

New England was
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A Hudson Bay Trading Post.



By Russell W. Porter

With illustrations from photographs by the author.

UP over the great divide, down the western slopes of the Rockies and Selkirks, at a point ten hours by rail from the coast, I alighted at Ashcroft, British Columbia. Sand butts walled in the horizon, sage bush and cactus tinged the landscape a delicate dusty green. The heat rising up from the parched ground was suffocating.

A glance at the town disclosed at once its importance at this particular time. Outfitting establishments bustling with activity, droves of half wild cayuses brought into corrals for inspection, pack trains making up and departing daily and a long row of white tents below the town, all pointed to one theme, the Klondike excitement. It was one of the starting points to the great North and its reported wealth of untold gold. But I was not one of the great multitude preparing for their three thousand miles' journey. Nor have the life and incidents which I encountered on my journey of over four hundred miles from this town to do with the Hudson Bay Company. Let me content myself with saying, as concerns that journey, that a fellow fresh from the East undertakes too much when he attempts to cover this distance with the above mentioned cayuses as his means of trans-

portation, in the expectation of anything approaching comfort. If the devil visits this planet of ours, he surely enters with all his powers the bodies of these beasts.

When I saw Fort St. James for the first time, across the placid waters of Stuart's Lake, the general impression was of its striking resemblance to the Danish trading towns of western Greenland; and as I saw more of the settlement and its daily life, its officers and their routine work, the more did the likeness to those far northern towns hold true.

Surrounded by a high massive fence, the log walls of the Company's buildings are seen clustered together. Somewhat isolated from this group are the homes of the natives, the Carrier Indians, a long row of good substantial houses. With some pretence to follow a street line, or rather the gentle curve of the beach, each house faces the lake, within a hundred feet of the water. This area between the houses and the shore resembles in high degree a crowded back alley in a city. Rubbish is scattered every-



FORT ST. JAMES.

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