

New Denver (Rosebery and Sandon Internment Sites, New Denver Church)

Slocan Valley, BC

1942-1945

Historic Place

New Denver is a small community in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia, located approximately 70 kilometres north of Nelson on the west shore of Kootenay Lake, within the Regional District of Central Kootenay.

The location of the former Orchard internment site with its still-existing, New Denver is the site of the associated Kohan Reflection Garden and New Denver Church. The historic place includes the former internment sites of Rosebery, 6 kilometres to the north and Sandon, 14 kilometres to the east.

Values

New Denver, with Rosebery and Sandon, has historical, aesthetic, spiritual and cultural value as an enduring record of the Japanese Canadian internment between 1942 and 1945, particularly as a major representative of those internment camps situated in former mining towns located in the West Kootenay region.

Of the former internment camps, the New Denver Orchard is significant because it was a purpose-built internment camp, constructed on the site of a vegetable garden and fruit orchard, within an active commercial and residential community related to the silver mining industry. Funded by the federal Security Commission and built with Japanese Canadian labour, the small wooden shacks were arranged in surveyed lots arranged into a typical grid and the streets given names. After the war, the original occupants were deeded ownership of the relocated homes and lots.

The Orchard has value as a rare example of an internment camp that was not dismantled at the end of the war. While other camps in the Slocan Valley and elsewhere were shut down and demolished at the end of the war, Japanese Canadians stayed in New Denver found jobs, attended school and were integrated into the general community. Today, the rehabilitated internment shacks, an original from 1942 and as evolved in 1957 provide an immediate perspective on life in the original Orchard camp.

Significant for their association with the New Denver camp, Rosebery and Sandon are examples of the remote interior towns with unoccupied or derelict buildings that were called into use during the internment. Rosebery was a suburb six kilometres north of New Denver housing primarily Japanese foreign nationals, while Sandon was an abandoned silver mining town of 20 residents. Internees in Sandon were from Port Essington, Victoria, Skeena, Steveston, Fairview and Powell Street in Vancouver.

New Denver is particularly significant for the cultural, historical and spiritual values embodied in the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre, a site dedicated to telling the story of Japanese Canadian internment in the Orchard and an ongoing reminder of the harsh conditions endured by internees. It is important as one of very few internment sites that has physical heritage resources directly associated with the tragic episode in B.C.'s history, with original buildings, personal artifacts donated by the community, and interpretive displays, as well as the Heiwa Teien Peace Garden designed Japanese Canadian gardener, Tomomichi Sumi.

The 1893 New Denver Church, the first one built in the town, is significant as a re-purposed building that would become Lakeview Collegiate high school, a site of worship, and a gathering place for the Japanese Canadian community.

Part of the significance of New Denver is found in the Kohan Reflection Garden, a Japanese style strolling garden designed around the remaining buildings in the Orchard. Elements such as lanterns, bridge, Shinto stone and Bacchi basin along with traditional horticultural elements such as planted maples, irises and lily ponds help to educate the public about Japanese Canadian heritage and provide a place for contemplation and cultural events.

Statements of Significance for Recognized Historic Places

Together, the New Denver Orchard, Kohan Reflective Garden, Memorial Centre, New Denver Church, Sandon and Rosebery are significant as places to view and contemplate the shock of internment and subsequent recovery of Japanese Canadians at a single location.

Like all internment sites, New Denver, Rosebery and Sandon evoke the hardships, memories and stories of the Japanese Canadians who lived there, assisting with the education and understanding about what happened in British Columbia during World War II. But while few traces remain of many internment sites, the New Denver Orchard, Kohan Reflection Garden and the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre remain to remind visitors of the trauma of the internment.

Sources

BC Archives. Bralorne, Quesnel Forks, Sandon. search-bcarchives.royalbcmu-seum.bc.ca/ghost-towns-bralorne-quesnel-forks-sandon

Village of New Denver. Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre. newdenver.ca/nikkei/ Japanese Canadian

Historic Places Recognition Project nomination forms,

New Denver, Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre, New Denver Orchard, New Denver Kohan Reflection Garden, New Denver Church, Rosebery and Sandon.

Reid, Linda Kawamoto and Beth Carter. *Karizumai: A Guide To Japanese Canadian Internment Sites*. Fourth edition. Burnaby, B.C.: Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, 2016.