

JUNE 2022

Robinson Roadhouse

Robinson Roadhouse is located in the Traditional Territory of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and Kwanlin Dün First Nation at km 139 on the South Klondike Highway, near the Annie Lake Road turn-off.

Established as a flag station for the White Pass & Yukon Route, Robinson Roadhouse was constructed in 1906 and also served as a staging point for miners in the Watson and Wheaton River mining districts.

The site includes a rest area with a large parking lot, outhouses, picnic tables, interpretive panels, and historic buildings. Visitors are free to roam the unmanned site while the interpretive panels provide historical context and information.

Historic Places Days 2022: Every Place, a Story

**Saturday, July 9, 2022
11 am to 3 pm**

A tradition at Robinson Roadhouse is to co-host, with the Historic Sites Unit (HSU) and the Yukon Heritage Resources Board (YHRB), an open house during Canada Historic Places Days. Canada Historic Places Days is an annual event promoting the importance of historic sites. Hundreds of sites across the country host special events and activities on this day.

Join HSU and YHRB in celebrating Canada Historic Places Days at the Robinson Roadhouse historic site.

There will be site tours, snacks, and games for the whole family to enjoy. All are welcome.

Learn more at www.historicplacesdays.ca.

The site will stay open during all activities and events, but certain areas may be closed to ensure the safety of the public.



Building Conservation activities continue

Ongoing conservation efforts at the Robinson Roadhouse site continue this summer. Three years ago, a portion of the Robinson Roadhouse building was separated from the three-part structure to provide space for conservation work. This was followed by leveling, straightening, and raising the structure to prepare for the replacement of deteriorated sill and other logs in the walls. Replacement logs were sourced and shaped, over the past two seasons. This year the replacement sill and wall logs will be installed. The work is scheduled for a few weeks in late summer and will be undertaken by a team of experts and learners to ensure the art of log conservation lives on.

Building conservation activities continue on Robinson Roadhouse.



Billy and Kitty Smith

Kitty Smith (ca. 1890-1989), a renowned Yukon storyteller and artist, spent much of her married life at Robinson. At the time she met him, her second husband Billy Smith was hunting and trapping in the Robinson area with his partners John Joe and Kitty's maternal uncle Charlie Brown. When Billy asked to marry Kitty, he promised to build a home at Robinson for her and her grandmother. With help from Charlie Burns, he built a house using lumber purchased from Matthew Watson's General Store in Carcross. He then sent Kitty \$100 to buy furnishings.

In 1916, she took the train to Robinson with her purchases: bed, heater, cook stove, chairs, dishes, washtub. "All!" She later related, "Trainman called out, 'There's your house, Mrs. Billy Smith!'"

Billy and Kitty spent several years in the Robinson and Carcross area. She gave birth to several of her children during this time. They hunted at Ddhäl Nàdhàda – Robinson Mountain. She later related: "Used to be big meat hunts there. Lots of people – Slim Jim, Laberge Bill, John Joe – on top of that mountain."

Kitty cooked at the Carcross Hotel for four years while her husband worked on hunting parties. They operated a gold mine in the Wheaton River area for nearly 10 years. She later recounted: " 'Shininook,' they call it: 'he gets up.' My husband's uncle was Skookum Jim, so I guess he's got to look for gold. My sons worked it with him. They worked the creek. We got a big house. We got hydraulic... But that main creek is no good."

While on the Wheaton, a particular poplar tree caught her imagination and prompted her to begin carving. She became well-known as a carver,



inspired by mythological themes. Today her carvings can be seen at MacBride Museum, Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, Da Kų Cultural Centre in Haines Junction, and in the Yukon Permanent Art Collection.

When the Alaska Highway came through, Billy and Kitty were trapping at Robinson. They had trouble crediting the rumours of the big highway being built from Edmonton. Billy ended up being one of the guides for road construction crews between Whitehorse and Watson Lake. Kitty recalled the US Army setting up a large camp at Robinson, "over one hundred working people." Kitty and her family prospered by selling hide and fur clothing to the soldiers, earning enough to buy a truck.

This summary is based on Julie Cruikshank with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith and Annie Ned, Life Lived Like a Story (University of British Columbia Press, 1990), pp. 230-232; 246-251.



Yukon Archives. A post office operated at Robinson Station from 1909 – 1915. Postmaster Charles McConnell.