

# Statement of Significance

## Description of Historic Place

Verigin Memorial Park is a burial site of Doukhobor leaders and a flower garden owned and operated by the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ (USCC) located on a hillside at 1814 Terrace Road in Brilliant, British Columbia just north of the intersection of Highway 3A and Robson Rd. overlooking the confluence of Kootenay & Columbia Rivers.

Coordinates: 49.31938, -117.63148

Property size: 2.7 hectares

## Heritage Values of Historic Place

Verigin Memorial Park is not the first burial site at the confluence of Kootenay & Columbia Rivers, a highly significant historic site valued first and foremost for the memorial, spiritual, cultural, and physical associations it holds of the Sinixt people's presence in this area since time immemorial. This confluence site is also deeply ingrained in the land use and histories of the Ktunaxa, Sylix and Secwécpemc peoples who like the Sinixt, all have a name for this place in their native languages.

As the burial site of a family of revered leaders amongst the West Kootenay Doukhobor community, Verigin Memorial Park was chosen for its panoramic vantage point near what was at the time Peter V. Verigin's beautiful guest house which overlooked the confluence of rivers he himself had named Brilliant for the rivers' diamond-like sparkle. This site represents associative and physical testaments to the headquarters of Doukhobor settlement in the West Kootenays in the first decades of the twentieth century when approximately 6,000 Doukhobors, Christian pacifist refugees from Russia, arrived to this area between 1908 and 1913 under the leadership of Peter V. Verigin to re-settle the floodplain as a agricultural utopian community founded on the principle of "Toil and Peaceful Life". As the vast majority of the historic buildings and homes of the early Brilliant settlement have since been dismantled, destroyed or reduced to ruins, the physicality and ongoing upkeep of this landmark is important as a tangible and spiritual testament to historic Brilliant, and for its view onto the former commune.

Containing the remains of three Doukhobor leaders Peter V. Verigin (1859-1924), his son Peter P. Verigin (1881-1939), his grandson John J. Verigin (1921-2008), three wives and a daughter, this place represents the esteemed value the Verigin family holds in the Doukhobor community in Canada. The Verigin family have continuously led the West Kootenay Doukhobor community since its arrival in 1908 represented by their Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood and after its collapse the USCC. Since 2008 Executive Director John J. Verigin, Jr., continues to make an immense contribution to the Doukhobor movement in both a practical and spiritual sense, earning the respect and loyalty of the membership. This value is expressed in the aesthetic of the monument, by the ongoing funding and meticulous maintenance of the site by the USCC, other Doukhobor societies and friends, and in its function as a

place of annual pilgrimage, prayer and reflection, bringing the current Doukhobor community together.

The transformation of this Doukhobor burial site over time also tells the story of conflict and loss in the community, from its two-toned extravagant, classical tomb for Peter V. Verigin erected in 1925 a few months after his still unresolved violent death, to the more modest, white concrete rectangular crypt seen today, built in the mid-1940s shortly after the original tomb was destroyed by a radical element of the Sons of Freedom, a sect of the Doukhobors who split-off over disagreements relating to land registration and education. They were noted for their arson campaigns as a protest against materialistic life, and are believed to have destroyed the tomb in 1944, along with several other structures in Brilliant and the Kootenay Boundary area during that period. Several fragments of the 1925 tomb have been preserved as artifacts and are today on display below the less vulnerable large concrete tomb. The abstract nature of the current tomb together with the fragments of the destroyed tomb offer a scenario for contemplation on loss, resilience, spirituality, reconciliation and healing - all intensely experienced by the Doukhobor community living at Brilliant and throughout the Kootenay Boundary region of BC.

### **Character-Defining Elements**

The character-defining elements of the Verigin Memorial Park include:

- Active Verigin family burial site since November 1924 and under the 1968 and 2009 Peter Verigin Tomb Act
- Use as a public park under Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ (USCC) responsible for its stewardship since 1968
- The elevated, landmark location overlooking the former commune of Brilliant, the Brilliant Suspension Bridge and the confluence of the rivers
- The sloped nature of the site with its terraced rock gardens and stone walls embedded in the natural rocks of the cliff
- The views of the confluence of the Columbia and Kootenay rivers and valleys and of former Brilliant afforded from the site
- The large, white-painted, rectangular concrete crypt on an elevated platform surrounded by a low metal fence containing the buried remains of Peter Vasilyevich Verigin, Peter Petrovich Verigin and their wives Evdokia Gregoryevna Verigina and Anna Fyodorovna Verigina
- The tomb of Anna Petrovna Markova and her son John J. Verigin
- Remnants of the destroyed 1925 tomb including stone carvings of wheat sheaves (representing the Doukhobor principle of "Toil and Peaceful Life"), and stone panels with carvings of trees made by Italian masons from Trail displayed on site
- The meticulously designed and maintained formal flower garden surrounding the crypt and around the park
- Nearby ruins of the foundation of the 1922 Peter V. Verigin guest house
- A miniature replica of a Doukhobor community home with visual displays
- Painted dedication to Peter V. Verigin "Lordly" in English and Russian on a cliff facing toward the park with the same wording found at the entrance to a small cave in the Republic of Georgia where Doukhobors gathered for prayer

- The proximity of and association to Peter V. Verigin's 'besedka', a private prayer and meditation site with a stone bench, stone table and created in the 1920s, restored by the Brilliant choir in 1983 who also erected a the scripted signage

## Resources

- <https://www.usccdoukhobors.org/veriginpark/veriginpark.htm>
- Photo album of Verigin Memorial Park: [Album03-verigin memorial park - USCC Doukhobors \(uscc-doukhobors.org\)](http://www.usccdoukhobors.org/Album03-verigin%20memorial%20park)
- [View and download an informational brochure \(2.5 Mb\)](#)
- [http://kalmakov.com/historical/farron peter verigin last fateful journey.html](http://kalmakov.com/historical/farron%20peter%20verigin%20last%20fateful%20journey.html)
- <https://www.kutnereader.com/post/peter-lordly-verigin-s-lost-prayer-site>
- <https://uscc-doukhobors.org/hereditary-spiritual-leadership/>
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedomites>
- Peter V. Verigin is designated a National Historic Person by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (2008)  
[https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page\\_nhs\\_eng.aspx?id=12053](https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=12053)
- Migration of Doukhobors to British Columbia is designated a National Historic Event by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (2008)  
[https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page\\_nhs\\_eng.aspx?id=12052&i=78226](https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=12052&i=78226)
- John J. Verigin was bestowed Member of the Order of Canada (1976), Member of the Order of British Columbia (1996), Freeman of the City of Grand Forks (1999), and the Soviet Order of Peoples' Friendship (1988)  
<https://www.gg.ca/en/honours/recipients/146-13229>  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/celebrating-british-columbia/honours-and-awards/order-of-bc/members/t-z>

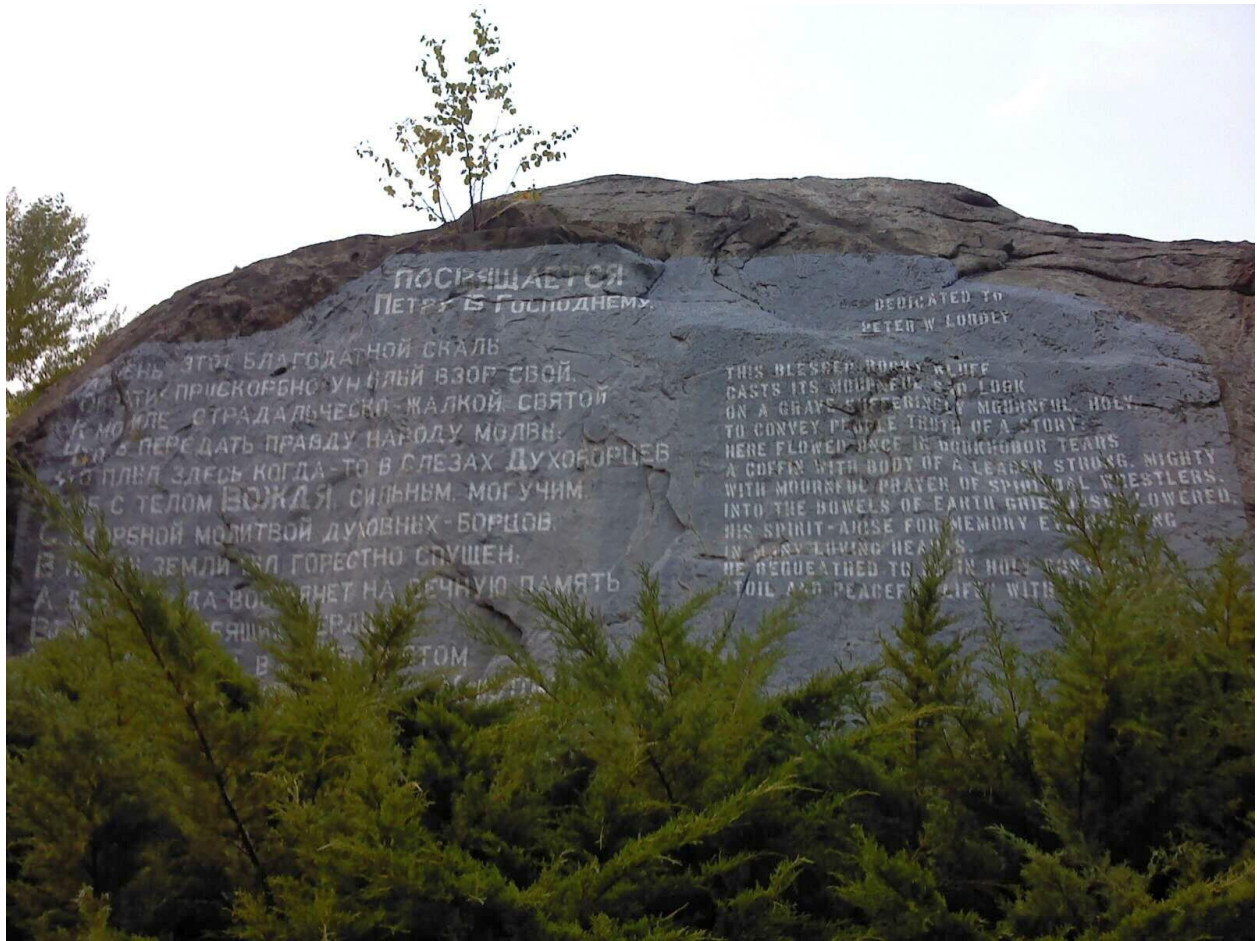
## Photographs



Current view of crypt and flower gardens.

<https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2523378/verigin's-memorial-park>





Painted dedication. <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2523378/verigin-s-memorial-park>



Remnants of 1925 tomb. [http://209.95.34.155/~kalmakov/historical/farron peter verigin last fateful journey.html](http://209.95.34.155/~kalmakov/historical/farron%20peter%20verigin%20last%20fateful%20journey.html)



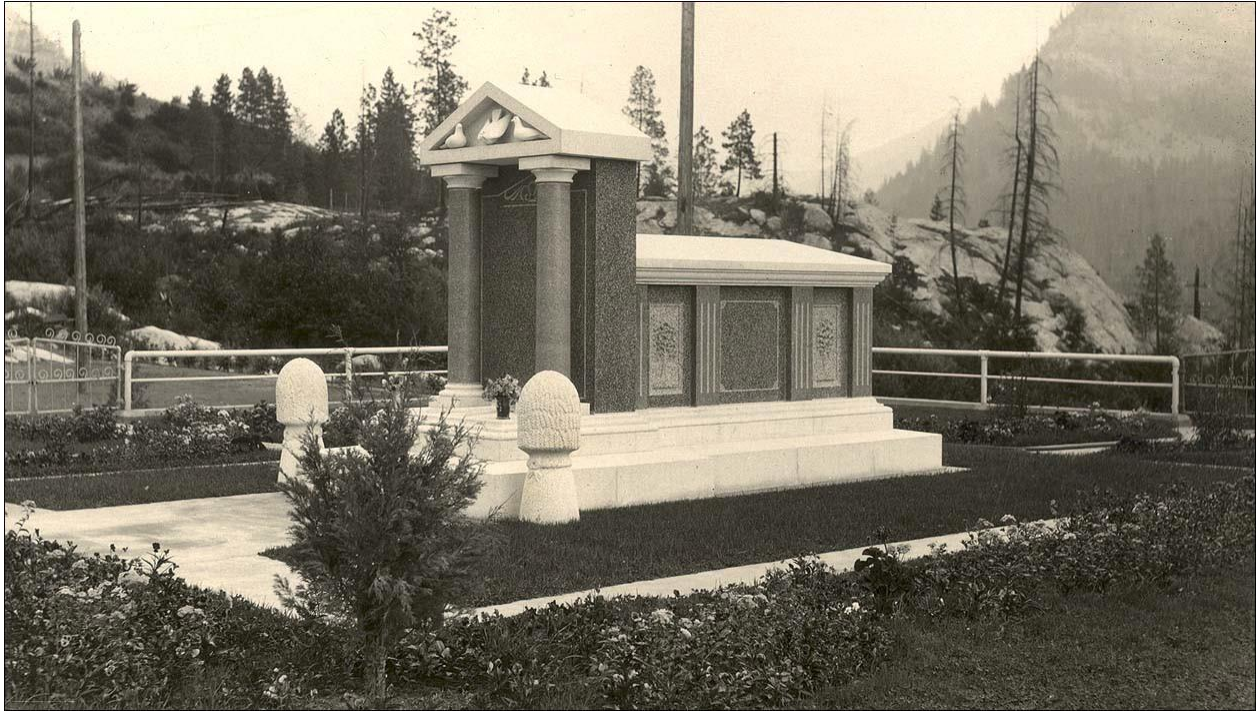


Verigin Memorial Park - L. Kalmakov photo 2013 - [http://kalmakov.com/historical/farron peter verigin last fateful journey.html](http://kalmakov.com/historical/farron%20peter%20verigin%20last%20fateful%20journey.html)



J.J. Verigin, current leader of the Doukhobours and USSC Executive Director at the site in 2023.  
<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/focus/2023/07/12/war-and-modernity-shake-pacifists>





Tomb of Peter P. Verigin at Brilliant - Thos. Gushul photograph, 1925 - [http://kalmakov.com/historical/farron peter verigin last fateful journey.html](http://kalmakov.com/historical/farron%20peter%20verigin%20last%20fateful%20journey.html)



Verigin Tomb completely destroyed by deliberate bomb - Vancouver Province photo, 1944 - [http://kalmakov.com/historical/farron peter verigin last fateful journey.html](http://kalmakov.com/historical/farron%20peter%20verigin%20last%20fateful%20journey.html)