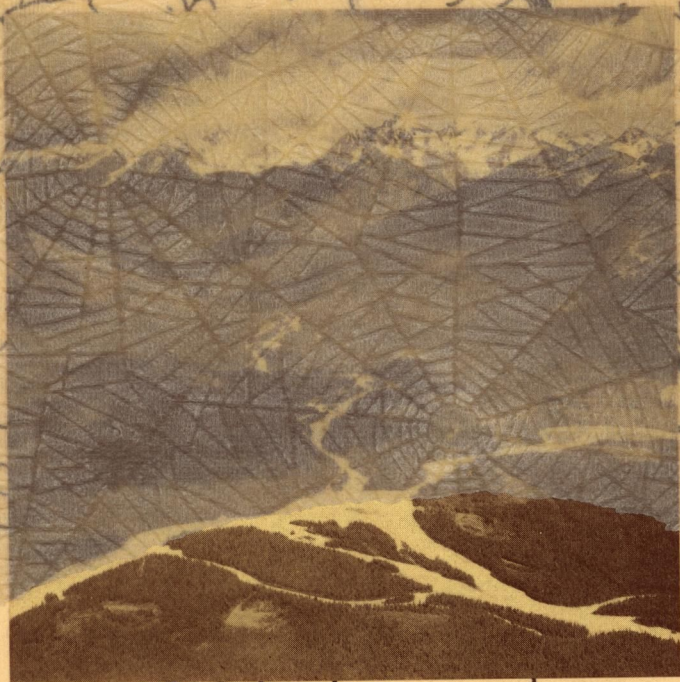




British Columbia presents

*the
Big Bend
Highway*



Revelstoke

Golden

My road calls me, lures me,
West, east, south, and north.
Most roads lead men homewards;
My road leads me forth.
To add more miles to the tally
Of grey miles left behind,
In quest of that one beauty
God put me here to find.

—Masfield.



"Frenchman's Cap," on the Big Bend Highway.



TO-DAY, by the rendezvous from the earliest days of the Fur Brigades, we set the seal upon another splendid accomplishment. In the service of our people we have bridged broad rivers and flowing tides. Now, with the opening of this grandly scenic section of the Trans-Canada Highway, we remove another stubborn barrier to uninterrupted travel and make another notable contribution to the cause of progress and human intercourse.

T. D. PATTULLO,
Prime Minister,
British Columbia.



COMMENCED more than a decade ago, the Big Bend Road will this year link the western sections of a Trans-Canada Highway and make readily accessible an area rich in tourist-attracting resources. Canadians and visitors to Canada are invited to travel over the road and spend whatever time is at their disposal in the mountainous areas which it serves. All are asked to exercise that care which is necessary if future generations are to have an equal opportunity of sharing in this unspoiled goodly heritage.

T. A. CRERAR,
Minister of Mines and Resources,
Dominion of Canada.



IT IS with pride and pleasure that I witness the consummation of the splendid efforts of my predecessors to close this all-important link in the Trans-Canada Highway. With to-day's ceremony we finish a keenly interesting chapter in the history of highway-construction. From to-day the story will be of an ever-swelling tide of travel, expansion, and development in the great area thrown open by this new Highway.

C. S. LEARY,
Minister of Public Works,
Province of British Columbia.



The Big Bend.

Golden, B.C.

THE BIG BEND . . . from the earliest days of the Fur Brigades, a name to be spoken with bated breath, an adventure even to those hardy voyageurs inured to every risk and hazard. Every mile was fraught with danger, grim with threat. Even the boldest launched upon its appalling chutes and rapids with anxious eyes and fearful hearts.

David Thompson, the great geographer of Western Canada, saw it first in 1807, when he scouted what was then an unknown wilderness in the interests of the North West Company. After him came the whole colourful crew of voyageurs and coureurs de bois, to make Boat Encampment their rendezvous and the Big Bend their thoroughfare to the Fur Depots of the Oregon Territory. Riding down in fifteen days, they beat their way back in six weeks of blood and sweat and unrelenting toil.

Its aspect in those days can be judged from the words of Alexander Ross, one of the original Astoria Party, from his log of a hundred and twenty years ago: "Picture in the mind a dark defile, skirted on one side by a chain of inaccessible mountains rising to a great height, and on the other by a beach, comparatively low but studded with standing and fallen trees and full of driftwood, over which the torrent everywhere rushes with such irresistible impetuosity that very few would dare to adventure themselves in the stream."

For years this whole Northwest remained to all intents the vast preserve of the Fur Companies, until in 1858 the finding of gold brought the miners flocking in thousands, in prairie schooners and around the Horn in tall square-riggers, from California and even from far-off Australia, to pan the gravels of the Fraser. With them came the road-builders, to give us the great Cariboo Road. Camps became robust towns, farmers began to clear and cultivate, vast herds of cattle were driven from the south, and the brooding solitudes withdrew before the hardy vanguard of civilization.

Slowly the system grew, as other roads were projected from the parent stem. Gradually the wilderness of a few years before took on the aspect of a settled and established land, as a new industrial empire was born.

In the early days construction was beset with difficulties. The rough terrain made it impossible to go marching on, up hill and down dale, in an undeviating line like the military



Kinbasket Lake.



Sullivan River Bridge.

PROGRAMME of OPENING CEREMONIES

11 A.M., JUNE 29th, 1940.

Selections—Revelstoke Band, E. R. Orr, Bandmaster.

“O CANADA.”

Introductory Address
by

The Honourable C. S. Leary,
Minister of Public Works,
British Columbia.

Road Dedicated to Public Use and
Officially Opened

by

The Honourable T. D. Pattullo, K.C., LL.D.,
Prime Minister, British Columbia.

Remarks by Members of the Legislature, Municipal and
Highway Officials, and representatives of United
States and Canadian Automobile Clubs.

“GOD SAVE THE KING.”

Light Lunch served by courtesy of Federal Department
of Mines and Resources.

Selections by Band.

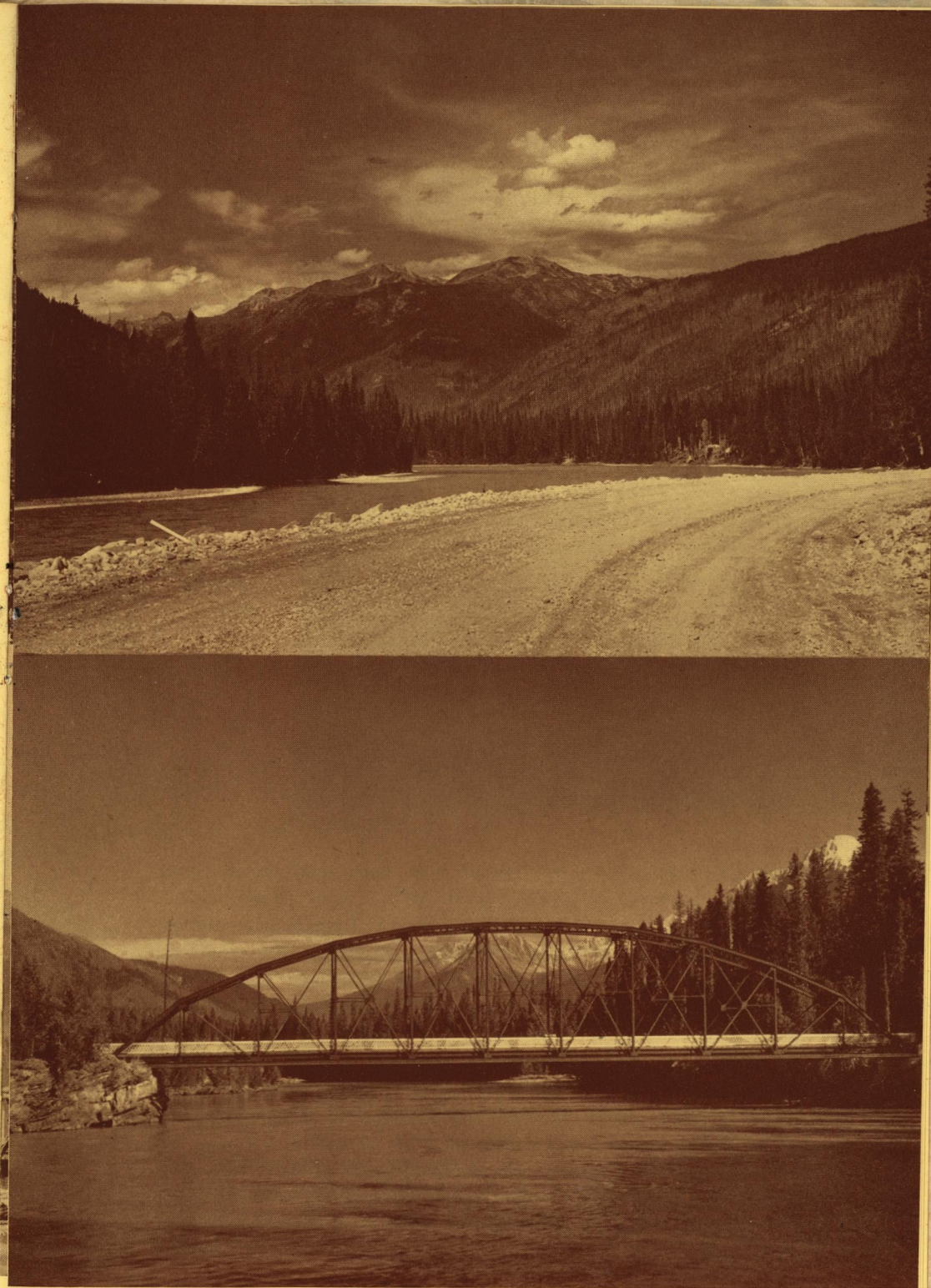
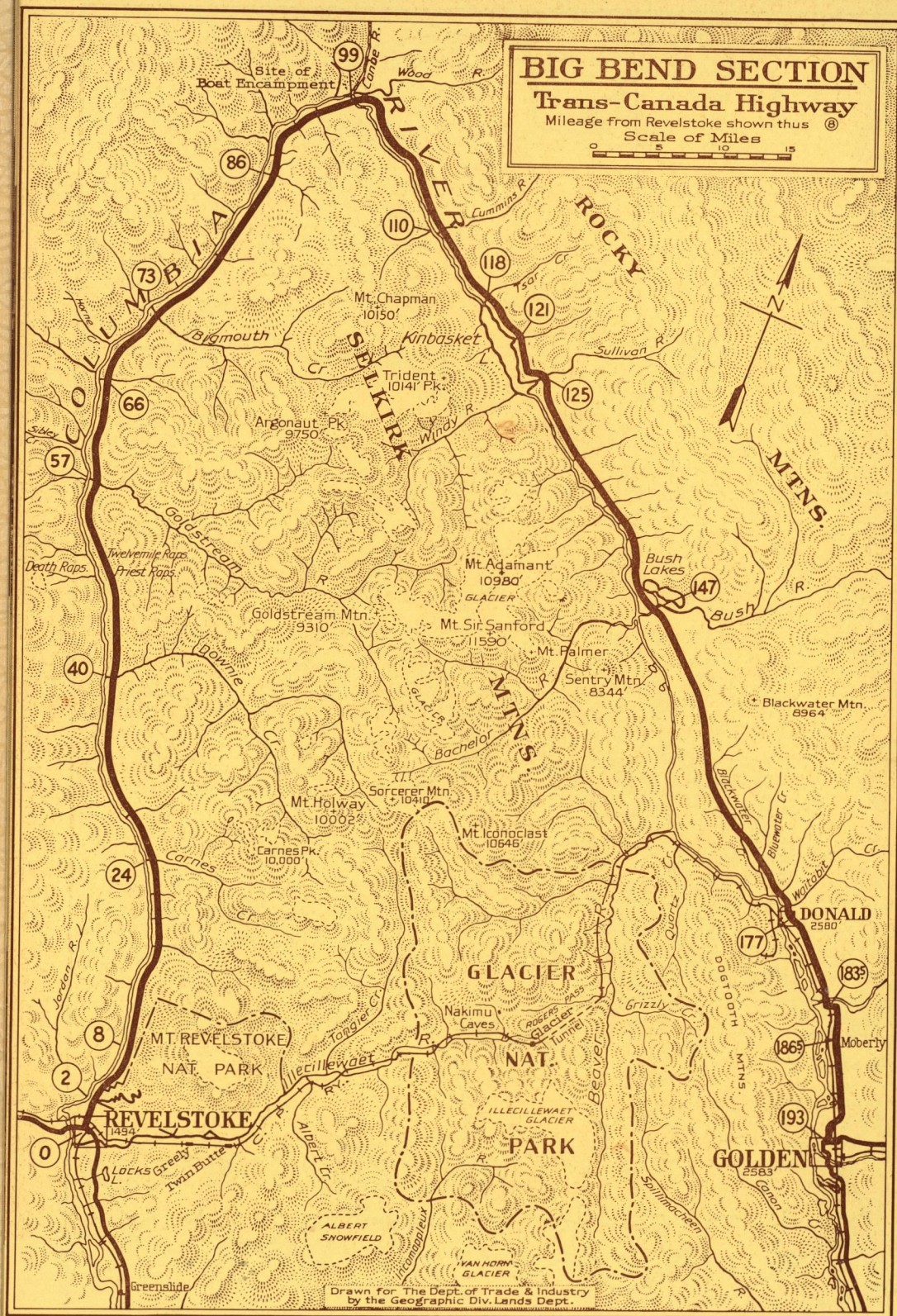
Through the courtesy of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Special Events
Department, Official Opening Ceremonies will be broadcast from
Revelstoke and Vancouver.



Key to
British Columbia Highway System.

Number.	Route	Colour.
1 & 1A.	Trans-Canada and Island Highways.	Red.
2.	Cariboo Road	Orange.
3.	Southern Trans-Provincial Highway	Green.
4.	Kootenay-Columbia Highway	Blue.
5.	Okanagan Highway	Silver.
6.	Nelson-Nelway Highway	White.
7.	Lougheed Highway	Brown.
16.	Northern Trans-Provincial Highway	White.
99.	King George VI. Highway	Royal Blue.

BRITISH COLUMBIA



On the Big Bend Highway.

Boat Encampment Bridge.



On the
Big Bend
Highway.

roads of ancient Rome, or—to use a modern parallel—like the highways on the Prairies, and until fairly recently many places were inaccessible to vehicular traffic. Picturesque stern-wheelers plied upon the larger lakes and breasted the racing currents of the rivers, and mining camps which to-day are thriving cities were reached on foot. Travel by stage was tedious and costly and commodities hauled laboriously over ungraded wagon-roads had to be sold at prices almost prohibitive. When the vast extent of the Province is borne in mind, and the scanty population of those days, the magnitude of the problem will be realized.

In the years immediately following its union with the Dominion, the Province—which until then was a Crown Colony—embarked upon a comparatively extensive scheme of high-



Goldstream
Bridge.

way-construction, and during the period from 1871 to 1880 as much as 44 per cent. of its total revenue was spent on roads to link up the scattered communities. Methods were crude, and more thought was given to the needs of the moment than to systematic development, but despite the difficulties of connection and settlement, in 1900 British Columbia had 5,600 miles of wagon-roads to form the nucleus of the present network of 20,000 miles of fine highways.

In the early 'eighties the railroad thrust itself through the mountains, descended the Kicking Horse, followed the Columbia briefly, and went down the Illecillewaet, leaving the Big Bend still the forbidding barrier of old, frequented only by the "white-water men." The railroad found a way, but at a cost which would have made a highway a fantastic dream. For



Silver Tip
Falls.

mile after weary mile, the road-bed was driven through solid rock, miles of tunnels were built where the mighty buttresses of the Selkirks barred its course. Rivers were forced into new channels and held there by great retaining-walls, and often the grade leapt across the deep ravines on long trestles standing with their feet in the frothing waters. The building of the railroad from Golden to Revelstoke was a Homeric struggle unsurpassed in the annals of railroad-construction, a thrilling drama to the driving of the last spike on the morning of November 7th, 1885.

Still for years the Big Bend remained inviolate. The highway system grew apace with the demands of Industry and Settlement. Travel for travel's sake was still no factor, and the system served well for the travel of those days. The



Revelstoke
from Mount
Revelstoke.

development of low-cost transportation changed the picture entirely, effected a complete metamorphosis of human life and habits. Those stubborn barriers to uninterrupted travel could no longer be tolerated, and a highway around the Big Bend became an urgent necessity.

As we see it to-day, it is the culmination of ten years of plotting and planning, of blasting, grading, and bridging. The joint effort of the Dominion and Provincial Governments, it stands as a triumph of courage and patient skill, the work of the men who took up the challenge of the Big Bend.

The completion of this section of the Trans-Canada Highway is an event no less significant than the driving of the last spike at Craigellachie; it closes the last link in the chain of highway travel from the Pacific Ocean to the Great Lakes, and

brings almost to fruition the dream of a Canadian Highway from sea to sea.

It throws open a veritable scenic wonderland. For almost its entire length it follows the Columbia closely; rarely, and never for long, is one out of sight and sound of it. Everywhere the prospect is filled with great vistas of splendid peaks, immaculate against the blue, their lofty saddles green with glaciers, their sides furrowed with little watercourses, each one adding its quota to the mighty river which fills the valley with its presence and its power.

From its source in Columbia Lake, in the western foot-hills of the Rockies, the great Columbia River flows northwards for 190 miles through the wide trench of the Columbia Valley to the Big Bend, where it wheels around the butt of the Selkirks and continues for 270 miles to the International Boundary. That is to say, for no less than 460 miles of its length the Columbia River flows through the Province of British Columbia.

From Columbia Lake it winds, no more than a shallow brook, to Windermere Lake, where it begins to gather volume and become an important stream.

Still cradled high up in the foot-hills, and swelled by the waters of the Spillimacheen and the innumerable creeks which tumble down the rugged slopes, it holds its course in long smooth reaches, through a valley backed by towering peaks, to the City of Golden. This is a typical Western mining and lumbering town, a pleasant little city superbly situated where the Columbia is joined by the Kicking Horse, and is, really, the eastern portal to the Big Bend.

From Golden the river flows on to Beavermouth, soon thereafter to plunge into the white smother of Surprise Rapids, where it falls nearly 100 feet in 3 miles, and presently, by another odd quirk of this surprising river, into the peaceful calm of Kinbasket Lake. This is little more than a wider reach of the Columbia, with a very definite current where the river gathers itself for the long series of rapids known as "Twenty-one Mile." Here for that distance the Columbia leaps from ledge to ledge, one rapid boiling into the next almost without intermission, through scenery superlatively grand, cliff facing cliff across the mad turmoil of the river.

From the ringing gorges of "Twenty-one Mile" the Columbia swings majestically into the Big Bend, where it changes its

direction from north to south with a suddenness most unusual in rivers of that volume. Here it is joined by Wood River and from the north by Canoe River (so named by the old river-men, who found its peculiar birch-bark excellent for canoe-building); the former a milky stream, the latter dark with soil from the upper country, which pour into the Columbia at the point known as Boat Encampment.

This whole section is intensely interesting. On this tiny alluvial flat, formed by the silts and gravels of three mountain ranges, voyageurs from the earliest times were accustomed to rendezvous. From east to west the colourful traffic of those days met at Boat Encampment, hauled out its boats, lit its camp-fires, and relaxed for a while from the rigours of trail and waterway. Its name appears regularly in all the chronicles of the period, and its ground was made sacred by the graves of those for whom Boat Encampment was trail's end.

Here too, in 1865, occurred one of the most spectacular incidents in British Columbia's development, when miners flocked to the sand-bars of the Big Bend. Elsewhere in the Province the surface wealth had for the time been exhausted, and men were being forced to search deeply for the hidden lodes and ancient channels; but in the Big Bend the gold lay openly in the river-bed. Travel was easy from the Cariboo Road to Cache Creek, and a wagon-road was built that summer to Savona. From there steamers plied to the head of Shuswap Lake, where a trail led to the new "strike." Another and much longer route was from Portland.

In 1866 the boom collapsed. The promise of the richer bars was not sustained and the golden dreams were shattered. The headlong rush was checked, became a straggling retreat, and the Big Bend sagged and broke. To this day (it is said) the long-abandoned trail from the head of Shuswap Lake is littered with the debris of the Big Bend excitement.

Swollen now by the waters of the Canoe River, the Columbia surges around the Big Bend to pour itself through the narrow gut known as the Rock Slide into the terrifying Dalles de Mort, soon to be followed by Priest Rapids (where two French-Canadian priests were drowned attempting the river), believed to be the fastest stretch of all. Luckily it is straight, and the river swirls through it at a full 20 miles per hour.

Below Priest Rapids is Downie Creek—the real centre, by the way, of the Big Bend gold-rush—and from there to Revelstoke the Columbia, one might say, behaves itself, unless for the risky canyon immediately above the city. Below Revelstoke it widens into the lovely Arrow Lakes, and then gathering to itself the waters of still another great river—the Kootenay—flows on over the Boundary to sweep across the North-western States to its rendezvous with the millions whom it serves.

At Revelstoke, the Columbia is joined by the Illecillewaet. Revelstoke is a thriving city, a prominent "railroad town," in a magnificently scenic setting. A remarkable feature, and one which the visitor on no account should miss, is the 20-mile drive which spirals to the summit of Mount Revelstoke. From there the panorama is indescribably grand, and the view of the city and of the glacier-fed Illecillewaet is positively breathtaking. Revelstoke is the western portal, as Golden is the eastern, to the Big Bend.

Here only the highway is new. The Selkirks, the Gold Range, and the Rocky Mountains are incalculably old. The river chafes in the rocky bed where it has chafed through all the ages. Could David Thompson launch again from Boat Encampment, he would thread the same fearful channels, would steer by the same old landmarks. A country lost in dreams, silent where once it echoed to the chants of the voyageurs, to the ringing picks and shovels of the miners of Downie Creek. A country of languorous days and keen, clear nights, when the velvet sky pulses with the streamers of the Northern Lights.

VICTORIA, B.C.:

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1940.

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