

# Hat Creek Coal

SITE #090202

GC1TT1K

Written & Researched by Angela Wynton

### SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Cache Creek, V0K 1H0  
 Parking: N 50°46.270'  
 W 121°35.728'  
 Geocache Location: N 50°46.261'  
 W 121°35.765'  
 Accuracy: 5 meters  
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page  
 UTM: East 0598994;  
 North 5625301 10U  
 Geocache altitude: 916 m./3,005 ft.  
 Overall difficulty: 1  
 Terrain difficulty: 1.5  
 (1=easiest; 5=hardest)  
 Date Established: 1877  
 Ownership: Private Property  
 Access: • Gravel Road  
 • Seasonal  
 • Vehicle accessible  
 • Detailed access information on next page.



The BC Hydro compound lies below the excavation site.

One of the thickest accumulations of coal in the world is in the Hat Creek Valley. The Hat Creek Coal deposit is 26 kilometers long, 400 metres wide and 1200 metres thick. When and how was it discovered? Well, therein lies a story.

of Canada was surveying, mapping and discovering the geology and geography of the Gold Country region for the Dominion of Canada and the Canadian Pacific Railway. As he surveyed the Hat Creek area for the potential of a railway corridor, he came upon the graben. A graben, created by a geological fault, is a low block of rock bordered by parallel fault

In 1877, Dr. George Mercer Dawson of the Geological Survey

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](http://www.goldtrail.com) or  
[www.GeoTourismCanada.com](http://www.GeoTourismCanada.com)

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40 foot prospect shaft, Hat Creek coal outcrop, 1910.



**80 foot deep coal outcrop at Hat Creek, 1910**

scarps, or cliffs. Often referred to as a rift valley, visually you see a broad valley edged by broken rock formations. Little did Dawson know he had discovered one of the largest coal deposits in the world.

At Hat Creek the coal is full range from bright to dull brown, but most of it is massive, compact,

fine grained, relatively solid, dull brownish-black rock. Fragments of petrified wood are common in the coal. Parts of the coal are also characterized by small lenses, globules and irregular shaped masses of light-yellow, semi-transparent fossilized amber (retinite). Rare fossils of forest and insect specimens dating back 50 million years have been found in the amber.

The area consists of Tertiary coal and classic sedimentary and volcanic formations that rest on Cretaceous volcanic rocks and metamorphosed Palaeozoic carbonates and greenstones.

In 1893, rancher George Finney sank the first shaft to supply coal to locals and the village of Ashcroft. In 1923 a Chinese syndicate began a more ambitious project to provide coal to the coast but it soon failed. The Clear Mountain Coal Company took over and was equally



unsuccessful. By 1925 it was Hat Creek Coal exploring with shafts, tunnels and drill holes, but again exploration soon became dormant that same year.

Beginning in 1933 L.D. Leonard mined a few hundred tonnes of coal, until 1942 when all activity ceased due to World War II. In 1957 the Hat Creek coal area passed to B.C. Electric, now known as B.C. Hydro, and again further exploration and drilling ceased by 1959. In 1974 B.C. Hydro resumed exploration of the site and began to mine sample quantities of coal. At this point protests began, continuing into the early 1980s and effectively preventing any further coal exploration or the development of a coal driven energy plant.

The Ashcroft Museum boasts an exceptional display diarizing and documenting the history of coal discovery and exploration in the Hat Creek area. For more information or just to view the amazing stages in this story drop in for a walk through time. To this day there remains controversy and opposition to any further exploration and exploitation of one of the largest coal accumulations in the world, the coal at Hat Creek in the heart of Gold Country.

Some interesting minerals present throughout the area include Bocanne, Buchite, Retinite and Poitevinite.

**Detailed access information:**

- From Cache Creek, follow Hwy #97N to Hwy #99.
- Follow Hwy #99 west to Hat Creek Rd., on the left.
- At Lehman Rd. keep left, remaining on Hat Creek Rd.
- Park well to the roadside to ensure adequate passing room.
- NO trespassing on B.C. Hydro private property.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES**

Hamilton, W.R., Wooley, A.R., & Bishop, A.C. (1985). *Larousse Guide to Minerals, Rocks and Fossils. 6th Edition.* New York, USA: Larousse & Co.  
 Press, F., & Siever, R. (1986). *Earth.* W.H. Freeman & Co.