

# Welcome to Ashcroft's

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF INCORPORATION



# A brief Ashcroft history

Ashcroft citizens sat down in March of 2002 and listened to the new economic development plan presented by Council at the Community Hall and tossed around the idea of "branding", of marketing Ashcroft with distinction not unlike the "Big Apple" which is of course New York City. Ashcroft considered many such brands in the past such as:

- \* The gateway to the Cariboo
- \* The home of the potato - the land of the tomato
- \* the young phoenix that rises from the ashes
- \* The gateway to the Highland Valley
- \* The Arizona of the North with all the water
- \* The bittersweet oasis

The most poignant of labels perhaps was the result of going without a sewer system until the 1950's and Ashcroft was in fear of being dubbed,

"Outhouse capital of Kingdom Come."

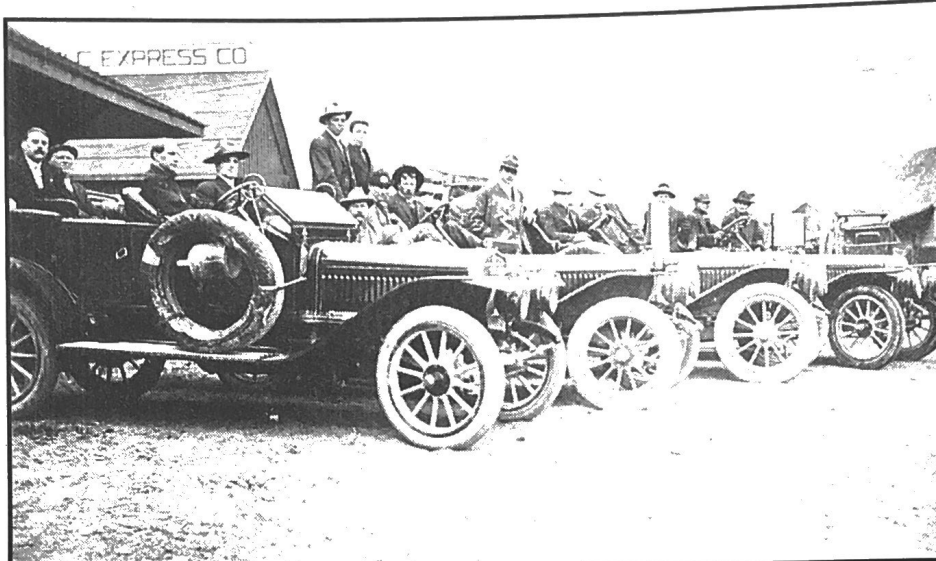
R.D. Cumming, editor of the Ashcroft Journal in 1952, provided a brief history of Ashcroft as it shilly-shallied its way to incorporation.

By R. D. Cumming

Now that the town of Ashcroft is on its way to becoming and incorporated Village, the time may be ripe for the reviewing of its back history.

Ashcroft was founded and built to be the Gateway to Cariboo in anticipation of the transcontinental CPR being completed and passing this way in the year 1895. For a few years after the completion, the gateway was established at Savona, the next stop east beyond Ashcroft.

I am not certain as to why Savona was chosen to the Gateway after the completion of the CPR but the



### Gateway to the Cariboo

With the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 it was assumed that Ashcroft would be the Gateway to the Cariboo, but for awhile Savona continued to be the connection with the road to the Goldfields utilizing the old Hudson's Bay Trail. About 1886 the connection was made to the Cariboo Road at Cache Creek and stage coaches and freight wagons began the run from the railhead at Ashcroft, later to be displaced by these "Winton Sixes" from the B.C. Express Co., loaded with passengers for Soda Creek.

probable reason was its popular starting point for the Hudsons Bay Company to Cache Creek, thence by trail to Lac La Hache, the company's destination from this end in

those early years. The government no doubt converted the Hudsons Bay trail into a wagon road for the accommodation of wagons and stage coaches in anticipation of the coming of the CPR to that point and the making of Savona a temporary gateway until such time as Ashcroft was founded and chosen, being much nearer the pioneer Cariboo road which crossed the Boston Flat near Cache Creek.

In anticipation Ashcroft was founded and began building up to fill the important position on the BC map. This would be about the year 1886. Plans and specifications were drawn out in the form of lots, blocks, streets, lanes - copying city rather than interior towns similar to others along the old Cariboo road. Trees were planted along the streets to take away the "dry-belt"

aspect of the district in which it was founded. Unfortunately, however, before approaching maturity, the trees were attacked by domestic milk cows and practically destroyed. This early effort, however, to convert a desert into a Garden of Eden, was accomplished some years later when a shipment of Manitoba Maples and other varieties, were imported and planted - inside block fences this time, and have survived to this day. In fact, much of the town today is hidden by the wide-spreading branches of the splendid shade trees.

The CPR was completed in 1885, as perhaps every one in Ashcroft knows. The flat, or bench by which it was known then, was owned and operated by the late J.C. Barnes, pioneer of the district, and the name Ashcroft was

derived, or copied from a bench or flat above owned and operated as a farm by the late Judge Cornwall, who had named his residence, "Ashcroft Manor" after his home in England. The Judge, Clement F. had the honor to be appointed Governor General of the Province in its early days. He was assisted on the farm by his brother H.P. Cornwall who is listed in the BC Directory of 1887 as a JP. From it founding the Gateway town was known as "Ashcroft" after the Manor on the Cariboo Road about two miles to the south.

Although touching the CPR it was still some distance from the Cariboo road where it crossed the Boston Flat. Perhaps Barnes divided his farm into town lots. I am not sure of than, and perhaps the government acquired

-See CREATES page 8-




## Ashcroft's GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<p><b>Friday, June 14, 2002</b> <i>Grand Ball</i> Reserved tickets and seating available at the Village Office, 601 Bancroft Street</p> <p><b>Saturday, June 15, 2002</b> ~ 11:00 am ~ Annual Parade (Downtown Ashcroft) ~ 12:00 noon ~ Paradise in Heritage Park Polynesian Dancers ~ 1:30 pm ~ 40th Annual Ashcroft &amp; District Rodeo ~ 9:00 pm ~ Ashcroft &amp; District Stampede Dance</p> <p><b>Sunday, June 16, 2002</b> ~ 1:30 pm ~ 40th Ashcroft &amp; District Rodeo</p>	<p><b>Friday, June 21, 2002</b> ~ All Day ~ West Coast Amusement Carnival ~ 6:00 pm ~ Music in Heritage Park</p> <p><b>Saturday, June 22, 2002</b> ~ All Day ~ West Coast Amusement Carnival ~ 11 am - 11 pm ~ <i>Ashcroft Solstice Festival</i> featuring: • Gary Fjelgaard • • Valdi • • Kat Wahama and Texas Gait • • Leslie Alexander • • Saskia Munroe • • Tom Coles • and much more!</p>
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Ashcroft's 50th Anniversary Supplement is published by:

## The Journal

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	Editor Barry Tait	Publisher Judy Stuart
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The Journal would like to acknowledge and thank Ashcroft Mayor Andy Kormendy, who was invaluable in the production of this supplement. Mayor Kormendy spent hours of his time researching the stories and text contained herein.  
**Thank You Mayor!**

# Ashcroft embraces incorporation as a Village

Not since 1913 did the citizens of Ashcroft want anything to do with a local government.

The Citizens back then formed a "Sewer District", but when the elected three man commission racked up an "astronomical \$600" in expenses in just a short six months, the smell of corruption flushed the populace with anger and they would have nothing to do with any form of elected local government until 1952.

Finally the outhouses had to go, but not without a stink, as the vote was closer than many thought it would be.

The following articles tract the birth of a new local government, their initial budget of \$4,200 levied under the "Taxation Act".

*From The Journal, Thursday, March 20, 1952*

## Ashcroft Endorses Incorporation as a Village

"The property owners of Ashcroft went to the polls Wednesday to cast their ballots on the question "Are you in favour of the incorporation of the area known as Ashcroft as a Village Municipality?" The majority were in favour, the result of the vote being 58 Yes and 44 No, with one spoiled ballot.

This culminates the work of a committee appointed by the Ashcroft and District Board of Trade which has been active in this work for over three years which has now been repaid for efforts which at times seemed hopeless by bringing the question to a vote, which is the first step in the incorporation of a village.

There now remains the calling of a general meeting to nominate five Ashcroft Commissioners to represent and administer the affairs of the town until the next municipal election in December of this year.

These commissioners must have certain qualifications as to land ownership, etc.

Attempts have been made for the past 40 years to incorporate Ashcroft into a Village, and those who in past years were anxious to see it go through will be pleased to hear of it.

Joe Burr, born and raised in Ashcroft cast the first ballot."

*From The Journal, Thursday, April 24, 1952.*

## ASHCROFT ELECTS COMMISSIONERS

"Roughly 25 percent of property owners and license holders turned out to a public meeting held last Thursday evening at the Community Hall to elect five Commissioners to administer the affairs of the Village of Ashcroft until the December elections this year. Out of an approximate 200 voters only about 45 exercised their franchise. Elected as Commissioner for the balance of 1952 were J. Bundus, W. M. Huston, S. Kincaid, A. D. Steed and T. Y. Scott.

Mr. R. V. McHallam, chairman of the Ashcroft Board of Trade, which organization had sponsored the incorporation of Ashcroft as a Village, acted as chairman. T. J. Richards was returning officer and scrutineers were R. S. Fulton and Milton Peters.

The question of incorporation has been brought up for the past 40 years and about five years ago the Board of Trade members brought the question up again, so to satisfy the members a committee from the Board was appointed to go into the matter.

For the past five years this committee has been working on incorporation such as gathering data from other incorporated villages, from the government, and by talking to the "deaf ear" and other citizens. Finally at a Board of Trade meeting it was decided to put the matter before the citizens in a legal way, so last month according to government regulations a vote was held and the majority of votes were "yes" for incorporation.

Last week a public meeting was called and the first inter-commissioners were elected.

The Board of Trade Incorporation Committee after past years of every kind of argument, for and against, have completed their job."

In a December issue of The Journal that year the December Village Election results were printed.

Elected were, F. Barraclough with 61 votes; J. Bundus with 82 votes; W. M. Huston with 80 votes; S. Kincaid with 64 votes and T.Y. Scott with 80 votes.

The poll was held December 11, 1952. There were 87 ballots cast, 2 were spoiled, balance 85. H. Rogers missed

being elected with 58 votes.

All of the original Commissioners were re-elected with the exception of A.D. Steed, who apparently did not seek re-election.

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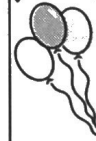
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## Hospital wing opens in 1956

The Lady Minto Hospital, long gone, but the site of the present day Village Office, served Ashcroft in the early days. On May 26 1956 a new wing was opened and shown above cutting the ribbon are ( L to R ) Les Dunsmore, Rev. W.E. Sieber, Sam Kincaid, L.E. North, Dr. F. H. G. Mills and K.D. Houghton.

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# Business in Ashcroft in 1952

Maybe the Ashcroft Journal couldn't predict the future, but R.D. Cumming did a pretty insightful job of warning us that it is good business to help each other locally. Consider the article that

he wrote on the Ashcroft Bakery and the premiere of its Hot Cross Buns. How true it is now with the advent of the Big Box stores in Kamloops; well, we just need to read the following article to

se the wisdom of the words. Take note of some of the advertisers back then. it is nice to recognize some of those names event today. And while many of the businesses no longer exist,

the names sure do ring a bell. It kind of makes you want to help out those folks who are doing their best to stay in Ashcroft and provide a business or a service. Let's not forget them.

## Good advice that still holds true

**By R.D. Cumming**  
 Commencing this week-end Ashcroft Bakery Hot Cross Buns will be on sale in local stores. This delicious bun is a favourite to everyone and no doubt will not last long.

Ashcroft is fortunate to have their own bakery to bake their bread, buns and cakes. We are fortunate too that we can get that loaf, bun or cake any old time and fresh out of

the oven. Years ago Ashcroft was without a bakery and citizens had the works of the world keeping their bread box full and were out it half the time, and cakes and buns were out of the question and were rare treats.

We should demand Ashcroft bread when we go to the stores and help support local industry. Local made bread, buns and cake are just as good

as any other imported bakery products.

We see a lot of foreign bread and cakes on local counters, but lets pick out Ashcroft made bread, etc. first.

The editor would like to further request all to support other businesses in Ashcroft also. If it can be purchased in Ashcroft it should be purchased here. We have been informed that people are buying too much out of town.

It's nobody's business where one does business, but it is good business to help one another locally.

The price of goods depends on the volume of sales in Ashcroft. If merchants are not getting the required volume of sale, prices may have to be up, but if the volume warrants, the prices are competitive with other places. So let's all buy locally and try and bring the volume up.

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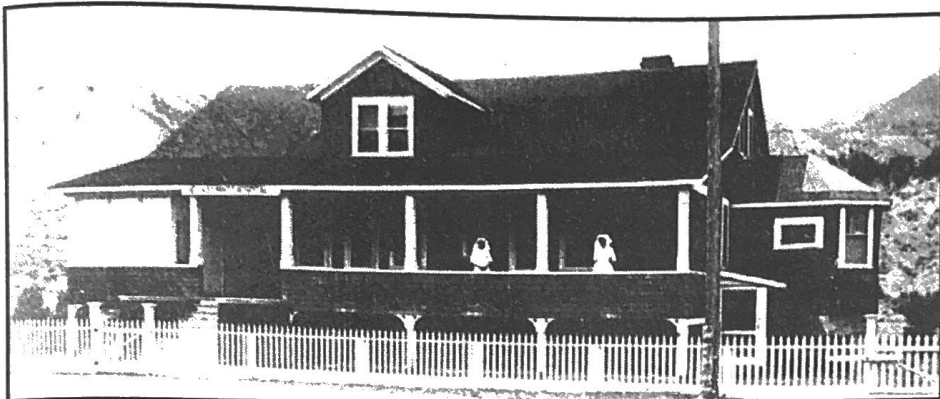
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Congratulations Ashcroft!  
 Good luck on the next 50!



*The Original Lady Minto Hospital*

The Lady Minto Hospital was opened in Ashcroft in May 1913 and was operated by the Victorian Order of Nurses. The building served the Ashcroft and area residents, with a new wing added in 1956. The building served the area until 1974 when the new hospital was built. The old building was boarded up and condemned. Today the building on the site houses the Village of Ashcroft Offices, The OAPO Seniors Centre, and The Elizabeth Fry Society Offices.

## Ashcroft built the best power & water system in Canada

### From Early Files of The Journal FOUNDING OF ASHCROFT WATER AND LIGHT COMPAN- NY

In the fall of 1897 a company was organized in Ashcroft for the purpose of raising the necessary capital to install an electric light plant and water works for the town. Those who took active part were C.H. Millar, Frank S. Taggart, F.M. Richardson, John Shields and F.S. Reynolds. Mr. Shields soon after visited Toronto where he interested Peter Ryan, city registrar of Toronto in the project. The capital was subscribed in due course and Mr. Ryan was elected president of the company with Mr. Shields as secretary-treasurer. Mr. Shields

superintended the installation of the plant, and it was pronounced the most complete and up-to-date plant of its kind in the dominion of Canada excepting none at that time.

The power was derived from the Bonaparte River a mile or more above Ashcroft and remains of the works can be seen there to this day. A dam was thrown across the stream at a narrow gorge with solid rock on each bank. About 400,000 feet of timber and 20,000 feet of iron bolts were used in its construction. The dam when complete created a 42 foot fall of water. Two 30 inch Dominion Turbine wheels were installed to supply power and a dynamo furnished the city of Ashcroft

with electric light and power for the pump that was to supply water.

The dam was 200 feet in length on top and 100 feet at the bottom, and was twenty feet wide. The flume conveying water to the wheels was 200 feet in length, 16 feet in width and 10 feet deep. The steel penstock five feet in diameter supplied the pressure that turned the great wheels. A power house 50 by 50 feet was built for the accommodation of the generator and other necessary machinery. In this building was also housed a rotary pump which used to

raise water to the Boston Flats which were put under cultivation at that time.

The capacity of the pump was sufficient to raise water 250 feet at the rate of 10,000 gallons a minute. The Boston Flats was leased by the company to a reliable party at the rate of \$10 per acre per annum. This basis of rent was conditional upon the company erecting suitable buildings, fencing and ditches, and furnishing the water for irrigation.

The electric power was generated by a three-phase system and conveyed to the

-See WATER page 8-

*Ashcroft*  
**River Inn**  
Steve & Sharon would like to thank the people of Ashcroft for their patronage over the years and congratulate Ashcroft on its' 50th  
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# Ashcroft

Down where the Thompson River flows  
Tween treeless hills where sagebrush grows,  
And railways run on either side  
On little plateau none too wide,  
The town of Ashcroft can be seen,  
A pleasant sight with trees so green.

Majestic curves grace Thompson's flow,  
Where waters 'neath the sunlight's glow  
Are hastening westward to the sea,  
Like time, flow by eternally.  
And water from it here we take  
The arid earth's great thirst to slake.

If on the bridge you stand and dream  
While moonbeams on the ripples gleam,  
What charming sight you there behold  
When moonlight turns the stream to gold.  
Or southward cast your eyes to gaze  
On far-off hills seen through the haze.

**Rev. Walter E. Sieber**

**Ed. Note:** Rev. Sieber was the minister at Zion United Church in the 50's. He is present in the hospital opening photograph.

- DBT

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# Ashcroft Athletics in 1952

Recreation and lots of it. At least that's what we call it don't we?

Outdoor hockey being played on the coldest month of the year, in one of the coldest years of the century? No wonder the public pined for the indoor facilities. Spring was bitter too as ball season began and the Ashcroft boys had a hard time holding onto the bat or the ball.

But the cold sure made them run and jump and win the district track meets, as the team of '52' outpaced all the surrounding community athletes who perhaps weren't as inspired by the cold weather.

The sun does spend a little more time in Ashcroft and that's the way we like

it.  
*From The Journal*  
*Wednesday,*  
*June 11, 1952*

## ASHCROFT DISTRICT WINS 12 CUPS

Last Saturday, June 7th, the athletes of six school districts again met at Merritt to compete for the many cups at stake. This year, as last year, the Ashcroft School District took the honors by winning the grand aggregate cup, as well as most of the other trophies. This school district brought back a total of twelve cups - really an outstanding performance.

The official results are not available until next week's issue, but the following aggregate scores were made

Ashcroft	157
Kamloops	125
Lillooet	113
Merritt42	
Kamloops Rural 39	

The outstanding athletes deserving special mention are:

- Lorraine Fooks of Ashcroft
- Ivan Williams of Lytton
- Anna May Aie, of Ashcroft
- Harvey Dunstan of Lytton
- Billie Gammie of Lytton

*From The Journal*  
*Thursday,*

*January 24, 1952*

## STEVE SASAKI GOES EAST FOR JUDO TOURNAMENT

Mr. Steve Sasaki, of Ashcroft Laundry, foremost Canadian Judo Black

Belt, flew to Toronto on January 19 to participate in the Ontario Black Belt Assoc'n's Judo performance by four of Japan's foremost Judo men at Toronto.

Feature event will be when Toshiro Daijo, Japan's Judo Champion of 1951, will take on all comers. This is no doubt where Steve fits in, and we wish him luck and bring home a win.

Recently in Germany Daigo defeated 10 Bavarian Judo stars.

Mr. Sasaki was judo instructor at the coast in senior and youth organizations before coming here. He has certificates of merit, which anyone would be proud of.

# Ashcroft - A sense of Community

There is a saying that was shared by an inspirational speaker with the students of Ashcroft not long ago. "Why do angels fly so high? It is because they take themselves lightly."

Small towns of today are taking a beating and it is tough to stay away from that feeling of defeatism. At every corner we seem to be fighting to preserve our hospital, our government services, our schools, and on it goes.

But as we review Ashcroft of the past we also need to view it as a community that did things together, that organized, that stood united during rough times.

It did not take buildings to make life good here. Many of those burned away. In times of trouble we could always escape to the Ashcroft theatre to watch Doris Day and Danny Thomas.

But what made us unique was our ability to enjoy the social graces with so many people in so many ways.

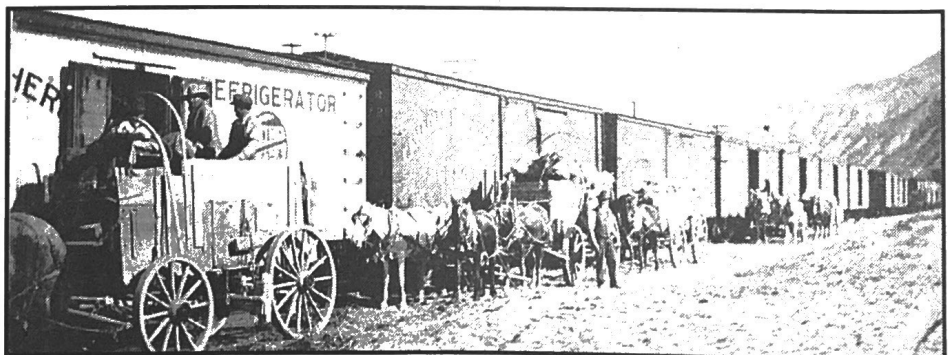
*We have a legacy of community. We need only to reflect.*

A review of copies of The Journal during the year 1952 an active community is reported on:

- \* Getting the curling rink ready in January 17 issue.
- \* A Robbie Burns Night Jan 25 at the Community Hall.
- \* Lions Club activities.
- \* Hospital Auxiliary activities.
- \* An Ashcroft Red Cross Society
- \* An Amateur Contest sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary and the Canadian Legion, held in the Community Hall. Of interest to present residents in this article might be that Frank Mierau, still residing in Ashcroft today, won first prize in the Senior Group

for singing "My Ain Folk."

- \* Cubs and Scouts activities
- \* A visit by the Premier of the province Byron Johnson May Day, May 24.
- \* A May Day Dance sponsored by the Ashcroft High School.
- \* A Board of Trade Game Banquet October 16 in the Community Hall.
- \* Halloween Fireworks Display.
- \* Royal Canadian Legion Armistice Day Program with a Grand Ball in the evening, a Turkey Shoot and a service in the Community hall.
- \* Zion United Church was celebrating its 89th Year in November.
- \* An Elks Turkey Shoot in December.
- \* And finally a New Year Dance sponsored by the Ashcroft Aquatic Club.



## World Famous Potatoes

This line of horse freight wagons loading potatoes onto refrigerated boxcars in Ashcroft's early days was a common site. The Ashcroft potato was famous far and wide and was served on the highest levels. Canadian Pacific Passenger train diners and hotels identified with the name of the town. The local soil, with the addition of water, grew anything.

# The world, the province and Ashcroft in 1952

The New Year 1952 brought many changes in government.

Internationally, King George VI passed away and the second youngest queen to ever reign over the commonwealth ascended the throne.

Provincially, who really heard of or cared much about Social Credit? They surprisingly took the provincial reigns and never let go for twenty years.

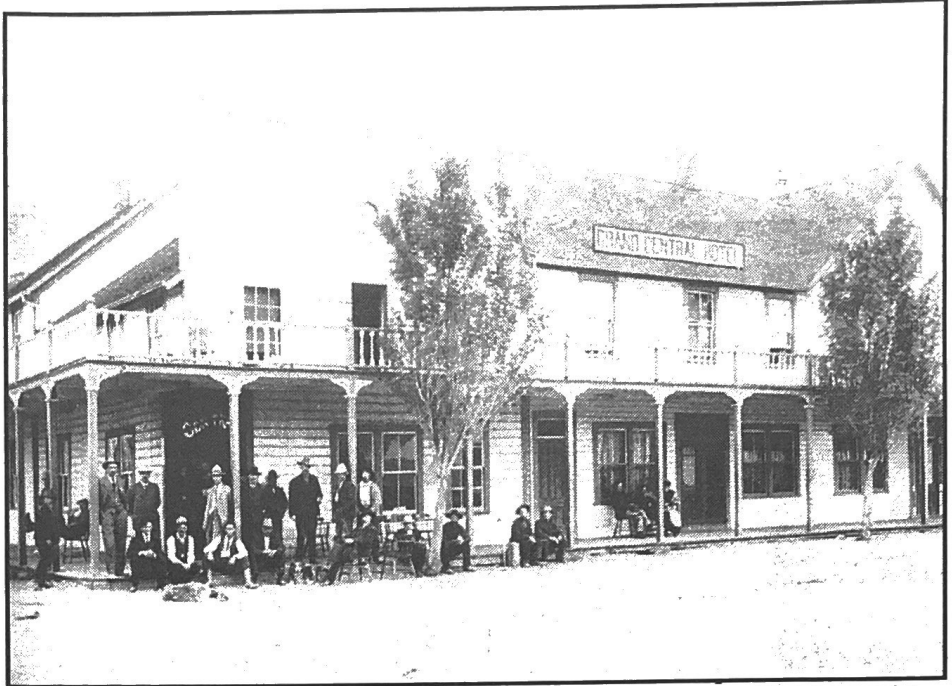
The results were close,

but the Liberals seemed to have lost touch and captured only six seats.

Perhaps the Premier of the day should have spent a little more time at the Ashcroft May Day celebrations to get his message across.

Locally, commissioners were elected, and the public kept a close eye on the school district and their hospital as their rates were going up.

Times were busy.



**An Ashcroft character from earlier times**  
Park Wong, with his wife Shirley left Ashcroft in 2001 for life at the Coast. The Central Cafe was a gathering place in Ashcroft from early times. A young Parkie is shown above splitting wood behind the cafe. Outhouses were still in vogue and Park told stories of many a customer who, after eating his meal went out back to the outhouse, only to vault the fence and disappear without paying for his meal.

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*Congratulations*  
**Village of Ashcroft**  
*on your 50th Anniversary!*  
From the  
**VILLAGE OF LYTTON**  
*"We wish you continued success"*

## Ashcroft

Where the splendor of the morning  
Writes the magic on the sky  
Where the gentle breeze at evening  
Shakes the tree top standing high  
Where the drowsy sun of noon-day  
Its warm wine of life distills  
In that little bit of heaven  
God set down between the hills  
Where the spire of good St. Albans  
Rises midst the lilac trees  
And each flower is a Chalice  
for the honey scented bees  
There the young and old will gather  
In that holy house to pray  
This is the Ashcroft I remember  
And my heart is there today

E. Conrad

## CONGRATULATIONS!

As we help celebrate Ashcroft's 50th year we would like to congratulate everyone in this community for keeping the spirit alive. Throughout the many adversities Ashcroft has seen, we still stand strong as a community - a Village that we are proud to be part of.



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## Congratulations Ashcroft!

**Congratulations to all of the businesses and community members on achieving this milestone!**

May the future hold many more successes.

## Village of Cache Creek

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**Premiere Growing Area**

It wasn't long before settlers in early Ashcroft learned that with the addition of water, the hot dryland climate, and the fertile soils would grow anything that was planted. The area was famous for its potatoes, tomatoes, fruit and forage crops. The Ashcroft Cannery was, for years, a major employer of local people in the tomato canning industry. Sadly, like many businesses in modern times it was bought up by a large corporation and closed to eliminate competition.

# Railway's arrival creates Ashcroft

From page 2

the property and sold lots to individual buyers. However Ashcroft citizens still pay taxes to the provincial government for the property. Under the awkward circumstances of Ashcroft being some distance from the Cariboo road without any approach from the town, the village of Savona about 20 miles to the east of Ashcroft, was chosen to be the Gateway pro-tem. All freight wagons, pack trains, and stage coaches took the Savona-Cache Creek road until the cut-off was completed about the year 1886 from Ashcroft.

This was accomplished about a year after our arrival (1885) when the road 'up the hill' and 'Around the Bluffs' to connect with the historic wagon road across Boston Flat was completed, making it a number of miles shorter than from Savona, known then as "Savona's Ferry," after the ferryman who operated the lake crossing in those pioneering days.

So Ashcroft immediately began its dress up for the opening ceremony of the new importance to be attached to its name. A bridge was built to cross the Thompson River just north of the town. Building sprang up - dwellings, stables for BC Express horses, Harvey, Bailey, and F.W. Foster were the first main stores; with M. Dumond hardware; J.H. Clements, druggist; Sandy Stewart, harness and saddlemaker. Stabling was the accommodation for teamsters besides a hotel room for themselves. The Ashcroft and Central were the two first hotels.

The first school was a log building at the north end of Bancroft avenue with its front facing toward the town. The school was known as the "House of Blazes", and the teacher, according to the BC Directory of 1887, J.F. Smith, J.P. The school building was destroyed by fire that swept the north half of Ashcroft in 1916.

The Ashcroft Journal was established in the last century, the first issue being published on the 9th day of May, 1895. It was named the British Columbia Mining Journal and was established and owned by Messrs. F.S. Reynolds and A.H. Sroufe, editors and managers. It covered Cariboo, Lillooet, Yale and Kootenay districts and had no lack of ambition."

# Water was used to irrigate Boston Flats

From page 5

power house built at the side of the Thompson River at Ashcroft, by three copper wires at a voltage of 2,300, to the transformer where the voltage was reduced to 104. This was fed to an electric motor of about 25 horsepower which drove a triplex pump consisting of three cylinders eight inches in diameter each.

The water tank on the hill facing the town, of which the remains may still be seen, was of 60,000 gallons capacity, and was manufactured by the Royal City Mills New Westminster. This tank was placed on an elevation of 210 feet above the power house and 170 feet above the town, and gave a pressure of 87 pounds to the inch. A telephone system, the first in Ashcroft, connected the power house on the Bonaparte with the pump house in town.

At the time of installing the water and electric light system at Ashcroft it was also the intention of the company to erect a sawmill at the dam. It was proposed to float saw logs down the Bonaparte for thirty miles during high water, planers and dressers to properly treat the lumber were to be installed. The company actually called for tenders for the supplying of 2,000,000 feet of saw logs to be delivered in the spring of 1898 at the dam, but nothing material ever seems to have resulted from this project.

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