

## Maiden Creek Ranch



Photo: GCCS

### Site Identification

**Nearest Community:**  
Clinton B.C.

**Geocache Location:**  
N 50°58.767'  
W 121°30.063'

**Altitude:**  
699m/2293ft

**Ownership:**  
Private Property

**Date Established:**  
1862

**Accuracy:**  
1 meter

**Overall Difficulty:** 1.5  
**Overall Terrain:** 1.5

### Access Information and

**Restrictions:**  
15 km from Clinton on Hwy 97. From  
Cache Creek it is 22 km on Hwy 97.  
Look for Maiden Creek Ranch Sign on  
the side of the Hwy.

**Parking Advice:**  
Pullout by cattle guard – Do not block.

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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There are several stories as to how Maiden Creek, between Cache Creek and Clinton, got its name. One tale tells of a beautiful Secwepmec (Shuswap) maiden who was betrothed to a handsome warrior Chief. He left one autumn on a hunting trip, and when he did not return by early winter the maiden was heartbroken, and sat awaiting her husband-to-be by the creek. When she at last saw him, he was with a new wife from another tribe. So overwhelming was her grief, she died of a broken heart, and was buried where she had waited.

A variation of this tale tells of a Secwepmec maiden whose warrior lover went away to fight, and never returned; the maiden jumped off a cliff in her sorrow. A third story recounts how a Secwepmec maiden went up the creek picking strawberries, and was never seen again.

However, another young maiden—a Pennsylvanian Dutch girl named Elizabeth Ebert—was more fortunate. Trained as a midwife, young Elizabeth had traveled north from San Francisco to the goldfields of British Columbia. Perhaps finding that there was not much call for midwifery in the area, Elizabeth became one of Barkerville's "hurdy-gurdy girls", dancing with the miners to uproarious music played by musicians on hurdy-fiddles.

While in Barkerville, Elizabeth caught the eye of Edward Dougherty, a handsome and hard-working immigrant from Britain's Isle of Man. He had traveled north via the Bonaparte Valley, and was so taken by the area on his way through that he later came down from Barkerville—probably in 1862—and obtained land on what was then a nameless creek, later called Maiden (sometimes Grave) Creek, before returning north. The devastating fire that swept through Barkerville in 1868 might have spurred the couple to leave the town, for in 1869 the pair

had arrived in the Bonaparte Valley, where Edward began working the ranch in earnest.<sup>2</sup> The Cariboo Wagon Road passed through the property, so the decision was made to open a roadhouse as well, to cater to the travelers along the busy road.

Elizabeth stayed at the Clinton Hotel during this time, and she and Edward were married in 1871, at the 4th Annual Clinton Ball. They were subsequently kept busy by the demands of ranch, roadhouse, and family. They had nine children in all, four girls and five boys, the youngest of whom—Charles—was born in 1887, with the birth commemorated by the planting of a crabapple tree. The family was well-known and much respected: Eliza and her four daughters were never short of partners at the annual Clinton Ball, while the meals at the Roadhouse were famous for their splendour. Willis West, manager of the BX Express Co. for many years, traveled the Cariboo road often and knew every roadhouse on it. He wrote that meals at the Dougherty's roadhouse "always included three kinds of hot meat for a mid-day meal, with vegetables and at least three kinds of pie and pudding, two kinds of cake, relish, cookies, and stewed fruit." And all this for only 50¢!

Sadly, at the age of only 57 Edward Dougherty contracted pneumonia, and died at Maiden Creek in January 1897. The Victoria Daily Colonist reported the death on January 23, 1897, noting that "Mr. Dougherty was one of the first settlers . . . and was very highly esteemed . . ."

Edward and Elizabeth's oldest son, Edward II, ran the ranch until his marriage, whereupon his younger brother Thomas took over. When Thomas went overseas to serve during WW I, the youngest brother, Charles, took over. It was at about this time that Elizabeth, who had stayed on at the ranch retired to Vancouver, returning to the area regularly to visit her family. She died in 1944.

Charles, along with his wife Mary Jane, continued running the ranch until his death in 1968. His only son, Charles II, took over, but within five years he too had died. His widow, Helene, continued to manage the ranch, assisted by her sons Charles III, Raymond, and Ken, and her daughter Linda. Today Raymond, along with his son Tyler and partner Jody, manage the ranch, making five generations of the family at Maiden Creek. The ranch itself has been designated a "Century Ranch" by the provincial government, and inducted into the B.C. Cowboy Hall of Fame as the oldest known operating ranch in the province still in the same family.

Much has changed over the years at Maiden Creek Ranch. A full-sized indoor arena, for practicing roping, penning, and barrel racing, has been added, while the roadhouse has long since closed. Gone, too, is the crabapple tree that was planted to mark Charles Dougherty's birth in 1887, and which survived until 2010. However, saplings are sprouting around the tree's site, a tribute to the indomitable spirit of Maiden Creek Ranch: a piece of living history in the heart of Gold Country.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Many thanks to Virginia Ambler, daughter of Charles and Mary Jane Dougherty, for her assistance in the writing of this article.

<sup>1</sup> This was the version of the story told to Sir James Douglas by area pioneer Walter Moberley in the 1860s.

<sup>2</sup> The Dougherty ranch included cattle, calves, hay, and an orchard, and by 1883 had expanded to a total of 400 acres.

Patenaude, Branwen Christine (1995). *Trails to Gold*. Victoria: Horsdal & Schubart Publishers Ltd.

Researched by Angela Wynton