

Moody, Dietz & Nelson Lumber Mill

Researched and written by Ralph Drew, Belcarra, BC, June 2012.

The shores of Burrard Inlet remained substantially untouched by Europeans until the second half of the 19th-century. In 1863 T.W. Graham and George Scrimgeour pre-empted 480 acres (194 ha) of Crown land and established Pioneer Mills on the north shore, the first industrial lumber mill on Burrard Inlet. The site was just west of the Second Narrows at the mouth of Lynn Creek, initiating a settlement which became the first significant non-native settlement on Burrard Inlet — Moodyville — not to be confused with Port Moody. As the forests were logged, settlement expanded out from Moodyville to the west, shifting the town center, which much later grew to become the City of North Vancouver.

Pioneer Mills was the first exporter to ship goods (lumber) from Burrard Inlet to a foreign country. However, the venture was too much for the financial resources of the company, and in December 1863 the mill, with logs and 'timber limits', was purchased by John Oscar Smith who operated the mill for one year as Burrard Inlet Mills. In 1865 a prominent figure-to-be came into the North Shore lumbering picture. Sewell Prescott Moody (1834–1875), an American from the State of Maine, bought the mill and 1,943 square kilometres of timber for \$6,900 on January 14th, 1865, and began cutting lumber in February 1865. The mill was renamed Burrard Inlet Lumber Mills and immediately entered the international market since the newly acquired timber was of excellent quality. In 1866 George Dietz and Hugh Nelson joined Sewell Moody in partnership. The S. P. Moody & Company — "Moody's Mills" as it was called — was the basis around which the lumbering town of Moodyville was built. In 1868 Moody enlarged the mill and made the important upgrade to steam power, and in 1870 the company name changed to Moody, Dietz and Nelson. The surrounding settlement was officially named "Moodyville" in 1872.



Sewell Prescott Moody

(BCA A-02351)

Sewell Prescott Moody died in a shipwreck while on a business trip. The SS Pacific, on its way to San Francisco in late 1875, struck another vessel in a violent storm off Cape Flattery and sank. There were only two survivors. Six weeks after the sinking, a fragment of the lost steamer was discovered on a beach near his Victoria home. Pencil into the white painted fragment is a final note from Sewell Moody: "*All lost, S.P. Moody.*"

Beginning in the 1870s, there were several hand loggers cutting the huge fir trees around the North Arm (Indian Arm) of Burrard Inlet and floating them to either Moodyville or Hastings Mill at Granville. Two hand-loggers, Stephen Decker (1827–1911) and John Hall (1819–1889), lived and logged on the east shore of Indian Arm. Decker moved his float to Bedwell Bay (also known as Decker's Bay) around 1870 and built a cabin close to the creek (Ray Creek) at the head of the bay. Also in 1870, John Hall pre-empted 160 acres (65 ha) of colonial Crown Land that included the present-day Belcarra picnic grounds (where he lived with his aboriginal wife) and more than half of the Belcarra Peninsula. Stephen Decker grew-up on his father's farm in Maine near the New Brunswick border, which gave him something in common with Sewell Moody who was also from Maine. This connection may have accounted for Decker moving to Bedwell Bay when the Moodyville Mill acquired its Bedwell Bay Timber Lease in June 1870.

The Moodyville Fire

Source: British Colonist, Saturday, December 27th, 1873.

"The fire by which Moody's mills were consumed on Monday [December 22nd, 1873], broke out in the lamp-room, and in a few minutes after it was first discovered the whole building was a sheet of flame. The only persons in the mill at the time were the watchman and the fireman, who lost no time in giving the alarm. The buildings, together with all the saws, belting, shafts, &c., and at least one engine, are a total loss. It is hoped that the boilers will have sustained no very serious injury. The fire did not extend to the lumber in the vicinity of the mill, nor was any damage done to shipping, with the exception of the schooner Matilda, which had some sails and spars burnt. We regret to learn that there was no insurance and that the heavy loss will consequently fall altogether on the enterprising firm. This is regarded as a public calamity."



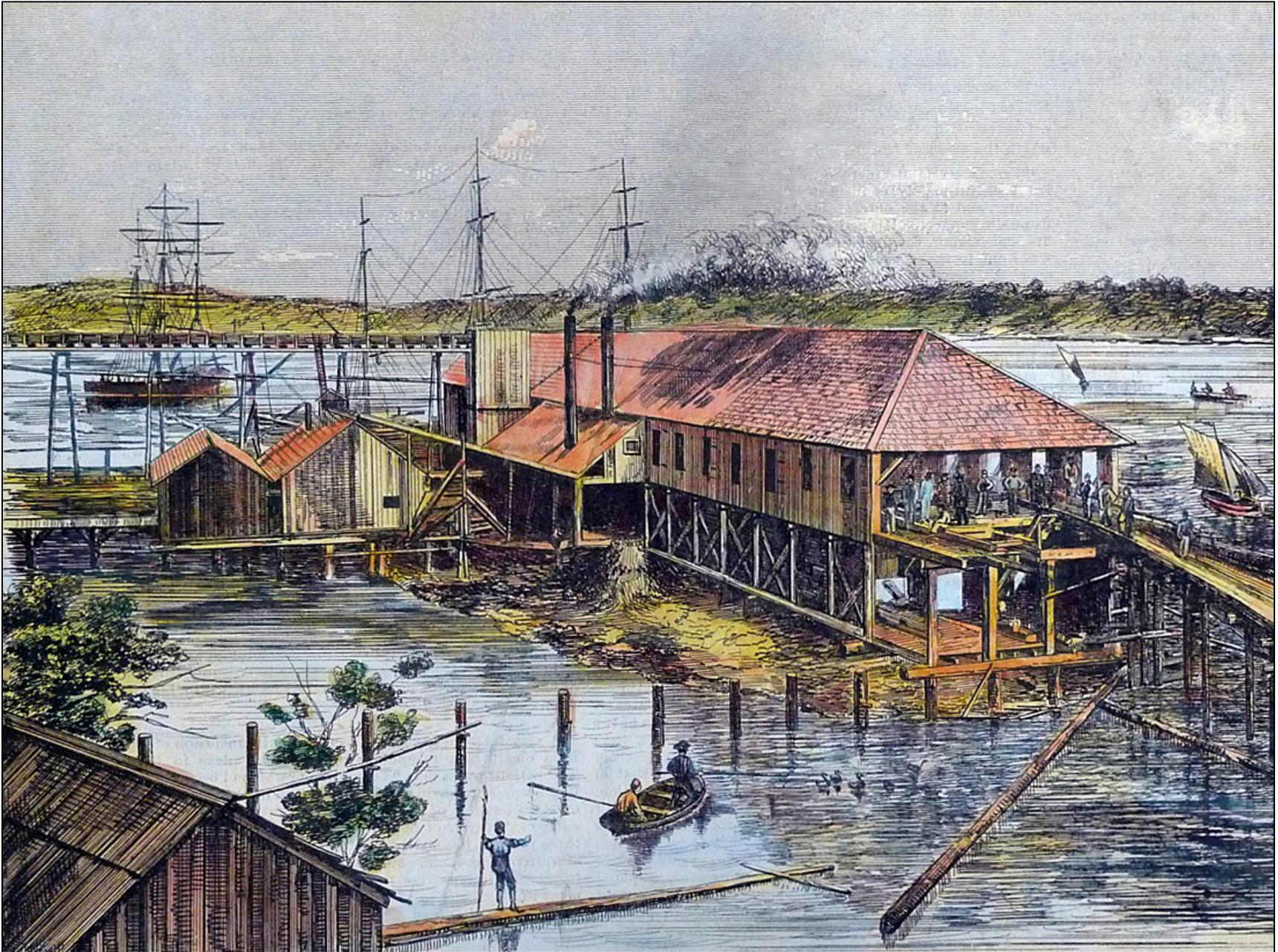
British Columbia Archives (BCA A-00397).

Moodyville Mill and Docks, *circa* 1885 — North Shore of Burrard Inlet.



British Columbia Archives (BCA A-03316).

Moodyville Mill, *circa* 1888 — North Shore of Burrard Inlet.



Source: *Canadian Illustrated News*, 22 June 1872, Vol. V, No. 25, page 389. (Also, *British Columbia Archives* A-03318.)

**View of Moody, Dietz & Nelson's Sawmill at Burrard Inlet in 1872 —
Hand-coloured etching from a photograph by D. Withrow.**