

The Last of the Fraser River Packers



By a turn of the wheel of fate two men who may assuredly be looked upon as the last of the original packers of the early days on the Fraser river are in Victoria at the present time. One of them, Charlie Holtz, is a member of the little group of old timers at the Old Man's Home while the other, Luke Campbell, suffering from a cancerous growth in his neck, is lying at the Jubilee Hospital. The two old fellows were chums on the trail in the days of long ago when the lure of bonny dust was beckoning strong men into the wilderness and tempting weak men to their deaths. Campbell owns a ranch now and is comfortably fixed. Holtz met with hard luck, lost his mules through over speculation, and worked for wages as long as he was able. Rugged-looking, bronzed of face, firm of limb and with hair still black, despite his eighty-two years, Charlie Holtz is easily one of the most interesting of the remaining links between this generation and the generation of more than half a century ago. The fact that he played a part in the Seattle Massacre and that he was one of the first to carry the news of the gold strikes on the Fraser to 'Frisco, which news started the great rush that ended in the Cariboo, makes his story doubly interesting.

Seated on the little iron bed in the little room which is his home now, Holtz laughingly apologized for sundry evidences of recent industry in the shape of sewing materials which were lying about, and, in the course of a most interesting conversation, told his story.

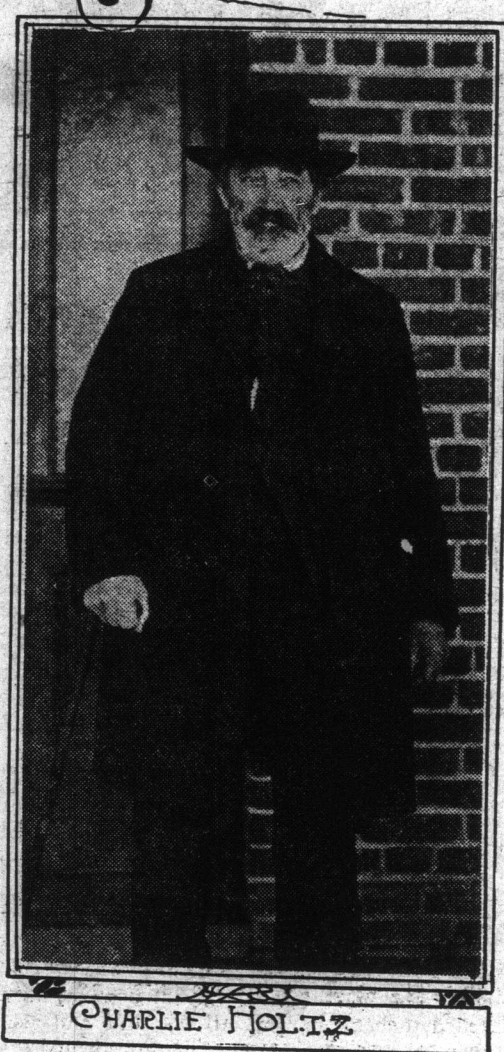
Charlie Holtz was born in Hamburg, Germany, November 20th, 1827. He remained there until 1862 when news of the gold to be dug in the deserts of California touched the nerve in his adventurous nature and bidding good-bys to that life which he was to know no more he shipped by way of the Isthmus for San Francisco. Through the stirring times of '49 he worked with shovel and pick and pan, but without the striking success that attended the similar efforts of more fortunate miners. Then, in 1854, he sought another Argosy, in search, this time for the Golden Fleece of adventure. His new Argosy was the U. S. Revenue Cutter Active, in command of Captain James Alden. The Active, among other duties, was required to carry on the coast surveys and in 1854, Holtz first visited Victoria on board the Active. Victoria, in those days, was marked by a Hudson's Bay fort and stockade. The Active, while on this trip to Victoria explored along the coast of Vancouver Island and discovered what is now Plumper's Pass in 1855. This pass was known at the time by another local name but the Active was the first naval vessel to sail through it and Captain Alden named it Active Pass. This name was changed afterwards by Captain Richards, R. N., in command of H.M.S. Plumper, who called the pass after his ship.

The Active was a wooden paddle steamer of 750 tons, mounting two guns and it is recorded that she took on coal at Nanaimo as early as August 13, 1855. The Active prior to her service in the U. S. Navy, was known as the Gold-hunter and saw many stirring adventures. She was schooner rigged, strong and a good sea boat when the navy department purchased her in 1853 from the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. She was refitted and strengthened at Mare Island, and it was in 1854, when she was ready for service that Charlie Holtz joined her.

After the cruise along this coast, during which she passed through Plumper Pass, for the first time, the Active started south and called at the settlement known as Seattle. Holtz recalls it as a dreary place, composed of a few Indian huts and the cabins of white settlers and squatters. But, on this occasion the Active had barely dropped her mud-hooks in Elliott Bay when the unusual situation prevailing ashore was brought forcibly to her attention. The Indians under Chief Lashi, were in open revolt, and the whites were being ruthlessly massacred, while the little body of volunteers was powerless to cover sufficient country to quell the trouble.

Captain Alden, realizing the seriousness of the situation, called for volunteers for a landing party at once, and Charlie Holtz was among the first who stepped forward. Under Second Lieutenant Johnson, the little party, comprising hardly more than a dozen nervy fellows, landed under cover of the fire from the Active's two guns, and ran, helter-skelter, for a large log hut on shore.

At this point in his reminiscences, if you



CHARLIE HOLTZ

especially ask him, Charlie Holtz will pull up his coat sleeve to the elbow and, taking your finger, will place it upon a hard, round object underneath the skin. This, he will tell you, very simply, is a buck-shot fired into his shoulder by Lashi's men, as he ran for cover with the rest of the landing party. The shot has worked its way gradually down to a point below his elbow. Another shot, which struck him in the head, has been removed.

In spite of these wounds, Holtz took an active part in the fighting which ensued. The landing party, once ensconced in the log hut began at once to fortify the position as thoroughly as possible. The Indians remained well under cover and, beyond some desultory firing, made no attempt to rush the position taken by the naval men. However, among those in the little party, were some experienced Indian fighters, and these men knew that the Indians would surely try to rush the hut under cover of darkness. This proved to be correct. A strong guard was posted at nightfall and those who were relieved sought sleep. As Holtz recalls it, it was about two o'clock in the morning when the guard gave the alarm. Every man sprang to his position. In the blackness outside nothing could be seen, but occasionally at the edge of the clearing a twig would snap or a branch swish, and there was that strange feeling of tension in the air which convinces the listener that danger is lurking unseen in the dark. The naval men had made their preparations in silence, and the period of waiting gave every man a chance to rub the sleep from his eyes and prepare for what was to come.

Without any warning a terrific yell split the air, and the night was full of the sound of running feet. The Indians attacked from all sides, firing as they ran. Amid the rain of bullets that beat against their little cabin, the naval men waited for the word of command. When the redskins were within a few yards of the hut and flushed with what they looked upon as an easy victory, the word came, and the cabin spit fire. Every shot told, and told so well that the Indians crumpled like leaves, turned about and scampered in disorder for cover.

Morning broke without a repetition of the attack, and the Indian fighters among the landing party felt sure that the redmen would not attack again until after nightfall. However, the Indians were shrewd, and daylight was flooding the landscape when they suddenly rushed for the cabin again. The naval men were not sleeping, however, and once more, after a hard siege, were the savages repulsed. What the eventual outcome might have been will never be known, for next day the volunteers came back and with their help the landing party cleared the Indians out.

The next year, in 1857, the Active was ordered to represent the United States in the survey of the 49th parallel, the boundary between Canada and the United States. She proceeded to the gulf and landed her men at Semiah-

moo Bay. The British government was represented by the men from H. M. S. Plumper, who were camped at Point Roberts.

The work of survey was well under way when one morning a man named Macaulay arrived at the American camp in a skiff, accompanied by two large barrels of long-range whiskey. Macaulay was welcomed by the men in camp, but his presence was carefully kept secret from the officers. As it happened, this visit of Macaulay made history. He disposed of the major portion of one barrel of his fire-water at the American camp and collected all the loose change there was among the men; then he moved off to Point Roberts, to ply his wares among the English. However, he wasn't so lucky at this camp. He was spotted by the officers, arrested and held for return to Esquimalt, where the Plumper lay. To accomplish his return, the British officer turned him over to the Active, which conveyed him to the naval base. On the voyage down Macaulay became more or less chummy with some of the Active's men, and in a spirit of bravado, he pulled forth an immense purse crammed full of gold dust. The color set the eyes of the ex-miners in the Active's crew to blinking, and they pressed Macaulay for particulars. The importance he thus gained appealed to Macaulay, and he finally told the Active's men that he found the gold dust, of which he had at least \$2,000 worth, on the Fraser river.

The excitement among the Active's men which followed this story came to the ears of Captain Alden, and, fearing a general desertion, he called the men together and had a talk with them. He pointed out that if they deserted then, they might be caught eventually, and, if caught, they would assuredly be shot. On the other hand, the Active would in a few weeks return to San Francisco, and then those who wished to do so might obtain their discharge.

This advice was followed by the men, and when the Active reached 'Frisco practically the whole complement obtained their discharges. Holtz was well acquainted in 'Frisco at this time, and he began to make preparations at once for a trip to the Fraser. The others of the Active's men went ashore and got drunk and spread the news of the gold on the Fraser through 'Frisco. Excitement ran high and the great rush of '58 was the result.

However, Charlie Holtz kept his own counsel and sawed wood. Many of his friends who heard the rumors came to him and asked if the reports were true. Holtz told them what he knew and assured them that he would go to the Fraser at the first opportunity. The opportunity came in '58, in the spring, before the big rush began. Holtz and one or two friends took passage on the ship Panama for Esquimalt, where a pilot was obtained who steered the Panama to Bellinham Bay. Here the gold-hunters landed and began the toilsome, wearying hike through the brush to Sumas Lake. Loaded down with their duffle and tools as they were, the party found this a terrible march, and only the fact that they were strong, husky men kept them up. Arriving at Sumas Lake, the party obtained canoes and pushed on with all speed, knowing that other gold-hunters would be racing to beat them in. From Sumas Lake the party paddled into the Fraser and began prospecting. By hasty stages they worked as far up as Fort Hope. They were the first of the rush, and they had the pick of the diggings. Their frantic prospecting was well rewarded, for they finally struck Hill's Bar and staked their claims. One of the biggest aggregate fortunes of the Fraser fields was taken from this bar before it was worked out. After staking Hill's Bar the party went lower and staked claims on Strawberry Island, where more rich dirt was found. Holtz staked his claims with the others and set to work. The allowance in those days was 25 feet frontage, and out of his 25 feet Holtz took \$50 a day in washings. The party found that it had not got in a day too soon, for right on its heels came the front rank of the rush, and within a week camps sprang up along the river and the woods rang with voices where solitude and silence had reigned before.

Holtz and his partners had the cream of Hill's Bar worked out when the Indians, who had been troublesome for some time, began to evince a tendency to wipe out the whole diggings. Mutilated bodies of miners began to float down the Fraser. Little prospecting parties of two and three who pressed up-river ahead of the camps were suddenly set upon by Indians and slaughtered. Or, a lonely miner, asleep by his fire, never awoke, stealthy red hands slitting his throat from ear to ear, mutilating his corpse and setting it afloat in the current as a warning to the camps below. At first the miners were so engrossed in their search for the gold that they accepted these murders as regrettable necessities along with the thousand and one other dangers and hazards of the life they led. But when they became too frequent the camps rose in indignation, formed volunteer committees and set systematically about chastizing the redmen. This proved to be no easy task. The Indians, finding the white men openly defiant, began decisive tactics and open warfare. They took up a position on the mountainside across from Fort Yale, where the river swept past a solid wall of rock, and the miners tried fruitlessly to drive them from this point of vantage.

The accepted leader of the miners in this campaign against the savages was a man named Snider, who had seen much Indian fighting on the American plains. The miners were well high discouraged when Snider, who was an indefatigable scout, one day returned to camp with the news that he had discovered a secret pass leading up to the top of the mountain. Next day a heavily armed party under Snider took the trail. They made a wide detour to throw the Indians off guard, and then, making use of the pass Snider had found, they surprised the Indians and drove them from their position.

This put an end to the Indian trouble as an

organized campaign, and, although small parties of miners had to be ever on the watch, the mining operations on the Fraser were carried on with renewed energy. Grub was exceedingly scarce at this time, and Holtz recalls having seen sales made where bread flour would be weighed in one side of the scale and gold dust in the other. This at least was one instance where bread was worth its weight in gold. On another occasion, when he was down to hard pan and would have gone miles for a handful of flour, Holtz offered a Hudson's Bay man a fine ivory-handled Colts which cost him \$50 in 'Frisco, for a three-quarter sack of mouldy flour, and was indignantly refused.

Obtaining sufficient grub for a stake by one means or another, and depending largely upon fish and game, Holtz and some companions pushed on up the Fraser in search of new diggings, and went as far as the mouth of the Quesnel River, where they turned and went to the Forks of the Quesnel, and entered, for the first time, the famous Cariboo country.

Prior to this Holtz had purchased a train of mules from an Oregonian, who came in with them, and he started packing from the lower camps 80 miles up the Fraser. By this time there was a general exodus up-river, and Holtz found all the work he could handle. He eventually owned 37 mules and horses, and plied a big trade. But Holtz shakes his head and smiles yet when he thinks of those early packing days. There was no trail and the going was awful. The packs were securely slung on aparejos stuffed with straw mixed with branches to make them springy. The aparejos were securely cinched, and over the packs, set upon these, was thrown the famous diamond hitch. And even this diamond hitch jolted loose sometimes so rough was the trail. Between Yale and Boston Bar there were places where the ordinary man would have said it was impossible for a fly to make head-way. But over this trail, day in day out, Holtz's train followed the bell mare, and Holtz slipped and jumped and climbed over the trail with them. There were other packers at the time, one of whom, a Mexican named Manuel Bateria, lost his whole pack train in a crevasse on a bad part of the trail, which was called afterwards, in honor of the event, Jackass Mountain.

Holtz was up-river with his train when he heard of the strike on Keistler's Creek, the first strike of the famous Cariboo. He decided to have a look at the color on this creek, and, sending his train back, he wintered at the forks of the Quesnel. This was in '60 and '61. Soon after the success on Keistler's, Antler Creek was struck, and the fever raged through the Cariboo. Holtz and some of his friends were at Antler when the strike was made, and they decided to do some prospecting. Besides Holtz, the party consisted of Dutch Bill, who afterwards struck William's Creek, and Bob Davis, and some other Germans. The bunch ate noon-day grub at Tom Maloney's Flat, and packing about 150 pounds apiece, besides their picks, pans and shovels, they struck for new country. After leaving Maloney's Flat they separated, Dutch Bill striking off towards the valley of Grouse Creek, while Holtz and Davis headed for Bald Mountain. Holtz and Davis had reached Groundhog Lake, and Holtz was beating through the brush quite a piece in the lead, when he turned and saw no sign of Davis. He called and fired his guns without any response. That was the last he saw of Davis for a long time.

Finding that Davis had strayed away, Holtz decided to camp for the night. At daylight he saw smoke from a camp-fire some distance away, and believing it to be Davis, he hiked over to it. Instead of finding Davis he found two well known characters, Nate Campbell and Billy Farrell, otherwise known as Billy the Blat, by reason of his oratorical powers. Holtz asked these two worthies where they were packing to, and was informed that they were hiking in to Antler for grub stakes. Holtz then proposed that as he had quite a bit of grub with him, he should grub stake the crowd, and they would "go cayuse" on whatever they found. This was agreed to, and the trio set out.

As a result of this hastily-formed partnership Holtz was one of the finders of Lightning Creek, which turned out to be one of the richest in the country. "We called it Lightning Creek," said Holtz, with a laugh, the other day, "because it made us see lightning getting down to it. Jimminy Crickets! but it was rough and rocky!"

Staking out the discovery on Lightning, Holtz and his pals were joined by others, each of whom got 100 feet frontage on the discovery. In this party were Nate Campbell, Billy the Blat, Charlie Holtz, Jack Adams, Tom O'Brien and Jack Hughes. Holtz worked his claim for a short time to try it out, and turned up \$7.50 to the shovelful. Afterwards, however, he found that he had all he could do to run his mules, and he gave his claim to Johnny Burns, who didn't have any. Johnny did well on that claim. Poor old Dutch Bill staked a claim, but it turned out so bad that Dutch couldn't make the price of the wear-and-tear on his pick out of it, and the boys took up a subscription for him, everybody chucking a little dust into the sack.

After this Holtz packed for many years along the Fraser and in the Cariboo. He packed over trails that are now supplanted by wagon roads, the work of the late Governor Douglas, and the old packer pays a high tribute to the man who could make wagon roads over that country. However, the gold fever drew Holtz on, and he did too much prospecting. He got into debt and had to sell his mules. Then he began to work for wages. He packed in the Cassiar and worked in the Crow's Nest Pass at various jobs. And today, passing the evening of life in the Old Men's Home, rugged-looking and strong for all his eighty-two years, he likes to look back on the stirring incidents that made up his life since he left Hamburg in old Germany early in the last century.

TRAINED SEA-LIONS

Though the seals and the sea-lion at the exhibitions did not look good subjects for the animal tamer's skill, this kind of animal can be trained to do the most astonishing things. Captain Winston is now showing at the Sydney Tivoli seven sea-lions that gave out of the cleverest turns of its kind ever seen in the colonies. The curtain goes up on an Arctic scene, and after a preliminary handshake, Captain Winston gets them to go through balancing feats that are amazing in such clumsy animals. "When an animal, whose habitat is the water, or in close proximity to it, gets enthusiastically down from its seat, and coming to the foot-lights, propels himself across a tight-rope on his fore-flippers, balancing meanwhile a ball carefully on his nose, just as some of the bipeds have done on the very same spot on some other occasion," says the Herald, "the impression on the mind is not so much the incongruity of it all as the amazement that anyone should have ever thought of trying to teach it such a thing." One animal balanced in succession an umbrella, a ball, and a drum-major's baton on his nose, and another walked up a ladder with a plate balanced on his nose and a stick poised on the rim of the plate. They played football by catching the ball on their noses as neatly as a good three-quarter line handles it in a passing rush. The troupe acted as a band, one vigorously playing a drum with his flappers, another clashing cymbals, another blowing a trumpet, and another—a comedian—making weird noises on a French horn. Captain Winston gave a Daily Telegraph interviewer an interesting insight into his methods. He achieves his success by kindness and patience. While the interviewer was with him he began to teach one of the sea-lions how to take up a bottle in her teeth and drink the contents by tilting it up. On the end of a small piece of wood was tied the tail of a fish. Topsy opened her mouth to take in the fish, and bit the wood. For this she was given a small piece of fish. The operation was repeated about a dozen times, and each time a similar reward was given. Then the fish-tail was removed, and Topsy seized the piece of wood without it. The next step was to insert the wood in the neck of a bottle, and so on, until Topsy was induced to lift the bottle alone and hold it tilted until her trainer took it from her. Captain Winston's father keeps a sea-lion farm in California, where the animals receive preliminary training before they take to "the road." After this there is nothing incredible in the proposal to harness polar bears to the sledges of explorers.

A REMARKABLE BEAR FROM ALASKA.

In a recent issue of the zoological publications of the Field Museum of Chicago (vol. x., No. 1) Mr. W. H. Osgood has described the skin of an abnormally colored bear from Alaska, identified with the so-called glacial bear (Ursus emmonsii), which is normally grey. The new specimen is much darker, the predominant tone being black, although grey hairs are distributed through the fur. A black line from the nape of the neck to the root of the tail is fairly distinct, and the tail itself is almost wholly black. This variation suggests that the so-called Ursus emmonsii is only a grey phase of the American black bear, and it is noteworthy that cinnamon-colored bears, which are by no means uncommon in many parts of the United States, are unknown in Alaska. It looks, in fact, as though Ursus americanus developed, as a sport, a grey phase in Gribble Island, British Columbia, where the so-called white bear is apparently nothing more than a pale variety of the black species.

AN AUTOMATIC COLLECTOR

A negro preacher, whose supply of hominy and bacon was running low, decided to take radical steps to impress upon his flock the necessity for contributing liberally to the church exchequer. Accordingly, at the close of the sermon, he made an impressive pause, and then proceeded as follows: "I hab found it necessary, on account of de astringency of the hard times an' de general deficiency ob de circulatin' mejum in connection wid dis chu'ch, t' interduce ma new automatic c'lection box. It is so arranged dat a half-dwollah or quatah falls on a red plush cushion without noise; a nickel will ring a small bell distinctly heard by de congregation, an' a button, ma fellow mawtels, will fish off a pistol; so you will go'n y' selves accordingly. Let de c'lection now proceed, w'ile I takes off my hat an' gins out a hymn."

VICTIMS OF DOSE COLDS

They met one morning on top of a motor-omnibus, sneezed, and shook hands. "Bordig, Jold!" said the first. "Bordig, Jib!" answered his friend. "Dice morning?" "Yes; uncobdolly dice." "Ady dew?" "Dot a thig! Adythig dew id your lide?" "Dot a bladed thig!" "How d'you feel this bordig?" "Dearly sneezed by head off last dight!" "Sabe here!" "Goig to the beetig todight?" "Do; goig to stay at hobe ad dridk rub ad hodey?" "I dridk hot rub putdch for bide. So-log!" "So-log!" And they wended their dismal ways, mentally exclaiming, "Codfoud these usdsettled sprigs!"

This painful story comes out of a suburb. It was a visitor from the middle of the town who was moved to remark, "You do keep your music up late at night." "Yes," said the resident pensively. "We are trying to keep the people next door awake so that they will be too sleepy to mow the lawn in the morning; and they are trying to mow the lawn so early that we shan't feel like singing at night."