

Early Vancouver

Volume Seven

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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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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.

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CONVERSATION WITH MRS. MARY JANE McIVER, WIDOW JOHN D. McIVER, NOW OF 1349 EAST 3RD AVENUE, IN WHICH HOME SHE HAS LIVED FOR 54 YEARS, WHO KINDLY CAME TO THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS AFTERNOON IN COMPANY WITH WALTER ALLAN SMITH, SON OF JOHN FREDERICK SMITH.

Walter Smith was born at the Northern Hotel, 30 West Hastings Street, 5 March 1889, and is seeking a delayed registration of birth certificate. As she is suffering from chronic arthritis and is 84, we sent a taxi for her and sent her back again the same way, 8 December 1954.

JOHN D. McIVER. MARY JANE McIVER. JOHN FREDERICK SMITH. WALTER ALLAN SMITH.

Mrs. McIver: "My husband was John D. McIver. He is shown in the famous photograph of the arrival of C.P.R. locomotive No. 374, at Vancouver on 23rd May 1887. He is the most prominent and is standing in front of the cowcatcher. I came here shortly after 'The Fire,' in August 1887. My maiden name was Black, and I was a waitress in the Northern Hotel, 30th (West) "Hastings Street. My husband was uncle to the mother of Walter Allan Smith" (who was present beside her as she spoke.)

"Mrs. Smith, his mother, and I were friends. I must have been 18 or more when Walter was born at the Northern Hotel, where I lived and they lived. When he was a tiny baby I have often nursed him. What date he was born I do not know, but I was born on March 17th, 1871, and must have been about 18 at the time Walter was born, which he says was March 5th, 1889, at the time I was waitress.

"I was married in Victoria—not in a church but at a home. I have four sons all living in Vancouver, and three daughters, none living in Vancouver. And" (she laughed) "lots of grandchildren and sixteen great-grandchildren."

Note: at this point, Major Matthews, who had been preparing legal papers, took Mrs. McIver to the Legal Department, City Hall, when she made oath before Mr. Elliott as to her knowledge of the birth of W.A. Smith. Upon their return, Mrs. McIver said:

Mrs. McIver: "What time is it?"

Major Matthews: Four fifteen.

Mrs. McIver: "I must be going. I must hurry home—I've a meal to prepare for three people."

A few moments previously she had said that her age was 84. A tiny frail little lady, clear of mind, serious in her speech, but one for whom walking was painful, due to arthritis, still devoted to her duty. These are the women one venerates; earthly angels before whom, if it were necessary, I should not deem it beneath my dignity to get down on my knees, bow my head, and, in token of my respect and my admiration, kiss the hem of their skirts.

J.S. Matthews.

VISIT OF MISS MARGARET FLORENCE McNEIL, OUR FIRST BABY, 23–28 APRIL 1951.

Born 27 April 1886. Previous visits, 1940, 1946 April, 1946 August, 1949, 1951 (present.)

On the evening of 23 April 1951, Miss McNeil and her friend, Mrs. Lucille Marincovich, both of Portland, Oregon, were guests of the Parks Board at the Pavilion at Ferguson Point. It was a lovely brilliant evening. Dinner was at 6:00 p.m. Arnold Webster, chairman, presided. About 20 were present.

Major Matthews:

Miss McNeil needs no introduction; nor does Mrs. Marincovich to whom we are indebted for bringing Miss McNeil to us for the fourth time. (In August 1946, Miss McNeil came alone.) But, Mr. Chairman, with your permission I should like to address a few words to Miss McNeil herself.

Lady Margaret. Fate ordained that you should be the first baby born in Vancouver. That placed you, as is a queen born to her regal state, in an unavoidable position of public prominence. For fifty-five years your whereabouts remained a mystery to us, for, though you made frequent visits

to Vancouver, your natural modesty forbade you making yourself known. For twenty years I, myself, tried to find you before we succeeded; then to accost you, accuse you, and invite you to confess. Fame was forced upon you. You did not, yourself, seek it.

But, when finally the unique burden such as it is, at this moment, borne by no other person on earth, was imposed, you accepted its responsibilities willingly, graciously, with good humour and distinction. In consequence, whenever you return to the city of your nativity, we derive pleasure. You have created a state of happy congeniality, and a tradition of goodwill for those who come after to emulate.

It is our hope that your visits to Vancouver are as enjoyable to you and to Mrs. Marincovich as they are to us.

And so say all of us.

MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE.

This is to acknowledge and to certify that I Keavie do take, for better or for worse, Miss Katey Squinum for my lawful Wife, and that I promise to maintain and support her as such; and further to have the marriage ceremony duly, and evangically solemnized on the earliest opportunity, when a clerical person may be had to perform the same.

In Witness whereof I set my hand and seal, this 1st day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty seven.

Witnesses

James M Yale
Ohia

Fort Langley, 1st Novr 1847

Presented City Archives
April 1947 by A.C. Packam, Vancouver.

Note: the original Marriage Certificate is in the Sir James Douglas file in the City Archives. J.S.M.

CONVERSATION WITH JAMES ARTHUR MARTIN, PIONEER, OF 645 WEST BROADWAY, WHO KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS MORNING, 2 NOVEMBER 1949.

The morning following the banquet attended by 410 pioneers of Vancouver (1 November 1949) given by the Board of Park Commissioners to all those who have resided here since 1889 or earlier, and commemorating the dedication, by His Excellency Lord Stanley, of Stanley Park, 28 October 1889. Mr. Martin was born in 1862 and is 87.

COAL HARBOUR BRIDGE. STANLEY PARK DEDICATION.

Mr. Martin: "I saw the dedication procession go by. I was fishing on the bridge when it went by. There were not so many there—all horses. Four horses in the vice-regal carriage, but mostly two horses to a buggy. Every buggy in town was there—oh, say twelve or twenty—one behind the other. I was too interested in fishing so stayed and caught a few bullheads."

HOMER STREET METHODIST CHURCH.

"It was a rainy day—very rainy—that morning. I was about 27. They shut down the building of the Homer Street Methodist Church, corner Dunsmuir and Homer; shut down for the holiday. That was why I was fishing on the bridge. I did not want to go to the dedication, so I went over to Greer's Beach over the old C.P.R. trestle bridge."

Note: this would indicate that on that date the fixed span was still in position. J.S.M.