

Exploration of the Lillooet Cattle Trail from Howe Sound to Indian Arm

Researched and written by Ralph Drew, Belcarra, BC, October 2011.

In October 1873 William Sampson, a contractor working on the *Lillooet–Burrard Inlet Cattle Trail*, became the first European to explore the overland route from Howe Sound up the Mamquam River valley, across the Mamquam Pass and down the Indian River valley to the North Arm [Indian Arm] of Burrard Inlet. [Source: *British Colonist*, October 31st, 1873.] The following is the report received from William Sampson who was dispatched to explore the route from Pemberton Meadows through to Burrard Inlet:

“On the 16th [October 1873], I left the ‘Meadows’ [Pemberton Meadows], reaching the north end of Green Lake, a distance of about 14½ miles, where I camped. The country consists of rolling hills, with some heavy timber. Two creeks will have to be bridged in this section, measuring respectively 100 feet, and 120 feet, wide. Feed abounds hereabouts, with good timber on the creeks for bridging purposes. The 17th, I made 6 miles, over rolling hills, intersected by flats, and covered with heavy timber. This brought me to the south end of Green Lake, where I camped. On the 18th, I travelled 12 miles, to Daisy Lake, where I camped. The country is here more level, but very heavily timbered. The east branch of the Tchiarkemish [Cheakamus River] will require about 100 feet of bridging. On the 19th, I made the mouth of the Tchiarkemish [Cheakamus River], the distance being 13 miles. The first five miles of this section are very rough, passing mostly over rocky slides, or bluffs of solid rock; there will also be two streams to bridge, wide, respectively, 60 and 120 feet each. On the 20th, I made 10 miles, and reached the mouth of the Squamish River, at Howe Sound. This section is for the most part level; heavily timbered; covered with underbrush; and considerably cut-up with sloughs. The 21st, I laid-over for the purpose of obtaining Indian guides to take me to [the North Arm of] Burrard Inlet, which I failed to accomplish. The 22nd, I retraced my steps for about two miles, when I branched-off in a south-easterly direction, following upstream the Mauquiem River [Mamquam River] for about 8 miles. The country, through which I travelled, is heavily timbered; covered with dense underbrush; and offering steep side-hill grading, but through excellent ground for road making. On the 23rd, I left the Mauquiem [Mamquam River], and went through a low mountain pass [Mamquam Pass], reaching the head of a creek [Chief George Creek], which flows [via Indian River] into the North Arm [Indian Arm] of Burrard Inlet. This stream I followed for six miles, and camped. The country, for the first 2 miles, is almost level to the sources of the creek, and covered with underbrush and plenty of feed. The remainder of the distance is cut-up by steep side-hills. The direction is east by south-east. The 24th, I camped at the head of the North Arm [Indian Arm]. Side-hills here alternated with flats, covered with timber and thick underbrush. A big rock slide bars the way at the rapids, three miles from the mouth of the creek [Indian River], and is about half a mile long. The 26th, I reached Messrs. Moody, Dietz and Nelson’s Mill [*Moodyville* on the North Shore] at the Inlet [Burrard Inlet], per canoe, whence I came on to Victoria.”

“I may here state that, from information obtained at the Mills [Moodyville Mill], I learned that a better route exists by leaving the pass I crossed on the left, and keeping up the Mauquiem River [Mamquam River] to its sources; when by going through another mountain pass, equally low, the head of Seymour Creek [Seymour River] is reached, by following which latter stream, an easy grade is obtained the whole way through to the Inlet.” [Source: Report of the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works [Robert Beaven] to the [Honourable Joseph William Trutch, Lieutenant-Governor of the] Province of British Columbia, Dominion of Canada, Victoria, BC, from the 1st day of January until the 30th day of November, 1873.]

In June of 1875 the steamship *Beaver*, famous in British Columbia’s history, steamed into Burrard Inlet from Victoria with a work party of fifteen men, which she landed on the north shore. These men were sent by the Provincial Government to make a trail up Seymour Creek as part of a projected trail between Burrard Inlet and Lillooet, via Squamish and Pemberton Meadows. The largest settlement was on the North Shore located around the Moody, Dietz and Nelson’s Mill and was known as *Moodyville*. The workmen for the trail landed at the mouth of Lynn Creek where Royal Engineer John Linn had his Crown Land preemption and lived with his family. [Source: “Working on the Old Lillooet Trail”, *Vancouver Province*, May 23rd, 1936, Magazine Section, page 5.]

The work party was led Ahster Havelock Cameron, and for part of the way up Seymour Creek he was assisted in the trail-blazing by John Hall. However, Hall cut himself so badly that he had to be taken to the hospital in New Westminster, and Mr. Cameron went on alone. — “John Hall, while cutting brush on the trail between Burrard Inlet and Lillooet, received a severe wound from his brush knife, which severed the main artery in his wrist. He was about three or four miles from the Inlet, and alone. He attempted to reach aid, and he travelled two or three miles towards *Moodyville*. Dr. McInnes was telegraphed for and was soon beside the sufferer, whose wound he dressed. The patient is very low from loss of blood.” [Source: *Mainland Guardian*, August 28th, 1875, page 3.]