

Early Vancouver

Volume Six

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Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1940-1945.

Supplemental to volumes one, two, three, four and five collected in 1931, 1932, 1934, 1939 and 1944.

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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After about two hours, Mr. Plante and his sister Mrs. Mayers and the little girl departed. Mrs. Mayers is a fine specimen of womanhood; good looking for her age; shapely features; her complexion shows no sign of any Indian blood; she is most kindly mannered, modest and somewhat heavily formed; she must weigh about 150 or 160 pounds, I suppose; by no means small, nor large, but is a very well-proportioned and motherly woman whom I surmise keeps a very comfortable home for those who look to her. Both brother and sister seemed to have enjoyed their visit, and were quite complimentary on the work being done by the City Archives.

J.S. Matthews.
20 June 1944.

From notes made last evening at the City Hall, immediately they left.

SURVIVORS, 1944. PETITION FOR INCORPORATION.

On the afternoon of 11 July 1944, Mr. W.H. Chase, pioneer, last proprietor of the Deighton Hotel, Granville, otherwise "Gassy Jack's of Gastown," called at the City Archives, City Hall, accompanied by his daughter, Mrs. W.W. Hatfield, and enjoyed tea and cake with Major Matthews.

During the conversation the photostatic copy of the petition was produced, Mr. Chase found his own signature on it, and also that of his brother, Ben. F. Chase. And then the complete roll of names was slowly read out to Mr. Chase. He could recall all of them which most people can recall, and there were others he knew nothing about, just as the rest of us do. So that is fairly certain that a required number of signatures were necessary to the petition, and, it is probable, guests at the hotel were pressed into service to that end. Anyway, there appear to be ten or a dozen names which seem to be unknown to all of us.

And Mr. Chase and I came to the conclusion—and Mr. Calvert Simson, former storekeeper at the Hastings Sawmill, 1884, concurred—that with the exception of Mr. W.H. Chase and his brother Ben. F. Chase, now in California, none of the other signatories are now living.

J.S. Matthews.

CONVERSATION WITH MR. HERBERT WILLIAM MARTIN, PIONEER, OF 744 WEST 8TH AVENUE, WHO TOGETHER WITH HIS SISTER, MRS. J.M. VYE, VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS AFTERNOON, 17 JULY 1944.

I noticed Mr. Martin was wearing the lapel "button" indicating that he had served in the last war, 1914-1918.

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION. ALDERMAN ROBERT BALFOUR. BEAVERMOUTH. STONEY CREEK BRIDGE. SURPRISE CREEK. REVELSTOKE. SICAMOUS.

Mr. Martin: "My father, with my mother and the rest of the children, and Alderman Balfour of the first City Council; my father was in partnership with him all the time, came over the mountains just ahead of the Canadian Pacific Railway grade. Father was keeping a boarding house at the end of the steel; we would be ahead of the grade, then when they came up to us, we would move on. Balfour was superintendent of bridge construction; he built the Stoney Creek bridge; at the time it was built it was supposed to be the highest bridge in the world. We started at Beavermouth, just west of Field, and the next stop was at Surprise Creek, and the next was Stoney Creek, and the next Revelstoke, and then where Sicamous is now, and then we stopped at Kamloops. Then we had to cross the river to the opposite bank to where the railway was being built. So we crossed and drove to Yale, and took the old stern wheeler *Rithet*, flat bottom, to New Westminster."

ARRIVAL AT GRANVILLE, 1885.

"We took the boat from New Westminster to Victoria, but they did not like the place and came back to Granville, or 'Gastown,' arriving here October 1885. Then we went into the hotel business, and built the Burrard Hotel at the northeast corner of Hastings and Columbia streets, where the Broadway Hotel is

now, and it was opened just one weeks before 'The Fire' came along and there were three men burned to death there.

"That, too, was practically the cause of my father's death. He got all burned inside, and lived for six years after that. But after 'The Fire,' he and Bob Balfour, his son-in-law, built the hotel where the Ranier Hotel is now on the southwest corner of Carrall and Cordova streets. Father sold out to Allan and MacDonald, and after that it was called the Balmoral Hotel, and the Quann Bros. got it, and just how and when I don't know as I was away."

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION.

"Nothing especial happened coming over the mountains. We were driving in a long covered wagon; making camp; in the height of summer it was lovely; rough, though, and you had to keep your ears open for them yelling, 'Blast.' We came down the old Indian tote road through the Canyon. You could get all the meat you wanted up there in the mountains; could buy it every few miles, get it from the Indians. My mother said that that trip was the best time of her life; she used to dote on that. In the wagon was my mother and three sisters and three boys. I rode a pony, rode a pony all the way. There was Mother and Adeline" (Mrs. Balfour) "and Maud, and Carrie here" (Mrs. Martin, who was standing beside him as he spoke) "and the three boys, Len, my eldest brother, and Ed. and Acie" (Asa) "all in the wagon, and Mother and Father and Mrs. and Mr. Balfour" (Adeline.) "There were camps all the way along until we left Kamloops, and then they were on the south side of the river opposite to the side we were travelling."

CHINESE.

"There were not any Chinamen until you got to Yale. I think the first Chinaman I saw—ever saw—was at Yale, and there were not any Chinamen until you got to Yale. I think the first Chinaman I ever saw was at Yale, and goodness knows there were plenty of them there. Onderdonk had them."

STONEY CREEK BRIDE. SURPRISE CREEK.

Note: at this point I got out some old photos and showed them to Mr. Martin.

C.V.P. Str. 99, N. Str. 64	C.P.R. Telegraph Office, Cordova Street.
C.V.P. Out. 185 and 346	Stoney Creek bridge
C.V.P. Out. 145, G.N. 291	Surprise Creek

Mr. Martin: (continuing) "that's Stoney Creek bridge; we lived down here in the bottom, by the creek. And this is Surprise Creek. I think that is an old construction trail, and this here is the first C.P.R. Telegraph office in that block on Cordova Street, where I worked as messenger. Mayor George Miller says that he was the first telegraph messenger in Vancouver, but he was not. I was the first and he was the third."

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY TELEGRAPH. FIRST MESSENGER'S UNIFORM.

"The C.P.R. Telegraph Office was right across the street from the present C.P.R. Station." (See photo C.V.P. Str. 99, N. Str. 64.) "There had been a telegraph office in Vancouver before that but they were without a messenger. I was the first telegraph messenger in Vancouver. At first I worked without a uniform, but they sent all the way to Montréal and got a uniform for me. It was the same kind of cloth as the cloth they made trainmen's uniforms; cap and all; just the same as trainmen's uniforms. And I got the big sum of ten dollars a month.

"If I had to deliver a message for Mr." (R.H.) "Alexander, manager of the Hastings Sawmill, I had to walk there; there were no bicycles; no one could have ridden one of those high bicycles down there, and safety bicycles had not been invented. But what you did need was gum boots; everything was mud down there, down Alexander Street way through the trail. Until they built the C.P.R. tracks on a trestle out over the beach, and then I took to the trestle when I had a message to deliver to the mill."

VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE, 1887. TORCH BOYS. THE SECOND FIRE OF VANCOUVER, 1887.

"I was torch boy in the Vancouver Volunteer Fire Brigade. They took us on in the summer of 1887, after the first fire of 1886, and we were on duty for 36 or 48 hours at the time of the second scare in 1887. The fire was up on the hill, past Cambie Street, up Pender and Seymour Street way. There was a high wind, and there were sparks from the small fires. Of course, there were no buildings up there at that time; the buildings were all down on Carrall and Abbott streets, and they were fighting to keep the fire and the

sparks away from them. It was just a bush fire—severe bush fire, of course—all around up there past Cambie Street was all logs and slash which had not been burned in the first big fire in 1886.” (Photo No. C.V.P. F.D. 21, N.F.D. 6 of Volunteer Fire Brigade, First Dominion Day celebration, corner Water and Carrall Street, is produced.) “But, about this old photo. You can see two boys standing behind the men who are kneeling and in front of the men who are standing, between the two ranks, two boys. Well, the boy on the left nearest the fire engine is myself, and the boy on the right furthest from the engine is Eddie Miller, Postmaster Miller’s son.”

TORCHES.

“The torches were just cans of coal oil with a big wick; just naked light; we carried it with a match, and used the torch as a flare, and carried it on the end of a long stick. Our duties as torch boys were to be right there when they were coupling or uncoupling the hose, and to hold the light so that the men could see what they were doing.”

WATER FROM WELLS. FIRE WATER FROM CISTERN. WOODWARD’S DEPARTMENT STORE.

“When we were fighting the second fire of 1887, we got our water from a cistern opposite Woodward’s store, in the street at the northwest corner of Abbott and Hastings Street.” (Shown in Dakin’s Fire Map, November 1889, as “cistern.”) “We pumped water from that.”

SURVIVORS OF VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADE.

“I don’t know how many of the old fire brigade, the Volunteer Fire Brigade I mean, there are living now beside myself, but all I can think of is two, and they are Hugh Campbell and Fred Upham,” (*NOTE ADDED LATER*: “and J.A. Mateer.”)

At this point it was decided that we had talked enough, so Mr. Martin, and his sister Mrs. Vye, Mrs. J.M. Vye, went off, Mr. Martin carrying with him a print of the photo showing the Fire Brigade all lined up on the corner of Carrall and Water streets, Dominion Day, 1887, in which he appears.

J.S. Matthews.