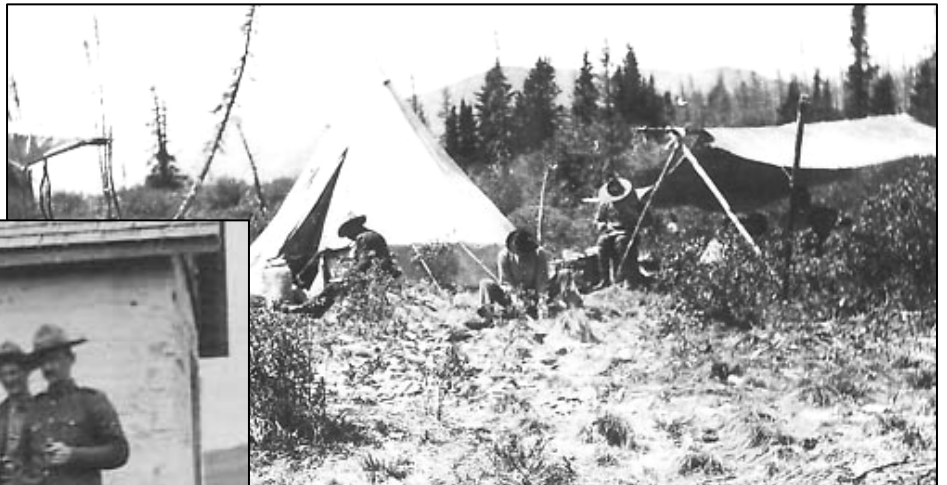


Documenting and Interpreting the History and Significance of the North West Mounted Police Peace-Yukon Historic Trails



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Photos on Cover:

Photo 1: Northwest Mounted Police trail route, 1905. Source: Glenbow Museum.

Photo 2: Camp of Royal Northwest Mounted Police party near Fort St. John, British Columbia. Source: Glenbow Museum.

Photo 3: Peace River Trail party at Fort St. John, British Columbia. Source: Glenbow Museum.

Executive Overviewⁱ

Erin Sherry and Veronica Cadden

The Historic Northwest Mounted Police Trail

The Northwest Mounted Police Trail (NWMP Trail) was initially one of numerous Aboriginal or ‘native walking’ trails that laced through the valleys and passes of the northern Rockies. Archaeological evidence indicates that some of these trails may well be thousands of years old. These trails were a vital connection between families and communities, and between hunting and gathering areas for the original inhabitants of the land.

By the mid-1800s, European, Canadian, and American prospectors were entering northern British Columbia and the Yukon in search of gold and other precious metals. Small Hudson’s Bay trading posts served these new immigrants with supplies and services. However, once gold was found in paying quantities in the Yukon in 1897, the influx of people in search of fast money increased dramatically. With the accompanying frenzy of prospectors attempting to reach the gold fields overland through northeastern BC, starvation, violence, and disorder inevitably surfaced. The authorities of the day called out to the Canadian government for help. Accurately identifying the lack of a safe, fast overland route to the Yukon from Edmonton as a major cause of the problem, the federal government commissioned the Northwest Mounted Police to move into the area to find a passable trail, and to police the route.

ⁱ This Executive Overview was prepared by Erin Sherry and Veronica Cadden, Regional Project Officers for the Northern Interior Region Inter-Agency Management Committee.

It was through this process that the trail became known as the NWMP Trail or the Peace-Yukon Trail.

In 1897, Inspector J.D. Moodie of the NWMP was commissioned to build a trail from Edmonton to the Yukon which would be used by prospectors and others as passage to the gold fields. With First Nation guides identifying most of the route, Moodie was successful in building a trail from Edmonton to Fort St. John then up the Peace River to the Halfway River. The trail continued up the Halfway to Cypress Creek, and up the Cypress through Laurier Pass over the Rockies to the Findlay River and Ft Grahame. From here it continued north up the trench following the Findlay and Fox Rivers, ultimately ending at Fort Selkirk, passing through Fort Liard (Lower Post) and Pelly Banks.

It was, without a doubt, one of the most incredible initiatives of its time. Despite weather, terrain, conflicting personalities, and poorly fed horses and men alike, the trail was successfully built and used by prospectors and others for several years. After another trail clearing venture undertaken in 1906 and 1907 by Superintendent Charles Constantine of the NWMP, the trail was used and patrolled by the NWMP for almost another 10 years. Since that time, some sections of the trail have continued to be used by First Nation communities for travel and subsistence; by adventurers, most notably Charles Bedaux, Mary Gibson Henry, and Fredrick Vreeland; by a famous geographical surveyor for the BC Lands Department, Frank Swannell; by trappers; by hunters; and, by members of the recreating public. Other sections have been lost to development or natural processes.

The Contemporary NWMP Trail

One section of the NWMP trail, along Cypress Creek, between the Halfway River and Laurier Pass, has been substantially preserved through the efforts of a Halfway River First Nation (HRFN) Elder, Pat Brady, who owns and runs the trap line in the valley. In 1905, Pat Brady's father, Baxter Clark Brady, built a trapline cabin at mile 114 on the NWMP Trail and subsequently worked for the NWMP, outfitting, packing, guiding, and trail clearing. Baxter Clark Brady moved to Brady Ranch in 1911 and purchased the land at the mouth of the Cypress in 1912 after it was surveyed by Land Inspector Hogan. From here, he ran an outfitting business with his ranch used as a supply and way stop for those travelling the NWMP Trail. Pat Brady was born on this ranch, and has lived there since. In the 1980s, when oil and gas exploration forays began in the valley, Mr. Brady started his now 30-year initiative to preserve the historic NWMP Trail. Over the years, several local champions have worked with him to keep the trail in the public eye.

In 1998, the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (MKMA) was approved by the provincial government and a Muskwa-Kechika Management Board was formed to manage resources in the area, which incorporates the Cypress Creek drainage. At that time, there was a push to have all or parts of the NWMP Trail designated as a 'Heritage Trail'. Heritage trails are designated as heritage sites under Section 9 of the *Heritage Conservation Act*; this designation means that the site/trail has heritage value to British Columbia, a community, and/or an Aboriginal people. Heritage designation requires specific protections to be in place along with a trail management plan to ensure that the future conservation needs of the trail will be met.

The *Muskwa-Kechika Management Area Recreation Management Plan* (MKMA RMP) (2000) notes several resource management zones with First Nation, cultural/heritage, and recreation values related to the NWMP Trail (Table 1), as does the updated *Local Strategic Recreation Management Plan for the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area: Recommended Draft* (2004). The process of *Heritage Conservation Act* designation for the NWMP Trail was so close to completion in the early 2000's that in the text of the Pre-Tenure Plans for Oil and Gas Development in the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area (2004), the trail is described as a designated Heritage Trail. However, the process was halted and nothing further was accomplished; the NWMP Trail remains without formal designation or protection other than a 5m corridor under the Heritage Conservation Act as a pre-1846 archaeological site.

Other landscape level plans that describe the significance and value of the NWMP Trail include the Fort St. John Land and Resource Management Plan (FSJLRMP) (1997) and the Mackenzie Land and Resource Management Plan (MLRMP) (2000). The former acknowledges that several major trails follow the Chowade River, Halfway River, and Cypress Creek, such as the Mary Henry Trail and the Bedaux Historic Trail (both of which overlap with the NWMP Trail), and that these trails are associated with significant archaeological sites in the Besa-Halfway-Chowade Resource Management Zone. Likewise, the NWMP Trail is specifically noted in the MLRMP as part of several resource management zones, including: the Keh Wahkeludi "Burned Cabin" – (Braid) Special Resource Management Zone, the Nuhseha – (Fox) - Special Resource Management Zone, and the Lower Ospika.

RMZ	First Nation Values	Important Features	Estimated Current Recreation Value	Current Access Method	Cultural/Heritage Values	Estimated Current Public Activities/Use levels	Estimated Current Commercial Activities/Use Levels	Anticipated Future Demand for Public Activities/Use Levels	Anticipated Future Demand for Commercial Activities/Use Levels	Environmental Considerations
Aeroplane Lake	Davie Trail; hevy Kaska TU around Aeroplane Lake	Aeroplane Lk.; Twin Island Lk.; Birches Lk.; Kitza and Calf Ck. Complexes; unroaded low rolling forested landscape; major guide camp	Moderate	Floatplane; boat; horse; raft/canoe	Davie Trail	Hunt, fish, raft/canoe, wildlife view, camp, hike, trail ride/ Low use	Hunt, fish, raft/canoe, wildlife view, camp, hike/ <6 suppliers; Low use	Existing/ Low increase in use	Existing/ Low increase in use	Critical habitat around lakes for grizzly bear and moose
Besa-Halfway-Chowade	Heavy Halfway River and Prophet TU; campsites and burial grounds	AMA Routes; Laurier Pass; Ten Mile; Robb, Marion, Koller, Twin, Cranswick, Colledge Lakes; Loranger and Nevis Cks.; Brown's Farm; Louis' Farm; major guide camps	Very High	ATV; aircraft; floatplane; horse; vehicle; snowmobile	Bedaux and RCMP Trails; traditional human migration route	Hunt, fish, camp, wildlife view, photo/ 3000+/yr.	Hunt, fish, camp, wildlife view, photo/ <10 suppliers/ 500/yr.	Existing/ Moderate increase in use, except for significant increase in snowmobiling	Existing/ Moderate increase in use	Mineral licks; critical habitat for moose, caribou, bison, elk, sheep and grizzly bear
Kechika River Corridor	Heavy Kaska TU; Davie Trail; numerous settlement sites	Kechika River; Scoop Lake; Heart of Rocky Mtn. Trench; major guide camp	Moderate	Riverboat; floatplane; aircraft; raft; horse, canoe	Chee House Post, Davie Trail; Heritage river; McDame Trail	Hunt, fish, wildlife view, camp/ 350/yr.	Hunt, fish, camp, wildlife view, trailride/ 14 suppliers/ 250/yr.	Existing plus canoe/ High increase in use	Existing plus canoe/ High increase in use	Mineral licks; critical elk habitat; moose winter range; bird migration/ staging areas
Denetiah Park	Heavy Kaska TU, particularly around Dall and Denetiah Lakes; Davie Trail	Denetiah and Dall Lks.; Davie Trail; Kechika (Heritage River) and Dall Rivers; viewscape of Gataga and Terminus Mountains; major guide camps	High	Riverboat; horse; floatplane; boat; raft/canoe	Historic fur trading route, Davie Trail	Hunt, fish, wildlife view, hike camp, photo, canoe, raft/ 100/yr.	Hunt, fish, wildlife view, camp, photo, trailride, rafting, canoeing/ 12 suppliers/ 350/yr.	Existing/ Moderate increase in use	Existing plus hike, snowmobiling/ Moderate increase in use	Lake char, northern pike and rainbow; Critical habitat for grizzly and goat; licks
Graham-Laurier Park	Halfway River and West Moberly TU	Christina Falls; Graham River watershed; Lady Laurier Lk.; Summits; AMA route; Needham Ck.	Low	ATV; horse; aircraft; snow-mobile; floatplane; mtn. bike	RCMP Trail	Hunt, fish, photo, camp, trailride, wildlife view, hike feature view/ 100/yr.	Hunt, fish, photo, camp, trailride, wildlife view, feature appreciation/ 4 suppliers 50/yr.	Existing plus ice-fish, canoeing/ Low increase in use	Existing plus ice-fish, canoeing, heli-hike/ski/ Low increase in use	Mineral licks; critical grizzly bear and caribou habitat; bull trout; fragmented/ Relic sheep and goat populations

Table 1: MKMA RMP assessment of values, current activities and use, and future demands related to the NWMP Trail area.

The interrelationship between the Davie Trail and the NWMP Trail is also outlined in the MLRMP. The Davie Trail or Atse Dene Tunna (Old Peoples Trail) runs over 600 kilometres to connect Fort Ware with Lower Post; first used as a traditional footpath by the Kaska Dena to access their seasonal hunting, fishing, and harvesting areas, the Davie Trail also functioned as a primary route for intertribal, cultural, and economic exchange between the Kaska Dena and neighbouring First Nations. In the late 1800s, the Davie Trail was extensively used to develop and accommodate the fur trade, the mining industry, and big game hunting outfits. During this time, some Kaska Dena took temporary work as guides, packers, and provisioners. From 1898-1899, J.D. Moodie, with the aid of First Nation guides, explored the Davie Trail; thus, a substantial portion of it became part of the NWMP transportation route to the Klondike gold fields. Significant heritage resources along the Davie/NWMP Trail include gravesites, abandoned trading posts and cabins used by the Kaska Dena.

Objectives laid out in the MLRMP relate to the maintenance of the historic integrity of the Davie/NWMP Trail while allowing for other uses, and necessitate identification of trail locations and historic features such as camp locations, viewing/vantage points, and trail markers. The MLRMP promotes designation of the Davie/NWMP Trail as a provincial Heritage Trail. Under this designation, the MLRMP suggests:

- priority should be given to the importance of the trail as a heritage resource;
- integrity of the trail should be maintained;
- the importance of this trail for First Nations' people should be recognized;
- a trail management plan should be prepared to govern public use with the support of provincial heritage legislation ... ensur[ing] that access strategies and development permits conform to plan requirements – a 200m corridor should serve as an operational guideline for managers;
- link and coordinate the trail management plan with other plans and development activities.”

In addition, the Fort Nelson Land and Resource Management Plan (1997) confirmed the importance of protected status for the Denetiah area, which contains a portion of

the Davie/NWMP Trail. Two other Provincial Parks are traversed by the NWMP Trail, namely Graham Laurier Provincial Park and Dune Za Keyih (Frog Gataga) Provincial Park.

Current Study Context

In 2007, a project entitled *Documenting and Interpreting the History and Significance of the Northwest Mounted Police/Peace/Yukon Historic Trail* (hereafter referred to as the NWMP Project), a partnership between the Ministry of Tourism, Sport, and the Arts (MTSA), the Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB), Halfway River First Nation (HRFN), and the North Peace Historical Society (NPHS), was initiated to foster natural and cultural resource stewardship along the trail. The purpose of this multi-year project sponsored and endorsed by the Northern Interior Region Inter-Agency Management Committee (NIR IAMC) was to enable the identification, documentation, and interpretation of the NWMP Trail. This initiative aimed to assist in illuminating the history of northern BC, to protect cultural values and traditions as well as a significant recreational resource, and to contribute to greater understanding and new relationships between First Nations and non-First Nations people in the Peace region.

This project attempted to promote equitable consideration of the range of values related to the NWMP Trail when making resource management decisions. By supplying information to MTSA's Northern Interior Regional Manager for use in establishing the NWMP Trail as a public recreation trail and to the Peace/Ft. Nelson District Recreation Officer for use in maintaining the NWMP Trail, this project contributed to the longevity of this significant recreation resource and, ultimately, to

the continued environmental, social, and economic stability of northern communities and the province. As well, the present initiative contributed to local First Nations' and Fort St. John community members' longer term goal of seeking 'Designated Heritage Trail' status for the NWMP Trail under Section 9 of the Heritage Conservation Act.

The multifaceted approach undertaken in this project to understand and depict the history and significance of the NWMP Trail involved, physically locating and mapping the NWMP Trail, archaeological reconnaissance fieldwork to identify archaeological and traditional use sites, oral history and traditional knowledge research with Elder Pat Brady, and collecting and analyzing trail related archival information (the subject of the current report). More specifically, the objectives of the NWMP Trail project were to:

- Identify, spatially define, and map the NWMP Trail corridor, initially focusing on the section of trail between the confluence of the Halfway River/Cypress Creek (Brady Ranch) and Laurier Pass (see 1:50 000 map sheets 94B/14 and 15);
- Document and preserve the history and use of the NWMP Trail, as well as information on significant resource features, using archival information, oral histories, traditional knowledge, and archaeological overview with field reconnaissance;
- Collect multi-media information concerning the NWMP Trail, its features, and histories during trail fieldwork, including photographs, video, digital voice recordings, and GPS (Global Positioning System) locations of significant sites;
- Generate an understanding of issues and options concerning both NWMP Trail maintenance and management from project partners; and,

- Provide information to assist in establishing the NWMP Trail as a recreational resource under Section 56 of the Forest and Range Practices Act.

The archival analysis presented in this report is a core component of the work underway in the NWMP Trail project. Archival references were identified using library catalogues, electronic indexes, databases, and bibliographies. Archives consulted include the North Peace Museum and Archives, the Royal BC Museum and Archives, the Glenbow Museum, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Archives, the Library and Archives of Canada, the Hudson Bay Company Archives, and the Yukon Archives. An eclectic range of supporting materials were collected and analyzed for this report, including primary archival information, local historical accounts, and scholarly secondary sources.

Current Conservation Attempts and Challenges

The NWMP Trail forms an important part of the cultural landscape and shows direct correlation with other cultural resource features. It provides a unique information source from which to study the history of local First Nations and non-native inhabitants, and is used currently as a tool for teaching, recreation, and for practicing traditional activities. However, the passage of time and resource development pressures threaten loss of the NWMP Trail features and associated knowledge that hold very important cultural, heritage, environmental, social, and educational value for Halfway River First Nation and all British Columbians. Oil and gas development is increasing in the foothills of the Rockies, as is independent power production (wind power), and mineral exploration. Mountain Pine Beetle management is also turning

the attention of the forest industry to the Cypress Valley. Increasing use of all-terrain vehicles by hunters and other recreationalists along Cypress Creek², vandalism, and changes to natural drainage systems caused by seismic line development in the 1980s are slowly impacting the trail corridor. Pat Brady still maintains an approximately 70km segment of the trail and places information sign posts along the route.

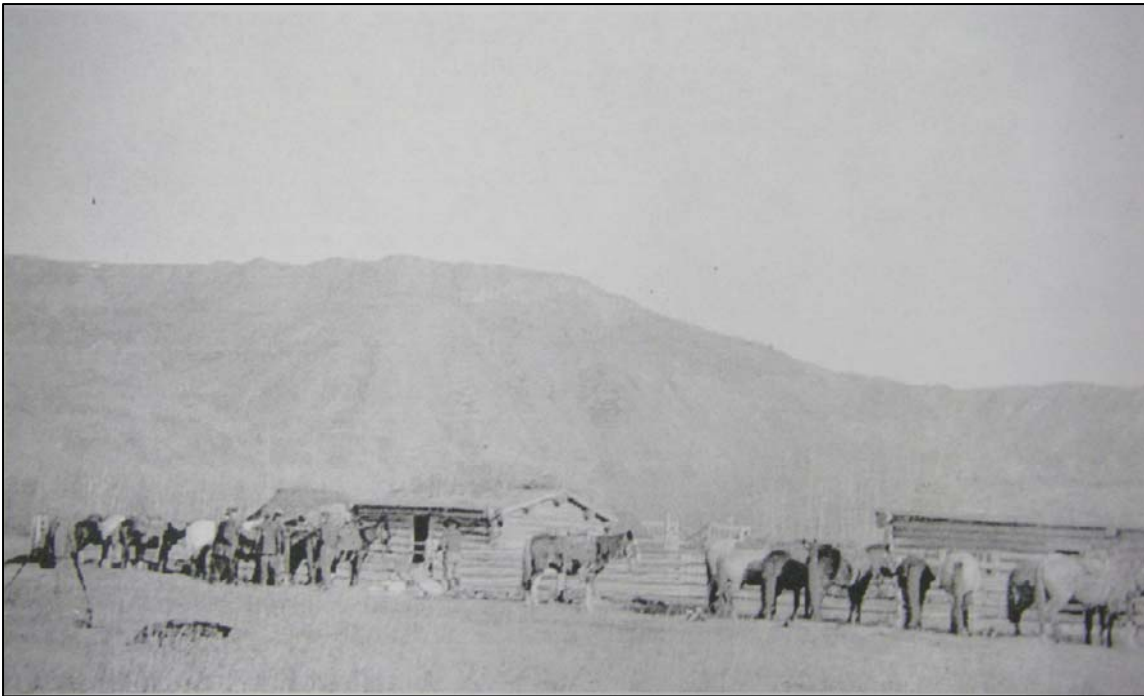
In 2007, a NWMP Trail Committee was informally established as an advisory body to the NWMP Trail project and to raise local interest once again in the conservation of the NWMP Trail. The committee is composed of representatives of the Provincial government, the Halfway First Nation, the North Peace Historical Society, and interested local citizens. In the view of the NWMP Trail Committee, preserving the trail is not just about preserving recreation and tourism development opportunities, but it is also about safeguarding the culture and identity of First Nations and caring for a place of historical and environmental significance where, at least so far, there has been relatively little disturbance.

Looking to the Future ...

A section of the NWMP Trail is currently undergoing the process of being designated a Public Recreation Trail by MTSA. However, this designation only affords a minimal amount of protection under the Forest and Range Practices Act (legislation that does not apply to other resource industries).

² There is an existing designated public recreation trail in the Cypress valley that follows an old seismic line. This trail intersects the NWMP Trail at several places in the valley. Called the Cypress Creek Recreation Trail, it is identified as one of the designated ATV routes in the MKMA and has formal designation under the Wildlife Act.

The historic environment matters to all of us. It tells us about who we are and where we have come from. It gives us identity and shapes the distinctive character of our province. Noted in significant provincial land use plans, in the oral history of Halfway River First Nation, and in the historical record of the Peace River region, many people care about the preservation of the NWMP Trail. To accomplish this, elaboration of a Heritage Trail designation process and an inter-agency approach to trail planning and management with involved First Nations will be required, a challenging agenda for us all but one that offers great benefits. At a time of rapid change and development, the NWMP Trail project served to collaboratively identify and research this natural and cultural heritage resource. Action is now required to protect and sustain the NWMP Trail both for us today and for future generations.



McCusker's survey party at Brady's Ranch, 1911
(Photographer undetermined; Image 0-00954 courtesy of British Columbia Archives)



Brady Children at home on Baxter Clark Brady's Ranch
(from back row left: Otto Brady, Eunice Brady, Betty Brady, Winnie Brady; from front row left: Old Man Lily with Pat Brady on knee, Glenn Brady; Photographer undetermined; date unknown, Photograph courtesy of Pat Brady)

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Notes

1) The Police Trails that originate in the Peace River region have many different names, all of which are used throughout this report. These include the following: Peace-Yukon Police Trail; the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) Peace-Yukon trail; the Police Trail; the Mounties' Trail; the Edmonton Peace-Yukon Trail; Moodie's Trail; and Constantine's Trail.

2) The North West Mounted Police Peace-Yukon Trails were in many ways an expression of European colonialism, which was often racist and xenophobic. Although some of these historical facts may be uncomfortable, it is important to accurately present this material in order to exhibit part of the mentality that surrounded the formation of the NWMP Trails. Thus, the report contains occasional cited examples of racism from the literature of this period.

Abstract

In 1897 and 1905 small groups of Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) guided by local First Nation people had the task of finding and constructing a wagon trail from Fort St. John to the Yukon gold-fields. This feat was performed through some of the most difficult terrain in Canada. The objectives of building the trail were two-fold: "...to connect the Yukon Territory with other parts of Canada, and thus secure an all Canadian Route to the Yukon [and to] open up an unknown and only partially explored portion of Northern British Columbia"³. The stories of the construction and subsequent usages of the NWMP Peace-Yukon Trails are compelling, and many short narratives have been written to describe aspects of the Trails' past. However, none of these singularly illustrate how complex and eventful this history is.

Considering this, *Capturing and Interpreting the History and Significance of the North West Mounted Police Peace-Yukon Historic Trails* is designed to examine the past in a number of different ways. The stories of the creation and usage of the NWMP Peace-Yukon Trails are central to this article; however, these accounts are then correlated with then-contemporary national and international socio-political themes to more fully demonstrate the Trails significance. For similar purposes, the knowledge and interpretation of local residents is also incorporated into this study. An eclectic range of supporting materials has been drawn on in order to achieve these results, including scholarly secondary sources, primary archival information, and local historical accounts.

³Premier Mac Bride Correspondence, March 19, 1908

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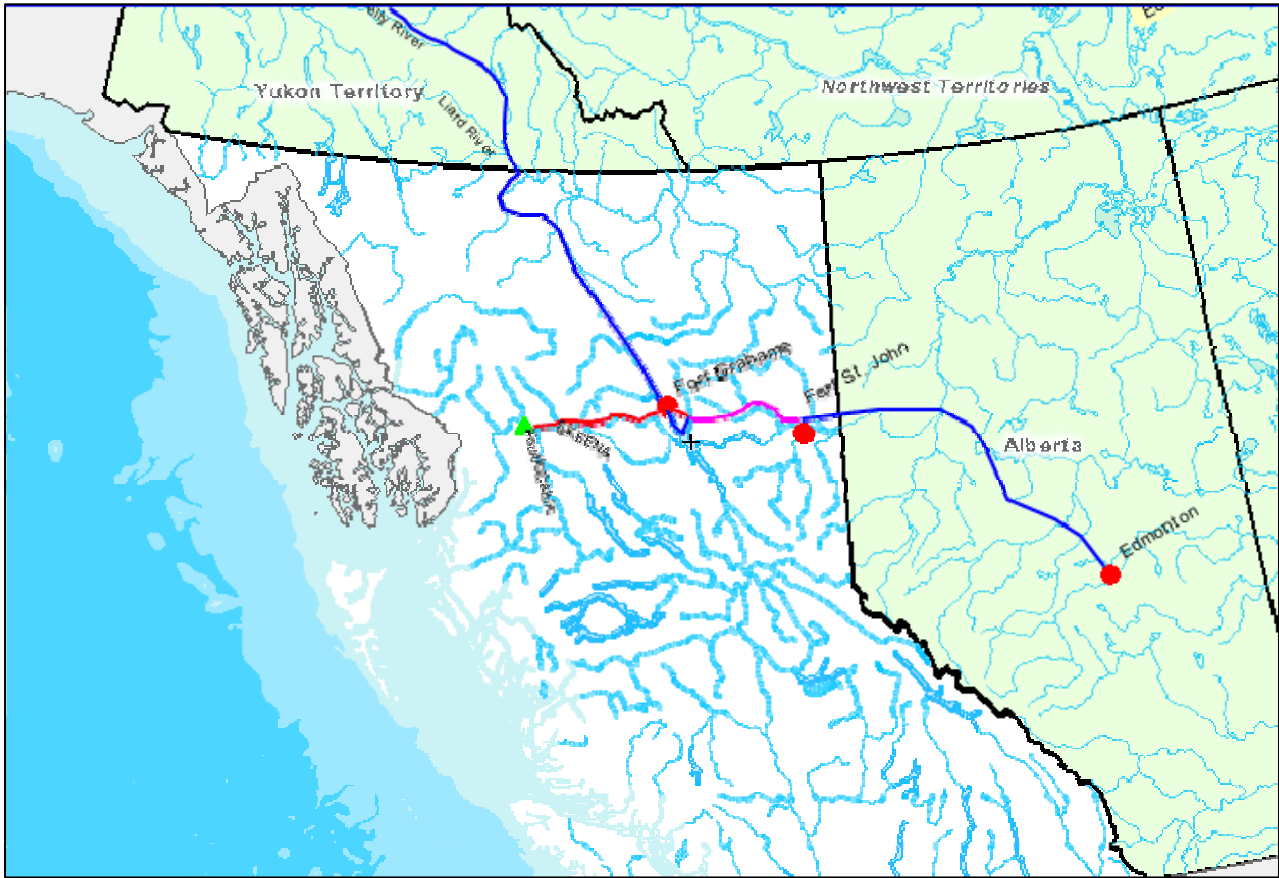
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THE NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE PEACE-YUKON TRAILS, 1897-98, 1905-1907.

Blue Line: Inspector J.D. Moodie 1897-1898 reconnaissance route.

Red Line: Superintendent Charles Constantine 1905-1907 trail construction route.

Purple Line: Trail section that was used by both Constantine and Moodie's parties.

Part One: National and International Historical Settings

Part One is comprised of five short chapters that demonstrate some of the key provincial, national, and international factors that contributed to the Yukon Gold Rush and to the creation of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) Peace-Yukon Trails. The first chapter, *The Yukon*, begins by describing the exciting atmosphere surrounding the Yukon Gold Rush, and provides a broad framework for the NWMP Peace-Yukon Trails' place in this history. Chapter two, *Canada before the Gold Rush*, shortly describes how the NWMP Peace-Yukon Trails reflect many of the themes found in late nineteenth century Canadian culture and politics.

The third chapter, *The United States before the Yukon Gold Rush*, discusses America's fascination with gold, and explains why the Peace-Yukon Trails were part of a larger need to protect Canadian sovereignty in the north. Chapter four, *The Development of British Columbia*, shows how gold stampedes played a major role in the development of B.C, and also reveals why British Columbia was not in a position to develop its northern territories during the Yukon Gold Rush. Finally, chapter five, *Peace River Area Historical Description*, overviews the history of Aboriginal tenure and early Eastern Canadian exploration in the heart of the Peace-Yukon Trails area.

1) The Yukon

From a European perspective, the Yukon in the 1880s was a desolate chunk of undeveloped territory in the northwest corner of Canada. Other than the local Indigenous groups very few people of European or eastern-Canadian First Nation descent (voyageurs) lived in the Yukon. The exceptions were a limited number of fur traders, missionaries, and an increasing number of gold hungry prospectors who had spent decades mining their way north from California, through British Columbia, and

were now pushing into the extreme northern boundaries of the continent in their search for precious metals. Finding gold in paying quantities in 1886, American miners started to construct the rough-and-tumble mining town known as Forty-Mile just inside the Canadian Boarder from Alaska.⁴

This new northern metropolis was a hodgepodge of simply-built log cabins with pole and dirt roofs and doors made from roughly-sawn slabs. Glass was a rarity and the crude windows might be made of scraped, un-tanned hide, a piece of white cotton canvas, or bottles laid on end then chinked with moss.⁵

No official North West Mounted Police presence existed in the Yukon at this time, and the miner's regulated themselves through primitive councils and vigilante justice.⁶ However, as more gold began to be found in 1886 and frictions increased, local missionaries began to appeal to the Canadian Federal Government for police support. Clifford Sifton, Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier's Minister of the Interior, realized that the region was growing economically, but the presence of vigilante American miners controlling Canadian territory could spell trouble: many of the Americans did not even know they were on Canadian land. Under these circumstances Sifton prudently opted to send a small expeditionary police force to the Yukon to establish law amongst the mining camps.⁷ This was an intelligent realization, for the strong police presence within the Yukon during the Gold Rush of 1897 would define a major difference between the Canadian westward frontier experience compared to the lawless colonization of the Wild West in the United States.

Unbeknownst to most, in 1896 men like Skookum Jim Mason, George Carmake, and Dawson Charlie hit rich gold strikes on desolate Bonanza Creek. This

⁴Helene Dobrowolsky.. *Law of the Yukon* (Whitehorse: Lost Moose Press, 1995), p.12.

⁵ Ibid, 12.

⁶ Ibid, 13.

⁷ Ibid, 14.



Photo 1: Mounties at Dawson City, 1900.⁸

anonymity would not last long. In dramatic fashion, international newspapers suddenly began reporting that two ships had brought over two tons of gold into San Francisco and Seattle from the Yukon between July fifteenth and seventeenth.⁹ An unprecedented stampede would be sparked, as thousands of people of different nationalities caught the gold-fever. Americans, Canadians, British, Italians, Chinese, and numerous other ethnicities swarmed up the west-coast of North America in ships or through Canada's unforgiving wilderness by various "overland" routes, all

⁸ *Klondike Gold Rush Pictures* http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Klondike_Gold_Rush

⁹ Berton, Pierre. *The Klondike Fever: The Life and Death of the Last Great Gold Rush* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 99-130.

striving to get to the Klondike's gold-bearing hotspots surrounding Dawson City.

Most Klondikers took the infamous and better travelled sea-routes to



Map1: Yukon Gold Rush sea routes; part of an “All Canadian Route” shown.¹⁰

the lawless port-towns of Skagway and Deya Alaska. From there they marched up the treacherous Chilkoot Pass, which served as the dividing line between Alaska and the Yukon.¹¹ Anyone entering the Yukon by way of the Chilkoot was expected to manually carry a year's worth of supplies over the pass, by order of the Mounties who had stationed a customs booth on top.

Such was the popular excitement over the Yukon that many of the people who started out on these epic journeys had only an inkling as to what this type of expedition into the far north really required. For individuals who did not choose to take the quicker sea routes into Alaska and instead headed overland through Canada by trail the experience must have been incredible. Imagine someone who had spent their entire life in mild, flat, urban London attempting to command a sixty

¹⁰ Dobrowolsky, 25.

¹¹ *Klondike Routes Map*, http://images.google.ca/imgres?imgurl=http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/09/Klondike_Routes_Map.png



Photo 2: Prospectors climbing Chilcot Pass, 1897.¹²



Photo 3: Chilcot Pass looking down from the Summit.¹³

¹² Marc Fishman. *Recreation and Travel*. <http://www.medecin.eu/recreation.html>.

¹³ *Gold Rush Photos*. <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Goldrushphoto/02english/02intro.html>

horse pack-train through Northwestern British Columbia's unforgiving mountain ranges, endless dead-fall, and hazardous waterways. These individuals would have had to travel over a thousand kilometers to get from Edmonton to Dawson City. If they actually managed to reach Dawson without losing all of their horses or dying along the way (many did), the greenhorn prospectors looked forward to jostling for gold in difficult conditions, and freezing in unbelievably cold winters. Of course, a few of them would also strike it rich. Historian William Morrison said it best when he noted that the Klondike Gold Rush was one of the rare moments in Canadian history that is both melodramatic and true.¹⁴ As we will see, this was the exciting atmosphere that surrounded the development of the Peace-Yukon Trails.

2) Canada before the Gold Rush

While it is important to understand the spirit of the Klondike, there were also several Canadian political themes that influenced the need for the Peace-Yukon Trails, even before the stampede began. In the decades preceding the Klondike Gold Rush, strong federal government leadership and national vision under the powerful governments of John A. Macdonald and later Wilfred H.C. Laurier created an energetic social and economic dynamic within the young country. Canada was at a transformative time in its history, and significant differences existed between the old and new guards.

At the time of the Klondike rush, the political landscape was in the waning days of the late-Victorian Loyalist conservatives who were closely linked to Great Britain. John A. Macdonald perhaps represented the apex of this form of Loyalist.

¹⁴ William R. Morrison, *The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), Introduction.

During most of Macdonald's reign (1867-1873, 1878-1891) ethnic hierarchy was still overtly acknowledged in eastern Canada¹⁵, and people of Anglo-Saxon origin considered themselves a dominant class within a colony that was firmly established within the British Empire. Not surprisingly, many of the loyalists were very recent immigrants to the country.



Photo 4: Sir John A. MacDonal.¹⁶

During the 1880's Macdonald's governments were responsible for brokering Confederation, and the economic momentum Canada rode into the Gold Rush era was largely initiated by the expansionist policies that Macdonald first endorsed. Most significantly, Macdonald enabled Confederacy and sparked the development of western Canada's natural resource potential with the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1881. Central to Macdonald's western vision was a peaceful and orderly colonization—an ethic that would carry through to the management of the Yukon Gold Rush.¹⁷ However, Macdonald's government was also prepared to use force to make sure that this migration was not disrupted, as evidenced by the decisive order to use the North West Mounted Police and Military units to crush the Métis led Northwest Rebellion in 1885. The Métis had been fundamentally

¹⁵ *First Among Equals: The Prime Minister in Canada Life and Politics*. <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/primeministers/h4-3031-e.html>

¹⁶ *Sir John A. Macdonald*. <http://www.uppercanadahistory.ca/pp/pp9.html>

¹⁷ Virginia R. Robeson, ed. *Debates About Canada's Future 1868-1896*. (Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.) p, 50.

opposed to Canada's governance of the central Northwest Territories, which they felt were under Métis jurisdiction.¹⁸



Despite the progress that was made towards settling the west, Macdonald's nation-building initiatives had also put Canada deeply in debt by the time the Yukon Gold Rush began due to expensive attempts to modernize and expand the economy. Macdonald was also a protectionist who was naturally suspicious of the United States, which both stimulated and hurt Canada. His anti-American "National Policy" among other things sheltered national industrial interests from aggressive US markets and allowed for the expansion of industrial economic growth

in eastern Canada.¹⁹ On the other hand, this hostile trade strategy obviously did little for Canada's diplomatic relations with the Americans. Macdonald's hand picked successor John Thompson (1893) was also very concerned with American economic and social influences. Thompson was particularly concerned about the possibility of US annexation, and maintained strong ties to the British over the course of his tenure.²⁰

Despite this reactionary Loyalist element, the 1890s were also a time when Canada's social fabric and political outlook changed rapidly in many respects.

¹⁸ J.M. Bumsted. *The Red River Rebellion*. <http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0006727>

¹⁹ Robeson, 50.

²⁰ *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*. <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BiId=40584>

Canada was a socially divisive place, particularly in the east, where a large population of Quebecois had challenged British rule for many years. Dissent from the crown was even advocated amongst some eastern Canadian politicians of British origin, who argued that Canada would be better off securing closer economic and social ties to the US.²¹ Others claimed that an isolated national identity distinct from the Americans and English was needed.²²

More Canadians of non-Anglo ethnicity also began to assume positions of power within Canada in the 1890s—monumentally--Wilfred Laurier became the first French-Canadian Prime Minister in 1896, just one year before the Yukon Gold Rush occurred. Laurier is noted to have begun gently moving Canada from its status of English colony to a commonwealth country during his tenure.²³ Similarly, Laurier's National Policy was different from Macdonald's in that it stressed improving Canada-US relations through a trade reciprocity policy. This, of course, was considered to be an act of annexation by the Loyalist opposition and fundamentally symbolizes the split between anti-American loyalists and North American-centric citizens.

Despite differing liberal and conservative views towards relations with the United States, both parties were unified in their vision of western colonization



Photo 5: Sir Wilfred Laurier.²⁴

²¹ Robeson, 60.

²² Ibid, 57.

²³ J. W. Defoe. *A Study in Canadian Politics*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1922.), p, 18-25.

²⁴ *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/art/print?id=12543>

throughout the 1880s and 1890s. All of the respective Federal Governments were unanimously anxious to somehow exploit the resource potential of the huge western land base, and thousands of immigrants headed into the territories under Laurier, as they had with MacDonald. Canada was a rural society during this period, and agriculture was central to Laurier's settlement plans.²⁵

There were other land based values besides agriculture that were also worthy of developing in the western territories: lumber, mining, gold, and oil were just a few of the known resources. In 1875 an extensive federal expedition known as the Geological Survey of Canada was performed across the country, and numerous botanical, geographic, and geological surveys were performed. In particular, the Athabasca region of what is now Alberta—which encompasses much of the Klondike era Treaty Eight region—was found to be vastly rich in oil:

The reports of government geologists led a Senate Committee to conclude that the petroleum reserves in Athabasca's tar sands would rank... among the chief assets comprised in the Crown Domain of the Dominion. The geologists had also identified rich deposits of silver, copper, iron, asphaltum and other minerals of economic value which were expected...to add materially to the public wealth of Canada.²⁶

The construction of the CPR had allowed for some of these riches to be developed and towns like Regina, Calgary, and Vancouver grew rapidly from 1878-1897, however, the European population in western Canada remained sparse. Despite these developments, western Canada was still a vulnerable place and many hinterland economies did not develop because of the lack of "settlers".

Therefore, in the years leading up to the Yukon Gold Rush the zeitgeist in Canada was already one of opportunity, expansion, progress, and cultural change. However, this was also a tumultuous era of national identity formation and many

²⁵ Robeson, 73.

²⁶ Robeson, 91.

people were confused about where Canada's imperial alliances ought to lay. While Canada officially pursued an economic policy in 1897 that aimed to create closer relations with the United States, there was also a significant sector of society who viewed America as a gold-hungry enemy who threatened Canada's possessions.

As we will see in later chapters, the development of the Peace-Yukon Trails in many ways was reflective of a delicate Yukon policy that balanced both of these views. The trails were designed, in part, to protect Canadian territory from an American invasion of the Yukon, while also being respectful and somewhat accommodating to the migrants who poured over the country—after all these newcomers could spend lots of moneys getting outfitted in Canadian towns, and possibly even settle the new territories they trekked through. In order to understand how the migration of prospectors from the United States played a role in the Yukon trails development more fully, it is important to understand why gold was desirable to Americans.

3) The United States before the Gold Rush

Both Canada and the United States were shrouded in the tail end of a serious global depression in 1896. Canada managed to start to break free of the depression before the start of the Yukon Gold Rush; unfortunately, the United States took longer to shake their economic problems. The depression was caused by several factors, but many Americans attributed the root of the economic crisis to a series of events that lead to the depletion of their country's national gold reserves.²⁷

²⁷ Kathryn Morse. *The Nature of Gold*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), p. 1-10.

American miners in the Yukon—not Canadians--were responsible for initiating the Klondike stampede. When the Yukon Rush occurred people came from all over the world to prospect the gold fields; however, Americans went north in particularly



Photo 6: July Fourth celebrations in Dawson City, Yukon, during the gold rush.²⁸

large numbers. Like Canada, gold rushes were an important aspect of the development of America's frontier economy. Therefore, it is no surprise that American prospectors lead the charge into western Canada whenever gold was discovered. But why was gold such a precious commodity? Historian Kathryn Morse says this question can be answered contextually.

The debate in the newly unified United States revolved around whether to use a gold or silver standard to back the new US national currency. This was a contentious issue because various interest groups stood to profit greatly from the fixed rate and assured annual federal sale of either gold or silver. In particular, many

²⁸ Forth of July Celebrations: <http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Goldrushphoto/>

silver miners and, oddly enough, farmers wanted to use a silver standard, and lobbied for it. The miners arguing that silver mining would basically go extinct if gold were continue to only be used to back the dollar, considering the difference in the value per ounce of silver compared to gold. Debt ridden farmers advocated silver because they were interested in the currency inflation that would occur if silver was used to back the dollar, which have the effect of devaluing their debts--thus making them easier to pay off.²⁹

In 1890 the Sherman Silver Purchase Act was legislated into existence and a compromise was reached: the federal government would use both gold and silver to back the dollar. Interestingly, the act also stipulated that a silver quota would ensure silver miners a guaranteed annual sale of silver to the federal treasury³⁰. This lead to a boost in silver mining production and a lot of silver was sold to US Government, however, dollar bills could be redeemed from the Federal Reserve in *either silver or gold*. At this time gold was worth sixteen times more than silver and individuals mostly cashed in their credit for gold. This lead to a US treasury that was deficient in gold and rich in silver, which ultimately contributed to American market instability.



Figure 7: An Anti-Sherman Silver Purchase Act Cartoon.

²⁹ Ibid, 1-50.

³⁰ Ibid.

When the depression of 1893 hit the United States, Conservative leaders said the Sherman Silver Purchase Act was at the root of economic problems, and the silver debate played a key role in the national elections of 1893 and 1896.³¹ “The presidential election of 1896 was fought on economic issues and was marked by a decisive victory of the pro-gold, high-tariff Republicans led by William McKinley over pro-silver William Jennings Bryan”.³² So by the time the Klondike Rush occurred in 1897 gold had been at the forefront of US the national debate for a while. Gold was iconic because it symbolized the key to renewed prosperity in the United States. The US national focus upon gold was not insignificant. Finding large quantities of this metal would help solve a critical domestic problem for the Americans, and go a long way to helping them to escape the depression. Hence, the Yukon in 1897 would lead to near pandemonium rush from the United States where gold was at a premium, both psychologically and monetarily.

Taking this into account, the Canadian Government’s decision to construct the Peace-Yukon Trails is partially explained. The trails were built for a multitude of reasons; however, the widespread Canadian alarm over national security was a significant factor in its construction. The flood of Americans frontiersmen into the Yukon treasure-box was worrisome to many, considering their renegade and confrontational reputation. Adding to some Canadian’s concern for the Yukon was the fact that the US and Canadian governments disagreed on the exact location of the Alaska-Yukon boundary, setting the stage for a potential international incident.³³ People across the country argued there was a need to physically claim the Yukon by

³¹ Ibid.

³² Albert Clark Stevens. *An Analysis of the Phenomena of the Panic in the United States in 1893.* Quarterly Journal of Economics 8 (January 1894) (JSTOR), p. 117–148.

³³ F. M. Carroll. "Robert Lansing and the Alaska Boundary Settlement". *International History Review* 1987 9(2): 271-290.

creating direct links to the Klondike, like the Peace-Yukon Trail, exclusively through Canadian territory.

But why was Ottawa responsible for the trail initiative rather than Victoria, and what was B.C.'s role in the Peace-Yukon Trails' development? For one thing the Yukon Gold Rush was an international event that required Federal level management. However, a brief survey of British Columbia's history also shows that although Gold Rushes were very important to the development of B.C., at the time of the Yukon Gold rush British Columbia was not in much of a position to support its northern frontier.

4) The Development of British Columbia

Prior to confederation in 1871, British Columbia existed as two remote colonies in the largely undefined territory that would eventually become western Canada.³⁴ Isolated by the Rockies and the Pacific, the bulk of this colony was uncharted by Europeans and virtually disconnected from compatriots in fringe outposts like Regina. By the 1850's colonial B.C.'s tiny non-native population was almost exclusively linked to the fur trading system, and the colonies' first economic and political developments grew out of this reality. For example, Hudson Bay Company official James Douglas administrated the establishment of many social and economic milestones that would lay the foundations for British Columbia.³⁵ Likewise, HBC officials were largely responsible for starting the first small industries, such as very limited agriculture, fishing, and other service operations. Many of these

³⁴ Woodcock, *British Columbia: The History of the Province*. (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990), p. 61-95.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

ventures was often supported by local Aboriginal people, who were an integral part of the workforce.³⁶



Painting 1: Ships of Meares' arriving at Nootka Sound in 1788.³⁷

Pre-confederation era gold rushes were particularly key to the development of colonial British Columbia. The territory's first small economic booms and real immigration resulted from the Fraser River rush of 1858, in which thousands of prospectors flooded the region from the United States. The 1861 Caribou Gold Rush and the 1869 Omenica Gold Rush in the Peace River Region are among a few of the other booms that attracted many prospectors from around the world.³⁸ These successive stampedes brought thousands of mostly American prospectors into the colony, and although a lot of these newcomers left, the gold rushes left the lasting effect of creating wagon road networks into B.C.'s interior. Residual population settlement occurred because some prospectors did not leave, and communities were established as a result.

³⁶ Hak, Gordon. *The Socialist and Laborist Impulse in Small-Town British Columbia: Port Alberni and Prince George, 1911-33*. Environmental History. (Durham: Duke University Press, April 2003).p 8.

³⁷ *Ships of Meares arriving at Nootka Sound in 1788* . <http://www.answers.com/topic/nootka-sound>

³⁸ Woodcock, 99-105.

Gold rushes into British Columbia also created the first significant administrative difficulties and social infrastructure growth. One of Douglas' biggest tasks included trying to creating viable wagon trail networks within the colony during



Photo 8: Caribou Stampeders with Camel.³⁹

the Caribou Gold Rush. Interestingly, Great Britain offered the support of the military's Royal Engineers from 1856-1863 to help develop the colony's road systems before the North West Mounted Police existed. The Royal Engineers were responsible for surveying the wagon road that extended through the Fraser Valley canyon to the Quesnel region.⁴⁰ Other Royal Engineer duties included designing the new administrative capital of New West Minister (which would be moved to Victoria), as well as creating town site plans for Lyton and Hope. Hence, before the NWMP arrived in Northern B.C. to construct the Peace-Yukon Police Trails, British military organizations had already played a strong roll in helping to establish British Columbia's colonial infrastructure during gold rushes.

Unfortunately mining's downside was that it bred instability within B.C.'s fragile economy. "The undulating pattern of mining, rush followed by recession, had

³⁹ Caribou Stampeders with Camel. <http://homepage.mac.com/kjkoome/HTML/tripreports/bcbike/bcbike9lilloet.html>

⁴⁰ Woodcock, 99-105.

led to chronic business instability. And nothing by 1871 had yet replaced gold as an effective stimulus to the nascent economy or as a lasting means of attracting population".⁴¹ Economic fragility was difficult for Colonial B.C. to



Photo 9: Group of Royal Engineers, 1856.⁴²

overcome especially since it was restricted from large markets. The fur trade was connected to an extensive network of ship-borne trade from B.C.'s south coast, however, during the pre-confederation period, B.C.'s ability to deliver or receive goods overland to major economic centers was non-existent—a national railway had not yet been constructed. Significant overland trade with US territories to the south was also out of the question because these areas were in equally undeveloped and less politically stable conditions.⁴³ With few profitable industries and limited social and economic infrastructure, colonial British Columbia was deeply in debt by 1871.

Considering the circumstances, there is little wonder why British Columbia agreed to join the Canadian Confederation in 1871 under the condition that Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) would be constructed to Vancouver, and the federal

⁴¹ Woodcock, 143.

⁴² <http://www.royalengineers.ca/REperiodpics.html>

⁴³ Dorothy O. Johansen, *Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest*. (NY: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 15-34.

government would assume B.C.'s debt.⁴⁴ The construction of the CPR was slow—it was not complete until 1881—but it brought a period of dramatic change for southern British Columbia. This era saw the rapid growth of Vancouver (the CPR's Pacific terminal) as thousands of CPR laborers, many of whom were Chinese, came to B.C. to work. The construction of the CPR resulted in a dramatic boom in both population and industry throughout Southern B.C.



Photo 10: Klondikers sitting on their provisions in front of a Seattle store, 1897.⁴⁵

Similarly, the 1897 Yukon Rush was a welcome addition to already bustling lower mainland, and was eagerly seized upon by Vancouver and Victoria's merchants. Port cities up and down Canada and America's west coasts were directly in-line with the popular Skagway and Dena routes, leaving these southern cities perfectly situated to outfit the swarm of would-be Klondiker's.⁴⁶ Prospectors in Vancouver or Victoria could spend up to two hundred and fifty dollars apiece

⁴⁴ Woodcock, 143.

⁴⁵ *Seattle Store*: <http://www.seattlehomestoday.com/history.php>

⁴⁶ Dobrowolsky, 17-18.

gathering supplies for their trip, which was a welcome economic stimulus in towns that knew how to capitalize on gold rushes.⁴⁷

Despite the economic growth that had occurred in the lower-mainland due to the CPR and the Klondike rush, British Columbia's provincial governments would suffer from endemic financial deficit problems at the time of the Klondike Gold Rush that had existed throughout the 1880s and 1890s. These problems were the result of mismanaged public funds that often went towards the benefit and aspirations of a small and reactionary segment of society, making it more difficult to grow British Columbia's volatile young socio-economic infrastructure.⁴⁸ From 1895-1898, Premier John Herbert Turner is said to have headed an oligarchic and unpopular non-partisan government, who best represented the interests of the old colonial merchants of Victoria:

Opponents of the governing group bitterly criticized its [fiscal management. Throughout the period that Turner was minister of finance (1887–98), the provincial budget was in deficit each year and by the time he left office the gross public debt had climbed to nearly \$7,500,000, a sevenfold increase from 1886. The government's generous grants to railway promoters were also denounced and were the reason given by David Williams Higgins* for his resignation as speaker of the house in the spring of 1898.... [Turner's government suffered from] favoritism, a lax civil service, extravagance in expenditure of public moneys, . . . encouragement of speculators and promoters at the expense of public assets, recklessness in railway charters and subventions, lack of definite and comprehensive policies, non-sympathy with labor aspirations, and everything else that might be chargeable against a government, which had been for a long time in power.⁴⁹

As a result Turner was impeached and removed from office, despite his vehement protest. So while Southern British Columbia bustled with a mixture of scandal, growth, and opportunity in 1897, the fledging province still did not have the means to effectively develop its northern frontier in any meaningful capacity. Simon Fraser

⁴⁷ Morrison, 39.

⁴⁸ *John Herbert Turner*. Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Biold=42530>

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

had established a few trading forts in the upper colony in 1806, ninety years earlier, however, aside from the occasional small gold rush, Northern B.C. did not change much. In 1860 a notable exception occurred when Caribou prospectors pushed their way up from the north to the Omineca River—a future NWMP trail region--where they struck it rich, igniting the Omineca Gold Rush. While this gold rush was relatively small and eventually fizzled out, it did establish a physical connection between the Quesnel and Omenica Districts, enabling miners to learn the area's attributes as a gold bearing region. This knowledge would turn out to be important to the location of the Peace-Yukon trail.⁵⁰



Photo 11: Prospector Camp on the Stikine River.⁵¹

By 1897 a renewed trickle of prospectors from the south and east were increasingly picking their way north by various waterways and trails, headed towards the Klondike. Other than the fur trade and placer mining, Northern British Columbia did not have major industry because modern transportation networks did not exist.

⁵⁰ J.G. Mac Gregor. *The Klondike Rush Through Edmonton*. (Toronto: The Canadian Publishers, 1970), p. 7-21.

⁵¹ Glenbow Archives.

River Steamers were the most advanced transportation around, and they did not extend into the Peace River region. Northern British Columbia's first train, The Grand Trunk Pacific, would not be completed until 1912 and its track would travel below the Peace Region when it was finished. Likewise a railway system would not be built through the Peace Region until the 1930's⁵², and with the exception of the Telegraph Trail's resurrection during the Gold Rush⁵³, there was not a significant network of wagon/automobile roads connecting southern and northern British Columbia. Under these conditions, the 1897 announcement to scout a potential wagon road across Northern B.C was an unexpected boon for B.C.'s Provincial Government, who-- having had their Premier impeached and being strapped with limited finances and manpower—could not do much to develop the north even during the midst of the Yukon Gold Rush.

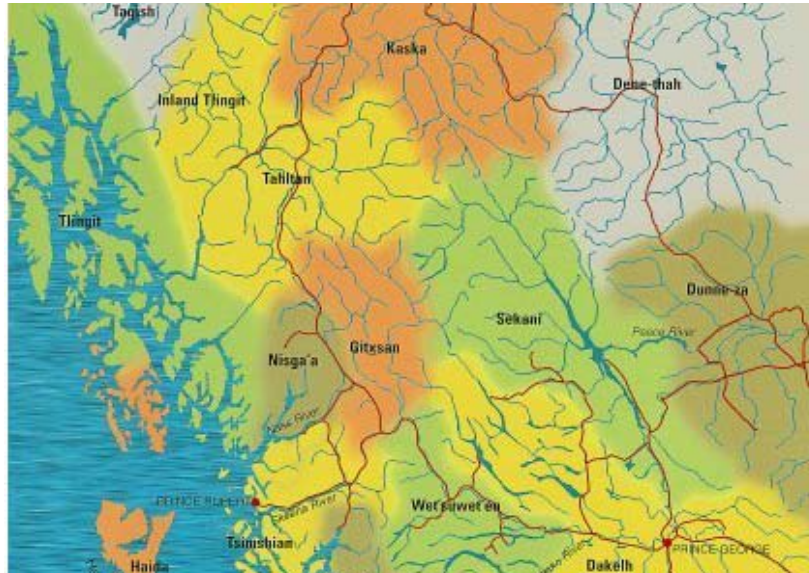
5) Peace River Area Historical Description

The NWMP Peace-Yukon Trails were not simply the construction of European newcomers. Rather, the North West Mounted Police largely used existing trail networks that had been created by native inhabitants before and after contact with European and Eastern-Canadian Indigenous voyageurs was made. The NWMP Trails often linked many of these pre-existing trails together through different Aboriginal Nations. The heart of the trail area--Fort St. John to Fort Graham--ran mostly through Sekani and Beaver-Dene Aboriginal territories. From Fort Grahame, the northern branch of Moodie's trail extended into Kaska country and beyond, while

⁵² The Peace River Outlet. *Atlas of Alberta Railways*. University of Alberta Press.. <http://railways-atlas.tapor.ualberta.ca/cocoon/atlas/Chapters-11-5/>

⁵³ *The Yukon Telegraph Trail* <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/map.htm>

the 1906 branch of the police wagon road connected up to Tahltan and Gixtsan-Wet'suwet'en trails.



Map 2: The various First Nations territories of Northern British Columbia.⁵⁴

The first Eastern Canadian fur traders and explorers entered the interior of British Columbia from Lake Athabasca (Alberta) and went up the Peace River against the current. Furs were also transported back into eastern Canada by the same route. It was this interior waterway—not the coastal trade route—that enabled European traders to penetrate British Columbia's heartlands⁵⁵. The Peace River water course was used by Alexander Mackenzie in 1793 to perform the first European journey across British Columbia. Mackenzie actually paddled beside the then future section of the NWMP trail that stretches from Fort St. John to the confluence of the Halfway River.

The Peace River route was also used by Simon Fraser when he entered the interior and administrated the construction of a group of fur trading forts known as

⁵⁴ *The First Nations People of British Columbia*. <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/map.htm>

⁵⁵ Basil Stuart-Stubbs. *Alexander Mackenzie and the Northwest*. (London : Faber, 1969), p. 8-45.

New Caledonia for the North West Company. These forts represent the oldest permanent European settlements within B.C. and include Fort Fraser, Fort MacLeod, Fort St. James, and Fort George.⁵⁶ The early posts were not generally preferred assignments for traders because they were incredibly isolated, “Fort George in this regard ranked only slightly ahead of Fort McLeod or Fort Misery as it was commonly known”.⁵⁷ Fort dwellers—traders and natives alike—often had to subsist only on dried salmon during winter months when imported rations ran out.⁵⁸



Map 3: Sir Alexander Mackenzie's 1793 route.⁵⁹

The two most central posts along the NWMP Trail area, Fort Grahame and Fort St. John, were considered to be part of the initial core of New Caledonia. They were built at later dates and are situated slightly north of the foundational district,

⁵⁶ Garvin Moles and Kent Sedgwick. *New Caledonia: The Frontier Yesterday and Today*. (Prince George: Heritage Society of British Columbia: 1985), 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 3.

⁵⁸ Daniel Williams Harmon. *Sixteen Years in Indian Country: The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon*. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1957), p. 134-155.

⁵⁹ *Words from the West*. <http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languageelog/archives/001500.html>

although all of the forts associated with one another and were linked together by trail and river routes. After the North Western Company forts became amalgamated into the Hudson Bay Company, one of the HBC's chief traders, Samuel Black, is recorded as being the first white man to explore and document the features of the Finlay River (1823-1824), which is the heart of the NWMP Trails region.⁶⁰ Fort Grahame and Moodie's trail along the North Finlay no longer exist; both the trail and the fort were situated on the Finlay River, a major tributary to the Peace River before the Finlay River, these features were flooded during the construction Williston Lake Reservoir in 1968.



Photo 12: Sekani Man, Bedaux Expedition.⁶¹

⁶⁰ R.M. Patterson. *Finlay's River*. (Winnipeg: Horsdal & Schubard, 1968.) p, 56-68.

⁶¹ Glenbow Archives, NA 1040-54.

PART Two: The Police Trails

Part Two, The Police Trails, describes the processes that brought about the legislation and construction of the Peace-Yukon NWMP trails. Part two begins with chapter six, which demonstrates how the root of the advocacy for a NWMP Trail came not from Ottawa, but actually originated in Edmonton. Chapter six also explores how this connection is significant to the Peace Yukon Trails' history. Chapter seven gives a brief overview of the inception and general nature of the North West Mounted Police during the Klondike Gold Rush, while also discussing why the NWMP were chosen to construct the trail. Finally, Chapters eight and nine look at the factors surrounding Inspector James Douglas Moodie and Superintendent Charles Constantine's respective Peace-Yukon NWMP Trail constructing expeditions.

6) The Yukon Gold Rush and the Development of the Peace-Yukon Overland Route

When the Klondike Gold Rush began official overland routes had to be located and established quickly because gold rushes did not often last long. Identifying overland routes was particularly important for the Klondike considering that the bulk of the gold in the Yukon was leaving the Klondike by ship and going straight to the American port towns of San Francisco and Seattle. As it was mentioned before, the best sea-access ran through Alaskan territory, which caused outrage among many Canadians over the perceived theft of Canadian resources.⁶²

Similar to British Columbia, towns like Regina and Edmonton were also interested in capitalizing upon the Yukon Gold Rush and developing a patriotic

⁶² (author unknown). "The Yukon". *The Edmonton Bulletin*, May 6, 1897.

marketing strategy to promote the development of their overland routes, which were also advocated for by their political representation in Ottawa. For example, member of Parliament Nicholas Flood Davin claimed official transportation projects connecting the Klondike to other Canadian cities would strengthening ties to the Klondike through the development of an “All Canadian Overland Route” completely within Canadian territory would benefit help solve these problems.

We know that this [Yukon wealth] immeasurably exceeds the wealth of Alaska. What is the proof of it? The proof is that the American miner, instead of remaining in his own country, in Alaska, and mining under his own laws, has been hurrying across into Canadian territory in order that he may reap the rich gold harvest that is to be reaped there. So we have in our Klondike and Yukon country, if it be properly managed by the Government, if they be wise, untold wealth yet to be developed. Let us make sure that the great wealth of gold that is there shall be for our own people here in Canada. If [they secure overland routes], the trade of the Yukon and the trade of the Klondike will be secured for the merchants of Montreal, the merchants of Toronto, the merchants of Victoria. Then we shall have an invigorating source of wealth operating on older Canada that will give to Canada itself an immeasurable push forward in the march of progress.⁶³

Towns argued that heading a trail from their center would be in the best interests of national security. However, to would-be Klondikers from around the world, a potential overland trail that might provide cheap access to the Yukon was an appealing prospect, and whichever city was selected to be at the start of such a trail would most likely receive a lot more business. As a result, the impetus for the Peace-Yukon NWMP Trails did not come from Vancouver, Victoria, or Ottawa, it came from Edmonton.

Historian William Morrison describes Edmonton during the Yukon Gold Rush as simply being a hole in the wall town in the middle of nowhere.⁶⁴ Alberta and

⁶³ Nicholas Davin (Speaker). *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada, Third Session—Eighth Parliament*. (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1898.), p. 5144.

⁶⁴ Morrison, 38.

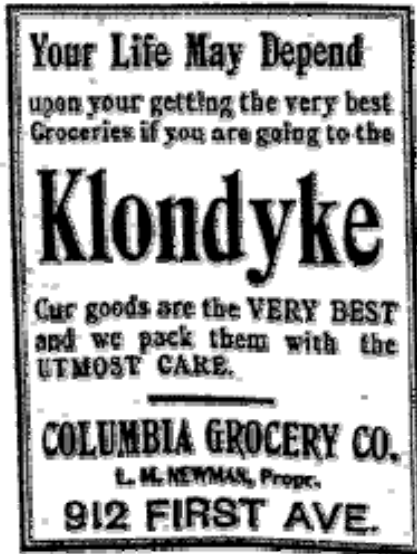


Figure 1: A typical newspaper advertisement.

Saskatchewan were not definitive provinces yet, and this region was simply included with the North-West Territories. The tried and true historical river routes that had been used by early eastern Canadian fur traders to travel through northern Alberta, B.C., and the Yukon, had also been used by Edmontonians and other eastern Canadians in later years to access the gold fields during the Omineca and Caribou rushes. Very importantly, well define wagon trails connected Edmonton to the Peace River district, giving the city a historical advantage in their bid create an overland trail.

As a result of these transportation corridors, some adventurers regarded Edmonton as a good starting point for prospecting trips into northwestern Canada before the Yukon Gold Rush had even started. In 1872-73 a prospecting party lead by Arthur Harper made their way to the Klondike by using part of the same route that the Peace-Yukon trail would eventually follow. They travelled by trail from Edmonton to Fort St. John, and then prospected their way up the Halfway River and then

headed towards Fort Nelson and the Liard, eventually reaching the Klondike.⁶⁵

Situating Edmonton at the start of an overland trail was not so far-fetched because the town already had plenty of experience outfitting prospectors who used the Peace River and the Mackenzie River Route to enter B.C. and the Yukon before the establishment of Yukon Rush or the Police Trail:

When the Klondike Rush started, Edmonton was ready for it. One hundred years of close contact with the vast northwest and some forty years of catering to crotchety prospectors had gone into preparing the old fur-trading post for its role of Gateway to the Yukon.⁶⁶

As historian J.G. MacGregor noted, considering this legacy, it is no surprise that when the first news of the Klondike broke many prospectors had already located Edmonton as a starting point before the city even started to promote the building of a trail. When the Yukon Gold Rush really started to grow, and more and more prospectors came into town, Edmontonians simply had to make the economic associations. Historian Bill Morrison summarizes the impetus for the construction of the Peace-Yukon Trail very well: "The question of developing overland routes to the Yukon involves a strange mixture of patriotism and economic self-interest, with the emphasis on the later".⁶⁷ It should be no surprise then that the Edmonton Board of Trade (representing merchants) in combination with *The Edmonton Bulletin* newspaper were vital to generating the overland trail idea, and lobbying for money from Ottawa its construction. *The Bulletin* was particularly outspoken in initiating the idea that constructing a wagon trail from Edmonton to the Yukon was vital to Canadian interests:

In view of the prospective rapid and great development of the gold fields of the Yukon, the question of a commercial route to that region entirely through

⁶⁵ J.G. Mac Gregor. *The Klondike Rush Through Edmonton 1897-1898*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1970), 6-21.

⁶⁶ Mac Gregor, 6.

⁶⁷ Morrison, 38.

Canadian Territory Arises...At the present the Yukon is, like the Kootaney, is being developed for the benefit and to the advantage of the people of the United States. Canada is not so rich that it can afford to allow its neighbors to have the benefit of the most profitable part of her business. A wagon road to Peace river and Liard, and across the mountains following up the Liard river would be a means whereby Canada would be able to reap the advantage of the development of the Yukon.⁶⁸

The Edmonton Bulletin was also remarkable in the way it comprehensively scrutinized the strengths and weaknesses of different Edmonton Routes to the Klondike, they did this by comparing the advice of miners who had previously traveled through north western Canada:

In a recent conversation with a miner who has been over the ground, from Edmonton to the Yukon, he informs me that for a party of prospectors wanting to reach the latter point, they could start from Athabaska landing by boat and travel down the Peel river, on the Mackenzie and thence across the mountains to the Porcupine river, and that the total distance travelled by land between the Peel and Porcupine rivers is only 90 miles.⁶⁹

Many of the prospectors *The Bulletin* interviewed also argued that any overland passage was unnecessarily difficult; aptly claiming that sea travel was much easier and faster.⁷⁰ When the first waves of Yukon Gold Rush prospectors started to come to Edmonton in earnest, the *Bulletin* carefully documented aspects of many of the newly arrived prospecting parties, such as their origins, how they were outfitted, and which routes they were going to take:

To the Yukon!

B. Pilon, Israel Lamoureux, Louis Lamoureux, E. St. Jean and Mr. Verrault, of Fort Saskatchewan, left for the Yukon on Tuesday by Way of the Mackenzie river...On this trip the party will prospect for gold on the Mackenzie, about the mouth of the Nehai river, where Mr. Pilon found gold on his former trip. Mr. Pilon believes from information which he received from Indians during his former trip that this is possible. The party are well provisioned and their

⁶⁸ *The Edmonton Bulletin*, May 6 1897.

⁶⁹ *The Edmonton Bulletin*, June 17 1897.

⁷⁰ *The Edmonton Bulletin*, May 17 1897. Correspondence with a prospector who dismisses the overland routes, saying that sea routes were much faster and easier.

experience will no doubt add greatly to the knowledge existing regarding the Mackenzie river region.⁷¹

The route that the Moodie's Peace-Yukon trail would eventually use (up the Halfway to the Pelly) was mentioned by the paper, but Edmontonians are said to have not favored this route.⁷² Instead, the Edmonton Board of Trade commissioned their own surveying parties to scout out potential overland wagon trail by following the Liard before the police arrived. The Board of Trade wanted their trail to more closely follow the area that the present day Alaska Highway closely travels through.⁷³

Unfortunately, the city's surveyors were forced to turn back in the fall of 1897 at Dunvegan Alberta, reckoning that it was too late in the season to continue surveying the trail.⁷⁴

While many Edmontonians joined forces to lobby for the development of an overland road to the Klondike, the tried and true method of transporting large quantities of goods into the Yukon from Edmonton had always been by the Mackenzie River Water Route, where scows loaded with gear could travel the navigatable rivers into the Yukon. The problem with this water-path was that it could be costly to hire the necessary cargo capacity on a steamer. Under these circumstances, poorer miners loaded with a years worth of outfit would be hard pressed to buy a trip up the river. For this reason, the NWMP Peace-Yukon Trail was designed from the start not to be the primary Canadian route to the Klondike, but rather a supplementary one that would cheaply transport mass quantities of cattle and people over a wagon trail—it was thought to be a good “poor man's route” to the Klondike:

⁷¹ *The Edmonton Bulletin*, July 15 1897.

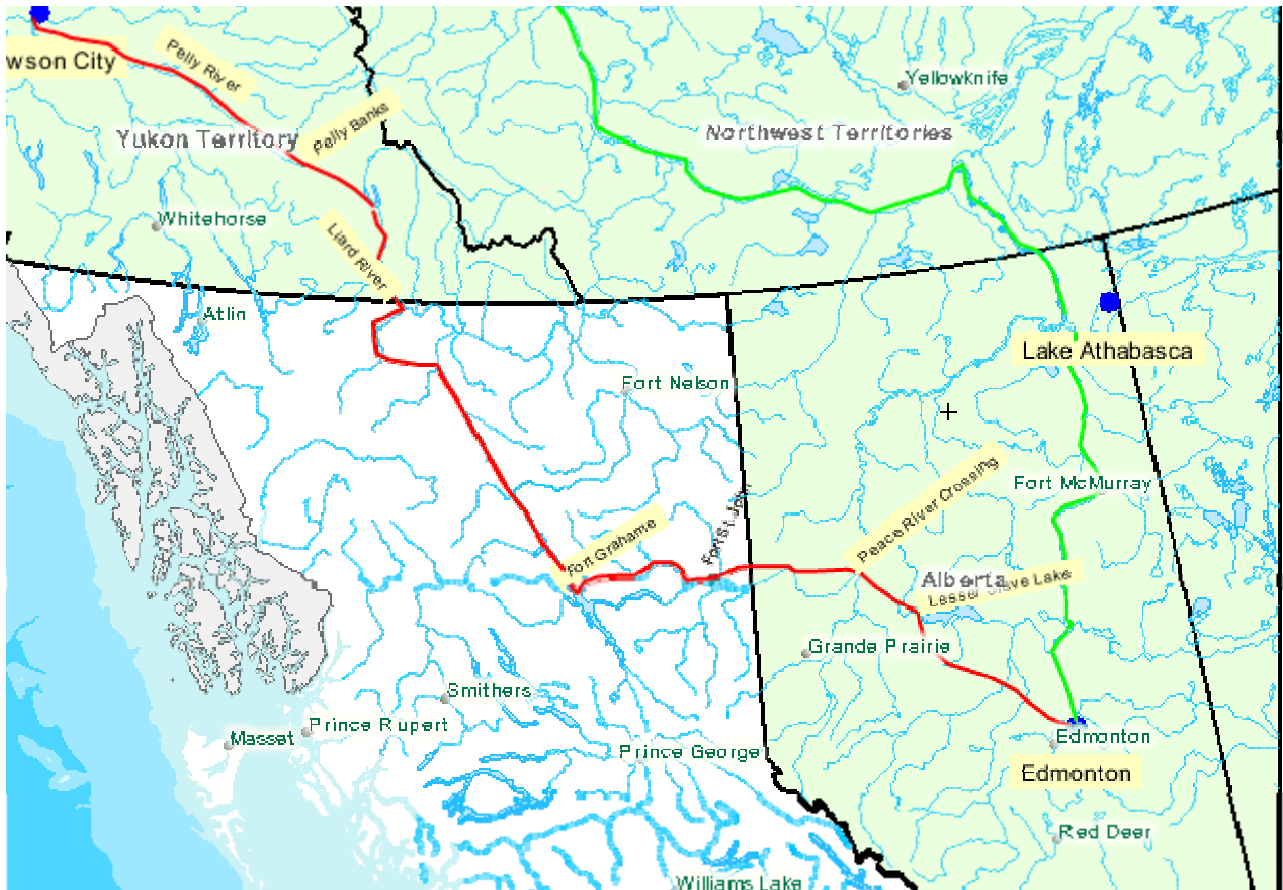
⁷² Mac Gregor, 44.

⁷³ Mac Gregor, 45.

⁷⁴ J.D. Moodie *Trail Diary*. Thursday, October 7 entry. (Ottawa, Publisher Unknown, 1898).

Therefore, I do not think the Government would be warranted in going to the expenditure this railway would involve for that purpose. But the route I advocate is a poor man's; it is a cheap route. It is a route that starts right from the centre of the territories, and will give us a chance of supplying all the food required by the people of the Yukon.⁷⁵

When one considers the various national and international factors surrounding the Gold Rush it is understandable why the Canadian Federal Government would become interested in creating a trail from Edmonton. Aside from the obvious question of linking Canadian centers to the Yukon Territory to support the bid for territorial sovereignty, the Laurier Government was interested in fostering the economic growth of frontier towns like Edmonton, as well as settling remote areas of



Map 4: Moodie's 1897-98 overland trail (red) and Mackenzie's water route (green).⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons*, p. 5140.

⁷⁶ *The Klondike Gold Rush Through Edmonton*, map.

the west. Many officials generally agreed that creating a thousand kilometer long trail would be a cheap way to get settlers into this ill defined area, and they were confident that a lot of the Klondike bound prospectors would not actually make it to the Yukon but would hopefully stop and homestead along the way, hence “opening up a new region”.⁷⁷ There was also a need to get large quantities of food quickly and cheaply to the Yukon: thousands of people flooded the remote non-agricultural region and disastrous food shortages were a real possibility.⁷⁸ And if all else failed, at least the trail would be cheap way to survey unknown lands for future projects, like a railway.



Photo 13: The Helpman Expedition preparing to depart from Edmonton for the Klondike, 1898.⁷⁹

The Canadian government was also concerned by the undisciplined nature of this high-volume Gold Rush. Klondikers were running haphazardly all over the north by whatever route they chose and in many cases indigenous peoples in these regions were suddenly competing for subsistence resources with the often-

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Helpman Expedition: http://www.abheritage.ca/francoedmonton/historic/photos_e.html

disrespectful invaders.⁸⁰ Tensions were developing quickly across sub-arctic regions. Unless Laurier's government wanted another Red River rebellion on their hands, or the same types of "Indian Wars" that the US had recently fought, they knew that it would be best to try to contain the migrants along police-able transportation networks. Considering this multitude of socio-economic realities, the Federal Government commandeered the Edmontonians plan and decided to spend fifteen thousand dollars to send a detachment of Mounties to scout out a trail from Edmonton to the Yukon.⁸¹

In response to a telegram sent by Frank Oliver, M.P. to the minister of the interior stating that the business of men in Edmonton were about to send a small exploring party to Pelly river by the Liard route this fall to return in the winter, and asking that the government send a scientific man along to make an official report, the following reply was received:

To Frank Oliver, M.P. Edmonton. Am sending small mounted police party to explore route which you are advocating. They will start at once. The comptroller will advise you of particulars. Your men can accompany the party if they wish, taking their own plies.⁸²

This may have seemed like a great stroke of fortune for the people of Edmonton, but they did not see it that way. To the chagrin of many, Inspector James Douglas Moodie was selected to take the Halfway route. The Halfway River path was not preferred by the majority of Edmontonians who wanted the trail developed. However, this does not mean that Edmontonians were uninterested in Moodie's progress, quite the opposite, an interesting aspect of Moodie's journey was that it had a national audience in a sense. For much of Moodie's expedition, *The Edmonton Bulletin* received reports from prospectors and local residences who had encountered the NWMP party at various points, and relayed their progress to the paper.

⁸⁰ Dennis F.K. Madill. *Treaty Eight Research Report: Treaties and Northern Research Centre Indian and Northern Affairs Canada*. (Ottawa, unpublished, 1986), p. 23.

⁸² *The Edmonton Bulletin*, August 23.

Lastly, it is significant to note that the Peace-Yukon Trail (known in Edmonton as the Edmonton-Yukon trail) was not the only government sponsored attempt to build a trail into the Yukon Territory exclusively on Canadian soil. In 1898, the same year the first Peace-Yukon NWMP trail is mapped out, a two hundred personnel eastern Canadian military unit known as the Yukon Field Force traveled by ship to B.C. with the aim of assisting the police in the Klondike. The Yukon Field Force soldiers were given the task of opening up a route from the Stikine River delta to Telegraph Creek. They would then travel north up the Teslin River to Fort Selkirk and finally Dawson City.⁸³ In 1907, a second NWMP trail expedition party under Superintendent Constantine's command would cut a wagon trail from Fort Grahame to Telegraph Creek trail, rather than following Moodie's reconnaissance trail northward up the Finlay River. However, Constantine's expedition will be explained in greater detail in later chapters.

7) North West Mounted Police Inception and Nature

Why did Minister of the Interior Richard Sifton choose the Mounties to find a trail? Sifton is said to have used the police as his personal apparatus in the west⁸⁴, and he gave the police the task of finding the 'All Canadian Route' because they were a versatile force who were considered to be best qualified to do it.⁸⁵ Before the Yukon Gold Rush occurred, the North West Mounted Police were specifically created in 1873 to oversee the development of Prime Minister Macdonald's western vision: "The police for the North-West Territories were to be a temporary organization. They would maintain order through the difficult early years of

⁸³ Dobrowolsky, 20.

⁸⁴ R.C. Macleod. *The NWMP and Law Enforcement, 1873—1905*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976.), p. 60-61.

⁸⁵ Morrison, 38.

settlement, then, having served their purpose, they would disappear”.⁸⁶ As a result, the NWMP’s early existence was ill-defined and unnecessary in the minds of some opposition leaders, and during Macdonald’s reign the Liberal were said to be particularly critical of the NWMP.⁸⁷

Being a force somewhat detached from Ottawa and given their shaky future, this was a group that had to prove its value as a *paramilitary force*—first through Riel Rebellion, then in the Yukon. A metropolitan force in the wilderness, Ottawa only had a vague idea of what to do with the force. Isolated as a result, the NWMP felt free to create policy as they saw fit.⁸⁸

While the Mounties were famous during their early existence for establishing sovereignty in Arctic regions that really did not need policing, their organization may have been saved by the Yukon Gold Rush, which was an assignment the NWMP were practically made for. This is true because the Mounted Police were not confined to typical police duties; they were constructed to be “Jacks-of-all-trades” civil servants. As we will see on the various Yukon trail detachments, the NWMP assumed all nature of governance in the remote regions they encountered. The Mounties’ tasks were not entirely mandated or specific, and most of the time they had to think on their feet and performed a variety of duties police would not do today.



Photo 14: Mounted Police outpost.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ R.C. Macleod. *The Royal West Mounted Police*, The Canadian <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0006981>

⁸⁷ R.C. Macleod. *The NWMP and Law Enforcement*, 50-70.

⁸⁸ Morrison, (xiv).

⁸⁹ Glenbow Archives.

They made up laws; acted as judges at times; performed manual labor; and sat on town councils.⁹⁰ The NWMP trail construction is an example of the sorts of multifaceted tasks the police took on in the interest of maintaining or developing social infrastructures in northern regions.

The whole *raison d'être* of the Mounted Police was that they should be able to turn their hands to whatever tasks, however prosaic or bizarre, that the government should lay before them.⁹¹

Many historians have argued that the Peace-Yukon Trails are an example of the prosaic and the bizarre. However, considering their status in Ottawa in 1897, it was important for the police to continue to stay busy, regardless of what they thought about their assignments. The NWMP were a creation of the previous regime, and were in threat of being made redundant under Laurier.⁹² Many of the NWMP administrators had tense relations with the Prime Minister's cabinet during the Peace-Yukon Trail era because both Laurier and Sifton restricted the police's autonomy and are said to have wanted to get rid of the origination all-together.⁹³



Photo 15: Mounties performing drills at the Fort McLeod Alberta Barracks.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Morrison, 3.

⁹² MacLeod. *The North West-Mounted Police and Law Enforcement*, 62.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Glenbow.

Considering that the NWMP had been a Conservative Party apparatus, it is no surprise that men of British origin ruled the higher levels of the organization. The Anglo-Saxon elite of eastern Canada generally became officers, and they were educated at the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario. These individuals were usually politically connected and “espoused Late Victorian and Edwardian middleclass values—they were the types of men who disapproved of frontier chaos”.⁹⁵ When the Peace-Yukon Trail’s were developed the NWMP’s Loyalist administration continued to be the dominant culture within the Mounties, even through Laurier’s tenure.

The police also went out of their way to ensure that their corps were comprised of lower class Anglo-Celtic men, and many immigrated from the British Isles during this period to fill the force’s growing needs: “between 1895-1897, forty eight percent of recruits were from the UK”.⁹⁶ A lot of the UK recruits were soldiers, however, the NWMP preferred to have non-resident farmers or factory worker from Great Britain policing remote regions of the northern territories, rather than allowing much more capable Canadians of non-White decent become official officers.

The pre-described syndrome was not unusual within the British Commonwealth. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century it was very common for working-class British subjects to travel to distant regions of the Empire in order to assume a job with the police. While society within Britain was quite regimented by the class system, commonwealth police forces offered a means for the average Briton to live in a “young country”.⁹⁷ Nations like Canada still in many ways abided by the same general caste system that existed in England but offered

⁹⁵ Morrison, 6.

⁹⁶ Morrison, 22.

⁹⁷ Robert Bickers. *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*. (England: Penguin, 2003.), p. 1-18.

more social mobility; an Englishman of any class was considered valuable in a land that was short on Britons. The ethnic make-up of the police would change quickly with the rapid expansion of the west at the turn of the century, and with the Laurier government's more inclusive social policies. Despite this, numerous Canadian born

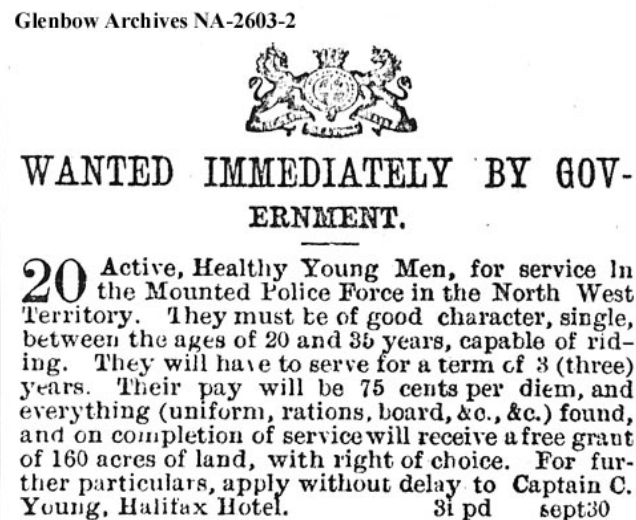


Figure 2: A recruitment poster.

regular police of Anglo-Celtic decent worked on the trail project, as well as foreign born English and Scottish officers and constables who were usually very experienced in the North West.⁹⁸ The NWMP trail was a special mission, so top recruits were generally picked for the job.⁹⁹

The Mounties' organization was fairly simplistic during the Yukon Gold Rush era. In the late nineteenth century the North West Mounted Police were headquartered out of Regina, and territories under NWMP control were then broken

⁹⁸ NWMP Personnel Records files (LAC) cross referenced with Peace-Yukon Trail pay-rolls.

⁹⁹ Charles Constantine, NWMP Correspondence, December 21 1904. Requests able-bodied young men from other divisions.

up into divisional regions.¹⁰⁰ For example, the Peace River region became part of the Athabasca “N” Division in 1905 after the Peace-Yukon Trail was established. Other divisions were also identified by letters of the alphabet. The divisions were then split into small detachments consisting of anywhere between five to fifty individuals, and there were about a dozen detachments per division.¹⁰¹ In the Athabasca Division, detachments were usually deployed around fur trading forts, where simple barracks, stables, and storage houses/armories were constructed. Each detachment also hired a number of Special Constables (often Aboriginal) for certain duties such as guiding and hunting. As we will see on Moodie’s expedition, the Special Constables often played very important roles in these types of expeditions.



Photo 16: Special Constable Alfred Hunter (in uniform) with his wife.¹⁰²

8) Moodie’s Trail

Inspector James Douglas Moodie of the NWMP spent his life in the service of the military and paramilitary. Over the course of his career Moodie--like many other

¹⁰⁰ Royal Canadian Mounted Police Organization. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_Mounted_Police

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Special Constable Alfred Hunter, note button jacket. Glenbow Archives.

Mounties-- maintained unflagging service to the Crown even in the most remote fringes of the British Empire. Moodie was born in Edinburgh Scotland in 1848, and throughout his adult life in England, James Moodie was a member of the Imperial



Photo 17: "NWMP cricket team, Maple Creek, Saskatchewan", Inspector Moodie standing center in white.¹⁰³

Army's London Rifle Brigade. When he was thirty-two (1880) Moodie immigrated to Canada, and at thirty-seven (1885) he joined the NWMP where he was immediately made the relatively high rank of Inspector during the Riel Rebellion. Aside from scouting the Peace-Yukon trail, Moodie would later lead expeditions into forlorn parts of the Arctic while in his late fifties, as well as performing a brief stint in the Canadian military during the Boer war in 1900, where he was superficially wounded in battle.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Glenbow Archives.

¹⁰⁴ "J.D. Moodie Biography". *NWMP Personnel Files*. Library and Archives Canada. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/nwmp-pcno/001032-300-e.html>



Photo 18: Inspector J.D. Moodie.¹⁰⁵

By 1897, Moodie had already spent twelve years patrolling the Canadian west, so he was no greenhorn to the duties of a Mounties by the time he was given the Peace-Yukon Trail assignment.¹⁰⁶ His orders were as follows,

You have been selected to command a small party about to leave Edmonton for the head waters of the Pelly River, the object being to collect exhaustive information on the best road to take for parties going into the Yukon via that route, and with this object in view you must map out the route, and carefully mark the portions over which a wagon trail can be made without expense, and the portions that require corduroying, grading or ditching; stating whether the work would be great or small. The portion so the road that cannot be made practicable for wagons, except at enormous expense, must be reported on as practicable or otherwise for pack trains, driving cattle over, etc., and you must report on all creeks and rivers that require bridges or ferries, their width, approaches, etc., and all along the route you must note the supply of fuel, feed and hay. The main object is to get parties with wagons as far as possible, and then, when not practicable with wagons, with pack horses and cattle, to the navigable waters of the Pelly River, avoiding the dangerous navigation of the Liard River, if possible. You will also report on favorable sites on the route for depots of provisions to be placed, either by public or private enterprise. If in fact you will be expected on return to supply such reliable information that a party leaving Edmonton will know exactly what they must expect at all points en route.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ *Inspector J.D. Moodie*. Glenbow Archives.

¹⁰⁶ *J.D. Moodie Bibliography*. NWMP Personnel Files, LAC.

¹⁰⁷ L.W. Herchmer, Commissioner. *Patrol Reports, Part II*. (Ottawa: publisher unknown, 1897.), p. 1.

Commissioner Herchmer had previously determined that, upon his arrival at Fort St. John, Moodie ought to travel west along the Peace River to the confluence of the Halfway River. From here Moodie was to follow the Halfway to its headwaters in the mountains, where the party would travel north in an attempt to winter at the junction of the Liard and the Dease Rivers at Fort Sylvester.¹⁰⁸ These vague directions were flexible to say the least, as Moodie's superiors noted that it was impossible to give Moodie detailed instructions considering their sparse knowledge of this northern region.¹⁰⁹

The journey was to take place in the depth of winter using dog teams. Although Moodie had spent years patrolling the west, the Inspector's experience with this type of mountainous winter expedition is questionable, as he had to rely upon outside advice in regards to whether or not he could travel through the mountains in the winter with horses: "Mr. Tate [Post Manager] assured me that it would be perfectly impossible to go through the mountains with horses at that time of year, and the...Indians whom I saw corroborated this statement".¹¹⁰ This reality would seem fairly obvious to anyone who has spent even a small amount of time high in mountainous backcountry during the winter.

In late August, Moodie's party collected supplies and horses for the initial leg of the trip at the NWMP barracks in Edmonton. Generally the Mounties rations were designed to give each man the following provisions each day:

- 1 pound of fresh meat
- 1 pound of flour
- 1 pound of grains or potatoes and fruit
- 3 ounces sugar
- 1 ounce rice or barley

¹⁰⁸ Good place to draw map of proposed route in relation to actual route.

¹⁰⁹ Patrol Reports 4.

¹¹⁰ Moodie. Patrol Reports: Instructions to, and Diary of, Inspector J.D. Moodie in Charge of Patrol from Edmonton to the Yukon 1897.

- 2 ounces butter
- ½ ounce tea
- ½ ounce coffee
- ½ ounce salt.¹¹¹

Emergency rations of pemmican were also included with the provisions. Packed, Moodie's small detachment headed out on horseback for Fort St. John on September the fourth', 1897. Moodie's party included "Constable Fitzgerald, Richard Hardisty...Frank Lafferty and H.S. Tobin, [who were] Graduates of the Royal Military college, Baptiste Pepin a half-breed, and an Indian guide, twenty four pack and six saddle horses"¹¹², a cook named Joe was also a party member. Later in life, Constable Fitzgerald would sadly become well known for leading the ill-fated "Lost Patrol" in 1910, when he and three other police perished traveling by dog team between Fort McPherson and Dawson City. Lost in the Arctic tundra and out of provisions, Fitzgerald addressed a farewell letter to his family before dying.

The road from Edmonton to the Peace River Crossing was generally known and somewhat well traveled. One of the greatest dangers on this initial stretch of the journey was getting lost on the many trails that split off in different directions. By the fall of 1897, when Moodie had departed, the prairie region was already fairly busy with greenhorn prospectors who were either excitedly traveling towards far-off gold bearing lands or were already trickling in from them grizzled and spent.

Notably, Moodie encountered the Fresno prospecting party on this stretch of trail. The Fresno Party had come from Fresno California to use Edmonton as their outfitting center and gateway into the Klondike. In Edmonton, this band had attracted a lot of media attention, and almost every aspect of their journey's progress

¹¹¹ The Edmonton Bulletin, September 2.

¹¹² J.D. Moodie, *Patrol Report*, p. 4.

was closely followed by *The Edmonton Bulletin*. Most of the Fresno Party would not travel far in 1897, wintering between Sturgeon Lake and Fort St. John. In the spring of 1898, the Fresno Party renewed their travels, although they would split up into smaller groups and followed various paths once they reached St. John. Some of the group would also give up and return to Edmonton. Even so, many of the Fresno members would continue to follow Moodie's troop up the Finlay River and deep into Northern B.C.¹¹³

The company of prospectors would be a running theme throughout Moodie's journey, so it would be wrong to assume that the police party was alone on this trip.



Photo 19: W. J. Morse party at south Edmonton, Alberta, before leaving for the Klondike, December 1897.¹¹⁴

For much of the time they were in contact with groups of prospectors, Indigenous people, post managers, and various other people--the Klondikers are said to have even helped the police hack trail on occasion.¹¹⁵ Not surprisingly, some of the more experienced prospectors who traveled with Moodie were also critical of his performance and ability¹¹⁶. Four other large parties left Edmonton and followed the

¹¹³ J.G. Mac Gregor, 126-131.

¹¹⁴ Glenbow.

¹¹⁵ Mac Gregor, 126-131.

¹¹⁶ Mac Gregor, 200-206.

same route in the winter of 1897. One member of these parties, Frank Walker gives this description of the Athabasca section of the trail:

By the time we reached the Athabasca, several of the parties who had gone ahead of us had become very much disgusted with the route, and stated so in no uncertain terms upon blazed trees. Some excellent poetry was also composed and written there apropos of the route. I now regret that I did not copy some of it, as it would be, at this date, very interesting....The Hillside [northside of the Athabasca River] was littered with broken boxes, smashed sleighs and harness, and practically every tree on the lower side of the grade was blazed and the owners of the outfits gave vent to their feelings in epitaphs on the trees. At the very top of the hill on rotten tree had been nailed a piece of board, with a hand pointing in each direction. The one in the direction of the Klondike had written underneath "To Dawson City 2433.5 miles" and underneath the other hand said "To Sweet Home".¹¹⁷

A small NWMP patrol lead by A.E. Snyder was also sent out in December of 1897 to—among other things—keep tabs on Moodie's progress and possibly assist them in the event of an emergency. The three hundred and twenty mile section of the overland trail from Edmonton to Fort St. John was also dangerous. For Moodie, just getting to Fort St. John from Edmonton was an adventure in itself that took two months to achieve, as his little band slowly headed out of the prairies and into to rolling woodland. Unfortunately, just before the party reached Fort St. John tragedy would strike Moodie's men:

After giving the horses a few days rest I left for Fort St. John hiring a guide [from Dunvegan], Edward Wilson, to go with us. This man missed the trail amongst burnt and down timber and I regret to say lost himself when out from the camp next day looking for the trail to the north. We hunted for him four days, but, although his last fire was found, no trace of him could be got. I am of the opinion that he went crazy as his trails led in every direction from the camp, returning to it after he had gone a short distance. If he had kept his wits he could have returned on back trail to camp. He has not been heard from since.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Mac Gregor, 177.

¹¹⁸ Moodie, Patrol Report, 5.

After spending four days of searching for a man who was destined to a die terrifying and lonely death in the bush, Moodie's party must have been tired and shaken when they arrived at Fort St. John. What was supposed to be the easiest part of the trip had turned disastrous, and the men probably wondered what their future ventures into the mountains would hold for them.

Moodie got to Fort St. John on November the fourth, just at the beginning of winter. During this era Fort St. John was simply a trading post surrounded by a few buildings and Beaver Nation teepee. As soon as Moodie arrived, he set about gathering the necessary people and supplies for his trip. The NWMP had carefully arranged with the HBC post outfitters to deliver the necessary provisions for the trip to Fort St. John by river scow, which went off without a hitch. However, there were other aspects of the journey that needed to be addressed:

On arriving at St. John I sent a runner out to find the camp of the chief of the Indians in this locality, he came in, and after considerable difficulty and several interviews, I succeeded in getting an Indian named Dick [Egg] who knew of a pass through the mountains to Fort Graham on the Finlay River. I also, according to these instructions hired an Indian Hunter. It was not until the 19th of November, that these arrangements were completed, as Indians are very unwilling to leave their own district, more especially in the winter. In the meantime I had set Indians and squaws to work making flat sleighs, snow shoes, and moccasins and other articles necessary for a winter trip in that region, and had engaged men as dog drivers, etc...the following day the dog trains left with half our supplies to make a cache about 13 miles up the river...I picked out 13 best horses...intending to take the horses as far as possible, and so to save the dogs for the hard work in the mountains...This would also save carrying so much dog feed, as I could kill horses and dry the meat when I took to the dogs.¹¹⁹

The Aboriginal hunter Moodie talks about was a man by the name of Napoleon

Thomas, who was of mixed ancestry that stemmed from Iroquois voyageurs.¹²⁰

Thomas was said to have come to the Dawson Creek in 1891, and is considered by

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Dorothy Calverley. Napoleon Thomas, *First Settler in the Dawson Creek Area*. <http://www.calverley.ca/Part04-Old%20Timers/4-001.html.html>

some to be the first immigrant to the Peace River district. Thomas was reputed to be the best hunter in the region and Moodie had pursued his services despite Napoleon's initial reluctance to join the party because his children were sick at the time. However, Moodie drove a tough bargain. He offered Napoleon ninety dollars a month salary, medicine for his kids, and promised to bring Napoleon back down the coast with the NWMP at the end of the trip. Thomas' participation proved invaluable to the expedition's survival.¹²¹ Likewise, First Nations guide Dick Egg was paid seventy five dollars a month to lead the party through the mountain route to Fort Grahame that he knew of. The use of local guides for hunting, guiding, and interpretation was essential to the success of these types of expeditions, and Moodie would later admit in his reports that the policemen's lives lay in the guide's hands many times during his journey. Hence, the indigenous guides' contributions to the development of Moodie's "Police Trail" cannot be underestimated.

Horse and dog sleighs were built by the native men and the police, while aboriginal women continued preparing winter garments for the trip. One would assume that some of the clothing would have included fur apparel. A Hudson Bay Company's bull was also killed and dried for dog food. During this time Moodie was unhappy with the pace of the work--apparently things got on slowly.¹²² Part of these preparations also included caching supplies and food for the horses up the Peace River was another element that was vital to the success of these journeys. Throughout Moodie's travels a supply train of dogs or horses would surge ahead of the main party to break trail and cache supplies incrementally, even into the mountains.

¹²¹ Moodie, Trail Report, 6.

¹²² Ibid.

Finally, on the second of December, the Police expedition was ready to leave St. Johns, and the main supply team consisting of ten horse drawn sleighs departed from St. John's for the Halfway River. On the sixth of December the main party lead by Moodie and Fitzgerald left by horse to pursue the supply train up the Halfway-- now the adventurous aspect of the journey was underway.¹²³ Saving the dogs, Moodie's party traveled by horse at first along the Peace River section of the trail. As they travelled, Moodie's men were careful to note geographical features in an attempt to discern whether or not the terrain they crossed would be fit for road building, and whether it could be put to commercial use for things like homesteading. Determining the quality of horse feed in the surrounding countryside was often difficult because the meadows were covered in snow; of course, they also blazed and mapped the general direction of their trail as they traveled. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, tensions started to arise within the party early in the going:

Tuesday 14th.—Morning Cold. Good traveling good until 11:30 am, and followed with remainder at 10 a.m...made about 8 miles today...At the second crossing some "Hudson's Hope" Indians were camped; I tried to get some dried meat but they would not sell. Napoleon was very anxious to camp here, and Dick had sneaked off ahead under pretense of getting a cache he had, but as I found in reality to visit these Indians. As I am in their hands entirely, I cannot afford to offend them at present, and so had to make a virtue of necessity, and camp. The dogs got three fine trout cached alongside a hole in the ice, and we confiscated them; two weighed about ten pounds each, the other about four and a half". I sent a piece of bacon to the Indians to repay them for these.¹²⁴

This incident demonstrates the beginnings of an interesting power dynamic between Moodie and the Special Constables that would continue to evolve over the course of the trip. In many ways, a vast gulf existed between the worldviews of colonizers like Moodie and aboriginal people like Dick. Much to Moodie's displeasure, it was

¹²³ Moodie, *Trail Diary*. December 2.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, December 14.

difficult to enforce the pomp and procedure of late-Victorian Mountie culture when he and the other NWMP were wholly at the mercy of their guides. Moodie would continue to privately complain about Dick and other non-NWMP personnel throughout the duration of their journey, and it is likely that most of the Aboriginal guides were contemptuous of the prejudice and hierarchy Moodie imposed upon them. Despite this, there must have been moments of comradely and even fun amongst all of the expedition members, but if these times existed Moodie does not focus much upon them in his notes.

Days passed and the party made quick progress up the Halfway River valley, and by the eighteenth of December they would have reached the Cypress Forks and left the Halfway River. The weather had remained good for travelling, it was fairly warm. Rather than continue up the Halfway, as his commanders had previously suggested,



Map 5: The Moodie expedition's 1897 trail (blue).

Moodie chose to continue along the Cypress route Dick knew. Moodie's party had continued to use horses all of this time, but as the river valley gradually rose in

elevation, the snow got deeper and more strenuous for the horses to push through. When they started to head into the mountains Napoleon would occasionally hunt after sheep, goat, and moose. He managed to get a caribou on the twenty-second of December.

Although they were making progress all was not well. The Special Constables continued to contest Moodie's authority, and the party's progress generally began to suffer from foot-dragging; for example, they began leaving camp as late as 10:30 in the morning.¹²⁵ Stuck in no-man's-land with the trek becoming more difficult, Dick became increasingly insubordinate. As the expedition got further from his home territory and neared the mountains, Dick claimed he was too sick to go any further; Dick then abandoned the party and headed back to Fort St. John.¹²⁶ This was quite a blow for Moodie. The person who knew the way through the mountains had left them, which was a discouraging predicament to say the least.



Photo 20: A typical NWMP winter camp.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Moodie, *Trail Diary*. December 15.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, December 22.

¹²⁷ *NWMP winter camp*: <http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archivesPhotosResults.aspx> Archive Number NA-2137-7.

However, Napoleon was confident that he knew the way and they agreed to continue on; although it must have been hard to keep pushing deep into unknown mountainous terrain, further from the last remnants of civilization, after the primary guide had left. On top of Dick's mutiny, general bickering and disagreement continued amongst the party and Moodie became "afraid he may have trouble with men at Grahame".¹²⁸ Considering the vulnerability of the party at this stage--stuck between Fort Grahame and Fort St. John—it is hard to imagine a more difficult leadership position to be in.

Despite this, blaming the guides for challenging Moodie's authority, or generally being unhappy, would be unfair. This mission was really dangerous, and Napoleon Thomas was noted as saying he could earn five-hundred dollars in five months trapping fur.¹²⁹ Thus, on a month-to-month basis they may have actually been paid less for this assignment than they would have made during a good fur bearing winter. With this in mind, Napoleon and Dick probably wondered why they should risk their lives for this mission when they could possibly make more money performing less hazardous tasks. The problems with the men continued:

By mistake the camp cooks were called at 5:30 instead of 6:30 this morning, and Joe, who was cook for the men, was very sulky, finally asking if this was to go on all winter, explaining that he meant were Tobin and Latherty not to take turns in lighting the fire...Baptiste, I think is at the bottom of this, at any rate does nothing to allay it...The fact is I have treated them all too well and if they do not alter very considerably will dismiss them at Graham as I can now do perfectly well without them.¹³⁰

Moodie's disgruntled non-NWMP party members continued their trudge through the deepening snow as they rose gradually out of the woods and into the high mountains.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Moodie, *Trail Diary*. November 8.

¹³⁰ Ibid, December 24.

In forested areas some of their days had been spent fighting through tangles of snowy alder and willow, but as they steadily climbed the land turned to alpine region and the vast high tundra of Laurier Pass.

Surprisingly, Moodie managed to ride his horses right up the wind swept mountain pass he had name after his Prime Minister. This is where the dispirited little party spent Christmas day¹³¹, resting at over seven thousand feet on a mountain summit. Some men hunted while others fixed sleighs. One wonders if the prospectors who had been following Moodie were around their camp at this stage of the journey; J.G. MacGeogor is certain that the Wilnkster Klondike party had been more or less in step with the police until they stopped at Fort Grahame to winter¹³², but Moodie makes no mention of this group in his records.

Upon leaving the pass the NWMP's sleighs started to show signs of wear, and the snow became very deep and difficult to get through as they descended into a labyrinth of mountain valleys. At this point—probably fearing for his life--Napoleon Thomas wanted to abandon the party like Dick. However, Moodie claims to have defused the situation and convinced Napoleon to continue to Fort Grahame. At this point the snow become too deep to ride any further and the party slaughtered their horses in order to dry the meat for the dogs.¹³³

Having done this Moodie's party began to travel through river valleys that he claimed did not even have Aboriginal trails established in them—a totally isolated region. The advanced party built one final cache ahead, and Moodie's group continued on their blind course southwest. This was a desperate phase of the journey: unsure of exactly where they were, and with no more caches being laid out

¹³¹ R.M. Patterson, 89.

¹³² Mac Gregor, 156.

¹³³ Moodie. *Patrol Reports*, 5.

ahead, all they could do was move forward in an attempt to get to Grahame as quickly as possible. The patrol fell into a grueling routine, and a lot of energy was expended helping the poor starving dogs get unstuck. Not knowing the names or locations of any of the waterways they encountered in this area, Moodie's party struck up the Ospika River and had to trust that following it down-stream would get them to their goal. Eventually they knew that these watersheds would coalesce with some sort of larger river—hopefully the Finlay because their supplies were running short.¹³⁴

While traversing the Ospika they ran out of food, and by sheer luck Napoleon managed to shoot a moose, which kept them fed until they finally reached the Finlay River. Arriving at the Finlay must have been a mixture of relief and apprehension. On one hand they knew they were within a days travel to Fort Grahame, but they were out of food and did not know whether to go up or downstream to get there.¹³⁵ Hedging their bets, they traveled downstream fourteen kilometres searching for the Fort. Finding nothing they camped hungry, frustrated, and exhausted.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Moodie. *Trail Diary*. January 17.



Photo 21: Mounted police dog team resting branch bed.¹³⁶

The next day, out of sheer luck, Napoleon recognized the mountain ranges surrounding the river and concluded that they were below Grahame, so they turned around and slogged up-stream until they finally reached their destination:

We arrived at Fort Graham on the 18th January and were then entirely out of supplies both for men and dogs. There was no dog feed to be procured here, and very limited supplies in the companies' stores. Hearing that fish could be procured from some lakes about 25 miles S.W. I next day sent out some of the men with the dogs to fish with nets through the ice, whilst others tried their luck after moose. Neither, however, were very successful, and bannocks had to be made for the dogs...The dogs were almost starving, the snow from 4 to 5 feet deep in the bush, and no guides to be had. I had, therefore, reluctantly to give up all idea of going further until spring.¹³⁷

The brutal four hundred and six mile first leg of Moodie's journey from Fort St. John to Fort Grahame had come to an end. The party had traveled a distance that is roughly the equivalent of driving from Prince George to Chilliwack.

R.M. Patterson would later note that Moodie's trail ran "Transverse to the lay of the country, crossing all the available mountain ranges instead of accommodating

¹³⁶ Glenbow Archives.

¹³⁷ Moodie. *Patrol Reports*. p, 5.

itself to them in the valleys. ... It's highest passes would be blocked with snow well into the average July. It would hardly ever be used. ... It was an incredible scheme in its utter disregard of geographical facts"¹³⁸. When one recounts Moodie's journey to Grahame, it is obvious that the panicked nature of their trail was determined more by survival than calculation. Thorough route exploration was not a luxury Moodie could have afforded, and he was just lucky that everyone survived that leg of the journey--some of the prospectors who followed their trail later would not. Patterson's assertion that the trail would "never be used" is debatable. Hundreds of people and thousands of horses used the Moodie Trail during the gold rush, while sections of the trail near Fort St. John continue to be used on a fairly regular basis to this day.

The Moodie party was destined to spend the rest of the winter in Fort Grahame the way that they had started it, scrounging for food to add to their constantly dwindling supplies. Not surprisingly, other problems greeted them in Fort Grahame where Sekani and wintering prospectors created friction:

Mr. Fox [Fort Grahame Post Manager] informs me that the Indians here at first refused to allow the white men to come through their country without paying a toll, and it was only after much talking that they agreed to keep quiet this summer in the hope that the government would do something to help them. They threatened to burn the feed and kill the horses; in fact, several times fires were started...but the head men were persuaded by Mr. Fox to send out and stop them...Even amongst the whites there have been several rows, with threats of shooting, and Constable Fitzgerald was appealed to and quieted things, by threatening to arrest and hold until my arrival any one making a disturbance. There is no doubt that the influx of whites will materially increase the difficulties of hunting by the Indians, and these people, who, even before the rush, were often starving...will be in the future in much worse condition; and unless some assistance is given to them by the Indian Department, they are very likely to take what they consider a just revenge on the white men...When told that if they started fighting as they threatened, it could only end in their extermination, the reply was, "We may as well die by the white man's bullets as of starvation. ...Those [Natives] in the Finlay district are a miserable lot, half-starved most of the winter, and utterly unreliable. Some of the head men [Aboriginal leaders] have asked for

¹³⁸ R.M. Patterson, 93-94.

assistance in this and I told them that I could not make any promise, except that I would represent their case to the proper authorities.”¹³⁹

Moodie contemptuously described his impression of the Aboriginals in the region, as well as the types of problems he'd perceived between the natives and prospectors at Fort Grahame. Moodie's impression of the Sekani people at Fort Grahame were obviously extremely racist, demonstrating that although the Peace Yukon Trail was partially designed to help First Nations, the development of the trail was paradoxically also an expression of colonialism's intolerance in many respects.

The problems Moodie experienced at Fort Grahame had similarly plagued north-western Canada during this period, and the Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton hoped the building of this future wagon trail would help to alleviate these types of tensions. It is remarkable that more violent uprisings did not occur. More serious incidence did arise the next summer, when Prospectors began to pour over the Moodie trail in earnest. Some sources say that Beaver First Nations blocked access to the Peace-Yukon trail around Fort St. John, and this blockage was a key incident that led to the establishment of treaty eight in 1899¹⁴⁰, although the massive amounts of oil that were known to be in the Athabasca region probably also played a key factor in the treaty negotiation. Of course, any Native blockade of the trail would have been understandable; Klondiker's along the Moodie trail were said to range horses on the Aboriginal's meadows, stolen First Nation's horses, and even destroyed their bear traps.¹⁴¹

The next spring open conflict sprang up between the Beaver Indians near Fort St. John and the Klondikers waiting to follow Moodie's trail. Klondikers pastured horses in natural meadows, and were disrespectful of the Natives. Natives sabotaged Klondiker's trip. Later the federal gov signed treaty 8,

¹³⁹ Moodie. *Patrol Reports*, 13.

¹⁴⁰ Robeson, 91.

¹⁴¹ J.G. MacGregor, 202.

undoubtedly, treaty 8 signed largely to stop such conflict between natives and Klondiker/settlers entering area....

Despite the police presence, some Indians blockaded the trail at Fort St. John in June 1898. The blockaders claimed that the prospectors were stealing their horses and scaring away game. They refused to reopen the trail until their demands for a peace treaty were met.¹⁴²

American Klondiker's had a reputation for being especially notable in their disrespectfulness towards the aboriginal peoples. Regardless of whether or not a trail blockade specifically triggered the Treaty Eight negotiations, there is no doubt that the flood of prospectors/settlers and subsequent friction with First Nations groups all over Northwestern B.C and Alberta lead to the creation of the treaty.

Back in Fort Grahame, Moodie's expedition spent the winter gathering food, making trips to other posts to prepare for the next year, and settling quarrels at the post. The next spring, Moodie had incredible difficulty procuring the necessary supplies for the 1898 campaign and had to travel all the way down to Quesnel by boat to gather the stores. True to the spirit of the expedition, these hold-ups were undoubtedly a source of aggravation. By the time Moodie got back on the trail on July fifteenth and started out with fresh horses, he was behind quite a few



Photo 22: Commissioners of the Treaty Eight Signing.

¹⁴²*Treaty Eight*. Library and Archives Canada. http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/treaty8/4_0_why_e/05130404_e.html

prospecting parties who were “breaking trail” ahead, travelling north along the Finlay. Moodie had arranged for locals to blaze a trail northward while he was gathering supplies, but Moodie says, “These, as usual, failed me”.¹⁴³ Nine of the Fresno Party had wintered in Grahame and left on the ninth of June. Nellie Gardner, the first European woman to travel the overland route, was part of this group. Mrs. Gardner would spend a year and a half traveling the Moodie Trail, and her progress was very much a source of discussion within the Edmonton Bulletin newspaper.¹⁴⁴

The section of the Finlay River Moodie followed could hardly be said to have a pioneering police trail blazed upon it, since there were ancient Aboriginal trails lining the banks of the river. Fur trader Samuel Black, one of the first voyageurs in the area, mentioned in his exploration of the Finlay River that the local natives preferred to walk the trails along the Finlay rather than navigating the river by boat¹⁴⁵, so undoubtedly some of these paths were followed by the Klondikers and police. Pressed by the lateness of the season, the NWMP party raced up the Rocky

¹⁴³ Moodie, *Patrol Reports*, 6.

¹⁴⁴ Mac Gregor, 78.

¹⁴⁵ Patterson, 62.



Photo 23: Klondiker's Grave Near [S]ifton Pass.¹⁴⁶

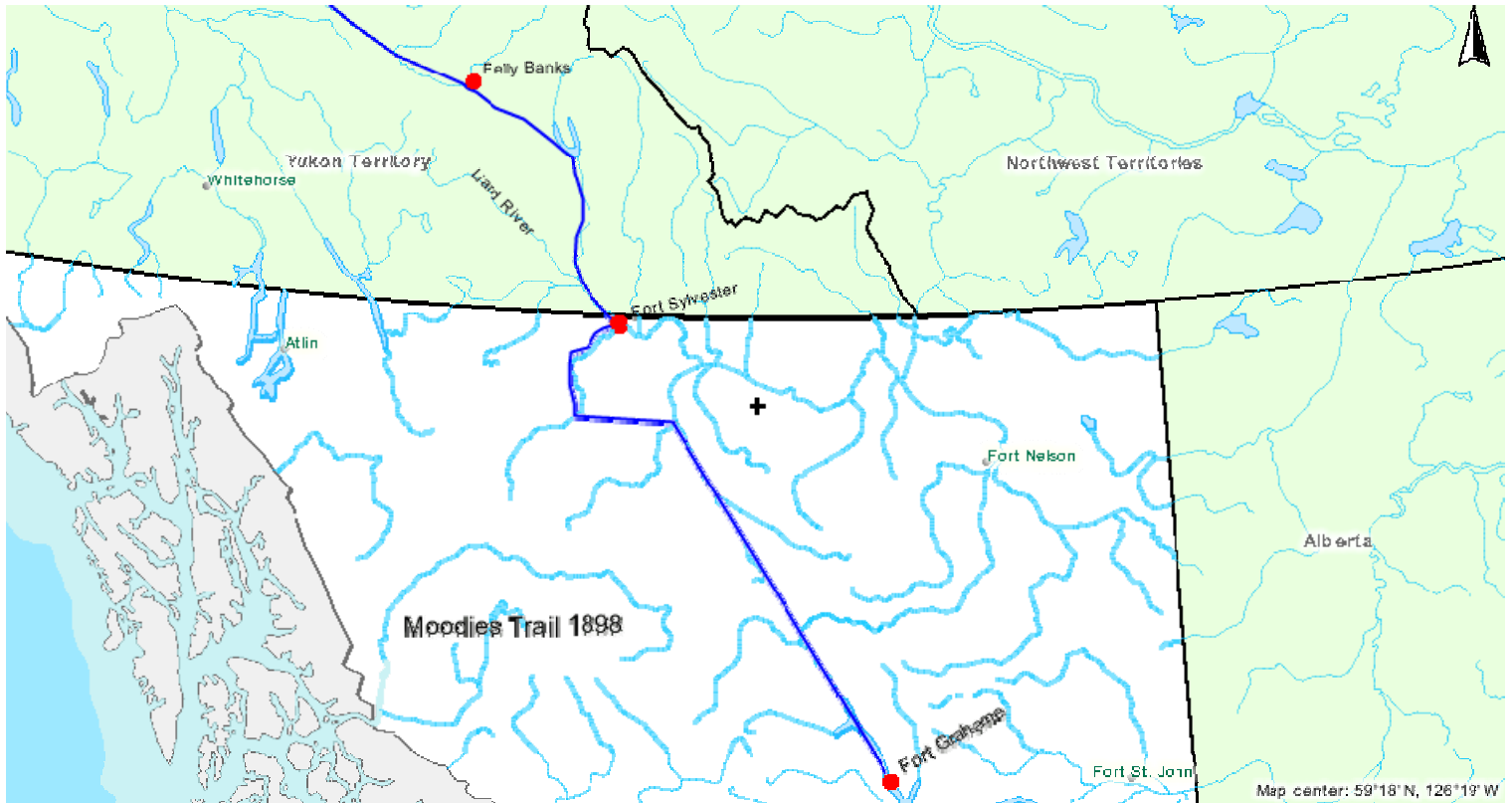
Mountain trench, heading due Northwest. They actually managed to pass some of the prospectors who had left Fort Grahame six weeks before. At Sylvester's Landing on Dease Lake, unable to buy fresh horses, Moodie bought a boat in order to alleviate the pack strain on the horses and keep them fit for packing as long as possible. They reached the Liard River on August the twenty ninth, which was already fairly deep into the fall season at that latitude. Finally arriving at the Pelly Banks they hired a guide: "Here I found a Pelly Indian and engaged him as guide to the banks, also a lad as interpreter. The former, however, cleared out during the night and we never saw him again. I fancy he was afraid of the horses, having never seen any before".¹⁴⁷

As the party traveled further north with the winter fast approaching on the Pelly, they began to encounter more and more prospectors. The Pelly was, after all,

¹⁴⁶ Image I-57378 courtesy of British Columbia Archives.

¹⁴⁷ Moodie, *Patrol Report*, 8.

one of the significant transportation corridors for the great rush of 1898. Quite a few of these prospectors had already stopped to set up camp and search for gold



Map 6: Moodie's Trail of 1898.

in the area before the winter set in. With their horses played out and being short of provisions and having no snowshoes, Moodie began to anxiously plan a quick escape to Fort Selkirk via canoe, hence ending the trail survey. However, they needed boats to load the men into. The NWMP party had intended to build a canoe at the Pelly Banks, but they were running out of time.

Finding a wintering prospector, Moodie persuaded the man to allow them to buy his canoe for the whopping price of four hundred and fifty dollars—roughly half a

years wage.¹⁴⁸ The prospector was said to be reluctant to part with the boat even at this price, but Moodie pressed the deal, knowing that his expedition could not afford



Photo 24: Canoe in ice on Pelly River, Yukon Territory¹⁴⁹

to get stranded during a Yukon Winter without the proper supplies. Desperate, they cached non-essential items, and set off down stream in the canvas canoe. After spending days navigating around ice flows, and portaging for miles, they finally made it to Fort Selkirk before complete freeze up. From there, they eventually headed home.

Moodie's official trail report is somewhat ambiguous. He concludes that the sea routes are much faster, but he also believes that if a wagon trail is to be made within Canada then his route is the best.¹⁵⁰ The strain of the trip is evident in his colorful narrative, and he praises the regular members of the NWMP who were with him on the journey, doubting that he could have survived without their steadfast support. On the other hand, one wonders how Moodie could manage to exhibit such blatant intolerance towards local First Nations people, even though his party was

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Glenbow Archives.

¹⁵⁰ Moodie, *Patrol Report*, 10.

often completely reliant upon them for food and direction. Still, it is commendable that Moodie managed to plan and command this expedition under very trying circumstances.

In the summer of 1898, quite a few prospectors left Edmonton to use Moodie's trail. J.G. Mac Gregor lists over sixteen hundred individual users of "Edmonton Routes,"¹⁵¹ many of whom used the NWMP Peace-Yukon Trail. Several of these prospectors are said to have died of starvation on the way. Despite the hostilities between First Nations and the prospector newcomers in these volatile regions, there are also a few stories involving the Fort St. John to Fort Grahame trail. This following events occurred to the Walker party on the Moodie Trail just outside of fort St. John in July 1898:

We just got to the top of a very steep hill, coming up from a creek, when Sophia's [a mule] hind legs gave out, and she started down the hill backwards, not like an ordinary animal would be rolling, but end over end like a cart wheel. There was an old rotten tree about half way down, lying horizontally about four feet or five feet off the ground, kept up by old rotten branches. This tree was fifteen inches in diameter, and Sophia went through it like a knife, and disappeared down among the trees about 150 feet below. We hastily unpacked two of the animals, and went down to bring up Sophia's load of flour and beans and riding saddle which was on top. When we got down there we found Sophia right side up, but wedged in between two fairly good-sized trees. The pack saddle was smashed to pieces, but the food was first class, not even a tear on it. We had to cut down a tree to get Sophia out and then pull off her load. She then shook herself, got up, and walked to the top of the hill, apparently all right, but she died about two weeks later. She had been hurt internally.¹⁵²

As well, in 1898, the Editor of *The Edmonton Bulletin* traveled the overland trail in order to meet up with Mrs. Garner of the Fresno Party as they returned to Edmonton after failing to reach the Klondike:

¹⁵¹ Morrison, 38.

¹⁵² Mac Gregor, 203.

Mrs. Garner, who accompanied her husband, and had the distinction of being the first lady to leave for the Klondike overland from Edmonton, has borne the long, hard trip bravely and shows no signs, beyond the inevitable tan, of the hardships of the journey. Among the experiences of the trip was a winter spent in a cabin on the Smoky, which to one who had never seen snow before, was an experience decidedly novel. Mrs. Garner, though realizing that the trip was more arduous than she had ever expected, regrets the circumstances which compelled her husband's and her own return and was anxious to keep on and if necessary go through to Dawson.¹⁵³

Similarly, several bands of cattle were driven over Moodie's trail to the Klondike in 1898. Two cowboys by the name of Jones and Smart of Swift Current brought fifty head of cattle from Fort Saint John to Finlay River over Moodie's trail, apparently all of the cows made it alive.

9) Constantine's Trail 1905-1908

By 1899, Klondiker's traveled Moodie's path less frequently as the Gold Rush declined; yet, the trail's development would continue. Moodie's job had been to scout a route for the establishment of a wagon road throughout this new region, and those plans would not be shelved even after the Yukon Gold Rush ended. A wagon trail would still be relatively cheap to build in comparison with a railway, and could still be of value to "open up new country" through settlement. Besides, the Mounties' reasoned, who knew what was yet to be found in the Klondike; it remained desirable to create strong linkages to this territory. Somehow the brutality of the Moodie expedition did not seem to completely register with the NWMP administrators, who managed to use the adjective "easiest" in their description of the trail:

This trip has established the fact that the easiest and cheapest way to get into the northeast portion of British Columbia, is via Edmonton, and by the pass

¹⁵³ *The Edmonton Bulletin*, September 5, 1898.

he traveled over. Already several bands of cattle have been driven by this route over the mountains.¹⁵⁴

However, the chivalric values of the NWMP might have lead them to different conclusions about the trail compared to those one might draw today: “The police did not seem to have given way to the rather natural tendency to think of themselves as sacrifices to Edmonton’s civic greed; rather, they regarded Moodie’s harrowing patrol as heroic proof of what they were capable of”.¹⁵⁵ Perhaps the fact that the NWMP new commissioner A. B. Perry was struggling to justify the forces existence during the post-gold rush period made the idea of a major wagon trail project more appealing at the time as well.¹⁵⁶ Even though the Yukon stampede was over, the NWMP and the Ministry of the Interior did not abandon the trail. The police continued to patrol it and plans were also made to improve it.¹⁵⁷

At this time British Columbia was starting to leave behind turmoil of its past governments and had entered an age of generally stability and prosperity under Conservative Premier Richard McBride, who would reign for twelve years (1903-1915). From a European perspective, things looked promising for the Peace region as well. The Gold Rush had resulted in establishing the first small wave of settlement in the Peace, and with it came modest advances in services and transportations. The policing of the region was anticipated to become more complex, and a new division was made to encompass the area north and west of Athabasca Landing-- “N” Division.

¹⁵⁴ L.W. Herchmer. *Report of the North West Mounted Police 1898: Report of Commissioner Herchmer.* (Ottawa: S.E., Dawson, 1899.) p, 2.

¹⁵⁵ Morrison, 38.

¹⁵⁶ Mac Leod., 56-70.

¹⁵⁷ Bowen A. Perry. *Peace River to Teslin Lake Report. Correspondence (To Minister of the Interior Richard Sifton?).* October 24, 1904. p, 1-10.

Many officials, like Perry, continued to advocate the construction of the wagon trail, convinced that doing so would add to the development in the region and have far reaching effects towards building the Northwestern corner of Canada:

A Steamer is now on the Peace River from St Johns to Peace River Crossing, delivering supplies...good fur catch that year, things going well with the Treaty 8. "We hear that the government intends cutting a road from the Peace to the Pelly river. Such a road would, in my opinion, be of great benefit to the country. It would open up new fields for trading purposes and would show the world the immense amount of timber said to exist through that region. It might also be the means of establishing a good all-Canadian overland route to the Yukon."¹⁵⁸

However, Moodie was not brought back to suffer on his trail again. A new official would oversee the construction of the wagon trail. Superintendent Charles Constantine had a long and distinguished career with the NWMP. While Sam Steele is the most famous of the Klondike Mounties, Constantine's contributions to the development of the Canadian Northwest can be judged as equally important in some respects. Constantine was in charge of the very first NWMP detachment to the Yukon Territory. This expedition was sent to establish a post for the purposes (Fort Constantine) of policing the activities of American miners at Forty Mile in the years prior to the Klondike Gold Rush.¹⁵⁹ As previously mentioned, many of the Americans were used to regulating their own activities through committee and the imposition of vigilante justice; they were not initially keen to have British Law imposed upon them.

Inevitably, a serious challenge to police authority in the Yukon occurred when a mineral claim dispute needed to be resolved. The miner's collective wanted to use their traditional methods to settle the problem, rather than have the NWMP interfere. But Constantine refused to allow this to occur and navigated the issue without

¹⁵⁸ Bowen A. Perry. *1903 NWMP Yearly Report*. (Ottawa: S.E., Dawson, 1903.) p, 41.

¹⁵⁹ Dobrowolsky, 20-21.



Photo 25: Fort Constantine¹⁶⁰

bloodshed, to the dismay of some of the prospectors. In doing so Constantine established a more formal version of law amongst the mining camps and “the old order had passed in the Yukon, and American-style frontier democracy had been replaced by British Paternalism”.¹⁶¹

The law and order that the NWMP brought to the Yukon is often pointed to with pride throughout Canadian history as defining major differences between the way Americans and Canadians expanded their western frontiers, and has been used to symbolize the dissimilarities between our national characters: the lawless/vigilantly Americans versus the law abiding Canadians. Superintendent Constantine can be credited for sewing the seed of this emerging aspect of the Canadian identity with his policing of the Yukon.

Compared to Moodie’s journey, the construction of the wagon trail would turn out to be grueling, but relatively free from drama. Throughout this period (1905-1908) the Sekani-Carrier people’s outward hostility towards white settlers dramatically reduced. The police attributed the Native’s complacency to the Treaty 8

¹⁶⁰ Glenbow Archives.

¹⁶¹ Morrison, 23, 26.

settlement, and the NWMP were generally very complementary in their description of First Nations conduct.¹⁶²

The attitude of the Indians and Half-breeds in the [treaty 8 region] is peaceable, and they are well behaved and law abiding, they give us next to no trouble. The valuable assistance given to us in the recent murder trail at Edmonton by Moostoos and his band, cannot be too highly spoken of, and the recognition that they have now received from the Government [Treaty 8] will I am sure be much appreciated by them and will stimulate them in future to assist us whenever it is necessary to enforce the law, which happily is of a most rare occurrence.¹⁶³

Although usually patronizing, the police reports often praise the industrious and peaceful nature of the Sekani and Beaver people. While the NWMP had very little conflict resolution to address as they built the wagon road, the First Nations participation in the project was also not as overt as it was with Moodie's expedition.



Photo 26: Superintendent Charles Constantine¹⁶⁴

Constantine's 1905-1908 trail building project was also performed much more incrementally than Moodie's dash across northern B.C. The wagon trail was

¹⁶² General NWMP Peace-Yukon Trail correspondence, 1905-1908.

¹⁶³ C.W. West. *Royal North West Mounted Police Quarterly Report*. (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1905). p, 43.

¹⁶⁴ Glenbow Archives

constructed with greater support, and the road building only commenced when the frost was out of the ground, thus, the party did not have to spend the winter months on the trail. The original plan for the road intended to follow Moodie's route up the Rocky Mountain Trench:

It was the intention of the government to make a trail from Fort St. John, in British Columbia, through the mountains to the head of Teslin Lake, in the Yukon Territory, from St. John, via Fort Grahame, in the direction of Sylvester's Landing at Dease Lake, and thence to Teslin Lake: and it is desirable that we should have the good-will of the Government of British Columbia, and permission to erect and maintain shelter huts at reasonable distances apart.¹⁶⁵

Maintaining regular police duties was also part of the detachment's orders while they built the trail. Specifically, they were told to monitor First Nations activities diplomatically, and help dole out regular treaty payments. As for the project receiving the approval of the British Columbia government, this was really just a technicality that was of course granted.

Understanding the elements that went into organizing and commanding the four-year trail project are among the most interesting aspects of its story. In 1905, forty-five men worked on the road: "The party consisted of two officers, inspectors [C.H.] West and [J.C.] Richards, six n.c. (non-commissioned) officers, twenty-two constables and two special constables, with sixty horses".¹⁶⁶ As this was a special assignment, they mostly enlisted physically strong young men for the work.¹⁶⁷ The recruits were required to have good health and good teeth, and they needed to have served for two years in the NWMP. Preference was also given to good axmen. The recruits were given the "Yukon rate" of extra pay from the date they left Athabasca

¹⁶⁵ Charles Constantine. "Annual Report of Superintendent C. Constantine, Commanding 'N' Division, Athabasca District." *Report of the Royal North-West Mounted Police 1905*. (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1906). p. 31.

¹⁶⁶ R.M. Patterson, 93.

¹⁶⁷ Constantine. Correspondence. Requisitions for men from other units, promise of Yukon pay rates, February 20, 1095.

Landing; however, Special Constables were not entitled to this pay.¹⁶⁸ Officers usually received between one hundred and eighty to one hundred and thirty dollars a month, while Sergeants were paid around seventy dollars and constables received about forty-five dollars. The Special Constables made about as much as the regular constables on this mission.¹⁶⁹

Considering that Moodie's trip was probably well known by the men who went on this expedition, they must have taken the assignment seriously. Inspector Richards, for example, had special arrangements made for his wife and family stipulating that the NWMP would secure their residence in Medicine Hat and send his pay to his wife. This sort of special treatment was usually only reserved for supervisors like Constantine, but considering the circumstances the NWMP administration felt they had little choice but to submit to Richard's request.¹⁷⁰

Historian Kathryn Morse has noted that during gold rushes prospectors were not isolated in the wilderness, rather they drug a long network of civilized tentacles into the bush with them, and in doing so reshaped the way people lived in that region. Most notably, prospectors brought new supply routes and goods into the areas they entered.¹⁷¹ This theory very much applies to Constantine's expedition as well, whose party was very well connected to urban resources.

Construction started on the NWMP wagon road in July of 1905. Contrary to popular belief, when the men started to work on the trail, Constantine mostly stayed at the base at Fort St. John where he organized supply shipments through the HBC and the Revillon Bros. Contractors. He also oversaw small units of NWMP who had

¹⁶⁸ Bowen A, Perry. Correspondence. Distribution of pay to individual members of the N division.

¹⁶⁹ Payroll document. July, 1905. "Distribution of the Pay of members of "N" Division, R.N.W.M. Police stationed at Fort St. John B.C.

¹⁷⁰ Bowen Perry. Correspondence. February 24th, 1905.

¹⁷¹ Morse, 1-25.



Photo 27: A Revillon Bros. pack train. This company outfitted Constantine's expedition.¹⁷²



Photo 28: "Camp of North-West Mounted Police party near Fort St. John, British Columbia".¹⁷³

stayed in St. John to do preparatory work, such as collecting hay, constructing winter barracks, and running pack-train supplies to the crews working on the trail.

Constantine's job was to administrate and he would not have performed much physical trail work. Constantine and the other officers did, however, travel frequently up the trail to view the progress that was being made. Less than one hundred miles

¹⁷² Glenbow Archives.

¹⁷³ Glenbow Archives.

of road was cut during the first season, so it was relatively easy to travel back and fourth. Two officers, West and Camies, stayed behind to assist Constantine with these tasks. The men who worked on the actual trail were commanded by Inspector J.C. Richards: "Inspector J.C. Richards, two corporals and thirteen constables were detailed as a "trail party" to follow the old blazed Moodie Mounted Police trail and widen it to eight feet".¹⁷⁴ Richards oversaw most of the field work, and he would later also be in charge of all of the duties that are included in wintering the party in Fort St. James, after Constantine returned to Regina.



Photo 29: Blazing the Peace-Yukon trail (Inspector Constantine, seated, right foreground, winching goods across stream).¹⁷⁵

One would assume that the trail party would simply work as a solid unit and cut road in a westerly direction towards Fort Grahame; however, this was not the case. First a survey crew performed layout work by scouting the route ahead through the rough bush while chaining out miles. Constable Bowler, originally of the

¹⁷⁴ Dorothy Calverley. *The Mounted Police Road, the First Alaska Highway*. (unpublished), <http://www.calverley.ca/Part03-Transportation/3-024.html>

¹⁷⁵ Glenbow Archives.

Depot Division was the qualified surveyor who was in charge of surveying the trail.¹⁷⁶

His list of surveying materials follows:

Prismatic Compass, Box Sextant, 100 foot chain with ten arrows, Aneroid Barometer, Maximum Thermometer, Minimum Thermometer, Canadian Almanac, 12 field books...then drawing instruments as well.¹⁷⁷

After the survey crew had done its job, a pack-train went along the uncut route to cache supplies before the hackers cut through to that spot. Then, one small crew of road builders would follow the uncut laid-out trail up ahead and turn around and start working in an easterly direction back towards the other half of the construction team, who were working west. In this way the two crews removed chunks of bush at a time. A well stocked camp would then be established near the cached supplies spot, usually a new camp was established every eight miles or so. Each camping spot was mapped and assigned a number in order to demonstrate progress as they trail party moved westward.¹⁷⁸



Photo 30: Peace River trail party at Fort St. John, British Columbia.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Constantine. "Correspondence". February 21, 1905.

¹⁷⁷ "The Controller". Correspondence. March 4, 1905.

¹⁷⁸ J.C. Richards. *Monthly Reports*. (Unpublished). 1-10.

¹⁷⁹ Glenbow Archives.

The road had to be built eight feet wide and scraped down to dirt, and the majority of the actual trail was built using simple tools like shovels, axes, saws, and pickaxes, which obviously required lots of strenuous manual labor. However, the horses did a lot of the heavy lifting, and were used for everything from transportation to packing and timber pulling. Twelve by sixteen foot rest-houses were constructed every thirty-six miles, adding to the worker's burden, and the men were also required to erect mile markers every few kilometers along the trail.



Photo 31: Northwest Mounted Police camp at Fort Grahame.¹⁸⁰

Really wet areas of the NWMP trail were either corduroyed or had bridges built over them, and it did not take long for the police to start complaining about the endless array of swamps and creeks. They did not seem to have anticipated how many watersheds of different varieties British Columbia would be capable of throwing at them.¹⁸¹

All the while, the trail was carefully recorded by the surveyor Bowler who noted major land marks like good pasture lands, which were very high on the list of

¹⁸⁰ Glenbow Archives.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

priorities for documenting. An abundance of meadows could make or break a prospecting trip or represent potentially good homesteading territory. As well, creeks, rivers, swamps or “muskegs”, forests, forest fires, and other features were duly noted. The first year went well, but the work was monotonous and fairly brutal.



Photo 32: Northwest Mounted Police working on the trail.¹⁸²

The Police probably regretted not starting in June when it was cooler because it was a very hot dry summer, particularly at the start of construction. Despite the heat, the Black Flies were bad under the cover of timber. There was also a thick forest fire in the mountains for weeks, which could have been a minor concern. Constantine’s men were not neatly kitted out in their red tunics for this labour assignment. They may have worn the tunics at times, but these garments probably would not have been in the best order. Mostly they wore work clothing that included

¹⁸² Glenbow Archives.

slacks and suspenders, with long-sleeve shirts, and, of course, the famous flat-brimmed Stetson.¹⁸³

Although many of the men grew up on farms and would have been used to physical labour, none of them were experienced in road building through northern British Columbia. Usually the road crews averaged two miles of new construction a day. Through July and August, the crews continued to sweat away in the hot weather with aching backs, while being swarmed by black flies in the swampy areas. The workers ate as much sugar and fruit as they could get in the heat, unexpectedly over-using rations like maple syrup and marmalade, while more savoury and heavy foods—particularly meats—were not eaten much at all, leading to an imbalance in the food stocks.

Surpluses [of certain foods] have occurred by men not eating their full rations of these articles, while they eat more of such articles, as are short, and that the Surpluses should be taken off the books... That a party of men, such as were on the Expedition, unaccustomed to such work, craved more of such things, as are short, than the regulation allowance, and could not always, more especially in warm weather, eat the full allowance, of such things as are a Surplus.¹⁸⁴

Under these conditions, the young trail workers would have become skinny and tough in no time. Generally, the worker's conduct was excellent; however, every once in a while an officer was placed under arrest for a "trivial issue" resulting from the "little spells of discontent" that probably occurred as a result of the tough work and relative isolation from family and friends. Aside from the daily routine, the Mounties' paramilitary regiment was also abided by. Dorathy Calverley, a Fort St. John historian, had this to say about Inspector Richards attempts to drill the trail crews:

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ J.C. Richards. *Proceedings of the Board—Opinion*. Jan 12, 1906.

There was a comic-opera air about the whole performance. One wonders what urge to perfectionism Inspector Richards was plagued with. At the end of a day's work the party would mount and place their axes as they would their rifles at the "advance into combat" order. The blunt end of the head was pressed against the thigh, the haft angled just so at the proper slant. The whole troop would ride back at full gallop. Every night the performance was carried out. How the unfortunate constables on foot got back in proper form was not recorded.

The lack of the customary spit and polish of Mounties' appearance must have distressed the Inspector. During the mosquito, black fly and no-seeum season the only protection for face, neck and arms was a rind of bacon smeared over the bare skin. They constantly smoked strong tobacco and probably didn't wash too often. At night they lit smudges of twigs overlaid with damp vegetation, so that with bacon fat and smoke, they must have smelled like over-cured hams.¹⁸⁵

Aboriginal groups also traveled up the newly constructed route, some from the nearby Halfway River reserve. They came to see the construction and to trade or sell dried moose, fish, and bear to the police, who were glad for it. The trail parties would also trade with passing groups of Native peoples in order to relay messages back to Constantine in Fort St. John, and vice versa. Here is a typical official record describing a work week in the late summer of 1905:

Weather Fine, about 11 a.m. commenced to work up a thunderstorm and rain which lasted intermittently all day and night. Sunday Routine, River very low indeed...The men of the party are all well and in good health, and getting on to the work in fairly good shape, their tent accommodation is ample, and a good many have their own bivouacs. The horses are all in good condition and pack well, they give but little trouble in the way of straying, the flies have been hard on them at times. The trail starts at the old camp and crosses a dip which is now corduroyed and follows to the right coming to the head of a swamp which is also crossed by corduroy work, thence along a small ridge, which joins the Old Trail which it follows through a bunch willow flat, thence to a poplar swamp and then crosses a small creek...two moose were seen near the Old Camp the day we moved by the men, no one at the time had a gun handy. Fish Creek is teeming with fish, but so far nothing but suckers have been caught, these are not good being soft and full of bones. I have the honor to be Sir, Your obedient servant. Constantine, Supt. Commanding "N" Division.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Calverley. *The NWMP Trail, the First Alaska Highway*. 1-3.

¹⁸⁶ Constantine. *Weekly Report*. August 18, 1905.

Notice the attention Constantine pays to the horses' condition. On these expeditions the horses were usually well taken care of because they were considered to be one of the most vital aspects of a mission.



Photo 33: A smudge [fire] is used to keep insects off horses.¹⁸⁷

As the fall approached and the weather became colder, the party took days off work when it rained too hard because it was impossible to not get completely saturated and very cold. Slippery conditions could also make axe wielding dangerous as well—from 1905-1908 numerous axe injuries occurred, some were fairly serious foot injuries that needed to be transported to hospital. Without the luxuries of electricity or close medical facilities, Inspector Richards had to be wary about the weather's effects on the men. As they worked into September, heavy cold rains increasingly lead to less work. Life, for the most part, was very active but probably dull and lonely for the police. The party's progress depended upon how quickly they could navigate around the obstructions they found throughout the passing country.

¹⁸⁷ Glenbow Archives.

From Fort St. John to the end point of that season 92 km west of St. John the most notable aspect of land was that it contained a lot of swamp and muskeg, so much so that the NWMP abandoned attempts to continue corduroying the road. The summer went without much incident but just before the season ended, the Fort Grahame saga began. On September eleventh a member of the trail team named corporal McLeod was ordered to travel with a small party over the remains of Moodie's uncut trail through Laurier Pass and on to Fort Grahame where they were to make sure that stores were cached at the HBC post. However, this trip proved to be very problematic and McLeod's party did not make it to Fort Grahame; instead they struggled through blow-down and eventually lost Moodie's faint and unused trail. The party was forced to return to Fort St. John after losing five horses and running out of rations.¹⁸⁸



Photo 34: Northwest Mounted Police pack transportation on Peace-Yukon trail.¹⁸⁹

Upset that McLeod did not reach Fort Grahame, Richards hired a guide and proceeded to try to get a party to Fort Grahame by water in order to make sure that the next seasons supplies were in order. Unexpectedly, eight miles west of Hudson's Hope they met an Italian in rags, who spoke no English, and had a blanket, but no gun. The police took him back to the Hudson's bay post at Hudson's Hope

¹⁸⁸ Constantine. *Annual Report 1905*, 40.

¹⁸⁹ Glenbow Archives.

where he ate a raw piece of bacon off the counter, and the resident Sekani's were said to be apprehensive of the man because they suspected he was a cannibal. The constables took him away at the request of the store keeper, who was worried about his safety. Luckily, the famous priest Father Nicola Coccola helped the NWMP translate the Italian's story. This strange individual turned out to be a prospector who had lost his way and claimed to have wandered for months alone in the mountains until he was saved by a group of Aboriginals. Inexplicably, the Italian miner would soon disappear again.¹⁹⁰

Thus ended the 1905 trail season, and the NWMP hunkered down and spent a lean and fairly eventless winter at Fort St. John. At this point Constantine must have started to question the validity of the assignment, as he concludes "the truth is the original trail is seldom, if ever used."¹⁹¹



Photo 35: "North-West Mounted Police winter quarters, Fort St. John, British Columbia", 1905-06.¹⁹²

The next two seasons of trail work would follow the same pattern described in 1905. The next spring 1906 the road crew returned to work up the trail; the most notable aspect of this campaign was that Inspector Richards quit his assignment

¹⁹⁰ J.C. Richards. "Correspondence". October 14 1905.

¹⁹¹ Constantine. "Correspondence". August 5.

¹⁹² Glenbow Archives.

around Ospika River and was replaced by Inspector E.J. Camies, who sparked a mad dash of hasty and poorly constructed work over Laurier Pass and through the mountains to Fort Grahame.¹⁹³ A small crew scouted the trail twenty kilometers west of Grahame, and claimed that new area was the most rocky and rugged yet experienced on the trip—no doubt the trail builders looked forward to the next season with that on their minds.

One notable aspect of the 1906 season was that instead of following the Ospika River downstream, as Moodie had, Camie's crew built the wagon road almost due west from the Ospika through a Mountain Pass (Herchmer Pass) to Fort Grahame. Ironically, Constantine missed the trail entire season in 1906 as the result of having a guide abandoning him on a pre-arranged trip from St. John's to Fort Grahame. As a result, Constantine could not oversee the trail construction or perform his supply maintenance duties, so he had no choice but to turn around and go back to Peace River Crossing.¹⁹⁴

During the winter, Constable A.G. Gardner and Special Constable Decoteau would lead a dog team over the new road from Fort St. John to Fort Grahame to deliver mail. Their trip was eerily similar to the one experienced by Moodie. This patrol would also run out of rations on the Ospika River stretch of the trail and were forced to eat the dog's food, which consisted of rotten butter and oatmeal. However, they were luckily saved by Sekani hunter's in the region who traded them meat for some of their other items.¹⁹⁵

Camies' main trail party wintered at Fort Grahame without much incident.

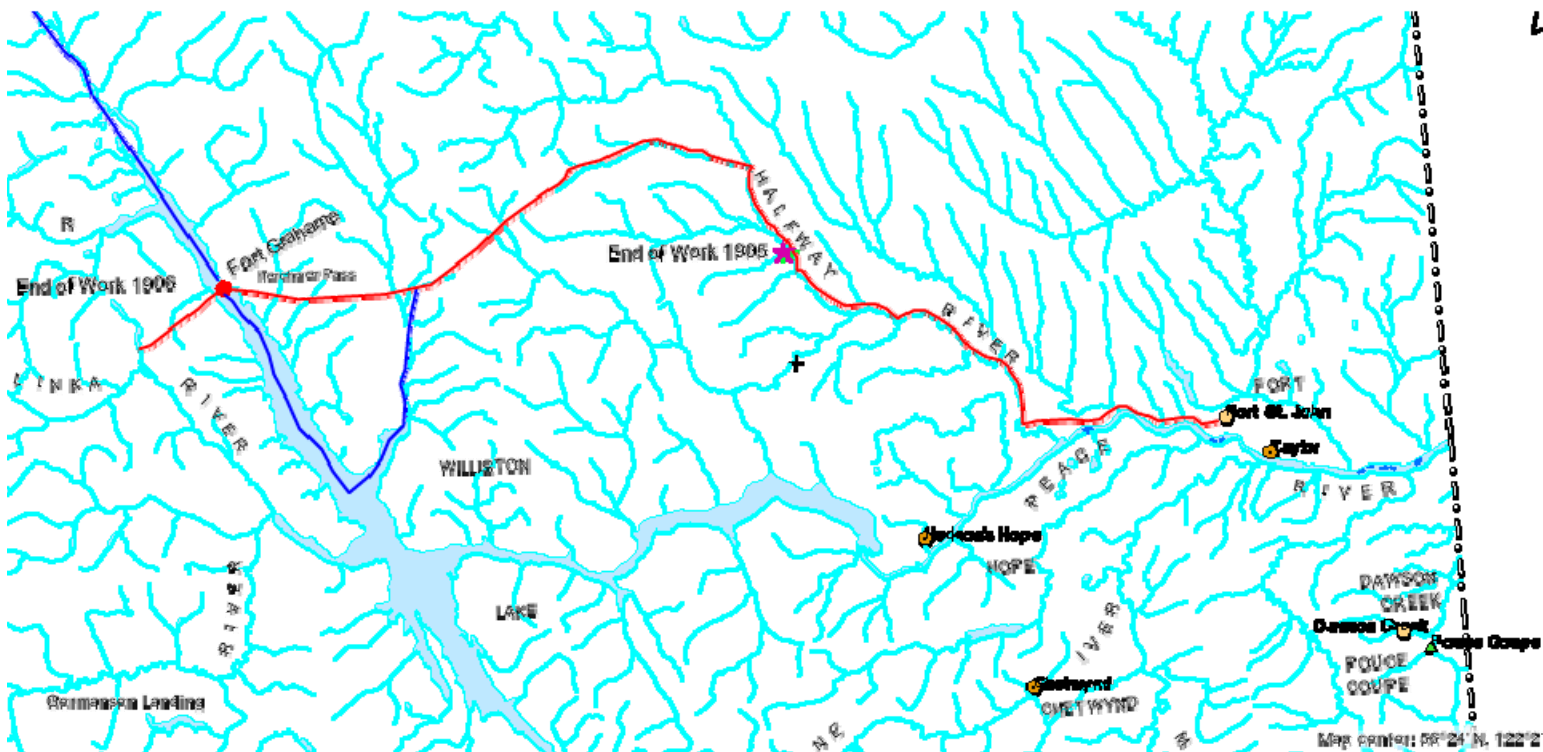
When the spring approached events started to stir; down in Victoria British

¹⁹³ Correspondence to Col. White. September 25th, 1907.

¹⁹⁴ Constantine. *Annual Report 1906*, 143-42.

¹⁹⁵ Constantine. *Annual Report 1907*, 32.

Columbian Premier Richard McBride told the NWMP administration that he wanted the trail to trail travel northwest from Fort Grahame to meet up with the overland trail that was established to Telegraph Creek, rather than going north up the Finlay River Valley as Moodie had.¹⁹⁶ A reconnaissance mission was sent to study this possibility from Hazelton in the summer of 1906.¹⁹⁷



Map 7: Constantine's 1905 and 1906 trail building expeditions (red) and Moodie's route (blue).

The 1907 season represented another quick dash by different NWMP parties to make it to Cabin Four on the Telegraph Trail. On the thirteenth of July the Fort Grahame Party headed west over the pre-existing Bear Lake Trail and arrived at old Fort Connelly on Bear Lake a day later. Camies' men then proceeded to cut through to the Cabin Four on the Telegraph trail towards Inspector Mc Donnell's party, who

¹⁹⁶ Richard Mac Bride. "Correspondence with Commissioner Perry." May 6 1906.

¹⁹⁷ R.C. Bowen, "Correspondence". July 4¹ 1906.

had been previously deployed to Fourth Cabin via Hazelton and were cutting south east towards Camies. Camies was “agreeably surprised” by how easy it was to build the trail from Bear Lake to the Skeena:

The country west of Bear Lake, to an Indian Bridge over the Bear or Sustut River, is very easy to travel. The bridge, so I am informed by our Indian, was built before the memory of any living Indian. It is a true cantilever, very old and frail and unsafe, though it has been repaired from time to time. The Indians use it...The Bear lake Indians do not travel or hunt west or north of this point, and do not know anything of the country at all. The Kispiox Indians claim the country from the bridge west. Chief Thomas arrived with further supply from Babine, 1, 008 lbs.,. Trail crosses Bear River, and then meets up with a good Indian trail until it meets the Indian bridge. The work, after crossing comes somewhat heavy. The willows and underbrush could only be cut by the use of heavy knives and hatches. The underbrush was the worsted feature we met with during the entire season. Men worked very well. On the 22nd, I crossed my party to Inspector McDonell’s camp and turned over to him party, etc. I cannot conclude this report, without expressing how well the party I had the privilege to command behaved and worked under somewhat trying circumstances at times, without complaint...there was no breach of discipline from the regular men of our forces. Accidents: Const. Thorne, H, on June 12 cut his foot with an axe, serious wound right through to the instep, was left at Camp 8 and treated by Dr. Genest...taken to Fort Grahame and Lesser Slave Lake...many other fairly significant axe related injuries occurred. Trail: I was agreeably surprised with the conditions met with in building the trail from Fourth Cabin to crossing of the Skeena River. From Bear Lake to Skeena, it is easy country for a trail. 153 miles of trail built this season, distance of 377 miles from fort St. John.¹⁹⁸

Commissioner Bowen Perry recommended that the trail be altered from Cabin Four on the Telegraph trail and be extended up the valley of the Slangese River in order to complete a more direct route to the Stikine. Although the trail was not fully finished, the NWMP would no longer be involved with construction on this project. Commissioner Perry decided detailing the number of men that would be required to complete the trail greatly hampered the growing amount of legitimate police work

¹⁹⁸ E.J. Camies. Report of *Inspector Camies on Peace River-Yukon Trail From Omineka to Bear Lake*. 1907. 154-155.

that was required around British Columbia. He recommended no work be done on trail in upcoming season.¹⁹⁹



Photo 36: NWMP trail route, 1905.²⁰⁰

Despite this, the NWMP did not give up on the trail. The Mounted Police still promoted the wagon road as an important aspect of national security and wanted to see it maintained and expanded:

The water route in complete hands of U.S. authorities, who have expended no-less than a million dollars in the establishment of Fort Steward...guns command the channel, "in the event of unfriendly relations, prevent any Canadian ship reaching the Port or Skagway, which is the key to our present entrance in the Yukon"...whilst I think only of Dominion interests, I know that this trail is of immense importance to the Province of B.C.²⁰¹

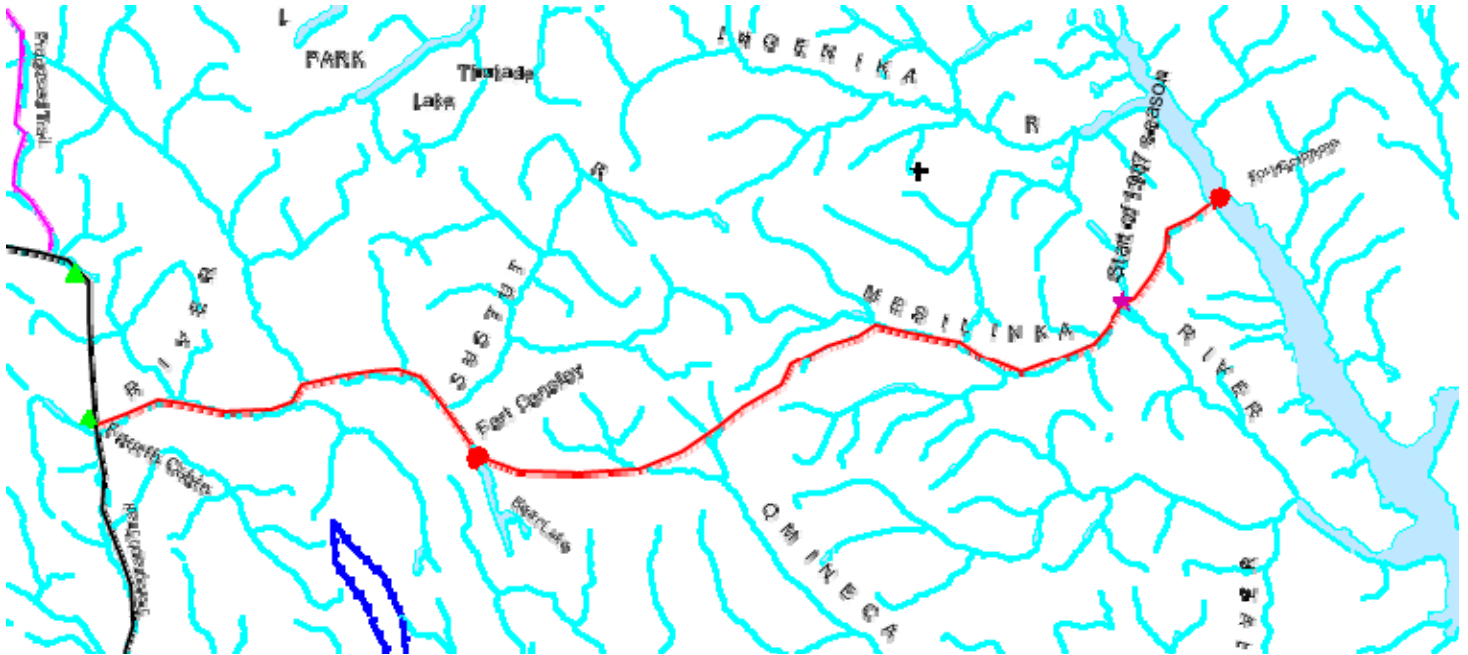
Even though the height of the Yukon Gold rush had passed almost ten years earlier, these NWMP officials still felt there was a need to defend the general territory from American interests. The Mounties then turned to B.C.'s Premier Richard McBride, and asked him "in plain language" to take over the maintenance of the trail, and continue the construction of the Dominion Government Trail to the Stikine.

¹⁹⁹ Perry. "Correspondence with Prime Minister Laurier". May 19th, 1908.

²⁰⁰ Glenbow Archives.

²⁰¹ A.B. Perry. "Correspondence with Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier". January 11, 1907.

Ottawa, 11th January, 1907: “I met Mr. McBride, the Premier of B.C, at dinner when he was in Ottawa during the meeting of the Premiers, and in casual conversation I asked him whether his Government would be willing to undertake to keep the trail which the Police are constructing...His reply was that he was keenly interested in the work we were doing and we might rely on the Province seconding our action, and that if I might write to him he would give the necessary instructions.”²⁰²



Map 8: NWMP 1907 Trail Season (red line = Police Trail; black line =Telegraph Line Trail; purple line = proposed extension).

After many NWMP petitions to McBride went unanswered, a letter finally came. MacBride stated that he appreciated all of the work the NWMP performed on the trail, but unfortunately, the Provincial Government did not have the resources to apply to the road's construction and maintenance at that time: “I regret, however, that after

²⁰² Ibid.

going into the matter most carefully, the government cannot see its way to build the trail from Cabin No. 4 to the Stikine River".²⁰³

From this point on no one would officially maintain the trail; however, the NWMP would continue to patrol the wagon road from time to time. For example, in October of 1910 a small expedition lead by Sergeant, J. Darling patrolled the NWMP trail from Athabasca Landing to Fort St. Johns, and then to the Yukon. Around Fort St. John the trail was said to be like this,

in fair shape but badly overgrown with brush, bridges decayed and unsafe, too much so to be repaired and will have to be renewed altogether; in some places there was considerable fallen timber which I expect will be worse next summer as there were bush fires raging all through that part of the country.²⁰⁴ From the Halfway River to Fort Grahame the trail is entirely blocked in places with fallen timber and was impossible to follow in places, it required two men ahead with axes otherwise this trail was good as the muskeg is drying up. The trail from Fort Grahame to Bear Lake is very bad, in fact there are places it is not even a good moccasin trail being altogether invisible...the crossing of Bear Lake mountain was accomplished with difficulty, as the snow was very deep and no sign of a trail...arrived at cabin IV on the 18th.²⁰⁵



Photo 37: Cabin Four on the Yukon Telegraph Trail.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Richard McBride. "Correspondence with Fred White". May 14th, 1908.

²⁰⁵ J. Darling. *Report of the Peace Yukon Patrol from Athabasca Landing to White Horse*. (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, 1910.)

²⁰⁶ *The Yukon Telegraph Trail*. http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/skeena/telegraph_trail.htm

And so ended the Mounted Police's connection to the Peace-Yukon Trail, which must have been a disappointing turn of events for individuals like Constantine who had spent many consecutive seasons working on the wagon road. By 1912, the police had stopped regularly using the NWMP trail, but dissimilarly, the Peace River district was starting to boom as a result of the real-estate speculation that had swept northern British Columbia. Individuals from around the world bought land across the province as they tried to determine where the new Grand Trunk Pacific's (GTP) track would be located. They did this in order to capitalize on pre-development by buying up potential town sites and marketable resources that they envisioned being located next to the track:

The latter district is booming famously [the lower Peace River District]. In Edmonton everyone is talking of the immense possibilities of the great "north country" and people in considerable numbers are going into the country via Lesser Slave Lake. The railroad is completed this year as far as Athabaska Landing and it is projected ultimately to Peace River and to Lake Athabaska.²⁰⁷

The GTP would actually travel south of the Peace River District, closer to Prince George. Nonetheless, settlement in the Peace region would continue to grow, and west of Fort St. John, sections of the Northwest Mounted Police Trail were being used by local ranchers, trappers, and First Nations people. Occasionally, the overgrown further reaches of the trail were also trod upon by foreign adventurers. Specifically, a few notable scientific groups would continue to use the NWMP Peace Yukon trail for various expeditions.

²⁰⁷ Constantine. N Division Annual Report. (Ottawa, S.E. Dawson, 1912) p, 23.

Part III: Science and Leisure Expeditions.

Part three recounts a four of the notable expeditions that took place upon sections of the Police Trails in the post-NWMP era, after the police had officially abandoned the trails. All of these trips were “scientific” in nature. However, most of these expeditions were also closely aligned with the early twentieth century adventure tourism phenomena, which created a new usage to the NWMP Peace-Yukon Trails, and attracted a few influential people to the region.

10) Fredrick Vreeland

In 1912, Fredrick Vreeland lead an American Geographical expedition into the Halfway River region to study various species of mountain sheep and also hunt for major sources that contributed to the Peace River, which they had determined to be unknown:

On the official government maps of British Columbia there are considerable areas of blank white paper surrounding the head waters of the Mackenzie River...of these three tributaries [to the Mackenzie] the Peace River is particularly interesting, because it performs the noteworthy feat of rising on the western side of the mountains in a great trough-like valley, whence it makes its escape by cutting a deep gorge clean across the range, through which it flows eastward to the great plateau.²⁰⁸

The Vreeland Expedition set out from Hudson’s Hope and then cut due south through the bush, connecting up to the Police Trail around Laurier Pass: this was a major area that the expedition wanted to explore, because they were particularly interested in finding the headwaters of the Halfway River. Vreeland’s 1914

²⁰⁸ Fredrick K. Vreeland. “Notes on the Source of the Peace River, British Columbia”. *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*. Vol. 46, No. 1. (1914). p. 1.

publication *Notes on the Sources of the Peace River, British Columbia* also

describes the remnants of the NWMP Trail as they found it:

On the Halfway River we struck and followed for some miles a trail which was located by Inspector Moodie of the Northwest Mounted Police in 1897, in the effort to discover an overland route to the Klondike by way of the Pelly River. Inspector Moodie, true to the traditions of the service, succeeded in reaching his goal after more than a year of hard and adventurous work, but the route was never a popular one. We found a few fragments of broken sledges and discarded cook-stoves as mute evidence of the failure of those treasure seekers who attempted to follow his lead, all of whom were forced to retreat or met a worse fate in the mountains. We found no indication of the trail having been recently used.²⁰⁹

The Vreeland expedition would continue to follow the Moodie Trail all the way to Laurier Pass, where they successfully shot mountain sheep and identified them. For all of their geographical expertise the scientist would be unable to determine exactly which mountain range the southwest fork of the Halfway River came from, a major tributary to the Peace. Ironically, a group of Beaver peoples would eventually meet the party and tell them where the source of the Halfway River comes from.²¹⁰

11) Frank Swannell's Expeditions

Similarly, Frank Swannell, a young man from Ontario, undertook surveys for the B.C. Lands Department into the region surrounding the NWMP Trails between 1912 and 1913. Swannell is famous in British Columbia for creating some of the most precise geographical surveys of the British Columbia's central interior in the early Twentieth Century. Frank Swannell is also famous for his excellent catalog of prototypical photographs of Northern British Columbian's wilderness culture. In 1913 Swannell's small party was charged with exploratory and triangulation mapping survey an area from Stuart Lake northerly to Ingenika and Finlay Rivers including

²⁰⁹Ibid, 15.

²¹⁰Ibid, 17.

Takla and Nalin lakes.²¹¹ As a Surveyor, Swannell had a reputation for being a perfectionist, and he had to be specifically ordered to not get too accurate of readings for the 1913 expedition.²¹²



Photo 38: Frank Swannell.²¹³

An interesting aspect of Swannell's sojourns was the inclusion of Chinese-Canadian Nep Yuen, who had come to Canada to work on the construction of the CPR. While Nep Yuen was a cook, his duties were very diverse, and included performing any activity that needed doing (with the exception of surveying) while on the trail: "Nep Yuen was a Chinaman of character, and two hard and often dangerous trips made him into a friend."²¹⁴ Consequently, Swannell named a mountain Northwest of the Finlay River "Mount Yuan", where it still exists.

Swannell's 1913 expedition into the Mesilinka region started overland from Fort St. James, and headed in a north easterly direction, where they connected up with Police Trail at around mile 280 west of Fort Grahame:

They were now on the Police Trail, on the trail that Constantine's men had cut out less than seven years before. Enthusiasm among the police for their

²¹¹ Unknown. *Frank Swannell, British Columbia Land Surveyor*. (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, ?). p. 1.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹³ Glenbow Archives.

²¹⁴ Patterson, 101.

futile task may have been waning by the time they reached Mile 280 west from Fort St. John (Swannell found the marker at his Camp 59 of the 1913 season), but forest growth and forest fires, snowstorms, whirlwinds and gales had all lent a helping hand to obliterate the road. “Trail exceptionally execrable”, is Swannell’s furious comment in the Diary—and again, on September 1, “It took horses 4 hours to go 3 miles and Bob nearly kills himself.”²¹⁵

When the Police Trail veered towards Fort Grahame, and away from the Mesilinka, Swannell’s expedition built rafts in order to continue surveying the River. However, this almost proved fatal for Swannell, whose raft got sucked under a log jam shortly after they had taken to the water.²¹⁶ Under these circumstances, Swannell had to abandon the raft in the log jam, and continued to follow the Police Trail with the pack train east to Fort Grahame. Having no raft at Fort Grahame, the party were then forced to construct a dug-out canoe out of a large cottonwood they chopped down.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Ibid, 103.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 105, 106.



Photo 39: Swannell's Party constructing the Dugout Canoe.²¹⁸

This incident illustrates an interesting difference between Swannell's trips when compared with the NWMP because in many ways Swannell's crew had to be a lot more self sufficient than the Mounties, and seemed to be more bush-savvy in some respects. Swannell moved quickly by using the rivers to cover great distances, his party also did a lot more hunting and fishing for subsistence purposes.

The next year (1914) Swannell would return to the region to survey the country surrounding the Ingenika River. This time his crew traveled from Prince Rupert to Fraser Lake by following the Grand Trunk Pacific railway path, they then used the old HBC portage routes to get from Fort St. James to McLeod Lake and then up to Fort Grahame. When they arrived at Fort Grahame Swannell found about sixty Sikani's awaiting a visit from Father Coccola.²¹⁹ Swannell's crew then headed

²¹⁸ Image F-08608 courtesy of British Columbia Archives.

²¹⁹ Frank Swannell. May 4-June 3, 1914. Personal Diaries. (British Columbia Archives).

north up the Finlay River by boat, whereupon they came to an old Klondiker camp beside the remnants of the Police Trail:

They camped for three days at the mouth of Paul's Branch, an eastern tributary. Nearby ran the trail of the Klondikers—which was also Moodie's trail. In an old camp of gold-rush days they found what they first thought was a winter grave—the body wrapped up in birch-bark and slung between two trees. Investigating gingerly, they found that the “body” was a cache of dynamite. The explosive had lain there for sixteen years of sunshine and storm...not wishing to disturbed its [the dynamites] rest, the investigators moved softly on—to find, close by, the skeletons of two packhorses with their saddles lying beside them, one with the name “Sousic” branded on it. Some of the Klondike farers were so green and helpless that they never unsaddled their packhorses or even took the packs off them. Some old experienced packer had shown them how to load a horse and had done it for them—once. And that was that: the packs stayed on till the horses practically rotted under the saddles. That may not have been the case here at Paul's Branch; nevertheless—and significantly—it was no more than five miles beyond this camp that they found another two horses' skeletons lying by the Klondike Trail, again with their packsaddles beside them.²²⁰

The Klondikers who had lead this pack train might not have made it to the Klondike.

On July 21st, Swannell's party returns to Fort Grahame to find a startling scene:

They were surprised to find a bunch of Sikannis hanging around- but no sign of Ross [fort manager] who had not yet returned from his trip out with the fur. A sickness had broken out among the Sikannis; nobody was hunting, and now they had lost heart and were starving. Five were already dead. Yet they could plainly see, through the windows of the pad-locked store, food and all they needed piled in plenty on the shelves...to the amazement of the Sikannis, Swannell broke the...lock and served out rations to them, chalking them up to their account. Then, while Copley [crew member] brewed up a concoction of wild strawberry leaves and maple syrup to cure those who were suffering from dysentery, largely brought on by starvation, Swannell attended to his own wantages.²²¹

This incident demonstrated an almost incomprehensible act of will-power by the Sinkani's present. Aside from continuing to map out large portions of British Columbia after 1913, Swannell would again find himself exploring sections of the

²²⁰Patterson, 157.

²²¹Ibid, 153-154.

Peace-Yukon Police trail when he was hired on as a geographer for the infamous Bedaux Expedition in 1934.

12) Mary Henry Gibson

The Edmonton, Dunvegan, and BC Railway completed its extension into northern BC in 1931, thus allowing for easy travel across the prairie from Edmonton to what is now the Dawson Creek area. As a result, many middle class urban people who were willing to fund their own adventures could now access this new gateway to northern British Columbia. Not surprisingly, local guides who were familiar with the territory started capitalized upon these tourists, as they had in the past. The Mary Henry Gibson explorations represent one of these adventurer/scientist trips. Gibson is regarded by some as being the first female America botanist and she was famous for collecting a huge variety of rare plants, which she traveled extensively around the world to find.²²² Gibson was also a well-healed Philadelphia socialite, who was married to Dr. John Norman Henry, Philadelphia's director of public health. Mary's botanical expeditions through Northern British Columbia are a definitive part of her occupational legacy, and would yield over three hundred and fifty different plant specimens.²²³

The Gibson family had actually traveled through parts of British Columbia the summer before they began their northern expedition (1930). Mary Henry Gibson's interest in exploring northern British Columbia was said to have been sparked in Jasper, where a trapper told her family about a "tropical valley" near the Yukon boarder "that was reportedly frost-free in spite of the extreme winter temperatures

²²² Mary Harrison, "Mary Gibson Henry, Plantswoman Extraordinaire" *Arnoldia*. (2000: Vol. 60, No1.): 1-5.

²²³ *Ibid.*

surrounding it".²²⁴ Mary must have been intrigued by the possibilities of finding unusual plant life in such an exotic oasis. That winter the Gibson's organized an expedition into the region with the help of the Canadian Department of the Interior, who offered the services of Knox McCusker to survey the regions they traveled through, and assist with guiding them. He had been through some of the general region on previous survey trips.²²⁵



Photo 40: The Mary Henry Gibson Expedition, 1931.²²⁶

The Mary Henry Gibson party would travel through thousands of square kilometres over the next few summers, taking various routes throughout the mountains in the expansive region between the Peace and Liard Rivers. All four journeys would use sections of either Moodie or Constantine's trail for transportation. The Gibson's final expedition in 1935 was notable in that they retraced the Moodie's whole route from St. John to Fort Grahame, as well as much of the trail north of Fort Grahame. However, the Mary Gibson Henry Expeditions most repetitively used the stretch of NWMP trail that lays between the confluences of the Peace and Halfway

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

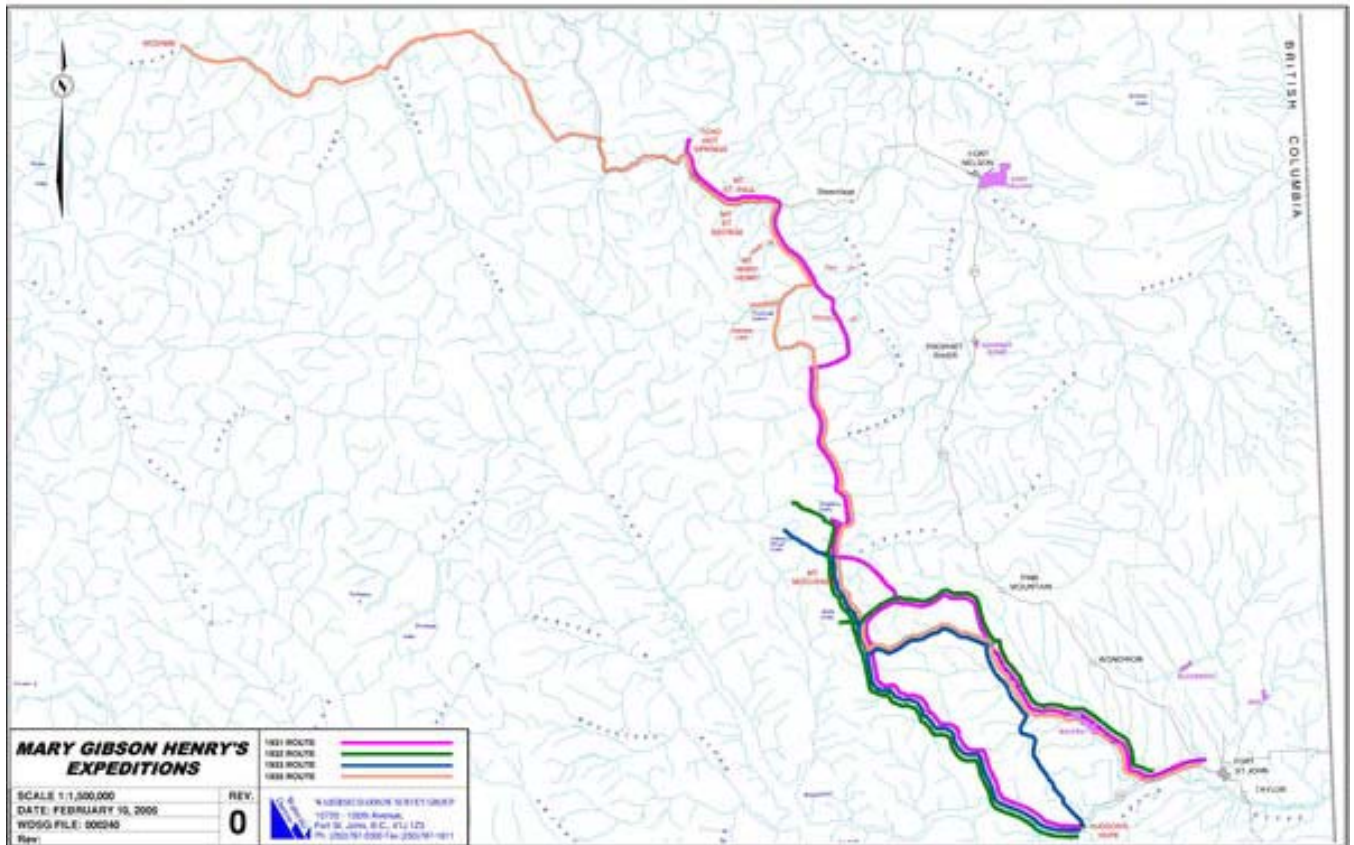
²²⁶ *The Mary Henry Gibson Expeditions..*

rivers north to the confluences of the Halfway and Cypress, which they traveled on three of their four expeditions.

Correspondence from this era indicates that this aforementioned stretch of NWMP trail was a very well used road by this point. There were many ranches established around the trail and the Halfway Native reservation was also situated near it. Rancher Bill Hickethier would later say that the locals living along the Halfway used this well-used section of the Moodie trail to drive their cattle to Dawson Creek, which was one hundred and thirty miles away. Hickethier claimed the first eighty miles of this ten day trip were traveled along the Peace Yukon Trail, strictly used pack horses.²²⁷

Like their predecessors and contemporaries, the Henry Gibson expeditions mostly used pack-trains to support the months they had spent in the mountains. The Gibson's also brought their four children along with them on their first trip in 1931, and arranged for Dr. B.H. Chandlee of Philadelphia to come with them to monitor their family's health. On later trips, Mary Henry would travel without her husband although "they communicated with Philadelphia via twelve carrier pigeons they

²²⁷ Dorothy Calverley. "Bill Hickethier, Rancher North of the River". *The Calverley Collection*. <http://www.calverley.ca/Part18-Interviews/18-033.html>



Map 9: Mary Henry Gibson expeditions (pink=1931 route, green=1932, blue=1933, and orange=1935).²²⁸

brought with them and received messages from Dr. Henry [who did not come on subsequent journeys] by radio receiver”. The tropical valley that the Gibson’s pursued in their first trip in 1931 turned out to be hot springs in the Tetsa River Valley that kept the area snow-free during the winter, and allowed prospectors to grow a wide variety of crops that otherwise would not grow at that latitude.²²⁹ This slight let-down did not stop Gibson from returning to the Cassiar region, though.

Mary Henry Gibson’s trips were strongly inclusive of women, which separates these expeditions from the police. For example, aside from Mary’s presence, Mary’s daughter Josephine was also involved with the expeditions on the 1932, 1933, and

²²⁸ *The Mary Henry Gibson Expeditions*. Living Landscapes.

²²⁹ Harrison, 6.

1935 journeys.²³⁰ As we will see again with the Bedaux Expedition, it was not uncommon for so-called “bourgeoisie safaris” to include middle class women in masculine pursuits. Women often partook in the same activities as the men on these adventures, such as mountain-climbing, hunting, and fishing. Take this example from the Mary Gibson Henry Expeditions:

The outfit followed the 1931 route north into the Tetsa River country, and here Mary G. Henry wanted in the worst way to climb the mountain that bore her name. They were running short of time, but Mac [guide] finally relented, and along with Glen Minaker mounted an expedition on foot from "Ladyslipper" (Summit) Lake, at the head of the Tetsa down to Mt. Mary Henry. They weren't very well equipped for mountain climbing in spite of the horseshoe nails that Smokey pounded into her boots, to help on the rocks and ice. Mac told her to pack light, socks were added to a toothbrush and a comb, and with a pack made out of his old overalls, they headed out. Mac got sick; Mary Henry and Minaker made it a long way up the mountain, but they just didn't have the climbing gear to make it to the summit. Mary Henry toughed it out in the Siwash camp at timberline, and just being on "her" mountain being serenaded by wolves while snow piled up on her bedroll was consolation itself. Meanwhile, Smokey and Josephine went hunting in the Mt. St. Paul area, and even though the gun was working only as a single shot, came back with a beautiful ram that was "...*bigger than the ones her sister took back in 1931*".²³¹

Aside from the female oriented nature of the Gibson Expeditions there is a lot of information pertaining to the nature of the guides who were along on this trip. Peace River area guide Ross Peck has written extensively about the Mary Henry Gibson journeys into the Peace River country, and his work is especially good at documenting the stories of the various guides who were along on the expeditions, such as Knox McCusker:

Knox McCusker (Mac), was a Dominion Land Surveyor, who trained at Queens, and the Gault Institute, and worked extensively in the Peace River country, since his first trip as a field assistant in 1909. He was a big man, who smoked a pipe, and he often wore a crumbled old hat, bib overalls, and

²³⁰

²³¹ Ross Peck. "The Crew of the Mary Henry Expeditions". *Living Landscapes*. (Victoria: BC Royal Museum, ?) http://www.livinglandscapes.bc.ca/prnr/life_trail/crew.htm

smoked a pipe. He hardly ever rode a horse...On the Henry expedition when the outfit stopped to rest, Mac and Mary Henry would climb to the top of the nearest mountain. Mac would get his bearings and work on his maps, while Mary Henry would work on her plant collection.²³²

The biographical material of other local guides like Billy Hill, Fred Cassie, Loraine Zean "Smokey" Neighbors and Bill Beckman are also well done. Peck's depiction of Neighbors' job as a horse wrangler are very interesting, considering that each proceeding summer expedition onto the police trail would have included some sort of horse wrangling, however, there are few other descriptions of the job:

Some seventy years later, at his retirement home in Vernon, Smokey could still recall every horse, and every camp they made on those trails back in the 1930s.⁴⁷ Smokey claimed there were "...68 head of horses on that 1931 trip, not 58 like the stories said", and he should have known as his job was to wrangle them and have them back in camp before breakfast each morning. There were horses from all over, and a couple of mules thrown in as well. Although Clark liked his mules, Smokey didn't, and that old Jenny mule would decide to pull out of the country, and the whole herd would follow. He got on their trail before daybreak one morning out of Redfern Lake, and by the time he got around them, and caught his saddle horse Ike, they were almost at Deadman (Trimble Lake). Well he sort of missed breakfast that day, and lunch for that matter, but it was a pretty happy camp that welcomed him back that evening with the whole horse herd in front of him. Wages on the trail went up to \$4.00 a day, which included board, pretty good for a young man in the midst of the depression, and it was one of the biggest adventures of his life.²³³

Between 1905 and 1931 the region around the Police Trail increasingly became guided by white men, which represents a shift that typically occurred across British Columbia in the early 20th century. As white settlement became more prevalent, it was common for Canadian men of European ancestry to learn about the region and then perform some of the occupations that had previously been solely the domain of First Nation people.²³⁴

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Peck, *Living Landscapes*.

²³⁴ Hak, 12-25.

The Mary Henry Gibson Expedition in many ways represents how the Peace region started to become the playground for urbanite American Safari's during the early twentieth century. Why did this occur? Obviously outdoor activities are fun, and it is no secret that European aristocrats have traditionally associated leisure with wilderness adventure. However, there were deeper reasons as to why outdoor adventures became the activities of choice amongst well-healed professionals. As historian Abigail A. Van Slyck has demonstrated, American society was changing rapidly in the early twentieth century. There was high immigration rates, and as the US economy became increasingly industrialized more American's turned from traditional land-based activities to office or factory jobs.

Similar to other historians, Van Slyck argues that amidst these changes Anglo-Saxon American's began to grow anxious about their culture's physical and psychological disassociation with nature. For example, in 1893 Historian Fredrick Jackson Turner had determined that the Anglo-Saxon conquest of the harsh western frontier imbued American society with an independent and rugged spirit, which he believed to be the root of American superiority. However, Turner later speculated that the conquest of the west was complete and wondered what would become of the American character as a result.²³⁵ Similarly, American scientists came to think that cities over-civilized the people who lived in them, and they linked urban dwelling to effeminacy and racial decadence. These types of arguments promoted a new association with wilderness spaces:

Afraid of the emasculating tendencies of higher civilization, these anxieties promoted a wholesale shift in middle-class ideals of male identity. Although Victorian culture had valued high-minded self-restraint (the chief quality of

²³⁵ Fredrick Turner Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. (New York: Holt, Rienhold and Winston, 1962). p, 2-40.

what they called manliness), middle-class men at the end of the nineteenth century came to consider such conduct effeminate and sought to temper it with more aggressive behaviors associated with masculinity. No longer a luxury or an indulgence, adult leisure was increasingly accepted as a necessity...an antidote to an over-developed work ethic.²³⁶

As a result, the early twentieth century saw a shift in American values. The wilderness became regarded as a space that was best designated for vacation activities. These activities, like hunting and camping, would demonstrate the White Man's rugged individuality and independence, serving to legitimize their superiority in the urban world as well. Historian Tina Loo specifically identifies this culture as one of "bourgeois masculinity", which she says led to a profusion of guided middle-class safaris in to the wilds of Northern British Columbia in the early twentieth century:

Bourgeoisie masculinity was formed through sports hunting, arguing that big game hunters defined themselves as skilled, self-reliant, self-controlled, chivalrous risk-takers in relation to the animals they stalked, the environment through which they pursued them, and the other men who helped make it possible...Despite their rhetoric, however, these men left very little to chance. Although they viewed hunting as an opportunity to escape the pressures and conventions of city life, their expeditions were as carefully-constructed and orchestrated as any of their business dealings. Their safaris to "the West beyond the West" were not so much occasions to get away from civilization as they were opportunities to impose some of its conveniences and conventions...Though many of these armed tourists fancied themselves great white hunters confronting the savage wilderness on their own, they were in fact dependent on their guides, many of whom were aboriginal.²³⁷

While the Mary Henry Gibson Expeditions were effectively led by a woman and involved legitimate botanical collection, the Henry Gibsons' were still self-funded, comprised of urbanites, well supported, and largely leisurely. Mary Henry's trips--and to a large extent Vreeland's as well--were ultimately an expression of the middle class (meaning wealthy professional) safari culture that is described by these

²³⁶ Abigail. Von Slyck. *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890-1960.* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). p. 9-43.

²³⁷ Tina Loo. "Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in British Columbia: 1880-1939". *The Western Historical Quarter.* (Autumn 2001: Vol 32, No. 3): 4.

scholars. The well documented inclusion of women in this form of “masculine bourgeoisie” activities demonstrates an understudied aspect of the literature. The history of Northern British Columbia shows that many genteel women like Mary Henry Gibson also partook in these adventures. For example, the Bedaux Expedition included quite a few women on their travels.

14) The Bedaux Expedition

The 1934 Bedaux Expedition is often referred to as being one of the most bizarre and amazing events to occur in Northern British Columbia, and there is no doubt that this glamorous attempt to conquer nature through technology and luxury was the epitome of the turn of the century bourgeoisie safari. However, one must first briefly understand expedition leader Charles E. Bedaux’s remarkable life story in order to appreciate the Bedaux Expedition’s significance.

Bedaux was a French-born American of humble origins, who, upon arriving in America virtually penniless at the age of nineteen, managed through sheer guile and vision to become one of the most powerful businessmen in the world by 1934.²³⁸ Bedaux achieved this in a very interesting fashion; he had invented a corporate

²³⁸ George Ungar. *The Champagne Safari*. (Montréal : National Film Board of Canada, 1995.)



Photo 41: Charles E. Bedaux.²³⁹

management system that was devoted to measuring human occupational output. This scheme implemented what was known as the Bedaux Measurement of Human Energy, which replaced seconds on standard clocks with a unit of energy measurement that was known as the Bedaux Unit.²⁴⁰ Charles Bedaux's system calculated that a worker's average output should be sixty "B's" an hour: if they produced more they got a bonus, if they produced less they lost their jobs. Unbeknown to many people today, Bedaux's method was very successful, and it was implemented in over six-hundred major organizations in eighteen countries around the world.

The 1930s were also a socially turbulent era in the western world. International markets in Europe and North America were destabilized by the destruction and political upheaval left in the wake of the First World War, which led to the Great Depression. This catastrophe especially affected working class citizens,

²³⁹ Glenbow Archives.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

fueling the spread of populist ideologies across the globe. As a result, communist and socialist parties became increasingly influential as average people throughout the United States and Europe desperately sought equitable economic conditions. These political groups are said to have universally demonized Charles's E. Bedaux's exploitive management techniques, claiming that Bedaux's system inhumanely turned workers into machines.²⁴¹

Bedaux's success had allowed him to become, he felt, a world citizen, and his allegiance belonged to no single country. He was a gentleman-entrepreneur who straddled a position that combined the traits of an American super-executive with the aristocratic culture of Europe's old-world nobility. Bedaux's French Chateau was famous for hosting lavish parties for high level dignitaries like the British Duke of Winsor, Edward VIII, with whom Bedaux was very well acquainted. Both the Duke and Bedaux shared the belief that the rise of Nazi Germany was the antidote to the influence of populism in Europe (particularly communist Russia) and America, which was not unusual. Many other large American firms such as Coke, IBM, Ford, and GM, also did a lot of business in Nazi Germany before the war, and some executives were said to have admired Hilter's governance style and anti-communist stance.²⁴² Throughout the 1930s both Wellington and Bedaux publicly supported Hilter's leadership, and they continued to do so even when American and Western European sentiment began turning dramatically against the Germans. Like other American firms, Bedaux had lucrative business interests with Germany, and he became more intimately connected to the Nazi bureaucracy as his public

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Dr. Jacques R. Pauwels. Profits über Alles! American Corporations and Hitler. Global Research. 2004.
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=PAU20070127&articleId=4607>

encouragement of their regime intensified. For example, Bedaux is said to have been personally advised Hitler at times.²⁴³

Naturally, Bedaux's visible alliance with the Nazi regime coupled with his previous status as an "enemy of people" amongst the working class, eventually lead to his public condemnation across the United States and Europe when the Second World War threatened to breakout by 1939. Bedaux's American corporation fell apart, and he was eventually exiled from the States. However, even amidst this disaster Bedaux would continue to strive to achieve greatness. Believing that the industrial society would imminently collapse, Bedaux envisioned himself as being responsible for the creation of a New World Order. This was an era of utopian social revision, and Bedaux was strongly influenced by alternate governance model like communism, which he married with capitalism to create a system he termed Equivilism. In theory, Bedaux thought his industrial efficiency system could be modified to govern entire countries by reorganize their societies to use his system. In 1939, Greek dictator Franco agreed to implement Bedaux's model across Greece, however, Bedaux never had the chance to perform this task.²⁴⁴

By 1939, Bedaux had also become closely aligned with German authorities in France, where he did business supplying them with coal. Now firmly connected to the Third Riech, Bedaux petitioned the Nazi hierarchy to implement another one of his grand schemes: he wanted to build a mega-project for the Nazi across the Sahara Desert in North Africa that would include the construction of a railway, an oil pipeline, and a peanut oil pipeline. Charles Bedaux was captured by Allied forces while supervising the construction of this complex in Morrocco. While incarcerated,

²⁴³ Champaign Safari.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

Bedaux killed himself by overdosing on sleeping pills. A farewell note that he had left behind claimed that he would have had to indict too many influential people who were also connected to the Nazis. Large American subsidiary firms made a lot of money in Hitler's Germany, and many are known to have continued to have had dealing with the Nazi's during the Second World War, like Bedaux.

This brief description of Charles Bedaux's life—as incredible as it may seem-- shows that he was a very interesting twentieth century historical figure by anyone's estimation. Bedaux was a megalomaniac who is probably better defined as having a Messianic complex; however, there is no doubt that he lived a full life. Another notable aspect of Bedaux's legacy, before his eventual downfall, was that he had a reputation for being a daring leisure expeditionary who had performed a series of Safari's into remote corners of the world, including through Tibet and the Sahara and Gobi Deserts.²⁴⁵

Years before he allied himself with the Nazi's, Charles E. Bedaux first visited the NWMP trail region around the Halfway River in 1926 and 1932, where he embarked upon hunting trips with many of the regional locals he would rehire for his 1934 expedition. Being impressed with the relatively "unexplored" and wild nature the area, Bedaux hatched a plan to lead an expedition from Edmonton to Fort St. John. Bedaux was going to attempt to travel through this mountainous region by using a fleet of prototypical high-tech "tractors" that were made by the French company Citroen. A central aspect of the mission would involve recording the performance of the tractors under these rugged conditions. The expedition also intended to use aspects of the Peace-Yukon NWMP trail to access "uncharted" areas of British Columbia's Muskwa Region and eventually travel west to Telegraph

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

Creek, which was the final goal. The Expedition was thought to have cost around a quarter of a million dollars, which was a considerable sum of money for those days.²⁴⁶

In June of 1934, Charles and his wife Fern Bedaux trained for the trip in Jasper National Park, where they climbed mountains, lounged, and attended social functions. Here is a typical entry from Fern Bedaux's diary regarding her daily activities:

Jasper Park
Home—Quiet Morning.
Bilous and Charles played 9 holes.
Shampoo 2:30 Lodge
Manicure 4:30 Cottage
Bilou Charles Mr. Crosby played golf, 18 holes.
Wrote letters, cheques, business notes, etc.
Reading.²⁴⁷

Many of Mrs. Bedaux's diary entries throughout 1934-35 are similar to this one, and by all accounts she appeared to lead an absolute life of leisure. Considering Charles Bedaux's propensity for grandeur and narcissism, this trip would be an elaborate demonstration of "bourgeoisie masculinity". Two women joined Bedaux on his Safari--his wife Fern Bedaux, who went on all of Bedaux's expeditions, and Italian Countess Alberto Chiesa who was Bedaux's mistress. Both ladies also brought a few personal maids to assist them on the journey.

²⁴⁶ Stephan Korener. *The 1934 Bedaux Sub-Arctic Expedition and Northern British Columbia* (Abstract). http://www.cariboo.bc.ca/ae/beyond_hope/abstracts/the1934bedaux.htm

²⁴⁷ Fern Bedaux. June 22, 1934. "Personal Diary". (Unpublished manuscript).



Photo 42: Mrs. Charles Bedaux and Mme Alberto Chiesa, Bedaux Expedition, 1934.²⁴⁸

Other members of the expedition included Horse Hill, Alberta guide Bruce Babcock, who had been with Bedaux on previous hunting trips in the region; Bedaux made Babcock second in command. A radio operator by the name of Bruce G. McCallum was also brought along, and his job was to send harrowing dispatches of the parties' progress back to major newspapers such as the Washington Post, the New York Times, the London Times, and La Monde.²⁴⁹ A world class downhill skier also joined the trip.

Citroen expert C. Baldouret came from Paris to study the five tractors and perform mechanical duties. Bedaux also employed Oscar winning cinematographer Floyd Crosby (High Noon) to film a "cowboy documentary" of the trip that would star and be directed by Charles Bedaux. British Columbia Surveyors Ernest Lamarque and Frank Swannell were also hired for the expedition because they knew the region

²⁴⁸Glenbow Archives.
²⁴⁹ Champagne Safari.

fairly well. Lamarque was in charge of a reconnaissance party that would scout ahead to Telegraph Creek and cut trail for the tractors, while Swannell was responsible for helping guide the main party and also document uncharted areas. A crazy looking Scottish hunter named John Chisolm also managed to somehow tag along on this adventure. An assortment of trappers, cooks, and mountain men came as well. Most significantly, fifty three cowboys from Alberta were hired to perform a multitude of tasks ranging from acting to wrangling the one hundred and thirty pack cargo hauling pack horses that were brought along.²⁵⁰ Among the twenty tons of supplies the poor horses were required to carry included five hundred pounds of books, a bush toilet, state-of-the-art asbestos tents, as well as crates of caviars, pate, tractor gasoline, and champagne. One horse is said to have carried only women's shoes.²⁵¹

Having prepared, Bedaux party left Edmonton in July of 1934 after a hero's send off from Edmonton, where Alberta's lieutenant-governor was in attendance for a farewell dinner and ball. The safari then embarked across the prairie, but it did not take long before trouble started occurring even while still on the grasslands. The summer of 1934 was exceptionally wet and the technological advanced Citroen soon became mired in the famous western Canadian gumbo:

one of the party was heard to remark that hitherto it had been considered that the mud of Flanders was the worst in the world, but that this did not compare to the Peace River gumbo. Samples of gumbo were taken and dispatched to France.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ A.E. Turner. "Bruce Babcock interview". *Mystery Millionaire Charles Bedaux*. (Newspaper article. publication unknown, B.C. Archives.)

²⁵¹ Champagne Safari.

²⁵² Edmonton Journal, July 17 (Newspaper clippings found in Frank Swannell's 1934 Expedition Diary.)

By the time Bedaux's party reached Fort St. John, they were already exasperated because they had spent too much energy and time repairing the Citroen's and getting them unstuck.

Meanwhile, Ernest Lamarque had gone ahead of the main party with a First Nations guide named Jack and a few men to scout and cut the route; Lamarque often professes to greatly admire Jack's bush expertise and friendly nature. Lamarque's personal memoire of this trip vividly describes the residence he encounters along the Halfway River section of the trail, including the Brady family:

soon after leaving camp, we passed Brady and one of his boys with some pack horses on their way to Fort St. John. He has a ranch thirty or forty miles to the north, on Cypress Creek. Like the rest of the settlers on this stream, he bears the marks of the frontier. These folk look rugged, strong and well. I noticed that Brady, despite the bitter wind, wore few clothes; his boy even less. We passed Brady near the northerly boundary of the Indian Reservation. We had seen no natives; only here and there old tepee poles where their lodges had been.²⁵³

Lamarque would also stop at the Westgaard and Hill ranches before continuing off the NWMP trail and onto the Muskwa country. Bedaux's party would encounter the same rancher's along the Halfway River stretch of the trail, and similarly spent time with a few of the families--one of the Westgaard men joined the expedition.²⁵⁴

By the time the main party reached the Halfway, Bedeaux had decided that the tractors—which he had previously used to travel across the Sahara and the Golbi deserts--were no longer worth driving, so the rest of the trip was to continue by horse. However, Bedaux did not want to simply abandon his vehicles, so he and Crosby managed to turn the situation into an opportunity rather than a complete loss,

²⁵³ Ernest Lamarque. *Travels and Explorations in Northern British Columbia, 1934*. (Unpublished Manuscript). p, 11.

²⁵⁴ Lamarque, 9-11.

“I don’t care how much time I loose”, his diary read, “I’m going to get something out of this disaster”.²⁵⁵ Around mile 78 of the Police Trail, a few kilometres up the

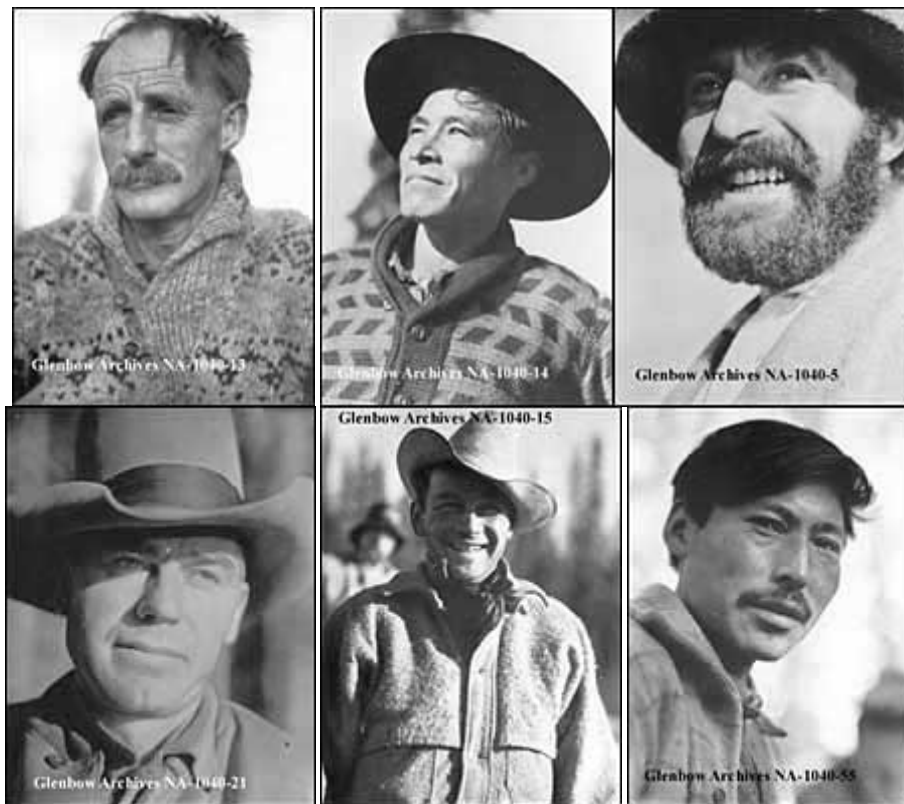


Photo 43: A few of the Bedaux Expeditionaries. Top from Left: Ernest Lamarque, Jack Stone, John Chisolm. Bottom from Left: Tommy Wilde, Aina Westergaard, Sekani man.²⁵⁶

Halfway River, Bedaux and Crosby filmed a staged scene in which one of the Citroens appears to drive off of a cliff into the river. Luckily the camera men “managed” to capture the driver of the tractor leaping from the vehicle with a few different camera angles before the Citroen plunged into the river. Apparently the cowboys had rehearsed their roles before filming.²⁵⁷ Another staged scene involved using a raft to carry a second Citroen across the river, of course, the raft purposefully gets away from its handlers on the shore, and drifts aimlessly down the Halfway.

²⁵⁵ Bedaux’s diary.

²⁵⁶ Glenbow Archives.

²⁵⁷ *Mystery Millionaire Charles Bedaux*

Bedaux reported these incidents to global newspapers as being spectacular disasters, yet he insisted that the expedition would continue on despite the odds,

Two of the five tractors have been wrecked by falls over a 100 ft. cutbank, another was swept away by a torn, and the remaining two have been abandoned...Was anyone hurt when they fell? [Bedaux] was asked. "No. You see, whenever the tractors were going over dangerous places, two men in each one would get off, and the driver would stand on the edge of the machine, ready to jump. Well, when there two started to go over, the drivers just stepped off, and watched the machines fall."²⁵⁸

These must have been hilarious occasions for the rest of the expedition members.

At another point, Bedaux got the others to stage a stampede and camp evacuation in the middle of the night for the benefit of the cameras, which probably created a lot of extra work for the cowboys because the horses destroyed much of the camp and were difficult to round up the next day. Aside from filming, Bedaux also worked on a science fiction novel during his leisure time. The plot of his novel was said to have revolved around Bedaux being made the leader of the universe.²⁵⁹ By August co-commander Bruce Babcock claimed the expedition became much tougher as they left the NWMP trail and proceeded to get off of the beaten path and head north towards the more rugged Muskwa region.²⁶⁰

As the expedition moved further from hay producing land and into the forest, feed for the horses became increasingly difficult to find—near the end of the trip the horses went for eight days without any horse feed at all. Like their predecessors, the horses suffered tremendously through the mountains on this trip. The horses contracted the highly contagious disease known as "hoof rot", and many of them quickly had to be put down to slow the spread of infection. Babcock says at this point the expedition started to deteriorate, however, Bedaux refused to adjust to the

²⁵⁸ Frank Swannell 1934 Diary. *Edmonton Journal*, Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Champagne Safari.

²⁶⁰ *Mystery Millionaire Charles Bedaux*.

increasingly difficult conditions, and would not depart with his luxury items even as the horses started to weaken. Instead of lightening the load by jettisoning some of the crates of Champagne and ladies shoes, Bedaux decided to first cast off Frank Swannell's surveying equipment.



Photo 44: Bedaux Expedition Camp.²⁶¹



Photo 45: Josephine Daly (Spanish maid), playing a cowboy game.²⁶²

²⁶¹ Glenbow Archives.

The main party managed to make it into the “totally unknown territory” of the Muskwa with winter fast approaching; here they encountered two prospectors who would later relay their meeting to the *Edmonton Bulletin*. The prospectors reckoned that the expedition would not be able to make it through the mountains before the snow hit.²⁶³ Despite this Bedaux’s group pushed on, and Swannell named a few features in the Muskwa region after his boss: Bedaux Mountain and Fern Lake still exists on the maps.

Their horses failing under the days of grueling travel through an untracked wilderness, the members of the C.E. Bedaux expedition area making on last desperate effort to complete their journey to Telegraph Creek, B.C. Should they fail, the party will turn back to Whitewater and travel by water to Prince George.²⁶⁴

From the Muskwa region the Bedaux Expedition veered west, rejoined the Moodie Trail above the Finlay, and headed up the already snowy Sifton Pass. With the horses dwindling dangerously—they had lost one hundred of their one hundred and twenty horses to Hoof Rot--Frank Swannell prudently advised Bedaux to turn around, telling him that it was too late in the season to get through the mountains and make it to the Telegraph Creek goal. Bedaux agreed to go back. Six miles north of the summit of Sifton Pass the Bedaux Expedition ran into Lamarque and Jack, who had managed to complete the trail to Telegraph Creek and had come back to find the rest of the party.

They started for Sifton Pass and the north, as Jackiboo had correctly stated, the previous evening. They saw my trail leading off from the Pass, but as the snow was deep on the plateau above and they had had no message from me and for all they knew, it might merely lead to a cul de sac, they kept to the old, Moody trail, turning back from the Driftpile for reasons I have already mentioned.²⁶⁵

²⁶² Glenbow Archives.

²⁶³ Frank Swannell 1934 Dairy, *Edmonton Journal*.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ *Travels and Explorations in Northern British Columbia*, 240.

So, on September 28th the expedition abandoned the last of their horses, turned around, and headed back to Fort St. John by using the White Water and Finlay

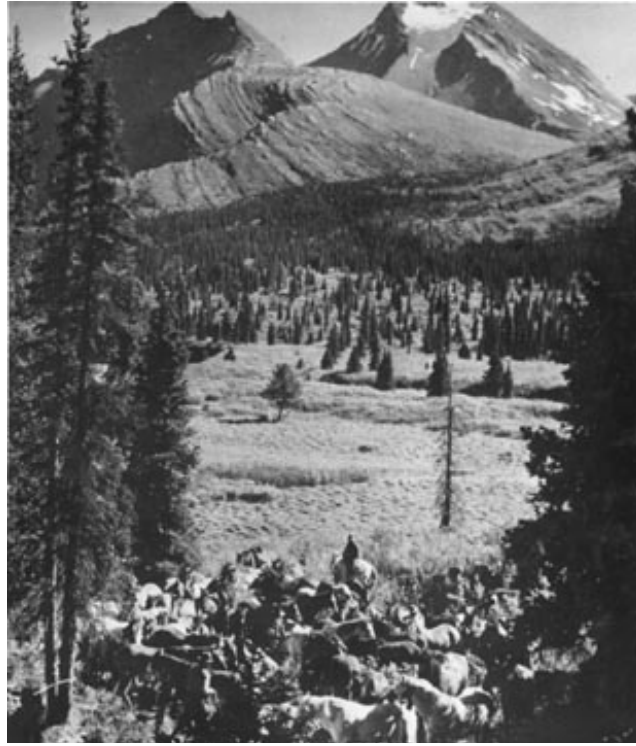


Photo 46: Headwaters of the Muskwa Region.²⁶⁶

Rivers. Bedaux estimated that they were within fifteen days of Telegraph Creek when they had to turn around. Although Fern Bedaux seemed to use a diary throughout her life, inexplicably, she stopped writing daily entries after they left Edmonton to start the Expedition. These entries do not resume again until just after the trip ends, but these short submissions indicate that she was relieved to get back to civilization. Her diary entry for October twenty fourth reads as follows:

Edmonton—arrived 8 50
Mac Donald Hotel Apt 3 00—1,2,3
Delightfully fresh linen sheets!
Warm Showers—hot bath—shinning white bath room. All lux.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Glenbow Archives.

²⁶⁷ Fern Bedaux Diary, October 24, 1934.

Although the Bedaux Expedition is typically painted as a colorful lark through the bush, John Babcock believes that the expedition had a more insidious intent, “It has always been my conviction that we were testing military equipment”.²⁶⁸ Regardless of the ultimate purpose for this Safari, the Bedaux Expedition was a significant moment for the history of the NWMP Trails.

Conclusion

Clearly the NWMP Peace-Yukon Trails have rich histories, and the preceding report only touched upon the multitude of stories surrounding these trails. As we have seen, the Trails were isolated stages where many people adventured, starved, and found sustenance. Similarly, the NWMP Trails are directly linked to some of the most interesting people and events in early Canadian history. Hopefully this living part of British Columbia’s heritage will continue to be preserved for future generations.

²⁶⁸ *Mystery Millionaire Charles Bedaux.*

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