

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BC Heritage fares big in Barkerville this Dominion Day

BARKERVILLE, BC, June 29th, 2010 – Ottawa didn't declare July 1st Dominion Day (or, "Canada Day") until 1879. British Columbia didn't even join Confederation until 1871. But three years earlier, on July 1st, 1868 - one year after Upper and Lower Canada officially joined teams to form our beloved Dominion - the citizens of Barkerville, BC gathered to celebrate that union, Cariboo-style.

It all started just past the stroke of midnight, when local blacksmith (and Ontario native) John Campbell poured a layer of gunpowder between two large anvils, stacked one on top of the other. Campbell proceeded to treat the town to a "21 gun salute" by repeatedly striking the top anvil with steel hammers he held in each hand.

The intent, apparently, was to remind the American miners and businesspeople living in Barkerville – who were known to celebrate their Independence Day rather raucously - that Canadians also had reason and, more importantly, rhyme to celebrate... three days earlier than their American counterparts.

Later in the day, traditional Victorian games and sporting events - including horse racing, athletic feats, and a grease pole climb - mingled with the most "modern" of spectacles: a downhill race between two rudimentary bicycles called Barkerville Boneshakers (for obvious reasons).

Considered by many to be the first bicycle ever built in British Columbia, the Barkerville Boneshaker sported a two-wheeled solid iron frame with no suspension to speak of, and pedals that attached directly to its front axle. The original "Boneshaker" is now part of the permanent collection at the Museum of Vancouver.

The evening concluded with a special performance by the Cariboo Amateur Dramatic Association at Barkerville's renowned Theatre Royal, followed by a fireworks display.

"This is the earliest recorded celebration of Canada Day in our country's history," said Nan Zhu, Barkerville's summer Special Events Coordinator. "And Barkerville has continued the party every year since, for the past 143 years."

Ever since the entire town was declared a National Historic Site of Canada in 1923, hundreds of thousands of visitors have flocked to Williams Creek to take part in Barkerville's annual Dominion Day celebrations.

“Celebrating Canada’s birthday here in Barkerville has a profound meaning,” said Nan Zhu. “Barkerville provides a unique and intriguing setting for visitors to commemorate British Columbia’s history, to reminisce about its pioneers, and to share the joy and pride of being a Canadian.”

This year as special commemoration, alongside traditional Victorian games and sporting events Barkerville will host the 2010 BC Provincial Heritage Fair.

Barkerville and nearby Wells will welcome sixty regional Heritage Fair winners, all students grades 4 through 10, from thirteen regions across British Columbia to a non-adjudicated provincial bash designed to introduce Heritage Fair delegates to one of this province’s premiere heritage resources, while exhibiting the efforts of a new generation of history enthusiasts to the thousand-plus visitors Barkerville hopes to see on July 1st.

The opening ceremonies for the Provincial Heritage Fair will commence at 11:00 am. At noon Barkerville’s giant Dominion Day birthday cake will be served, followed by a costumed street parade and array of traditional games for both children and adults, including a broad jump, funny face contest, cracker eating whistle races, sack race, tug-o-war, egg toss, hammer toss, ladies nail-pounding, egg-and-spoon race, and a grease pole climb. Later in the evening guests are invited to the House Hotel for dancing and mingling to the tunes of the Lakeside Ramblers, and a grand finale fireworks display at approximately 10:00 pm.

Please join Barkerville Historic Town in the celebration of Canada’s 143rd birthday, and take an advantage of our exciting, entertaining and edifying events. You’ll treasure the experience.

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ABOUT BARKERVILLE HISTORIC TOWN

BARKERVILLE HISTORIC TOWN is the largest historic site in western North America (www.barkerville.ca). Barkerville is provincially, nationally and internationally recognized for its historic significance associated with its place in western Canada’s gold rush era and the role the gold rush played in BC joining Canada. Barkerville is widely known as a “must see” for travel itineraries in western Canada. The historic town is also a significant contributor to the Cariboo regional economy and is widely regarded as a unique component of the regional identity.

The Barkerville Heritage Trust, as Barkerville’s operating and managing partner, works in conjunction with the Province of British Columbia, the owner and statutory guardian of Barkerville’s heritage resources, to ensure that Barkerville is efficiently managed, entertaining and educational to visitors, and financially

stable as the premier heritage resource and tourism attraction for the Cariboo. The ultimate aim is to maintain and enhance Barkerville's position as a nationally significant heritage resource and tourism attraction for British Columbia and Canada.

Barkerville is situated 80 km east of Quesnel, British Columbia in the foothills of the Cariboo Mountains, close to Troil Mountain Ski Resort and Bowron Lake Provincial Park. The nearby community of Wells (8 km from Barkerville) is the service and housing centre for the area (www.wellsbc.com) and is itself a dynamic cultural community, home of Island Mountain Arts, the acclaimed Toni Only Artists' Project, the International Celtic Harp School (www.imarts.com), the dynamic indie music festival ArtsWells (www.artswells.com), and the Sunset Theatre (www.sunset-theatre.com). Wells is also situated close to a wide variety of winter and summer outdoor activities

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