

Port Alberni, B. C.

A SHORT HISTORY.

PORT ALBERNI stands at the head of the Alberni canal, a natural waterway twenty-four miles in length, almost cutting Vancouver Island in two, and averaging a mile and a half in width and 300 feet in depth. The Canal is a continuation of Barclay sound, on the West coast of the Island—named after Capt. Barclay a contemporary of the famous Capt. Vancouver.

The Canal was known to the Spaniards probably as early as 1790, and is named after a Spanish officer, Don Pedro Alberni, who was in command of a company of volunteers in the expedition to Nootka. On the old Spanish maps of this coast Barclay sound is known as the Archipelago de Nitinat. It was not until 1860 however, that the Canal was thoroughly explored.

In 1855, Messrs. Anderson, Anderson & Co., shipbrokers, of London, England, who were interested in a shipbuilding yard at Rotherhithe on the Thames, heard that there were large areas of timber suitable for spars and masts on the West coast of Vancouver Island, and in 1860 they sent out Capt. Stamp, after whom the harbor is named, to investigate the truth of the report. Capt. Stamp chose the head of the Alberni Canal where Port Alberni now stands, as the most suitable place to erect a sawmill, not only on account of the timber but also because of its suitability as a shipping port to foreign markets, and the Andersons received a grant of some 1600 acres of land and timber at the head of the Canal from the Government.

In 1860, the Government of the day sent Mr. Gilbert M. Sproat with two vessels, the "Meg Merrilies" and the "Woodpecker" to take over this land from the Indians, and a few years later the first sawmill on Vancouver Island was erected at Port Alberni.