

# Museum Corner: A Page From History

## May 2020: Freighting

Situated at the North end of Brink Street is an old freight wagon. This wagon is a tribute to early Ashcroft's most important economic business, the freighting industry. However, goods were first carried into the Cariboo on the backs of the miners themselves— food, blankets, mining equipment. Miners followed the old trails made by the Indigenous people. A "mule" trail was soon built and 500 mules were engaged in packing. The building of the Cariboo road brought the big freight wagons pulled by oxen and later horse teams. With the completion of the CPR in 1886, and the building of a bridge, the new little town of Ashcroft became known as the Gateway to the Great North Country.



Ben Caux's Pack Train loading at Harvey Baileys for Babine Lake - 1897

Above: "Cataline" loads up his Mules at the Harvey Bailey Store

**GENERAL:** Cataline's pack train left Ashcroft Monday for the Omenica country with a load of goods for the Colonel Wright party. It will take about three months for the round trip. June 13, 1896



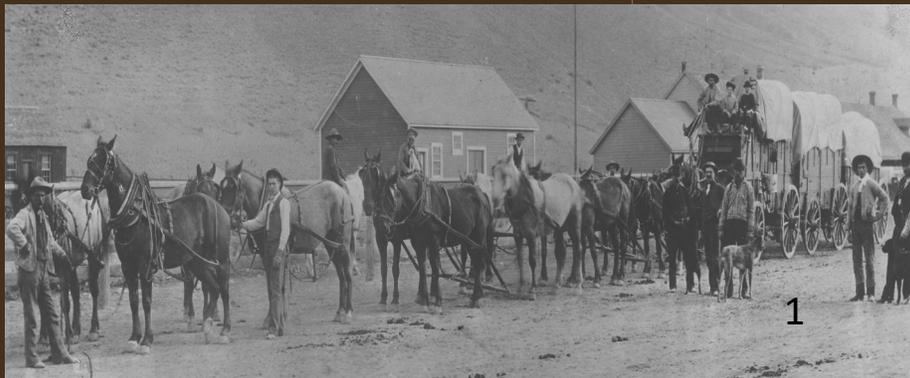
Wagons were first imported from California and assembled at Yale. A few years later, Isaac Lehman, wheelwright and wagon builder of Ashcroft built wagons at Yale for the Cariboo Freighter, including the wagon pictured above which sits at the end of Brink. It belonged to "bull" teamster Sam McDonald. In the late 1920's R.D. Cumming spearheaded a fundraiser to acquire and restore the old wagon.



This freight wagon was found in 1948, by Bert Collins on the site of the old Semlin property near Dairy Lake. It was missing some wheels but Bert found those in the nearby bush and put it on display in Cache Creek. In 1971, the wagon was acquired by the Provincial Transportation Museum in Cloverdale. In 1992, Hat Creek Ranch Manager Dwayne Scott organized the return of the wagon, and its restoration. Today the wagon is on display at Hat Creek Ranch.

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## Freighting Continued...



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Teams were made up of six, eight, and ten horses or oxen, and two and some times three wagons. Packers turned their mules and horses out at night to feed on bunch grass. Ox teams also fed on bunch grass as well as some horse teams. Road houses sprung up at various points along the Cariboo road. Here grain and feed could be stored in large barns. It was found that horses fed on grain had more endurance and daily relays could be extended by a number of miles.

Photo 1: A team of freighters load up in Ashcroft, at the head of the team is early Ashcroft freighter Bill Bose. Old timers say that "it took half a day to get out of Ashcroft."



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Photo 2: Freight wagons pull along side the CN rail to load Ashcroft's famous potatoes.

The building of the PGE north in 1915 signaled the demise of Ashcroft's freighting days. After 30 years of supplying the Cariboo, freight no longer stocked the warehouses and the horse drawn wagon became a thing of the past.

New trucking companies sprung up in the area, and goods were hauled mainly to Vancouver as well as other points. Early truckers in the area included Tom Stewart, Phil Parke and Wee Tan Louie.



Below will be found the date of departure, teamster and destination of all freight shipped north by Ashcroft forwarding agents. 1897

June 26, J Gannon, Clinton.....	5,578
" 26, T Maxwell, Soda Creek.....	5,200
" 26, M McCarthy, 150.....	10,600
" 28, A H Martley, Lillooet.....	4,000
" 28, M Burns, Lac La Hache.....	8,000
" 28, G. Bruce, Lillooet.....	3,118
" 29, J. Douglas, Lillooet.....	0,627
" 29, R Yorston, Lillooet.....	1,875
" 29, H Martin, Lillooet.....	1,145
" 29, J M Yorston, Lillooet.....	3,298
" 29, J Dickey, Lillooet.....	2,600
" 29, D Spratt, 150.....	9,000
" 29, W Abbott, 150.....	7,000
" 29, H Rayson & Co., Ques Forks.....	15,500
" 29, W Hautier, Soda Creek.....	9,000
" 30, H Martin, Lillooet.....	1,500
" 30, D W Smith, Stanley.....	9,000
" 30, R Cummings, Lillooet.....	1,600
" 30, Ah Chee, Keitny Creek.....	12,300
" 30, A McLeod, Soda Creek.....	11,000
" 30, A. Tressairo, Dog creek.....	4,898
" 30, J. Pigeon, Dog creek.....	512
July 1, R. Jarvis, Lillooet.....	578
" 1, J. Gannon, Clinton.....	5,868
Total.....	127,762

The Ashcroft Museum is open from Monday to Sunday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Come on down and learn some fascinating history about the area.

Located at 151 and 4th Street.

250-453-9232

[museum@ashcroftbc.ca](mailto:museum@ashcroftbc.ca)



Tom Stewart loads up wool at Walhachin