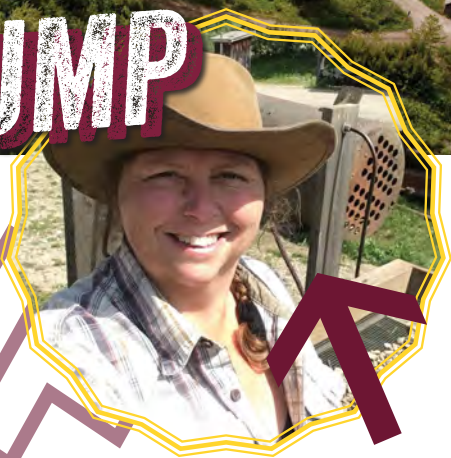


Barkerville Historic Town & Park

In Barkerville, B.C., an archeologist is learning a lot from the stuff people threw away.

DISCOVERIES FROM THE DUMP

Starting in the 1860s, the Cariboo gold rush brought people to B.C.'s central interior from all over. Miner Billy Barker hit gold in 1862 and a town named after him soon grew up. Today, all of Barkerville is a big, busy museum with people in costume reliving its history. And one of the best ways to learn about that history? Digging through the rubbish the original townspeople left behind. That's where Barkerville's on-site archeologist comes in.



Visitors in Barkerville's Chinatown.

DAWN AINSLEY SORTS THROUGH THE TOWN'S DUMPS TO PIECE TOGETHER THE STORIES OF ITS PEOPLE AND WHAT THEIR LIVES WERE LIKE. FOR INSTANCE, THOUSANDS OF CHINESE MEN CAME TO BARKERVILLE HOPING TO FIND GOLD ON THEIR OWN OR AS WORKERS FOR MINING COMPANIES. THEY WANTED TO MAKE MONEY TO SEND TO THEIR FAMILIES BACK IN CHINA. THEIR GARBAGE REVEALED COINS FROM CHINA THAT WERE HUNDREDS OF YEARS OLD, WOODEN DOMINOES, CERAMIC DISHES AND GLASS PLAYING PIECES FOR A GAME CALLED FAN TAN.





THE FOLKS AT BARKERVILLE ARE STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THIS ITEM, MADE OF CARVED BONE, MIGHT BE.



DAWN OFTEN HAS TO DO A LOT OF WORK JUST TO FIGURE OUT WHAT AN OBJECT IS. THIS LUMP TURNED OUT TO BE A POCKET WATCH, A VALUABLE ITEM THE OWNER WAS PROBABLY VERY UPSET TO REALIZE THEY HAD LOST.



COULD THIS WINDUP TOY CAR MEAN THERE WERE KIDS IN BARKERVILLE?

Whether the dumps are in backyards — people often just chucked their garbage out the window — or in bigger spots like mine shafts or beside the Chinese restaurant, they can tell Dawn a lot. Meat tins and fruit pits show what people ate. Glass bottles show what medicines they used and what they drank. Bits of rusty metal might come from a sewing machine or frying pan. Animal bones reveal whether people hunted deer or raised pigs.

Thomas Drastauskis, Barkerville



This homemade sieve would have been used to scoop up water. When the water drained out, it left rocks and maybe even some flakes of gold behind.

An interpreter at Barkerville leads school visitors in a game.

