

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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4. Eleanor, born in Victoria, and now Mrs. Walter Nelson, living at Scott's Creek, near Sorrento, Shuswap. Her husband is on the ferry boat on the lake. She has six children, three sons and three daughters.

"That makes thirteen grandchildren altogether."

THE RETURN OF GENERAL CURRIE TO VANCOUVER.

A CURSORY MEMO BY J.S. MATTHEWS.

Written following a letter, dated 13 February 1941, from Colonel Willis O'Connor, Office of the Principal Aide-de-Camp, Government House, Ottawa. (His Excellency the Earl of Athlone.) As Major O'Connor he was with General Currie the day he returned to Vancouver. Col. O'Connor's letter says in part: *"It's hard for a great man to be a hero in his own country. He played too straight a game."*

My recollection is that, news being that General Currie would reach Vancouver in the morning—I think by C.P.R.—I arose earlier than usual and made my way downtown. I found portions of Granville Street roped off, lamppost to lamppost, with a thick rope, about one inch, from Hastings Street to the old Hotel Vancouver on Georgia Street. I waited, as I was too late to reach the station.

There were few people on the streets; fewer than usual. The ropes hung bare; none were near them; it seemed queer to see streets roped off for a crowd, and a few stragglers only on the sidewalks. It seemed ominous.

However, presently, the procession came up the street. I forget just what, but a few motor cars, and it hurried onwards; there was scarcely a cheer. I do not recall hearing one. I hurried on down to "The Arena," on Georgia Street West, at Denman, and walked in just as the procession arrived.

The inside of the "Arena," since burned down, was not especially prepossessing. It "sat" about 5,000, but was gaunt and bare; tier on tier of seats—bleachers—high up to the roof. All were empty; not a soul sat in them. The interior was poorly lighted in daytime, better at night, and this was daytime. In the centre of the large wooden floor was a platform, perhaps forty feet wide by twenty feet deep, and a lot of chairs ranged in rows.

As soon as the procession arrived, all those who entered seemed to go up on the platform and take seats; General Currie and others of his party, excepting Major O'Connor, among them. Major O'Connor stayed on the floor and I spoke to him. I had met him in Ottawa during the war. There were more people, it seemed, on the platform than on the floor as audience.

I whispered to Major O'Connor, "This is awful."

Major O'Connor replied, "Never mind; he's living it down."

Poor Currie; it was a terrible welcome; heartless, thoughtless, cruel, and undeserved. I was ashamed of Vancouver that day.

HERE IS PART OF COL. O'CONNOR'S LETTER, 13 FEBRUARY 1941.

I can remember the day that General Currie went to the old arena; it wasn't a very friendly reception. It is hard for a great man to be a hero in his own country. He played too straight a game for the politicians, and would not be under their thumbs.

Willis O'Connor.

J.S. Matthews.

18 February 1941.