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Haines Junction

Walking Tour



THE BACKE SERVICE WAS LOCATED ACROSS THE ROAD FROM THE KLUANE PARK
INN. L-R FRITZ LANGBAKK, JOHN BACKE JR., MARGARET BACKE AND JOHN BACKE.
(CREDIT: SALLY HOGAN)



Walking Tour

A brief Haines Junction history

The first buildings at Haines Junction were constructed in 1942 at a highway construction camp at the junction of the Alaska Highway and the Haines Road. The Kluane Wagon Road, built after the gold discoveries near Kluane Lake in 1904, wandered past the camp generally following the Dezadeash River and the traditional trails of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. This road was in good repair and regularly maintained by the 1930s when George Chambers was delivering mail and operating the Whitehorse Kluane Stage Line along the route. When building the Alaska Highway, the American army followed the route of the Kluane Wagon Road fairly closely from kilometre 1520 to Kluane Lake, and construction camps were established as needed along the way.

Maintenance of the Canadian sections of the Alaska Highway and the Haines Road was taken over by the Canadian military in 1946 and they continued to use the Haines Junction maintenance camp established during highway construction. When the Alaska Highway was re-aligned to its current location, the old “tote road” became known as Marshall Creek Road. Haines Junction started to grow as a community when wives joined their husbands at the maintenance camp. Private service stations, lodges and businesses were soon established at the junction of the Alaska Highway and Marshall Creek Road. In 1972, over 22,000^{km²} of land near the town became a national park and Haines Junction became the administrative centre for the Kluane National Park & Reserve of Canada.

Haines Junction is also the administrative centre for the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Government. Champagne and Aishihik people have lived in Haines Junction since the 1960s when the federal government, in administering the Indian Act, relocated Southern Tutchone families here from the Champagne Landing and Aishihik Lake regions. The name recognizes the origin of the two different groups. Today the people of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations are self-governing and own some of the lands within the municipal boundaries.

1) St. Elias Convention Centre



The St. Elias Convention Centre, completed in 1998, is located in the same block as the ice arena, swimming pool and community hall, and hosts year-round activities and community events. The Centre has a variety of meeting rooms available for rent and also houses the municipal offices. The lower floor is home to “The Cultural Landscape of Kluane”, a local history exhibit depicting significant events in the region since 1890. A growing art collection highlights local artistic talent. In the Arena Mezzanine, adjacent to the St. Elias Convention Centre, a 42-photograph “Trail of ‘42” exhibit depicts the construction of the Alaska Highway and early days in Haines Junction. Access to the exhibit is through the municipal office, which is open during working hours.

2) Shakwak Valley Community Hall



The Shakwak Valley Community Hall was constructed as a Centennial Project for the Village of Haines Junction in 1967. Many community residents contributed money, time and supplies to complete the building. The Haines Junction Royal Canadian Mounted Police took a lively interest in building community spirit and were founding members of the Shakwak Valley Community Club. The club also drew members from the nearby government experimental farm, residents of Canyon Creek to the south-east, employees of the oil pipeline pumping station to the north-west, the Dezadeash Lodge community to the south, and neighbouring highway maintenance camps. The Community Hall stands in the same block as the St. Elias Convention Centre and arena, swimming pool, and curling club, to form the heart of community activity.

3) Old Fire Hall



There were two early fires that burned buildings in the budding “downtown core” of Haines Junction. The O’Hara Bus Line building burned in 1949. It housed a store and the offices of an early transportation service between Whitehorse and Fairbanks, Alaska. The first gas station and garage in town burned in 1954. The Shakwak Valley Community Club raised the money to build a fire hall in 1967 and Al Tomlin, an experienced Whitehorse fireman, instructed the first crew of volunteer fire fighters. After the fire hall moved to the new James Smith Building, the village used the old fire hall as a Public Works shop before it was sold to Smokey Guttman. Smokey has dreams of opening a Museum of Nostalgia in the Old Fire Hall.

4) Pugwash’s Place

This house was built in the 1940s and was originally 1 of 5 cabins owned by the Haines Junction Inn and rented to summer travellers.

Fraser Pollard has owned this building since the 1970s. Pollard, who hailed from Pugwash, Nova Scotia, worked at Blanchard Camp on the Haines Road and began “scavenging” as a hobby and to supplement his income. The way in which he could pursue hunting for “treasures” from the dump changed form when the Yukon Government and the village invested in a compactor as part of a new waste management project. In a typical Yukon solution, Mr. Pollard obtained employment running the compactor. Scrounging is a time-honoured occupation in Haines Junction and all over the Yukon. Freight costs are high for those living in the north and the secondary use of material was in place here long before “reduce, reuse, recycle” became the modern mantra.



5) Al MacLean's Place



This building was constructed at Sheep Mountain in the early 1970s. Sally and Neil Olsen cut and peeled the logs by hand and the floor was made of salvaged bridge decking from the old Dezadeash Bridge. The redwood door was crafted in Dawson City with wood salvaged from a mining-related water flume. When the Kluane Game Preserve became part of the national park, all of the private buildings were relocated and this house was moved to its current location. Al MacLean is the artist who created the collection of painted driftwood animals that graces the fence around his home.

6) James Smith Administration Building



This building was constructed in 1975 and named to honour a chief executive officer of the Yukon, Commissioner James Smith. The Administration Building houses the liquor store, Territorial Agent, Public Library, Employment Services Office, Yukon College, Community Justice and Yukon Housing offices.

7) Weigh Scale



The Department of Public Works moved their operations across the Haines Road in 1958 and the Weigh Scale building was part of the new complex. When the yard relocated again, the Weigh Scale remained to house other tenants. During the 1950s and 1960s, an office at one end of the building became a checkpoint for those travelling the Haines Road in winter. This was the first Canadian checkpoint in a series of four along the road and visitors were required to sign in at all of these checkpoints. The road maintenance crews used snow blowers to clear the road and the machine created high vertical banks. Even without a snowstorm, strong winds could fill the trenches and bury a stalled car. The Weigh Scale staff was in contact with the other checkpoints to monitor travellers' progress. The Tourist Information Centre found a home here before the Kluane National Park and Haines Junction Visitor Centre was constructed and the Weigh Scale building then became a Seniors' Drop-In Centre.

8) Swallow Haven/ Dezadeash River Trail

An extension of the Dezadeash River Trail starts at the day use pullout, near the Weigh Scale, and



passes a group of swallow boxes. Before the boxes were built it was a yearly spring chore to try to "bird-proof" Haines Junction buildings to prevent these ingenious, and not easily discouraged, birds from building their mud nests under the eaves. At the same time, the community was struggling to control the enormous number of mosquitoes who shared tenacity with their natural swallow predators. It seemed a solution made in heaven to create a comfortable roost for the birds, and the swallows seem to like their new home. There is a 1.5 kilometre trail from here connecting to the Dezadeash Trail and you can continue on to walk the 4.5 km loop. Parks Canada and Ducks Unlimited were partners in developing this trail.

9) Nurses' Residence



This modern looking building includes part of the original Haines Junction Nursing Station. In the early 1950s, the community had one nurse responsible for a territory that stretched from the Alaska border on both the Alaska Highway and the Haines Road to the outskirts of Whitehorse to the east. The nurse was by herself with no office help or visiting doctors and sometimes not the best of training for emergency situations. There is a story of one such nurse practicing sewing sutures on what would become the evening's chicken dinner.

10) The Old Church



This little building is a log cabin covered with cedar siding. It was owned and perhaps built by Bill and Rickie Brewster. In the early 1970s,

it was the office for the Yukon Government Fish and Wildlife Conservation Officers and in 1974 the Brewster's Yukon Pack Train used it to store their big game outfitting equipment. In 1979, the building was sold to an evangelical church organization before it became a private residence. The Alsek Renewable Resource Council occupied the building between 1995 and 2002. The Resource Council makes recommendations for forest management and the conservation of the fish and wildlife in the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations traditional territories.

11) RCMP Corporal's Residence



This two-storey frame residence was constructed in 1956 for the Haines Junction Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers and their families. The building was designed with a gambrel roof to match an earlier RCMP building. There were two RCMP officers stationed at Haines Junction in the early 1950s.

12) Antler Street Sign



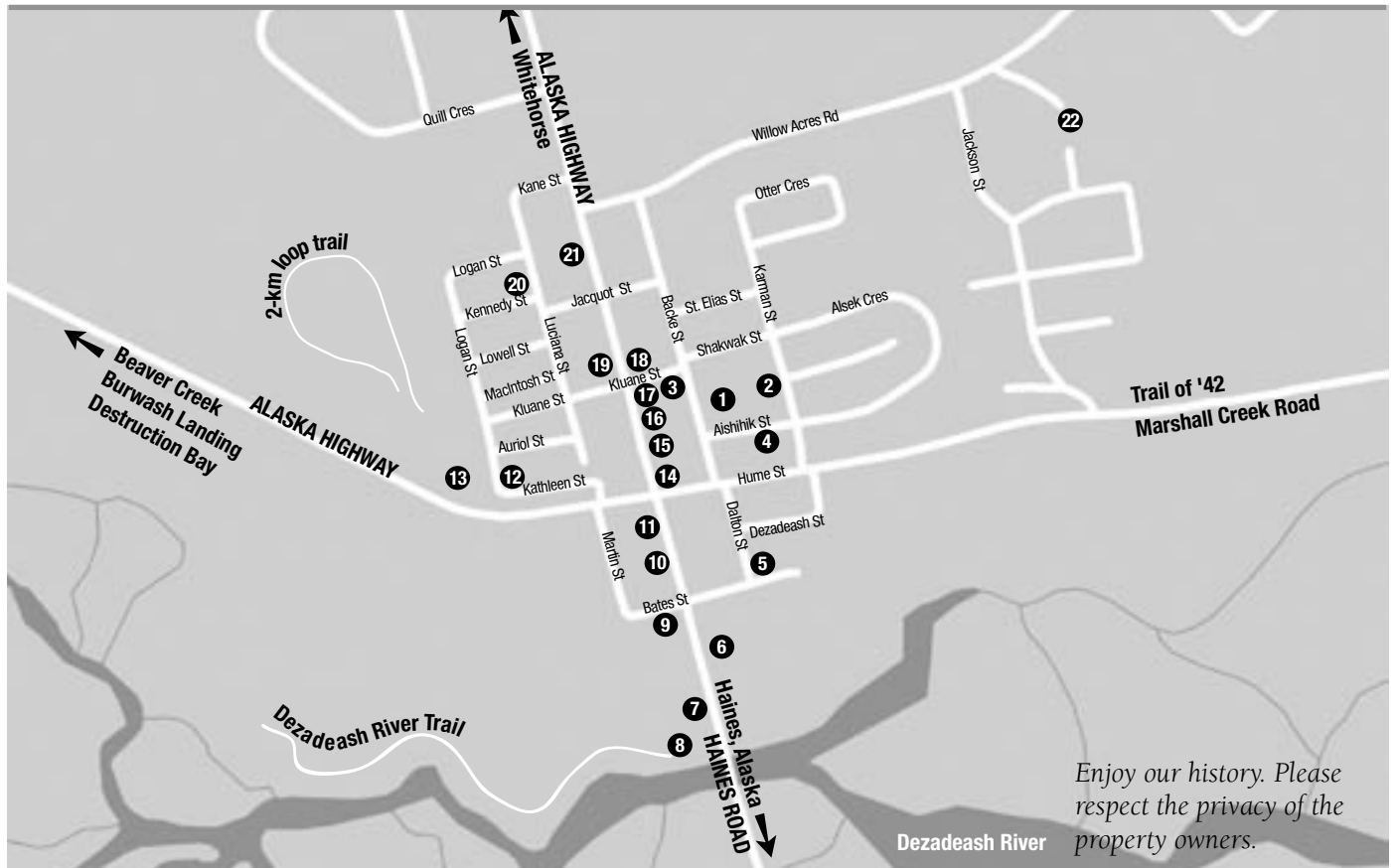
Val and Dan Drummond put up a set of antlers on a village street signpost in 1986 in front of their log home and business, but a big wind blew the sign over. The Village supplied a larger post, and with that encouragement the Drummonds added horns and antlers from all the so-endowed beasts of the region. Dall's sheep, caribou, elk, bison, and moose are all represented on the signpost.

Haines Junction

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Enjoy our history. Please respect the privacy of the property owners.

13) Kluane National Park and Haines Junction Visitor Centre



The Kluane National Park and Haines Junction Visitor Centre opened in the summer of 1980. Visitors come to the Centre to learn about Kluane National Park & Reserve. The park encompasses many of Canada's highest mountains, including Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak (5959m), and one of the largest non-polar icefields in the world. Some of the huge mountains in the park are visible to those who stop at the Icefields Ranges Rest Stop on the Alaska Highway at km 1816. Kluane National Park & Reserve has one of the most genetically diverse populations of grizzly bears, a large concentration of Dall's sheep and a rare population of land-locked Kokanee salmon. The traditional territories of both the Kluane First Nation and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations overlap the Park boundaries and the First Nations share responsibility with Parks Canada for managing the park's natural resources.

14) Village Square



The Village Square is home to the Village Monument, one of Haines Junction's most photographed structures. Representations of the large mammals in the area stand out against the mountains of Kluane National Park & Reserve in the background. The sculpture is affectionately known throughout the Yukon as "The Muffin". A time capsule was buried in the Village Square in 1992 during the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the construction of the Alaska Highway. The capsule will be recovered and opened in 2042, 50 years after the burial date. The St. Elias Community School shop class and the Kluane National Park & Reserve employees collaborated on constructing the shelter for the oversized guest book.

15) Brewster House

Jack and Wilma Brewster owned this two-storey frame building in the early 1960s. Brewster came to the Yukon in 1956 from Banff, Alberta where his family owned a large outfitting business. He operated a garage and gas station here and Brewster



House offered lodging to highway travellers. The building was brought into town from a government maintenance camp on the Haines Road and was the largest and best-constructed building in town for many years. The Brewsters lived in a house behind Brewster House. The original lot included the area where the Alcan Motor Inn is now located, and where the Brewsters ran a small restaurant for a time. The Quonset Hut on the property operated as Ed and Betty Karman's Wayside Garage after their original garage burned.

16) Kluane Park Inn



John and Sally Backe became agents for the O'Hara Bus Lines and then started the Kuskanaw Store in 1946. In 1947, the business moved across the street to the current location of the Kluane Park Inn and the Backes started a lodge called the Haines Junction Tavern. After the lodge was sold in 1973, the original building was torn down and a remaining collection of pre-fabricated cabins were grouped together as the Haines Junction Inn. In 1975, Neil and Sally Olson started to construct the present building and named it the Kluane Park Inn in honour of the new park nearby. The basement contains a never-opened bowling alley. The Backe Room was added in 1978.

17) Dakwakada Building



This humble building has a long and varied history as a liquor store, office for the territorial agent, daycare, craft shop, the office of the Southern Tutchone Tribal Council, and more recently, the Alsek Renewable Resources Council office. The land and property belong to the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. The Southern Tutchone name for Haines Junction is Dakwakada. This area was a "junction" for Southern Tutchone people travelling from Klukshu and Kloo Lake to Hutchi, Champagne and Mendenhall. Dakwakada means "high cache" and refers to a particular type of storage structure that was raised high off the ground to protect food and necessities from scavengers.

18) St. Christopher's Anglican Church



Miss Eva Hasell and Miss Iris Sayles operated the Anglican Sunday School Caravan along the Alaska Highway, beginning in 1949. Eva Hasell travelled from England every summer to participate in the program. Miss Hasell donated the land for the first Haines Junction Anglican Church. Reverend Watson and Peter Tizya, a lay minister from Old Crow, constructed it in 1956. The old church was stabilized once but by 1987 it was beyond repair and a local carpenter, Henry Henkel, persuaded the congregation to put faith in future funding sources and start construction on a new building. Henry knew the local timber and, following a sketchy plan of his own design, he and an assortment of volunteers built St. Christopher's Anglican Church. The inmates of a local minimum-security prison supplied labour for hauling logs and cement. Southern mission societies and foundations supplied money for plywood and milled lumber for the floor and roof.

19) Our Lady of the Way Catholic Church



Father Morisset, OMI, travelled north in 1943 to serve as a missionary and auxiliary chaplain with the American Army. He and Father Van Rouej, a travelling missionary, built Our Lady of the Way Church in 1955. They converted an American army “Quonset Hut”, into this unique and beautiful church. Quonset Huts were constructed in 1942 for the United States Navy at Quonset Point Naval Air Station in Rhode Island and became a common sight at military camps during World War II. The steel arch-rib frame is covered with a skin of corrugated metal sheets. Fr. Morisset wanted windows in the roof and Fr. Tanguay, concerned with snow load, suggested the clerestory arrangement. Old bridge timbers were used for the beam that runs the length of the building. The rectory was built later from a pipeline camp barracks building. Haines Junction became the headquarters for the North Alaska Highway missions in 1983.

20) Northwestel Exchange



The Northwestel relay building houses equipment for the telephone and internet exchange. In 1997, the company contracted artists Catherine and Paul O’Toole to design and create an exterior finish for the building. The materials used include paints and metals that were meant to weather and make an artistic statement about the landscape. The school band members and the music teacher raised money for the band program by planting wildflowers and placing rocks and wood chips around the building.

21) Glacier View Motel



This motel is constructed of a modular residence and “assorted orange crates” that were part of the original Haines Junction Department of Public Works maintenance camp next to the Dezadeash River. The relocated structures first housed a general store and post office owned by Pete and Florence Shulmeister. Through the years, several businesses located here including a restaurant and gas bar. In 1982, Heinz and Katie Eckervogt purchased the complex and converted some of the buildings into the Mountain View Restaurant and Motel.



22) CAFN Administration Building



When Champagne and Aishihik First Nations began implementation of their Comprehensive Land Claims Agreement, existing staff quickly outgrew the old office facility located along the Marshall Creek Road. A modern facility was designed and built to fulfil the space requirements of the emerging government. The architectural design is based on the shape of a traditional fish smokehouse. The Chief's office is located here amongst the various staff that make up five departments responsible for implementing the Land Claim Agreement and fulfilling the Mission of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations people.

The brochure was produced with the help of Haines Junction residents. We are anxious to hear from you if you have additional information or corrections regarding the information presented here. Please contact YTG Cultural Services Branch at 1-(867)-667-3458 or toll free 1-800-661-0408.