

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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and public playing grounds. The temporary affluence of many land owners was false; the value did not exist; the figures were visionary; their perspective had no more substance than foam on beer.

JSM

CLOUGH AVENUE (SOUTH VANCOUVER), AFTERWARDS 61ST AVENUE EAST.

Mr. Clough, nephew of John Clough the lamplighter of Vancouver (1887) was a friend of the above Mr. Lalande.

MAIN STREET (FORMERLY WESTMINSTER AVENUE.)

Mr. Lalande was active in changing the name. His contention was that there were too many Westminsters—Westminster Avenue, Westminster Road, New Westminster, the city. Alderman Hepburn, an old-timer, bitterly opposed the change of historic old names, but the “boomsters” were riding gloriously on the crest of a great real estate wave; the soberer heads were disdained as fossilised; and when Alderman Hepburn publicly stated that those who sold lots “on Grouse Mountain” were “criminals” who ought to be in jail, a mighty howl arose, and had undoubtedly much to do with his defeat in a contest for the mayoralty. He was a splendid alderman, an astute financier, had served as an alderman for many terms, and deserved a more gracious reward.

JSM

EARLY AEROPLANES (APPROXIMATELY 1906 OR 1908.)

One of the earliest of aeroplanes in Vancouver was that possessed by Fred Clark, who bought the plane, and Art (Arthur) Lalande (son of the above), who supplied the engine. It was a British military Arvo or Alvo machine, fitted with bicycle wheels, and was purchased in St. Louis, Missouri, knocked down, shipped to Vancouver, and put on pontoons made by the Vancouver Shipyards in Coal Harbour. The propeller was enormous, and a foot wide. It never flew. The plane was burned when Hoffar’s boat house was destroyed by fire; the engine, being elsewhere, was saved, and afterwards put in a motor boat. All this as related to me by Art Lalande, who says he does not know where Fred Clark went to.

JSM

3 DECEMBER 1931 - KITSILANO BEACH, POST OFFICE.

The first post office at Kitsilano Beach was established at the time the Canadian Pacific Railway subdivided the area lying at the back of Kitsilano Beach, probably because at that time there was no mail delivery in that section, and its earliest residents had to go to town for their mail. It was located in a little store called “The Popular” run by a Mr. Green, just around the corner from Cornwall Street and on Yew Street.

The second postmaster was Mr. Yates, who retained it from 1912 to 1927, in a little store just west of Yew Street on the south side of Cornwall, where he sold confectionery and played chess.

The third incumbent is a postmistress at the same place, same business. I am informed that it was never known as Kitsilano Post Office, but as Sub Post Office No. 4

4 DECEMBER 1931 - HIS GRACE THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF NEW WESTMINSTER. COLONEL THE MOST REVEREND A.U. DEPENCIER, O.B.E., D.D.. 62ND OVERSEAS BATTALION, C.E.F. (“HULME’S HUSKIES.”)

Colonel Hulme tells me that when, early in 1915, he was given authority to raise the 62nd Overseas Battalion, he was completing the establishment of officers, and gave thought to the question of a regimental chaplain. One of the earlier overseas battalions had been unfortunate in the selection of a chaplain who had made himself “avoided” by too strict ideas on cigarettes,

swearing and other “weakness of a soldier.” In searching for a chaplain, Colonel Hulme relates, he hit upon the idea of writing to His Grace the Bishop of New Westminster, requesting him to be so kind as to recommend a suitable cleric of Anglican denomination.

In his letter to His Grace, Colonel Hulme said that he desired a man of broad vision, that he was training 1,200 men, and that, among so many, it would be impossible to avoid an occasional cuss word; he wanted a man who would not be too fidgety about an occasional “damn,” and added, naively, that circumstances might even arise where the issue of a tot of rum would be necessary. He would therefore be very much obliged if his Lordship would recommend some broadminded parson.

A day or so later, His Lordship appeared at Hastings Park, and, letter in hand, was ushered into Colonel Hulme’s orderly room.

The Bishop: “I think I have such a man, Colonel Hulme, a broadminded man, just such a man as you want; one whom I believe I can heartily recommend.”

Colonel Hulme: “Oh, I’m very glad, Your Lordship, what’s his name?”

The Bishop: “A.U. DePencier, Colonel.”

Colonel Hulme: “He is your son?” (Bishop DePencier had a son who had been ordained, but his initials were not “A.U.”)

The Bishop: “Well, no, not exactly; he is the Lord Bishop of New Westminster; that’s me.”

There were two broad intelligent smiles; Colonel Hulme swung around in his chair and reached for form “M.F.B. 287,” and a few moments later, Captain the Right Reverend A.U. DePencier, chaplain of the 62nd Overseas Battalion, marched out of the orderly room.

Colonel Hulme also tells another story, that in March 1815, whilst they were in training at Hastings Park, word reached him that the Dardanelles had been forced by the British Fleet. The news spread rapidly, first to the Officers’ Mess, which was soon in a hilarious mood; there were hurrahs, etc., and the noise, being heard by the men in camp, was soon taken up by them, the whole camp turned into an uproar, bands turned out. That there was no truth in the rumour is immaterial, and the incident has little value other than to illustrate the spirit of the moment, of the Vancouver volunteer, and is preliminary to what follows.

Soon word came that the departure of the 62nd for overseas had been indefinitely postponed, and the information imparted to the officers as they assembled at the Mess at the conclusion of the day. There was dejection, an outcry of disgust, general condemnation of the Militia Department, and a few of the milder swear words uttered. The chaplain, Captain the Right Reverend DePencier, stepped outside and diplomatically went to his tent.

Ten minutes later, he was back, and “poked his nose” in the doorway, with a quizzical look, and exclaimed before entering, “Well, is it all over?”

Colonel Hulme stepped up, and profusely apologised for the rumpus, the unseemly expression, and the swearing.

“Oh, that’s all right,” said His Lordship, “if I were not a bishop, I’d have done some myself. I’ve been out in my tent and done mine privately.”

In those days, prohibition days, a beverage known as “Near Beer” was sold; the maximum legal content of any liquor was 2% alcohol. “Near Beer” was served to the troops, but some kind brewer sent to the Officers’ Mess a case of private stock, very much stronger, and it appeared on the table for dinner.

Captain the Bishop picked up his glass, smacked his lips with a relish, and smiling with evident satisfaction, exclaimed, “Colonel, this beer seems to be getting near-er.”

JSM