

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 150 MILE HOUSE TO FORT ALEXANDRIA



The old Evans Place with remnant of CWR, at junction of Highway 97 and Mountain House Road

Safety is an important concern in all outdoor activities. No guidebook can alert you to every hazard or anticipate the limitations of every reader. Therefore, the descriptions of roads, trails, routes, and natural features in this book are not representations that a particular place or excursion will be safe for your party. When you follow any of the routes described in this guide, you assume responsibility for your own safety. Under normal conditions, such excursions require the usual attention to traffic, road and trail conditions, weather, terrain, the capabilities of our party, and other factors. Keeping informed on current conditions and exercising common sense are the keys to a safe, enjoyable outing.

New Pathways to Gold Society

This guide is funded by the New Pathways to Gold Society (NPTGS) as part of its Cariboo Waggon Road Restoration Project initiative.

We acknowledge that much of the land discussed in this chapter is located on the traditional, unceded territory of the Secwepemc (Shuswap) and Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin) Nations, which includes Tsq'Escen' (Canim Lake Band), Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation (Canoe Creek/Dog Creek Bands), Xat'sull First Nation (Soda Creek Indian Band), T'excelc (Williams Lake First Nation), ?Esdilagh First Nation (Alexandria Band), Esk'etemc (Alkali Lake) and Tl'esqox (Toosey Band).

In this chapter, the route for cycling and trekking of the Cariboo Waggon Road (CWR) includes sections of the original road, which is designated as the **Main Route**. The option for motorists (and cyclists alike) is the **Alternate Route**. There is no through route of Highway 97 in this chapter.

Ground truthing is *not complete* on this route.

Distance from 150 Mile House to Fort Alexandria: by bicycle or on foot via CWR **Main Route** – 79 km

Distance from 150 Mile House to Fort Alexandria: by motor vehicle via **Alternate Route** – 90 km

Distances do not include any side trips.

Cell service: There is coverage throughout this section of the CWR.

Elevations: 150 Mile House, 750 m; Likely Rd, 950 m; Soda Creek, 430 m; Williams Lake, 600-700 m.

Road surfaces: pavement, hard packed gravel.

Connections: The closest large centre to 150 Mile House (via Highway 97) is Williams Lake (15 km).

Health Care: Cariboo Memorial Hospital (Williams Lake); Bridge Care Virtual Clinic for non-emergencies.

Modern photographs by the author unless otherwise noted. Historic photographs from B.C. Archives unless otherwise noted. District Lot surveys from B.C. government website, specifically the application GATOR: Government Access Tool for Online Retrieval. Online maps from Google Earth.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE**

Actual mileages in the guide may differ between your pedometer, your cycle computer, apps (such as GAIA, or Relive), our vehicle odometer and official highway mileages. Keep this in mind when using our guide for your travels. Many variables come into play, depending on what side of the road you ride on, GPS signals, bumps, ditches and construction. This applies to country roads, two-lane tracks, as well as highways. It is not an exact science.

### **HISTORY OF THIS SECTION OF THE ROUTE**

150 Mile House was an early economic hub for the Cariboo Waggon Road. It was 150 miles from Lillooet to this settlement along the CWR, and that number stuck as the name ever since.

The first European settlement came in 1859, when Thomas W. Davidson, an experienced miner from California got permission from the local Shuswap chief, Chief William, to set up a roadhouse, farm and store. Two well-used pack trails were nearby and the land was good for farming. By 1863, Davidson had almost 2000 acres in the area with many hundreds under cultivation and his roadhouse at “Lake Valley Ranch” was popular and the only one for several miles. There were many changes in ownership over the years, and the property morphed into The 150 Mile Ranch.

In later years, the community around the roadhouse became known as 150 Mile House. It grew and prospered during the various other gold rushes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the Omineca rush in 1869-73, the resurgence of Cariboo mining in the 1890s, and the Klondike rush in 1896-99. Other events such as the telegraph in 1865 and the railway to Ashcroft in 1884 all brought increased activity and traffic to the Cariboo Waggon Road and 150 Mile House.

The old roadhouse burned to the ground in 1916, but the community has continued to survive into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an important link to points north, south, east, and west, and most particularly as a bedroom community for those who work in Williams Lake.

The original route of the Cariboo Waggon Road from 150 Mile to Fort Alexandria completely bypassed Williams Lake and portions of current Highway 97. This gives travelers a good chance to traverse intact sections of the original road, many of which are still in use. Watch for the alternate route, as it also has beautiful scenery and history making it a desirable choice for travel.



Freight team at 150 Mile House, 1903

#### 150 Mile House features

- First Nations territory (unceded)
  - Originally known as “Lake Valley Ranch”
  - Named for its mileage from Mile 0 at Lillooet
  - Population: 1172 (as of 2016 census)
  - Founded: 1859
  - Gas station and mini mall
  - RV rentals
  - General store
  - Unincorporated community
  - Accommodation at several guest ranches nearby
  - Home of the Little Red Schoolhouse (1896) and 150 Mile Courthouse (1913)
  - Recreation: horseback riding, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, wildlife viewing
- For more information, visit: <https://landwithoutlimits.com> and <https://explorecariboo.com>

#### **IMPORTANT NOTE**

The route in this chapter continues with mileage from Lillooet to Clinton, described in Chapter One, the route onward from Clinton to 100 Mile House, described in Chapter Two, and onward from 100 Mile House to 150 Mile House, described in Chapter Three.

#### **WARNING FOR ALL CAMPERS & TRAVELERS**

**You cannot safely drink water from lakes, ponds, streams, springs, rivers and creeks in BC, as they are likely contaminated by the Giardia parasite. You must boil or filter the water first.**

If you think you have become infected with this parasite, visit:  
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/giardia-infection>, or check into the nearest health clinic.



View of 150 Mile House along the Cariboo Waggon Road, 1910-14  
City of Vancouver Archives

### THE JOURNEY – AND TWO DIVERGING ROUTES – AHEAD



Aerial map of the two routes heading north:  
 Main Route to the east over Likely Road, Mountain House Road and Highway 97  
 Alternate Route to the west over Mission Road, Highway 97 and Soda Creek Road



Aerial map of the two routes continuing north  
 Main Route to the west over Soda Creek–Macalister Road and Edmunds Road  
 Alternate Route to the east over Robertson Road and Highway 97

From 150 Mile House, north to Fort Alexandria, the CWR and other early routes created a tangled network of roads to the goldfields. In attempting to untangle the routes and offer flexible options for travel, we opt for the earliest historical routes wherever possible, which are traversable for cyclists and trekkers. We suggest equally interesting routes suitable for motorists – or cyclists and trekkers.

In all routes but one, travelers can use the same roads. As the routes head north on their divergent paths, they converge, before splitting up again, only to converge again for the final leg to Fort Alexandria. We leave you to decide which route to travel – or mix and match from both to create your own route!

### THE MAIN ROUTE

The earliest, historical **Main Route** of the CWR begins at 150 Mile House on Highway 97. Bypassing Williams Lake, the route heads north over Carpenter Mountain, onto Likely Road, Mountain House Road and rejoins Highway 97 for 13 km, heads down to Soda Creek–Macalister Road, along the Fraser River. This leg of the route has an extensive landslide, not suitable for motorists. Cyclists and trekkers travel through the slide **AT YOUR OWN RISK**. The route continues up Edmunds Road and rejoins Highway 97 again for 20 km to Fort Alexandria.

This route is suitable for all travelers except the slide area of Soda Creek–Macalister Road.

### THE ALTERNATE ROUTE

The **Alternate Route** heads through historic, scenic country, beginning at 144 Mile, 5.5 km south of 150 Mile on Highway 97. It heads onto Mission Road, rejoins Highway 97 for 10 km, travels through Williams Lake, heads onto Soda Creek Road, along the Fraser River. It gets a name change to Williams

Lake Cut Off Road, which rejoins Highway 97 for 2 km. The route heads onto Robertson Road and rejoins Highway 97 at McLeese Lake for 26 km to Fort Alexandria.

This route is suitable for all travelers.

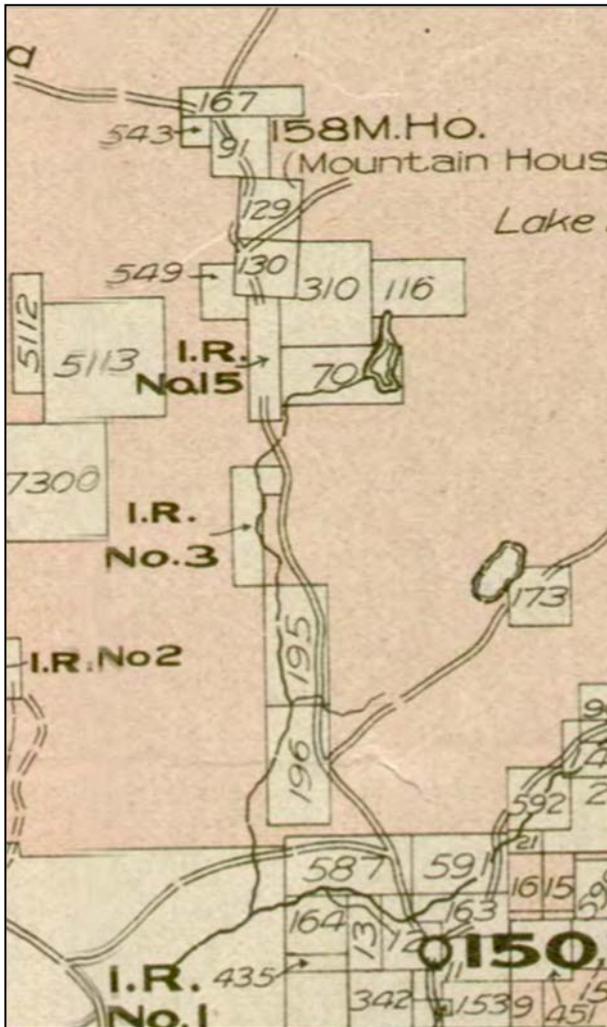


Vintage postcard of 150 Mile Store, circa 1940s

### **THE MAIN ROUTE:**

**VIA MOUNTAIN HOUSE ROAD, SODA CREEK-MACALISTER ROAD, EDMUNDS ROAD & HIGHWAY 97**

The two maps below show the beginning of this lap, continuing north. From 150 Mile to 158 Mile (Mountain House), the Cariboo Waggon Road has not changed much, aside from a couple of extra loops around Nelson Road and Patenaude Road (km 243 and 243.7).



1914 Pre-Emption map versus aerial image of the region from 150 Mile to 158 Mile (Mountain House) km 241.2

Elevation: 750 m

Marshall's 150 Mile Store, west side of Highway 97. Fill up on water before you leave. Cross highway and head north .5 km.

km 241.7

Junction. North/right is Likely-Horsefly Road and original CWR over Mountain House Road. Turn right and head north, uphill. Road is paved through next several junctions, up to km 260.9.

Early travelers disliked this hill with its constant grade over a 4.5 km distance, as it heads up to the y-junction of the Likely and Horsefly Roads. It seems the road needed almost constant maintenance:

*"About the worst feature of this section is the road over Carpenter's Mountain, between the 150 Mile Post and Deep Creek. This is an extremely bad part in the fall, winter, and spring, the ground being soft and boggy after rain, and the snow being troublesome, deep and drifting in winter. It will be an expensive and difficult matter to put this in permanent good order...."* Mr. Mahood, C.E., Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, Sessional Papers, Victoria, January, 1877.

As for the decision to build the road in the first place:

*"The waggon-road over Carpenter Mountain to Soda Creek, over an elevation of 4000 feet, should never have been made. It was condemned by the people when it was decided to take it over that mountain, and private motives attributed to the party who built it – and one that cost the Government large sums of money ever since...."* Mr. Evans, M.P.P to Provincial Secretary, Sessional Papers, Victoria, February, 1877.

km 243

Elevation: 830 m

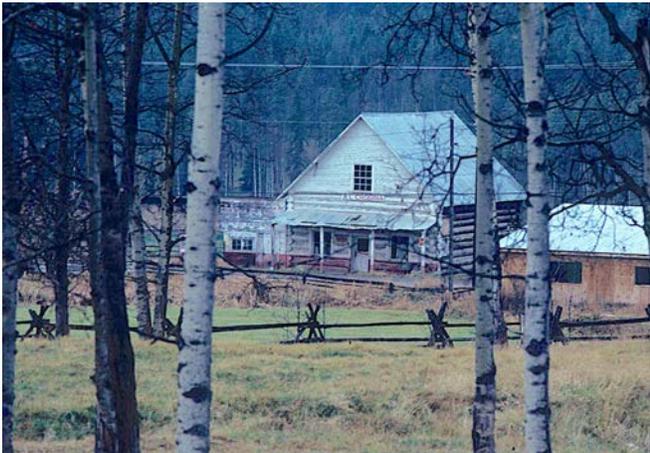
Nelson Road on left. Continue on Likely-Horsefly Road. Nelson Road is a remnant of the original CWR. Enbridge Compressor Station on right.

km 243.7

Elevation: 862 m

Patenaude Road on left. Continue on Likely-Horsefly Road.

Patenaude Road is a remnant of the CWR. It heads through a belt of trees, then opens out to farmland and the original location of 153 Mile House. Known as the 153 Mile Ranch, it was originally owned and operated by Italian immigrant Louis Crosina, along with his wife, Clara (née Noble) from St. John, NB. They built the roadhouse in 1902-03 and over the years, expanded their holdings with several buildings to serve their growing needs as a family and their loyal clientele.



153 Mile Ranch, Crosina's Store, 1978-80 – UNBC Northern BC Archives & Special Collections

The property stayed in the Crosina family for two generations; it sold to the Patenaude family in 1958. Still owned and operated by the Patenaudes, you can visit the privately run museum/store by appointment. There is a proposal to donate the museum/store and its artifacts to the City of Williams Lake, including a new home for the building within the city limits.

km 244.6

Elevation: 886 m

On left are restored original buildings and roadhouse of 153 Mile House, still in use today.

km 246.1

Elevation: 912 m

Y-Junction. Likely Road forks north/left, while Horsefly Road continues ahead. Take left fork.

This route winds through forested areas and ranchlands. There are many burned, bare trees along both sides of the road, evidence from the dramatic wildfires of 2017.

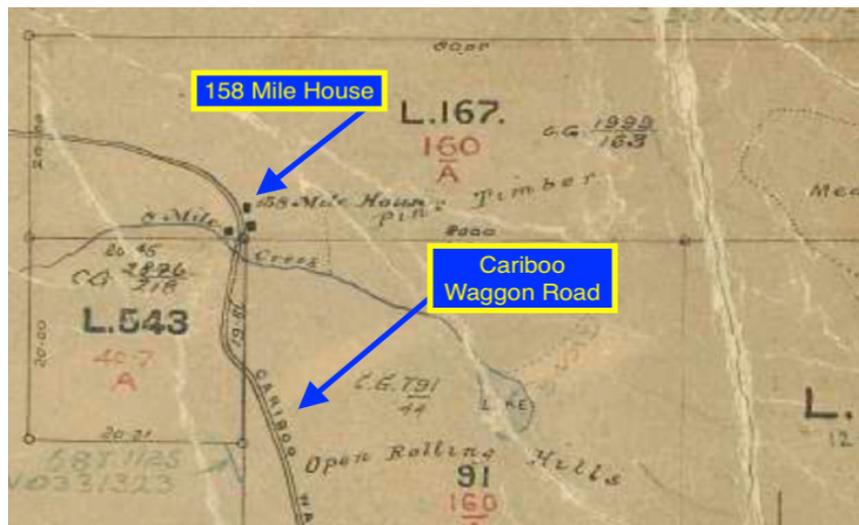
km 253.2

Elevation: 934 m

Junction. Mountain House Road on left, the original route of the CWR. The paved fork heads west, while Likely Road continues, heading northeast. Take left fork to continue on the CWR.



158 Mile House, aka Mountain House, (c 1935) and Stephen Tingley, the original owner



District Lot 167 showing original location of 158 Mile House

This was the location of 158 Mile House, also known as Carpenter's House and later, Mountain House. Captain Carpenter was an employee of G.B. Wright (the builder of the CWR) who built a roadhouse at this location in 1863. While this rise of land isn't a mountain, it became known as Carpenter's Mountain.

In later years, Stephen Tingley, owner of the B.C. Express Company built a roadhouse in the same area, called Mountain House. The building sat precisely at the corner of the two roads, one heading to Likely (an alternate route to the goldfields), the other heading to Soda Creek and the Fraser River route. Mountain House burned to the ground in 1943.

Another significant piece of land sits at this junction. On the east side is Mountain House Ranch, where there is now a first-of-its-kind-agreement between First Nations and the BC Government. The ranch has been purchased by the government and is being leased to Xatsull First Nation and will be transferred to them if a treaty is ratified. The land includes 3840 acres of deeded land, 280 acres of additional pasture and over 13,000 acres of range tenure.

For more information, visit <https://www.mountainhouseranch.com>



Mountain House Ranch, 2008 Likely Road – photo contributed

As you travel west along Mountain House Road, there are more fire-blackened trees noticeable from the 2017 wildfires. The elevation gradually drops as the route passes through several logging cut blocks with haul roads on either side of the road.



The CWR runs from 158 Mile to Williams Lake Cut Off Road on Highway 97

km 259.8

Elevation: 803 m

West Coast Road on left. Continue along Mountain House Road. On the right is a large open area, probably a former log dump.

km 260.9

Elevation: 773 m

Pavement turns to gravel here.



Deep Creek House at 164 Mile on the CWR, now Mountain House Road – UBC Library

km 262.3

Elevation: 730 m

Hawks (Hawkes) Creek Bridge. Hawks (Hawkes) Creek is known locally as Deep Creek.

This area is the approximate location of 164 Mile House, also known as Deep Creek House. It was built early in the rush, in 1863 and had several owners. The property of Deep Creek farm became part of the Deep Creek Indian Reserve after the death of the owner, A.S. Bates, in 1879.

Sarah Crease, wife of circuit judge, Henry Crease, kept a journal of a trip she took with her husband to Cariboo. It's full of fascinating details about what she saw on her travels north during the fall of 1880.

*"Passed through 'Deep Creek' formerly the supply house for the Cariboo and the Forks of Quesnell. The large houses [are] now all in ruins and washed away by the floods."* Kathryn Bridge, "Henry and Self – The Private Life of Sarah Crease."

Continue along Mountain House Road (CWR) as it winds through pasture and forested areas of the Xatsull First Nation territory. At left is a log home construction site, a division of Pioneer Log Homes.

km 268.8

Elevation: 690 m

Xatsull First Nation band office on the right. Continue to the junction of Highway 97 in 400 m.

km 269.2

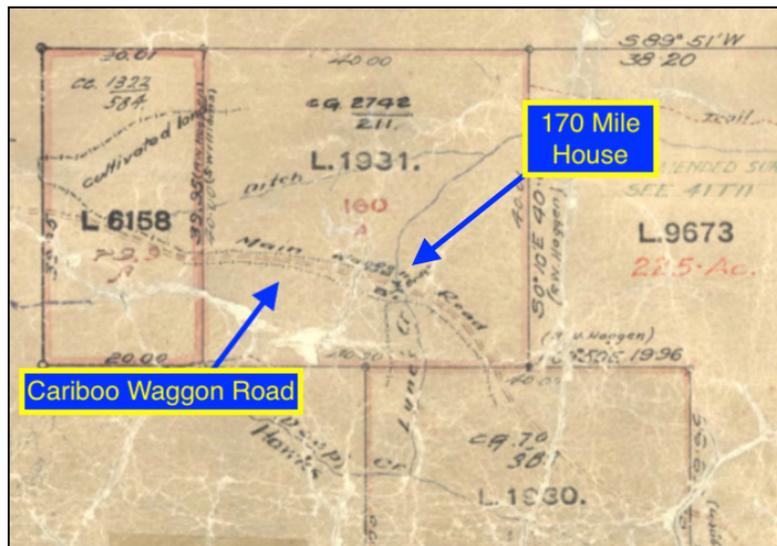
Elevation: 685 m

Junction. Highway 97. Turn northwest/right and continue along the highway.

Across the highway is a remnant of the CWR. It winds around old houses and barns through private property, known by the locals as the old Evans Place and is still owned by the family. For many years it was the home of noted First Nations storyteller, Augusta Tappage. It's a wonderful location for exploring and offers many opportunities for photography. Do not enter buildings. Respect private property.



The old Evans Place homestead, at junction of Mountain House Road and Highway 97



District Lot map shows Lyne Roadhouse/170 Mile on lot 1931  
CWR marked as "Main Waggon Road"

km 271.2

Elevation: 695 m

Lynes Creek Road on right. This is the location of 170 Mile House, also known as the Lyne Roadhouse, run by Angelique and Billy Lyne, in operation from 1895 into the 1900s. There is also a small, private cemetery at the corner. Ask local landowner for permission to visit.

km 273.8

Elevation: 705 m

Powerline Rest Area on left. Continue on Highway 97 as it heads almost west, then curves north. The precise location of CWR in this area is being researched at this time (Mar 2022). It is thought to be on the west/left side of Highway 97 and remnants are seen at various locations.

km 274.4

Power lines. Up ahead is the Soda Creek substation. The highway continues heading west, then makes a large turn to the north.

km 278.5

Egg Lake on left and Egg Lake Road on right. Recent information from local resident Jim Gibson suggests the CWR route was along Egg Lake Road. Jim's assistance is a wonderful example of how local engagement is integral to the Cariboo Waggon Road Restoration Project. This is one of the few areas where we are missing historic land surveys, so locating the CWR here is ongoing.

km 279.6

Elevation: 642 m

GPS: 52°19'55.89" N 122°15'44.04" W

Williams Lake Cut Off Road, aka Soda Creek Road on left. Also the turnoff for Xatsull Heritage Village. Turn left if you wish to visit the award-winning First Nations heritage site. Otherwise, continue north on Highway 97 for 2.8 km to Soda Creek Townsite Road (south entrance).

km 282.4

Elevation: 663 m

Junction. Soda Creek Townsite Road. Turn west/left and follow the road downhill. **Cyclists**, make sure you have a good set of brakes and tires for this steep, downhill grade on the gravel road.

km 286.3

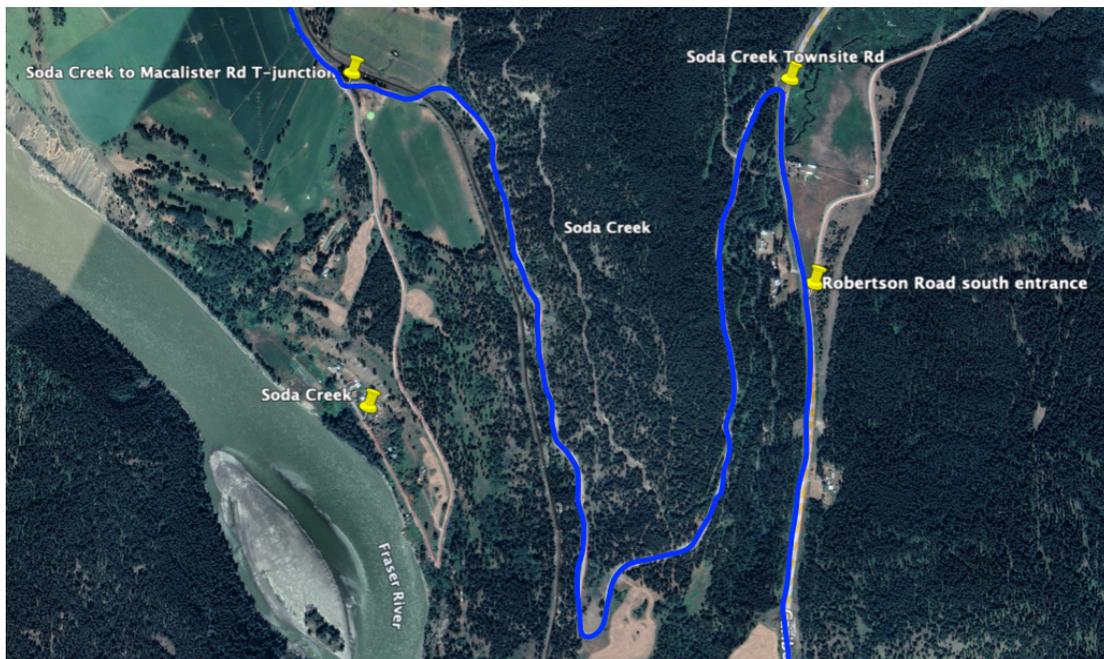
Elevation: 535 m

T-junction. Soda Creek–Macalister Road heads north and south here.

#### IMPORTANT NOTE

**Cyclists and trekkers**, turn north/right if you wish to travel through the hazardous slide area ahead, if the weather is fine and the slide area is passable. Be prepared to turn back if it is not. **TRAVEL THROUGH THE SLIDE AREA AT YOUR OWN RISK.**

**Motorists, YOU CANNOT DRIVE THROUGH THE SLIDE AREA.** Turn south/left and explore the historic townsite of Soda Creek. Return to Highway 97 and follow the **Alternate Route** of Robertson Road.



Soda Creek Townsite Road leads to the Soda Creek-Macalister Road  
And the historic townsite of Soda Creek.

## SIDE TRIP TO TOWNSITE OF SODA CREEK

To make a detour and visit the historic townsite of Soda Creek, follow the road down to the old village. Side trip is not included in total mileage.

Turn south/left at T-junction.

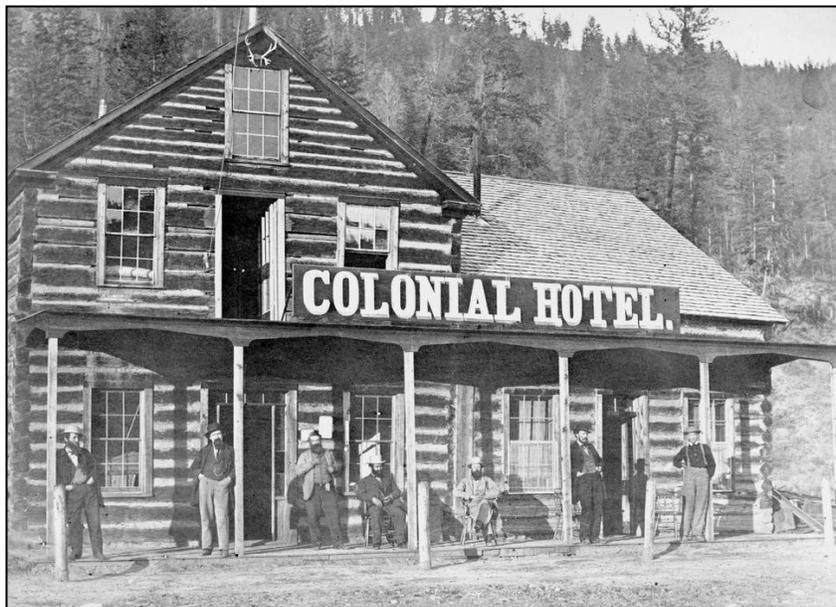
At 1.4 km, the road on right leads to the old Soda Creek Cemetery. There are many fascinating old stones from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Take some time to explore this historic cemetery.



An old headstone in the historic Soda Creek Cemetery

At km 1.5, the road makes almost 180° turn. Look through trees at the corner to your left; this is an old, overgrown remnant of the CWR.

At 2 km (elevation: 428 m) is the town site of Soda Creek. The road comes to a dead end in about 150 m at a private driveway. Explore area on foot, including old jail (on east side of road).



Well-known photograph of the Colonial Hotel, by Frederick Dally in 1868.  
The hotel was built by Robert McLeese in 1863.

A short history of Soda Creek, written in 1917 by Surveyor R.W. Hagan:

*"The original survey of this townsite was made in 1863 by one of the Royal Engineers; he showed the position of old buildings on his plan, and these buildings are still standing as portions of the present buildings. Though numerous patches show where fires have started, they seem to have a charmed life; and these buildings at Soda Creek are probably the oldest in the Cariboo."*



Soda Creek in 1942; many of the early buildings were still standing

Surveyor Hagan continued: *"The town came into existence at the time of the gold-rush in the late fifties; at that time a steamer was built at Soda Creek and operated between that point and Quesnel, at which place the road to Barkerville leaves the Fraser River. Being the foot of navigation, Soda Creek became a village of importance in the country, and was for some years used as a supply-point for the Chilcotin District, and also partially, for the Beaver Lake and Quesnel Forks Districts."*



Construction of the BX Monarch, which plied the waters from Soda Creek to Quesnel



BX Monarch on the water, ca 1901-1915  
Northern BC Archives & Special Collections

Surveyor Hagan continued: *“Until 1915 steamers continued to operate on the Fraser, and Soda Creek was the southern end of their run, so retained a certain amount of trade. After that, owing to a change in mail service, the steamer was replaced by a gasoline-launch plying between Quesnel and Fort George only, and today Soda Creek is practically without transportation and very little business centres there.*

*Soda Creek may be considered as the northern limit of the Dry Belt extending along the Fraser River. Fruit does well in the village, and corn and tomatoes can be ripened every year....”*



The CWR as it heads north towards Soda Creek, 1867

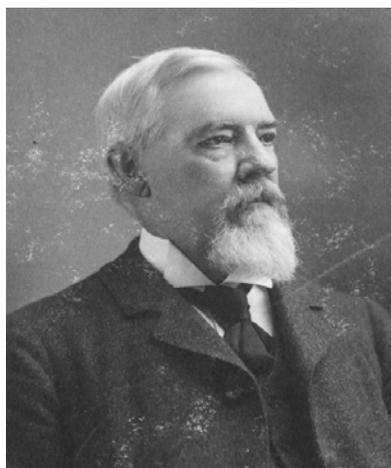
This route is out of commission now due to the removal of the Bailey bridge in 1991

Sarah Crease and her husband, the circuit judge, Henry Crease, continued their journey through the Cariboo and ended up at Soda Creek on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1880.

*“Went down very steep, winding, sandy road into Soda Creek – light rain. Thank God, arrived safely at 6 P.M. at Dunlevy’s house. Mrs. D. received us in her nice little parlour – with nurse and 2 children.”*

Kathryn Bridge, *“Henry & Self – The Private Life of Sarah Crease”*.

What Sarah Crease may not have known was that Peter Dunlevy also had a First Nations wife and several children living on his farm, just a few kilometres away (see km 287.6, p 137).



Peter Dunlevy (1833-1905)

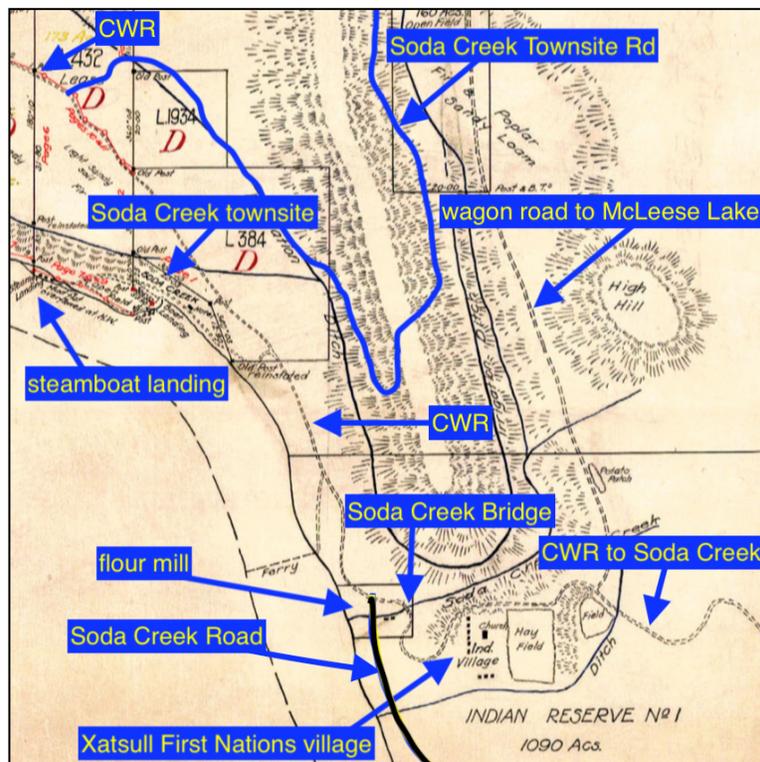
Thanks to the geology of the land where the old road is built – on the banks of the Fraser – stability of the road in many areas has been a problem over the years. A good example of losing a route thanks to Mother Nature, is the loss of the Soda Creek Bridge, (actually a bridge over the Soda Creek Valley), which meant cutting off a whole section of the CWR between Soda Creek and Xatsull Village.



The Soda Creek Bridge in 1901

Barb Scharf, of Hill Farm Nursery in Macalister, is very familiar with this stretch of the old road.

*“The old Soda Creek Bridge was replaced by a Bailey bridge, but it was removed in 1991, due to severe land movement affecting road safety, plus a number of structures in Xatsull village, located directly above the bridge area. The bridge was not replaced, as the area was considered too unstable to carry out repairs.*



Land Surveys map from 1914 with locations marked and modern road in blue

As can be seen in the map above, historically, travelers heading north could reach Soda Creek via two different routes. The CWR came from the east, while the Soda Creek Road came up from the south. The modern route to Soda Creek has created a very different approach to this historic area.

Barb Scharf continued: *"The current Soda Creek Townsite Road leading from Highway 97 down to Soda Creek–Macalister Road, was put in operation after the bridge closure in 1991. It utilized an existing irrigation service road maintained by Dunlevy Ranch (Kaufman family) and was improved for public use by the Kaufman's and other local residents and later taken over by MOTI (Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure) and improved to its current standards.*

*"I was very familiar with the bridge removal. We have lived in the area all our lives and were always happy to travel from Williams Lake all the way to Macalister without having to drive on the highway. Also, many of our friends lived along that stretch, from the Soda Creek townsite all the way to Macalister. We had a lot of great roadside conversations, delivered a lot of groceries and tractor parts, and in general appreciated the option to go by gravel versus pavement. With the bridge out, we saw the huge inconvenience to everyone to the north of the bridge, and the traffic on our end of the road became significantly busier."*



In its heyday, Soda Creek also had its own flour mill; 1897 photo.

Barb Scarf continued: *"The historic flour mill was located to the immediate south of the bridge; remains of the structures could still be seen in the ravine in the 1970s and 80s, though I believe they are all gone now. There was more severe erosion several years ago during the spring freshet and this area was severely impacted."*



This photo from the BC Archives is simply titled, "Soda Creek Stage".



An rare photo from this period, titled "Indian girls on horseback", Soda Creek, 1901  
Photo by surveyor, Frank Swannell



The old jail in Soda Creek is now mostly overgrown



Near the jail was a pacific-slope flycatcher with a big, hungry brood!

After exploring Soda Creek, head back to the T-junction. We return to the km mileage prior to the Soda Creek side trip. Add 4 km to your mileage to match up with mileages going forward.

km 286.3

T-junction. **Motorists**, turn east/right and head back up to Highway 97 and Robertson Road.

**Cyclists and trekkers**, continue straight to travel on the Soda Creek–Macalister Road.

As you travel through this road, note that it goes through private property, as it did 150 years ago. The only difference is during the Gold Rush, these farmlands, ranches and roadhouses were purposefully situated right next to the CWR to pick up passing trade from travelers to and from the gold fields.

Today's property owners may welcome travelers to their lands – or they may not. Respect all private property and no trespassing signs. If you wish to explore private lands, check with the landowner. Usually, there will be a ranch home and outbuildings, which are quite obvious along your route. A simple knock on the door, pleasant greeting and request may do the trick.

km 287.6

This ranch is the approximate location of the old Dunlevy Roadhouse, one of the most valuable farms in this area of the Cariboo. Dunlevy built his roadhouse right beside the Hudson's Bay Brigade Trail, which ran through his property here. The CWR was built directly on top of that historic trail.

For more information on the ranch, now owned by the Kaufman family, visit:

<https://www.sodacreeksweetcorn.com/about-the-farm>

The road gradually descends as it heads west, close to the river.



Ranchlands along the Soda Creek–Macalister Road  
Photo by Richard Wright

km 290.9

Elevation: 470 m

Soda Creek Ferry Road on left. This road now only leads to a few properties in the area. The reaction ferry went out of service in the late 1960s, after the Rudy Johnson bridge was built, 9.6 km (6 miles) downstream.

km 291.5

Elevation: 465 m

**SLIDE AREA. TRAVEL AT YOUR OWN RISK.**

In technical parlance this landslide is a “deep-seated rotational slide”. It occurred during spring flooding in 2020 and is one of many roads in the Cariboo that has suffered thanks to climate change.

The BC government website states: *“The very wet spring and summer months of the past couple of years, combined with snow melt and impacts of wildfires, have brought more water into the ground than normal and caused unprecedented slides and road washouts in 2020 and 2021.”* For this site in particular, *“a landslide occurred in 2020 and remains active. **Road is unsafe for public travel through the slide area.**”*

Barb Scharf and her neighbours along Soda Creek–Macalister Road are now dealing with another major problem impacting their local road: *“We are on the north side of the current slide, with most of our friends and neighbours on the south side, and it is a huge issue for all of us! No more running our tractor down to cut hay for Soda Creek neighbours. It has essentially cut our neighbourhood in half.”*

Where the Cariboo Waggon Road used to unite people and communities, these dramatic road closures are breaking them apart.

We traveled to the slide area from the north entrance of Soda Creek–Macalister Road in the summer of 2020 and it looked like this:



Soda Creek–Macalister Road slide looking west



Soda Creek–Macalister Road slide looking south



The slide area *has not been ground-truthed* as of this writing (March 2022), though we plan to ride it this season if it is passable and safe to do so. Watch for updates to see what it's like getting through on mountain bikes. Due to the slide, mileage from here to Edmunds Road may not be perfectly accurate as we traveled that section of the route from the other side. If you get through, you'll note a gradual ascent as you head north. There are views of the Fraser River through the trees.



Severe flooding seen here along the Fraser River in summer 2020

km 293.9

Elevation: 502 m

Junction. Edmunds Road (CWR) comes in on east/right side of the road. Turn right.

Though it appears as though Soda Creek–Macalister Road came first (as it continues straight ahead at this junction), recent research shows that Edmunds Road was the first of the two routes. The north end of Soda Creek–Macalister Road was put in after the railway.

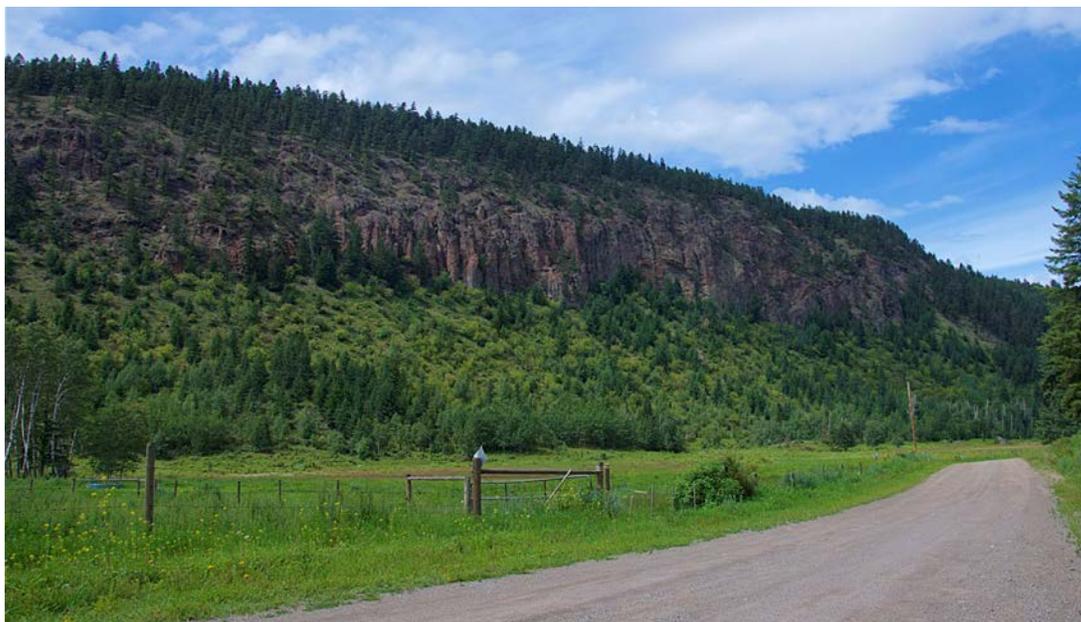
The road immediately crosses the railway, then continues through a mix of grasslands, forest, small mountains and private property on both sides of the road for the next 5 km.



The railway and Edmunds Road (aka CWR) travel side by side for 1.2 km

km 297.2

The road passes some beautiful cliffs reminiscent of the colourful cliffs at Chasm Provincial Park.



Cliffs along Edmunds Road are reminiscent of the cliffs at Chasm

km 299.6

At about this mark, one of the early routes of the CWR headed off through farmers' fields on the west/left side of road, cutting through the northeast corner of a large belt of trees. (This route is very easy to see on Google Earth.) The road originally went down through a gully and then continued. You can see this gully from the pullout on Highway 97 described at km 304.6.

Richard Wright has dug deeply with his research on this area of the CWR. Through oral history and survey records, he has confirmed Edmunds Road and the gully as the earliest leg of the CWR on this route.

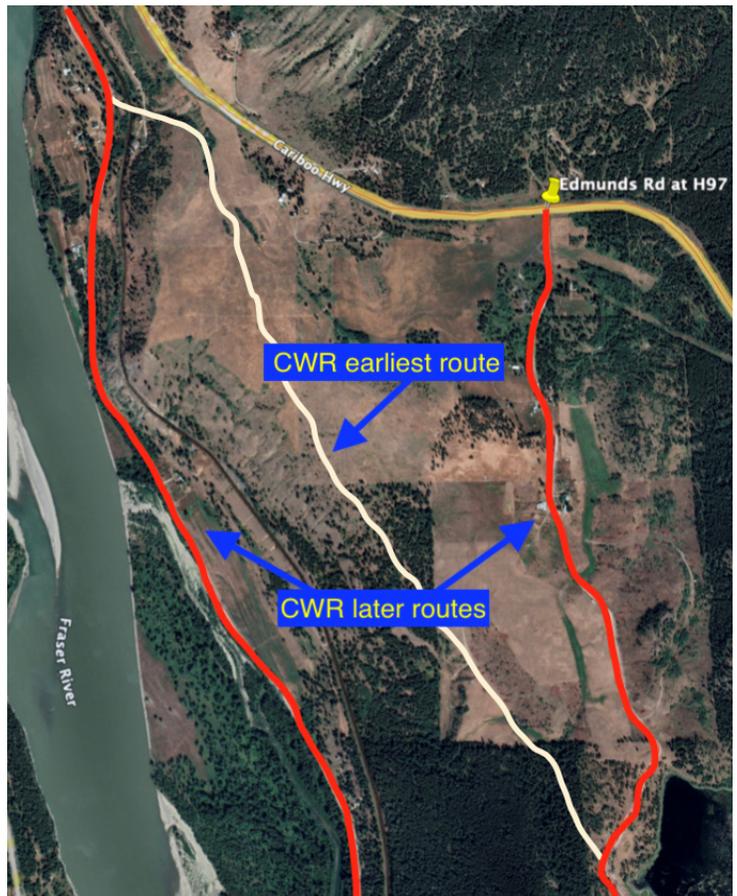
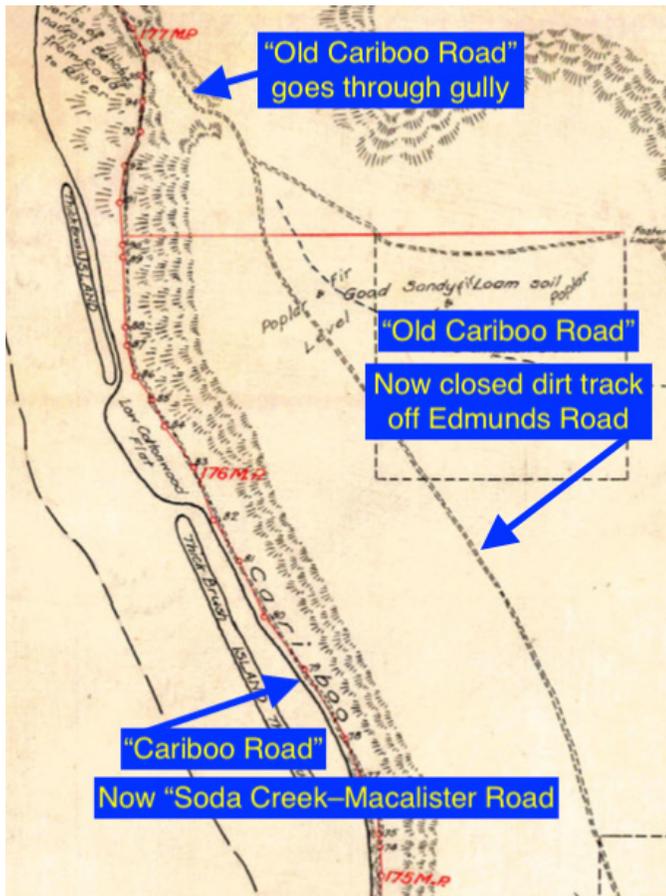
*"It was morning just before Christmas in 2019 when I got a call from Bob McDonald in Halifax, Nova Scotia. As I recall he confirmed that I was working on relocating the Cariboo Waggon Road and offered some information on the section from Soda Creek to Macalister. 'The road is not where folks think it was,' he said. 'The north end did not run along the river. It was too steep; that piece was not put in until the PGE Railway came through. I lived right there.'*

*"And this is how we gradually piece together the route we are locating. A story here, a sketch on paper there, a survey, or a phone call from Halifax – oral histories that tell the story of a road, a time and people.*

*"Bob explained that the original road left the river to head north-east around a bluff – on what is now called Edmunds Road. About half way up Edmunds, it headed north/left across present day fields, onto a bluff. I later wondered how it got off the bluff? Bob called back and the two of us huddled over Google Earth, thousands of miles apart, as he tracked the line for me and indicated where the road dropped back down to the river through a gully. Oral history. Bob knew because he lived right below that spot for many years. On Google we could see his grandfather's house.*

*"Bob told me, 'When they paved the new road down the hill north of McLeese Lake, we were the first to use it. We rode our bikes to the top of the hill and coasted, raced, all the way to the bottom on the first pavement we had experienced.'*

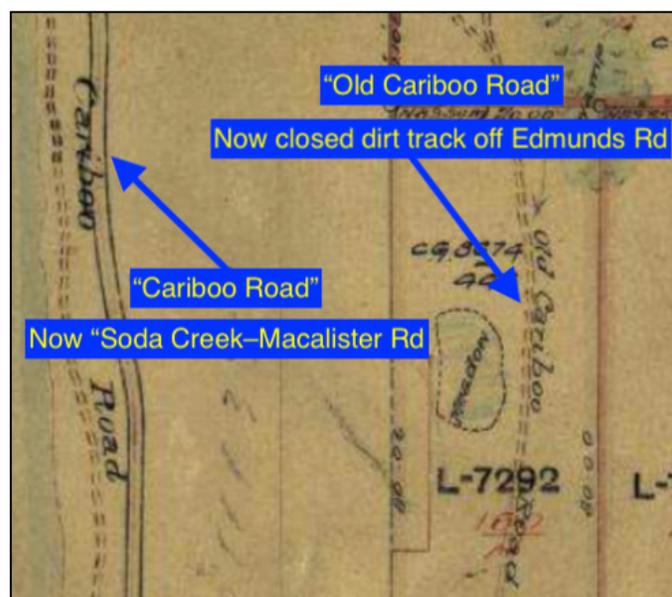
*"Two years later our project received a welcome batch of old maps from the vaults of Land Surveys in Victoria. They were surveys done in 1912-14. Magnificent maps with loads of detail. And there, delineated on the Soda Creek sheet, was the Edmunds Road/gully route clearly laid out: a documented survey corroborating Bob's oral history from thousands of miles away. And so we inch forward re-locating the route."*



1914 survey map and aerial map from Google Earth showing the earlier route vs. the newer routes

The Land Survey map by J.H Brownlee, shows the CWR as it was in 1914, along the river, and the older route around the bluff on Edmunds Road. The gully is indicated at the top of the map near MP 177.

District Lot below and Land Survey map above shows the newly favoured "Cariboo Road" vs. the "Old Cariboo Road", which was the earlier route.



1914 District Lot map showing the new "Cariboo Road" vs. the "Old Cariboo Road" It's east to see why there is so much confusion between all of the iterations of the road!

Junction. Edmunds Road and Highway 97. Turn west/left to continue heading north.

km 304.6

Elevation: 543 m

“Paddlewheels North” pullout here on south/left side of Highway 97. It’s worth a stop, if safe to turn when heading north. Great views of the Fraser River, over the pastures, CWR, railway 70 m below.

km 305.8

Spur Road to left and right and railway buildings on west side of highway.

km 306.1

Railway overpass.

km 306.2

Elevation:

Soda Creek–Macalister Road (north entrance) comes in on south/left side of highway. If you wish to take a detour south and explore this section of the old road, turn left. (The Edmunds Road turnoff came in about 8 km from the north entrance.) Otherwise, continue along Highway 97 to Fort Alexandria and points north.

km 311.3

Elevation: 484 m

Pullout on west/left side of Highway 97.



Route of the CWR north to Fort Alexandria

km 312.2

Hill Road; settlement of Marguerite. The CWR is basically underneath Highway 97 in this section of the route, passing through a mixture of ranchlands, pastures, woodlots, and a few sparsely populated, rural neighbourhoods, such as Marguerite.

km 314.8

Marguerite Rest Area on east/right side of Highway 97. At this point, the highway (and CWR) pass very close to the Fraser River.



Watch for the one-eyed sphinx moth in B.C.  
Photographed near the Marguerite Rest Area in summer 2020

km 315.7

Old Marguerite Reaction Ferry crossing. Nothing remains of the old ferry crossing here. The closure of this ferry in 2003 caused great hardship for the First Nations communities, ranchers and foresters who used it extensively for travel back and forth to the west side of the Fraser.

Joan Taillon of The Raven's Eye, an Indigenous online news publication, wrote about the fight to keep the ferry operating:

*"... Alexandria chief Violet Stump said there is broad support for keeping the ferry open as non-Natives also are affected. The Tsilqot'in National Government and Alexandria do not argue the ferry service is economically viable... but they argue it is within the fiduciary duty of both federal and provincial Crowns to provide the service. The chief said they can accept reduced hours, but the ferry must remain open so the band's office staff, forestry and agricultural workers can get to their jobs... In addition, there is the social cost to a geographically divided community, and a detrimental affect on their own and nearby non-Native businesses that depend on band members' and tourists' spending.*

*"The Ministry of Transportation... said it costs about \$125,000 a year to transport 7,800 vehicles and 16,000 passengers at a cost of \$16 per vehicle and \$8 per passenger. The ferry closes during freeze-up, approximately four months of the year, when people drive the West Fraser Road, a distance of 60 km, which the government considers reasonable...*

*"The band says what is unreasonable is that they were forced onto a reserve in the first place. Their protest was to draw attention to the fact that no right-of-way through the reserve in Tsilhq'otin territory has been settled with the province of British Columbia."*

The ferry service was withdrawn later that year.

As proof that nothing is ever wasted and no idea is ever new, this location was also a sternwheeler landing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Stephen Tingley had done brilliantly well as a stagecoach driver with on the CWR with his BC Express Company. Later, he turned his hand from horse power to water power – and sternwheelers. This was one of the many landing points for ships that he owned along with his partners in a company called the North British Columbia Navigation Company, which they founded in 1896.



Enlargement from 1914 Land Survey  
Tingley's Landing was at Mile Post 184

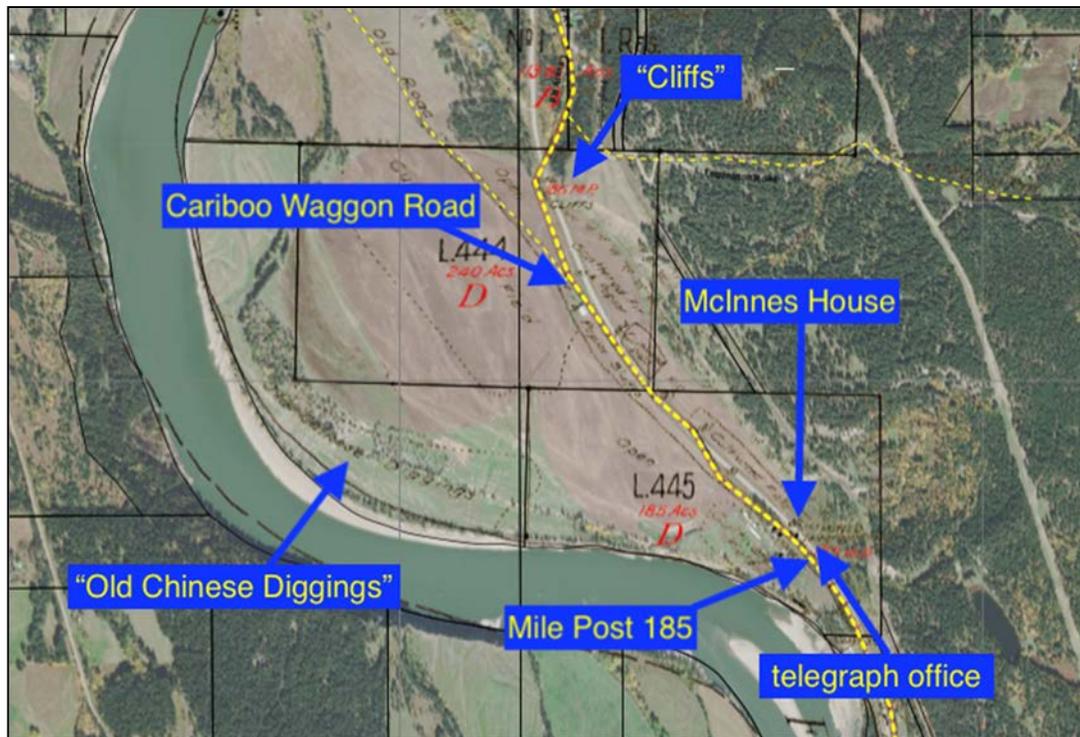


"Charlotte" sternwheeler, owned by Tingley & partners  
It plied the waters of the upper Fraser

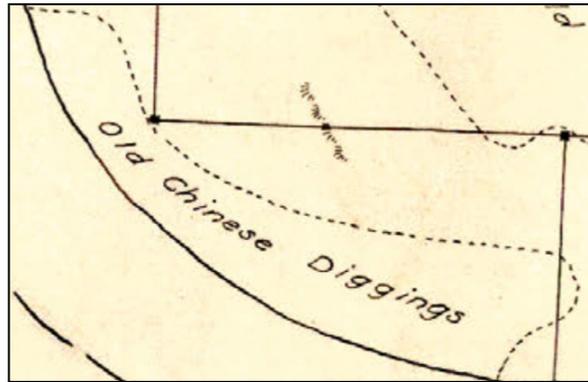
km 317.1

Location of McInnes House, an old roadhouse on the CWR. This roadhouse was owned and operated by Douglas McInnes (a Glasgow Scot) and his Irish wife, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Roddie. They had operated a boardinghouse in Barkerville but lost much of their property in the Great Fire of 1868. They tried again, operating a hotel in Van Winkle, on Lightning Creek.

Eventually, they moved with their children, pre-empting District Lots 444 and 445 near Alexandria and opened McInnes House in 1873. It was a popular stopping place for travelers over many years. The roadhouse was located around Mile Post 185 of the CWR.



Locations marked in blue show an area rich in people's history  
Aerial map overlaid on 1914 survey map by Tenorex GeoServices, Quesnel



Enlargement from 1914 Land Survey map

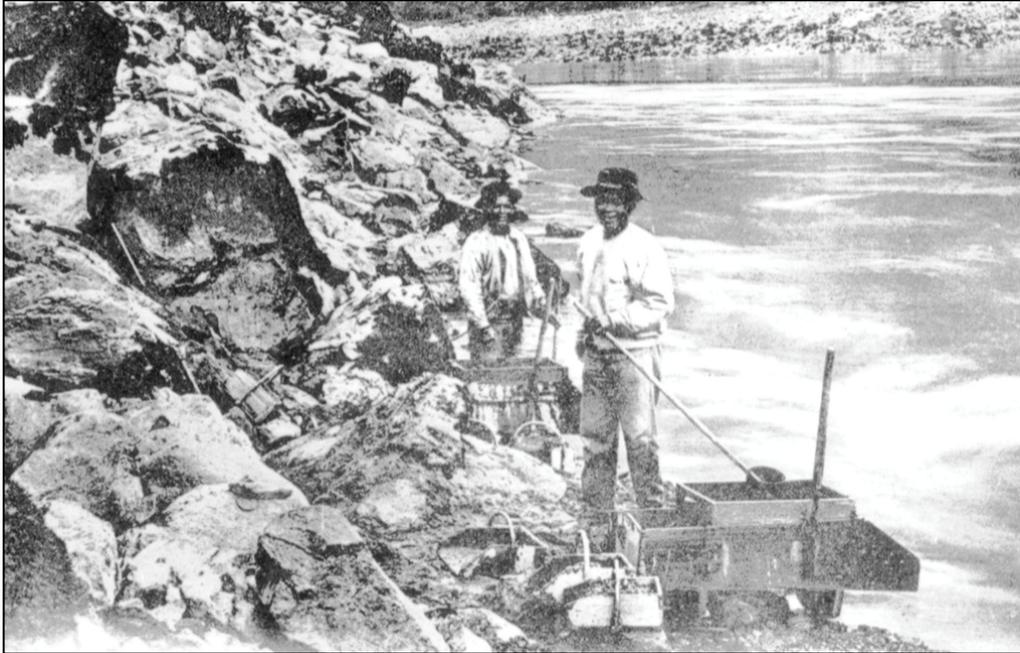
There are many areas along the Fraser where you can still see the remains of Chinese mining operations. Throughout the breadth of the Fraser River – from Hope and Yale on up the Fraser Canyon, in this region and onward to Likely, Quesnel Forks, and Barkerville, the Chinese came to find gold, and they were very good at it. Where Europeans sometimes gave up their placer claims, calling them “played out”, the Chinese continued working to discover gold.

*“China Diggings’ producing only ‘China Wages.’ That is how Caucasian miners referred to claims they considered worthless but which Chinese miners meticulously worked to show a profit. To the scorn of white miners, they would work for four dollars a day, half the usual rate, share a cabin with four others, and work the claims passed over by those looking for higher pay. Grubstake earned, they could then go into mining for themselves, methodically reworking old claims.”* Richard Wright, “Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields.”



“Chinese man washing gold, Fraser River”  
Photo by Richard Maynard, c. 1875

One of the main differences between the two cultures in terms of the gold mining experience was the Chinese generally sent their earnings home to families in China, specifically to Guangdong province, where the population was suffering from a great famine during this period.



Two Chinese miners working along the Fraser River during the Gold Rush

Many of the Chinese miners – the vast percentage of whom were men – came to the gold rush in BC having mined in California, where they were looking for “Gold Mountain” or Gum “Saan”. They found “Gold Mountain” in California, and along the Fraser River – and all the way up to Barkerville, where they became an important and influential part of the gold rush story.



Chinese labourers working on the roads (U.S. photo)

They also forged relationships with First Nations, building gold mining operations among their communities along the Fraser River. Sometimes, the miners stayed on and married into those First Nations communities.

In 2015, Henry Yu, a history professor at UBC, was assisting the BC government officially preserve and recognize a group of Chinese historic sites in the province. *“The Chinese dealt in reciprocal ways with*

*First Nations,” said Prof. Yu. “They didn’t take, they asked. They brought gifts, they shared foods. They did relationship-building.”*

Many Chinese stayed on in BC and their descendents are part of the province’s rich culture today.

km 318.4

Basalt rock columns, from a shield volcano, on east/right side of Highway 97. It is possible that another route of the CWR ran along the base of the columns. We need to do more research here. The location of the “Cliffs” (as described on survey map at km 317.1) was Mile Post 186 of the CWR.



Basalt rock columns on Highway 97 and possible CWR at the base

km 319.7

Fort Alexandria. A National Historic Site of Canada.

The actual site of the fort was close to the Fraser, so this cairn is in the wrong place. It is marking the general location only, but as this is First Nations Reserve land, the area is not accessible at this time.



The Fort Alexandria cairn is in the wrong place

There are a few old wooden structures standing behind a fence, remnants of another time.



An old building still stands near the Fort Alexandria cairn, but behind a fence

Fort Alexandria was designated a national historic site in 1925 due to its connection with the economic development of the country. The fort was built in 1821 as the northern terminus of the North West Company's Pacific Brigade Trail, and the last post established by the company west of the Rocky Mountains.

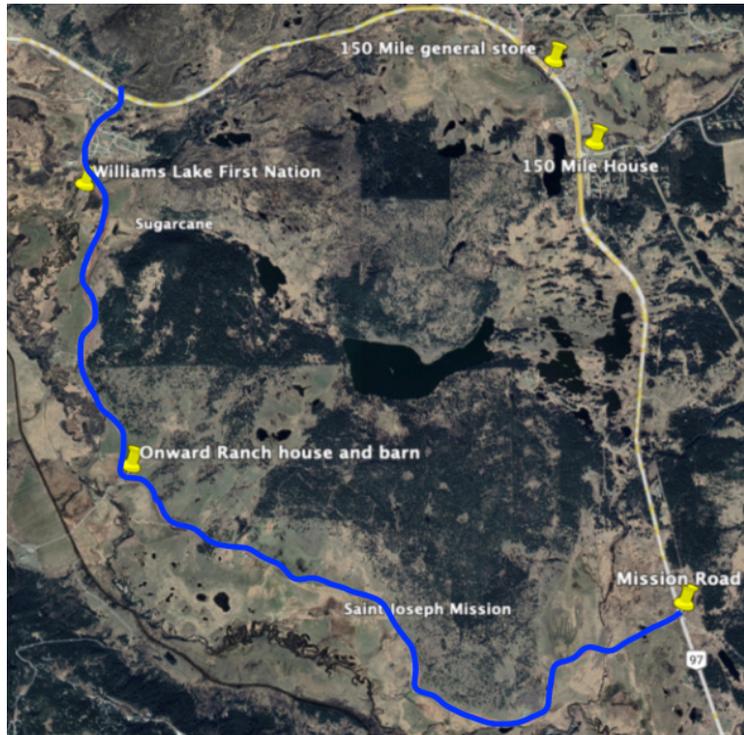
The first iteration of the Cariboo Waggon Road was completed to Fort Alexandria in 1863. By 1867, the fort was a farm supplying produce to Quesnel and miners heading north to Barkerville. The Hudson's Bay Company "relinquished" the property in 1881, as quoted on the National Historic Site of Canada website. One may assume this means the HBC gave the property to the First Nations as part of their Reserve. The buildings of the fort are long gone, having been demolished in 1915.

If it's a hot, sunny day and the café is open, grab an ice cream and or enjoy a sandwich and relax while you study your maps and decide how much farther you want to travel today.

End of the **Main Route** of the CWR in this chapter. We now describe the **Alternate Route**.

## THE ALTERNATE ROUTE: VIA MISSION ROAD, SODA CREEK ROAD, ROBERTSON ROAD & HIGHWAY 97

This route begins south of 150 Mile House at Mission Road, which was put through for ranchers as an easier alternative from 144 Mile to Williams Lake. The mileage begins at km 236 (from Chapter Three). Or skip Mission Road if you are already at 150 Mile and don't want to retrace your route. Note your mileage and continue following route directions through Williams Lake and on to Soda Creek Road.



Mission Road, the first leg of the route

The Mission Road was built after a letter was written and signed by 258 residents, then sent to several representatives in the Legislative Assembly for Cariboo District: *"We, the undersigned residents of Cariboo District, wish to bring before your notice the necessity of constructing a new piece of road, from, or near, the one hundred and forty-four mile post, Lake La Hache Valley, via Williams Lake Mission, [to] Williams Lake..."*

The residents went on to point out many advantages of having the road put in, including there being a route for farmers to take their produce to market, and *"...that a survey of the proposed road was made by Mr. Mahood in the spring of 1876, who we understand, made a favourable report... We would again urge you, as our representatives, to bring this matter before the House of Assembly, and use every effort in getting the road built as soon as possible."*

It worked. The road was built and has been in use ever since by ranchers, farmers, First Nations, the traveling public and others. Obviously, it didn't impress the engineers and builders of the modern Highway 97, as it was too circuitous for the main route north.

km 236

Elevation: 698 m

GPS: 52°03'54.32" N 121°55'05.42" W

Turn west/left on Mission Road. Follow the road as it travels through grasslands and hay fields. The road is paved, but with no centre line. It's 10.5 km to its northerly junction at Highway 97.



Western meadowlarks are common in BC grasslands



Turkey vultures are widespread across the southern quarter of BC  
Its range is expanding north of 51° latitude

This is an excellent birding location: it's listed at number 13 out of 100 sites for best birding in the Cariboo. In mid-August of 2021, we saw turkey vultures and a flock of meadowlarks. It would also be a good cycling route, being off Highway 97. While it is a narrow road with no shoulder, there is little traffic. A pastoral, scenic, country road.

km 236.6

Narrow bridge over creek.

km 238.8

St. Joseph Residential School and Cemetery on west/left side.

The Heritage BC website states: *"In 1886, St. Joseph became an Indian Residential school and remained one until it burned down in 1957. All that remains of the building is its foundation. The historic cemetery also remains. In 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada issued an apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools system, acknowledging that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language."*

This residential school is also the birthplace of "Orange Shirt Day", which has become a national statutory holiday on September 30<sup>th</sup>, with the official title, "National Day for Truth and Reconciliation".

The cemetery at this site was the first in the area of Williams Lake and many early, non-Indigenous pioneers were buried here, including Peter Dunlevy.

For more information, visit <https://www.orangeshirtday.org>

BC Government news release: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022IRR0006-000111>

km 240

Elevation: 645 m

Large hay fields and pastures are part of the 4500 acre Onward Ranch. Now owned and operated by Ingrid and Ty Johnston, they focus on cattle, as well as beekeeping and horses. The origins of the ranch go back to 1867 and Charles Eagle, who with his First Nations wife, Anna Tatkwa, built the first log cabin on the property. They raised 10 children on the ranch, had a general store, a steam engine sawmill, and in 1886, built "Onward House". The house and large barn (well known in the region for its distinctive design) are still in use today by the present owners, the Johnston family.

For information on the Onward Ranch, visit: <https://www.onwardranch.ca>  
<https://farmfolkcityfolk.ca/2021/04/onward-ranch/>



Onward House, built 1886

km 242.2

Elevation:

Junction. Felker Road comes in straight ahead as Mission Road curves to the west/left, then north/right. Continue as the road winds through small ranch holdings.



The large barn at Onward Ranch, built 1911

As you pass travel this route, there is more evidence from the massive 2017 wildfires, with blackened, scorched trees throughout the area.

km 245.4

Borland Creek Bridge. Mission Road passes through the Sugar Cane First Nations Reserve, part of the greater Williams Lake First Nation, members of the Secwepemc (Shuswap) Nation.

Get to know the Williams Lake First Nation here: <https://www.wlfn.ca>

km 245.7

Elevation: 590 m

Sugar Cane Development Corporation on left. This organization fosters business relationships and economic opportunities for the Williams Lake First Nation. It is also the parent entity for Sugar Cane Archaeology, Sugar Can Medical Services, Sugar Cane Security and Sugar Cane Environmental.

For more information, visit: <https://www.sugarcanedevcorp.ca>

Just ahead are two First Nations cemeteries on the left as Mission Road curves northeast.

km 246.4

Elevation: 627 m

GPS: 52°06'41.27" N 121°59'26.45" W

Junction. Mission Road and Highway 97. Turn left to continue on Highway 97, as it heads west towards Williams Lake.

For cyclists and walkers, note there are recent highway improvements in this area, including 4-lanes with lots of shoulder heading north.

km 247.7

First Nations gas station and campsite on north/right side of highway.

As you travel on the route in springtime, watch for carpets of arrowleaf balsamroot blooming along the hillsides south of Williams Lake. For those who wish to grow them either for medicinal reasons or their simple beauty, collecting from the wild is not recommended, as it's difficult to dig a good root system. A better bet is to plant seeds and then be patient as it takes several years to grow to maturity and flower.



Arrowleaf balsamroot bloom in the spring on the hillsides south of Williams Lake

km 250.4

Williams Lake Rest Area.



Highway 97 from Mission Road junction to Tourism Info Centre, Williams Lake

km 254.3

Elevation: 602 m

Tourism Discovery Centre on east/right side of highway. For those who wish to take some time here, this is a good place to stop for more information on the area. After your visit, continue on Highway 97 for 1.5 km.

Williams Lake is surrounded by lakes, ranchlands and has been a strong force in the region for over a century. It lies within the Secwepemc traditional territory whose neighbours are the T'exelcenc First Nation (Williams Lake Indian Band) and Xat'sull First Nation (Soda Creek Indian Band). Many Tsilhoqot'in (Chilcotin) people also live in the city. It is the heart of ranching country.

Originally bypassed in 1863 by the CWR, it owed its later success to the Pacific Great Eastern (PGE) Railway that arrived in 1919, as it became a hub for mining, forestry and transportation. It's famous for the Williams Lake Stampede, which is the second largest professional rodeo in Canada.

Williams Lake features:

- First Nations traditional territory
- Named after Secwepemc Chief William
- Founded: 1860
- Incorporated: 1929
- Population: 10,947 (2021 census)
- Primary industries: forestry, mining & ranching
- Airport & transit system
- Hospital
- Grocery stores & gas stations
- University satellite campus
- Several radio stations
- Livestock auction

- Cafes & restaurants
- Recreation centre
- Gallery & arts centre
- Arts & culture events
- Parks & trails
- Hotels & motels, B&B's
- Camping & RV sites
- Turnoff for Highway 20 and the Chilcotin region
- Supply centre for surrounding ranches
- Recreation: swimming, cross country skiing, horseback riding, ice-skating, mountain biking, boating, canoeing, snowmobiling, golfing, whitewater rafting, snowshoeing, skateboarding, hiking, back-riding, wildlife viewing and more.



Another early route through Williams Lake

For more information visit: <https://www.williamslake.ca/441/About-Williams-Lake>

If you wish to camp with your trailer/RV downtown, try the stampede grounds. For more information visit <https://williamslakestampede.com/campground>

Cyclists: Williams Lake is a mountain biking centre, so there are several bike shops in town.

km 256.1

MacKenzie Ave South on left. Take this turn and follow for .7 km. This route skirts the edge of the downtown core and continues through the industrial area to Soda Creek Road.

If you are interested in doing a nature walk, take the MacKenzie turnoff, then a quick, hard angle left turn on Borland Road to Scout Island Road and the nature centre. This is a great place to spot white pelicans in spring as they make their way to breeding grounds in the Chilcotin at White Pelican Provincial Park. These magnificent birds are on the Endangered Species List for BC.

For more information visit <https://scoutisland.ca>, <https://www.birdatlas.bc.ca/>  
<http://britishcolumbia.com/things-to-do-and-see/parks-and-trails/cariboo-chilcotin-coast/white-pelican-provincial-park/>



American White Pelicans stop over at Scout Island, Williams Lake

This route now leaves Highway 97. While the route ahead is not far in mileage to the next junction with the highway (approximately 45 km), the road does have a somewhat remote vibe. Plus, once on the Soda Creek Road, there are no gas stations, so make sure you fill up your tank. Also fill up on water.

km 256.8

Elevation: 576 m

Junction. Highway 20. Go through intersection and continue on MacKenzie Avenue South. As it swings around and heads north, the name changes to MacKenzie Avenue North.

The Williams Lake Stampede grounds are on the right about 160 m after the intersection.

Visit <https://williamslakestampede.com> for more information on the schedule of events. As of this writing (Feb 2022), most restrictions on events have been lifted, and the website states it will be going ahead. Proof of vaccination will be required for entry (12+) as per Provincial Health Order (Feb 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022).

km 258

Station House Gallery & Gift Shop on left. This former station house of the PGE Railway was built in 1919 and is considered by some to be the oldest building in Williams Lake. It fell into disrepair but was saved by concerned citizens and re-opened as the Station House Gallery in 1981.

For more information visit <https://www.stationhousegallery.com>

km 258.2

Borland Avenue on right. Continue on MacKenzie Avenue North. Cyclists should use sidewalk as there is **no shoulder** – or take the lane.

The route begins to shift from the feeling of the downtown into a mix of light industrial and housing. The railway follows along the route at the edge of the city.

km 258.7

Comer Street on right. Continue along MacKenzie Avenue.

If you wish to take a side trip along the Williams Lake River Valley Trail, park at the Comer Street entrance and make your way down to the river valley and enjoy a popular area for walking, running, mountain biking, horseback riding, as well as wildlife viewing. It appears that the recreation site near the Fraser River is closed; however, a large portion of the trail seems to be open.

For more information, see “Trails of the Southern Cariboo”, by Colin Campbell.

Or visit <https://www.williamslake.ca/481/Williams-Lake-River-Valley-Trail>  
<http://www.sitesandtrailsbc.ca/search/search-result.aspx?site=REC2987&type=Site>

km 260.8

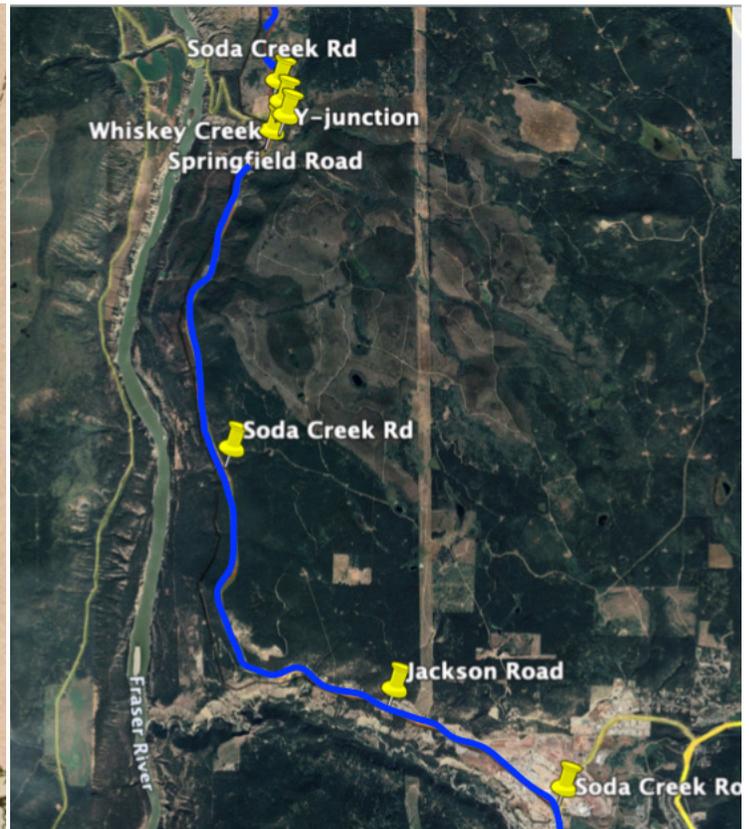
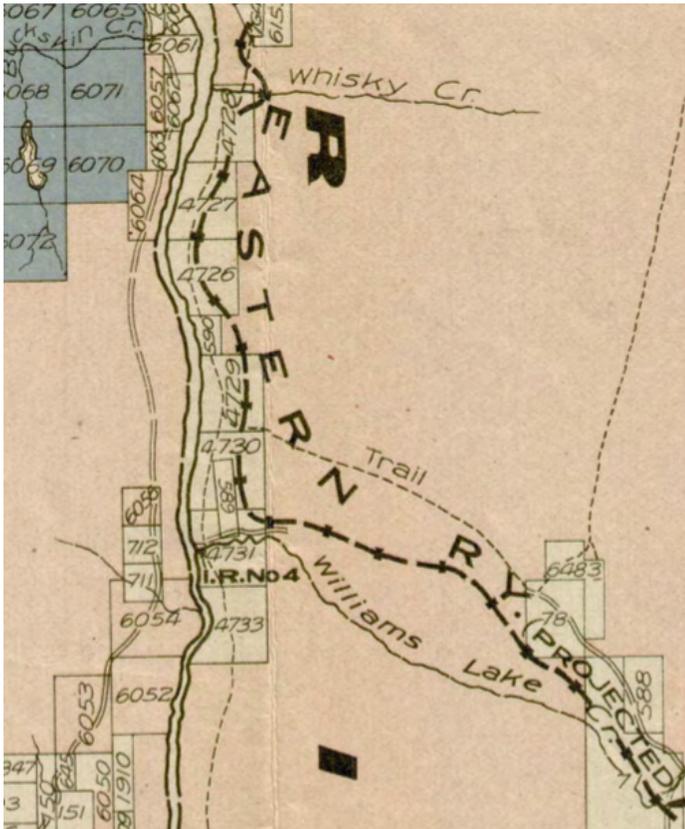
This general area of Williams Lake is known as the “Dairy Fields”, after a family that operated the “Primrose Dairy” in the 1940s.

There is a great deal of history in the region, going back to First Nations people who inhabited the country at least 3500 years ago. For several hundred years, the Secwepemc (Shuswap) had a village here, along with a cemetery, but were displaced by Europeans who came to settle the area during the gold rush era. As settlers were pre-empting their land in the early 1860s, roughly half of the regions’ First Nations were dying of smallpox. Also in 1863, Judge Begbie sentenced four Secwepemc men to death for killing two Italians. They were hanged in the jail at the Dairy Fields. Eventually, the Sugar Cane Indian Reserve lands (on the Mission Road loop as described at km 245.4) were purchased by the federal government and the Williams Lake band settled there.

Meanwhile, many of the new settlers created ranches, roadhouses and produced excellent crops. Over the years, the ranches and roadhouses have changed hands many times. With the coming of the PGE railway in 1919, the town of Williams Lake was born.

In the 1970s, the site of the “Primrose Dairy” became protected as archaeological evidence of human remains was discovered. The sites, including burial grounds, are now registered under the Archaeological and Historical Site Protection Act. In recent years, investigations have discovered several more significant prehistoric and historic remains.

The Williams Lake Indian Band filed a Village Site claim with the federal government in 1994 and in 2018, the Supreme Court accepted the claim that the Secwepemc people had been displaced from their land 150 years ago.



1914 pre-emption map with route marked as "Trail" and modern route today along Soda Creek Road  
 km 261.8

Elevation: 620 m

Junction. Soda Creek Road. Turn west/left and follow the road as it heads towards the Fraser and then swings north.

On right, immediately after turnoff there is a large logging operation run by Tolko Industries, a large forest products company that was founded in BC during the 1950s. This part of the road is heavily used by industry.

km 262.9

Railway spur crossing. The road is paved, two-lane here.

km 263.9

The road deteriorates as route leaves the industrial area and heads northwest.

km 265

Elevation: 636 m

Jackson Road on left. Railway also on left, next to the road. Comer Hill Estates Mobile Home Park on right. Continue along Soda Creek Road.

The road has no shoulder or centre line, though it is two lanes wide, as it begins to climb. Lots of sloughing on other side of the Fraser River. Williams Lake Creek and the popular River Valley Trail can be seen in the valley 100 m below.

km 267.3

Elevation: 736 m

Nearing the top of the hill. Resource roads on left and right. Look back to see Williams Lake. Note the railway down the hill. This route gives spectacular views of the Fraser River. The road now turns north as it continues hilly and winding, but there is virtually no traffic – a terrific cycling route!

As you travel along the CWR, watch out for the Red Squirrel. It can be found throughout coniferous and mixed forest habitats, feeding on conifer seeds as its main food source. Watch for them particularly in areas with high concentrations of lodgepole pine, white spruce and Douglas fir. The Red Squirrel is a common small mammal and its population is not at risk at this time.



The red squirrel is common across BC and coniferous forests of North America

km 267.8

Elevation: 751

Height of land. The road continues at around this elevation for the next several km, dipping down a bit, then coming back up again. Heading through forested areas and cutblocks. The railway winds along, often close to the road at various locations.

Km 269.6

Elevation: 738 m

The road now begins heading down.

km 272.6

Elevation: 688 m

Small pullout on left. The road continues its gradual descent.

km 274.2

Ranch properties on left and right here, at km 275.4 and at km 276. The elevation drops from 662 m to 652 m.

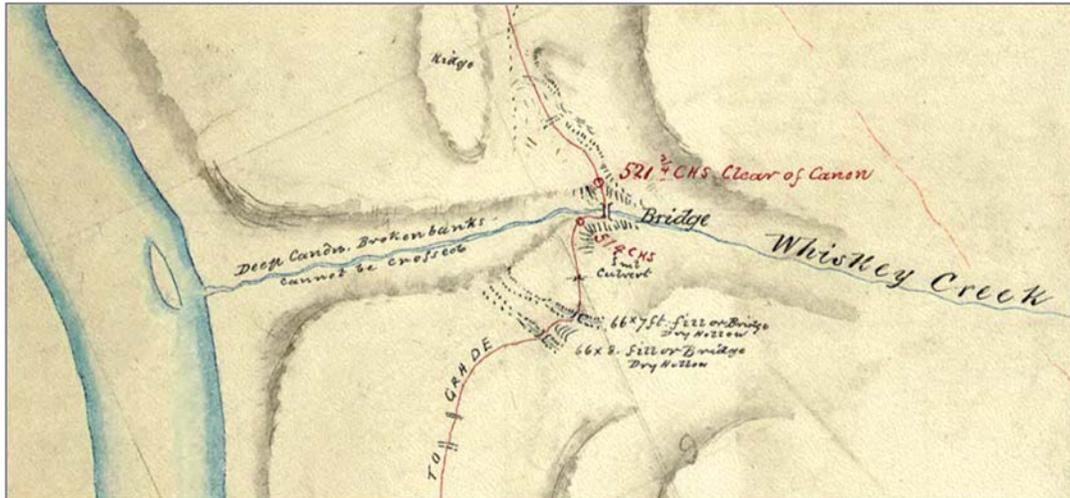
km 276.5

Elevation: 634 m

Springfield Road on left. Named for the large cattle ranch in the area, Springfield Ranch, which got its start during the early days of the gold rush. Today, the ranch extends on both sides of the Fraser and includes Springfield Ranch and Buckskin Ranch. The ranch has three breeds: Black and Red-Angus and

Hereford; grass, alfalfa, oats, barley and corn are all grown as forage crops for the cattle. The ranch is self-sufficient; no other feed is necessary to purchase for their herd.

For more information visit <https://www.springfield-ranch.com>



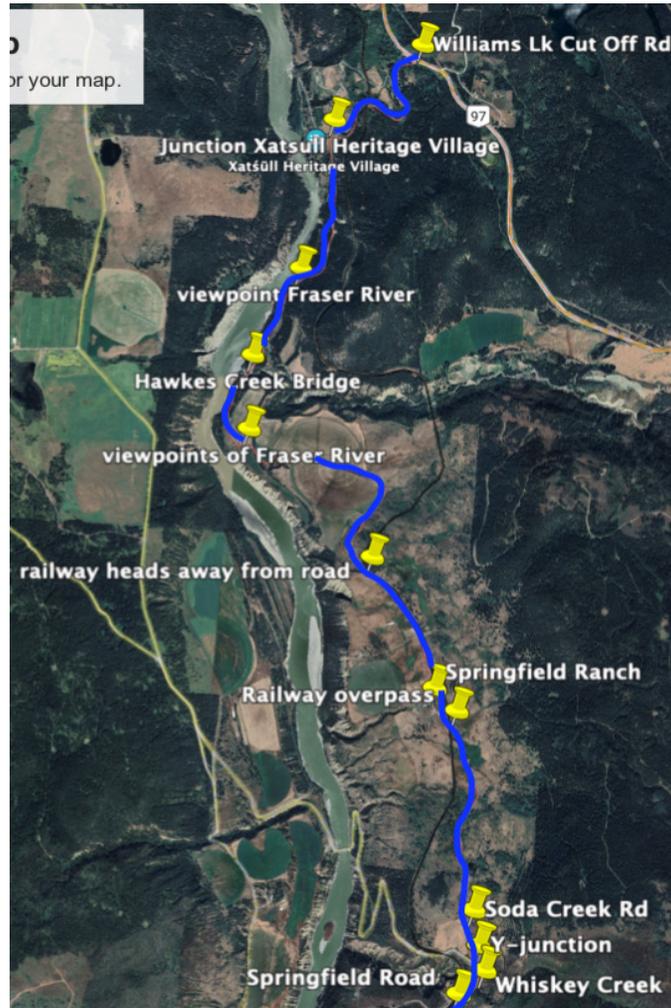
1878 map of the area, including Whiskey Creek and the Fraser River

km 276.9

Elevation: 650 m

Whiskey Creek. In the early days, a bridge was put in to cross this creek. Over the years, the bridge was replaced by filling in that section of the creek with earth, and putting in a culvert. The road was partially washed out during a flooding event in April 2020 but was repaired.

Here is a video of the flooding damage that occurred at the time: <https://vimeo.com/411679824>



Aerial view of Soda Creek Road, aka Williams Lake Cut Off Road, from Whiskey Creek to Highway 97

km 277.1

Elevation: 653 m

Y-junction. Take the **right fork** to continue on Soda Creek Road. The road north from here is signed as Williams Lake Cut Off Road; however, many locals still consider it to be the Soda Creek Road. Pavement turns to gravel here. Road is hilly and winding.

The left fork is Stack Valley Road and heads down to the Fraser River and the Rudy Johnson Bridge, which replaced the Soda Creek Road ferry (farther upriver) in 1968.

The bridge was originally paid for and put in by a local rancher, Rudy Johnson. He learned that the Alaska Department of Highways had a surplus bridge available, so he arranged with his bank to finance the \$40,000 price tag and bought the bridge. It had 3300 pieces, which were transported by rail to a dock in Alaska, then shipped to Prince Rupert, then by rail to Prince George and on to Williams Lake, where they were trucked up to the Soda Creek ferry site. The bridge was built by Dominion Bridge, with concrete footings poured by Johnson. Initially, many were skeptical of his scheme, but eventually all the logging companies were on board, as it opened up thousands of km for logging on the west side of the Fraser. Seven years later the government bought the bridge from Rudy Johnson, but kept the name.

km 279.5

Elevation: 608 m

Railway overpass. Springfield Ranch on left. Continue along Williams Lake Cut Off Road, aka Soda Creek Road.

Springfield Ranch began as a large parcel of land in 1862 pre-empted by speculators. There were several owners over the years, including John Francis Hawke of Ohio. By 1866, he and his partner eventually had over a thousand acres and their home, called, "The Springs" had become a popular stop for travelers. Eventually, Hawkes changed the name to Springfield Ranch after his hometown in Ohio.

The railway travels alongside Soda Creek Road. The road continues through mixed conifers, deciduous trees and grasslands.

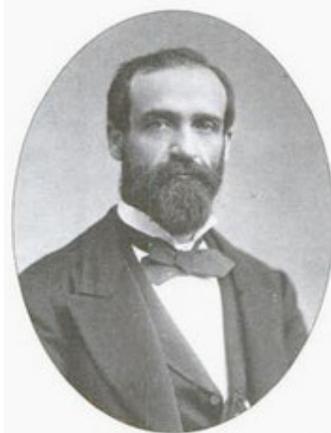
km 281.2

Elevation: 597 m

The railway now turns away from the road and heads slightly northeast. The road continues ahead, takes a turn northeast, then almost due west.



Springfield Ranch began as a stopping place for travelers during the gold rush era



John Francis Hawkes of Springfield Ranch, 1870s

km 282.2

Elevation: 550 m

The road comes out of the trees and heads through pasturelands of Springfield Ranch. Elevation continues to drop as the route heads north.

km 283.8

Elevation: 511 m

Ranch lands on both sides. Respect private property. Viewpoints of the Fraser River along here. The road continues descending as it heads downhill towards Hawks (Hawkes) Creek (also known as Deep Creek) Bridge. Named after John Francis Hawkes, early owner of Springfield Ranch.

km 284.4

Elevation: 418 m

Junction. Road on left, 400 m before bridge, leads to recreation site near banks of Fraser River. Ahead is Hawks (Hawkes) Creek Bridge.



Crossing Hawks (Hawkes) Creek Bridge as we continue ground-truthing the route

km 285.7

Viewpoint of Fraser River. A few hoodoos and sedimentary banks. Road is hilly and winding as it continues through coniferous forest.



Fraser River viewpoint around km 285.7 along Williams Lake Cut Off Road, aka Soda Creek Road

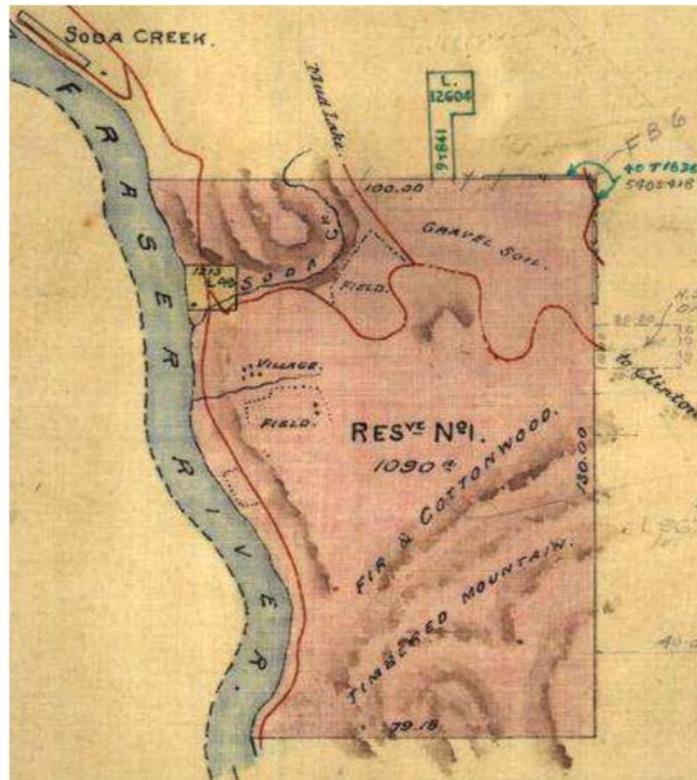
km 287.5

Elevation: 510 m

T-Junction. Xatsull Heritage Site Way and Williams Lake Cut Off Road are ahead. If you wish to take a side trip to Xatsull Heritage Village, head west/left for 1.5 km to the heritage site. Otherwise, head east/right for 1.8 km to junction of Highway 97. Our route heads to the highway.

50 m after the heritage site turnoff, a road comes in on the left, leading to the town site of Xatsull. Continue heading east/right to the highway. The CWR traveled through some of the First Nations lands here, though the precise location of the road is not clear.

For more information on Xatsull Heritage Village visit <https://www.xatsullheritagevillage.com>.



Indian Reserve #1, near Soda Creek, as set out by the provincial government in the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Xatsull First Nation has never ceded any of its land or territorial claims.

### IMPORTANT NOTE

The First Nations and colonial communities who lived near each other in this area shared the name “Soda Creek” in many ways.

The First Nations community lives on the banks of the Soda Creek Valley. This community now goes by the name, “Xatsull”, while the colonial settlement is called Soda Creek. The two communities are less than 2 km apart as the crow flies. Also, there are three roads in this area that have “Soda Creek” as part of their name. It’s very confusing. There is Soda Creek Road, which we have just described, coming north from Williams Lake. By the time it joins up with Highway 97, it has been renamed Williams Lake Cut Off Road. Ahead, there is Soda Creek Townsite Road, which has a south and north entrance, both of which lead to the Soda Creek–Macalister Road and in fact, these two names seem to be somewhat interchangeable on the signage.

Watch out for these different roads with similar names, and good luck!

km 288.1

Elevation: 560 m

Railway overpass. Road winds uphill; heading north this is a long climb.

km 288.8

Elevation: 597 m

Road to the left. This is a side road into the town site of Xatsull. Continue to highway.

km 289.2

Elevation: 642 m

GPS: 52°19'55.89" N 122°15'44.04" W

Junction. Williams Lake Cut Off Road, aka Soda Creek Road and Highway 97. Travel 2.2 km north on the highway to Robertson Road (south entrance).



The two routes ahead join up briefly before diverging

The **Main Route** heads to Soda Creek while the **Alternate Route** heads to Robertson Road

km 291.4

Elevation: 660 m

Junction. Robertson Road. Turn right and follow this very scenic, pleasant route as it winds through forest edges, pastures, grasslands and lightly populated, rural neighbourhoods for the next 9 km.

km 294

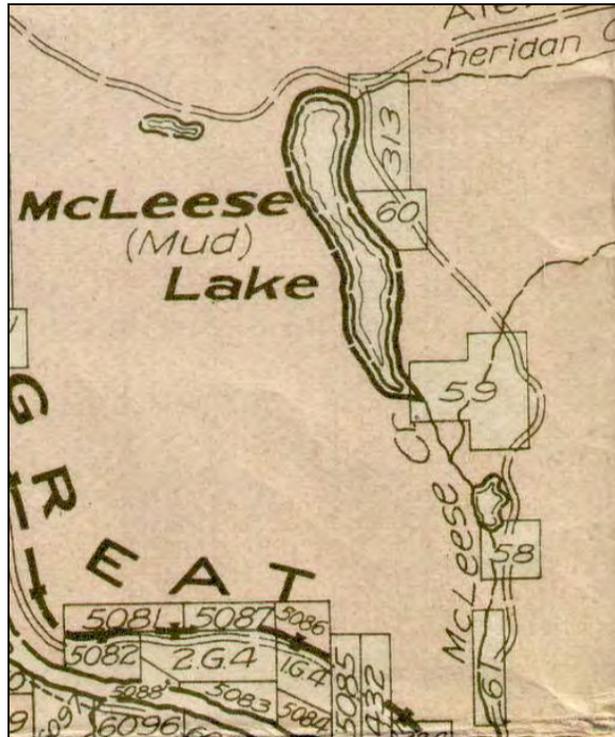
Elevation: 675 m

Duckworth Lake on left.

km 294.9

Elevation: 678 m

Dunlevy Road on left. Named for early gold rusher/pioneer, Peter Dunlevy. (For more info, see Chapter Three, page 104, of the guide, or km 287.6, p 137 in this chapter.)



1914 pre-emption map showing the old road (now Robertson Road) heading up to McLeese Lake

km 295.1

Collins Road on right.

km 295.2

Elevation: 683 m

Cattleguard. Continue along the road as it passes forested areas and pastureland. The road gradually climbs, then drops down again, as it heads towards the junction with Highway 97.



View along Robertson Road (km 299.6) looking south

km 299.6

Elevation: 715 m

The old McLeese Lake Elementary School (on left) has not been in use for a long while. It's considered, "surplus property" by School District 27, and in February 2020, the trustees voted to seek approval from the Ministry of Education to dispose of the property. How times change. A thriving schoolhouse is now an empty shell waiting for "disposal".

km 300.5

Elevation: 681 m

Junction. Highway 97. Turn right and continue north (actually west at this section of the route).

McLeese Lake General Store is at the junction. There are a couple of motels, RV and camping sites nearby. Swimming in the lake is a wonderful treat on hot summer days.

This area is also good for bird watching. There was a lot of activity from songbirds along Robertson Road (near the highway junction) in July 2020. I was fortunate to get photographs of a lincoln sparrow, a pair of western tanagers and an orange-crowned warbler (interior west population).



Orange-crowned warbler



Lincoln's sparrow



Western tanager male (at left) and female (at right) feeding on Saskatoon berries

km 301.2

Beaver Lake Road on right. Continue on Highway 97.

One of the forks off this road leads to Gibraltar Mines. Beaver Lake Road was originally a route to Quesnel Forks.

km 301.4

Elevation: 681 m

McLeese Lake Rest Area. Continue on Highway 97, passing a couple of resorts.

The highway heads downhill as it winds west towards the Fraser River, then turns north again and generally follows the river north up to Quesnel. This would be a long, steep climb heading south!

km 307.1

Elevation: 601 m

Edmunds Road comes in on south/left side of highway. To take a detour and explore this original remnant of the CWR, turn south/left. Otherwise, continue along Highway 97.

EDMUNDS ROAD SIDE TRIP will be described at the end of the **Alternate Route**.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE**

At this point, we join the **Main Route** and use the mileage at the junction from the **Main Route** as we continue north to Fort Alexandria. The “new” mileage at this junction is now km **300.3**. Subtract 6.8 km from your total mileage to match up with the continuing mileages ahead.

As you head north, only basic mileage and information will be listed here. For complete details of this lap to Fort Alexandria, see km 304.6-319.7 (pages 142-148) of the **Main Route**.

### **km 300.3**

Edmunds Road junction with Highway 97. Continue heading north.

km 304.6

Elevation: 543 m

“Paddlewheels North” pullout here on south/left side of Highway 97. It’s worth a stop, if safe to turn when heading north. Great views of the Fraser River, over the pastures, CWR, railway 70 m below.

km 305.8

Spur Road to left and right and railway buildings on west side of highway.

km 306.1

Railway overpass.

km 306.2

Elevation:

Soda Creek–Macalister Road (north entrance) comes in on south/left side of highway.

km 311.3

Elevation: 484 m

Pullout on west/left side of Highway 97.

km 312.2

Hill Road; settlement of Marguerite. The CWR is beneath Highway 97 in this section of the route.

km 314.8

Marguerite Rest Area on east/right side of Highway 97. At this point, the highway (and CWR) pass very close to the Fraser River.

km 315.7

Old Marguerite Reaction Ferry crossing. Nothing remains of the old ferry crossing here. The closure of this ferry in 2003 caused great hardship for the First Nations communities, ranchers and foresters who used it extensively for travel back and forth to the west side of the Fraser.

km 317.1

Location of McInnes House, an old roadhouse on the CWR.

This roadhouse was owned and operated by Douglas McInnes (a Glasgow Scot) and his Irish wife, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Roddie. It was a popular stopping place for travelers over many years. The roadhouse was located around Mile Post 185 of the CWR.

There are many areas along the Fraser River where you can still see the remains of Chinese mining operations. Many Chinese miners found gold along the Fraser – and all the way up to Barkerville. They also forged relationships with First Nations, sometimes marrying into those communities. Many Chinese stayed on in BC and their descendents are part of the province’s rich culture today.

km 318.4

Basalt rock columns, from a shield volcano, on east/right side of Highway 97. It is possible that another route of the CWR ran along the base of the columns.

km 319.7

Fort Alexandria. A National Historic Site of Canada.

The actual site of the fort was close to the Fraser, so this cairn is in the wrong place. It is marking the general location only, but as this is First Nations Reserve land, the area is not accessible at this time. Fort Alexandria was designated a national historic site in 1925, but the buildings of the fort are long gone, having been demolished in 1915.

If it’s a hot, sunny day and the café is open, grab an ice cream and or have a home cooked meal or sandwich and relax while you study your maps and decide how much farther you want to travel today.

End of the **Alternate Route** in this chapter. We now describe Edmunds Road Side Trip.

#### EDMUNDS ROAD SIDE TRIP – VIA EDMUNDS ROAD AND SODA CREEK–MACALISTER ROAD

The side trip travels along Edmunds Road, makes a sharp, 30° turns north again, onto Soda Creek–Macalister Road and heads back to Highway 97. The trip is about 15 km long. This trip is not included in the total mileage, so be prepared for some calculations when you rejoin the route.

For details of the Edmunds Road leg of this route (in reverse), see km 293.9 of the **Main Route**.



The route of the Edmunds Road Side Trip

km 0

Elevation: 601 m

Turn left and follow Edmunds Road as it gradually descends through a mixture of pastures, a few small farms and forested areas. This road is one of the early iterations of the CWR.

km .6

Elevation: 585 m

The road goes through a small farm.

km .9

Elevation: 581 m

The road goes through another farm.

km 1.8

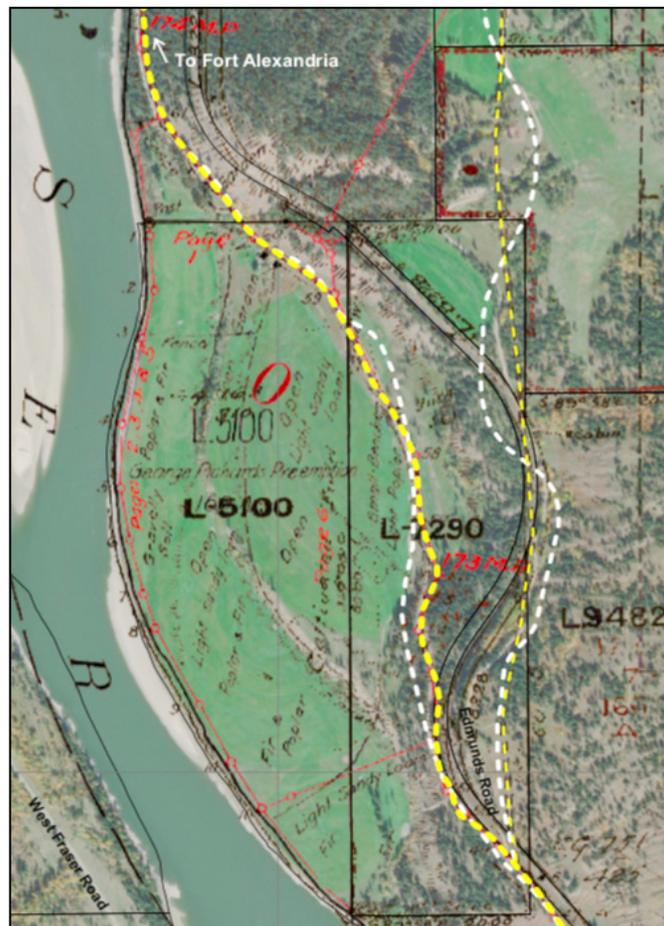
Elevation: 573 m

The road makes an abrupt 90° angle turn to the southwest as it passes a small lake.

km 2.2

The road makes another abrupt 90° turn – this time to the southeast as it continues along past the small lake. There is a large knoll on the west side of the road.

At the corner of the turn is a dirt road heading off in a northwest direction. This is a very early iteration of the CWR, which Richard Wright discusses in his description of this location. See km 299.6 of the **Main Route** for the story.



Detail of Edmunds Side Trip shows the many iterations of the CWR over the years. The large green area (and the small patch nearby) are all part of the old Pickard Ranch. Aerial map overlaid on 1914 survey map by Tenorex GeoServices, Quesnel

km 2.9

Elevation: 563 m

The small mountain on the west side of the road has some beautiful cliffs that are reminiscent of the colourful cliffs in Chasm Provincial Park. See km 297.2 of the **Main Route** for the photo.

km 3.3

Elevation: 567 m

The road passes through another farm or small ranch.

km 3.7

The road curves around a small, wooded knoll.

km 4.1

Elevation: 555 m

The road makes another sharp 90° turn in a southerly direction.

km 4.2

Elevation: 544 m

The road goes through pasturelands on both sides.

km 4.8

Elevation: 509 m

The road has been winding through a belt of trees and pastures. It makes a soft right angle turn to the southeast. On the southwest/right side of the road, is a small, rectangular-shaped pasture. This is part of the larger Pickard Ranch, most of which is located on the bench land 60 m below, on the other side of the railway.

km 5.2

The road meets up with the railway and follows alongside the tracks for the next kilometre.



View looking north of the railway and Edmunds Road

km 6.35

Elevation: 501 m

Edmunds Road crosses the railway.

km 6.4

GPS: 52°22'58.00" N 122°22'30.86" W

Junction. Soda Creek–Macalister Road. To the south/left, is the continuation of Soda Creek–Macalister Road. The slide area is approximately 2.4 km south. Beyond that is Soda Creek. To the north/right, is Highway 97. Turn right, in a hard 30° turn onto Soda Creek–Macalister Road for the highway and the route north.

km 7.4

Elevation: 460 m

The road gradually descends as it winds through the property of the Pickard Ranch.



The Pickard Ranch and roadhouse, ca. 1920s

The Pickard Ranch was an 160 acre property, 11.3 km (7 miles) north of Soda Creek. George Pickard was 45 when he married Carrie Elmore who was just 16. Together they had 13 children over 28 years, the last child being born when Carrie was 44 and George, 73. All of their children lived to grow up.

The ranch was in a good location for vegetable and fruit growing, as well as animal husbandry and the family had cattle, milk cows, sheep and chickens to sustain themselves. Both Carrie and George were extremely hard-working individuals – as they needed to be – with a family this large. There wasn't much room in their main house for paying guests, with just one room set aside for travelers.



The Pickard house is one of the few old ranch homes still standing today

km 8

Elevation: 445 m

The old ranch house is just off the road on the south/left side.

km 8.5

Elevation: 439 m

The old road heads towards the Fraser River, then gently curves north and follows alongside it for the next few km. In dry years, there is a partly forested sandbar at the edge of the river. In wet years, this would be an island or be flooded.

km 12

Elevation: 441 m

The road comes very close to the edge of the Fraser River here, though in summer, the deciduous trees almost mask the river with their foliage. In a couple of spots you can see the massive Fraser through the branches. The railway is just above the road here, so don't be surprised if you see or hear one pass by on the hillside right above you.

km 12.5

Elevation: 443 m

The road now passes through the community of Macalister for the next 1.5 km.

km 14

Elevation: 485 m

The railway follows alongside the road here; then, the railway yard is seen on the east/right side.

km 15.1

Junction. Highway 97. Turn north/left to join up with both the **Main Route** and **Alternate Route** to Fort Alexandria.

#### **IMPORTANT NOTE**

We will continue with the km mileage from the **Main Route**. As you are rejoining Highway 97 at the Soda Creek–Macalister Road (north entrance), use the km **306.2** to match up with the mileages on the **Main Route** and continuing north beyond Fort Alexandria.

Take your total mileage, which should be around 322.2 and subtract 306.2 = 16 km. That is the amount you need to subtract at each of the upcoming markers in order to match up your mileages.

See km 304.6-319.7 (pages 142-148) of the **Main Route** to finish this lap of the journey to Fort Alexandria.

**END OF CHAPTER FOUR.**

**WATCH FOR OUR NEXT TWO CHAPTERS THAT LEAD YOU ON TO QUESNEL  
AND  
THE FINAL LAP TO BARKERVILLE!**