

## Jesus Garcia

**Photo: Nicola Valley Museum and Archives**



### Site Identification

**Nearest Community:**

Merritt, B.C.

**Geocache Location:**

N 50°06.442'

W 120°47.182'

**Ownership:**

City of Merritt

**Accuracy:**

3 meters

**Overall Difficulty:** 1.5

**Overall Terrain:** 1.5

**Access Information and**

**Restrictions:**

From the Nicola Hwy/97C turn right onto Blair, and right onto Coldwater Avenue and then turn right onto Tutill Court.

**Parking Advice:**

Park in parking lot of the Nicola Valley Museum.

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](mailto:info@exploregoldcountry.com)

For more site pages go to:  
[www.goldtrail.com](http://www.goldtrail.com)

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Born in Sonora, Mexico, in 1832, Jesus Garcia left his home at the age of 13 to pursue his fortune in California, which at the time was still part of the Republic of Mexico. He looked up a friend from home, Blais Leon, and hired him to help in his Packing work. Hardworking and with a mind for business, Garcia expertly worked pack trains with up to 20 heavily-laden mules as they carried silver ore to smelters. As rumours swirled of a gold rush in Canada, Garcia and Leon, as well as a number of other Spanish-speaking men from Mexico and Europe made their way north. Garcia and the other packers, including the legendary Cataline, helped form the transportation system that made the gold rush possible.

Arriving in Yale, Garcia met Raphael Carranzo, a 50-year-old muleskinner who immediately hired the younger Garcia and sent him off on his first packing trip in the Cariboo a few days later. Within two years, the hardworking Garcia had saved enough money to buy half of Carranzo's mule train to go into business for himself.

Each fall, the packers needed to find a location to live and graze their animals during the winter. Garcia and the other Mexican packers determined that the Nicola Valley met their needs perfectly and their presence in the area played a critical part in the booming history of the area. Unlike local Indians, the Spanish-speaking packers were afforded all the rights of citizenship although they were counted as separate from the white majority, Indians, or Orientals for census purposes.

A devout Catholic, Garcia married a local Indian woman, Kroventko, daughter of Humsinna, a chief at Spuzzum. After marrying Garcia she became known by her English name – Mary. Garcia sold his packing outfit in Yale in 1871, deciding to focus on ranching instead. He moved his family to the Forks, which is now known as Merritt.

He pre-empted Lot 123, a very large parcel of land, which includes the area now containing Granite, Quilchena, and Coutlie

Avenues, and Garcia, Charters and Blair Streets in its very centre. The discovery of coal and the possibility of a rail line coming into the area led Garcia, and other local businessmen John Charters and William Henry Voght, to band together and have the future town site surveyed out of portions of their lots.

Aside from packing and ranching, Garcia was involved in a number of coal deals over a 20-year period leading to the disposal of his rights to the Diamond Vale Coal Company in 1905.

Jesus and Mary had 14 children, although only 5 were alive at the time of his death in 1916. It is not clear how many survived infancy. Throughout their lives both Jesus and Mary had given land, money, and other donations to the Catholic Church. Still, when he died, Garcia left an estate worth over \$100,000, including several thousand acres of land from as far away as Aspen Grove and Mamit Lake.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Nicola Valley Archives Association, (1984). *Nicola Valley Historical Quarterly*: "the Garcia story." Vol 6 - No. 4, May, 1984.

#### **Letterboxing Clues:**

From the front door of the museum walk to the left to the side of the building. Look along the fence line. Blends with landscape.