

SINCE 1910 William George Gillett has made Vancouver the head of his operations as general contractor, coming here from Nelson, in which town he was one of its real builders. Enjoying the highest reputation professionally, it is but natural that larger and larger contracts should have come to him, among which may be mentioned the building of the largest bridge across the Columbia river at Revelstoke, the building of the Vancouver arena and some of the greatest wharfs. Mr. Gillett is at present largely renowned for a fact which he values still more highly, and that is that he cares for his men and their lives as for his own and he never allows them to take any unnecessary risks. It is most notable that in building the Columbia River bridge and the great Vancouver Arena not one life was lost from the beginning of the operations until the works were completed. This remarkable record of Mr. Gillett throws much light upon his humane nature and makes his character one which makes him beloved by all men.

William George Gillett was born at Twillingate, Newfoundland, December 6, 1870, a son of George and Ann (Whitehorn) Gillett, both natives of that colony. The grandfathers on both sides came, as many of the other settlers there, from the western part of England. George Gillett, the father of our subject, still resides at Twillingate, where for many years he has been engaged in general merchandising and is highly respected.

In the acquirement of his education Mr. Gillett attended public school in his native town, beginning his independent career at the age of fifteen while gaining some knowledge of the carpenter's trade. He worked along this line of occupation in Twillingate until nearly twenty-one years of age, when he removed to Boston, engaging in carpentering there for two months before coming to Victoria, where he arrived in January 1891. In addition to his trade he here engaged also in fur sealing on the coast, being so occupied during the sealing season for three years. In 1895 he made removal to Rossland, British Columbia, being there during the boom days, when much building was undertaken. He continued following his trade but also began to take on contracts, which he carried to successful completion. It was here that he made his first step into the contracting business. In April 1897, Mr. Gillett went to Nelson, engaging in contracting only. He has ever since confined his efforts to that line. While there, however, he first took an active part in politics. He was and is still today a liberal, but a liberal with somewhat original and independent ideas who does not blindly indorse every party recommendation. In 1901 Mr. Gillett was elected alderman for the east ward and in 1905 John Huston, the mayor, suddenly left Nelson and upon his departure the council appointed Mr. Gillett acting mayor for the remainder of the term. At the election of 1906 the new mayor and entire council were elected and again in 1907. Under the guidance of Mayor Gillett and this council many works of vital importance to Nelson were executed. The large hydro-electric power plant was built at a cost of three hundred thousand dollars under his regime and it is still the pride of the city. It was in 1906 that Nelson took over the defunct street railway, which had permitted its charter to expire, and conducted it as a public utility. This street railway is of particular interest and unusual efforts have been made to maintain it because it is the only street railway in the interior of British Columbia. When the San Francisco disaster occurred, Mayor Gillett's energies were again tested when he and the council, acting on behalf of the city, started a fund for the sufferers. They worked through all that night, securing large contributions from the citizens and packing a car load of supplies to be shipped at the earliest possible moment. The expense of the shipment was paid out of the large fund made up and a comfortable sum was left which was forwarded in the form of cash. This aid from Nelson was the first contribution from Canada to reach the San Francisco sufferers. Mr. Gillett also was chairman of the managing committee of the interior liberal district council and in that capacity had charge of the appointment of the organizer for the district. He was on the executive of the Board of Trade and while mayor of the city entertained for five days His Excellency, Earl Grey, governor general of Canada, and his party.

During his stay in Nelson, Mr. Gillett built the beautiful marble courthouse and the handsome marble and granite edifice of the Trinity Methodist church. He was a trustee and most active member of that church for several years and was also a director of the Kootenay Lake General Hospital for ten years. During one year of his building operations in Nelson, Mr. Gillett erected twenty-seven buildings, which statement gives an idea of the magnitude of his undertakings.

In August, 1910, seeking a broader field of operation, Mr. Gillett came to Vancouver. He built in that same year the Columbia River bridge at Revelstoke for the Provincial Government. This is one of the largest bridges across the Columbia. In the same year he also built a railroad approach, six thousand and ten feet long, over the mud flats at the head of the Portland canal, for the Northeastern Short Line Railroad. At the same place he built a wharf of fifty-three hundred feet for the Dominion Government. These two works, each more than a mile in length and built entirely of wood, are masterpieces of their kind of construction and recognized as such by the profession. Mr. Gillett was the largest and most costly arena built for these uses on the American continent, having a seating capacity of ten thousand five hundred people. The size of the building is two hundred by three hundred and thirty feet. It was the first artificial ice rink ever built in Canada and is of semi-fire proof construction. Its cost of erection was two hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars. Actual work was begun August 1, 1911, and the rink was opened to the public on December 20th of the same year. There were two hundred and thirty men employed on the work and the building was completed without injury to a man. Although the number employed was not so large in building the Columbia River bridge, this work was finished with the same remarkable record. Mr. Gillett values the lives of his workmen as he does his own and never permits them to take risks that can be avoided. He has always steadfastly adhered to this rule with the result that it is seldom that an accident occurs in his building operations. Since leaving Nelson in 1910 he has made Vancouver his home, and upon completing the arena his work has been largely confined to northern British Columbia, where he principally engages in the building of wharfs for the Dominion Government. Since April, 1913, he has been principally engaged with building numerous government wharfs on the Queen Charlotte islands.

On December 7, 1892, at Twillingate, Newfoundland, Mr. Gillett was married to Miss Susan Elizabeth Young, who died in Nelson, February 8, 1908. On April 19, Mr. Gillett married, at Rossland, British Columbia, Miss A. Beatrice Hobbs, of Brandon, Manitoba, and to them two daughters have been born, Margery Beatrice and Georgia Vivian.

Mr. Gillett is well known in fraternal circles, being a member of Nelson Lodge, No. 23, A. F. & A. M., and a charter member and recording secretary of the Loyal Orange Lodge at Nelson. The importance of his work in opening the resources of the province to the world can hardly be estimated today, and in that relation he must be considered one of the most useful men in British Columbia. He is patriotic to the core, ever interested in worthy public enterprises, and considers the general welfare as of greater importance than individual prosperity. It is, however, but natural that financial independence has come to Mr. Gillett as the result of his extensive operations, which were ever guided by extraordinary executive ability and good judgment, and it is therefore not surprising that he is to be counted today among the most substantial men of the city and province. He enjoys to a great extent the good-will and confidence of the public, the government, those who employ him and especially those whom he employs and for whose safety he feels as responsible as a father. It is this trait of his character which stands out above all else and begets great admiration.

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DEATH NOTICE OF WILLIAM GEORGE GILLETT WHICH APPEARED  
IN THE VANCOUVER SUN, SEPTEMBER 11TH, 1917.

"WELL KNOWN CITIZEN CALLED TO HIS REST  
AFTER BRIEF ILLNESS."

W. G. Gillett, Prominent in Business  
and Political Circles of British Columbia  
Dies of Pneumonia.

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The host of friends of W. G. Gillett will hear with great sorrow of his sudden and unexpected death which occurred yesterday morning of pneumonia. Deceased was in usual good health and spirits up until Friday last when he complained of a slight pain in his throat. He shortly retired to his bed and the end came yesterday.

The late Mr. Gillett was one of the best known and highly respected citizens of British Columbia. Born in 1870 in Newfoundland he came to B.C. from his birthplace, Twillingate, in 1891, and settled in Victoria, where he lived for five years and then removed to Rossland. In 1907 he went to Nelson and entered the general contracting business. From Nelson he came to Vancouver in 1910 and remained in this city until 1914, when he went to Fort George.

Mr. Gillett was well known as a public figure. He first entered public life in Nelson, where, in 1901 and 1905 he was elected to the city council. In the latter year he, as acting mayor, was called upon to fulfill the duties of that office upon Mayor Houston suddenly deciding to relinquish the duties. In 1906 and 1907 he was elected mayor of Nelson.

Removing to Vancouver his increasing business interests took up all of his time. He built the Columbia River bridge at Revelstoke, and later constructed the Vancouver Arena rink, the largest building of its kind in the world, as well as a number of other local buildings.

He went to Fort George in 1914 and headed the polls in the municipal election of 1915, when he ran for mayoralty. The following year he was again elected. He was an unsuccessful independent candidate at the provincial election last September for Fort George riding.

His residence in Vancouver was 2860 First avenue west. Deceased leaves a wife and three children.

The funeral will take place Thursday afternoon at 2:30 from Grote & company's chapel, 232 Kingsway, Rev. A. H. Sovereign officiating.