

Transportation

1840-1916

A DIP into the Minutes of the Honourable, the Hudson's Bay Company records (1840), will interest the reader taking his ticket by the Canadian Pacific Railway to-day to some northern point. The following excerpt is worth recording:—

Norway House, June 1840

"In order to afford every facility to Governor Simpson on his intended arduous journey across the continent it is Resolved, 72, that Chief Factor Rowan be directed to provide the necessary horses and appointments for crossing the plains from Red River to Edmonton."

The line of route ran: from Fort Garry to White Horse Plains, on to Fort Pelly, Fort Ellice, Carlton, Fort Pitt, Edmonton. From the latter point to Fort Colville and thence to Fort Vancouver, ending this extraordinary jaunt at Walla-Walla on Puget Sound.

The records tell of the start out at sunrise one July morning, cannon booming from the ramparts of the old Fort, the Governor, escorted by Chief Factor Rowan and a convoy of fifteen out riders. The commissariat was borne by pack—the native ponies (cayuse) laden with panniers of good fare, and, you may be sure, a flagon or two of the famous old Hudson Bay Rum to cheer the journey.

That was an imposing caravan starting out, and, oddly enough, forerunner of the route later mapped out by brainy engineers of a great transcontinental railway. It was a picturesque sight, I feel sure, and one worthy of the Artist's brush: Sir George Simpson, wearing his well remembered "stove-pipe" silk hat, his Scotch plaid, and that fearsome air he assumed to terrify the savages he met on the onward way.

Records state that seven different languages were used and so many "interpreters" taken along in order to carry on the business in hand.

Important matters took the first Governor west. The Oregon boundary question was at this date in dispute; the H. B. Co. had big interests on the banks of the Columbia river; farm lands, horses, cattle, swine, etc., a settlement of families having