

Britannia as a National Historic Site

Introduction

From the Parks Canada 1999 report on Canadian National Historic Sites:

Canada's National Historic Sites represent thousands of years of human history imprinted on the landscape of the country. These special places demonstrate not only this country's diversity of geography and cultures over the course of its history, but also express elements of our national identity and illustrate key aspects of our collective past. Each place contributes an important thread to the Canadian tapestry. Every one has been recognized as being significant to the nation.

On 13 May 1989, at a ceremony on the Village Green of Britannia Beach, the National Historic Site plaque was unveiled declaring the Britannia Mines and Concentrator a National Historic Site. In awarding this honour, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recognized that the Britannia Mines had made a substantial contribution to the Canadian economy in producing vast quantities of copper ore for almost seventy years. The Board also designated the Concentrator a building of historic and architectural importance. Completed in 1923, the gravity-fed mill was highly innovative, particularly in its use of bulk froth floatation. During the life of the Mine, over 60,000 people of mixed races, languages and religions worked and made their homes in the area of the Britannia Mines.

There are currently 87 National Historic Sites in British Columbia. Of those, only 13 receive funding from the Federal Government. The BC Museum of Mining receives no direct federal funding for the care of our site.

Objectives of Program

The objectives of the Government of Canada for the National Historic Sites program are:

- To foster knowledge and appreciation of Canada's past through a national program of historical commemoration.
- To ensure the commemorative integrity of National Historic Sites by protecting and presenting them for the benefit, education and enjoyment of this and future generations, in a manner that respects the significant and irreplaceable legacy represented by these places and their associated resources.
- To encourage and support owners of National Historic Sites in their efforts to ensure commemorative integrity.

Also...

The Other Heritage Values include a number of important messages not directly related to the commemorative intent of the site. These include:

- This site is a member of the family of National Historic Sites located across Canada.
- The geological history of the coastal mountain ranges of British Columbia.
- The name “Britannia” was assigned by Captain Richards in honour of a British warship in 1859.
- Mining played an important role in the establishment and development of British Columbia.
- Britannia is a representative example of an isolated resource community on the BC coast.
- The Britannia site bears associations with coastal maritime transportation and the history of shipping on the BC coast.
- The development of the Britannia Mines and Concentrator (Mill No. 3) was part of a major wave of resource development in BC in late 19th to early 20th centuries.
- The Britannia site retains the ability to convey the story of mining: past, present and future.
- The Britannia site offers the opportunity to convey the story of environmental responsibility in resource development.
- The site has the ability to illustrate the issue of acid rock drainage and its impact on the environment.
- The history of the site is enhanced by the contributions of individuals such as C.P. Browning.
- The site bears opportunities to convey significant aspects of social and labour history.
- The B.C. Museum of Mining maintains linkages to the educational programs of the Mining Association of BC.

For more information about the National Historic Sites of Canada visit parkscanada.gc.ca/progs/lhn-nhs/index_E.asp.