

1858 ROCK CREEK GOLD RUSH

The Rock Creek gold rush took place in an area that was dubbed the Boundary Country because it took place just to the north of the 49th parallel that separated the United States from Canada. The rush was touched off by First Nations braves pursuing two American soldiers across the border. The soldiers escaped and three miles inside Canadian territory chanced to find gold on the Kettle River where it was met by Rock Creek. Adam Beam filed the first claim.

The rush that followed was composed mostly of Americans and some Chinese. All these men had come north from Fort Colville just south of the border and some came all the way from the California gold rush. At the peak of the gold rush an estimated 5,000 men were in the area and a new town, called Rock Creek, sprang into existence with a population of about 300. Governor Douglas sent Gold Commissioner Peter O'Reilly to the area to collect duties on items coming across the border as well as collect fees for mining licenses. Unfortunately,

just as O'Reilly arrived at Rock Creek trouble broke out between the Caucasian and Chinese miners—and the inexperienced new Gold Commissioner was driven from the mining camp by a hail of stones in what came to be known as the Rock Creek War. O'Reilly's recourse was to flee to Victoria to report to Governor Douglas.

A short time later, Douglas, accompanied by William George Cox, who was to become the new gold commissioner, and Arthur Bushby, best known for being the clerk and companion, proceeded to Rock Creek. Douglas laid down the law to the American miners and told them that if they didn't behave themselves on British soil that he'd return with 500 marines. He further explained that the Chinese had the same rights to the gold workings as they had and that any further molestation of them would not be tolerated. As the men left the large tent, Douglas insisted on shaking each man's hand, looking each one in the eye—and ingraining his personal expectations of each of them.



The Wagon Road, Engineers' Road or Dewdney Trail passes parallel to Highway #3 near the western exit from Manning Park.

THE ENGINEERS' ROAD OR DEWDNEY TRAIL

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OPPOSITE

EDGAR DEWDNEY (1835-1916)

The Civil Engineer namegiver of the Dewdney Trail, built the first section from Hope to Rock Creek in 1861. He afterwards took the contract to build the section from Wild Horse to Rock Creek in 1864. Dewdney went on to become the Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Territories before becoming the fifth Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia.

HISTORICAL PHOTO#012677 ROYAL BC MUSEUM & ARCHIVES
PHOTOGRAPH BY WILLIAM NOTMAN, CIRCA 1865

