

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF CAPTAIN WILLIAM MOORE

Captain William Moore was one of the outstanding pioneer characters of the northwestern frontier, from the State of Washington through British Columbia and into Alaska where he played a prominent part in the stirring days of the gold excitement of the Klondike.

He was born in Germany March 30, 1822, and came to the United States about 1845 or 1846. Beginning at the age of seven years in a sea faring life, he sailed on schooners on the North Sea. About 1845 or 1846 he came to New Orleans, where he married his wife Hendrika, and where his son John was born in 1848.

He left no written records but he was often heard to mention that he was on the USS. *Lawrence* on the Gulf of Mexico during the Mexican War, and while he was in no engagements he heard the guns of Taylor's army at times in some of the battles on the shore. He became a naturalized citizen soon after arrival in the United States.

About 1851 he went to California following the gold stampede to that country; was in Klamath for a while; then joined the company of gold seekers who went to the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1852. This venture proving a failure, he went to Peru, where he procured a schooner and engaged in the coasting trade. One of the frequent revolutions in the country rising, his wife was so frightened that he returned to California in 1856.

In 1858 the Fraser River gold mines were discovered and his adventurous spirit led him to follow the throng of men who hurried by sea and by land to that region. He landed at Victoria in 1858.

The material for this sketch is from a MS by Captain Wm. D. Moore, his son, who was born in Peru in 1854, and who accompanied his father to the mines of the Caribou and Cassiar, and who after an adventurous life in the mines and on the navigation of the Stikeen River, went to the Yukon and was one of the Pioneer swift water captains of that northern stream. This material is supplemented by notes from Captain Moore personally, from letters from Captain W. D. Moore, and from contemporary records. The MS, which was deposited in the Library of the University of Washington, among the historical records of that institution, relates:

"Hearing of the rich gold strike made on the Fraser River, British Columbia, he at once took his family, household effects, some

goats and pigs, and embarked in the early spring of 1858. He at once built a small house for his family (at Victoria), and built a 15 ton barge which he named the *Blue Boat* and engaged in carrying freight from Victoria to New Westminster and thence up the Fraser River to the different mining camps as far as Fort Hope, which was an old Hudson's Bay Company trading post.

He made money very fast so that in 1859 he was the owner of a small stern wheel steamer named the *Henrietta*¹ and operated her between New Westminster and Port Douglas at the head of Harrison Lake, the waters of which emptied into the Fraser River by Harrison River.

The merchant Dodge, also a merchant Jack and his brother Uriah Nelson, shipped a number of pack mules and employed men and cut a pack trail from Port Douglas to Lillooet on the Fraser River, as the miners were following the gold up the river.

The Government began exploring and found it would be better to build a pack trail up through the Fraser River Canyon which was quite an undertaking at that time. They succeeded and trains began packing from Fort Yale, and the Douglas Route was practically abandoned. It was astonishing what they would put on those mules backs. Iron safes, billiard tables in sections, large barrels set on top of the *aparajos*. G. B. Wright had the machinery of his steamer packed in sections from Fort Yale on mules' backs to Soda Creek on the Fraser River.

Captain Moore built a stern wheel steamer and named her the *Flying Dutchman*.² She was the first steamer to arrive at Fort Yale, head of navigation on the lower Fraser. A wagon road was built as soon as Caribou was discovered and a great piece of work it was.

In 1861 news came that gold was discovered on Stikeen River in Alaska. Moore sold the steamer *Henrietta* and built a twin screw steamer named *J. W. Moore*. In 1862 Moore steamed the *Flying Dutchman* up to Fort Wrangel into Alaska about 600 miles from Victoria, B.C., up the coast, having to cut the wood for the steamer along the way. The natives were very saucy in those days, it took considerable patience to avoid trouble with them.

¹ The first steamer on the inland waters of British Columbia according to *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest* was the "Governor Douglas," and she made her trial trip in January 1859, followed in May by the steamer "Colonel Moody" and later by the "Henrietta." Page 81.

On page 82 of the same book is a portrait of the Captain, with a note; "Capt. William Moore, better known as "Bill" Moore, who has always been an interesting figure in British Columbia marine circles, was born in Hanover, Prussia, and, after following the sea for a number of years, arrived at Queen Charlottes Island in 1852 on the brig *Tepec*."

Bancroft's *History of British Columbia*, p. 346, has an account of the gold strike.
² The steamer *Flying Dutchman*, was a sternwheeler, built in 1860, but was not put in service until January 1861. *Ibid.* p. 98.

While operating his steamer on the Stikeen the natives told him several times that he must stop running his steamer as she made so much noise that she would scare their fish and game away, however he operated the steamer on the Stikeen River up about 145 miles from Fort Wrangell till in October; then steamed her back to Victoria.

He then laid the keel on another sternwheel steamer which was completed in the early spring of 1863 and named her *Alexandra*.³ He operated the *Alexandra* between Victoria, New Westminster and up the Fraser River once a week and one trip a week to Port Angeles and Steilacoom on Puget Sound for cattle, sheep, hogs, poultry, hay, grain, etc., these commodities were all shipped to Victoria those days.

Moore was a little in debt getting the new steamer built and running opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company boats from Victoria to New Westminster. Capt. Irving's and other sternwheels on Fraser River, also against the Puget Sound boats. He began to be harassed by his creditors who would not give him time, so he steamed the *Flying Dutchman* and *Alexandra* to Utsalady W.T. and tried to come to terms. His creditors would not come to terms. They were assisted by other steamboat men to down Moore. He sold the *Flying Dutchman* to Grenon and Crany of the Utsalady saw mills, the *Alexandra* he laid up in Penn's Cove, Whidbey Island, she having a United States Marshal on board, but one night a party came on boats from Victoria with Captain and engineer, put the machinery together and steamed her to Victoria with the United States Marshal on board.

In the spring of 1864 Moore took his family in a small sloop with their household effects, also the old goats, which mother could not part with, and sailed for New Westminster. Moore purchased a barge, fitted her with masts, sails, etc., and traded between Puget Sound and New Westminster.

In 1865 a rich gold strike being made in the Big Bend of the Columbia River, B.C. Moore took his son J. W. and three men and went up to Shuswap Lake where he built a barge. After making a few trips from Savannahs Ferry, foot of Kamloops Lake to Seymour, head of Shuswap Lake he preempted a piece of land 12 miles from a Hudson's Bay Company post named Kamloops, where he built a house, then sent for his family.

³ "Several new steamers appeared in the waters of Puget Sound and British Columbia, the most important of them a big sternwheeler, the *Alexandra*, built at Victoria by Captain Moore." *Ibid.* 127 p.

The next year he came to the conclusion to leave this part of the country as the strike in the Big Bend country did not amount to much. Cattle raising and farming looked too slow for him. Early this spring he took his whole family, household goods, with two wagons and two horses to each to Savannah's Ferry, started up the wagon road for Quesnell.

This little town of Quesnell was nicely situated on a level bank well out of reach of the freshets of the rivers. It is at the junction of the Quesnell River and the Fraser. It had a Hudson's Bay Company Post, three other stores, and two saloons. The steamer *Enterprise*, G. B. Wright, owner, plied between this place and Soda Creek about 65 miles. The Western Union Telegraph Company had the telegraph line completed beyond this town on its way through British Columbia and Alaska to Siberia. Work on this telegraph line was discontinued during the next year on account of the completion of the Atlantic Cable.

Moore purchased two mules and a wagon and moved his family to the town of Barkerville,⁴ Williams Creek, in the Caribou country. This year Henrietta and Wilhelmina were sent by stage coach from Barkerville to a convent in New Westminster.

Captain Moore worked in the mines at Barkerville that year. The mining claims in the vicinity of Barkerville were 40 feet deep. They timbered and put lagging to hold up the dirt. The most of the claims had overshot wheels to hoist the dirt. There were several stores, butcher shops, three hotels, one bank, several saloons and two dance halls where German girls were employed to dance. Gambling was carried on to its fullest extent. One mile up the creek was the little town of Richfield, which had a couple of saloons, a hotel and a butcher shop. Here the Government held court and here the jail was situated. On up a short mile farther was the only sawmill owned by Meacham and Nason. There were several hydraulic claims in operation between this and Barkerville. Another little town about one and one fourth miles down the creek from Barkerville was called Camerontown. At Richfield a white man and a native were hung for committing murder. They were guilty of separate crimes but were hung on the same scaffold.

Moore, Senior, moved with his family to Dunbar Flat on Lightning Creek in 1868, where he built a log house.

News of a gold strike being made on Jamieson Creek, a tribu-

⁴ Barkerville was the distributing point for the gold mining region called the "Caribou." The Caribou mines were discovered in 1860, and yielded between \$30,000,000 and \$40,000,000 in the next twenty years. See *Id.* p. 514.

tary of Omineca River, which empties into the Mackenzie, thence into the Arctic Ocean, Moore at once moved, with his family to Quesnell, here he entered into an agreement with a Mr. Ellmore to deliver about 15 tons of freight at Tatla Landing.

Just before they arrived at Quesnell there were seven natives hung on one gallows for the murder of a family who entered their country to settle down to farming. This country was called the Chillecooten, and lies between Fraser River and a branch of the sea called Bentick Arm.

Moore and sons began work on a barge which he agreed to build to carry freight. Quite a number of Chinamen wintered at this place, cutting cordwood and rocking on the bars of the river in summer for gold, a few had ranches and did teaming, etc. Kong Lee had a large store, also in Barkerville, Caribou.

The winter passed quickly. Moore Senior, in the spring when the river was well clear of ice, loaded his barge and procured a number of men to help him tow the boat along the banks of rivers and lakes to Tatla, taking with him his son J. W.

A letter from his (Wm. D. Moore's) father and brother was received telling him of their hard trip up the Fraser River and Stuart River, up the lakes to Tatla⁵ Landing and across the portage which is about 40 miles to Omineca⁶ River which empties into Peace River, thence into Mackenzie, this river empties into the Arctic Ocean. They went down Omineca River which is very sluggish and very crooked about 70 odd miles to the mouth of Jamieson Creek. They went up and located claims but had not got gold out as yet.

William D. Moore received another letter from his father stating that he had left Jamieson Creek with his son J. W. at the close of the season and went up Omineca River to the new place called Hogem, where the trail leads to Tatla. Mr. Ellmore set up a store at this place and charged such exorbitant prices that the miners named the place Hogem. He charged \$1.50 per pound for bacon, \$1.00 a pound for flour and everything else in proportion. Moore went by way of Fry Pan Pass, a distance of about 30 miles from Tatla Lake over a dim native trail to Babeen Lake, at this place was a Hudson's Bay Company Post kept by Thomas Charles.⁷ This Fry Pan Pass was a very bad portage as there was considerable dry fallen timber, the trail was very hard to follow, when there was a slight fall of snow. Some six or seven men lost their way and never were found.

⁵ Tatla, or Tatu, Lake is given on the map as Tacla.

⁶ Omineca, an Indian name of the huckleberry growing there. Banc. Hist. p. 543.

⁷ Thomas Charles was in charge of Fort George in 1863. *Id.* p. 385.

Moore was very short of food, he asked Mr. Charles for flour. Mr. Charles exclaimed that he had only 250 lbs. for his allowance for him and his family but he would spare him 50 lbs. for \$50.00. He took the 50 lbs., and it was divided among 6 of them. He then started from there in a native canoe for the foot of Babeen Lake⁸ which is 15 miles to the portage. The whole length of Babeen Lake is 110 miles. With his blankets on his back he walked over the Indian trail to Hazelton of the Skeena River. This portage is 75 miles long. Hazelton got its name on account of the hazel nuts which grow in the vicinity. Cunningham and Hankin kept a trading store here. Moore procured a canoe from the natives and went down the Skeena River to Spokeshoot which is on the coast. Here he and his son J. W. took passage on the Hudson's Bay Company's steam ship *Otter*, down the coast to Victoria, where he found his wife and children who were in good health and very glad to see him.

Moore Jr. (William D.) received a letter from his father stating that he had entered into an agreement with one named Stirling to transport a quantity of goods from Victoria to Tatla Landing by way of the Skeena River across the portage to Babeen Lake, thence up to the Hudson's Bay Company Post and across the Fry Pan Pass, across Tatla Lake to Tatla Landing. He was constructing a flat bottom center board schooner to transport freight from Victoria to Hazelton on the Skeena River, and for him to try to get passage from Quesnell to Tatla Landing to meet him there. Moore Jr. was glad to hear this as there was a man J. B. Lovell constructing a boat at Quesnell who intended to load her with goods for Tatla Landing. He promised Moore passage with him. When the Fraser got well clear of ice, the boat was loaded and they started up stream, there were nine men including Moore.

"We got to the mouth of Nechako River. Here was a Hudson's Bay Company Trading Post. We turned from the Fraser River here and go up the Nechako River. The Trader at this place was named McGregor. The Nechako River is a clear water stream as it comes out of large lakes, the Fraser River being of whitish color, the Nechako is very rapid in places, there were two places where we had to portage freight and boat. We proceeded up the Nechako River to the mouth of Stuart River, and arrived at Stuart's Lake⁹ where there is a Hudson's Bay Company trading post, close to the

⁸ Babeen Lake seems to have been named from the Babines, a native tribe inhabiting the shores of the lake. Morice, *History of Northern Interior of British Columbia*, p. 4.

⁹ At Stuart Lake was Fort St. James, *Id.* p. 63.

outlet of the lake. Ogden,¹⁰ a Red River half-breed (was) in charge. Here we rested up for one day. The men working for the Company were very much pleased when they were asked to join them (the crew) at dinner, the dried fruit they (we?) served was a great treat to them, also smoking tobacco, their H.B. Co.'s tobacco resembled a coil of three-fourths inch black rope. They had a fine garden here a good many cows also. The two other men were the only whites at the post, a good many half breed children were in evidence. We also met a Jesuit Father named Lagack,¹¹ he seemed to be a conscientious man. He had the natives pretty well under control; the native village was close to the post. In cases of adultery the woman and paramour were both flogged publicly; the natives done this themselves. These natives attended the church regularly."

They left here with a nice, fair wind, rigged up a sail and arrived at what is called Tache River about 20 miles in length with one very bad rapid, almost a falls, where they portaged boat and freight, they then arrived at Twombly Lake.¹² It was not over 15 miles to an easy river and not much current of about 40 miles. Arrived at Tatla Lake they were three days getting over the lake to Tatla Landing, the place being about three hundred miles from Quesnell. They saw quite a number of moose and caribou, one of the men killed one bear and two caribou, they also killed with sticks three porcupine on their trip up. These lakes have white fish, ling, salmon trout and later on in the season the salmon would come up into these lakes up through the canyon of the Fraser over rapids and falls for about 600 miles from the coast. A good many boats were ahead of them and a good many men had come by the Skeena River route.

Moore Jr., stopped here two days, then went to meet his father at the Fry Pan Pass Landing, and his brothers J. W., and Henry, who were with him. They were fixing up the big barge he had built at Quesnell and which he had left here the fall before. They took the freight, which the Indians had packed on their backs to Tatla Landing, where they met a man who had started from Quesnell with 56 pack animals. he had come on ahead to engage Moore and his barge to go down to the lower end of Twombly Lake and bring the freight of the animals on his barge to Tatla Landing. They agreed on a price. The man was getting tired of the trip having to cut a trail for the animals and it being worse ahead they took the load off the animals. The packers drove the animals along the bank.

¹⁰ Peter Ogden, son of Peter Skene Ogden, of the Hudson's Bay Co., was in charge at Fort George in 1863. *Banc. Hist. B.C.*, p. 385. He died October 9, 1870, being in charge of New Caledonia at that time. *Morice, Hist. Nor. B.C.*, p.319.

¹¹ Probably Father Lejacq, who is mentioned in *Morice's Hist. Nor. Brit. Col.*, pp. 331

et seq.
¹² Called Tremble Lake, in *Morice, Hist.* p. 3.

After loading the freight on the barge they soon caught up to the men and animals. Bohanon, the owner of the animals, arranged with Moore to take 30 of the animals on the barge as he wished to hurry to get to Tatla Landing and pack from there to Hogem, on the Omineca River. Moore bought 26 animals from Bohanon for \$200 per head including apparatus and rigging. He intended taking the animals to Fry Pan Pass Portage and also on the Skeena and Babeen Portage.

Captain Moore left his sons W.D., and Henry, with two men to drive the animals as far as they could along the bank of the river and lake. He left them what provisions he thought was necessary, and then started with the barge and was soon out of sight.

They got around Twombly Lake and the river, to a point on Tatla Lake almost abreast of the Fry Pan Pass, this pass being on the opposite side. They would wait here for their father, who would return from Tatla to meet them. He had a fair wind down the lake and passed without seeing them. The boys saw the sails far away and set fire to trees, but he did not return. He told them afterwards that he saw the smoke but thought it was an Indian signal. However, when he got to the outlet of Tatla Lake he landed on the left limit and there he saw the tracks of the horses. He could not come back rapidly on account of head wind, consequently they were out of grub for four days. On the fourth day one of the men who was a Mexican, said; "I will not go without food any longer." So he got a horse and tied him up and would have killed him, but Henry was watching, and called out that his father was coming.

When Captain Moore got there he kissed them both, the tears running down his cheeks. They got very sick, for they ate a little too much although their father watched them closely, they would steal away the food any way.

The animals were then loaded on the barge and went across the lake to the F.P. Portage (Fry Pan), It was not a bad portage. The most work was cutting through fallen timber. They left half the animals here and drove the other half around Babeen Lake. There was a Hudson's Bay Company Post here where the Indian Trail strikes Babeen Lake, called Fort Babeen. T. Charles was the chief factor. It is about 20 miles from here to the foot of the lake where the portage is to the Skeena River. Babeen River is a succession of rapids and falls and empties into the Skeena River. They drove 13 animals to Skeena Portage.

Captain Moore met Mr. Woodcock, whom he had taken into partnership to build a pack trail from Skeena River to Babeen Lake

he having got a charter from the Canadian Government. Mr. Woodcock had a force of men to work. They got the trail so that animals could get over it and kept improving it till it was finished. Shortly after he (Captain Moore) brought the other horses from Fry Pan Pass to the Babeen Portage, now having 26 head in the one train which Moore operated from Hazelton to Babeen Lake.

There were two stores at Hazelton, one kept by Tom Hankin and one by C. Yeoman. The natives here are called the Huklegates who have their village a short distance up a tributary of the Skeena and a few miles from Hazelton. Some of these natives were employed by Tom Hankin to bring some freight up the Skeena with their canoes. While they were getting through the rapid water of Kitzgoogler¹³ Canyon one native was drowned; the others stopped there until they found the body which was in a couple of days. They then put the body in a rude box, brought it up to Hazelton and set it down not further than 100 feet from Hankin's door. They then demanded payment, as that is their law if a native gets hurt, killed or dies of sickness when in the employ of others, the employer must pay or die. The price is according to the ability of the deceased when alive. Tom put them off, thinking, because there were a few white men around he might get out of paying them, but when he saw them come into the store with their knives and guns he got busy and settled up.

Shortly after, Moore brought the other horses from Fry Pan Pass to the Babeen Portage. Now he had 26 animals in the one train which he operated till Fall when he had them taken down the Skeena about 40 miles by two men to look after them the coming winter. Moore Sr. and his sons and 50 miners went on down the Skeena River aboard the barges. It was quite a wild ride over the rapids and through the canyon, making the 150 miles in two days to Woodcock's as it was named at that time. This man Woodcock kept a store of liquors etc. Here, they remained for a few days when the Hudson's Bay Company steamer *Otter* arrived. They then took passage on this steamer with no less than 150 miners for Victoria, B.C. On arriving at Victoria Moore found his wife and children well. He arranged with the Hudson's Bay Co., to transport freight for them up the Skeena River.

(To be continued)

C. L. ANDREWS.

¹³ Kitzgoogler; a river coming from the south a little above the Kitwanga River enters the Skeena River on the north. Canadian Government Interior Department map of 1898.