

## Early Vancouver

### Volume Two

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2011 Edition (Originally Published 1933)

*Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1932.*

*Supplemental to volume one collected in 1931.*

### 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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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Footnote or Endnote Reference:

Major James Skitt Matthews, *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2 (Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011), 33.

Bibliographic Entry:

Matthews, Major James Skitt. *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, 2011.

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## **CAPILANO RESERVE.**

On an old linen drawing—an original—marked “Plan No. 1, Skwawmish Indian Reserves,” with a footnote, “surveyed by W.S. Jemmett, 1880,” in the possession of Andrew Paull, who says “the Indian Affairs Office have been unable to find a copy of it in their possession,” the word is spelled “Kahpillahno.” The map shows “Beaver dams” in West Vancouver, and old trails in Gastown and Kitsilano Beach.

Corporal Turner’s original field notes of the survey of Burrard’s Inlet in February and March 1863 are in the Court House, Vancouver. They show “Coal Peninsula” (Stanley Park) and the “Brickmaker’s Claim” (West End) and are complete in detail. He surveyed the mouth of Homulcheson Creek (Capilano River) but does not name it, although he places a square to indicate a house or settlement.

“I have always understood,” writes Noel Robinson, editor of the Vancouver newspaper *Star*, and a close friend of the Capilano family, “from Mrs. Mary Capilano or her son Chief Matthias, that Mrs. Capilano was directly descended from the brother of that first Chief Capilano of whom we know—the one who met Captain Vancouver—and that she married Chief Joe, who was not then chief of the Squamish, but a very prominent and leading Indian of the tribe, and that, as you indicate, he then took the name ‘Capilano.’”

“Chief Matthias is quite clear about this.”

The answer to this is that Chief Joe never was chief of the Squamish tribe, but was chief of the Capilano band of the Squamish tribe. There is not, and apparently never was, a “chief of the Squamish tribe.” As to his meeting Captain Vancouver in 1792, and assuming that he died in 1875—this needs investigation—and that he was 100 years old when he died, then, having been born in 1775, he could not possibly have been chief when Captain Vancouver arrived in 1792, seventeen years later. “Old Chief” Capilano is remembered by several Indians now living whose ages cannot be over 80, and more likely about 70.

Further, Ayatak says the “Old Chief” told him that he was “a big boy, ‘bout five feet high” when Fraser came down the river in 1808. Further, what would he be doing at Whoi-Whoi or Capilano River (Homulcheson) in 1792; he was born in Mahly, according to Ayatak.

## **QOITCHETAHL (ANDREW PAULL).**

Conversation with Andrew Paull, secretary, Squamish Indian Council since 1911 and still, 1933, acting, North Vancouver, 15 December 1932.

## **THE ARRIVAL OF CAPTAIN VANCOUVER.**

It was the duty of the more responsible Indians,” said Mr. Quitchetahl, “to see that the history and traditions of our race were properly handed down to posterity; a knowledge of our history and legends was of similar importance as an education is regarded today among whitemen; those who possessed it were regarded as aristocrats; those who were indifferent, whether adults or children, were rascals. Being without means of transmitting it into writing, much time was spent by the aristocrats in imparting this knowledge to the youth; it was the responsible duty of responsible elders.

“When I was a youth, my father took me fishing with him. I was young and strong, and pulled the canoe while he fished, and as we passed along the shore—you know progress when one is rowing is very slow—it gave him ample time as we passed a given point for him to explain to me all about the various matters of interest of that location, which it was his delight to do. It was in this manner that the history of our people was preserved in the past; it was a duty for elders to attend to equally as important as the schooling of our children is today. Then again, in 1920, all was arranged for me to go to Ottawa to impart some historical information to some historical department there—I never went—but in preparation for it I went especially to Squamish to see the daughter of the ‘real’ ‘Old Chief’ Capilano, a sister to Frank Charlie, or Ayatak Capilano” (Ayatak) “of Musqueam.”

Note: some mistake here; must mean granddaughter. Frank Charlie is grandson.

“It seems that it was a tradition among the Indians of early days that a calamity of some sort would befall them every seven years; once it was a flood, on another occasion a disease wiped out Whoi-Whoi, again it was a snow storm which lasted for three months. The wise men had long prophesied a visitation from a

great people, from a very powerful body of men. Captain Vancouver came in 1792, a year which coincided with the seventh year, the year in which some calamity was expected, regarding the form of which there was much trepidation, so that when strange men of strange appearance, white, with their odd boats, etc., etc., arrived on the scene, the wise men said, 'this may be the fateful visitation, what may it bring us,' and took steps to propitiate the all-powerful visitors.

"It was the custom among Indians to decorate or ornament the interior of festival or potlatch houses with white feathers on festive occasions and ceremonials. The softer outside feathers from beneath the coarser outside covering of waterfowl were saved, and these white eiderdown feathers were thrown and scattered about, ostensibly to placate the spirits, in a manner not dissimilar to the decoration of a Christmas tree with white artificial snow at Christmas time.

"Captain Vancouver reports that he was received with 'decorum,' 'civility,' 'cordiality,' and 'respect,' and that presentations were made to him. I will explain to you the true meaning of this, always bearing in mind that I have come to know, it has come to me as knowledge, through my father's devotion to the duty of elders to pass on by word of mouth the great traditions and history of our race.

"As your great explorer Vancouver progressed through the First Narrows, our people threw in greeting before him clouds of snow white feathers which rose, wafted in the air aimlessly about, then fell like flurries of snow to the water's surface, and rested there like white rose petals scattered before a bride. It must have been a pretty welcome. Then there were presents of fish, all to invoke the all-powerful arrivals to have pity on them; it was the seventh year. You see, there was motive behind it. They were expecting a calamity and were anxious to do anything to avoid it. Read what Vancouver had to say about the conferences which took place, the meaning of which he did not understand, but which reports as, 'they did not seem to be hostile.'

"I am informed that the ceremony of casting the white eiderdown before him took place as Captain Vancouver's ship passed through the First Narrows and was passing Whoi-Whoi, the big Indian village in Stanley Park where the Lumberman's Arch is now. Whoi-Whoi must have been a very large village, for it spread from Brockton Point to Prospect Point. It must also have been a very ancient village; none know its age, but there must have been hundreds, perhaps thousands living there at one time. Tradition says that Captain Vancouver went on up the inlet, spent the night on the shore, but saw few Indians, because none were living up there, so I am told.

"I can quite understand that Captain Vancouver reports Stanley Park as an island blocking the channel, for in earlier days even I can recall that the waters of English Bay almost overflowed into Coal Harbour at Second Beach.

"Tim Moody—Timothy is a flathead, that is, his forehead was flattened according to Indian custom when he was a child, and that is long ago; the sculptor Marega has made a bust model of his head and shoulders—Tim Moody tells you that all Stanley Park is called Paa-pee-ak; that is not correct. At the time of the court proceedings respecting the ejection of squatters from Stanley Park, I was called upon to replace Tim Moody as interpreter; Tim was expressing his own opinions instead of interpreting the witnesses' remarks. During the proceedings, I had to interpret for a very old Indian, Abraham. He continually and consistently referred to Stanley Park as Whoi-Whoi. No; Paa-pee-ak is nothing more than an Indian way of saying park.

"It may be interesting to record how my ancestors cut down a tree. In bygone days, my ancestors cut down many cedar trees in Stanley Park for making canoes and other purposes; you can see the evidences of their attempts to cut down trees even yet. There are many trees in Stanley Park with little holes in them, holes some feet up from the ground. Last year, the Parks Board gave us permission to cut down a tree in Stanley Park to make a canoe, a racing canoe, and there is one such tree, with a little hole in it, near the tree we cut down for the racing canoe, and there are many such throughout the park, right at the head of Beaver Lake trail. You see, the Indian fellers had nothing but stone chisels and a big round stone for a hammer. Cedar trees expand in girth near the ground; frequently they are hollow or rotten in the centre; there would be disadvantage in cutting off at the widest diameter, for not only would the bulge have to be cut off with a stone chisel, but the lower end might have a rotten centre; too much extra labour. So they eliminated all this extra work by going a few feet up the tree trunk and cutting in an exploratory hole, ascertained if the tree was sound; if a rotten centre was struck, the tree was abandoned. That is the

meaning of those little holes in the cedar trees; they are abandoned trees; ask the park forester to show them to you.

“Siwash Rock! Well, Chants is not only a big rock on the beach, that is, symbolically Siwash Rock’s fishing line rolled up in a ball, but it also includes a big hole in the cliff nearby where Slahkayulsh kept his fishing tackle. You can see the hole as you come in on the Victoria boat. Stuk-tuks is too abrupt a pronunciation of the name for the little bay known as Fisherman’s Cove; abruptness destroys the sense of the root from which the word is derived. The longer Stoak-tux is better; it means ‘all cut up’; the rocks there are all fluted and cut up.

“Dick Isaacs’ Indian name is Que-yah-chulk; Tim Moody’s is Yahmas. Frank Charlie” (Ayatak) “of Musqueam is quite entitled to use the surname Capilano; the Capitanos of Capilano River and Frank Charlie of Musqueam both acknowledge descent from the same blood.”

### **QOITCHETAHL, THE SERPENT SLAYER.**

“My ancestor Qoitchetahl, the celebrated serpent slayer of Squamish, was born at Stawmass, near Squamish. The aged Haxten tells me that he was the great-grandfather of my grandmother. I was given the name of Qoitchetahl at a meeting held in my grandmother’s house on the North Vancouver Indian Reserve in 1910 or 1911. All, every one of the old chiefs of the Squamish tribe were present. My grandmother, being a direct descendent of the original Qoitchetahl, herself chose me as the member of the family to bear the name Qoitchetahl.”

Note: the aged and wrinkled Haxten, seated nearby during the talk, is said to be 112 years old—it is fairly conclusive she is over 100. Her rapid and repeated utterance of the word Qoitchetahl sounded, in English, much like “Whichtull” or “Wudge-tal.” [NOTE ADDED LATER: Haxten, or Mrs. Harriet George, North Vancouver, died 8 February 1940; see *Province*, 9 February 1940.]

A full report, somewhat different in detail to that related by August Kitsilano of the legend of Qoitchetahl, is printed in Professor Chas. Hill-Tout’s report on the *Ethnological Survey of Canada*, British Association for the Advancement of Science, Bradford Meeting, 1900, page 530. August Kitsilano’s account is given elsewhere in this record.

### **FURTHER CONVERSATION WITH ANDREW PAULL, NORTH VANCOUVER, 10 JANUARY 1933.**

“The story of Kokohaluk and the burning of Homulcheson is not legend, but actual history,” continued Mr. Paull (Qoitchetahl) “and is in part verified by Haxten,” (Mrs. Harriet George) “my wife’s grandmother, who actually saw the bodies of the slain; she is now over 100 years old, it is claimed that she is 112 years old, so that it is probable that the incident occurred about, say, ninety years ago. I will call her, and interpret for you.”

Query: Ask her why they call it Homulcheson?

(Mr. Paull asks.)

Haxten: “Ahh, ah, ah.” (Mr. Paull interpreting.) “Where they split the cedar trees and made them into a fence” (fort or stockade), “because of the enemy that used to come, in the stockade they had a northern Indian woman imprisoned, Kokohaluk; they had stolen her from the enemy, and were keeping her in the fort; she had become the wife of a Squamish Indian and was an expectant mother.

“Well, about eighteen warriors from the north came in a big canoe and at a moment when it was undefended, attacked the fort at Homulcheson, rescued Kokohaluk, burned the stockade, and made off with her.

“Whilst all this was going on, three Squamish men, all brothers, were coming down in two canoes, one large and one small, from Squamish to Coquitlam. They were proceeding via the North Arm of the Fraser. The canoe had just been completed by the three brothers, and they were taking it as a present to their sister who had married a man at Coquitlam; the smaller canoe was to take the three brothers back to