

Early Vancouver

Volume Four

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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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(Haytulk) "got it from my grandfather, and he got it from he's father Haatsalanogh, and he got it from he's father, old Haatsalanogh."

(Note: it will be recalled that Haytulk's two sons, known by the English names of Willie Jack and August Jack, were ceremoniously bestowed at a potlatch given under the Burrard Street bridge—the old village of Snaug—with the names of Hay-tulk and Haatsalano, being the names of their father and grandfather.)

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH AUGUST JACK HAATSALANO, IN MY GARDEN, 14 AUGUST 1937.

INDIAN CUSTOMS. INDIAN FOOD. STURGEON.

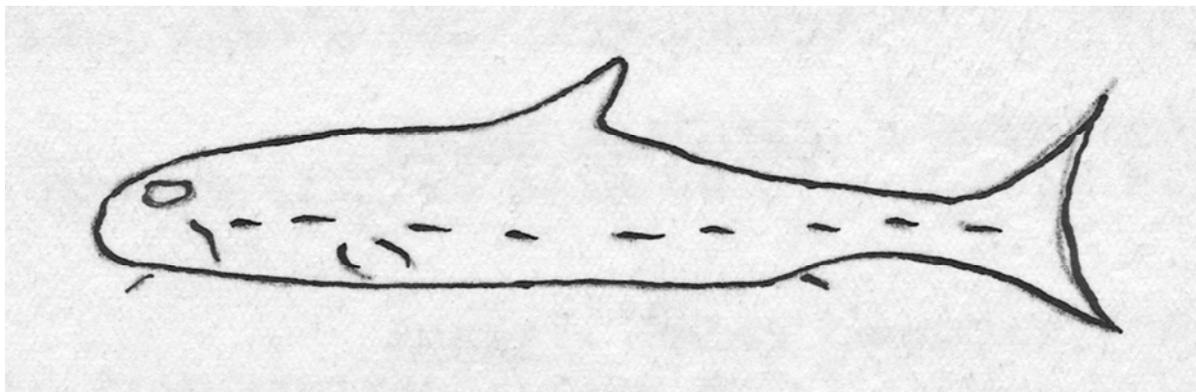
August arrived dangling an angular stone, six and one half inches at its widest part, and weighing three pounds net, by a wire which had been passed through a tapered hole, about one and one half inches wide at the mouths on either side, and narrowed down to a central half inch, two and one half inches through stone from side to side of hole, which had been bored by some primitive instrument; the angular edges of stone being rounded, and the stone itself showing minute specks which sparkled.

Major Matthews: Where did you get that?

August: "I dig it up. I get another bigger one, bring it next time; got hole in it, too. Not sure what it is, but I think its hold canoe when they catches sturgeon out Spanish Banks or up head False Creek. I dig it out of ground when digging for my treasure; not find my treasure yet, but find this, about two feet down" (in earth); "two of them, together, right where Chinaset's" (Jericho Charlie's) "house was" (approximately 100 yards east into the Indian Reserve from the corner of Ogden Avenue and Chestnut Street) "—down deep, about two feet; I find two; bring you big one next time."

Major Matthews: What for?

August: "I think use it when they catches sturgeon. Squamish have big hook on end of long pole; big bone hook with barb on it, and they's go out after sturgeon, when the tide is out, and hook him; then sturgeon, he's big fish, maybe ten feet, he pull hard; wriggle, wriggle in the water, go swift; canoe goes too fast, may be waves, may be wind; Indian hold on hard, and if they's got nothing canoe not go straight; goes this way, goes that way, all about, so the man in the stern drops this stone; hold back stern of canoe."



Item # EarlyVan_v4_008



Item # EarlyVan_v4_009

Major Matthews: For anchor?

August: “No, so’s canoe not go so swift. Makes canoe go straight. Then, by and by, he’s” (sturgeon) “get tired; they take him to beach; he’s too heavy, so’s they tip canoe on beach, slip him in, tip canoe back again, and they’s take him home.”

Major Matthews: How do they know where the sturgeon is? They cannot see him on the bottom?

August: (shaking head) “There must been awful lots sturgeon one time; up end False Creek, out Spanish Banks, all over. They can’t see him on bottom; they just feel with pole with hook on it; bone hook, big one; they just feel around with pole when the tide is out. Front man in canoe have pole with hook; man in stern with paddle; poke around with pole. Sturgeon’s kind of rough inside, they can feel when pole touches him; then jerk hook quick, maybe hook him in front, maybe middle, maybe tail.

“There’s a cedar rope on the hook; man in stern pull rope tight. Hook comes off pole” (note: he means that the tremendous weight, perhaps 800 pounds, of the struggling fish, would pull the bone hook off the pole); “take pole in canoe, but hold on hard to rope; hold hard on to sturgeon, keep rope tight, hang on, pull pole in canoe; hook not come out if hold on hard; throw rope with stone over stern, it pull behind; rope is cedar bark rope.”

Major Matthews: Well, what happens then? When he gets tired, take him beach, tip canoe, slide him in, tip canoe back; he’s in canoe. What next?

August: “Take him home. Pull canoe up on beach, dump sturgeon, clean him, slice him; not very thick” (note: with stone knife) “’bout one inch; hang slice up to dry; maybe hang in house to dry; maybe good day hang him outside.”

Major Matthews: Doesn’t it get smell?

August: (amused and smiling) “Dry, oh dry quick, dry good two days; then put slice in house; smoke him, dry by fire; that’s food for winter.”

Major Matthews: (laughing) Then put in (wooden) trough (filled with water), put in hot stone; supper’s ready.

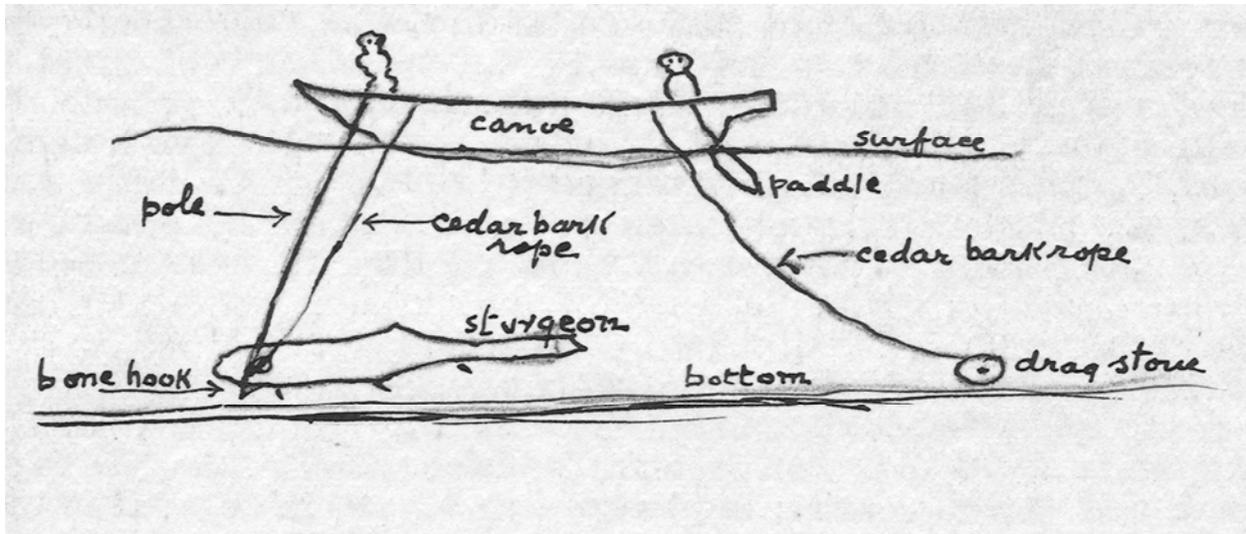
August: (also laughing) “Supper’s ready; no bread, just sturgeon; good eat.”

Major Matthews: What about pudding?

August: (chuckling) “No pudding.”

Major Matthews: (consolingly) Well, maybe they didn’t have oranges, and lemonade, or ice cream, but that sort of food produced some pretty good men and women.

August: “Good health; no sick. Look at Haxten; she’s 106 years old, and got front teeth; same teeth” (as when she was a girl.) “Don’t drink tea when she was young; everything roast, fire roast, maybe sometimes boil. I bring you big stone next time.”



Item # EarlyVan_v4_010

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH AUGUST JACK HAATSALANO, IN MY GARDEN, 23 AUGUST 1937.

(He is still camping on the Kitsilano Indian Reserve.)

Mr. Haatsalano brought another stone, much larger than the last, of sandstone; probably originally from Sim-sah-mulls (Bayswater Street beach), or perhaps from near Siwash Rock; pierced by some primitive abrasive stone tool, with a good sized hole in the centre large enough to pass a half-inch rope through. The stone is 7½ inches by 7½ inches by 4 inches, and weighs nine pounds, ten ounces. It was dug up on the Kitsilano Indian Reserve by Haatsalano, about one foot beneath the surface, and about one hundred yards east of the corner of Chestnut and Ogden streets, on the site of the old house of Chinalset (Jericho Charlie) and To-who-quam-ki.

STURGEON.

Mr. Haatsalano: "Here's that other stone I promised you." (See conversation, 14 August.)

Major Matthews: Do you suppose it was anchor for canoe?

August Jack: "Nooo. It would not be sharp in front if it was."

INDIAN DRESS. INDIAN HAIR.

Haatsalano: (handing over three more crude drawings on writing paper, made with coloured crayons such as school children use) "Indians heads" (laughingly.) "These green feathers all right in he's hair; may be not coloured right" (not correct hue), "I's got no good paints, but they's" (Indians) "take white feather and dye them so they's" (feathers) "same as grass; then put them in their hair."

"Indians not cut their hair short long time ago; long time ago let it grow down to he's middle; only since whitemans come cut it short." (Note: by short he does not mean as whitemen cut their hair, but cut off about the nape of the neck, which is very long for whitemen.) "Chinalset and Tom-who-quam-kee cut hair short, but not before that" (Indians did not); "before that Indians wear it long, down to he's breasts. They's braid it. Mans wear it in front; womans hang it down back. Mans have one braid on each side; it hang down in front; he ties ends together so's it not go over" (his head), "just like I draw you here."