

Victoria City and the Island of Vancouver



AST Sunday, on this page, there was reproduced from the files of the Colonist of 1868 a report of the historic proceedings in the Legislature which resulted in the transference of the seat of government of this province from New Westminster to Victoria. The editor has been handed the following letter bearing on this matter:

Sir,—Among the excerpts from the Colonist of forty years ago, I see that you include a reference to the action of the Imperial government in transferring the seat of government from New Westminster, on the Mainland, to Victoria, on the Island. The colony of British Columbia and Vancouver Island, previously separate political settlements, with two governors and two civil lists, were united by Imperial proclamation about 1867, with one governor and one civil list. Governor Seymour, who had been governor of British Columbia before union, remained governor of the united colonies, with the capital at New Westminster. An agitation was immediately begun at Victoria and in the interior of the mainland for the removal of the seat of government to Victoria. This agitation was stoutly resisted by Governor Seymour and his ministers, who were backed by the people of the Lower Mainland. Many dispatches passed between the governor and the authorities at Downing street. It was understood that Governor Seymour urged the case for New Westminster with much force and ability and that for many months after he had been informed that the Imperial government desired the selection of Victoria, he hesitated to issue the proclamation and continued to press New Westminster's claim.

In the meantime, those who advocated Victoria's claims were not idle. They were headed by Hon. Dr. Helmcken, to whose admirable handling of the matter, more than to any other influence, may be attributed the final result. The Colonist, as you have shown, did good service in the cause; but I have always conceded that without Dr. Helmcken's active support, excellent judgment and good management, the Capital would have remained on the Mainland and Victoria's political career would have been closed.

Of course there were many rumors afloat as to the action, or rather inaction of the governor. Several months before the question was finally disposed of the colonial secretary had stated to a deputation that he had intimated to Governor Seymour that it was the desire of the Imperial government to have Victoria declared the Capital and that several dispatches had passed between the two governments on the subject.

The agitation, locally, was continued with warmth and considerable ability on both sides, but nothing definite could be learned as to the nature of the instructions that had reached the governor until one day the information leaked out in a rather extraordinary manner. There was, at the time, a telegraph office maintained on San Juan Island, which was then in the joint occupation of Great Britain and the United States. The operator in charge was a young man named D— (long since dead). Into his office one day there lounged a soldier of the American garrison, who, unknown to D—, had acted as operator during the war between the North and South. This man, being an "ear operator," heard a dispatch in its progress through the San Juan office. It was from the Colonial Secretary and was addressed to Governor Seymour. It peremptorily commanded Mr. Seymour to proclaim Victoria the Capital and prepare to remove the establishment to this place.

Two months later this soldier visited Victoria, and finding the Capital agitation still progressing, told what he had heard in the San Juan telegraph office. His information was given wings by the Colonist, and in a few days Governor Seymour discontinued his opposition and Victoria became the capital.

A diligent but vain inquiry was made as to how the contents of the dispatch became known; and this is the first time that the story has ever been told.

D. W. HIGGINS.

VISITOR'S VIEWS OF ALBERNI

In an article descriptive of a visit to Alberni, Mary Markwell writes in the Manitoba Free Press as follows: Setting aside the natural beauties of Alberni town, (or towns), a glance over the historical page of the district, which was known to the outer world since 1790, will lead us to discoveries showing that the wealth of these parts, highway and waterway, is no new thing. The fact is, an English company, as early as 1860 established sawmills at Alberni and regular trips of the company's ships were made, spars, masts and lumber being shipped to all parts. In 1886 the mills closed down and it was just about this time the people of the island began to see the value of their own possessions.

Alberni district is 25 miles by 5 miles in length, and has as fine a waterfront as Fort William.

The E. & N. Ry. Co. is at present building a direct line from Wellington to Alberni, and a connecting link (between Nanaimo and Vancouver) with the mainland is by cat-ferry. This railway, some 90 miles in length, passes over the finest timber sections in all British Columbia; a forest as dense and as virgin as it was hundreds of years ago. The right-of-way is through Douglas firs towering at times 300 feet in the air; white pine and hemlock in enormous quantities, with the far-famed cedars

Story Told for First Time of How Cable Message to Gov. Seymour "Leaked," With Momentous Consequences—Whaling on West Coast

of a girth extraordinary, and a thickness measuring six feet is no curiosity at all. When the timber is cleared away there will be left a fine farm-land soil of red loam 18 inches in depth, under which gravel and sand is found, this being what gives the fine fruit growth which everywhere abounds. Alberni seems to grow every fruit mentionable. I saw grape vines which produced a high grade quality of blue grape, maturing in October early. Apples grow to perfection; plums and cherries ripen and rot on their branches, and overplus in supply, and one gentleman who sowed peach stones (as an experiment) possesses a fine fruit-bearing tree in his farm garden. The marsh grounds of the district are over done by the wild currant bush, and the largest and finest cranberry I ever saw grows in abundance.

I arrived March 2, and found the farmers had done the spring ploughing. The rainfall is placed at 60 inches average and is confined to

stone quality, and marble is known to exist. Coal indications have been found; also mineral deposits, but the granite-faced rocks tell nothing as yet of what lies in the heart of the hills.

Leonard Frank, a mining man of the day, who has spent his time in travelling over the island, is the possessor of a magnificent collection of views. Mr. Frank showed me some pictures taken from the granite walls of Sproat lake and Great Central lakes, showing carvings of a rude kind made thousands of years ago by some pre-historic roamer of the wilds. The carvings are of giant size and represent land and sea animals, apparently in pursuit of, or attacking each other. The Indians in the district have known nothing of the origin of these outlined carvings, but they attach a superstitious awe to the same and paddling by the places so decorated they refrain from speech and make a soundless passage with muffled paddles.

At the time of writing Alberni is on the ris-

ing the worker every opportunity which leads to success.

WHALING IN NEAR-BY WATERS

When the sea is tossing hills-high, the white-lashed spume flying from the wave crests before the driving gale, the man behind the pen goes forth to kill the whale. Then the conditions are ideal for him; for the death of the ocean leviathan, to his mind, should be accompanied with strenuous action on the part of the elements. Above all things, romance must run through his story. Not so with the man behind the harpoon-gun. For him, such conditions are far from being ideal. Strenuous action enough awaits the vessel and her crew on an even sea; and while romance is ever there in plenty, it is hardly observed; for whaling in the Northwest Pacific is conducted on a business basis; the man who fires the gun is part of a machine and probably sees no more

scarcely concluded his examination when the lookout man in the crow's nest at the foremast head calls out "Whale on the starboard bow!" or "Whale on the port bow!" as they case may be. Instantly every man takes his station—becomes a part of the little craft. To get within range requires considerable skill on the part of those handling the vessel, for the whale may become alarmed at too much commotion, such as the vibration the propeller causes as it churns the water, and be the cause of a long chase. Cautiously, then, the whaler is manoeuvred within striking distance. It is largely a matter of guesswork to get this distance properly at the right moment, for the whale does not necessarily move in a straight line nor has it any fixed time between blowing periods. This uncertainty is about the only excitement known aboard the whalers.

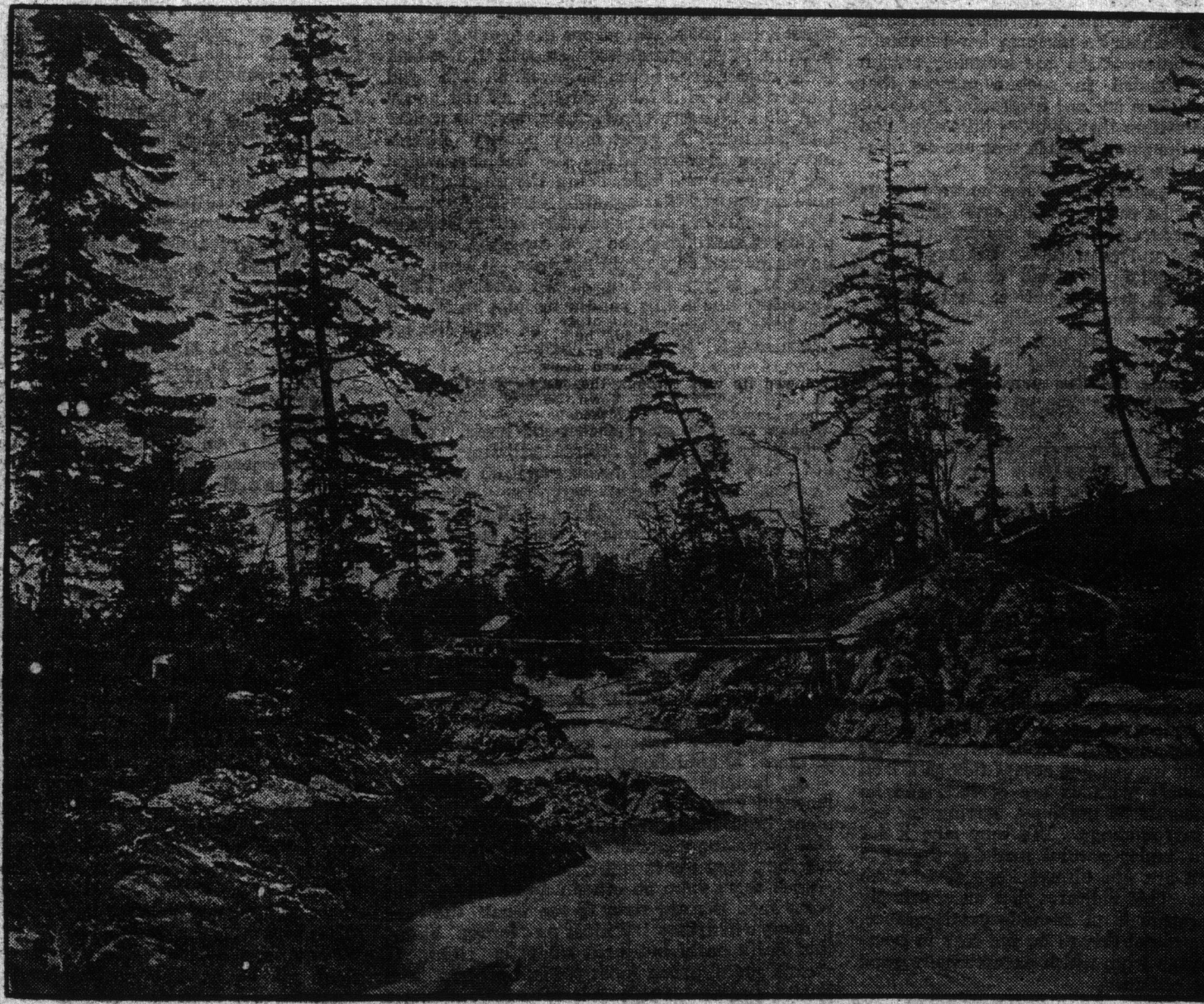
When all is ready, the moment when the glistering back of the ocean mammal is arching as it rolls lazily along, the gun is fired, and six feet of harpoon, wrought from the best of Swedish iron, is hurled against the quarry. As the harpoon speeds on its way, the "foregoer" uncoils from the bow directly beneath the muzzle of the gun. This is the rope fastened immediately to the harpoon. It is made of the very finest Russian hemp, is light, very flexible and withal able to stand an enormous strain.

The marksmanship is good, rarely is there a miss, and the whale starts wildly as the iron penetrates its body. Never has it felt anything so terrible as this thing; for it is not of its element, a thing to be combatted and perhaps overcome. It is a one-sided battle, the result inevitable. Against it, however, the whale sometimes puts up a terrific struggle. With the bomb exploded, the irons of the harpoon spread and hooked securely, it often takes hours to see the finish. An illustration of the gigantic strength, of the wonderful vitality of the whale, I had from one of the whaling captains. Fairly struck, an eighty-foot sulphur bottom kept him and his vessel busy for fully six hours. At first it tried every possible way to break the stout cable, as even a trout will strive to break a fishing-line. It would "sound" then it would come to the surface, breaching its full length into the air. Tired of this at length, it started to swim away with the vessel. At the rate of six miles an hour, with the engines going half-speed astern, the whaler was towed through the water for a full four hours.

When the unequal battle has ceased, the whale is winched alongside; and if there are other whales about, an air-pipe is inserted through the mass of blubber and the body inflated. It is then marked with a flag and cast adrift. Afterwards it is picked up and towed to the station. There it is hauled out on to the slip, and the work of cutting up is commenced. A score or more of Chinese, Japanese and Indians with great sharp knives swarm around the carcass. Some of them work on the sides, some climb on top. From head to tail the blubber is slit into five-foot widths. At the end of these sections of fat a hook is then fastened. This hook is attached to a wire cable leading to a winch. The cable tightens, and with a peculiar crackling sound the great strips of fat are torn from the body. This is called "flensing." The strips are then cut up into little square blocks and sent in carriers to the trying-out vats. Some of these pieces, by the way, never see that part of the whaling establishment. At the close of the day's work, more than one Indian may be observed making for his hut carrying a piece of blubber. To him, whale meat is the most palatable of all food.

Oil, of course, is the chief product of the whale, one specimen yielding as much as ninety barrels. At twenty-two dollars a barrel, such a whale in oil alone is worth nineteen hundred and eighty dollars. Besides the oil, there are anywhere from three hundred to three thousand pounds of whalebone in the mouth of each whale. This is worth anywhere in the neighborhood of four hundred dollars a ton. For the whale meat, of which there are some ten tons, the whaling people get sixty-five dollars a ton. This meat is salted in brine and finds a ready market in Japan, the natives of Nippon being particularly fond of it. In that country the tails are also sold, the price averaging about fifty dollars per ton. Then there are some four tons of guano, made from the contents of the stomach and all refuse pieces of fish, which brings about forty dollars a ton. The large bones also make a splendid fertilizer, which does not, however, bring so good a price as that obtained for the guano.

Of all the whale kind, the bowhead is said to be the most valuable, for bone and oil to the value of twenty thousand dollars have been taken from a single specimen. Second in importance comes the right whale, valued at something like ten thousand dollars in bone and oil; while the sperm whale comes third. From its head alone, which seems to be fully one-third the length of the animal, as many as sixty barrels of pure oil have been secured. These three varieties were the principal ones hunted through the romantic years of the hand-harpoon, and are somewhat scarce today; but with modern appliances, the commoner varieties, such as the sulphur bottom, finback and humpback, have become of great commercial value. At the Vancouver Island stations the latter varieties are principally taken, where off Sechart alone as many as nine have been captured in a single day.—F. M. Kelly, in Pacific Coast Magazine.



A RARE PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEW OF THE GORGE, VICTORIA ARM

Courtesy of Miss Emily Woods.

There are comparatively few people living at the present day who remember the Gorge when it presented the appearance portrayed in the above photograph. A couple of logs will be seen spanning the waters, and, until the early sixties, nothing more pretentious in the way of a bridge was attempted. At this period excellent trout fishing was to be had from the shore line at this point, and it was the popular rendezvous of all the disciples of Isaac Walton.

the winter months—if you can call it winter at all. All day long a beautiful sunshine filters down from a cloudless sky, and Mount Arrow-smith, 6,000 feet high, shines through vaporous mists that gather about its snowy crown. About 6 p.m. the air suddenly cools, and the nights are beautifully calm and sleep-coaxing.

Alberni district possesses some splendid lakes: Sproat lake, Great Central lake, Cameron lake, which excels even Lake Lucerne in wild beauty.

Game abounds. The lakes I passed were black with ducks and "waxies" and grouse are plentiful. The wapiti, bear, wolf and panther make big game, and black tailed deer haunt the hillsides. Fishing is easy in this quiet retreat where few white men have as yet thrown the line to water. Three pound trout are not unusual, and leaving aside the salmon, you get smelts of a flavor beyond all comparison.

I may add a big business will shortly be opened up in shipping fish (by refrigerator cars) between Alberni and the coast towns.

I have a fine photograph of an island harbor taken when the herring came in to spawn. The picture shows millions of sea-gulls hovering in the air and settling on the water, previous to, or after, gorging themselves on fish. The gulls eat until they are in a state of drunken torpor, and lie heavily on the water until their digestion improves! The photograph looks like a snow storm and is most unique of its kind.

The Alberni valley is the draining yard of the Beaufort mountains. The rock is of lime-

ing tide of prosperity. Americans have secured certain timber and milling privileges along the water front, and a quarter-of-a-million of dollars is already moving in circulation, while the beginning of this movement is only in infancy compared to what the end promises. I have statistics before me concerning the promises of a great tomorrow but I pass these over to deal with what the actual cost of living is at the present day in the interior of Vancouver Island.

Supposing a man wanted to begin life in the Alberni district, what would his actual expenses be in securing his land, preparing it for cultivation in fruit, and allow for his own labor, etc.

First the cost of say, twenty-five acres: 25 acres at \$100 per acre.....\$2500 Fencing the same.....200 Preparing the land, labor, etc.....150 Fruit trees, 500, at 25 cents each.....125 Freight, cartage.....15

Total.....\$2990

This land, at the price quoted, is to be had within immediate reach of shipping points; is to be had today in what will likely be town property tomorrow; and once the railway opens the fruit grower has his outlet as well as his local market. There are orchard farms to be had standing and in working order within Alberni (as other) points in distributive centres; and I have no hesitation in saying that adding a poultry and milk business to this orchard proposition, Vancouver Island offers to

than his "lay" during the mighty struggle which takes place on the fishing grounds after the whale has been struck.

Two modern whaling stations are located on the west coast of Vancouver Island; one being at Sechart, Barclay Sound, the other at Narrow Cut Creek, Kyuquot, while whaling operations have recently commenced at a third station near Nanaimo, on the Gulf of Georgia. All three stations are controlled by the Pacific Whaling Company of Victoria. On account of the wild storms which ravage the ocean coast of Vancouver Island, the whaling people have decided to close down the stations at Sechart and Kyuquot for the winter months, operating the inside station only. The most complete in the world, these plants are located near the principal haunts of the whale—the banks where the small fish swarm.

In connection with each station, the object of most interest is the little steam vessel built especially for the whaling game. Of a hundred and fifty tons burthen only, all too small they appear; yet they are stoutly built, steel-ribbed and plated, with powerful engines to drive them rapidly through the water. When the weather is favorable the boat leaves her berth at the station wharf about two hours before daybreak. Under a good press of steam she is able to be on the killing grounds just when the light begins to get strong. It is then that the most important personage on the little craft overlooks his harpoon-gun, invented by a Norwegian named Foyen to replace the hand-harpoon of the old-time whalers. He has