

**Early Vancouver**

**Volume Five**

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

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*Supplemental to volumes one, two, three and four collected in 1931, 1932 and 1934.*

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**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. JAMES WALKER, ELDEST DAUGHTER OF JOSEPH SILVEY, PIONEER, 1868 OR EARLIER, OF GASTOWN, WHOSE LITTLE GRANDDAUGHTER, MISS AGNES LAUREN TAYLOR, A SCHOOL GIRL, TELEPHONED ME LAST EVENING THAT SHE DESIRED ME TO CALL, 27 OCTOBER 1938.**

Mrs. Walker was waiting in front of her home, 721 Cambie Street, an old dilapidated rooming house, and received me with a gracious smile, and conducted me by a narrow stair, scarce thirty or thirty-six inches wide, upstairs to a long passage, uncomfortably narrow, to her solitary room at the back, about ten by twelve feet square, and containing a poor bed, two chairs, a gas cooking plate, a small tall heating stove. Mrs. Walker told me she was "on relief," and the room certainly did not belie her assertion. The whole spectacle was unseemly for anyone, especially for the eldest daughter of Joseph Silvey, one of the earliest settlers of Burrard Inlet, a pioneer of pioneers, who established himself on Water Street before even the townsite of Granville existed.

Mrs. Walker is a woman of pleasing appearance and kindly manner; short of stature, alert, practical, keen memory, motherly, and natural dignity; her semi-Indian origin is indicated by her dark eyes, stiff black hair, and light copper complexion. She was a most gracious host.

It is not to the credit of Vancouver that this native daughter—one of the first children born on Burrard Inlet—should, at her age, be permitted to continue in such a state of penury.

**JOSEPH SILVEY OF GASTOWN. "PORTUGUESE JOE" No. 1.**

Mrs. Walker said: "Joseph Silvey of 'Gastown' was my father. His real name was Joseph Silvey Simmons. I cannot say exactly whether the name is spelt Silvey or Silvia, or how; nor can I say where he was born, excepting that it was in Europe somewhere.

"He came out to British Columbia with a lot of men for the Hudson's Bay Co., Victoria, and then they went prospecting for gold up the Fraser River, up at Yale or somewhere; up the Cariboo, anyway. That was when he was a young man, and before he was married.

"They had a lot of trouble with the Indians; the Indians were killing the whitemen off, and then one night six men, whitemen, ran away from the mines at Yale, or wherever it was, and escaped down to New Westminster in a canoe; they could not stop where they were any longer as the Indians were killing whitemen off.

"From Westminster, a report was sent to Victoria—by telegraph I think, or somehow, if there was a telegraph—asking Victoria to send a man-o-war, and a gun boat came, and went up the river after the Indians, and that tamed the Indians down."

**MUSQUEAM INDIANS.**

"Then my father, together with four or five whitemen who had come down the river with him, went on down the North Arm of the Fraser in the dugout canoe, and when they approached the Point Grey Indian Reserve on the North Arm, they saw a crowd of Indians in front, and they were frightened, and clasped their hands together before their faces as in prayer, because they thought they would all be killed, and that the Musqueam Indians were like the Yale Indians.

"But the Musqueams treated them with kindness, and they sure were good" (with emphasis) "to my father and his companions."

**CHIEF KIAPILANO, THE OLD CHIEF. BOW AND ARROWS.**

"The big chief, Kiapilano, from Capilano, happened to be at Musqueam, and he stood in the middle of the crowd of Indians. All the Musqueams had their arrows ready, but Kiapilano, the chief, stopped them; he put up his two arms over his head, and that motion held the crowd in check; he was my great-grandfather on my mother's side.

"The old chief lived at Capilano Creek" (the village of Homulcheson), "but he also had a home at Musqueam; his mother was a Musqueam. I remember they used to take me to see the old chief

Kiapilano; a great big man, fine tall man, grey hair. He was kind and nice. I was a little girl.” (Note: all accounts speak highly of old Chief Kiapilano. J.S.M.)

#### **JOSEPH SILVEY AT POINT ROBERTS.**

“Father stayed a night with the Musqueam Indians, and was treated so well there, and the next morning, Father and his companions went to Victoria in the canoe. He was in Victoria for a while, and then he came back, and he was at Point Roberts with a man named Mr. Dublin, or some name like that; that was before Father was married; and my father had a little store there, and that was how he came to propose to my mother down at Musqueam.”

#### **JOSEPH SILVEY MARRIES. INDIAN MARRIAGE. MARY ANN SILVEY.**

“Mother and Father were out in a canoe, and then afterwards Father said by signs to the old chief, Chief Kiapilano, that he wanted my mother for his wife, and could he have her; all by signs. Then the old chief said, by signs, that he could; waved his hand and arm with a motion, signifying to ‘take her.’ He motioned with his right arm, waved quickly, upward and outward.

“She was a pretty girl with dark eyes, and hair down to her middle; large deep soft eyes. Her name was Mary Ann in English; I don’t know what it is in Indian, but my aunt’s name was Lumtinat. My grandfather, Mother’s father, was Musqueam; he was a son of old Chief Kiapilano, and I suppose his name was Kiapilano too, but don’t actually know; but my mother’s name was Squamish.” (Khaal-tin-aht.)

#### **INDIAN MARRIAGE OF JOSEPH SILVEY.**

Major Matthews: When your father married your mother, was the ceremony in a church?

Mrs. Walker: “Oh, no. In those days they married under Indian law. Well, you know, my father told me how the Indians married; you see, Father and Mother got married at Musqueam, Point Grey. The old chief, Chief Kiapilano, took my father, and the chief of the Musqueams took my mother, and the two chiefs put them together.

Major Matthews: Was anyone looking?

Mrs. Walker: “Oh, yes” (with emphasis), “I should say there was. They had canoes and canoes and canoes, all drawn up on the beach, and a great crowd of Indians, and they had a great time. They had a lot of stuff for the festivities, Indian blankets, and all sorts of thing, and—threw” (gave) “it all away; they had a great big potlatch.

“And then they put my mother and father in a great big canoe with a lot of blankets; made them sit on top of the blankets, and then brought them over to home at Point Roberts.”

#### **JOSEPH SILVEY COMES TO GASTOWN.**

“My father, Joseph Silvey, left Point Roberts after a short period, and came to Gastown, and put up a saloon; that’s what they called it; not a hotel, but a saloon. He built it quite close to the beach, down on Water Street somewhere; it had a square top, but I don’t see it here in this photo of ‘Gastown, 1884’; I remember all the bottles on the shelf, and there was a counter” (bar.) “It was on the Gastown beach, and the street was just planked over, and then my mother died; she caught cold in her back, I gathered, from remarks my father dropped, when my little sister was born, and my little sister was less than a year old when Mother died; my only sister—I had no brothers—Josephine, afterwards Mrs. Anderson; so Father was left alone with two young children, one unable to walk. Then he sold the saloon to some hand loggers.”

#### **INDIAN LEGEND OF COMING WHITEMEN.**

“My mother has told me that Great-grandfather Chief Kiapilano had twin boys, and the boys were growing up and about six years old, and wanted to go down to the beach, and their mother would not let them go, but they argued that there was water down there, and they wanted to go down and see it. So old Chief Kiapilano told them that they could go down, but that some day the whitemans would come, that they were to treat the whitemen nicely; that they would probably come on an island” (ship) “and that they were just like us, only lighter colour skins, and that they were all right, and that they would not stop long; that they were just travelling through; and to be nice to them. That’s what old Chief Kiapilano told the twins;

that they were always to be kind to the whitemans; there was never any crime committed by the Indians towards the whitemen about here. No, I should say not, old Kiapilano was a fine man; would not allow it.”

#### **CHIEF KIAPILANO.**

“Chief Kiapilano had lots of wives; the chiefs used to have a ‘princess’ from each of the different tribes as a wife. Chiefs used to marry a daughter from each tribe; only the chiefs had a lot of wives—not the common people—but they used to say Kiapilano had the most; used to visit them every month.

“I don’t suppose you believe in fortune telling, but the Indians used to foretell things; I don’t know what you call it in English, but they used to tell what would come someday; and about how the white faces would come, and they would be different; have white faces, and things would change, and not be the same anymore. I don’t know just exactly what that had to do with it, but they tell me that, when the whitemen did come, that Chief Kiapilano wanted to give them land; I think he did give them some land somewhere.

“Kiapilano was a very nice man; he was very nice and kind.”

#### **GOVERNOR DOUGLAS. DATE OF BIRTH OF MISS SILVEY.**

“Father told me I was born on the Fourth of July. It was an American Day, and they were having a celebration at New Westminster. They always told me, jokingly, that I was an ‘American baby.’ They were having a celebration, the Americans were, and Governor Douglas was there, and they were firing guns, or practicing or something—no, it was not the 24<sup>th</sup> of May or July 1<sup>st</sup>—it was some American celebration at Westminster. That was the day, Father said, that I was born. Father had a big time that day; treated his friends with brandy, because he had a baby girl, and that was the day I was born.”

(Note: as she was born at Gastown, it is much more likely that the celebration was at Moodyville, where the “Glorious Fourth” was customarily celebrated; it is hardly likely it was at Westminster.)

“And my own mother told me that, too. I must have been about four years old when my mother died, but” (with emphasis) “I can remember these things. My father told me there was two years between my sister Josephine and me.”

#### **DEATH OF MRS. JOSEPH SILVEY. CHIEF KIAPILANO.**

“Mother died when my little sister was not, as yet, actually walking; less than a year, and she wanted to be buried at Musqueam, so she was buried there. I don’t know her father’s name, but her grandfather, that’s my great-grandfather, was the original old Chief Kiapilano. Great-grandfather Chief Kiapilano used to come and camp at Brockton Point, in a tent in front of our house, and I used to see him resting on his bed in the tent.” (Note: this is the Indian chief invited on board H.M.S. *Plumper* in August 1859. J.S.M.)

“Everybody is surprised that I know these things, I was so young, but I have a good memory, and I remember my mother dying in Gastown, and how her people at Musqueam came for her body, and took it in a canoe for burial at Musqueam.

“Father has often told me that she was a wonderful wife, and woman.”

#### **JOSEPHINE SILVEY.**

“For instance, I can remember the birth of my little sister Josephine in Gastown, because they took me to a strange house, and the next morning, when I went back, there was a strange baby in the house; I remember, too, I tried to pick it up.

“My sister Josephine married Steve Anderson at Vancouver Island, either Nanaimo or Kuper Island, and they had four sons and three daughters; Josephine died in Vancouver in 1935, and is buried in Ocean View. Her sons were Cleveland, Harry, Alfred, and Frankie, the youngest son; her daughters were Nellie” (Mrs. McDonald), “Minnie” (Mrs. Penderson), “Florence” (married name unknown.)

#### **JOSEPH SILVEY MOVES TO BROCKTON POINT.**

“Father sold out and went to live at Brockton Point. He put up a house there, near Deadman’s Island, facing east, and while at the point was married a second time to a Sechelt Indian woman, Lucy, and she died at Reid Island, as Mrs. Watson, about 1935.”

**JOSEPH SILVEY BUILDS A SLOOP. THE SLOOP *MORNING STAR*.**

“Father built a sloop; I helped him; he built it at Brockton Point. I was only a little girl, but I could hold the boards, and I could hand him the nails, and could hold something against the other side of the board when he was hammering; put a little pressure on.”

**TOMPKINS BREW, CUSTOMS OFFICER.**

“Tompkins Brew was living at Brockton Point when we went there; he had quite a nice little cottage; it was about twenty feet or so—just a little bit—west of the nine o’clock gun, on that little bit of clearing right on that little point; but my father was the first one there, and when he left, Gonsalves got it. I tried to find out if my father sold it to Gonsalves, but from what I could learn, he did not; he just left it and went to Reid Island.” (Note: these squattings are shown on the map of squatters’ locations in Stanley Park, 1923.)

**“PORTUGUESE JOE” No. 2.**

“I got little or no education; only about six months, but I can read a few words. But I have seen to it that my children got good educations. Father had a man at Reid Island, he boarded with us for six months, and that is all the education I got; I can read a little. We were too young to go to school when we lived at Gastown. I don’t know when we left Gastown to go to Brockton Point, but it was before I was old enough to go to school, because I never went to the Hastings Sawmill School, and I remember, Joe Little went to the Hastings School, but I remember Arthur Brew, son of Tompkins Brew; he was a big boy going to school, and I remember running over to Joe Fernandez’s store across from our place—just a few steps—nearly every day. The men who came into the bar room used to give me ten cents, or fifty cents, and I used to run over to Joe’s store and get candy. Joe Fernandez had a great big cordwood stove in the store; I used to stand by it when I went over to get candy from Joe.”

**GASSY JACK.**

“I remember Gassy Jack, but don’t know much about him. We children did not have much to do with the men; he had a place along the beach—to the east—of Father’s saloon; he had a saloon there; he was a stout man; he had a saloon too. He had an Indian wife, and so had Joe Mannion.”

**INDIAN CHURCH.**

“Yes, I remember the Indian church.”

**GREGORIS FERNANDEZ. “PORTUGUESE JOE” No. 2. “PORTUGUESE JOE” No. 3.**

“Joe Fernandez of Gastown died. We had left Brockton Point and gone to Reid Island when he died. When I first recall him, he was an old man with a big long beard; all the men wore beards then; even the young men had big beards.

“When Gregoris Fernandez” (“Portuguese Joe” No. 2) “was ailing, he sent for his nephew, Joseph Gonsalves” (“Portuguese Joe” No. 3) “to come from Portugal; he is up at Pender Harbour now; his wife died last month.

“*There is no relationship between Joseph Silvey and ‘Joe’ Fernandez; Mrs. Buss, my half-sister, says there is, but she imagines all sorts of things; she knows nothing about it; why, she was not born.*”

**JOSEPH SILVEY MARRIES SECOND WIFE.**

“His second wife was a Sechelt Indian woman, Lucy, and he married her at a church ceremony at Sechelt, and they had four boys and two girls; the children are still living. They were:

Domingo, now on Reid Island;  
Joseph, now at Egmont;  
Henry, also at Egmont;  
Anthony (Tony), on Reid Island;  
Mary, now Mrs. Buss, at Egmont;  
Rose Alena, in Egmont, now Mrs. Beal [*sic*].

“And there are lots of grandchildren.”

### **HERRING IN COAL HARBOUR. DOGFISH OIL.**

“Father taught the Indian women how to knit nets at Brockton Point; taught them how to make seine nets, and then he used to stain the nets in vats, and then they went out on the little bit of sandy beach, facing this way from Brockton Point, and used to catch herrings. One would go away out in the boat with one end, and one away out with the other end, and then they would circle around, and two men on one rope end and two men on the other end would pull the net, slowly, slowly, into the sandy beach, and they would get, well, I heard them say there was a ton of herrings in the net, you could see the net coming in with the herring all splashing in it; drawing it up on the beach. Father had the first herring seine license; made out to Silvey and Sons; I believe Domingo sold it and its rights to someone.

“Then they used to put the herrings in barrels, and they used to salt it, and they used to sell the herrings for one dollar a barrel; they used to sell them to the schooners. The schooners used to come in, and get one hundred barrels each, and go away; sometimes as much as one hundred and fifty barrels; that” (with emphasis) “one hundred and fifty dollars; they used the herring for bait; used to catch dogfish up the coast, and they sold the dogfish oil to the mines at Departure Bay.” (Coal mines.) “But the oil was so high” (in price) “those days.

“Ewen and Wise, at Westminster, used to call my father the ‘net boss’ during the salmon fishing season, in the summer. In the summer, when they were fishing salmon, we used to live in the boathouse by Mr. Wise’s store in New Westminster. There were just three of us then; Mary—Mrs. Buss—was not born then; there were just three children.”

### **JOSEPH SILVEY MOVES TO REID ISLAND.**

“Then Father left Burrard inlet and went to Vancouver Island, and crown granted Reid Island, died and is buried there, and as there was no will, the eldest son, by the second marriage, of course, Domingo Silvey, got the whole of the island, and he is there yet. I hear they have a school there now.

“I am the eldest of Joseph Silvey’s children; my name is Marion Elizabeth; born in Gastown, I don’t know what year, and christened in Victoria, where I had a godfather, Mr. John Munto” (sic); “he had a lot of property in Victoria; Father took me to see him once, and he nursed me in his arms and told me I could have anything I wanted. My godmother was Mrs. Morie” (sic); “they kept the Dominion Hotel in those days.

“Then I married James Walker when I was sixteen, at the Church of England, Kuper Island, and by the Rev. Mr. Roberts. My sister, Josephine, my full sister, died in Vancouver seven years ago; she was Mrs. Steve Anderson; Mr. Anderson is still living.

“There were just the two girls, Marion Elizabeth, that’s myself, and my sister Josephine; that’s all Father had by his first wife.

“Father had a little store on Reid Island, alongside of the house. He was a builder; he could build a house, as he did for himself at Gastown, or he could build a sloop, as he did at Brockton Point; could build sail boats.”

### **JOSEPH SILVEY DIES ON REID ISLAND.**

“My father lived on Reid Island” [blank] “years, and died there, aged about 60, and, according to his wish, was buried on the island.”

### **INDIAN WIVES OF WHITEMEN.**

“Domingo, Father’s eldest son, got everything when Father died; there was no will; thought he had some coal rights on Reid Island, and he said to Mr. Planta” (Senator Planta) “that the two girls—that’s my sister and myself—could not claim anything because my father was not married to my mother. But Mr. Planta said to him, ‘Don’t you think anything like that. Their father and mother were married according to Indian law.’”

### **GRANDFATHER SILVEY. JOHN SILVEY. JOSEPH SILVEY.**

“My father’s father was an old sea captain in New York, and he married a Miss Silvia, and she gave my father his name Silvia; it was just her maiden name.” (An attempt to find out, by pronunciation, if the name

was Silvia or Silvey, was unsuccessful; sometimes it sounded one, sometimes another. Mrs. Walker used Silvey when speaking, but when I asked her which was correct, she replied, "Silvia." J.S.M.) "That is how my father came to be known as Joe Silvey; his real name was Joseph Silvia Simmonds.

"Grandfather Silvey died of heart trouble on his ship. My father told me that he, Grandfather, was training my father and my uncle, his brother John, on the ship. Father was to be second mate, and Grandfather was training him for it; the two brothers. And then Grandfather called the two boys into his study—a place where they could sit, sitting room—and Grandfather was sitting in a big chair, and he told the boys to be good boys when they grew up, and then he just sunk down in the chair and was dead, while they were with him; Father told me that."

#### **MARRIAGE OF MRS. JAMES WALKER.**

"I was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July" (year not known) "and I was sixteen the year I was married. I was married on the 15<sup>th</sup> July. Mr. Walker kidnapped me; I did not know I was going to be married until I was in the little row boat; nor did my father. James Walker asked my father if he could have me for his wife, and my father was furious about it; said, 'No,' that I could not be married until I was twenty, and I heard him telling my stepmother that he did not want me to marry James Walker. James Walker, my husband, used to come over and visit me; what they call a 'boy friend' now; and he asked my stepmother if he could take me out for a boat ride. So I went.

"I stepped into his boat, and he rowed me away from Reid Island; his home was on Thetis Island; he kept on rowing, and rowed over to Kuper Island, and we were married by the Rev. Mr. Roberts. Mr. Walker is still living, but I have been away from him for twenty years; I was just his 'slave.'

"I have ten children; four are dead; six living.

1. Frank Matthew. My eldest. I was seventeen when he was born. He is married and lives on Vancouver Island, and has three sons.
2. William James. He is married, lives in Vancouver, and has a daughter, Norma Jean.
3. Dora Caroline. She is dead. She was Mrs. William Sims of Ladysmith, and she had seven children.
4. Rose Edith, now Mrs. Edward Knox, of Alert Bay; she has two sons and a daughter.
5. Adelaide, now Mrs. John Miner of Courtenay, and has two sons and several daughters.
6. Robert Joseph, named after his grandfather; he is a locomotive engineer up the coast, is married, no children. His wife has been in England for about eleven years.
7. Elizabeth Agnes, she is dead; she was Mrs. J. Crone of Seattle; she had one son.
8. James Alexander. Killed at Prince George about 1934 in a railroad accident; there was a washout, and a collision, and the locomotive went over. He was a fine man; his death was a great blow to me; he was unmarried.
9. Marion Jane. She is dead, too. She was Mrs. Albert Taylor, and her only little girl lives with me; she ought to be home from school in a few minutes. [*Agnes Laureen Taylor.*]
10. Vera June, the youngest; she is Mrs. F. Lambert, living in Seattle; one son and one daughter.

Correct, as read to me, 17 July 1939.

(Signed) Marion E. Walker (née Silvey.)