

**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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*Assistant Archivist*  
MRS. J. G. GIBBS



**CITY ARCHIVES**  
VANCOUVER 10, CANADA  
INST., 1933

**CITY HALL**  
22nd October, 1953.

**TO THE TRUSTEES FROM THE ARCHIVIST**  
**ANNUAL LUNCHEON MEETING, CITY HALL**  
**22nd OCTOBER 1953**

The CITY ARCHIVES is no longer solely civic; nor even metropolitan; it has become the most active archival institution in western Canada, and its character is national. Correspondence and visitors come from all British Columbia; the provinces of Canada, the British Isles, Australia and the United States.

It serves five hundred thousand busy people in two cities and four surrounding municipalities. By working overtime and week ends, and doing without holidays, a staff of two has managed to cope with immediate demands. This situation is not reasonable, for should illness or misadventure befall either one, disorder would follow, to the inconvenience of other activities, official and unofficial, and far afield, and disrupt those who, primarily, are relying upon us. Not a creditable situation.

Accommodation which was suitable when our city was half its present population is now so inadequate that there is no longer space. It has become a piled up mass in orderly confusion. After inspecting the CITY ARCHIVES recently, the Hon. ~~Justice~~ Justice Manson commented "Vancouver can do better than this". Others have spoken likewise.

We are overworked. An increase of staff by even one is no remedy for we lack space for a servant to work, or to put the result of his work. Someday we may get our own building, but until we do the City Hall is the best location and eminently satisfactory. We need fireproof storage where heavy, bulky, and infrequently used material can be kept. The ARCHIVES itself could then be made more presentable, and, provided the salary was available, a third staff member could be engaged.

Excellent support and many courtesies have come to us from the people. There have been no disagreements; there has been good progress, and we believe we have the confidence of those who depend on us. A small surplus, saved from the civic grant by keeping our salaries down, gives us freedom to do things. We could not wish for a better assistant than Mrs. Gibbs. My health continues good, but it is obvious that an archivist of my years should have an understudy.

What the public does not realise is that the CITY ARCHIVES is the jewel which is theirs.

I have the honor to be, sirs,

Your obedient servant,

J. S. MATTHEWS,  
*City Archivist.*

City Archives,  
City Hall,  
Vancouver, Canada  
22nd October, 1953

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## ***THE VANCOUVER PROVINCE, TUESDAY, 9 MARCH 1954.***

### CITY ARCHIVIST BATTLES FOR ADEQUATE FACILITIES

One of the most devastating broadsides in 20 years of battling for better city archives was fired Monday night by Major J.S. Matthews.

The veteran city archivist scarcely had time to train his guns on City Council before the shooting started.

“Why has the city archives—for the past 20 years—been given the poorest of accommodation, starved of staff and funds?”

“Who is there to look after the histories of three municipalities and Vancouver—500,000 people in all? Two people, one of them (Maj. Matthews) 76 years old.”

“Why have we 500 policemen looking after the bad people and only two looking after the builders?”

#### Fights Recalled

“Why is half the budget of the provincial archives in Victoria provided by Greater Vancouver taxpayers who get nothing for their money?”

“Why will no one raise funds for a proper archives when the Park Board has promised land?”

Major Matthews, speaking before the Professional Photographers Association of B.C., recalled some of his past fights with council.

“A year before the Golden Jubilee (1936) I sent 1000 photographs of Vancouver and 167 stories to B.C.’s agent-general in London.”

#### Well Preserved

“These photographs and stories ran in 243 British journals and Vancouver received the greatest amount of publicity it has ever had in Britain.”

“City Council turned down the bill for \$250 involved in preparing the material and I paid it myself.”

Major Matthews criticized others, too.

“No city has had its history as well preserved as Vancouver,” he said. “We have 10,000 negatives and each has its story. Five hundred of these pictures, with brief notes, would make the finest possible city history. That idea was turned down by the School Board.”

Major Matthews pointed out one pamphlet produced by the archives is now used in schools in five Canadian provinces.

In spite of the contributions of photographers—“the historians of our race”—he noted “no photographer has ever been knighted nor commemorated by statute.”

For his work in collecting photographs of early days, Major Matthews was presented with an honorary life membership in the association and a framed aerial picture of the city.

“I’ve tried to do my duty,” he said. “That’s all you can say about it.”