

Department of the Interior,

OFFICE OF GEOGRAPHER,

Ottawa, FEB 20 1906

DEAR SIR,

I wish to obtain information respecting the derivation of the place-names of Canada—of the names of the villages, towns, cities and of the natural features, such as rivers, lakes, capes, bays, mountains, etc.—and shall be much obliged if you will give me any information that you may possess or can procure, respecting the below-mentioned name and also respecting the names of any other features in the vicinity of your residence concerning which you have knowledge.

In many localities, the older generation is passing, or has passed away, and unless steps are taken to collect this information, it will, in many instances, be too late. In most communities there are persons who take an interest in things of this nature or who have been connected with the early settlement of the locality. If there are any such in your neighbourhood, will you kindly submit this to them.

Below I have indicated the lines along which I desire information and also the commoner derivatives of place-names in Canada :—

(1.) Whether named after a village, town or city, or natural feature in any other province or country ; if so, the name of province or country in which the original locality is situated.

(2.) Whether named after a person ; if so, the person's name, occupation, spelling of name as rendered by the person and any details of interest respecting him (or her) such as (a) Whether alive or, if dead, approximate year of death ; (b) Whether at any time a resident of the locality and, if so, whether still living there.

(3.) Whether named after a natural feature ; if so, any details respecting the origin of the name as applied to the feature and the geographical position of the latter.

(4.) Whether the town, village or city ever had any other name or names ; if so, at what dates, approximately, and the origin of these obsolete names.

Any information bearing on the above will be deemed a courtesy.

Yours truly,

JAMES WHITE,
Geographer.

Kindly write your reply on the attached sheet.

To ensure free transmission of your reply I enclose herewith an addressed envelope which will come free of postage.

Nelson

Kootenay

B. C.

Replied

Nelson was named after the Hon Hugh Nelson, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia 1887-92 who died about the year 1896, and all Coriboo mines during the excitement of 1867. The Hon Hugh Nelson never lived in Nelson and never visited here, being very frail at the time Nelson was staked out as a Government Townsite by A S Forwell, Surveyor, and on instructions from Gilbert-Malcolm Sproat, then local Commissioner for Kootenay. Nelson was first called Buntoville after the man who first staked it out as a pre-emption, and who had to give it up, as a Government Reserve was placed upon it by Mr Sproat. It was then called Salisbury after Lord Salisbury but only for a month or so when Mr Sproat called it Stanley after Lord Stanley who was then Gov Gen of Canada (see Mr Sproat's notes attached). It was named Nelson in 1888 when the Town was platted. The first Mining Recorder in this District was Harry Anderson, a son of an old Hudson's Bay Factor from Victoria, who had a log cabin in what was called Bogustown next lot to Nelson, but what is now called Fairview. The first Mining Recorder & Provincial Constable in Nelson proper was Terrance H Siffin, who died in Brockville ont some six years ago. Gilbert-Malcolm Sproat was first local Commissioner

over

The first paper published in Nelson was the Nelson Miner, started in 1890 by Houston Ink & Allen. John Houston is now the member for Nelson in the Provincial Legislature. These three men came in by Bonners ferry, Idaho, and had to walk on the ice from Gorbuchanau's old Saw-mill sixteen miles from Nelson, lost in the Outlet of Kootenay Lake. The first Doctor in this country was Dr LaBau (La Bau) who still resides in Nelson, Dr LaBau came in also by Bonners ferry Idaho in 1887 building a boat for himself & partners at Bonner's ferry. The striking of the Silver King mine by the Hall's in 1886 was the first strike of Nelson although there was no one living here at that time but only used as a landing place for boats and it also being the end of navigation as the Rapids of the Kootenay River commences a mile below Nelson. The first trail into Nelson from the Columbia River was built by the Government in 1888. This was only a pack trail leaving the Columbia River at Stevensons Store crossing the Kootenay River 12 miles up at Ward's crossing, going up 49 Creek to the Silver King mine, then down to Nelson. The elevation of the Silver King mine from Nelson is over 5,000 ft. So you may imagine what kind of a trail it was from 49 Creek up & down. In 1889 the Government extended the trail from 49 Creek along the Kootenay River to Nelson, a distance of nine miles so that travelling was made much easier. The first Store was started in 1888 by R. E. Lemon & J. Fred Hume. Mr Hume was afterwards Minister of Mines in the Provincial Government.

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The townsite was selected, for the government, in
by Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, Stipendiary Magistrate and
Gold Commissioner for the district, whose headquarters, then,
were at Farwell, (now Revelstoke). There being no
appropriate, old name for the locality, his first intention
was to give it the name of the Governor General
"Stanley", but, finding that, already, a little post
office village of that name existed in the Cariboo
district, that of the Lieutenant Governor of the province
Hugh "Nelson" - was recommended and adopted.

Mr. Sproat states the circumstances of the
selection of the site, as follows.

"Having, with Mr. A. S.
Farwell, C.E., explored, for the information of the government,
the whole Kootenay district - East and West - entering
by Bonner's Ferry, and leaving by Eagle Pass, in 1883,
I was, necessarily, acquainted with its surface, and
had to give special attention to waterways and possible
future lines of communication. The present site of Nelson
was visited, and its situation noted, as the head of a waterway
into the United States, and the end of a possible railway-valley
also leading thither. The rough valley of the Kootenay river,
broken by rapids, in another direction, namely, to the west,
however, was the only natural line of communication, between
the locality and the Columbia river, running through other
parts of the ~~district~~ province. A few prospectors spoke of

mining possibilities, and 49 creek, nearby, had been mined formerly, but, except at the old "Blue Bell" on Kootenay Lake, where tentative mining was in progress, little was known of the country as a mining section. That was the situation when the Toad Mountain discoveries of mineral, in 1886 and later, became known to me, and had attracted miners, chiefly from the South, who formed the usual encampment, chiefly of tents, temporarily, on part of the ground, now occupied by the town. This caused the appointment of a mining recorder, a notification by me that squatters could not acquire rights, and that government Reserves were established at the present townsite, also, on the Columbia near the mouth of the Kootenay, and, lower down, at Foot Shepherd. These arrangements were made, pending developments. Some thought it possible that mining along the Columbia river might be as good as around Kootenay Lake, and that, as the latter was difficult to reach from the west, the provincial business interests might be best served - at any rate until a railway from the Columbia to the Lake was made - by the commercial and administrative centre being on the Columbia river. This question, ultimately, I determined in favour of the Nelson locality, feeling assured that, if the mining progressed, a railway would be made from the Columbia to the Lake, and, that, meanwhile, with a trail, made by the government to connect these points, the energy of the Revelstoke traders would enable them to secure most of the business. A further element in this decision was, that prospecting along the Columbia river had been comparatively unsuccessful. Accordingly in 1888, part of the reserve at Nelson was

laid off as town lots and sold by public auction. They were all sold at fair prices, many of the purchasers being from Revelstoke and Northern Kootenay. Additional parts of the townsite were, afterwards platted and sold, and the subsequent progress of mining, and the construction of railways, assured the success of the town as a distributing centre for the southern district. It is now the third city in the province, in commercial importance."

Govt District Office
 Smelter

COR +c

Dashes

Fruit Section

jc

jc

Bevelstoke Hotel 22 Oct 1905

Dear Mr Gibson

I am very pleased to hear from you, for the sake of "Auld Lang Syne", but I have none of my papers, as to Nelson, here. I have, somewhere, in Victoria, my diaries of the early days of Nelson — and copy of the advertisement of the first sale of lots, or, or — I don't quite know, (and, probably, you do not know) — the particular information wanted by the Department of the Interior — perhaps only a few facts and figures of the gazetted kind. However, though without special reference to papers 'I don't' take to give Dates, I enclose a statement of the general reasons which influenced me in selecting Nelson. The date of the first sale of lots you probably can find, locally. ^{John} Kirkup was the auctioneer. You can use my statement, or part of it, for a "starter" and easily describe the progress of the town since.

I think Mr Gosnell's Year Book 1903 gives information as to Banks, Public Companies &c. — Nelson. Volume of trade, progress, your Custom House can give you, and you can pile on the fruit possibilities. If you find too much, the Dept. can cut it down; better give it too much than too little, and to your credit, and you can give us a reason

Did not know Billy Kirkup & I lay off the first lots with step and rope and then was it Mr Farwell who the next year went over our work. I forget.

for delay, that you could not find me sooner
as the only person really acquainted with the
"innards" of early history. The Govt knew
little of Kootenay ^{then} and left me alone to do
what seemed best.

One thing comes on top of another
here, preventing my getting away, or knowing
if I can get away at all - nothing of
great importance, still, that must be
attended to.

Funnily, with your letter as to
old times, came over from Capt. Walbran of Marine
& Fisheries asking ^{me} to settle a question or two as to
occurrences on West Coast Vancouver Id^l in 1857
and 1860. I happened to know all about them
and had them in memory; he is preparing some kind
of Report or Book.

I think, some generations back -
our folks and the Kirkcubright Sprots were connected (in fact
that might apply to all Scots) - they became large Liverpool
shippers and bought land. With best wishes. Home
to all old friends.

Yours respec^t
Gall Sproat

J. A. Fisher & Nelson