

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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20 OCTOBER 1931 - BIG TREES. WESTMINSTER AVENUE.

In the photographs of the first brass band in Vancouver, and also of the first cricket team to play (Dominion Day, 1887) on the Cambie Street grounds, the dark clump of trees in the background are trees still standing on Westminster Avenue, or rather up to Westminster Avenue. This last clump of trees remained there for a "long time" after 1886. They stood about where the Canadian National Railway station was in 1931, but close up to the street.

JSM

HORSE RACING. GRANVILLE STREET, 1887.

On 23 May 1887, a communication was received by the City Council (see Minutes, page 359) from the Horse Racing Committee informing the Council that they had gone over the grounds of the city with a view to finding a suitable place for horse racing, and recommended that Granville Street be fixed up for that purpose. The communication was referred to the Board of Works who, on June 6th, submitted the engineer's report to the Council for approval.

One page 366, June 6th minutes of Council, it was "Moved by Ald. D. Oppenheimer, seconded by Ald. Lefevre that the improvement of Granville St. be awarded to William Harkins. Carried."

In discussing this matter with Mr. H.P. McCraney, he said that it was intended to hold the horse races on Georgia Street, a wide street, and that they probably would have been had it not been that it rained so hard all that June that the new ground which he had cleared—he had the contract—was so muddy that it was impossible to race horses on that street, so they were held on Howe Street, the start being near Nelson Street, and the finish by the Hotel Vancouver where a small judge's box was erected. (See Mrs. J.Z. Hall's remarks.)

21 OCTOBER 1931 - THE LAMPLIGHTER OF VANCOUVER.

Probably the first and only lamplighter that the city of Vancouver ever employed officially was appointed to the position on 11 April 1887 by the City Council. As the summer of that year drew to a close, successful efforts to introduce electric light were commenced. (See H.P. McCraney's account of the "First Electric Light.") His name was Tom Clough (pronounced Cluff) and his salary thirty dollars per month, probably Vancouver's only lamplighter, for in September 1887 steps were commenced to install electric light.

THE BLUFF. HOWE STREET.

Few indeed of the people of Vancouver in 1931 could say where "The Bluff" lies located; its prominence has gone, it lies concealed in other and more artificial eminences; yet, in the earlier days, it was a most conspicuous landmark. It comprised that bold headland which now forms the northern end of Burrard, Hornby and Howe streets.

"The Bluff" rose almost straight from the water of Burrard Inlet, was crowned with forest trees, and stood out majestically above the low lying southern shore of Coal Harbour on the west and Gastown on the right, to the height of approximately eighty feet above high water mark.

There is a minute in the records of the City Council of 28 March 1887 which orders the ditching, grading, etc., etc. of "Howe Street from Georgia to The Bluff."

JSM

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY. TAXATION.

The City Council, on 28 February 1887, exempted from taxation for twenty years all Canadian Pacific Railway yards, roundhouses, etc., etc. (See minutes City Council this and subsequent dates.)