

Parke Ranch



Photo: Barbara Roden

Site Identification

Nearest Community:
Cache Creek, B.C.

Geocache Location:
N 50°49.333'
W 121°20.440'

Ownership:
Privately Owned

Accuracy:
2 meters

Overall Difficulty: 1.5
Overall Terrain: 2.5

Access Information and Restrictions:

Heading towards Cache Creek from the North, look for Gold Country information sign and pullout on the right.

Parking Advice:
Park at the pullout for the info sign.

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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When he emigrated to Canada from County Sligo in western Ireland, Philip Parke probably dreamt of striking it rich in the goldfields of northern British Columbia. The ambitious young man must have soon realized, however, that there was vast potential in the rich land around Cache Creek, and that more money could be made by ranching than by moiling for gold.

For a number of years Parke took various jobs around the area, working for a time for Clement Cornwall and running Cornwall's roadhouse at Ashcroft Manor. In 1865 he partnered with Charles Semlin to purchase Bonaparte House in Cache Creek, and three years later sold his share in the business.

The proceeds from the sale almost certainly helped him to buy land northwest of Cache Creek, and before long the Buonaparte Ranch (as it was then called; the "u" was later dropped from the name) had been cleared, irrigation ditches built, hay planted, and a cattle herd started.

As the Bonaparte Ranch became more developed, Philip Parke turned his attention to an adjoining valley to the south. Hat Creek Valley, running from north to south roughly halfway between the Thompson and Fraser Rivers, boasted fertile valley bottom fields, abundant timber, and lush open grasslands where the grass grew as high as a horse's belly. It was already owned, by Parke's former employer Clement Cornwall, but Parke owned something Cornwall wanted: water rights for Cornwall's Hibernia Ranch, near Ashcroft Manor. In 1900 the two men did a swap, and Philip Parke set about establishing the ranch which was originally called The Meadows.

Philip Parke never built a permanent dwelling at The Meadows; he and his wife lived at the Bonaparte, with

Philip making the arduous journey (three days herding cattle; two days in a wagon; several hours on a horse using a mountain shortcut) between the two properties as necessary. The Parkes had no children, but in the late nineteenth century Philip's nephew Henry arrived from Ireland, and eventually joined his uncle at the Bonaparte. Soon after that he purchased land in Hat Creek Valley adjoining The Meadows, and moved there with his family. The two properties were known jointly as the Parke Ranch, Upper Hat Creek.

Henry, his wife Isobella, and their four children lived on the Parke Ranch, first in a small log cabin with a sod roof and then in a spacious two-storey frame house built around 1910. Although they have been modernized since, the two buildings are still extant, and still recognizable as the houses seen in early photographs. When Philip Parke died in 1927, Henry took over the running of both the Bonaparte and Parke Ranches until his death in 1941. Henry's only son, Arthur, carried on the tradition, although he and his family lived at Bonaparte, with Arthur making the still-difficult trip between the two properties many dozens of times over the next forty years.

When Arthur Parke died in 1967 his two sons Alan and Gordon took over the properties and ran them together until 1970, when the land, machinery, and livestock were split. Alan took over the Bonaparte, while Gordon and his family settled in Upper Hat Creek at what became the Gordon Parke Ranch. Before retiring to Vancouver, Gordon Parke served as President of both the B.C. Cattlemen's Association and the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. A fifth generation of the Parke family, Gordon's son Brian, now lives in Upper Hat Creek, overseeing much of the ranching property in the valley. In March 2012 Gordon Parke was inducted into the B.C. Cowboy Hall of Fame, in the category "Pioneer Rancher".

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Parke, Gordon (1993). *The Parke Ranch, Upper Hat Creek: Four Generations*. Cache Creek, B.C. Kamloops, B.C.: Plateau Press.

(2012) *Sagebrush, Steers and Saddlesores: The Parke Family—Five Generations at Upper Hat Creek*. Retrieved June 2012 from

"Community Memories" at virtualmuseum.ca: http://www.musee-virtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires_de_chez_nous-community_memories/pm_v2.php?id=story_line&lg=English&fl=0&ex=379&sl=2852&pos=1

Letterboxing Clues:

Looking at the Gold Country Information sign hike up short hill. Located at top under sagebrush.