

Cache Creek Park Story of the Mysterious Mine Shaft

SITE #020102

GC1TWXX

Written & Researched by Kathy Paulos

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Cache Creek, V0K 1H0
 Location/Parking: N 50°48.942'
 W 121°19.554'
 Geocache Location: N 50°48.982'
 W 121°19.643'
 Accuracy: 5 meters
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page
 UTM: East 0617826;
 North 5630738 10U
 Geocache altitude: 463 m./1,520 ft.
 Overall difficulty: 3
 Terrain difficulty: 1.5
(1=easiest; 5=hardest)
 Date Established: 1901
 Ownership: Village of Cache Creek
 Access: • Public Road
 • Year-round
 • Vehicle accessible
 • From Hwy 97N, follow Parke Rd. to Quartz Rd. Head north on Quartz Rd.
 • High activity area, use stealth.

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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Photo: Village of Cache Creek

View inside the shaft. The white spot in the centre is the hard hat of a village employee exploring the shaft.

Great excitement surrounded the Village of Cache Creek Community Park on March 7, 1990 at 6:00 pm when local children, Brennan LeClair and Dawson Stone, discovered a mine shaft opening. Village employees had inadvertently unearthed the historical mine while working on extending the parking area.

The excitement became concern when, along with the shovels and a pick, a box of dynamite including several live sticks were discovered in the mine shaft. A bomb squad from Vancouver was soon on its way to dismantle the dynamite. All ended safely, encouraging a quest for answers to the mysterious shaft, revealed to be 10 feet high, 4 feet wide and 90 feet long.

The community park site was originally part of ranch land belonging to the Parke family. Philip Parke was born in County

Sligo, Ireland, arriving in the Cache Creek area during the early 1860s. After working for the Cornwall brothers for a time, he and Charles Semlin purchased a roadhouse in Cache Creek.

After a short time operating the roadhouse, Parke acquired land along the Bonaparte River in 1862. By the 1870s, Parke's "Buonaparte Ranch" had developed into one of the finest in the area. Future Parke family members dropped the "u" from the ranch name and the property remained in the Parke family for over 130 years and four generations. Philip had no children of his own, but nephew Henry, who also came from County Sligo, Ireland, became a successful rancher in the Upper Hat Creek Valley. Upon Philip's death in 1927, Henry's son Arthur Parke inherited the ranch.

In 1969, the Village of Cache Creek purchased a portion of the



Current view of the rear parking area. The circle indicates the approximate location of the shaft. A large boulder was placed over the shaft entrance, and covered with fill.

ranch for a park site. In 1974, the swimming pool was opened and an outdoor skating rink soon followed. In the 1980s, the park was extended to include baseball diamonds. As the park development continued, a parking lot expansion occurred in 1990, uncovering the 'Mystery Mine'.

A letter appearing in the 1962 Ashcroft journal, written by former Cache Creek pioneer Neil Darough, reveals the mystery of the Cache Creek Park tunnel.

"The year 1901 found my brother Duncan and I in Ashcroft where we staked claims at Cache Creek. After tunneling in 140 feet, we found no pot of gold at the rainbow's end, but did find ourselves broke. However, our hopes were high, so we placer mined on Scotty Creek for two months and came out with \$22.00 in gold and \$3.00 in rubies."

Further information supplied by Alan Parke, Arthur's son, confirms that it was the Darough brothers who were responsible for constructing the discovered mine shaft. He also shared that there were once three tunnels in the vicinity. Neil Darough remained in the area, living in Hat Creek and Ashcroft until retiring to Whalley, British Columbia in 1952. Mr. Darough found no magic riches in his mining endeavors, but rather supported his family with more traditional pursuits.



BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Darough, N. A Pioneer of the cariboo. (1962). *Ashcroft Journal*.

Parke, G. (1993). *The Parke Ranch: Upper Hat Creek Four Generations*. Cache Creek, BC: Self.