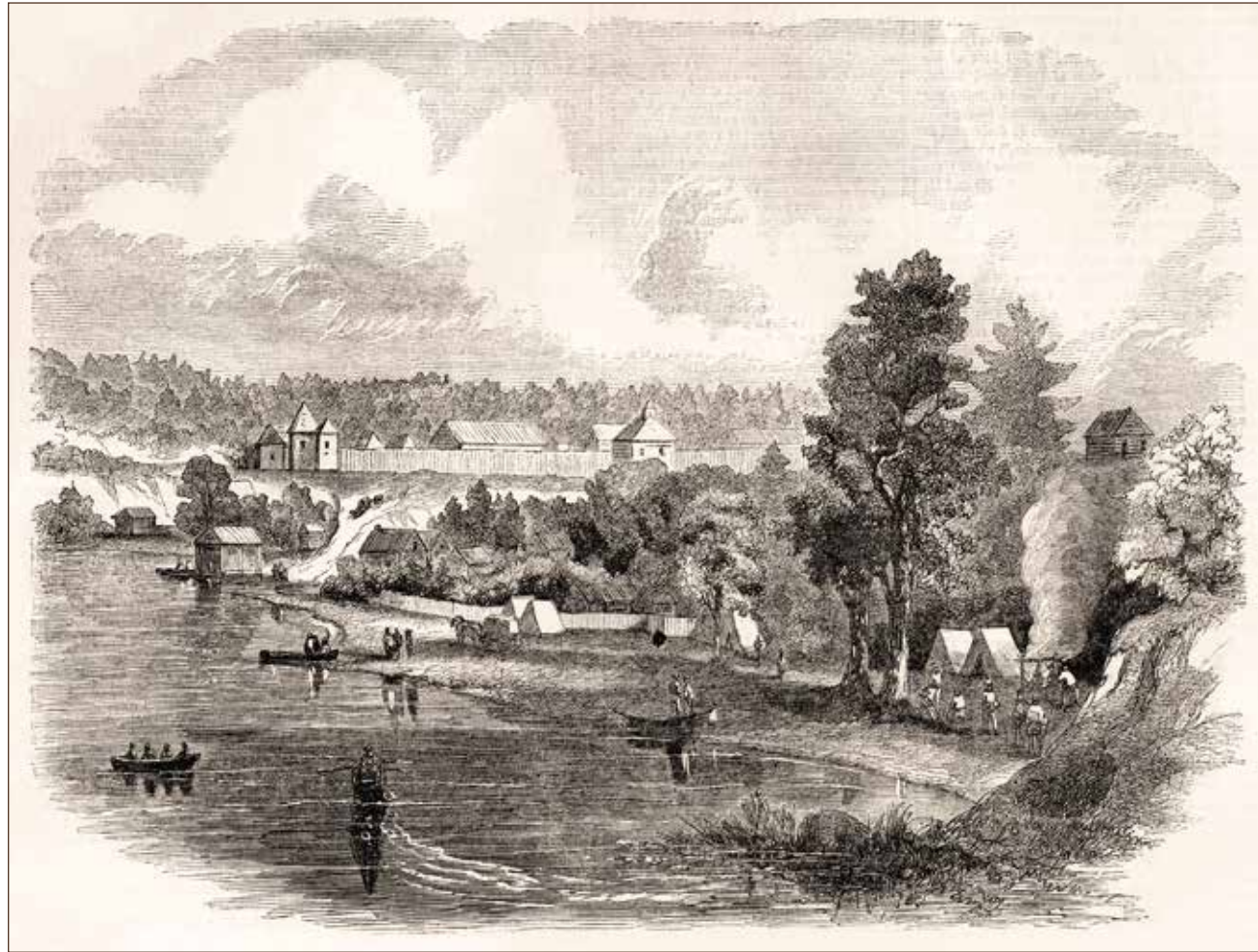


## THE MULE TRAILS



A WOOD CUT THAT APPEARED IN THE OCTOBER 9TH, 1858 ISSUE OF THE NEW YORK HARPERS' WEEKLY OF FORT LANGLEY.

COURTESY WERNER KASCHEL

The first miners into the Fort Kamloops area either trudged over the Hudson's Bay Company brigade trail through the Columbia and Okanagan Valleys or else chose the more treacherous Indian trails along the Fraser River. Those who traveled up the river found that they would have to wait out the spring flood before they could proceed along the canyon. During their wait, many of these anxious miners panned the river below Fort Yale with relative success.

James Douglas, the HBC Chief Factor for the area north of the Columbia River and acting Governor for the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island, was aware of

the deplorable conditions regarding the mainland. At great risk to his position, he set about organizing the construction of an improved route from the coast to New Caledonia, with the explanation that such a route would secure the area north of the 49th parallel as British territory. At Fort Victoria, Douglas called a meeting and told the miners that his government would provide transportation, equipment, and food, in exchange for labour in the building of a 4-foot wide mule trail through the mountains as far as Lillooet. As a precaution against desertion and to put some money in the government coffers, Douglas required each miner to put up a \$25 deposit to be refunded in goods

at Lillooet providing his conduct and work on the road proved satisfactory. If all worked out according to plan, Douglas realized this gamble could mean a great personal success as well as a British one.

Douglas had worked hard and hard and spent much of his life influencing the right people to achieve his dual role in the British colonies. Born in 1803 in Lanarkshire, Scotland, to a Scottish father and Creole mother, he went at an early age to live in British Guiana, where his father had a large sugar plantation. Both parents died when James was very young. At 16, James accompanied an older brother to Canada to begin his apprenticeship in the North-West Company in Montreal. At Fort William on Lake Superior, his intelligence and good working habits came to the attention of Chief Factor Dr. John McLoughlin. Shortly before the merging of the two fur trading companies, McLoughlin sent Douglas to Fort Chipewan to supervise the fisheries of the district, an important responsibility since it was the fish that the forts relied upon as a principal article of food. In 1825, Douglas was posted to Fort St. James on Stuart Lake in the District of New Caledonia under Chief Factor William Connolly. The following year he accompanied his superior on the annual journey with the packs of furs from New Caledonia to the headquarters of the Columbia Department to Fort Vancouver.

In 1827 Douglas married Connolly's eldest daughter and was placed in temporary charge of Fort St. James while his father-in-law left on the annual trip to Fort Vancouver with the furs. Consequently, it was Douglas who arranged the welcoming committee for the arrival of Sir George Simpson, the Governor of the Northern Department of the HBC.

Three years later Governor Simpson transferred Douglas to Fort Vancouver as Chief Factor McLoughlin's chief accountant for the next 15 years. In 1843, McLoughlin sent Douglas, now a Chief Factor, to construct Fort Victoria on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. In 1849 the HBC, upon leasing the whole of Vancouver Island from the British

government, moved their headquarters from the Columbia River to Fort Victoria.

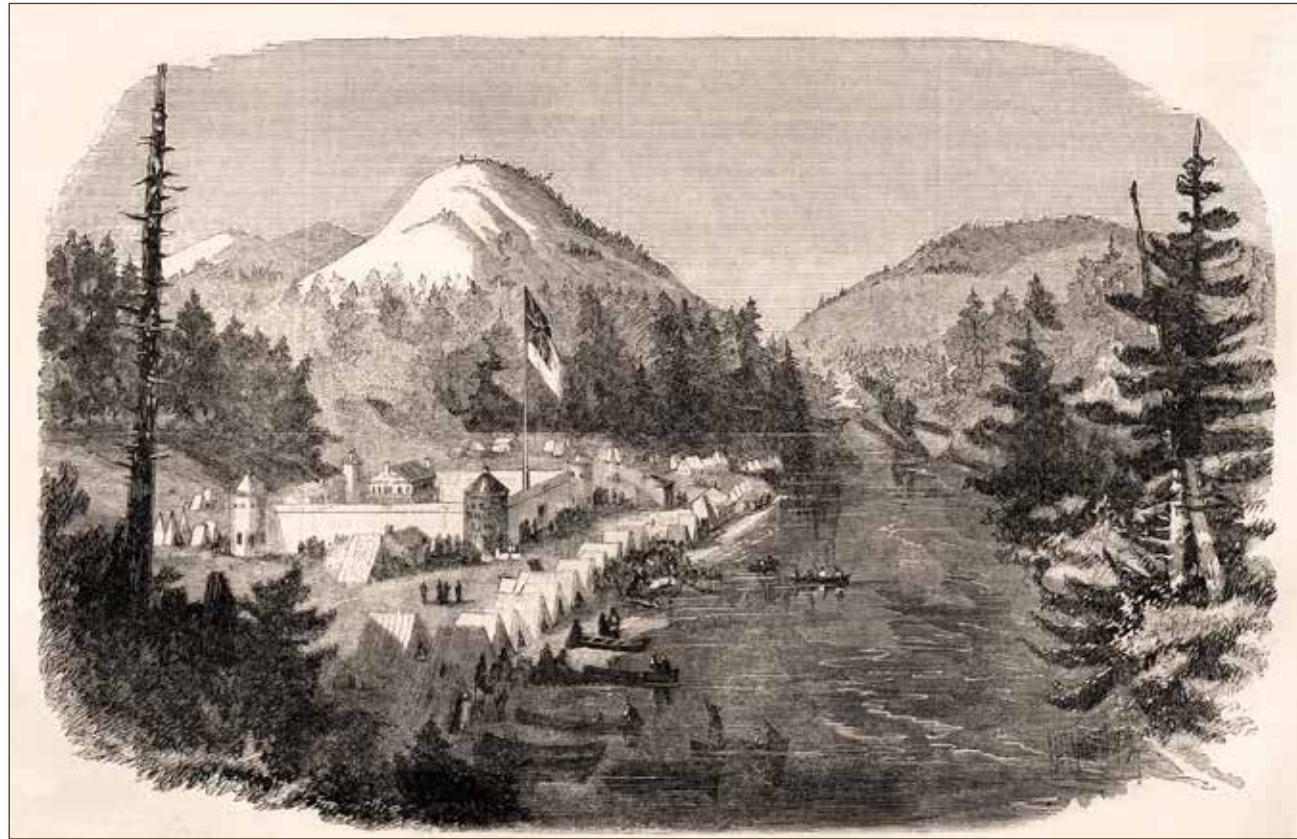
For the proposed mule, Douglas chose the route explored by Alexander Caulfield Anderson in 1847, via the lakes and portages west of the Fraser River from Fort Langley to Lillooet, and appointed Anderson to take charge of the project. Anderson named Harrison Lake for Benjamin Harrison, a British shareholder in the HBC, Anderson Lake for himself, and Seton Lake for his uncle Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Seton, who, when the troopship Birkenhead sank near the Cape of Good Hope in 1852, held his entire command at attention while the crew launched the women and children away in lifeboats.

In July, the Umatilla, the first steamship to reach the upper end of Harrison Lake, deposited on shore an eager force of mineer-roadbuilders. That evening before supper the men held a meeting and named their camp Port Douglas after the Governor before giving three hearty cheers to honour him.

Anderson quickly organized the men into parties of 25, each with its own captain, and by August 500 pick-and-shovel laborers were spread out along what came to be known as the Douglas Trail. Miners, following the route, employed Indians with 30-foot dugout canoes to carry them across the 3 lakes, while mule trains skirted the lakes by following Indian trails. The road builders quickly widened the Indian paths to facilitate the movement of pack animals. By mid-September, the trail had reached Lillooet Lake and by mid-October, Douglas was able to report to London that the road was finished.

To defray the costs of transporting supplies into the road camps, Calbreath advanced William Francis Laumeister the cash to purchase 23 camels from the United States army for \$300 per animal. The syndicate, which included Adam Heffley and Henry Ingram, hoped to clear \$60,000 the first season since camels could easily carry twice the load and travel twice the distance than mules or horses.





A wood cut that appeared in the October 9th, 1858 issue of the New York Harpers' Weekly under the caption 'Fort Yale and the Gold Hunters' Camp, Fraser's River'.

COURTESY WERNER KASCHEL

Storekeepers at Port Douglas stared in disbelief when the sternwheeler *The Flying Dutchman* towed a barge wharf side and a couple of men began unloading the humpbacked beasts of burden. Laumeister's troubles began when the first camel down the gangplank bit and then kicked a prospector's mule into oblivion. He soon learned that the camels' hooves, adapted for travel in sand, could not stand up to the rocky terrain, with the result that many soon went lame. Laumeister fitted them with rawhide boots that solved that problem only to find that the camels' potent odors stampeded any horse and mule trains encountered along the trails. The mule and horse owners both sued for damages and signed a petition to have the 'Dromedary Express' removed from the road. Several were used for a short time at least on the Cariboo Road until the rocky terrain proved too much for their soft padded feet.

Besides this handicap the camels' stench spooked the horse and mule teams which soon resulted in several civil suits against the owners. Before two years were out Laumeister was forced to admit that the entire venture had been a big mistake and an expensive learning experience. A few of the camels were sold cheaply to US circuses while the rest were turned loose to fend for themselves in the Cariboo. The last one died near Grand Prairie (now Westwold) in 1905.

Miner John Morris, passing by Quesnel Forks, saw what he took to be a large grizzly bear and immediately blasted at it with his rifle. When he saw the animal topple over, he and his companions rushed to the spot only to discover one of Laumeister's camels with a big gaping hole in its side. Henceforth he became known as 'Grizzly' Morris and the very rich mine that he later discovered on Williams Creek came to be known as the

'Grizzly' in memory of the incident.

Meanwhile, other road contractors were having their problems. Those past the first section were finding their supply route cut off because of the dynamiting just past Yale. Aware of the great danger and long delays, packers were unwilling to use the route and turned instead to the Douglas Trail.

About this time a contingent of Royal Engineers under the command of Colonel Richard Clement Moody arrived in response to the pleas from Douglas for a British military force to maintain law and order on the Pacific coast north of the 49th parallel. They were accompanied by Judge Matthew Baillie Begbie, who at a ceremony held in Fort Langley, on November 22, 1858, swore in Douglas as the governor of the crown colony of British Columbia. Douglas' first act as governor of the mainland was the swearing in of Begbie as chief justice.

Two of the first tasks facing the Royal Engineers, known as sappers, were the deepening of the channel at the south end of Harrison Lake to facilitate boat traffic to Port Douglas and the surveying for a 4-foot-wide mule trail through the Fraser Canyon from Fort Yale to Camosin (Lytton). On December 18th, the *Victoria Gazette* announced: Good boats are running on all the lakes, while numerous houses for public entertainment are opening up all along the line."

Three small paddle-wheel steamers, the *Melanie* on Lillooet Lake, the *Lady of the Lake* on Anderson Lake, and the *Champion* on Seton Lake, replaced the Indian canoes.

Across the Fraser River from Lillooet, an enterprising individual by the name of Otis Parsons built a stopping house upon the foundations of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Berens. Parsons had worked on the building of the Douglas Trail until it reached Lillooet where he decided to rig up a barge affixed to a ferry cable to transport the pack animals and miners across the Fraser River. His stopping house soon provided homegrown produce to feed the continuous stream of

men heading to the goldfields.

Douglas responded to the miners' demand by contracting road builders to develop the mule trail from Yale to Lytton. The trail had barely opened before the inhabitants at Yale began an advertising campaign. Instead of discussing the new trail's merits, they chose to ridicule the competitive route. Of the Douglas Trail, the ad stated: "Elegant and high-toned. Meals one dollar. Beds fifty cents. Crawlers thrown in gratis. Sit on an open deck in the cold; stick your nose in the cook's galley to warm it for free. Take your own snowshoes." The advertising was effective for the reason that many of the travelers heading to the Cariboo over the Douglas Trail were inexperienced men who had never lived outside a city environment. The poor souls tramped the entire route with just the clothes on their back and a small pack of provisions that sometimes only included a blanket. Stories about bears and Indians terrified these individuals into packing revolvers. One greenhorn wrote: Accidents with firearms are of a frequent occurrence in this country, through the inexperience of their possessors. Furthermore, revolvers are of little or no use here, the same weight of good worsted stockings would be much more serviceable". One frightened lad went to sleep with a cocked revolver in his bedroll and upon arising in the morning, began to roll up his blanket, only to have the weapon's trigger catch on its fold. It discharged and killed him instantly, much to the astonishment and grief of his companions.

In June 1860 Douglas granted a \$22,000 contract to Franklin Way and Josiah Crosby Beedy for the construction of a mule trail from 12 miles out of Yale to the Indian Village of Spuzzum. It was here that Way built a stopping house and erected a cable ferry across the Fraser River to connect with the Indian path on the opposite shore. That fall Douglas let out a second contract to Hugh McRoberts and William Powers to begin extending the trail upriver from Spuzzum towards Lytton. From Lytton, miners followed along the south side of the Thompson River until arriving at

**OPPOSITE**

**SIR JAMES DOUGLAS (1803 - 1877)**

Fur trader with the Hudson's Bay Company, Douglas came up through the ranks until becoming Chief Factor in 1839. When gold was discovered in New Caledonia in the early 1850s Douglas became Governor of British Columbia. from 1851 until 1864 he was Governor of Vancouver Island, in 1858 he also became Governor of the Mainland of British Columbia. After his retirement in 1864, he traveled to England where he was knighted by Queen Victoria I and made a Knight Commander of the Bath. While overseas Douglas visited Europe and with relatives in Scotland. He was often credited as being the "Father of British Columbia".

Mortimer Cook's ferry crossing, the place at which Spence's Bridge was later built. Once on the north side of the Thompson River the miners could follow a Hudson's Bay Company trail that skirted the Bonaparte River to Robert Watson's stopping house located at the junction of the two competing trails to the Cariboo. Port Douglas storekeepers Joseph Lorenzo Smith and Thomas Marshall realized in early 1861 that the new mule trail was a much faster way to the goldfields than the Douglas Trail. They loaded all their worldly possessions on their backs and headed for the new junction with the intention of reaping wealth from the weary travelers by setting up a stopping house. Upon their arrival, they discovered that Watson was already located at the junction and doing a great business catering to the needs of the miners and was in the process of building a larger stopping house. Not to be thwarted, Smith and Marshall bought him out. When Smith died in 1871, his wife remarried Marshall, and by the time he passed away in 1877 a Smith son was old enough to join his mother in the business. The location came to be known as Clinton.

From this stopping house, the miners followed a Hudson's Bay Company trail to Alexandria (formerly Fort Alexandria). From here they worked their way northward, following Indian trails through to Lac La Hache to Chief William's village (later Williams Lake). The trail from Yale through to the junction at Watson's stopping house became known as the Cariboo Trail.

Past Chief William's village, foot trails led the miners to Quesnel Forks, where William Prosper Barry and Samuel Adler had constructed a 200-foot bridge across the Quesnel River. These two industrious men made good money collecting tolls from the travelers using the bridge.



*James Douglas*