



Guru Nanak Mining and Trust Co. Commercial Building

1742 West 2nd Avenue, 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 the site of the former Guru Nanak Mining and Trust Company Building at 1742 West 2nd Avenue in Vancouver, B.C., now an area of newly developed businesses, studios and retail shops.

Heritage Value

The former location of the Guru Nanak Mining and Trust Company Building has historic, cultural and social significance, primarily through its association with its founder, Sant (Professor) Teja Singh. Teja Singh was a revered Sikh teacher, scholar and translator of the Sikh sacred texts. Educated in Britain and the United States, Teja Singh provided invaluable religious and political leadership for South Asian pioneers in B.C. in the early years of immigration prior to World War I.

Arriving in Vancouver in 1909 at the behest of the local South Asian community, Teja Singh pioneered efforts, through the establishment of the Trust Company, to fight for South Asian Canadian justice in B.C., at a time when discrimination against South Asians was at its height. It is notable that the company had its origins in the Khalsa Diwan Society Gurdwara, an important Vancouver Sikh temple, at 1866 West 2nd Avenue, which was a

place for South Asian religious activities and community gathering. The company moved its operations to the nearby location at 1742 West 2nd Avenue in 1912. Both the gurdwara and the new company offices were located in an area near False Creek, a part of Vancouver favoured by South Asian immigrants due to its location near the sawmills and other wood processing companies that dominated the False Creek basin, and where many South Asian Canadians were employed.

The Trust Company was important because it was established as a reaction to the Canadian government's discriminatory immigration laws against South Asians. Policies such as the Continuous Journey Regulation enacted in 1908 were designed to stop all immigration from India. Under the regulation, immigrants seeking entry had to come to Canada by continuous journey with through-tickets from the country of their birth or citizenship, an impossibility at that time. Through the Trust Company, Teja Singh also sought to change the negative image of South Asians in the eyes of the citizens of B.C. and to support the South Asian community in its quest to bring their wives and children to Canada.

The Trust Company has historic and social value because it secured the economic welfare of the local South Asian Canadian community by organizing unemployed South Asians into an incorporated company of land owners. Based on the Sikh principles of hard work, sharing and brotherhood, its directors, including prominent local Sikhs Bhag Singh (president) and Atma Singh (secretary), sought investments in farmland, mining companies, and real estate, such as its purchase of a large tract of land in North Vancouver to be used for market gardening. It is also important for its recruitment of prominent Sikh community members as directors and employees, further heightening its legitimacy and success.

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

Building Social and Community Life

Social Movements

Peopling the Land

Migration and Immigration

Function - Category and Type**Current****Historic**

Commerce / Commercial Services

Office or Office Building

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-1295

Status

Published

Related Places

n/a

Links and documents

[Province of BC Historic Places website](#)