

A Real Canadian Pioneer

Back to George IV's Time With A Vancouver Citizen.

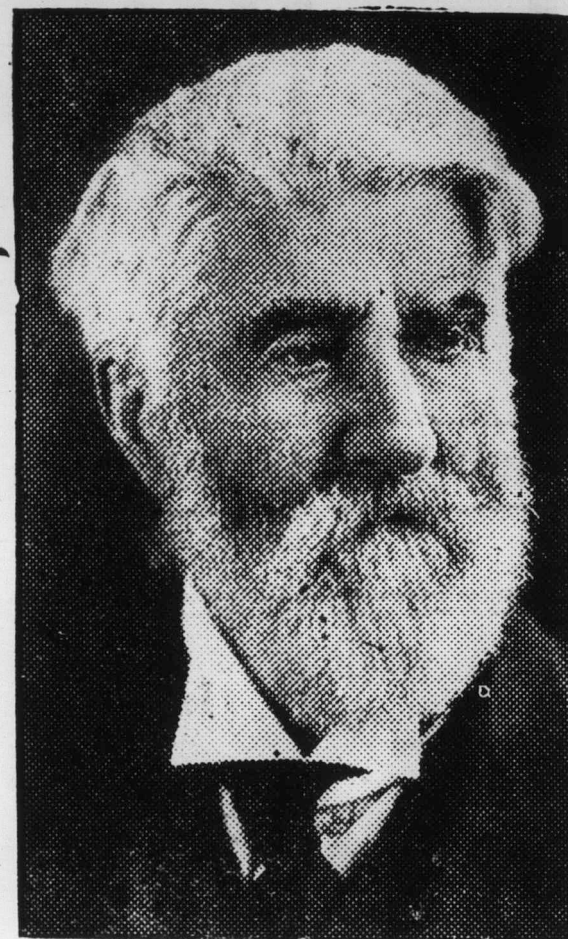
(By Noel Robinson)

"As one gets older I think one's childhood's memories get clearer, and I remember, as if I were there now, standing on the stone wall of the railings at Hyde Park the better to see the illuminations at the Coronation of King William IV. I was just a small child then."

Until he recorded this fact, very simply, I had not fully realized that in Mr. Frederick William Stevenson ("I should not have been christened Frederick William if I had happened to be born in these days", he had remarked, laughing) I was talking with a man who was born in the reign of George IV and who had therefore, lived through the reigns of five British monarchs, one of whom had occupied the throne for over sixty years.

There is, perhaps, a tendency to write a little extravagantly of men and women who have far overpast the allotted span of life and who still retain their faculties unimpaired—possibly it is because we live at such high pressure now that we do not expect the human machine to stand as much as it used to do in our grandfather's day. But in the presence of Mr. Stevenson it is difficult not to enthuse.

When I rang at the door of his home (he is staying for the winter with his son, Dr. R. G. Stevenson) an old gentleman, sturdily built, fresh-complexioned, blue-eyed, with white beard and a great mass of snow-white hair, opened the door briskly, shook hands and invited



MR. F. W. STEVENSON

me in. Could this be the man who had celebrated his 97th birthday the day before and who, with his wife—who is 87 years of age—hopes to celebrate the 68th anniversary of their wedding day next February? There proved to be no mistake about it. Later I found that they have over one hundred grandchildren and that the family was very well represented at the front in the Great War.

In a brief article one can only hint at the career of this grand old pioneer. The man himself and his outlook on life—a most optimistic outlook—is a more interesting study than his life, full of incident as that has been.

Though he has never been back to London since he was a child—he was born in Lambeth, London,—Mr. Stevenson talked of streets and places there which are household words as though he knew them intimately, and he believes he could easily find his way about in the world's great Metropolis if he should return. Next to those illuminations at the coronation of King William his most vivid childish recollection appears to be of Paddington Green, where he used to go and stay, and where there were some very big trees—elms or oaks, he supposes. "I suppose those trees will be gone long ago", he observed. As Paddington station stands there now they probably are gone.

Drifting To Death.

One of old Mr. Stevenson's daughters married Mr. Thomas Molson, one of the heads of the famous banking firm, and it was, perhaps, appropriate that Mr. Stevenson himself should travel from Quebec to Montreal aboard the John Molson, one of the first steamships of all time. He has very vivid-recollections of his journey from Montreal to Prescott—this also, would be in the reign of William the Fourth—how they were poled up the rapids at various places. The journey took 17 days. "At the time hundreds of people were dying along the shores, for it was the year—1832—of the great cholera in Europe. Before they got to the worst part of Long Sioux, four Frenchmen took them into a little bay in the forest and left the boat with the children and women in it. "We drifted out and travelled at a tremendous rate, but fortunately ran upon

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