

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.

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Archivist To Tell Story Of City To Vancouverites

City Archivist, Major J. S. Matthews, 76, is stepping up his lecture engagement schedule "because it's time I opened my mouth."

Surrounded by the city's 163-year-old history, crammed into the ninth floor of City Hall, Major Matthews said. "I'm not going to give up—not while I live, but someday I'll pop off, and who will take care of all this?"

"All this," consists of thousands of articles, filing cabinets, documents, newspaper files, old photographs—an almost month-by-month record of the "greatest city in the west."

Cornerstone of Major Matthews' archives is a carefully-preserved letter written in 1792 to England by Captain George Vancouver.

The age-stained parchment starts a carefully-documented trail to such recent and memorable civic milestones as the opening of the new Granville Bridge.

Major Matthews wants to tell people of the value of his work, and his ultimate aim is a separate archive building.

He says the Park Board has offered land for a building in Stanley Park or on Little Mountain, but, as yet, City Council can't see the point in spending the money.

"Mind you, I am not blaming them, or Mayor Hume, who got my archive grant boosted from \$6000 a year to \$12,000. I can get along here, but is the greatest city in the west to be forever without a permanent record office?"

Major Matthews draws \$300 per month, "and I spend about half of it buying things for the archives."

He has one assistant, Mrs. Jean Gibbs. Both work limitless hours a week, and the major is most indignant about the provincial archive setup in Victoria.

"They get \$60,000 a year to work with, have about 13 em-

ployees, yet the bulk of the history of BC is centred in Vancouver. About half their staff over there does nothing but look after Victoria," he said.

VANCOUVER NEWS-HERALD, THURSDAY, 11 MARCH 1954.

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LETTER FROM MAJOR MATTHEWS TO MRS. R.C. BURKE, WHOSE HUSBAND IS MANAGER OF DOMINION OXYGEN Co.

Oct. 25th, 1954.

Dear Mrs. Burke:

The delay in sending you what I promised is due to the impossibility of giving attention to all the demands made upon us, hence much of our work is done in the evening, and I have had to await a week end to attend to matters arising out of our telephone conversation. This is written at my home, Saturday morning, as the City Hall is closed.

In 1933 the City Council granted my application to call myself "City Archivist." I was working at my home at the time, and to my surprise they also allotted me a small disused office in the Temporary City Hall, and, better still, added a gratuity of \$25 a month to cover "salary" and expenses.

Today, the City Archives occupies one whole floor of the City Hall; has done so since 1936, and our monthly grant is \$1,000. I have never asked for an increase in annual grant; it has been given by the Council without being asked for.