



Abbotsford Sikh Temple National Historic Site of Canada

33089 South Fraser Way, Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada

Formally Recognized: 2002/11/01

Other Name(s)

Abbotsford Sikh Temple
Temple sikh d'Abbotsford
Gur Sikh Temple, Gurdwara
Abbotsford Sikh Temple National Historic Site of Canada
Temple / Gurdwara Gur Sikh

Links and documents

[Early Migration History](#)
[Gur Sikh Temple Homepage](#)
[Gur Sikh Temple History](#)
[Community Stories](#)

Construction Date(s)

1910/01/01 to 1912/01/01

Listed on the Canadian Register: 2008/04/23

Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place

Abbotsford Sikh Temple National Historic Site of Canada is located on a one-acre property at the crest of a hill in the centre of Abbotsford, in the Lower Fraser Valley of British Columbia. Built in 1911, this simple, rectangular, gable-roofed building is of wood-frame construction clad in wood siding. The false fronted façade that faces the street is typical of Canadian commercial vernacular architecture of the period. A verandah runs along three sides of the building on the second floor. Official recognition refers to the building and its legal lot.

Heritage Value

Abbotsford Sikh Temple was designated a national historic site of Canada in 2002 because:

- it is the oldest surviving example of the temples which played a crucial religious, social and political role in the pioneer phase of Sikh immigration to North America;
- it continues to embody both the fundamental beliefs of the Sikhs and their early immigrant experience in Canada; and,
- its architectural form represents a pragmatic adaptation of Sikh traditions to the Canadian context.

The Abbotsford Sikh Temple is an early example of a Sikh temple and was part of a network of temples that represent the pioneering phase of the Sikh community in Canada. Built by early immigrants, the structure reflects the limited resources of the builders and their adaptation of a Canadian architectural type, namely, the false-front building. Built in 1911 and used continuously since then, the temple is evidence of the early roots of the Sikh community and of the larger Indo-Canadian community that is located in this region of Canada. The structure's simple design blends a Canadian architectural form with all the key elements of a Sikh religious building's structural traditions including the prayer hall, the four entrance doors, the Sukh Aasan, (the room where the Guru Granth Sahib was kept) and the Granthi's quarters on the second level, the communal kitchen, and the dining area. These architectural features have religious meaning and symbolize the openness of the temple to all, regardless of caste, creed or colour.

Sources: Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Minutes, April 2002; Commemorative Integrity Statement.

Character-Defining Elements

The key elements that contribute to the heritage character of this site include:

- its prominent location on a hill in the centre of Abbotsford, making it visible from a distance as an important local landmark;
- the layout and functional spaces adopt the required elements of a Sikh temple and reflect fundamental Sikh beliefs: these include the prayer hall with the Sukh Aasan (the room where the Guru Granth Sahib was kept) and the Granthi's quarters on the second level, as well as the communal kitchen and dining areas on the first level;
- the construction and design represent a pragmatic adaptation of the traditional Sikh temple to the Canadian environment; the wood-frame construction with false fronted façade masks a simple rectangular building with a gable roof typical of vernacular commercial architecture of the period;
- the volume, materials, placement and design of doors and windows including the four main doors on the second floor that provide entry through to the prayer hall from all three sides;
- the veranda running along three sides of the building at the second level was a recurring feature of early Sikh temples in Canada that allowed for direct access from the outside into the prayer hall originally from four sides;
- original exterior materials and details such as the horizontal wooden siding, door and window mouldings, chimneys, verandah supports, and railings;
- interior details such as the wooden arches and ornate canopy defining the altar; the early pendant light fixture and picture rail in the prayer hall, and the tongue and groove wall treatment seen in the prayer hall, the Sukh

- Aasan, Granthi's room, and the kitchen and dining area on the ground floor;
- the Nishan Sahib, a tall flagpole flying the Sikh emblem, a yellow triangular flag with the Sikh symbol the Khanda in the centre;
 - any archaeological resources that might be discovered;
 - a collection of photographs and objects owned by the Khalsa Diwan Society;
 - the modest furnishings.

Recognition

Jurisdiction

Federal

Recognition Authority

Government of Canada

Recognition Statute

Historic Sites and Monuments Act

Recognition Type

National Historic Site of Canada

Recognition Date

2002/11/01

Historical Information

Significant Date(s)

1932/01/01 to 1960/01/01

Theme - Category and Type

Building Social and Community Life

Religious Institutions

Expressing Intellectual and Cultural Life

Architecture and Design

Building Social and Community Life

Community Organizations

Function - Category and Type

Current

Religion, Ritual and Funeral

Religious Facility or Place of Worship

Historic**Architect / Designer**

n/a

Builder

n/a

Additional Information**Location of Supporting Documentation**

Heritage Conservation and Commemoration Directorate, Documentation Centre, 3rd Floor, Room 366, 30 Victoria St, Gatineau, Quebec

Cross-Reference to Collection**Fed/Prov/Terr Identifier**

10044

Status

Published

Related Places**[Abbotsford Sikh Temple](#)**

The Abbotsford Sikh Temple is a one and one-half storey, wood-frame vernacular structure set on a full raised basement, with a false front parapet, an upper balcony running along...