



Lured by the glory of gold, the young Methodist preacher made his way to Victoria in 1862 only to find the excitement of the Gold Rush abating. So he bought a bookstore in January and advertised "Valentines, valentines, sentimental and comic, new and beautiful" – weeks before the big day. He believed in the slogan *start the demand – don't follow it*.

In 1867 Spencer fell in love and married the apple of *his* eye, Emma, and started a family.<sup>2</sup> By 1873 Spencer sold the bookstore and purchased a dry goods business with a partner. Five years later he went solo and grew the business. Spencers was now in Nanaimo and Vancouver, for a total of nine stores.

In 1912 the company added farms and ranches to their assets, including Earls court. Unfortunately, David died in 1920, but the business and properties remained in the family. Several years later it was noted that Earls court was now 700-acres with 16,000 fruit trees.

The family sold the department store business to T. Eaton in 1948, but kept the farm in Lytton until 1959 when they sold Earls court to rancher Norman Gregory. Gregory's ownership was short and the property was bought by Raymond Mundall in 1962. He was no stranger to farming, as he had operated a 100-acre almond orchard while practicing medicine in California.

He brought his family to Lytton where they settled in at Earls court. However, Mundall was soon discouraged by a fire that destroyed the equipment shop a year later. They kept the farm but moved back to California.

Fire would plague the farm, with the packinghouse burning in 1972. Mundall returned to the farm in 1991 to retire and one year later the greenhouse burned. This was followed by the burning of the mansion in 1992. However, the Mundalls are a hardy lot.

Today Dan Mundall and the apple of *his* eye manage the organic orchard, run a cattle operation and a horse training facility. Earls court has come a long way, withstanding the ravages of time and fire. The story of Earls court Farms apples weaves an interesting history – a delicious golden dream coming true in the heart of Gold Country.

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### **Bibliography & Sources:**

[www.mundall.com](http://www.mundall.com), Mundall family business website inc. Earls court Farm  
[www.biographi.ca](http://www.biographi.ca), Canadian Biography On-line  
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<sup>1</sup> See site page The Smiths in Gold Country GeoTourism Adventures Field Guide Volume 1, p 147

<sup>2</sup> A governess cart belonging to the Spencer family is on display at the Lytton Museum. It is a small, light two-wheeled horse drawn cart from the 1800s.