

HAGAN, MICHAEL, journalist, publisher, author, school principal, and farmer; b. c. 1831; d. 2 Nov. 1896 in Kelowna, B.C.

Little is known of Michael Hagan's early life except that he was of Irish origin and apparently well educated. According to one report, he spent some time in the oilfields of Pennsylvania and Ontario. Another account states that he was associated for a while with fellow Irishman and journalist Thomas D'Arcy McGee*. In July 1875 Hagan established the *Thunder Bay Sentinel* at Prince Arthur's Landing (Thunder Bay, Ont.), where construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway was in progress. He edited it for three years before moving to Manitoba for a short time.

In 1879 Hagan settled in British Columbia and began a newspaper at Emory Bar in the Fraser Canyon. It was there that construction of the CPR began in that province. He built a house and printshop, and published the first issue of the *Inland Sentinel* on 29 May 1880. Consisting of only four pages, each five columns wide, the paper carried mainly news of railway construction. In June 1881 he obtained an old French press brought to British Columbia by Bishop Modeste Demers* and used in Victoria and Barkerville.

Hagan was a liberal-minded and outspoken journalist, and was the author of several open letters in the *Sentinel* which were critical of the CPR. He quickly obtained a reputation as a defender of oppressed groups such as the Indians and Chinese railway workers. A devout Roman Catholic and an abstainer, he won, according to his obituary in the *Vernon News*, "respect and esteem from all classes and conditions of men. He was scrupulously honourable in his dealings, upright in his private life, a keen observer and deep reasoner"

Hagan, it would seem, never married and had no living relatives. His preoccupation was the newspaper, which he also used as a vehicle for his own projects. In 1882, for example, he published in it a romantic novel entitled "Myra, or the broken hearted." When activity at Emory Bar had begun to decline, he and the *Sentinel* had moved to nearby Yale in October 1880. While there, he reported in August 1881 that he was president of the Yale Force Pump Placer Mining Company.

In 1882 Hagan made a reconnaissance of the British Columbia interior, during which he visited Kamloops, an up-and-coming railway centre. He decided to relocate there, and

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the first issue of the *Inland Sentinel* published in Kamloops came out on 31 July 1884. Hagan continued his critical swipes against the CPR and especially its chief contractor in the province, Andrew Onderdonk*. But he was also a promoter of progress and repeatedly emphasized the prospects of Kamloops as the “inland capital.”

In 1886 “advancing years and impaired sight” forced Hagan to sell the *Sentinel* to businessman Hugh McCutcheon. Hagan then moved to Okanagan mission (part of modern Kelowna), where he pre-empted land and took up farming. He made frequent trips through the interior, however, and continued to write articles and to speak out on a variety of topics: game preservation, pork packing, the first trip of the steamer *Okanagan* in 1888, and a proposed railway from southern British Columbia to Alaska which, he argued, would increase travel, trade, and friendship among the people of the Pacific coast.

Hagan returned to Kamloops in 1889, having been chosen superintendent of the new Indian industrial school on the recommendation of MP John Andrew Mara*. Hagan’s reputation for honesty, managerial abilities, and farming experience were his chief qualifications for the position. However, controversy over the appointment of a layman resulted in the withdrawal in July 1891 of the Sisters of St Anne who taught there [see Marie-Angèle Gauthier]. A decision was made by the government to turn the school over to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and Hagan resigned the following June. For a short time he remained involved in local affairs, stressing the need for irrigation on the Indian reserve and for a new flour-mill, and promoting the incorporation of the city.

Later in 1892 Hagan returned to his 640-acre farm, but he continued to contribute “bright and vigorous criticisms on things appertaining to provincial interests” to the *Sentinel*, the *Vernon News*, and the *British Colonist*. He was preparing to undertake hog-raising and the manufacture of bacon when he became ill. He died on 2 Nov. 1896 and was buried at Okanagan mission, where his funeral was attended by a large number of people.

Hagan was, in the words of the *Vernon News*, “one whose kindly nature and sterling character had endeared him to all associated with him.” He “left an indelible impress upon the history of this country,” and his major legacy, the *Inland Sentinel*, was published for 107 years under various auspices and titles until December 1987.

KEN FAVRHOLDT

Michael Hagan’s novel “Myra, or the broken hearted” was serialized in the *Inland Sentinel* (Yale,

B.C.), 5 Jan.–2 March 1882. Other relevant issues of his paper are those of 4 Aug. 1881 and 29 May 1884 (also published at Yale), and those of 2 Sept. 1886, 4 June 1892, 27 May 1893, and 29 May 1905 (published at Kelowna, B.C.).

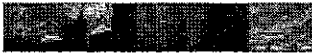
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