# Henry Castillou



Photo: Nicola Valley Museum and Archives

## Site Identification

**Nearest Community:**
Merritt, B.C.

**Geocache Location:**
N 49°54.931'
W 120° 54.745'

**Altitude:**
903 m

**Ownership:**
Crown Land

**Accuracy:**
3 meters

**Overall Difficulty:** 1.5
**Overall Terrain:** 2

**Access Information and Restrictions:**
Follow the Coldwater Road from Merritt until you reach the Kane Valley Road to the left.

**Parking Advice:**
Park at the yellow sign right after the Kane Valley Road turn off from Coldwater Road.

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

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Judge Henry Castillou, or 'The cowboy judge' as many knew him, was a pack train operator, a captain in the Royal Flying Corps, a lawyer, a Judge of the Supreme Court for the County of the Cariboo, and a one-time president of the B.C. Fish and Game Association. An amateur anthropologist, he was also known as an expert on BC native tribes and their origins. He was a big man, and he left a lasting legacy in the city of Merritt.

Born May 25, 1896 in the Coldwater Valley, ten miles south of Merritt, to Joseph and Emma Castillou, Henry Castillou's early upbringing was among the pack train operators who had come from Spain, Chile, and Mexico to move supplies for the gold rush. His father came from the French Pyrenees, the mountains dividing France and Spain. By the time he was sixteen Henry had his own successful pack train which carried supplies to those in the gold fields and other remote areas. Education was important and Henry attended highschool in New Westminster. World War 1 interrupted Castillou's further education. He enlisted, and eventually became a captain, in the Royal Flying corps. After the war, he attended Temple Law School, graduating in 1923.

Castillou practiced law in Vancouver for a number of years where he successfully defended a number of people charged with murder, including several Indian trials. In 1950 he was appointed County Court Judge for the Cariboo, and later became Judge of the Supreme Court for the County of the Cariboo. During his career he was also a political and legal advisor to the North American Indian Brotherhood and represented B.C. native groups before the 1948 Indian Claims Commission. A hobby anthropologist and oral historian, he gathered one of the most extensive collections of native and pre-historic artifacts of the time.

In 1937 Castillou was appointed by Attorney General G.S. Wismer to go to China as a representative of the government. He was charged with the task of finding evidence in a drug ring case in which five Chinese immigrants were charged in a conspiracy to distribute opium in a case that extended from Vancouver to San Francisco and Hong Kong. The case lasted 18 months and all five were found guilty. While in China, Castillou was presented with a black silk dragon robe that is now displayed at the Nicola Museum and Archives. The symbol of the dragon was supposed to be outlawed in China at the time and it has gold thread that were rumoured to have been dipped in real gold.

Never removed from the western lifestyle, Castillou was the announcer at the very first annual rodeo in Merritt.  His booming voice was so loud that he didn't require a microphone. That same weekend he was awarded the key to the city of Merritt. Castillou retired in 1960, and passed away in 1967 at the age of 71. He will always be remembered as one of B.C.'s first native rights lawyers, and as a man who embraced the cowboy lifestyle of his birth.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Nicola Valley Museum Archives Association, (no date). *Judge Henry Castillou Exhibit and Collection*. (brochure).

Nicola Valley Museum Archives Association, (no date). Misc. notes.

Letterboxing Clues:

Walk uphill 40 m, under large overturned root.