

Miners

Mrs. Ellis—the wife of Tom Ellis, one of the area's cattle barons—who was known for her nursing skills. Little could be done and Father Charles Pandosy died on February 6, 1891. He was returned to his Mission on the steamer *Penticton* and buried across the road from his church.

While the Okanagan Mission benefitted from the presence of many priests during its forty-two-year existence, none have been identified as strongly with the place and its history as Father Pandosy. Most of those who served were devout and passionate men who felt they were called by their God to go forth to save, educate and minister to the New World's indigenous peoples. They were true pioneers who suffered privations beyond our present-day comprehension: they were frequently close to starvation, often isolated and lonely, and knew few creature comforts. Clothing, blankets and seeds were hard to come by, and most went barefoot and bare-headed in the summer and used pelts and hides to survive the winters. They worked constantly, walking to their destinations, which were often over the next mountain range or two. Though their physical and mental well-being concerned their superiors, most priests were on their own to make the best of whatever was available. Their abiding faith carried them when little else was available.

The Mission and the community around it continued to flourish after Pandosy's death. The farm grew to about 2,450 acres, and the Mission became the Catholic Church's headquarters for the area from the international border in the south to Fort Kamloops in the north, the Similkameen Valley in the east to the Nicola Valley and Merritt in the west. When the Canadian Pacific Railway completed its transcontinental line in 1885, however, Kamloops became the nearest rail connection. The Oblates moved their headquarters to the St. Louis Mission in Kamloops in 1895. The Okanagan Mission and all related properties were sold to Father Eumelin and other members of his family in 1896. Though Eumelin was not an Oblate, he continued to run the Mission as its priest until 1902, when the original Mission of the Immaculate Conception was officially closed. The land was purchased by the Kelowna Land and Orchard Company in 1906, then subdivided and sold as prime orchard sites.

GOLD EVERYWHERE -

Miners

The Hudson's Bay Company had been buying gold from the Okanagans for many years, though David Douglas was the first to record its discovery in 1833. Douglas, a Scottish botanist, was collecting specimens for the Royal Horticultural Society while travelling through the area with one

of the company's fur brigades. The Hudson's Bay Company was in the fur business and wasn't interested in having its lucrative trade disrupted by an influx of unruly miners: it kept Douglas's discoveries to itself for many years.

Gold was discovered in California in 1848. Over the next seven years the hopeful, the delusional, the skilled and the ill-equipped converged from all over the world to pan the rivers, creeks and gullies for the magical metal. As it became harder to find and mining became more technical and more costly, word of gold discoveries in British Columbia drifted south and enticed miners to leave for the British territory. First there was gold in the creeks near Kamloops, then Bear Creek on the west side of Okanagan Lake, and then Mission Creek, Rock Creek and the Fraser River. By 1858, amid turmoil and lawlessness, over thirty thousand miners had moved into British territory—and they fought with the Natives and each other to stake their claims.

The chaos also brought opportunity as the newcomers needed to be fed and supplied. An uneasy truce was negotiated that same year with various Washington tribes, which allowed the Palmer and Miller wagon train to leave Oregon and make its way through the Okanagan Valley to the Cariboo goldfields. Miller, an adventurer, and Palmer, an experienced wagon captain and treaty negotiator, were accompanied by two hundred miners who were fearful the truce wouldn't hold and wanted the security of travelling in a convoy. Ox teams pulled nine wagons loaded with food, equipment and clothing to sell to miners. Once through the Washington Territory, they picked up the Okanagan Fur Brigade Trail and headed north. One wagon loaded with sugar overturned crossing the Columbia River, and another was lost farther along the trail, but the remaining seven crossed the international boundary and continued along the old brigade trail to Deep Creek, near present-day Peachland, on the west side of Okanagan Lake.

Stalled by the rough shoreline and the ravines that ran down to the lake, the group had to find another way to continue northward. Undaunted, they felled trees and lashed them together into rafts—some reports say fifty logs were needed for each one. The wagons were dismantled and loaded onto the rafts, piece by piece, along with all the goods they were carrying, and paddled across the lake to the flat eastern shore. After they landed the wagons were reassembled and reloaded, and then everyone waited for the cattle and horses that had backtracked to the south end of

Okanagan Lake to be rerouted down the eastern shore. Once they were all back together, the wagon train continued on to Fort Kamloops.

This was challenging travel. Each wagon carried about three thousand pounds of provisions and merchandise for sale to miners, and when the terrain became too rough, the wagons were once again disassembled and the goods transferred onto the horses and oxen. As the countryside flattened out, the wagons were again reassembled and reloaded and the journey continued. When the group finally arrived in Kamloops, the wagon masters heard the terrain to the north was even more challenging and it made little sense to continue on. The Cariboo was still a long way off, but Palmer and Miller and the other wagoners found a needy and hungry market at the fort and were able to sell everything for a great profit, including their oxen, which were soon seen roasting over open fires. Normally sustained by the wild meat they shot or trapped along the trail, the hungry miners were overwhelmed by the prospect of so much tame meat: they devoured the animals without giving much thought to what other uses the beasts might have been put to. So great was the impression created by this first wagon train that tales of its size and its troubles were told and retold in Native villages for many years.

Cattlemen from Washington and Oregon used the Okanagan as a supply route to the Fraser River and the Cariboo goldfields for a few more years, but settlement didn't come quickly to the Okanagan, as the valley was still isolated and access was difficult. However, the new colonial government in Victoria was becoming increasingly alarmed by the number of Americans crossing the international boundary and making their way into the southern and eastern parts of the province. Gold was being discovered, mines were being built and the new government needed the revenue and soon established its own tax collectors in the area. The Fraser River sternwheelers carried government agents, settlers and supplies as far inland as Hope, but only a narrow foot trail continued on to the Southern Interior.

By 1860, Edgar Dewdney, a British engineer, was commissioned to build a wagon road from Hope through to the goldfields in the Kootenays. The existing footpath was converted into a four-foot-wide trail, wide enough for a pack train, and cut through to Vermillion Forks (Princeton). Then the contract ended and nothing happened for four years. Finally, Dewdney was commissioned to pick up where he had left off and continue the trail along the Similkameen River to Keremeos, and over what would become Richter Pass, to Osoyoos. The trail, soon known as the Dewdney

Trail, continued on for another three hundred miles and eventually reached Fernie and the coal fields awaiting the arrival of the Canadian Pacific's transcontinental trains.

The Dewdney Trail, or Hope Trail, also provided access from the Lower Mainland to the Mission Valley. Pack trains carried the ordinary and the extraordinary, settlers rode and walked, and Father Pandosy travelled back and forth many times as the Okanagan's first pianos and billiard tables were hauled over the pack trail. Riders on horseback strapped mail pouches to their saddles, prospectors followed the latest rumours of gold discoveries and cattle barons drove their herds from the Interior over the trail to the port of New Westminster. The famous also used the trail: American General William Tecumseh Sherman travelled from Osoyoos to Hope in 1883 with a military escort of sixty men, and Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria travelled over the trail to the Similkameen in search of bighorn sheep before his 1914 assassination, the event that triggered World War I. The remarkable engineering of the Dewdney Trail established the first route into the Okanagan from the Lower Mainland of BC.

FEEDING THE INFLUX

There were more cattle in Oregon than buyers and Palmer and Miller's expedition encouraged ranchers to look north to sell their stock. Soon a succession of cattle drives followed the old brigade trail through the Okanagan and continued on to the Cariboo goldfields. Attempting to collect all the revenue due them, the colonial government levied taxes of a dollar a head at Kamloops, or drovers could pay a one-time fee to cover them for a six-month period. Yet the government was aware there were too few cattle in the British territory to feed the miners. Not wanting to deal with a food shortage, government representatives were known to turn a blind eye to those who slipped past the forts. It wasn't long before cattle began overwintering on the abundant bunch grass ranges along the Thompson River, near the fort at Kamloops, waiting to be driven to the Cariboo when the trail re-opened in the spring.

Old Hudson's Bay men and drovers who knew the land began pre-empting the ranges along the Thompson River in the early 1860s, and settling in the area. About the same time, the Vernon brothers arrived from Ireland in search of gold, and a man named Cornelius O'Keefe decided he could make more money raising cattle instead of driving them from Oregon. All pre-empted large acreages in the North Okanagan. As