

Early Vancouver

Volume Four

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

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Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1935-1939.

Supplemental to Volumes One, Two and Three collected in 1931-1934.

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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CAPILANO JOE, OR CHIEF JOE CAPILANO.

City Archivist's Office
City Hall,
26th Sept. 1937.

Dear Mr. Ball:

I have just been reading your penciled note over again, and more carefully, and there is a bit of a sentence in it I would like to answer. The words are:

"When Lahwah died, the surviving sister was agreeable to passing over the chieftainship to Hyas Joe, who apparently assumed the name "Capilano Joe."

The fact that Burrard Inlet was very quiet; no newspapers, no theatre, no phone—only work—resulted in a situation similar to that among soldiers in the Great War; they had nicknames for almost everything and every person. There was "Gastown," "Kanaka Row," "Maiden Lane," and "The Rookeries"; and again "Gassy Jack," "Navy Jack," "Sugar Jake," "Dutch Pete," "Supplejack," "Howe Sound Jim," "Squamish Jacob" and so on, including "Mowitch Jim," the last four being Indians; I forgot, "Jericho Charlie"; that's five Indians.

Now one trouble in "Gastown" was that there were two many Joes. There was three "Portuguese Joes," one being Joseph Silvey, another Gregoris Fernandez, and a third Joseph Gonsalves, all, at various times, termed "Portuguese Joe." Then there was Joe Mannion, afterwards alderman, and "Holy Joe," a whiteman of near Point Atkinson, and there was a Isaac Joe, for finally they called the last one "Lockit Joe," lockit meaning eight. "Sore Neck Billy" was another Indian; "Faithful Jim" still one more; "Little Tommy" and "The Virgin Mary" were Indian women, the latter being a wrinkled old skeleton with whom the Countess of Dufferin shook hands.

Now, when I first came here "Capilano Joe" was just Capilano Joe; we distinguished him by his home, and he had bare feet with skin on it half an inch thick. Then, suddenly, he went off to see King Edward VII—I think the Indians had some big ceremony on the Cambie Street grounds at which they formally bestowed on him the title "Capilano"; the idea being that a territorial title would give more weight to his visit to His Majesty—and further, it appears he had not been formally "ennobled" according to Indian ritual (as August Jack and Willie Jack Khahtsalano had been at the False Creek Reserve.)

However, "Capilano Joe" went off to England with much ado, and when he came back, he was "Chief Joe Capilano"; of course he was chief before he went, but the publicity he got had turned "Capilano Joe" into "Chief Joe Capilano."

Chief Ki-ap-a-la-no of 1859, and later, was a good Indian, according to John Morton and all others, a very good wise Indian, and he lived at Homulcheson, Indian village, but the whiteman applied his name to that creek, and as his successor "Hyas Joe," who was not of Ki-ap-a-la-no blood at all, but was the husband of a Ki-ap-a-la-no woman, lived there, pioneers gave him the name "Capilano Joe," just as they did "Jericho Charlie," "Squamish Jacob," "Howe Sound Jim."

All of which is submitted subject to the errors, omissions, mistakes and other failings to which humans, and especially archivists, are prone.

With best wishes,

Most sincerely,

J.S. Matthews
CITY ARCHIVIST

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