

History of Cariboo Wagon Road: HOW IT WAS CONSTRUCTED AND ITS PLACE IN THE RECORDS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

THE FOLLOWING LECTURE was delivered on Tuesday night at the Aberdeen School, Burrard street, Vancouver, by Walter Moberly, civil engineer:

Sir, President: When I had the honor on March 13th, 1907, of addressing the members of the Canadian Club of Vancouver on the subject of "Early Pathfinding in the Mountains of British Columbia, or The Discovery of the North West Passage by Land," I gave a general outline of how I became, in the years 1855-6-7, the original promoter of Canada's first great trans-continental railway, and how, for a series of years, as active steps I took by making extensive explorations through the mountains of British Columbia, established beyond doubt that a practical route for such a railway existed between the magnificent harbor of Burrard Inlet and the extensive prairie region east of the Rocky Mountains.

In the address I alluded to I described how I first explored, during the winter of 1855-1856, the route by way of Harrison lake and the different portages between that lake and via the present town of Lillooet, and then the mountain. As I found this route was not favorable for the construction of the western section of the trans-continental railway, I projected in the early part of the year 1859 I explored the formidable canons of the Fraser river between Yale and Lytton, and later in the year, after founding the city of New Westminster, I explored from the head of Howe Sound up the valleys of the Squamish and Chehalis rivers, etc.

I may here mention a rather amusing circumstance that happened to me when exploring the great canon of the Fraser river. On my way down from Boston Bar the first night I reached a camp where a few Chinese were mining. It was situated on a narrow shelf of rock about six feet in width and twenty feet in length. The Chinamen received me kindly and made me some tea, and mixed some flour and water and made thin cakes of dough which they cut in strips about an inch in width and boiled. They had no other provisions, but were looking forward to the spring run of salmon which were then on their way up the river. I left my kind friends early the following morning and after a terribly fatiguing journey over hot rocks along the precipitous mountain side I reached Chapman's bar in the evening. I was very tired and dreadfully thirsty. I had a little store which was a log but about 35 feet in size and spied some Dublin stout porter, with which I at once regaled myself and then had a good meal of flapjacks, bacon and coffee. I then went into a partly constructed new log building without door, windows or flooring, and feeling a stretcher made out of gunny sacks, etc. I threw myself on it and at once fell asleep. In the morning my boots near my bedside. The unusual sound of pig's grunting awoke me in the evening. This pig continued to make his researches around me until he came close to my bedside. He began to play with my boots near my bedside. The unusual sound of pig's grunting awoke me in the evening. This pig continued to make his researches around me until he came close to my bedside. He began to play with my boots near my bedside.

When I arrived in Victoria in the early part of the year 1862 I found that Colonel Moody had preceded me, and that the government was greatly in favor of his plan. I was then in the possession of a small map of the Cariboo region, which was much excited about the gold fields of Cariboo, and the projected roads from Bute Inlet and Bentinck Arm, and the present town of Lillooet, on the Fraser river. This route was a broken land and water one that necessitated much handling of the freight passing over it, and was not at all likely to be a profitable one. I was then in the possession of a small map of the Cariboo region, which was much excited about the gold fields of Cariboo, and the projected roads from Bute Inlet and Bentinck Arm, and the present town of Lillooet, on the Fraser river. This route was a broken land and water one that necessitated much handling of the freight passing over it, and was not at all likely to be a profitable one.

The discoveries of gold mentioned induced prominent citizens of Victoria to construct from the heads of Bute Inlet and Bentinck Arm direct to Quesnelle mouth, in order to draw the trade of the Cariboo districts away from the present route. I was then in the possession of a small map of the Cariboo region, which was much excited about the gold fields of Cariboo, and the projected roads from Bute Inlet and Bentinck Arm, and the present town of Lillooet, on the Fraser river. This route was a broken land and water one that necessitated much handling of the freight passing over it, and was not at all likely to be a profitable one.

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My different explorations heretofore made through the different sections of the colony I had visited now convinced me that the best route to adopt for the great wagon road I projected was by the valleys of the Fraser and Thompson rivers, although the formidable canons along the valleys of those rivers presented natural obstructions that, for a country having a small revenue, were most uninviting and appeared to be almost insurmountable. From careful observations I also felt confident that the mountain region of the country would be in the immediately west of the Rocky Mountains. I was also satisfied it was by the valleys of the Fraser and Thompson rivers that the mountain section of Canada's first and greatest trans-continental railway should reach the coast and have its west terminus on the mainland at the spacious and magnificent harbor that Burrard Inlet would afford to the large class of sea-going ships, and where the sites for future cities on both sides of the Inlet, and also on the shores of English bay, could hardly be excelled.

In the present of their topographical features, and the scenery in its immediate neighborhood both grand and beautiful, which together with its fine sea bathing beach, and its inestimable to its inhabitants and promoters, I considered it a feature to bring people from all quarters of the globe to visit a city

so well endowed by nature; and that has within easy reach of it, both by land and water, many charming resorts where residences can be constructed, where its citizens or others can have picturesque dwellings outside the turmoil of a large city.

Ever since the arrival of the corps of Royal Engineers, under the command of the Major-General, Richard Clement Moody, sent out by the Imperial government in the year 1858 to maintain law and order, and to generally supervise and control all such measures and works needed to establish the colony road, and also my belief that the great wagon road to develop the colony should be built through the canons of the Fraser river, etc. I also had many conversations with the Major-General, who was the first governor of the province, and of British Columbia, but Sir James considered the physical difficulties presented by the canons of the Fraser river, etc. I also had many conversations with the Major-General, who was the first governor of the province, and of British Columbia, but Sir James considered the physical difficulties presented by the canons of the Fraser river, etc.

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Mr. Oppenheimer had arranged before he left Victoria to have large quantities of supplies and tools forwarded to Yale, and I also sent a quantity of the same things that I had on hand to the same place. We now began to experience our first difficulties, as the pack trail between Yale and Lytton was only partially completed, which necessitated all freight between these places being conveyed partly by water through the dangerous canons, and partly by pack trains, which caused very heavy transportation charges and losses of supplies. Some idea may be formed of the cost of transportation in those days when in many instances it cost us as much as fifty-five cents a pound to convey our supplies from Yale to Lytton. There were not enough boats on the river to meet the demands for transportation, and the number of pack animals was altogether inadequate as the great number of those engaged in packing were employed in the very lucrative business of conveying freight through the Cariboo, and therefore did not find it so profitable to convey it for us over a comparatively short distance to our works. We had to employ large numbers of Indians to pack supplies on their backs, and the high prices they charged enriched them. When Mr. Lewis and myself travelled from Yale to Lytton we were compelled to walk, as we were unable to get saddle animals. This journey was accomplished in two days, but owing to the extremely rough trail our feet were blistered and very sore.

At Lytton I made my headquarters in the court house, which Captain H. M. Ball, who was the gold commissioner, sheriff, etc., of the district, very kindly placed at my disposal. I now established my first road camp a short distance out from Lytton, and as the men arrived I set them at work. A few days afterwards I established another camp at Nicomin, a small stream about twelve miles from Lytton, and shortly afterwards a road camp a few miles above Cook's ferry, which was a short distance below where Spence's bridge was afterwards built.

By this time the work was going on at a great rate, as I could not get a sufficient number of white men to be obliged to let a contract for the construction of the road from a "slide" a short distance above Nicomin to Cook's ferry to a body of Chinese, with the exception of that portion around a rock bluff below Cook's ferry.

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At this time I met Mr. Charles Oppenheimer, who was at that time at the head of the great mercantile firm of Oppenheimer Bros., having their establishments at Yale and Lytton, where they carried on a very large and lucrative business. Mr. Oppenheimer and a friend with me, Mr. T. B. Lewis, proposed to join with me in obtaining a charter for the building of this wagon road, providing we could obtain the right to collect very remunerative tolls for a series of years and a large money subsidy from the government to assist in defraying the cost of its construction. We therefore entered into an agreement for that purpose under the firm name of Oppenheimer, Moberly & Lewis, and Mr. Oppenheimer withdrew from the firm in order to devote his whole attention to the work we proposed to undertake, and shortly afterwards, on the 10th of May, 1862, we obtained a charter, which empowered us to collect very remunerative tolls and also to be paid a large cash subsidy as the work of construction progressed, we proceeded to the construction of the road, and Governor Douglas at this time fully expected to obtain a large loan from the Imperial government, for which he had applied.

The manner in which the different sections of this road was to be constructed was as follows: Captain G. M. Grant, with a force ofappers and miners, together with a large force of civilian labor, was to construct the section, extending from Yale to Chapman's Bar.

The late Mr. Thomas Spence was to construct the section from Boston Bar to Lytton.

My department in this undertaking

was to locate the road and supervise its construction. Mr. Lewis was to keep the books and accounts, and Mr. Oppenheimer was to look after the purchasing and forwarding of the supplies and the finances.

When we arrived at Yale a large number of men seeking employment on our work could not get beyond that point, and they were without money, food, clothing and boots, and as they had to walk from Yale to Lytton along the pack trail we were obliged to make them advances of all those articles. I had already paid the fares of a large number of men from New Westminster to Yale, which cost me between \$2,000 and \$3,000.

Mr. Oppenheimer had arranged before he left Victoria to have large quantities of supplies and tools forwarded to Yale, and I also sent a quantity of the same things that I had on hand to the same place. We now began to experience our first difficulties, as the pack trail between Yale and Lytton was only partially completed, which necessitated all freight between these places being conveyed partly by water through the dangerous canons, and partly by pack trains, which caused very heavy transportation charges and losses of supplies. Some idea may be formed of the cost of transportation in those days when in many instances it cost us as much as fifty-five cents a pound to convey our supplies from Yale to Lytton. There were not enough boats on the river to meet the demands for transportation, and the number of pack animals was altogether inadequate as the great number of those engaged in packing were employed in the very lucrative business of conveying freight through the Cariboo, and therefore did not find it so profitable to convey it for us over a comparatively short distance to our works. We had to employ large numbers of Indians to pack supplies on their backs, and the high prices they charged enriched them. When Mr. Lewis and myself travelled from Yale to Lytton we were compelled to walk, as we were unable to get saddle animals. This journey was accomplished in two days, but owing to the extremely rough trail our feet were blistered and very sore.

At Lytton I made my headquarters in the court house, which Captain H. M. Ball, who was the gold commissioner, sheriff, etc., of the district, very kindly placed at my disposal. I now established my first road camp a short distance out from Lytton, and as the men arrived I set them at work. A few days afterwards I established another camp at Nicomin, a small stream about twelve miles from Lytton, and shortly afterwards a road camp a few miles above Cook's ferry, which was a short distance below where Spence's bridge was afterwards built.

By this time the work was going on at a great rate, as I could not get a sufficient number of white men to be obliged to let a contract for the construction of the road from a "slide" a short distance above Nicomin to Cook's ferry to a body of Chinese, with the exception of that portion around a rock bluff below Cook's ferry.

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