

# Charles Augustus Semlin

SITE #020101

GC1TXXG

Written & Researched by Angela Wynton

## SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Cache Creek, V0K 1H0

Geocache Location: N 50°48.284'  
W 121°16.902'

Accuracy: 3 meters

Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page

UTM: East 0621074;  
North 5629518 10U

Geocache altitude: 560 m./1,837 ft.

Overall difficulty: 1

Terrain difficulty: 1

(1=easiest; 5=hardest)

Date Established: 1869

Ownership: Private Property

- Access:
- Highway
  - Year-round
  - Vehicle accessible
  - *Detailed access information on next page.*

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](mailto:info@exploregoldcountry.com)

For more site pages go to:  
[www.goldtrail.com](http://www.goldtrail.com) or  
[www.GeoTourismCanada.com](http://www.GeoTourismCanada.com)

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*Semlin Ranch*

The Gold Rush brought a plethora of skills to the young British colony; trades people, professionals and savvy entrepreneurs. Many came searching for gold, while others were looking for riches from business enterprises.

One such professional was school-teacher Charles Semlin. Finding gold was not his forte, but finding riches and fame certainly were. Semlin saw more value in packing supplies for the gold seekers than prospecting for himself. After three years he had enough of packing in the Cariboo and in 1865 found himself in Cache Creek, where he would live out his life.

Semlin was hired to manage the Cornwall brothers' roadhouse, Ashcroft Manor, a social hub in the area. Only a few months later Charles purchased the stopping house at Rattlesnake Hill, moved it to the centre of Cache Creek and re-named it Bonaparte House. At this time he also became the first postmaster in Cache Creek. Semlin had been pre-empting and purchasing land since 1867 and in

1870 he traded the hotel for more ranch land. He grew his Dominion Ranch (now called Semlin Ranch) east of the community to 15,000 head of cattle; however, Semlin would soon begin a notable new career.

Semlin's political career was somewhat serendipitous. In 1871, when the colony joined confederation, Charles was elected to the inaugural session of the legislature of British Columbia. Well, not quite elected. After a tie, "Gentlemen,



Photo: Ashcroft Museum

*Charles Augustus Semlin*



Cache Creek Boarding School, c 1890

a hat please.” The elections officer announced, “Mr. Charles Augustus Semlin, I draw your name. You are the first Member of the Legislature for Yale in the Province of British Columbia.”

Early in his political career Semlin successfully convinced the government to establish a public boarding school in the Interior to educate the scattered population of children in the region. He introduced the legislation of 1874 that led to the establishment of the Central Boarding School in Cache Creek. It would be the only time the province would participate in a public boarding school. The school existed until 1890 when it was shut down due to dwindling enrolment.

It was 1882 before Semlin returned to politics and in 1894 became the leader of the opposition. Not a good position for such a gentle man. Regardless, Semlin persevered and survived his years of political chaos.

With a controversial move in 1898, Lieutenant Governor McInnes dismissed the current government and requested former Premier Robert Beaven create a political

platform with ministries. Beaven failed. It was Semlin who succeeded when next asked by McInnes to do what Beaven could not. And yet again, the gentleman rancher established himself politically.

Premier Semlin was at the helm for only eighteen months and they would be some of the most tumultuous political months in history. With challenges from political rivals and party members, a yearlong mining strike, railway controversy, controversial patronage appointments, and poor political structure, the short term for the gentleman rancher was tempestuous. He would not run again in 1900, “I felt that I had done my share, and that it was time that younger shoulders were taking up the burdens of public life.”

Semlin was instrumental in establishing the Inland Agricultural Society of B.C., and the B.C. Cattleman’s Association, still active today after 120 years. With a keen interest in history he became the president of the Yale and Lillooet Pioneer Society, not knowing he would very much be that history.

In 1927, Semlin’s death was front-page news in the Vancouver Daily Province. The last surviving member of British Columbia’s first legislature, Renaissance-man Charles Semlin, 91 years old, died at his cherished Dominion Ranch in Cache Creek. He is buried in the Ashcroft Cemetery.

**Detailed access information:**

- East of Cache Creek on Hwy #1.
- Remain on the side of the frontage road, allowing equipment to safely pass.
- DO NOT cross cattleguard onto residential property.

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES**

(1999). The Cariboo Gold Rush. Retrieved March, 2009, from B.C. Heritage Digital Collections Web site: <http://bcheritage.ca/cariboo/>

Mouat, J. (2000). Semlin, Charles Augustus. Retrieved March, 2009, from Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online Web site: <http://www.biographi.ca>