

Ghost of Walhachin

SITE #090401

GC1VA6W

Written & Researched by Amy Thacker

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Savona, V0K 2J0
 Parking: N 50°45.815'
 W 120°59.475'
 Geocache Location: N 50°45.755'
 W 120°59.590'
 Accuracy: 4 meters
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page
 UTM: East 0641530;
 North 5625343 10U
 Geocache altitude: 427 m./1,400 ft.
 Overall difficulty: 1
 Terrain difficulty: 1.5
 (1=easiest; 5=hardest)
 Date Established: c 1907
 Ownership: Private Property
 Access: • Highway
 • Year-round
 • Vehicle accessible
 • Watch for cactus!
 • *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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Walhachin overlooking the Thompson River

Once a grand dream, the quaint community of Walhachin whispers the tales of a century old project.

In 1907, American entrepreneur Charles Barnes began to develop his dream of grandeur set along the banks of the Thompson River. This rich, fertile ground was to produce unparalleled produce and orchards for the elite of British society. A community plan was laid out, elegant homes and businesses established, ground broken and subdivision parcels established to attract the wealthy English to this 'new' land.

By 1908 families had begun to arrive, the town site was planned and plots of land were selling for \$300 per acre or \$350 per acre with trees. In order to provide income while developing the young orchards, alternate crops were grown between the rows of trees including, potatoes, tomatoes, onions and tobacco. The soil granted immediate rewards with record crops of vegetables and healthy young fruit trees beginning to establish.

Chinese workers were hired to tend the fields and orchards, freeing the 'upper-class' to live a life of leisure and apparent luxury. They enjoyed games of cricket, hunting, tennis, lakeside picnics, music recitals and dances at the new community hall, which boasted the best dance floor in the Province. By 1912 the town was well established with a bakery, general store, barber, butcher, dairy, livery stable, ladies store, two insurance offices, three laundries, post office and hotel.

While many, including the infamous Widow Smith of Spences Bridge, offered advice to assist Walhachin residents to fulfill their dreams, the words of caution fell unheard in this lively little 'Camelot.'

Water for the orchards and community was brought some twenty miles from Snohoosh Lake in the Deadman Valley via flumes, an engineering feat of significance. Built by local contractors, some skilled and others not, and maintained by the Chinese labourers,



Penny Station, 1905

the lumber used to build the flume was supplied by the Monarch Lumber Company in Savona.

Despite early success, Charles Barnes dream was not to be fulfilled. As World War I escalated the majority of Walhachin male residents enlisted in the British forces and returned to England to fight. With leaking flumes, arid ground and a lack of human resources to maintain the system, the 'free' life in Walhachin became taxed. A storm washed out a section of the flume and it was never to be repaired. Many immigrants returned to England, defeated. Others stayed and built their own dreams in this new British Columbia, some descendants still return to see this place where dreams were born.

Today, the 'Ghost of Walhachin,' the flume remnants, lay along the hills above the Trans Canada Highway and along the Deadman Valley, bearing testament to the engineering feats that once were. You can still view the concrete forms that have withstood the mighty Thompson currents below the town, these forms supported the cables that slung the flume across the river.

From high above today's highway the waters entered a wooden pipe, wrapped in wire, plunging down some four hundred plus feet to the river. This drop created

sufficient velocity and force to carry the water up the high banks of the south shore to the orchard benches above. The cables now lay along the river bottom.

Originally the only way to cross the river was a cable ferry barge, in low water you can look down upon the original ferry pilings. Due to the growth and interest in the community the government commissioned a bridge crossing down river, which was completed in 1910 and stands today.

As you travel down to the bridge, observe the banks to your right. The dark discolorations offer evidence of ancient First Nations fires and a simple sift through the sands reveals an abundance of fresh water clam shells, remnants of old cooking sites. The nest upon the bridge belongs to the resident Osprey family that returns annually. They too, enjoy the fabulous fishing along the Thompson River.

The historic Penny Ranch, situated west of the road on the south shore, is the site of the first fruit trees and the stimulus for Barnes dream. The area was originally known as Penny Station and this ranch existed prior to the development of the infamous community.

Several original homes remain in the community, while others were sold and moved to the nearby communities of Savona, Kamloops and Ashcroft. Please feel free to visit with local residents of Walhachin and Thompson River Estates in your quest for more tales on the 'Ghost of Walhachin.'

Detailed access information:

- Follow Hwy #1 to Thompson River Estates.
- No driving or parking on fragile grasslands.
- Do not disturb historical artifacts or cross private property without permission.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Weir, J. (1984). *Walhachin: Catastrophe or Camelot*. Surrey, BC: Hancock House Publishers.