

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

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MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH WILLIAM HENRY EVANS, 866 WEST 15TH AVENUE, VANCOUVER, WHO VERY KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS MORNING, 19 FEBRUARY 1941, TO TALK ABOUT THE HUDSON'S BAY STEAMER *BEAVER*.

WRECK OF S.S. *BEAVER*.

Mr. Evans said: "I came to Vancouver from Toronto in 1886; I was working for the C.P.R. at Yale, in the machine shop under Andrew Onderdonk and 'Fatty' Armstrong, and cut the end of my thumb off, and was sent down to Westminster by freight train to Dr. Trew. Then I went back to Yale again, and saw the first train come through to Port Moody; my name sake, Billy Evans, was engineer. And I stayed at Yale until the shops burned down, and then I was brought down to the roundhouse in Vancouver, or Vancouver shops, the little bit of a shed at the back of Carrall Street, near the B.C. Electric Railway Co., they had a bit of a turn table you turned by hand there; push it. Then I quit.

"The next thing I did was to take a contract to clear some lots on False Creek, north side, south end of Carrall Street over False Creek, just east of the street" (old George Black's slaughter house.) "I had two brothers with me. We cleared the lots, we certainly did. I never got paid for all. Then I was here in New Westminster at the time of the fire.

"Then one day, old Capt. George Marchant and I were fooling around at the Sunnyside; that was the only place to go to anyway to spend time, and he asked me to come on the *Beaver* with him as assistant engineer; the *Beaver* was tied up to the Hastings Sawmill store wharf, and the chief engineer was David Simmons, and my brother Tom was deck hand, and a Chinaman, 'One Lung,' was cabin boy. That must have been about the June 1888, because I was only on her a month when she went on the rocks."

OBSERVATION POINT, NOW PROSPECT POINT.

"She had been running north, and this time, the night she was wrecked, it was dark, about one a.m. in the morning; we were going to Nanaimo for bunker coal before going north to some island, Harwood or Thurlow Island, and from the time we left the dock until we were on the rocks was not very long, I think I was having a sleep and don't actually know who was on board except the crew, or if there were any except the crew.

"Anyway, I think the tide was pretty near high water, but still running in, because the captain hugged the shore pretty tight to get past the eddy off Observation Point, and the first thing I knew she hit, and that settled it. We all got off. We were in too much of a hurry to pack up, and believe me, it would not have taken any of us three minutes to pack up, because in those days we travelled light. We all got off into the water and waded ashore; walked through the park to the Sunnyside Hotel, and we were at rest, and peace. There was a peaceful calm settled down on us. The barkeeper, when he saw us, thought we had gone nutty because we had not long before left the bartender with goodbyes, and promised we would see him again, by and by, but he did not expect to see us that quick."

***BEAVER'S* WALKING BEAM.**

"About the walking beam. I was up with Mr. A.E. LePage at Stanley Park workshops the other day; we both went up together to have a look at it. They have got it all covered with black paint now, and it looks sort of dilapidated; it was lying on the floor with a lot of other machinery and miscellaneous junk, but I recognised it at once.

"The *Beaver* had four of those side levers or walking beams, two for each engine. The boilers burned slack coal, and lots of it, and we kept up a pressure of well, she blew off at thirteen pounds; the valve was set for thirteen pounds. And the engine would stop dead if the steam went down to six pounds; the steam pipes were not covered in those days. The steam led to the steam chest, and the rocker arms, or walking beams as some call them, worked the air pump of the jet condenser, boiler feed pump, bilge pump, and any other little pump kicking around. In order to pump the bilge we had to set the whole machinery going; the paddle wheels need not be engaged until we disconnected with a sliding clutch on the main shaft.

"That walking beam down in the Stanley Park workshops came off the S.S. *Beaver*. I know it did because I've handled it lots and lots of times, and am familiar with it."

[signed] William H. Evans,
February 19th 1941.