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FUR AND GOLD IN SIMILKAMEEN.

Fur-traders pioneered Similkameen before men were attracted thither by reports of rich placer deposits. The search for gold has continued to the present, but the story of the fur-traders has long been a closed chapter in the history of the valley. These two strands in local history have been linked with parallel strands in Provincial and Dominion history: the fur-trade with the great fur-trading companies, and with the International Boundary settlement; the search for gold with the "making of a province," and with the Royal Engineers. Both have played a part in exploration and development. But before tracing the history of fur and gold in Similkameen, we must learn something of the country itself, and about the native tribes who first called it "Similkameugh."

The original name has been forced into the same phonetic groove as Tulameen by the white people of the valley, in much the same way as Kitsilano, in Vancouver, has been made to rhyme with Capilano. Father LeJeune, for many years a missionary at Kamloops, gives "Tsemel-ka-meh" as a word descriptive of the people, or of the land in which they lived.[1] Teit describes them as "Eagle People," said to have been so named because eagles were formerly plentiful in the valley, and their tail-feathers an item of export.[2] Tulameen means "red earth," but there is no sufficient authority for any of the numerous meanings assigned to the word Similkameen.[3]

The name Similkameen denotes a variable area, according to whether it refers to Provincial, Dominion, electoral, or mining divisions. Charles Camsell, of the Geological Survey, has defined it as "the country from the Okanagan valley to the Hope mountains, and from the International Boundary northward for

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(1) Letter dated Kamloops, September 9, 1927.

(2) J. A. Teit, "The Salishan Tribe of the Western Plateau," *45th Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1927–28*, Washington, 1930, p. 136.

(3) On the meaning of place names in the Similkameen *see* J. C. Goodfellow, "Princeton Place Names," in *Seventh Report of the Okanagan Historical Society*, 1937, pp. 10–16.

a distance of about forty-five miles."[4] It is a land of creeks and rivers, of bench lands, rolling hills, and mountains; and even to-day man's activities are confined to the valleys of the rivers and their tributaries. The most important of these is the Similkameen River, which is brought into being by the junction of several small streams near the International Boundary, and after flowing in a northerly direction for some 30 miles turns first eastward and then south-eastward in a great curve which brings it back to and across the Boundary, about 15 miles south of Keremeos. Soon after it enters the United States it twists sharply to the east and joins the Okanogan River, which in turn flows almost due south to meet the Columbia. The principal tributary of the Similkameen is the Tulameen, which rises farther north and west, but which follows a similarly curved course, first to the north, and then east and south-east, until it joins the Similkameen at the point known as Vermillion Forks, where the town of Princeton now stands. Of the many tributaries of the Tulameen the most important is Otter Creek, which flows from the north, passes through Otter Lake, and joins the Tulameen at its most northerly point, where the town of Tulameen is to-day.[5]

The country is well wooded. Travellers on the trail during the summer months are constantly delighted with the profusion of wild flowers. Lupin and paint-brush, sunflower and fireweed give vivid touches of colour, and from the last week in June till the middle of July the rhododendrons are at their best along the Dewdney Trail, where it overlooks the Skagit and Sumallo Valleys. There is abundance of wild animal life in the hills, and the whole area between the Hope Road and the Dewdney Trail has been set aside as a game reserve.

The natives of the Similkameen Valley were a border people; that is to say, they were a buffer tribe between the Thompsons and the Okanagans. The Interior Salish Indians have five main tribes—Lillooet, Thompson, Arrow Lake, Shuswap, and

(4) Charles Camsell, *Preliminary Report on a part of the Similkameen District*, Ottawa, 1907, p. 7.

(5) It should be borne in mind that the Tulameen River was formerly known as the North Fork of the Similkameen River. The South Fork is now known simply as the Similkameen, as is the united stream formed by the coming together of the two branches at Princeton.

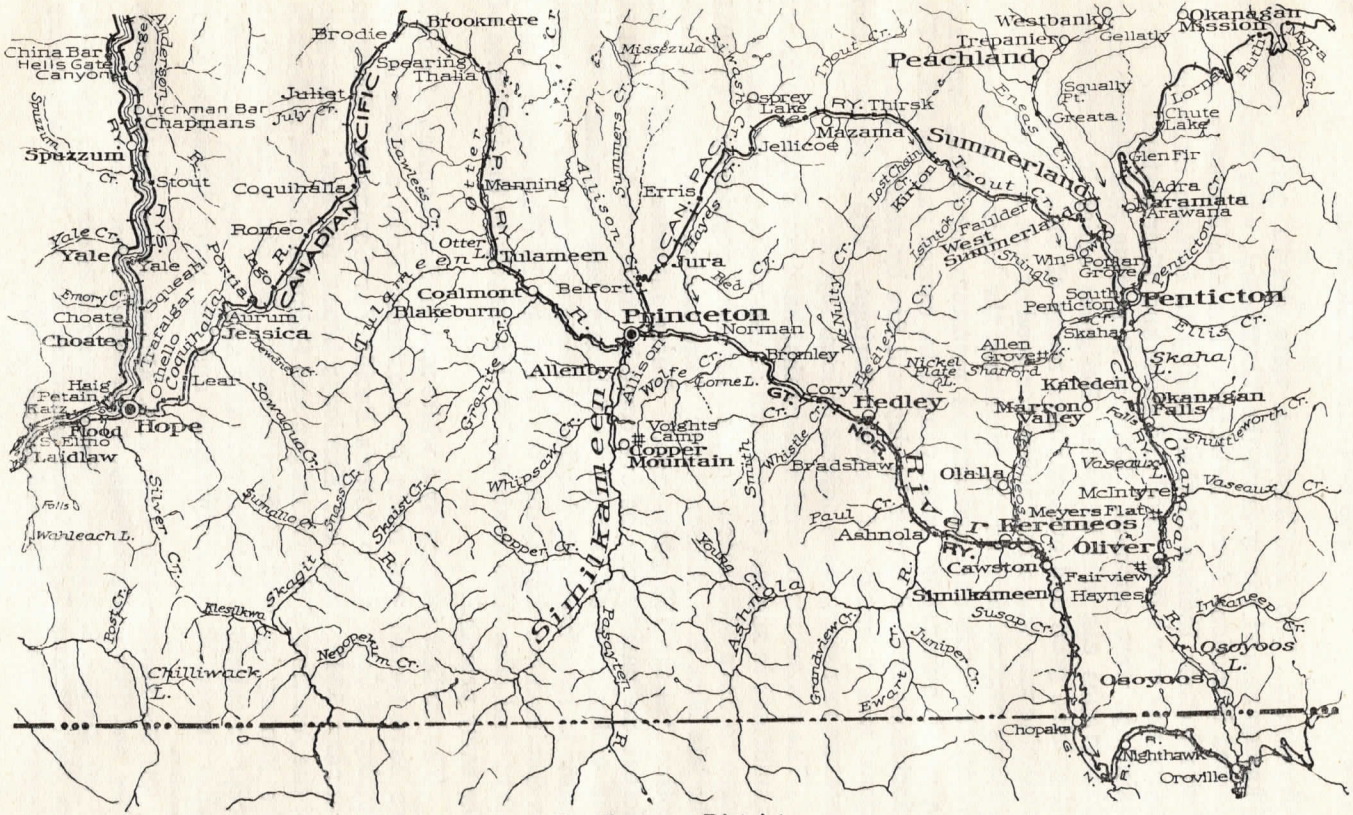
Okanagan. The Similkameens were drawn partly from the Okanagans and partly from the Thompsons, with various unrecorded intrusions from elsewhere. The Similkameens were not behind other Indians in their ability to fashion implements of peace and war out of wood and stone and other materials. Rock paintings were common. Between Princeton and Hedley many pictographs can still be seen. Religious belief in a multitude of spirits, good and evil, explains many of their customs. The medicine man was a real power for good or evil, or both. Superstitions centred around the rainstone, the blackstone, the ghost-stone, the lovestone, and around monsters inhabiting land and lake. The rainstone, when prayed to, caused rain to fall. The blackstone caused smoke by day and fire by night. The ghost-stone was a centre of votive offerings. The lovestone, and strange monsters, were objects of local legend.[6]

The fragments of local history that have come down to us are insufficient to suggest the pattern of the whole. War and peace seem to have alternated with monotonous regularity. In 1912 the late Mrs. S. L. Allison wrote of the coming of a band of Chilcotins "about 150 years ago." These intruders could neither defeat the natives nor be overcome by them; so they settled in the valley, and all learned to fish and hunt together. There seems to have been less friction between natives and newcomers in Similkameen than across the boundary, in Washington Territory; and Mrs. Allison attributes this largely to the influence of the early priests.[7]

The earliest journey by a white man in Similkameen of which we have record was made by Alexander Ross, a clerk in the employ of John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company. Early in January, 1813, Ross left Kamloops bound for Fort Okanogan, at the junction of the Okanogan and Columbia Rivers, and made the journey by way of Similkameen. He chose that route in order to satisfy a natural curiosity and to "spy out the land." After incredible hardships, Ross and his party descended from

(6) *See* Stratton Moir (Mrs. S. L. Allison), *In-cow-mas-ket*, Chicago, 1900; and Clive Phillipps-Wolley, *A Sportsman's Eden*, London, 1888.

(7) *See* Mrs. S. L. Allison, "Early History of Princeton," in the *Princeton Star*, January 5, 1923, and succeeding issues; *Vancouver Sunday Province*, February 22, 1931, and succeeding issues.



Similkameen District.

the highlands on the north side of the Similkameen River, and came to the valley at a point near Keremeos.

Ross had set out on December 20, 1812, to visit David Stuart at Kamloops, and he arrived there on the last day of the year. The rest of the story is told in his own words:—

. . . with Mr. Stuart I remained five days, and in coming home I took a near and unknown route, in order to explore a part of the country I had not seen before; but I chose a bad season of the year to satisfy my curiosity: we got bewildered in the mountains and deep snows, our progress was exceedingly slow, tedious, and discouraging. We were at one time five days in making as many miles, our horses suffered greatly, had nothing to eat for four days and four nights, not a blade of grass appearing above the snow, and their feet were so frightfully cut with the crust of the snow that they could scarcely move, so that we were within a hair's breadth of losing every one of them.

Here follows an account of an accident caused by using too much powder to kindle a fire. Both Ross and his companion, Jacques, were stunned by the explosion. The narrative continues:—

We hastened next morning from this unlucky encampment, and getting clear of the mountains, we descended into a low and pleasant valley, where we found the Indians I had been in search of, and something both for ourselves and our horses to eat. At the Indian camp we remained one day, got the information we required about the country, procured some furs, and then, following the course of the Sa-milk-a-meigh River, got to Oakinacken at the forks; thence we travelled almost night and day till the 24th of January, when we reached home again.[8]

In maps printed prior to 1878, the Trepanege River, which flows into Lake Okanagan just north of Peachland, is shown as Jaques [*sic*] Creek. Mr. Leonard Norris connects this name with the explosion at the "unlucky encampment." He thinks it probable that the incident occurred near the headwaters of this creek, and that it was so named for this reason.[9] It is likely that when Ross left Kamloops he followed the string of lakes south as far as Nicola Lake, then turned south-east, passing Douglas Lake. From here he would journey in a southerly direction across the high plateau which dips to Osprey Lake. It is not possible to determine the exact spot where he descended

(8) Alexander Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River*, London, 1849, pp. 206–208.

(9) *Second Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society*, Vernon, 1927, pp. 33–34.

into the " low and pleasant valley," but there can be no doubt that it was in the vicinity of the present town of Keremeos. Here he would find the Indian camp referred to, and here he would come to the Similkameen River, which he followed to the Okanogan.

The next record we have is contained in Archibald McDonald's map of the Thompson River district. This map is dated 1827, and indicates a journey made by McDonald in October of the previous year. This also covers the ground between Kamloops and the Similkameen-Okanogan Forks, but follows only in part the route taken by Ross in 1813. As nearly as can be ascertained from his map, McDonald followed a more westerly course after coming to Nicola Lake, and came to the " Schimilicameach " at a point apparently near the present town of Princeton. His Red Water River may be the Tulameen, which is the north branch of the Similkameen River. Thereafter he followed the left, or north bank, as he journeyed eastward.[10]

After 1826 we have no records until 1846, the year in which the Oregon Treaty established the 49th parallel as the boundary between British and United States territory west of the Rocky Mountains. This was an event of critical importance to the Hudson's Bay Company, in view of the fact that the treaty placed its headquarters in the West, Fort Vancouver, in American territory. The Company had anticipated the award, and had founded Fort Victoria, on Vancouver Island, in 1843. But before the headquarters could be removed thither, it was imperative that new travel routes between the northern interior and the coast should be discovered, which lay wholly within British territory. Hitherto goods had been transported from Fort Vancouver to New Caledonia by the Columbia River as far as Fort Okanogan, thence by pack-train to the junction of the Similkameen and Okanogan Rivers, and then across country to Okanagan Lake. The brigade trail led along the west side of this lake, and then crossed over to Kamloops. What was now required was a route practicable for pack-horses from Kamloops to Fort Langley, on the lower Fraser River. The Fraser Canyon, which

(10) The original map is preserved in the Archives of the Hudson's Bay Company. A photostat is on file in the Provincial Archives.

was considered impassable, was the great problem involved, and the search for a new route quickly developed into a search for a detour around this obstacle.

Following a conference with Sir George Simpson, in 1845, Chief Factor Peter Skene Ogden requested that Alexander Caulfield Anderson, who was then in charge of Fort Alexandria, be appointed to carry these plans for exploration into effect. Anderson had volunteered his services, and Ogden felt that he was well equipped for the task, by reason of his natural ability and "his active habits and experience in Caledonia."[11] Along with five men, Anderson set out from Kamloops on May 15, 1846, and travelled to Fort Langley, where he arrived May 24, by way of Harrison and Lillooet Lakes. It is in the return journey that we are interested. This began on May 28. Anderson and his men were accompanied by several Indians, including a chief who had undertaken to guide him to the headwaters of the Similkameen River. From this point he hoped to cross country to the Forks, where Princeton is now situated. He had arranged to be met there by guides and horses from Kamloops. As this would indicate, the valley of the Similkameen was well known to fur-traders at this time; and there was a well-established trail from the International Boundary north to Kamloops, which followed the Similkameen and Tulameen Rivers and Otter Lake and Creek, or much the same route McDonald seems to have followed in 1826. Anderson's task was to find a way through the Hope Mountains and the country beyond which would link the Fraser River below the canyon with this Kamloops trail.

Anderson ascended the Fraser to the vicinity of Hope, and after a false start up the Tlae-Kullum (now Silver Creek), entered the valley of the Coquihalla River, which opens into the Fraser a few miles higher up. On this journey Anderson travelled east for 23 miles, on a route which closely paralleled that later followed by the Dewdney Trail. Leaving the Coquihalla on his left, he followed first the Nicolum, and then the Sumallo, as far as its junction with the Skagit. In his journal he comments upon the slow progress made, "owing to the miserable travelling of our Indian assistants," and records that at this point the party

(11) Ogden to Chief Traders Tod and Manson, October 22, 1845.

> Fell in . . . with an Indian from the Forks of Thompson's River [Kamloops] who is hunting Beaver in this neighbourhood. As he appears to possess a knowledge of the Country superior to our other pseudo-guides (who are miserably at a loss) I have engaged him under the promise of some Ammunition and Tobacco to accompany us for a day or two.[12]

Although it was only the first week in June, the rhododendrons were already in bloom.

Near this point the Sumallo forks with the Snaas, and Anderson had to choose between following the eastern fork or the northern one. The Thompson Indian recommended the latter, and this was followed. They soon came to the summit of the mountain pass, not far beyond which the Indians, except three, turned back, according to agreement. The journal continues:—

> There is a small lake here, bearing a marvellous similitude in some respects to the Committee's Punch Bowl in the Rocky Mountains. It is still covered with ice, save in one small spot, where through the limpid water, the bottom is seen shelving off, apparently to an immense depth. . . . We have no one who knows anything of the country beyond this point. The water must guide us.

Three hours later Anderson encamped on the right bank of a "descending stream," which he correctly took for granted was "one of the tributaries of the Similkameen." It was, in fact, the South Fork of the Tulameen; and, following it, the party ploughed through deep snow. Night frosts formed a crust over which they could make good time, but when the snow was soft, travelling was difficult. The Indians had no idea of their location, but as the river bent round eastward in advance of him Anderson had no anxiety. The hardships of the journey were telling severely on the men when, on June 6, they found a beaten road and tracks of horses. The same day they met two Indians, "who proved to be old Black-eye, the Similkameen, and his Son-in-law, on their way to visit their deer snares." Anderson learned that he was still about 20 miles from the appointed rendezvous at Red Earth Fork, where Princeton stands to-day. The son-in-law was sent to fetch the horses, and Black-eye

(12) A. C. Anderson, *Journal of an Expedition under the command of Alex. C. Anderson of the Hudson's Bay Company, undertaken with the view of ascertaining the practicability of a communication with the interior, for the import of the annual Supplies.* (Original manuscript in Provincial Archives.) I am indebted to His Honour Judge Howay for the loan of a transcript of this and other journals and letters, references to which are cited hereafter as F. W. Howay MSS.

guided the party from Otter Lake to the Kamloops trail. Black-eye's lodge was at the north end of the lake, and the party enjoyed a meal of fresh carp. Their own provisions were exhausted. Anderson learned that the beaten road which he had struck led straight across the bend of the river. Had it not been for the depth of snow, he would have seen it at the divide, and saved himself the painful circuit. It was used by the Indians during the summer when they went hunting. Anderson never lost sight of the main purpose of his journey, which was to discover a feasible route for the brigade trail from Kamloops to Fort Langley; and in his journal he makes ample references to sites with good pasturage for horses, and to the suitability of the country for pack-trains. At the same time he appreciated the beauty of the land through which he travelled. The horses from Red Earth Fork arrived on June 7, and Anderson left Otter Lake the same day. The following night he made this record of the land through which he passed:—

"Our road to-day has lain, for the greater part of the distance, through a charming country. Beautiful swelling hills, covered with rich verdure, and studded at rare intervals with ornamental clumps of the Red Fir and the Aspen. This is the chief characteristic of the scenery; in some directions as far as the eye can reach."[13]

Kamloops was reached on June 9, the whole journey having lasted twenty-six days. Anderson was satisfied that a brigade road between Kamloops and Hope, following in part the way he had travelled, was practicable.

In 1847 Anderson continued his explorations.[14] A route by way of the Fraser "Falls" (or lower canyon) was thought to be practicable, and in November, 1847, upon this assumption, Ovid Allard and party were sent from Fort Langley to establish Fort Yale. This route was used to bring the returns to Fort Langley in the spring of 1848, and to take in the outfits to New Caledonia in the fall. It was again used in the spring of 1849, but proved difficult.[15] It had already been determined to seek a more feasible route, as we learn from the following passage in

(13) *Ibid.*

(14) A. C. Anderson, *Journal of an Expedition to Fort Langley via Thompson's and Fraser's Rivers, Summer of 1847.* (F. W. Howay MSS.)

(15) James Douglas to John Tod, October 30, 1848. (F. W. Howay MSS.)

a letter from James Douglas to John Tod, dated at Fort Langley October 30, 1848:—

> . . . In consequence of the very unfavourable report we have received from Messrs Manson and Anderson of their last summer's route we have come to the determination of opening a new road recommended by Mr. Peers after a very careful survey. Leaving Fraser's River it follows successively the valleys of the Quiquialla, Peers and the Sosqua Rivers, from thence the crossing of the dividing ridge into the Similkameen Valley, where it falls upon Mr. Anderson's track of 1846 and follows it to the Thompson's River. Mr. Peers will be despatched with ten men in a few days hence to commence operations at the mouth of the Quiquialla, where we intend to establish a small Post . . . and enable us to complete [the road] in time for the Brigade of 1849.

The main objection to this route had been the heavy snowfalls, but Chief Trader James Murray Yale had sent a party from Fort Langley to visit the area during the summer, and they had reported favourably. The road was completed "according to plan," and used in the fall of 1849.

This road, which became the brigade trail, had five stopping-places between Hope and Otter Lake. The first was Manson Camp, at the head of Peers Creek, 15 miles from Hope. The next was Encampement du Chevreuill (Deer Camp), 19 miles farther on. It was here that Chief Trader Paul Fraser was killed by a falling tree in July, 1855. The third camp was at the bend of the Tulameen, on the east side of the river, and 49 miles from Hope. The fourth was on the plateau near Lodestone Mountain, a distance of 12 miles from Camp 3. Another 12 miles brought the brigade to Encampement des Femmes, near Otter Lake. It was so called because the Indians used to leave their women and children there when going on the summer hunt.

In October, 1937, in company with W. A. ("Podunk") Davis, the writer travelled from Otter Lake, past Camp 5, and up Jackson Mountain. Very little of the old trail is apparent now, but at one or two places the switchbacks are still to be seen. At one point we came across an old stump, from which, near the base, a piece of wood projected, making a triangle with the trail and the tree. This was one of the little devices the brigade man used to keep the horses from rubbing their packs against the tree. The horses had to go around the projection. This road, used for many years, has long since fallen into dis-

repair, and now it is difficult to follow. But to old-timers in Similkameen it is still *the* Brigade trail.

These explorations in the western part of Similkameen were all made to discover transportation routes within British territory, from the northern interior to the coast. By the time the brigade trail from Kamloops to Hope was an accomplished fact, servants of the Hudson's Bay Company were surveying the eastern part of Similkameen. The purpose of this latter exploration was trade rather than transportation. When Robert ("Bobby") Stevenson visited Fort Okanogan on June 17, 1860, he found a great number of Indians at the fort. They were assisting the factor to pack up the goods, preparatory to moving the post to Keremeos, where it had been decided earlier in the year to establish a farm and trading centre. The possibilities of stock-raising and horse-breeding were also kept in mind. The goods were being packed in Hudson's Bay *parflêches*, made of rawhide, and loads were arranged for 150 horses. At the time, Stevenson was a member of the John Collins Expedition, and had gone to the fort to purchase supplies. But no supplies were on sale, as the post was to be abandoned the next day.[16] The name Keremeos is said to mean "wind channel in the mountains." The name is descriptive. The town of to-day lies not far from the river, and the sage-brush slopes beyond the orchard lands are often swept by the winds that course through the valley. The rolling bunch-grass hills made an ideal range, and the servants of the Company were quick to see its possibilities.

The first factor at the Keremeos post was Francis Deschiquette. He came from the nearest post across the line. Soon after his arrival he erected a small log building, and commenced farming on a small scale. Dying two years later, he was succeeded, in 1863, by Roderick McLean, who had been with the Boundary Survey party, and was considered one of their best axemen. Frank Richter, who planted the first fruit-trees in the valley in 1860,[17] was in charge of the horses and cattle. By the spring of 1864 McLean had completed the log store, and

(16) R. Stevenson, "A Story of a trip through the Okanogan Valley in the summer of 1860," *Oroville Gazette*, Christmas, 1910. (F. W. Howay MSS.)

(17) Letter from J. Wesley Miller, Keremeos, dated December 14, 1937.

begun the erection of a dwelling-house.[18] He made many journeys among the Indians, who traded furs for goods supplied by the Company. When Jason O. Allard was ordered to report at Fort Shepherd, on the Columbia River, just north of the boundary, in the summer of 1866, he went from Fort Yale to Fort Hope there to join the pack-train for the interior. At Hope he met McLean, who was preparing the outfit of fifty mules for the long journey. On this occasion McLean, though stationed at Keremeos, was to go right through.[19] Furs collected by McLean were bailed, and shipped by pack-train to Fort Hope. From there they were taken by river steamer to New Westminster, then on to Victoria, and thence to London, England. After McLean left the Company in 1867, he opened a store at Rock Creek, later going to Cariboo, where he remained ten years. Following this he lived for a time in Kelowna, then took up land at Okanagan Falls.[20]

McLean was succeeded by John Tait,[21] who remained until 1872, when the post was closed. As a trading centre, Keremeos does not seem to have been very profitable. It was more important as a centre for wintering horses and putting up hay. It also had a strategic value, which was lost when the American trading-posts near the Boundary were closed. The store erected by McLean stood until 1914. The house belonging to the W. H. Armstrong estate now stands almost on the exact site of the vanished landmark.

A note regarding the Boundary and other surveys will serve to review what has been written, and also to introduce the second factor around which we have woven our story. Lieutenant Charles W. Wilson, Secretary to the British Boundary Commission, notes in his diary, under date August 14, 1860, fording the Similkameen River above Keremeos, and continues as follows:—

> We travelled up the much talked of valley of the Similkameen & crossing it about 3 miles below the mouth of the Ashtnolon camped on the bank having made about 16 miles. The valley is very pretty but from having heard so much about it I was disappointed; the finest part of the valley was

(18) Letter from Mrs. R. B. White, Penticton, October 1, 1937.

(19) Jason O. Allard in *Vancouver Sunday Province*, September 19, 1926.

(20) Letter from Mrs. R. B. White, Penticton, October 1, 1937.

(21) Mrs. S. L. Allison, in *Princeton Star*, January 5, 1923; letter from Mrs. R. B. White, Penticton, October, 1937.

occupied this spring by the Hudson's Bay company & we found a [French] Canadian half breed in charge, he had some cows & a large number of oxen so that we had a good drink of milk a thing not to be despised in this part of the world. The Canadian had just gathered in his harvest; the wheat, the first grown in the valley, looked very well as also did the potatoes & other vegetables; from the farm an Indian hunter joined us & accompanied us into the mountains on his way to hunt; just where we forded the river we passed the wooden cross erected over the graves of our three men who were drowned when [Captain] Haig [Astronomer to the Commission] crossed over.[22]

H. Bauerman, geologist to the Boundary Commission, did geological work in the southern portion of Similkameen, in 1859–61, when the boundary-line was being defined; but his report was not printed until 1884. He explored along the Hope and Pasayton trails. This latter trail, between the Roche (Similkameen) and Ashnola Rivers, long abandoned, has recently been made passable. Dr. G. M. Dawson covered much the same ground in 1877, and again in 1878. This was the last work done in the district by the Dominion Geological Survey till Charles Camsell made his survey in 1906. In 1901, W. Fleet Robertson, Provincial Mineralogist, examined and reported on Princeton and Copper Mountain district. The same year the International Boundary Survey Commission commenced a topographical map of the boundary belt. Dr. R. A. Daly was Canadian geologist to this Commission. Subsequent work is recorded by Camsell in his reports on Hedley and Tulameen, issued in 1910 and 1913 respectively.[23]

In his report covering the years 1859–61, Bauerman notes the presence of Chinamen panning for gold along the Similkameen River; but he adds that the diggings were abandoned at the beginning of the winter of 1861-62.[24] This marked the end of an episode which had commenced in October, 1859, when a sergeant attached to the United States Boundary Commission had discovered gold in the "Big Bend" region, where the Similkameen turns eastward, just south of the 49th parallel.

(22) Quoted from the original diary, in the Provincial Archives.

(23) *See* Charles Camsell, *Preliminary Report on a part of the Similkameen District*, Ottawa, 1907, pp. 17–18.

(24) H. Bauerman, *Report on the Geology of the Country near the 49th Parallel . . .* Geological Survey of Canada, 1884, p. 37B.

Some of the early reports stressed the fact that the area known to be auriferous was very small, and that experienced miners doubted if the diggings would prove to be extensive; but exaggerated reports of rich discoveries were soon noised abroad and considerable excitement followed.[25]

Just previous to this the valley of the Similkameen had been traversed by Lieutenant H. Spencer Palmer, one of the officers of the detachment of Royal Engineers which had been sent out by the British Government to assist Douglas to govern the new mainland Colony of British Columbia. He was instructed to make as careful a survey of "the country lying between Fort Hope and the 49th parallel of latitude, where it meets the route to Fort Colville," as circumstances permitted; but it is clear that two points were regarded as of special interest. The first of these was a site for a post which "would command the routes to British Columbia from Washington Territory"—in other words, a strategic point at which customs officers could intercept persons bound for the Fraser River gold diggings who had chosen an overland route to the mines, instead of ascending the river itself. In the second place, Palmer was to pay particular attention to the "adaptability to settlement" of the Similkameen Valley.[26]

Palmer left Hope on September 17, 1859, and on the 22nd "struck the Similkameen a mile below the Forks," where the Tulameen joins the Similkameen. "The junction of the two rivers," he notes in his journal, "is named the 'Vermillion Forks,' from the existence in its neighbourhood of a red clay or ochre, from which the Indians manufacture the vermillion face paint. . . ."[27] From this we learn the origin of one of the early names of Princeton. Vermillion Forks and Red Earth Forks are both derived from the translation of Tulameen, which means "Red earth." It is probable that there is also some connection between this and the Red Water River on McDonald's map of 1827. On the banks of the Tulameen not far west of

(25) *Further Papers relative to the Affairs of British Columbia, Part* III., London, 1860, pp. 74–75.

(26) *Ibid.*, p. 80. (Palmer's instructions in full; dated September 8, 1859.)

(27) *Ibid.*, p. 84. Palmer's report is printed in full on pp. 80–89. His original manuscript report is preserved in the Provincial Archives.

Princeton is a large outcrop of red ochre, which was formerly highly prized by the Indians of Similkameen.

Following the Similkameen River, Palmer crossed the International Boundary on September 27, and soon after met a party attached to the United States Boundary Commission. The discovery of gold was made just ten days later, and Palmer duly noted the fact in his official report, which is dated November 23. With reference to the prospects for successful settlement in Similkameen, he had this to say:—

> The present undeveloped state of British Columbia, and the absence of any good roads of communication with the interior, would probably render futile any attempts to settle the Similkameen and other valleys in the vicinity of the 49th parallel.
>
> Extensive crops, it is true, might probably be raised, but the emigrant would have to depend for the other necessaries of life either on such few as might from time to time find their way into the country from Washington Territory, or on such as might, during four months in the year, be obtained from Fort Hope and other points on the Fraser River, and either of which could not be obtained but at prices too exorbitant for the pocket of the poor man.
>
> It would seem therefore that the Buonaparte and Thompson River valleys are the natural starting points for civilization and settlement. . . .
>
> Starting from these points civilization would gradually creep forward and extend finally to the valleys of the frontier.[28]

Settlement could wait, if need be, but gold-seekers are proverbially impatient, and Douglas was faced with an insistent demand for a good trail to the new diggings. In April, 1860, he reported to the Colonial Secretary in London that "he was daily expecting a report from a surveying party employed at Hope, in examining . . . the passes leading from that place to the 'Shimilkomeen' Valley. These routes," he added, "may, without exaggeration, be severally compared to the passage of the Alps."[29] He was determined to "use every exertion to connect the Shimilkomeen with Fort Hope by means of a convenient road."[30] About June 1 Douglas visited Hope, and at a public meeting there urged the miners to assist financially in the construction of a road to the interior. The extent of the gold deposits was still very uncertain, however, and Douglas therefore

(28) *Ibid.*, p. 88.

(29) *Further Papers relative to the Affairs of British Columbia*, Part IV., London, 1862, p. 4.

(30) *Ibid.*, p. 5.

recommended that they should at once form a party, selected by themselves, and composed of experienced miners, and of men on whose energy and judgment they could rely, to prospect the Shimilkomeen country, and I agreed on the part of the Government to furnish the party with food, and to allow a bonus of 4 *l.* sterling in money to each of the men employed in prospecting, provided they succeeded in finding gold.

The proposal was received with evident marks of satisfaction by the whole company of miners, and they proceeded at once to select a party of nine men, out of a large number of those present who volunteered for the service; and this choice band will start in a few days time . . .[31]

The leader of this party was John Fall Allison, who had been in British Columbia since 1858, and ranks as the Similkameen's best-known pioneer. His report on the trip to Similkameen, which was dated July 27, 1860, was, in Douglas's words, very favourable but "not conclusive." Gold had been found on the South Fork, however, and the specimens forwarded with the report for assay proved rich and promising.[32]

Late in September, 1860, in the course of an extended tour of the interior, Douglas visited Similkameen, and in a despatch to London, dated October 25, described conditions there as follows:—

After five days' travel in a fine open country we reached the main branch of the Shimilkomeen River, a few miles below the lately discovered gold diggings, where 80 or 100 miners were at work, all seemingly in high spirits, pleased with the country, and elated with their prospects and earnings. Many of them were engaged in putting up log huts, and making other preparations, as they intend to winter there if they succeed in having supplies of flour and other necessaries brought from Hope before the mountains become impassable from snow. As that was clearly impossible without greater facilities of communication, it was evident they would have no alternative but to desert their claims and leave the country, at a serious loss to themselves and to the Colony.[33]

Thus impressed once again with the importance of building trails and roads, Douglas proceeded to Hope, where he arrived October 3. Much more than the prosperity of a hundred miners in Similkameen was involved in the road problem, however. Gold had been discovered on Rock Creek, in the boundary country some 35 miles east of the Similkameen River, and Douglas had found nearly 500 miners at work there. The pressing necessity was now a road not merely to the South Fork, but a road

(31) *Ibid.*, p. 10.
(32) *Ibid.*, p. 13.
(33) *Ibid.*, p. 28.

carried on eastward to Rock Creek, where lack of trails in British territory had thrown the trade of the area into the hands of the Americans. After this date, indeed, Rock Creek overshadows Similkameen in importance, not only in dispatches and newspapers, but also in the eyes of miners, traders, and road-builders.[34] As is their custom, the miners pressed on to the spot where rumour told of richer diggings; and although there were reported to be 200 miners in Similkameen in August of 1861, 150 of them were Chinese.[35] By the fall of the year glowing accounts from Cariboo completed the eclipse which Rock Creek had commenced, and the Similkameen diggings, as noted by Bauerman, were practically deserted.

It should be noted in passing that the earliest community formed by the gold-seekers in the district was at Blackfoot, on the South Fork of the Similkameen, about 6 miles south-west of Princeton of to-day, and 2 miles past Allenby. In 1861 the flat and its immediate neighbourhood contained forty houses, including miners' cabins. For many years this remained one of the ghost towns of the Province; then it became not even a memory. In September, 1935, the site was relocated, and identified with Kruger's Bar.[36] According to J. Jameson, iron spikes in a river boulder indicated until recently where a bridge crossed to a store and hotel on the south side of the river. Theodore Kruger, who gave his name to the place, was born in Hanover in 1829, and came to British Columbia in 1858. Like J. F. Allison, who arrived the same year, he had tried mining on the Fraser before coming to Similkameen. In 1868 he moved to Osoyoos, as store manager for the Hudson's Bay Company.[37]

The detailed history of the building of trails and roads in Similkameen cannot be related here, but it is possible to give the story in outline. In 1860 Sergeant W. McCall, of the Royal Engineers, located a trail as far east as the lake which A. C.

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(34) For an interesting account of this episode see L. Norris, "The Rise and Fall of Rock Creek," *Sixth Report of the Okanagan Historical Society*, 1936, pp. 233–241.

(35) Victoria *Colonist*, August 31, 1861.

(36) See *Seventh Report of the Okanagan Historical Society*, 1937, pp. 14–15.

(37) Mrs. C. Kruger, "Early Days at Osoyoos," *Third Annual Report of the Okanagan Historical Society*, 1929, pp. 7 ff.

Anderson had christened the "Punch Bowl." This followed, in part, Anderson's own trail. The Allison (or Yates) trail was farther to the south, and is being followed, in part, by the road now under construction from Princeton to Hope. The 1860 trail, on which Edgar Dewdney worked, avoided the Manson Mountain route, and followed the Anderson track of 1846 as far as the Punch Bowl, going by way of the Nicolum and Sumallo Rivers to the head of the Skagit, then turning north. From the Punch Bowl the trail crossed over to the source of the Whipsaw. This led over a summit nearly 6,000 feet in altitude, but avoided the painful switchbacks which became necessary when the trail was later straightened out between Mile 23 from Hope and the summit. There seems to have been considerable trouble during the trail construction of 1860. Prospectors coming in were unwilling to be detained by work in progress. The result was that much of it had to be done over again. Also there seems to have been division of authority among those in charge, and Dewdney for a time left the Engineers to follow their own surveys.[38]

In 1861 Governor Douglas decided to build a wagon-road from Hope to Rock Creek. In charge of this undertaking was Captain J. M. Grant, whom Judge Howay describes as "the greatest roadbuilder of them all."[39] This road was completed as far as 25 miles from Hope. Although over seventy-five years have passed since its construction, it is still being used and remains the best monument, east of Hope, to the lasting work of the Engineers. A dispute arose over tolls proposed by Douglas. Money was scarce, and more promising gold discoveries lured miners elsewhere. The result was that road-building was stopped, and trails already constructed were widened. Three separate parties continued this work under Sergeant L. F. Bonson, Corporal William Hall, and Sergeant J. McMurphy.

Walter Moberly tells us that in the spring of 1860, at New Westminster, he "entered into a contract, in partnership with Mr. Edgar Dewdney, to build a trail from Fort Hope on the Fraser River to the Shemilkomean River on the east side of the

(38) *See* H. T. Nation, "The Dewdney Trail," *Fourth Report and Proceedings* of the B.C. Historical Association, Victoria, 1929, pp. 30–33.

(39) F. W. Howay, *The Work of the Royal Engineers in British Columbia 1858 to 1863*, Victoria, 1910, pp. 6–8.

Cascade range of mountains, to reach the gold-diggings on the latter river, where gold of a very fine quality had been discovered."[40] Later, in 1861, he and Dewdney continued road-making, and the trail which they finally completed has ever since been known as the Dewdney Trail. From 1861 till 1885 there was no excitement in Similkameen, such as accompanied the first gold discoveries, but the trail was continually in use.

Dr. W. N. Sage describes the trail as a link in a grand scheme cherished by Douglas for connecting the coast with Edmonton. This is understandable, but Douglas's decision that goods could be brought overland from Hope to Vermillion Forks and taken down the Similkameen River by boat is not so easy to understand.[41] The wish must have been father to the thought. The truth is that neither in 1860, nor at any time since, has the river been suitable for this purpose. On October 2, during his visit to the interior, Douglas instructed Sergeant McCall " to continue the road to Vermillion Forks or as far as requisite . . . and to mark out the lower townsite at Vermillion Forks and to push on over the watershed without delay before winter sets in."[42] The original survey of the town of Princeton, carried out in October, 1860, was *below* the forks. The name Princeton was chosen in honour of the Prince of Wales, afterwards Edward VII., who had just visited Eastern Canada. A number of the Engineers pre-empted land in the vicinity, and some of them are remembered in such place names as Moody's Prairie, and Luard Lake.

We have already noted the community of gold-seekers at Blackfoot. The only other "rush" in Similkameen was to Granite Creek. Here, in 1885, a large community sprang up. This was at the mouth of the creek, where it enters the right bank of the Tulameen, 12 miles west of Princeton. W. H. Holmes, recalling his arrival there soon after the rush began, tells that it was full of life, and every hundred feet on the river was a wooden wheel, all turning to a different tune. The rush was started by the

(40) Walter Moberly, *The Rocks and Rivers of British Columbia*, London, 1885, pp. 33–34.

(41) W. N. Sage, *Sir James Douglas and British Columbia*, Toronto, 1930, p. 318.

(42) *Ibid.*, pp. 318–319.

discovery of a nugget by cowboy John Chance. The date of the discovery is given as July 5, 1885. Chance and some other cowboys were taking some horses through to the Fraser River. He stopped to water his horse at the creek, and discovered the nugget which started the rush. Within a few months a tent town covered the flat near the mouth of the creek. By the end of October, sixty-two companies had creek claims, averaging 300 feet each. From July 5 to October 31 gold to the value of $90,000 was reported.[43] In December, Henry Nicholson, the Mining Recorder, estimated the population at 600 whites and 300 Chinese. Tents were soon replaced by log buildings. In January, 1886, G. C. Tunstall, Gold Commissioner, reported forty homes, six saloons and hotels, and seven stores. The peak production was in 1886, when gold and platinum to the value of $193,000 were taken, chiefly from Granite Creek.[44] By 1900 Granite Creek was another ghost town. Hugh Hunter, who had been appointed Mining Recorder in August, 1899, was in March, 1900, moved to Princeton as Government Agent.

Gold officially reported at Granite Creek represented only a percentage of what was actually taken. Chinese were regarded as the worst offenders in not reporting amounts taken.[45] If Government Agents were unable to report correct returns, others were able to overstate them. The truth lies somewhere between what was actually reported, and what was stated in the following quotation:—

> F. P. Cook, the pioneer merchant of Granite Creek was to Princeton last Friday. In 1885 when Mr. Cook walked into Granite Creek carrying his blankets it was with difficulty that he made his way along the crowded main street. Twelve saloons did a flourishing business and closing hours were unknown. The town had a population of about 2,000 inhabitants, and was the third largest city in B.C., being only exceeded by Victoria and New Westminster. Kamloops then would probably come next in size. Placer miners in 1885–1886 took $800,000 in gold and platinum out of Granite Creek.[46]

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(43) *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines for the Year . . . 1885*, Victoria, 1886, p. 492.

(44) Charles Camsell, *Geology and Mineral Deposits of the Tulameen District, B.C.*, Ottawa, 1913, p. 8.

(45) *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines for the Year . . . 1885*, p. 494.

(46) *Similkameen Star*, Princeton, September 10, 1915.

There is little to-day to suggest the former glory of what was possibly the third largest town in the Province in 1886. To-day it is "just another ghost town." Coal has superseded gold as the main source of industry in the Tulameen Valley. Early in the 20th century coal was discovered near the present site of Blakeburn, and in 1909 at Collin's Gulch. Coalmont was so named because of the belief that there was a mountain of coal which could be stripped and operated by steam-shovels.

It remains to carry the story of gold in Similkameen, in brief outline, down to the present day.

Hedley is the largest settlement in Similkameen now dependent on gold-mining. Placer-mining, which began at the mouth of Twenty Mile Creek, now Hedley Creek, in the early sixties, was soon exhausted. The period of lode-mining began in 1896. George Allison and Jim Riordan had staked three claims for Edgar Dewdney, in 1894, and one had been recorded by J. Coulthard. These four, however, were allowed to lapse. Peter Scott located the Rollo in 1897, and three claims the following year. That same August (1898) Albert Jacobson and C. Johnson, two Swedes who had been grub-staked by W. Y. Williams, of Phoenix, located two claims, and four were staked by F. I. Wollaston and C. H. Arundel. Samples from these last claims came to the notice of M. K. Rodgers, who represented the mining interests of the late Marcus Daly, of Butte, Montana. At the time Rodgers was on his way to the Cassiar district. He cancelled his sailing from Victoria, and next morning started out for Similkameen. The first samples to be assayed carried values so high that Rodgers suspected salting. With this in mind he returned by himself and resampled the properties. The results were equally promising. With the bonding of the group, permanent work was started in January, 1899. In October, 1902, a tramway was constructed, flume work undertaken, and the erection of a stamp-mill and cyanide plant commenced. Milling of ore began in May, 1904.[47] By the time that the Nickel Plate holdings of the Daly estate were sold on August 12, 1909, to the Exploration Syndicate of

(47) Charles Camsell, *The Geology and Ore Deposits of Hedley Mining District, British Columbia*, Ottawa, 1910, pp. 16–21.

New York, over two and a half millions in gold had been taken.[48] During the war, and again during the depression, operations were suspended. Since then other companies have entered the field, and Hedley continues to be one of the best-known camps in the Province. Elsewhere in Similkameen the search for gold continues by the time-honoured methods of hydraulicking, sluicing and panning. The prospector has outlived the fur-trader.

It is now eighty years since the first gold-seekers came to Similkameen. It was the presence of prospectors and the discovery of gold that decided Douglas to have trails completed from Hope through Similkameen to Rock Creek. It was also the search for gold which brought to light the presence of other minerals, and of coal. These are being mined to-day on a large scale.

It is now 125 years since the first journey through the Similkameen was made by a fur-trader. The Hudson's Bay trading-post at Keremeos, opened in 1860, was closed in 1872; but the farming, fruit-growing, and stock-raising which were begun there are to-day the mainstay of the lower end of the valley.

The fur-traders and the seekers after gold who pioneered Similkameen have left a goodly heritage.

J. C. GOODFELLOW.

PRINCETON, B.C.

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(48) Statement to the writer by the late Frank Bailey. *See* the chapter on "Camp Hedley" in his *Nicola, Similkameen and Tulameen Valleys*, Vancouver, n.d., pp. 56–65.