

## **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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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## **EARLY VANCOUVER**

A collection of historical data, maps, and plans made with the assistance of pioneers of Vancouver between March and December 1931.

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

1932

## **INTRODUCTION**

The story of the beginning of Vancouver is relatively modern. Less than fifty years ago, our city came into being and only a few years before that, were the first dwellings built by white men anywhere on Burrard Inlet. In the light of these facts, there are some who might say that Vancouver has no history worth preserving. On the other hand, those who are engaged in gathering historical data realise the extreme difficulty amounting almost to an impossibility of securing reliable, first-hand information regarding any place or event even after fifty years have elapsed.

We are now in this interesting period in Vancouver where there are still surviving a few of the early settlers who were here before the fire in June 1886. The next decade or two will see them gone. It will then be too late to secure these first-hand personal accounts of events which transpired in the early days.

Realising this, the author of this volume of notes set about the almost insuperable task of preserving all that seems worthwhile concerning the early years of the city's existence. Insuperable, not so much because of the task, or because of the difficulty of obtaining material, but chiefly because of the apathy and indifference which our city now exhibits toward such things. In spite of this, the following pages tell a story of enthusiasm, insistence and persistence on the part of Major Matthews without which they could not have been created. No sum of money, however great, could have bought these notes, because they did not exist; and no amount of energy could have created them without that uncanny instinct which their author displayed in their collection. Vancouver is under perpetual obligation to Major Matthews for what he has done and is doing, and I am proud of having this opportunity of writing these few words of introduction to this volume of notes which it is hoped is but the first of many more of a similar nature.

E.S. Robinson

Vancouver, B.C.

31 March 1932

## **VANCOUVER**

In the chronicle of human endeavour there is no story more inspiring, no tale more romantic, than that of the resourceful, courageous people whose initiative and energy, peacefully, and in the briefest period of time, created out of the silent emptiness of dark primeval forests, a monumental city of beauty and of culture; an achievement in world history which must forever interest the peoples of all nations.

With jealous care alone should this splendid record be preserved.

J.S. Matthews

Kitsilano Beach

March 1932

## Vancouver.

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With jealous care alone should this splendid record be preserved.

W. S. Matthews  
Kitsilano Beach  
March 1932.

## **PREFACE.**

Scene.--The winding stairs, Vancouver Public Library. May 1931.

Personae.--Two gentlemen, one ascending, the other descending. They greet each other, halt, engage in earnest conversation, and part again, one continuing downwards, the other upwards.

The First.--(turning and calling upwards from below) "I suppose you haven't some place where it could be started."

The Second.--(looking down from landing above) "I believe I have; come back."

Thus was instituted an endeavour to establish in Vancouver an orderly record of the city and its events, its people and their achievements.

Difficulties were many; so were the expedients. The "place" was a disused room beneath the tower of the old City Hall on Main Street, where falling wallpaper entwined with cobwebs hung from a ceiling, part of which bent downwards, and part lay on the floor.

Two old chairs and a half broken desk were brought in as furniture; a cardboard box served for filing. Of artificial light and heat there was none. The first archive preserved was the Roll of Honour of soldiers of South Vancouver who served in the Great War; the second, a Voters List, City of Vancouver, 1886.

Some days later (23 May 1931), the Vancouver Library Board approved of their Librarian's initiative (E.S. Robinson, Esq.), and placed at his disposal one hundred dollars for small purchases of archives. In November the Board recommended to the City Council that \$2,550 be appropriated from city funds during 1932 for the establishment of a public archives in Vancouver.