

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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Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 7 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

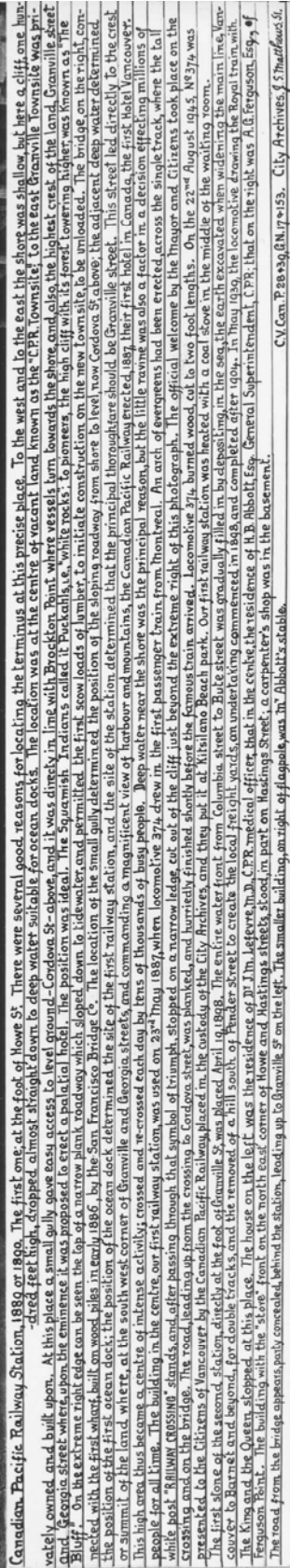
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[photo annotation:]

Canadian Pacific Railway Station, 1889 or 1890. The first one; at the foot of Howe St. There were several good reasons for locating the terminus at this precise place. To the west and to the east the shore was shallow, but here a cliff, one hundred feet high, dropped almost straight down to deep water suitable of ocean docks. The location was at the centre of vacant land known as the "C.P.R. Townsite"; to the east Granville Townsite was privately owned and built upon. At this place a small gully gave easy access to level ground—Cordova St.—above and it was directly in line with Brockton Point where vessels turn, towards the shore, and also, the highest crest of the land, Granville street and Georgia street where, upon the eminence it was proposed to erect a palatial hotel. The position was ideal. The Squamish Indians called it Puckahls, i.e., "white rocks"; to pioneers, the high cliff with its forest towering higher, was known as "The Bluff." On the extreme right edge can be seen the top of a narrow plank roadway which sloped down to tidewater, and permitted the first scow loads of lumber, to initiate construction on the new townsite, to be unloaded. The bridge, on the right, connected with the first wharf, built on wood piles in early 1886, by the San Francisco Bridge Co. The location of the small gully determined the position of the sloping roadway from shore to level, now Cordova St. above; the adjacent deep water determined the position of the first ocean dock; the position of the ocean dock determined the site of the first railway station, and the site of the station determined that the principal thoroughfare should be Granville Street. This street led directly to the crest or summit of the land where, at the southwest corner of Granville and Georgia streets, and commanding a magnificent view of harbour and mountains, the Canadian Pacific Railway erected, 1887, their first hotel in Canada, the first Hotel Vancouver. This high area thus became a centre of intense activity; crossed and re-crossed each day by tens of thousands of busy people. Deep water near the shore was the principal reason, but the little ravine was also a factor in a decision effecting millions of people for all time. The building in the centre, our first railway station, was used on 23rd May 1887, when locomotive 374 drew in the first passenger train from Montreal. An arch of evergreens had been erected, across the single track, where the tall white post "RAILWAY CROSSING" stands, and, after passing through that symbol of triumph, stopped on a narrow ledge, cut out of the cliff just beyond the extreme right on this photograph. The official welcome by the Mayor and Citizens took place on the crossing and on the bridge. The road, leading up from the crossing to Cordova street, was planked, and hurriedly finished shortly before the famous train arrived. Locomotive 374 burned wood, cut to two foot lengths. On the 22nd August 1945, No. 374 was presented to the Citizens of Vancouver by the Canadian Pacific Railway, placed in the custody of the City Archives, and they put it at Kitsilano Beach park. Our first railway station was heated with a coal stove in the middle of the waiting room. The first stone of the second station, directly at the foot of Granville St., was placed April 19, 1898. The entire waterfront from Columbia street to Bute street was gradually filled in by depositing, in the sea, the earth excavated when widening the main line, Vancouver to Barnet and beyond, for double tracks, and the removed of a hill south of Pender street to create the local freight yards, an undertaking commenced in 1898, and completed after 1904. In May 1939, the locomotive drawing the Royal train with The King and the Queen, stopped at this place. The house on the left was the residence of Dr. J.M. Lefevre, M.D., C.P.R. medical officer, that in the centre, the residence of H.B. Abbott, Esq., General Superintendent, C.P.R.; that on the right was A.G. Ferguson, Esq., of Ferguson Point. The building with the "store" front on the north east corner of Howe and Hastings streets, stood, in part on Hastings Street; a carpenter's shop was in the basement.

The road from the bridge appears, partly concealed, behind the station, leading up to Granville St. on the left. The smaller building, on right of flagpole, was Mr. Abbott's stable.

C.V. Can. P. 28 & 39, G.N. 17 & 153. City Archives. J.S. Matthews. 51.

WHAT BECAME OF THE FIRST C.P.R. STATION.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY FIRST STATION BUILT, FOOT HOWE STREET, 1887.

On 5 November 1948, the *Sun* newspaper, page 40, published a story, "VANCOUVER'S FIRST C.P.R. STATION still graces its secondary site, 10 Heatley Avenue." And says that a few weeks ago Mr. and Mrs. Noel Ross moved out. It says that in 1898 William Alberts, a C.P.R. switchtender, injured in the service of the railway, was allowed to live there and remained there until March, 1948. Mrs. Ross, his daughter, was born there.

On 17 October 1953, Major Matthews, City Archivist, visited the location, which is within a few feet of the rails of the C.P.R. line, and on the east side of Heatley Avenue. He found the old site a level of tall grass and weeds, unfenced. Mr. G. Morris, the crossing watchman, in a tiny shelter precisely opposite, told him, "*The C.P.R. tore it down about four years ago.*" Mrs. Ross is still living somewhere in Vancouver.

It is undoubtedly the same building, as the illustration—a photograph in 1948—is precisely the same as the photograph of it when at the foot of Howe Street in 1887.

See photo Can. P. 78, N. 52, taken 23 May 1887.

CANADIAN PACIFIC LOCOMOTIVE No. 374.

Celebration, in Stanley Park Pavilion, and at Kitsilano Beach, 23 May 1947, of the sixtieth anniversary of the arrival in Vancouver of the first trans-continental passenger train, Montréal to Vancouver, 23 May 1887.

The banquet, given in honour of the anniversary by the Commissioners of the Parks Board was attended by one hundred and seventy-three ladies and gentlemen comprised of pioneers of Vancouver and vicinity, and Canadian Pacific Railway officials from as far east as Winnipeg. Mr. R. Rowe Holland, chairman, Parks Board, presided. The only speaker was Major J.S. Matthews, City Archivist.

Major Matthews:

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: (in a loud voice)

Montréal to Vancouver!! Ocean to Ocean!! All aboard. Tomorrow Her Majesty the Queen, Victoria the Good, will receive as a birthday present in the Golden Jubilee year of her reign, the news that the train has reached the sea on the Pacific Coast; that Canada at last is whole; the Atlantic linked to the Pacific, and the All Red Route around the world complete. Twenty-third day of May, eighteen eighty-seven.

(lowering his voice) I have a message from Montréal for you. (reads)

"Nothing would please me more than to be present; and it is my misfortune that circumstances deprive me of this privilege. One thinks, naturally, of the many friends who have made a valuable contribution to the foundation and development of your great city, and who, alas, are no longer with us. In company with others, I shall always recall them with deep and abiding admiration and affection. Never do I think of Vancouver without, for example, recalling my many visits there with our late dear friend Charlie Cotterell, who played a large part in the progress of not only the City, but the entire Province, during the thirty years and more of his work and residence there. It is, therefore, most appropriate, and I am indeed glad, that Mrs. Cotterell has been invited to participate in the ceremony."

(ceases to read)

That message comes to you from Mr. W.M. Neal, the president, Canadian Pacific Railway, Montréal. (applause)

In no other city in the world, Mr. Chairman, could there be such an assemblage as that over which you preside; these are the venerable men and women of the van; who led the way into the primeval wilderness now, after sixty-one years, a metropolis ten miles wide by five deep.

Paramount—and above all—must come our gratitude to the Almighty for the abundant blessings which are ours. And then, secondly, our appreciation of that great structure, the Canadian Pacific Railway, without which Canada—as we know it—would not have been, and our acknowledgement of the interest which its gentlemen officials have always shown; and lastly, our own Commissioners of the Parks Board, and their keen conception of the fitness of things, and to whom one never appeals in vain. had it not been for the astuteness of Mr. Neal, the late Mr. Cotterell, and our own Mr. Holland, "374" would have been in the scrap heap, and you would not have been sitting in your chairs.