

Continued from page 16

dirt road then," recalls Fran. "Finding the place wasn't easy — now all that's changed and all summer folks head north to visit the place."

It is an unusual experience to visit Barkerville and relive the old Gold Days at what is now the Barkerville Historic Park. To get there you strike towards Prince George and turn east at Quesnel — which is about as much in the middle of BC as you can get. However Fran and Louise have another home in the winter — at Richmond, not far from the US border and south of the sprawl of urban Vancouver. Around is flat farming country, crossed by roads running in every direction — very different from their summers in the interior, as you can judge from the many photographs and posters on the walls of their winter home.

"We have a home in Barkerville too," says Louise. "It took me a time to get used to it — you're surrounded by all sorts of wild animals up there. Not just squirrels and rabbits, but big stuff — bear and moose. It's really wild."

"And you don't just get to see a Gold Rush mining town," puts in Fran. "You also see real country, still unspoiled, and some really beautiful views of lakes and mountains. You only have to look up — and there it is!"

But what of the theatre the two have created in Barkerville, the ringingly named Theatre Royal? On the posters, and on the stereo record *The Best of Barkerville* they have made for Capilano Records, the little theatre in the heart of the Cariboo trumpets out its attractions in true 19th century fashion. "The following Star Artistes," it heralds — and note that 'e' — "Shall appear personally in UNPARALLELED ATTRACTIONS" and off it goes to list songs and dances stirring, nostalgic and naughty. The Theatre Royal is probably the only one on the continent of North America to be presenting real English-style music-hall, adapted for Canadian tastes with many original songs and special acts such as tap dancing, patter-songs, choruses, medleys of Stephen Foster songs and rousing piano solos. There's a chairman of the evening's pleasures who stirs the revels and keeps them going, pausing to tell a tale or bang his gavel when the audience gets out of hand. To get a feeling for it you should try the Player's Theatre under Charing Cross Station where Victorian Music-Hall reigns and where Louise worked for a year before she met Fran. Both she and her husband feature prominently in the entertainment, as does Fran's son Christie, growing up into the business. A company of ten professional entertainers has been carefully chosen by Fran — a stickler for authenticity, whose English forebears had long associations with the world of the theatre.

"We feel," he says "That the Theatre Royal show is the pure gold of music-hall. It follows the main idea in every way — that is, to keep to the overall plan of maintaining historical correctness in

Barkerville. The Government of BC is trying hard to keep the place as authentic a reproduction of a mining town as possible."

"In the Canada Centenary Year," recalls Louise, "the Canada Council was so impressed with Fran's show they sent us off on a tour of the whole country. We even played Eskimo audiences in the far North — up there they don't applaud if they like you — they grunt!"

Should you happen to visit Barkerville this summer season, you'll find a cast of seasoned performers doing the afternoon shows at the Theatre Royal every day. The town is still being restored with care and imagination by the Barkerville Restoration Advisory Committee, which operates a museum with lively displays from Barkerville's highly-coloured past. You can pop into the bar-room of Kelly's Saloon, see a startled customer being shaved at the barber shop of Wellington Moses and be surprised at the range of goods on display on the shelves of the general store. Look at the mine shafts, the grave of that Barkerville character, Cariboo Cameron, and visit the little faded wooden church of St. Saviour's which stands commandingly at the end of the street. You can have a drink at the Barkerville Hotel, watch the stage coming in with its team of horses — ride on the roof if you like — and have a hearty meal at the Wake-Up-Jake Cafe.

A genuine gold-mining town is all around you — together with more ghostly reminders that perhaps serve as the most effective memories of this strange little town — wagon wheels piled against a shed wall, ancient posters, crumbling porches and long faded shop signs. Then, every day along the street come the singers and actors for the show at the Theatre Royal — old-time music-hall, given new vigour in the wilds of British Columbia's Cariboo. ❖

Barkerville's main street looks just as it did in 1860.



Economic Digest

Most of Canada's leading businessmen are hesitant about forecasting any kind of significant recovery for the economy in 1976. They say economic growth — if it comes — will be modest or uneven and will be largely dependent on upswings in the economies of the United States and the affluent western nations. Most of them predict continuing high inflation and high unemployment despite the federal price and wage controls. A bright spot, however, is the housing industry which is expected to improve on last year's minor upsurge.

As 1975 drew to a close, forecasts by the business leaders were further clouded by Prime Minister Trudeau's warning that the free enterprise system had failed and that a new economic order loomed. Most businessmen reacted angrily, charging that Government intervention created economic disruptions, and they were concerned about how the warning would affect their own business and market decisions.

Here is a summary of forecasts for the year from a selection of business spokesmen:—

Harold Corrigan, President, Canadian Manufacturers' Association: "As 1975 ends, there are signs of economic recovery but the movement is hesitant. At the best, the recovery is likely to be a modest and uneven one. For the first time in 30 years, Canadians are subject to a large degree of Government regulation affecting compensation, costs and prices. This has been generally accepted as an essential first step in battling inflation, but structural changes, including further reductions in the level of spending by governments, are an essential aspect of the overall programme."

J. Allan Boyle, President, Canadian Bankers' Association: "Unlike past economic recoveries, Canada is not expected to experience rapid rates of growth in real GNP. Instead, Government policy and other circumstances dictated that the recovery will be moderate as a consequence. Canadians will still be faced with high unemployment rates, even as the pace of activity accelerates... Despite the announced controls on wage and price increases... prices are still expected to rise by more than nine per cent for 1976 as a whole.

"The fact that price moderation will come only slowly points to the likelihood of continuing high rates of interest for some time."