

Early Vancouver

Volume Five

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2011 Edition (Originally Published 1945)

Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1936-1945.

Supplemental to volumes one, two, three and four collected in 1931, 1932 and 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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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH OTWAY WILKIE, 629 EIGHTH STREET, NEW WESTMINSTER, IN CITY ARCHIVES, 28 NOVEMBER 1935.

Mr. Wilkie was one of the survey party, C.P.R. line, Port Moody to Granville, finished in a snowstorm—they had worked all day in the snow—Christmas Day at dusk, 1884, after which they repaired to George Black's at Hastings for Christmas dinner with Major Rogers of Rogers Pass, etc.

INDIAN HEROISM.

Mr. Wilkie, formerly provincial constable: "I remember once an Indian woman swimming ashore from a capsized canoe with one of her children under each arm, and the third in her mouth; she was awarded the Royal Human Society medal I think; she saved the two under her arms, but the baby in her mouth was drowned."

August Jack Haatsalano: "Yes, that's right; up the North Arm, Burrard Inlet."

City Archivist: How did it happen?

August Jack: "She was the wife of Aneas" (sic.) "I forget her name, but I think it was Molly. She was coming down from up Indian River way with her two children and her baby, three of them, in her canoe; it capsized, she was south of Raccoon Island, and she took one child under each arm, and the other, the baby, in her teeth, and swam a mile and a half to a logging camp in that deep bay just east of Raccoon Island; it was about 36 years ago" (about 1898.) "Yes, she 'got the medal.' She saved two, but the baby was dead when she reached shore."

Otway Wilkie: "I know she was recommended for it, but I never heard before if she got it."

THE LAST FLAT FOREHEAD INDIAN, BURRARD INLET. TIM MOODIE, OF NORTH VANCOUVER INDIAN RESERVE.

City Archivist: Has Tim Moodie got any children?

August Jack: "Tim Moodie, that's Yahmas, has a son, Napoleon Moodie; his son, Yahmas's grandson, is Tim Moodie, he's secretary of the Squamish Indian Council."

Yahmas (see *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2) is the last surviving Indian with a flat forehead; made flat by the old Indian custom of flattening the forehead in childhood; a model of him was made by the well-known Vancouver sculptor, Chas. Marega. He died about 22 December 1936.

JOE'S STORY OF SIMON FRASER'S ARRIVAL.

"He told me that when he was a boy, the Langley Indians at that time lived where the B.C. Penitentiary in New Westminster now is located. In fishing time, that is, in idle summer, the Indians all moved across to what is now Liverpool, or Brownsville, to fish. When there, it must have been 1806—two years before Fraser is said to have officially come down the river—but the Indians said two snows before that, the Indians looked up the river and saw a fleet of canoes coming down the river. When the canoes got opposite to where the Langley Indians were camped, much to the surprise of the Indians, a musical instrument sound—they think from tradition that it was a bugle—and all the canoes stopped and remained where they were. You see, the Indians could not understand this, why the canoes remained stationary. You see, it was high water, and the river running strong, and the canoes remained stationary. The Indians at that time did not know anything about anchors; they had never used anchors in their canoes. They said everything was done to the sound of the music.

"One of the Indians—this is common knowledge when I came here in 1878—prior to this had declared that he had dreamed of a man in a" (boat or) "canoe with a hairy face; a white face with fire coming out of his mouth. The dream immediately came to the minds of the Indians who had been told of this hairy-faced man, and when they saw these men coming down the river they thought they were gods who had come down from heaven.

"The men in the canoes sat in the canoes smoking. This confirmed the dream; they saw the smoke coming out of their mouths. Up to that time the Indians did not smoke; neither did they use sail or anchor with their canoes.

"Then the strangers" (Fraser) "went to go ashore. He drew his sword. It flashed in the sun, and that confirmed the opinion that they were gods. They got into conversation through making signs. Fraser wanted to go on to the sea, but the 'Tchwashins'" (?) (Point Roberts Indians) "and the Musqueams of the North Arm of the Fraser River were at war, and the old Indian chief, father of Chief Cashmere of Langley" (who died about 1925-1930) "made them understand that if they went past their camp that they would be killed either by the Tchwashins" (?) "or Musqueams.

"Fraser turned back from there and went up the river again, but before he went an axe was missed. The whitemen went back and made a search for the missing axe, and found it in the possession of a young Indian buck. They took it from him, and kicked his backside, which was a terrible insult to a young buck—if it had been a girl it would not have mattered—and there was quite a hubbub about this, and they were going to kill Fraser and wipe out the insult, but an old Indian who died about 10 or 12 years ago at Katsey persuaded them not to, as he explained that the whitemen were gods, and more numerous than the stars above, and that if they killed Fraser that his friends would return, and there would be none of the Indians left.

"Fraser was allowed to go.

"Two snows after Fraser came down the river with more canoes, but with different 'queer' music" (perhaps bagpipes) "and went on down to the sea.

"This story was afterwards confirmed to me by the Chilliwack Indians.

"Mr. Wilkie thinks that there may be confirmation of this story as he states that Fraser's diary does not record what he was doing for a period of two years—Fraser's diary is supposed to lapse from March 1806 for a period of about two years, perhaps lost or destroyed—and that the missing two years coincides with the Indian story that he came down two snows before, 1808."

(Note: my experience—several such—is that Indians get their fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers mixed up a bit. This story appears to be founded on fact.)

J.S.M.

As narrated to me.

J.S. Matthews.

SIMON FRASER, 1808.

The enclosed narrative was submitted after typing to Mr. Otway Wilkie for his approval.

It was pointed out to Mr. Wilkie that there was a question of doubt involved in the astonishing age to which the Indians mentioned would have had to have lived, but Mr. Wilkie argued that it was not only quite possible for them to have lived to the necessary great age, but also quite probable that they did. This representation was made to Mr. Wilkie two days ago at a long conversation on the matter in this office.

Mr. Wilkie preferred to have the story recorded exactly as it is typed.

J.S. Matthews.