

Early Vancouver

Volume Two

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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.

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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.

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THE PASSING OF THE BEARD.

Corp. J.Z. Hall, the first soldier of Vancouver, 1885—husband of the well-known public spirited lady, Mrs. J.Z. Hall, née Jessie Columbia Greer, daughter of Sam Greer—wore a dark bushy beard in uniform—see photograph—as also did many other volunteer soldiers. Most of our pioneers wore beards.

“Ah, those were before the days of bare faced bishops,” mused the late Archbishop Matheson, Primate of All Canada (Anglican) when speaking in a reminiscent mood at a banquet the evening of the opening of the Anglican Theological College at Point Grey. The banquet was attended by many bishops from near and far, east and south, all of whom were “bare faced.”

A venerable old gentleman with enormous flowing white beard and shiny bald head spoke a kindly word to a little fairy girl of about four, “Fuffy Koko,” alias Frances Schofield, second daughter of Dr. S.J. Schofield, professor of Geology, U.B.C., whilst summering at Salt Spring Island about 1928. The little tot looked up quizzingly and said, “Did God make you?”

“I rather think he did,” graciously replied the sage.

“Then why did he put all your hair on your face instead of your head?”

Apropos of the Anglican Church. Above the entrance to the synod office of the Diocese of New Westminster, Province Building, Hastings and Cambie streets, a huge fiery red ball, always illuminated, hangs; large painted letters announce “FIRE ESCAPE,” and just below, “SYNOD OFFICE, DIOCESE OF NEW WESTMINSTER.”

THE FIRST VOLUNTEER SOLDIER. CORPORAL J.Z. HALL, NO. 1 BATTERY, B.C.B.G.A.

The first volunteer soldier resident in Vancouver was Corporal J.Z. Hall, afterwards a well-known citizen, a prominent real estate agent, an ardent churchman—he had much to do with the establishment of St. Mark's Church, Kitsilano. His first wife was Miss Eliza Jane Greer, his second wife her sister, Miss Jessie Columbia Greer, daughters of Sam Greer of Greer's Beach. (See *The Fight for Kitsilano Beach*.)

“Father,” (her husband) said Mrs. J.Z. Hall, “worked in Granville before the Fire, and used to go over to New Westminster to attend drill parades. He told me that he ‘never missed a drill.’ I think he belonged to the B.C.B.G.A. in New Westminster as early as 1883.”

The old photograph shows him in the dark blue uniform of the artillery; head dress of a dark busby with scarlet flap and white plume in front centre, beard, sidearm. It was loaned by his widow, Mrs. J.Z. Hall, in 1932 for copying, and was marked on the back, “Dad, 1885.” At the unveiling of a memorial tablet to commemorate the site of the first Drill Hall in Vancouver—Sunday, 13 November, 1932, Christ Church Cathedral; present Brig.-Gen. J. Sutherland Brown, C.M.G., D.O.C., M.D. No. 11 and the Vancouver Garrison—his two granddaughters occupied the front pew side by side with Sergeant Major (Master Gunner) J.C. Cornish, the first sergeant major of the first Vancouver unit of volunteer soldiers.

An enlargement (coloured) of this is in Artillery Officers' Mess, Bessborough Drill Hall.

102ND BATTALION, “NORTH BRITISH COLUMBIANS,” C.E.F. LT. COL. J.W. WARDEN, D.S.O., O.B.E., V.D. PRIVATE FRANCIS GOTT OF LILLOOET, INDIAN.

The manner in which the 102nd Battalion received its territorial designation was as follows:

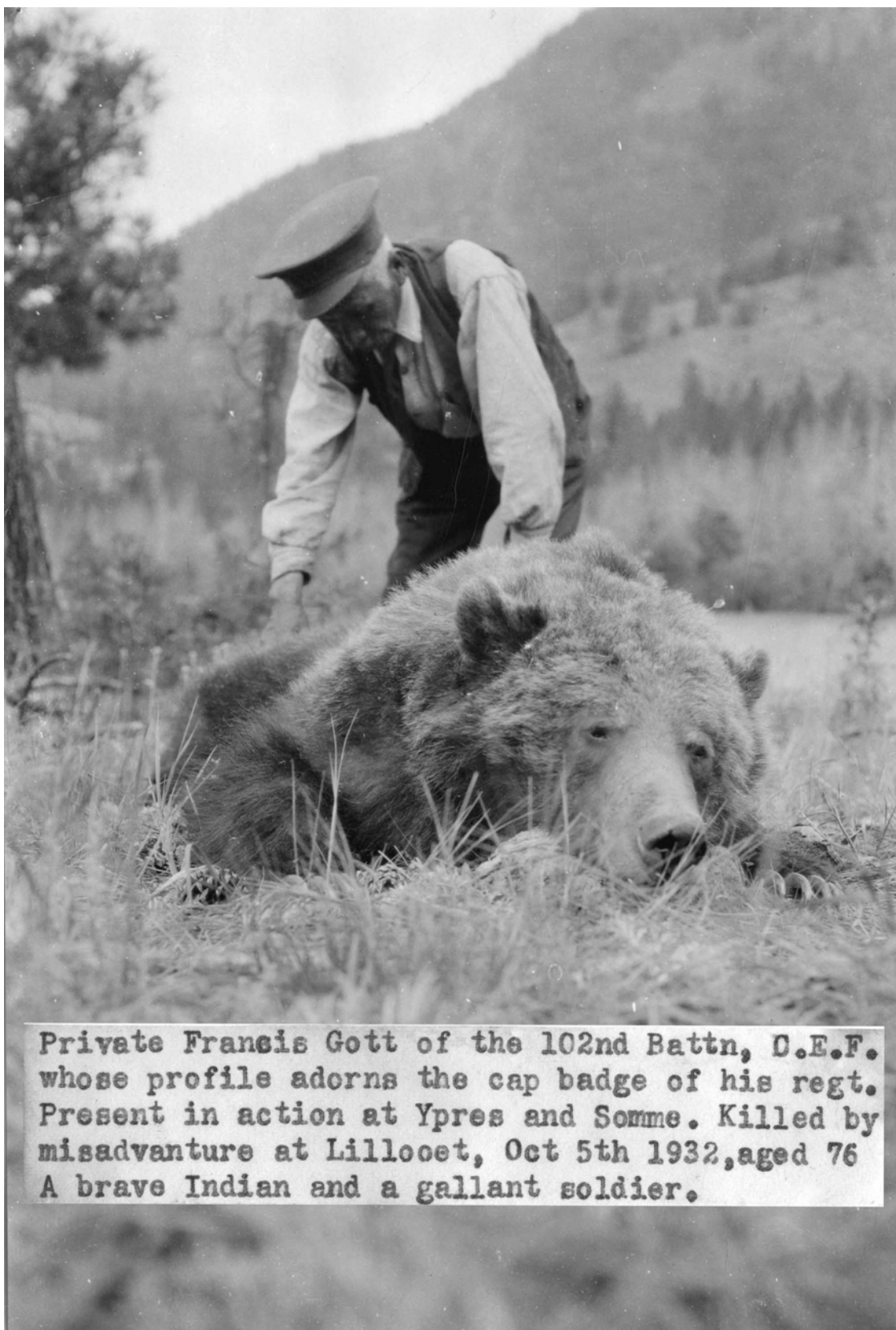
On Captain Warden's return, wounded, from the 2nd Battle of Ypres, he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel, and authorised to raise in the electoral district of Comox-Atlin, a battalion of men. He chose as the training camp site a spit of sand at Comox, B.C., called Goose Spit, an old British Admiralty target practice camp site and rifle range, long since discarded. The battalion was given the number 102nd, and called the “Comox-Atlin Battalion” locally. The small units of the battalion were collected together all over northern and eastern British Columbia, and in February and March 1916, assembled at Goose Spit.

One evening, the company from Prince Rupert arrived by boat, marched from Comox to the camp. Captain Matthews was the senior officer on the Spit, and saw them coming over the sandhills. He

hurriedly collected together all hands and the cook, just as they were, formed a rough ragged column, and marched out to welcome them. As they came over a dune which had hidden the men of the north as they approached, Major Worsnop suddenly loomed up at their head on horseback. Major Worsnop called out, "Come on, Captain Matthews." Captain Matthews hesitated a second, when another command came, "Come on, Captain Matthews." Captain Matthews, without a moment's thought, called out, "North British Columbians," followed by, "three cheers for the men from Prince Rupert." The sobriquet "stuck," was officially adopted, and is borne on the regimental badge and on the wooden monuments erected of the killed in France. (See *From B.C. to Baisieux*, narrative history, 102nd C.E.F.)

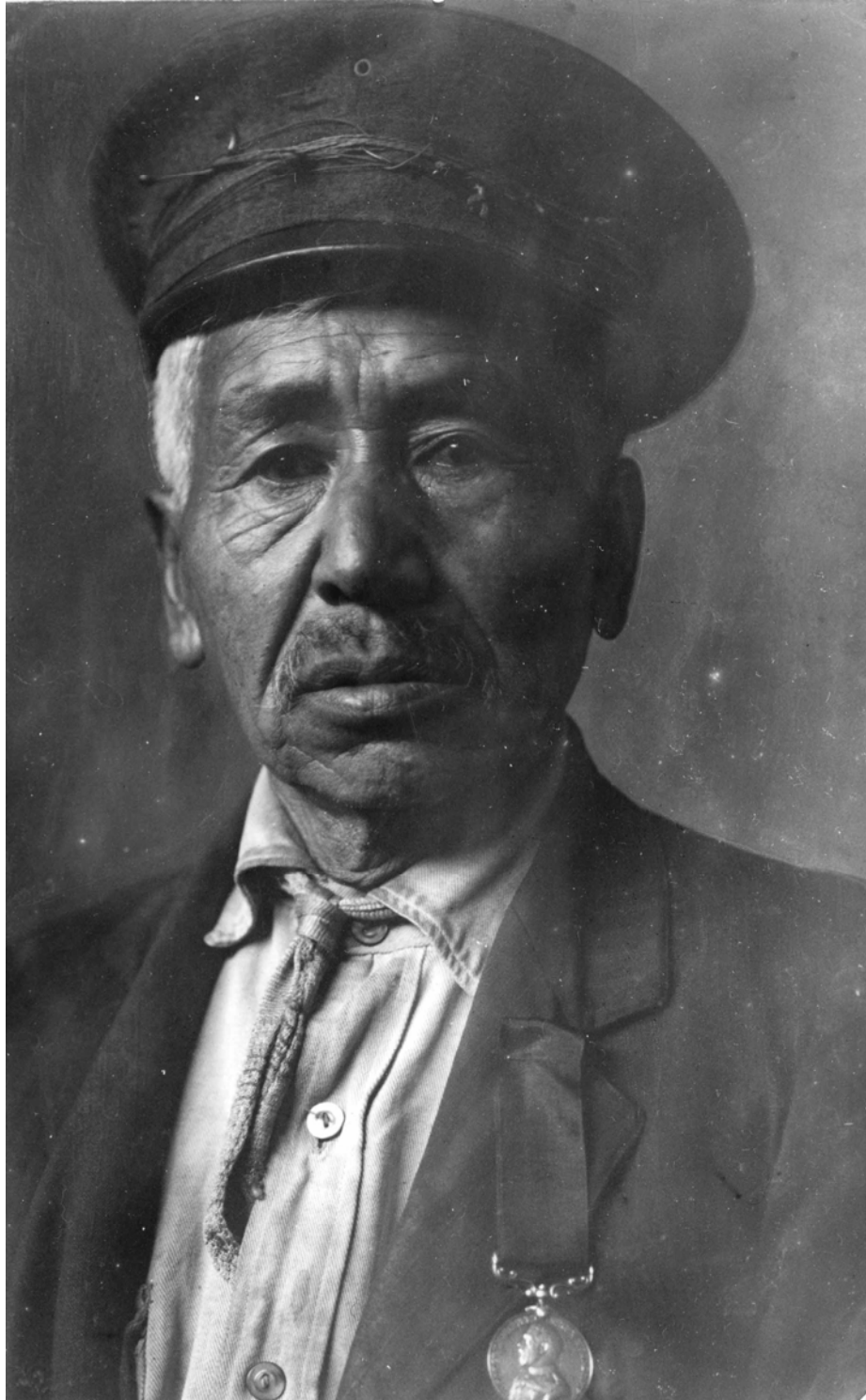
Private Frank Gott, pure blood Indian of Lillooet, was in Captain Matthews' company. On the authority of Lt. Col. John Weightman Warden, D.S.O., O.B.E., V.D. who raised the battalion, it was Private Gott's Indian face which suggested to him the adoption of the Indian head on the crest or cap badge. Gott afterwards proved a most gallant soldier. JSM 1933.

Gott shot a game warden at Lillooet in October 1932, but expunged his crime by dying a heroic death the next day. He was loved by his comrades and admired by all for his manly qualities.



Private Francis Gott of the 102nd Battn, D.E.F. whose profile adorns the cap badge of his regt. Present in action at Ypres and Somme. Killed by misadventure at Lillooet, Oct 5th 1932, aged 76 A brave Indian and a gallant soldier.

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Gott of Lillooet

By HIS MAJOR.

J. S. Matthews

"I AM a soldier," boldly declared Gott of the 102nd, and walked on to his doom.

"I am a soldier!" Courageous utterance; spoken in the cold of dawn's imperfect light; that hour when men's courage is feeblest; the proud, hopeless boast of a hungry, hunted man whose night's comfortless couch had been an open barn.

Gott was a fugitive from none more than himself. There had been a terrible, an awful incident; a life sacrificed needlessly; perchance by accident, misadventure; mercifully we shall never know. Gott was responsible, recognized its horror, and like the gallant Indian that he was, welcomed the penalty.

Those who knew him best, who loved him most, who saw his gallantry in war, his tenderness in peace, need naught to tell of the implacable torments of that troubled mind. The deed was done; all was lost. The challenge, "Halt, who goes there," and the pointed rifles were as nothing. A few more steps, a puff of dust, a rifle cracked, and—eye for an eye—the awful error was expunged. Aged 76.

♦ ♦ ♦

FRANCIS GOTT, "Gott of the 102nd," was pure Indian; his German name came from "old" Capt. Gott, white man, his mother's second husband. Long, long before the railway, he helped to haul the Hudson's Bay Co.'s bateaux up the Fraser to the goldfields; then many years high in the mountains searching goat and grizzly as hunter, trapper, guide—a famous guide—and friend.

Then the Great War. In 1915, this Indian, now past three score, volunteered his help to those whose laws had made it a crime to hunt the deer for food as his ancestors had done for ages—laws which were to cost him his life.

"Province"
end of Oct, 1932

It was at St. Eloi Craters, Ypres. We, of Canada, were green troops, on "trench garrison" duty. That afternoon—our first—they shelled us mercilessly. A copper-colored stoic sat erect, rifle between legs, still as a monument in the wet broken earth which served as trench, and "took it"; a splendid example of coolheadedness. It was Gott.

"How do you like this, Gott?" he was asked, as the shells burst.

"Fine, sir," was the astonishing answer.

"Better than Lillooet, Gott?" we asked again.

"Oh, yes, if I'd known it was like this I'd come sooner."

"What an awful old bluffer," was the admiring comment of his officer, and by such "bluffers" we won the war. The shelling left us twenty fewer.

Eight months later, after Regina Trench, they sent him back. Grasping both our hands in his, and with a suspicion of a tear in one eye, he pleaded:

"They're sending me back, sir, back to Canada, too old they say; I'm not too old. Won't you please stop them?"

"Tell us your real age, Gott. Not your military age; your real age?" we asked.

"Sixty-three, sir."

Then came peace, and he wanted a loan. He got it. Rare experience; it was soon returned in full. His letters, splendidly written, are epitomies of beautiful, gentle sentiment. Gott was no "killer," but as brave a man and gallant a soldier as ever wore His Maesty's uniform—he always wore his overseas soldier's cap.

"I am a soldier," he said in his Indian pride, and passed on.

♦ ♦ ♦

TWO useful lives sacrificed for naught; the tragedy of Lillooet.