

## **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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### **3 JULY 1931 - POST OFFICES.**

The first post office on Burrard Inlet is generally assumed to have been "Burrard Inlet," a post office conducted by the Hastings Sawmill prior to the creation of "Granville." The post office of "Granville" was a small building, or part of it, on the east side of Carrall Street, just south of the corner of Carrall Street and Powell; next to the Ferguson Block on the corner. After the first post office, that is, before the fire, "Granville," after the incorporation of the city, "Vancouver," both before the fire, was burned, a temporary post office was established in a cheap shack at the southern end of Carrall Street, where it remained a few weeks, and was then moved to Hastings Street. A photograph of the little building on Hastings Street is in the archives of the Vancouver Public Library.

"The first post office in Vancouver after the fire of June 1886," said Mr. William Bailey, "was in the little old frame one-storey building shown in this photograph, so my brother told me at the time I came here in 1890, in the fall of 1890. It was situated where the Kent Piano Company now is, or about there, between Homer and Hamilton streets, on the north side of Hastings Street West. Afterwards, it was used as a store by my brother. That is why the name 'C.S. Bailey and Co. Landscape Photographers' appears on the glass of those windows. He came here some time before I did.

"When I came here in 1890, there was nothing near that building, just vacant lots, a blankness. Right back of it was where Jonathan Miller, the first postmaster had lived, and a raised platform connected his dwelling to the post office at the time it was used as such. He must have lived there quite a time; a year or more after the fire; until the stone building in the next block up the street was built and in shape for occupancy.

"Jonathan Miller's dwelling behind my brother's store was used, when I came in 1890, as the Rosehill Dining Hall. It was right behind our photograph shop, and we went down some steps from Hastings Street to enter it, or it could be entered from the lane. Everyone ate there, it was just a rough place, but in those days there were no 'fancy hotels.'"

The British Columbia Directory of 1887 shows "Jonathan Miller, postmaster, Hastings Street," the Vancouver Directory of 1889 shows "Jonathan Miller, postmaster, residence 311 Hastings Street," and the same directory for 1890 shows "Jonathan Miller, post office, 309 Hastings Street West." The street numbers have been changed since.

Was this the place which caused all the complaint by the citizens of Vancouver, supported by a petition to the City Council, because it was so far out from the centre of civic life? I asked.

"I don't know, it may have been," said Mr. Bailey. "When I got here the post office was in the centre of the next block, opposite where the C.P.R. Telegraph is, and I think J. Oben, of Central Park, afterwards had a pastry shop in it. Jonathan Miller's son Walter is living—he would tell you; so is George Fowler."

Mr. Geo. L. Schetky, a very early pioneer, told me that when the post office was moved to the first Hastings Street site—it was numbered afterwards 227—there "was a terrific row; it was so far out."

"After my brother moved from 227 Hastings Street he located on Cordova Street, near Carrall, north side; the building is still standing, used as Woods Boot Shop, 160 Cordova Street West. Later we moved to the other side, between Abbott and Cambie. The block number 200, that is 227, on Hastings Street West, is now numbered 300," said Mr. Bailey.

J.S.M.

### **MEMORANDUM.**

The very extensive collection of photographic plates of C.S. Bailey & Company were sold by Mr. William Bailey to the Dominion Photo Company about 1929. All are of priceless value, and they are very numerous. He sold them for \$50. All are early scenic.

There is a minute in the Minute book of the City Council recording the receipt of a petition from numerous citizens protesting against the removal of the post office and its establishment at so inconvenient a location. "Out in the woods."

### **6 JULY 1931 - SPRATT'S ARK, EARLY CANNERY IN VANCOUVER.**

Spratt's Ark, a very early cannery in Vancouver, was located just west of Burrard Street; a sort of floating cannery, sometimes used as a wharf. Another very early cannery was at the foot of Burrard Street on False Creek—a small one. The largest cannery, the English Bay Cannery, stood a little to the east of the foot of Trutch Street—on English Bay. There was another, the Great Northern Cannery, almost opposite across the bay on an unnamed shore and in an unnamed district, now West Vancouver.

### **ENGLISH BAY CANNERY.**

Of the English Bay Cannery, Lieutenant Colonel W.D.S. Rorison, M.C., V.D., son of R.D. Rorison, and member of the firm of R.D. Rorison and Company Limited, Dominion Building, formerly owners of the Royal Nurseries at Royal on the Eburne-Vancouver interurban line, now of Cambie, Lulu Island, said:

"We must have built our house at 3148 Point Grey Road in 1908. I think I lived there from 1908 to 1911 inclusive. Yes, we did buy the lumber of the old cannery, and used a lot of it in building our house; our rafters, and such heavy timbers; the outside lumber of the cannery was no use." (Note: it would be interesting to examine those timbers to see how they have stood the ravages of time.) "I have heard it said that when Mr. Alexander's house at the Hastings Sawmill was pulled down after the Great War, that the timbers were in excellent preservation, and they must have been placed there in the 1860s. There were fourteen rooms in our house, and it had a sort of peaked tower. It faced north."

As late as 1928, that is, roughly 25 years after the old English Bay Cannery ceased operations, a heap of rusty red iron stood, like an island, on the shore of Kitsilano waterfront under the old cannery location. It was the remains of the old scrap tin heap. In the earlier days, and after 1900, salmon canners of the British Columbia coast made their own cans. A large amount of sheet tinned iron was used, and there was much waste in cutting out the round tops and bottoms from flat sheets. The waste clippings were shot through the cannery floor into the water beneath; it did not pay to save it.

### **6 JULY 1931 - SPANISH BANKS. "COLUMBIA RIVER" SALMON FISHING BOATS.**

Prior to 1900, and for some years afterwards, the lights of the fishing boats, twinkling on the summer sea off Spanish Banks made a pretty evening sight for spectators on the shore of English Bay. Each boat was necessitated by law to carry two lights; one on the fishing boat, the other on a float at the end of the net. We were still in the sail age—there were gas engines, but few were used. The sails were stowed whilst fishing, and the hundreds, literally hundreds, of tiny lights flickering in the distance, the last light from the sun which had set, the smooth sea, made an enchanting summer's scene.

At that time, Spratt's Ark had long since disappeared, the cannery on False Creek was canning, without success, clams, etc. The fish caught off Spanish Banks and Point Grey were delivered for canning to the English Bay Cannery, the Great Northern Cannery, the cannery in a bay beyond Point Atkinson—around the corner of the lighthouse at Point Atkinson, and to North Arm and Fraser River canneries.

### **THE GREAT SALMON YEAR, 1900.**

Bathing on the beaches of Vancouver was almost impossible for most part of a month in the summer of 1900; dead salmon lay on the shore in thousands. The ebb and flow of each tide