

Early Vancouver

Volume Five

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2011 Edition (Originally Published 1945)

Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1936-1945.

Supplemental to volumes one, two, three and four collected in 1931, 1932 and 1934.

About the 2011 Edition

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MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MR. M.S. LOGAN, PIONEER, 1875, FORMER PARK COMMISSIONER, NOW OF THE CROWN BUILDING, 615 WEST PENDER STREET, WHO VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS AFTERNOON, AND REMAINED TO CHAT, 25 JUNE 1946.

“GASTOWN PRISONERS TIED TO STUMPS.” BY B.A. MCKELVIE, *PROVINCE*, 8 JUNE 1946.

Major Matthews: When did you come to Burrard Inlet, Mr. Logan?

Mr. Logan: “In 1875, with my father and the family.”

Major Matthews: Did you notice in the *Province* recently a news item to the effect that “Gastown prisoners tied to stumps.” The item appeared in the magazine section, 8th June, and was to the effect that the policemen of Granville, Burrard Inlet, or someone, tied prisoners to stumps. On April 8th the same newspaper published an item reporting a lecture given by a Miss Boutilier, past president, Vancouver Section, B.C. Historical Association, in which she had stated, so it is alleged, that Granville pioneers tied prisoners to trees; please note, in one case it was trees; the other, stumps. What is your opinion of the truth of such assertions?

CHAIN GANG, NEW WESTMINSTER.

Mr. Logan: “I did not read the article. I have never seen, nor ever heard of such a thing as tying prisoners to stumps. My opinion is that the writer must have a very vivid imagination. I should think he would be well advised to check the facts before he published such statements. The nearest I have ever seen to that sort of thing was in New Westminster in 1875 at the time of our first arrival here. There was what was known as the chain gang, and the prisoners had leg irons fastened to their legs.”

LOGGING OFF THE FOREST IN LYNN VALLEY.

Mr. Logan, continuing: “Speaking of logging on Burrard Inlet. There used to be a logging road running up the west side of Lynn Valley. I did not know how far, but it was built in this way. First they laid skids about five feet long on the path they had cleared through the forest; then they would mortice out about two feet in the top centre of the skid as it lay embedded in the ground, and to a depth of about three or four inches. Into the cavity thus made they would insert a piece of hardwood, usually birch, and spike it down. The reason hardwood was used was because the friction of the heavy log passing over the soft fir of the skid cut away the softer wood more quickly; with the hardwood it lasted longer, and in the long run, reimbursed for the extra work of morticing in a piece of hardwood.”

DOGFISH OIL. BEARS.

“Off Siwash Rock there were frequently big schools of dogfish; they were caught with nets by Indians and white alike; the Indians took them to their settlement at ‘The Mission,’ North Vancouver, where they boiled them down to get the oil. They sold the fish oil to the Moodyville Sawmill. The loggers would take this oil out on their skid roads, and then a man with a pail of it would go ahead of the oxen drawing the logs, and give each skid a swipe with a wide brush, like a whitewash brush, he had dipped in the oil pail. It made the logs run easier. The oil smelt strong, especially after the sun had been on it a little while. I have heard of the bears licking the skids afterwards to get the greasy stuff off. Usually there were eight oxen on a turn of logs; six or perhaps eight oxen, and they would haul the logs the length of the skidroad, which might be a mile, or two miles, more or less.”

OXEN.

Major Matthews: What, Mr. Logan, is your opinion of the treatment of the animals, that is, by their drivers? Did they mistreat them at all; did the animals suffer? We started the conversation on the treatment of human beings, and I wanted to gather how the same persons would treat their animals.

Mr. Logan: “My recollection is that the animals were treated, under the circumstances, as well as they could be. I do not remember ever having seen a prod or goad used. It was usually something more like a switch or buggy whip. I have often seen oxen being yoked up together. They were always yoked in pairs, and then each pair was fastened together to make a team of six or eight oxen. I have never seen those in charge having any difficulty getting them into position; not any more than getting horses. I think that is my

answer to your question. If the animals had been ill-treated they could not have been yoked together with such ease. I take it, Major Matthews, you are trying to find out if the drivers exercised judgment and kindness in handling their animals, and my answer is that, with very rare exceptions, the loggers of those days were just as humane, and as fine a type of men, as you would find any logging camp in British Columbia, or anywhere else, today."

MAGEE HIGH SCHOOL ANNUAL, 1945-1946. A LIBEL.

(After reading page eleven) "Do you want my opinion?"

(Pointing to page eleven) "My opinion of this paragraph is that while there may be a fraction of truth in it, it is put in such exaggerated words that it makes the whole article a libel on conditions as they then existed, and shows the absolute ignorance of the writer. It is a 'crime' that such misleading and unworthy statements should be given out to the young generations of today.

"I am absolutely in favour of a free press, but, for instance, if there should be a building burned, the headlines in the newspapers record it as, say, '100,000 fire,' whereas the facts are it is only \$50,000, and this applies to almost anything and everything which occurs which can be emblazoned to the public in scare headlines. That is my opinion of the free press today. To the ordinary layman it would appear that the object of these exaggerated headlines is to sell the newspaper, but in my opinion it is a boomerang to the newspaper which publishes it. As a whole, the public invariably halve what they read; they have become suspicious. What, then, advantage accrues to the newspaper whose readers will accept only half of what is in it as truth?"

PARKS BOARD, 1916-1919. SEAWALL, FIRST NARROWS.

Major Matthews: Mr. Logan, you were on the Parks board a number of years, 1916-1919?

Mr. Logan: "In that connection. You remember the fast C.P.R. steamer *Princess Patricia*; she was a turbine steamer; the first on the Pacific Coast, I think; used to run from Liverpool to the Isle of Man, and then came out here and the C.P.R. put her on the Vancouver-Nanaimo run. Well, the swell which she would throw up as she passed swiftly through the First Narrows was washing away the beach between Prospect Point and Brockton Point. I got an idea that we should have a seawall, and that it should extend from Brockton Point to Prospect Point, and then, after skipping Prospect Point itself, should commence again, and extend all the way around, ultimately, to False Creek. We took the matter up with Ottawa, and my recollection is that we got a small allotment of money, and that was the beginning of the seawall which has gradually been extended along the shore of the Park in the First Narrows."

KITSILANO BEACH. FALSE CREEK FLATS.

"Then, another incident, during one of those years in which I was Park Commissioner, the filling in of the False Creek Flats, where the Canadian National and Great Northern terminals are now, was begun, and the Parks Board made arrangements with the contractors who were filling in the head of False Creek, and sand was pumped onto the Kitsilano Beach, where the street car ends now."

As narrated, and typed as he spoke, 25 June 1946.

P.S. During our conversation, Mr. Logan lit his pipe fifteen times.

J.S. Matthews.