



Walking Tour

A Brief History of Carmacks

Carmacks is located in the traditional territory of the Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation. The Northern Tutchone speaking people living here are closely related to the Northern Tutchone at Mayo, Stewart Crossing and Pelly Crossing as well as the Southern Tutchone of Champagne, Klukshu, and Aishihik. A system of trails and water routes connected all of these areas, and the mouth of the Nordenskiöld River was an important meeting place.

Before the Klondike Gold Rush, George Carmack built a trading post here and started to mine coal from the hill behind his post. During the gold rush, in 1898, the North-West Mounted Police established Tantalus Post near “Carmack’s Landing” to monitor the river traffic. In 1902, a winter road was built between Whitehorse and Dawson City and White Pass & Yukon Route started a horse-drawn freight, mail and passenger service. Stage drivers changed horses every twenty to thirty miles and the Carmacks Roadhouse became a key stop along the way. Carmacks also became an important summer stop for the sternwheelers as they landed to load cattle driven overland from Whitehorse. The steam-driven boats needed a constant supply of wood for their boilers, and wood camps around Carmacks paid wages to local men.

In the 1950s, during construction of the North Klondike Highway, it was briefly thought that Minto Landing, further north along the highway, would become the larger town. However, Carmacks retained its status, and become a successful supply centre for the rich mines to the west. Over the years, the Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation people settled permanently on the north bank of the Yukon River while the business section of Carmacks developed on the south bank. Hunting, fishing, trapping, berry-picking, hiking, and snowmobiling all play an important role in community life today.

1) Telegraph Station/Visitor's Centre



In the early 1900s, telegraph stations were an important part of the communication system linking Yukon communities with each other and the outside world. The federal government made construction of the line a priority in an effort to better communicate with the newest Canadian territory. Construction started early in 1899 and the Yukon line reached Skagway in September of that year. Two years later the Yukon was connected to the Dominion Telegraph Line at Quesnel, British Columbia. This telegraph line station was built in 1903 at Big Salmon. It was rafted to Carmacks in 1915 and located by the High Cache, near the corner of River Road and Victoria Crescent. The first telegraph operator was Howard Macmillan. Macmillan, and his wife, Alice, lived in the Telegraph Station until the early 1930s and had the post office there as well. Bill Hayes took over as the telegraph operator after Macmillan. The Station was moved to its present location and completely renovated in 1991 as the new Visitor's Centre. A monument to four Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who were killed in an airplane crash at Carmacks, is located in front of the building.

2) Boardwalk



A well maintained, and wheelchair-accessible, boardwalk runs between the campground and a gazebo near the Carmacks Roadhouse. It is a half-hour stroll to walk the length of the boardwalk and enjoy beautiful views of the river and the mountains. A series of signs, located at intervals along the boardwalk, interpret the cultural and natural history of the area. The gazebo is a very pleasant place to rest. Those who complete the walk during the Village of Carmacks office hours can stop there to receive a certificate signed by the mayor.

3) High Cache

This little log cache sits on River Road next to the fire hall. The cache used to sit next to the Telegraph Station on the other side of



Victoria Crescent. The Cache and the Telegraph Station were moved to their present locations in 1991 and the cache was set on the ground for safety reasons. Not a true high cache, which are often set on poles more than ten feet in the air, this structure was originally built a few feet off the ground to house flammable material. Caches were commonly used in the Yukon to store fragile or edible goods. Today, steel traps have replaced fragile quill and skin snares, meat is more commonly refrigerated instead of being hung to dry, and the semi-tanned skin strapping used in dog sleds and snowshoes has been replaced by plastic that is not so appetising to the always hungry sled dogs.

4) Walkers' Cabin

This log structure is just visible through the trees on the river side of River Road. The building was



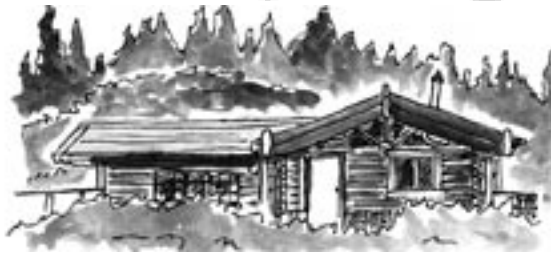
originally built at Little Salmon Village on the Yukon River just downstream from the mouth of the Little Salmon River. George Walker homesteaded and managed the Taylor & Drury store at Little Salmon. When they moved to Carmacks in the 1920s, the Walkers dismantled this building and rafted the logs fifty-six kilometres to Carmacks where the cabin was rebuilt. George Walker and his wife Jessie lived here for many years before it became the residence of Jimmy Roberts. Jimmy and his wife May lived here in the 1930s.

5) LePage Garage



Frank Zimmer built this cabin as a one-room home in the 1920s when he was a trapper and had one of the many rink ranches that were common in the Yukon between 1915 and 1925. Pauline and Happy LePage purchased the Zimmer cabin in the mid-1940s and the family used the cabin when they visited Carmacks. Happy LePage came to the Yukon in 1926 and worked on the sternwheeler Casca for two seasons before he started a wood camp on the Yukon River at Rink Rapids. This was the first of many wood camps that the LePages established along the Yukon River. Each camp would cut between 200 to 300 cords of wood every winter as fuel for the summer sternwheeler traffic. Between 1958 and 1968, Happy LePage converted the cabin to a tool shed and garage for repairing his equipment.

6) Goulter Mink Ranch



Frank Goulter was born in England, enlisted in the British Army in 1894, and served in South Africa during the Boer War. He joined the North-West Mounted Police in 1903 and became one of four Tantalus Station officers posted at Carmacks. Goulter left the Mounted Police after four years and built a home in Carmacks in 1910. He married Ida May Mack at the Carmacks Anglican Church in 1914 and their reception was at the Carmacks Roadhouse. The Goulters operated a successful mink and fox farm in the 1920s. Frank worked at the Tantalus Mine around 1926 but continued to raise mink into the 1930s. He also trapped in the country near Braeburn and along the Whitehorse-Dawson winter road and became an accomplished taxidermist.

7) Joe Britton Cabin



This cabin was built in the 1920s. Joe and Elsie Britton lived here after they moved out of the Carmacks Roadhouse. The Brittons moved to Carmacks from Dawson City where Elsie played the piano in one of the dance halls. Britton was a cook for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and worked at posts all over the Yukon. In 1914, he was cooking for the police at Kirkman Creek, on the Yukon River, and was also a partner in a successful mine nearby. The Brittons moved here because the little cabin was easier to heat and look after than the big old roadhouse.

8) Coal Cars

The geologist George Dawson first noted coal deposits at Carmacks in 1887. Since then there have been three successful coal mines in the area. These coal cars are probably from the Tantalus Butte coal mine just



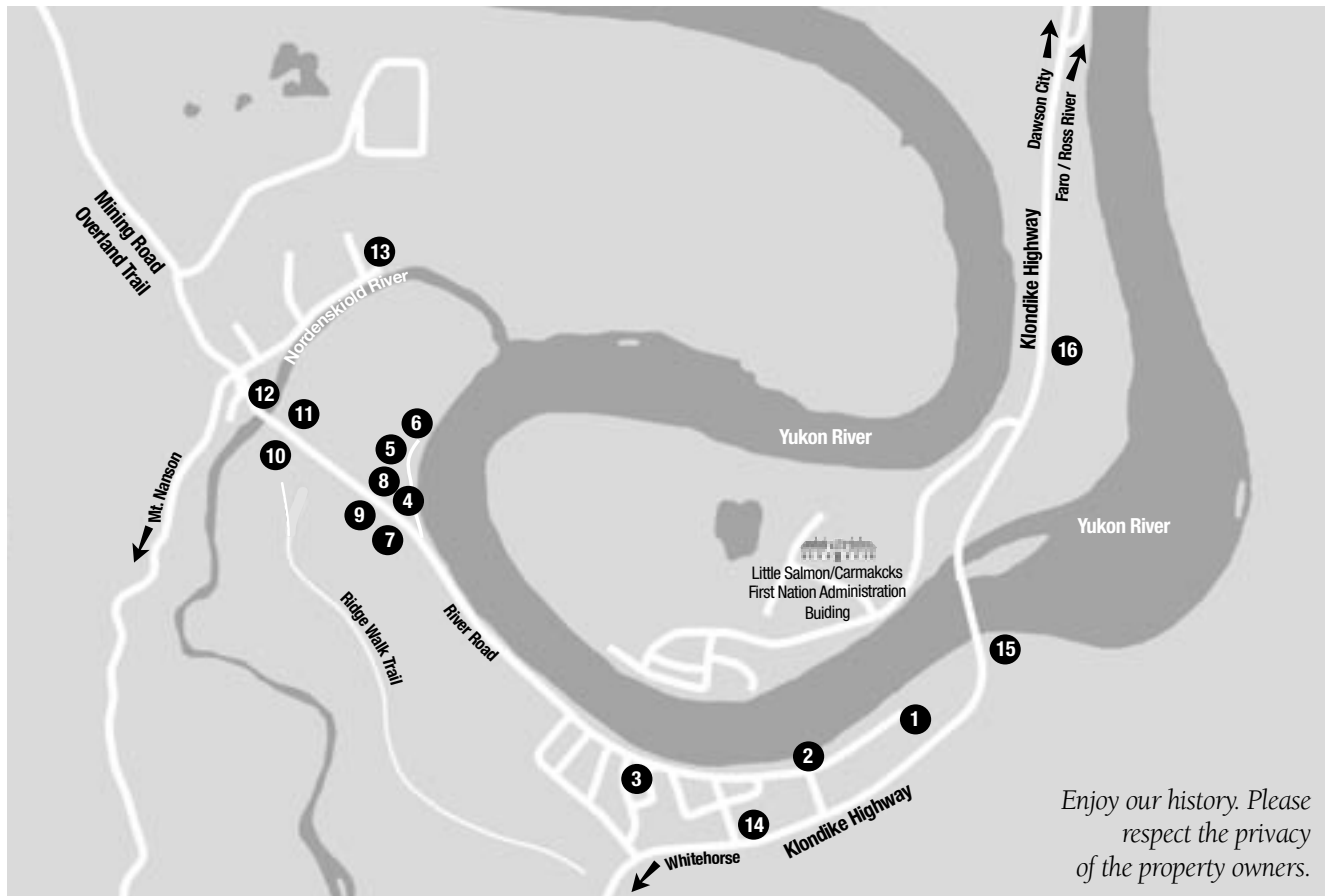
north of town. The enormous need for fuel to power the river steamers created a demand for the coal located in ancient reefs under the nearby hills. Coal was discovered at Tantalus Butte in 1904 and Charles E. Miller was the first to mine there. While Tantalus Mine was operating, development of the Tantalus Butte mine was slow. The Tantalus Mine closed in the 1920s and the Tantalus Butte mine opened in 1923 and operated until 1978.

Carmacks

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Enjoy our history. Please respect the privacy of the property owners.



9) Orloff King Cabin



Orloff King was a prospector who roamed the country around Carmacks and built this cabin in the 1920s as his “town house”. Over the years, many other

Yukon prospectors have lived in this little cabin. Yukon prospectors usually live solitary and largely unsung lives, but their efforts are responsible for the exploration and development of the most profitable mining regions in the Yukon. One year Orloff King went prospecting and did not return. He was found and buried near his cabin on Mount Nansen, about 95 km west of here. Placer gold was originally discovered on Mount Nansen in 1899 and the first lode gold discovery there was made in 1943. This is just one of the many mineral rich areas in the country west of Carmacks and it continues to be of interest to the prospectors of today.

10) Carmacks Roadhouse



A series of roadhouses was built along the Whitehorse-Dawson winter road while it was being constructed

in 1902. The roadhouses were spaced about every 30 miles along the trail to provide a change of horses and offer travellers a hot meal and a bed. Eugene Mack and Seymour Rawlinson built the Carmacks Roadhouse and Seymour operated the bar and roadhouse from 1903 until 1909 when he sold the roadhouse to his brother and a partner. A street in Carmacks is named for the Rawlinson family. During its heyday, the roadhouse was a 12-room two-story building with a stable. The roadhouse changed hands several times before Hazel Mack Brown bought it in 1922. Her husband, George Brown, took over the property after she died. The Village of Carmacks now owns the roadhouse and has restored the building.

11) White Pass & Yukon Route Stable

In 1902, White Pass & Yukon Route aquired contracts to build the winter road between Whitehorse and Dawson City. The company also carried the mail



along the road in the winter and on the Yukon River by sternwheeler during the summer. This stable belonged to the White Pass & Yukon Route. Until the early 1920s, the company owned a large herd of horses and at each post employed stablemen to tend to them. There were two stables in this area and the Carmacks Roadhouse stable was on the opposite side of the street near the roadhouse. The Royal Mail ran teams of horses on the Overland Trail until 1924 when they started using tracked vehicles. In 1925 a young driver, named Wilson, came into Carmacks one time at 40 below and his feet were frozen to the pedals. George Brown and RCMP Corporal A. B. Thornthwaite had to pour water over his feet to get him off the tracked vehicle. The stable is now privately owned.

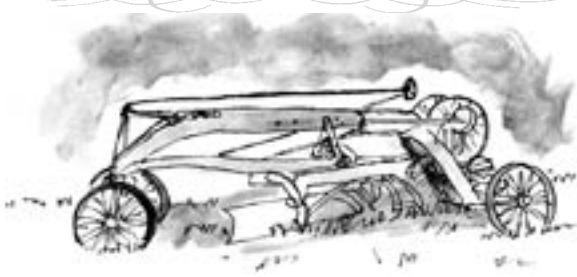
12) Hazel Brown Cabin

Hazel Mack Brown was the daughter of Courtland Mack. Courtland and his brother Frederick came over the Chilkoot Pass in 1898 to prospect and mine in the Carmacks area.



Two more brothers, Franklin and Eugene, came later and settled near Carmacks. Franklin and Courtland both had families and their wives and children arrived to join their husbands. Eugene Mack and Seymour Rawlinson built the Carmacks Roadhouse and the Hazel Brown cabin. The cabin is across the road from the site of Hazel's family home. Hazel Brown lived in her cabin from 1922, the year she purchased the Carmacks Roadhouse, until 1925. At one time there was another guest cabin on the property as her little home was too small to accommodate overnight visitors. The Village of Carmacks now owns the Hazel Brown Cabin and they repaired the building in 1996.

13) Grader



This grader is part of a private collection of mechanical equipment and parts used for mining and road building. The grader was built in the 1940s and was pulled by a tracked vehicle. Equipment such as this was used in the construction of the North Klondike Highway in the early 1950s. The North Klondike Highway was built to provide year-round access for trucks bringing silver ore from the mines near Keno City to the railhead at Whitehorse. Carmacks had a major road construction camp located where the highway maintenance buildings are today.

14) Minto RCMP Barracks



This building was constructed in 1949 as a residence for two officers assigned to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Detachment at Minto Landing, about 60 km north of Carmacks. A townsite and airstrip was laid out by the Yukon River at Minto in anticipation of a major transfer depot for the concentrated ore from the Keno City area mines. It was anticipated that the ore would be loaded onto the British Yukon Navigation Company paddlewheelers at Minto. Prefabricated panels for the Barracks were shipped in and assembled on-site by the highway construction crew. The new North Klondike Highway, however, bypassed Minto and allowed the trucks to easily convey ore to the railhead at Whitehorse. The RCMP Barracks was moved from Minto Landing to Carmacks in 1954.

15) Tantalus Mine

In 1894, George Carmack was tunnelling into the hill across the highway from Carmacks for a supply of coal that he sold to prospectors for their blacksmithing chores. The Five Finger Mine, downriver near Five Finger Rapids, was developed during the Klondike Gold Rush, but attention turned again to the Tantalus Mine when Captain Charles E. Miller started mining coal to power his small fleet of sternwheelers. In 1903, a Dawson City businessman, George De Lion, started mining the site and managed to ship 24 tons of coal to Dawson City where the Dawson Electric Light and Power company became a customer. The Yukon population was declining and there was so little freight by 1918 that the steamers were running without barges unless they were hauling coal, and the demand for coal in Dawson was weakening. The British Yukon Navigation Company sternwheelers started hauling coal to Whitehorse for company use but production dropped in 1918 below 1,000 tons and continued to fall until the Tantalus Mine closed in the 1920s.



16) Tage Cho Hudan Cultural Centre

Visit the Tage Cho Hudan Cultural Centre and learn about the lifestyle, past and present, of the Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation Northern Tutchone people. Interior displays include a salmon-skin dog pack, a “netted” rabbit-skin blanket, a dugout canoe, moose-skin boats, moose-skin clothing, a birch freighting toboggan, and a rare collection of traditional tools such as micro-blades and moose-skin tanning implements. Outside the centre, there is a garden of traditional-use plants, many of which are still used as natural medicines. A walking trail loops down to the Yukon River past a caribou fence, a pole house, a moose-skin tanning camp, drying racks, and a winter moose-skin shelter. The centre is home to the only mammoth snare in the world!





This brochure was produced with the help of Carmacks residents. Many thanks to Bill Harris, Helen Brooks, and Phyllis Simpson for sharing their stories. If you have additional information please contact YTG Cultural Resources Branch at (867) 667-3458 or call toll free 1-800-661-0408.



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