

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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THE FIRST FIRE ENGINE. THE WATER TANKS.

"The tanks from which that fire engine is pumping water stood at the corner of Dunsmuir and Granville Street, east side," said Mr. W.F. Findlay of the Vancouver Pioneers Association, and a nephew of Lewis Carter of the Carter House. "I don't know much about that tank; I know more about the one on Carrall Street, near the old Maple Tree. The tank by the Maple Tree was wooden roofed and sided, and sunk in the ground. It was not planked at the bottom, for the contractor found after digging the hole that the water seeped in sufficiently to keep the tank part full of water. The tank held about 10,000 or 12,000 gallons.

"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."