

NED STOUT'S GULCH

Edward Stout was born in Bavaria, a Province of Germany, 26 September 1827 and in his infancy was left an orphan. He acquired a good education in the public schools of his native country and remained in Bavaria until he was twenty years of age.

In that year, 1846, he left Europe and crossed the Atlantic for the New World, landing in New York. He proceeded from the coast, inland to Milwaukee, where he obtained employment on a schooner. There is some evidence that he joined his uncle here, a Captain Stout who worked a steamer operating on Lake Michigan.

Stout sailed on the lake until 1849, becoming familiar with nearly every port from Chicago at the southern end to the Canadian frontier in the north. In the spring of 1849, he left inland navigation to join the great migration west.

"It was a long, but at that season of the year, pleasant journey. I can remember it most distinctly. We passed over a beautiful country literally swarming with buffalo, elk and other deer, as well as antelopes." Stout's party went through the Black Hills by way of Salt Lake through the Sierra Nevada and arrived in 'Hangtown' or Placerville in November of 1849, the trip taking some 7-odd months to complete. Ned worked in the gold mines and prospected with fair success in this area for over eight years.

Hangtown derived its name from the number of desperadoes who were hung within its boundaries by the Vigilance Committee. In the centre of the town was an oak tree, with large, thick and wide spreading branches.

"One could count the number of hangings that had been carried out by the number of rings on the branches of the tree, just as you can tell the age of some trees by the number of circles or rings which can be counted within the bark when the tree is felled to the ground. Every time the rope from which the criminal was pendant was thrown over the branch and drawn into the air, the friction removed some of the bark in a circular manner and left its count."

The year 1857 found Ned Stout and some members of 'his' party engaged in mining in various creeks and streams of the El Dorado county in California. Among those with Stout at the time, and who later accompanied him to the north to the Fraser, were Alexander Coultee and John Oppenheimer, both of whom had crossed the plains with him in '49.



EDWARD STOUT (1827 - 1924)

BARRY GENERAL STORE, YALE, B.C.

A WHEELBARROW.

COURTESY FORT LANGLEY NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



It had been eight years since the discovery of gold in the American West and the easy pickings were long cleaned out. Mining companies had been formed to pool resources and retrieve gold that was beyond the means of the individual prospector. It was during this 'time of transition' in California that rumours of rich diggings on Fraser's River hit the depressed region.

Ned Stout, one among many, was struck by 'gold fever' and he made up his mind to travel to San Francisco, which he did. Once there, he and several others made a bargain with the captain of a schooner to take them north. The captain charged them a sum of \$2,000, which included the transportation of supplies and a "sufficiency of timber to build two large boats with..." - Ned Stout

The schooner dropped off its cargo and passengers in Bellingham Bay in March of '58.

"We were the only vessel in that spacious har bour. Whatcom, at that time, consisted of two or three houses, or cabins..." - Ned Stout

Using the lumber they had acquired in Frisco, the men built two flat-bottomed scows and headed north for the mouth of Fraser's River. When they arrived on May 2, 1858, there was not a living soul could be seen, nor the mark of an ax on a single tree. At Fort Langley they saw one white man and at Fort Hope they saw only two.

"After a long struggle of eighteen days we arrived opposite the present town of Yale. Of course it had no name at that time." - Ned Stout

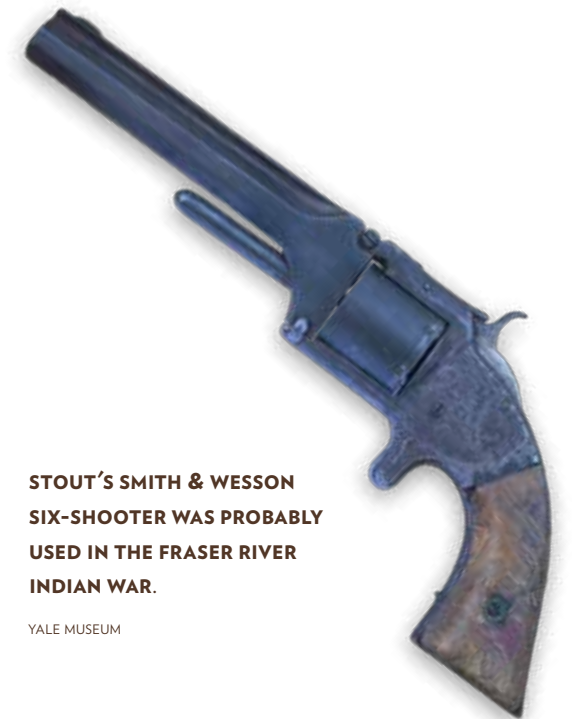
"...two miners ...had been ambushed and murdered by hostile Indians"

It was at Yale that gold had been first discovered on the Fraser, but by the time Stout's party arrived the place was deserted. It was later learned that the two miners who had been working the bars around Yale had gone south to Port Townsend for supplies and during their return to the Fraser had been ambushed and murdered by hostile Indians. Just how hostile the local population was had yet to be discovered...

In company of Stout at that time was James McClennan, Archie McDonald and "Old Texas", all Californian miners. Accounts state that McClennan led the party up the Fraser until they reached the present site of Lytton where the Thompson joins the Fraser. They left the Fraser canyon and followed the course of the Thompson until they reached what would later be called the Nicomen River.

STOUT'S MEERCHAUM PIPE

YALE MUSEUM



STOUT'S SMITH & WESSON SIX-SHOOTER WAS PROBABLY USED IN THE FRASER RIVER INDIAN WAR.

YALE MUSEUM

During their travel they had met a young Indian woman who had become enamoured of James McClennan after he had given her some of his clothes to wear. She would follow him throughout the day and insist on carrying his pack while at night she would retire with another native fellow to a spot outside the miner's camp. One night, in the middle of July, she suddenly appeared at the fire of the miners and warned them that the First Nations planned to attack the miners.

'Before sun up you white men go. Go back in the stick, far, far, then you back to salt chuck. Indian kill all white men in canyon, by-by he come kill you all. Tomorrow he come. Go now, go quick.'

McClennan took this to mean that the Indians had killed all the whites in the lower canyon and that they must immediately return to Fort Yale or risk the same fate.

During July and August, recoveries of bodies of white men floating down the river were common at Fort Yale. There was a state of terror in the canyon. The cause of the trouble, it was said, was a combination of influences: the desire of the Indians to monopolize the mining, coupled with the success of the Indian wars then raging in Washington and the arrogance of the miners who lived by the code that "the only good Indian was a dead one." Unfortunately, Stout and his party were prospecting far to the east of the canyon, had been oblivious of the new developments that had taken place. If it had not been for the friendship of McClennan and the young Indian woman, Stout and the rest would surely have perished, as it was they faced a dangerous and harrowing trip south, to safety.

"Stout's party lost nearly a man daily"

The miners broke camp that night, after disposing of anything and everything that would impede their speed. Early the following day, they were attacked...

The Indians, who were concealed amongst some rocks and bushes, ambushed the party and wounded three of the miners. The arrows were poisoned and by the next day all who had been wounded were dead. According

to Stout the poison was made by placing the fangs of a rattlesnake in a sort of mortar, with some deer's blood and the two were mixed together. Water was added if necessary to dilute the solution and make it possible to coat the arrowheads. The effect of this poison was to cause convulsions in the victim and turn the skin black after death.

"As it was extremely dangerous to travel by day, we made our way in the night time. As soon as the day broke we built small forts upon the bank of the river with stones and pieces of timber. Detached parties of Indians often hemmed us in, skulking behind low bushes, while occasionally some of them would send a chance musket ball whistling across the rocks with savage interest."

Stout's party lost nearly a man daily, including their leader James McClennan; the chance of escape became bleaker and bleaker. At Four Mile Creek Stout and his party discovered four salmon hanging on a pole. Just before they partook of this fish feast, Mike Mallahan, an Irishman who was with the group, noticed several dead blue jays in the vicinity and quickly surmised that the salmon were poisoned and laid as a trap. After reducing the fish to small pieces they pitched them in the river and continued on.

Arriving at China Bar with only five left out of the original twenty-six among the party, their supply of ammunition depleted, the hopes for survival were bleak. Each of the five survivors was wounded, and so, unable to travel, they lay in their fortifications expecting an assault at any time. But luck or providence would be with them, and the following day a party of soldier-miners led by Captain Schneider and Captain Graham arrived from Fort Yale some miles below and relieved the company.

Following this narrow escape, Stout spent some time recovering from a total of nine arrow and bullet wounds received during the ordeal. The most serious was a wound to the groin which had nearly severed the main artery in his thigh. However, Stout was true to his name and by August he felt well enough to begin mining again.

Moving north through the canyon and eventually into Cariboo Stout met up with William 'Dutch Bill' Dietz. The Dietz party, including Stout, made its way up the headwaters of Antler Creek, over Bald Mountain and down into a different watershed. The gold found by that first party of explorers was nothing impressive but word got out to dissatisfied miners on Antler Creek and soon they were streaming over Bald Mountain in droves. The new creek was named after Dutch Bill, some say because he had the most luck on that first day in panning others say that he bribed the rest of his party with promises of champagne in the offing, regardless the new find became known as William's Creek.

Jordan's partner had 50 ounces of gold in his hand ...and more to come

Initial expectations for the area were high, but for those used to the easy finds of Antler and Keithley, William's Creek soon became 'Humbug' Creek. Gold here was located deeper and underneath a layer of hard blue clay that was initially taken for the bedrock. Since gold is heavier than all other gravel it sinks to the level of the bedrock and that is where the richest 'pay' can usually be found. Strangely, there was very little gold on this hardpan of clay.

One day, Jordan of the Abbott & Jordan claim left to get supplies from town; while he was gone, Abbott, out of boredom, swung a few blows at the 'bedrock' and broke through. By the time Jordan returned, his partner had 50 ounces of gold in his hand and more to come. The rush was on!

Meanwhile, Stout had broken off from Dietz's party and had staked claims on a tributary gulch of William's Creek. Stout's 'Gulch' was to become an important factor in the development of Barkerville itself.

At a point between the town of Richfield and Barkerville, William's Creek slows to a trickle. Miners of the time speculated that all the gold would have been deposited at or above the slowing of the creek and would never have made it into the lower regions of the canyon. When several miners tried the ground in the lower canyon

they found nothing of interest. This was the situation when Billy Barker showed up on the scene. Barker had mined in the California rush of '49 and was therefore an experienced hand. He recognized that although the ground in the lower canyon was poor there must be gold there somewhere because Ned Stout was doing well and he was below the slowing of William's Creek, albeit in a tributary gulch. It was this revelation that indirectly caused Barker to sink extensive shafts in the lower canyon. The rest is history.

Ned Stout worked the gulch bearing his name for two years and then sold his share and moved to Lowhee where he mined some more. When mining activity lapsed, Stout worked as a packer for the Cariboo Co. carrying freight by boat from New Westminster to Lytton. Stout moved back to Yale, built a house and continued to prospect near there and on Siwash Creek. In 1873, he married Mary Thorpe of Yakima, Washington Territory and they had three children (his descendants were still living in British Columbia as late as 1979). Although no longer residing in Cariboo he returned every summer to prospect and was the picture of vigor even into his old age; proud of the fact that he had never taken a drop of liquor. He died in 1924 at the age of ninety-six, a true pioneer.