

Early Vancouver

Volume Two

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Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1932.

Supplemental to volume one collected in 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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Note: merely another instance of that wonderful dorky, “Old Joe,” for whom all Vancouver held so deep an affection that they erected a monument to him at English Bay, where he spent over thirty years as, first unofficial, then official, beach master and life guard.

“Father,” (Mayor MacLean) “died in our home in the 600 block, Hornby Street, in 1895. Our house can be seen in the photograph of Vancouver taken from the Hotel Vancouver, back of the white house, and on Hornby Street.”

FIRST CHIEF OF POLICE.

“His full name was John Malcolm Stewart.”

A.W. ROSS, M.P. W.E. GRAVELEY. C.P.R. TERMINUS.

Memo of conversation with W.E. Graveley, 11 April 1932.

“A.W. Ross was member of parliament for Lisgard, and a ‘C.P.R.’ member of parliament, and Van Horne tipped him off that Port Moody would not be the terminus of the C.P.R. I sold hundreds of lots in Port Moody, but never once did I buy one myself. He” (A.W. Ross) “formed a syndicate to buy up all the land east of Carrall Street; Dr. Powell, Major Dupont, 1460 acres right in the centre of the city, from Burrard Inlet to away up in Cedar Cottage. A.W. Ross had no money, and when it came to making the first payment he had to apply to others.

“Innes was my partner in Winnipeg as well as here. He” (A.W. Ross) “sold Innes—Innes, Richards and Ackroyd, an early firm, they were incorporated before the fire—he sold half of his one-fifth interest to Innes and myself. Then he again got into financial difficulties, so we had an assignment drawn up—I have it yet—and gave us one twentieth of the interest. We got up a pamphlet, the *West Shore*—we had an advertisement in that—drawing attention to the place; that was in 1884.”

(Note: see *The Name of Vancouver* and its appearance in the *West Shore*, published in Portland, Oregon, September 1884.)

EARLY REAL ESTATE. C.P.R. SELLS FIRST LOT.

“I built a little real estate office on the northeast corner of Alexander and Carrall streets. Tom Dunn, the hardware man, and Hart, furniture, were down Hastings Road. When the C.P.R. came along they ordered the stores away. I was staying at the Sunnyside Hotel, and was friendly with all the C.P.R. officials. They asked me why I did not move too. L.A. Hamilton and others were staying at the Sunnyside, Hamilton was C.P.R. surveyor. I told them that I did not want to move and that I wanted to buy a lot. They wired Van Horne, and he replied, ‘All right,’ so I bought the southeast corner of Carrall and Cordova Street, where the Oyster Bay Café is, and own it yet.

“We moved my little shack up Carrall Street with seven teams of horses. The horses came down the street too fast, and bang went the telephone and telegraph wires; came tumbling down, and the horses brought up in a cut down tree or something. I got into all sorts of trouble. Joe Armstrong started ‘after’ me, so I saw J.J. Blake, and he asked how high the gable of my building was. I said, ‘Fifteen feet.’ ‘Oh, well,’ he replied, ‘do nothing,’ which I did. See Judge Howay’s history book published twenty years ago, you will see there the first real estate advertisements; we pointed out the distances from London to Vancouver, from Vancouver to Yokohama, and the distances to other places.” (See *West Shore*.)

EARLY TELEPHONE.

“Oh, yes, there must have been a telephone before the fire, or how could Joe Armstrong have got after me; besides my little shack was burned in the fire.”

FIRST LOT SOLD. FIRST MAP OF VANCOUVER.

“I bought the first lot the C.P.R. sold in Vancouver. You see, the first map of Vancouver was made in 1885; it was all called Coal Harbour then. I have travelled the world over, and have yet to find a city which appeals to me so much, or a place of such hope and prospects.”

TENT ON CARRALL STREET. GREAT FIRE PHOTO.

"That tent, the white tent in the well-known photo of Vancouver the day after the fire is in the middle of Cordova Street. That stump, the nearest one, is still there, on the right of way of the C.P.R., east side, between, about half way between Carrall and Cordova Street, a few feet north of the lane. It stood exactly as it was in the photo until last year, then someone cut the top off for fire wood, but the lower part is still there, the only stump left on the peninsula, as far as I know. I own the lot the second stump is on. I paid \$700 for the first lot; at first my taxes were \$11.90; now they are \$800."

THE GREAT FIRE OF 1886. GRAVELEY AND SPINKS.

"When the fire took place we were up Mount Pleasant. I said, 'It looks to me that the place is on fire.' We came down the hill, crossed the old wooden bridge over False Creek, and came on down the old trail which slanted from Carrall Street across Hastings and struck Main Street about where the gas works is. We met a horse and wagon coming along furiously. It was loaded with household furniture and mattresses. We went on, and got as far as my office, got out one or two books, ledger, cash book and so on, then we cleared out pretty quick, and then, strange thing I so well remember, I turned the key in the lock. I tried to get my trunk, etc., out of the Sunnyside, but the Sunnyside went up like a puff. Then I took a nice metal sign painted in black and gold, 'Graveley and Spinks,' and slipped it under my arm; I will tell you more about that later.

"As we passed the Burrard Hotel, and the three-storey building opposite," (north east corner of Hastings and trail) "I passed Balfour the proprietor; he was an alderman. He was up to his neck trying to get a lot of children out of danger and said, 'Give me a hand with these children.' I took one child up on my shoulders and started off for False Creek." (See note below.) "When I came back there were three or four dead bodies under the Burrard Hotel; they had evidently crawled under the hotel to save themselves, and had been burned to death.

"The next day a man came to me and said, 'I have some papers belonging to you.' I said, 'Where did you get them,' and he replied, 'On the beach.' They were a bundle of deeds, agreements of sale, tied closely together, and had been in my trunk in the Sunnyside Hotel, and when that burned they must have been sucked out in the fierce air blast caused by the fire. I have them yet, all stained with mud, and including the deed to the first lot sold by the C.P.R."

THE REAL ESTATE SIGN.

"As we were escaping I put the sign down behind a stump and when I came back it was gone. I thought it queer that anyone should want a sign with my name on it; not a sort of thing other people want. I looked at the ground, and there was my sign all right, but it had melted; that will give you an idea of the heat of the fire."

HIS WORSHIP MAYOR MACLEAN. THE FIRST COUNCIL.

"M.A. MacLean was a broad visioned man, generous to a fault, and a man of whom Vancouver should be proud to have had for its first mayor. Well, judge for yourself; he was victorious over Alexander in the election, and Alexander was a well-known and influential man. Yes, I do think that our first aldermen were men of great heart and understanding, and," (significantly) "better than some we have had since."

Note above: two of these were Alderman Balfour's children; the other two those of his wife's mother (Mrs. Martin who died 1932.) Alderman Balfour's widow still lives, 1932.

Note: the leading remarks of Mr. Graveley serve to illustrate the controversy "East End versus West End"; see W.F. Findlay, who states that the great question was "which way will the city grow?"

THE FIRST CITY COUNCIL.

Ex-Alderman Harry Hemlow, so far as is known one of the two surviving members of the first City Council, the other being ex-Alderman L.A. Hamilton, in Toronto. Mr. Hemlow resides at the Martinique Hotel, Granville Street, has been there several years, is very deaf, in poor health, financially depressed, complains of poor memory. He died a month after this interview, in March 1932.