

## **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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**SURVEY OF “C.P.R. TOWNSITE,” OR VANCOUVER, BY L.A. HAMILTON, 1885.**

**SURVEY OF VANCOUVER. “C.P.R. TOWNSITE” SURVEY. L.A. HAMILTON. C.P.R. OFFICES, 1885-6.**

On 8 March 1950, letter 673581/01863, G.S. Andrews, Surveyor General, Victoria, wrote Major Matthews as follows:

“A diligent search has been made for any field notes of the survey of Vancouver by L.A. Hamilton, but without success.”

Comment by J.S. Matthews:

This is what I expected. In January 1886, and possibly a brief period earlier, Mr. Hamilton had an office in the C.P.R. Offices, with a staff of about three, upstairs in a new wooden building erected a month or so earlier on the southeast corner of Powell and Carrall streets. It was the first business block in the first Vancouver; was erected by Mr. A.G. Ferguson (of Ferguson Point, Stanley Park), and was called the “Ferguson Block.”

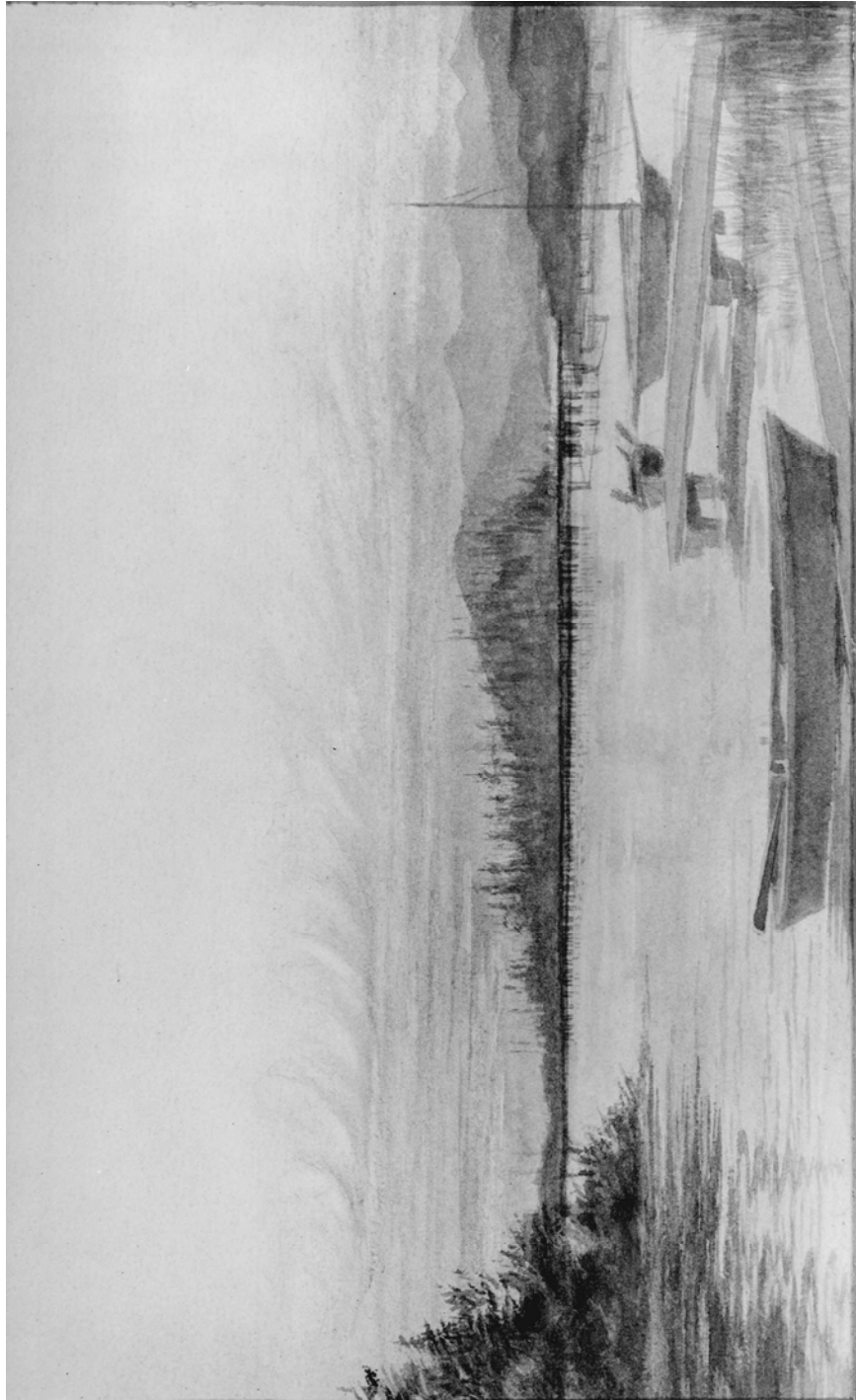
The building was destroyed in the blast of flame which swept Vancouver in June 1886. In this holocaust, the plans of the first Hotel Vancouver were burned, and had to be drawn again. In a letter from Mr. Hamilton—about 1932 or 1935—he says that all his photographs were kept in those offices and that they were burned. It would be the natural place for him to keep his field notes. In Mr. Hamilton’s letter of 5 May 1932, he writes that he thinks they must be in Vancouver (see photostat of letter to J.S.M.), but every search has been made here, both in the C.P.R. Land Office and in the Court House, without success. I have never heard of them having been seen by anyone.

**SIX FIELD SURVEY NOTE BOOKS FOUND, 1950.**

Early in May, 1950, Mr. Harry Dunbar, Chief Clerk, found in an obscure corner of the Canadian Pacific Railway Land Department, Vancouver, six surveyor’s note books. On 17 May they were presented to the City Archives by Mr. C.W. McBain, Land Agent.

Subsequently a telescope case was made for their protection. It is lettered in gold:

“SURVEY OF VANCOUVER”  
1886  
HAMILTON  
City Archives



This is the mouth of Mackie Creek. High tide.

Cottage was on high ground behind. Trading sleep at anchor.

The Royal Engineers opened trails leading north, south, east and west from the capital of British Columbia established at New Westminster. One of these, now Kingsway, led to False Creek. There has been various opinions as to the location of the False Creek end. The only place between Main and Granville streets where, on the south shore of False Creek, a feasible boat landing could have been at the end of a forest trail, was about one hundred yards west of Ash Street produced, on the sloping beach, an old Indian clearing on the east bank of the mouth of Mackie Creek. From Main St. to beyond Cambie St. a shallow muddy shore was the fringe of an impassable swamp or muskeg flooded at high tide, extending south to Sixth Ave. To the west, from the west bank of the mouth of Mackie Creek, the cliff rose fifteen to fifty feet perpendicular; the sand, but now Granville Island, prevented safe approach, and was without drinking water for men or horses. Pioneers and Indians don't camp where they have to climb cliffs, nor wade through swamp to reach their camp fires. Further, Mackie Creek flowed through a ravine sixty or more feet deep, and was an effectual barrier need less to cross when an ideal canoe and boat landing, used for ages by Indians, already existed and made the effort unnecessary. The original intention appears to have been to extend the trail to the anchorage off the Admiralty Reserve, our 'Jericho' inside Spanish Banks, where British warships sheltered, and thus provide sailors and others with a means of reaching New Westminster on foot. It is supposed that when it was found that an excellent natural landing existed, and even more sheltered, and nearer, that the futility of the expense and arduous effort of extending the trail beyond salt water at the foot of Ash Street became evident. East of Main St. the trail kept to south of the elevation at Twelfth Ave and Kingsway. It circled the hump of land, came through the hollow, gradually descending, as waterways indicated, but keeping on solid ground about Seventh Ave, ending on the sloping shore and deep water just north of Sixth Ave, and a few yards west of Ash St. where I lived for three years, 1899-1900. The forest, distant centre, is False Creek Indian Reserve. All Fairview was forest. Here loggers landed from canoes, and stern wheel tow boats brought oaks, hay and barley for the oxen at Jerry Roger's logging camp in the muskeg, now Douglas Park, where elk once roamed. The sinuous skid road, with its effluvial dog-fish skid oil, led uphill from the tollway to many silent forest glades, now Shaughnessy Heights and Little Mountain. A tiny wharf and a sheltering roof protected groceries from the weather. Then men came, felled the forest, named the clearing, "FAIRVIEW". The old dock and its shed, became the bathing rendezvous for the boys and girls of early days in Mount Pleasant; beside it, a patch of grassy sward, soft to their bare feet—the old tollway—served for their gambols. A white washed cottage, of board and batten, a flower and vegetable garden, herbs which laid eggs in a stump, a cow which grazed where it could find grass, all these comprised the Matthews home. Their Indian dug-out was on the beach. *J. S. Matthews Sept 1950*  
See maps 10 11, and 17 11, "Roads & Trails", Lands & Works, Victoria, circa 1860. "Trail to False Creek."

### The End of the False Creek Trail, 1860

A watercolour by Edgar Bloomfield, Esq. K.C., 1901.  
Broken Indian dug-out. Shed was at end of wharf.

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*[illustration annotation:]*

The End of the False Creek Trail, 1860

This is the mouth of Mackie Creek. High Tide. Cottage was on high ground behind. Trading sloop at anchor.

A watercolour by Edgar Bloomfield, Esq., K.C., 1901. Broken Indian dug-out. Shed was at end of wharf.

The Royal Engineers opened trails leading north, south, east and west from the capital of British Columbia established at New Westminster. One of these, now Kingsway, led to False Creek. There has been various opinions as to the location of the False Creek end. The only place between Main and Granville streets where, on the south shore of False Creek, a feasible boat landing could have been at the end of a forest trail, was about one hundred yards west of Ash street produced, on the sloping beach—an old Indian clearing—on the east bank of the mouth of Mackie Creek. From Main St. to beyond Cambie St, a shallow muddy shore was the fringe of an impassable swamp or muskeg, flooded at high tide, extending south to Sixth Ave. To the west, from the west bank of the mouth of Mackie Creek, the cliff rose fifteen to fifty feet perpendicularly; the sand bar, now Granville Island, prevented safe approach, and was without drinking water for men or horses. Pioneers and Indians don't camp where they have to climb cliffs, nor wade through swamp to reach their camp fires. Further, Mackay Creek flowed through a ravine sixty or more feet deep, and was an effectual barrier needless to cross when an ideal canoe and boat landing, used for ages, by Indians, already existed,, and made the effort unnecessary. The original intention appears to have been to extend the trail to the anchorage off the Admiralty Reserve, our Jericho, inside Spanish Banks, where British warships sheltered, and thus provide sailors and others with a means of reaching New Westminster on foot. It is supposed that when it was found that an excellent natural landing existed, and even more sheltered, and nearer, that the futility of the expense and arduous effort of extending the trail beyond salt water at the foot of Ash street became evident. East of Main St. the trail kept to south of the elevation of Twelfth Ave and Kingsway. It circled the hump of land, came through the hollow, gradually descending, as waterways indicated, but keeping on solid ground about Seventh Ave, ending on the sloping shore and deep water just north of Sixth Ave, and a few yards west of Ash St, where I lived for three years, 1899-1902. The forest, distant centre, is False Creek Indian Reserve.

All Fairview was forest. Here loggers landed from canoes, and stern wheel tow boats brought oats, hay and barley for the oxen at Jerry Roger's logging camp in the muskeg, now Douglas Park, where elk once roamed. The sinuous skid road, with its effluvial dog-fish skid oil, led uphill from the rollway to many silent forest glades, now Shaughnessy Heights and Little Mountain. A tiny wharf and a sheltering roof protected groceries from the weather. Then men came, felled the forest; named the clearing "FAIRVIEW." The old dock and its shed became the bathing rendezvous for the boys and girls of early days in Mount Pleasant; beside it, a patch of grassy sward, soft to their bare feet—the old rollway—served for their gambols. A white washed cottage, of board and batten, a flower and vegetable garden; hens which laid eggs in a stump; a cow which grazed where it could find grass; all these comprised the Matthews home. Their Indian dug-out was on the beach. J.S. Matthews. Sept 1950

See maps "10 T 1" and "17 T 1," "Roads & Trails," Lands & Works, Victoria, circa 1860. "Trail to False Creek."

**SURVEY OF “C.P.R. TOWNSITE,” VANCOUVER AND FAIRVIEW, AND ALSO “GRANVILLE TOWNSITE.”**

In May 1950, as the result of a diligent search which included the Land Registry, Vancouver; the Lands Department, Victoria, and the Land Department C.P.R. Vancouver, there was finally discovered six field survey note books belonging to Mr. L.A. Hamilton. They were discovered by Mr. Harry Dunbar, Chief Clerk, C.P.R. Land Department, in that department, and were presented by Mr. C.W. McBain, Land Agent, to Major Matthews, City Archivist.

Major Matthews ordered a suitable case, with gold lettering on the back, made for them.

Close examination of them has not been made, but it is clear—from what little has been done—that the first field survey note books were destroyed, Vancouver, 13 June 1886—Mr. Hamilton so writes, “All my papers.” Evidently, the fire destroyed the wooden pegs or stakes (he must have used them because Hamilton reports driving a stake with a nail in the top), and it was essential to go over the whole survey and replace the wood stakes with “iron posts”—as shows “I.P.” in the field survey note books.

J.S. Matthews

31 May 1950.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY COMPANY

LAND AGENT'S OFFICE

CHEQUES SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO THE COMPANY

C. W. McBAIN, LAND AGENT  
F. W. PERKINS, ASST. LAND AGENT

317 C.P.R. DEPOT  
VANCOUVER, B.C.

CWM-mb



May 12th, 1950

PLEASE REFER TO FILE NO.

Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.  
City Archivist,  
City Hall,  
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Major;

Mr. Harry Dunbar, Chief Clerk in the Land Department, who has followed our correspondence about the early surveys with great interest, has now unearthed in an obscure corner, six surveyors' note books.

In one of the note books a paper slip bearing the letter "A" marks a page showing that on July 8th, 1886, an iron post was planted on the north east angle of Block 26 (S.W. corner Hastings and Hamilton Streets).

In another book a white slip bearing the letter "B" marks a page evidently sketched October 29/86, showing an iron post planted on that date at the south west corner of Hamilton and Hastings Streets.

Why the iron post was planted twice is hard to say.

The sequence of events seems to have been as follows:-

Plan of survey signed,	April 8th, 1886.
Fire,	June 13th, 1886.
I.P.	July 8th, 1886.
I.P.	Oct. 29th, 1886.

Some time previous to April 8th, 1886, Mr. Hamilton must have driven the first post - probably a wooden one which was likely burned in the fire.

I think it was not until 1884 that Van Horne met the Premier of the Province to discuss the making of a Grant to the Railway of the present site of Vancouver to induce the Railway to build from Port Moody into Vancouver.

The exact date of the driving of the first stake is still indefinite but there seems to be no doubt at all that the stake was driven at the south west corner, whereas in Mr. Hamilton's letter to you from Florida the 5th of May 1932 where he writes "The corner post from which the survey of the City of Vancouver started was planted with a certain amount of ceremony at the corner of Hastings and Hamilton Street." he does not say whether it was the south east or the south west corner.

I have received the copy of letter from the Corporation of Land Surveyors dated 8 May, 1950, and if you will send me a sketch of a bronze plaque of a size to fit into the space on the Bank building, with wording that seems to you to be suitable, with a quotation as to the cost, I will take the matter up with the Company.

Mr. Baillie thinks the plaque should mention Hamilton and the Canadian Pacific Railway which I have no doubt is in your mind.

The note books contain a lot of information about the posting of any down town corners and a reference to the old Vancouver Hotel site. I think you will find them full of items of interest.

I enclose a copy of a letter written in longhand 2nd November 1886, and signed by L.A. Hamilton, to Mr. I.G. Ogden then Auditor of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company at Montreal. This letter shows that all the records of the C.P.R. land sales up to June 13th were destroyed by the fire on that day, as you already know.

I know you will be glad to have these old records for the archives.

Best regards,

C. W. McBAIN

Land Agent.

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