Early Vancouver

Volume Two

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Narrative of Pioneers of Vancouver, BC Collected During 1932.

Supplemental to volume one collected in 1931.

About the 2011 Edition

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meaning of those little holes in the cedar trees; they are abandoned trees; ask the park forester to show them to you.

“Siwash Rock! Well, Chants is not only a big rock on the beach, that is, symbolically Siwash Rock’s fishing line rolled up in a ball, but it also includes a big hole in the cliff nearby where Slahkayulsh kept his fishing tackle. You can see the hole as you come in on the Victoria boat. Stuk-tuks is too abrupt a pronunciation of the name for the little bay known as Fisherman’s Cove; abruptness destroys the sense of the root from which the word is derived. The longer Stoak-tux is better; it means ‘all cut up’; the rocks there are all fluted and cut up.

“Dick Isaacs’ Indian name is Que-yah-chulk; Tim Moody’s is Yahmas. Frank Charlie” (Ayatak) “of Musqueam is quite entitled to use the surname Capilano; the Capilanos of Capilano River and Frank Charlie of Musqueam both acknowledge descent from the same blood.”

QOITCHETAHL, THE SERPENT SLAYER.

“My ancestor Qoitchetahl, the celebrated serpent slayer of Squamish, was born at Stawmass, near Squamish. The aged Haxten tells me that he was the great-grandfather of my grandmother. I was given the name of Qoitchetahl at a meeting held in my grandmother’s house on the North Vancouver Indian Reserve in 1910 or 1911. All, every one of the old chiefs of the Squamish tribe were present. My grandmother, being a direct descendent of the original Qoitchetahl, herself chose me as the member of the family to bear the name Qoitchetahl.”

Note: the aged and wrinkled Haxten, seated nearby during the talk, is said to be 112 years old—it is fairly conclusive she is over 100. Her rapid and repeated utterance of the word Qoitchetahl sounded, in English, much like “Whichtull” or “Wudge-tal.” [*NOTE ADDED LATER:* Haxten, or Mrs. Harriet George, North Vancouver, died 8 February 1940; see *Province*, 9 February 1940.]

A full report, somewhat different in detail to that related by August Kitsilano of the legend of Qoitchetahl, is printed in Professor Chas. Hill-Tout’s report on the *Ethnological Survey of Canada*, British Association for the Advancement of Science, Bradford Meeting, 1900, page 530. August Kitsilano’s account is given elsewhere in this record.

FURTHER CONVERSATION WITH ANDREW PAULL, NORTH VANCOUVER, 10 JANUARY 1933.

“The story of Kokohaluk and the burning of Homulcheson is not legend, but actual history,” continued Mr. Paull (Qoitchetahl) “and is in part verified by Haxten,” (Mrs. Harriet George) “my wife’s grandmother, who actually saw the bodies of the slain; she is now over 100 years old, it is claimed that she is 112 years old, so that it is probable that the incident occurred about, say, ninety years ago. I will call her, and interpret for you.”

Query: Ask her why they call it Homulcheson?

(Mr. Paull asks.)

Haxten: “Ahh, ahh, ahh.” (Mr. Paull interpreting.) “Where they split the cedar trees and made them into a fence” (fort or stockade), “because of the enemy that used to come, in the stockade they had a northern Indian woman imprisoned, Kokohaluk; they had stolen her from the enemy, and were keeping her in the fort; she had become the wife of a Squamish Indian and was an expectant mother.

“Well, about eighteen warriors from the north came in a big canoe and at a moment when it was undefended, attacked the fort at Homulcheson, rescued Kokohaluk, burned the stockade, and made off with her.

“Whilst all this was going on, three Squamish men, all brothers, were coming down in two canoes, one large and one small, from Squamish to Coquitlam. They were proceeding via the North Arm of the Fraser. The canoe had just been completed by the three brothers, and they were taking it as a present to their sister who had married a man at Coquitlam; the smaller canoe was to take the three brothers back to

Squamish after the presentation. The big canoe was very valuable." ("As valuable as a large ocean liner is to us today," added Mr. Paull.)

"As the raiders from the north, returning from the burned fort, were proceeding home again, they and the three Squamish men met; just where they sighted each other I do not know, but I think somewhere off Skaywitsut" (Point Atkinson); "the weaker force retired when they were attacked by the eighteen warriors. The fight took place somewhere about Kee-khaal-sum" (Eagle Harbour.) "Two brothers were in the great canoe [and] hastened to the shore to defend it; the other brother took the smaller canoe and took up a position behind the big boulder on the rocky shore. This brother's name was Skwa-lock-tun. He prepared for battle; he had his bow and arrow in a satchel slung to his side. One by one, the attackers were either killed or wounded, largely by Skwa-lock-tun from behind the big boulder, until finally only two of the raiders and the woman Kokohalak remained in the raiders' canoe.

"Then Kokohaluk said to her captors, 'You had better stop fighting; that is a bad Squamish man you have met,' so the fighting ceased, and the dead and wounded were dragged back to the canoe, which drew off in the direction of the north and disappeared.

"After their departure, Skwalocktun, the Squamish man, emerged from his retreat, and went to look for his brothers. He found both their bodies; their heads were gone; both large and small canoe were smashed to pieces. Skwalocktun alone survived, so he resolved to proceed to Homulcheson and seek assistance.

"From Keekhaalsum to Homulcheson he walked, and then related the story of the fight.

"Payt-sa-mauq, half-brother to 'Old Chief' Capilano, said, 'This fighting must stop.' Kokohaluk's husband said, 'I love Kokohaluk. I am going to Nanaimo, where there is a Nanaimo man married to a woman from the north. I will ask him to go with me, and we will go as ambassadors of peace from the people of the south to the people of the north, and I will ask them to let me have Kokohaluk.' In due time, the mission proceeded north, their requests were granted, peace was declared, and," laughed Qoitchetahl as he interpreted, and then added, "they lived happily ever after."

THE SLAIN LIE IN BUSHES AT GIBSON'S.

"A short time afterwards—how long she does not know—Haxten was journeying by canoe with her husband along the shore near Gibson's Landing, when her husband saw some wild gooseberries, and drew them to her notice. Haxten disembarked from the canoe, and proceeded up the shore to gather some, and whilst wandering midst the wild gooseberry bushes gathering the fruit, she 'stumbled upon' the bodies of the slain; they were covered with mats and badly decomposed.

"After peace was declared, the Squamish houses were built on the shore, and not concealed in the forest as they had been previously, and as Captain Vancouver reports they were when he visited here in 1792; there was no longer fear from attack."

Note: assuming Haxten's age to be 100, this incident probably happened about 1850. The dead would be heavy, and would be carried but a short distance, i.e. just beyond the actual beach. The Indians fought with bow and arrow; Matthias Capilano says that 'Old Chief' Capilano had fought battles with bow and arrow and lived to fight them with guns. The white man's rule probably accounts for the change in sites of houses.

Paull continues the conversation; Haxten retires.

"Some time ago, I saw at a table opposite a Yuclataw Indian; he appeared uneasy, conscious of some emotion, and presently he remarked to me that my ancestors and his had been foes, and commented upon the oddity of two descendents of hereditary foes conversing in amity side by side, and then he told me of the great holes which his ancestors had dug in the ground to protect themselves from the assaults of my ancestors, and mused on the labour he had been given, and smiled and nodded his head at the thought of it, of filling them up again. 'Some work,' he remarked with irony, 'I had to draw about twenty wagon loads of earth to fill each hole up again.'"

INDIAN NOMENCLATURE ABOUT ENGLISH BAY

"In studying the names on your map, I think we should change some of them. Hkachu means 'a lake'; Akhachu means 'a little lake,' and Beaver Lake in Stanley Park is a little lake. Then Siwash Rock is best

spelt ‘Slah-kay-ulsh’ to get the proper meaning, ‘he is standing up.’ Be careful to spell Chah-kai with the second ‘h’ so as to distinguish it from Che-kai, i.e. Mount Garibaldi. The mouth of the creek just west of Wallace’s Shipyard, 100 yards or so east of Lonsdale Avenue, should be spelt ‘Es-tahl-tohk’; it means ‘a fine, large, pretty house built there.’ The name ‘Stait-wouk,’ Indian for Second Beach in Stanley Park, is the Indian name for a clay material or muddy substance formerly obtained right in the bed of a small creek right at Second Beach which, when rolled into loaves, as the Indians did it, and heated or roasted before a fire, turned white like chalk. As you know, the Indian blankets were made from the woven mountain goat’s fur, and staitwouk, after being whitened, was used to dust or powder them with to whiten them. I am told that Staitwouk was the only place known to the Indians where this material was procurable.”

Note: Rev. C.M. Tate says that Indians would come long distances to procure this white pipe clay; they came as far as from Vancouver’s Island.

“Sahix does not mean the site of the old Moodyville Sawmill, which was east of Sahix. Sahix means ‘a point’ or ‘cape,’ and is that prominent headland east of the North Vancouver ferry landing. If you will observe, you will see that the whole of the north shore from West Vancouver to Roche Point is low and flat save for one point, Sahix, which rises to eminence, and appears as a bold bluff; it must have been still more prominent when the forest grew upon it. At Estahltohk, just east of Lonsdale Avenue, there was a graveyard as well as a ‘fine, large house.’ Lucklucky means a ‘grove of beautiful trees,’ and ‘Kumkumlye’—it is better spelt ‘lye’ than ‘lai’—means that there is a lot of ‘maple trees’ there” (Hastings Sawmill.) “In some of the photographs of early Vancouver, you will see Indian canoes about the Hastings Sawmill waters, canoes with upturned prow and stern; these are the canoes of northern Indians—probably they worked at the mill. The Squamish canoe is peculiar to itself; the stern is not turned high in the air, and the prow has a straight stem part way, and then a projection, like a blunt bill, and almost horizontal, sticks out. Smamchuze on False Creek brings to mind the system of Indian burials.”

INDIAN BURIALS

“Our system of burial has progressively changed. One hundred years ago, perhaps, it was exclusively tree burial, and, when they could get it, on an island; then changes gradually crept in. After the arrival of the whiteman they were told that it was not proper, not decent, to have bones lying on the surface of the earth, but even as late as 1907 or 1908 I was on those two little islands just west of Point Atkinson, south of Eagle Harbour, and found the remains of several bodies on the summit of one of them, just laid on the bare rock—there is no earth on those storm-swept islets—and covered with split cedar slabs, about say three inches thick, eighteen inches wide and about five or six feet long, held down by their own weight, no stones on them. This will illustrate that, prior to the advent of the whiteman, Indians did not usually bury in the ground; I would not say that they never did. Defence Island, near Squamish in Howe Sound, is an old Indian burial ground, merely half an acre in extent. It was surveyed and given to the Indians in 1876, and again surveyed in 1881, but recently has been sold to private parties by the Provincial Government, and a deed for it actually issued. The new ‘owners’ want $1,200 for it, but it belongs to the Indians, and was an old burial ground.”

INDIAN UNDERGARMENTS

“Do not forget that, in addition to being useful for canoes, buildings, etc., cedar was used to make undergarments.” (Note: Hill-Tout speaks of it being used for the fluffy lining of infants’ cradles.)

Kee-khaal-sum (Eagle Harbour) which Prof. Hill-Tout refers to as having reference to “nipping grass, and that the deer went there in spring to eat the tender young grass, really refers to the gnawing of animals; you know, they have a habit of gnawing buds and tender shoots in spring. It really means ‘gnawing.’”

Pookcha, that is, part of Spanish Banks, can be interpreted radically as “floating,” perhaps “floating island”; it suggests something rising out of the water as though it were floating, as of say, the back of a whale. Pookcha is that particular part of Spanish Banks at the northwestern extremity which, as soon as the tide starts to ebb, rises out of the water earlier than the remainder of the sandbanks; it is a knoll on the sand flats, and when first it appears out of the water, has the appearance of floating.