

## **Early Vancouver**

### **Volume Three**

**By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.**

**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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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(Note: he missed one, a small shack on the edge of False Creek, in the low, wet land—on Pender Street—just at the end of Abbott Street, below the corner of Beatty and Pender streets.)

**MRS. ONDERDONK. ANDREW ONDERDONK. PORT HAMMOND. ENGINES, C.P.R. ENGINE NO. 4 “THE LYTTON.”**

“I went to work on the building of bridges for the C.P.R. in August 1882, and then from March 1883 worked for him” (Onderdonk) “for three years at Yale, building cars in the car shops, making car repairs; also foreman wrecking car.

“A fine man was Onderdonk; I’ll say so” (with emphasis.) “My wife came up in March 1883 to Yale. Mr. Onderdonk and my wife were the only two passengers on the boat from Westminster to Yale. When I went to the Yale shops in March 1883, the superintendent and master mechanic were at Port Hammond unloading engine No. 4, the ‘Lytton,’ which had come on a big scow from Tacoma, and the foreman of the shop would not put me to work, but sent me to see Mr. Onderdonk at the general office, Yale, a building about sixty feet long. When I gave Mr. Onderdonk my letter from the bridge superintendent, he looked at me and asked if that was my wife who came up on the boat with him. I said, ‘Yes.’ He looked at my letter from the superintendent to him, and he wrote across the corner of the letter in red ink, ‘Start this man to work immediately,’ and he never forgot to speak when he came around the shops.”

**CISCO BRIDGE.**

“Mrs. Onderdonk I only spoke to once, on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1884. They gave us a free excursion up to the end of the track; we had flat cars with railings around and board seats. She was aboard and congratulated everybody, and hoped we’d have a nice holiday.” (See *Port Moody Gazette*.) “A fairly tall lady, fair complexion and good dresser. The oldest boy was Shirley, about thirteen years old then, and the youngest girl was Eva.”

**MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. JAMES EDWARD SMITH, 1630 CHARLES STREET, VANCOUVER, 3 MAY 1935.**

**STREET CARS.**

“I was the first baby to ride on the street cars of Vancouver. The story goes that when the first street car came out of the Prior Street barn, that Mr. Snyder, our next door neighbour, grasped me from my mother’s arms, and said as he did so, ‘He’s going to be the first baby in Vancouver to ride on a street car.’ Mother is said to have protested that my face was dirty, and that I was not dressed. But Mr. Snider said ‘that did not matter. Car was coming; no time to wait,’ jumped on the car in the middle of the block—it stopped for him—went a short way, and got off.

“The car in question was out for a trial spin from Prior Street as far as Hastings Street; Westminster Ave was a bit of a rough thoroughfare then.” (He may mean Front Street barn; don’t think Prior Street barn was built; the Vancouver Street Railway’s Carhouse was on Front Street early in 1890. The *World* panorama map of 1890 shows no buildings on Prior Street, but does show a siding turning in there.)

**YALETOWN.**

“My father came to Vancouver about 1887, and first went to live in Yaletown. Then he squatted where the B.C. Electric Railway Company located their first barn, but the Vancouver Electric Railway Company forced him out; he squatted right on the beach; there was trouble, and they were going to arrest him. Then we moved over to Prior Street to some little old cottages, still there.

“Father helped to grade Georgia Street in front of the Hotel Vancouver.” (The Council let the contract for this work on 19 July 1887.) “The work was done by John Clendenning.” (See photo No. ? of Mr. J.I. Smith, also see B.C. Electric Railway *Buzzer*, 1935.)

**CHARLES E. TISDALL, FORMER MAYOR OF VANCOUVER. JOHN INNES, SCENIC PAINTER.**

John Innes loved to joke, even when he was ill in bed, as he was from September 1934 to March 1935. Mr. Tisdall was a pioneer gunsmith, afterwards had the first and the finest sporting goods store in Vancouver, but was always noted for his economy.

"Bill Barnes," said Mr. Innes, "was City Hall reporter on the *Province*, and in that capacity was able to do Mr. Tisdall, while he was a mayor some years ago, several favours. Bill decided to go on a fishing and hunting trip, and somehow Mr. Tisdall got to know about it. Anyway, Bill got a letter from Mayor Tisdall saying he wanted to see him before he started on the fishing trip. Bill conjured up visions of something good; thought he was going to get a cheque 'for past services' to help with the expenses, and provide a bottle or two to keep the cold out. So Bill goes down to the Mayor's office in high glee and expectancy.

"What do you suppose His Worship handed him?" chuckled Mr. Innes.

J.S.M.: Cannot imagine.

"A sporting goods catalogue," laughed Mr. Innes.

### **HIS WORSHIP GERALD GRATTON McGEER, MAYOR OF VANCOUVER, 1935 (AND 1936).**

Mr. McGeer is the son of James (Jim) McGeer, a pioneer farmer of a preempted farm at the corner of Kingsway and Fraser Avenue, known as the "Tea Swamp"—an old elk pasture. He conducted a milk business. (See *Early Vancouver*, vols. 1, 2 and 3, Matthews.)

Reeve W.B. Russell, Reeve of South Vancouver Municipality in 1916-1917, says in part (see his genealogy sheet), 2 May 1935:

"As a boy, I peddled milk same as 'Gerry' did when he was a boy with holes in his pants and no boots on his feet. Gerry and I were apprenticed to our trade at the same time, and worked together in the old B.C. Iron Works at the foot of Dunlevy and Heatley Avenue."

### **HIS WORSHIP LOUIS D. TAYLOR**

#### **CITY ARCHIVES, 1933.**

City Archivist J.S. Matthews: I thank you, Your Worship, for what you did towards establishing the City Archives. (Appointment by Council of first City Archivist, and an allowance of \$25 a month.)

Ex-Mayor Taylor: "I should have liked to have done more, but those aldermen; they're only a lot of ignorami; they never read."

Note: the essence of this remark is that it is an opinion of a man, many times Mayor of Vancouver, of an electoral system which allows almost any person, regardless of his fitness, who feels he is capable of being mayor or alderman, to attain that office; witness the candidature of a kindly but eccentric old gentleman attired in queer garb, Mr. Rubinowitz, for mayor. Or the case of artisans, such as street car conductors, who never earned more than 75¢ an hour, or had more than a few dollars in their pockets, suddenly finding themselves administering an expenditure running into sixteen millions of civic funds per annum—one of the weaknesses of democratic government.

(J.S.M.)

### **CHIEF JUSTICE AULAY MORRISON.**

In a speech at the annual banquet of the officers of The British Columbia Regiment (D.C.O.R.):

"I love even the name" (with emphasis on *British*) "*British* Columbia."