

***Nicola, Kamloops, and
Similkameen Railway***

Site Identification

Nearest Community:
Merritt, B.C.

Geocache Location:
N 50°09.474'
W 121°02.787'

Altitude:
495m

Ownership:
Crown Land

Accuracy:
3 meters

Overall Difficulty: 1

Overall Terrain: 1.5

**Access Information and
Restrictions:**

From Merritt City Centre follow Hwy 8 west towards Spences Bridge for approx. 21.5 km until you reach the N'kwala Recreation Site. Turn left unto dirt road and follow around fence line. When past the fence stay to the right and park.

Parking Advice:

Park at the N'kwala Recreation site.

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: Baillie Stewart

In the 1870s, while George Dawson and other geologists and surveyors were surveying the area around what is now Merritt for the new Canadian Pacific Railway, not only did they discover new routes for transportation, they also discovered coal. In those days it was Nicola and not Merritt (known then as Forksdale), that was the major centre in the region. Forksdale was named after the fork between the Nicola and Coldwater Rivers and was the underdog in status to Nicola until the early 1900s.

With the discovery of coal came the need to transport it around the southern interior for local use, as well as the need to move it to the larger markets on the west coast. In 1891, two railways were awarded charters to build rail lines into the area. Backed by the CPR, the Nicola Valley Railway proposal involved a line being built from the CPR mainline at Spences Bridge to Nicola. At the same time, an independent railway, the Nicola, Kamloops & Similkameen Coal & Railway Company (NK&S) was founded to build lines from Kamloops, to Nicola, south to Princeton and then on to Osooyos. Neither railway started construction and both charters lapsed.

In 1903, the coal beds around Nicola inspired William Hamilton Merritt, a local entrepreneur, to revive the charter for the NK&S. Merritt, born in 1855, was among other things, a mining engineer with big plans. Merritt had prospected for coal in the area in 1891. Finding it, he organized the NK&S railway plan to transport the coal out of the valley and, after considerable delay, the independent company started construction on the railway from Spences Bridge in 1905. Seeing the value of the initiative, the CPR leased the charter in 1905. Using its more significant resources, the CPR increased the pace of the work so that the line was completed in 1906. A year later, in 1907, the railway extended across the Coldwater River and connected

to the other major lines. The first coal left on a train on January 22, 1907. As the hunger for coal grew, the NK&S Railway was eventually bought out by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

In recognition for William Hamilton Merritt's tireless efforts to bring the railway, and therefore access to a world of suppliers and customers to the town, the name Forksdale was changed to Merritt in 1906.

Starting in 1915, the NK&S Railway operated as part of the CPR's Kettle Valley Railway, and later becoming part of the CPR's Princeton Subdivision. As passenger rail-use declined and the smaller lines began to compete with the new Hope-Princeton Highway, the KVR, and therefore the NK&S Railways, were abandoned in the 1980s. The track was removed in 1991.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Macek, Alan. (2005). *The early years of the CPR in BC*. Retrieved 22, Jun. 2012 from <http://canyon.alanmacek.com/index.php/>

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Nicola Valley Archives Association. (2007). "Lieutenant-

Colonel William Hamilton Merritt III." *Nicola Valley Historical Quarterly*, Spring 2007: 21.3
Nicola Valley Archives Association. (1989). *Merritt & the Nicola Valley: an illustrated history*. Sonotek, Merritt, BC.

Letterboxing Clues:

Between dirt road in campground and river on raised bank, at the base of a large tree with an elbow or crook, under a geopile.