

Telkwa

Historic Walking Tour

The picturesque, historic Village of Telkwa sits on the traditional territory of the Gitdumden Clan of the Witsuwit'en people. Indigenous people often came to fish at the junction of the Telkwa and Witzin'kwa (now Bulkley) Rivers. In the Witsuwit'en language, "Telkwa" means "muddy river", referring to its colour in the spring. The syllable "kwa" or "qua" means "river".

It was in 1906 that surveyors first laid out the townsite of Telkwa, although prospectors had been mining in the area for quite a few years. The first townsite in the area, Aldermere, was originally established on the bluff above the Bulkley River, located on the Telegraph Trail system, and was a central restocking spot for prospectors following the call of the Gold Rush. As the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway began constructing the western section of their railway in 1907, many businesses and settlers began to move down the hill to the present site of Telkwa to be closer to the anticipated railway and for easier access to water.



Telkwa Museum

1620 Highway 16
Tel: 250-846-9656 (summer only)
Tel: 250-846-9607 (off season)
Email: douglas.boersema99@gmail.com

Monday - Friday: 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
(summer only)
Other times by appointment only

This self-guided walking tour is designed to help you discover the history of existing buildings and what you might have seen in Telkwa in the early 20th century. Be sure to check out the Telkwa Museum, St. Stephen's Anglican Church and the Village of Telkwa office to view some interesting facts & artifacts.

Please be mindful that today many of the stops on this tour are now private homes and not open to the public.

1. Second Telkwa Elementary School - built in 1920
(now the Telkwa Museum and open to the public)

This building was originally constructed on the grounds of the present elementary school and served as a school until about 1985. The building was moved to its current location in 1987 to serve as a senior centre before becoming the Telkwa Museum. Mr J. Clotworthy was both teacher and principal from 1926 to 1949, and the stained glass window in the foyer was created by local artist, Paulie Haines, in commemoration of Mr Clotworthy.

2. Sargent's General Store - built in 1910

Sargent's General Store was probably the original pioneer store and built by Mr R.S. Sargent, a merchant of Hazelton. A lean-to attached to the back of the store housed the Post Office from 1910 to 1953. Sargent's Store changed hands in 1951 and became the Phillips and Shepherd Store until 1983.

3. For pedestrian traffic safety, please stand at "3" on the map to read the information for sites 3a, b & c (located across the highway).

3a. The Bernt Bros. Garage

The Bernt Bros. Garage was first mentioned in *The Interior News* in 1947, indicating that it was probably opened at or around that time. Brothers Art and Emerson Bernt jointly operated the garage. Emerson left the business around the 1950s. Art continued to operate the garage until 1965, when it was sold to Huck Tompkins and Mel Briggs.

3b. Dr Wallace's Dispensary - built in 1915

The original Dr Wallace's Dispensary, located on the riverbank, burned down in the fire of 1914. Dr Wallace relocated to this building after H.H. Phillips moved it here in 1921.

3c. United Church - built in 1920

In 1925, it was used by the newly formed United Church of Canada, after the amalgamation of the Presbyterian, Methodist, Union and Congregationalist churches. The building was also used as a home and church in the 1950s by Dutch immigrants when housing was in short supply. Major renovations were done in 1952 and in 1958. Telkwa United Church members combined with the United Church in Smithers in 1991, and the Church was then rented by the Faith Reformed Church for 15 years. In 2006, the building was deconsecrated and became a private residence. The bell, originally donated by Canadian National Railway (CNR), was later donated by the church to the Telkwa Museum.

4. **Second Telkwa Nursing Home** - built in 1924

In the earlier pioneer days, patients had to travel west to Hazelton to see Dr H.C. Wrinch, while Telkwa's Rev. Stephenson, having had some medical training, handled emergencies. The first Nursing Home had been in the Telkwa Hotel building in Aldermere. After a few years and a lot of fundraising, the second Telkwa Nursing Home was built to take care of sick people and expectant mothers. The Nursing Home closed in 1933 when a new hospital was opened in Smithers. The Second Telkwa Nursing Home became a private residence and a ground floor was added.

5. **The Fairbairn House** - built in 1916

This was the home of Andy Fairbairn, the first law enforcement officer in the area, who lived here with his wife, Allison, and their three daughters. He was one of the most popular constables in the Valley. He worked with the R.C.M.P. in Telkwa for 12 years, as well as in Aldermere (1915), Smithers, Hazelton and other places. He retired as Staff Sergeant in Williams Lake in 1951.

6. **J.B. Hunsberger House** - built in 1922

The house was built by J.B. Hunsberger, the ticket agent at the CN Rail Station. From 1943-1984 the Noonan family lived in the house. Grandma Noonan, a spunky, colourful character, was the subject of the book, "PS, Don't Tell Your Mother" by Margo Bates (*for sale at the Museum*).

7. **St. Stephen's Anglican Church** - built in 1910

The steeple, lychgate and back room were added about 10 years after the church was built. Many changes have been made since then. The church's first priest and medical missionary was Rev. F. Stephenson, also known as the "Walking Pastor". He often walked the 201 km (124 miles) between the Glentanna area (north east of Smithers) and Francois Lake to visit his flock. The congregation joined the Smithers' St. James congregation in 1985. This church building was deconsecrated in 2019.



Open to the public. Ask at the Museum for a tour of this building.

St. Stephen's Anglican Church

8. **Roman Catholic Church** - built in 1920

This church replaced the first building built in 1911. The bell, which was on display at the Telkwa Museum until 2018, is now at the St. Joseph's Church in Smithers. It followed the Telkwa congregation that joined the Smithers Church.

9. Telkwa Pentecostal Church - built 1920

The congregation thrived in Telkwa such that in 1963 they added the large two-story addition on the front of the building. In 1979, the Telkwa congregation joined the Smithers congregation and moved to Smithers and started to worship in their new building on the corner of Viewmount Road (the old Highway 16) and the current Highway 16.

10. McDonald House - built in 1920

Tom and Sue McDonald arrived in Telkwa with nine children, two sons-in-law, one daughter-in-law and five grandchildren.

11. Old Telkwa BBQ Grounds (Currently the Telkwa Elementary School)

If you stood here in 1914 you might have seen a parade of cowboys on horses, teams pulling prairie schooners, floats and maybe a Model T Ford. You might have smelt barbecued beef coming out of a stone lined pit in this annual event. This was the location of the famous Telkwa BBQ from 1912 to 1920, before it was moved across the Bulkley River to its current location, and the second elementary school (now the Museum) was built on the site. Here you could watch or join in events ranging from children's races, bucking broncos, steer wrestling, horse racing and baseball games. In the evening there would be a ball where music was supplied by local talent. The Telkwa BBQ is British Columbia's longest running event.



Old Telkwa BBQ Grounds

12. Seed Cleaning Plant (Building no longer exists - for interest only)

There was once a seed cleaning plant on this corner. During the 1920s and 1930s many tons of Timothy seed were produced, cleaned and shipped from the Bulkley Valley to T. Eaton Co. in Toronto and other buyers. The building ended its days as the "Greenhouse Restaurant" before being torn down to allow for the upgrading of the highway intersection and underpass for children to get to the school.

13. Bulkley Valley Milkland Ltd. (Village municipal office - open to the public)

This building was originally built for Bulkley Valley Milkland Ltd. (Northern White), a milk plant and ice-cream factory, later becoming a meat packing plant and retail outlet operated by North West Premium Meat Cooperative.

14. Post Office and Washy's Café - built in 1955

This red building housed Telkwa's last Post Office before the new one was constructed on the corner of Highway 16 and Hope Avenue. Washy's Café was in the same building, situated beside the Post Office. Washy's was a simple café with basic, good food, and was a welcome addition to the business section of Telkwa.

15. Old Road to Houston

Before crossing the Bulkley River Bridge, look left. This narrow trail between the bluff and the river was the main road to Pleasant Valley (now Houston) in the 1920s-1940s.

16. L.J. McArthur Merchant Store - built in 1913

Various businesses, including a drug store (pharmacy) and the Royal Bank of Canada, operated from this building. Although the exterior has been renovated, the original frame, now over 100 years old, is still in place.

17. The Bulkley River Bridge - built in 1957

In 1908, a wooden truss bridge was built to replace the cable reaction ferry operated by Broughten & McNeil. The center section rested on piers of logs filled with rocks, with a small king truss at each end connecting the bridge to the shore. The river ice was hard on the piers and, in 1918, a second bridge was built on the upstream side of the first bridge. This second bridge had a longer span so part of the bluff had to be carved away to allow for a better approach. The third and current bridge was built in 1957, on the site of the first bridge. These bridges allowed access to the rich mining district on the other side of the Bulkley River.



Bulkley River Bridge

18. The Famous Rock

This rocky knoll has been mentioned in "Ripley's Believe It or Not" for having three bridges starting from it (at least from 1913 to 1935): the Bulkley River bridge, the rail bridge and the road bridge over the Telkwa River.

1. See point 17 above about the Bulkley River Bridge.
2. The existing steel single span railway bridge replaced the original temporary wooden bridge built on wooden piles.
3. The road bridge (replaced in 1924) connecting to Tatlow Road (the main road to Smithers) was washed out in 1935 and never replaced.

The Telkwa Railroad Station, dismantled by CN Rail in 1976, was located about 15 metres (50 feet) upstream of the Bulkley River bridge, between the railway tracks and the river.



Three Bridges from one rock

19. Riverside Park

The grassy patch of Riverside Park was once a bustling pioneer main street. If you walked along this section of the riverbank in about 1913, you would have seen Telkwa's thriving business centre which included a poolroom & cigar store, hardware store, barber, restaurant, real estate



Riverside Street

business, pharmacy, insurance company, and some private residences. In 1914 a fire destroyed 13 businesses. Many of the buildings were not rebuilt as some merchants moved to the new town of Smithers. On the east side of the street stood the castle-like New Telkwa Hotel (which burnt down in 1930), a general merchant store and other businesses.

20. The Old Well House

Here, a pump house is all that remains of the former Village of Telkwa municipal office that was demolished in 2012.

21. Jack McNeil's House - built in 1920

Jack MacNeil came to Aldermere in 1905 and, along with his partner Lem Broughton, set up several businesses and prospered during the boom of railway building. The Broughton & McNeil store, built in 1915, was located across the street from Jack's house.

22. Chinese Laundry, Bath House and Café - built in 1920

This was an important business as most houses did not have running water. When the ice rink was in operation, the owner, referred to as Wong, allowed the children to warm up in the building. The building has had several owners since it was sold, in 1946, to Art Bates, the fire chief.

23. Joe Dockrill Skating Rink

Located between the old bath house and the creamery, the Joe Dockrill Skating Rink is on land donated by the Dockrill family for a skating rink, in honour of their son, Joe Dockrill, who died as a pilot in Egypt during WWII.

24. Interior Creamery - built in 1936

Built by Mr Alfred Millar as a subsidiary of the Prince George Creamery. All equipment was run by steam produced by a boiler burning local Telkwa coal. During the height of production, between the Lakes District and Hazelton, there were 235 shippers of cream. Butter was shipped by rail as far east as Vanderhoof and as far west as Prince Rupert. In 1947, under the ownership of Mr Thor Paulson, the business changed to Bulkley Valley Creamery. The creamery closed in May of 1969.

25. Telkwa Reading Centre (Open to the public)

The library opened in 1919 in the former office of the Roads Department. With a shipment of 200 books from Ottawa, an earlier Public Library Society had been started by Rev. F. Stephenson.

26. Union Bank - built in 1912

The School Board bought the building from the bank for \$60. It was Telkwa's first school house from 1915 to 1919. This building was moved from its initial spot on the riverbank to its current location. When enrollment increased, school was held in the Town Hall while a new school was being built.

27. Log House (Hoops House) - built in 1908

The E. Hoops family lived here from 1915-1948. Most of the bookkeeping of the Village businesses was done through the firm of Thorp and Hoops. Log houses 27 and 28 are among the oldest buildings in Telkwa.

28. Log House (Timmermeister House) - built in 1908

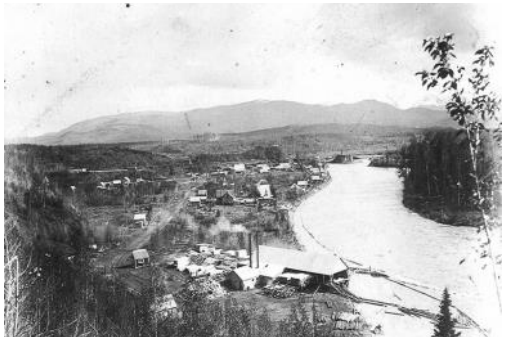
The Gus Timmermeister family lived here. Mrs Timmermeister was a sister of Mrs "Nan" Bourgon, the author of "Rubber Boots for Dancing". Her book recounts many pioneer stories and is now a collector's item.

29. W.M. Hunter's House - built in 1910

Hunter's Basin, a valley high in the Telkwa Mountains, was named after the prospector who built and lived in this house.

30. Eddy Park

This picturesque park is often used as the setting for wedding photographs. In the early pioneer days there was a sawmill on this site. You would see a log boom swinging out into the river to trap logs as they floated down the Bulkley and Telkwa Rivers from various logging operations. In January 1914 the Interior News reported, "Skaters are having heaps of enjoyment on the fine rink which nature has provided in the eddy by the sawmill at Telkwa."



Sawmill at Eddy Park

31. Log House - built in 1922

Built by Mr J.H. Mead, a member of the Telkwa R.C.M.P. detachment.

32. Ranger Station - built in 1957

(We suggest driving to this location as it is a distance from the Museum. Look for the white building with green trim, opposite the gas station).

With its iconic Dutch-Colonial style and accompanying 4-bay garage, it was built to accommodate the Provincial Forest Service and the Forest Rangers (now "Foresters") who tended to the forests. Three houses behind the building were living quarters for the Chief and Assistant Rangers and their families. The land behind was converted to a tree nursery and greenhouse to provide seedlings for reforestation.

Historic Walking Tour Map

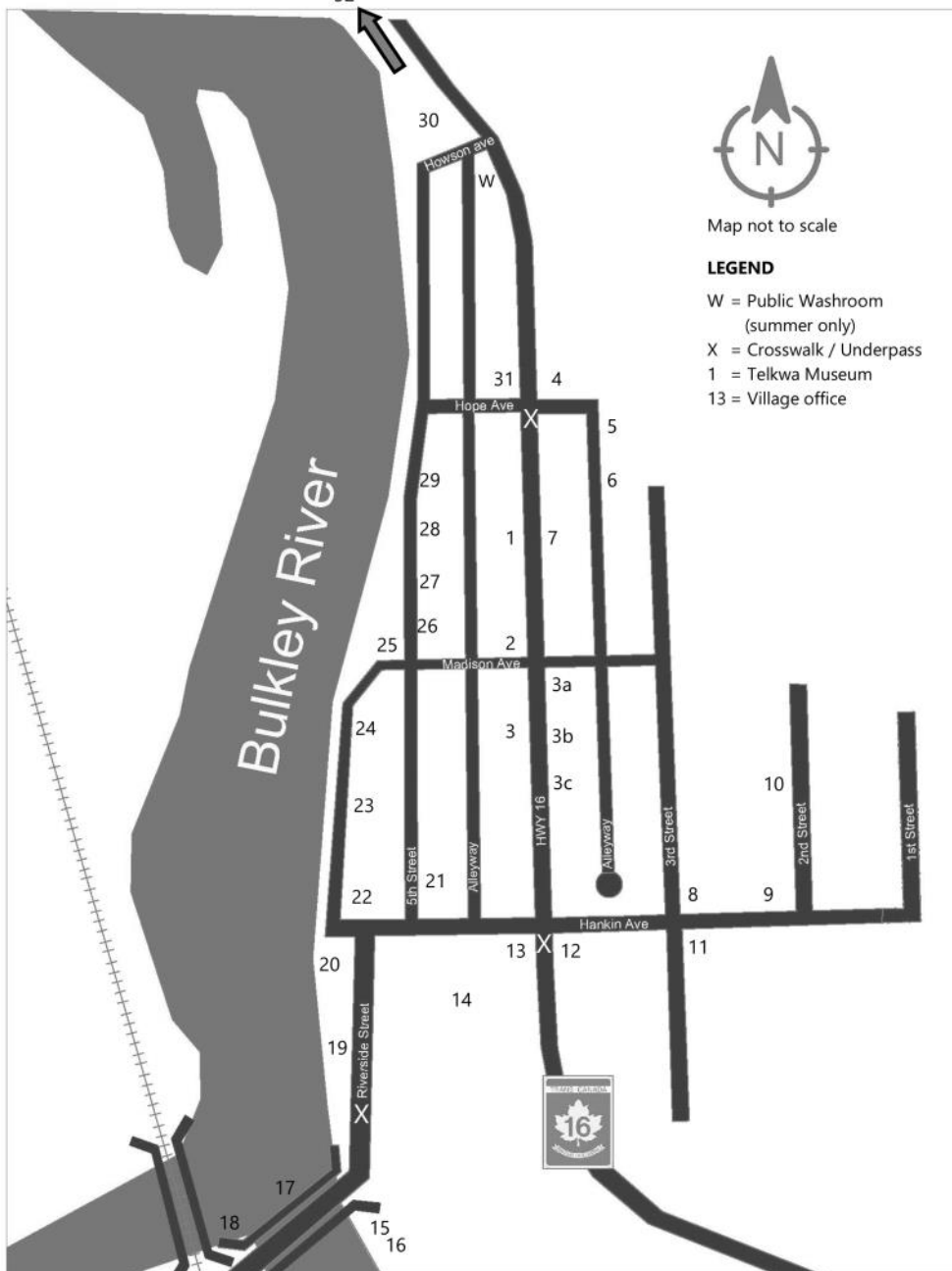
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Map not to scale

LEGEND

- W = Public Washroom
(summer only)
- X = Crosswalk / Underpass
- 1 = Telkwa Museum
- 13 = Village office



For more information:
 Village of Telkwa
 1415 Hankin Avenue
 PO Box 220
 Telkwa, BC V0J 2X0



Phone: 250-846-5212
 Email: info@telkwa.ca
 Website: www.telkwa.ca