

Groovy Archival Treasures

Featuring amusing, poignant or unusual bits from deep within the Archives' holdings

Found in a recent donation of Irving family records, this beautiful and rather impish little pen and ink drawing and accompanying poem were done in 1875 in an album of Elizabeth Irving, daughter of Captain William Irving and his wife Elizabeth Dixon Irving. The anonymous artist and poet was clearly an admirer of 16 year-old Lizzie (as she was known). The poem indicates that he was off to join the Canadian Pacific Railway's survey party.

Those who know New Westminster's history likely recall that the location of the terminus for the CPR sparked a tremendous debate between the Royal City and its rival, Victoria. Victory was finally declared by New Westminster in 1878 when the federal government announced that the railway would end in Port Moody. At great cost, a trunk line to New Westminster was established in 1886, thus securing New Westminster as a transportation and commercial hub for the Fraser Valley and surrounding area.

It's doubtful that Lizzie's admirer is her future husband, Ernest Spencer, since he was living in Portland, Oregon in 1875. The identity of the talented poet and artist remains a rather enticing mystery, lost in the past and left to the imagination. How tantalizing!

