

Because Douglas seemed to be leasing the land from the Native peoples—there was an annual compensation of £2 10 **shillings** per family—some people say that he confirmed that the aboriginal peoples had title to these lands. In fact,

the governments of Britain, Canada, and British Columbia have all acknowledged this title. The Douglas treaties on Vancouver Island were the only treaties of this nature negotiated in British Columbia in the nineteenth century.

ACTIVITIES

1. Why do you think the British government granted a trade monopoly to the HBC on Vancouver Island?
2. What was unusual about the landholding policy in the colony? Why would immigrants from Canada object to such a policy?
3. How was the Legislative Assembly set up by Governor Douglas not a representative government? How do you think the inhabitants of the colony would react to this state of affairs?
4. Why did Governor Douglas make treaties with many of the Vancouver Island First Nations?
5. Examine the primary source on page 215. With a partner, discuss how this text could be interpreted as meaning First Nations peoples owned their lands. Do you agree with this interpretation? Discuss your findings with the rest of the class.

THE CARIBOO GOLD RUSH

shilling: an old British coinage, about one twentieth of a pound

title: established or recognized right to something

infomercial: an extended commercial that seems like a news show

Today, many people believe or hope that they can “get rich quick.” Some Canadians assume they will never have enough money to retire, or buy a house, or go to school—and they are counting on winning a major lottery to top up their savings. Television also provides hundreds of **infomercials** on ways to accumulate wealth quickly. These infomercials feature interviews with men and women who have been lucky enough, or smart enough, to have done the impossible. Although any good financial advisor will tell you that getting rich quick is nearly impossible, many

people choose to believe otherwise.

In the nineteenth century, people were just as susceptible to the idea of quick wealth. After all, many immigrants had rejected old ideas about class and money. If you could survive the trip to Canada or America, and those difficult first years, who was to say you couldn't become a millionaire? This optimism was fuelled by a series of gold rushes in western North America between 1849 and the end of the century. One of these rushes was directly responsible for the early development of British Columbia.

Miners Everywhere

In 1848, gold was discovered along the Sacramento River in central California. By 1849, thousands of people had left their jobs and homes to travel to California. They came overland, across the United States, or they travelled by sea, around the tip of South America and then up the Pacific Coast. Many perished along the way. The vast majority of these gold seekers never did get rich, and many never made it back home. As much as it was real, the gold rush was also a fantasy. The fantasy promised that you could scramble along the banks of a gold-bearing creek, pick up nuggets the size of your fist, and become wealthy overnight. In reality, gold seekers had to **stake a claim** along a creek, and then sink a mine shaft down to **bedrock**. Gold-bearing clay and sand would be brought to the surface, and the lighter material would be washed away to reveal the gold. Most of the claims had been staked in California by the time people started arriving for the rush of 1849. Most of those driven to California by the fantasy of instant wealth found themselves instead working as miners for the original claim holders. Many were broke and unemployed again by the mid-1850s.

Then, in late 1857, a Hudson's Bay Company trader arrived in Fort Victoria. Along with his cargo of furs for the Company, he carried two vials filled with gold dust and some small nuggets that he had **panned** along the banks of the Thompson River. He presented these to Governor Douglas, who examined them one night at dinner. Douglas believed that news of another gold strike would unleash an influx of greedy miners into the colony. His

fear was borne out during the winter of 1857–58. Miners who had moved to Washington and Oregon after the California rush had ended moved north to the banks of the Thompson and Fraser rivers, and began prospecting for gold. Most discovered that the best sources for easily found gold were on the sandbars along both rivers.

Word reached San Francisco in early 1858. Soon, hundreds of unemployed miners were trying to book tickets on any ship that would take them north. The first ship to arrive at Fort Victoria was the side-wheel steamer *Yosemite*. Some 450 miners disembarked on April 25, 1858. Almost immediately, they moved on to the mainland. The miners had to be creative about getting across the Strait of Georgia—some even used makeshift rafts. More ships arrived as the year progressed. By the end of the summer, more than 10 000 miners—mostly Americans—were working on the Fraser River.

Because the majority of miners were Americans, Douglas saw that the mainland had become more vulnerable to US territorial expansion.

to stake claim: the legal right to mine gold, or other minerals, on a specific piece of land

bedrock: solid rock underneath looser materials such as soil

to pan: to search for gold by panning gravel

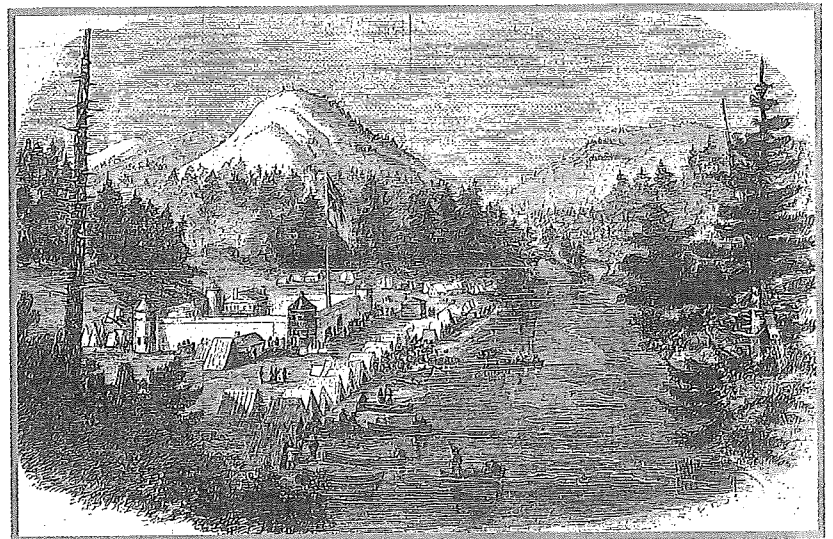


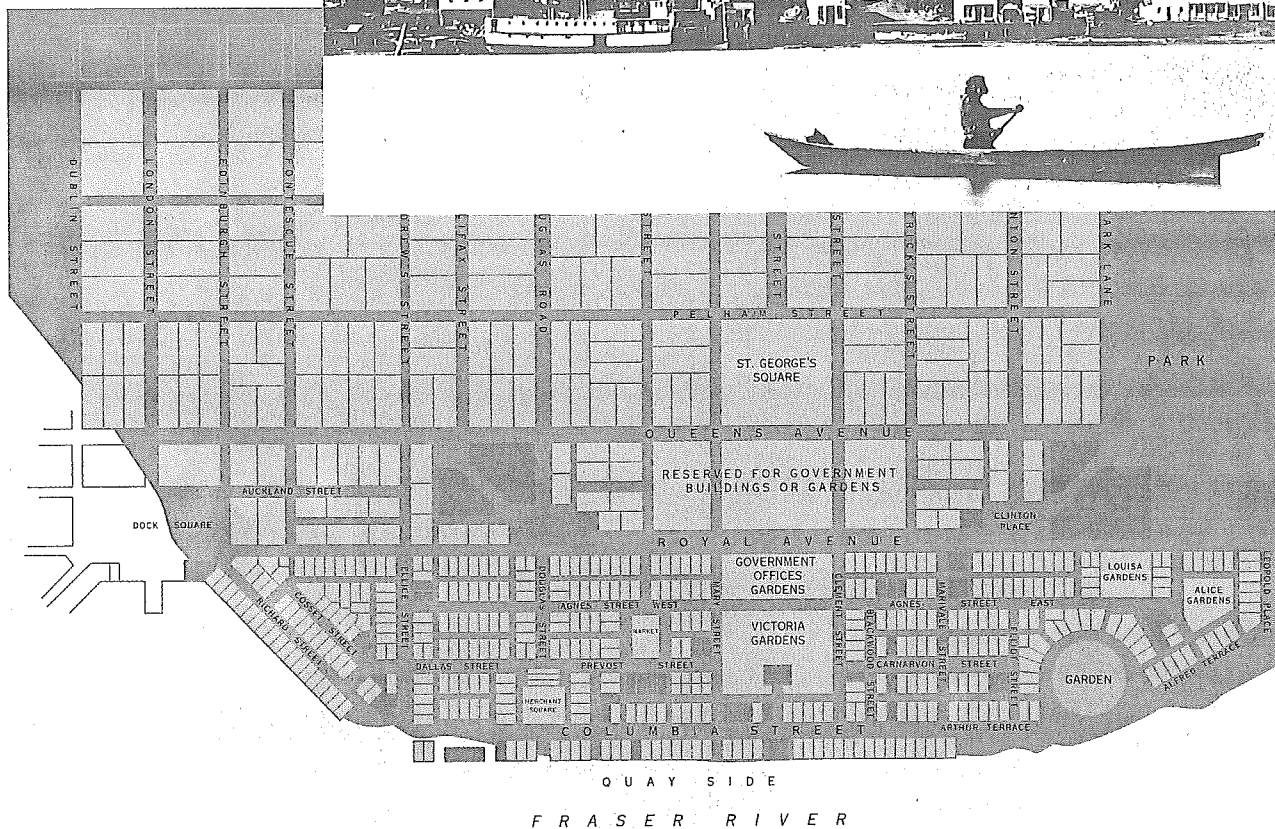
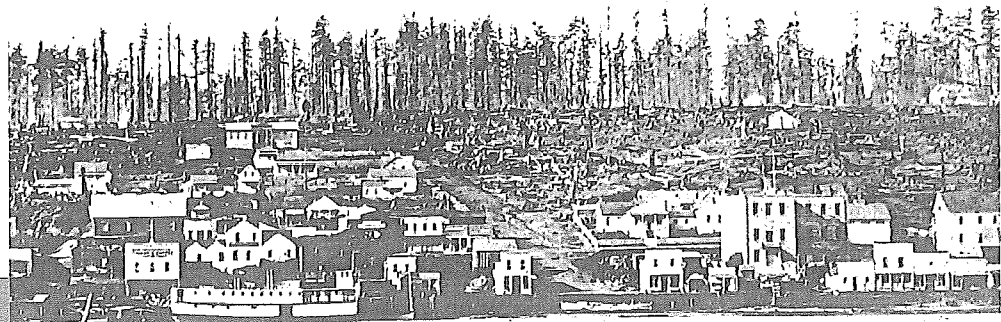
Figure 6-9 A miner's camp near Yale in 1858

He immediately communicated his concern to the Colonial Office in London. The response from London was swift. First, Douglas was made governor of the new Crown colony of British Columbia, which encompassed the mainland as far north as 54° 40'N. Second, Britain dispatched a contingent of Royal Engineers under Colonel Richard Moody. The Engineers would provide some degree of military pres-

ence in the new colony. They would also survey the region and provide technical assistance in building roads and towns, as Douglas required. Moody and the Royal Engineers arrived in 1859.

That year, the gold deposits along the sandbars of the lower Fraser were almost all gone. Prospectors now assumed that the gold found in the river sands and gravels had been eroded from a

Figure 6-10 New Westminster became the capital of the new crown colony. Below is Moody's plan for the settlement. Above, a picture of the actual town. What is the difference between the two pictures?



larger deposit upstream. That year, the miners moved north along the Fraser, searching for the source of the gold. Between 1860 and 1861, several miners arrived in the Cariboo region of southcentral British Columbia. Here they found sizable gold deposits in the creeks that fed the Fraser.

The Cariboo Road

In the early 1860s, Governor Douglas realized that profitable mining operations in the Cariboo were happening right under his nose—yet the colony wasn't seeing a penny of revenue. Since all the gold removed from British Columbia was taxable, Douglas decided to build a road to the goldfields. In this way, he could ensure that the gold would leave the region via the Fraser, not through US territory. Moreover, a roadway would promote settlement and encourage economic development.

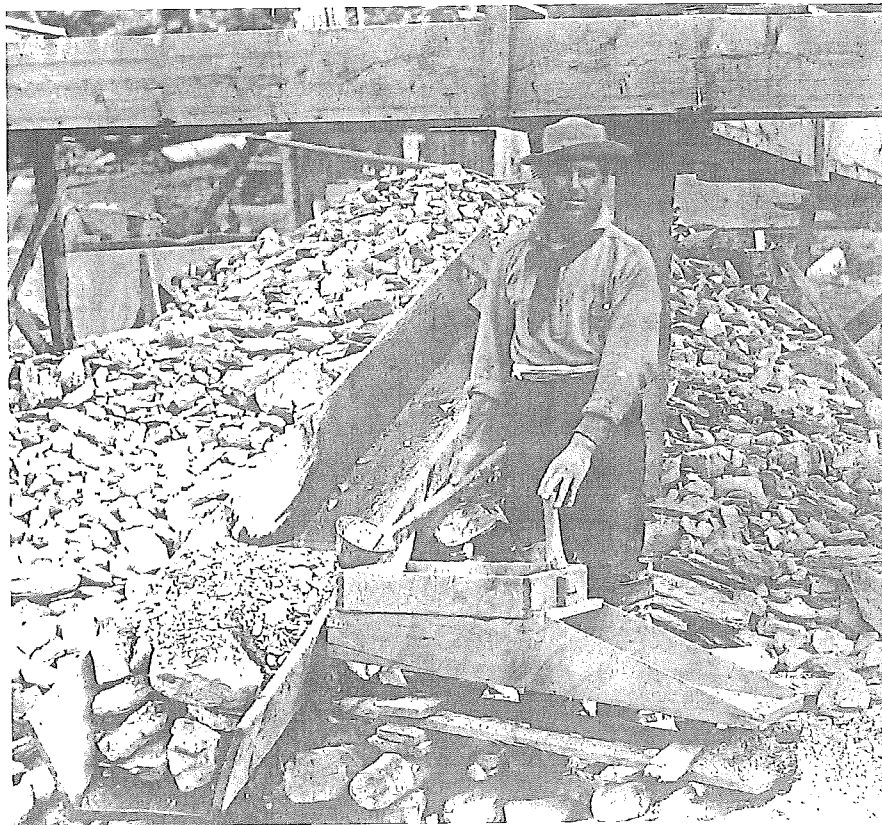


Figure 6-11 Mining in the Cariboo region, at the old Caledonia Mine. What effects to you think such operations would have on the environment?

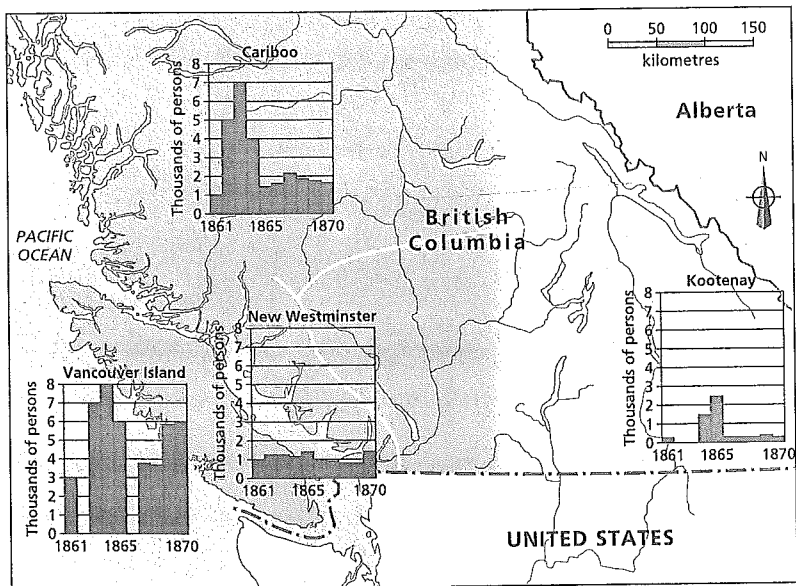


Figure 6-12 Great shifts in population occurred in parts of British Columbia and Vancouver Island during the Cariboo Gold Rush. Examine these population graphs, which show the fluctuating size of four areas: Vancouver Island, the Cariboo region, New Westminster, and the Kootenay region. How do you account for the different patterns seen here?

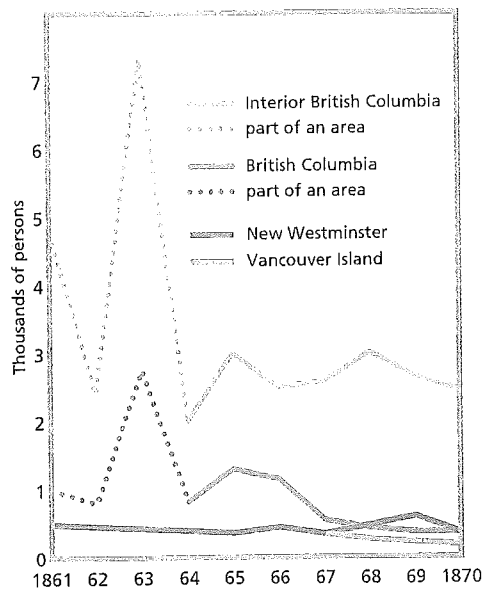


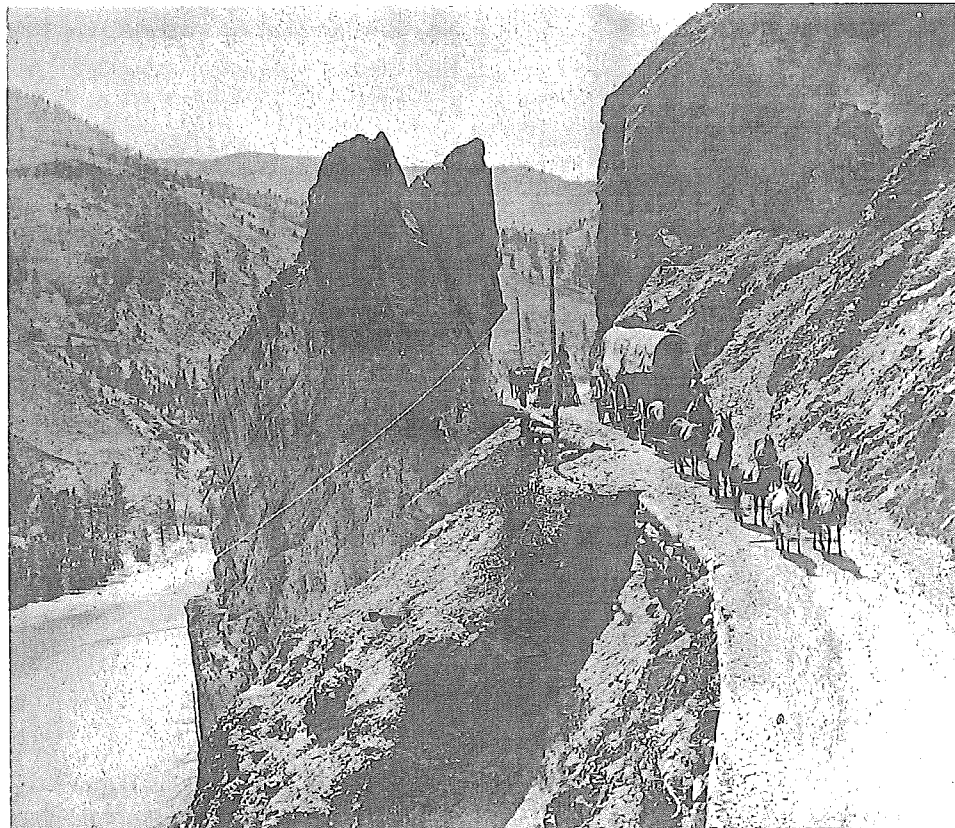
Figure 6-13 What does this graph tell you about the society of the Cariboo region compared to that in the southern part of the colony?

Two possible routes existed. The long route was via Lake Harrison and the Lillooet River. The short route was via the treacherous Fraser Canyon. The Harrison route, which took several steamer routes along the lakes of the interior, probably would have cost more than the second, more difficult, option. So, in 1862, construction of the Cariboo Road began. It covered 650 kilometres, from Yale, along the Fraser Canyon, to the new centre of the Cariboo, Barkerville. The road was a marvellous feat of engineering, and took four years and more than \$750 000 to complete. In many places, the roadway had to be blasted from solid rock. Unfortunately, the gold rush was coming to an end by the mid-1860s. The

Cariboo Road, built at such expense, was finished only after possible revenues were in steep decline. The colony had a tough time recouping the cost of its construction.

In 1864, James Douglas retired as governor of the two colonies. He was replaced by Frederick Seymour, in British Columbia, and by Arthur Kennedy, on Vancouver Island. Seymour, an active, enthusiastic man, quickly took charge of the colony and seemed to have the best interests of the inhabitants at heart. Kennedy, on the other hand, was autocratic and hard to get along with. He quickly found himself embroiled in all sorts of disputes with the elected Assembly on Vancouver Island.

Figure 6-14 The Cariboo Road



Tragedy for the Native Peoples: When Death Came to Call

Before construction of the Cariboo Road, the oldest trails along the Fraser Canyon had belonged to the Native peoples. Those who knew these trails intimately—and had often escorted miners to the goldfields—also helped to build the Cariboo Road. Although European construction workers always got the first jobs, by 1862, gold prospecting had caused a labour shortage. Contractors working under the Royal Engineers began hiring Chinese immigrants, as well as workers from the aboriginal nations. Eventually, Chinese immigrants would comprise approximately one-third of miners working in the Cariboo region. The Native peoples did not fare so well.

That same year, an outbreak of smallpox started outside of Victoria and spread to other parts of the colony. Smallpox was a dreaded disease in Europe, and one that affected the settlers and miners. For the Native peoples of the Americas, it was almost always fatal—they had never been exposed to it before, and had no immunity to it. It is estimated that after European contact, smallpox was responsible for the deaths of more than 70 percent of all aboriginal peoples.

Following the outbreak in Victoria, the authorities responded swiftly but misguidedly. Homes of the Native peoples were destroyed, and the occupants were ordered to leave Victoria. As they travelled up the coast, they infected other Native peoples. By summertime, smallpox had reached the Native com-



Figure 6-15 The rifle pit dug by some prospectors on their way to the Cariboo. They were attacked by the Chilcotin in 1864.

munities in the northern part of the colony.

The effect was devastating. Whole villages began to die, and survivors scattered into the hinterland. With no one left to perform burial rites, corpses rotted in the abandoned villages, and travellers along the coast reported the scene to the press. Among the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands, the effect of smallpox was perhaps the most pronounced. More than 80 percent of the Haida died that summer, and villages that had existed for thousands of years became ghost towns. Along the entire coast, it is estimated that over half of a total population of some 60 000 people died of the disease in 1862.

Unscrupulous—or ignorant—European traders and prospectors compounded the tragedy. They collected blankets and other

possessions from the dead and sold these to other Native communities. The smallpox virus can live for more than six months in contaminated clothing, and so the recipients of these goods quickly contracted the disease. During 1863, even more aboriginal peoples died of the disease inland.

Among the Chilcotin, the smallpox epidemic was a catalyst for rebellion. Their traditional land overrun by road construction and an unwelcome influx of American and European miners—who also disturbed their **salmon weirs**—they staged a brief war in 1864. Smallpox survivors attacked several labourers as they were building a railway right-of-way from the coast to the interior. Eventually, five Chilcotin were tried and executed for their role in the uprising.

salmon weir: a fenced-in stream for easier salmon fishing

Apply Your Knowledge

Barkerville: The Evolution of a Town

The largest town in the Cariboo was Barkerville, situated on the western edge of the Cariboo Mountains. It was named after Billy Barker, a sailor from Cambridgeshire, England, who struck gold in 1862. Barkerville grew up almost overnight, and was a case of "growth via word of mouth." Barkerville grew as fast as word of Barker's strike spread. His claim would eventually yield 1100 kilograms of gold.

Before the construction of the Cariboo Road, people had hauled their own supplies to Barkerville, either on their backs, or in a **pack train**. Because supplies were scarce, even the prices of most everyday items were **inflated**. Inflation in Barkerville did not ease up until the Cariboo Road had been finished, when goods could be transported by huge freight wagons. Soon, movers of freight boasted that they could pack and carry a set of champagne glasses without any breakage—for a price, of course. More women also came to Barkerville after the construction of the Cariboo Road.

At first, the town consisted only of makeshift cabins and tents. By the mid-1860s, however, Barkerville had a population of approximately

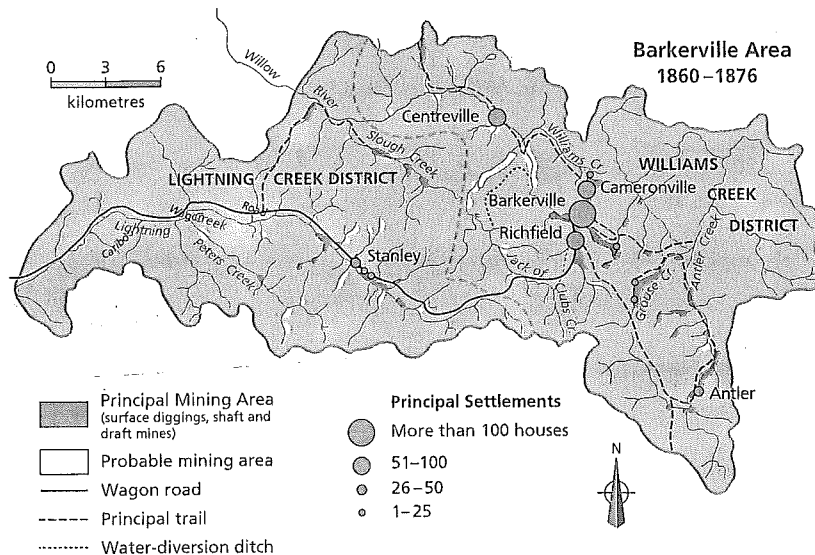


Figure 6-16 The Barkerville area

5000 people—it was the largest town north of San Francisco and west of Chicago. Even though its population was **transient** and largely dependent on mining, Barkerville was becoming less of a

service town and more of a real community. It had several general stores and boarding houses, a drugstore that also sold newspapers and cigars, a barbershop that also cut

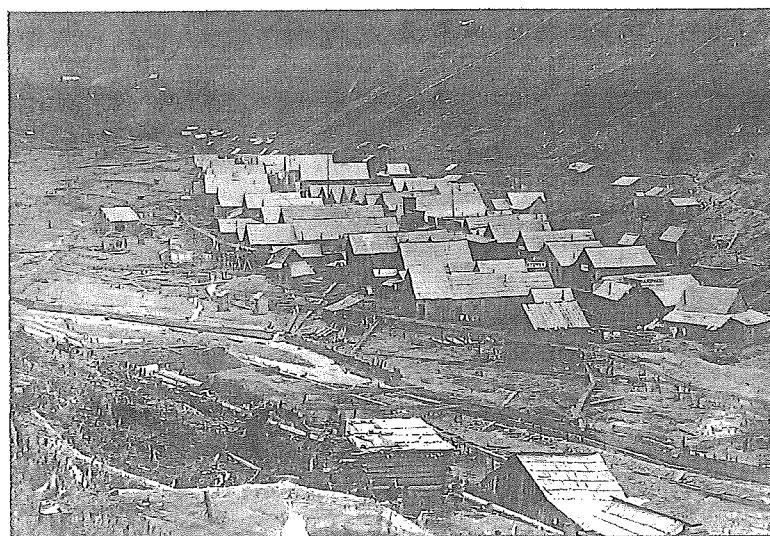


Figure 6-17 Historic Barkerville before the fire. The landscape has been heavily altered by the activities of the gold miners. What possible problems are likely to develop? How would such a town be extremely vulnerable to fire?

women's hair, the "Wake-Up Jake Restaurant and Coffee Saloon," a theatre (the Theatre Royal), and a literary society (the Cariboo Literary Society). Horse racing and prize fighting were common entertainments. Among the so-called "sober set," church services were extremely well attended.

Chinese immigrants were an important part of Barkerville life for almost a hundred years. They established a number of businesses, including the Kwong Lee Company, a general store that sold groceries, clothing, hardware, and mining tools. The Kwong Lee Company also had other stores in other parts of British Columbia, but the Barkerville store was one of the most impressive in town.

The Chinese community also built cabins for Chinese miners, where they saved money by sharing four or five to a cabin, and Tai Ping (the "Peace Room"), the equivalent of a modern nursing home. Chinese immigrants who came to Canada

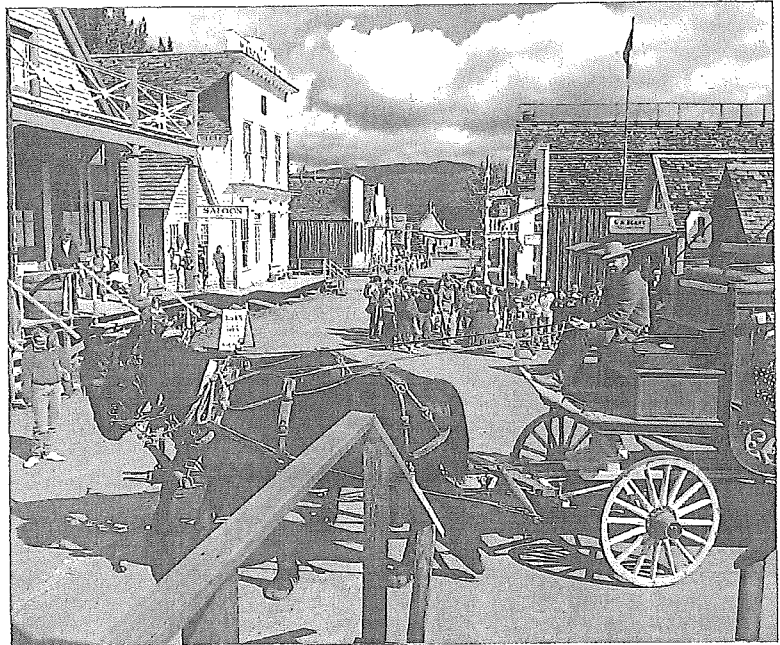


Figure 6-18 Barkerville as it has been recreated today

during the Cariboo Gold Rush or the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway always wanted to return to their homeland for burial—to do otherwise was an insult to one's ancestors. When a Chinese person was buried in

Barkerville, it was the Chinese community's duty to ensure that the grave was excavated after a suitable time and that the body was sent to China for reburial.

On September 16, 1868, Barkerville was destroyed by a fire that spread quickly through the wooden buildings. Rebuilding began immediately, and at an impressive pace. Within six weeks, ninety buildings had been rebuilt. Even the sidewalks were improved. By 1880, there were enough children in the area to build the Barkerville School. It had just thirteen pupils and one piece of school equipment—a chalkboard. Even so, Barkerville's population was declining by the end of the century, and it eventually became a ghost town. It did, however, have a small



Figure 6-19 The old schoolhouse, which accommodated thirteen students

DID YOU KNOW?

Billy Barker eventually lost his entire fortune through bad investments and died penniless in a Victoria home for senior citizens.



revival in the 1930s, when the Great Depression caused widespread unemployment, and the price of gold skyrocketed.

In 1958, the government of British Columbia decided that the town should be restored and operated as a tourist attraction. Today, Barkerville appears as it did in its heyday, and visitors can step back in time and marvel at its past. "Barkerville Historic Town" now greets visitors from all over Canada and other parts of the world, including thousands

of students. The history of each building has been meticulously researched and documented. No actual residents remain. They were either bought out or moved to New Barkerville during the restoration of the site.

pack train: a line of people or animals carrying heavy packs

to inflate: to increase the price of something dramatically

transient: not lasting very long

service town: a town that provides services to people engaged in one main industry

Figure 6-20 Billy Barker

ACTIVITIES

1. Examine Figure 6-16 and explain Barkerville's location with respect to the main mining areas.
2. Are there any physical characteristics of Barkerville that would discourage settlement? Explain.
3. How many stages of development has Barkerville experienced? Create a time line to illustrate these stages.
4. Why were there no schools in Barkerville before 1880?
5. Using the text and pictures above as a reference, describe the changing cultural landscape of Barkerville. See Chapter 3, pages 115 to 118, for more information about cultural landscapes.
6. What economic and social tensions might have existed in Barkerville during the early 1860s?
7. If you had been a resident of Barkerville during its gold rush, would you have preferred to mine or to operate a business that supported the miners? Explain your answer.

ACTIVITIES

1. How did the fantasy of the gold rush differ from the reality? Which version was more popular? Why?
2. Where was gold first mined in British Columbia? What goal drove miners onward?
3. Douglas was concerned about an anti-British bias among the miners. What was the basis of his concerns? What steps did the British government take to deal with these concerns?
4. Why was the construction of the Cariboo Road so important? With a partner, examine the maps in this section and/or in an atlas. Based on the distance covered, the topography, and the water routes, determine what you feel would have been the best route inland. Share your findings with the rest of the class.
5. Imagine you are a Native person on the BC coast in early 1863. Describe, in a paragraph, poem, or poster, your feelings regarding what has happened to your community and your feelings towards the non-Native people of the colony.