

Early Vancouver

Volume Two

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Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1932.

Supplemental to volume one collected in 1931.

About the 2011 Edition

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CITY ARCHIVES, VANCOUVER

Points from Letters

“ SIWASH ” INDIANS

You published on March 13 an illustration of a very interesting Totem from the West Coast of British Columbia. But why is it described as the work of “ Siwash ” Indians ? During my residence among these Indians I was never able to locate any tribe known officially by this name. On the contrary, if a Coast Indian was called a “ Siwash ” he resented it as much as any other coloured person would resent being called a “ nigger.” There would appear to be an almost exact parallel between the two expressions. “ Siwash ” is often used by white men on the West Coast (frequently contemptuously), but never by Indians themselves. Hence it is difficult to understand why it is sometimes used by scientific writers in England. Your article states that this particular Totem came from “ the northern part of Vancouver Island.” The Indians who inhabit these parts are sub-tribes of the once-powerful Kwaguitl (or Kwawkewlth) Confederacy. If we could know the exact place from which the Totem came it would be possible to name the tribe. There is one other interesting feature about it. The Kwaguitls usually carve the Thunder Bird with wings outspread. Folded wings are usual among the tribes farther north.—The REV. F. S. SPACKMAN, Vicar of Marple, Cheshire: formerly Principal of the Indian Residential Schools, Alert Bay, B.C.

Item # EarlyVan_v2_014

CHIL-LAH-MINST (JIM FRANKS). CONVERSATION WITH JIM FRANKS, 20 NOVEMBER 1932.

"My father was Chil-lah-minst; come down here, Skwayoos, from Squamish with people get smelts, 'bout this time, fall, lots smelts here Skwayoos. My father have little hut down at corner, foot of Yew Street, by bathhouse, where beach turn. Squamish people come down here to get food, go back Squamish for winter.

"I was born at Skwayoos, right here, down by the corner there, foot yew Street, where the beach turns west, by the bathhouse."

Jim Franks ought to be about 62 or 64, as he says he was working in the Hastings Sawmill the day of the Fire (13 June 1886), and he was about 16 years old then. He says he remembers August Jack Kitsilano (August's mother is Jim's sister) who is his nephew, "as a little boy." August Jack is 54 or 56, so that it is likely that Chil-lah-minst was born on Kitsilano Beach about, approximately, 1870. He was selling baskets when he called this afternoon, and we had a cup of tea together in the kitchen. He is a fine old Indian gentleman; queer, perhaps, to whiteman's way of doing things, but with a very sound conception of the fundamentals of life.

"Siwash Rock was once an Indian man. I think one man make the world, but some people say three men. They go out sturgeon bank, out Point Grey; they wash themselves, wash themselves, wash themselves, make themselves very clean, keep themselves very clean; they get very powerful. Then the three great men go all around the world making it. If they find poor people, they give them stuff so they no more poor, teach them how to do things better, show them how to get food, but if they find people too smart, too clever, they say, 'you go to hell, we not trouble about you.' That's how Siwash Rock came to be where he is; he too smart, three great men turn him into rock, so people see not much good to be too smart."

Jim said he would like another cup of tea.

"I'm Indian, me Indian, not Siwash. My face to the front, my body behind. I may have black face, but it in the front. When I die, what inside me," (here he pressed his chest with his right hand) "I think go to my son, maybe to my grandchild." (What Jim was trying to convey was that he was not two-faced, but honest, sincere, upright.) "Priests supposed to protect Indians, but government do what priest say. Priest government." (Priests are the government.) "Government lease land, Indian land, but Indian not get lease money. Once I young, strong, work Hastings Sawmill, two and one half years; work on carriage, good man; then I work Fader Bros. sawmill" (on False Creek at north end of Granville Street, where Robertson and Hackett sawmill now) "but now I get old, have no money, have to sell basket. When whitemans call me Siwash I say, 'Go to hell.'" (See clipping, above.)

"Smamchuze," he said, in referring to a little bay at the foot of Howe Street on False Creek—see old maps—"I think once be a little island, one time. Indian put dead man there; little island of sand, water come all 'round, maybe two or three crab apple trees on top where water never come; always dry. Indians put dead man there so wolf not get him. Indians always put deadmans on island so wolf not get him." (August Kitsilano says, "Smamchuze: a little graveyard on an island with perhaps a bit of grass on top dry part; tide wash grass, graves and island away.")

FURTHER CONVERSATION WITH CHIL-LAH-MINST (JIM FRANKS), 10 DECEMBER 1932.

"My grandfather Chillahminst too. My father Chil-lah-minst make canoe all his life, he make canoe several places; one place Skwayoos, down foot Yew Street on beach; make canoe all his life, just canoe, his trade; when I get old I be Chil-lah-minst, I do work, take my father's name, just same you do. One time long ago, logger take out fir tree only; logger not much use cedar—leave cedar—but logging road make easy for Indian to get cedar tree out for canoe to Skwayoos. My father all time chisel, chisel, chisel, big round stone in hand for hammer, make canoe, then burn him out pitch.

"First I was Jim, then when I get married, priest give me name Franks.

"Chief Chip-kaay-am of Snaug very good, very good man, very kind, very good; that's why him family make him chief." (See Rev. C.M. Tate's pleasant recollections of "Old Chief George"—Chip-kaay-am.)

I asked Chillahminst about the Indians Swillamcan, Kanachuck and Mrs. Salpcan, who sold their "improvements" at Greer's Beach to Sam Greer. (See *The Fight for Kitsilano Beach*.)

"Will-ahm-can was Chief Jimmy Jimmy's father. Kanachuck, not sure, but I think brother to Chief Chip-kaay-am of Snauq; maybe Mrs. Salpcan was his wife, don't know. We leave Skwayoos, go Hastings Mill to work; peoples at Snauq sell 'improvements' to Greer.

"Jericho Charlie my uncle; Frank Charlie" (Ayatak) "of Musqueam my cousin. Jericho Charlie die long time ago; fell off C.P.R. bridge cross False Creek; he live Jericho, just by slough, on bar in front of slough; Jerry Roger's camp there. May be Jericho Charlie have place Skwayoos; don't know." (August Kitsilano says, "Yes, he did.") "Frank Charlie live Musqueam now; old man. Frank Charlie is same as Capilano; his name Capilano too. Indian come down Squamish, marry Musqueam woman; by and by Musqueam give Squamish man place to live down by Mahly, by beach, Musqueam up by slough, Mahly down by sea, way down. Old Man Capilano live Mahly too.

"Old Man Capilano, I just remember him; very old man when I see him. I was about 20 or 21 when Vancouver burn; must be about 67 or 70 now. Old Man Capilano died long ago, don't know when. Lah-wa come next, but he drink too much booze, fall out of canoe in First Narrows. Priests say too much booze must stop; Joe good Catholic; priest say Joe to be chief, to get Indians to come to church. Joe some relation Chief Lah-wa.

"I had fourteen children; all die. Some live two three months, then die, cough up blood; my wife sick."

Assuming that Chillahminst (Jim Franks) was born in his father's hut on Kitsilano Beach about 1870 or earlier, as he claims to be older than 62, then this bears out Mrs. J.Z. Hall's (née Greer) statement that there had been several houses located on the site of her father's pioneer cottage prior to the one burned down by the Canadian Pacific Railway officials. Sam Greer bought the Indian "improvements" (see *Fight for Kitsilano Beach*) some time on or before November 1884. Robert Preston of New Westminster was interested in the preemption of the property in October 1871, and Samuel Preston preempted it in April 1873. As recently as early years of 20th Century, even as late as 1918, smelts could be raked ashore at Kitsilano Beach. (See *Early Vancouver*, Matthews.)

THE SPELLING OF CAPILANO.

Kleoplannah: in a letter to the Colonial government at Victoria, February 1860, A.J. Julius Voight, pioneer, 1858, educated Prussian, spells it "Chief Kleoplannah." Voight afterwards preempted land on False Creek at the foot of Mount Pleasant.

Ki-ap-a-la-no: Captain Richards, R.N., of H.M.S. *Plumper*, in a letter to Governor Douglas in 1859, spells it Ki-ap-a-la-no.

THE NAME CAPILANO.

Hill-Tout says, "The Skqomic at that time had a courageous and resourceful leader in their head chief Kiapilanoq." *Ethnological Survey of Canada*, B.A.A.S., Bradford meeting, 1900, page 490.

"The supreme Siam of the tribe was known by the title Te Kiapilanoq, and had his headquarters at the mouth of the Homultcison Creek now called Capilano by the whites." Same report, page 476.

Andrew Paull and Chief Matthias Capilano contradict. (See below.)

Hill-Tout, 1932: "Pronounce it Kee-yapee-lah-nogh."

Tate, 1932, "Pronounce it Kype-al-lah-nough."

On an old linen map marked "Plan No. 1, Skwawmish Indian Reserve, surveyed by W.S. Jemmett, 1880," the word Capilano is spelled "Kahpillahno."

Frank Charlie (Ayatak) of Musqueam: "Capilano a Musqueam name, not a Squamish name. Squamish people not belong English Bay or Burrard Inlet. Squamish people belong Howe Sound, way over mountains" (West Vancouver.) "Squamish not belong North Vancouver; just camp there; whitemans bring