

## Tisdall's Sporting Goods Store

CHARLES EDWARD TISDALL, called Charlie by his friends, arrived in Vancouver in 1888 and began business as a gunsmith, sleeping under the counter of his own shop. He had left his native Birmingham, England, in 1886 and had opened his own merchant's shop in Fredericton, New Brunswick, before his 21st birthday and was given the right to vote on a tradesman's qualifications. In Vancouver he opened a small store on Cordova Street before moving to the 600 block of West Hastings Street.

He didn't waste any time and was soon involved in the political scene. From 1904 to 1910 Charlie was chairman of the Vancouver Parks Board.

By 1910 Tisdall boasted that his sporting goods store was the largest west of Chicago with as many as 5,000 rifles and shotguns in racks down one side of his store some three tiers high. It was about that time that Henry B. Morley became a junior partner in Tisdall's store, and the partners amassed a small fortune by supplying guns for Sun Yat-sen's revolution in China. Chinese "coolies" would bring gunny sacks filled with silver "shoes" up to the office on the mezzanine floor, drop them with a polite bow that would be returned by Morley, and then leave without a word. The "shoes" were quarter or half-pound ingots of silver from Hong Kong, so called because they looked like Dutch wooden shoes. Morley spent many a night puzzling over bills of lading for shipments of bones of Chinese dead that had been shipped back to their place of birth on the Empress ships. The shipments actually contained rifles, shotguns and ammunition destined for the Chinese revolution. The secrets of the

arms trafficking enterprise came to light when Morley at the age of 90 was on his deathbed in Penticton. He told the story to his son Alan, a newspaper reporter with the *Vancouver Sun* and the author of the title *Vancouver: From Milltown to Metropolis*. The book had been published some three years earlier.

### Opposite

Charles E. Tisdall was the Provincial Minister of Finance in 1919, Mayor of Vancouver from 1921 to 1922 and Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge of British Columbia & Yukon from 1923 to 1924.

### Below

Carved from a mastodon's tusk discovered in the gold fields of the Alaska, the Grand Master's gavel is now displayed in the Grand Lodge Museum.



*Geo. L. Wood* Charles E. Tisdall Vancouver B.C.  
Grand Master A.F. & A.M. B.C.A. 1923-24