

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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It is appalling to think that with so many historical names available by which to honour our pioneers, that recourse should be books of fiction for names. The changing of historic names, some given in the very earliest days, to gratify the fanciful whim of some newcomer temporarily in power, and with a mad penchant for systemising everything, and devoid of any spark of emotion or romance or affection for our forbears, is deplorable. The changing of Grove Street to Atlantic Street is an instance of it.

JSM

25 NOVEMBER 1931 - EARLY VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY. GEORGE POLLAY, FIRST LIBRARIAN.

The widow of our first librarian, Mrs. Janet S. Pollay, having written me that she desired me to call, I went to 743 East 18th Avenue, where she resides with her niece. She is now 90; she must have been a great little lady in her prime. I asked her how it was that Mr. Pollay came to receive the appointment of librarian; she had said that his occupation was that of cooper. She replied that he was a great reader. He was at one time a Methodist, but accepted in later years the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, 1688-1772, of Stockholm. She showed me a copy of this writer's book, *The True Christian Religion*, published in London, England in 1867, and said that Mr. Pollay was sent a complete set of his works—as a gift, all he had to do was pay the freight—and that perhaps they may be in the library yet. I read to her Mr. H.P. McCraney's account, dated 14 October 1931, of how the public library started, and she nodded acquiescence and added that her husband was asphyxiated in the mining accident, his body brought from Discovery, B.C. to Atlin, that he was chaplain of the Arctic Brotherhood when he died, his funeral consequently conducted with considerable ceremony, and afterwards his remains placed in the Atlin Cemetery. She gave me one of his letters, dated Discovery, 9 December 1911, to his nephew Robert Nightengale, which commences with the words, "Life, and its manifold manifestations is the most wonderful of all other phenomena," etc. Mr. Pollay died at Discovery in June 1912. She told me that their first home (which they built themselves) was at the corner of Gore Avenue and Hastings Street, and that the site was subsequently sold by them, and upon it was built the First Presbyterian Church. She remarked that it was a peculiar coincidence that a man of so pious a turn of mind as Mr. Pollay should sell his home for the purpose of building a church on its site.

Mrs. Pollay, who had been engaged, at 90 years of age, in washing dishes when I arrived, then revealed the purpose of her desire for my call. It was to present me with a chronicle which she herself had written, at my former suggestion, of the circumstances under which the first library started. It read as follows, and is now preserved in the archives.

743 18th Ave. E.

November 21st 1931.

Mr. Matthews,

Dear sir:

When you called on the 23rd Oct I was deaf; my hearing is good again. I will tell you about the beginning of the first library.

In 1888, on the south side of Cordova Street between Abbott and Cambie Street upstairs, in a small building. Two rooms were secured. Mr Devine, sen. and his son Harry T. having another room for business on the same floor. Mr Jackson jeweler had a little place at the east side of the entrance, to the stair no door to it & Mrs Hannafin milliner on the west side of the entrance. [*In error, was over Dunn's. Criticism, H.P. McCraney.*]

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