

TELEGRAPHS & CABLES.

The Telegraph in British Columbia.

At the recent meeting of the Canadian Electrical Association in Montreal the following paper was contributed by R. B. McMicking, Manager of the Victoria & Esquimalt Telephone Co.:

Since that excellent paper on the "Early Construction of Telegraph Lines in the Dominion" was submitted at the fifth convention by C. P. Dwight, I have had in mind the need of a supplementary clause concerning the introduction of the telegraph into British Columbia in the early sixties, & which was to constitute a section of the somewhat formidable undertaking of connecting the New with the Old World by means of about 18,000 miles of land line.

It may be—doubtless is—within the recollection of some of our members that, on the failure of the first Atlantic cable in 1858, there was set in motion as a means of attaining the same end—i.e., telegraphic communication between the two hemispheres—a gigantic enterprise, known as the "Collins Overland Telegraph (Russian Extension) Co.," having in view the stretching of a wire from the telegraphic system of the Pacific States, through British Columbia, & via Behring Strait to Russia & Europe.

With marvellous energy & enterprise, the work of construction was commenced in 1863, the line entering B.C. from the south in longitude 122 W in 1864, being carried thence to New Westminster, from which point it followed the valley of the Fraser River & the Cariboo waggon road northward to Quesnelle, a distance of about 450 miles, which point was reached in 1865. Offices were established along the way, & from Quesnelle southward the line was soon opened for commercial business. The enterprise proved a great boon to the early colonists, both by reason of the large expenditure necessary in its construction & operation, as well as by the facilities offered thereby to the widely-separated settlements for speedy communication.

In 1865, also, a branch line was run across the San Juan Archipelago to Vancouver Island, connecting Victoria, the capital of B.C., with the main line at Swinomish, Washington Territory. This branch was about 74 miles long, including 5 submarine cables of a combined length of about 16 miles.

From Quesnelle the main line crossed the Frazer River to the westward, & following a north-westerly course, with Behring Strait as its next objective point, reached the Naas River—about 400 miles distant from Quesnelle—when the second Atlantic cable was successfully laid, & operated July 29, 1866.

The construction party of about 250 men—and which included explorers, surveyors, choppers, line builders, operators & transport gangs—on receiving the news of the completion of the cable, remained in camp 2 or 3 days, awaiting developments. At the end of this time, finding the cable continued to work well, they set out for civilization, leaving their tools, stores & material to the tender mercies (in great part) of the Hudson's Bay trappers & the native red man, as their transport out would have cost more than the new article.

During the winter of 1866-7 a station was maintained at Fort Stager, on the Skeena River, where an operator named McCartney & a companion domiciled until the following spring, & where oftentimes during those—to him—dreary winter months, I held converse with him by wire from Yale.

In addition to the construction party the Co. owned & had in service a fleet of vessels, steam & sail, plying upon ocean & river, some in the transportation of material, supplies & line equipment, others in preparing for the placing of a cable across Behring Strait, a dis-

tance of about 60 miles—quite an undertaking at that date.

Of the fleet, I now recall the ocean steamer George S. Wright, the river steamer Mumford, barques Onward, Clara Bell, H. L. Rudgers; ship Nightingale, schooner Milton G. Badger. The Onward made a trip to Siberia with material and supplies, was caught in the ice—where she remained all winter—and became a wreck when the ice moved in the spring.

The Behring Strait cable was to stretch from Cape Prince of Wales, on this side, to Plover Bay, on the Siberian shore, from which latter point inland about 350 miles of line had been erected, while southward from Cape Prince of Wales, in Russian America, about 300 miles of land line had also been constructed.

The course of this contemplated line through the British possessions & down the great waterways of Russian America would doubtless have brought it into close proximity to the present Klondike gold fields, & near Dawson City, in which event it is not improbable that the hole-digging necessary would have developed the riches of that section at least 30 years earlier, & have given to the former generation an additional important mining epoch.

The history of the building of this line, & the causes which led to a work having for its object the encircling of the world by wire at so early a date, is likely always to be read with interest.

The Co.—which subsequently merged into the Western Union Telegraph Co.—maintained the line northward as far as Quesnelle until purchased in 1870 by the B.C. Government, which in turn handed it over to the Dominion Government on B. C. entering Confederation in 1871. Later still the C.P.R. assumed control south from Ashcroft. While under Government control, & previous to the influx of population consequent upon the building of the C.P.R., the revenue fell far short of the expenditure yearly.

In 1867, Buie Bros., merchants, built a branch line from Quesnelle to Barkerville, in the Cariboo gold region, a distance of 60 miles. This branch, together with the main line between Quesnelle & Ashcroft, is still operated by the Federal Government.

The original expenditure in the construction of the B.C. section of the Intercontinental line reached the large sum, roundly, of three million dollars.

I have written from memory, yet, doubtless, with comparative accuracy, through having been in the Co's service during construction & for some years afterward, & while in charge of Quesnelle office in 1866 becoming the medium by which the news of the successful laying of the Atlantic cable, July 29, 1866, reached the construction party 400 miles north-west of that point on July 30, 1866.

Canadian Pacific Telegraphs.

The Co. is stringing another wire between Canso, N.S., & Halifax, to provide the necessary facilities for the increased business between Europe & the West Indies consequent on the opening of the Halifax & Bermuda cable.

The land lines connecting with the cable across the Straits of San Juan de Fuca between Beecher Bay B.C. & Crescent Bay Wash., were completed July 28, giving the C.P.R. Telegraphs direct connection between Victoria B.C., Seattle, Port Townsend, Port Angeles, Wash., & other Puget Sound ports.

The C.P.R. has announced a large reduction in rates from the Kootenay District, taking effect August 1, the maximum rate now being \$1 from any point in the Kootenay to any telegraph office in North America. Local rates from the same district have been reduced from 25% to 50%. The Co. was able to

make these reductions on account of the advance made in the construction of its copper wire across the continent, & other local construction in British Columbia, which enables it to handle business with B.C. to better advantage.

The Co. has built a line between Nelson & Kuskanook B.C., 65 miles, which will form a part of the Crow's Nest line, & has been built ahead of construction so as to place Kuskanook, the supply depot on Kootenay Lake, in connection with telegraphic points in West Kootenay. For the present but one wire has been strung.

The Co. is repoling its line between Victoria & Nanaimo, B.C., along the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Ry., & stringing an additional wire through to Departure Bay, 82 miles, to connect with the new Gulf cable. This when completed, about Sep. 1, will give Victoria 3 direct wires to Vancouver.

Telegraph Office Changes.

GREAT NORTHWESTERN.

OPENED—St. Leon Springs, Q.; Glanworth, Ont.; Bluevale, Ont.; Caledonia Springs, Ont.; Cacouna, Q.; Grimsby Park, Ont.; Port Sandfield, Ont.; St. Placode, Q.

CLOSED.—Lowville, Ont.; Odessa, Ont.; South Finch, Ont.; Cedars, Q.; Etchemin Mills, Q.

CANADIAN PACIFIC.

OPENED.—Departure Bay, B.C.; Amyot, Ont.; Brule Lake, Ont.; Grand Hotel, Caledonia Springs, Ont., summer office; Helderleigh, Ont.; Otter Lake, Ont.; Parry Wood, Ont.; Pembroke Station, Ont.; Pendleton, Ont.; Ray Side, Ont.; Rock Lake, Ont.; Ravensworth, Ont.; South March, Ont.; Seguin Lake, Ont.; St. Lazare, Que.

CLOSED.—Claresholm, N.W.T.; Dereham Centre, Ont.; Sulford, Ont.

Telegraph and Cable Items.

The Western Union is putting in new poles between Frederickton Jct. & Fairville, N.B.

The Lake Manitoba Ry. & Canal Co. is stringing a wire between Winnipeg & Portage la Prairie, Man., to connect with the wires on its railway line.

The Western Union has its poles up to Vancouver, B.C., & it is said wire will be strung by the end of August. The line will run from Vancouver to New Westminster, thence by way of Blaine & Fairhaven, Wash., where connection will be made with existing W.U. lines. (See June issue, pg. 111, July, pg. 140.)

A 4-masted twin-screw steamship, said to be the largest cable steamer afloat, has been launched for an English telegraph construction company. The craft is 440 ft. long between perpendiculars, fitted with vertical cable drums, & in 4 of the holds are circular cable tanks about 45 ft. in diameter & from 17 to 32 ft. in depth.

On the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Ry., 42 telegraph poles have been set for a test of the life of different woods. The poles are divided as follows: 6 chestnut poles, creosoted; 6 pine poles, creosoted; 6 chestnut poles, woodline; 6 set in broken rock, 6 in clay, 6 in the ordinary manner, & 6 to have a hole bored near the ground so they can be saturated with oil.

The Charlottetown Board of Trade has complained to the management of the Anglo-American Telegraph Co., in England, in reference to the rates charged on business to & from Prince Edward Island & in regard to the offices being closed at 8 p.m. It is said that unless the Board's representations are effective steps will be taken to secure competition, it being claimed that the Co. has no right to a monopoly of the Island business.