

Aspen Grove Mining Characters

SITE #120103

GC1TKPX

Written & Researched by Angela Wynton

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Aspen Grove, V1K 1B8

Parking: N 49°55.434'

W 120°37.674'

Geocache Location: N 49°55.431'

W 120°37.675'

Accuracy: 5 meters

Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page

UTM: East 0670261;

North 5532866 10U

Geocache altitude: 1,052 m./3,450 ft.

Overall difficulty: 1

Terrain difficulty: 1.5

(1=easiest; 5=hardest)

Date Established: c 1905

Ownership: Crown Land

Access: • Highway

• Year-round

• Vehicle accessible

• *Detailed access information on next page.*

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

Gold Country Communities Society
P.O. Box 933 Cache Creek, B.C. V0K 1H0
Tel: 1-877-453-9467

email: info@exploregoldcountry.com

For more site pages go to:

www.goldtrail.com or
www.GeoTourismCanada.com

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As they say, all that glitters is not gold. The Nicola Valley is rich with minerals and copper and was soon the centre of a vast mining community. Aspen Grove became the heart of the mining area. It was the central stage coach stop, post office and the social hub of the community with galas, balls and brawls.

Of the many who staked claims for the copper and minerals in the early years, a few became well known throughout the camp. They attended social events, drank with the miners and rode regularly through town. Perhaps though, some of their recognition was partly through association or misadventure, an association that would become legendary.

The local press, *Nicola Herald*, in June 1905 reported “*Dad Allen and his partners are hard at work on the Pearl Group of claims, and are continuing the tunnel cross cutting the formation, and have shown up a large body of ore.*” The 1906 B.C. Mining Report for

the Yale District, Nicola Division, comments, “*Efforts are now chiefly to keeping up assessment work and crown granting.*” And continues, “*On the group of claims owned by Dad Allen, assessment work has resulted in exposing copper ... Locations held by (Alonzo) Roberts and (Jack) Budd, in which prospecting has been done, afford excellent showings.*”

It is said, J. P. ‘Dad’ Allen had once owned a stable, running pack trains and horses to mines. He



was also said to be a partner of Wild Bill Hickok, “...he was born in the state of New York, of Scottish descent. Molly and Dad packed the kids in a covered wagon, horse-trading through the old West. All went well until the Sheriff of Death Valley killed Dad’s eldest son, Charlie, so Dad killed the Sheriff, and had to get out and come to B.C.” wrote Maisie Campbell-Johnston.

Jack Budd was from Texas and immigrated to British Columbia. He ran a ranch in Princeton with his partner George Edwards. They both also had interests in mineral claims. Alonzo Roberts was a local Aspen Grove rancher who partnered with the three to explore similar claims. “But who was George Edwards?” you ask. Well, Edwards lived at the Roberts ranch for several months and Alonzo describes him as ‘a likeable chap...a decent chap, who loved riding and hunting and rode a large black horse...’

In May 1906 Edwards and several blokes decided to avail themselves of a payroll aboard a Canadian Pacific Railway locomotive that would be coming through the Ducks station. However, things went awry and the robbers took off, trying to disguise themselves as wandering prospectors. The Royal Northwest Mounted Police, thanks to Constable William Fernie and others, tracked Edwards and his gang for five days and found them holed-up near Douglas Lake. While two of the robbers proved not as well mannered, Edwards, who was the leader, surrendered with his usual politeness and courtesy. After all,

he was apparently known as ‘The Gentleman Bandit’. All three were arrested and convicted.

Jack Budd was considered a likely accessory in the Ducks robbery, but how is unknown and it was never proven. The Gentleman Bandit was the legendary Bill Miner, the notorious train robber with good manners, both polite and courteous. The Gentleman Bandit later escaped prison and was never seen again in Aspen Grove or anywhere else in Canada.



**George Edwards,
aka Bill Miner**

Aspen Grove Camp is historic not only for its contribution to the wealth and development of Merritt and the Nicola Valley, but also for its extraordinary connection to the legendary outlaw Bill Miner. As you mosey the scenic prairie-lands, imagine a courteous and polite miner riding about the camp on his dark horse. Imagine further, this very same gentleman mounted on a great black steed, a Gentleman Bandit, chasing down a great ‘Iron Horse’ in search of another kind of gold, the glitter of a C.P.R. payroll traveling through Gold Country.

Detailed access information:

- From Merritt, follow Hwy #5A south to Aspen Grove.
- As you travel south through town, the ‘old barn’ to your right was the stagecoach stop.
- South of the community, park at the Kidd Lake rest area.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Campbell-Johnston, M. (1943). A New Side of Bill Miner’s Character. In *Vancouver Museum Archives*.
Grauer, P. (2006). *Interred with their bones: Bill Miner in Canada 1903-1907*. Tillicum Books.