

Colonel John Marshall Grant RE (1822 – 1902)

2/Lt 1 Jan 1842; Lt 18 March 1845; 2d Capt 17 Dec 1853; Capt 21 May 1855; Lt-Col 7 Jan 1865; Col 23 May 1873.

Army: Col Jan 1870; Half-pay 31 Dec 1881; retired 22 April 1882.

The senior officer with the Columbia Detachment, he was in charge of the second group, arriving on Nov 8th 1858 - "genius in construction."

Born 22 April 1822 and died at Bournemouth 1 April 1902.

Captain John Marshall Grant 1822 - 1902

Respected Road Engineer Captain John Marshall Grant is a man whose presence within B.C. was only for a relatively short period of time and yet his impact on the landscape stretches into the present. The Royal Engineers arrived in Victoria in 1858; they would remain in B.C. for the next five years, bringing to the colony a sense of discipline and expertise in all they undertook. The group under Captain Grant consisted mainly of carpenters. Grant would build a reputation as one of the greats in engineering and road building through his construction genius. In his five years here, he was involved in deepening the Harrison River channel, completing a road from Douglas to 28 mile and one from Cook's Ferry to Yale, converting the Dewdney Trail into a wagon road, and he took control of Walter Moberly's section of the Cariboo Wagon Road. John Marshall Grant was born at sea in the year 1822. He was educated at the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich where he learned his trade as an engineer and reached the position of 2nd lieutenant in 1842. 1 By 1845 he had made Lieutenant and in 1853 he had earned the position of 2nd Captain. The title of Captain would be gained in 1855.



Upon arriving in B.C., he had held the title of Captain for three years. By the time that Captain Grant left B.C. in 1863 he was known as the 'greatest road builder of them all.' 3 In correspondence from Governor Douglas 4 regarding Captain Grant he stated "he has generally been detached in charge of the road parties and numerous occasions I have personally witnessed his exertions and have observed with much pleasure, the ability, zeal, and hearty cooperation he has always brought to bear upon whatever he was engaged in." 5

Captain John Marshall Grant brought his family with him to the colony that is now British Columbia. Sophia Cracroft, while accompanying Lady Franklin, recalls her time spent at the Royal Engineers camp at New Westminster. Here Miss Cracroft observed Mrs. Moody and Mrs. Grant taking their children walking. "Each lady has to be her own head nurse, if not sole nurse...Mrs. Moody and Mrs. Grant each has her baby to carry but are often relieved by a stray gentleman...It is quite common to see gentleman carrying the children out of natural pity for the mothers." 6 At this time the Grants had two young children.

When the decision was made to send the Engineers back to England, they had the option of staying in British Columbia and pre-empting land. Grant and his family returned to England, although he retained possession of land in B.C. until his death. Departing from B.C. via the Enterprise in 1863, 7 they would take with them fond memories of the emerging colony.

Back in England Captain Grant became Lieutenant Colonel in 1865 8 and Colonel in May of 1873. In 1881 he was put on half pay and the following year he retired after forty years of service with the Royal Engineers. In 1892 he recalled the time he spent in B.C. in a letter of thanks after receiving the Year Book of British Columbia: "Many thanks to you [Crease] and the Members of the Government for so kindly thinking of an old Pioneer who, quite often thinks with pleasure on the happy times spent in the early days of the Colony and the friends we left behind there!" 9 Colonel John Marshall Grant passed away in 1902 at 80 years of age. Today the impact he had on the colony of British Columbia is echoed throughout the province of British Columbia.

Written by Darla Dickenson 1 January

1, 1842 2 May 21, 1855 3 Hill, Beth. Sappers: The Royal Engineers in B.C. Ganges: Horsdal & Schubart Publishers Ltd, 1987. Pg. 92. 4, November 13, 1863. 5 Douglas personal correspondence, 1863. From "Captain John Marshall Grant: genius in construction." Internet: www.royalengineers.ca/GrantJM.html. 6 Sappers, Pg. 86 7 November 14, 1863 8 January 7, 1865 9 Grant Personal Correspondence, 1898. From "Captain John Marshall Grant: genius in construction." Internet: www.royalengineers.ca/GrantJM.html.

Walter Moberly - The Cariboo Waggon Road's Casualty

He dreamed of seeing the Cariboo Waggon Road coming into being, the creation of this road led to his downfall. Few people so fervently believed in the cause of advancing the colony of B.C. and the one man who did was shunted off to the side of the road.

Born in England in 1832 it was not long before he was relocated to Toronto, Ontario where he grew up and received the necessary education to become an engineer. His impact on the major transportation routes during the 19th century goes almost unparalleled and equally unrecognized. No trail, mountain, hill, ravine, town river, creek, road was named after him.

In the words of Daphne Sleigh, former Maple Ridge museum curator, he was "touchy, opinionated, careless with money and prone to self-importance...he antagonized many people in spite of his sociable and generous nature...yes Walter Moberly was a flawed hero, but which of our heroes is not?" 1

Coming to B.C. armed with a letter to Governor Douglas from George Simpson it was not long before he was given his first project, laying out the town of New Westminster. Upon completing this he received a number of jobs and building projects in relation to trails and roads throughout B.C., including the Dewdney Trail and a section of the Cariboo Waggon Road. He was awarded the contract to build the section of the

He was awarded the contract to build the section of the wagon road stretching from Lytton to a junction road leading to Fort Alexandria. He entered into this contract with Charles Oppenheimer and T.B. Lewis. From the outset the going was discouraging. Lewis sold out to Moberly due to what he described as the discouraging attitude of the government. Both Moberly and Charles ran out of money - creating a situation where Captain Grant was sent to work out the necessary details in order to see the section completed. Upon Grant leaving Moberly was no longer a contractor for that section, rather he was an employee of the government in charge of the men he had hired.

The government at this time did seem to have a heartless disregard for the contract, going as far as arresting Moberly for money owed. Moberly describes his feeling on the matter, for "When this business was closed up at the end of the year, the country had gained a large and most expensive portion of the Cariboo Waggon road built, which cost them nothing, but it left me a ruined man, with heavy personal liabilities, which took all the money I could make during eight subsequent years. 2 As Moberly and Oppenheimer were unable to complete their section they were unable to collect the tolls generated by traffic on the road.

In 1865 he was appointed assistant Surveyor General of B.C., finding new routes for roads within B.C. It was while he was engaged in this job that he discovered Eagles Pass and wrote a lengthy report to Joseph Trutch, then the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, about the prospects of this pass.

In 1868, after Moberly had been in Utah for a while, Trutch, now B.C.'s first Lieutenant Governor, asked him to assist with the surveys for the layout of the railway. When they opted for the Yellowhead pass rather than Moberly's recommended Eagle's Pass, Moberly became disillusioned recommended Eagle's Pass; Moberly became disillusioned and moved to Manitoba. Eagle Pass would become the gateway through the Selkirk Mountains, effectively enabling the mainline to reach the West Coast through via Revelstoke.

his importance was not immediately recognized during his lifetime, since his death in 1915 more people are beginning to recognize the role, he played in building B.C. from the ground up and establishing the transportation routes that to this day are so vitally important to us.

Written by Darla Dickenson, edited by Irene Bjerky
Sleigh, Daphne. "The Bigger they Come" In B.C. Book Review.
Moberly, Walter. History of the Cariboo Waggon Road