated, but she took no notice of me. I warned her she might lose it in the street car with her purse. I warned her that her house might burn. But all she replied was that she knew what she was doing, very cheerily, and so confident that no harm would befall the precious diary of one of the two brothers, Samuel and Fitzgerald McCleery, first settlers on the site of Vancouver. So I asked her if I could have it to read. “Sure, you can” said Greta. I promised I would have it back Monday morning.

Friday night I was up all night. I was at it again on Saturday. I didn’t sleep that week-end. Monday morning it was back in place—but I had a long hand copy. Next, I had the manuscript converted into typescript, then bound into a book with green cover. Her father was from Ireland—northern Ireland. I send you, with the compliments of Mrs. Matthews and myself, one copy. Greta hasn’t found out yet—and that’s years ago. As a sort of preface, I had typed a page of explanation as to why I took this unpardonable liberty. I never got the original diary.

You may perhaps care to observe some entries which I selected at random:

Page	3	“Commenced to dig some ground for plants.”
	4	“Commenced work on the trail today.”
	13	“Helped to poot up the fence.”
	17	“Fixt the window.”
	40	“Brought a churn from town.”
	40	“Churned some milk today.”
	102	“Fido caught a deer.”

“Fido” was our first dog. The butter was the first butter from the first cows; churned in the first churn; the fence was the first fence; the trail is now “Marine Drive,” smooth paved with

hastening busses and motor cars; the window was the first to let light into a Vancouver home; and the plants—vegetables—were our first.

Today—and one hundred years have not yet passed—one city and four municipalities surround that vanished cabin on the Fraser River bank, and the residents number nearly half a million busy people.

With best wishes

Most sincerely,

J.S. Matthews

F.A. Hardy, Esq.,
Parliamentary Librarian,
Ottawa, Ont.

CONVERSATION, 5 APRIL 1949, WITH MRS. ROBERT MACKIE, FRENCH STREET, MORE COMMONLY KNOWN AS “MISS MCCLEERY,” WHICH NAME SHE STILL RETAINS DESPITE HER MARRIAGE SOME FOUR OR SIX YEARS AGO.

She has been to the City Hall on business in connection with her property on Marine Drive, and, as is her invariable custom, always at the City Archives before going home.

FITZGERALD MCCLEERY. D.L. 315.

Miss McCleery: (showing a blueprint map marked .575 acres, D.L. 315. Parcel B, between lots 6 and 9) “That is the last of it. I am not even on the voters’ list as a property owner now. Sold. Sacrificed. To meet and satisfy my city’s growing needs; the city needs more, more; the employees want more wages; the last subdivision is sold.”

“Let me tell you” (and she chuckled a little laugh.) “Away back in or about 1934 the mortgagees of our property foreclosed and our land was taken for taxes, interest and mortgage.”

Major Matthews: Who bought the six acres?

AUSTIN TAYLOR. MRS. HARRY LOGAN. SOUTH WEST MARINE DRIVE. MRS. B.T. ROGERS. “SHANNON.”

Miss McCleery: “Austin Taylor did. He did not want my home, so I picked it up and moved it onto my sister’s” (Mrs. Harry Logan) “bush land. That was before Marine Drive was named.”

“Then, when South West Marine Drive was made they raised a wall eight or ten feet high on my northern boundary, cutting off my access to the road. My present outlet is by a lane on the southern boundary of Lot 6, known to me as ‘Wee Lony Lane.’ Austin Taylor cleared the six acres and put it back into a subdivision. He never lived there but bought Mrs. B.T. Rogers’ place, ‘Shannon,’ and lives there yet—on Granville Street.

“When the mortgagee said he was coming from Florida to see the land I just put up a prayer to Almighty God for help and said I was willing to give up everything. Inside of a week a buyer was sent, Austin Taylor. I thought he would want the house but he said, ‘No.’ He paid cash for the land. It nearly struck the mortgagee dead to find he could not take possession. He had a man all hired to take the land over. He did not know I had the good Lord for my partner.

“So, the money Mrs. Logan and I got from Austin Taylor paid up all the taxes and mortgage. As Austin Taylor did not want the house I put up another prayer. I took my share in farm land, known as Parcel A, and went to the Vancouver Mortgage Corporation and asked them for \$4,000 on the sixty-nine acres. I went home and then next day went to see them again. I kept my eyes open, and on his desk was a paper saying, ‘Keep her to \$3,000 if possible.’ The gentleman was not in. I was told to sit down and wait and, as usual, I used my eyes. I read the paper, relaxed, and waited for him to come. When he did come he said to me, ‘I think we can let you have three thousand.’ I replied, ‘Gentlemen, I read that note—three thousand is no use to me. If I cannot get \$4,000 I’ll go somewhere else.’ I got the \$4,000.