

The Slocan Extension (Slocan City, Bay Farm, Popoff and Lemon Creek internment areas)

Historic Place

The Slocan Extension is a collection of four adjacent Japanese Canadian internment areas including Slocan City, Bay Farm, Popoff and Lemon Creek, located approximately 26 kilometres south of New Denver in the Slocan Valley in B.C.'s West Kootenay region.

Values

Together, the four internment camp sites that make up the Slocan Extension have historical, social and cultural value as an enduring record of its association with the Japanese Canadian internment between 1942 and 1945 during which families were uprooted, their rights as Canadian citizens removed, and their possessions taken and sold.

Situated at the south end of Slocan Lake, Slocan City is significant as a former Slocan Valley mining town with existing buildings, including hotels, shacks and mining camp cabins that were re-purposed to create the internment camp. The place is important because it functioned as the service, social, government and economic centre of the Slocan Extension. The B.C. Security Commission offices and recruiting centre for teachers, hospital, post office, Silvery Slocan social centre, retail stores and other services were located in Slocan City. Post-internment, it became the new location of the Slocan Village Market.

The town is the location of the Slocan cemetery which includes a monument to Japanese Canadians, notable for being the only physical remaining indicator of the Japanese-Canadian internment in Slocan City. Created in 1944 by the Slocan Buddhist Mission Society, the monument commemorates the nine internees interred at the Slocan cemetery during the period internment, 1942-1945.

Slocan City has significance for functioning as a train transfer point for internees, first from the B.C. coast en-route to camps in New Denver, Rosebery and Sandon, while post-war, in 1946, it was a deportation point for Japanese Canadian citizens being 'repatriated' to Japan. This was a highly controversial event during which government policy gave Japanese Canadians the untenable choice of moving permanently east of the Rocky Mountains or leaving for Japan, a foreign country most of them had never seen.

Together, Bay Farm, Popoff and Lemon Creek internment sites have significance because they represent purpose-built camps integrated into government-leased existing farms and agricultural fields in the Slocan Valley. Arriving before the camps were constructed, internees lived in unheated tents, until dormitories, bunkhouses, family cabins and communal kitchen facilities were built with the forced labour of the internees themselves. The valley's Doukhobor farmers provided an essential service in helping feed the almost 5,000 internees, augmented by vegetable gardens in each of the camps. Local grocery retailers included the Popoff store, Albright's meat market and Hurst's grocery store.

It is significant that even in these internment camps, Japanese Canadians were contributing to the economy of the province. There were several logging camps and sawmill sites where Japanese Canadian men worked as loggers producing firewood, poles, posts and logs; there was a portable sawmill at Bay Farm. Others worked on the valley farms or for local businesses.

Social value is found in the creation of community and recreation within the Slocan Extension despite the trauma and hardships associated with internment and repatriation. Elementary schools and Japanese kindergartens operated at each of the camps, while the Catholic church managed a high school for 250 students. Outstanding B.C. citizens Raymond Moriyama, David Suzuki and Joy Kogawa were educated at the Pine Crescent School at Bay Farm. There was a community hall, women's institute and baseball team. In the summer, children played in the Slocan River and Slocan Lake; in the winter there was a ski hill and skating rink for hockey.

Several individual buildings and structures hold specific value within the Slocan Extension. Today's Slocan Village Market, formerly Popoff's Market, is significant for its purchase and operation post-war as Kino's Market by Zenichi Kinoshita and operated as Kino's Market in Slocan City. Designed in 1952-53 by son James Kinoshita while an architecture student in Manitoba and operated by his

parents, a modern, one-storey post and beam structure with a pitched roof and a large glass wall facing the street. James Kinoshita would become a prominent international architect.

Built as an Oddfellows Hall in Slocan City in 1923, the Silvery Slocan Social Centre is significant for being a community and social hall for Japanese Canadians during internment. It was the site of a commemorative event on in June 2012 for unveiling of interpretive signs marking the former Lemon Creek and Popoff internment camps.

Collectively, the internment sites associated with the Slocan Extension have the ability to evoke the memories and stories of the Japanese Canadians who lived there, assisting with the education and understanding about what happened in B.C. during World War II. Every internment camp has heritage value for past, present, and future generations, and their individual recognition acknowledges Japanese Canadian struggles, tenacity and resilience.

Sources

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