

Early Vancouver

Volume Three

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2011 Edition (Originally Published 1935)

Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1933-1934.

Supplemental to Volumes One and Two collected in 1931-1932.

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. 3 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 3. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

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"Then we raced for town. My furniture factory, warehouse and dwelling was about 200 feet from Rev. Thompson's place on Alexander Street, near corner of Gore Avenue, and I headed for it with the 'Cambie Street millionaire' following. The town was burning then, and a great black column of smoke was rising. Jack said, 'I believe the town's gone.' Jack's store was near the Sunnyside, same side the street, grocery store; Otton was his partner, close to the Sunnyside, a cheap one-storey house; he did not build it, he rented it, it could not have been bigger than 25 feet wide by 40 feet long; on piles at the back, on land in the front. Jack was heading for his store.

"We did not get any further than Rev. Thompson's. We had made a bee line from the boat to my factory and Jack was heading for his store. The fire hadn't reached my factory. Chas. Weigand, afterwards well-known furniture man in Vancouver, and now living on his ranch at the north end of Bowen Island, was my bookkeeper in 1885 and 1886 too. Charlie had the key to the factory, and I could not find Charlie. As far as Jack McGregor was concerned we could not get nearer the town than about 100 feet west of the Princess Louise Tree at about the foot of what is now Main Street" (Gore Avenue.) "There was a two-plank sidewalk ran along the beach side of Hastings Road from Hastings Mill to Gastown, and we didn't get any further than the Rev. Thompson's house; about there.

"Rev. Thompson's house was about twenty feet from Charlie Coldwell's place; Charlie Coldwell's home was about a storey and a half; anyway, there was one window in the upstairs. And when we got there, here was Coldwell sitting on top of the roof, and what the dickens d'you think he was doing? Why, firing his pistol, his revolver. Coldwell's house did not burn. Every now and again he would point the revolver up in the air and fire a shot; every minute or so. There he was, up on the roof, sitting down, and firing his revolver in the air.

"The Rev. Thompson's house was not on fire; my factory was gone, so we started to get the furniture out of Thompson's house. Coldwell was foreman at the Hastings Mill and a 'big' man; I was not so 'big' about town, but I told him what I thought of him. We were struggling to get the furniture out, and the piano; we got the piano out but broke a pedestal doing it. I got mad at him sitting up there on the roof, and shouted, 'You damn fool, come down here and help us.' He may have been a 'big' man about town, but that didn't stop me telling him what I thought then.

"Anyway. The fact remains Charlie Coldwell's house was the last house which the fire did *not* burn; the fire stopped there." (See Geo. L. Schetky.) "I don't know, but he said that the firing the pistol caused an air draft to go up. It may have, I don't know. He was a practical man, and ought to know what he was doing; he said it did. Anyway, the fact remains that Coldwell's was the first house saved, but at the time, it did seem to be a fool thing to doing, and he was quite cool and collected about it, too. Just sitting there firing away." (Note: the peculiar circumstance is referred to by Geo. L. Schetky in *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1.)

FURNITURE BUSINESS, F.W. HART.

"In the first boom after the C.P.R. arrived, and up to 1889, seventy-five percent of all the furniture handled in Vancouver, and at no time less than fifty percent, in the first eight years, was handled by my firm. We used to have a car load of furniture a week arrive, and, including stablemen, drivers and others, had as many as one hundred men on my staff at one time or another. I was prosperous then, and helped to build St. Andrew's Church; that is, I contributed to the cost of building it."

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH. THE FIRST.

J.S.M.: Mr. Hart, you spoke of the little old church they had before St. Andrew's was built; where was that? The one you were married in?

Mr. Hart: "It was at the back of the site where St. Andrew's stood; on the same lot, I think, a bit of a building facing Georgia Street, near the lane. It was used until St. Andrew's was built."

CAPTAIN EDWIN SAYRE SCOULLAR, "WESTMINSTER RIFLES," THE GREAT FIRE OF 1886.

Pioneer hardware merchant whose store was south side Water Street, between Abbott and Cambie, said, "There wasn't a piece of wood left big enough to make a match, and my store was 42 feet by 128." (128 feet?)