

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

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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“The Indians moved away from Snauq in 1911,” (The last Indian departed 11 April 1913, “Old Man Jim,” wife and son. JSM) “and the remains of those buried in the graveyard on the reserve close to First Avenue about the foot of Fir or Cedar Street were exhumed and taken for reburial at Squamish. The orchard went to ruin, the fences fell down, and the houses were destroyed; a few hops survived and continued to grow until the building of the Burrard Bridge covered them up. I received a formal invitation to be present at the opening of the great bridge as a guest of the city.”

CHULKS—KEW BEACH, WEST VANCOUVER. CONVERSATION WITH AUGUST KITSILANO, 20 DECEMBER 1932.

“This is the way it is about the big boulder at Chulks. There is a point there, and on the south side, facing south, is a big hole in the rock, and a big stone about five or six feet in diameter in the hole. When the Gods were fixing the geography of the earth, they threw this stone at the top of Mount Garibaldi, that is Chy-kai. Chy-kai is the mountain; Che-kai is the creek. The stone missed the mountain and landed at Chulks, and is there yet for you to see. Squamish Indians were very powerful.

“One of the Gods put the boulder in a sling, and then swung the sling around and around his head to work up speed and force; somehow the sling as it flew around touched something—some say a raven’s wing, others that a slave got in the way of the thrower—touched his arm, spoiled his aim, and the big stone missed the mountain, and now you see it in the crevasse, a big stone five or six feet in diameter in the crevasse facing due south at Chulks. That shows you what power the Squamish Indians had in those days; that’s power.”

Do you believe it? I asked, smiling, and expecting that he would return the smile, but to my surprise and regret at having smiled, he replied most earnestly and vigorously:

“Of course, I believe it; I tell you, it’s true. To show you: in the early days, they once cut a man open, split him down the middle from the top of his head, front to back, all the way down, so that he was open right through, and then they put him in the fire and roast him; the grease run out. Then the eight powerful men start to work to fix him up again. Squamish Indians were very powerful once; could do anything.”

Are they the same eight as those who came before the Indians and were turned into stone at Homulson? I asked.

“No,” replied August, “that’s a different lot; not the same men. These powerful men of whom I speak were Squamish. Well, they sew him up, and after a little while, after they work on him, he get up and walk.

“These eight men were just like other men, only very much power. They live just like wild, only they were not wild. They go up in the mountains, stay in the mountains ten years, wash themselves, wash themselves, good and clean. Then they get power, power to do anything.” (See Hill-Tout, Report, B.A.A.S., 1900 and 1902.) “Then, after they fix him up, they say to the man, ‘See that sawbill? You run race with that sawbill.’ Sawbill duck fly very fast, but the man they fix up run a race with that sawbill, and he won the race; that will show you how powerful those Squamish Indians were in those early days.

“When I was twelve years old, I see the last two of these eight powerful men at Jericho—all the rest dead; the two very old—catching smelts there. My mother Qwhay-wat, she show them to me, and tell me they were the only two living of the eight powerful men. When I was a child, my mother marry again; marry Jericho Charlie, his Indian name Chin-ow-sut. Chin-ow-sut come from twenty-five miles up the Squamish River; his father was the greatest hunter in the Squamish. He killed the biggest grizzly with bow and arrow.”

Comment: it was very strange to hear August Kitsilano, a splendid manly Indian full of worldly wisdom, energy and integrity in ordinary affairs, credited with sound judgment by those who know him, and well able to and does manage the difficulties of his logging business, getting logs out of the woods, down the river, a resourceful man highly regarded by the Indian agent, Mr. Ball, for his worth. August is a mild mannered man, with a pleasant smile when he smiles, and dignified when he does not. He used the telephone, has a rough idea of banking, log scale sheets, etc., but never learned to write or read. He once said to me a wisdom. It was, “Those young fellows never begin to think until the meeting has started; I lie in bed and plan the whole thing out before I get there.”

Yet, here he sat and solemnly told me that he believed the above story, and even related it with such earnestness that it was almost convincing to the listener. Respect for his sincerity forbade further questioning.

**CONVERSATION WITH REV. C.M. TATE, 26 NOVEMBER 1932, AS HE LAY IN HIS BED
INDISPOSED AFTER A TOO FESTIVE CELEBRATION TWO WEEKS AGO OF HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY.**

Mr. Tate is probably the foremost Indian linguist of today, and was an Indian missionary who knew all the coast, and up as far as Yale, in the seventies, eighties and nineties. He listened as I read the foregoing page. Then I remarked, Do you believe in Jack and the Beanstalk?

Mr. Tate's reply was a smile, a nod of the head, and the laconic, "Suppose we'll have to." Then I added quizzingly, And the biblical story of the five loaves and the little fishes with which Christ fed the multitude? Again he nodded. Then how can we point the finger of scorn and ridicule at the Indians?

Mr. Tate replied, "Well, cannot you see the stone at Chulks; doesn't that prove it? You know that Mount Baker in the state of Washington is the 'Mother of All Indians,' don't you? Well, Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt; what's unreasonable about the Mother of All Indians being turned into a mountain of snow, or Siwash Rock being made from an Indian fisherman?"

"Why, I remember," he continued, "one story they told me up at Bella Bella years ago. They told me all about the flood, the great flood which enveloped the earth; that the water was coming up and up, and the people went up the mountain to escape it, but the water kept on coming and coming, until they were in fear that it would soon cover the top. So they cried out, and the people who had gone to a higher mountain heard their cries, broke off the top of the higher mountain, and threw it across to them and saved their lives. Of course, the top broken off landed on top of the smaller mountain, just exactly where it was wanted to fall, and that was twelve miles away. They told me that in all seriousness; the mountain is there yet, top of it and all, just as it was thrown across."

And then the Rev. Mr. Tate smiled again.

AUGUST KITSILANO, OR HAATSALAHNO.

Andrew Paull (Qoitchetahl), secretary of the Squamish Indian Council, having told me that he was a direct descendant of the celebrated hero of the Squamish tribe, Qoitchetahl, the serpent slayer of Squamish—Haxten, an aged Indian woman, says Andrew Paull is the grandson of the great-granddaughter of the original Qoitchetahl—I asked August Kitsilano, grandson of Chief Haatsa-lah-nough, to give me his conception of the legend. He said, 19 December 1932:

"This is the way it was:

"Qoitchetahl just a man, he just get married, then a serpent come in the lake way up above Squamish. Old peoples say to Qoitchetahl, 'You go chase that serpent; don't stay at home asleep with your wife.' So Qoitchetahl he get up, and tell his wife he be away ten days and not to worry; but he go away ten years. Well, when he was going on the way, was following the serpent, he wash, wash, wash himself all the time, take bath in the creeks in the mountains, get power. He gets that power, and the serpent was in the lake swimming about, and then the serpent came to the Indian man. Of course, they talk together, the serpent and the man Qoitchetahl, and the serpent said, 'Go get pitch wood, and drive it into my head, one stick; get three sticks, make sharp, drive one in my head right here, the other one in the middle of my back, and the other one at the end of my dragon tail.' You know, serpents have two heads, one at each end; the one in front is his head, the other is near the tail, and is a dragon's head. I see one once, little fellow, 'bout five feet long; two heads, one in front and one in tail.

"Well, Qoitchetahl did as the serpent told him. Serpent die. Qoitchetahl stay there until serpent all rotten. Then he took a bone, just one special bone, like a club, and he took it down with him out of the mountains. When he comes to the head of the Squamish River, he pulls out that bone, out of his pocket, and he waves it in the air. All the peoples, everybody, just drop, just like dead, but he has stuff which he sprinkle on them, and they all come up again. When the peoples come up, they give him a wife, and by time he gets back to Squamish he had eighteen wives. Everywhere he goes, the people fall down just like