

Guichon Lundbom Grasslands

SITE #120101

GC1V1X7

Written & Researched by Angela Wynton

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Merritt, V1K 1B8
 Location: N 50°04.006'
 W 120°39.611'
 Geocache Location: N 50°04.004'
 W 120°39.497'
 Accuracy: 5 meters
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page
 UTM: East 0667583;
 North 5548677 10U
 Geocache altitude: 1,109 m./3,638 ft.
 Overall difficulty: 1
 Terrain difficulty: 1.5
(1=easiest; 5=hardest)
 Date Established: n/a
 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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Between Nicola Lake and Aspen Grove is one of the vastest and most unique golden rolling grasslands to be found anywhere in the Nicola Valley. It is rich with fowl, songbirds, birds of prey and wildlife. It is an ecosystem to be treasured and protected forever.

The grasslands have a long rich history. Pioneer and rancher Joseph Guichon was originally born in Chambery, France and immigrated to British Columbia in the mid 19th century. He arrived in the interior in 1865 and soon found employment in Ashcroft on the Dominion ranch owned and managed by Charles Augustus Semlin. He later hired on with Jean Caux, a French horse packer, travelling the Hudson Bay Brigade trails, providing for the miners in the gold fields.

It was 1867 on those trails through the Nicola Valley that Guichon recognized the immense potential for cattle ranching. By the following year he acquired land in the 'Savonaux' region,

where his own herd grew and thrived. At the same time, with his brother Laurent, he took up land at 'Mamit' Lake and established a farm. It was here in 1877 that Dr. George Mercer Dawson of the Geological Survey of Canada discovered Guichon and noted in his diaries, *"He grows grain of all sorts and potatoes with success, despite the high elevation."*

By 1878, the Guichon brothers relocated their base operations to the Home Ranch at Chapperon Lake. They both married sisters and continued to acquire more land growing their holdings and developing grazing property between Mamette and Chapperon Lakes.

Joseph and his brother were establishing themselves as very significant figures on the ranching frontier. With a history of perpetual expansion the ranch was now growing further east on Nicola Lake. The families moved to this latest acquisition where they would remain for years to



come. In the meantime, the Chapperon Lake lands were sold to Douglas Lake Cattle Company and the profits divided equally between the two families. Laurent himself moved to the coast and Joseph maintained the 1400 head of cattle.

The ever business savvy rancher, Joseph could see great advantage in marketing his beef to the construction crews now building the great railway. By 1885 he was marketing his cattle closer to home in Kamloops. In the 1890s he was raising Percherons and Thoroughbreds selling them to the North-West Mounted Police (later the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and the Vancouver Mounted Police.

Guichon continued to increase holdings throughout the Nicola Valley. He expanded further north in the 1890s. By 1904 he acquired the Quilchena Ranch, the Quilchena Hotel and the general store. He bought the Triangle Ranch in 1911. In 1918 three years before his death he divided his worth evenly amongst his seven children. The Guichon lands included nearly 40,000 acres of deeded land and more than half a million acres of crown land leases, in ranches, rolling hills and grasslands.

Sons, grandsons and great grandsons of the Guichon family still retain land and continue to ranch in the valley. Great grandson Mike Rose and his family own and manage the Quilchena Cattle Company. They have carried it through every possible hardship imaginable but continue as the true cowboys they are today.

Laurie Guichon, also a fourth generation rancher, was a significant figure in the ranching industry and a noted conservationist. Growing up with a history of ranching and a love for the grasslands, he would practice safe and ecological cattle grazing and hay management. He was well recognized and respected as a grassland conservationist throughout B.C. The Lundbom grasslands and marshes, as a protected habitat, was a vision he worked diligently to establish. Since his death in 1999 his wife and others have continued to carry on the legacy, and the grasslands were officially designated and dedicated as the Laurie Guichon Grasslands and Interpretive Site.

The old Nicola-Aspen Grove stage road traverses the grasslands that stretch across the Lundbom Common. Dotted about this great expanse are several marshes and lakes. These are home to waterfowl in abundance. The marsh is one of the first water areas to be ice-free in the spring and attracts an assortment of birds such as mallards, pintails and teals and on the rare occasion trumpeter swans and American white pelicans.

The grasslands are home to things seen and unseen that keep this diverse ecosystem sensitive and protected. Laurie Guichon knew of the value and importance of this delicately balanced system and his vision was realized. As you amble along, gazing at the gold of ancient grasslands, think of the many generations of Guichon ranchers and their subsequent goal to keep the grasslands a healthy, protected golden sanctuary in the ancient heart of Gold Country.

Detailed access information:

- Follow Hwy #5A east approximately 11 km and turn left on Lundbom Rd.
- Park in designated areas and do not take any motorized vehicles offroad.
- Please stay off the grasslands where possible, this is a fragile environment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Egan, D. (2008, July). *Where have all the cowboys gone*. BC Business Magazine.

The Guichon Family. (Undated). In *Merritt Museum and Archives* (Quarterly #11), Merritt, B.C.

University of Toronto, (2000). Joseph Guichon. Retrieved May 18, 2009, from Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online Web site: http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=8177&interval=25&PHPSESSID=6fu6jmg8jd9apmvt2nsaf1f335