

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

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When referencing the 2011 edition of *Early Vancouver*, please cite the page number that appears at the bottom of the page in the PDF version only, not the page number indicated by your PDF reader. Here are samples of how to cite this source:

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.

Contact Information

City of Vancouver Archives
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9
604.736.8561
archives@vancouver.ca
vancouver.ca/archives



MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH DR. BRYDONE-JACK, PIONEER MEDICAL PRACTITIONER, NOW CORONER, AT ACACIA MASONIC LODGE, 5 OCTOBER 1934.

EARLY STREET CARS.

"I used to live on Westminster Avenue" (about corner of 4th or 5th Avenue) "just above the old car barn down near Dufferin Street, where the first car line stopped, and, if I got a night call, I used to take a car out of the barn, and drive myself downtown. The motormen had shown me how to run the car; I just hopped on, and went off; oh, just perhaps as far as Cordova Street or Carrall Street; I was motorman, conductor and only passenger all in one; little open end street cars, open both ends."

FIRST ELECTRIC LIGHT STATION.

The first electric light steam power house was a low, one-storey shed, perhaps 50' by 60', on the south side of the lane between Pender Street and Hastings Street, and about fifty feet east of Abbott Street; it had a wide door facing Hastings Street—vacant land between Hastings Street and lane, and a very tall narrow black smokestack. (See *World* newspaper illustrated panorama of Vancouver, 1890, and photo No. ?—Bailey—of Peter Claire's garden on Cordova Street, showing power house in background; also see *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1.)

The second steam power house was built on the same ground, but it was of brick, and still stands, 1934.

12 FEBRUARY 1935 – HIS WORSHIP L.D. TAYLOR (LATE MAYOR OF VANCOUVER). THE WORLD NEWSPAPER. BRIGADIER-GENERAL VICTOR W. ODLUM, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

His Worship: "No. Victor Odlum did not put up any money, nor his father, when he joined me in taking over the *World* newspaper about thirty years ago. He promised to put up half, and on the strength of that I gave him a five year contract to employ him; he was just a young fellow then. At the end of two years I got sick of him. He had not put up any money, left me to carry the whole load; I had to find security, and every time I went away he would change the policy of the editorials. So I told him I wanted his resignation. He replied that he had a contract and said, 'I've three years to go.' I said that didn't matter, I wanted his resignation and was going to have it. I got it. I was afraid he would go around saying that I had gypped him; he was a Methodist. So I signed an agreement to pay him \$35 a week for three years and he got it, and then he left the *World*."

CONVERSATION WITH MR. J.W. SENTELL OF SENTELL BROS. ON BOARD PRINCESS JOAN PROCEEDING WITH 295 PASSENGERS, PIONEERS AND CHILDREN OF PIONEERS, TO NEWCASTLE ISLAND FOR THE ANNUAL PICNIC, 14 JUNE 1933.

Mr. Sentell is now aged 75, and lives at 1908 West 8th Avenue.

FIRST CITY HALL (1886).

Major Matthews: Is that story that you would not let the city occupy the City Hall on Powell Street, after it was finished, true, Mr. Sentell? When did you start to build it?

Mr. Sentell (who is up from California for a visit): "Well, yes, it is true; I kept them out for about two weeks after it was finished. I started to built it about August 24 after 'the fire,' and had it finished about the end of September or first few days of October. The contract price was \$1,200, and there were to be a lot of extras, but when it came to getting my money for it there seemed to be a bit of a hitch somewhere. I only had \$2,000, and to tie up my money at that time would have crippled my activities; I couldn't afford to loan the city \$1,200. So I went up to James C. Keith, who was the manager of the bank" (Bank of B.C.) "down opposite the C.P.R. offices, and saw him once or twice, and finally he made me promise I would not tell if he told me, and I promised I would not, and never have. He said that the city hadn't the money to pay; so I would not let them in; only old John Clough, the jailer, I let him in. I kept them out of it for about, say, two weeks. They never forgave me for that."

"Some time afterwards they built an addition to the old wooden city hall. The City Hall I built was about twenty-five feet wide by sixty feet long; no basement, a plain building set back from the street a few feet, and with a verandah or porch along a portion of the front of it, on which John Clough used to sit most of the time. Upstairs was where the aldermen held their meetings; downstairs was for offices, city clerk, and so forth.

"I don't know about Bob Hemphill's story of driving the cows through the corridor into the jail yard behind. Bob is getting old, always did like to have a joke; his memory cannot be as good as it was; he might be beginning to believe it true; anyway, I know nothing about it. Whenever we used to hear a noise on Hastings Street late at night, we usually said, 'There's Bob Hemphill going home.'

"I have told you previously about my experiences in Winnipeg and Brandon. Well, we were working on the Stoney Creek Bridge, C.P.R. line." (Note: the Stoney Creek Bridge was a wonder, a structure 296 feet high built entirely of wood.) "One of our companions there was Mr. Whitehead; his father was fireman for the famous Robert Stephenson, on the first railway engine in the world. Of course, if fire got in about that bridge there would have been the dickens to pay; so my job was to clear away the forest below and about, so that if fire did start it would not get into the chips from the bridge construction; then, when the construction had reached 250 feet high, I decided to clear out for the west, and walked across the single stringer, about three feet wide, 250 feet in the air, no railing, etc., and went west.

"They told me that Port Moody was doomed, that the end of the railway was not going to be there, so I decided not to go there, but got the contract building a bridge across the Tulameen River at Granite Creek, a bridge into Granite Creek."

CITY HALL, 1886. COURT ROOM.

"Then I came to Vancouver, and three days after arrival here, got the contract to build the first City Hall and Court Room, the one on the north side of Powell Street between Westminster Avenue and Columbia Street; it was about twenty-five feet wide and sixty feet deep; narrow side facing Powell Street; the contract price was \$1,290 and I had to put up a deposit of good faith of fifty dollars. I commenced construction about the first of September in 1886, and it was finished in thirty days."

ALDERMAN E.P. HAMILTON.

"Alderman E.P. Hamilton—no relation to Alderman L.A. Hamilton, who was a good fellow—was the alderman in charge of the building committee, and I have very unpleasant memories of him. He was a contractor, too, which may account for some of the disagreeable things which happened. There were a good many extras wanted; I put them in at my own expense, but Alderman Hamilton said to me one day that there was a clause in the contract which said that the extras were to be put in without extra cost, and I replied, somewhat heatedly, 'Is that so!' Hamilton said one day, before the building was constructed, 'If a man puts his head in a noose, he deserves to have the rope pulled.' I did not forget that remark. Finally, when we had nearly finished, he wanted a threshold put to the front door step. I told him thresholds were out of date, but he insisted, and said, 'This building is going to have a threshold,' and I replied, 'All right,' and that was the last thing we put in."

CITY CLERK. T.F. MCGUIGAN.

"Then, when the building was finished, Hamilton and I and Tom McGuigan, the city clerk, [were] inside it one day, and Hamilton said to Tom, 'They've got the building finished, better give them a certificate; write out a certificate and I'll sign it, and, at the same time, you might as well give him his fifty dollars back.'

"Well, Tom McGuigan gave me the certificate—Tom was a decent fellow; he did not like giving me the receipt, but Hamilton told him to, and afterwards Tom said to me, 'Better give that certificate to me for safekeeping.' I said, 'Oh, no, I think it will be safe with me.'

"So next thing I began to enquire about my money; somehow I found out that I was not likely to be paid; I only had \$2,000 and to tie up my money would have crippled my business, so I would not give up the keys.

"I said to Tom McGuigan, 'What about the money?' Tom says, 'We haven't got it.' Tom was a decent fellow. Then I saw Alderman E.P. Hamilton, and he said in his squeaky voice, 'They've been giving it to me for giving you that certificate.'"

BONDS AND DEBENTURES.

"Tom McGuigan says, 'Why not give him debentures?' I said, 'I don't want debentures,' and then I got hot, and said, 'By gosh, I'll keep the building.' Hamilton said, 'I'll put a dozen men to work and pull the building down.'

"As I was coming down I met Sergeant McLaren" (of the Police force) "and he says, 'Did you get your pay?' I said, 'No,' and McLaren says, 'I've got the keys; I've got the Police installed down there.' I says, 'What right have you to take the keys?' So McLaren gave me the keys back. And McLaren says, 'Here's that man tells McGuigan to give you a certificate and now he says he's going to put twelve men in to pull it to pieces; damn shame; here's your keys,' and he threw the keys over to me.

"Hamilton came to me after business hours, and asked, would I take Tom Dunn's cheque? I said, 'Yes; get J.C. Keith to mark it first.'" (J.C. Keith, manager, Bank of B.C.) "But Keith either wouldn't or didn't mark it, whether he refused or not I do not know; you see, I was not such a softie after all. So Hamilton said, 'If you let us in, everything will be all right, and we won't tear nothing to pieces.'

"Then I met old John Clough, with his one arm, and said to him, 'If I let you in here, you understand you have no authority in here; you're just looking after it for me.' And old John says, in his quiet way, 'All right, I won't take possession or anything; just stay in the building.' So John went in, and stayed there, and I kept them out for about a fortnight. Some of them wanted to go to law, but I said I didn't want any law. I'd hold the building, so I kept them out for a fortnight."

12% INTEREST.

"I'd have taken the debentures if I could have got them cashed. Keith told me there was some woman down east—she would advance fifty per cent at 12% interest. We wanted our money in the worst way. Finally, I got the cheque on the bank of B.C.; Baldwin signed it himself; I said to Baldwin, 'There's a lot of extras in there I'm not getting paid for.' Baldwin said, 'It's a shame, Sentell, it's a shame.' Afterwards E.P. Hamilton 'skipped out'; Ferguson went down to Seattle to try to get him to come back."

CENTRAL SCHOOL. MOODY AND SANKEY.

"At the time Dr. Moody of Moody and Sankey firm was here in the fall of 1888 there was no building large enough to accommodate the crowd, so we built a great big barracks of a barn on the site of the present Central School—facing Pender between Hamilton and Cambie streets; it stood there for three or four months afterwards, probably 'til about March 1889, when it was bought by a contractor and pulled down." (Note: Dr. Moody was in Victoria, too, 11-12 October 1888, holding evangelistic meetings.)

ORIGINS OF VANCOUVER PEOPLE.

"Vancouver was peopled in the first place very largely by persons from Manitoba, and grew at the expense of the Maritime provinces. The old men you now see about Vancouver, and the men who have added lustre to the record of this city, were once the young men of eastern Canada in the spring time of their youth, full of ambition, full of ability; and what was Vancouver's gain was Eastern Canada's loss, especially so in the case of the Maritime provinces.

"The first representatives to the legislature from Vancouver city went in 1890. They follow like this:

"1890 F.L. Carter-Cotton; J.W. Horne.

"1894 Adolphus Williams, afterwards magistrate; Robert McPherson (no relation to R.G. McPherson, afterwards M.P., later postmaster); F.L. Carter-Cotton.

"1898 C.E. Tisdall; Robert McPherson; F.L. Carter-Cotton; Joseph Martin.

"1900 J.F.M. Garden; Joseph Martin; R.C. Tatlow; Hugh G. Gilmore."

F.W. SENTELL.

Archivist's note: Mr. Sentell is still another instance of the wonderful physical vitality of our pioneers. He is active, alert, both in mind and body, is over 75, and drew, from memory, the pencil sketches he presents of the first City Hall and Court Room. His conversation is brilliant.

He was born 31 May 1858, at Loch Lomond, St. John, New Brunswick. His ancestors fought for England in War of Independence, and went to New Brunswick afterwards (V.E.L.). His mother was a daughter of John Jordon, physician, stipendiary magistrate, and member of Parliament, Fredericton, New Brunswick (died [of] pneumonia).

CONVERSATION WITH MR. R. HEMPHILL, FIRST POUNDKEEPER OF CITY OF VANCOUVER, ON BOARD *PRINCESS JOAN* DURING VANCOUVER PIONEERS' PICNIC TO NEWCASTLE ISLAND, NANAIMO, WEDNESDAY, 14 JUNE 1933.

Mr. Hemphill now spends the winters in Pasadena, California, and the summers in Vancouver. He is 81 years old today.

POUNDKEEPER. CITY HALL. JAIL.

Major Matthews: What's this story about your appointment as dogcatcher for the city of Vancouver, which Mr. W.H. Gallagher tells? (See *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 1, 1931.)

Mr. Hemphill: "Dogcatcher? Dogcatcher? Oh, poundkeeper! Oh, that was not until after the fire. I didn't know anything about it; they had to fill in the charter; there were certain offices to be filled; city solicitor, city clerk, and I suppose they had to have a poundkeeper, so they appointed me, but I knew nothing about it. I was just one of the boys around town, didn't care for anything or anybody just then—young, looking for fun or trouble, whichever came first; I didn't care which."

(Laughing) "Westminster Avenue across the bridge was awful up the hill; just a trail, and slippery, gosh, going up the hill you'd slip back further than you went up, so the city council ordered it planked, you know, about twelve feet wide; Jerry McGeer's father, Jim McGeer, had a ranch up there—milk ranch."

Major Matthews: Along Kingsway?

Mr. Hemphill: "Yes, off that way."

Major Matthews: As far as the Tea Swamp? (Fraser Avenue.)

Mr. Hemphill: "No-o-o-o! Not that far; just up there, on the top. Jim's cows got out, and came down the plank road, new planks, easy walking, came right down; came across the False Creek bridge, and you know Sentell's place?"

Major Matthews: Up by Grove Crescent? (South end Jackson Avenue and False Creek.)

Mr. Hemphill: "Sure, along the beach. The cows went along the beach, and got into Sentell's cabbages, and what they didn't do to those cabbages—oh, boy. I was working down by the Hastings Mill, and Sentell came running down, and said, 'Say, here, you, you're poundkeeper; you're not doing your duty,' and I said, 'Like hell I am,' and I took a swipe at him. I was big and strong. Anyway, I went down to the old City Hall on Powell Street, the one Sentell built, and old John Clough with his one arm was sitting out in front, just beside the door, with his old clay pipe stuck in a corner of his mouth, and I said to him, 'Who's poundkeeper around this town?' John said, 'You are, Bob,' kind of slow like. So I says, 'All right.' So off I go, and get my boy, and Stuart's boy—no, not Stewart, Stuart—Stuart that used to be purchasing agent for the city—and we rounds up the cows and takes them down to the City Hall. There wasn't no pound, no place to put them, so we put them in the jail" (yard.)

Major Matthews: However did you get them in?

Mr. Hemphill: "Get them in? Why, through the City Hall, and oh boy, didn't they make a mess. What with the cabbages and the parsnips and the running, say, lad, it was awful. We got all around them, and in through the door they went, and down the corridor, and out into the jail yard. Great big fence, sixteen foot high, around the jail yard, we put them in that, but, oh boy, what with the cows, and the cabbages and the running you ought to have seen that corridor after they had got through."

Major Matthew: How many?