

# Historic Romantic Elopement

## BC's First Marriage License

By Archivist Frederike Verspoor

On August 14, 1871, BC marriage license number one was issued to Bruno Mellado and Mary Ann Thompson. The new province's first Lieutenant-Governor, Joseph W. Trutch, signed the license. They were married a week later. It was a "romantic elopement". The bride and groom – aged 16 and 27 respectively – had come to Victoria from Nanaimo "in a canoe paddled by four Indians" to marry.

The groom, Bruno Mellado, was born October 6, 1843 in Santiago, Chile. Son of Spanish parents, he had arrived in Victoria via San Francisco with his mother in the early 1850s. He studied drafting and architecture, and eventually found work in Nanaimo. He designed the first public school in Nanaimo, built in 1873 on Crace Street.



Photos of Bruno Mellado (left) and Mary Mellado (right) taken around the time of the wedding in 1871. Photographs provided courtesy of Donald Gordon.

The bride, Mary Ann Thompson, was born February 28, 1855 in Nanaimo. Her parents had arrived in November 1854, after a six month journey from England, with other coal miners and their families. Her father worked in the coal mines.

This marriage was one of the first of a handful of marriages that took place in BC after it became a province of Canada in July 1871, but before the government started to register marriages in September 1872. It is therefore not part of the records of the BC Vital Statistics Agency.

In 1971, family members generously donated the license, with the marriage certification written on the back, to the BC Archives. Not only was it the 100th anniversary of the marriage but also of BC's entry into confederation.