



Burrard Inlet - Coal Harbour

Coal Harbour Seawall, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Formally Recognized: 2020/02/07

Construction Date(s)

Listed on the Canadian Register: 2021/02/25

Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place

The historic place is comprised of both the location in Vancouver's Coal Harbour in Burrard Inlet, B.C. where the ship Komagata Maru, carrying potential South Asian immigrants from India, was detained at anchor for over two months, and the site of plaques, artworks and a commemorative installation in nearby Portal Park in Coal Harbour that memorialize the Komagata Maru incident.

Heritage Value

The location of the Komagata Maru incident has historic, cultural, social and spiritual values for South Asian Canadians because it symbolizes the hardship endured by 376 South Asian Canadian immigrants affected by the detainment of the vessel that lasted from May 23 to July 23, 1914.

Denied entry into the country, its passengers were forced to stay on board for over two months while the ship remained anchored in the waters of Vancouver's Coal Harbour. The Komagata Maru incident has become one of

the defining and resonant events in the history of South Asian Canadians in B.C.

The historic place is significant because it symbolizes the restrictive federal and provincial immigration policies in place at the time, as well as the wider context of the British Empire and its colonies, including Canada. In response to the anti-Asian riots in Vancouver in 1907, the federal government restricted all immigration from India as well as from China and Japan.

The site of the Komogata Maru incident is politically and socially significant because it symbolizes both a momentous confrontation between embedded Canadian immigration policy and legitimate South Asian Canadian immigrants, and the 50-year struggle of the South Asian community in B.C. and Canada for citizenship, finally granted in 1947.

Despite their status as British citizens from India, primarily Sikhs, the South Asian immigrants aboard the Komogata Maru were not exempt or protected from the immigration policies put in place by the Canadian government. Politically motivated officials endeavoured to exclude South Asians from B.C. based on their colour and their race, which was a race-based violation of human rights. The ship's passengers were from the Punjab region of India, a place where they were often prosperous and educated farmers who could emigrate independently, and were seen to pose an economic threat to the white working establishment in Canada.

The historic place is also valued as a reminder of the determination of South Asian Canadians to immigrate to B.C., and the support provided by earlier South Asian immigrants and their established institutions, such as the Khalsa Diwan Society gurdwara in Vancouver.

Social, spiritual and cultural value is found in the contemporary commemoration of the incident at the Komagata Maru monument in Coal Harbour, erected in 1912 and designed to reflect B.C.'s commitment to respecting and honouring cultural differences and traditions. There have been other commemorations, including a museum at the Khalsa Diwan Society gurdwara on Ross Street in Vancouver and a short-term contemporary art exhibit at the Surrey Art Gallery.

Despite the multi-cultural nature of present society and a formal apology from the federal government in 2015, the historic place associated with the Komogata Maru event reflects the fact that racism remains an issue up to today, further demonstrating the significant historic value of this site to contemporary B.C.

Character-Defining Elements

N/A

Recognition

Jurisdiction

British Columbia

Recognition Authority

Province of British Columbia

Recognition Statute

Heritage Conservation Act, s.18

Recognition Type

Provincially Recognized Heritage Site (Recognized)

Recognition Date

2020/02/07

Historical Information

Significant Date(s)

n/a

Theme - Category and Type

Peopling the Land

Migration and Immigration

Function - Category and Type

Current

Historic

Transport-Water

Harbour Facility

Architect / Designer

n/a

Builder

n/a

Additional Information

Location of Supporting Documentation

Province of British Columbia, Heritage Branch

Cross-Reference to Collection

Fed/Prov/Terr Identifier

DhRs-1299

Status

Published

Related Places

n/a

Links and documents

[Province of BC Historic Places website](#)