

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

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Item # EarlyVan_v4_007

MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH AUGUST JACK HAATSALANO, IN MY GARDEN, EVENING, 21 JULY 1937.

INDIAN SLAVES.

We do not resume our previous conversation on this subject; the time was inopportune, but upon reflecting upon what my friend said the other evening, it is evident that much which has been written about Indian slaves—as in other matters—has been exaggerated and “coloured.” It is obvious, for instance, that a Yuclataw slave in the possession of the Squamish would be a source of irritation to the Yuclataws; might form an excuse for a reprisal raid on the Squamish, and, regardless of what whitemen have written of the desire of Indians to fight one another, the fact is they feared those raids, and desired peace, no less than we do. Capt. Vancouver reports that when, in 1792, he passed through our First Narrows, he saw no signs of habitations, yet actually there were two large villages close at hand; one at Homulcheson (Capilano) and the other at Whoi-Whoi (Lumberman’s Arch, Stanley Park). The explanation most likely is that, following their usual customs, these two villages were slightly back from the beaches, and hidden from the sight of passersby, for one authority, Chief Matthias Joe, states positively that until the whitemen guaranteed safety, Indian villages were concealed thus in the trees, to hide them from the sight of possible foe. JSM.

SKUNK COVE.

Major Matthews: August. Did you ever get the Indian name for Skunk Cove?

Haatsalano: “Noooo. I ask everybody; don’t know; must be some name; the only one I can now ask is Haxten, or perhaps Jimmy Jimmy may know. If they don’t know then no more use trying.”

(Note: this is in connection with the map “Indian Villages and Landmarks, Burrard Inlet and Howe Sound,” recently compiled after six years’ endeavour. Through disuse, the Indians have forgotten the old names; one by one we recovered many, but Skunk Cove seems to have been completely forgotten.)

INDIAN PAINTINGS.

Note: Haatsalano came this evening with three coloured drawings, done by himself; one on brownish paper or cardboard depicting an Indian in yellow jacket and feather headdress; one on an old piece of packing case cardboard depicting, in red and yellow paint, three Indians wearing masks; and one of a half-length naked brown Indian with feather headdress and clenched fist on white paper. It is an extraordinary fact that Haatsalano could not write even his own signature until I taught him four years ago, nor can he read, nor has he ever previously made drawings, yet this week he successfully attempted and effected these quite creditable drawings in his little tent on the Kitsilano Indian Reserve on False Creek, where he is digging for his buried “treasure.”

INDIAN DANCES. INDIAN MASKS.

Major Matthews: What’s this? (Holding up second picture.)

Haatsalano: “These two big fellows are swwhy-whee” (masks) (a form of Whoi-Whoi, i.e. “masks,” the village) “and the little fellow is Quain-nia, the funny man. They are dancing; every time there is a death, or a marriage, or a first born, they can have a dance. The funny man is tickling the swwhy-whee, teasing him, tickling his nose with a brush; makes peoples laugh.

“Those” (stems with red and yellow flowers in headdress) “are bushy feathers off geese; the red” (plumes) “are little sticks with feathers tied to them; hand made, home made; they are like whitemans feather duster.”

Major Matthews: Why have two swwhy-whee and only one quain-nia?

Haatsalano: “Oh, just looks better; if there’s only one swwhy-whee, not look so good, but one quain-nia is enough; no others can use that mask; that mask belongs to one man; it’s he’s mask; nobody else use it.”

- Major Matthews: Patented, eh? Well, why did you put big eagle feathers on their heads? Squamish not have hats with eagle feathers like prairie Indians; only prairie Indians have feathers before (whiteman come).
- Haatsalano: "That's right. Only prairie Indian have them before, but that's my hat." (Note: by which he means that he has adopted that form of headdress; he is the first to use it; he may have copied it from pictures of prairie Indians but he is the first to use it, and therefore, according to Indian ethics, it is his personal property; that is, the design, whatever it may be. Henceforth that form of headdress belongs to Haatsalano; see his photo.)
- Major Matthews: What's this? (Indicating brown skinned naked Indian, half-length, with clenched fist and feather headdress painted in colour on white paper.)
- Haatsalano: "Oh, just an Indian, only he's angry, he's mad, he's got clenched fist, he's looking up, he's lips are firm, he's going to do something, he's determined."
- Major Matthews: What about all this long hair. I thought Indians cut their hair at the shoulders; why so long, down to his middle?
- Haatsalano: "That's an old-timer. All the old-timers have long hair; some braid it, some ties it up like this man ties his, but all old-timers have hair down to he's middle." (See Lieut. Willis famous painting at Ottawa of 1861 of part of Kitsilano Beach which shows an Indian with his hair halfway down his back, in the foreground.) "Only old-timers have long hair."
- Major Matthews: Why is he naked?
- Haatsalano: "Squamish got no coat; only little shorts around his middle; just like whitemans bathing trunks, made of buckskin, about twelve inches around his middle, like little short pants; buckskin. That's only thing he wears; he's not cold; summer or winter go naked."
- Major Matthews: Why not cold?
- Haatsalano: "Not when he's in house by fire; when he goes out he wears cape over his shoulders."
- Major Matthews: Bare feet in house?
- Haatsalano: "No, moccasin; he's got lots moccasin; lots time make them in winter."
- Major Matthews: August. You can't read or write. How did you draw these pictures? You never draw before this week. (He is about 60 years old.)
- Haatsalano: "Yes. I draw him. I just sit down. Some peoples have models to draw from; some peoples have picture to look at, but I just draw from memory. I give little totem pole to boy; he give me paints. I just sit down in my tent and draw what you've got; only it get dark and I have to stop; maybe by and by I draw better."

Note: a remarkable fact that this Indian who has never had a day's schooling in his life, can sit down, and with rude tools on a rough table, draw these pictures of Indian life from memory. He must have great natural ability, and be a born artist. And yet some people call Indians "Siwash." (French, i.e. sauvage, English, i.e. savage.)

INDIAN MASKS.

- Haatsalano: "I's only one got it, mask, in all Squamish peoples I's only one. I's got only old time mask; my great-grandfather's."
- Major Matthews: How did you get it? Did you say your great-grandfather?
- Haatsalano: "My mother keep it when my father" (Hay-tulk) "died, and my brother" (Willie Jack), "he's Haytulk, too, he not like it, so he waits until I grow up, and then he gives it to me" (Haatsalano.) "I's the only one in Squamish" (tribe) "whose got one. My father"

(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.

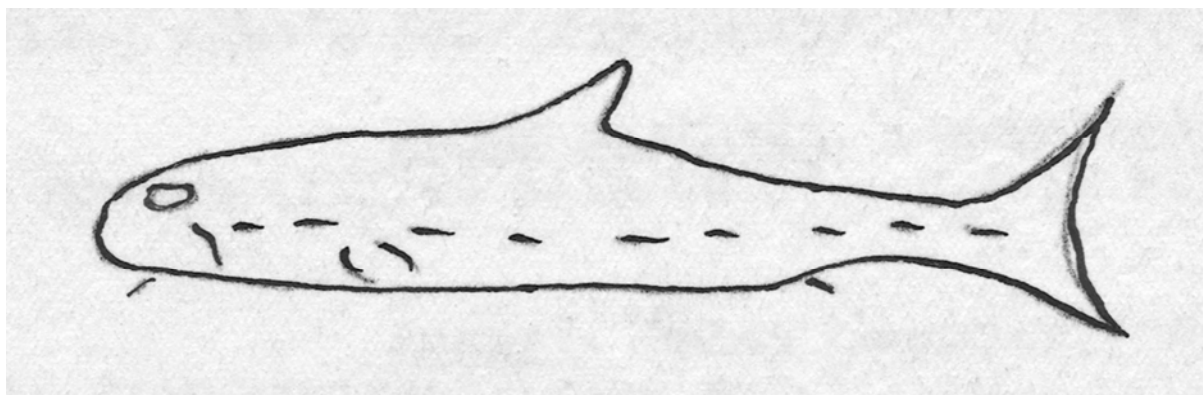
August arrived dangling an angular stone, six and one half inches at its widest part, and weighing three pounds net, by a wire which had been passed through a tapered hole, about one and one half inches wide at the mouths on either side, and narrowed down to a central half inch, two and one half inches 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 Chinalset'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