

DRIVER LANG'S LAST DRIVE

Started From Edmonton for the Golden Klondike

With Fifty Bulls O'er Mountain Ranges, Frozen Streams and Unknown Trails.

From Saturday's Daily

Before the era of transcontinental railways, and while still the roadway to the Pacific lay over the interminable, hoof beaten trail, George W. Lang, of San Antonio, was famous. When there were shortages in the live stock markets in certain districts, adventurers undertook the task of driving in big herds over mountains, prairie and desert, from sections where there was plenty, and of this class he was the most adventurous. The requisites for a great drover were courage, coolness, perseverance, endurance and an unlimited amount of patience, and he was truly great, for with these virtues he was liberally endowed. Years ago, when a great drought in California threatened a meat famine, he bought immense herds on the fertile Texas plains and drove them over the scorching Nevada deserts to California. He is credited with being the first to accomplish this feat. From the Atlantic to the Pacific he was always to be found buying stock where it was cheap and driving it to where it commanded high prices. So he lived, making large sums of money on a successful drive, to lose it again when disease or lack of water and grazing on the trail cut down his herd by thousands. But the railroads came. Against this cheap and expeditious mode of transportation he could not compete, and the activity of his life became but a memory.

As old age was fast overcoming his energies, the report came of fabulous discoveries of gold in the distant north. Concurrent, too, was the report of great shortage of food in the district. It carried him back to the golden days of '49. He remembered that then the poor prospector of one day was the millionaire of the next. He thought, too, of those stirring drives when mounted on a broncho, he herded cattle on the trail. The odor of the dust cloud raised by the thousands of desert-parched steers as they scented the river from afar again greeted his nostrils. Memories of the past were painted in glowing tints, and his restless spirit urged him to new achievements. He conceived the idea of buying up herds of steers and using them as draught or pack animals to prospect the vast country lying between Edmonton and the Klondike. Even if they found nothing in mineral the live stock would yield a big profit where meat was worth \$1 a pound. It was in vain that his friends and family tried to dissuade him. He could not believe that he was old and that the trail was impractical—they had told him that about the Nevada deserts, and about all the great drives he had made in the past. "This will be my last drive," he told a friend as he stepped on the train at Los Angeles in the fall of 1897. "After this I shall settle down to a quiet life." Such was to be the crowning feat of a life of adventure.

In the early winter of 1897 he reached Edmonton and proceeded to buy up a herd of 50 oxen, a dozen or more horses and a stock of provisions intended to last the party until they reached their destination. Early in February, 1898, he was ready to start. The first objective point was Lesser Slave lake. To this point the townspeople reported that a trail had been recently put through much shorter than the freight road to Athabasca Landing and up Slave river which had been used for years. But stern experience had taught this old fox of the trail that short cuts as a rule were disastrous, and that one will never go wrong by following the old established trails. Consequently while the inexperienced multitude were searching for the trail that did not exist and trying to find a way over a mountain in four feet of snow, with horses weakened and perishing from hunger, the Lang outfit with their slow moving oxen pulled into the Slave lake post.

The faces of the men showed fatigue and lack of sleep, and their voices were hoarse with shouting to the oxen in the manner of bull-punchers. From daylight they traveled until dark, never stopping at noon, but munching at hard tack and eating snow as they walked and shouted. Then before supper the stock must be fed and cared for, for to the successful drover the stock is of first importance, and men merely incidental. Then almost as soon as the eyes have closed in slumber,

it seems, the voice of the indefatigable drover sounds "Roll-out!" and the stock must be fed again ere the men snatch a hasty breakfast and resume their toilsome march. Early on the way one of the men sickened and was forced to turn back, and another deserted. This increased the burden on those remaining, but in no way weakened the strong purpose of the leader.

At this post many stopped a few days to rest, but to the Lang outfit, who foresaw the breaking-up of the Peace river, there was no such word. The very next morning the oxen were yoked to their heavily laden sleighs, and started over the trail to Peace River Landing, 86 miles distant. From this point it was intended to follow up Peace river on the ice 300 miles to Fort St. John, from which place there was supposed to be a pack trail leading to the north by a way no one seemed clearly to understand.

Here began a contention between the oxen outfit and those traveling with horses. The former had but a few men to handle a dozen ox teams, horses and loose cattle. The latter had a driver to every team. Tempted perhaps by some browsing in the snow by the path, the loose cattle would block the trail for the teams, and if a loud shouting and cursing were ineffective it would be necessary for the first driver to wade forward through the deep snow. In this way it took time to get the whole outfit moving each time, and the trailers behind were forced to wait, and give vent to their impatience in persistent inquiries or muttered cursing. Those who followed over the trail days afterwards knew something of their trouble, for at frequent intervals was inscribed in the snow by the roadside: "Damn the bulls!"

But the Peace river was reached and along its broad trail there was room for the hurried ones to pass, and all enmity ceased.

Here began a period of mental anxiety and physical strain. The Chinook wind began to blow and from excessive cold, the temperature rose rapidly above the freezing point and the ice began to soften. Soon pools of water formed over the ice, and in swift places the channel of the river was exposed. The outfits hugged closer to the shore, or if compelled to travel in the center of the river, a horseman herded the loose cattle away from the most dangerous spots. Occasionally hoofs broke through the sup softened ice, and it was deemed advisable to travel by night when the ice was firmer. When a horse or an ox breaking through the ice was yoked in a team the others were either pulled in after, or they succeeded in pulling the unfortunate out. If loose, unless roped in time he would be carried away by the current, or if pulled out, in many cases so injured, that he would have to be killed. In this way, working always, and sleeping never they made slow but steady progress, and each day they risked life and property on the treacherous, honey-combed ice. Those who had already reached Fort St. John were informed by each late arrival "the bulls are coming!" It was nearing the middle of April when the ice on Peace river was daily expected to break up, when Mr. Lang with the first section of his outfit pulled up the river bank to the flat on which is built the Hudson Bay Company trading-post of St. John. The others were expected in the following day, but a rain fell during the night, the water rose and they were forced to the bank. Later they cut a trail overland and packed their goods to the fort.

Some of them were of the opinion that it was the fatigue and mental worry of that terrible journey up Peace river; others argued that he was too old and should never have attempted a journey that would undermine even the strongest constitutions of youth; the deeply religious said it was a judgment of Providence for traveling on Sundays, while more affirmed simply that his time had come and it could not be otherwise. Whatever the cause, George Lang had been at the post but one day when he fell ill. He was sick before, but his directing hand could not be spared and so no one knew. He was taken to the officer's house, and given the best care the post afforded, but he sank lower. A doctor in overall came in over the trail and volunteered his professional services, but he failed to improve. The weeks passed, the ice broke and passed out of the river, the oxen fattened on the green grass starting from the sunny slope of the hill, but in the trader's house a form wasted, and a face looked ghastly in its long tobacco stained beard, while a delirious brain herded cattle on the plains. It was decided that the only hope was to attempt to get him to civilization, so they carried him carefully to the river bank and laid him gently into a canoe. The swift current carried them easily over the distance that he had recently traversed with so much

difficulty. But it was in vain. They had gone but a short distance down river when the spirit of George W. Lang passed away. He had made his last drive.

He was taken to the trading post of Dunvegan, and in the wildness of nature, where he loved best to live, he was laid to rest.

While here ends the story of the organizer and leader of the party, the expedition itself kept on. It was a last wish of Lang that it should do so. While the stock was fattening on idleness, these hardy men were reducing the outfit to packages suitable for packing. In May the pack saddles were completed, the cinches and ropes were prepared and the draught animals were converted into beasts of burden. To use Western parlance they "hit the trail." They would make Fort Graham, 150 miles distant, from that point they would go to Sylvester's Landing, 500 miles farther. They were told that there was no pack trail and that the journey was impossible, but these men knew that there are no obstacles of nature that patience and persistence will not overcome. They cut trees from their path to allow the pack animals to pass. They forded small rivers and, coming to larger ones, they rafted their provisions and swam their stock. In crossing muskegs, or bogs, if by reason of his sharp hoofs an ox became mired, he was dug out, and throwing a rope over his horns, dragged to solid ground. If a leg was broken in doing so he was shot and after the choicest of the flesh was cut off for food, was left for the bands of coyotes and wolves that fattened on the trail.

Early in August the outfit reached Fort Graham, after crossing three summits of the Rocky mountains. The stock was in good condition, but the men were dust grimed and thin. The next day they left for Sylvester's Landing on the Dease river. A short time before a band of Indians had been in to the fort and had strongly protested against white men traveling through their country. The horse bells, they claimed, scared the game, and furthermore there was a deep rooted belief among them that when white men enter a country the fur leaves it. Finding that their protests were of no avail, they supplemented threats. If white men attempted to cross the divide to Dease river they would set fire to the country and burn up the feed so their stock could get no grazing. With this threat they left for the mountains.

The men in charge of the oxen outfit, however, had heard Indian threats before, and to this report they gave the same attention they had previously to the natural obstacles of the trail. With other parties who had reached this thousand mile mark on their journey, they continued into the unknown. The Indians had made no idle threats. Before the trailers had gone a hundred miles on the way, a dense smoke cloud was seen ahead, and very soon they were in the middle of a burning wilderness. Here, indeed, coolness and patience were required, for if a stampede should result among the pack animals not only the stock, but their entire supply of provisions would be lost in the flames. So, regardless of their own safety they herded them carefully, drove them through the flames, and into the still smoking country beyond. Nor was the danger over here, for trees, with their supporting roots burned, were now falling on all sides, and even this danger past the country was effectively blocked by fallen trees, and the trail, never clearly marked, had entirely disappeared. Yet they struggled on, and how well, those following after, who never saw the outfit, can testify, for in the labyrinth of misleading trails, where muskegs and windfalls compelled a choice of paths, they had long learned to look for the cloven hoof prints which marked the passage of the Lang outfit, and "Follow the bulls" became the standing direction of the trail.

Just before winter closed in they stopped on a little stream by Deadwood lake, 75 miles from Dease river, and prepared to winter. There we last saw them. Their herd was reduced to 23, and the men were standing to their knees in ice cold water as they endeavored with scythes to cut enough frozen marsh grass to carry the stock over till spring, when they should resume their journey.

How many the long, cold winter spared and how many of these were not needed to keep the men from starvation is not known, but certain it is that up to this time no portion of the G. W. Lang outfit has reached Dawson City.—Sidney Church

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Notice.
NOTICE is hereby given that the following survey, notice of which is published below, has been approved by Wm. Ogilvie, Commissioner of the Yukon Territory, and unless protested within three months from the date of first publication of such approval in the Klondike Nugget newspaper, the boundaries of property as established by said survey shall constitute the true and unalterable boundaries of such property by virtue of an order in council passed at Ottawa the 2nd day of March, 1900.
CREEK CLAIMS No 32, 36a, 37 and 38 Gold Run creek and creek claim No 2 on a tributary at 38—Gold Run creek, in the Dominion mining division of the Dawson mining district, a plan of which is deposited in the Gold Commissioner's office at Dawson, Y. T. under No. 40 by T. D. Green. D. L. S. First published February 6th, 1901.

Notice.
Notice is hereby given that on and after March 1st, 1901, grants for all applications for relocation will be issued at the time the application is made, wherever the claim applied-for appears open for relocation upon the records. The allowance of two weeks which has hitherto been made for holders of claims to take out a certificate of work will cease on and after March 1st. Holders of claims are warned, in order to avoid trouble with relocators, to take out a renewal of their claims on or before the expiration of their former lease.
(Signed) J. LANGLOIS BELL, c28 Assistant Gold Commissioner.

Notice.
Whereas the commissioner of the Yukon territory has created a new mining district known as the Clear creek mining district, which district is described as follows: All of Stewart river and its tributaries from Lake creek to Fraser falls, including Lake creek and its tributaries.
Now, therefore, the public is hereby notified that on the 26th day of February, 1901, a mining recorder's office will be opened at Barlow City, and all records and documents pertaining to the Clear mining district will be located there.
Dated, January 31st, 1901.
(Signed) J. LANGLOIS BELL, Assistant Gold Commissioner.

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BURRITT & McKAY—Advocates, Solicitors, Notaries, etc.; Commissioners for Ontario and British Columbia. Aurora No 2 Building, Front street, Dawson. Telephone No. 89.

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HENRY BLECKER FERNAND DE JOURNEL BLECKER & DE JOURNEL Attorneys at Law, Offices—Second street, in the Joslin Building Residence—Third avenue, opp. Metropole hotel Dawson.

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SOCIETIES.
THE REGULAR COMMUNICATION of Yukon Lodge, (U. D.) A. F. & A. M., will be held at Masonic hall, Mission street, monthly, Thursday on or before full moon at 8:00 p. m. C. H. Wells, W. M. J. A. Donald, Sec'y

Fresh halibut at the Denver Market.

Notice is hereby given that an application will be made to the parliament of Canada, at the next session thereof for an act to amend the act respecting the Dawson City Electric Company, Ltd., and to extend the time limited for the commencement and completion of the electric railway and tramway by said last mentioned act authorized to be constructed.
BELOUCOURT & RITCHIE, Solicitors for the Applicants. Dated at Ottawa, this 10th day of December, 1900.

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