

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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name for the place. I tried many, until finally one night I thought of 'burn' which meant brook or creek. I added 'holly,' and that is how it was; I invented the word," added Mr. Lawson, and continued. "The walnut trees were about ten years old when we came here; that would make them 35 years old now, but the cherry trees are at least fifty years old. This property was preempted about 1872," and I remarked to him that that was about the time many preemptions were made; Greer's Beach (Kitsilano) was preempted, first in 1871, then in 1873. The fruit trees show, leafless, in the photo.

THE FIRST POST OFFICE.

The first post office—Mr. Lawson being the postmaster—was in a small room, probably ten feet by ten feet at the southeast angle of the house.

TAME DEER.

"Our first tame deer was a buck, and became so very tame that it entered the house," related Mr. Lawson. "One Christmas, Mrs. Lawson placed the Christmas pudding on the table, and while her back was momentarily turned, the deer ate the pudding on the table, and then jumped out of an open window. The second deer was secured when, being chased by some strange dog, it ran into the sea, and two men, passing in a boat, secured it and were about to cut its throat when Mrs. Lawson shouted to them to bring it in alive. It was a doe. I gave them \$10 for it. It was quite young. Soon afterwards, two men caught another one in the water; it was 'all in,' exhausted. I bought it, took it to the stable in a wheelbarrow, rubbed it and rubbed it, and finally it got its strength back. Later, it had two little fawns; that made five deer in all, so we built a little yard, then a larger one, and took in part of the creek. All these deer were caught close to the house."

Mr. Lawson was very fond of horses and had some splendid driving and riding specimens. Some of them appear in a picture given me of his farm on the shore. He had some splendid specimens of black Irish cattle.

The beauty of this Hollyburn forest retreat twenty or more years ago, its silence, its primeval verdure, its mountains and its sea, must indeed have been enchanting. No wonder Mr. Lawson looked back in fond recollection, and not without regret of its passing. The little old house framed in the green of cherry and walnut trees, the smooth lawn of the tennis court, the tiny creek rippling by, cold and clear, the boulder-strewn shore lapped by the waters of English Bay, the distant forest of Stanley Park, the noble bluff of Prospect Point, the verdant background of forest stretching away to the mountain top, the sunshine and the silence, the black cattle in the pasture, and the tame deer in the pen—a charming place of happy memory.

THE FIRST WHARF.

The remains of the old government wharf at the foot of 17th Street can still be seen, a narrow elevation of gravel between logs which originally supported it—the same gravel as has given its name to a certain quality commonly used in making concrete. The original "Navy Jack" (gravel) came from an excavation on the shore just east of the old wharf, a surface pit from which Vancouver got its first gravel for the concrete of its buildings, and which gave its name, or its owner's name, to a building material now universally known throughout British Columbia as "Navy Jack."

12 AUGUST 1931 - THE FIRST SCHOOL AND WEDDING.

The first wedding in West Vancouver was that of Mr. John Hart to Mrs. Lawson's sister, but the first wedding in a church, or perhaps "church wedding form," was held in the first school room, and was that of Mr. Lawson's eldest daughter Elizabeth Catherine, now Mrs. W.J. Pitman. A picture of this wedding, taken on the steps of Navy Jack's house, is in the Archives.

NOTE ADDED LATER:

(City Archives C.V.P. Out. 80 N. Out. 22.)