

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF CHARLES STEVENSON.--

*Charles Stevenson
Miners' Flats
Fort Edmonton
Donald Ross*

Known in the Early Days of the West as "ENGLISH CHARLIE"

During the early years of 1900 I became acquainted with English Charlie who was at that time living with a Scotch half-breed by the name of Anderson whose home, at that time, was about where Capital Hill is located. English Charlie used to come in to town quite often and would occasionally come into my office which was a small frame building located where the Sanderson Block is now standing, almost opposite 99th Street which was known then as Queens Avenue. Charlie used to like to talk about the early days in the south-western United States and western Canada, briefly his story was as follows:

He was a news-boy in London, being of roving nature he got on board a ship bound for America--got over as a stowaway. After arriving at New York, he continued as a news-boy on the streets of New York. The Gold Rush of 1849 became news in New York and Charlie finally arrived in the Sacramento Valley and washed gold there until the placer gold was cleaned out. He stated, that they would wash along the Sacramento River until they filled a large sized baking-powder tin with nuggets. The value of the gold contained in the tin would vary according to the size of the tin, from four to eight thousand dollars in money. I asked him, "How long would that last you, Charlie? "Oh", he replied, "about four weeks". "Well, how would you spend that amount of money in that short time?" He put his hand up to his mouth, held his head back, opening his mouth replied, "that, and other things".

Hearing of gold being found in abundance in British Columbia,

he and his partner headed for the Canadian West. About 1859 they arrived in the Caribou District and washed for sometime there, later on, drifted to a little place known as Vancouver. He and his partner wandering around finally located a small island not far out from the main-land. They remained on the island for sometime, growing potatoes chiefly and raising some pigs, selling the produce in Vancouver. After having a somewhat protracted good time in Vancouver they started for the wharf to return to their island, in some manner, his partner fell off the wharf into the water, Charlie made his best efforts to find his partner, but was unable to do so, feeling sure he was drowned, Charlie pulled out for his island.

After remaining on the island some considerable time, he found it so lonely that he decided to relinquish possession of the island. Coming to the main-land, much to his surprise, he met his partner whom he thought was dead and who also thought Charlie was dead. Hearing of gold being discovered on the Saskatchewan River, the two of them decided to journey through the mountains to the Saskatchewan River. Coming through the Okanagan Valley, Charlie thought it was such a beautiful spot that he would squat and spend most of his life there. His partner did not want to remain with Charlie so wandered on. Sometime later a party of horsemen appeared in the valley remained for some short time and camped there. This would be 1876 and was undoubtedly the Lord Dufferin Party. One of the men was so attracted by this piece of property which Charlie had located, he finally induced Charlie to sell. This piece of property

was improved, later on it became the Dufferin Ranch.

Charlie started on his wanderings again. Arriving at or near Fort Kipp which was somewhere in the district where Lethbridge is now, whilst there the Blood Indians stole his ponies and outfit with the exception of rifle and blankets. From there he wandered to the South Saskatchewan, not finding gold in paying quantities there he continued his journey heading for Fort Edmonton as gold in large quantities was being washed from the North Saskatchewan River, this was late in the fall or early winter. During his journey across the open country, a blizzard blew up from the north. There being no shelter where it happened to catch him, he expected to be frozen to death, however, a herd of buffalo were drifting south, probably the blizzard had started them on their annual trek, Charlie shot one of the buffalo, cut the buffalo open and removing the inside crawled in, remaining there until after the blizzard was over. He said, "had not the buffalo come along I would surely have frozen to death".

Finally arriving at Fort Edmonton, he went up river to what is known as Miners' Flats, the first Flats on the west side of the Saskatchewan River beyond the Golf Links. He washed there for some time, taking out of the gravel from twelve to fifteen dollars per day. After finishing the panning of the gold he located on that piece of land, later securing home-stead rights for same. The writer purchased a portion of Miners' Flats from him about the year 1903 paying him twelve

dollars per acre for the land. At this time he must have been at least 80 years of age, being unable to earn a living

During some of the latter years of Charlie's residence at Edmonton, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Ross had as guest English Charlie during the winter months where Charlie was one of the privileged members of Donald's ram pasture. Some years later the writer being down at Miners' Flats and wanting some fresh eggs went to a log-house built near the bank of the river, got into conversation with the inhabitants of the house, finally asking their name was told it was Stevenson. This man was the grandson of English Charlie who had come out from New York and was remaining on the portion of the old claim that was still in the name of Charles Stevenson.

By S. H. SMITH.