

Pioneers & Early Settlers

Clinton Hotel

Site Identification

Nearest Community:
Clinton B.C.

Geocache Location:
N 51°05.879'
W 121°34.430'

Altitude:
894m/2933ft
Ownership:
Crown Land

Accuracy:
2 meters

Overall Difficulty: 1.5
Overall Terrain: 2

Access Information and Restrictions:

From Clinton go 1.4 km North to pull out at Gold Country and Clinton signs. Park at pull out. Walk 250m along dirt road behind pull out. Entrance for dirt road is by the Downing Park mileage sign.

Parking Advice:
Park in gravel pullout.

Point of Interest:
To view the historic sites of the Toll Booth and Clinton Hotel proceed to Clinton. Sites are marked by info signs in town.

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

Gold Country Communities Society
 PO. Box 933
 Cache Creek, BC.,
 V0K 1H0

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

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

Apply Sticker Here



Photo: GCCS

In 1862, the Clinton Hotel was constructed opposite the Toll Booth with the Cariboo Trail to Barkerville running between them. Gustavus Wright was the road contractor responsible for the building of the section from Lillooet to Clinton and onward 151 miles (243 km) to Alexandria. The road building was a costly undertaking. A toll booth was established in Clinton from 1863 to 1868 to recover costs from those using the road. Rates were set in Sterling, a shilling for each animal and scales weighed the freight at one cent per pound. The toll booth was operated by a man named J. Champness and also served as a temporary courthouse.

Overlooking these proceedings sat the Clinton Hotel, a flourishing roadhouse built by another group of visionaries, Walter McKinnon and the Watson brothers. It was sold on to Joseph and Mary Smith and partner Tom Marshall in 1865 (date of sale varies) who expanded the building and developed its reputation as a fine hotel known for good food, clean accommodation, and good service. It continued in use until it burnt in 1958.

The road here was built wide with plenty of room for the wagons and teams of oxen, mules and horses to pull by each other or turn around. It was estimated that in the height of the gold rush as many as twenty thousand people and their animals would travel through this route.

It is likely that very little phased these hard working animals. They had no doubt encountered all manner of wildlife, dealt with wet and muddy roads, raucous road traffic, extremes in cold and heat and clambered over rocky scree and boggy sections, until 1862 when the camels came up the gold trail. The stir of excitement over these exotic visitors was pronounced. Within the four legged world the response was horror and panic. The shape of these

Bactrian camels, with their long legs, rolling gait and two humps was striking. Even more remarkable was their distinctive smell, highly offensive to an animal nose. In an attempt to disguise this problem and encourage a more peaceful co-existence within the working animal kingdom one of the owners went so far as to try perfume as a disguise. It did not work. The best behaved teams bolted in terror at these encounters. Mules were attacked by the camels and law suits were pending.

In truth, the camels were a disaster. They suffered from the rough Cariboo terrain, even wearing a boot-type covering did not protect their padded feet. They went lame. They ate everything in sight including pants, shirts and even a bar of soap. The camels had initially served with the US Army Camel Corps rail construction in Arizona, and later as pack animals during the California gold rush. It was hoped that these powerful animals, able to carry 500-600 pounds, twice the load a mule could manage, would revolutionize transportation to the gold fields. By 1863, after only one year of trial, owners Frank Laumeister and associates decided to abandon their experiment, sell what they could and turn loose the remaining camels.

The last identified camel was known to have died at a ranch near Kamloops in about 1905. Random sightings were reported for a number of years after that. Their presence continues in the name of the Camelsfoot Mountain Range near Lillooet.

Written and Researched by Edith McLorn

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Brundage, Mike. *Tales of the Cariboo*, self published, Clinton, BC Charles, Peters. *At the "47 Mile" A history of the Village of Clinton*, Orca Book Pub. Ltd., Victoria, BC, 1990.

Wilson, Diana, ed. *Heart of the Cariboo-Chilcotin, Stories Worth Keeping*, Heritage House, Surrey, BC, 2006

Village of Clinton, *Historical Walking Tour*, self published by Village of Clinton and Clinton & District Economic Development Society

Wilson, Diana, ed. *Heart of the Cariboo-Chilcotin, More Stories Worth Keeping*, Heritage House. Surrey, BC, 2007

"U.S. Camel Corps" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Camel_Corps), sourced June 20, 2012.

Letterboxing Clues:

At bottom of steep hill, turn left and walk 40m to barbwire fence. Hidden in Juniper bush by rock.