

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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Bay, they went on shore and made themselves comfortable in a temporary camp. Finding plenty of food and abundance of cedar timber for building purposes and to make their canoes, they decided to remain permanently.'

"Cedar was very useful to the Indians, and cedar always grows more prolifically in swamps than elsewhere. I think it must have been, in part at least, the cedar which attracted and kept the Indians in the neighbourhood of Burrard Inlet and English Bay. The reason why they are scattered about in small bands is the common reason with all Indians—petty jealousies, family quarrels, disagreements between would-be chiefs, and many other causes. Hence the little band at Seymour Creek, another at the head of Howe Sound, in Stanley Park, Capilano, False Creek and other places. The Indians at North Vancouver are accounted for from the fact that the Roman Catholic Mission was established there in early days, and the Indians have been encouraged to build their homes in the neighbourhood of the church. The two key words in the Nooksahk tongue which particularly attracted my attention were the words 'haatl' and 'sneetcham,' meaning 'good' and 'language or talk.' After long experience with Indians and their languages in various parts of this country, the Nooksahk explanation seems reasonable enough to me."

INDIAN CONVERTS.

"Among our converts at the little Indian church at Granville was a husky fellow from Bella Bella named Jim Starr. I think he must have been named after old Captain Starr. Jim probably worked for Captain Starr on his boat, and after a time became known as Jim Starr; it was in some such manner that most of the Indians got the names by which they are known today." (Note: Johnny Scow of Alert Bay was named by Mr. Munn, cannery man of Westminster, after Johnny had saved the lives of Indian women and children adrift on a scow in a storm on a scow at Steveston; there are now many Scows at Alert Bay.) "Shortly after his conversion, Jim Starr went to Victoria Indian Mission, and married a Kit-a-maat woman named Esther, also of the Victoria Indian Mission. They were about the happiest couple I ever met. Very soon after their marriage they went north together, and sought to lead their tribes people in a Christian way. Jim and Esther both died several years ago, but their names are still fragrant at Bella Bella, and the Indian Church at old Gastown must be long credited as the spiritual birthplace of one of the most saintly men British Columbia has ever known."

A continuation of this narrative of Rev. C.M. Tate's experiences with Indians in other parts of the Province, etc., will be found elsewhere.

REV. C.M. TATE, METHODIST INDIAN MISSIONARY.

"Gold brought me to British Columbia. I was born in 1852, and my first work was as a butcher boy. I recall very vividly the long miles I used to walk to get cattle, sheep and pigs for my employer; they were terribly long walks, but I suppose they fitted me physically for the work I was destined to do in British Columbia. I was 18 when I came out, via the Panama to British Columbia to go to the Cariboo goldfields. There is a long account of it entitled 'Fifty Years with the Methodist Church in British Columbia' which I have written and which is published in book form, *Review of the United Churches in British Columbia*, 1925. But on arrival in Victoria it was clear that there was no sense in going to the Cariboo; all the miners were returning, some of them starving. I got a job in Nanaimo looking after a bit of a donkey engine which, when sailing ships were not in for coal, hauled the coal cars up a slope from which the coal was dumped in to the coal bins. Thus it was that when I first came to British Columbia in 1870, I became associated with the Wesleyan Methodist church at Nanaimo, and through them with the uninstructed Indians. The Indians interested me; I was little more than a lad, just 18, got talking to them, spent my evenings with them, started to learn their language, and ultimately suggested that they start a night school amongst themselves. 'But,' their reply was, 'how can we get someone to teach us,' the problem of a teacher was seemingly, to them, an insurmountable difficulty, and no doubt they were a little astonished when I said, 'I will.' So in the evenings I used to go down to the village and teach them, and of course when the strike came—it was a long strike of seven months—I was able to do it in the daytime. All voluntary, of course, no salary.

"The strike ended, and I applied for my old job back again, but Mr. Mark Bate—you have heard of him, he was manager of the coal mines—told me there were a lot of older men who wanted the job, men who were 'up against it'; and that I was a young fellow and could look after myself, so I was not taken on. I

was 'flat broke,' had not a cent in the world, but kept on going for a week or two. Just then the superintendent of missions from Toronto came along, and he said to the Rev. Mr. Crosby who was in charge of Nanaimo, 'Why not start a school, do you think you could find a teacher?' Mr. Crosby replied, 'Yes, one right here, one who has been teaching them voluntarily.' I got the appointment, at \$300 a year and paid my own expenses.

"My directions I got from the Mission Board at Toronto; my salary gradually rose until it reached \$500, always without travelling allowance, and out of which I had to find my own horse, or canoe, or steamboat fare and expenses; pretty hard going at times with sugar at 25¢ a pound and other things in proportion.

"How did I obtain my ordination? Well, I can best explain that, perhaps, by relating the story of a question which was once asked me when travelling in eastern Canada. A gentleman enquired of me what college I had been in. I replied that I had been in most of the colleges of Canada and the United States, but that my collegiate training I got mostly in a canoe or on horseback; that was where I did most of my studying.

"When it came to the actual ordination which was in Victoria at the time of the Methodist Conference of 1879, I had already passed my examinations, but as a final test, was required to preach a sermon before three examiners. My examiners and I repaired to the Indian church on Herald Street and with the three examiners and Indians as my congregation, I preached a sermon in the Ankameenum Indian language, that is, the language of the Indians on the east coast of Vancouver Island; not one word of which my examiners understood.

"Next morning, to my astonishment, I listened to a most glorious report upon my preaching given by my examiners to the conference, and"—here Mr. Tate smiled—"I was ordained."

THE GREAT FIRE. REV. JOSEPH HALL.

"The Rev. Joseph Hall succeeded the Rev. Thos. Derrick in 1884, and it was he who was in charge when the Great Fire destroyed church, parsonage and stable. The stable for the two cows had been built in 1885, and, together with the cows, was owned by Mr. Hall. During the fire one cow escaped along the beach; the other was burned to death. I was in Chilliwack at the time of the fire; a good deal of smoke passed over the valley, some ashes, and small pieces of burned shingles.

"After the fire, neither parsonage nor church was rebuilt, but instead on the same lot there was erected the well-known Methodist Hall, which good service for our devotional exercises as well as for church services for such organizations as the Orangemen, for concerts, indeed I believe it was there that the first band concert of Vancouver's first brass band was held. Previous to the erection of the Methodist Hall, we held our services in the Hastings school house, together with the Anglican clergy, and an organ was purchased by public subscription and used by both denominations."

HOMER STREET METHODIST CHURCH

"As the city began to assume proportions, the old building and the lot were sold for \$8,000, and the money formed the nucleus of a fund with which the Homer Street Methodist Church, erected on the northwest corner of Homer and Dunsmuir, was built. The Rev. Ebenezer Robson was then minister; his son is in Vancouver.

"The old Methodist Hall was, after sale, used as a grain and feed store, first I think by Mr. Arkell, then by Mr. Fred Allen, and just before it was torn down in February 1924 by Rainsford and Co., wholesale fruit warehousemen."

Note: there was burned church, parsonage, stable and hall. The hall was new, had been opened on 23 May 1886 by Rev. Ebenezer Robson; the hall only was rebuilt, in the fall, after Fire; same shape, same size.

Marginal note by Prof. Hill-Tout in reviewing manuscript: "Mr. Tate is wrong in saying the 'Ankameenum,' otherwise called 'Malkomalem,' is the language of the West Coast. It is the tongue of the River Indians from Yale downwards, otherwise know as the 'Cowachin' tongue."