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HISTORICAL
NEWS

BRITISH COLUMBIA HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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BRITISH COLUMBIA HISTORICAL NEWS

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It seems incredible that by the time this issue reaches the members we will have reached the halfway point between our conventions. Therefore it seems that it should be appropriate to make you all aware of the place and date of next year's event. Council, after much consideration chose Penticton for the site of the next convention, and arrangements have been made for Friday and Saturday, May 23rd and 24th, 1969, and it will be held in the new Penticton Inn. A successful convention is a well attended convention, and for a good attendance please make a note of the date and plan to be there. The "News" will keep you posted on all special events and speakers as soon as arrangements are completed.

It is with regret that I bring to your attention the passing of Rev. John Goodfellow of Princeton. I believe that it is correct that he was one of the founding members of the British Columbia Historical Association even though his member society is not now within the Association. I knew him well when I lived in Princeton in the late 1930's, and in those poverty-stricken days used to admire his ability to organize and conduct an annual hike over the old Hope-Princeton Trail. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find amongst us men as dedicated as John Goodfellow to preserve and record local history for posterity.

On a happier note I would like to wish good health and happiness to Colonel Andrews of Victoria who is retiring shortly. He has planned an extensive tour of Mexico, which should be an exciting start to his carefree future.

During the late summer season in a brief stay at Williams Lake I spent an evening with Mr and Mrs Douglas Stevenson. Mr Stevenson had recently given a talk on Alfred Waddington and is in the process of polishing up his notes into an article for publication. It was flattering to me to know that the "News" was considered shipshape enough to do the launching.

There is still a problem of getting copy from the affiliated societies of their activities, for the Notes and Comments section of the "News". Whatever I get that is newsworthy will go into each issue. It should be submitted on a regular basis rather than a yearly accumulation given at the Convention, when space in the "News" is at a premium. My file for this issue looks as scanty as a grass crop grown on a public highway.

Source material for articles in future copies of the "News" has been sent to me by the Nanaimo Historical Society and will appear in the near future.

It may be of interest to members that James Nesbitt, in two consecutive issues of the Islander, October 27th and November 3rd, used extensively and gave credit to our President's address to the Convention. It was the feature article of the last copy of the "News", the memoirs of Florence Baillie Grohman.

The requests for subscriptions come from farther afield each time. The latest requests have been from the British Museum and Harvard University. Would you believe it?

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Minutes of Second Council Meeting of the British Columbia Historical Association held on September 15th, 1968 at 4649 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver. Present: Mrs Jordon (Pres.), Mr R. Brammall (V.Pres.), Mrs G. Bowes (Treas.), Mr P. Yandle (Sec.), Col. G.S. Andrews (Exec.Mem.), Mr H.B. Nash (Exec.Mem.); Delegates: Mr D. Sehon (Nanaimo), Mr G. Bowes (Vancouver ).

The minutes of the Council meeting held on May 25th, 1968 were read and adopted on motion.

Arising out of the minutes it was learned that the picture of Captain Vancouver had not been delivered to Victoria. After considerable discussion it was moved Yandle, seconded Andrews that the offer of Mr Brammall to deliver the picture to Victoria be accepted and that it be done so before October 23rd to coincide with a party to be held on that date in Victoria, and further, that Mr Brammall take out the necessary insurance policy to protect the picture at all times. - Carried.

It was the understanding of Council that museums displaying the picture would also have their own insurance protection to cover it while in their care.

The question of fencing the petroglyphs at Cranbrook had been under study by the President, and the information that she had at this time was that the property had been purchased by an American and was now fenced private land; therefore the Association no longer had any authority to make any further representation in this matter. Col. Andrews asked if it would be possible to get a legal description of the property and the President agreed to do this for him.

The Treasurer reported that $3484.81 had been transferred to a True Savings Account at a branch of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and would bear current interest rates for that category.

The Editor was instructed to make a list of supplies required to publish the B.C. News, so that some arrangement could be made by the Provincial Archivist through Col. Andrews to obtain them from the Gestetner Company in Vancouver.

Reports of Mrs Bowes and Mrs Jordon on progress of establishing a joint convention between the B.C. Historical Association and the Okanagan Historical Society to be held in the Okanagan Valley next year were given to Council. Mrs Jordon stated that she had been in correspondence and had phoned Mrs Dewdney, the President, for last minute information, who informed her that a letter had been sent from their executive to the Secretary of the B.C. Historical Association that would be self-explanatory. Unfortunately, due to the aftermath of the postal strike it had not arrived. However, the President felt optimistic as did Mrs Bowes that such a convention could be mutually agreed upon. There were, however, certain difficulties to overcome: the Okanagan Historical Society made their convention a one day affair, with a banquet on Sunday. Their date was May 4th at Kelowna, and the Hope-Princeton highway could be bad at such an early date in May and the weather could be also quite cool. Mrs Bowes felt that Penticton would possibly induce more people to come, rather than the added distance to Kelowna, and a banquet on a Sunday left no travelling time to return to the coast for work on Monday.

By an expression of opinion by members, Council felt that we still had nothing definite to work on, and it would not be physically possible to call Council together to discuss and arrange such a convention when the two bodies concerned had to plan by correspondence through their respective secretaries. As it would be too much to expect that the Secretary be left with the burden of further planning it was moved Bowes, seconded Brammall, that Mrs Jordon head a committee to include Mrs Bowes, Col. Andrews and Mr Schon, with powers to add. This committee to have powers to act. - Carried.

Further discussion suggested to the Committee that it might be advisable to limit the convention to two days, and to consider a date after the 24th May week-end.

The Secretary was asked to pass on to the Committee a copy of the letter from Mrs Dewdney when it arrived.

A letter from the Social Studies Teachers' P.S.I. requesting copies of the essays entered in the Centennial Scholarship of the B.C. Historical Association was discussed and it was the decision of Council to pass on copies of the award winning essays.

Meeting adjourned on motion at 4.30 p.m.

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## SOCIETY NOTES AND COMMENTS

ALBERNI The Alberni Historical Society had an exhibit in the Alberni District Fall Fair parade in conjunction with the Community Arts Council. This took the form of a hand operated fog horn used at Polly's Point on the Alberni Inlet. In emergencies it was used

until 1967. The fog horn was the gift of the Port Alberni Harbour Commission.

The Society has published a booklet by Margaret Trebett entitled "Pioneer Women of the Alberni Valley", which costs $1.00. They also have available hasti-notes, 50¢ per pkt of 12, six scenes of the Paper Mill (the first in B.C.) 1894-96, and six scenes of the Anderson Sawmill, 1861-65. These as well as the booklet are obtainable from Mrs F.A. Ford, R.R.#3, Stirling Arm Road, Port Alberni, B.C.

GULF ISLANDS Winter conditions prevented meetings in the new year until March when Mrs A. Turnbull was guest speaker at a North Pender meeting, her subject "The Sternwheelers of the Columbia River." The annual meeting was held in April and in May the society was the guest of the Saanich Pioneers in a tour of the countryside and a visit to their Museum. At the June meeting two graduates of the Vancouver City College's course for Museum Technicians described their training and, as a result, in July a most successful historical workshop was held on Saturna Island under the guidance of Mrs Hindmarch, with a display along museum lines under the direction of Mrs May Louttit of the Technician Course. At a picnic meeting on Galiano Island applications for the annual bursary to an Indian student were received and after study by the membership $100 each was awarded to Jennifer Williams, continuing Secondary School with an excellent record for leadership, and George James, entering the Vancouver Vocational Institute's course in draughtsmanship.

NANAIMO At the first meeting of the season Mr Jack Hardcastle spoke to a full house about his work. Mr Hardcastle, who is 86 years old, is a famous marine artist and his paintings of ships are eagerly sought by maritime museums and collectors the world over.

WILLIAMS LAKE A move to reestablish the Williams Lake Society is underway according to Captain Evans-Atkinson whom I met recently. He has been instrumental in bringing to the attention of the Provincial Government the need to establish a 350 acre wild-life park on Snowshoe Plateau, and to improve the 40 mile existing road and trail. Quoting him from the Cariboo News, he said "All we want for a road is a passable summer gravel affair, something deliberately circuitous so people can take time to enjoy the scenery". We will be watching to see if Victoria can hear you calling, Williams Lake!

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The following is the address given at the banquet of the B.C. Historical Association's Annual Convention held in May 1968. Mr Clifford Wilson, who gave this address, in addition to holding many other positions, was editor of the Beaver, Curator of the Hudson's Bay Company Museum and Historian of the Company in Canada from 1939-57.

## ROBERT CAMPBELL : FORGOTTEN EXPLORER

... Some of you may wonder why I have chosen this particular title for my talk tonight. After all, you will say, Robert Campbell

is by no means forgotten; and I grant you that this is more likely to be true of this gathering than would be the case anywhere else in Canada -- for two reasons: First, you are especially interested in the history of this province, and secondly because the Yukon Territory, which was Campbell's chief field of exploration, is very close to British Columbia. In fact, to quote Stephen Leacock in another context, it is only three-quarters of an inch away from it.

At any rate I am sure that if you were able to ask, say, two thousand reasonably well educated people in a gathering at Calgary's auditorium, or Winnipeg's new performing arts theatre; at O'Keefe Centre in Toronto, or the Place des Artes in Montreal: how many of them had ever heard of Robert Campbell, maybe two or three people would put their hands up. Yet one learned Montrealer who had just returned from some pretty primitive travel over hundreds of miles in the wilds of the Yukon about eighty years ago was able to write as follows:

"The utmost credit must be accorded to the pioneer fur traders for the enterprise displayed by them in carrying their trade into the Yukon basin in the face of difficulties so great, and at such an immense distance from their base of supplies. To explorations of this kind, performed in the service of commerce, unostentatiously, and as matters of simple duty, by such men as Mackenzie, Fraser, Thompson, and Campbell, we owe the discovery of our great north-west country."

The man who wrote that in 1887 was the great Canadian geologist, Dr George M. Dawson.

Well, of course, everyone knows about Mackenzie, Fraser and Thompson. But Campbell -- who was he? That question I hope to answer in some small measure tonight.

He was, like many notable officers of the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies, a Scotsman. Born one hundred and sixty years ago in Perthshire, his boyhood was largely spent tending his father's flocks on the Grampian Hills. When he was 22 his fur trading cousin, Chief Factor James McMillan, came home on furlough and stayed with the Campbells, and the young man listened enraptured to his tales of travel and danger among the wild tribes and along the wilder rivers of what is now British Columbia. McMillan had accompanied Governor Simpson on his famous canoe journey of 1824-5 from York Factory to Fort George on the Columbia and back; and in 1827 he had founded Fort Langley.

The upshot of this visit of his to the Campbells was that in 1830 young Robert sailed for York Factory on board a Company ship with his cousin and Chief Trader Donald Ross. At Red River McMillan was placed in charge of the new experimental farm a few miles up the Assiniboine River from Fort Garry; and at the beginning of May 1831, Campbell joined him there as his assistant.

"I was so constantly on the move," he writes in his auto-

biography, "from earliest daylight till dark, that it was seldom I was more than four hours out of the 24 in bed -- a habit I was thankful for all my life after." And we shall see how useful that habit was during his first year of exploration along the Liard River.

This bucolic existence, however, was not the sort of life for which the eager young Scot had joined the Hudson's Bay Company. As he put it: "I had a hankering after the more stirring life I had heard so much of. So early in May I requested to be transferred to the Fur Trade, as Governor Simpson had suggested. I proceeded with the boats to York Factory where I was appointed to the Mackenzie River district. The Governor's last words to me were: 'Now Campbell, don't you get married, as we want you for active service'."

Well, Campbell did get married -- twenty-five years later . . .

Travelling by the usual route via Portage la Loche and Lake Athabasca, he arrived in mid-October, 1834, at Fort Simpson, on an island in the Mackenzie River below the mouth of the Liard. This famous depot of the fur trade, which is still flourishing, was the headquarters of the Mackenzie River district. It was thus the capital of that huge area extending down the mighty river as far as the arctic sea and (in due course, as exploration proceeded) over the mountains to the Yukon River. And it was to be Campbell's field of operations for the next eighteen years.

The day after he arrived, a canoe was sent up the Liard River to Fort de Liard to notify Chief Trader Murdoch McPherson that he was to succeed John Stuart in command of the district. And that, as we shall see, was a fateful decision for the future welfare of the Company's operations up the West Branch of the Liard. As I remember, the word most frequently used by Campbell in his private diary to describe the policies of Murdo McPherson is "imbecile".

Campbell was put in charge of Fort de Liard for the following summer; and the next spring, when McPherson went off to Portage la Loche to meet the annual brigade of boats from the east, he was left in charge of the depot.

One day in August a canoe was sighted coming across the Mackenzie from the mouth of the Liard. Campbell went down to meet it, and was astonished to see, sitting amidships, a Company clerk named Hutchison, who was supposed to be establishing a new post hundreds of miles away at Dease Lake. And he had a hair-raising tale to tell.

He said that he had not proceeded far up the Liard when an alarm was raised that hundreds of fierce Indians were advancing down the river intent on murdering them all. Panic had seized the whole party, and they had jumped into their canoes and never stopped paddling until they reached Fort de Liard. Then, after a short stay there, they had hurried on to Fort Simpson.

This was the kind of Adventure with a capital A that young

Campbell had been looking for, and when McPherson returned from the Portage he asked if he could take another party to Dease Lake and carry out the task allotted to Hutchison. McPherson gladly agreed, and in March 1837 he left with a party of men on snowshoes for Fort de Liard. Arrived there, they built two eight-man birch-bark canoes, and finally in May Campbell succeeded in persuading enough men to come with him.

On the second night of their voyage up the Liard some of the Indians deserted; and in the cold light of morning, half the other men refused to go any further. There was nothing to do but put back to the fort and try to recruit more men.

Now, perhaps this would be as good a place as any to insert in this tale some idea of the tumultuous river that was the only highway to the country that Campbell wanted to reach. Let me quote again from the report of Dr. George M. Dawson. Of Campbell and his people he writes: "Less resolute men would scarcely have entertained the idea of utilizing, as an avenue of trade, a river so perilous of navigation as the Liard had proved to be when explored. So long, however, as this appeared to be the most practicable route to the country beyond the mountains, its abandonment was not even contemplated. Neither distance nor danger appear to have been taken into account, and in spite of every obstacle a way was opened and a series of posts established, extending from Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie to Fort Yukon."

On the same subject, Chief Factor James Anderson, who took over the Mackenzie River district in 1851, writes of the Liard River: "You can hardly conceive the intense horror the men have, to go up to Frances Lake. They invariably, on rehiring, endeavour to be exempted from the West Branch. The number of deaths which have occurred there is 14. Of these, 3 died from starvation, and 11 from drowning."

And so, if we add to these dangers the fear that Campbell's men had of being massacred by Indians, one can hardly wonder that he had difficulty in recruiting enough for the journey. Nevertheless, so persuasive and determined was this tall, muscular Scotsman, that the morning after his return downstream to Fort Liard, he was able to start again with two full crews.

In the meantime the summer freshet had come, and when the river is in flood -- as Campbell writes -- no boat that is built can ascend from the lower end of the Devil's Portage. The current is not only strong, but full of rapids and whirlpools, and rushes between perpendicular walls of rock two to three hundred feet high.

When the Devil's Portage was reached, some of the bales of trade goods were carried part way across before dark. Next morning, as was his habit, Campbell rose very early and quietly left the camp to reconnoitre the portage. On the way across he noted particularly how the pieces were lying that had been left at the end of the first carry. But on his return from the head of the portage he noticed that one of the bales had been shifted and

was cut at one corner. Back at camp, he found the men sitting doing nothing, just waiting, with gun in hand. Hostile Indians, they told him, were lurking nearby. And as proof of this, they said that one of the bales dropped the evening before had been cut open.

Campbell, of course, had them there. He told them how he had got up early, while all of them were still in their blankets, and had walked across to the end of the portage, noting the recently-cut bale on the way back. There was no doubt, he said, that one of them had done it. And he ordered them to get moving at once, and not to try any more silly tricks.

By the time they got to deserted Fort Halkett at the mouth of the Smith River, the season was too late for them to go on, so Campbell decided to winter there. "However," he writes, "I determined to go on to Portage Brulé, the spot Mr Hutchison and party had evacuated so hurriedly the year before, and which, on reaching, we found just as they had left it. The goods were scattered about all the way down to the water's edge, just as they had been dropped by the men running to the canoes. Of course everything was spoilt - except such articles as ball, shot, etc. - and the provisions had been eaten by wild animals."

In September the year's trading outfit was forwarded from Fort Simpson to the Devil's Portage, and with it came a letter to Campbell from Governor Simpson, written at Norway House. "I am very much pleased," he wrote, "at your spirited tender of your services to establish Dease's Lake, which has called forth the approbation of the Council and led to your promotion to the rank of clerk, with an advance of salary ... Let me beg that your attention be particularly directed to pushing the trade across the mountains . . and Robert Campbell is not the man I take him to be unless in due time he plants the H.B. standard on the shores of the Pacific." And that, of course, was just the sort of gubernatorial remark to incite the romantic young adventurer to greater efforts.

In the spring of 1838 a party came up from Fort Simpson bringing an apprentice clerk, A.R. McLeod, Jr, and some extra hands for the summer's work at Dease Lake. When all was ready, Campbell and his sixteen men resumed their journey up the Liard in two canoes. When they came to the mouth of the Dease River, they turned southwest and headed upstream to Dease Lake. On the east shore they selected a site for the new post, and at once began clearing away the surrounding timber.

On July 20th Campbell left most of the men with McLeod to put up the fort, and started off to explore the west side of the Mountains. With him he took his interpreter, Hoole, and two fine young Indians, Lapie and Kitza, whom he was to find, again and again, a very present help in time of trouble.

The four men travelled in two small spruce-bark canoes down to the south end of the long narrow lake, twenty miles away, and from there headed southwest across the mountains. From the shoulder of one of them, the next afternoon, they gazed far down on a river that looked like a white thread running through the deep valley. It

turned out to be the Tuya, a tributary of the Stikine. They had crossed the height of land from the Arctic side to the Pacific slope.

Down the steep trail they went till they came to an Indian bridge spanning the chasm. It was a rude, ricketty structure of pine poles spliced together with withes and stretched high above a foaming torrent; and to prevent it from collapsing, the ends of the poles were loaded down with stones.

As they approached it they saw smoke rising from a hut on the far side, and an Indian standing there. They beckoned to him; but as he refused to come, Campbell and his two Indians started to cross. The bridge, which leaned dangerously to one side, swayed and bounced, threatening to hurl them into the boiling waters far below. But finally they all got across and climbed up to the hut -- only to find that the Indian had vanished. His fire was burning brightly, however, and around it were three metal pots, showing that he had made contact with white traders. In one of them some salmon was cooking, so they helped themselves and left in payment a knife and some tobacco. Then they recrossed the ricketty bridge.

At dawn the next day they spotted a party of sixteen Indians issuing out of the woods near the hut. Campbell hoisted the Hudson's Bay flag and beckoned to them. Whereupon the Indians began to cross the bridge, calling out that they were friends, while their chief held out a pipe of peace. They turned out to be Nahannis, and they told Campbell that they had come from a great gathering of Indians a dozen miles down the Stikine, presided over by the great chief Shakes.

When Campbell asked them to lead him there, the chief implored him not to go. "Shakes will kill you," he said. "His men are as numerous as the sands of the beaches." The young Scotsman, however, was adamant, and they all started off for the great camp. Every now and then they met small groups of Nahannis who would push them and try to turn them back. At last things began to look so serious that he told Hoole, the interpreter, and one of the Indian lads to go back to the bridge and wait for two days. If he did not turn up in that time, they were to conclude that he had been killed, and were to cut down the bridge and head back to the fort on Dease Lake. Both the Indian boys refused to go back. Their fathers had told them, they explained, that if ever they deserted the white man in danger, they need never come back themselves. So all four of them went on, wondering, no doubt, if they would ever return.

At this point I am going to let Campbell tell what happened in his own words, since I certainly cannot better them. Nor would I want to abbreviate his account, which sounds almost like a few pages from 'Rider Haggard'.

"From the top of a hill," he writes, "we caught our first glimpse of the immense camp of which we had heard so much, and indeed the description given us was not exaggerated. Such a concourse of Indians I had never before seen assembled. They were gathered from all parts of the Western slope of the Rockies and from along the Pacific Coast. These Indians camped here for weeks at a time, living

on salmon which could be caught in thousands in the Stikine by gaffing or spearing, to aid them in which they had a sort of dam built across the the river.

"On the top of the hill I lost sight of my companions, including the Nahany Chief, & went down to the closely packed crowd awaiting us below escorted by an Indian who called himself "Jack" & could speak a little broken English. Every word I said in reply to the numberless questions asked me was taken up & yelled by a hundred throats till the surrounding rocks & the valley re-echoed with the sound.

"Presently a lane was cleared through the crowd for Shakes to come down to meet me. Shakes was a coast Indian, tall & strongly built, & as I afterwards learned was all-powerful among the Indians on that side of the Mountains. He ruled despotically over an immense band of Indians of different tribes. He came to the Stikine every year, with boats & goods, to the splendid rendezvous where I met him. Here he traded with the Indians of the Interior for the Russians, who supplied him with goods at Fort Highfield at the mouth of the river. He shook hands with me & led me to a tent which had been put up for me. After entering & sitting down, he produced a bottle of whiskey & a cup. I merely tasted the liquor, but all the others in the tent had a drink.

"Meanwhile the din outside was something fearful. Suddenly the eaves of the tent were raised from the outside & then the whole tent was swept away amidst loud shouts. I was subsequently informed that this was done by the Nahanies, who regarded me as their guest & friend, and who had reasons to suspect that Shakes would murder me inside & consequently pulled the tent down calling out as they did so "If the White Chief is killed, there will be plenty blood spilled here."

"I was well armed having pistols & a dirk in my belt, & a double barrelled percussion gun, which was a great source of wonder to them as the only guns they were familiar with were single-barrelled flint locks. Shakes wanted me to fire so that he might see how the gun went off. Fearing this was only a ruse to render my gun harmless, I took the precaution to have ball, powder & cap in my hand ready to slip in immediately after firing a shot. At every report, the whole camp yelled clapping their hands on their mouths at the same time, & the noise was frightful.

"I was glad to find that some of the Indians knew Dr. McLoughlin and Mr. (afterwards Sir) James Douglas, both prominent H.B.C. officers on the Pacific slope. This induced me to write notes addressed to them & others, giving particulars of my trip & informing them that I had ascertained that the so-called Pelly & the Stikine were identical, & requesting them to forward the information to headquarters. I may here add that these notes duly reached their destination.

"I remained in the camp for some time, the object of much curiosity, till at length getting clear of Shakes & the crowd on the plain in safety, which was more than I expected when I first went among them, I found my small party also all right on the top of the hill, where I forthwith hoisted the H.B.C. flag, & cut H.B.C. & date on a tree, thus taking possession of the country for the Company.

"Here too I first met a remarkable woman, the Chieftainess of the Nahanies. The Nahany tribe over which she and her father, a very old man, held sway were then about 500 strong, & like other Indians led a nomadic hunting life. Now & then a few of the leading men visited the coast at the mouth of the Stikine; but the Chieftainess said I was the first White man she ever saw. Unfortunately we had no proper interpreter, so that our conversation was very limited. She commanded the respect not only of her own people, but of the tribes they had intercourse with. She was a fine looking woman rather above the middle height & about 35 years old. In her actions & personal appearance she was more like the Whites than the pure Indian race. She had a pleasing face lit up with fine intelligent eyes, which when she was excited flashed like fire. She was tidy & tasteful in her dress. To the kindness and influence of this Chieftainess, we owed much on more than one occasion; in fact in all probability we owed our lives to her more than once.

"She came back with us for some miles & urged us on no account to stop till we were across Terror Bridge, as some of the young bloods with the sanction of Shakes were likely to slip after us and kill us or do us harm. On parting I gave her my handkerchief & all the loose nicknacks I had about me & received in return her silver bracelets. We walked hard & late & got across the bridge in safety, much elated at the result of our trip."

All this happened on July 23, so they still had a few weeks of summer left. Back at Dease Lake they found that work on the new fort was proceeding well, but that the daily yield of fish from the nets was getting smaller. Neither were the Indian hunters having much luck in killing moose and caribou. The only thing to be done to meet the situation, Campbell decided, was to go all the long, perilous way back to Fort Simpson for more supplies. And there were other considerations. As he put it: "I considered that the success of my recent trip across the mountains, my visit to the Russian or Coast Indians, and my identification of the Stikine River, were of sufficient importance to warrant my going down to Ft. Simpson with the news."

Accordingly he and one of his Indian lads left in a small canoe and paddled down the Dease River and the tumultuous Liard. When some distance above Hell's Gate, enclosed on both sides by high, perpendicular walls of rock, their canoe sprang a leak and began to sink. Luckily they saw a large spruce tree growing near the water's edge, and landing on a ledge of rock just in time, they took some pitch from it and repaired the damage.

Eventually, about August 20th, they reached Ft. Simpson. Chief Trader McPherson was glad to hear of their success in reaching the Stikine, but to Campbell's amazement and consternation he refused point blank to let them have any extra supplies. "Though we went there at the risk of our lives," writes Campbell, "it availed us little." This was the first, but by no means the last, evidence of McPherson's parsimony, which was to plague Campbell and his men year after year. As so, far from bringing back provisions for the starving men on Dease Lake, they had exhausted their own supplies before they got there.

They passed the long winter in terrible privation, hundreds of miles from the nearest Hudson's Bay post, scattered in twos and threes along the lake shore, and barely existing on rations which included small rodents, skins, and babiche. But their worst trouble was the frequent visits of what Campbell calls "the Russian Indians." The first really large band came in February, under the chieftainess whom he admired so much.

"We were at the time," he writes, "perfectly destitute of food of any kind. One of our men had just died at a camp she had passed, and she expressed her sincere sympathy with our forlorn condition. Her kindness to us was unbounded. She ordered her servants to cook the best they had for our use, and it was served under her own directions. We partook of a sumptuous repast -- the first for many a day -- consisting of excellent dried salmon and delicious fresh caribou meat.

"In the course of the evening, when everything had seemingly quieted down for the night, yell after yell suddenly broke the silence. The now furious savages rushed into the room where McLeod and I were sitting, loading their guns. Some of them seized our weapons from racks on the wall and would assuredly have shot us had not the Chieftainess, who was lodged in the other end of the house, rushed in and commanded silence. She found out the instigator of the riot, walked up to him, and stamping her foot on the ground, repeatedly spat in his face, her eyes blazing with anger.

"Peace and quiet reigned as suddenly as the outbreak had burst forth. I have seen many far-famed warrior chiefs with their bands in every kind of mood, but I never saw one who had such absolute authority, or was as bold and ready to exercise it, as that noble woman. She was truly a born leader, whose mandate none dared dispute. Her controlling presence and intrepid interference undoubtedly saved our lives."

Some weeks later the Nahannis returned without her, when Campbell and Louis Lapierre, an old French-Canadian, were alone in the house. They seized the old man roughly. "Are we to yield to them" he cried out, "or are we to sell our lives as dearly as we can?" But Campbell, fearful that they would surprise his people scattered along the lake, and murder them in cold blood, told him not to struggle. The big Scot was a deeply religious man, and it being a Sunday his Bible was close at hand. Now he picked it up, and opening it at random, his gaze fell on the ninth verse of the first chapter of Joshua. There he read: "Have I not commanded thee? Be strong, and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee."

The words had a salutary effect on the heathen -- as well as on the Presbyterian. He had noticed that these Indians seemed to stand in great awe of books, and pointing upward, would ask if it was the Great Spirit speaking. Presumably in this case he assured them that it was. At any rate, they backed away, and he offered one of them a blanket to take a note to McLeod at the far end of the lake, telling him to gather all the men and hasten to the fort as quickly as possible.

All hands were in the next day, and with their support the white men were able to get rid of their troublesome guests. Many years later, some old papers were discovered at Telegraph Creek post on the Stikine, written during that terrible winter of 1838-39. Two were receipts for dried meat and fish; but the third read: "This old scoundrel wishes me to give him a certificate of character. He has been trying to starve and murder me all winter. (signed) Robt. Campbell."

In the spring when the ice went out they prepared to leave for Fort Halkett. And the last meal they ate at the Dease Lake post before abandoning it for good, on May 8th, 1839, consisted of a single course -- the babiche netting from their snowshoes and the parchment from their windows, all boiled down into a gluey mess.

In September the winter's trading outfit reached them at Fort Halkett, and with it were some despatches for Campbell. The latter included a letter from Simpson, congratulating him on reaching the Stikine, and telling him that in the previous winter, he and Baron Wrangell, acting for the British and Russian trading companies, had concluded an arrangement whereby the whole of the Russian mainland territory north to Cape Spencer, including the fort at the entrance to the Stikine, had been leased to the Hudson's Bay Company for ten years. "Your services," wrote Simpson, "will now therefore be required to push our discoveries in the country situated on the Peel and Colvile Rivers, and I am quite sure you will distinguish yourself as much in that quarter as you have latterly done on the west side of the mountains."

This was the chance that Campbell had been yearning for. In February 1840 a clerk named William Movat arrived with instructions to Campbell that he was to follow up the Liard to its source, then cross the height of land in search of a large river flowing west. If he could not find such a river, he was to look for the headwaters of the Colvile, the mouth of which Thomas Simpson, the governor's cousin, had discovered three years before on the Arctic coast of Alaska. Presumably because its mouth was reported to be two miles wide, Simpson had concluded that it must also be a long river, and time and again he mentions it as the one Campbell must look for. Little did he realize that its nearest branch lay about 750 miles in an air line from the northernmost tributary of the Liard.

That tributary, which Campbell eventually found, flowed south-west into a beautiful lake about thirty miles long, having the shape of a spur. He named the lake Frances, after the governor's lovely young wife; and the land dividing the arms of the lake, rising about 2650 feet, he named Simpson's Tower, after her husband. Today the road running from Watson Lake to Ross River (which Campbell named after Donald Ross) skirts the western shore of Frances Lake.

Following this western arm, Campbell and his men found a river flowing in from the west, its last ten miles cutting through canyons in a series of cascades. With Hoole, Lapie, Kitza, and another Indian, he followed the tortuous course of this stream on foot and found it had its source in a lake he named Finlayson. And close by he discovered the low-lying Arctic-Pacific watershed.

A four-mile portage across it led them to the westward-flowing waters of a creek that Dawson later named after the explorer. Then, following it down to its mouth, Campbell made a great discovery -- the greatest of his career. Let us now hear him tell of it in his own words:

"On the sixth day of our journey from 'Simpson's Tower' we had the satisfaction of seeing from a high bank a large river in the distance, flowing northwest. I named the bank from which we caught the first glimpse of this river "Pelly Banks", and the river "Pelly River" after our home Governor, Sir J. H. Pelly. Then, descending to the river, we drank out of its pellucid water to Her Majesty and the Hudson's Bay Company."

At the time, or course, Campbell had no idea what he had discovered. And he was not equipped to pursue his discovery very far. However, they built a raft and drifted down for a few miles. And when they turned back, they threw in a sealed tin can containing some notes on their discovery.

Back at Pelly Banks, Campbell took possession of the country in the name of the Company -- as he had two years before on the hilltop above the great Indian camp -- by cutting the letters H B C into a tree trunk, with the date, and flying what he calls "the H B C ensign". This could have been either of two flags -- the red ensign with the white H B C of today, or the much older houseflag bearing the coat-of-arms on a white field, in use until 1953.

They eventually got back to Fort Halkett in mid-September with their canoe loaded with provisions, and the very next day the outfit and packet arrived from Fort Simpson, with the famous guide Jean-Baptiste Bruce in charge. He, Mowat, and seven canoemen left almost at once on their return journey. But a few days later, Campbell was astonished to see Bruce and two others approaching the fort on foot. While running a rapid on the day they had left, and congratulating themselves that they had passed the worst parts of the river, a large whirlpool suddenly appeared in front of them, and the bow was sucked into it. The steersman had then jumped overboard, and the two ends of the canoe had jack-knifed, throwing them all into the tumult of waters. Six, including the steersman, were drowned.

The winter of 1840-41 proved to be more or less normal, including a period when the inmates of Fort Halkett were on the verge of starvation. In the spring Campbell went down to the depot and there met his new boss, Chief Factor John Lee Lewes, an efficient, kindly Englishman who mercifully had replaced Murdoch McPherson as head man. Lewes gave him a kind welcome and a promise of cordial support in his work of extending the Company's trading empire.

Campbell had officially reported the success of his trip to the Pelly River, and in due course received a letter from the Governor -- who had just been knighted, and was on his way round the world. As far as Campbell himself was concerned, the really important part of the governor's letter was that in which he was instructed to continue his work of exploration, and in the spring of '42 he again went

down to Fort Simpson, where Lewes equipped him with two fine new boats manned by ten Company servants and two Indians, and gave him ample supplies for establishing a new post at Frances Lake.

They reached that spur-shaped lake in mid-August and at once began building and placing the fish nets on which they would have to depend for most of their food. In October he again heard from Sir George, who told him that the Committee in London had decided against building new posts in the leased Russian territory. Instead they would trade with the tribes there through the Coast Indians, as the Russians had done -- especially as the new territory was -- to use the Governor's words -- "not of such extent or so valuable as we expected it was."

During the ensuing winter the surrounding Indians discovered the new post, and came to Frances Lake to trade furs and provisions. Hoole, Campbell's right hand man, who could build houses and canoes, make sleds and snowshoes, bring home more meat and fish than anybody else, and serve as interpreter in the trading, was sent across to Pelly Banks to build another post. While there he built a large birchbark canoe for the ensuing voyage, and in June when Campbell and the remaining men joined him, they were soon able to embark on their voyage of discovery.

The crew consisted of Hoole, two French Canadians, and three Indians, including Lapie and Kitza. For food they had only three bags of pemmican among the seven of them, brought all the way from Fort Edmonton; and for trade goods, a few pounds of tobacco and beads, a few knives, axes, and awls.

They saw their first Indians the second day, and with the help of Hoole they were able to converse with them. They offered the men some tobacco, and all had a smoke and something to eat together. Then the explorers left some presents with them, and paddled away downstream. A large river coming from the east Campbell named the McMillan, after his cousin the chief factor. On the sixth day from Pelly Banks they reached the junction of a larger river, flowing from the southeast, and this Campbell named after his friend Chief Factor John Lee Lewes. This junction of the two headwaters streams was to prove an historic spot for Campbell.

Below the forks they came upon a large band of Indians whom he refers to either as the Wood Indians or the Gens de Bois. They also had never seen a white man, and were taken completely by surprise. When the explorer told them he was going further down the river they were much alarmed, and told him he would meet with many hostile tribes who would not only kill them, but also eat them. This of course greatly frightened Campbell's men, especially the Indians, and considering they were not equipped for going much farther, he decided to turn back. "I learned afterwards," he writes, "that it would have been madness to proceed."

On the third day of the return voyage they noticed, on both sides of the river, fires burning on the hill tops. And he guessed that, as in Scotland in the old days, these were signals made to

the tribes to gather and intercept the strangers. So they redoubled their efforts with paddle and tracking line to get upstream as fast as possible. On the fourth morning they spied a band of Indians on the opposite bank who made signs to them to cross -- which they did.

"They were very hostile," writes Campbell, "standing with bows bent and arrows on the string, and would not come down from the high bank to meet us. I sent up some tobacco to assure them of our peaceful intentions, but they would scarcely remove their hands from their bows to receive it. We then ascended the bank to them, and our bold, and at the same time conciliatory demeanour, had the effect of cooling them down. We had an amicable interview with them, carried on with words and signs. It required some finessing, however, to get away from them; but once in the canoe we quickly pushed out of range of their arrows and struck obliquely downstream for the opposite bank, while I faced about, gun in hand, to watch their actions."

That night the men were completely tired out, so he made them sleep in his tent while he kept watch. "In the forks of a large tree," he records, "I passed the greater part of that anxious night, reading Hervey's Meditations and at the same time keeping a vigilant lookout. Occasionally I descended and walked to the river bank, but all was still."

Two years afterwards, when friendly relations had been established with those Indians, he learned that they had dogged the strangers' steps all day, and when they camped for the night had lain in ambush behind the crest of the hill and watched their every movement. And they confessed that, had Campbell knelt down to drink, they would have rushed upon him, and murdered him and his sleeping followers.

In August 1844 he received orders to build a post at the junction of the Pelly and Lewes Rivers as soon as possible, but to delay the exploration of the river below that point in case it would bring them into competition with their Russian neighbours. However, four winters were to pass before they were able to make a concerted attempt. In the meantime, another fort was erected, this time at Pelly Banks as a jumping-off place, and some boats and canoes were built there for transporting men and supplies 300 miles downstream. Campbell himself hopefully made another trip to Fort Simpson to get supplies, but was again refused by the miserly McPherson. So it was not until May 1848 that Campbell and his new assistant, James G. Stewart, set off for the Forks with eight engages and some Indian hunters. They had a boat, a skiff, some canoes, and a raft of building boards. Fifty miles from the Forks they found the Indians waiting in large camps, friendly and eager to meet the traders. The imposing flotilla, the size and character of which astonished the natives, reached the junction of the Pelly and Lewes on June 1st, 1848. Building was begun at the extreme point of land between the two rivers and the fort was named Selkirk.

The great drawback to this post was its isolation. By April 1850 they had been living there without any communication with District Headquarters for eighteen months, so Campbell sent off

Stewart and another man on foot to try and reach Fort Simpson, many hundreds of miles away. And in August, an Indian arrived with the news that they had got back to Frances Lake with a boat-load of supplies.

Campbell and some of the others at once set off to meet Stewart. They found him waiting for the fall boat, and there he told them of his gruesome experiences. Arrived at Pelly Banks from Fort Selkirk on the way out, he had found that the whole establishment, save one small house, had burned down in the previous winter. The incompetent in charge, whom Campbell charitably identified only as "Mr P.", they found camped close by with one of Campbell's Indians. They had passed through dreadful suffering all winter and were emaciated to skin and bone. The other two men had died of starvation. So had several Indians in the vicinity, and some of the poor wretches had descended to cannibalism.

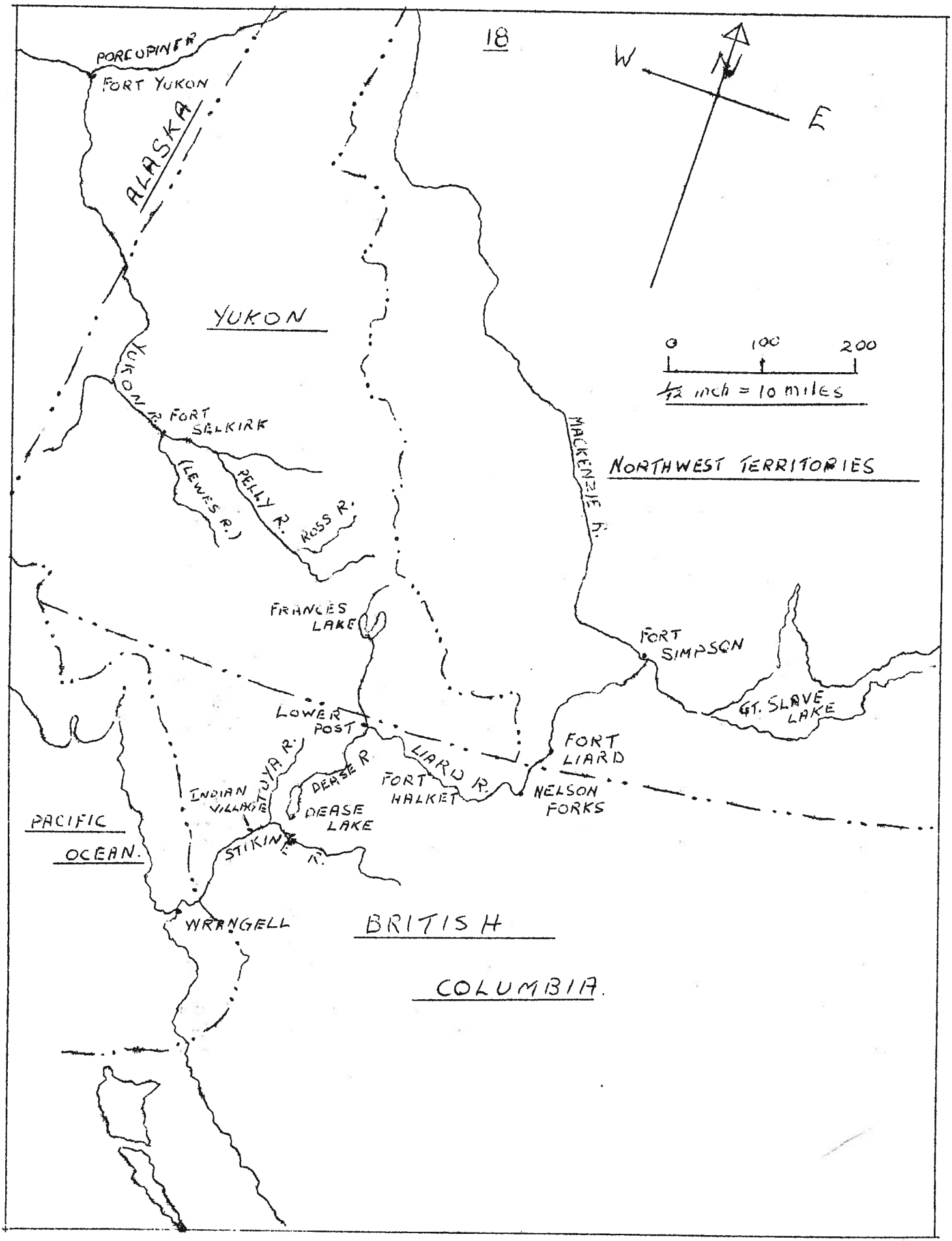
The following April -- that is, of 1851 -- Campbell got an express from Sir George telling him to explore the Pelly downwards as far as he thought advisable. This was the permission he had been waiting for, and at the end of May he left his good friend Stewart in charge at Selkirk and set out in a boat for the unknown North.

After a while they began to meet bands of primitive Indians, who proved very friendly. Their only arms were bows and arrows, and knives which were of bone or stone. Their kettles were woven tightly of small spruce roots, and their cooking was done by boiling the water in them by means of hot stones. Campbell's description of their appearance and dress shows that they were Kutchins.

Other Indians, farther down, told him that before long he would find a fort on the river bank, manned by people like themselves. Would it be a Russian or a Hudson's Bay fort? Eventually he sighted it afar off; and waving above the palisades he saw the red ensign of his own Company.

By this he knew that it was Fort Yukon, founded four years before by A.H. Murray, well within the territory of Russian America. And he knew too that his long-held theory, that the Pelly and Yukon were identical, had been proved. This river, not the murderous Liard, was the logical supply route for the posts he had built. Thus he had forged the last link in the great double chain of waterways connecting Fort Simpson with Fort Yukon, eight hundred air miles apart.

This, it seems to me, is the note of triumph on which to end this epic story of discovery and exploration in the Northwest, which is Robert Campbell's chief claim to fame. Though he continued to serve the Hudson's Bay Company for another twenty years, in northern Alberta and Manitoba, that was prosaic stuff compared to his trail-blazing days. And it is as the discoverer and explorer of the upper Yukon that his name will be remembered and honoured, by posterity.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FORT SIMPSON
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DEASE LAKE
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PACIFIC OCEAN.
STIKINE R.
WRANGELL
BRITISH COLUMBIA.