



Fraser Canyon, B.C.

The Fraser River skirts the Caribos in the north and then plunges down its center, deep into rocky canyons, 1,000 or more feet below the plateaus of rich alluvial soil.

The plateaus are stacked like stairs (each step a thousand feet) and are called benches. They were stacked one at a time when the Fraser, dammed by glaciers, overflowed its banks and dumped silt for miles around.

The central area is sparsely populated except for a few towns on transportation routes. The area around Prince George has a relatively large number of people. Quesnel is the metropolis of the valleys.

Stands of cottonwood and poplar surround Quesnel and the nearby smaller towns of Cinema, Strathnaver, Hixon, Nazko, Kersley, Australian, Alexandria, Macalister and Marguerite. The summers are dry with a mean temperature of 56°F (14°C). Winter lasts from mid-November to mid-April with two or three feet of snow and mean temperatures of 21°F (-5°C).

Barkerville, the old gold rush town to the east of Quesnel, is higher and the weather is colder with a short, frost-free summer of only fifty-two

days. The gold rush began in 1858 and ended in 1865 (though gold continued to be mined). Twenty to thirty thousand miners and campfollowers rolled in the first year, and as new strikes were made on the Quesnel River, the ones who left were quickly replaced.

Barkerville was a rich but flimsy town. When writer Bruce Hutchison visited it in 1921, Harry Jones, who had arrived in 1862, described the original settlement for him.

"A kind of wild town. You had to pay the German hurdy-gurdy girls \$10 for a dance and a lot more for larger favours.... Billy Barker who made the first big strike on Williams Creek took out \$600,000, spent it over the bar, got a job as a cook in a road camp, lived his last days in the old men's home in Victoria."

At the time of Hutchison's visit Barkerville was a ghost: "a double row of shacks along a single street cramped between Williams Creek and a naked hill," and Hutchison concluded that it would sink in the mud some day or burn up like a box of matches. He was wrong. It is now restored, perhaps a shade beyond its prime, and is a tourist spot drawing more than 100,000 visitors a year.

The Southern Interior

British Columbia's agriculture is concentrated in five per cent of its area — in the Fraser delta and in the Okanagan, Thomson, middle Fraser and Kootenay valleys in the southern interior. Minerals, particularly copper and molybdenum, are mined in this region.

South of the Cariboo is the prosperous town of Kamloops, a forest products centre at the junction of the North Thompson and South Thompson Rivers. Below are endless acres of irrigated fruit orchards and the fruit-packing towns of Penticton, Kelowna and Vernon. Eighty-five per cent of British Columbia's apples, peaches, pears, apricots and grapes come from the Okanagan Valley.



Barkerville as it used to be, 1894.