

20 Mile House

Site Identification

Nearest Community:

Clinton, B.C. &
70 Mile House, B.C.

Geocache Location:

N 50°58.243'
W 121°27.686'

Altitude:

592m/1943ft

Date Established:

1863

Ownership:

Private Property

Accuracy:

1 meter

Overall Difficulty: 2

Overall Terrain: 2

Access Information and

Restrictions:

From Clinton follow Hwy 97 towards
Cache Creek for 19 km. Turn left onto
Loon Lake Road and park at the pull out
by the post boxes.

Parking Advice:

Park at the post boxes.

For more information or to report a
problem with this site please contact:

Gold Country Communities Society
PO. Box 933
Cache Creek, BC.,
VOK 1H0

Tel: 1-877-453-9467
email: info@exploregoldcountry.com

For more site pages go to:
www.goldtrail.com

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Photo: Marcie Down

The Gold Rush attracted folks from far and abroad, and the Cariboo Wagon Road attracted entrepreneurs building roadhouses along the way in hopes of making their own fortune. And some were far more interesting and entertaining than others. One such roadhouse was established at Maiden Creek at the Bonaparte River, about twenty miles from Ashcroft.

William Fraser pre-empted 160-acres in 1863 near the HBC Fur Brigade Trail to Loon Lake and beyond.¹ There he constructed a large log house on the north side of the wagon road. He fared well, with both gold seekers and fur traders patronizing the Fraser's Ranch. In 1870 he sold it.

Jacob Mundorf, who originally hailed from Wurms in Germany, made his way to the gold of Barkerville in the early 1860s. There he settled at Williams Creek buying mining claims in the area. He also fell in love with a German hurdy-gurdy girl, Catherine Haupt.²

By 1866 Mundorf had acquired both wealth and property in nearby Camerontown. Here he built several businesses, including the Miners' Bakery & Restaurant and the Mundorf & Company Livery Stables & Feed. The following year he converted the stables into a saloon and dance hall. Katrina, as she was called, danced for the miners and Mundorf accumulated more wealth with his latest enterprise, The Crystal Palace. However, in 1868 Barkerville burned.

The Mundorfs began their next enterprise with the purchase of Fraser's Ranch in 1870. Mundorf had big plans and built a larger two story house

with a saloon. At the same time, he and Catherine continued to grow their family to five children by 1875.

The wagon road would soon see an increase in traffic with the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in Ashcroft. With the movement of even more goods from the station to the north, the saloon became *the* place to stop. Anybody and everybody could be seen at the Mundorf saloon. The business flourished, but not so the marriage.

Of the two sons, John became a blacksmith which was ideal with all the horse and wagon traffic. The three girls helped in the road house, but sadly one of the daughters died at the early age of fourteen years. The Mundorfs were industrious and ran a good business, but they were not a particularly happy family according to patrons and neighbours.

And not all neighbours were happy with the Mundorfs. Edward Dougherty, of the nearby Maiden Creek Ranch, one day in 1883 happened upon Mundorf clearing trees on his land.³ Mundorf believed the land to be his, but Dougherty had been paying the taxes on it for a number of years. Letters from both parties were exchanged between Government Agent Frederick Soues in Clinton and William Smith, the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works in Victoria.⁴ The land battle continued until 1885 with the decision in favour of Dougherty.

The next battle Mundorf experienced was in 1893 when Catherine applied to the courts for a judicial separation. She left and moved in with her son George, who had relinquished all interest in the ranch. John had recently moved, taking his blacksmith skills to Victoria and then later to Vancouver. Christine and Charlotte remained with their father, helping him run the business. Mundorf continued to do well until his death in 1903 at the age of seventy-five. Christine, now thirty years old and married, kept the business going until 1910. By 1942 the property was sold to Percival Woodward, son of the well known retailer Charles Woodward.

Woodward hired caretakers to manage his new acquisition. Unfortunately, shortly thereafter during a fumigation process, the roof caught fire and the house and several other structures were destroyed in the flames. Now the only original structure still standing is the old blacksmith shop. And the property has since passed through several owners. On the south side there stood a gas station and café known as Jacob's Place.

The Mundorf roadhouse at 20 Mile may be gone, but the rich history and old blacksmith shop remain to tell the story of a German entrepreneur and a hurdy-gurdy girl who lived the Cariboo life in the heart of Gold Country.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

¹ See site page "The Hudson Bay Company Brigade Trail", *Gold Country GeoTourism Adventures, Field Guide Volume 1*, 117.

² See site page "Maiden Creek Ranch", *Gold Country GeoTourism Adventures, Field Guide, Volume 2*, 103.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See site page "Clinton Pioneer Cemetery", *Gold Country GeoTourism Adventures, Field Guide Volume 1*, 43.

Patenaude, Branwen, *Trails to Gold*, Horsdal & Schubart, Victoria 1995

Lands & Works Department, Government of B.C., *Evidence Select Committee on Public Lands, Fourth Report*, 1886

Patenaude, Branwen, *GOLDEN NUGGETS Roadhouse Portraits along the Cariboo's Gold-Rush Trail*, Heritage Books, Surrey 1998

Ramsey, Bruce, *Ghost Towns of British Columbia*, Mitchell Press, Vancouver 1963

Letterboxing Clues:

Park at the post boxes. Follow the trail by the fence line up to the top of the hill by the hydro poles. At pole #17 turn to the right, and walk towards the last pole with a view of 20 Mile Ranch and the Old Cariboo Wagon Road that runs along the hillside. Cache is hidden in sagebrush near the backside of pole #1755.