

## **Early Vancouver**

### **Volume Four**

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

**2011 Edition (Originally Published 1944)**

*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**

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 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City's founding. The project was made possible by funding from the Vancouver Historical Society.

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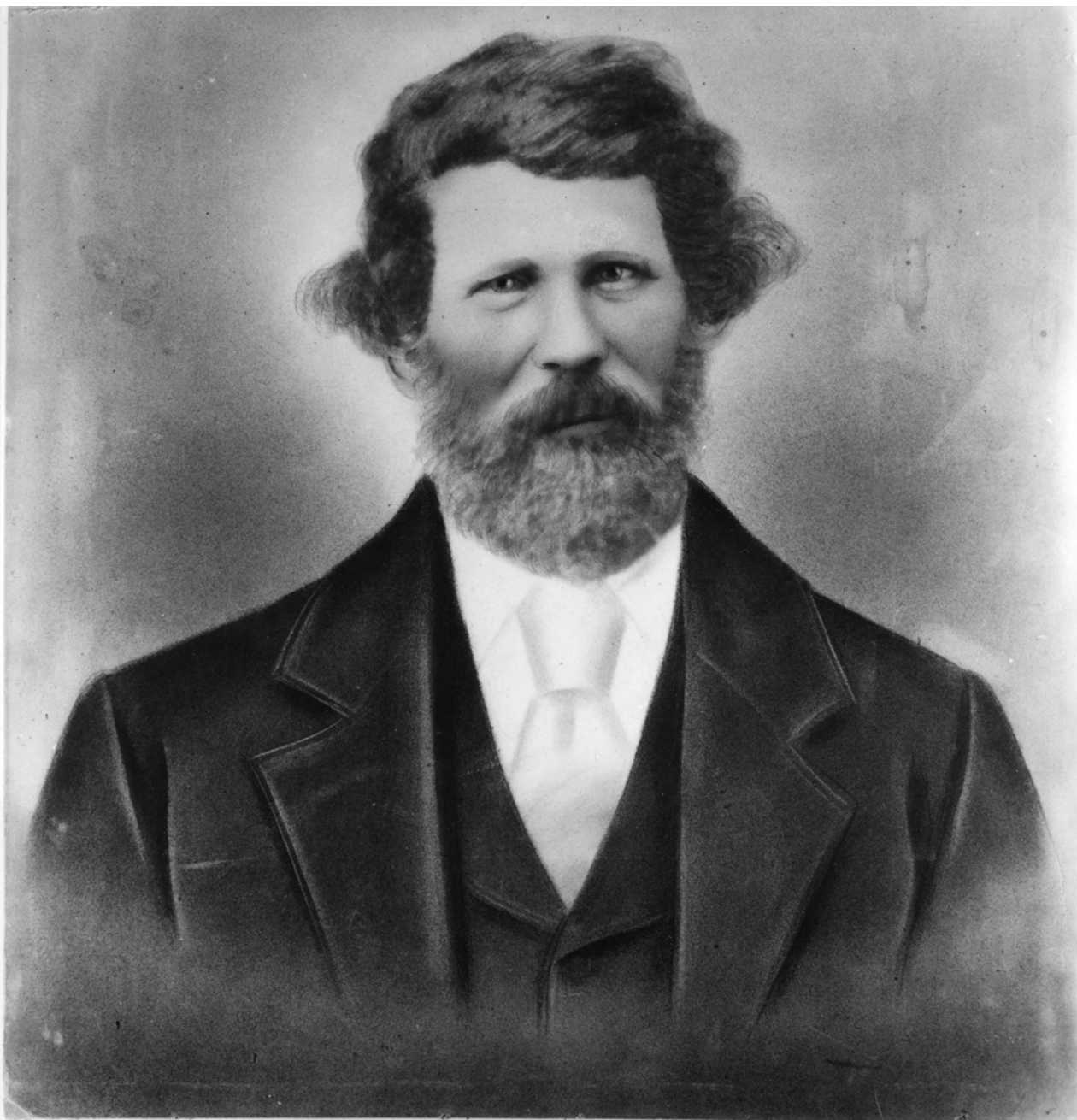
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Joseph Silvey, of Granville, B. I.  
"Portuguese Joe," No. 1, 1836-1902.

An early settler, perhaps the first, who squatted on an unnamed beach overhung by lofty fir and cedar of a dense primeval forest, of a "Reserve" which in 1879 was in part surveyed into a townsite of six blocks and named "Granville," colloquially "Gas-town," now Vancouver, Canada. Of Scottish ancestry—his hair and beard were sandy—it is said, by his daughter Elizabeth that he was the descendant of a Scottish soldier who remained in Portugal after a war and that his proper name was Joseph Silvia Simmonds (sic), a son of a master mariner who owned his own vessel and sailed from New York. She says also that Silvia was "his mother's name." In British Columbia, his name has been spelt Silve, Silvy and Silvey. His father was John, his mother Francesca Macintosh, and he was born in 1836 on Piepika Island, Portugal. He died on his farm on Reid Island, 17 Jan. 1902, aged 66 years. He was a fisherman and a Roman Catholic. Joseph Silvey came to British Columbia with a group of men for the Hudson's Bay Company, Victoria, then sought gold in Carleton, and with four or five associates, escaped in a canoe down the Fraser river from hostile Indians. Arriving off Musqueam, North Arm, Fraser River, the sailors threatened with bow and arrow, but "Old Man" Chief Kispil-la-mo forbid them, welcomed Silvey, who subsequently asked for Kispil-la-mo's grand daughter, Khaalim-nahlt, in marriage. The wedding of Joseph and Khaalim-nahlt, granddaughter of the notable Indian chief and Sumasahlt, one of his wives, was the first formal marriage ceremony on the site of the present city of Vancouver. At Musqueam, the groom and bride were placed side by side by Kispil-la-mo and another chief, and declared man and wife. A palatine followed, and later, Silvey set out for his home at Tom Roberts in a canoe, his bride seated "in state" high upon a heap of gift blankets. Later they squatted on the shore of Burrard Inlet at the north end of the present Abbott St. His dwelling and saloon faced the inlet, and stood upon the present south east corner of Abbott and Water St. Lot 7, Block 2, O.G.T. He traded with the Indians and fished for dogfish and sold their oil to sawmills and coal mines. Here, before Granville was created, the first child of European parentage born on the site of Vancouver, his eldest child, Thorian Elizabeth, was born, 6 July 1868 or earlier year. Her marriage on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1883, incorrectly records her age as 20; she asserts it was 18, now Oct. 1943, to James Walker, 721 Cambie St. Josephine, her sister, (b<sup>pt</sup> Steve Anderson) was born at Tasley Island, Howe Id., 1<sup>st</sup> Apr. 1872, and died in Vancouver, 23 March 1920 aged 47 1/2. Her b<sup>pt</sup> "Portuguese Joe" (N<sup>o</sup> 1) sold his saloon in Granville, moved to Brew's Point, now Nine O'Clock Gun, Stanley Park, where he built the sloop "Morning Star" and conducted a licensed saloon. With his two daughters on board, he sailed the "Morning Star" to Shishaleh, (Seabell) where, 20<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1872, he married Lucy Kwahtematt. His daughter Elizabeth, a tiny girl, helped to build the "Morning Star" at Brockton Point. Numerous descendants use the family name spelt thus, Silvey.

This enlarged and colored photograph was graciously presented to City Archives, City Hall, Vancouver, by Mr. James Walker, nee Indian Elizabeth Silvey 721 Cambie St.

J. S. Walker's  
City Archives  
2 Oct. 1943

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[photo annotation:]

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Joseph Silvey came to British Columbia with a group of men for the Hudson's Bay Company, Victoria, then sought gold in Cariboo, and, with four or five associates, escaped in a canoe down the Fraser river from hostile Indians. Arriving off Musqueam, North Arm, Fraser River, the natives threatened with bow and arrow, but "Old Man" Chief Ki-ap-i-la-no forbid them, welcomed Silvey, who subsequently asked for Ki-ap-i-la-no's granddaughter, Khaal-tin-aht, in marriage.

The wedding of Joseph and Khaal-tin-aht, granddaughter of the notable Indian chief and Sumqwaht, one of his wives, was the first formal marriage ceremony on the site of the present city of Vancouver. At Musqueam, the groom and bride were placed side by side by Ki-ap-i-la-no and another chief, and declared man and wife. A potlatch followed, and, later, Silvey set out for his home at Point Roberts in a canoe, his bride seated "in state" high upon a heap of gift blankets. Later they squatted on the shore of Burrard Inlet at the north end of the present Abbott St. His dwelling and saloon faced the inlet, and stood upon the present southeast corner of Abbott and Water St. Lot 7, Block 2, O.G.T. He traded with the Indians and fished for dogfish and sold their oil to sawmills and coal mines. Here, before Granville was created, the first child of European parentage born on the site of Vancouver, his eldest child, Marian Elizabeth, was born, 4 July 1868 or earlier year. (Her marriage on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1883, incorrectly records her age as 20; she asserts it was 16); now Oct. 1943, Mrs. James Walker, 721 Cambie St. Josephine, her sister (Mrs. Steve Anderson) was born at Pasley Island, Howe Sd, 1<sup>st</sup> Apr. 1872 and died in Vancouver, 27 March 1930, aged 57 yrs 11 mo 27 d. "Portuguese Joe" (No. 1) sold his saloon in Granville, moved to Brew's Point, now Nine O'Clock Gun, Stanley Park, where he built the sloop "Morning Star" at Brockton Point. Numerous descendants use the family name spelt thus; Silvey.

This enlarged and colored photograph was graciously presented to City Archives, City Hall, Vancouver, by Mrs. James Walker, née Marian Elizabeth Silvey, 721 Cambie St.

J.S. Matthews  
City Archivist  
2 Oct. 1943

**MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. MARY BUSS OF EGMONT, JERVIS INLET, B.C., IN THE CITY ARCHIVES OFFICE, CITY HALL, 29 AND 30 JUNE 1936.**

Very confused when compared with narrative of her half-sister, Mrs. James Walker.

Mrs. Buss is a daughter of Joseph Silvey of Gastown who, in 1868, applied for, and was refused, a lease of land on what is now Water Street, but subsequently, in 1870, acquired probably the first privately owned plot of land in what is now the City of Vancouver; he was known as one of the several "Portuguese Joes." She was born in Stanley Park, just across from Deadman's Island, 24 May 1877 (see *Early Vancouver*, Vol. 2); she has been married twice, has children living; is a stout woman with the characteristics of an Indian, and in this respect takes after her mother, who was a full-blooded Sechelt Indian; she cannot read or write, but is very clever at making Indian basketry.

She has come to Vancouver to witness the Golden Jubilee festivities of her native home, but has come without money, and is trying to sell Indian basketry of her own make to raise the small sum sufficient for her humble needs.

**“PORTUGUESE JOE.” JOSEPH SILVEY. MRS. MARY BUSS.**

Mrs. Buss: “My father, ‘Portuguese Joe,’ is commonly called Joseph Silvey, but his real name is Joseph Silvey Simmons; I don’t know how you spell it; it’s Simmons” (sic, perhaps Ceemans, Seamans; not Symons.) “He came from Pekaipika, Azores Island. In them early days, he was about 12 years old when left the Azores, he had a brother, Manuel, and they were going to make a king out of him, and he did not like it, and Manuel escaped. Manuel got on a whaling ship, and he got drowned. Then they were going to do the same thing with my father, ‘Portuguese Joe,’ and he got on a ship, and it maybe a whaler, and they got to Victoria, and there he got a canoe, bought it from the Indians, and went up the Fraser River to Kamloops for gold.” (Mrs. Walker tells a different story.)

“Then, when he had made his fare, he came back and went to California, and dug gold, and then he came back, and started his saloon in Gastown, and when the railroad came it cut his house in two” (this is queer, J.S.M.) “and he got disgusted; he did not sell out; he just left.

“Then they got fishing, and I don’t know about the stabbing; but he did not sell out; he cleared out.” (See *Early Vancouver*.)

“I was eight years old when he left Gastown” (presumably 1885) “long before the fire, June 1886, and he went to the park, and built a smoke house for fish; we lived in the park a year.

“My father’s first wife died; she was an Indian; then he married my mother, a full-blooded Sechelt Indian woman; her English name was Lucy; her Indian name Qua-he-ma, or Kwa-he-ma.

“Father died about 1906, when he was ninety-six years old, and is buried on Reid Island, near Portier Pass.”

**GREGORIS FERNANDEZ OF GASTOWN.**

“Gregoris Fernandez was my father’s uncle; he was also my godfather; he never had a family, and when he died I was supposed to have his estate.” (Note: he also was known as “Portuguese Joe.”

Note by J.S. Matthews: This statement should be accepted “for what it is worth.” Mrs. James Walker, an elder half-sister, and a reliable woman, says: “Mrs. Buss, my half-sister, imagines all sorts of things; there is *no relationship* between my father and Gregoris Fernandez.” There are many discrepancies in Mrs. Buss’s statements. J.S.M.

**JOSEPH GONSALVES.**

City Archivist: Well, who is Joseph Gonsalves, now of Pender Harbour, who also appears to have been known as “Portuguese Joe”?

Mrs. Buss: “I never heard of him; I think he was just a friend of ours; I don’t know. Father had all our pictures taken; they were tintypes; he sent them back to Portugal; if you write to Portugal, don’t ask for Silvey, ask for Simmons” (sic) “and at Pekaipika. Domingo Silvey on Reid Island has a tintype photo of my father ‘Portuguese Joe’; this is a photo of my mother, Indian woman Qua-he-ma.

“I thought when I came down to the Jubilee I might ride around in the procession; when I see all these people, I say ‘you people weren’t born in Gastown; I was.’”

**“GASSY JACK.” JOHN DEIGHTON. TOMPKINS BREW, THE CONSTABLE. THE FAMOUS MAPLE TREE.**

“I remember Tompkins Brew, and the little Customs office; he had a long white beard, and used to nurse me; I did not like him very well, and used to climb up in the boughs of the Maple Tree, and drop little pebbles on people I did not like who passed underneath; used to climb up there, and stay up in the branches all day when they were looking for me to give me a hiding; used to take a pocket full of pebbles up there with me.” (Note: the Maple Tree leaned north and south, and dogs could run up it, see Geo. Gary, *Early Vancouver*.) “They used to call me ‘The Queen’ because I was born on the 24<sup>th</sup> May, the

Queen's birthday; my father was 'mad' when they called in Vancouver; he said they should have called it by its original name, 'Gastown.'"

**"DUTCH PETE."**

"'Dutch Pete' lived in Stanley Park, over on the south side of Brockton Point, just opposite Deadman's Island; this big" (sic) "house with verandah over water, and fir tree beyond, here is his house; then there were two other families there."

At this point, Mr. Theo. Bryant of Ladysmith, son of Rev. Cornelius Bryant, minister, Methodist Church, Water Street, who left Granville in 1881, arrived, and was introduced to Mrs. Buss; they conversed on mutually interesting matters, and after Mrs. Buss departed with her baskets, he said: [blank].

**MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH ALASTER HAVELOCK CAMERON, WHO DECLINED TO STATE WHERE IN VANCOUVER HE LIVED, 17 MAY 1935.**

**SEYMOUR CREEK TRAIL TO CARIBOO.**

"I came to Hastings Sawmill on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1875, and that year worked on the building of the Seymour Creek Trail to Cariboo. The trail was built with the idea of getting cattle out that way from the Cariboo, but only four bands of cattle, about three hundred head to a band, ever came out that way; the trail was cut twelve feet wide, and graded three feet in the centre and covered with mattox" (gravel, etc.) "for the horses and cattle to walk on."

**BIG TREES.**

"The biggest tree I ever saw in British Columbia—it was a cedar—was, as near as I could judge, nineteen and a half miles up the Seymour trail; it was on a flat as you approach the rise of the creeks to the summit and benches; and on a flat, about two hundred yards down from the trail towards the river. I would have run the trail by it had I noticed it early enough. I put a small tape line around it, as high as I could reach, and it was sixty-three feet around, and about sixty feet before it forked; a cedar, of course. Maybe there yet if it has not been burned. No, never heard of George Cary.

"The next year, 1876, I worked building bridges from Hope to Princeton, and the next spring hewed timbers for the first bridge across the Fraser at Lytton."

(Note: Mr. Cameron, very elderly, does not inspire my confidence in matters of figures. He probably did see a very big tree; there was one in Stanley Park, a cedar, reputed to be fifty feet around. The big tree on George Street was about forty-eight or –nine.)

**MEMO OF CONVERSATION WITH MRS. J.D. CAMERON, FORMERLY MRS. CHARLES BURNS, 1732 KITCHENER STREET, ONCE KNOWN AS 1732 BISMARCK STREET, GRANDVIEW, WHO KINDLY CALLED AT THE CITY ARCHIVES THIS AFTERNOON, 31 OCTOBER 1938.**

Former Mrs. Burns, now also widow of Mr. J.D. Cameron, who died 7 September 1938, is one of the "real" pioneers of Grandview, and especial interest attaches to the family, as their name is associated with the *earliest mention of the name Grandview*. She is approaching her seventieth birthday. She married J.D. Cameron, 22 May 1924 or 1925. He died at Victoria, 7 September 1938.

**CHARLES BURNS. ROYAL CITY PLANING MILLS. ST. LUKE'S HOME.**

Mrs. Burns said: "Mr. Burns, my husband, was born in Co. Antrim, Ireland; his father, David, a joiner; his mother, Jennie, and he came to New Westminster when he was about nineteen. In Westminster he was working for John Hendry, and then came over to take charge, as foreman, of the Royal City Planing Mills on Carrall Street, when those mills were first opened.

"I was born August 9, 1869, and came from Ipswich, Suffolk, about July 1887, and before I married, was employed in St. Luke's Home, Vancouver, and then, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1889, I—my name is Muriel Alice Norman, daughter of Daniel and Matilda Norman—married Mr. Burns at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria; Canon Beanlands was the clergyman."