

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

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LIEUT.-COL. J.W. WARDEN, D.S.O., O.B.E.

Major J.S. Matthews tells some anecdotes of the life of Col. Warden, of whom he was a great admirer.

Major Matthews first "met" Col. Warden on board the S.S. *Rupert City* on the way to the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle about 1907. As Lieut. Matthews he was Orderly officer, and proceeded with a sergeant to the hold of the ship to see that "lights out" was observed. In the darkness there was a candle burning. The sergeant called out, "Put that light out." An answer came out of the darkness, "I can't find my blankets." Lieut. Matthews asked the sergeant, "Who's that fellow?" The sergeant replied, "His name's Warden, a private."

Some years later, December 1916, Capt. Matthews approached Lieut.-Col. Warden who was raising the 102nd Battalion C.E.F. and asked for a post in the new unit. Capt. Matthews was actually a major in the 158th Overseas Battalion, but did not like the unit. Col. Warden replied, "What's your rank now?" Capt. Matthews replied, "Major." Warden said, "I cannot take you, I'm full up; best I could do would be as a captain." "All right," said Matthews, who afterwards dropped down from major to captain.

After the war, and Warden's return to Vancouver, Col. Warden contested one of the six seats of the City of Vancouver in the B.C. Provincial elections of 1921, and in the conservative interest. Five liberals were returned, and one conservative, ex-Premier Bowser. Warden ran next to Bowser, an excellent showing. But the cost of the election, plus his losses by the failure of the Dominion Trust Co., to whom he had entrusted his finances, grew so low that, in desperation, he boarded a harvester's train bound for the prairies; a rough train of "colonist" cars, crowded with rough men, bound for the harvest fields at \$10.00 a ride to the prairie, any part. His companion was young Hugh Matthews, son of Major Matthews, a youth off for the excitement of the adventure. Two weeks later Col. Warden and young Hugh might have been seen in the field at Govan, Saskatchewan, stooking wheat, living in a rude shack with an uncultured farmer. Here was a case where we had a Canadian officer with nine decorations or medals, who had commanded 125,000 men in the Caspian area, who had raised his own battalion and commanded it at Regina Trench, Vimy, Passchendaele, before whom some Persian sheik had spread red carpets from the river front for Col. Warden, as H.M. representative to walk upon to his palace, working in overalls on a prairie farm for \$4.00 (or less) per day. The two men, the distinguished soldier, twice attending at Buckingham Palace to receive honours from the hands of His Majesty, and the youth, returned together two or three months later with about \$200 in their pockets apiece.

Warden blamed much of this misfortune on Gen. Odlum. The feud had started years before Warden came to Vancouver. Odlum had been an officer in the old 6th Regiment D.C.O.R. and, failing to attend to his duties as a volunteer officer, was invited to retire. This incensed Odlum, who never forgot it. It is but necessary to read Gen. Odlum's article in the *Listening Post*, journal of the 7th Battalion C.E.F. to understand his attitude towards the 6th D.C.O.R. Warden was an officer of the 6th D.C.O.R. and when, after Col. Hart-McHarg's death in action, Major Odlum assumed command of the 7th, no love was lost between the two men. In the subsequent elections after the war, Odlum was liberal member of the legislative assembly, Warden defeated candidate in the conservative interest.

One would have thought that two officers of the old 6th, again officers of the 7th, and subsequently the brigadier of the 11th Brigade in which the 102nd Battalion existed commanded by his fellow officer the lieutenant-colonel, would have found more in common after the war. The writer blames Gen. Odlum, not Warden. The "issue of rum" incident of the winter of 1916-1917, and the esteem in which Warden was held by the men in the ranks, is all that is necessary to judge by.

However, after Warden's return from the prairie, he secured an appointment as "Special Representative" for the West Coast Lumbermen's Association, with headquarters at Seattle, for the promotion of lumber and shingle sales throughout North America. He travelled luxuriantly, was paid \$600 a month, including expenses, raised the second year to \$1,000 a month including travelling expenses, but his expenses were high, and when, at the end of two or three years, the Hoover tariff on lumber, etc., etc., had played havoc with the shingle and lumber mills, Warden's position vanished, and he had saved very little.

Finally in desperation again, he secured a "job" as doorman at the entrance to Chicago's leading picture theatre, and retained it for about 18 months. He stood on his feet on a concrete pavement many hours a day and seven days a week. In one year he had but two holidays off duty. He writes that he rarely saw his

three daughters, for he remained to close the theatre at 2 a.m. and was on duty again at 10 a.m. His salary was small. Finally the theatre people got to know that he was trying to secure a position as warden of the New Westminster Penitentiary, and he was told his services would no longer be required. He wired Major Matthews one Saturday that he must have \$75 by Monday, or he and his wife would be thrown onto the street out of their apartment. Matthews wired the money.

He repaired to Detroit, or Windsor, Detroit I think, and there secured a commission selling graves in a new burial park being promoted; it yielded nothing after two months effort. Then he went to Windsor and got a job as night clerk in a fourth rate hotel at \$90 a month, and on this, and what his daughters could earn by working in a department store, they lived in more or less penury. This lasted six months or a year. Then in September or October 1929 he received a telephone message to come at once to the hospital, but before he reached the hospital his youngest daughter was dead. All his letters written at this time are in the Vancouver City Museum.

Major Matthews had done his best; his telegraph bill, in trying to get him the position of warden of the Westminster Penitentiary, was over forty dollars. He wired everyone from the premier of B.C. to the minister of justice at Ottawa, all without avail; but evidently the work was not lost, for two years later, after Warden had endured all the harrowing experiences recounted above, he was appointed Governor of the Essex County Gaol, Sandwich, Ontario, and Ontario Provincial Government appointment, and still, 1933, retains it. A front full page article on his remarkable career appeared in the *Border Cities Star* in the fall of 1932.

Such is a part of the story of a boy of "red school house" education, who rose from piano salesman to be an illustrious son on Canada. He was no social butterfly, just plain "Honest John" Warden, a tall, gaunt man with a great heart.

A queer anomaly in 1928. The Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel of the "North British Columbia Regiment" standing as doorman before the entrance of Chicago's leading moving picture theatre.

On 13 February 1919 was ordered to take draft of three hundred officers and men from Bombay by ship to Vladivostok, Siberia, with instructions to hand command to Gen. Knox, and proceed to Canada. On arrival at Hong Kong was ordered to disembark his troops, and remain until spring, as there were no quarters at Vladivostok. During this interval proceeded to interior of China with Intelligence officers gathering data on official Chinese internal affairs. Vladivostok was reached on 16 April 1919, where orders were received to proceed with draft to Omsk, arriving there 1 May. Remained with Gen. Knox's staff for a month, ordered to proceed to Russian Island on coast near Vladivostok and take over from Brig.-Gen. Sir Edward Grogan, command of Russian Military Training School. Remained May until October 1919, and withdrawn with remainder of troops being withdrawn from Russian sphere. Proceeded to England by way of Japan and Canada, remaining in England until March 1920, during which time was offered position on staff of General Dennikin, the Russian commander in the Black Sea area, declining on account of long absence from family—almost six years.

Was transferred back to C.E.F., having been seconded since 10 January 1918. Returned to Canada 31 March 1920, discharged, and placed on reserve of his old regiment, the 6th Regiment The Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles, Vancouver. Accorded a banquet in his honour at the Hotel Vancouver by the officers and men of the 102nd Battalion, colloquially known as "Warden's Warriors."

He has been awarded nine decorations or medals.

Has for many years been Hon. Lieut.-Col. of the North British Columbia Regiment at Prince Rupert.

Candidate for legislature, conservative interest, 1920. City of Vancouver, defeated with all other, save one, the ex-Premier Bowser, conservative. (B.C. Legislature.)

Was an early alderman in West Vancouver, soon after its establishment as a municipality.

In the spring of 1923 was "Special Field Representative" in the United States for the West Coast Lumbermen's Association, and for five years covered the whole of the United States and Mexico in their interests, when President Hoover's tariff laws forced the lumber mills of B.C. to cease imports to U.S. and

Col. Warden's position vanished. Since the fall of 1929 has been Governor of the Essex County Gaol, Sandwich, Ontario.

Born in New Brunswick (United Empire Loyalist.)

The above is a very cursory sketch of Col. Warden's remarkable career, and is copied from a faint carbon copy of his services which he himself must have prepared, probably for some military record office. What it leaves out is almost more than it includes. The motif of his life was a compelling patriotism; it brought him much; he also suffered much in consequence of his ideals. A quantity of documents, papers, etc. have been preserved in the Vancouver City Museum by his friend, Major Matthews. The history of the 102nd Battalion, *From B.C. to Baisieux*, gives more; the Canadian Defense Quarterly, 1932, gives a description of the Dunsterforce expedition.

LIEUT.-COL. JOHN WEIGHTMAN WARDEN, D.S.O., O.B.E. 102ND BATTALION "NORTH BRITISH COLUMBIANS," C.E.F.

Military Record:

Enlisted about 1 January 1901 at St. John, New Brunswick, in the South African Constabulary for service in the Anglo-Boer War, leaving Halifax 8 March 1901. Served as scout to end of war, then placed in charge of Wakkerstroom Mounted Police District, Transvaal, appointed Public Prosecutor, Criminal Court, June 1902 to November 1905, when returned to Canada on six months leave.

After return to Canada joined as private the 6th Regiment D.C.O.R., Vancouver. Charter member United Service Club. Won St. George's Challenge Shield at Bisley, 1911. In 1913 member international rifle team competing against five United States teams, his score being 222 out of 225 at 800-1,000. Annually competitor at B.C. and Ottawa rifle meetings, 1909-1913. Holds some fifty prizes for rifle shooting won in local, provincial, dominion, national and international shoots.

Telegraphed offer of service to Ottawa day Austria sent ultimatum to Serbia, and sailed for England with First Contingent (7th Battalion), Captain. His brokerage business he entrusted to the Dominion Trust Co., which crashed during his absence, and he lost all. Dangerously wounded and gassed during 2nd Battle of Ypres at Graafenvorst (Locality "C"). After convalescence returned to Canada six months leave, 1 November 1915, as unfit for further service. On 15 November promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel, and authorised to raise the 102nd Comox-Atlin Battalion, afterwards known as "North British Columbians." Whilst under medical care started to recruit in January 1916, and in August 1916 was with his battalion in the front line at Ypres as part of the 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 4th Division. Trained battalion at Comox, B.C. This most enviable record is remarkable, for six months after receiving his first recruits at Comox his battalion was in action.

On 10 January 1918 selected to take secret military expedition afterwards called Dunsterforce, or "Hush-Hush" Force to Baku on the Caspian Sea to General Dunsterville, who was waiting in Enzeli, Persia to take command. Left England in charge of force 10 January 1918 and proceed by transport to Basrah, thence by barges on Tigris River to Baghdad, arriving 28 March 1918. Marched his column on foot to Enzeli, a distance of approximately 1,000 miles, some 800 miles being through unmapped country, arriving 29 August 1918.

General Dunsterville commanding, they proceeded on 30 August 1918 to Baku, where General Dunsterville was obliged to remain at his headquarters on board ship, and placed Col. Warden in command of the entire frontage—some thirty miles—occupied by 125,000 troops, Russian, Armenian, Georgian, Arab, Tartar, Turkamena, and British. The purpose was the decoy part of the Turkish Army, about fourteen divisions, from in front of General Allenby in Palestine, thereby weakening the forces in Palestine, aiding their defeat by Gen. Allenby, which it was calculated would cause the collapse of the Turks and as a natural consequence of Bulgaria, Austria and finally Germany. The purpose being completed, they withdrew on 14 September 1918.

On 15 September 1918, Col. Warden was ordered to take over the command of another Transcasian British Expedition with headquarters at Krasnovodski. On 16 September he assumed command and carried out operations along Persian and Afghanistan frontiers until Armistice, when he requested return

to Canada. He handed over his command to Major General Thompson, proceeded to Baghdad, and thence via Basrah to India, arriving 11 January 1919.

LIEUT. COL. W.S. LATTA, D.S.O. AND TWO BARS.

Lieut. Col. W.S. Latta, D.S.O. and two bars, of the 29th (Vancouver) Battalion, was born at Ayr, Scotland, 14 April 1879, and joined the old 6th Regiment, The Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles, Vancouver, as a private on 5 January 1900, promoted corporal February 1903, sergeant March 1903, and then was offered a commission in his regiment in the spring of 1909.

It was the unwritten law of the officers of the old Sixth that officers of the regiment must come from the sergeants or lower ranks of the regiment. At the time of the outbreak of the Great War, all the officers of the regiment save one or two of those on the staff, and one or two other exceptions, had at some time or other been in the ranks of the regiment or some other regiment. Further, notwithstanding that it was contrary to military procedure, the officers of the regiment voted on the candidature of suggested officers; the procedure was for the name of the intended officer to be mentioned at one monthly officers' meeting, and secretly voted on at the next meeting; three nays disqualified the candidate, and although it was the commanding officer's prerogative to ignore such a vote, he rarely did so, and in a number of years there were but two instances where he overruled the decision by secret ballot of his thirty or thirty-five officers.

Sergeant Latta's name was submitted to the officers of the regiment for a commission, a secret vote was taken, and the decision was adverse. But the commanding officer, Lt. Col. F.W. Boulton, overruled the decision, and exercised his prerogative, thereby saving from oblivion a soldier who subsequently attained much distinction.

As captain, he joined the 29th Vancouver Battalion on 1 November 1914 and went overseas in May 1915 as captain in command of "C" Company. Promoted Lieut. Col. and assumed command 21 July 1917; took an active part in all engagements from September 1915 to August 1918 and was present at Kemmel, St. Eloi Craters, Ypres, Somme, Courcelette, Vimy, Arleux, Lens, Hill 70, Passchendaele and Amiens. Wounded, Battle of Amiens, 9 August 1918. D.S.O. June 1917, bar January 1918, second bar, August 1918.

Subsequent to the war he was with the Land Department of the B.C. government until September 1931 when he was transferred to another department.

A splendid rifle shoot, and winner of the British Columbia Rifle Association's Grand Aggregate Gold Medal in 1913.

He was one of three brothers who were the first to climb the "Lions," Labour Day, 5 September 1903.

CAPTAIN AND QUARTERMASTER FRANK KENNEDY. 6TH REGIMENT, THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT'S OWN RIFLES.

The old 6th Regiment "The Duke of Connaught's Own Rifles" was a really splendid regiment in which nearly every officer was a man of note in some respect. About 1911 His Excellency the Governor-General, H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught, K.G., visited Vancouver for the first time in his capacity of Governor-General, and was accorded a wonderful welcome. One of the features of the visit was his first dinner with the officers of this regiment, of which he was Honorary Colonel, and during this dinner he made a speech in which he made the following remark (he was speaking of rifle shooting), "And I hope that in this respect, you will long continue to set an example to the other regiments of Canada."

At this time, and for many years previously, fifteen or more, the regimental quarter master sergeant was Q.M. Sgt. F. Kennedy, afterwards, during the war, Captain and Q.M. of the regiment. In conversation today, 2 March 1933, he said, re surrender of Indian chief, Riel Rebellion, 1885:

"Poundmaker came riding up to us on a horse surrounded with his staff of twenty or more, and the priest; it was the priest who did all the talking. I was Colour Sergeant Kennedy of the Queen's Own Rifles; Captain Hughes was a son of some wealthy business man in Toronto. As Poundmaker rode up to us—there were just two of us, Capt. Hughes and myself—he looked one of the most imposing sights I have