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Princeton in Early Days.

I have been asked to give an account of the early days of Princeton.)

Personally I can go no further back than 1866 but I have some old records and a few letters written by my late husband, J. F. Allison, that will enable me to give a few facts that are not known to many and to recall names, forgotten now, that should be remembered by those who have reaped the results of their toil and hardships.

Early in 1858 J. F. Allison, who had gone to California with the rush in 1849, made up his mind to try his fortunes in the newly discovered gold mines of Fraser River and so, armed with a letter of introduction to Governor James Douglas, he left California and came to Victoria (then a thrifty little town) early in the season. He tried mining on the Fraser but, after California, the results seemed poor and he was disappointed. Then Governor Douglas asked him if he would venture to try an entirely new field and told him of the beautiful Similkameen Country, with its rolling Bunch Grass Hills, its rich Pasture Lands and abundance of game and fish waiting for any one who would venture across the mountains. Governor Douglas asked him if he would go and enquire into the facts about some rich placer ground reported to have been struck by some Hudson Bay employees on the North Fork

of the Similkameen River, or the Tulameen as it was called by the Indians.

Mr. Allison, who was used to prospecting on the California mountains, gladly agreed to go and was furnished with plans and directions by the Governor, who himself was familiar with the Country and the Indian trails across the Hope Mountain. Mr. Allison started with great confidence in his ability to perform the task set him but he made a mistake of which he was unaware for many days. In his search for the Tulameen he came on a river that he thought answered the description he had of it but he really was on the head waters of the Similkameen, which he slowly followed down, finding rich prospects in many places. Continuing down the stream ^{he} found what appeared to be a rich copper mine (this he located some twenty years later as the Allison mine).

Still following down the river and continuing to get good prospects, he discovered on reaching the confluence of the so-called North and South Forks, that he had been prospecting the South Fork or Similkameen River. As a matter of fact the North Fork came from a westerly direction. Proceeding down the united rivers for about a quarter of a mile he found Johnny McDougall, a Hudsons Bay halfbreed with his Indian wife and family, encamped on a high bench above the river. They were engaged in mining the bench, they had constructed a rough sheet ^{chute} to convey the pay dirt down the river where they washed out the gold with a Rocker, they were getting

plenty of rough gold with three and four dollar nuggets occasionally in it and making good wages, they said.

Mr. Allison thought when he first caught sight of the Similkameen hills and ~~valleys~~ that it was the most beautiful place he had ever seen. The luxuriant bunch grass uncropped and standing waving in the wind like a field of grain. All the side hills that are now so barren were covered with tall grasses.

^{Cross} ~~Crossing~~ the the river he struck coal near the ~~works~~ - this coal he often used, mixed with wood, for winter fuel.

Returning to Victoria he reported his success and failure to the Governor, also the capabilities of the Country for horse and cattle raising.

Again in 1859 he was sent out to look up old trails and prospect. In the early ~~Fall~~ he took in some of the coal, some gold, platinum and a large nugget of white metal the size of a pigeon's egg. These were sent by Mr. Douglas to Swansen where the coal was pronounced to be an excellent quality of lignite, good most probably for local consumption in the future, but not good enough for exportation - indeed exportation in those days would have been almost impossible. The white metal was ^{um}irridium and of great value. The platinum was much mixed with other metals. Much ~~Platinum and Irridium~~ was found with the placer gold, but I have never heard since of so large a nugget of ~~irridium~~; though the Chinese who have been constant miners here may have found many such.

they knew its value and called it "White Gold."

That fall there was quite a rush to the Similkameen. Edgar Dewdney and his partner Walter Moberly were among the many, also Capt. Marsden or Marston, I do not exactly remember the name, but he built a cabin and remained all winter. and in September 1860 the first white woman, Mrs. Marston, crossed the Hope Mountain to join her husband who was mining on the Similkameen near the ^ggrave yard Creek. I can remember seeing her start out from Hope, on foot accompanied by an Indian packing a rocking chair, six chickens and some other effects. The trail at that time was very rough. Mrs. Marsden and her husband did not stay long but went further down the River. *(now called One mile creek)*

In 1860 Governor Douglas laid out the town site of Princeton, naming it after the Prince of Wales, afterwards Edward 7th. The town site was surveyed by a party of the Royal Engineers under Colonel Moody and Capt. Luard. It was a mile and a quarter square, beginning near the mouth of Grave Yard Creek and running back to Swan Lake. The Pyramids of this survey are still standing, or did till a few weeks ago and I do not think any one has moved them since.

I have seen a plt of the town as it was originally intended to be drawn up by the Hon. E. N. B. Postman, a young surveyor of great ability and if his dream had ever materialized it certainly would have been a beautiful city - with a race course,

parks, terraces and fountains. I have, as I said before, old records showing how much was thought of the Similkameen.

In '60 Edgar Dewdney and Walter Moberly got the contract to build the Hope-Similkameen wagon road, previously surveyed by the Royal Engineers, when they had finished twenty-three miles there was a shortage of funds and Governor Douglas proposed to put on a tax of one half per cent per pound on all goods passing over the Trail. The people of Hope, then a flourishing little town and head of navigation, objected so strongly that the Governor decided to leave the wagon road as it stood and make a trail for pack horses the rest of the way. The main road to Cariboo then was put up the Fraser River and Yale became head of navigation.

During the days of wagon road construction Dewdney and Moberly were frequent visitors to Princeton. They had firm faith in the mineral riches of the country ^{on} as did Dr. Dawson and Amos Bowman and other Geologists who visited the district.

S. W. Hayes went into the cattle business.

Still Princeton continued to be a Government Headquarters for the Similkameen district as it was called in those days. The Geological surveys always outfitted and received their mail there and the various Indian agents, Judge Okeilly, A. Howel, Commissioners Sprout and Anderson, A. E. Howse and Joe McKay generally assembled the Indians and held their powwows there. Little do the settlers on the Okanagan and at Nicola realize what they owe to Joe McKay and the good old priests. ~~At~~ the same scenes of horror and bloodshed that were

enacted across the line would have occurred here but for their prompt action and influence with the Indians. I know this for a fact for our old Indian travelled sixty miles to warn me to take my children and put off to the mountains. Envoys had been sent from the Indians across the line, who were in arms against the American Government and were killing all the white settlers they could, to the Okanagan, Nicola and the Similkameen to get the Indians there to join their confreres[^] ~~enfranchises~~ in Washington and Oregon, in wiping out the white settlers on both sides of the line. The Similkameeners, to their credit, refused to join but the others were touch and go. The Priests and Joe. McKay, both loved and respected by the Indians, used all their influence and persuasion they could bring to bear on the Chiefs and Headmen, and luckily succeeded, for the sparsely settled whites would easily have been wiped out. I remember asking Cockshist, a Similkameen Indian, which side he would take if it really came to a fight. "Go to the mountains and keep out of it. The whites here are my friends, I could not harm them, nor could I strike against the Indians who are my brothers?" he answered. Personally ^{we} were prepared to hold our own. - Fortunately we did not have to.

No one can write about the early days of Princeton without mention of the good old Priests - Father Pandosie, Father Grandidier, Father Richard, and others, all saintly men - not hypocrites[^], but men who, like their Master, gave up their lives to their fellow men and truly went about doing good. If there was

sickness, no matter if it were small pox or any other infectious disease, they were there to minister to the sufferer - if there was snow they would travel miles to soothe the one afflicted. This they did without hope of reward or even thanks - as likely as not the man they helped would abuse them when they ceased to be of use to him. Father Pandosie was a French physician and was the only doctor in the country, except the Indian doctors, but unlike them he gave his services free to those that required them. Well, the good they did lives after them - no old timer can ever forget them.

When I first came to the Similkameen in 1866 Princeton was nearly deserted, in fact the only permanent residents were Mr. Allison and Mr. Hays, as yet there were no settlers nearer than Keremeos. At Nicola there was no white settler. At Keremeos the Hudson's Bay had had a post for years. M'Lean the factor built a good solid house and store which was afterwards occupied by Mr. Gate and family.

In the vicinity of Princeton a few miners worked the placer mines on the River and came in nearly every week for supplies, those I remember best were, Sebastian Lottario and the M'Kellop Brothers and an old man named Billy Royal, who lived up the Mine Creek. Lottario came every year up from the Coast, to a certain spot on the Similkameen whence he regularly took out five or six hundred dollars. That amount always satisfied him, he used to say it was his Bank and he could return and get more when he wanted it. With this money he would return to the coast and buy goods from the Hudson's Bay Company, fit out his ^{sloop}shop, take her up the north coast and do a good trade with the Indians. This he did for many years, then he ceased to come, and I learned from Hudson's Bay men that his ^{sloop}shop had been found

partly burned and he himself murdered.

The two McKellops were Scotchmen and did not tell what they made but they always brought in well filled buckskin bags -- they came every season till one of the brothers, John, was drowned and then I think William came no more.

But though Princeton was almost deserted Mr. Young, Dewdney, and Moberly had abandoned the land they held and Frank Richter had left in '65. He had had a small store and mined five miles up the Similkameen; but he preferred Keremeos near the Hudson's Bay Company post.

Princeton had her Post Office. James Wardle (of Hope) carried the mail in '66. It used at first to come twice a year along with the Osooyoos and Rock Creek mail, also the Kootenay mail. Afterwards a man named Johnston brought it every two months. I think George Goldsborough was our last mail carrier over the Hope Mountain and then we had it every month. In the winter time it was often carried by an Indian on snowshoes, and he often was eight or nine days on the road. When we wanted to send letters out between mails we hired our own Indian to take it paying from fifty to a hundred dollars, according to the weather. This expense was generally shared by Mr. Haynes who was magistrate at Osooyoos. One time we sent an Indian in for the mail and he was gone over two weeks - as it was storming heavily we almost gave him up for lost. When he did turn up he said that he had been caught in a heavy snow storm and could not see the Road nor the Mountains, so he stacked his pack, rolled himself up in his blankets and remained there, snowed up, till the storm had ceased, when he rose warm and comfortable, shook off

the snow and came along.

Men were not always so fortunate, in the early sixties a Capt. Venables came to Mr. Allison's house, one evening while he and his partner were at dinner, of course they asked him to sit down with them and it was some time before it was discovered that he had frozen both legs up to his knees. ⁴the queer thing was that the man himself did not know that there was anything wrong till, taking off his boots, the poor fellow suffered most terribly and though

both Mr. Allison and Mr. Hayes did all that they could for him the only real service they could render was to hire four Indians to pack him over the Hope Mountain on a stretcher. It was a most painful journey. Mr. Allison, himself, went along to see that the Indians did not desert him. Pain and helpless misery made him irritable and he could not understand that everyone was helping him to the best of their ability, so naturally he was impatient. From Hope he was sent on to Westminster by steamboat to the Westminster hospital, then in charge, I think of Doctors Black and Jones. After much suffering he died.

The J. P. at Princeton often administered more justice than law. On one occasion when the American sheriff crossed the line in hot haste after a horse thief, who had stolen two valuable horses from the other side, did not know what to do to get them back. The man had committed no offense on this side of the line. There being no constable in Princeton, after consulting together, it was decided that the best way would be to "set a thief to catch a thief." So they called upon an Indian, known to the whites as "Napoleon," who had a well established reputation as a horse thief, though according to ~~the~~^{his} ethics there was nothing wrong in a man taking a horse that he fancied and needed.

Napoleon undertook for a certain reward to bring in the horses. He found out where the man was camped, and pretending to be out hunting, lazily strolled up to his camp and got into conversation with the man, who had no idea that he had been followed. He pretended not to notice the horses that were picketed close to the camp. The man was anxious to find out the way to various places and the Indian, apparently innocently friendly, offered his services as guide. He was at once hired. After supper Napoleon took his blankets out under a tree near where the horses were picketed, rolled up in them and pretended to sleep. There he waited till the camp fire went down and the other man retired to his blankets. When he felt sure that his employer was sleeping, he

slipped out of his roll of blankets, leaving it to look as if he still occupied it, crawled like a snake along the ground to where the stolen horses picket stakes were driven into the ground. Very gently without disturbing the animals, he drew his knife, severed both ropes. Then filling his mouth with grass, he chewed the ends of the rope left attached to the pickets so as to make it appear that the horses had bitten themselves free. He then very gently withdrew, still crawling and drawing the horses after him till out of sight of camp. He then mounted on a horse and led the other. When well out of hearing he broke into a gallop. The sheriff paid the reward and went back with the horses rejoicing. That is only one case but it is a good sample of oldtime justice.

We had the usual amount of shooting scrapes, murders and such things in the country but not just in Princeton, though at times we came pretty close to it. If a man was shot across the line the shooter usually headed for Princeton but as long as he behaved himself no one molested him. If he did mis-behave he was quietly but firmly told to move on, and he always went.

In early days General Sherman and his staff often stopped at Princeton to rest and get fresh supplies, on their way to the coast. With him were the now historic General Miles, Captain Charles King and Lieut Malloreay, a young Southerner who was always uneasy that his men might try and desert, which they did in spite of his watchful care.

Princeton always had a small mining population in its vicinity. In the early 60's Frank Richter, and Theo. Kruger and a man named Bos-hon mined on what is still known as Kruger Flat. The river has been well worked out in various places but the benches have scarcely been touched. There was one mining excitement which originated from a rough joke of our cowboys. It led to the discovery of "Rich Bar" and Granit Creek. It was, I think, in 1884 three of our cowboys - Wm.

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McKeon, Harry Hobbs and Billy Elwell, having drawn their pay right up to date, resolved to have a little fun across the line. I think it was their original intention to put a little extra paint on Colville, but just as they were starting out, having donned their best buckskin shirts, tied new crimson handkerchiefs around their necks, drawn on their long, embroidered gauntlet gloves and were standing foot in stirrup and bridle in hand a Chinaman came along. In those days a Chinaman was always fair game for a cowboy. They could not resist stopping to tease him and examine his little bag of "dust". They wanted to know where he got it and how much he was making? I think he said he made "six bittie" in one day. No Chinaman ever admitted making more. He was working up the ~~Sinix~~ Tulameen. It was then the boys an inspiration (in addition to a little dust) from the chink. They then departed on mischief bent. Which of them told the biggest lie I do not know but they each showed the little bag of gold and gave a glowing description of how and where they got it. Only anxious to deceive others, they unknowingly told the truth about the fabulous wealth of the Tulameen.

Others believed them and thinking that they could do better than any cowboy and decided to try their luck. On their return the cowboys laughingly said "look out for the rush that's coming. The Chinks won't have it all their own way now." And sure enough it came. Hungry, weary, foot-sore men came dropping in at all hours of the day or night, making enquiries about the new gold find and would not believe us when we said there was nothing new - that we knew nothing about any great find. They just kept on coming from all quarters. Many later returned from up river saying the whole thing was a fraud. Some got fair diggings and stuck to them. One party, ^{consisted of about ten men} with Bill Jenkins (Wild Goose Bill,) Charlie Rhinehart and Johnny Chance at the head. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~
Johnny Chance was an ex-cowboy and very lazy. These men pushed on up the Tulameen about nine miles and prospected in the river just below

what is since known as Hogg's Hydraulic. There they struck it rich and named their ~~xxx~~ claim "Rich Bar." The men were all hard workers with the exception of Chance, who used to sit around, smoke and tell yarns. Occasionally he caught a few fish or brought in a few grouse. After a few weeks his partners began to tire of this and one day when they came in tired and hungry, after a hard day's work, and found Chance, as usual sitting smoking, with nothing to eat in the house, they handed him a gun and told him to get out and get them grub, if he would do nothing else.

John L. Chance took the gun, strolled up the river about three miles till he came to a shady creek. The afternoon was intensely hot, so going a little way up the creek he lay down to rest and sleep a little in the shade.

Similkameen, 20th Sept. 1860.

P. O. Reilly Esq.,

Sir,

Will you be so kind as to record 160 acres of land for me at the junction of the Similkameens and Red earth fork (also called North and South Forks) bounded as follows - on the N. W. by the N. or Vermillion fork on the S. E. by the South fork of Similkameen. If this flat has not been recorded by other parties you will please locate it for me.

(sgd.) I. F. Allison.

Recorded by me this Twenty)
fourth day of September A. D.)
1860, at Hope, B. C.)

P. O'Reilly I. P.

P. O'Reilly Esq.,

Sir,

I hereby notify that I have in addition to my former preemption, staked off 100 acres of rural land situated at the South and North extremities of it. It has been staked and blazed throughout and when surveyed I shall be ready to pay for it. The rough and Retch below described the land alluded to.

(Sgd.) P. H. Nind.

Recorded by me this Twenty-seventh
day of July A. D. 1860 at Hope, B. C.

28 P. O. Reilly Esq., I. P.