

MUDDING A SLED

by Venerable D. B. Marsh
Eskimo Point



1. The "mudder" chops the moist earth fine with his snowknife (left) and takes a ball of mud . . .

FOR generations the Eskimos have used "mud" as a shoeing on the runners of their sleds. The term mud does not mean the same in the Arctic as it does to those who live farther south. In the North mud is muskeg or decayed mosses and vegetable matter. Light in weight, it can be planed smooth and covered with a coating of ice, so that sleds so shod slip lightly and easily over the Arctic snows. Perhaps its greatest advantage is that it can be found almost anywhere in the Arctic and thus repairs can be made at any time and place. Good mud must be totally

2. . . which he applies to the runner of the overturned sled, seen in the background of (1).



free from sand and grit, and sufficiently decayed that it can be broken up till it resembles a fine meal.

As soon as there is enough snow on the ground, the Eskimos start to mud their sleds, and in the fall when the temperature is above zero it is a much more pleasant job (though never really pleasant at any time) than when the thermometer registers forty below zero.

The top layer of the frozen ground is first removed, and the soft waterlogged underlayer chopped fine with an axe or snowknife before the Eskimo sets to work mashing the mud with his hands to make it evenly textured throughout. In the winter, the mud is chopped out with an axe, then thawed and broken finely within the shelter of an igloo or windbreak.

From this "mash" he makes a ball of mud with his hands (1) and carries it to the sled, where he breaks it in half. One half is laid on the runner out of the way and the remaining portion taken in both hands. This he splits in two and, holding a part in each hand,



3. A friend comes to help him and breaks up a ball of mud before putting it on the bare runner.

applies them to opposite sides of the runner. Using his fingers to mould the sides, his thumbs press and shape the top surface (2), and when finished, the other half of the original ball is used in the same way. Many trips to the mudhole are necessary before the sled is completed, and when several men are mudding together, the first one finished will often help his companion (3).

The job completed, the mud is left to freeze—often overnight—but if the Eskimo feels certain that the night will be cold and the mud is frozen before sundown, he will plane it before dark.

For planing a sled, a modern jack-plane is used, though in former times a block of wood with a piece



4. *When the mud has frozen, it is planed smooth . . .*

of steel inserted for a cutter served admirably for this purpose. The Eskimo holds the plane in both hands (4) as he planes along the top, then the edge, and lastly along the sides of the mud. As he moves from end to end of the runner, he every now and then stoops to make sure that he is planing it evenly.

Icing is the next operation; and for this water is taken from the ice-hole and either poured from a vessel or else taken into the mouth and squirted into a piece of bearskin. The bearskin is then rapidly swept over the surface of the mud, leaving behind it a thin film of water which freezes almost immediately (5).

Bearskin is used because it does not become wet. After icing, any excess water is removed immediately by beating the skin on the nose of the runner, thus ensuring that it will be ready for use when next required. The thickness of ice laid on the runners



5. *. . . then iced with a wet piece of polar bear skin.*

depends entirely upon the judgment of the Eskimo who is icing the sled and his knowledge of the type of country over which he is to travel, together with the likelihood of the ice rapidly wearing off in comparatively warm weather. Needless to say, gravelly or rocky ground will not only wear off the ice but often, when travelling through rocky ground or rough ice, knock large pieces of mud from the runners. Thus a sled may need to be iced many times a day, and it is seldom that it is not necessary to do it at least at midday (6).

6. *On the trail, a chip of frozen mud has been knocked off the left hand runner. When the traveller stops at mid-day, he builds a snow windbreak (on the left), lights his primus stove, and thaws some mud to fill the gap. Meanwhile, he applies a new coating of ice to the other runner.*



Photos 1-4 by the author,
5 and 6 by William Gibson.

The DISCOVERY of GOLD in B.C.

The finding of gold by Indians, on the Queen Charlotte Islands and the banks of the Thompson River, led up to the B.C. gold rushes.

by T. A. Rickard
Victoria

WHEN Captain James Cook landed at Nootka on Vancouver Island in 1778, he found the Indians in possession of iron knives, and spears pointed with copper. No mention is made of gold. Likewise Captain George Vancouver, who examined the coast in greater detail during the years 1792-1794, makes frequent mention of the iron and copper seen in the hands of the Indians and of their desire to obtain those useful metals; but they had no gold or silver, nor did they appear to set any value on the metals we deem precious. This is noteworthy, because usually savages that discover gold will use it, for the reason that it is shiny and soft, and therefore adapted to the fabrication of ornaments.

Until the fur-traders arrived, the Indians of British Columbia took no notice of the gold they could have gathered. Then they saw that the white man valued the gold, for he and his womenfolk wore it in the form of ear-rings, finger-rings, bracelets, and watch-chains. The Indians therefore inferred correctly that if they

Roderick Finlayson, who bought the first gold nuggets seen at Victoria for \$11 an ounce.
B.C. Archives



brought gold to the trader, he would be willing to barter his goods, such as blankets and tobacco, for the yellow metal. This led to a search for gold, and the consequent discoveries in British Columbia.

At the time of the Californian gold rush, in 1849, the island of Vancouver was a part of the Hudson's Bay Company's domain. In 1850 the island became a British colony. Furs, and not gold, were sought in trade with the Indians. Nevertheless the possibility of gold being found must have been present in the minds of the Hudson's Bay factors in consequence of a visit from some successful Californian diggers to the fort at Victoria in 1849.

Roderick Finlayson, who was chief trader for the Hudson's Bay Company at Victoria at the time, tells a good story about some Americans that offered gold in payment for goods. These Americans wore red shirts and were mistaken at first for pirates. When their ship anchored in the harbour, Finlayson rushed his people to the bastions of the fort, to make ready for defence.

"I then interviewed the men," he says, "from the gate, who told me they were peaceable traders, come from San Francisco, with gold, to trade for goods, as this was the only station on the northern coast where they could get the goods they wanted. Having satisfied myself that they were what they represented themselves to be, I let them in, and they then told me that gold had been discovered in California in large quantities the previous fall, and that they had gold nuggets which they would gladly exchange for goods. They produced several nuggets, the value of which I at first sight felt doubtful of, but brought one of the nuggets to the blacksmith's shop, and told him and his assistant to hammer it on the anvil, which they did, and flattened it out satisfactorily. I then referred to my book on minerals, and found that the specimens appeared to be genuine. I then offered them \$11 per ounce for their gold, which they accepted without a murmur, and having thus mentioned my price and received no objections, I felt doubtful, but concluded to accept it, and the trade went on."

The Californian gold was worth about \$16.50 per ounce; so the Hudson's Bay trader did well. In exchange, the Californians took "old pots of iron, sea boots, blankets, baize, etc.," says Finlayson. Thus he gathered numerous gold nuggets, but, still being doubtful of their value, he hastened to send a canoe with eight men to Puget Sound and thence overland to the headquarters of the Company at Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia River, for the purpose of ascertaining if he had been right in his trading. The answer, from Dr. John McLoughlin, was in the affirmative. Finlayson's action was commended, and more goods were sent to him for similar trade if the opportunity offered. Indeed, he adds that "several other vessels came from California to trade, for which considerable quantities of gold was received." This episode has been overlooked by historians.



The fight for gold at Mitchell Harbour, Queen Charlotte Islands.

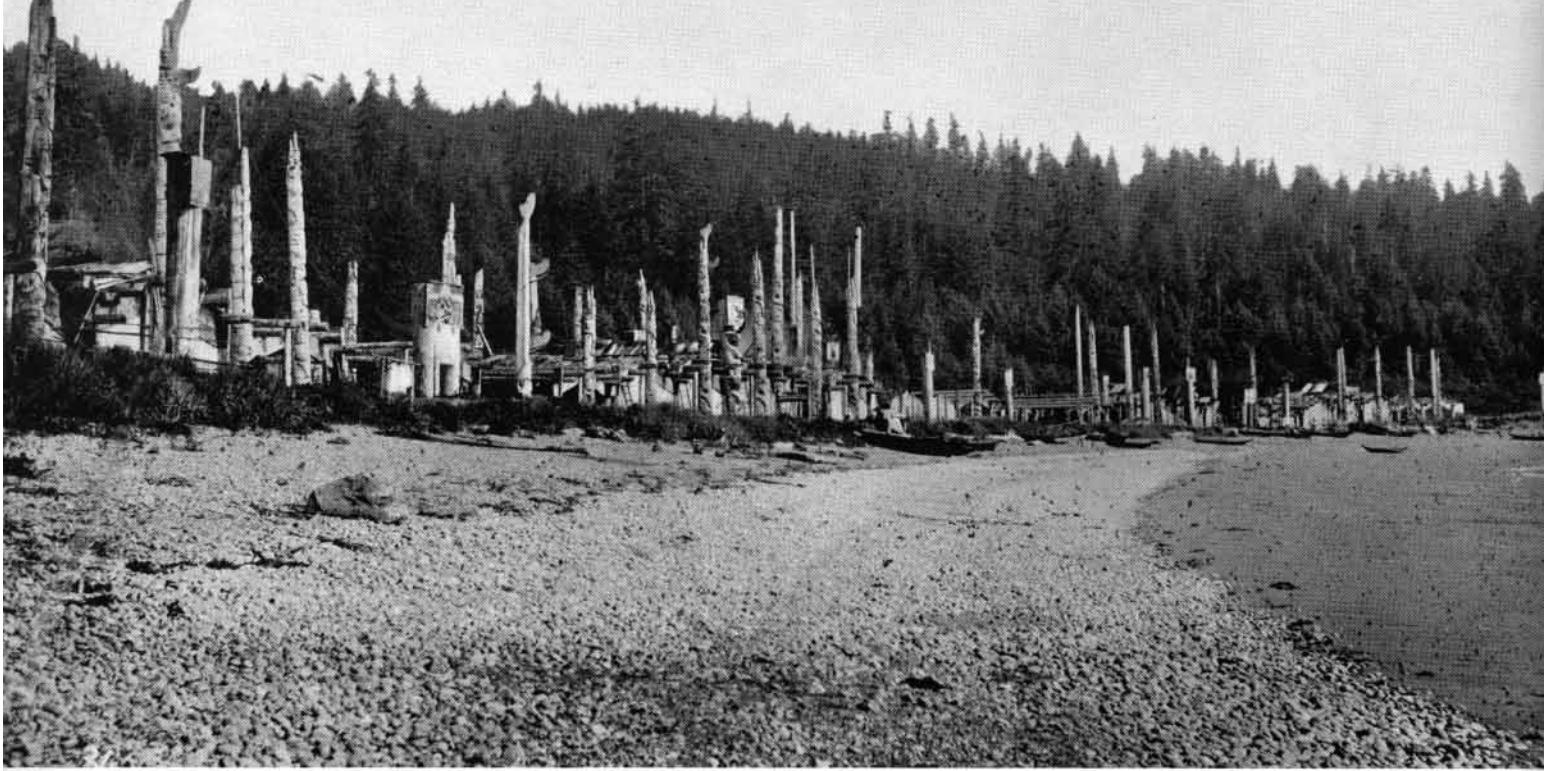
The earliest discovery in British Columbia that aroused public interest was made by an Indian on one of the Queen Charlotte Islands. Richard Blanshard, the first governor of the colony of Vancouver Island, reported to Earl Grey, the Colonial Secretary, in August of 1850, that he had seen "a very rich specimen of gold ore, said to have been brought by the Indians of Queen Charlotte's Island." In the following year, 1851, an Indian woman found a nugget on the beach of Moresby Island, one of the Queen Charlotte group. After a part of it had been cut off, it was taken to Fort Simpson, where it passed by trade into the hands of the Hudson's Bay factor at that place.

The nugget, as received, weighed about five ounces. Later it was sent to the headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Victoria. On March 29, 1851, Governor Blanshard informed Earl Grey: "I have heard that fresh specimens of gold have been obtained from the Queen Charlotte islanders; I have not seen them myself, but they are reported to be very rich." The Company sent the ship *Huron* to Mitchell Harbour, on Moresby Island, for the purpose of investigation. Some gold-quartz was brought back to Fort Victoria and this stimulated further interest in the discovery. During July, and again in October, 1851, the brigantine *Una* was sent thither by the Hudson's Bay Company and returned with information concerning a quartz vein that was seven inches wide and traceable for eighty feet. It was reported to contain "twenty-five per cent. of gold in some places," which indicates specimen stuff goodly to look upon.

Some of this gold-bearing quartz was blasted and then shipped, despite the interference of the Indians. The *Una* was lost on her second return voyage. Then the *Orbit*, an American ship, which was on the rocks off Esquimalt, was bought by the Company, repaired, and renamed the *Recovery*. She was sent north with

thirty miners in addition to her crew, these miners having agreed to share their luck. Three months were spent in getting a cargo of ore, which was taken to England and eventually yielded a sum of money that gave the miners \$30 per month for their labour.

The Indians objected to the intrusion of the miners and to their removal of the gold. Chief Trader W. H. McNeill, once captain of the *Beaver*, who accompanied the *Una* expedition, reported to Governor Douglas: "I am sorry to inform you that we were obliged to leave off blasting, and quit the place for Fort Simpson, on account of the annoyance we experienced from the natives. They arrived in large numbers, say 30 canoes, and were much pleased to see us on our first arrival. When they saw us blasting and turning out the gold in such large quantities, they became excited and commenced depredations on us, stealing the tools, and taking at least one-half of the gold that was thrown out by the blast. They would lie concealed until the report was heard, and then make a rush for the gold; a regular scramble between them and our men would then take place; they would take our men by the legs, and hold them away from the gold. Some blows were struck on these occasions. The Indians drew their knives on our men often. The men who were at work on the vein became completely tired and disgusted at these proceedings, and came to me on three different occasions and told me that they would not remain any longer to work the gold; that their time was lost to them, as the natives took one-half of the gold thrown out by the blast, and blood would be shed if they continued to work at the digging; that our force was not strong or large enough to work and fight also. They were aware they could not work on shore after hostility had commenced, therefore I made up my mind to leave the place, and proceed to this place [Fort Simpson]. The natives were very jealous of us



Haida village at Skidegate, Queen Charlotte Islands.

when they saw that we could obtain gold by blasting; they had no idea that so much could be found below the surface; they said that it was not good that we should take all the gold away; if we did so, that they would not have anything to trade with other vessels should any arrive. In fact, they told us to be off."

McNeill had with him only eleven men, a force quite insufficient to discipline the Indians; moreover, it was the settled policy of the Hudson's Bay Company not to antagonize the natives, with whom the factors traded for furs. Therefore any sort of lethal attack was avoided.

When the finding of gold on one of the Queen Charlotte islands was noised abroad, not only at Fort

William McNeill, captain of the *Una*. Previously he had commanded the *Llama* and the *Beaver*.
B. C. Archives



Victoria but also at San Francisco, several vessels sailed from that Californian port for Mitchell Harbour. But Chief Factor James Douglas, who had been appointed governor of Vancouver Island two years before, was ready for them. In September 1852, Sir John Pakington, the Colonial Secretary in London, had instructed Douglas "to take immediate steps for the protection of British interests against the depredations of the Indians, or the unwarranted intrusion of foreigners, on the territory of the Queen," and forthwith had issued a commission making Douglas lieutenant-governor of the Queen Charlotte Islands. Whereupon, in March of 1853, Douglas asserted the regalian right to any gold that might be obtained there. This action on his part proved deeply significant. The regalian right, or royal claim, to deposits of precious metal, is traditional; it is a kingly perquisite that comes from the days of the Roman emperors. Douglas followed this proclamation by fixing a miner's license fee of ten shillings a month, payable in advance, and to be obtained only at Fort Victoria; and Victoria thereby became the chief point of departure for the gold diggings.

The deposits at Mitchell Harbour, however, were quickly exhausted, and the Americans soon left, disappointed. Later the American ship *Susan Sturges* arrived and the captain collected some of the ore discarded by the *Una* expedition. This shipment was sold for \$1500 at San Francisco. A second voyage by the same American ship ended in disaster, for she was captured and the crew made prisoners by the Indians at Massett, on Graham Island, another of the Queen Charlotte group. The American gold-seekers were rescued by a party sent thither on the Hudson's Bay Company's steamer *Beaver*. Altogether about \$20,000 was taken from the little quartz vein at Mitchell Harbour. It was merely a pocket, and of no industrial importance, but it made the people at Victoria, and elsewhere along the coast, gold-conscious. Their interest in gold mining had been aroused.

In 1855 gold was found by "a servant of the Hudson's Bay Company" near Fort Colville, in the valley of the Columbia River, just south of the Canadian border. James Cooper, testifying in London before the parliamentary committee investigating the affairs of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1857, linked this discovery of gold at Fort Colville with the subsequent finding of it by white men on the Thompson River. George M. Dawson, the distinguished Canadian geologist, was of the same opinion. Writing in 1889, he says: "It seems certain that the epoch-making discovery of gold in British Columbia was the direct result of the Colville excitement. Indians from Thompson River, visiting a woman of their tribe who was married to a French-Canadian at Walla Walla, spread the report that gold, like that found at Colville, occurred also in their country, and in the summer or autumn of 1857, four or five Canadians and half-breeds crossed over [the border] to the Thompson, and succeeded in finding workable placers at Nicoamen, on that river, nine miles above its mouth [junction with the Fraser]. On the return of these prospectors the news of the discovery of gold spread rapidly."

Sir James Douglas, in his memorandum dated 1860, says that "gold was first found on Thompson's River by an Indian, a quarter of a mile below Nicoamen. He is since dead. The Indian was taking a drink out of the river. Having no vessel he was quaffing from the stream when he perceived a shining pebble which he picked up and it proved to be gold. The whole tribe forthwith began to collect the glittering metal." This probably was in 1857. The description creates an interesting picture: the swarthy savage leaning over the clear water of the stream, the yellow nugget lying on the grey gravel, the longing for a drink that was followed by the ageless hunger of mankind.

Roderick Finlayson, later chief factor at Fort Victoria, says that the Indians discovered gold in crevices of the rocks, on the banks of the Thompson. Donald McLean, the trader in charge at Kamloops, inspected the gold-bearing ground and then sent down to Victoria for some iron spoons to be used by the Indians for extricating the nuggets from the crevices in the rocky beds of the creeks. The spoons were sent, as requested, and McLean was instructed to encourage the natives in searching for gold and using it for trade.

In 1857 Governor Douglas reported to the Colonial Secretary in London: "The auriferous character of the country is daily becoming more developed, through the exertions of the native Indian tribes, who, having tasted the sweets of gold-finding, are devoting much of their time and attention to that pursuit." On April 6, 1858, Douglas referred to this phase of the subject once more: "The search for gold had, up to the last dates from the interior, been carried on almost exclusively by the native population, who had discovered the productive beds [river diggings], and put out almost all the gold, about eight hundred ounces, which has been hitherto exported from the country, and who are moreover extremely jealous of the whites, and strongly opposed to their digging for gold. In addition to the diggings before known on the Thompson's river and its tributary streams, a valuable deposit [placer] has been recently found by the natives on the bank of the Fraser's river about five miles beyond [north of] its confluence with the Thompson; and gold in small quantities has been found in possession of the natives as far as the great falls of Fraser's river about eighty miles above the Forks."

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The eight hundred ounces of gold to which Douglas refers was brought by them, in course of trade, to the Hudson's Bay factors, and dispatched on the S.S. *Otter* to San Francisco. When the news of the find was noised abroad, a band of American prospectors set out for the Fraser River, where they discovered rich gravel at Hill's Bar, about a mile below Yale. News of their success, together with a shipment of their gold dust, in time reached San Francisco. And that started the gold rush to the Fraser River.

In a subsequent article, Mr. Rickard will tell the story of the Fraser River rush itself.

Site of the first gold discovery on the B.C. mainland. Here on the Thompson River, an Indian caught sight of a shining pebble, which proved to be gold. *B.C. Archives.*

