

In the rising town, water was very scarce, the chief supply being at Spring Ridge, about a mile from Government Street. It was carted in 90 gallon hogsheads, and delivered at one dollar each. Some people dug wells, were supplied that way. After a time water was laid on in wooden pipes, chiefly for fire purposes, tanks being dug at the intersection of streets. The men who came in from San Francisco being used to frequent disastrous fires in that town, organized fire companies, purchased their own apparatus, gave their time gratuitously, which proved a great boon to the young town, on many occasions saving it from destruction. At this time there was no organized City authority, the Colonial Government looking after streets, drains, etc. No attempt at sewerage for many years.

I was worked very hard this year. Men being scarce I was put to do many jobs, taking the place of a gentlemanly fine man, Captain Sangster, who became incapacitated, as collector of customs and postmaster, then Gold Commissioner, issuing Mining licenses. A guard ship being anchored in the mouth of the Fraser River, no miners could pass up without showing a license. Then I was commissioner, road commissioner and Captain of Militia. In the clerical part of this work I was greatly assisted by my wife and her sister, Mary Ann.

No printing to be had in those days. A free port prevailed, an importer could land to any value by paying one dollar permit. Extensive importers were much surprised to know they could import to any amount for so insignificant a fee. The idea of a Free Port was to establish an emporium for British goods on the Pacific Coast, but it proved a failure, as the Pacific Coast merchants could import direct from Europe, and bond their goods. A Free Port is a bad policy commercially, inducing more exports to be sent than a market can absorb, causing a glut and depreciation.

Sir James Douglas relieved me of some of those duties, giving Mr. Alex. Anderson, an old friend and Hudson's Bay Chief Trader, the position of Collector of Customs. He unfortunately employed a man called Angelo, as chief clerk, who took what did not belong to him, and was put in prison, and Mr. Anderson had to retire.

Seeing the failure of a Free Port, a duty of twelve per cent. was levied. The end of this year I retired from the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and joined Captain Reid in the mercantile business.