

DEWDNEY TRAIL (ROSSLAND SECTION)



Ritchie Mann on Dewdney Trail

Heritage Register – Site

- 1) **Historical Name:** Dewdney Trail (Rossland Section)
- 2) **Common Name:** Dewdney Trail
- 3) **Location:** Southeast Rossland
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1865
- 5) **Builder:** Edgar Dewdney / George Turner (Royal Engineer)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Description:

The original Dewdney Trail was a 720 kilometre long, all-Canadian route along the southern border of the newly established colony of British Columbia. The Dewdney Trail (Rossland Section) is the 2,377 metre portion of the trail located southeast of city centre, located in the proximity of Redstone Resort and within Rossland city limits.

Heritage Value:

The first engineered land transportation corridor in the Rossland area, was the Dewdney Trail (Rossland Section). “The Trail” is significant for it’s economic, cultural, social and, particularly, for its historic role in providing access to prospectors who made the first mineral claims in 1890, specifically prospectors

Morris and Bourgeois. They staked *The Lily May* claim located beside the Trail and, therefore, established the beginning of the Rossland mining era and subsequent creation of the Rossland town site.

The Trail is a rare, surviving example of the physical infrastructure specified by the Royal Engineers for mule train traffic, particularly its specifications for maximum grade no steeper than 1 in 12 and a one-and-a-half foot wide bed with a four foot clear width at shoulder height for the passage of laden mules.

The Trail is valued for its contribution to the physical and economic development of Rossland and neighbouring settlements that would become key for processing Rossland's ore and therefore contribute to the economic stability of the city and region. The Trail also helped secure the control of land and trade in the region immediately north of the nearby American frontier line that extended across the natural north-south mountain ranges and trade routes and divided the colony from American territory. The Trail was the earliest overland access connecting Rossland to the Pacific coast and eastern BC. It was used mainly by early prospectors, miners and traders from 1865 until rail lines and motor roads supplanted it in the 1890s.

The Trail is culturally significant as many historic trails in British Columbia often have a connection to earlier First Nation trails along the same routes. The existing network of First Nation trails was a significant foundation for making many newcomer activities possible, including exploration, travel, transportation of goods, communications and economic development. The Trail is valued for the stories of its builders that include First Nations and Chinese crews, as well as the Royal Engineers.

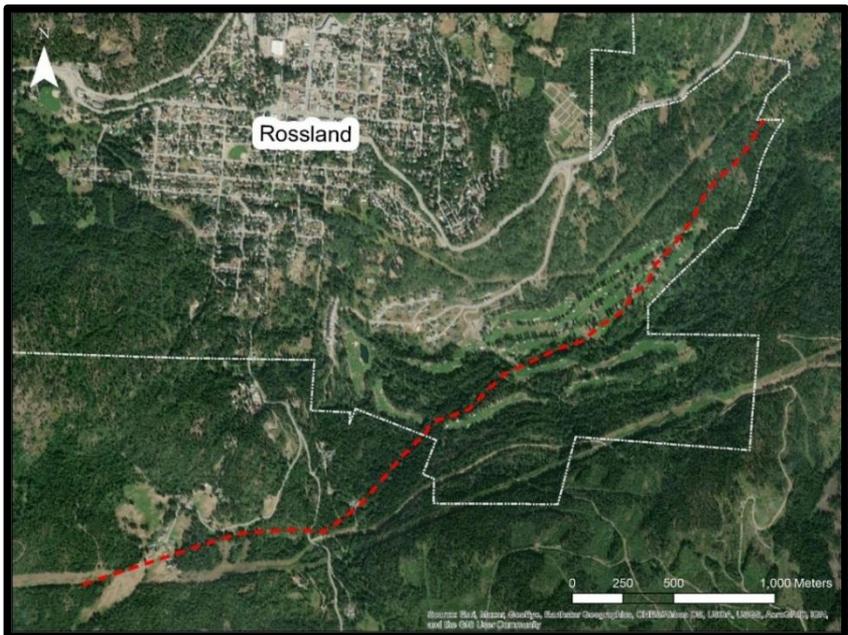
The Trail is valued today by mountain bikers and hikers and used as a beautiful recreation trail maintained by the Kootenay Columbia Trail Society.

Character-Defining Elements:

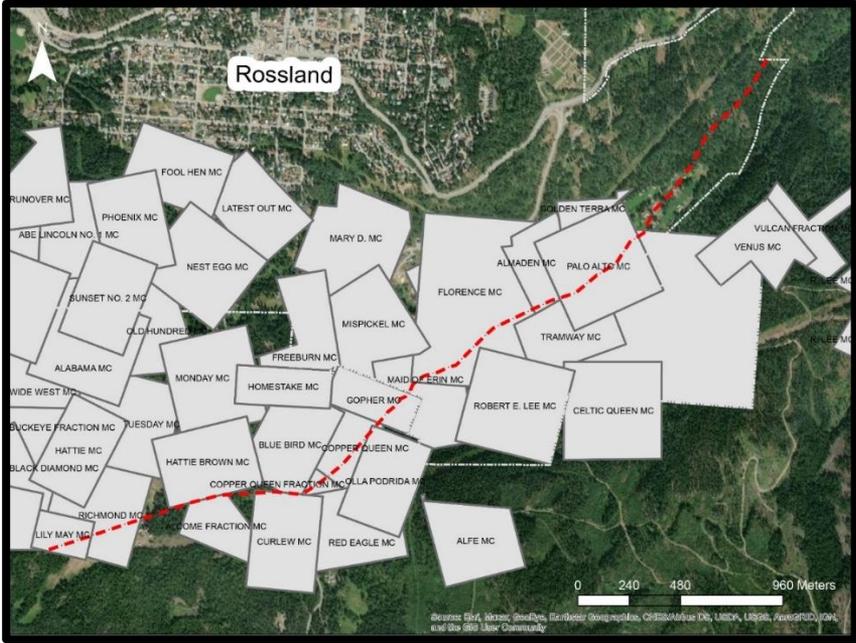
- Original route of the Trail 2,377 metres located within the boundaries of Rossland city limits beginning southeast Rossland at the intersection of the Rubberhead Trail, continuing northeastward to Redstone Golf Club, Hole 15,

past the historic Valley House and continuing through Holes 2-8.

- Visible and remaining sections of the Trail are accessible from Redstone Resort, Hole 15 and the Rubberhead Trail.
- Geometry of the roadbed: original 4-foot width and grade no steeper than 1 in 12.
- Associated land works, including dry rock retaining walls and excavations.
- Trail interpretation, including “stop of interest” sign located on Rubberhead Trail.



Approximate modern-day Dewdney Trail location within Rossland city limits.



Approximate modern-day Dewdney Trail location according to historic claim sites

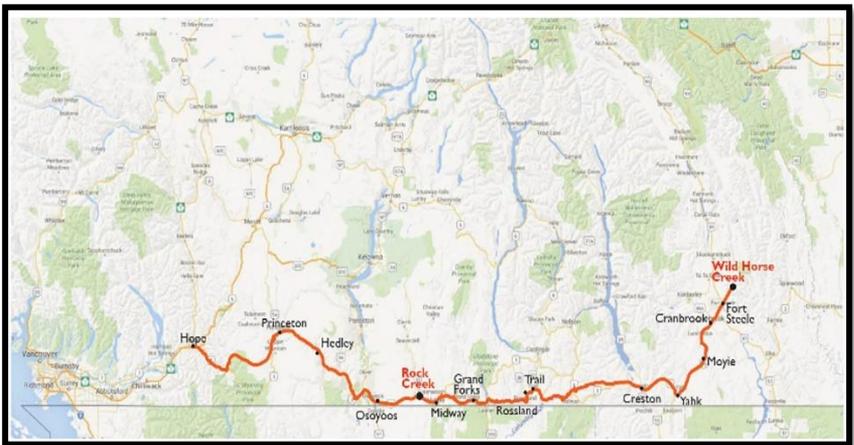


Construction of the Dewdney Trail near Rossland c. 1865

HISTORY

The Dewdney Trail is a 720 kilometre trail that traverses the Province of British Columbia near the American border between the present-day locations of Hope on the Fraser River and Wild Horse Creek at Fisherville just north of Fort Steele in the East Kootenays. It crosses the Cascade, Monashee, Selkirk and Purcell Mountain Ranges and connects the Coastal Fraser and Skagit Valleys with the Interior Similkameen, Okanagan, Kettle, Columbia, Pend d'Oreille, Salmon, Moyie, and Kootenay River Valleys, which are all part of the Columbia River watershed.

In 1865 the Dewdney Trail was extended from Rock Creek to the East Kootenays to provide a direct Canadian supply route from the Pacific Coast to the gold rush camps on Wild Horse Creek in the East. The Trail crossed the height of land just south of the site of Rossland and then followed Trail Creek, almost to its mouth on the Columbia River, before veering east along the Columbia River.



Route of the Dewdney Trail overlaid on contemporary map of Southern B.C.

The gold rush in the East Kootenays was of short duration; thereafter the Trail was not maintained but was used by travelers into the Kootenays. The prospectors who made claims on Red

Mountain, Morris and Bourgeois, used the Dewdney Trail to access the Lily May claim in 1890, which was located beside the Trail. It was from this claim that they saw the red ore on Red Mountain and decided to investigate. Their five claims were the beginning of the Rossland mining era and foundation for the city of Rossland.

According to the Victoria Daily Colonist, in August, 1865, Edgar Dewdney had 75 men working on the Trail from Wild Horse Creek towards Kootenay Lake. He also had a party of about the same number of Chinamen working at the other end of the trail, and 75 men working from Fort Shepherd towards Christina Creek, about 50 miles from Fort Shepherd. In 1905, the West Kootenay Power and Light Company built a transmission line west of Rossland, using parts of the Dewdney Trail for their access road and right-of-way.

In the early 1920s, the Cascade Highway was constructed between Christina Lake and Rossland. The new road crossed the Dewdney Trail many times but did not follow it for any distance. The Trail was used by local ranchers and farmers for moving their cattle and as a horse trail. The Cascade Highway became important for larger conveyances.

In 1972, the B.C. Parks Branch did a reconnaissance of the Christina Lake to Paterson portion of the Trail and found that 70% of the original Trail was still intact. Over the next three years the Parks Branch, in cooperation with the Forest Service, worked to restore the Dewdney Trail section between Christina Lake and Paterson, including interviews with old-timers. In 1989, a Corridor Plan for the Dewdney Trail was produced under the Recreation Corridors program.

On April 10, 1991, portions of the Dewdney Trail were designated as a Historic Site by provincial Order-In-Council. These designated portions were on Crown Land along the Wild Horse River; near the headwaters of Summit Creek and down to the Kootenay River; and from the Rossland Summit (Record Ridge - Mount Sophia Pass) to Christina Creek.

On May 24, 1995, a Memorandum of Agreement on Heritage Trails was signed by the Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture. The Trail was also designated as a forest recreation trail under the Forest Practices Code of B.C., and as an Archaeological Site under the Heritage Conservation Act. In 1996,

a Dewdney Trail Management Plan for Trail Portions on Public Forest Lands in the Nelson Forest Region was published and distributed. The Dewdney Trail Corridor is considered to be 100 metres on either side of the trail centerline. In line with the Management Plan, the Ministry of Forests commences a procedure of Alteration Permits established under the Heritage Conservation Act, including rehabilitation measures for disturbed parts of the trail.

In 1998, mapping and assessment was conducted by Champion Contracting for the Forest Service on sections of the Dewdney Trail, including the Santa Rosa Summit, Santa Rosa Creek, Big Sheep Creek to Corral Creek, Corral Creek to Cascade Summit, Cascade Highway Summit and Lost Creek.

In 2015, the Dewdney Trail Heritage Society was formed to focus on the protection and preservation of the section of the Dewdney Trail between Christina Lake and Rossland.

Presently, most of the trail has been converted into the Crowsnest Highway and Highway 3. The portion between Christina Lake and Rossland is one of the last sections of the Trail still operating, though only as a recreational trail.