

Early Vancouver

Volume One

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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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THE SLOGAN, “ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND MEN IN NINETEEN-HUNDRED AND TEN.”

A widely adopted slogan used in Vancouver commencing with about 1907 or 1908. It was extensively used for advertising purposes, in newspapers, on printed cards in shop windows, and in almost every conceivable way in which advertising can be used; it was on everyone's tongue, on “band wagons,” etc., etc. A noisy club of young bucks known as the “Booster Club” on one or two occasions drove around the streets in a tallyho, plastered with streamers painted, “100,000 men in 1910,” beating a drum, and yelling the slogan in unison. At the time it was started, the population must have been about 75,000, and there remained but two or three years to attain 100,000. It was about the time of the height of the real estate boom; everyone was excited about Vancouver's phenomenal growth; there was much wild speculating; a boom peril was flourishing; sane men—those who kept their heads—were few, and not over popular. But the slogan did good work for Vancouver. The objective was attained before the year 1910 was reached.

JSM

THE “JUNGLE” OF 1931.

Met Colonel Williams of “Jungle” fame and read to him my notes of October 19th, asking if they were correct. He replied, “yes, but too much ‘Williams.’”

Major Matthews: “Is what I have put down true?”

Colonel Williams: “Yes.”

Major Matthews: “If you had not arisen from your desk, gone to the window, seen the legs disappearing, and fished those men out from under the rails, would the ‘Jungle’ ever have been?”

Colonel Williams: “No.”

Major Matthews: “Why?”

Colonel Williams: “Because the harbour police had orders to clear them out. But you must remember that after it was started, Mr. McClay” (Sam McClay, the chairman of the Board of Harbour Commissioners) “got very interested. The soup would never have been there as regularly as it was if it had not been for Mr. McClay. If it did not arrive on time, he went up and got it in his motor car, and when he was away he paid for it being brought down. Then ‘Kennie’ Burns” (Mr. Kenneth J. Burns, superintendent) “did nobly.”

It is appalling to reflect that, in this heyday of democracy, when every jack is as good as his master, midst a confusion of countless institutions, societies, committees, orders and what not, for the promotion of almost every benevolent sympathy peculiar to man, and in bewildering profusion, it should be possible for one or more men of great heart, without any more effort than that of stepping to the office window, to establish on the spur of the moment an odd coterie, the number of which rose at times to nearly 250, of able-bodied, deserving, sincere men whose most pressing want was food and shelter.

JSM

30 NOVEMBER 1931 - THE FIRST DOMINION DAY (1 JULY 1887.) INDIAN CANOES. EARLY BURRARD INLET. WATERFRONT ILLUMINATIONS.

In an article which was printed about the last day of June 1930, on our first Dominion Day celebrations, I referred to the waterfront illumination on Burrard Inlet in the evening, and of which Mrs. J.Z. Hall (Sam Greer's daughter) spoke as being so beautiful. Mr. A.E. Beck today told me more about this.

Mr. Beck said, “We had two strings of Indian canoes, each string of fifteen canoes towed by a tug, a steam tug. In the centre of each canoe was a small mast, and a line of Chinese lanterns were suspended from the mast top to the prow and stern of the canoe. The lanterns were all colours.

After dark, the two strings of canoes, with lanterns lighted, were towed to and fro over the waters of the Inlet, passed, re-passed, and circled around. The canoes were fairly large. The bands on the warships were playing, the sea was glassy smooth, the crowd watching lined the shore and Water Street. I have never seen a better display on our harbour, before or since.

"We paid the Indians a small sum."

JSM

3 DECEMBER 1931 - KERRISDALE. STREET CARS. 41ST AVENUE WEST.

Generous, hospitable Kerrisdale! Had Carlyle lived there, midst those great hearted pioneers, stout men supported by that subtle encouragement which women give, he would have hesitated before giving expression to his famous phrase, "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless millions weep."

"I helped to build the 41st Avenue car line twenty years ago," Mr. Clampitts, the Kitsilano car conductor told me. "At first, we had a little 'dinky' car which ran 'jerkwater' from the Interurban" (Eburne to Vancouver) "to Dunbar Street. It was a wild kind of place then, but those people who lived there were the kindest people I ever knew. I remember one time, it was Christmas, the folks in some house—I forget just which one—brought us out a Christmas dinner, and we, the conductor and I" (the motorman) "ate it in the car. They had it all fixed up on a silver tray, with white napkins, silver napkin rings, silver jugs, turkey dinner, and hot mince pies. Another Christmas, we had five turkey dinners sent out to us by residents along the street car line, and we ate them in the car. I know I got 28 cigars on one day, and the conductor got 25. You remember Alvo von Alvensleben, the German, friend of Kaiser Bill? Well, Taylor, he ran night shift; he never troubled to take lunch. Every night, they never missed, Alvensleben sent him out his lunch, and," (with emphasis) "a glass of wine."

There was something very beautiful about those pioneer days; the going was rough, the inconveniences many, but there was a sweet wholesomeness to those sincere souls who led the way into that primitive region, a tender sympathy, a simple faith, which has left memories which grow fonder and fonder as the days pass.

JSM

3 DECEMBER 1931 - THE ECHOES OF THE REAL ESTATE BOOM. 54TH AVENUE EAST.

There is a street in South Vancouver, between old 53rd and 55th avenues, shown on maps—it was never actually a street or road—as Lalande Avenue. It was two blocks long from Westminster Avenue, in D.L. 652, and divided in twain four city blocks once owned by Mr. Lalande and associates; probably twelve or thirteen acres in all. It was about 1908 or 1909.

They cleared it of forest at a cost of \$2,000; the streets were not graded. Then they were offered and refused \$120,000 for it. Later, they had, as the decline came, to mortgage it for \$20,000, and finally lost it altogether. Then the mortgagees lost their \$20,000, and still later the property reverted to the Municipality of South Vancouver for taxes unpaid. The trees, second growth, grew up again.

Today it is a civic park, the property of the new amalgamated city of Vancouver, and part is used for park board nurseries and greenhouses.

The original possessor, or one of them, Mr. Lalande, now, 1931, makes a most modest living in a small and obscure real estate business of humble pretence, on Pender Street and Homer Street corner. (See Miss Annie Morrison, Volume 3.)

These personal tragedies have not been without their compensating benefits. It is by such personal misfortunes that Vancouver has, in part, retrieved the stupid improvidence which failed to reserve, from a vast tract of empty wilderness, adequate areas for churches, parks, schools