

Early Vancouver

Volume One

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2011 Edition (Originally Published 1932)

Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1931-1932.

*A Collection of Historical Data, Maps, and Plans Made with the Assistance of
Pioneers of Vancouver Between March and December 1931.*

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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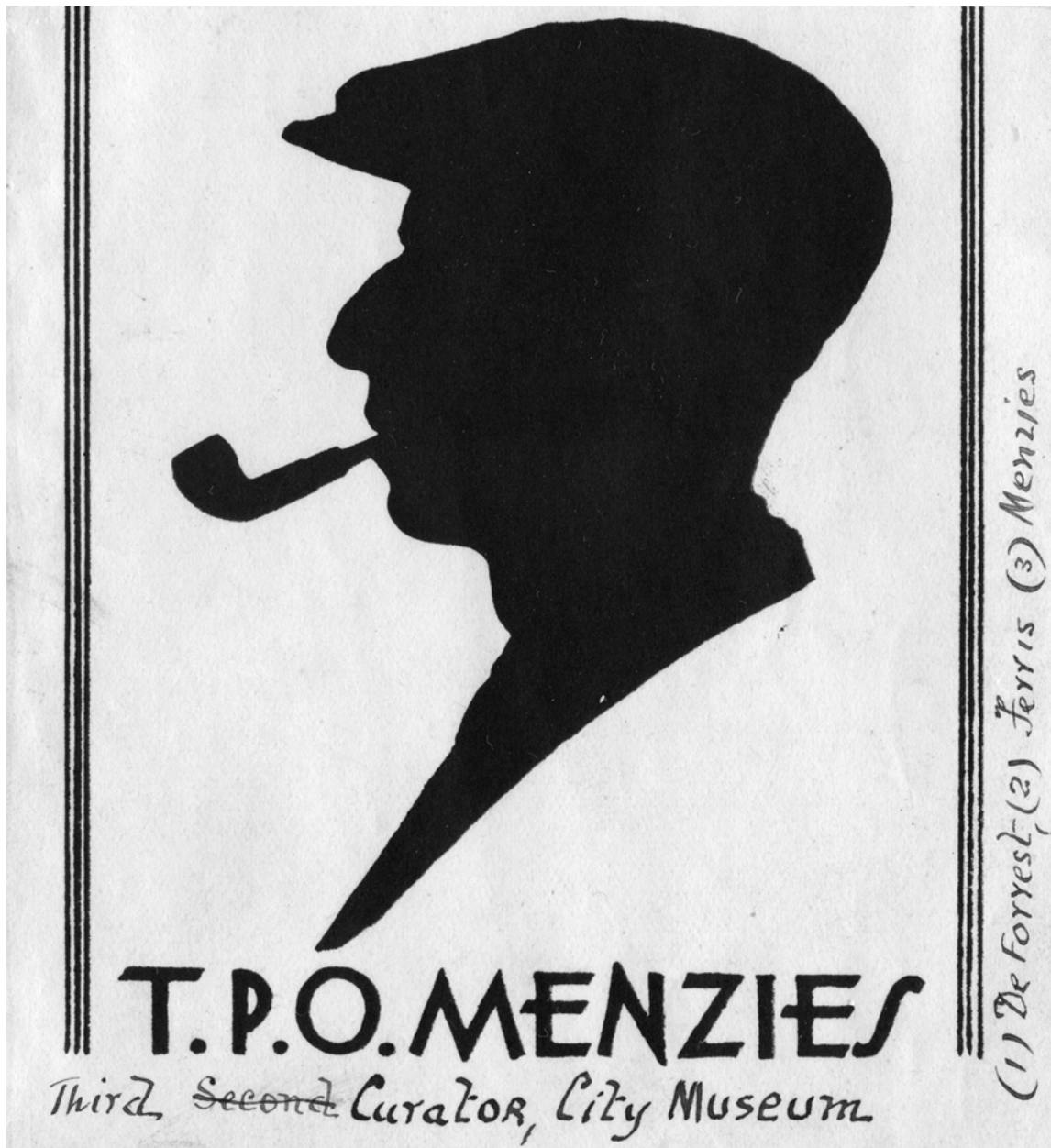
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Item # EarlyVan_v1_0089

21 DECEMBER 1931 - THE GREAT FIRE OF 1886. GEO. L. SCHETKY.

"It's all nonsense about the fire starting up at Drake Street; it started about Kelly Douglas's place, at the angle of Cordova and Water; they do say it started in some brush back of a shack there," said Mr. Geo. L. Schetky, when Mr. W.H. Gallagher's narrative was read to him.

"There were hundreds of fires burning; I always thought the Regina Hotel escaped because it was back of the fire zone. The only thing the fire left, other than the well-known exceptions, was the skeleton of a building" (McLennan, McFeely's and Company) "at the junction of Powell Street and the C.P.R. track; it was in process of erection and the fire just there was not hot enough to set fire to the scantling, but scorched and blacked it; the building was afterwards covered with iron.

"At the time, someone told me that a great tongue of flame burst forth from the Deighton House, and leaped in a great arch of fire and flame, clean over Carrall Street, and just licked up Scuitto's bake shop on the sharp corner where the Europe Hotel stands now—the apex of the triangle of Alexander and Powell streets. The Maple Tree, of course, was destroyed, and it was a big, old tree, probably two feet through."

JSM

21 DECEMBER 1931 - THE FIRST VANCOUVER-WESTMINSTER ELECTRIC RAILWAY. CAPTAIN E.S. SCOLLAR.

In a long conversation in the Vancouver Public Library today with Captain E.S. Scoullar, he said:

"The Westminster-Vancouver Electric Interurban railway, now the B.C. Electric Interurban, was the first electric railway built on the Pacific Coast, and the second electric road in Canada; the first was at Ottawa. San Francisco had horse and cable cars."

NOTE ADDED LATER:

Canada Year Book, 1932, page 559, says St. Catharines, not Ottawa.

"We were an ambitious, progressive lot in New Westminster; our idea in building it was to build up New Westminster, and to build up the country. Sir Charles Tupper made a speech at the old Colonial Hotel in New Westminster, and to a 'crowded house.' I remember his words well, 'The C.P.R. will never go beyond Port Moody,' he said, and that was how my partner and I put \$10,000 apiece into Port Moody real estate, and ... lost it.

"At the time we organised the interurban electric railway, there were only eight of us in the company. Mayor Oppenheimer, Benjamin Douglas, New Westminster, Harry Elliott and John A. Webster, also New Westminster, Henry Edmonds, and Samuel McIntosh, who was secretary, and of course myself. I forget who the eighth man was, perhaps it was John Hendry of the Hastings Mill. Edmonds owned all the land about Mount Pleasant, from the bridge up—about 640 acres.

"We had quite a time negotiating for the property for the right of way, but we finally got it, for nothing; they gave it to us. T.J. Trapp or Geo. Gibson, or both, were our agents for buying the right of way.

"The first track ran up Columbia Street, new Westminster, to the east, not to the west as now, and then turned north, then west towards Vancouver. We had to go that way to get up the hill; we had not the power that is supplied now; the cars used to groan as they started and gathered speed, and they were very slow at that.

"On the top of the hill our line ran through the Clarkson Gardens—we paid \$35,000 for the Clarkson Gardens—we simply ran the line through our own property. Then we had 100 acres just outside the city limits; we spent \$100,000 clearing that 100 acres.

"If Mr. McCraney did say that there were only three houses between Vancouver and Westminster at the time we ran our line through, then he is wrong; there were more than that; probably what he said was that there were only three stops. Our line ran up hill and down dale, a regular switchback through the forest. After leaving the Westminster city limits, I think the first stop was the power house. The car barn was at the power house, and there was a big boarding house there where all the men boarded, right on the job, and the cars were brought back there for the night. The second stop was, I think, Central Park. The third and last stop was the old city limits of Vancouver, 16th Avenue, and then our track came on through the city almost exactly as it does now, down Park Drive" (Commercial Drive), "Venables Street and Campbell Avenue, and west along Hastings Street.

"Our power was steam, generated at the Burnaby Power House. The rails were very light, just thirty-five pounds; I think we ran hourly. Some of our cars are still here.