

Archaeological Assessment of the Twin Falls  
Teahouse National Historic Site,  
Yoho National Park



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## Introduction

From September 8th to the 10th, 1998, the Twin Falls Tea House National Historic Site located in the backcountry of Yoho National Park (figure 1), was assessed by an archaeological team from Cultural Resource Services, Western Canada Service Centre, Parks Canada, Calgary. The assessment was part of a larger heritage recording and assessment program led by Public Works, Architecture and Engineering, Calgary. The archaeological component of this recording involved the excavation at three locations along the foundation of the log structure to aid the restoration recording team in obtaining structural information as well as enhancing the site's historic and archaeological information base.

## Background

The site was initially recorded in 1985 (Sumpter and Perry 1987:31), where the log chalet was photographed and a brief structural history was reported (See Getty 1972:200; Canadian Pacific Railway 1928:2,8,9; and Richard Friesen and Associates 1985:n.pag.). This initial assessment was a baseline recording and did not provide any management direction.

Rectangular in shape, the lodge was constructed in three stages. The first stage involved the erection of a one-room cabin ca. 1908. The second stage, an addition, was constructed about 1917. The third stage, a two-storey log chalet addition, was constructed around 1923-24 (Getty 1972:200).

This log structure was the first of five teahouses to be erected by the Canadian Pacific Railway in Yoho National Park. Canadian Pacific Railway brochures advertised the facility as a picturesque log cabin house providing meals and accommodation for five guests (Canadian Pacific Railway 1928:2,8). As of 1935, the teahouse was open from June 21 to September 10, charging \$2 per day with an European cuisine. The teahouse was later sold to Brewster and Ford Mountain Lodges Ltd. in 1962 (Richard Friesen and Associates 1985:n.pag.).

## Methodology

The 1998 archaeological assessment comprised three excavations: two one-metre square units along the structure's rear wall at the join between the 1908 structure and the c.1917 annex (figure 6), and the third unit (one metre by 50 cm) on the southwest corner of the 1908 structure (figure 6). The placement of the units were directed by Janet Gourley-Vallance, Restoration Architect, Engineering and Architecture, Public Works to obtain structural and architectural building sequence information about the teahouse.

The units were excavated using shovels and trowels by natural layers. Detailed notes, photographs profiles and artifact descriptions were also produced. All artifacts were collected, analyzed, and curated. In addition, a detailed surface reconnaissance was directed within the site vicinity and surrounding areas which revealed the presence of additional historic refuse deposits on the site's eastern slope extending downslope in two lobes and radiating a short distance from its base.

## Results

The excavations recovered a wide range of artifacts dating from the 1930s to relatively modern times. In general, recovered artifacts from units 1A and B located in the back of the teahouse included building hardware, glass pane fragments, wire-cut nails, bottle fragments, tin cans, etc. Four glass bottle manufacturer's maker's marks were noted, but none could offer a definitive date range for the artifacts. One bottle base was manufactured by the Dominion Glass Company of Montreal, Quebec. The bottle mark was in use from 1913 to the present day (Toulouse 1972: 154). A cap label on a clear bottle neck had an embossed coat of arms and the name **JOHN WALKER & SONS LTD KILMARNOCK**, indicating that at least some of the bottle fragments belonged to former whisky bottles. The John Walker & Sons whisky malting company purchased controlling shares in the John Lumb and Co. Ltd. glass manufacturing plant in Castleford, York, England in 1915 thus ensuring a constant supply of bottles for their distilled malt products (Toulouse 1972:282). It is not clear how long after this date the embossed coat of arms was utilized.

The artifacts recovered from the front of the structure in unit 1C were mostly building materials such as pane glass fragments and building hardware such as nails and spikes. The different artifact types noted between the two unit locations is consistent with most historic refuse sites as people are inclined to discard their refuse towards the rear of a structure, while building-related items tend to fall in-place.

The profiles of units 1A/B indicated a thin layer of ash at about 12cm below the sill log sandwiched by layers of fine-grained orange silt (figures 3 and 4). The profile of unit 1C at the structures' front southwest corner indicates a 10cm thick charcoal layer with ash pockets at about 25cm below the sill log. This layer is sandwiched between an upper orange silt and a lower rocky yellow clay matrix (figure 5). The presence of this burn layer on both sides of the structure likely represents a natural burn event such as a forest fire. This is supported by the overlying natural silt layers showing no evidence of human disturbance.

In addition, a large historic refuse deposit was noted approximately 50m off the lodge's east side extending out in at least two lobes from the base of the slope (figure 6). Time did not permit an examination or testing of the deposit or its

material, but informant information (pers.comm: Fran Drummond) indicates the refuse area to have been used over a long time span.

## Summary/Management Direction

The archaeological investigations have added to the baseline structural information at this site as well as established the presence of an artifact base spanning the latter two thirds of the site's occupation. Due to the presence of archaeological material along the front and rear walls of the structure, any future ground disturbance proposed for the Twin Falls Teahouse will require additional mitigative excavation and/or monitoring. The presence of an extensive and as yet unassessed historic refuse area to the east and downslope of the teahouse, any development or disturbances proposed for this area will likewise require additional assessment. Testing of this historical refuse feature will likely greatly contribute to the site's historical knowledge base.

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Figure 1: View of the front face of the Twin Falls Teahouse. Photograph 404T14M.



Figure 2: Units 1A and 1B before excavation. Note join in structure between the earlier log cabin and the later annex. Photograph 404T17M.





Figure 3: Post excavation photograph of excavation unit 1B. Photograph 404T20M.



Figure 4: Post excavation photograph of excavation unit 1A. Photograph 404T21M.



Figure 5: Post excavation photograph of Unit 1C. Photograph 404T22M.



