

George Batstone by George Batstone

I brought in the first Phonograph that ever came into the country. People in New York were listening to it being played. It was new to everyone even in a big city like New York. In travelling from New York to Granite Creek I played it on the train. On the Sooke line from St. Paul to Moosejaw it didn't go so good as it wasn't as good a road bed as the main C.P.R. but it was sure lovely when played there. People on the train heard about it but never heard one. I had two dozen pieces to play. It was a small cast iron machine with cylinder records; an Edison Gem with a brass horn on it.

I took out the first load of ore (a ton in little sacks) from Princeton. I tended bar all through the R.R. construction, for A.E. Howse and the Driard Hotel. Howse cleaned up thousands at the hotel while the R.R. was being completed. I came out of it alive; how I don't know. Fighting with knives, shooting revolvers off in the bar. Men I knew coming in for a good time after having worked and made a stake would take a gold ring off and their watch and give them to me also counted their money out and gave it to me. After we had both counted it and signed our names to it, he would want some to spend and as long as he could subtract the amount, I gave him from the true amount, I would give it to him. When he got so drunk he couldn't, then he wouldn't get anymore. Of course, one couldn't find a rougher bunch than those fellows using pick and shovel on the R.R. You had to be on your toes and on the watch all the time.

I found the way to handle them was to treat them as fair as one could. You had to be stern, or they would walk all over you. Sometimes I'd lock them up, have to fight with them. I was young and strong, but no matter how good you were, you weren't good enough sometimes so you had to take it when two or three ganged up on you. Still, I came out of it at the end still being alive.

I drove extra stages when I worked for the stage outfit. The stage would leave Spences Bridge in the morning, arrive at Nicola at night (there was no Merritt then), leave Nicola in the morning arrive at Jack Thynne's Ranch at night, leave there in the morning get to Granite Creek at noon. The stage driver would put saddles on the horses for passengers and pack horses for express then start over the trail for Princeton because there wasn't any road to Princeton then, although they were working on it with pick and shovel. They would get to Princeton at night and leave there in morning arrive at Granite Creek, change horses back to stage again and reach Thynne's Ranch at night, leave there in the morning and get to Nicola that night. I drove a freight team, four horses, once in awhile 6 horses. It would be a nine days round trip from Thynne's Ranch to Spences Bridge and back. Take your own grub, shoeing tools, horse shoes, medicine, harness kit, oats, etc. Sleep under the wagon sometimes or small tent sometimes when you are camped for the night. Take a willow pole and a bit of black thread and hook and get yourself brook trout for breakfast or supper. Knock over a grouse, lots of fish in every stream, lots of game everywhere. When I first freighted the roads were very bad and narrow and the worst was mudholes. Sometimes when you were coming along with a heavy load, you would get stuck, so as a rule it was always a long mud hole. You would have to camp right there and get

through it somehow but you would lose a lot of time. When you did reach home, you would change all your horses to fresh ones so you had some unbroken horses to break.

Lots of horses in the country then. A good little bronc - \$10 a piece. Larger horses higher. All freight was brought in in summer as one couldn't freight in the winter. You couldn't camp outside. The country from Spences Bridge in the winter was cold but not much snow and the country from a few miles about Nicola would be blocked with snow, although you could go through with sleighs to Princeton but no one cared to tackle it in winter time.

Death

I have built quite a few coffins and helped bury quite a few. Some are buried along trails, some on the mountain range up in the little burying grounds in the little towns. Mr. Perkins, an old timer died in his cabin. I sat up with him for a few nights, then made his coffin and a few came to help bury him (on the mountain where he lived). Another, a man who found a good showing of coal got a couple of mining men from the coast interested in it and they came up to Pete's place wanting Pete to take them with his horses up the mountain where the coal showing was. So they got their supplies and, using Pete's horses, went up the mountain. There they pitched their tent and as they were having supper an awful lightening and thunderstorm came up. Pete told them to go and untie the horses from the trees and put hobbles on them as he was afraid of trees falling down. Pete stayed in the tent. The other two fellows fixed the horses and in doing so heard a big tree crash near the tent. One of the fellows went back to the tent and found that a big tree had crashed down across the tent and Pete underneath it. So they chopped him out from the limbs but he was hollering with pain. One went down to the little town and got an old prospector who knew what to do. They made a stretcher and brought him down and in the meantime sent a fellow to Princeton for the only doctor in this part of the country. He came up on his horse and he cut his foot off and arm. Anyway, he died before morning and I had to make a box to put him in. I found some old boards on the roof of an old cabin, made a box with a lid on it. There was a little porch with no railing on it. The porch was about three or four steps up from the ground. I put the box at the edge of the porch and took the cover off and we went up the stairs to get him. When we brought him down, someone had put the cover on. I said, "take that cover off". We went to put him in. They had put a fellow named Steve Brooks in the box and put the cover on. They took the cover off, tipped the box up and Steve fell out of the coffin onto the ground. He was so drunk he never knew anything about it and we buried Pete Gunderson.

A fellow who was a stranger in town had been drinking all day and towards dark he was heard to say to himself, "it's no crime to kill a partner like he was." Then he went down and borrowed a 30-30 rifle. He told the man that lent him the gun and ammunition that he wanted to use it for deer hunting early in the morning. He went down in the brush and shot himself. The shot was heard close by, they went hunting for him and found him. Then they sent a fellow on horseback to get the doctor in Princeton. He came up that night and in the morning as I was going to start out with a load of freight, they wanted me to wait awhile as the doctor wanted someone to help him perform an operation to see whether he shot himself or whether someone else may have shot him. So I went into an old log cabin where they had him laid out on a plank

and two apple boxes and he stripped him off and cut him open between chest and stomach. Then he felt for the course of the bullet, so he made me put my hand in and find the course of the bullet like he did. After I did that and washed up, he said now if I was going to operate for appendicitis, I should open him up this way. "Doctor," I said, "if you are going to cut him up some more I have to go now. You don't need me." So I went. Old John Burns, I made his coffin and buried him alongside the one mile road near the Sky Blue Lodge. The old fellow used to own that place in the early days. I won't keep on with burials, but I've helped do several.

Game In Early Days

A person would generally get a prospector license then they could get meat when they were really in need of it. The woods were alive with game and fur animals. A way up high in the mountains one would come to where there were large flocks of blue grouse. Down lower in the bottoms all kinds of willow grouse and the fool hen or Franklin partridge. Deer were everywhere. In the lakes wherever you wanted, there would be dams and houses used by the beaver. They weren't trapped much because for a good beaver pelt you would only get \$5.00. For a lynx the same, lots of them. Martin, fisher, muskrats, coyotes, bear – lots of them, black, light brown, cinnamon, and bald faced. When I came here in 1898, we used to find full sets of elk horns in the small lakes. Of course the horns would be bleached white but sets not broken. The old Indians used to say there used to be elk here, but a very cold, severe, deep snow winter killed them all off in this part of the country. But starting about four years ago, not only the elk are coming into the country, but the moose too. Where I used to ranch and do lots of hunting and no one in my time ever saw a moose or an elk, I've hunted up there lately and have seen tracks of elk and moose. After I'd lived in the country several years, furs started to go up higher. Then beaver, lynx, fisher, martin and furs like those got to be worth trapping. Now you pay \$5.00 for a license and two tags. You can kill two deer, one buck and one a doe later on in the season. There's no limit on bears, only grizzly.

Range (Cattle Now and In the Early Days)

The bulls were with the cattle the year round. So you would have calves during the winter. It was down to 30 below sometimes. You couldn't save the calves unless you did as I learned to do. Have buildings to put them in, sit up all night sometimes when it was so cold. Dry them off and give them their first milk. Have them in a box stall with plenty of hay for them to lie on. My cattle were mostly very gentle. I took a great interest in cattle and learned by books and other ways how to doctor them – both horses and cattle. One could turn their stock on the range anytime and take them off anytime. But after awhile, range laws came. Then you had to have good bulls of the beef breed. That meant you would have better breed of cattle. You couldn't put them on the range until a certain date and you had to take them off in the fall at a certain date. Then your range wouldn't be over grazed. You paid 25 cents for cattle and 35 cents for horses. If you wanted a bad mud hole fenced or a new trail built if there was enough money, the government would do it. All money paid into the government for range fees would be kept by the government for your range and (to be used when there was enough paid in) for tails, fencing mud holes, etc. The range man came in and mapped out the range we could have, showed us the boundaries, etc. He had a meeting of all the ranchers in that district and explained

everything to us. Once a year we have a meeting, he would be there. So since the range laws came into effect, our calves are born in summer, we don't over graze our range and we raise better cattle.