

Early Vancouver

Volume Two

By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.

2011 Edition (Originally Published 1933)

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.

Copyright Statement

© 2011 City of Vancouver. Any or all of *Early Vancouver* may be used without restriction as to the nature or purpose of the use, even if that use is for commercial purposes. You may copy, distribute, adapt and transmit the work. It is required that a link or attribution be made to the City of Vancouver.

Reproductions

High resolution versions of any graphic items in *Early Vancouver* are available. A fee may apply.

Citing Information

When referencing the 2011 edition of *Early Vancouver*, please cite the page number that appears at the bottom of the page in the PDF version only, not the page number indicated by your PDF reader. Here are samples of how to cite this source:

Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

Contact Information

City of Vancouver Archives
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9
604.736.8561
archives@vancouver.ca
vancouver.ca/archives



**CAMBIE STREET GROUNDS. STANLEY PARK. MAYOR OPPENHEIMER. ALDERMAN HAMILTON.
A.E. BECK, K.C.**

Copy of letter.

Oak Tree House,
Kissimmee, Florida.
11th April 1932.

Dear Major:

I duly received both your letters, and have read over Mr. Beck's article re the Cambie street playgrounds, [*article, Early Vancouver, Matthews, 1931*] which is returned herewith. As far as my memory serves me the statements are in accordance with the facts.

I have a lot of sketches of water colors made at the time when I was laying out the city. I will look them out at Toronto, and send you on such material as I think would be useful.

REFERENCE TO THE CAMBIE STREET GROUNDS and Mr. Beck's reference to the visit to the Narrows reminds me that the great credit for securing the Indian [*he means "government reserve," or Stanley Park*] as a park has always been given to Mayor Oppenheimer. If the records were available it would show that the chief credit should be given to A.W Ross and Alderman Hamilton. We both worked together to attain this object, the former as an M.P. using his influence with the Dominion Government, and the latter with the Canadian Pacific Railway by getting the chief officials at Montréal to use their influence with the government of the day. You may not be aware that I personally surveyed and laid out the drives around the big park, and arranged with the engineer to use the shells on the shore [*Note: not strictly described; they were from an old Indian midden on the shore at Lumberman's Arch, see old photographs, etc., etc.*] to gravel the roads with. On one of our inspection trips the engineer and myself were nearly drowned by having our canoe upset in the Narrows in a tide rip. We both had a hard struggle to get the canoe ashore; then in our wet clothes on the bitterly cold evening, paddled all the way back to the Granville wharf.

Yours very truly,

L.A. HAMILTON.

P.S. Have you any record of the votes taken at the first election in Vancouver? I think that the city records were destroyed, [*Note: in the Great Fire, 13 June 1886*] but that information might be found in the New Westminster or Victoria papers of that date.

L.A.M.

EARLY PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS.

In the minutes of the City Council for 28 March 1887, page 298, the Board of Works recommends (24 March 1887) as follows:

"That a committee consisting of Alderman Hamilton, Lefevre, and Oppenheimer be appointed to ascertain at what price the following blocks can be purchased for a city park, viz. 105 to 110 in District lots 196 and 181, or any other blocks in a suitable locality within the city limits. Carried."

Grove Street, a short street of two blocks on the shore of False Creek between Jackson Avenue and Dunlevy Avenue formed the base line of a crescent-shaped street in the woods known as Grove Crescent, one half of the horn of the crescent forming block 105, and block 110 the other half. It is now part of Atlantic Street.

A.E. Beck, K.C., who was largely responsible for the securing of Cambie Street grounds, states that this property was proposed as an alternative to the Cambie Street grounds property, afterwards secured. (See Council minutes 25 April 1887.) (See Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, 1931.)

W.H. Gallagher states that it got its name from either a squatter who lived there under the assumed name of Grove, or from the fact that there was a little green open space there, two or three butternut trees, a patch of timothy grass, old logs, bush all gone, perhaps a Royal Engineers' or logger's camp on the point. The point was a very pretty place, a sort of mound, the butternut trees hung over the water at high tide; there was an Indian medicine ditch there, and the agreeable old man named Grove lived in a shack on logs on the beach. Its picturesqueness suggested it as a playground; Cambie Street was a mass of black stumps.

GROVE CRESCENT. EARLY PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS. SENTELL.

Of this spot, Mrs. P.S. Saville, now of 1758 Venables Street, and sister to the three Sentell brothers who subsequently developed the point, says (November 1931):

"When I first saw that point on False Creek, it was covered with vine maples, wild crab apples, wild peas, shalal berries, and a profusion of blackberries; we went there to pick blackberries in 1889; it looked as though there might have been an old Indian encampment there, and I have been told that there was an Indian medicine ditch there, a sort of Indian Turkish bath, where in a hole in the ground they sweated themselves to cure a cold or ailment by putting hot stones in the water and sitting beneath a covering enclosed over it. Some said it was where Indians tried their fellows for crime.

"Then in 1890 my brother Alderman F.W. Sentell, bought the place at Grove Crescent. It was nothing when we went there; the bush was so thick you could not get through it. Our house, which was in the centre of block 109, faced south, looked over the waters of the creek, was slightly elevated on a bank which sloped gently down to the beach, and a popular bathing resort in summer time. The city promised my brother it would become a park; it was a delightful spot; he went ahead and cleared it, cleared the whole crescent at his own expense, spent an immense amount of time on it, put down a sidewalk, planted apple trees to the west of our house, cherries to the east, built a fine home, and for years it was an outstanding landmark for it was large and was painted white, and showed up well in the beautiful surroundings of green, and he was promised it would be a park, and never anything else; we had cut it out of the bush.

"Then all our hopes were dashed. First they put a septic tank for city sewers; we did all we could to stop it, but it was put in and finished. Finally it was wanted for Canadian Northern Railway yards; my brothers got \$100,000" (?) "for one acre in the ex-appropriation proceedings. The fine old house was torn down in 1912. It was a beautiful house, wonderfully finished, for my brothers were contractors and builders. I lived there in 1896, -7 and -8, at the time of the Klondike rush."

THE CITY HALL ON POWELL STREET.

"My brothers built the City Hall on Powell Street, and when it was finished the city could not pay for it, so my brothers locked the doors, and would not let the city officials enter.

"We came here on 2 November 1887; my brothers had worked on railway construction. I forget the first building they erected, but the second was 417 Hastings Street East—next to the brick house—it is standing yet. Then my brothers, E.B., A.J. and F.W. Sentell built the tabernacle for Dr. Moody, of Moody and Sankey hymn book fame, evangelists, when he visited Vancouver in the fall of 1888. The tabernacle was built either on the Cambie Street grounds or where the old City Hospital was on Pender Street. My sister and I sang in the Moody choir. E.B. was one of the trustees of the Y.M.C.A. who guaranteed Dr. Moody's expenses."

STANLEY PARK DRIVEWAY.

"One thing about Stanley Park I recall very vividly. On 1 July 1898 we rowed over; the bridge was not built then; and walked along the park road, or driveway; it was all mud then."

Note: there is a photo of the Sentell home in the records.