Early Vancouver

Volume Two

By: Major J.S. Matthews, V.D.

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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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REV. CHARLES M. TATE. THE INDIAN CHURCH AT GRANVILLE.

Conversation with Rev. Charles Montgomery Tate, Dominion Day, 1932, and subsequent days during July and August 1932.

The following statement, after successive typings, is as finally approved by the Rev. C.M. Tate.

Other comment: Professor Chas. Hill-Tout. "I am returning the MS. Taking Mr. Tate's statement as a whole I think you are doing good work in making a record. I shall be glad to look over your final proofs."

Rev. W. Lashley Hall, White Rock, B.C., 7 July 1932. "I am glad to discover a man who believes in accuracy. Therefore let me offer my congratulations on the story you have compiled. The best compliment I can give is that it brings Rev. Mr. Tate before me, and accords with all I know of him. I know Mr. Tate very well, and I am sure I could rely implicitly on any statement he makes of things happening within his own ken. Whatever he presents would, ipso facto, command great respect."

Rev. Charles M. Tate, the Indian Church at Granville:

"The first church in Granville stood on the boulder and seaweed strewn shore of Burrard Inlet, on a blunt point of land jutting out into the water at the foot of what is now Abbott Street. Together with the Rev. Thomas Derrick, I dedicated it in 1876," remarked the Reverend Charles Montgomery Tate, Wesleyan Methodist Indian Missionary, once a butcher boy, now a venerable cleric of pioneer days resident with his nephew and niece, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Watson, Lilfred Apartments, Cornwall Street, and today, despite his eighty years, a picture of physical and mental activity, and will be, this afternoon, a guest of the city of Vancouver at the opening of the Burrard Bridge which passes over the Indian village, or rather its site, where once he preached in its potlatch house.

THE FIRST CHURCH IN VANCOUVER.

"The tiny house of God," he continued, "was a little box of a place, perhaps thirty feet long by twenty wide, built on the edge of the low bank, perhaps three or four feet high, of the shore, surrounded by a bit of clearing in the forest, say half an acre, more or less, at a point where the shoreline bulged outwards. It was so close to the shore that the Indians used to tie their canoes to the front steps. This position gave it a certain prominence as a landmark in a marine and forest scene which, in all directions save perhaps the First and Second Narrows, was a verdant forest, covering, as a green blanket, everything from mountain top to water's edge. In the immediate foreground, the shallow shore lay littered with large and small boulders, kelp, seaweed; in the background a narrow fringe of bushes, stumps, etc., and behind that, within a very few yards, were the tall timbers of the woods, wrapping the little grey edifice and its parsonage in a frame of green. The colouring was enhanced by a number of maple trees with light green foliage which, in the sunlight, gleamed against the darker green of fir and cedar; it was a pretty scene in summer.

"To the west, the branches of the firs and cedars overhung the shore, and at high tide the waters of the inlet almost touched the lower branches. To the east were the few houses, curved along the beach, forming the townsite of Granville, in all nine or ten small buildings scarcely visible from the parsonage because of the intervening small trees and bushes. Granville was reached by a single plank laid on the earth from the parsonage."

THE INDIAN CHURCH AT GRANVILLE.

"The path dipped down to the shoreline as it passed Granville, curving somewhat irregularly as it went, and then continued on through the trees to Hastings Mill, at that time the centre of almost every activity on Burrard Inlet. Two or more narrow tracks up and down the low bank from the shore to the church had been worn by the Indians coming and going from their canoes.

"Both buildings, the church and the parsonage, the latter most easterly, were crowded between forest and shore; there was little room. A small garden clustered around the parsonage; there were a few flowers, that was all; space did not permit a vegetable garden or fruit of any sort."

THE METHODIST PARSONAGE.

"The parsonage was the first building used by us for devotional purposes on what is now the site of the city of Vancouver. The lot on which it stood had been bought for three hundred dollars" (one authority

says two hundred) "from the government at Victoria by the Reverend James Turner, the first resident minister in Granville. The front of the parsonage faced the water, and at high tide the steps from the doorway were lapped by the waters of the inlet, and to them the parson tied his boat. It was a very convenient location for the Indians, who came from all parts of the inlet in their canoes, and also for the preacher in his boat, the only means of getting about amongst his parishioners. I never saw a survey map of the townsite of Granville, but I do know that, when the lot was surveyed, the parsonage was found to be on Water Street. Corporal Turner, of the Royal Engineers, whom you tell me made the first survey of Burrard Inlet in 1863, was still surveying when I came; perhaps he surveyed our lot."

THE FIRST MINISTER.

"An itinerant Methodist missionary to the native tribes, I made several visits to Granville between 1872 and 1876. The Rev. James Turner was itinerant preacher to the English speaking residents. In 1873 the parsonage was built by the Rev. James Turner, who had been appointed to the Burrard Inlet Mission by the Toronto Methodist Conference, and who selected the site as being the most central for his large field; his portrait in oils is in the Columbian College, New Westminster. It was a two-storey building of the simple frontier type, with a peak roof and a very large kitchen in which the first services were held and in which I participated. Then, during 1875, the Indian converts to the Christian faith became too numerous for the kitchen; that is, during the incumbency of Rev. Thomas Derrick from Cariboo, who had gone to Cariboo, the Indian church was built on the same lot as the parsonage.

"The Rev. Mr. Derrick had collected subscription in cash and material—the Hastings Sawmill gave most of the lumber—and superintended its construction. He, of course, was actually minister to the white people. When the Indian church was completed, I, as Indian missionary, together with the Rev. Mr. Derrick, dedicated it.

"This will set at rest any misunderstanding as to the priority of parsonage or church, both the first of their kind built in the city now possessing over two hundred sacred edifices. I do not know when the first church services were held in the old Hastings Mill store, but I clearly recall the purchase of an organ with funds raised by public subscription for the services held in the Hastings Mill school house. I presume it is the same organ as is now in the Vancouver City Museum."

THE INDIAN CHURCH.

"The outward appearance of the Indian church was just boards and a hand shaved shake roof; above was a small bell tower, a sort of cupola with a bell, and I can still [hear] its solitary toll tinkling out over the silent waters of Burrard Inlet calling the worshippers, principally Indians, to Sabbath morning devotions. There were a lot of northern Indians working at the Hastings Mill, and they, as also those from Stanley Park, Capilano, and Seymour Creek, came in their canoes. The location was most convenient for the Indians coming by canoe, and was the reason for its being built in that location on the shore; it was equally convenient for the preacher, who did most of his work by boat as the only means of getting about; all landed almost on the steps of the church or parsonage.

"When we went to civilization we first went by trail passable for pedestrians only, a single plank laid on the earth through the trees to Hastings Mill, and then took the old steamer *Senator*—Captain Stevens, I think, was her master, but am not sure—as far as Hastings Landing, quite a bit up the inlet, and then took stage, a wagon with leather springs, cross seats and two horses, from the end of the road to the Royal City.

"The interior of the church was as unpretentious as the exterior; just rough, no attempt at embellishment or ornament, rough, as befitted the circumstance, the general situation, and the tenets of the Wesleyan Methodist denomination. In the spring and summer, the whole scene, church and parsonage, was romantically picturesque, a picture of wild primeval beauty.

"The fact that the crown grant for the property was granted to the Rev. Mr. Pollard on 5 January 1877, that is, four years after the parsonage was erected, is probably explainable by the fact that the Rev. Mr. Pollard, who was chairman of the B.C. District of the Methodist Church, was acting for the Rev. Mr. Turner, and further, that it took some time for the application for the grant for funds to purchase the land to be granted by the Missionary Board at Toronto."

PASTORAL TRAVELS AMONG THE INDIANS.

"People would not believe it now, but the fact is that the district under my care was, from my headquarters which were supposed to be in Nanaimo, down the east coast of Vancouver's Island as far as Victoria, then all Victoria, then over to the Musqueam Indians at the mouth of the Fraser River, and thence up the Fraser River as far as Yale, and an occasional side trip to Nooksahk in the territory of Washington.

"I first saw Granville in 1872. The Rev. Mr. Turner lived at New Westminster, at the parsonage there, and used to come out from New Westminster and return the same night; I came with him sometimes. My duties demanded periodical trips from Westminster to Hastings; sometimes I walked, sometimes staged—to tell the truth I preferred walking to riding in the bumping stage—and then took the ferry to Moodyville where I preached to the Indians working in the sawmill there. Then I would cross to Gastown by canoe, and sometimes traverse the woods to the False Creek reservation, or as we know it now, the Kitsilano Indian Reserve. Bear in mind, I was itinerant preacher to the Indian tribes; Mr. Turner was itinerant preacher to the English speaking people. I had plenty of opportunity to become familiar with the Indians, their trials, triumphs and customs."

THE FALSE CREEK VILLAGE.

"I often visited the Kitsilano band in the '70s. There were a hospitable lot, and I was entertained by Chief George and his band in their community house. Old Chief George's community house (potlatch house) was right under the present Burrard Bridge which we have opened this afternoon; I believe a stone dropped from the bridge would strike in the centre of the site on which the village stood."

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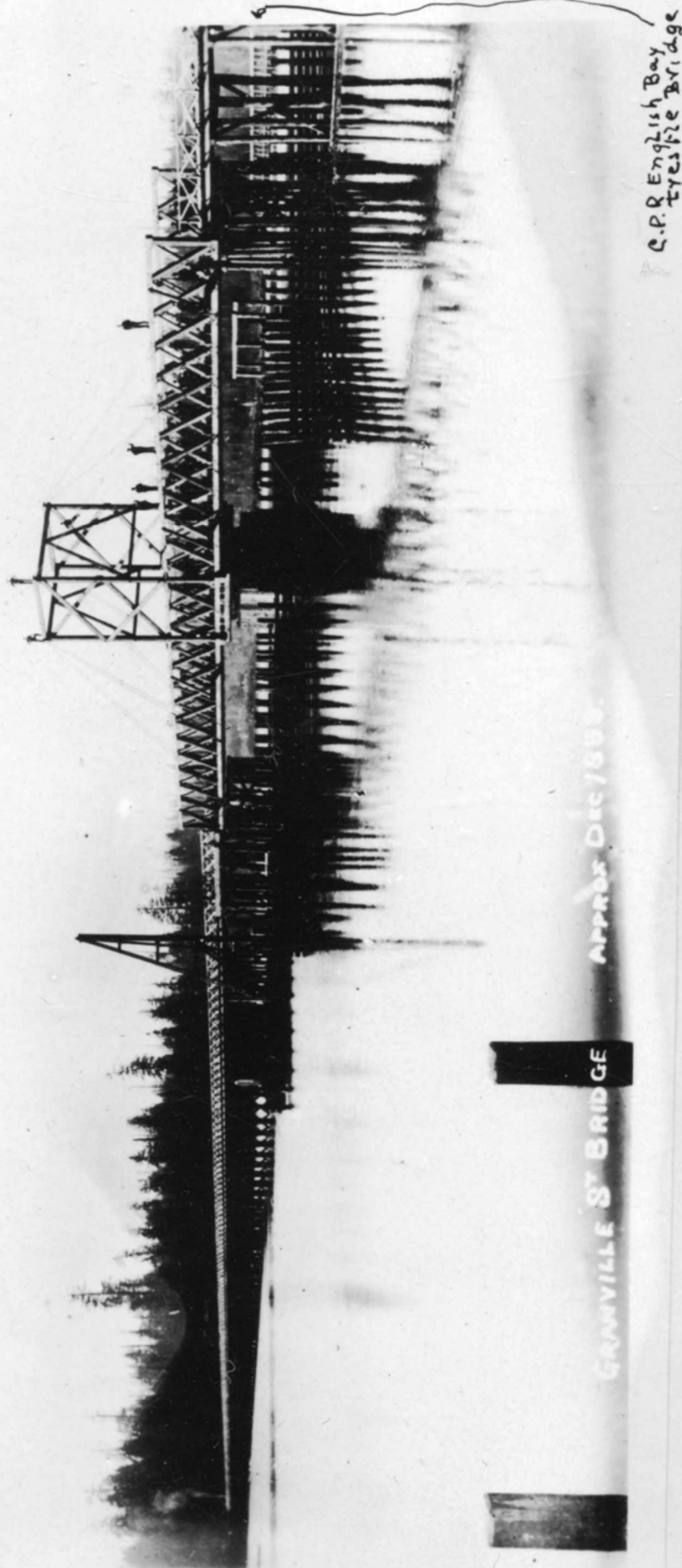

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THE KITSILANO INDIAN RESERVE. CHIEF GEORGE, INDIAN NAME CHIP-KAAY-AM.

"At the end of the meeting I would call out, asking if anyone had anything to say, or sometimes old Chief George would do it himself. In any case he would usually get up and make some remarks, giving the young men some good advice as to how to deport themselves, and the proper things to do."

Note: in reviewing the MS Professor Hill-Tout margins, "I spell the name 'Khātsalánoogh.'" (See below.)

"What do I mean by 'entertain'? Oh, well, something to eat, and the privilege of gathering the people together for services; probably some bread baked in the ashes, and a cup of questionable tea; the teapot was not always cleaned out when tea was scarce; in fact, when tea was very scarce, the Indians used the leaves of some swamp shrub which grew with a kind of thick leaf, 'Hudson's Bay' tea, we used to call it. The tea was commonly made in a tin 'billy,' a small tin pail with wire handle for carrying it by, and a lid with a wire finger ring in the centre of top. Chief George of the False Creek Reserve, Snauq was the Indian name for it, was an Indian of the best sort, and his band were a most hospitable lot. His wife was a Nanaimo woman. There was quite a settlement at Chief George's False Creek reserve, probably a dozen houses, built of split cedar, sawboards and slabs, and the big community house; a total population perhaps of fifty persons all told; it was a settlement of consequence. There were no Indians living further up the creek.

"'Kitsilano,' as pronounced by the Indians of that reserve, was Haat-sa-lah-nough, the last syllable being given a shorter and more guttural sound than 'nough' in 'enough'; more like Scotch 'lough' (loch), but actually there is no sound in the English tongue akin to it. 'Haatsa' means swamp or lake.

"I have heard that Professor Chas. Hill-Tout, well versed in Indian custom and lore, explains that 'Kitsilano' was the hereditary name or title of the chief of the tribe, or some such thing, and perhaps this is true, but the first syllable is geographical in its meaning. The place always has precedence over the man; the chief's name is usually taken from the place; a similarity is in the British baronial system of nomenclature for titles of nobility."

CHIEF HAATSALAHNOUGH (KHAT-SAL-ANOUGH).

Query: What did August Jack mean, 24 August 1932, when he said that his father, Hey-tilt (Khay-tulk), son of Chief Haatsa-lah-nough, was buried in a little glass house and red blankets at Chay-thoos (Prospect Point in Stanley Park)?

"Oh, that was a dead house. The Indians had them all along the coast, used them for putting the dead in; some of the dead houses were quite pretentious, even fixed up with doors and windows, and in some cases, even had easy chairs, sofas and such and such—" (significant pause and resigned nod) "'for the repose of the soul' of the dead. On the west coast of Vancouver Island they put the dead in the trees; rolled the body up in a blanket or mat, tied it up with a rope and as soon as the person was dead and" (significantly) "very often before they were dead, hang the body up in a tree. An Indian, Joe Smith of Claoquaht" (Clayoquot) "told me with his own word of mouth that he had been wrapped up in a blanket, and put in a cave. After he had lain there a day or two he became conscious, and managed to untie the ropes and walked out. When he walked across a bare piece of land he met another Indian who accosted him with, 'What are you doing here, you're dead? You go away, or we shall have no food for winter, no salmon.' Joe protested that he was not dead, but the other Indian ran off and got a rifle, and returning, raised it. Joe protested, 'Don't shoot, don't shoot, I'm not dead.' Joe told me that himself at Claoquaht.

"If August Jack is the grandson of Chief Haatsa-lah-nough, he is most certainly entitled to be known as August Kitsilano in English."

VISITS TO MUSQUEAM.

"From the False Creek reservation I walked by Indian trail through the forest to Musqueam where Thit-see-mah-lah-nough was chief; the names of many of the chiefs ended in 'nough.' I cannot say exactly how I got from Granville to False Creek, but my impression is that it was by a trail which ran from somewhere about Abbott Street through the forest cross country to the foot of Granville Street. There I crossed False Creek by canoe, and struck out for the north arm of the Fraser River by logging trail. There was one good logging trail which led to Rowlings Landing," (Mr. Tate omitted to state where) "another to Eburne, that is, to the McCleery farm near Eburne, and from there down to the Musqueams there was a

pretty well beaten track. It is doubtless difficult for people of Vancouver to picture the dry well drained site on which they live as, in parts, a wet soggy swamp. Behind the Kitsilano Beach was a muskeg of twenty or more acres alive with muskrats. Much of the high land in the West End was very swampy—the Royal Engineers noted that on their first maps—another very large peaty area was what I think we call Dunbar Heights now, and of course behind Jericho there was an enormous area of swamp, and there were others.

"After preaching to the Indians in Chief Thit-see-nah-lah-nough's house at Musqueam, I returned to New Westminster either by canoe, or to Granville, via Main Street" (North Arm Road) "as we call it now, then across the False Creek Bridge to Hastings Mill, and on by Steven's ferry to the 'end of the road' at Moodyville Crossing" (Hastings) "where I took Lewis's stage, or walked—which actually I preferred to staging over corduroy roads in a vehicle swung on leather straps instead of springs—to New Westminster."

INDIANS AT STANLEY PARK AND CAPILANO.

"As a side trip I frequently took a rowboat or canoe to the First Narrows to visit a small band living in Stanley Park where the Lumberman's Arch" (Whoi-Whoi) "now stands. Chief Thomas of the Squamish tribe lived there. There was a community house at Stanley Park, and I should not be surprised if the posts are not there yet, beneath the surface; they were probably chopped off level with the surface when the buildings were demolished. The biggest community house there was probably one hundred feet long by forty feet wide; the Indians did not live in separate homes, but in one long community house." (See Indian Villages and Landmarks, and Mr. Tate's remarks there.)

INDIAN BUILDINGS IN STANLEY PARK (WHOI-WHOI).

"The Indian building in Stanley Park by the Lumberman's Arch, indeed most Indian buildings, were constructed by first placing four tall posts in the ground, two at each end, and connecting each set of two end posts together with a stringer, twenty or more feet from the ground. A long beam was then laid at right angles from stringer to stringer, and served as a sort of ridge pole and carried the roof, but the buildings were not peak roofed—they were lean-tos—the roof had just one slope; the floor, of course, was just bare earth. The walls were generally made by driving a couple of small poles or stakes close together in the ground along the line of the wall, and slipping, or dropping, boards, usually split cedar boards, very thick, between the two stakes, and then tying the two stakes, lashing them together with some sort of cedar rope. The roof was also made of split cedar shakes, split with a wooden maul and deer horn wedges.

"There was no real door; usually a mat was hung over the opening which served as an entrance. When they wanted light, they poked a stick up, and slid aside one of the roof boards, and let the light in that way, and the same thing when there was too much smoke; the smoke went out through the roof. These buildings have all been cleared away now."

Note by Prof. Hill-Tout on MS. See example of one in Hill-Tout's *The Far West*, page 50.

CHIEF LAH-WA.

"Then there was Chief Lah-wa of the Capilano band, and several of his members who were our earliest converts. Chief Lah-wa, poor fellow, was drowned while crossing the First Narrows in a canoe; it is presumed the someone had given him some liquor, with tragic results. He had been baptized and married in the little Indian church at Gastown. Another small band lived in a community house at Seymour Creek, near Moodyville Sawmill."

ORIGIN OF SQUAMISH TRIBE.

"Where the Squamish Indians came from is a question of conjecture. On one of my visits to the Indians at Nooksahk, Washington, I asked if they could give me any reason for their language being similar to that of the Squamish Indians. They said to me, 'They are our people,' and told me the following legend.

"'A long time ago when the salmon were very plentiful about Point Roberts and Semiahmo Bay, a number of our people went fishing with sunken nets, called swahlah, when a heavy southeast storm came up and carried them away north. The storm kept up day after day which made it impossible for them to return to the mouth of the Nooksahk river, so, finding it quite calm under the shelter of Point Grey and in English

Bay, they went on shore and made themselves comfortable in a temporary camp. Finding plenty of food and abundance of cedar timber for building purposes and to make their canoes, they decided to remain permanently.'

"Cedar was very useful to the Indians, and cedar always grows more prolifically in swamps than elsewhere. I think it must have been, in part at least, the cedar which attracted and kept the Indians in the neighbourhood of Burrard Inlet and English Bay. The reason why they are scattered about in small bands is the common reason with all Indians—petty jealousies, family quarrels, disagreements between would-be chiefs, and many other causes. Hence the little band at Seymour Creek, another at the head of Howe Sound, in Stanley Park, Capilano, False Creek and other places. The Indians at North Vancouver are accounted for from the fact that the Roman Catholic Mission was established there in early days, and the Indians have been encouraged to build their homes in the neighbourhood of the church. The two key words in the Nooksahk tongue which particularly attracted my attention were the words 'haatl' and 'sneetcham,' meaning 'good' and 'language or talk.' After long experience with Indians and their languages in various parts of this country, the Nooksahk explanation seems reasonable enough to me."

INDIAN CONVERTS.

"Among our converts at the little Indian church at Granville was a husky fellow from Bella Bella named Jim Starr. I think he must have been named after old Captain Starr. Jim probably worked for Captain Starr on his boat, and after a time became known as Jim Starr; it was in some such manner that most of the Indians got the names by which they are known today." (Note: Johnny Scow of Alert Bay was named by Mr. Munn, cannery man of Westminster, after Johnny had saved the lives of Indian women and children adrift on a scow in a storm on a scow at Steveston; there are now many Scows at Alert Bay.) "Shortly after his conversion, Jim Starr went to Victoria Indian Mission, and married a Kit-a-maat woman named Esther, also of the Victoria Indian Mission. They were about the happiest couple I ever met. Very soon after their marriage they went north together, and sought to lead their tribes people in a Christian way. Jim and Esther both died several years ago, but their names are still fragrant at Bella Bella, and the Indian Church at old Gastown must be long credited as the spiritual birthplace of one of the most saintly men British Columbia has ever known."

A continuation of this narrative of Rev. C.M. Tate's experiences with Indians in other parts of the Province, etc., will be found elsewhere.

REV. C.M. TATE, METHODIST INDIAN MISSIONARY.

"Gold brought me to British Columbia. I was born in 1852, and my first work was as a butcher boy. I recall very vividly the long miles I used to walk to get cattle, sheep and pigs for my employer; they were terribly long walks, but I suppose they fitted me physically for the work I was destined to do in British Columbia. I was 18 when I came out, via the Panama to British Columbia to go to the Cariboo goldfields. There is a long account of it entitled 'Fifty Years with the Methodist Church in British Columbia' which I have written and which is published in book form, *Review of the United Churches in British Columbia*, 1925. But on arrival in Victoria it was clear that there was no sense in going to the Cariboo; all the miners were returning, some of them starving. I got a job in Nanaimo looking after a bit of a donkey engine which, when sailing ships were not in for coal, hauled the coal cars up a slope from which the coal was dumped in to the coal bins. Thus it was that when I first came to British Columbia in 1870, I became associated with the Wesleyan Methodist church at Nanaimo, and through them with the uninstructed Indians. The Indians interested me; I was little more than a lad, just 18, got talking to them, spent my evenings with them, started to learn their language, and ultimately suggested that they start a night school amongst themselves. 'But,' their reply was, 'how can we get someone to teach us,' the problem of a teacher was seemingly, to them, an insurmountable difficulty, and no doubt they were a little astonished when I said, 'I will.' So in the evenings I used to go down to the village and teach them, and of course when the strike came—it was a long strike of seven months—I was able to do it in the daytime. All voluntary, of course, no salary.

"The strike ended, and I applied for my old job back again, but Mr. Mark Bate—you have heard of him, he was manager of the coal mines—told me there were a lot of older men who wanted the job, men who were 'up against it'; and that I was a young fellow and could look after myself, so I was not taken on. I