

ROSSLAND – TRAIL WAGON ROAD



Heritage Register – Site

- 1) **Historical Name:** Rossland - Trail Wagon Road
- 2) **Common Name:** Wagon Road, Trail Wagon Road
- 3) **Location:** 13 kilometre route starting at the Le Roi mine on the western side of Rossland, past Centennial Park to Dunn Crescent, south on Nevada Street and east on Cook Avenue to Esling Road to what is now called the Wagon Road Trail, down the north side of the Trail Creek valley to Warfield and then along the Dewdney Trail south to Trail Creek Landing
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1893

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Description:

The Rossland - Trail Wagon Road was a 13 kilometre road from the Rossland Camp to Trail Creek Landing for the purpose of bringing in machinery and hauling out ore. The Rossland - Trail Wagon Road started at the Le Roi mine, made its way down to the corner of Cook Avenue and Esling Road and moved south to what is now called the Wagon Road Trail, down the north side of the Trail Creek valley to Warfield and then along the Dewdney Trail south to Trail Creek Landing.

Heritage Value:

The Rossland - Trail Wagon Road has historical significance as one of the first major transportation routes between the Rossland Camp and Trail Creek Landing. It is a testament of its design that many sections of it are still being used today.

When ore was discovered on Red Mountain in 1891, the only way to get the ore to a smelter was using mules to carry it down the 13 kilometre Dewdney Trail, which was an overgrown little used trail.

The Rossland - Trail Wagon Road was built in 1893, by the Le Roi mining company and the provincial government, in order to ensure that there was a reliable and feasible transportation route for taking equipment up the hill and ore down to the Columbia River. The Rossland - Trail Wagon Road was constructed in response to a wagon road built in late 1892 by Oliver Durant between Red Mountain and Northport, Washington.

In March of 1895, a ten-passenger stagecoach was regularly carrying passengers for \$2.00 per up and down the mountain. The significance of the Rossland - Trail Wagon Road was emphasized by its continued use for travel by foot and by horse/mule between Rossland and Trail, even after the ore wagons were gone with the construction of the Columbia & Western Railway in 1896.

The Rossland - Trail Wagon Road was used until a new highway (present-day Highway 3B/22) was constructed to accommodate automobile traffic between Rossland and Trail. The new road followed the Rossland - Trail Wagon Road south of Warfield. The intact portion of the Rossland - Trail Wagon Road between Rossland and Warfield continues to be used as a hiking and biking trail.

Character Defining Elements:

- Original intact portion of the Rossland - Trail Wagon Road between Rossland and Warfield.
- Signage at the southern end of Esling Drive recognizing the heritage value of the Rossland - Trail Wagon Road.

HISTORY

When gold was discovered on Red Mountain, on the edge of what was to become Rossland, the only transportation route in the area was the Dewdney Trail constructed in 1865 between Hope and

Fort Steele. Fortunately, the Columbia River was less than 13 kilometres down the hill. The paddle wheelers were already plying its waters from Washington to the south and Robson to the north, at the confluence of the Columbia and Kootenay Rivers providing access via connecting rail lines to smelters in Butte, Montana.

In the spring of 1891, several tons of ore from the Le Roi mine went by mule down the mountain and along the Dewdney Trail to Trail Creek Landing at the creek mouth. Following boat transport to Little Dalles, Washington, the Spokane Falls and Northern (SF&N) Railway and connecting lines railed the product to the Colorado Smelting and Mining Company Works at Butte, Montana. The trip was arduous and cost prohibitive.

In late 1892, Oliver Durant built a new wagon road from Red Mountain towards Northport, Washington. From Northport the ore was ferried by boat to Little Dalles and put aboard the SF&N Railway with connecting lines to Montana. The Le Roi Company ordered 40 heavy wagons in 1893 to replace the mule trains to Trail. However, the wagons were often mired in mud causing delays and making deliveries uncertain, creating friction between the mine owners and the smelting companies.

The opening of the road to Northport, Washington, spurred the construction of the Rossland - Trail Wagon Road to Trail Creek Landing to win back traffic for Trail. In 1893, the Le Roi mining company, aided financially by the provincial government, undertook the construction of the three metre (11 foot) wide Rossland - Trail Wagon Road to take ore from the Rossland mines to Trail Creek Landing and then to American smelters via steamboats. This Wagon Trail was a vast improvement from an overgrown, little used trail into a road capable of transporting ore by horse and wagon.

Freight wagons hauled mining machinery, goods and staples up the hill from the Columbia River and ore down to the Columbia River for the first few years. Initially, the ore was shipped to smelters south of the border but, in 1895, Fritz Augustus Heinze gave notice that he would be building a smelter in Trail and a railway to the Rossland mines to more easily transport the ore to his smelter.

Construction of the Heinze railway began in late 1895. The 22 kilometre narrow gauge rail Columbia and Western Railway was completed by June of 1896 from Trail to the Le Roi mine. The grade was steep (4 - 4.8% grade) and four switchbacks were needed to get the train up the hill. At the same time, Daniel Corbin was building a

rail bridge over the Columbia River at Northport, Washington, to connect the SF&N Railway to a rail line that would run to Red Mountain. Corbin completed the Red Mountain Railway six months after Heinze's railway was operating.

After the ore and equipment started travelling by rail, the Rossland - Trail Wagon Road continued to be the major passenger route to Trail and beyond. It is a testament to the design of the Rossland - Trail Wagon Road that in 1912, when a new road was being designed, a large portion of the Rossland - Trail Wagon Road was used. The section not used for the construction of Highway 3B between Rossland and Trail continues to be a popular hiking and biking trail.

