

## **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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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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**VANCOUVER, B.C. WATERFRONT PANORAMA IN MAY 1886. CONVERSATION WITH HARRY T. DEVINE, EARLY PHOTOGRAPHER, 8 JUNE 1933.**

Mr. Devine: "I took the panorama photograph of Vancouver before the fire in 1886; there were three glass plates, not four. I took it from the old *Robert Ker*, afterwards C.P.R. coal hulk; she was swinging on the tide. The panorama extends from about Abbott Street to beyond Cedar Cove.

Major Matthews: Are you sure there were not four plates; do you know where the plates are?

Mr. Devine: "Not, not four, only three. Don't know where the plates are, they may be in Nelson; there was a fellow up there who had some sort of a lien on them; I tried to get them back. Offered \$50 for them, but he would not take it."

Major Matthews: I have those three plates, paid \$8 for them, but they are in awful shape; I have had prints taken from them, retouched, the new prints retouched, and a key made in black and white tracing; it cost \$31 but the panorama looks well.

Mr. Devine: "I photographed the City Council in front of a tent. 'City Hall' after the fire."

Note: these plates were purchased for \$35 from Ben McGregor, Alma Road, Vancouver, in June 1934. McGregor and his brother purchased a photo business in Nelson, B.C., and found them there many years ago. They were probably kept by Bailey and Neelands, early Vancouver photographers, who also had a photo studio in Nelson in early 1890s.

**THE GREAT FIRE OF JUNE 1886. TELEGRAMS.**

Wording of copies of telegrams in Dominion Archives, Ottawa.

OTTAWA  
THE GREAT NORTH WESTERN TELEGRAPH COMPANY OF CANADA  
TELEGRAM.

To Sir John A. MacDonald

No. 298 15 pd.

Time 6.40

Ottawa, 14 June, 1886.

Our city is ashes three thousand people homeless can you send us any government aid.

M.A. MacLean

Mayor.

(Answered)

To Sir J. MacDonald

No. 326 22 pd.

Via Sumas

Time 11.05

Ottawa, June 15, 1886

Vancouver city reduced to ashes three thousand people houseless and destitute provincial Govt & corporations assisting what will your Gov't do please answer.

N. Shakespeare

(M.P.)

To Sir J.A. MacDonald

No. 323. 15 pd.

Via Sumas

Time 7.15

Ottawa, June 22, 1886.

Our citizens are in extreme want will your Gov't please do something for us.

M.A. MacLean

Mayor.

(In Sir John's own handwriting, at foot of above telegram)

M.A. MacLean Vancouver City B.C.

Dominion-Government will contribute five thousand dollars.

John A. Macdonald.

To Sir John MacDonald

No. 306. 14 pd. Via Sumas

Time 12.01

Ottawa, June 27, 1886

Message received please accept our unbounded thanks for your most generous and timely assistance.

M.A. MacLean.

All time Ottawa time.

## INTERPRETATION OF LETTER

Phone Green 698

P.O. Box 230

Office: 616 Sixth Avenue W.

F.W. HART

Real Estate and Merchandise Broker

We Build, Buy  
Sell and Rent  
Houses

Prince Rupert, B.C. Sep. 4-33.

City Archivist *[as I read it. J.S. Matthews]*  
City Hall, 16 Hastings St. East  
Vancouver, B.C.

Dear Sir: Yours of Aug 31 at hand. Re the photo found *[1A]*; that was my hearse; it was built by Nash and Co. of --- and took the first prize at the Toronto fair that year. I bought it after seeing it at the Exhibition.

Queen Bros. kept it for me at their livery stable opposite the Hudson's Bay Co., now corner of Granville and Georgia Streets; the Stanley Park stables was Georgia Street *[1]* with one or two blocks of the Medical Building now. --- *[2]* kept by William Harvey who moved to Trounce Alley directly behind my place on Cordova street near the corner of Carrall street. My undertaking establishment stood beside my store, near the Bodega in Trounce Alley. I named it Trounce Alley; it kept the name in my time.

I knew Mr. Oben very well; don't remember the widow. You say she said she "recalled a funeral down Cordova street with the coffin on top of a load of carrots" which I most emphatically deny. There was no cattle on Mount Pleasant or anywhere near it or farms or gardens between the city and the cemetery; there is absolutely a mistake, with all due respects to Mrs. Oben. *[3]*

Many funny things did happen in those early days (here is one.) A first I had to bury Indians and Chinamen in Deadmans Island. --- *[4]* New Westminster, when I used the hearse of Fales and Co. of New Westminster and Victoria. We shipped *[bodies]* direct to Victoria. *[5]* The City got a site, but done nothing to get it ready. I called on the City Council often to prepare the ground. So at last the mayor got tired of my coming, and began to call me down. After the ground was ready I had no funerals, finally a suicide case. *[6]* I turned to Mayor and said, "I could not get anyone, but finally got a volunteer."