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By Way of the Cariboo Road

By Margaret Grant MacWhirter

BRITISH COLUMBIA, the most westerly province of Canada, measures nine hundred miles in length, by four hundred and twenty-five miles in width, and extends from the 49th to the 60th parallel of north latitude, and westward from the Rocky Mountains to the shores of the Pacific.

It is a mountainous country. In the south this elevation extends four hundred miles in width, made up of parallel ranges separated by long valleys. The Interior Plateau is between the Rockies and the Coast Range.

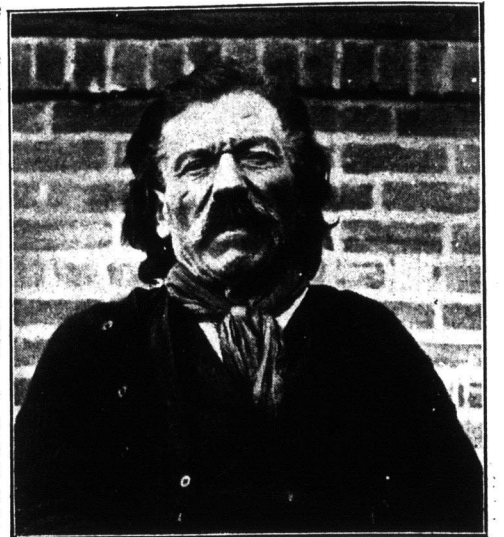
The two largest rivers, Columbia and Fraser, reach the sea after crooked southern courses. The greater part of the river basins is rich in agricultural and grazing lands. The country is rich in minerals, and mining, chiefly gold, is one of the most important industries of the province.

For nearly a century after its discovery British Columbia was almost inaccessible to the rest of the world. By two ways only could it be reached, and hardships and danger were attendant on those ways, either by sea around the south of one of two continents, or across lonely side-stretching prairies, and over lofty, snow-capped mountain ranges.

It is only within half a century that roads have come into existence in British Columbia, and railways were beyond the pale of possibility. Gold opened the way in the Pacific Province. The discovery of the precious metal in the Cariboo made imperative the building of a highway,

the right hand or the left precipices from 500 to 1000 feet in depth."

Over a million dollars were expended in the construction of the Cariboo Road, which bears testimony to the skill, perse-



Cataline Pioneer Packer of the Cariboo.

verance, and indomitable courage of the men who left behind them a wagon-road, unsurpassed, if indeed equalled in the world.

When the road was opened for traffic, various were the modes of travel. Passengers went by stage, drawn by four or



Pack train loaded ready to leave for Northern Interior over Cariboo Road.

and thus the Cariboo Road, the most famous highway of its kind in the world came into existence. From Yale on the Fraser River, to its terminus, at Barkerville, is upwards of three hundred miles. As has been remarked: "Its construction was a work of vast difficulty, and one of the greatest achievements in the world in the way of road-building."

From data in the Dominion Archives, relating to the Cariboo Road, we find that in 1861, Governor Douglas visited the gold mines, going by way of Kamloops and Okanagan Lake to Rock Creek, and returning by the nearly completed trail. It was then arranged that a detachment of the Royal Engineers under Captain Grant was to construct the Western part of the road.

In 1862 the road was divided as follows: The Government of British Columbia, the Royal Engineers, in conjunction with a force of civilians should construct various sections: From Yale to Chapman's Bar on the Fraser, thence to Boston Bar, on to Lytton and Clinton; payments to be made in money and in tolls. At last the road was finished, and the government levied a toll to reimburse itself for the heavy expenses of construction.

It was finished, but it is impossible to describe or realize how stupendous was the undertaking, and how difficult of achievement.

To quote from the Archives: "In great part it was built on the scarp of the mountains, bordering on the Thompson and Fraser Rivers, and in many places these precipices are so abrupt and offer so little facility for cutting out a road, except at an enormous cost, that it was necessary to build crib-work and attach to the almost perpendicular sides of the mountains. It is the only road establishing communication between the lower Fraser and the interior of the country, and although an immense amount of travelling passes over it, and it is from fifteen to twenty-five feet wide, it is generally in good order, and accidents are seldom. This is very wonderful when we remember that the road for a great part of the course presents on either

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Any Decrease
In the
Size of Package
Or Quality
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