

**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.

**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



"The Victoria Mayor and Council went up to Moodyville this week to see the electric light erected at the mills. There are ten lamps or burners, each being equal to 2,000 candlepower. The whole thing is a complete success."

The sequel to this was that the City of Victoria installed electric light. Shortly afterwards there was a wind storm, and, during it, the lights went out. The newspapers reported that, as the wind had blown out the (electric) light, they could not see that it was much of an improvement on the (old) coal gas lighting system. J.S.M.

### **"THE LIGHTS OF VANCOUVER."**

I started this years ago, but put it aside and never finished it; if a "finish" is ever possible. I shall put down a few notes in the hope they will help some compiler, or writer, to find "bits" of useful items for a story.  
J. S.M.

Sunday, 17 December 1950.

### **STREET LIGHTS OF VANCOUVER, 1905.**

In one of the long boxes, indexed as "OBLONG L.," "OBLONG M.," or "OBLONG S." (corset boxes, we call them) there is a map of Vancouver showing where all the street corner electric lights were situated. None in Kitsilano; few in Fairview; one or two in Grandview, and lots of corners in the West End without a light. I fancy it was photographed.

### **THE TWINKLING GLOW OF THE FIRES THE NIGHT OF THE GREAT FIRE, 13 JUNE 1886.**

The fire was at midday. That night all Vancouver lay black to the bare earth except where, in the distance from the foot of Mount Pleasant hill (Main Street) where the refugees had assembled under His Worship the Mayor awaiting food from New Westminster, the blackness of night was pierced with little lights in the distance, the small fires on the hill beyond, now downtown Vancouver, burning themselves out; just little glow worm lights against the dark background of gloom.

### **THE ONLY HARBOUR LIGHT ON JOE MANNION'S DOCK AT HIS HOTEL ON WATER STREET.**

See photo, "Ridley's Gastown." Joe Mannion's "Granville Hotel" was on the south side of Water Street, about midway between Carrall and Abbott Street. In front was the beach and from this a log float ran out. At the shore end of the float, about sixty feet from the front door, was a post on the top of which was a coal oil lamp. It was the only harbour light on Burrard Inlet (except the lights on the sailing ships tied up to the Hastings Sawmill, or Moodyville Sawmill, so dim that they lit nothing save the gangplank, and not that very well.) When, in the winter, old Hans, the boatman, came from the Hastings Sawmill with the mail and it was foggy and night, he watched as he rowed along the log strewn shore for the light, tied up, and took the mail into the Granville Hotel, facing the beach (now Water Street) and threw the bag on the counter. Everyone helped themselves to their own mail.

### **DOMINION DAY.**

See *Early Vancouver*, Matthews, Vol. 1.

This refers to the local Indians who, on Dominion Day, used to erect a small mast in the middle of their canoes, and tied a rope from the top to the bow and also to the stern, and then tied Chinese lanterns, with a lighted candle inside, all up and down the rope. Then, they would tie about 10 or 20 canoes bow to stern, all in a line, and when it was dark would get a small steam tug to tow them up and down the harbour in front of Water and Cordova Street. It was very pretty to watch.

Forty years later, at the suggestion of Major Matthews, the Kitsilano Yacht Club, foot of Balsam Street, did the same thing but with yachts in place of canoes, and then got a tug to tow them up and down the beach at Kitsilano, and then go over to English Bay at Denman Street and repeat it. It was very pretty.

### **SUNNYSIDE HOTEL.**

The "Sunnyside" was on the northwest corner of Water and Carrall Street—partly over the water on piles. McGirr was the proprietor about 1887, when the first train came in, 23 May 1887—the Queen's Birthday was on the morrow. So he decorated his hotel with cedar ropes in festoons and hung Chinese lanterns all along the underneath part of the balcony. There was no such thing as electric light decoration in 1887.

### **THE PILOT BOAT *CLAYMORE*, AND HER FLARE IN THE NIGHT.**

Before the Pilotage at Skunk Cove, now Caulfeilds (not Caulfields), was started, the pilots used to live on the sloop *Claymore*, which lay at anchor in the cove. When word came that a sailing ship was coming up the gulf from Victoria to load lumber at Moodyville, or at Hastings Sawmill, if it was night, and dark, the *Claymore* made her presence out in the gulf known to the ship or barque needing the pilot by waving backwards and forwards in the blackness of night, a burning flare. It was a handle about 18" long, on the end of which was a crisket, or iron basket, filled with asbestos. A suitable can with large base and narrow top went with the flare, and was filled with kerosene and turpentine mixed. The handle, with its crisket, was stored in the can head first down, crisket at bottom to soak up the oil, handle protruding for grasping, and a fixed cover to set on the top of the can was attached to the handle. The original flare is in the City Archives. The oil in the crisket was lighted with a fuse (matches blew out in the stiff winds), and when burning the flare was waved to and fro to indicate to the sailing ship where the pilot boat lay.

### **GOING TO CHURCH ON HASTINGS STREET BY LANTERN LIGHT.**

The two slopes on Hastings Street, down from Victory Square and down from Main Street, terminated, originally, in a swamp, one margin of which was at Abbott Street, and the other at Columbia Street. At Carrall Street the hollow was eight feet deep, which, at high tide, permitted the waters of False Creek and of Burrard Inlet to intermingle. But at other times it was fairly dry and quite passable for pedestrians. Hastings Street, at Carrall Street, has been filled in to a depth of eight feet.

The Presbyterian Church, the first, was on the slope down from Westminster Avenue (Main Street) on Cordova Street. Quite frequently, on a Sunday evening, 1886, churchgoers would pick their way along Hastings Street stepping from high mound of earth to the next one so as not to get their feet wet, by the aid of a lantern.

### **FIRST NEW YEAR'S BANQUET, ST. ANDREW'S, CIVIC, ETC., DOUGALL HOUSE.**

On New Year's Day, 1887, the best hotel was the Dougall House, on the southeast corner of Cordova and Abbott streets. A great banquet was given on New Year's Eve, the first real banquet ever held in Vancouver. All the celebrities were there, from Victoria, Nanaimo and New Westminster; there were many fine speeches. It was a cold blustery night. The guests were obligated to carry lanterns, going and coming.

### **LOOKING DOWN ON CORDOVA STREET FROM THE HEIGHTS ABOVE.**

After "The Fire," June 1886, Cordova Street became the principal retail business street. There was no obstruction to the line of sight from the high land at the corner of Homer and Hastings and that vicinity. It was possible, by standing in the right place, to see right down Cordova as far as Carrall. It was an odd sight to look down and see the lanterns, carried by the pedestrians on the Cordova Street sidewalks, bobbing up and down as the people walked to and fro, or crossed to the other side of the street.

### **ELECTRIC LIGHT IN 1887.**

When electric light first was introduced it was generated from a small low power steam plant on the lane near the corner of Abbott and Pender streets. Carbon light bulbs were used and not very strong light power—8 or 16 candle power. The joke at the time was that one needed a candle to find the electric light.

### **PROPOSAL TO PUT ELECTRIC LIGHT IN CITY HALL, POWELL STREET.**

When advances were made to the City Council to install electric light in our first \$1,280 City Hall on Powell Street, the Company installed one in the upstairs chamber and, when the Council was seated, turned it on. One of the aldermen had a candle in his desk. He raised the lid, took out the candle, struck a match on the seat of his "pants," and then, holding the burning candle up to and beside the electric bulb, exclaimed to his colleagues, "They call this thing eight candle power. I call it a fraud!"

### **HASTINGS SAWMILL FIRE, REFUSE BURNER.**

For many years, fifty or more, the Hastings Sawmill burned its slabs. For years the fire was never out and it was a huge thing fed by a chain drive feeder which ran uphill from the mill's saws from which the slabs and sawdust dropped onto a conveyor which had cross pieces which dragged the slabs and sawdust up to the highest point, directly over the fire, onto which they dropped and burned. It made a huge bonfire, the light of which could be seen from the entrance to the First Narrows. Ships, large and small, entered the western end of the First Narrows, manoeuvred about until they saw the Hastings Sawmill burner fire, and its light served as a beacon to direct them through the dark night. They made straight for the fire and thus passed safely through the First Narrows. It was a sort of lighthouse for which they headed. At that time, of course, at night Vancouver Harbour was pitch black in darkness—no light burned anywhere.

### **ARC LIGHTS WERE THE FIRST STREET LIGHTS IN VANCOUVER.**

The first street lights in Vancouver were arc-lights, that is, they consisted of two pieces of extremely hard carbon, placed perpendicularly one above the other, but almost touching. The light was caused by the current jumping across the gap between the upper and lower carbon "pencil." These "pencils" burned away, and it was necessary to replace them almost daily. An employee of the light company, riding in a light sulky or buggy, drove around the city each day, and put in new carbons. He drove along, his horse stopped, he jumped out, went to the light pole, released a rope and lowered an arm at the end of which was the globe. When the globe was within his reach he lifted it up, inserted the new carbon and went back to the light pole, hauled on the rope and the iron arm, which extended over to the middle of the street, went up into place. Then he went on to the next one.

### **THE LIGHT IN ST. PAUL'S HOSPITAL, BURRARD STREET, 1898.**

Burrard Street, such as it was, ended at St. Paul's Hospital, a small three-storey building. Beyond was a trail through the clearing. The "West End" was largely unoccupied in 1898. One summer's night in 1899 I wandered out into the West End clearing just as it was getting dusk, and, having gone a good way, sat down to watch the sunset, etc., on a log over the brow of the hill beyond Jervis Street. Darkness coming on, I suddenly thought it was time to return to my home on Burrard Street near Pacific, but, when I started to move, did not know in which direction to go. All was dark. I could not see a single light to guide. So, having wandered a little, I suddenly saw in the sky a light which was not a star. It was a light in the third storey window of St. Paul's Hospital on Burrard Street. I headed for it and soon was home.



Clearing Shaughnessy Heights, steam power and gin pole 1910  
H.J.Cambie, C.E.(C.P.R.) on right, H.E.C.Carry, C.E.(?) on left

Item # EarlyVan\_v7\_049

*[photo annotation:]*

Clearing Shaughnessy Heights, steam power gin pole 1910

H.J. Cambie, C.E. (C.P.R.) on right, H.E.C. Carry, C.E. (?) on left

### **SHAUGHNESSY HEIGHTS BONFIRES.**

The first "Shaughnessy" was cleared by the C.P.R. about 1909, the logs and stumps being piled in huge heaps by the aid of a donkey engine (steam) and a gin pole. As King Edward VII had died, and King George V was about to ascend the throne, the great piles of logs and stumps were kept until the evening of his formal crowning at Westminster Abbey; then about 9:00 p.m. they were lighted. As these piles were along the ridge about Sixteenth Avenue, between Granville Street South and Oak Street, the fires were easily visible to all down town Vancouver, then largely the "West End" insofar as our homes went. We expected the fires would look magnificent. I watched from Pacific Street but they were too far away; the effect was most disappointing. We had expected huge flames reaching to the sky. Actually, all we saw was some dull lights, not very big and not always bright, on the skyline. We had hoped for and expected too much. The expected spectacular flames did not appear and we were very sad and sorrowful they did not.

All I can think of at one sitting, but much more.

Sunday afternoon, 15 December 1950.

J.S. Matthews

### **LILLOOET, B.C. THE MEANING OF THE NAME "LILLOOET."**

This afternoon Mr. A.W. Phair, old friend of Lillooet, called at the City Archives, 28 June 1955. He is down for a few days to visit his daughter, Mrs. C.L. Dove, of 7767 Heather Street.

#### **THE NAME LILLOOET.**

Mr. Phair: "There is no doubt the name appeared in the very early records, probably 1858. Tyee Jimmy was a very famous Indian chief up at Lillooet and he said to me and to my father (my father, Casper Phair, asked him) that when people at the Coast here were going up the river they would point up north and say, 'I'm going lillooet,' meaning, 'away up there.' That is the idea, 'away up there.' 'Where are you going?' was the question. 'Lillooet, lillooet,' meaning 'away up' was the answer.

"Now, it seems that there was a store near Pemberton called Lillooet. That was what Tyee Jimmy said. I am 75 now and I think I heard that when I was, probably, twelve years old. At the time Tyee Jimmy would be middle-aged. Another thing, which few people know today, is that Lillooet was once called Cayoosh—that is not a horse, which is 'cayuse.'

"There is another thing that people do not know. The Hudson's Bay Company had a fort there called Fort Berans, or something like that. That was across the river where East Lillooet is now, where the Japanese internment camp was put during the war, about 1941."

#### **BRIDGE OVER FRASER RIVER. LILLOOET BRIDGE.**

"The first bridge over the Fraser was built, I think, about 1886 or 1887. They had a ferry there before, just a few yards below it, and old John Miller ran the ferry. It ran on a cable suspended from bank to bank. I was only six or seven years old at the time. It was a 'Howe Truss,' so my father told me. Twenty years afterwards they blew up the old bridge and put in the suspension bridge right on the same ground. When they built the first bridge it was a very cold winter—very cold—and they built the false work on the ice, and the ice heaved up and they had quite a time."

Major Matthews: Mr. Phair, were you the first white baby born in Lillooet?

Mr. Phair: "Yes and no. I think I was the first white boy born on the site of the town of Lillooet, but there may have been a white baby born in the district before I was. I was born 1880."