

The Butte Ranch Site

SITE #010101

GC1TWTM

Written & Researched by Kathy Paulos

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Ashcroft, V0K 1A0
 Location/Parking: N 50°44.835'
 W 121°14.344'
 Geocache Location: N 50°44.797'
 W 121°14.007'
 Accuracy: 5 meters
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page
 UTM: East 0624629;
 North 5623136 10U
 Geocache altitude: 302 m./991 ft.
 Overall difficulty: 2
 Terrain difficulty: 1.5
(1=easiest; 5=hardest)
 Date Established: c 1860
 Ownership: Private Property
 Access: • Public Road
 • 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

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

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Photo: Ashcroft Museum

Just 3 km from Ashcroft up the Evans Road you will come to a desolate area, where windswept cliffs provide an incredible backdrop to the winding Thompson River. The local residents call it the “slough”. Avid movie fans may recognize this area from the opening scene of the 2007 Mark Wahlberg movie, ‘Shooter’.

Several of Ashcroft’s early settlers homesteaded in this area, including one of the founding fathers, William Brink. Born in the United States, and like so many others, the discovery of gold brought him and partner J.C. Barnes into Yale in 1858. Here they packed freight north to the gold fields. Not enjoying the hardships and cold weather of the north, Brink and Barnes decided to homestead in Ashcroft. By the mid 1860s, the partners were farming large tracts of land, including the mile long flat of the present Ashcroft town site. William Brink chose the “slough area” to farm and called it “The Butte Ranch”.

Although Barnes and Brink are listed in the 1878 directory, according to early Cariboo histo-

rian J.B. Leighton, Brink refused to have his name listed on the 1874 voters list and his early life remains a bit of a mystery.

Unfortunately, Brink passed away on July 11, 1879, five years before the coming of the rail and the emergence of a bustling supply town, and was buried on his homestead. When the Canadian National Railway tracks were laid, his body was exhumed and moved further up the bank. The gravesite remains to this day, marked with a



William Brink's gravesite



Photo: Ashcroft Museum

Curling at the 'slough' near Butte Ranch

chain link fence and a flat marble headstone; however, the site is on private property and is not accessible to the public.

With Brink's death, his children, Ellen (Evans) and William Jr. inherited the Butte Ranch. Here Ellen and her husband Oliver raised a family of thirteen. Their ranch was the envy of many a visitor with its fine orchards and large house, complete with a fountain.

In those days, the slough was a popular area for curlers, skaters and in the summer a popular picnic and swimming hole. In 1908, the Barnes Creek School was established to provide education to the Evans children and others.

In 1909, Mrs. Lewell, a recent widow with two young sons also settled here. *"Mrs. Lewell has moved into her fine house which she had built on her land at the Butte Ranch. The house, a modern ten room structure, was erected by Bob Stoddard."* According to her son Bernard, *"Mother had the house designed around the carpet that was to go in the living room."*

Over the years, the 'Lewell House' was bought and sold several times. In the 1950s the Muir family acquired

the house from the Owens'. The Muirs ran a dairy farm and delivered bottled milk to the residents of Ashcroft. Mrs. Muir later sold it to Dupont Explosives who used it for an office. Sadly, the house burned down just a few years ago.

Today, it is difficult to picture this quiet spot as a busy, thriving community. But if you listen carefully, the sounds of children's laughter as they swim and the song of a fisherman's line singing through the air may conjure up images of an earlier era.

The names Barnes, Brink and Evans remain alive. Brink is the name of one of Ashcroft's main streets, the local lake is named for Mr. Barnes and Evans is the road to the slough.



Buildings that remain on the Butte Ranch site

Detailed access information:

- From Ashcroft, follow Evans Rd. beyond the pavement ending.
- Please stay on the river side of the road.
- Park well off road, in widened area; be aware of truck traffic.
- Watch for trains, use caution when crossing tracks.
- Always use great care near river's edge.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

Belton, B. (2002). *Bittersweet Oasis*. Altona, MB: Friesens.
 Brinks & Barnes History Files. *Ashcroft Museum & Archives*.
 Jacob, E. (1979). *Cariboo Christmas: The Pioneer*.
 Lewell, Personal Letters. Cummings Notes. *Ashcroft Museum & Archives*.