

EXPLORATION AND SURVEY

There is much of romance in the exploration of any *terra incognita* and British Columbia was no exception. Situated on the Pacific littoral of the American continent, British Columbia could be approached by both land and sea. The latter was the first to be used.

Whether or not Sir Francis Drake in 1579 sighted the shore of British Columbia is still a matter of controversy but certainly he made no landing. Nor has the voyage of Juan de Fuca in 1592 ever been satisfactorily authenticated. It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that concerted efforts were made to explore this Pacific Northwest, and then largely upon the impetus of growing international rivalry stemming from Spanish concern over Russian intrusion from the north.

As a matter of simplicity in treatment, the progress of exploration and survey in British Columbia can be considered in historic phases. Four such convenient aspects are traced in the maps opposite.

PRE-COLONIAL 1741-1846

Bering and Chirikov were in the vanguard of Russian exploration and the voyage of the latter in 1741 marked the first examination of any considerable portion of the Pacific seaboard, although no successful landings were made. For over two hundred years Spain had felt so secure in her American possessions that no effort was made to chart the northwest coast, but she began to bestir herself and in 1774 Perez brought the Spanish colours into northern waters for the first time. Other expeditions followed in 1775 and 1779 but only the most meagre additions to the knowledge of the coast were made.

Then another nation, Great Britain, directed its activity to the Pacific Northwest under still another impetus, the search for the North West Passage. In the spring of 1778 Captain James Cook, R.N., landed at Nootka Sound to begin the first serious examination of the coast. The posthumous publication of the account of his voyage made the world aware of the fur resources of the region and

prepared the way for a host of maritime fur traders of various nationalities. France was also represented in this region in 1785 by la Pérouse. All this activity stimulated Spain into a second cycle of exploration beginning in 1790 with Fidalgo and Quimper. In the end this was to result in a clash between British and Spanish interests. Open warfare was avoided by the Nootka Sound Convention which brought to these shores Captain George Vancouver, R.N., whose work during the years 1792-94 resulted in the publication of the first satisfactory charts of the region.

Overland exploration was later in developing for in reality it was an extension of the westward push across the continent that began with the discoveries of Columbus. In British territory the overland approach was closely associated with the activity of two great fur trade organizations, the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. The latter was the first to penetrate west of the Rocky Mountains. In 1793 Alexander Mackenzie became the first white man to cross the continent, antedating by twelve years the Lewis and Clark expedition. One of the greatest of all explorers was David Thompson, another *Nor-Wester*, who traversed the Kootenay country 1806-11 and traced the Columbia river from its source to the sea. Still another was Simon Fraser who in 1808 made the hazardous descent of the river that now bears his name. American fur traders occasionally penetrated into what became British territory and of these Alexander Ross was the most important.

Following the amalgamation of the two great fur companies in 1821 greater attention was paid to the territory west of the Rocky Mountains. The problem of communication was fundamental to the fur trade so all possible routes were examined. Out of this came the brigade routes and trails. Later when it became apparent that the boundary decision was likely to mean the loss of the Columbia river route renewed attempts were made to develop an approach by the Fraser river as a substitute.

Uncontrolled exploitation of the sea otter led to the collapse of the maritime fur trade early in the nineteenth century. The overland fur trade, however, survived another fifty years and then gave place to colonization and settlement which followed the discovery of mineral wealth, first gold, and later, the base metals.

COLONIAL PERIOD AND TERRITORIAL EXPANSION 1847-1871

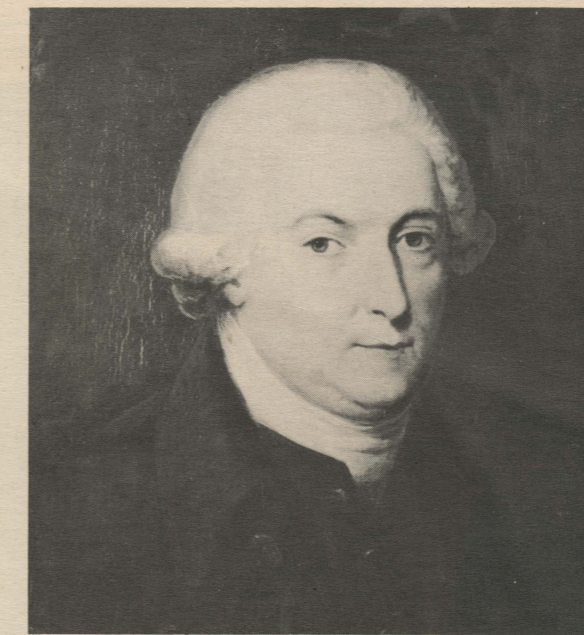
Until 1846 no boundary existed west of the Rocky Mountains to separate American and British interests. Once that line was fixed, in an effort to build a bulwark against American westward expansion, British territory came under colonial jurisdiction by successive stages—Vancouver Island (1849); Queen Charlotte Islands (1853); British Columbia (1858); Stickeen Territory (1862). Ultimately these four entities were amalgamated and the united colony of British Columbia, as established in 1866, became the sixth province of the Dominion of Canada in 1871.

The era of territorial expansion was marked by successful efforts to link the coast with the interior of British Columbia. In this period such famous historic routes as the Dewdney Trail, the Harrison Trail, and the Cariboo Wagon Road were developed.

POST-COLONIAL 1872-1901

The advent of the miner and the settler during the Colonial period resulted in fundamental changes, for the fur trade had followed the communication pattern laid down by the physical geography of the country. Now the problem of communication from one river valley to another became of prime significance in the political and economic unification of the young province. Trails and roads became a necessity and the civil engineer and his survey parties took the place of the traditional explorer. These were the days of the geologists Dawson and McConnel and of the C.P.R. surveyors. One of the terms of Confederation was the construction of a transcontinental railway and in the resulting search for a route from 1871-1885 great strides were made in the exploration of the province. Often where the railroad did not go telegraph lines could go and the surveys again resulted in increased knowledge of the far-flung reaches of British Columbia. The settlement which followed exploration and survey is elaborated in Map 15.

Improved techniques in terms of aerial surveys have to a degree taken the glamour out of the remaining exploration but increased proficiency in survey has resulted in speedier acquisition of basic information about the physical nature of the province.

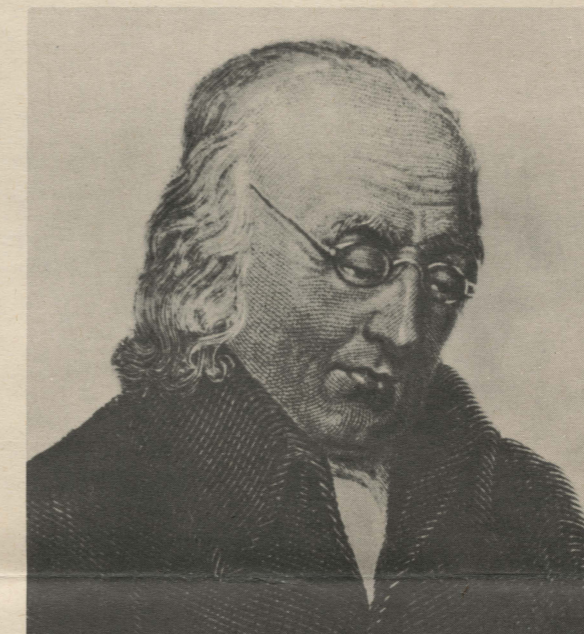


CAPTAIN GEORGE VANCOUVER, R.N.
From 1792-1794 explored the coastal waterways of British Columbia.



ALEXANDER MACKENZIE
The first white man to cross the continent of North America, reaching tide-water near Bella Coola, July 22, 1793.

A PHOTOGRAPH REPUTED TO BE OF DAVID THOMPSON, famed explorer of the Columbia river and the Kootenay country of British Columbia.



SIMON FRASER
Pioneer fur trader and explorer of the North West Company, who descended the river bearing his name in 1808.

CAPTAIN COOK'S SHIPS OFF THE INDIAN BEACH AT NOOTKA SOUND.

