

THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY IN BARKERVILLE

RAMONA BOYLE* AND RICHARD MACKIE

THE GOLD RUSH ERA IN BRITISH COLUMBIA brought an end to the Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC) trading monopoly on the mainland and involved a succession of rushes from Big Bend and Rock Creek to Cassiar.¹ Yet little is known about the HBC's commercial response to the new circumstances and opportunities of the gold rush era in mainland British Columbia. In June 1867, when the HBC opened its store in the Cariboo gold rush metropolis of Barkerville, it already had a chain of retail stores and farms along the Cariboo Wagon Road (hereafter Cariboo Road) as well as a more traditional, and extensive, fur trade district to the north in New Caledonia.² Beginning at Fort Vancouver in the 1830s, the HBC's coastal operations had branched out to include everything from retail to farming, coal mining, sawmilling, fishing, coastal trading, and urban land sales.³ The HBC took advantage of the

* This article originated as an essay written for History 318, "Contesting the Columbia: The Fur Trades of the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia," taught by Richard Mackie at the University of Victoria in the summer session, 2005. That essay won the BC Historical Federation's 2006 W. Kaye Lamb Award for the best history essay written by a student in a third- or fourth-year course at a BC university. Mackie subsequently edited the paper and readied it for publication and is gratefully acknowledged as co-author. We thank Mandy Kilsby, Nancy Anderson, Susan Safyan, Elizabeth Hunter, and Michael Kennedy for their assistance with images and information, and three anonymous reviewers for *BC Studies* for their perceptive and helpful comments.

¹ See Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 340-44; John S. Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company as Imperial Factor, 1821-1869* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 391-428. The HBC's sale to the International Financial Society in June 1863 does not seem to have changed corporate momentum or policy in British Columbia. For the sale, see E.E. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 2 vols. (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), 816-49 (volume 2).-See also Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), but Ray's work does not extend to British Columbia.

² The authority on the New Caledonia posts remains A.G. Morice, *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia* (Smithers: Interior Stationery, 1978 [1904]).

³ Examples are numerous, but see James R. Gibson, "A Diverse Economy: The Columbia Department of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-1846," *Columbia* 5, 2 (1991): 28-31; James R.

new colonial reality on Vancouver Island after 1849 and on the mainland in 1858. Having lost its traditional monopoly of the “Indian trade” in both Island and mainland colonies,⁴ the well-capitalized company rebranded itself as a competitive and broadly based commercial entity in British Columbia. The Fraser and Cariboo gold rushes provided the HBC with an opportunity to pursue the fur, provision, retail, dry goods, and gold trades of the interior. Using the Barkerville Correspondence Books, 1869–71, located in the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (HBCA), this article charts the commercial practice, range of goods, and clientele of the HBC in Barkerville during these years.⁵

By 1866, the HBC had stores or farms in Yale, Fort Langley, Hope, Kamloops, Fort Alexandria, and Quesnel (see map). These were linked by a steamer and wagon-borne supply chain from the HBC’s western headquarters in Victoria, along the Fraser River, and into the very heart of the Cariboo goldfields. Started in 1862 by Governor James Douglas to provide for the movement of people and goods to the mining claims of the interior, the Cariboo Road enabled freight wagons to gain direct access to the goldfields. Following the rich strikes on Williams Creek in 1861, and the subsequent influx of miners to the Barkerville area,⁶ the Cariboo Road was extended north via Quesnel, reaching its final terminus in Barkerville in the late fall of 1865.⁷ The road now stretched some 492 km. between the head of navigation at Yale and this high mountain town. In 1866, the HBC opened a store in Quesnel,⁸ and supplies from Yale, which had previously taken a month to arrive, now reached

Gibson, *Farming the Frontier: The Agricultural Opening of the Oregon Country, 1786–1846* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1985); Richard Mackie, “The Colonization of Vancouver Island, 1849–1858,” *BC Studies* 96 (1992–93): 1–40; Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793–1843* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); Keith Ralston, “Miners and Managers: The Organization of Coal Production on Vancouver Island by the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1848–1862,” in *The Company on the Coast*, ed. E. Blanche Norcross (Nanaimo: Nanaimo Historical Society, 1983), 42–55

⁴ On the expiry of the licence to the exclusive “Indian trade,” May 1859, which, in any event, was annulled by the formation of the mainland colony in August 1858, see Rich, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, 789; and Galbraith, *Hudson’s Bay Company*, 277.

⁵ Two valuable recent histories of Barkerville mention the HBC’s role in the town between 1867 and 1884: Anne Laing, *The Traveller’s Site Guide to Barkerville Historic Town* (Burnaby: Vanpress Printers, 2009), 38; and Richard Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields* (Victoria: Heritage House, 2013), 194–97, 203. Wright also draws on HBC archival material.

⁶ The best account of the opening (and naming) of the Cariboo region between 1860 and 1862 is Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 17–45.

⁷ On the Cariboo Wagon Road’s date of completion, see Fred W. Ludditt, *Barkerville Days* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1969), 71. For Billy Barker, see Ken Mather, “William ‘Billy’ Barker – Myth and Reality,” in Laing, *Traveller’s Site Guide*, 88–95.

⁸ Gordon R. Elliott, *Quesnel: Commercial Centre of the Cariboo Gold Rush* (Quesnel: Cariboo Observer Limited, 1958), 61.

Barkerville along what Robert Galois calls the colony's "central artery" in ten days.⁹ Until then, the trail from Quesnel had been rough, and even after the Cariboo Road was completed, deep snow, mud, and rockslides closed sections of it in winter, spring, and fall.¹⁰

By 1867, Barkerville had consolidated its position as the supply centre for the mines of the Cariboo Mountains. Economic and transport conditions along Williams Creek itself had improved greatly. With the road in place, and transport by freight wagon possible for the first time, Barkerville emerged as the principal town on Williams Creek, gained its own newspaper – the *Cariboo Sentinel* – in 1865, and soon surpassed nearby Richfield, Camerontown, and Marysville in population and importance. "Within the last few months the town has increased to double its former proportions," noted the *Sentinel* in May 1867, adding that the principal buildings of Camerontown "have been removed to Barkerville" and that not a single building site in the town was vacant.¹¹ Historian Fred Ludditt noted that the road's completion allowed miners' wives to access these distant gold fields easily for the first time.¹² The Williams Creek mines and mining communities, centred in Barkerville, combined in the 1860s for a maximum population of six thousand.¹³

The completion of the Cariboo Road and urban centralization in Barkerville attracted the large Victoria-based merchant houses and banks to the town: Kwong Lee & Co. acquired a retail trade licence in June 1866 and a wholesale licence the following summer.¹⁴ The Bank of British North America opened a Barkerville branch in 1866, and the Bank of British Columbia followed a year later.¹⁵ The Collins Overland Telegraph reached the town in 1867.¹⁶ Indeed, the boom year 1867 was an ideal time for the HBC to set up shop in the consolidated and lively town; the company had every reason to expect more gold discoveries in the Cariboo and a continuation of high gold production as mining properties

⁹ Lorraine Harris, *Barkerville: The Town That Gold Built* (Surrey: Hancock House, 1984), 26; Robert M. Galois and R. Cole Harris, "The Gold Rushes in British Columbia, 1858-1881," in *Historical Atlas of Canada. Vol. 2: The Land Transformed 1800-1891*, ed. R. Louis Gentilcore (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), plate 36.

¹⁰ Barkerville, at an elevation of 4,200 feet (1,280 metres), had a severe winter that lasted from October until mid-May. See Ludditt, *Barkerville Days*, 103.

¹¹ *Cariboo Sentinel*, 9 May 1867, quoted in Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 133.

¹² Ludditt, *Barkerville Days*, 71.

¹³ Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 54.

¹⁴ For Kwong Lee & Co., see the article by Tzu-I Chung, this volume.

¹⁵ Isabel M.L. Bescoby, "Society in Cariboo during the Gold Rush," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 24, 3 (1933): 195-207, 202.

¹⁶ Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 161.

were brought into production.¹⁷ The colonial government established an assay office in Barkerville in 1869.¹⁸

The HBC sent Chief Trader John McAdoo Wark to open the Barkerville store, and he arrived aboard Barnard's Express Stage on 24 June 1867.¹⁹ Wark was well suited to this flourishing settlement. Born in Ireland in 1829, he had arrived in Victoria in 1851 and was posted until 1854 at Fort Simpson, which was still primarily a fur trade post; at the "U.S. Sales Shop" at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River from 1854 to 1857, where he catered to the retail and agricultural trades of American settlers; and at Fort Victoria from 1860 to 1861, where he also dealt with and adapted himself to a new colonial economy.²⁰ In other words, his commercial exposure ranged from the HBC's traditional trade in peltries to the varied and new demands of European settlement on the Pacific slope.

Wark had been preceded in Barkerville in June 1867 by the first installment of thirty tons (sixty thousand pounds) of general merchandise carried by pack oxen, mule train, and First Nations packers along the Cariboo Road from Yale.²¹ This was about half of the 134,000 pounds of merchandise needed to stock the new store.²² The HBC purchased the store from Eliza Ord, one of the few women property owners intown;²³ she had previously purchased the property from M.C. Davis.²⁴ Wark, as

¹⁷ Placer-gold production, which peaked in 1863, did not show an appreciable decline until 1870. See Galois and Harris, "Gold Rushes in British Columbia." Ludditt notes the continuous yield of Cariboo mines after the peak of 1863, caused in part by improved methods of mining. Ludditt, *Barkerville Days*, 37, 81.

¹⁸ For the assay office, see Bescoby, "Society in Cariboo," 202; and Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 197.

¹⁹ Cariboo Sentinel, 8 July 1867. Wark (ca. 1829-1909) was the nephew of the HBC's chief factor John Work, an Irishman who had changed the spelling of his surname from "Wark." See William R. Sampson, "WORK, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, available at http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/work_john_9E.html.

²⁰ Wark's wife Amelie was a daughter of James Birnie of the HBC. See Wark's page in the BC Metis Mapping Research Project, available at http://ubc.bcmetis.ca/hbc_bio_profile.php?id=MzQxNg.

²¹ Cariboo Sentinel, 24 June 1867. For First Nations packing, see the article by Mica Jorgenson, this volume.

²² Cariboo Sentinel, 19 July 1867.

²³ John M. Wark to J.W. McKay, 11 September 1869, Barkerville Correspondence Books, 1869-71, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA). Unless noted otherwise, all HBC sources cited below are drawn from this source. Another source states that the HBC bought the store from Carl Strouss. See Laing, *Traveller's Site Guide*, 38. For Ord, see Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 48, 83, 87.

²⁴ Various letters from Wark to James A. Grahame, chief trader at Quesnel. For Grahame, see Richard Mackie, "GRAHAME, JAMES ALLAN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, available at http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/grahame_james_allan_13E.html.



Figure 1. John McAdoo Wark, photographed at Barkerville by Louis Blanc, ca. 1869. British Columbia Archives (BCA), I-60756.

chief trader for the HBC in Barkerville, was also responsible for overseeing the accounts of the company's store in Quesnel as well as its farm in Fort Alexandria.²⁵ His assistant, a Scot named Hugh Ross, was transferred from HBC Quesnel and arrived in Barkerville on 15 July 1867 (though the store had already officially opened for business on 8 July), with a salary of eighty dollars per month.²⁶ Most of the senior employees of the HBC in British Columbia at this time, including Wark, McKay, and Finlayson, were either Métis or were married to Métis. Interrelated and familiar with the settler as well as the older fur trade economies, they were a considerable presence in colonial British Columbia.²⁷

²⁵ Undated note enclosed with letter from Robert Williams to Wark, 18 December 1867. Williams, previously of Fort Alexandria, had moved to Quesnel after Grahame was transferred to Victoria in July 1867. On the closure of Fort Alexandria in 1867, see Elliott, *Quesnel*, 15, 61.

²⁶ For 8 July opening date, see *Cariboo Sentinel*, 8 and 15 July 1867; for monthly salary, see Wark to the HBC Board of Management, Victoria, 30 August 1869. On Ross's work at Quesnel, see Elliott, *Quesnel*, 61. The 1881 census reveals that Scottish-born Ross was forty-four years old, a merchant, Presbyterian, and lived at Richfield.

²⁷ Sylvia Van Kirk, Bruce Watson, and Jean Barman have shown the persistence and continuing relevance of HBC families in the gold rush and later eras in British Columbia. See Sylvia Van Kirk, "Tracing the Fortunes of Five Founding Families of Victoria," *BC Studies* 115/116 (1997-98): 149-80; Bruce McIntyre Watson, *Lives Lived West of the Divide: A Biographical Dictionary of Fur Traders Working West of the Rockies, 1793-1858*, 3 vols. (Kelowna: UBC Okanagan, 2010); Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014).

The HBC did a thriving business in the first year of the store's operation. When a catastrophic fire swept through the town on 16 September 1868, just a year after the HBC's arrival, the community suffered combined losses estimated at \$670,000. The *Cariboo Sentinel* reported the loss to the HBC's store at \$65,000, second only to Carl Strouss, whose estimated loss of \$100,000 included both his general store and his dwelling.²⁸ However, the actual losses sustained by the HBC were much higher than the published figure, and they were considerably higher than Strouss's.²⁹ Indeed, only a year after the HBC store opened, it was already the largest business in town. The final account (Table 1), sent to the HBC's Board of Management in Victoria in July 1869, gives an indication of the value of the store's operations before the fire.

TABLE 1

Accounting of goods lost in fire, 1 January - 16 September 1868

From Victoria Depot	\$55,738.01
From Quesnel	\$29,108.75
Inventory 1 st January 1868	\$21,650.17
Cost Value of goods sold for cash between 1 st January and 16 th September 1868	\$27,530.90
Cost Value of goods sold on credit including supplies to servants	\$22,540.44
Cost Value of goods transferred to other districts (Quesnel)	\$321.92
Cost Value of goods used for the maintenance of the establishment	\$112.94
Total Losses	\$157,003.13

Source: Wark to Board of Management, 24 July 1869.

²⁸ *Cariboo Sentinel*, 22 September 1868. The best account of the fire is found in Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 134-40.

²⁹ Wark to Grahame, 18 June 1869. The *Sentinel* reported that "the progress of the flames stopped just before it reached McInnes' saloon, which was saved, and also the warehouse of I. Weill and H. B. Co." See *Cariboo Sentinel*, 22 September 1868. Other sources suggest it was Scott's Saloon that was saved. See Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 138; and telegram from Chartres Brew (Richfield), 15 September 1868, Colonial Correspondence, GR 1372, British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA).



Figure 2. The HBC's store in Barkerville as it looked after its construction in 1868. This rebuilt HBC store existed at Barkerville Historic Town from 1971 to 1979, when it was renamed Mason & Daly General Merchants after the firm that bought the HBC's premises in 1885. BC Government photograph, 1975. BCA, I-05300.

This considerable figure of \$157,000, which does not include the value of the building destroyed in the fire, represents nearly a quarter of the total losses sustained by the entire town.³⁰ Soon after the fire, the HBC was able to reopen for business because the new store, under construction before the fire, had escaped the blaze.³¹ Although business was slow for about three months after the fire “owing to the poor assortment of goods left,”³² by April 1869 Wark was pleased with the recovery of business and expected a “good season for mining.”³³ Indeed, he commented approvingly, “business is steadily improving here.”³⁴ The store was open from seven in the morning until ten at night, and even in late 1869, when business was “dull,” weekly sales totalled approximately twenty-five hundred dollars.³⁵

Reports to the Board of Management in 1870 show that the HBC owned not only a “Sale Shop” but also a large cellar (completed in the fall of

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 21 August 1869.

³¹ Telegram from Chartres Brew at Richfield, 15 September 1868, Colonial Correspondence, GR 1372, BCA.

³² Wark to Grahame, 13 May 1869.

³³ Wark to HBC Board of Management, 29 April 1869.

³⁴ Wark to McKay, 29 April 1869.

³⁵ Wark to HBC Board of Management, 7 August 1869.

1868)³⁶ and a warehouse, and employed a chief trader (J.M. Wark), a clerk (Hugh Ross), and a post master (possibly M.C. Davis).³⁷ An inventory made in October 1870, before the large winter order of supplies had been received, shows stock considerably depleted. Goods in the sale shop amounted to \$25,811.09, in the cellar to \$14,432.88, and in the warehouse to \$12,541.52, for a total of \$52,785.49.³⁸

Tables 2 through 9, taken from the depot's correspondence between 1869 and 1871, show a comprehensive inventory of the dry goods and hardware stocked and specially ordered for customers. Not surprisingly, materials for building, construction, and carpentry (Table 2) and mining supplies (Table 3) dominate the list, followed by transport goods (Table 4), blacksmith and shoemaker supplies (Table 5), and materials for hunting, fishing, and trapping (Table 6). Barkerville was, of course, a boomtown comprised of wooden buildings in the "Eldorado vernacular,"³⁹ and the inventory also features domestic ware and household supplies (Table 7), kitchen and cooking supplies (Table 8), clothing (Table 9), and stationery (Table 10). These lists reflect an impressive supply route; testify to the impact of the Cariboo Road with regard to permitting the movement of bulk goods; show the HBC's broad range of commercial activities in this gold rush district and community; and chart the spread of commodities into this high mountain town. Such information should also prove valuable when further historical archaeology is conducted in the Barkerville area.⁴⁰ The HBC's letterbooks expose a rich and fascinating seam of ingredients for material history.

These lists suggest the needs of the HBC's clientele, including miners (and women and some children),⁴¹ merchants, restaurateurs, and tradespeople as well as Chinese merchants and miners and First Nations trappers. The store stocked all the necessary dry goods and provisions, but a considerable choice and many luxury items were also offered to the customers of the store.

The HBC general store in Barkerville was already showing signs of the company's retail savvy, a talent for "giving the customer what they want," which was to transform the former fur-trading company into a department store empire into the twentieth century and beyond. Whatever was wanted

³⁶ Wark to Grahame, 29 May 1869.

³⁷ Wark to Finlayson, 20 August 1870 and 1 October 1870.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 October 1870.

³⁹ For the Eldorado vernacular, see the article by Jennifer Iredale, this volume.

⁴⁰ For the archaeology of Chinese sites at Barkerville, see the article by Douglas Ross, this volume.

⁴¹ In his gold rush database, Wright has almost four hundred named women between 1862 and 1882. See Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 81.

could be provided, if it could be procured, though at prices that reflected the difficulties of transporting goods to this remote place.

TABLE 2

Building, construction, and carpentry (asst = assorted)

hatchets
 axes (asst)
 turpentine
 rope
 stall lanterns
 hinges
 wire tape measures
 twine
 varnish
 wire
 carpenters' braces
 magnets
 bunting
 canvas
 chisels (asst)
 paintbrushes (asst)
 bluestones
 auger bits (asst)
 boxwood rules
 copper rivets
 manila rope
 hand saws (asst)
 steel files (asst)
 chalk lines
 chalk
 door locks
 padlocks
 jack planes
 spirit levels
 sink & lines
 window glass (asst)
 painted pails
 paint (asst)
 pincers
 saws (10 kinds)
 platform scales
 screw drivers

nails (asst)

screws

Source: Tables 2-18, and 22-24 are bcompiled from letters, invoices, and requisitions in Barkerville Correspondence Books, 1869-71, HBCA.

TABLE 3

Mining supplies

patent fuses

hoes

handles (asst)

grindstone irons

augers

awls

sluice forks

shovels (asst)

Indian rubber boots

leather boots (asst)

pick iron

gold pans

gold blowers

gold assaying acids

gold bags

quicksilver

hose (asst)

blasting powder

caps and fuses

TABLE 4

Transport goods

steel springs (asst)

saddlers' twine

car wheels

axle grease

horse bells

bridles

TABLE 5

Blacksmith and shoemaker supplies

sole leather

blacksmiths' bellows

iron hoops
 farriers knives
 hammers (asst)
 iron (asst)
 anvils
 steel (asst)

TABLE 6

Hunting, fishing, and trapping

trout hooks
 gunflints
 gun worms [barrel cleaners]
 beaver traps
 percussion gun caps
 percussion pistol caps
 marten traps
 double barrel guns
 shot

TABLE 7

Domestic ware and household supplies

scarlet ensigns [flags]
 coal oil
 clay pipes
 cigars
 tin cups
 chamber pots
 oil cloth
 Portman's plasters
 alcohol [rubbing?]
 HBC blankets (asst)
 window cord
 perfumery (asst)
 carpet
 green baize
 smoothing irons
 glue
 pins
 ticking
 thread (asst)
 candles

poker chips
seeds (asst)
wax matches
tortoise shell combs
brass combs
Indian Rubber combs
lamp chimneys
scissors
towels
brass candlesticks
pocket knives
brooms

TABLE 8

Kitchen and cooking

cups and saucers
corks
frying pans
table cutlery (asst)
plates and bowls
serving spoons
ladles
soap (asst)
washing soda
lye
Borax

TABLE 9

Clothing

vests
wool comforters
cotton (asst)
sheeting
table covers
moccasins
ribbon (asst)
tartan for dresses
frocks (asst)
drawers (asst)
shirts (asst)
trousers

undershirts
 men's braces
 tweed suits
 rubber coats
 pilot jackets
 tweed jackets
 coat material
 buttons (asst)
 coats (asst)
 handkerchiefs (asst)
 gloves (asst)
 shirting
 hats (asst)
 paper collars

TABLE 10

Stationery

wrapping paper
 envelopes (asst)
 mapping paper
 memo books
 note paper
 requisition forms
 pencils
 blotting paper
 pencils
 erasers
 copying books
 time books
 ledgers

The HBC's records also permit an inventory of the main provisions stocked or special ordered in Barkerville between 1869 and 1871. Several items are of note. Alcohol was a large part of the HBC store's business, and alcoholic drinks were the first item brought in when the store opened in 1867.⁴² Indeed, Wark remarked in 1870 that the HBC store was the "principal importer of liquors to this place."⁴³ The store stocked brandy, claret, gin, rum, brandy, port wine, champagne, Bass ale, whisky, absinthe, and curacao, and it acted as a wholesaler for many of the saloons and restaurants in town.

⁴² Cariboo Sentinel, 24 June 1867.

⁴³ Wark to Grahame, 6 August 1870.

The HBC's butter came from its farm in Fort Alexandria and its flour was ground from wheat grown in Lillooet and Williams Lake.⁴⁴ With this local venture in agricultural provisions, we see the HBC extending a trade that had emerged throughout its territories during the self-sufficiency drives of the George Simpson era of the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s and had continued onto colonial Vancouver Island in the 1850s.⁴⁵

TABLE 11

Kitchen staples

tea
 coffee
 salt
 salaratus [baking soda]
 vinegar
 chocolate
 bakers' bitters [essence of orange or chocolate]

TABLE 12

Cereals, grains, flour, pasta, rice

arrowroot
 vermicelli
 macaroni
 cornstarch
 biscuit
 hominy
 Chinese rice
 pilot bread
 tapioca
 cornmeal
 Oregon flour
 oatmeal
 barley

TABLE 13

Fresh and preserved fruits and vegetables

lime juice
 maraschino

⁴⁴ Wark to HBC Board of Management, 17 July 1869.

⁴⁵ See Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 254-55 and *passim*; Mackie, "Colonization of Vancouver Island," 35-40.

pineapples
 prunes
 split peas
 green peas
 bell peppers
 pickles
 candy peel
 raisins
 canned pie fruits
 dried peaches
 pears
 tomatoes
 beans
 apples
 hops
 green corn
 capers

TABLE 14

Spices, herbs, oils, sauces

essence of ginger
 powder curry
 chillies (sic)
 cinnamon
 cloves
 cayenne pepper
 Gallipoli oil
 allspice
 sage
 saltpeter
 pepper sauce
 mustard
 Worcester sauce
 Chicory

TABLE 15

Sugars, jams, honey

jams (asst)
 barley sugar
 syrup (asst)
 sugar (asst)
 marmalade
 honey

TABLE 16

Fresh and preserved fish

sardines
salmon
star lobsters
lobster (fresh)
anchovy sauce

TABLE 17

Meats and meat products

meats (asst)
lard
tallow
jellies (asst)

TABLE 18

Dairy products

butter
cheese

Everything sold at the Barkerville store had to be brought in by freight wagon from Victoria and Quesnel along the Cariboo Road. Most of the HBC's supplies for Barkerville in 1869 and 1870 were transported by a Mr. Cannell and his oxen-drawn wagons. The HBC's teamsters on the Cariboo Road were under the direction of J.W. "Joe" McKay, the capable veteran chief trader in Yale,⁴⁶ who dispatched goods from there to Barkerville. Freight charges ranged from 17/8⁴⁷ to ten cents per pound (454 grams),⁴⁸ depending on the season, state of the roads, and competition.⁴⁹ Toll charges of five hundred dollars per fortnight also contributed to the high price of goods sold in the Barkerville store.⁵⁰ Despite a requisition for the spring outfit in 1869 for sixty thousand pounds of stock, Wark

⁴⁶ Wark to Edward Tormey, 150 Mile House, 18 September 1869. On McKay, see Richard Mackie, "McKAY, JOSEPH WILLIAM," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, available at http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mckay_joseph_william_12E.html.

⁴⁷ Wark to Williams, 9 July 1870. Williams took charge of the HBC store at Quesnel when Grahame was transferred to Victoria on 9 July 1870.

⁴⁸ Ross to Finlayson, 26 August 1871.

⁴⁹ Wark to Williams, 2 September 1871.

⁵⁰ For example, remittances to F.W. Foster and Mr. Clinton, 13 May, 29 May, and 5 June 1869.

commented that it was “very probable” that he would need to order more.⁵¹ When the Collins Overland Telegraph reached Barkerville in 1867, communication with other HBC depots, which often moved stock around between them, became easier.⁵²

Table 19 provides some examples of the HBC’s pricing and puts the general sales figures into some perspective.

TABLE 19

A selected price list prepared for a wholesale customer at Keithley Creek, 1869

Tea, Congon	lb	.90
Sugar, Colonial	lb	.27
Sugar, Crushed	lb	.25
Peaches, Dried	lb	.30
Rice, China	lb	.20
Rice, Patna	lb	.20
Butter, Isthmus	lb	.80
Boots	case	100.00
Syrup	keg	15.00
Yeastpowders	case	50.00
Hams, Oregon	case	50.00
Bacon, Haywood	case	45.00
Tobacco, Paces	twist	1.25
Candles	piece	.50
Oysters	2 dozen	17.50
Nails	lb	.24
Currants	lb	.40

Source: Wark to S.A Smith & Co., Mouth of Keithley Creek, 4 September 1869.

The HBC letterbook also affords interesting glimpses of modes and problems of transport. Goods transported by oxen generally arrived in better condition than those brought by mule train,⁵³ although the oxen could sometimes travel only eight miles a day on the stretch between

⁵¹ Wark to McKay, 13 May 1869.

⁵² On the Collins Overland Telegraph, see Rosemary Neering, *Continental Dash: The Russian-American Telegraph* (Ganges, BC: Horsdal and Schubart, 2000).

⁵³ Wark to McKay, 31 October 1869.

Soda Creek and Barkerville, which was particularly prone to rockslides.⁵⁴ Occasionally, when the oxen were unable to get through because of slides, other means were employed, like packers⁵⁵ or the sternwheeler *Victoria*, owned by Edgar Marvin and G.B. Wright and launched in 1869, which ran on the Fraser River between Soda Creek, Quesnel, and Cottonwood Canyon.⁵⁶ Most goods were transported in the late fall to service the needs of miners staying on their claims through the winter. Miners needed stocks of winter provisions and also came into town in the spring to replenish their supplies.

The store also acted as a wholesaler to outlying areas. An order for Samuel Smith of Keithley Creek in August 1869 is an example (Table 20), and it offers an accurate glimpse into the considerable requirements of companies of small retailers and miners on the more remote claims.

TABLE 20

Samuel Smith's order, Keithley Creek, August 1869

1 gross yeast powder
1000 lbs rice
24 prs shoes
2000 lbs sugar
1 chest tea
[illegible]
1 cwt soap
2 doz. asst. felt hats
50 boxes Belmont Sperm [illegible]
6 doz. Wright Pills
6 doz. pain killers
56 lbs American Castille soap
200 hams
1 doz. pewter framed looking glasses
1 cwt small cod/trout hooks
6 bunches twine
1 doz. assorted shoemakers' awls
6 balls shoemakers' twine
6 doz. papers roundheaded tacks (for boxes)
4 nests covered tin kettles
500 lbs bacon
1 box 10" x 12" window glass

⁵⁴ Wark to Board of Management, 9 June 1870.

⁵⁵ Wark to McKay, 14 June 1870.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 31 October 1869. See also Elliott, *Quesnel*, 135.

1 doz. horn dressing combs
 3 doz. playing cards
 2 small bottles ink
 6 lbs. ink
 6 lbs. epsom salts
 6 boxes raisins
 4 kegs nails
 20 gallons rum
 20 gallons scotch whiskey
 10 gallons brandy
 20 lbs 6-shooter ball shot

Source: Wark to Board of Management, 7 August 1869.

Although miners and the women of Barkerville were the most numerous customers, the HBC store also catered to the specialized Chinese and “Indian” trades. In January 1869, Wark complained that a large quantity of China rice, brought in for the Chinese trade, was going unsold, even at a discounted rate of twenty-two cents per pound. Perhaps the Chinese merchant house Kwong Lee & Co., which reached Barkerville at the same time as the HBC, arranged its own supplies.⁵⁷ Relations between the HBC and Chinese merchants were cordial. Not only did the Chinese purchase supplies of rice⁵⁸ and HBC blankets⁵⁹ for their own establishments but also, on occasion, shared information about freight costs on the Cariboo Road in an effort to keep them as low as possible through united pressure on the teamsters.⁶⁰ However, this joint action could work to the store’s disadvantage too. Hugh Ross, in charge of the HBC store in Barkerville, wrote in 1871: “Oppenheimer is trying to get all the teamsters to put up the freight and pushing away his goods[;] at that he raised the price on articles we have not got in stock.”⁶¹

The company also acted as an informal post office and delivery service for people throughout the district, as is indicated in an October 1869 letter sent by Wark to the HBC’s Robert Williams in Quesnel: “Mr. J.G. Jennings is anxious to get in as soon as possible some bedding and private

⁵⁷ Wark to Grahame, 19 January 1869. See also Wark to Samuel Smith, Mouth of Keithley Creek, 4 September 1869. See the article by Tzu-I Chung, this volume.

⁵⁸ Wark to Williams, 14 June 1870.

⁵⁹ Ross to Williams, 2 September 1871.

⁶⁰ Wark to McKay, 14 June 1870.

⁶¹ Ross to Williams, 2 September 1871. This is Isaac Oppenheimer. See Peter Liddell and Patricia E. Roy, “OPPENHEIMER, DAVID,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, available at http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/oppenheimer_david_12E.html.

packages of his Wife's weighing about 150 lbs and please send this on by earliest opportunity that offers."⁶²

The HBC's business in Barkerville involved regular contact and communication with the company's other districts and divisions, just as it had in the fur trade era. In 1869, John Wark wrote to Williams in Quesnel: "Have you any idea of the quantity of tallow Mr. Ogden will require in New Caledonia? I think I can get from one to two thousand lbs cheap here."⁶³ Ogden's use of the tallow (rendered animal fat, usually beef) is unknown, but possible uses include candles, pemmican, and soap. Wark also supplied flour to Ogden and considered sending him bacon but found it of insufficient quality.⁶⁴ The HBC readily moved goods and supplies between posts to meet local demand or to seek the most profitable market.

The "Indian trade" was also a source of income for the HBC in Barkerville. Furs were traded at the store, which stocked inferior brands of tobacco as well as marten and beaver traps, and each spring the Fort George Indians came to trade pelts for these items.⁶⁵ In June 1869, however, Wark complained that he was unable to dispose of a large quantity of Peach brand tobacco (possibly snuff) purchased for this purpose because "the Fort George Indians have not been here this year."⁶⁶ And again in October 1869, in his report to the Board of Management in Victoria, Wark explained:

It is to be regretted that the price of Beaver has declined so much as this is the only kind of fur that has been offered here lately and these are by no means plentiful nor of good quality. Formerly the Ft. George Indians brought a great many furs here but so far this year they have not visited us and it is to be presumed they are getting a better price at home than they would get here.⁶⁷

The "Fort George Indians" are the Lheidli T'enneh, a Dakelh (formerly Carrier) people.⁶⁸ The fur trade was one reason for their visits to Bark-

⁶² Wark to Williams, 18 October 1869.

⁶³ Wark to Williams, 14 August 1869. Chief Trader Peter S. Ogden was at the time in charge of Fraser Lake. He and his son died there, within days of each other, in October 1870, of influenza. Wark noted: "The Fur Trade has suffered a great loss as Mr. Ogden was not only a favourite with the Indians, but much respected by the miners who have recently gone to Peace River." See Wark to Finlayson, 1 October and 5 November 1870.

⁶⁴ Wark to Finlayson, 16 September 1870.

⁶⁵ Wark to Williams, 2 October 1869.

⁶⁶ Wark to Grahame, 7 June 1869; Wark to Williams, 4 September 1869.

⁶⁷ Ross to Board of Management, 9 October, 1869.

⁶⁸ For the land and territories of the Lheidli T'enne, see <http://www.lheidli.ca/>. See also Doug Brown, "Carrier Sekani Self-Government in Context: Land and Resources," *Western Geography*

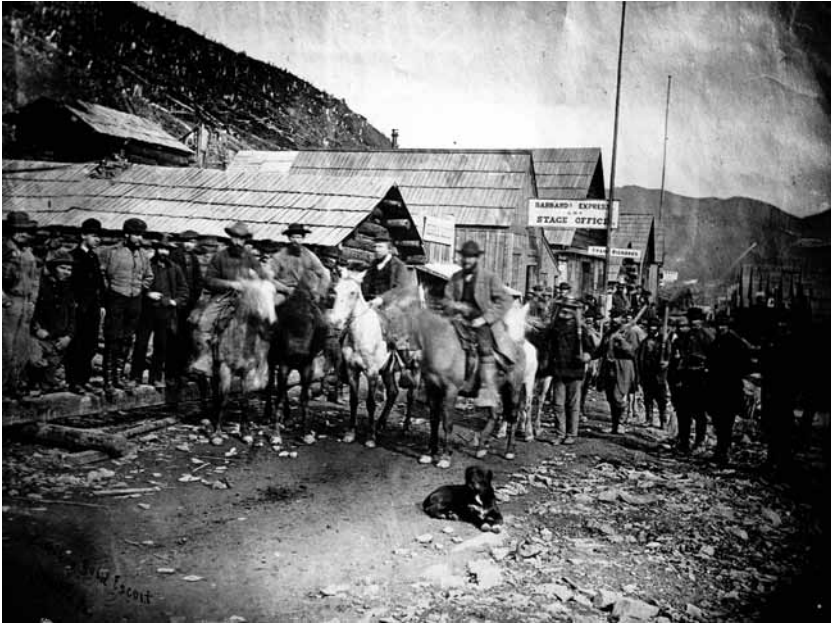


Figure 3. Gold escort leaving Barkerville, 1865. British Columbia Archives, I-31594

erville, but recent research has revealed that the town attracted First Nations from all over the southern half of British Columbia. The Fort George Indians may well have hoped for a better price in the competitive market of Barkerville than in Fort George, where the HBC still had an effective monopoly owing to its isolation. Or they may simply have been driven to Barkerville by curiosity, by its novelty, or by its opportunities for employment.⁶⁹ By 1869, First Nations trading pelts in Barkerville received some combination of cash or trade goods in payment instead of participating in the Made Beaver exchange system of the traditional fur trade.⁷⁰

Wark was later angry to learn that the trappers had sold their furs to Francis Barnard, who ran the express service and with whom the HBC did a considerable business. He advised Chief Factor Finlayson not to give Barnard any further contracts until he promised to quit trading with

¹² (2002): 21–67.

⁶⁹ On First Nations trade and labour at Barkerville, see the article by Mica Jorgenson, this volume.

⁷⁰ See Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 284–86.

the Fort George Indians.⁷¹ Barnard found the loss of the HBC contracts too heavy a price for the trade, and he agreed to stop.⁷²

Native traders had seized the opportunity to negotiate the best trade possible for their pelts, though prices had fallen dramatically. In 1869, martens were worth from \$2.50 to \$3.50 each, beaver from fifty cents to seventy-five cents per pound, and minks seventy-five cents each.⁷³ In June 1870, the Barkerville store sent the following furs (Table 21), taken over the previous six months, to Victoria (figures are in pounds, shillings, and pence; the standard exchange rate was £1 = \$5), and in August 1871 Barkerville sent two bales and one box of furs to Victoria for shipment to London.

TABLE 21

Furs sent from Barkerville to Victoria, June 1870

2	Fishers	3	2	-	
1	Cross Fox	1	5	6	
2	Lynx	-	16	-	
145	Martens	105	2	6	
9	Minks	2	5	-	
1	Land Otter	-	10	3	
24	Large Beavers	9	6	-	
19	Small Beavers	7	7	3	
6	Wolverines	3	1	6	
		£132	16	-	\$644.08

Source: Ross to Williams, 19 August 1871.

These records show that, at least into the early 1870s, the fur trade co-existed with gold mining in the vast central interior districts of British Columbia and that the HBC pursued its traditional fur trade in this quintessential gold rush town. Barkerville affords the incongruous sight of an HBC store in a town that offered both a fur trade and a telegraph connection.

⁷¹ Wark to McKay, 24 May 1870. On Barnard, see Margaret A. Ormsby, "BARNARD, FRANCIS JONES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, available at http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/barnard_francis_jones_11E.html.

⁷² Wark to McKay, 14 June 1870.

⁷³ Wark to Samuel Smith, Keithley Creek, 13 November 1869.

Equally incongruous is the HBC's encouragement, alongside the fur trade, of a trade in gold in Barkerville. The company store included an assay office, and the HBC became a gold merchant for the Williams Creek miners, both before and after the construction of the first colonial government assay office in Barkerville in 1869. Gold district assayers, Wright notes, "tested the purity of placer gold and ore and melted gold into bricks for shipment south."⁷⁴ The HBC accepted freshly mined gold in lieu of cash at the Barkerville store. In October 1869, Wark outlined the process: he had the gold assayed and weighed, issued a receipt for it, and then sent bank notes (bills) to the miners at their claims.⁷⁵ Between 1869 and 1871, HBC Barkerville purchased gold dust, gold nuggets, and gold bars and remitted them to Victoria every two weeks by Barnard's stage (see Tables 22, 23 and 24).

TABLE 22

1869 gold purchases made by Hudson's Bay Company, Barkerville

14 June	\$1,650.08	
12 July	2,300.82	
24 July	4,583.13	
14 August	4,486.75	
30 August	2,332.09	
4 September	2,005.04	(113 ozs)
18 September	3,257.68	(177 ozs)
2 October	2,346.00	(128 ozs)
18 October	1,871.82	
23 October	3,597.35	
31 October	3,047.06	
11 November	3,599.33	
27 November	2,482.77	
(CT visited Victoria, and may have taken gold with him)		
24 December	3,835.66	
Known Total 1869	\$41,396.18	

⁷⁴ Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 197.

⁷⁵ For example, Wark to Messrs Boyd & Heath, Cold Springs Ranch, 18 October 1869.

TABLE 23

1870 gold purchases made by Hudson's Bay Company, Barkerville

11 January - 30 April	\$14,781.48
10 May	2,354.30
24 May	6,143.16
21 June	1,334.59
6 July	3,594.13
6 August	4,069.93
20 August	7,020.70
10 September	2,356.68
16 September	1,615.19
1 October	1,178.63
8 October	2,492.08
15 October	1,444.30
21 October	1,237.20
3 December	1,082.65
Known Total 1870	\$50,705.02

TABLE 24

1871 gold purchases made by Hudson's Bay Company, Barkerville

2 January	\$2,826.62
13 January	1,098.54
26 January	6,870.84
10 February	1,504.84
25 February	3,810.11
14 March	3,684.25
21 March	1,864.12
31 March	1,949.45
10 April	1,337.32
14 April	1,662.52
28 April	2,704.49
18 May	2,389.39
20 May	2,755.35

3 June	2,256.70
12 June	2,052.24
19 June	2,244.12
1 July	1,277.23
1 July (additional)	1,489.09
15 July	2,884.18
22 July	2,514.99
29 July	2,796.21
5 August	2,291.22
12 August	2,517.75
26 August	2,049.65
2 September	2,540.83
9 September	1,697.48
16 September	2,357.80
23 September	2,040.53
(Records End)	

Known Total 1871	\$67,467.86
------------------	-------------

In July 1869, Wark wrote the Board of Management about his ambitious plans for a new trade in gold bars:

Should the Gold Bar business prove profitable I think I could purchase largely here, had we the funds to do so, but at present I have no money at hand and I fear I will not get many bars this week. It is a question for the consideration of the Board whether to send up Bank Notes to the extent of \$15,000 or \$20,000 to buy Gold Bars with.⁷⁶

By October 1869, the HBC's gold business had attracted notice, and Wark remarked that the Bank of British Columbia, which had set up a Barkerville branch in 1867, had begun to make efforts to stop the HBC purchases of gold.⁷⁷ The bank was unsuccessful, and the gold remittances to Victoria continued. For unknown reasons, but possibly in private transactions, gold was even sent from Barkerville to Victoria on behalf of individuals, including the registrar of the Supreme Court, C.E. Pooley, and the chief factor of the HBC at Victoria, Roderick Finlayson.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Wark to Board of Management, 17 July 1869.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 October 1869.

⁷⁸ Wark to Grahame, Victoria, 6 August 1870. On Finlayson, see Eleanor Stardom, "FINLAYSON, RODERICK," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of

On 14 March 1871, Ross told the Board of Management: "I am buying all the gold I can pay for."⁷⁹ However, by 20 March he was becoming worried by the company's focus on speculation in gold:

In looking through the account [illegible] of the Depot, I find a very unfavourable result from the sale of Gold Bars in San Francisco and London, the freight and insurance amounting to \$1669.40 and the profit only \$9.72, showing a clear loss to the district of \$1570.72. Please send me definite instructions relative to purchasing more Bars for Cash, exchange on Victoria is only half of one percent now through the Bank.⁸⁰

However, the Barkerville store continued to purchase and forward substantial, indeed increasing, quantities of gold through the end of September 1871 and probably beyond, strongly suggesting that the Board of Management felt the market in gold was profitable enough to justify the expenditure. Each year for which figures are available saw an increase in gold purchases of roughly 23 percent, and purchases were probably growing at an even faster rate, given that the figures of 1871 only account for the first nine months of the year.

These figures, in turn, broadly support the precision of official placer gold production figures for the whole of British Columbia, which do not exhibit a substantial decline until 1878.⁸¹ This new financial activity of the HBC represents a canny business strategy at its store in the heart of the Cariboo Mountains, in the richest gold district of colonial British Columbia, and in the largest settlement on the BC mainland.

Despite the gold that flowed into the HBC's accounts, the Barkerville fire of 1868 had a more significant impact on the community than Wark had at first thought. Wark's hopeful reports in April 1869 had indicated, perhaps prematurely, that business was "steadily increasing."⁸² By May he was becoming concerned about the effect of the closure of several competing provisioners, including J.H. Todd and Co., W. Wolff, and L. Greenbaum, whose liquidated inventories temporarily flooded the local market with discounted goods.⁸³ Historian Richard Wright summarizes the impact:

Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-, available at http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/finlayson_roderick_12E.html.

⁷⁹ Ross to Finlayson, 14 March 1871.

⁸⁰ Ross to Grahame, 20 May 1871.

⁸¹ See "Placer-gold Production" in Galois and Harris, "Gold Rushes in British Columbia."

⁸² Wark to Board of Management and to McKay, 29 April 1869.

⁸³ Wark to Grahame, 29 May 1869. On this incident, see also Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 203.

Wark and the retreating merchants and miners make it clear that following the 1868 fire, Barkerville began its decline. Some merchants left immediately after the fire, even the next day. While others stayed and rebuilt, they did so on credit or with savings. As miners left for the Omineca or skedaddled south without paying debt, revenues dropped and merchants such as Strouss, Todd, Wolff and Greenbaum could no longer “stand the gaff,” nor could they offer miners “jawbone” or credit. Those merchants who were savvy businessmen knew it was time to move on.⁸⁴

In June 1869, Wark gloomily observed: “Business is unusually dull with us and there is a general stagnation all over this section of the country.” He went on to say that the July transactions of \$1,630.35 were “anything but satisfactory.”⁸⁵ An unseasonable lack of rain meant that miners were unable to work claims that required water for sluicing gravel – and for accumulating gold. The population also fell off as miners abandoned the area for other, more promising mining districts,⁸⁶ including the Omineca region, where a gold rush had started in the fall of 1869. When the Board of Management complained about the number of outstanding debts owed to the store, Wark replied at the end of September 1869: “Miners, as a class are very migrating people, one day you will hear of them doing well at a certain Creek, and before the expiration of a week they will have sold out and gone somewhere else.” He went on to observe: “I am informed that there are 300 mining licenses less now than there was this time last year.”⁸⁷ Rumours in 1869 and 1870 of rich deposits in the Peace River (Omineca) country and at Lightning Creek, near Quesnel, enticed even more miners and businesses away.⁸⁸

By July 1870, however, business seemed to be improving after a sixty-seven-dollar nugget was picked up at Lowhee Creek,⁸⁹ just west of Barkerville. However, the news that an old competitor, Carl Strouss, was closing up his large general store meant, once again, that the HBC had to deal with a flood of discounted goods.⁹⁰ Once the unsuccessful operations had closed their doors, the situation improved as the HBC

⁸⁴ Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 167.

⁸⁵ Wark to Grahame, 18 June 1869 (stagnation); Wark to Board of Management, 24 July 1869 (July transactions).

⁸⁶ Wark to Board of Management, 14 August 1869.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 25 September 1869.

⁸⁸ For Peace River, see Wark to McKay, 31 October 1869; for Lightning Creek, see Wark to Board of Management, 15 July 1870.

⁸⁹ Wark to Board of Management, 6 July 1870.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15 July 1870.



Figure 4. The Main Street, Barkerville, Spring 1883, with the Hudson's Bay Company's store at left. The original caption reads "Street in Barker-ville 83." A lantern slide by Newton & Co., 3 Fleet Street, London. Photographer unknown. Courtesy Richard Wright. See "How to read a historic photograph," <http://richardtwright.blogspot.ca/2012/02/reading-historic-photograph.html>

increased prices in the less competitive market,⁹¹ but this was somewhat offset by a significant increase in freight charges as the volume of goods flowing into Barkerville shrank. "Freight from Yale to Soda Creek is near ten cents per lb and still rising," Ross reported to Finlayson on 26 August 1871, "and from Quesnel here three cents per lb. Goods will be at famine prices here during the coming winter but will be the means of making a great many leave. They are getting frightened already."⁹²

Ross would take charge of the Barkerville store in 1871 after Wark was granted a year's leave of absence.⁹³ He had been unwell even before an episode that occurred in April 1870.⁹⁴ Returning from a trip to Victoria with a sleigh full of goods, his horses found it impossible to keep their footing in the snow, which was five to seven feet deep. He was forced to abandon the sleigh and to walk most of the way from Quesnel over

⁹¹ Wark to Finlayson, 16 November 1870.

⁹² Ross to Finlayson 26 August 1871.

⁹³ Chief Factor Roderick Finlayson (visiting Barkerville from Victoria), to Mr. Goodfellow, Bank of British North America, Barkerville 22 April 1871; Hugh Ross to Grahame, 10 April 1871.

⁹⁴ Wark to HBC Board of Management, 11 September, 1869.

a period of several days and, subsequently, suffered greatly from snow blindness and rheumatism.⁹⁵ This incident, combined with the constant frustrating and stressful challenges of procuring regular deliveries of supplies, prompted Wark to request a leave of absence in July 1870.⁹⁶

This snapshot of the HBC's activities in Barkerville deals only with the company's first few years there, from 1867 to 1871. In fact, the HBC remained in Barkerville for another fifteen years but with steadily dwindling returns. "As the yield of the gold mines on which this place depends entirely has been falling off," wrote an HBC official in October 1882, "and the population diminishing in late years, we think it would be advisable to withdraw gradually, and when the present stock of goods there can be disposed of or greatly reduced, to close out."⁹⁷ The store closed finally in 1885, when the other large surviving Barkerville merchant, Kwong Lee & Co., went into receivership.⁹⁸ Future historians will profitably pursue the surviving correspondence books, covering the period from 1871 to 1884.⁹⁹

Our exploration of the HBC's significant role in Barkerville and its varied and energetic response to the Cariboo gold rush reveals a company adapting readily to new conditions while retaining the fur, retail, and provision trades, all of which predated the gold rush.¹⁰⁰ In Barkerville, the HBC branched out into gold, mining supplies, general hardware, and construction materials while retaining its traditional role in the fur trade with interior First Nations. The HBC's Barkerville letterbooks offer a vivid and detailed view of the commercial and financial life of this gold rush town and suggest a remarkable level of detail that museum curators, historical archaeologists, material historians, fur trade historians, and economic historians might profitably consider.

⁹⁵ Wark to McKay, 26 April 1870; Wark to HBC Board of Management, 27 April 1870.

⁹⁶ Wark to McKay, 23 July 1870.

⁹⁷ Unnamed HBC official, 9 October 1882, quoted in Ludditt, *Barkerville Days*, 103.

⁹⁸ Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 172.

⁹⁹ The subsequent correspondence books are HBCA b 12/b/2 and 3, covering the period 1871-84.

¹⁰⁰ For the relationship between these three trades, see Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 283-89.