

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF CAPTAIN  
WILLIAM MOORE

(Continued from Vol. XXI., page 280.)

*The Gold Mines of the Cassiar*

They went up the creek four miles and found Thibert, Tifair, and Loozon at work mining. They had two rockers, making three to six ounces a day to the man, \$50 to \$100. This looked good. Captain William Moore and his sons went up a short distance and located claims. The British Columbia laws would only allow 100 feet long, that is up and down a creek, and the width from the base of bench or hill to the opposite base of hill or bench. A discoverer, if one, would be entitled to 300 up and down the creek and from summit of hill on one side to the summit of the hill on the other side, taking in bench and hill. If two men are discoverers they would be entitled to 400 feet, from summit to summit. If more than two men it would be 150 feet to each man's summit to summit.

Moore proposed to all the men that he thought it would be a good plan to appoint a Recorder from among them, as there might be more people coming when the news of the strike was made. He thought it might save trouble if they should record their claims. Although this was never done before in British Columbia, Moore felt certain that if they conformed with the laws, the Government would uphold them. The others were of the same opinion so William Rath was appointed Recorder for the Cassiar Country, The natives called this country "Casca" but to be like white men they altered it into "Cassiar."

All the whites proceeded to stake claims. Moore and his sons took up their claims together. They got good prospects, so John W., and W. D., whipsawed lumber for sluicboxes. It was rather late to wing-dam the creek, so they went to work on the bench. The ground was frozen hard under the moss and they could only make \$6 to \$8 a day, as it took so much time to thaw up the ground. J.W. and W.D. talked about going back up the lake twelve miles to prospect in a creek they had passed on the way down. Moore, Senior, advised them not to, as they might lose a lot of time. However, the boys went anyway.

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\* Corrections: In Volume XXI., page 196, footnote 2 should have been cited to *Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*, p. 98; and note 4 on page 198 should have been cited to Bancroft's *History of British Columbia*, p. 514.—EDITOR.

When they got up the creek about three miles they began to prospect on a bar and found gold in the very first pan. They went deeper and were rejoiced to get better prospects, 10 to 50 cents in one pan of dirt. They at once went back to Thibert Creek, as it was named, and got one rocker, which they had made, and a few boards and provisions, got the loan of Thibert's boat and went back to the creek they had discovered. They at once started to work, washing out the dirt with the rocker. On the third day that they were there a man came up the creek by the name of Jimmy Holywood. He asked the Moore boys if they had prospects. They showed him about \$600 in gold that they had washed out. Holywood staked off a claim and said he would go back to Thibert Creek and get all his provisions, also Bill Whig and Casey. The Moore boys told him to tell their father and Henry to come, which he did in a couple of days. Every man came but Tifair who was sick. That made fourteen men and Henry Moore, who was only fourteen years old at the time. They staked claims and gave the creek a name calling it Dease Creek.

Moore and his sons staked discovery claim, 600 feet for the four of them.<sup>1</sup> William Rath recorded all the claims and received \$2.50 from each claim, and \$5 apiece for Miner's License, which would be turned into the Land Office in Victoria, B.C. Moore and his sons worked hard and were making \$50 to \$75 a day. They got word that Tifair died, they could not tell of what, some thought he died of scurvy.

Moore, Senior, was ailing. Henry waited on him, but they all began to feel very much alarmed at their father's sickness. None knew what was the matter with him and they had only a few simple remedies. They shot a few grouse and caught some fish. After a week, he began to improve.

The season was closing. It was then the beginning of September, some of the men left as they were short of provisions. They worked till the 18th, then made up their minds to start out of the country. They had washed out over \$5000 and were well satisfied. There was six inches of snow on the ground.

They left some of their goods, such as the tent and some of their blankets. They had only about twenty-five pounds of flour, a small piece of bacon, no tea, sugar or fruit. They were part of two days getting around Dease Lake. When they got to Buck's

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<sup>1</sup> A letter of Captain W. D. Moore states: "My brother Henry was only 14 years and 2 or 3 mos. old at the time. The miners voted for him to hold his claim as well as other men. . . . When we all got to Victoria, Mr. Rath turned over the records to the Government. Then the Provincial Parliament made a law allowing persons of 14 years to . . . hold mining claims."

Bar, on the Stikine River, they found about sixty or seventy men camped there. They had heard of the strike. Some went to Dease and Thibert Creek and staked claims. Moore, his sons, and others got on board the barge which they had left at Miller's, a few miles below Buck's Bar, and started down the Stikine River. The second day they passed the old Hudson's Bay Company Post and soon were in Alaska. The morning of the third day they arrived at Fort Wrangell.

The steamship *California* was due at Wrangell in a few days. She made monthly trips from Portland, Oregon, to Sitka, calling at Victoria, B.C., and at Nanaimo for coal.

At Fort Tongas was an unoccupied barracks which the United States had built. The miners all went ashore and visited the large native village, and found fastened on one of the totem poles an old telescope, with an inscription on it, "Captain James Cook, 1778." Old natives said that a white man had given it to the father of one of them a long time ago.

Moore, Senior, procured a charter from the Canadian Government to build a pack trail from Stikine River to Dease Lake. He then went in partnership with M. Lenz, a merchant of Victoria, to build the trail and operate a pack train.

Captain William Moore arrived at the place called Glenora on the stern wheel steamer named the *Glenora*, owned and operated by Captain Irving. He had a force of men and at once began to build the trail. He put men here and there, at the worst places, and at bridging the streams. White men and natives were packing goods getting \$1.00 per pound, but it was not long before horses made the first trip to Dease Lake with light packs. Moore was improving the trail all the time. When the Government inspectors reported the trail suitable Moore was allowed to collect two cents per pound toll, and fifty cents a head for horses and cattle, twelve and one-half cents a head for sheep.

The packers reduced the rate to fifty cents per pound. A man, Dooley by name, shipped twenty-six head of beef cattle to Glenora from Puget Sound. He packed them with 300 pounds at fifty cents per pound from Glenora to Dease Lake, then drove them around the lake to Dease Town, slaughtered them and sold the meat for sixty and seventy-five cents per pound. The prices of provisions were cheaper than they had been; in fact, before animals got to Dease Lake, provisions could not be bought at any price.

Dease Town was running full blast. Many claims were paying well, and money was everywhere, several stores, dance halls, filled

mostly with native girls from the coast. Saloons and all kinds of gambling was going on. Judge Sullivan, who was the Gold Commissioner, was busy holding court, principally on mining disputes. There were no gun plays and no one expected any as the law was carried out very fast in British Columbia.

Moore kept a small number of men repairing and changing the trail. He wrote that the Steamer *Hope*, owned and operated by Capt. O. Parsons, was plying on the Stikine River from Wrangell, Alaska, to Glenora, B.C. There was then about 4500 men in the Cassiar Country and about 300 Chinamen. There were about fifty darkies. A colored man, McDame by name, discovered a creek about 150 miles down the Dease River, and named it after himself.<sup>2</sup> It paid well and many stampeded to it.

The season was drawing to a close, men were leaving for the outside, but some remained for the winter. Captain Moore, and his son W.D., went to Wrangell and took passage for Victoria on the steamship *California*. They had accumulated close on \$50,000 from the claims on Dease and Thibert Creeks.

Moore, Senior, and his sons came to the conclusion to build a river steamer for the Stikine River, and at once gave orders for lumber, etc., employed carpenters and started to build the boat.

In March, 1875, the steamer was launched and was named the *Gertrude*, after Captain William Moore's youngest daughter. On the 15th of April the boat left Victoria under her own steam for Wrangell, Alaska, arriving at that place the 23rd of April.

Captain Moore left Wrangell with the steamer loaded with passengers and freight, also pack animals, fifty in number, they steamed up to Telegraph Creek, fifteen miles further than the other boats had gone. He and his son, W.D., operated the steamer, and had all they could do with freight, etc.

The steamer *Hope* made only two trips this season. Captain Parsons removed the machinery and boilers from her, then sold the boat to Chinamen, who hauled her up on the beach at Wrangell and turned her into a hotel.

The Canadian Government took the trail, paid Moore and Lenz the first cost of building with twenty-five per cent added, according to agreement.

Captain Moore steamed his boat, the *Gertrude*, to Victoria, and laid her up for the winter. The Moores purchased a screw

<sup>2</sup> "It is now well established that Dease, Thibert and McDame Creeks yielded in two seasons nearly \$2,000,000." Bancroft's *History of British Columbia*, p. 561.

steamer, the *Grappler*, which they operated on the coast, towing, etc. Captain Moore also bought the steamer *Glenora* from Captain John Irving, with the understanding that he would not interest himself in any other steamer on the Stikine River.

On the opening of the season of 1876, Captain William Moore went captain on the steamer *Gertrude*. Captain John Hayes was made master of the *Grappler* which was put on the route between Victoria, B.C., and Wrangell, Alaska, connecting with Moore's boats on the Stikine River. After making several trips up the river, they laid up the steamer *Glenora*. Captain Moore, Senior, acted as manager of the steamer *Grappler* with Captain Hayes. W. D. Moore took charge of the steamer *Gertrude* as Captain. The Stikine is a very swift river with many bar rapids and shoal bars.

J. W. Moore had practically worked out the claims. He sold them all to the Chinamen.<sup>3</sup>

In the season of 1877, Captain William Moore arrived at Wrangell with the Steamer *Grappler*. The *Gertrude* at once steamed alongside of the *Grappler* and loaded with freight and passengers for Telegraph Creek.

The stern wheel Steamer *Beaver*, owned and operated by Lipsett and others in 1877 on the Stikine, would be on the route this year from Wrangell to Glenora.

Captain William Moore brought a new steamer to Wrangell which he had named the *Western Slope*. He had cleared the steamer from Victoria to Boundary on the Stikine River. She only called at Wrangell to report and proceeded to the boundary on the Stikine River, where the steamer *Gertrude* loaded from her seventy head of cattle and freight, the *Western Slope* returning to Victoria. The Moores were having strong opposition on the Stikine and on the coast. They were not making any money this season.<sup>4</sup>

In 1880, the Moores ran their steamers on the same routes. During a dense fog the *Grappler* ran on a reef and sank. Very nearly the whole cargo, which was hay and grain, was a loss to the Moores, there being no insurance. They raised her at great cost, and after they got her to Victoria, sold her. Opposition was much stronger, and they lost much money.

<sup>3</sup> Many of the men who mined in the Cassiar, and much of the gold they took out, went down in the wreck of the Steamer *Pacific*, which collided with the bark *Orpheus*, on her voyage to San Francisco from Victoria, B.C. Among the lost was Gold Commissioner Sullivan of the Cassiar.

<sup>4</sup> By 1879 the mines of the Cassiar had been largely abandoned to the Chinamen. The total yield of the Cassiar mines from 1873 to 1903 is estimated to have been \$7,800,000. See *Mining in British Columbia Bulletin No. 19*, p. 47, Victoria, 1904.

The next year, the Moores operated the *Gertrude* on the Stikine River, the *Western Slope* on the coast. This year there were two other stern wheelers on the river. They lost more money.

In 1882, they sold the steamer *Gertrude* to Calbrath, Grant and Cook, and Captain William Moore operated the *Western Slope* from Victoria, B.C., to New Westminster and Fort Yale, head of navigation on the Fraser River. He continued the same trade during 1883.

The following year, Captain Moore was forced to let go his holdings in the steamer and in his real estate to satisfy his creditors, but still acted as captain on the *Western Slope* for a salary. She was then owned by J. Irving.

In 1885, Captain Moore, Senior, built a screw steamer in company with others and went captain on her. They operated her till fall. Then Captain Moore, Senior, induced his son Captain W. D. Moore, to take the screw steamer *Teaser*, as the new boat was called, into Alaska, for the purpose of forcing his partners in the steamer to give a straight account of earnings, etc., as he thought they were not acting on the square with him.

W. D. Moore took the steamer to Tongas, Alaska, and lay there, but she was taken by a force of men, who were employed by the partners of Moore, Senior, and steamed to Victoria. Captain Moore lost control of her.

#### *Back to Alaska*

In 1886, Captain William Moore and his son-in-law, Captain William Myers, contracted with parties in Seattle to build a stern wheel steamer. Upon the completion of this boat, which was named *Alaskan*, Captain Moore, in company with Captain Myers, took it to Wrangell, where they put it on the Stikine River.

During 1886, Captain W. D. Moore went to the Yukon. The younger son, Henry, had left Seattle with three other white men on a schooner, called the *Sea Bird*, for Alaska. The Captain was mining on the bars of the Stewart River when "Some men coming into the country gave Moore a letter telling him of the murder of his brother, Henry Moore, and his three companions, by the Salmon River natives of Vancouver Island. They had anchored their schooner in Blinkensop Bay, to wait for the turn of the tide, as it was impossible for them to stem the tide in Johnson's Straits, and while at anchor the natives killed the four men and sunk their bodies with the schooner."

From this point the MS nearly exclusively follows the life of Captain W. D. Moore, on the Yukon, mining, prospecting, trading and commanding steamboats on the Yukon for different companies, the Alaska Commercial Company, the North American Navigation and Trading Company and others. The narrative relating to Captain William Moore will be continued from his own statements, from letters of W. D. Moore, and from contemporary sources.

#### *In the Yukon Valley*

In 1887, the fortunes of Captain William Moore were at a low ebb. He and his three sons had accumulated a fortune in the Cassiar Mines of approximately \$80,000, to which had been added some \$10,000 profit from building the trail from Glenora and Telegraph Creek to Dease Lake to open up the Cassiar Mining region. This fortune had been invested in the transportation business and had now slipped away with the decline of the trade of the Stikine River and with the opposition of other companies. He had been compelled to dispose of his fleet of river steamers, the *Gertrude*, the *Glenora*, the *Western Slope*, and after the disaster to the *Grappler* it too had gone. Litigation took his last venture, the *Teaser*. He sold his fine home in Victoria, B.C., and with a vision of the future in the newer lands again turned his face to the North.

His sons, William D., who had been a captain on the river steamers on the Stikine, J. W., and Henry, who had been associated with him in all the enterprises, were involved in the financial losses. Henry, as seen before, started for Alaska in a schooner and met death at the hands of the Indians. Captain W. D. Moore had gone to the Yukon the year before.

The Yukon Valley was beginning to attract attention. In 1887, William Ogilvie, Dominion Surveyor, and afterward Gold Commissioner and Governor of the Yukon Territory, was sent to the Yukon by the Canadian Government to ascertain and fix the boundary line between Canada and the United States Territory of Alaska at the 141st Meridian on the River.

When W. D. Moore went to the Yukon in 1886, as he writes in one of his letters, he heard of a new pass to the interior. He says: "Had a long talk with one of the Indians who could talk a good deal of Chinook Jargon, and found that by way of the Skagway River was a longer route but not so high a pass to cross."<sup>5</sup>

He wrote this back to his father. The old Captain was fired

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<sup>5</sup> Manuscript by Captain W. D. Moore.

with desire to know more about this new portal to the vast region in the North and he seized the opportunity to join the expedition of Surveyor Ogilvie. He was detailed to investigate and make a running survey of the new route, and with "Skookum Jim," a brother-in-law of George Carmack, he went over the pass and meeting Ogilvie at Lake Lindeman he reported the results, stating that he found it longer, but lower. Ogilvie states: "The Captain was strongly of the opinion that the route is feasible for a wagon road and possibly for a railway."<sup>6</sup>

Mr. Ogilvie also says: "I have named this pass "White Pass," in honor of the late Hon. Thomas White, Minister of the Interior, under whose authority the expedition was organized."<sup>7</sup>

Captain Moore continued with the exploring party to about twenty-five miles above Selkirk, where they met J. Bernard Moore, a younger son of the Captain, generally known as "Ben," who had been in the Yukon during the summer. Ben, in company with Hank Summers, another prospector, was poling up the Yukon on his way outside. Captain Moore joined them and returned to the coast. This return journey was made by poling or lining the boat along the bank on the river for the current was too rapid for the use of paddles or oars, except when crossing the lakes, and it covered a distance of 350 miles to the head of Lake Bennett.

Moore was delighted with the Valley of the Yukon and envisioned its future with the imagination of an enthusiast. Ogilvie says of this: "Every night during the two months he remained with us he would picture the tons of yellow dust yet to be found in the Yukon Valley. He decided then and there that Skagway would be the entry port to the golden fields of the Yukon, and the White Pass would reverberate with the rumble of railway trains, carrying supplies."

"I remarked that an old time steamboat competitor of his on the Fraser and the Stikine would probably put a good line of steamboats on the river.

"'Him! Vy — him, if steamboats was sellin' for two bits apiece he could not buy a gangplank'."<sup>8</sup>

#### *Beginnings of Skagway*

Captain Moore's faith in the future of Skagway was not dimmed from that time until the day of his death, and he lived to realize

<sup>6</sup> Governor Ogilvie in an interview published by *The Daily Alaskan*, Skagway, Alaska, April 4, 1901.

<sup>7</sup> *The Klondike Official Guide*, by William Ogilvie, Department of the Interior, Dominion of Canada, 1898, page 21.

<sup>8</sup> Governor Ogilvie in the *Dawson Daily News*, 1901.



his vision in seeing the tons of gold brought through the port and carried on the trains he predicted more than ten years before.

True to his faith in the future he returned the next year in company with his son Ben, bringing an outfit of equipment and provisions for work on a cabin and wharf which he constructed. The wharf was about 200 feet north of the dock of today and the cabin was between Fifth and Sixth Avenue in Skagway, and east of Broadway. The logs for the wharf were handled with a Spanish windlass.

In 1891, he presented a petition to the Secretary of the Interior, asking for the right to construct a toll-road over the White Pass, from tidewater to Lake Bennett, but it was not granted. Later he was employed with an engineer named Gavreau on inspecting routes to the interior in the interests of the Canadian Government, and of this Mr. Ogilvie says: "The Government examined routes and condemned the White Pass, but the Captain protested and won."<sup>9</sup>

It is also stated that in 1891 he procured a grant of money from the Canadian Government for the building of a shelter cabin which was placed on the Indian Trail from Dyea to Lindeman about one mile south of the lake.<sup>9</sup>

He is also credited with bringing the first party of miners to cross the pass, February 2, 1895, on the steamer *Rustler*, seven in number, each with a ton of provisions, and helped them to the foot of the canyon, on the way to the interior.

In 1896, he secured a contract for carrying the mail over the trail to the interior, which was the first official contract for that service given by the Canadian Government. Under this contract he made two trips, the first being early in the season of 1896, when he went over the Dyea Pass, and down the Yukon in a small boat, returning by the mouth of the Yukon where he took the Steamer *Bertha*, for the States.<sup>10</sup> The second was over the trail and down the river by small boat. He camped at the site of the present town of Dawson, where he saw George Carmack. He continued down to Circle City, then turned back, and with three dogs, came up to the Klondike River, where he wished to stake claims. He was advised by some friends that mining was too hard work for him, at his age, he being over seventy years old, that he had better go on outside, and that they would stake a claim for him, which they did. The claim was staked for him on Hunker Creek but was jumped, on the

<sup>9</sup> Governor Ogilvie in the *Daily Alaskan*, April 4, 1901, and also in personal memorandum from Captain William Moore in the Andrews Collection.

<sup>10</sup> *Skagway News*, November 24, 1899.

ground that no claims could be staked except in person. The man who took the claim paid him \$1000 for it afterward.<sup>11</sup>

With the discovery of gold in the Klondike and the flood of gold-seekers passing through Skagway, the tide of fortune changed in favor of the old pioneer. The wharf was a rich source of revenue. Title to sixty acres of land as a townsite was granted by the Government. He became engaged in other business enterprises and built a fine residence in Skagway. On April 27, 1900, having heard of the gold strike at Nome he left Skagway for the new digging, being unable to resist the attraction of a stampede to a new mining camp. He made his way to Nome but soon returned to his home at Skagway.

During the early days of the growing town at the ocean terminus of the White Pass and Yukon Railway which was built during 1898 and 1899, the massive form of Captain Moore, as he moved about the wharf, clad in a heavy yellow overcoat that defied the stormy wind that blew down the canyons, was a striking figure.

When he built his home at Skagway, evidently he harked back to his sea faring days, for he constructed it with a "Texas" at the top from which he could look out as he was used to do from the pilot house of the steamer.

In later years he sold the house in Skagway and moved to Victoria, B.C., where he spent his last days, and there he died March 30, 1909. Of him his son, Wm. D. Moore, writes in a personal letter, September, 1928: "Father was not an educated man. Had he been so, his life would have read in a different way. He was headstrong and aggressive, full of ambition, never would give up. He used to smoke when he was young. He gave it up. He did not drink to excess. He did not gamble. He was fond of his wife and children."

CLARENCE L. ANDREWS

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<sup>11</sup> Letter of Captain W. D. Moore, dated June 15, 1928.