

Early Vancouver

Volume Three

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Supplemental to Volumes One and Two collected in 1931-1932.

About the 2011 Edition

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH AUGUST JACK HAATSALANO, 2 FEBRUARY 1935.

POTLATCHES.

Query: What did the Indians use to “make a potlatch” before the whitemans came?

Haatsalano: “Blankets. The Squamish women made the blankets, Indian blankets. After the whitemans come they get other things. About one hundred guns, two thousand whitemans blankets, and thirty canoes, ‘make a potlatch.’”

(Note: Prof. Hill-Tout records that Jonathan Miller told him that at one great potlatch held at Whoi-Whoi, Stanley Park, there were about two thousand Indians present.)

Query: What do you think about the banning by law of the potlatch? Don't you think that if the whiteman had emulated the noble spirit of the potlatch instead of interdicting it, it would have been more creditable? What a spectacle it would be to see a rich citizen of Vancouver on top of an elevated platform in Stanley Park, casting down on the crowd below the worldly riches it had taken him a lifetime to acquire! Did you have debauchery? Were there intoxicants before the whitemans came?

Haatsalano: “No whisky before whitemans. Whitemans come, he bring booze, spoil everything.” (After pause) “Chinnalsut” (Jericho Charlie) “and Towhimqwhamkee” (Jack) “club together give big potlatch that time at Jericho.”

INDIAN DANCES.

“When Indians were dancing at potlatches, they danced by themselves; they did not hug a woman like the whitemans do. Hug woman no good. I never do it. Dance by myself. Only three Squamish mans now dance by themselves; nobody else. Just Chief Matthias,” (Capilano) “? and myself. All rest dance with woman like whitemans,” (making grimace and hugging motion to illustrate.) “Indian girls now paint faces like white womans, rouge lips, pluck eyebrows and make curve,” (arched eyebrows) “put stuff on eyelids, high heels about four inches, long skirts down to ground; then they sweat, and” (drawing fingers down cheek) “paint run all down face. Don't like. No good. No good hug womans. Indian paint not run off cheek like whitemans face paint.”

DEER AND ELK.

Query: Didn't you tell me that Old Man Capilano (about 1860) shot thirteen elk on the shores of False Creek after a big snow storm? (Vancouver has just experienced one of the deepest falls of snow in her history, January 1935.)

Haatsalano: “Yes, I remember out Jericho beach, used to kill deer with a pike-pole. Snow so deep, deer come down on beach. When the tide go out they eat the kelp and sea grass. Jericho Charlie” (Chinnalsut) “come along in a boat; deer get frightened, can't go in snow, snow too deep, so deer strike out into the water. Go after them and kill them with a pike pole from the boat.”

CANOES.

“Indian name for canoe ‘snaquaith.’”

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH AUGUST JACK HAATSALANO, 15 MARCH 1935.

INDIAN HOUSES. INDIAN MATS. INDIAN COOKING. INDIAN SOAP.

Query: How did the Indians eat their meals before the whitemans came? They couldn't eat outside on a wet day.

A.J.H.: “Inside house, on mat. No wooden floor, just earth, then put a mat on earth to keep the dirt away, and then another mat on top.”

Query: Why two mats?

A.J.H.: "The thin mat goes over the heavier one; thin mat easier to clean, to wash; oh, may be a yard and a half square. See why they have two mats; ground might be a little dry, that's why; the bottom one keeps the dust down; may be little kids move, he make dust; so they have two mats."

"Table? No table. They don't use chairs; they got little blocks, cut them with slate chisel; little blocks about sixteen or eighteen inches long by ten inches high; sit on them."

VENISON.

"They roast deer meat by fire inside house. Take sharp stick; sometimes split stick" (make a prong), "sometimes not split it; then put meat between stick; put stick in ground close to fire, and cook meat very carefully; roast it. If they want to boil meat they get certain kind of rocks, and then they got, like—you know how they feed pigs?" (Interjection, "Trough.") "Yes, that's it, trough, cedar trough; they put hot rocks or stones in water, and boil meat."

INDIAN PLATES.

"They got plates; they make plates themselves; big fellows, three feet long; and they put meat on the wooden plate, and put plate on mat on floor; then Indian family sit all around; and vegetables on big plate too. They not put their fingers in it; have little stone knife; cut 'em" (meat.) "Now, s'pose one family may be five or six; then may be plate five feet long; all sit around and eat off the one big plate; or they got spoon; you know mountain goat's horn spoon; well, they use that; they use big spoon" (ladle) "to lift vegetables out of hot water; put on big plate; use big spoon to dip from trough, then put vegetable on big plate; then each man have little spoon."

Query: How about drinking?

A.J.H.: "Drink? They got cups; not regular whiteman's cups, but cups made out of alder dug deep, and a little handle on them" (a sort of wooden dipper.)

Query: How did Indians wash themselves? They had no whitemans soap.

A.J.H.: "They use little white berry; grows on bush, so high," (holding hand about three feet from ground) "lots in" (Stanley) "Park, lots at Kitsilano, grows in little clusters of white berries; they take them, rub over buckskin, and make clean; no foam, not much anyway. You take four or five those berries, and rub in your hand," (crush between palms) "then go in water, and your hand quite clean. You can't wash buckskin in water. Collect lots white berries, put in damp moss; they keep 'til next year."

INDIAN HAIR CUTTING.

Query: How did Indians cut their hair?

A.J.H.: "Sharp stone knife, sharp as glass. You see, there two kinds of slate rock, soft slate rock and hard slate rock. Indian get hard slate; make him sharp, cut hair. Indian wear hair so it just nearly touch shoulder. Have leather band about two inches wide of buckskin, with two or three feathers in front, go around forehead and back of head to hold hair in place."

INDIAN CLOTHING.

Query: Did Indians wear underclothing?

A.J.H.: "Noooo! Wear buckskin pants, buckskin shirt; oh ho, nice and warm; too hot. Soft. In very cold weather, wrap blanket over shoulders."

INDIAN CANOES.

"Squamish word for canoe 'snaquaith.'"

THE LAST POTLATCH.

"The last real potlatch was before the war—about 1913, and was held at Quamicham—a big affair down on the river bank. After that the government banned them. I was there."

THE FIRST POLICEMAN. THE FIRST CUSTOMS OFFICER.

“The first policeman I remember was George Brew.” (Not George, but Tompkins.) (See F.W. Alexander.)
“He had an Indian wife, and lived at Brew’s Point in Stanley Park—they call it Brockton Point now.
Jonathan Miller was the next constable.”

DEATH DANCE.

“The Squamish word for funeral is ‘kumsapp’; the word for dance is ‘maytha’; the dance and feast come after the funeral; if the funeral is in the morning or afternoon the dance and feast come in the evening of the same day. One time, down at Snauq,” (Burrard Bridge) “before 1915, four or five small Indian children die one after another. I pay for potlatch; nobody’s else got any money. Government not allow potlatch like we used to have, so we pay those whose helping in money. Man who makes coffins get most; man who digs grave next most; girls peels potatoes; everybody gets money; after funeral, then have feast and dance; potlatch.”

Query: What’s the reason for feast and dance when everybody sad?

A.J.H.: (apparently annoyed at the stupidity of the question) “Well, may be.” (Pause.) “You got to pay help. Whitemans give drinks” (whisky) “after funeral. Indians don’t give drinks; he gives eats; something good.”

INDIAN MEDICINE MEN.

Query: What is a medicine man, August?

A.J.H.: “A ‘swohmtun’” (medicine man) “is a doctor, what whitemans calls doctor, makes you well again. A ‘suu-wayn’ is a fortune teller, who tells about things that are going to be; they are two different kinds of men, though the whitemans thinks both the same; a suuwayn tells about things” (myths.)

“It’s like this. When a boy about sixteen, you go out. Stay up in the mountains, jump in the lake, wash yourself, make yourself clean, come out dance about, get warm again. Well, you do that for ten years.”

Query: No, surely not for ten years?

A.J.H.: (positively) “Yes, for ten years; then he’s a *man*” (pause) “in ten years. Ten years, summer and winter.”

Query: What does he do for food and shelter?

A.J.H.: “He get himself his own food from mountains. He got bow and arrow, kill goat; that’s what he use for winter; kill goat, dry it, he makes his little house; he’s got goat fur, deer fur, bear fur.”

Query: How far up does he go?

A.J.H.: “Oh, he goes long way so nobody’s see him; nobody go near him; nobody disturb him. And all the time he practicing. He kill things and try to make them alive again; bird; that shows he’s a doctor, a good doctor.”

Query: What do you mean by “make it alive again”? Does he kill it first?

A.J.H.: “Yes, kill it first.”

Query: But it can’t be quite dead?

A.J.H.: “Well,” (reasoning) “he stone him; must be dead; anything he sees in the woods he uses stone to kill him; then he dance around it and try and make the thing ‘live again. If he makes it ‘live he’s a *doctor*” (emphasis.) “Some swohmtun, see, if it’s a bruise, they suck that blood out. Sometime mans get hurt in his head, his brain; then swohmtun come, suck blood out with his mouth. See, two different ways. One swohmtun, if that was you hurt,” (pointing) “he come suck the blood in your bruise; another swohmtun, he just cure sick people” (physician.) “Those fellows stay in the mountains ten years; nobody see them. When he comes home again, he’s doctor.”

Query: How does he know when to come home?

A.J.H.: "Well, I was telling you. If he kill something, and make it alive again, then he's doctor; he know he cure somebody; he comes home. Swohmtun don't use poison; whitemans doctor use poison. Indian never use poison; use herb, good to eat, good to drink, make you fat, make you feel good. No poison anywhere 'cept rattlesnake, but does not belong; he just rattlesnake."

KITSILANO INDIAN RESERVE. SNAUQ. BURRARD BRIDGE.

Query: What did you say the Squamish Indians got for the sale of the eight acres of the Kitsilano Indian Reserve used in 1932 for the footings of the Burrard Bridge?

A.J.H.: "The arbitrators gave \$44,988.58 and the lawyers got \$28,854.50 of it. The lawyers for the City of Vancouver got \$15,145.65, and the Indian costs were \$13,708.85, and then they wanted us to carry it to the Privy Council, but the Indians decided not to; there would have been nothing left at all. I understand that when they buy the four acres for the Seaforth Highlanders drill hall they will pay \$7,500 an acre, or \$30,000 in all, but I hear something that the Indians are to get only \$15,000, but don't know. The Indian agent said that if we did not sell it they would take it anyhow, by expropriation. So our Council voted to sell it."

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH AUGUST JACK HAATSALANO, IN MY GARDEN, 24 MARCH 1935.

"TAYHAY" AT WHOI-WHOI.

Query: Tayhay had a peakless roof, just a lean-to, one side higher than the other; which side was the tallest?

A.J.H.: *The one nearest the water.* All those Indian cottages concealed in the trees. You see, those days, enemy might come; no use showing where you were, so hide house in the trees." (Note: Captain Vancouver's Journal says they saw no sign of habitations as they passed out of the Narrows.) "Long time afterwards—after whitemans come—Indians commence to build houses out on the shore where peoples could see them."

EYALMO (JERICHO.) POTLATCHES.

"The big potlatch at Jericho was before my time; all I know about it is what they tell me, but it was the biggest potlatch of all. Indians come from everywhere—Lummi, Victoria, Saanich, Nanaimo, Panall," (Cooper Island) "Chee-woat-held; no Indians from Sechelt; they not come to potlatches.

"Four men give it. Chinalset" (Jericho Charlie), "Tow-hu-quam-kee, Hay-much-tun, and Charl-tun" (Old Tom.) "They have great big building just other side where air station is now; building about three hundred feet long, ninety feet wide, great big beams. At each end three big posts; high, big as a man's body, then three big beams run the entire length of building on top of posts, each beam eighty to ninety feet long, and butted end to end so as to run whole three hundred feet of building, one on each side, one down middle. Split cedar slab sides, laid what you call horizontal, laced together with small posts; roof of great big split cedar slabs fitted together like this so as not use one for canoe after they pull it down. Warship come along one day and take a lot of it away; load on scow and take on board; don't know what they did with the slabs; to England, may be, may be burn; don't know. But you see the way they build the roof no water can get in."

POTLATCHES.

"I'm glad government stopped potlatches. All right in the early days when Indian make his own blankets and no booze, but afterwards white man bring booze, and Indian buy blanket. Indian rich those days; poor now."

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH AUGUST JACK HAATSALANO IN MY GARDEN, 19 MAY 1935.

Mr. Haatsalano came from North Vancouver to pay me a visit; we sat under the trees for three hours and chatted and he had a plate of pudding my wife brought.