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## Paldi

Near Duncan, Vancouver Island  
1859



Gurdwara at Paldi. (author photo)



Interior of the gurdwara at Paldi.  
(author photo)

### 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 has a gurdwara that is still in frequent use by the community, along with a water tower from the sawmill operation, and several residences.

### Values

Paldi has historical, cultural, social and spiritual value as evidence of South Asian Canadian participation in the early development of B.C., its history of economic and cultural importance derived from South Asian Canadian success in the lumber and sawmilling industries, and its continued importance to today's local community.

Established in <sup>1919</sup>1921, the community of Paldi is significant for being the centre of the forest industry in B.C., evolving around the creation of the successful railway logging and sawmill operation established by the <sup>at</sup>by the Mayo Lumber Company. Mayo Singh purchased property and timber rights near Duncan from the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway, becoming the centre of Mayo Lumber operations.



Paldi in the 1920s. (Cowichan Valley Museum 1997.2.7.5)

**Paldi** B.C.'s lumber and sawmilling industries, including Mayo Singh Manhas, Kapoor Singh Sidoo and Doman Singh, whose enterprises evolved into forest industry giants such as the Mayo Lumber Company, Doman Lumber Industries and the Kapoor Lumber Company.



School children in Paldi, c.1930s.  
(South Asian Canadian Digital Archive)

Originally known as Mayo, <sup>Sidoo</sup> the community is highly significant for recognizing the key role South Asian Canadians played in the development of B.C.'s forest industry. Postal authorities approved the name of Paldi for the settlement in 1936, chosen in honour of Mayo Singh's home village of the same name in the Punjab.

The site is important for the consideration of its location, chosen because of its proximity to the Esquimalt and Nanaimo railway, and to Sahtlam Creek, which was dammed to form a mill pond for the storage of cut timber and to provide power for the sawmill.



Paldi streetscape. (author photo)

Paldi is considered an evocative and iconic place for B.C.'s South Asian Canadian community. It is important for its role in helping early South Asian immigrants arriving in the province become established by providing economic stability through work in forestry and sawmilling. By providing roots and meaning for future generations, Paldi is a place to honour and respect for the courage, innovation and dedication of the community's economic founders, early pioneers and later generations who live and work here.

Paldi is historically, culturally and spiritually significant because of its Sikh gurdwara that was the centre of social and religious activity. Originally constructed in 19XX, it was replaced by the current gurdwara in 1959 which stands in the same location and facing the same direction.

This structure retains the key aspects found in gurdwara's including the second-floor prayer hall with traditional space for worshippers to sit on the floor, four entrance doors, the *Sukh Aasan* a room containing the 104-year-old *Guru Granth Sahib* holy book, the *langar*, or dining area and communal kitchen. The second-floor veranda along three sides of the building is representative of some pioneer Sikh temples in B.C., permitting direct access into the prayer hall.

The temple ~~is~~ continues to be used by the local congregation and is considered a destination 'mecca' for South Asians from Canada, India and other destinations.

Social value is found in the was a multi-cultural nature of Paldi, consisting of was made up of South Asian, Chinese and Japanese Canadian, along with Caucasians. The Sikh gurdwara was joined by a Japanese Buddhist temple.

**Paldi** The community came to life after the relaxation of immigration laws in 1947 when the male bunkhouse community became a vibrant village with a community hall, school, company store, post office and housing for families. Singing and dancing in the evenings in the well-lit village was considered a highlight of social life in the village. Paldi is valued as a company town with communal social, cultural and economic support.

Spiritual value is found in the fact that Mayo Singh's grave and that of several members of his family are located here in Paldi, while descendants of Mayo Singh still live in Paldi and in nearby Duncan.

Many generations of South Asian Canadians throughout Canada have connections with Paldi either through their grandparents or parents who had resided in Paldi. The values embodied by 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 cultural, social, economic and political history of B.C.

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