

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.

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**THE LOCATION
OF
HUT AND CLEARANCES
OF THE
FIRST RESIDENTS OF BURRARD INLET
JOHN MORTON, SAM BRIGHOUSE AND WILLIAM HAILSTONE
PREEMPTORS OF "THE BRICKMAKER'S CLAIM"
BEING DISTRICT LOT 185
NOW KNOWN AS
THE "WEST END"
VANCOUVER, B.C.**

Excerpts from statements, written and verbal, made by Mrs. Ruth Morton, relict of John Morton, Esquire, by Joseph Morton, Esquire, his only son, and other pioneers of Granville and Vancouver, as to the exact location of the CABIN AND CLEARING OF JOHN MORTON OF BURRARD INLET AND ENGLISH BAY, together with photostatic copies, etc. of documentary evidence.

Compiled by
Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.
Archivist
Vancouver
1932

The remarks which follow were made to me during 1931 and 1932 by early residents of Vancouver, all of whom have personal knowledge, and all of whom are living, August 1932.

Vancouver, August 1932

J.S. Matthews, Archivist.

JOSEPH MORTON

John Morton's only son, born New Westminster, 1881. Conversation, 3 March 1932. Also see *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1, Matthews.

"I was walking down Seaton Street, now Hastings Street, with Father one day about 1905 or earlier. We had met downtown and were going home together, when Father halted, and we peered over a rail fence onto a vacant lot. He pointed his finger and said, 'Do you see that little knoll? That was where we built our cabin.' Note carefully, he said, 'That was where *we* built *our* cabin,' not 'where *I* built *my* cabin.' The location was where the Blue Ribbon Tea people, Galts, now have their tea and coffee warehouse, at that time, vacant land. To the west of where we stood, probably 50 or 100 feet, there can be seen today the ruins of the basement walls of the old Williams and Parker Brewery on the western bank of the ravine; the 'knoll' was on the eastern bank. A narrow, disused, old wagon road came up, somehow, between the brewery and the knoll."

MRS. RUTH MORTON

Relict of John Morton, and now of Montrose Apartments, West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, and, at the opening of the Burrard Bridge, 1 July 1932, a guest of the City. Conversation 13 May 1932. Also see "Here before the Fire," Letters, 1931.

In June 1884, my husband and I came over on the stage from New Westminster with the intention of my seeing the white sand beach [*now English Bay Beach*] but we could not get a seaworthy row boat, so did not get there. Whilst my nephew, Edmund Ogle, and I were waiting on the beach at Gastown for Mr. Morton, in front of us was a sow digging up clams, and a crow hopping in front of her getting a meal from bits of the clams. We saw the English Church [*St. James'*] and had

lunch at George Black's [*Hastings Townsite*] and then went back to New Westminster on the stage, and from there up to Mission to our farm.

[*signed*] Ruth Morton

13 May 1932.

Note: Mrs. Morton told me that she had never actually seen Mr. Morton's clearing. She is the stepmother of Joseph Morton.

WILLIAM DALTON

Chairman, Board of Vancouver Public Library. Conversation July 1932.

"John Morton told me that his cabin was where the Blue Ribbon tea people are located. Sam told me he paid for his preemption in scrip given him by the government for building roads, etc.; not in cash."

DR. HENRI E. LANGIS, M.D.

Pioneer C.P.R. medical officer. He reached Victoria on 15 July 1884, and Granville in 1885, and is now, 1932, resident at Parksville, B.C. Conversation, see *Early Vancouver*, Matthews, 1931.

"The John Morton-Brighthouse clearing had just one shack. A man named Proctor, or Porter, was living in it—he married an Indian, and was, about 1883 or 1884, making spars for the British Admiralty. 'Spratt's Ark' was at the foot of Burrard Street, and the way to get to the big tree, so well known in Vancouver by the photograph "Vancouver Lots for Sale," and which was located up near the corner of Granville and Georgia streets, was to take a boat at Andy Linton's boathouse at the foot of Carrall Street, row to Spratt's Ark, and walk up the skid road which slanted from there up to where the Hotel Vancouver now stands."

W.D. HAYWOOD

Of Rogers Building, Vancouver, formerly of Commercial Hotel. Conversation in July 1932.

"I came to Granville in September 1885. John Morton's place was just a bit of a clearing, perhaps half an acre. The ravine crossed Pender Street West where the house on the south side, now numbered 1030 Pender Street West, stands. I remember very distinctly the filling in of the hollow when the house was built in 1890."

Note: this house stands on all or part of Lot 4, Block 2.

YORKSHIRE AND CANADIAN TRUST, LTD.

Conversation, 22 August 1932.

"We are having trouble with a house on Lot 16, Block 1. It is sinking; this map explains it." (City of Vancouver, 1886.) "The house must stand on the filled in ravine."

(FORMERLY) MRS. ALEXANDER STRATHIE

Of 1150 Alberni Street, now Mrs. Emily Eldon, relict of Mr. Eldon, formerly Superintendent, Stanley Park. She arrived Vancouver 1 March (about) 1886. Conversation 16 June 1932.

"It had been our custom—my husband's" (Mr. Strathie) "and mine—to take a walk on Sunday afternoons. Frequently we went west along the narrow bush trail which led from Gastown to Coal Harbour and English Bay. The trail led 'up the hill' along the top of the 'Bluff,' and continued on between what is now Pender Street West and Hastings Street West, past John Morton's old clearing, just a little clearing, less than an acre, with a board shack big enough for two people. The trail through the trees was so narrow, and lined with bushes so close and thick, that a woman had to draw in her skirts close around her legs."

JOHN MORTON'S CLEARING.

"Morton's clearing was only a small place; just about half an acre or so," said Mr. W.D. Haywood, formerly of the Commercial Hotel.

"I came here in 1885, in September 1885. The ravine or gulch of which you speak as first shown in Corporal Turner's map of his survey of Burrard Inlet in 1863, was located, well, it crossed Pender Street West where the house now numbered 1030 West Pender Street stands; because, I distinctly remember the hollow being filled in when the house was built in 1890. I think it, the house, is on lot four, block two, D.L. 185.

"On the southwest corner of Pender and Burrard streets there is a little lane running north and south—just fifty or sixty feet west, where the Pender Street sidewalk bends; the house is the second from the little lane, second to the west, and is the one which stands on the filled in gulch; it is not more than sixty feet or so from the bend; Frank Holt will tell you all about that location; he has lived there for thirty-five years or more."

JSM, 28 July 1932.

JOHN MORTON'S CLEARING. SPRATT'S OILERY.

Frank Holt, now aged 77, who came to Vancouver on or about 13 July 1886, a month after the fire, and now lives at the back of 1003 Hastings Street West, in an old house on the edge of the cliff—a sheer drop of thirty or forty feet from his verandah, which faces north, to the C.P.R. tracks *directly beneath*, that is, a few feet from the Quadra Club building, and about sixty-six feet from the western wall of the Marine Building. He has lived in this same house for thirty-eight years.

"This old house was built by Spratts of Victoria in 1875, and was used in early days as a bunk house for the employees working in the oilery operated by Spratts. Come outside, and I will show you the charred boards" (on northern front); "these charcoal marks were caused by the fire" (11 August 1886) "which destroyed Spratt's Oillery, and nearly destroyed the old house. I moved the old house some years ago; it used to be 66 feet east of here. This house is actually on the C.P.R. right of way, but the garage people in the front there let me have access.

"When I came here about a month after the fire, 13 July 1886 I came, the only clearing out this way was just west of Burrard Street, from about Burrard Street as it is now to the old brewery on the edge of the creek; the brewery was not there then; nothing. The clearing went back a few yards from the northern side; went back about as far as Seaton Street" (Hastings Street West.) "The edge of the cliff was the northern limit of Morton's clearing. Beyond these boundaries was stumps and fallen trees as far south as about Pendrill Street, and from there on westwards was pretty solid forest. There was a trail along the top of the Bluff, a trail through fallen timber, leading towards the westwards and Coal Harbour, about as far as Broughton Street, where it entered the trees.

"The little clearing—about an acre, more or less—was very clearly outlined, because it was in grass; no fruit trees or fences. The cliff bent back to about where the Blue Ribbon Tea Company's warehouse is now, and on the corner, as it were, above the creek, was a little cottage. Another building stood on the northern end of, I think, Lot 4, and behind it was a big building afterwards used as a mattress factory. Another cottage with a fence about it stood on Lot 3; all were used by Spratts. The approach to Spratt's Oillery was exactly where we sit now. At that time the waters of the inlet came right up to the base of this cliff."

JSM, 15 August 1932.

JOHN McDUGALL

Now, 1932, of Quesnel, B.C., known to pioneers by the sobriquet "Chinese McDougall," who cleared the forest off 440 acres of the "West End," etc. Letter received 8 August 1932 from Quesnel.

"Mr. Morton's house and garden was on the shore directly south of Deadman's Island. It was used for a logging camp after his time; it was my camping place whilst slashing down the timber on the 440 acre Brighthouse estate in the months of April and May 1886 (?) 1887."

W.H. GALLAGHER

Formerly Alderman, and one of the two known survivors of those present at the first meeting of the City Council, 1886. See *Early Vancouver*, Matthews, 1931.

"Sam Brighthouse and John Hailstone, they kept their cows out on a ranch on the cliff at the foot of, and to the west a little, of Burrard Street, overlooking the inlet.

"I have been up at John Morton's, up on old Seaton Street.

"He had a small piece of land cleared there; an acre or so partly cleared, and had some cows.

"Brighthouse and Hailstone wanted the land for their cows; that was what they preempted D.L. 185 for; they had no idea there would ever be a Vancouver.

"Brighthouse himself told me what they wanted the land for. He preempted it because he did not want others bothering him. He also told me that when the man who was surveying it was laying out the boundaries, the man said to him, 'I will put in the island (Deadman's Island) in your preemption for five dollars.' Hailstone, so Brighthouse told me, said, 'Don't give it him; we've enough stuff now.'"

FRANK H. HOLT

Resident in 1932, so he states, since 1894—38 years in the same house, now numbered 1003 Hastings Street West, standing on the extreme edge of the cliff, with a sheer drop to C.P.R. tracks beneath, and which house he states was formerly one of the buildings connected with Spratt's Ark. The tide formerly washed the foot of this cliff. Conversation, 15 August 1932.

"When I came to Vancouver, about a month after 'The Fire,' 13 June 1886, the only clearing in the West End was just west of what is now Burrard Street—from there to the creek and back from the shore to about the north side of Seaton Street; just a little clearing in extent about one acre, more or less, clearly defined because it was all in grass; no fruit trees or garden. The bit of cleared land sloped steeply, but it was not a cliff, down to the shore on the north and the creek on the west. High up on the corner where the slope bent back up the creek was a cottage, about four rooms. What its early history had been I do not know, but it was used then in connection with Spratt's Oillery, which was on the water to the east of it. That cottage, whatever cottage it was, was on the top of the slope and overlooked the inlet."

Note: nothing has been revealed at this date to show whether this was the original cabin, or any part of it.

R. KERR HOULGATE

To whom Mrs. Ruth Morton, now very elderly, entrusts the management of her private interests. Conversation, 19 August 1932.

"I have read Mr. Joseph Morton's narration of March 3rd from end to end twice over. My experience has been that Joe's memory for historical detail is quite good, and, so far as I have knowledge, the narrative is all right, except perhaps that you might see the Yorkshire and Canadian Trust, who may perhaps verify what the amount of the estate was.

"Mr. Williams of Williams and Barker of the old Red Cross Brewery was a close friend of mine, and I often used to go down there to visit him. The exact location of the road Joe speaks of is difficult to explain. The bank dropped down to the creek bottom quite a distance; it was a big hole in the ground, and the path up from the bottom, I think, at first wound up on the western side, then crossed over to the eastern, and in that way ascended the steep slope. A lot of water came down that creek; there was a small dam.

"John Morton was a dour Yorkshireman, solid, very devout, and of quite determined character."

CONVERSATION WITH MR. WRIGHT, VICE-PRESIDENT OF YORKSHIRE AND CANADIAN TRUST LTD., 22 AUGUST 1932.

"Mr. E.B. Morgan was not himself the executor of Mr. Morton's will, but the North West Trust Company, a British Columbia trust company with which he was associated, and which became insolvent in 1915, when the Courts appointed us as executors.

"Mr. Joseph Morton's statements as to the probated value is about right. The Baptist Church does not get the one hundred thousand dollars until Mrs. Ruth Morton's death; they did not get a previous one hundred thousand.

"I am afraid there was some strange administration until the estate came into our hands; it was in an awful tangle when we took it over."

CITY OF VANCOUVER, BUILDING DEPT.

Record of building permits issued.

"8th July, 1905. G.F. and J. Galt, Lot 6, Block 1, \$21,000.

"17th August, 1917. Addition, west twenty feet, Lot 6, Block 1, \$17,000."

Note: prior to 1 January 1928, the firm known as Blue Ribbon Limited, tea merchants, etc., was known as G.F. and J. Galt, tea merchants and vendors of the "Blue Ribbon" brand, well known throughout Canada.

COPY OF LETTER DATED 18 AUGUST 1932, RECEIVED FROM BLUE RIBBON LIMITED, VANCOUVER, B.C.

Dear Major Matthews:

Replying to your letter of August 12th. We have checked carefully the description of our property as outlined in your letter and find that your information is correct, excepting that our building on Lot 6 is 56' wide instead of 66'. Our portion, therefore of Lot 6 is the west 56'.

The property is described as Lots 6 & 7, Blk 1., D.L. 185. It is now owned by Blue Ribbon Limited, as G.F. and J. Galt sold out their interests to this Company over four years ago.

The first part of our building was put up in 1905, and the addition of 20' to the west, in 1917. All of our building stands on Lot 6, Lot 7 being at the present time vacant.

Yours very truly,

BLUE RIBBON LIMITED,

per Fred T. Moore.

NARRATION, JOSEPH MORTON, ESQ., 2116 YORK STREET, KITSILANO, TO MAJOR J.S. MATTHEWS, ARCHIVIST, 3 MARCH 1932.

(Proof subsequently corrected and approved by Mr. Morton.)

"Father has told me, upon many occasions, the story of how fate brought him to Vancouver. I am his only son. This is how it was.

"Father was born in Yorkshire, at a little village called Salandine Nook, three miles from Huddersfield, famous for its pottery. Father was a potter, so was his father. The firm of Joseph Morton and Sons, that is, my grandfather and his sons, still functions. You will see later how this avocation of Father's had much to do with his subsequent fortunes and his establishment at Vancouver.

"Father was born on the 16th April 1834, so that he must have been about 27 or 28 when he left England for the Crown Colony of British Columbia on that famous leviathan of the nineteenth century, the paddlewheel steamer *Great Eastern*, the vessel which laid the first Atlantic cable. It seems to me that Father told me that he came out on her on her first trip, but I don't see how that could be, as I think she made her first trip in 1858. Anyway, he came to British Columbia in the spring of 1862.

"Sam Brighthouse and Father were first cousins, travelling together to make their fortunes in the Cariboo goldfields, and they met William Hailstone, also on his way to the Cariboo, on the *Great Eastern*. Father has never intimated to me that they knew Hailstone before they met on the ship.

"The three travelled together to New York and from there by way of St. Louis and the Union Pacific Railway, then under construction, down to the coast to Panama. Father told me that, whilst travelling on the Union Pacific, it was necessary upon one occasion to stop the train for a quarter of an hour to let the buffalo pass, or rather, to work through them. The buffalo were crossing the track and were strung out as