

Early Vancouver

Volume One

By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.

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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Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

Contact Information

City of Vancouver Archives
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9
604.736.8561
archives@vancouver.ca
vancouver.ca/archives



"Both these tanks were used to have a supply of water on hand in case of fire, as the water pressure was, in the early days, very poor."

Note: the seepage mentioned would be natural when the nature of the ground under Carrall Street is considered, and the fact that, ten or twelve feet down, perhaps less, there is a strata of firm hard shale.)

"Pressure, pressure," ejaculated Mr. J.A. Mateer when the above narrative was read to him, "pressure, there was no pressure. There was no water other than in those tanks. Vancouver had no water supply other than wells."

NOTE ADDED LATER:

"And ten feet below high tide." – W.F. Findlay, April 1932

"We are referring to different dates. There was at first only one pipe, a twelve inch, across the First Narrows. He is referring to an earlier day, before the water was installed." – W.F. Findlay, 12 April 1932

GRANVILLE STREET IN 188-. DUNSMUIR STREET IN 188-. THE FIRST FIRE ENGINE.

A photo of an early fire engine pumping water, and in the distance, on the left, a building with a large sign, "RAND BROS, REAL ESTATE," was shown to Mr. W.F. Findlay.

"That," he said, "is a test of the first fire engine owned by the City of Vancouver, and was brought here shortly after the Great Fire of 1886. The site is Granville Street at Dunsmuir; the crossing of Dunsmuir Street can be seen by the planks laid long ways for a walk over the crossing. The heavy, large hose is pumping water from the tank.

"The engine was christened by Mrs. Carlisle, wife of the fire chief, J.H. Carlisle. The 'process' of christening it was for all hands to get around it, lift it in the air, while Mrs. Carlisle broke a bottle over it, and called it the "M.A. MacLean," in honour of the first Mayor of Vancouver.

"What became of the engine afterwards I do not know, but I seem to recall it in use twenty-five years ago. It was drawn by horses, I rather imagine two horses, though the later engines, before the motor engines came in, had three horses, and fine show, very spectacular to witness, they made as they galloped along. They were beautifully kept, fine specimens of horseflesh, and shone in their polished brass mounted harness. The old engine burned coal; you can see the poker on the ground, and also an empty coal sack. The top of the boiler and other fittings were burnished nickel, and shone brilliantly, as you can see by the reflections of the surrounding buildings shown in them.

"The site of the building 'RAND BROS, REAL ESTATE' is on Granville Street, about midway between Dunsmuir and Pender Street, on the west side. I think it was torn down afterwards to build a taller building.

"At the same time that the engine came, I think we got 2,500 feet of hose also."

26 August 1939

Who in 1889 - exactly fifty years ago, when the questions of the day was how to cross the North Arm, (see Kidd's "History of Lulu Island") was one a intense interest, hoped, or expected that the day would ever come - at least, within half a century, when a huge circus, "Ringlings", with Elephants, and lions and clowns - and hundreds of performers and attendants, who would entertain on Grauer's Field across the river on Sea Island (adjoining the bridge), a multitude who arrived in horseless carriages so numerous as to create a problem in traffic. J.S.ue

Saturday evening. 26 August 1939

What an age of wonders to
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Saturday evening, 26 August 1939.

What an age of wonders to have lived in. JSM

10 AUGUST 1931 - AIRPORT. GRANVILLE STREET SOUTH. EBURNE.

"I came to British Columbia in October 1889," said Mrs. H.E. Campbell, now of 2848 Birch Street, "coming on the first 'Tourist' car the Canadian Pacific Railway operated to the west. I got off at New Westminster and came down the river to Eburne. There were no bridges over the river at Eburne then; we used to cross over in boats, or on a scow to a little wharf where there was a store, the only one, 'run' by a Mr. Eburne. At that time there were a few shacks around, but the store was the main building. It was not altogether like coming to a strange place, for I knew Mr. McLeod, Mr. Sandy McLeod. On my arrival, Mr. Sears called for three cheers to welcome 'another woman for British Columbia.' Some time afterwards, I remember someone calling excitedly, 'Oh, come look, come look.' We all rushed to the window or door. The 'sight' we were urged to see was a woman crossing a field. I don't know who she was; it might have been Mrs. Nicol; they sold their place for seventy thousand dollars recently, for the new airport. Our water? Oh, we got that out of tanks; the river water was too salty.

"We went over to Vancouver once in a while, driving up Granville Street, as it is now called, but then it was just a slit in the forest, a solid wall of trees on both sides from Eburne to False Creek, with timber so tall you had to look straight up to see the sky. We went over to Vancouver on the first day of July 1890, and the mud on Granville Street was up to the hubs. The sun could not get in to dry the road—the trees were too tall. The road was no wider than a wagon, and, every half mile or so, there was a little space, somewhat wider, where the wagons could pass.

"When I arrived in October, I weighed 128 pounds, but in six months, the fresh air and the freshness of everything so improved me that I weighed 153 pounds. There was a lot of mud around—there were no dykes. When we went to Vancouver, we went up a short way to a little wharf, but the mud was deep, and I thought it was the funniest thing when Mrs. McLeod called out, 'let Bill pack you.' They called it 'packing.' So the man picked me up and carried me under his arm to keep me out of the mud. Another man was carrying Mrs. McLeod.

"My sisters came in 1890. They opened a dress making shop, Miss Donnelly's, in the Dunn and Miller Block on Cordova Street, and they were considered very clever designers.

"The accident to the party of sleighers? Oh, yes, that happened just a short way up Granville Street from Eburne, about the Magee Road. A tree fell as a party of merrymakers was passing; it killed one of them."

JSM

NOTE ADDED LATER: September 1933 – This remarkable and tragic misadventure occurred, according to Miss E.J. Rowling, "about a quarter mile east of what is now the corner of Marine Drive and Argyle Street. It took place December 26, 1889. Four were killed, two escaped." See H.S. Rowling; see Miss E.J. Rowling.

JSM