



Paldi

23 Paldi Road, Paldi, British Columbia, Canada

Formally Recognized: 2020/02/07

Construction Date(s)

Listed on the Canadian Register: 2021/02/19

Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place

The community of Paldi is a former sawmilling town located in the Cowichan Valley 11 kilometres northwest of Duncan on Vancouver Island, B.C. The historic place is the location of a gurdwara (a temple or place of worship) that is still in frequent use by the community, a water tower remaining from the earlier sawmill operation, and several residences.

Heritage Value

Paldi has historic, cultural, social and spiritual value as evidence of South Asian Canadian participation in the early development of B.C., for its history of economic and cultural importance derived from South Asian Canadian success in the lumber and sawmilling industries, and for its continued importance to South Asian Canadians on Vancouver Island and across the province. Originally known as Mayo, postal authorities approved the name of Paldi for the settlement in 1936, chosen in honour of many of its workers' home village in the Punjab region of India.

With settlement beginning around 1908, Paldi is significant because the community became the centre of the

South Asian Canadian forest industry in the Cowichan Valley in central Vancouver Island between the time of its establishment and the closure of its sawmill after a devastating fire in 1945. It is representative of the settlement patterns of early twentieth century immigration during which South Asians, primarily Sikhs from the Punjab region of northern India, began arriving in B.C., just as the forest industry was expanding to become a dominant force in the provincial economy. With its original exclusively male population, Paldi is a reminder of the exclusionary legislation of that time, the 1908 Continuous Journey Regulation. Paldi evolved into a vibrant village beginning after World War I, when the ban on new arrivals from India was lifted and South Asian women were legally permitted to immigrate. The community established a hall, school, company store, post office and housing for families, as well as a Sikh gurdwara, a temple or place of worship, with key aspects of traditional gurdwaras. Originally constructed in 1919, the current 1959 gurdwara continues to be used by the local congregation and is considered a pilgrimage site for South Asians from Canada, India and elsewhere. Paldi is recognized for being a close-knit company town with communal social, cultural and economic support.

Paldi is significant because of its long-standing economic influence as a source of employment and livelihood for the South Asian community and the role the community played in the development of the lumber and sawmilling industries in B.C. Due to the racially discriminatory environment, South Asian workers developed a tightly knit network of mutual support based on work and religion. Typical of entrepreneurial South Asian workers, a financial partnership of 35 was formed, enabling the purchase of private forest reserves between Duncan and Lake Cowichan, the formation of the Mayo Lumber Company in 1917, and the expansion of a multi-cultural village at Paldi to include South Asian, Chinese and Japanese Canadian and Caucasian workers. The partnership represents the South Asian community drawing strength from its own traditions, cultural values and equal financial opportunity. The town is also remarkable for having South Asian workers employed in highly skilled positions, at a time when there was racial segregation of occupations.

Paldi has historic and social value because of its association with well-known South Asian names in B.C.'s lumber and sawmilling industries, including founders Attar Doman Singh, Mayo Singh Manhas, originally the cook, and Kapoor Singh Siddoo, a bookkeeper, whose individual enterprises evolved into forest industry giants including Doman Lumber Industries, the Mayo Lumber Company, and the Kapoor Lumber Company.

Paldi is considered an iconic place by members of B.C.'s South Asian Canadian community because it provides a sense of history for present generations, and embodies the respect they feel for earlier generations who found homes and careers in forestry and sawmilling, providing stability for several generations. The values found in the community of Paldi and its citizens - hard honest work, giving back to the community, and accepting all people - have enabled South Asian Canadians to become significant contributors to the history of 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

Developing Economies

Extraction and Production

Peopling the Land

Migration and Immigration

Building Social and Community Life

Education and Social Well-Being

Function - Category and Type

Current

Historic

Community

Town

Industry

Wood and/or Paper Manufacturing 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**

DeRx-2

Status

Published

Related Places

n/a

Links and documents

[Province of BC Historic Places website](#)