

**Pioneers & Early Settlers**

**Bonaparte House**

**Site Identification**

**Nearest Community:**  
Cache Creek, B.C.

**Geocache Location:**  
N 50°48.230'  
W 121°19.460'

**Altitude:**  
458m/1502ft

**Date Established:**  
1862

**Ownership:**  
Private Property

**Accuracy:**  
2 meters

**Overall Difficulty:** 1  
**Overall Terrain:** 1

**Access Information and Restrictions:**

Park near the Good Knight Inn at the east end parking lot, near picnic area.

**Point of Interest:**

Take the Old Cariboo Road across from cache site to view the location of where the Bonaparte House was moved too.

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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**Photo: Barbara Roden**

The building of the Cariboo Road through the heart of Gold Country brought sweeping changes to an area which had previously been accessible only to the most determined people. When the road from Yale to Soda Creek was finished in 1863, roadside stopping houses began springing up along the route, offering welcome relief to weary travelers.

In 1862 James Orr opened an establishment called Wayside House on a flat piece of land to the south of Rattlesnake Hill, about half-a-mile below what is now Cache Creek. (The exact location is unknown, although an early photograph shows that it appears to have been on the site now occupied by Wastech on the east side of Highway 1.) Orr continued as proprietor of the Wayside House until the fall of 1865, when he sold the land and building to local businessmen and landowners Charles Semlin and his partner Philip Parke.

When J.B. Leighton traveled along the Cariboo Road through the Cache Creek area in June 1865 he reported that “There was no stopping place nor sign of one at what was afterwards known as Bonaparte House”. However Semlin and Parke decided, soon after purchasing the Wayside House, that a better location for it would be down in the valley at the base of Rattlesnake Hill, near the Bonaparte River, so it was moved to its new location (near where the sign for the Sage and Sands trailer park now is), and re-opened early in 1866 under the name Bonaparte House.

The venture was soon booming, with the owners charging \$1.00 for meals, 50¢ for a bed, and 25¢ for a drink. They soon added a general store, a blacksmith shop, stables for the B.X. Express, and a telegraph office to the property. Not only was there a steady stream of people heading

north to the gold fields of Barkerville, there was the discovery (in 1866) of gold at Big Bend, north of Revelstoke, which brought a fresh influx of travelers. The Big Bend mines proved, two short years later, to be a failure, but the pack trains and stagecoaches still making their way north to Barkerville provided more than enough traffic to make Bonaparte House a roaring success. In 1872, when Sir Sandford Fleming was making his surveying journey across the country, his party traveled from Kamloops on September 30th, intending to stay the night in Cache Creek. However, when they arrived they found that “the hotel was full, as it generally is, because [it is] at a junction of several roads.”

In 1868 Philip Parke sold his share of the business to William Henry Sanford, known locally as “Boston”. In 1869 Charles Semlin sold his interest in Bonaparte House to James Campbell, and Sanford and Campbell ran it together until 1870, when Sanford left the area. By 1882 the property had expanded to include a post-office, and was described by one traveler as “a location that is a land mark upon the Cariboo Road”. Campbell was still the owner in 1895, when an advertisement in the Ashcroft *Journal* reads “Cache Creek: Bonaparte House. James Campbell, P.M. [Post-Master], Proprietor. First Class Bar. Accommodations For Man And Beast.”

At some point after this the hotel was moved yet again, and incorporated into the north end of what is now the Oasis Hotel. By 1962 it had lost its peaked roof, and subsequent renovations in the mid-1960s removed all exterior traces of Bonaparte House, although it’s thought that parts of the original building may survive within the present structure.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

(1882). *Inland Sentinel* (newspaper). “From Spences Bridge to Savona”. In Ashcroft Museum and Archives.

(1895). *Ashcroft Journal* (newspaper). In Ashcroft Museum and Archives.

**Letterboxing Clues:** Wagon wheel.