

The Hudson Bay Company Brigade Trail

SITE #100102

GC1TT1W

Written & Researched by Doug Smith

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Savona, V0K 2J0
 Location/Parking: N 50°48.362'
 W 120°46.686'
 Geocache Location: N 50°48.388'
 W 120°46.674'
 Accuracy: 6 meters
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing
 clues page
 UTM: East 0656564;
 North 5630656 10U
 Geocache altitude: 582 m./1,909 ft.
 Overall difficulty: 1.5
 Terrain difficulty: 3
 (1=easiest; 5=hardest)
 Date Established: c 1843
 Ownership: Crown Land
 Access: • Gravel Road
 • Seasonal
 • 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

For more site pages go to:
www.goldtrail.com or
www.GeoTourismCanada.com

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View of Kamloops Lake.

Moving goods through the Interior of B.C. was never easy. High mountains, steep canyons and raging rivers challenged every route. The Pacific Fur Company established posts at Okanagan, Spokane, and “Shewhaps” (Kamloops) at the junction of the North and South Thompson Rivers. In competition, the Northwest Company connected routes between New Caledonia and the Okanagan through “Cumcloops” in 1813. Various routes were used by both trading companies, but in 1821, Fort Alexandria was built, under the new merger of the Northwest Trading Company and the Hudson Bay Company.

Overland trade routes began to take the shape of Brigade Trails using horses, a big departure from the canoe-portage system. By 1826 the route from Fort Vancouver on the Columbia to Fort Okanagan used flat bottomed boats on the rivers and lakes wherever possible. From Fort Okanagan, the route was overland

to Fort Kamloops using horse brigades. The horses each carried 80 to 90 pound packs and a brigade could have up to 100 horses.

Kamloops was the stopping place, with grasslands to feed the horses, for transportation routes north and west. The original route northwest was up the North Thompson to Little Fort, then along the route of Highway 24 today to 100 Mile House, then north to Fort Alexandria. Furs traveled south in the fall and supplies traveled north in the spring. It took about 20 days one way to make the journey.

In the 1840s with trade routes south of the 49th parallel cut off, the establishment of trade routes from Fort Langley to Fort Kamloops became a priority. The Hudson Bay Company Fort in Kamloops was moved to the west side and a new brigade route (“the lower route”) was found from Shuswap Lake (now Kamloops Lake) to 100 Mile House.



Journals from 1843 describe the route. The brigade travelled along the north side of the Thompson River to Tranquille Creek, then climbed the steep hill up into what is now the Dewdrop Range. The route dropped down to Kamloops Lake at Red Point, then followed the lakeshore to Copper Creek. Early routes climbed up the hills near Copper Creek, then through the Sabiston Creek Valley to Hudson Bay Springs and over the hills, descending to Deadman Creek. The brigade trail followed Tobacco Creek towards Chartrand Lake, then over the hills near Hihium Lake towards the east end of Loon Lake. From here, the brigade crossed the Bonaparte Plateau via Fly Creek to the southwest corner of Green Lake, and then on to Horse Lake. From here it connected to traditional north-south routes.

The Hudson Bay Company Brigade Trail from Kamloops to Fort Alexandria followed this route and other variations until 1858 when a ferry was established at Savona. The last brigade took place in 1862. After that a route was established along approximately the same route as the Trans Canada Highway, along the south shore to Savona, then overland to the Cariboo Wagon Road.

After the Hudson Bay company route was no longer used, the old brigade trails were sometimes used by miners heading to gold fields and by cattle drivers. Over time, sections have been turned into roads, railway beds, or have become part of private lands. There are traces of the trail here and there, but it is rare today for someone to travel over this entire route by foot or on horseback.

Sections of the brigade trail can be hiked or explored by using area back roads. From the Red Lake Road, the Deadman Valley Road, or the Loon Lake Road, visitors can see the same terrain as explorers and traders in the 1800s.

Detailed access information:

- From Hwy #1, take Sabiston Rd. for nearly 24 km.
- At junction of Tranquille, Savona, Copper Creek & Sabiston access, find a wide spot to safely pull off road.
- Be prepared for all conditions, back country access, no cellular service.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

- Balf, M. (1981). *Kamloops: A History of the District up to 1914*. In Kamloops Museum Archives.
- Favrholdt, K. *Fur Trade Trails through British Columbia*. In Kamloops Museum Archives.
- Wilson, B. (1966). Hudson Bay Brigade Trail. In *Boom Town Tales and Historic People*.