

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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"The biggest tree I have ever seen," says George Cary, "was the big tree on Georgia Street; it stood where the Strand Theatre now stands; the stump is probably under the theatre yet. I measured it many times. It was fourteen feet four inches at the widest part. It was cut up in sections; part went to Queen Victoria's Jubilee Exhibition in London, part to Toronto, and a piece stood on Hastings Street for years." (See A.W. Ross.) "Then when the clearing operations started they tried to burn the log, but it just burned the centre out, and left a shell in which J.W. Horne set up a show real estate office, just an advertising stunt, not a real office, depicted in the well-known photograph 'Vancouver Lots for Sale.'"

The Georgia Street big tree also has legendary dimensions; it was said to have been 325 feet high, taller than the Vancouver Block, but "The truth is," says Pat Myers, octogenarian, who logged on the Brighthouse estate (West End) and whose log dump was beside the bathhouse at English Bay, "The truth is that the top had broken off, and the giant stub was merely eighty feet high.

"When we were logging the West End we got over the line" (Burrard Street); "I 'skidded up to'" (built a skid road) "the big tree, but we decided the tree was too big, it would break up our skid road, so we left it." (See Vol. 3.)

Later, when clearing the stumps and debris off the land about Robson, Dunsmuir and Burrard streets, H.P. McCraney, who built our first street car lines, cleared the log away. To W.H. Gallagher, sole surviving witness in Canada of the meeting of our first City Council, we are indebted for the photograph of the great stump. All of these pioneers are still residents of Vancouver. (See W.H. Grassie.)

That a great fire swept through the forest between Vancouver and New Westminster some two or three hundred years ago is the interesting theory of Mr. Myers. He bases his assumption on the "patchiness" of the forest in certain sections; that of the West End and Shaughnessy having trees of enormous size and prolificacy, while that of parts of Hastings, Central Park, and near Ontario Street on the North Arm of the Fraser was "second growth stuff with pin knots." Mr. Myers declares that the fire not only destroyed the forest, but burned the land bare of humus. "You can see what I mean, even today, in that bit of forest at Central Park; those trees have grown up since the fire; poor bits of things, no humus in the soil, just bare stone and earth." The forest about Granville Street and the West End and Shaughnessy was one of the finest stands of timber in the world.

Support to this contention is given by a correspondent replying to "Lumberjack," who narrates that when clearing his lot in Hastings East, he removed a log embedded in the soil, overlain with moss and humus, and straddled with a stump three and one-half feet thick which had grown over it, and found the log beneath to be charred by fire.

14 DECEMBER 1933 – MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH GEORGE CARY.

(See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2, 1933.) He came to Granville in 1884.

INDIAN VILLAGE IN STANLEY PARK.

Major Matthews: What about that Indian village in Stanley Park, the one on the First Narrows?

Mr. Cary: "I don't think it was a permanent place; just a stopping place, to fish. You know, the Indians don't always stop at the same place as they go to fish." (See old charts.) "The same thing at Buccaneer Bay. I was along there one and there were ten or fifteen huts, but there was no Indians living there. I know it was that way; just temporary shelters when they came down to fish for dogfish.

"They had a little potlatch over there once; it was never much of a village; just a few shacks right there some place. They have put up some totem poles in Stanley Park, but that's not where the shacks I knew were."

Major Matthews: Well, there was a big village over there at one time; that's what the Indians say.

Mr. Cary: "May be; not in my time; the path along the shore up and down the shore of the Narrows was just wide enough to let one man through at a time; Indians always travel single file anyhow; I'm speaking now of the prairie Indian, not shore Indians; shore Indians don't travel much through woods. All these Indians here on this coast are canoe Indians. Shoes, what shoes? Oh, they sometimes wore moccasins, not bare feet always, but I must tell you about old Capilano, old Capilano Joe, the chief over there."

CAPILANO JOE.

"I see Capilano Joe" (Chief Joe Capilano) "one day at the corner of Water Street. Oh, that was a long time ago. He was standing with a blanket around him, and that was all he seemed to have on, excepting a necktie, and a plug hat, and bare feet, and ice and snow on the sidewalk; he was standing there barefooted on the sidewalk. As I passed he spoke quietly to me. He put his hand to his cheek, and said in his broken English, 'Your face cold?' The skin on his feet was, I'll bet, half an inch thick."

STANLEY PARK.

(See his narrative, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.) "I did not go clear around Stanley Park. I cut across about the pipe line road; I guess that was how it was. The Indians would have a trail into Beaver Lake; you can see the beaver dams there yet."

"Indian trails? Oh, Indians' trails always follow the easiest route. There was a trail down east from Sarnia to Niagara; I have seen parts of it; it took the easiest route; it was beaten so hard with Indian feet, you could see the steps they had taken, in some places six inches deep, one after another."

COAST INDIANS.

"But the Coast Indians don't walk; they canoe. I never saw an Indian trail in this country. The Coast Indians are like the Mexicans who go for a horse to ride across the street."

(Note: Mr. Cary spent his youth in Ontario with the Indians, fur trapping, and his remarks are sometimes, unconsciously, referring to them.)

HASTINGS ROAD.

"There are traces to old Hastings Road to be seen yet in Vancouver; just east of the sugar refinery, a few steps south of the railroad track."

DEER IN VANCOUVER.

"Dumps' Baker" (see Fred W. Alexander narrative) "had lots of dogs; he lived down by the sugar refinery in a shack; he had to get a lot of deer to keep his dogs; he was longshoring down at the Hastings Mill."

"Dumps' Baker would come down to the old Tremont Hotel" (near southeast corner Carrall and Powell) "which I was running, and one day I said to him, 'Dumps, what's the matter with giving me a dog? I'd like a dog.' He replied, 'Mr. Cary, I'd be only too glad, but I am running short of dogs; just now I've only got thirteen.' The dogs rustled for themselves, dug clams and mussels."

"George Black of Hastings used to run the deer down from the upper end of False Creek, and the deer used to cross over the land and ran into the upper end of the Inlet" (near Cedar cove) "where they took to the sea."

(Note: this refers to the use of dogs for getting deer for meat for the pioneers of Hastings, Hastings Mill and Granville, etc.)

SUGAR REFINERY.

"When they put up the sugar refinery, Dumps' shack was right in their way, on their property. We had an old isolation shack—we had had the small pox—so when they wanted his shack they give him the old isolation shack to get him out of his; it was away down there somewhere; there was no road to it. So I went down to see Dumps, and when I got near, I heard the dogs barking; I could tell where the shack in the woods was by the dogs barking. When they came out I threw my hat at them, and then they ran away, and went into a hole in the shack like a lot of rabbits. Dumps had knocked out one of the panels." (Note: one of the boards of a board and batten shack.)

ELK.

"About elk; why, elk travel in herds. About thirty years ago I heard them shooting over on Vancouver's Island. I told my pals they had better keep away; I knew enough to keep away" (protected by law); "they got a nice one; half a dozen shot at it and someone hit it, and they got a nice head. It was at the head of Cowichan Lake."

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH GEORGE CARY, 18 JUNE 1934.

SURVEYS. CAMBIE AND CORDOVA STREETS. SQUATTERS.

"As I was telling you last year" (see *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2), "J.J. Irwin lived in a shack on the northeast corner of Cambie and Cordova streets. He was one of the squatters of Granville. The C.P.R. were giving the squatters trouble. Irwin had squatted on the two lots, the corner and the next one." (Lots 9 and 10, Block 5, O.G.T.) "The C.P.R. wanted a slice off the corner lot in order to avoid a bad corner at the junction of Cambie and Cordova, so Irwin offered to compromise, and settle the dispute, offering to give them the corner lot so that they could straighten out the proposed street, and he would take the other inside lot and call the dispute off. The C.P.R. agreed to this, and addition gave him \$250 or \$300."

FISHERMAN'S COVE. CAPTAIN RICHARD GOSSE. LELAND HOTEL.

"I was building the annex" (north side of Hastings Street), "Leland Hotel, 100 feet or so west of Granville on Hastings—the annex was across the street—when a young fellow, Rich Gosse, came to me asking for a job as carpenter, which I gave him. He was a tall, strong young man, and made a good workman. Then he went down on the Fraser River building canneries; got intimate with some of the cannery owners, and I soon found him building cottages in the West End. Then more canneries went up and he came to me asking for pointers re estimating their cost, and after that, he went right ahead; that was the start of his career in the cannery business, and his ultimate success as salmon canner." (Gosse-Millerd.) "Captain Westerland's wife's father lived around on Howe Sound just 'round Point Atkinson." (See Vol. 2. Also W.A. Grafton, Vol. 3.)

NAVY JACK.

"Navy Jack married an Indian woman. His children live at North Vancouver."

(Note: August Khaatsalano says one daughter is Mrs. Henry Jack, another Mrs. Williams, and a third who married a foreigner. They live on the North Vancouver Indian Reserve.)

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH GEORGE CARY, 21 JUNE 1934.

COAL HARBOUR. LOST LAGOON.

(See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2.) "This photo" (No. 55, Dally Collection, Provincial Archives) "is in Lost Lagoon; I know by the lay of the land; there was a little gully just to the right. Old Mr. Tiffen used to hand split shingles down there, and Ostrander had a cabin down in Stanley Park nearby, but this looks like Indians. These are Indian canoes, six of them, and there are two long poles—fish poles, probably, with iron spear points." (See Calvert Simson, "Ostrander.")

BLASTING STUMPS ABOVE VICTORY SQUARE.

"Yes, and at night, too." (*Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2, after "when the gang quit at noon.")

BRUNSWICK RIFLE.

(Rifle dated 1860 presented by Thos. Deasy of Saanich, June 1934.) "This round hole in the butt here is where the cloth grease patches were kept; your powder was in a flask over your shoulder. You put the little grease patch over the muzzle, then put the lead bullet on it, and then pulled out your ramrod and rammed it down, and by the time you had finished ramming I doubt if the bullet was still a round bullet."

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION TO MR. AND MRS. PATRICK J. MYERS, 1840 EAST 6TH AVENUE, GRANDVIEW, ABOUT APRIL, 1933.

BIG TREE, GEORGIA STREET. LOGGING, SITE OF VANCOUVER.

"The truth about that big tree on Georgia Street between Granville and Seymour streets, is that it was a stub; the top was broken off; anyone who says it was 325 feet high is talking rot; it was just a stub, not over 80 feet high. I was working for Phil McMahon and Hugh Carr; we were getting the timber off the Brighthouse estate west of Burrard Street; they sold most of those logs which came off the Brighthouse estate to Victoria mills. *I was about the last man to work around that tree to get ready, ready to handle it. I skidded up to it.*"