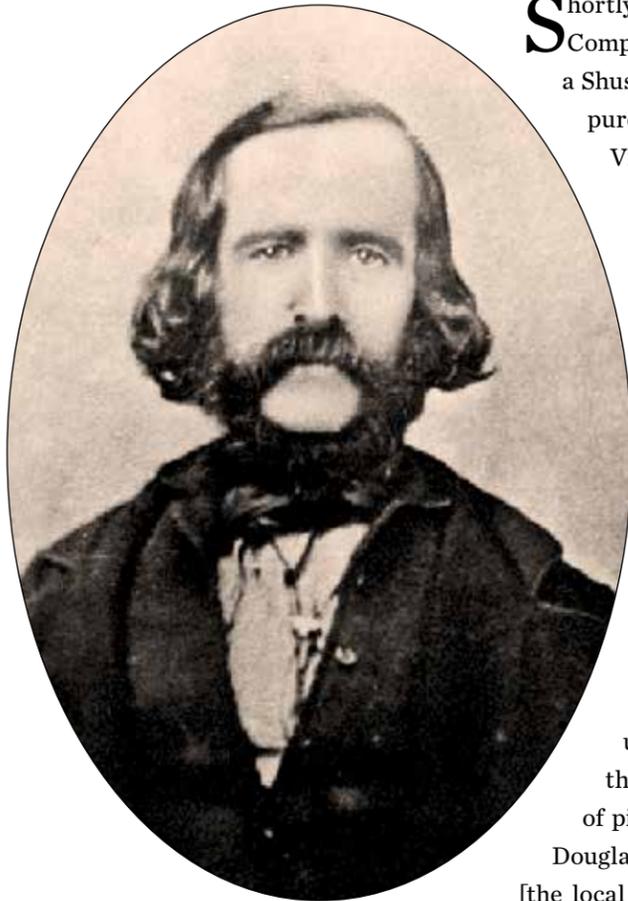


BREAKING TRAILS & CREEKS OF GOLD



DONALD MCLEAN (1805-1864)

The Chief Trader in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company Fort Kamloops, McLean made the first reports to his superior James Douglas that gold had been discovered by First Nations braves on the Thompson River. McLean became one of the casualties of the Chilcotin War in 1864.

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Shortly after his arrival at Fort Kamloops in 1855, Hudson Bay Company Chief Trader Donald McLean traded for gold with a Shuswap First Nations Indian. When McLean reported the purchase to Chief Factor James Douglas, his superior in Victoria, he was instructed to keep the information quiet since a gold rush would spell the end of the fur trade. Douglas wrote in his diary: "Gold was first found on Thompson River by an Indian a quarter of a mile below Nicomin. He is since dead. The Indian was taking a drink out of the river; having no vessel he was quaffing from the stream when he perceived a shining pebble which he picked up, and it proved to be gold. The whole tribe forthwith began to collect the glittering metal. This was likely in 1856."

After exchanging letters with Hudson Bay Company officials in England, Douglas encouraged McLean to buy gold from the First Nations braves. McLean requested that spoons be shipped to him at Fort Kamloops for sale to the Indians so that they could be used in the extracting of nuggets from the crevices of the bedrock. Apparently McLean had collected a couple of pickle jars of gold by the fall of 1856. In December 1857 Douglas reported: "The reputed wealth of the Couteau mines [the local name of the Thompson-Fraser River area] is causing much excitement among the population of the United States of Washington and Oregon, and I have no doubt that a great number of people from those territories will be attracted thither in the spring." By this time the First Nations had mined about 800 ounces of gold and traded it with the fur traders.

In February 1858 Douglas sent the 800 ounces of gold south on the steamship Otter for minting at San Francisco, California. The mint superintendent, a member of the fire department, remarked at the group's next meeting that the next gold excitement would be on the Fraser River. By March the first vanguard of miners began to arrive on the Fraser River and a few miles above Hope they discovered the first rich pay on a bar they named Hill's, after the man who had washed the first gold. News of their success and samples of the gold were sent to San Francisco and by April the rush

had started on the Fraser River. Since the California gold rush had taken place only a few years before, the rumor spread quickly and a new breed of fortune seeker was soon trudging along the explorers' and fur traders' trails.

There was a real urgency at the time of the 1858 Fraser River gold rush to ensure British jurisprudence with the result that Governor James Douglas hired gold commissioners to intercept American gold hunters at the borders and make them buy miners' licenses, stake claims, and record their findings. The size of claims were first only 12 by 12-feet, then 25 x 25-feet and finally 100 by 100-feet.

Seasoned miners who had proven their ability at finding gold strikes across the world made the first major gold strikes in the Cariboo. They were known to be able to look at a creek and be able to tell if it contained gold. George W. Weaver, William Ross Keithley and John A. Rose were 3 such men. Weaver was an experienced gold-hunter from the California gold rush who already had Weaverville named in his honor while Rose had more recently had Rose's Bar named in his honor just below Yale. During the summer of 1860 Weaver, Keithley and Rose persuaded Ranald MacDonald to lead them on an expedition along the north shore of Cariboo Lake. It was a wise and sound decision based on MacDonald's background as he had acquired valuable life experiences long before reaching the goldfields of the Cariboo. He had been born at Fort Astoria in what was then known as the Columbia District or Oregon Country. His parents were Archibald MacDonald, a Scottish Hudson's Bay Company fur trader, and Princess Raven, daughter of Chief Comcomly, a leader of the Chinook First Nations. Following the death of his mother, the infant Ranald was raised by a maternal aunt until after his father was transferred to Fort Kamloops. From then until he was 10, he was raised by his father and step-mother at Fort Kamloops, Fort Langley, and Fort Colville before being sent east with the fall fur brigade to Red River for schooling. In 1839, at the age of 15, he was apprenticed in the banking business under Edward Ermatinger at St. Thomas, Ontario, his father's friend and brother of Francis Ermatinger of Fort Kamloops fame. The youth hated the indoor occupation and within a year ran away much to the despair of his father. By 1848, Ranald was working on a whaling ship and while sailing along the coast of Japan he had requested a sailboat to put off for shore to explore this strange land. By first simulating shipwreck and afterwards ingratiating himself with those in authority by teaching English to 14 Japanese interpreters,

he escaped execution but still suffered almost a year's imprisonment since white men were banished from Japan at this time. He was reported in American papers as having drowned in the South Seas. He was safely deported from Japan on an American ship bound for Australia and was able to participate in the gold strikes near Melbourne in the 'Land Down Under'. A short time after the death of his father, the prodigal son returned to St. Andrews, Ontario, to see his family and it was while visiting here that he heard of the Fraser River gold rush. He persuaded his two half-brothers, Allan and Benjamin, to join him and participate in this new gold rush. The trio took a sailing vessel bound for the Panama and when en route up the Pacific Coast opted to disembark at Fort Vancouver where Ranald made enquiries about his maternal grandfather. He was saddened to learn that Chief Comcomly had fallen victim to a smallpox plague in the 1830s. Upon reaching Fort Victoria, the trio paid a visit to their father's old friend Governor Douglas. Known as 'Black' or 'Siwash' MacDonald in the Cariboo, Ranald was on the Lower Fraser in the fall of 1859 and the following spring volunteered to guide Rose, Weaver and Keithley into the hinterland. 'Black' MacDonald's half-brother Benjamin, although only 15 when he arrived in British Columbia, was among the first to stake claims on the better gold producing creeks in the Cariboo.

The four trailblazers eventually came across a gold-bearing creek that they name Keithley. Weaver and Keithley worked this creek with mediocre success but soon gave up to join Rose and MacDonald who had gone deeper into the hinterland. Although it was not a rich source of gold, less experienced miners who tended to follow experienced parties such as theirs, began staking claims along the stream and by that fall the settlement of Keithley sprang up as a supply center. When winter struck, the reluctant miners built igloos and crude shelters to live in while protecting their staked ground from claim jumpers.

Weaver and Keithley, who had gone on during the early excitement, followed Keithley Creek for several miles

before heading off along one of the feeder streams. When this small creek petered out, the men crossed a high plateau and descended into a valley by following a stream so littered with deer antlers that they then and there named it Antler Creek. Continuing on, they met up with Rose and MacDonald who were bursting with good news about the creek. They had been working the creek and were able to show the amazed newcomers places where the rusty colored gold nuggets were in plain view in exposed pockets of sun exposed colored bedrock, and announced that they had been able to take 4 to 5 ounces of gold to the pan.

Bedding down for the night, the 4 men excitedly planned their strategy. Because they were the discoverers of the creek the 4 men were each entitled to one 100-by-100 foot claim as well as their regular claim of the same size. It was decided that they would search the creek for the richest spots on which to stake their 8 claims and then pan the remaining areas until their food supplies ran low. During the night however the camp was covered with a foot of freshly fallen snow. Despite the change in weather, the men prospected feverishly up and down the creek and succeeded in staking out the choice areas. By this time supplies had run low and they agreed that Keithley and Weaver would return to Keithley Town for winter supplies. Everything was planned carefully in order to keep the creek secret. They would use the Keithley Creek gold to purchase the supplies since the store owner might notice the color difference of the Antler Creek gold and suspect a new find. More importantly Weaver and Keithley would have to make sure that their actions did not arouse any suspicions.

The two set off and about half a mile from Discovery Rock, the spot on Antler Creek where they first found gold, they located an easier route up to the plateau and then down again in practically a straight line southward in the direction of Keithley. They waited until the supper hour to enter the town, knowing that the miners would be occupied with their meals. Entering the store, they made great effort to appear

casual, even to the point of engaging in small talk while purchasing their supplies. Lingering, so as not to appear hurried, they felt safe to leave by dark; but upon passing through the mining community found that hordes of men were packed and snow shoed-up, ready to follow the pair to wherever they had come. Their prospecting fame had defeated any measures they had taken to prevent interest in their actions and, like the Pied Piper; they led the merry horde to the gold.

Thus, some dozens of parties set out for Antler Creek in 6-feet of snow. Many crossed the plateau on snow shoes—hence the name Snowshoe Plateau—and before long claims were being staked over already staked ground, giving rise to many disputes. Upon returning to their claims, Weaver and Keithley helped Rose and MacDonald build an 8-foot x 10-foot cabin from spruce and balsam logs as a shelter against the harsh winter. The other miners chose to live in tents or holes in the snow. Soon Antler Creek became so solidly staked that new arrivals began to look elsewhere resulting in several rich creeks being discovered almost simultaneously. Four of these—Williams, Lightning, Lowhee and Grouse—would soon become the chief source of gold in the rush that followed the discovery of Antler. Almost immediately, a depot called Antlertown was set up on Antler Creek to provide supplies for the area.

By Christmas of 1860, Murtz J. Collins, Michael Costin Brown and John 'Kansas' Metz had reached Quesnel Mouth where they purchased snowshoes from Fort George Indians for \$14 a pair before striking out for Antler Creek.

Williams Creek was discovered in February 1861. Born on the slopes of Bald Mountain, it flows in a northwesterly direction for about 9 miles before emptying into the Willow River. At the midway point the creek flows through a canyon or gulch before meandering through a broad valley.

One evening Wilhelm Dietz, an ex-Prussian sailor,

and his partners, James Costello and Michael Burns, stumbled into their camp in a half-starved state claiming they had found gold in a nearby-unnamed creek. The next morning Brown decided to join Dietz and Costello in their exploration while Burns, Collins, and Metz decided to remain in camp. The trio moved around Discovery Rock and continued upstream until a wide creek (later named Racetrack) blocked their passage. Heading into the hills, they climbed up a mountainous slope, finally reaching a broad plateau that they named Bald Mountain because it was barren of any timber. Brown left the following account: "We crossed the divide, eventually making the headwaters of the creek and after some time we traveled to a place near a little gulch or canyon, where we camped for the night, building a little shelter.

On the following morning we separated to prospect the stream, agreeing to meet again at night to report progress. The story of that day's prospecting, which we recalled over the campfire, has become a matter of mining history in British Columbia. 'Dutch Bill' made the best prospect, striking pay dirt at \$1.25 a pan. Costello and I had done pretty well, finding dirt worth a dollar or so a pan. You can well imagine we were well pleased with the day's exertions, and each man in his heart felt that we had discovered very rich ground. I shall not forget the discussion that took place as to the name to be given to the creek. Dutch Bill was for having it called 'Billy Creek' because he had found the best prospects of the three. I was quite agreeable, but I stipulated that Mr. William Dietz should buy the first basket of champagne that reached the creek. This appealed to Costello, and so the creek was then and there named—not Billy Creek but 'Williams Creek'."

The 6 men returned to camp and they all worked out certain plans: Costello would remain on the creek and guard their claims; Dietz, Burns, Collins and Metz would return to Antler for supplies; and Brown would travel as quickly as possible the 60 miles to

MAP ON FOLLOWING TWO SPREADS COMPILED BY JOHN ARROWSMITH, 1864

RARE BOOKS & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS 9_3510_1864_A7



Fraser & Stuart first descended this R. to the Sea in 1808. near the R. Soil fertile. Climate good. Natives numerous.

(here Fraser & Stuart left their Canoe. Story I

Carriellind

Mountainous Country

Shoushwapind

Camp of Andersons party 1835

The Waters of Fraser R. at full height in June & July

Car. 3/4 mile

Yellow Head or Tebe Jaune Cache

L.d'Original

Cranberry & L. Portage

Canoe R.

Niagara L.

Quesnel L.

Falls

North Branch

Thompson Riv.

Traverse

Gr^d Prairie

Barrier

Richfield

Antler

Keithley

Quesnel Parks

Quesnel

St. Alexander

Rap

Mud L. & Ho.

Soda Cr.

Deep Cr.

Court Ho.

Williams L.

Chimney Cr.

S. Jose R.

Axe L.

Bridge Cr.

Horse L.

Tranquil L.

Rock L. & R.

L. Lomond

Green L.

Bonaparte R.

Clinton

Dead R.

Sir A. Mc Kenzie 1793

Chelchekulle R.

Cokelin

Precipice

Nocoontloon L.

Susannah W.

L. Sutleth

L. Towteestson

L. Chantlar

Summit L.

Alstackin L.

Chilcotin L.

Alexis L.^s

Chilco R.

Chilanco R.

Chilcotin R.

Chilco R.

Chilco R.

Homathgo R. W. Br.

Homathgo R. E. Br.

Downie R.

La Vigne R.

Dead R.

Baptiste R.

West Road R.

Rapid

Swift R.

Van Winkle

Willow R.

Sugar Cr.

Antler Cr.

Cameron

Cottonwood

Lightning Cr.

R^d Prairie

Diamond I.

Beaver R.

Rap

Mud L. & Ho.

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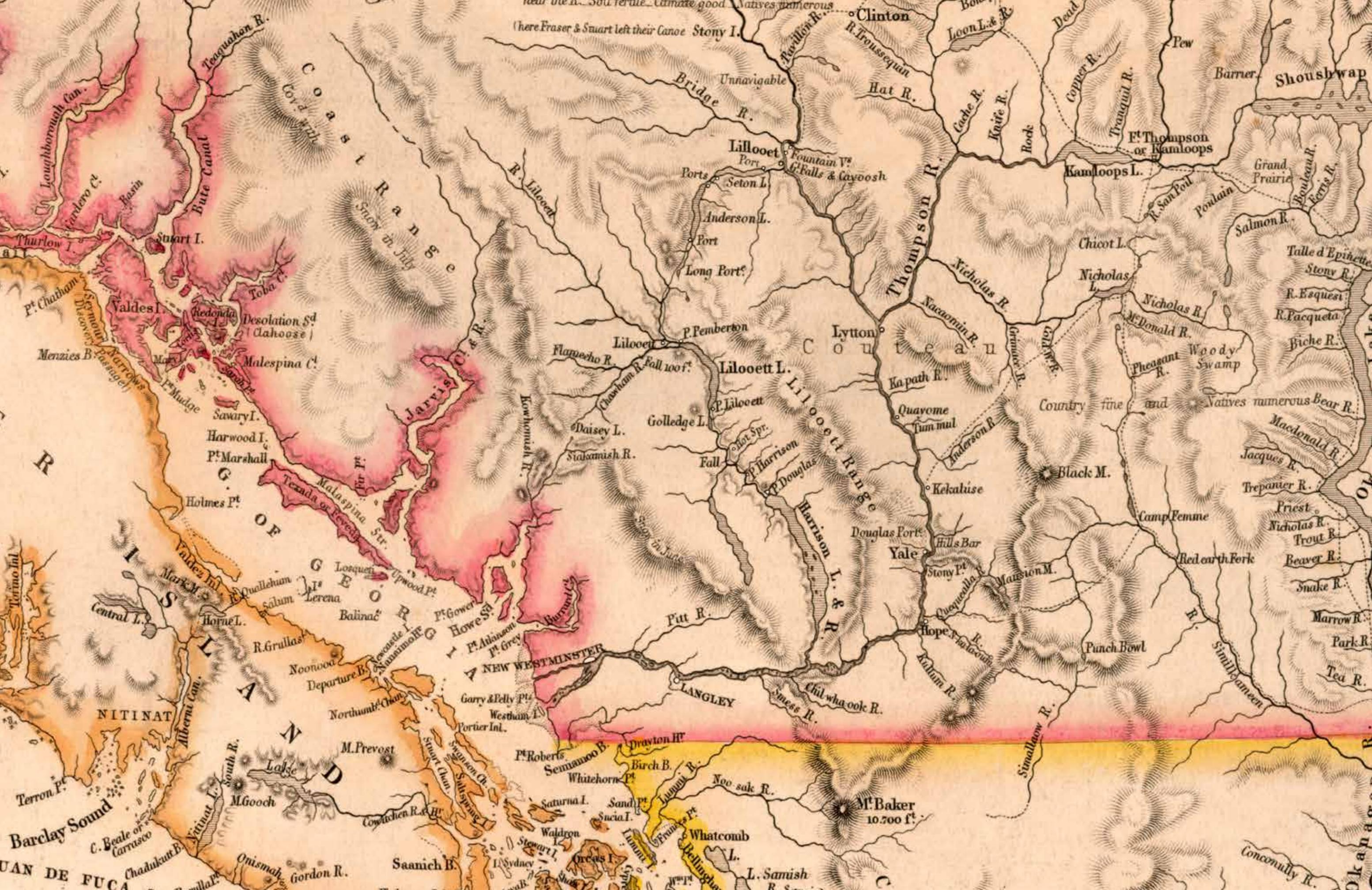
L. Sutleth

L. Towteestson

L. Chantlar

Summit L.

Alstackin L.



Williams Lake to register their discovery with Philip Henry Nind Jr., the Cariboo's only gold commissioner. Things began to go awry when news of their strike leaked out at Antler. They decided that Dietz should return to the claims the following morning. Using showshoes, he retraced his footsteps in a record 3 hours but his strenuous exertions were of no avail for the entire population of wintering miners at Antler followed his trail in the snow and within hours were staking claims up and down both sides of the creek.

Ironically, the discoverers staked claims that proved to be among the poorest on a creek that became among the richest in the world. After working like slaves for 3 months most of the original discoverers sold their claims for modest prices and became involved with more productive sites. Brown ended up selling his shares to William Wallace Cunningham for \$2,500. An Irishman by birth, Brown had managed a hotel in San Francisco at the height of the California rush before catching the sternwheeler Brother Jonathan to join the flood of humanity heading north to the Cariboo. This experience prompted him to purchase a pack train to supply provisions to the growing hordes of miners. On one trip alone he took 8,000 pounds of provisions into the gold camps. He sold flour for \$1.25 a pound; beans, bacon and dried apples for \$1.50; and tobacco for \$2. He packed all summer but that fall was caught in a snowstorm and lost 42 horses. In the spring of 1863 he had carpenters build him a 30-foot by 60-foot store on Williams Creek from whipsawed lumber at a cost of \$4,500. He sold the store in 1864 to open the Adelphi Hotel in Victoria. During the next 40 years he took part in the gold rushes to the Big Bend, Cassiar, Dease River, and eventually the Klondike. In 1904, he left the Yukon for good and returned to Victoria where he passed away 10 years later.

With Keithley, Antler, and Williams Creek all solidly staked, the miners of poorer claims began to investigate any unexplored streams within a 20-mile radius of Antler Town. In June 1861, William W. Cunningham, Edward Campbell, W. Henry Lightfall, James Bell and John Hume discovered an incredibly rich stream that began as a trickle on the slopes of Agnes Mountain and flowed westward until emptying into the Swift River. When Cunningham took the first pan of gravel from the creek and saw the prospects, he remarked, "Boys, this is lightning" and the name stuck.

It was Cunningham who announced that gold had been discovered on Van Winkle Creek, a tributary of Lightning. Because a Rip Van Winkle Bar near Lytton in earlier days had been prosperous, the

new locality was named Van Winkle in its honor. In keeping with political tradition, the nearby community of Stanley that had sprung up in 1870 to replace the declining Van Winkle, was named in honor of Edward Henry Stanley, the 15th Earl of Derby and secretary for the colonies at the time. His brother, Frederick Arthur Stanley, Baron Stanley of Preston, was the Governor General for Canada from 1888 to 1893 and left his name to Vancouver City's Stanley Park (and later the National Hockey League's Stanley Cup).

Richard Willoughby had sold a mine for \$35,000 in Arizona before leading a 300-man force of soldier-miners through hostile Indian Territory in the United States en route to the California diggings. Willoughby, Hanson Tilton, and brothers Asa H. and Thomas P. Patterson circumnavigated the canyon on Williams Creek and descended on through a narrow valley before coming upon a lovely lake that was later called Jack of Clubs Lake. On their right a small stream flowed from the lake—later proven to be the source of the Willow River—while on their left a small creek disgorged itself through a narrow ravine between 2 mountains. The party found gold immediately and Willoughby christened the creek 'Lowhee' and their claim 'The Great Lowhee' after a secret miner's society to which he belonged at Yale. The men took their time and were careful to stake what appeared to be the most productive ground. In July the 4 partners returned with the necessary equipment to work their claims. Other eager miners followed them and when Willoughby reached the diggings he turned to these men and announced, "Boys, this is it!" Lowhee Creek was fabulously rich and easy to work, for nowhere was the silt and gravel more than 4-feet deep to bedrock on which rested the gold nuggets. During 5 weeks of mining, Willoughby and his 3 partners took out 250 pounds of nuggets from a 200 x 500-foot rectangle of 10 claims. Upon leaving the Cariboo, Willoughby tried farming in Chilliwack in the Fraser Valley but that occupation did not suit his reckless nature and in 1869 he headed for the gold strikes in the Cassiar and Omineca country. The rest of his life was spent in northern British Columbia and Alaska. He died in Nome, Alaska, in 1904 with a large fortune.

George Downey was one of a group of prospectors who followed Antler Creek to its source. From here the men crossed an alpine pass to the headwaters of another stream that they named Grouse Creek. This waterway also proved to be a generous source of gold.

By the summer's end, 1,200 men were working on the gold-bearing



It was probably in a moosehide pouch similar to this that McLean sent the two pickle jars of gold that he'd purchased from First Nations braves to Victoria.

COURTESY VERNON MUSEUM



RANALD MACDONALD (1824 - 1894)

This gold hunter was one of the most interesting of all the gold discoverers to venture into the Cariboo. Seen here a few years before his death, MacDonald, the son of the Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor, was one of the early educators of English to the Japanese. He had participated in the Australian gold rush before coming to British Columbia.

MacDoonald was a major player in the discovery of gold at sooke on the southern tip of Vancouver Island in 1864.

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creeks around Keithley and Antler, and soon small companies of 2 and 3 men were busy taking out as much as one-and-a-half pounds of gold per man per day. The gold the miners were finding on Williams Creek was in hard blue clay 8 to 10 feet below the surface that was believed to be an old creek bed.

One day Joel Abbott working alone while his partners William Jordan and John Dawson were away buying supplies dug through the blue clay and found unbelievable rich gravels containing smooth water-worn nuggets and from that day forward the creek began yielding unimaginable amounts of gold. As early as August the Abbott and Jordan Company was reported to have amassed over 400 pounds of gold after expenses.

George W. Weaver and William R. Keithley had to put in a 4-mile-long flume to carry water to their diggings. Although the flume's lumber and construction costs were extremely expensive, the claim's gold output easily covered the overhead and the two men accumulated a tidy fortune. Ranald MacDonald mined a fortune before selling his claim to John A. Rose for a 20-pound bag of gold. After selling his claim to Rose, Ranald MacDonald engaged in packing supplies from his ranch on the Bonaparte River into the gold camps. After packing for several years, he retired to Colville, Washington (formerly Fort Colville) to write his autobiography. Several publishers refused his manuscript fearing his story was too fantastic to possibly be true. There are monuments honoring MacDonald in both Rishiri and Nagasaki, Japan. He died a poor man in Washington State in 1894 and his last words to a niece were reportedly "Sayonora, my dear, sayonora".

Rose, nicknamed the 'Man of Destiny' was last seen rafting down the Willow River with an unknown companion in the fall of 1862. The bodily remains of these 2 men were later found buried under the ashes of their last campfire. It was speculated that they had either swamped their raft losing their provisions and thus died of starvation and hypothermia, later to be buried by passers-by, or had been ambushed by Indians who sought to conceal their dastardly deed by burying them. George Weaver later went to the Kootenays where he met his death while working alone in a ground-slucing claim on Weaver's Gulch. He had been buried up to his neck in cold mud for 2 days before being found. He almost survived the ordeal. He was buried not far from where the accident took place.

John Innes' 6-foot by 9-foot painting of the discovery of gold in 1861 by a party led by Wilhelm 'Dutch Bill' Dietz. His companions agreed to name the creek in his honor provided he pay for the first case of champagne that arrived at the diggings.

COURTESY NATIVE SONS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA POST #1

