

Overland Trail

Dawson City–Whitehorse



Sled dog teams, horse-drawn stagecoaches and sleigh convoys all travelled the Overland Trail over the years. Yukon Archives, Robert Coutts fonds, 86/15, no. 37

The Overland Trail was one of the Yukon's first roads. In 1902, the Yukon government awarded a contract to build a winter road to the White Pass & Yukon Route. This 530-kilometre mail delivery route linked Dawson City to Whitehorse, replacing the Canadian Development Company's route along the Yukon River. The road builders followed traditional First Nations trails for many sections of the new road.

The White Pass & Yukon Route maintained 14 roadhouses, one every 30 to 40 kilometres. Each featured a roadhouse, stable, storehouse, woodpile, and sometimes cabins and hay meadows. These roadhouses welcomed travellers and made delivery (of mail and freight) and passenger transport much easier. The North-West Mounted Police also set up six new posts near the roadhouses.

The trail, which crossed the traditional territories of several First Nations, was abandoned in the late 1930s, due largely to its deterioration and the advent of automobiles and air travel.

Many Francophones worked on the Overland Trail. From 1901 to the summer of 1902, Yukon government engineer William A. Thibaudeau planned, located and cleared the trail from Dawson to just north of Carmacks. From 1912 to 1920, Maxime (Mike) Cyr worked in several roadhouses as a stableman and carpenter. In 1929, Happy LePage ran the Yukon Crossing roadhouse with his wife Pauline.

This colouring sheet highlights Franco-Yukon history – for more, take a look at the colouring sheets for Yukon Crossing and Mme Tremblay's store!



Carmacks roadhouse on the Overland Trail, 1924. Yukon Archives, Claude B. Tidd collection, no. 7740



On the back there is an illustration of the Overland Trail by artist Aurore Favier. It contains many of the objects that people used to carry with them on the trail. Sixteen of them appear twice. Can you find the doubles?

Aurore Favier is a multidisciplinary artist who uses a variety of techniques and media, ranging from illustration to papier-mâché, to blend reality with the imagination as she wanders through various worlds.

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