

## **Early Vancouver**

### **Volume Five**

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

**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**

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### **Contact Information**

City of Vancouver Archives  
1150 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3J9  
604.736.8561  
archives@vancouver.ca  
vancouver.ca/archives



**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH CALVERT SIMSON, FORMER STOREKEEPER, HASTINGS SAWMILL, 27 AUGUST 1936.**

**“PORTUGUESE JOE.” GREGORIS FERNANDEZ. JOSEPH SILVEY. JOSEPH GONSALVES.**

Mr. Simson said: “I saw Joe Gonsalves this week. He tells me he came to Gastown from Madeira, via New York and San Francisco, in July 1874, to join his uncle, Gregoris Fernandez, who died about 1875, a year after he arrived. He landed in Westminster, had no money, and started to walk to Gastown, but got lost in the forest, which he told me would give me an idea of what the trail between Westminster and Gastown was like at that time.

“Joe” (Gonsalves) “followed fishing for a living.

“Then in 1904 he bought out Irving of Irving’s Landing, Pender Harbour, and established himself there as a general store merchant, and is still in business there. Sometimes later than 1904, he formed a partnership with Dames, his deceased son-in-law, as the firm of Gonsalves and Dames; his daughter still survives.

“Amongst Gastown people of later days, Joe Gonsalves was known as ‘Portuguese Joe’; according to Joe Gonsalves, his uncle as known to early Gastown as ‘Portuguese Joe’; this accounts for ‘Portuguese Joe’ No. 2; Joseph Silvey was ‘Portuguese Joe’ No. 1, and Joe Gonsalves himself was ‘Portuguese Joe’ No. 3.”

**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH CALVERT SIMSON, SECOND STOREKEEPER (1884 ONWARDS) AT HASTINGS SAWMILL, CITY ARCHIVES, 4 SEPTEMBER 1936.**

**HASTINGS SAWMILL RANCHERIE. “HOWE SOUND JIM” (INDIAN.) “JERICHO CHARLIE” (INDIAN.) “AUNT SALLY.”**

Mr. Simson: “‘Aunt Sally’s’” (of Stanley Park, died April 1923) “husband was Jim ‘Grouse’; he may have been called ‘Howe Sound Jim’ too, but I nicknamed him ‘Jim Grouse,’ why I don’t know, may have been because he brought us grouse, I forget. Then we had ‘Jericho Charlie,’ who used to take a great big load of feed down to the logging camp at Jericho every alternate week—went in his big canoe through the First Narrows at slack tide, and took down a load of forty sacks of barley, or feed; sometimes he came into False Creek” (Carrall Street) “and our dump carts” (two-wheel carts) “took it to him there and dumped it.”

**BARLEY. JERICHO. INDIAN POTLATCHES. INDIAN DANCES.**

“The Indians used to save up and give a potlatch down at the rancherie just east of the mill, down by the Ballantyne Pier.” (Note: this rancherie was visited in 1876 by Her Excellency Lady Dufferin.) “They would buy about one hundred boxes of hard tack, about two hundred sacks of flour, ten bales of blankets—not the big ones, but the smaller size—and they always paid for it in twenty dollar gold pieces. They would have a fire or two in the middle of the floor and poke away a shingle or two of the roof to let the smoke out, then each would beat a little stick on something, and as they did so, would call out” (slowly) “‘Salaam, salaam,’” (then faster and faster) “‘salaam, salaam, salaam,’ and then a girl would come out and dance, or a man, pointing in mimicry as though he was shooting a deer with bow and arrow, do a hunting dance; the dancers worked themselves up into a regular frenzy; the audience sat all around and watched.”

**POTLATCHES.**

“They did not throw the gifts; they handed them out. A man would beggar himself giving away all he had, so that after the potlatch he would not be possessed of a thing in the world; the more he gave, the bigger the chief he would be; there was keen rivalry as to who could give away the most; at one time, they gave away sewing machines; it got so that the government stepped in and stopped it.”

Comment by City Archivist: I have always held that the abolition by law of potlatches amongst Indians was a whiteman’s indiscretion; the bad white first spoilt them with his liquor, then the good white forbade them; they should have been controlled, not abolished. The abolition of Christmas gifts amongst whitemen would be an equivalent. The Indian practiced the fundamentals of Masonic goodwill to one

another long before the whiteman brought Christianity; the whites would have done better to emulate the principles of the Indian Potlatch rather than to abolish them.

How splendid it would be if the chief object of life amongst whites was the acquisition of riches that such may be again scattered amongst the less fortunate before death intervened.

J.S. Matthews.