

3. Portuguese Joe and Canadian Multiculturalism

In 1849, "Portuguese Joe" Silvey, an Azorean from Pico Island, arrived in California, USA, as a whaler. In 1852, he appears at a fur trading post in Fort Victoria, in the British colony of British Columbia, now a Canadian province.

It is likely that Silvey was in California at the time of the gold rush, and then went up to Fraser River (already in Canada), because a gold rush began there in 1858, and later moved to Cariboo, and it should be mentioned that many people, after the discovery of gold in British Columbia, went to this territory, even leaving California.

When Joe and other Portuguese arrived at Point Roberts (now American territory belonging to the State of Washington), they encountered the Musqueam Indians. Although the Portuguese were first frightened, they were eventually treated well by these Native Americans, so they continued their journey in their canoe to Georgia Strait for the Victoria gold rush. However, the experience at Point Roberts left its mark on Silvey, so after earning some money and storing goods, he returned to the place.

At Point Roberts, the Portuguese built a cabin and opened a small store selling equipment and products for the miners passing through. He also occupied his time with activities such as farming, fishing and hunting, and at this time earned his nickname, "Portuguese Joe," a nationality he was proud of. This, however, did not stop him from marrying a native woman, namely, a granddaughter of Chief Kiapilano. Feeling strongly attracted to this woman, through signs he indicated to the native chief that he wanted to marry his granddaughter, and they ended up marrying, according to the practices of the culture of that tribe.

Together with his wife, Khaltinaht, they settled in Burrard Inlet, British Columbia, Canada, where Silvey engaged in dogfish fishing. At this time more and more people were settling in Victoria and New Westminster. When in 1863, north of Burrard Inlet, a sawmill began operating, Silvey had the idea of opening a business to sell food to the workers and provide oil for the sawmills. Thus, the Portuguese saw fishing as the solution to both problems, because by fishing for dogfish he could produce oil for the sawmill.

In 1866, the search for gold ended, and the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia were grouped into a single colony, British Columbia. In 1867, Joe Silvey became a "naturalized British subject", making him the first Portuguese to receive British citizenship in Canada.

Since Silvey had a daughter, Elizabeth, he decided to purchase property. It is known that he lived in Burrard Inlet, where he fished for shark oil and sold it on Deadman's Island to a sawmill for about 25 cents a gallon. However, he was going back to an activity he had done before, whaling. Silvey was aware that whaling was lucrative, for he could get a lot of oil from a single whale. However, since whaling was more labor-intensive than fishing for dogfish, he joined with two other men to start whaling. One was English by birth, Harry Trim, and the other was born in the Azorean archipelago,

Peter Smith, both married to Squamish women. Since they needed a ship big enough for whaling, they used Abel Douglas' schooner, which also joined the business.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1871, Joe and Khaltinat's 2nd child was born, and they were all busy whaling. However, this economic activity began to decline in importance, as oil discovered in the USA began to increasingly replace whale oil, and the number of whales was decreasing. Despite the decline of whaling, in the second half of the 19th century, "Portuguese Joe" invested in another business. He was encouraged by a Madeiran in Burrard Inlet, Gregocio Fernandez, to open a saloon focused on the working class market segment in the community called Gastown.

The first saloon operated for a short time, but Silvey would eventually open another, calling it Hole-in-the-Wall. By this time, he was whaling, fishing, and owned the saloon, and although everything went well, his wife, Khaltinaht, became ill and eventually passed away. Khaltinaht wanted to be buried in Musqueam (her hometown), and so she was, and Silvey was left with two children to take care of, and could no longer live in Gastown, so he sold the saloon, and moved to Brockton Point, where he tried unsuccessfully to rent a place to fish. However, despite his wife's death, he continued to maintain a relationship with his wife's family, and received visits from his wife's grandfather.

Later, Silvey built a ship, the Morning Star. He also needed to rebuild his family, and so he found a wife and mother for his daughters, Kwahama Kwatleematt, a Christian named Lucy, whom he met while sailing on the Georgia Strait, near the Sechelt peninsula, and in Sechelt, in a Catholic church, they were married.

Thanks to the teachings of the Christian missionaries, Lucy could read and write, something rare for a young native girl at the time, being three times younger than Silvey. Meanwhile, the family was using the ship for fishing, and at this time, the Portuguese man pioneered seine fishing in British Columbia, and taught his wife how to make mesh nets and seine nets. He used to catch herring, dry them, and sell them to schooners, who would load barrels, sometimes spending around a hundred barrels loaded, and Silvey used herring as bait to catch dogfish, fishing in places like Porlier Pass and even Pender Harbour. The Azorean sold the oil he produced to coal mines in Nanaimo and Departure Bay, and the dogfish oil was also used in factories and logging operations. Fishing made a lot of money, and Joe Silvey helped make fishing a viable and attractive occupation in British Columbia. In 1874, the first child was born to his second wife.

Meanwhile, more people began to arrive at Brockton Point, who populated Burrard Inlet. However, many of these people had racist prejudices and attitudes, despising Native Americans as well as people of dual ethnicity, calling them "half-breeds. Silvey could not understand such attitudes, and he remembered with nostalgia the times when everyone respected and was accepted, so he left Brockton Point, and moved to Reid Island, located northwest of Galiano Island, where he built a house and continued to live off the sea. On Reid Island, with two children by his first wife, Elizabeth and Josephine, and by his second wife, Domingo and Mary, the couple would have seven more children, only one of whom did not make it to adulthood.

As early as 1901, in the censuses, Joe Silvey identified himself as a fisherman, earning a total of \$600 the previous year. Silvey passed on his knowledge of fishing and life at sea to his children. They would go fishing with him, but as they grew older, the older ones would leave home. In 1902, Silvey eventually passed away. His wife, Kwahama Kwatleematt, was a quadragenarian, with their youngest daughter aged seven, so she later married an Irishman, Joe Watson, and saw her family grow and expand on Reid Island, but not only there.

In Reid Island, Joe Silvey was successful as a businessman in the fishing and trading fields, even though he was illiterate. He was the first Azorean and Portuguese to become a British citizen in Canada, and besides this, he was also married twice to native women, and an example of what Canada respects so much these days: multiculturalism and respect for difference.

Bibliography

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