**The Rise and Fall of Barkerville**

HIST 1120

Outline

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I chose to research the rise and fall of the Cariboo Gold Rush in Barkerville with one question in mind, How did the Gold Rush in the 19th century impact not only the people of the Cariboo region, but most importantly, how it affected the economy of Western Canada and how it formed a colonization. When I initially set out on my research for this topic, I had little knowledge of the fact that the Barkerville Gold Rush played a huge factor in bringing Victoria and the mainland to unity, and creating one single crown land known as British Columbia. Growing up in middle school, Barkerville was a popular destination for field trips for schools in my area, being so young at the time, the thought of gold was so fascinating to me and my classmates. Even today, without having much of a history background, I failed to think of how the discovery of gold at this particular time in history could bring such a major impact on the economy. When news finally broke out of Billy Barker’s discovery of gold in the Cariboo region, it spread across North America like wildfire, with tens of thousands of people travelling from all across the continent to the village of Barkerville, named after Billy Barker. With pioneers and miners coming from every corner of North America, Governor James Douglas in Victoria was forced to take action into his own hands. Governor Douglas provided the mainland with some protection and ordered the establishment of some law enforcement throughout much of the province. With bringing together the two colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, Governor James Douglas hoped that this would save a lot of costs in transportation of goods and services and simplify the Government’s administration.

As I continued to research other articles on the Rise and Fall of Barkerville, I was able to gain a new perspective of the events that transpired in the region. I hadn’t put much thought of what the effect of thousands of Europeans migrating to the Cariboo region could have on the First Nation people that had called British Columbia home for years before the gold rushes throughout the Province. With European people migrating west at such a rapid rate, the aboriginal people, most notably the Dakelh people, had very little time to adapt to the large population that would call Barkerville home. The Europeans were said to have brought in an influx of diseases into the province, such as small pox, the Dakelh had not yet become immune to such diseases, and also didn’t have the knowledge of the remedies to heal them. This influx of disease brought great misfortune to the Dakelh people, causing a vast majority of them to pass away. This depopulation of First Nation people in the area would allow the moose population to explode. Without thousands of Dakelh hunting the moose, this allowed the animals to roam free without worry, although this would eventually lead to being a great food source for the Europeans. One thing that really surprised me in doing my readings, was that the gold industry, as big as it was at the time, wasn’t the only big industry at the time in Barkerville. Between 1866 and 1871, there was a meat shortage in the Cariboo region. The First Nation’s people who survived the small pox outbreak put their fishing and hunting knowledge to good use. An 1869 newspaper stated that “those who have been in the fishing business, will do much better than if they had been in mining.” This was great news for the aboriginal people who would be tasked with supplying a much needed food-source to the miners.

As I continue my research of the Rise and Fall of Barkerville, I continue to gain more knowledge about the events that took place in such a prosperous time in British Columbian history. Many questions that I didn’t know I even had were answered in doing my research, like the economic effect Barkerville had, the history of the Dakelh people and much more. Although I have learnt a lot in my studies, I still have a few unanswered questions I would like to answer, including what transportation was like in the 19th century, and how the home-life was like for European families, and Dakelh families, as well as the other Aboriginal groups in the area. Something I would do different in my research next time, is look deeper into the history of Barkerville, and try using different sources other than sources provided on the Internet.

**Bibliography**

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