

Early Vancouver

Volume One

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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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"At its conclusion those big, rough, hardy bushmen paid as gentle a compliment as ever I have witnessed. The service over, none moved; they all stood motionless while His Worship moved down the rude aisle. His Worship halted at the entrance, and stood to one side, Reverend Mr. Thompson on the other, and both shook hands with each member of the impromptu congregation as they slowly departed from the half-finished building. Then the men went back to work to make Cordova Street passable."

"NORTH AMERICAN CHINAMEN."

From *Canada's Great Highway: From the first Stake to the Last Spike* by J.H.E. Secretan, 1924. (Mr. Secretan, a civil engineer, [was] in charge of selecting right of way, etc., C.P.R.)

Page 44: "When the Canadian 'tenderfeet' began to immigrate into the country they were not particularly welcome; their ideas were too small, and parochial to suit the man in the mountains" ... "he could not understand them at first" ... "the smallest coin in the country was a twenty-five cent piece, which was known as 'two bits'; a half dollar was 'four bits,' and no one had ever heard of anything so small as five or ten cents until the Canadians arrived, so I suppose those lordly pioneers looked down in pity on the lowly emigrants when they mentioned such currency, and called them 'North American Chinamen.' They thought them mean."

"NORTH AMERICAN CHINAMEN." R.H. ALEXANDER.

"The expression 'North American Chinamen' may have been used previously, but I do not think so. I will tell you of the first time I heard it, and I have always understood that it was Mr. Alexander who coined it," resumed Mr. Gallagher.

"A few days prior to our first election, a strike took place at the Hastings Sawmill. Quite a number of navvies who had helped to build the railway for Onderdonk had come back from the construction of the roadbed. Most contracts for this work were finished in the fall of 1885, and the roadbed work was pretty well complete. These navvies had got work at the Hastings Sawmill for the winter and at, I believe, \$1.25 per day; I am not certain whether this sum included their board and lodging or not; I rather think it did." (Note: in 1898, the author worked in a Puget Sound sawmill for \$1.00 per day of 10 hours, and 25¢ extra for two more hours, 6 to 8 p.m., and paid 50¢ a day for board and lodging at the company boarding house.) "These navvies prompted the strike of early April 1886, probably ten days before the first civic election in which Mr. R.H. Alexander, the mill manager, was one of the two candidates for first mayor of Vancouver.

"A conciliation committee of merchants and business men was appointed at a meeting held under the Maple Tree, and was requested to interview Mr. Alexander; I was one, the late Mr. Fulman Rutherford of Lulu Island was another. Mr. Alexander received us very cordially, told us that, for many years prior to that winter, he had run the mill successfully with Indians and some Chinamen, that he was quite willing to take back the men who had gone out—his old white employees had stood by him, and the mill was not shut down—but that he would not reduce the hours.

"The following evening, the committee reported back to the meeting, again under the Maple Tree, conveyed their report, and added that they had promised to report back to Mr. Alexander what the men decided to do.

"But the men would have none of it, and when we went to Mr. Alexander for our second interview, and gave him the men's answer, he replied that he would just engage a few extra Indians and Chinamen, and it was then that he made the remark, 'Canadians are only North American Chinamen anyway.'

"Mr. Alexander was a splendid man, but the remark, made undoubtedly in a moment of exasperation, was very costly to him afterwards in the first civic election."