

Early Vancouver

Volume Three

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

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

About the 2011 Edition

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH A.E. BECK, K.C., NOW OF 5609 BALACLAVA STREET, KERRISDALE.

Mr. Beck was born in 1860, and is now more or less confined to his house; see elsewhere for more precise personal details in *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1, and also his typewritten narratives by J.S.M.

THE FALSE CREEK FLATS. CHINESE IMMIGRATION. JAPANESE.

"As registrar of the County Court" (and afterwards also Supreme Court) "I issued the registration papers in connection with Orientals entering Canada, so that when the commission appointed by the Dominion Government to report on Oriental immigration; the Japanese, or 'Japs,' were coming in in batches of 50 or 100, and organised labour was agitated about the influx—I was requested to appear before them. The commission consisted of Messrs. Clute—he was afterwards a justice of the Supreme Court in Ontario—and Mr. Folley, and another man—you can see the whole report in the Board of Trade's offices, issued by the Dominion Government; a thin blue book—and in due course I appeared before them, read a paper; the chairman asked me to leave it with him, and you will find it printed in their reports.

"Following this, and growing out of it, a committee of five from the Trades and Labour Council were appointed to handle the matters for that body. It consisted of J.T. Bruce, a carpenter, Morton, a brother to Alderman John Morton" (of the City Water Works—nothing to do with John Morton the pioneer) "Watson of the Customs service, and two others. This committee wrote to G.R. Maxwell, M.P. representing Vancouver, and Aulay Morrison, M.P." (afterwards Chief Justice) "representing New Westminster at Ottawa; they replied, 'Go and see Beck.' The meeting took place in my office, the office of the County Court Registrar.

"There was a whispering campaign going on then that a syndicate of financially strong business men was being formed to acquire the False Creek Flats; they were going, so it was said, to offer Saturday afternoon off, a free lunch, and other quack inducements to get labour's support.

"The committee of five said to me, 'What has the False Creek Flats got to do with us?'

"I pointed out to them that if the city acquired the land that they, the Trades and Labour Council, could, it could insist upon its being acquired from the Dominion and Provincial governments under such conditions the union men desired, such as exclusion of Orientals, scale of wages, Saturday afternoon off, and other privileges. You can enforce your wishes. They saw the point. But I told them that they could not do it by themselves, they would have to get the cooperation of the Board of Trade and the City Council. They did. Fred Buscombe—I think he was mayor at the time—and Adolphus Williams—I don't know if he was magistrate then or not—were two of the representatives or delegates appointed from the three united bodies too, to meet the Dominion and Provincial government representatives. In this way we shut out the aspiring politicians. So the committee of five came to me to draw up the necessary documents, and I did so. Fred Buscombe afterwards showed me my own document. I replied, 'Yes, I drew it up.' 'Oh,' he answered, 'they told me *they* did.'"

FALSE CREEK FLATS.

"Opposition, of course, came from the people holding the railway charter; the V.V. and E., I think they called it; John Hendry, of the Hastings Sawmill, was in it. One alderman, Ed Cook, told me the flats were not worth filling in. Joe Martin, one time premier of B.C., was their counsel; D.C. McDonnell was another 'Grit,' and was an influence behind the political syndicate. But with the City, the Board of Trade, and the Trades and Labour Council united, the politicians were shut out."

THE CANADIAN NATIONAL HOTEL ON GEORGIA STREET.

"The outcome, of course, was that the city got the False Creek Flats, and subsequently concluded the agreement with the Canadian Northern Railway, now the Canadian National Railway, which included, as a clause, the building of the C.N.R. Hotel on Georgia Street. It is within the bounds of possibility that the hotel would never have been built had the C.N.R. not been compelled to do so by agreement, so that I contend that, had I not made the suggestion I did to the Trades and Labour Council, the city of Vancouver could not have got the big hotel—anyway, not when they did."

INDIANS IN FALSE CREEK FLATS.

"I have told you previously of how I lived by the Bridge Hotel on Westminster Avenue at the home of Magistrate Boulton, and how I mistook the flats for a prairie the night of my arrival in September 1886." (See "Cambie Street Grounds," *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1.)

"From the windows of that house I have seen the Indians fishing in their canoes up at the eastern end of False Creek, east of Main Street, in the big basin; used to watch them out of the back window; about halfway up the basin, I should think. They had long poles with nails on them which they used to dip down in the water, and long rakes." (See W.R. Lord.) "I think they got pilchards or herring or some such fish." (See "Herring on Burrard Inlet," *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2, 1933, Matthews; also "Cambie Street Grounds," Vol. 1.)

CONVERSATION WITH GEO. MATHESON, LAND REGISTRY OFFICE, 4 JULY 1933.

AL LARWILL.

"This is a photo of Al Larwill's original shack on the Cambie Street grounds, and that" (seated) "is Al Larwill. Al Larwill came from Chatham, Ontario; 'Niggertown,' they used to call it; all the slaves escaping from the United States found a refuge there. He and his brother built that shack themselves. Vic, his nephew, was a lawyer in Winnipeg, but Al Larwill is dead, so is his brother, I think; the two of them drifted here from Chatham. He lived in that shack for years and years. The Cambie Street grounds was C.P.R. property, and the city leased it. Then when the city bought it, they thought they would have trouble getting him off, thought he would claim 'squatter's rights'—he'd been there so long. The rumour got around to Al Larwill's ears, and he said he never intended making any such claim. They let him stop there; he was to stop there as long as he lived, but he died.

"The shack was at the northeast corner of Cambie Street grounds; the bleachers, just seats, were down at the southeast corner.

"Al Larwill would never allow us to swear. He had a rawhide whip lash, about that" (three feet) "long; it hung on a nail on the wall; he would give us that if we swore."

Query: Did you ever feel it?

Mr. Matheson: "*You bet I did.*" (With emphasis.) "We used to play cards in his cabin; we could play all the cards we wanted, but you daren't bet, not even a cent; he would not stand for betting."

CAMBIE STREET GROUNDS.

"There were bushes in the northeast corner, and all along the east boundary—along Beatty Street. We boys used to lie around in them. Once there was a circus on the Cambie Street grounds. The circus had been to Victoria, came over by boat, and one of the cages, full of snakes, slipped back in the 'chuck'" (sea) "as they were getting it off the boat; they got it again, and brought it up to Cambie Street; then one day, when we were lying in the bushes along Beatty Street—some days after the circus had gone—we were rolling about and one of the boys rolled into a bush, and there was coiled a great big snake, big around as your arm; say, didn't we get out of there."

CONVERSATION, 26 JULY 1933, WITH JOE REYNOLDS, SON OF THE MUSICIAN IN OUR FIRST BRASS BAND.

(See photo of band on Cambie Street.)

AL LARWILL.

"Al Larwill!!!! Why, he did wonders for the boys down on the Cambie Street grounds; he just made things go right; kept the boys pure and wholesome, and the boys knew it then; know it now, too."

Query: Did Al Larwill live in a shack?

Mr. Reynolds: "Sure he did. I don't know when he built it. I was in it hundred of times. I came here just after the fire" (June 1886.) "I cannot remember the time when Al's shack was not there. The doorway