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Simon Fraser University Special Collections and Rare Books

Finding Aid - Japanese Canadian Blue River Road Camp Collection (MsC-140)

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Japanese Canadian Blue River Road Camp Collection

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Summary information

Repository:	Simon Fraser University Special Collections and Rare Books
Title:	Japanese Canadian Blue River Road Camp Collection
Reference code:	MsC-140
Date:	17 Feb. 1942-10 Nov. 1943 (date of creation)
Date:	17 Feb. 1942-10 Nov. 1943 (date of creation)
Physical description:	35.5 cm of textual records 10 architectural drawings on 5 sheets : pencil on tracing paper
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	Created August 26, 2014 MH
Note [generalNote]:	Sources of information used in the development of the administrative history: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o “Historical overview: Reference timeline.” JapaneseCanadianHistory.net.n.d. http://www.japanesecanadianhistory.net/reference_timeline.htm o “Japanese Canadian Timeline.” Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre. n.d. http://centre.nikkeiplace.org/japanese-canadian-timeline o “The Politics of Racism.” Ann Sunahara. 2000. http://www.japanesecanadianhistory.ca/index.html

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

On December 16, 1941, the Canadian government passed Order-in-Council PC 9760, requiring all persons of Japanese origin in Canada, including those holding Canadian citizenship, to register with the Registrar of Enemy Aliens. The order was passed following the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and the subsequent declaration by Canada of war on Japan. On January 16, 1942, Order-in-Council PC 365 established as a “protected area” all territory within 100 miles of the coast of British Columbia and, on February 7, all male “enemy aliens” between the ages of 18 and 45 were ordered to leave this area by the 1st of April. Under authority granted in Order-in-Council 1486, on February 26 the Minister of Justice ordered all people of “the Japanese race,” nearly 21,000 Japanese Canadians, to evacuate the protected area.

Established by federal Order-in-Council PC1665 on March 4, 1942, the British Columbia Security Commission (B.C.S.C.) was mandated under the supervision of the federal Department of Labour to organize and oversee the evacuation, which was carried out by the RCMP. During the evacuation, 12,029 persons, mainly women and children, were sent to detention camps in the interior of British Columbia;

3,991 individuals were sent as labourers to sugar beet farms in the prairies; 1,161 established themselves in self-supporting communities; 1,359 were granted special work permits; 699 men were interned in prisoner-of-war camps in Ontario; 111 men were kept in detention in Vancouver; and 42 men were sent back to Japan.

Approximately 945 male Japanese Canadian nationals were sent to road work camps along the proposed route of the Yellowhead Highway between Blue River, British Columbia and Jasper, Alberta. The camps were organized by the federal Department of Labour and operated by the Surveys and Engineering Branch of the federal Department of Mines and Resources.

Beginning in the summer of 1942, following the increasing discontent of Japanese Canadian road camp workers and several strikes, some of the more inefficient road camps were closed, and married men were able to transfer to detention camps, such as those at Hope and in the Slocan Valley, where they could be reunited with their families. The remaining road camps stayed open until the end of the war.

Custodial history

The records were salvaged from the CNR railway station in Albreda, British Columbia at the time of its demolition in 1972. They were kept continuously by the same individual until their purchase by Simon Fraser University Library Special Collections and Rare Books in 2013.

Scope and content

Covering the time period from February 1942 to November 1943, the collection consists of records created or received by various staff of the Department of Mines and Resources, Surveys and Engineering Branch in the course of their activities establishing, administering and operating road work camps for evacuated male Japanese Canadian nationals along the proposed route of the Yellowhead Highway between Blue River, British Columbia and Jasper, Alberta. Also included among the files are some records of Department of Public Works staff pertaining to their role in the establishment of the camps, as well as a significant amount of correspondence with the British Columbia Security Commission (B.C.S.C) and related records. In addition to documenting the evacuation of Japanese Canadians from the B.C. coast to interior road work camps and other areas in early 1942, and many of the activities and events that occurred in the camps, the records also provide evidence of the economic and labour conditions in British Columbia during World War II.

Records within the collection pertain to the following road work camps: Albreda, Black Spur, Blacks Spit, Blue River, Gosnell, Grantbrook, Lampriere, Lucerne, Pratt, Pyramid, Rainbow, Red Pass, Red Sands, Tete Jaune / Yellowhead, and Thunder River in British Columbia, and Geikie, Jasper and Decoigne in Alberta. In addition, some records reference detention camps at Greenwood, Kaslo, Lemon Creek, New Denver, Roseberry, Sandon, and Slocan.

Record types include correspondence, reports, lists, nominal rolls, bills of lading, invoices, operational memos, purchase orders, and balance sheets. A significant number of records relate to the establishment and ongoing supply of the road work camps; these include supply orders and invoices, architectural plans for camp buildings, and status and other reports concerning the preparation of camps. Administrative personnel records document the hiring, management and activities of non-Japanese Canadian road camp workers, such as foremen, sub-foremen, and carpenters, and include information pertaining to the previous work and life experiences of these men, their age, 'character,' medical conditions, and home address, as well as positions and wages expected and received.

Many records within the fonds relate to the management of Japanese Canadian road camp workers, including the administration of pay, Workmens' Compensation claims, and payment of assignment fees for dependents; medical and perceived psychological issues and the treatment of such issues; and the movement of Japanese Canadian men between camps and the policies and procedures governing these movements. This includes records pertaining to the granting of temporary leave, transfer to other camps or areas, family re-unification, the release of workers to private jobs, either within B.C. or in another province such as Ontario or Alberta, and the attitudes of certain communities towards Japanese Canadians. Correspondence in several files relates to supervisors' attitudes towards road camp workers, including those identified as agitators or troublesome, and the methods used to deal with them, such as transfer out of camp and the censorship of Japanese Canadian mail. Included also are records relating to the organization and collective resistance of Japanese Canadian road camp workers, their demands, complaints and refusals to work, and the techniques identified to deal with these situations.

Several files include nominal roles and other lists of Japanese Canadian and other road camp workers, including some or all of the following personal information: name, registration number, occupation, previous work experience, age, place of birth, address, marital status, number of dependents, 'physical defects' and medical, dental or mental health issues. Some correspondence from Japanese Canadian road camp workers to camp administrators provides insight into their lives both in camp and prior to evacuation.

Notes

Title notes

- **Source of title proper:** Where files had existing titles, these titles were maintained. Where there was no title for a file a title was created by the archivist based on the contents of the file; such titles have been placed in square brackets. In cases where the original title needed additional information, the supplemented information has been enclosed in square brackets.

Arrangement

Due to the small number of files and the coherence of the records amongst all of the files, as well as the fact that records within the files are not clearly delineated according to function, activity or location, no series were established. The files have been arranged chronologically according to dates of creation.

Restrictions on access

Access to records in this collection is restricted due to personal information. A research agreement must be completed before access is granted. Consult staff for more information.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** published

- **Level of detail:** Full

Access points

- British Columbia Security Commission
- Canada. Department of Public Works.
- Wishart, W.J. (subject)
- Brereton, A.W. (subject)
- Corning, R.M. (subject)
- Cornish, C.R. (subject)
- Mills, T.S. (subject)
- Walker, C.M. (subject)
- Booth, C.V. (subject)
- Eastwood, W.A. (subject)
- Mitchell, J.H. (subject)
- Textual records (documentary form)
- Architectural drawings (documentary form)
- Cultural groups (subject)
- Labour (subject)
- British Columbia (place)
- Alberta (place)
- Ontario (place)
- British Columbia (place)

Series descriptions

Reference code	Title	Dates	Access status	Container
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-1	File - Department of Public Works	17 Feb. 1942-24 Apr. 1942	Access to some records in this file may be restricted due to personal information. Consult staff for more information.	MsC 140 - Box 1 folder 1
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-2	File - No. 2: Employment (foremen and subforemen) [correspondence and related records]	20 Feb.1942-6 Jul. 1942	Access to some records in this file may be restricted due to personal information. Consult staff for more information.	MsC 140 - Box 1 folders 2-4
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-3	File - [Camp organization records]	22 Feb.1942-31 Mar. 1942	Access to some records in this file may be restricted due to personal information.	MsC 140 - Box 1 folders 5-8

			Consult staff for more information.	
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-4	File - Camps	2 Feb.1928-30 Apr. 1942	Access to some records in this file may be restricted due to personal information. Consult staff for more information.	MsC 140 - Box 2 folders 1-3
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-4-1	Item - Notice	[1942]		MsC 140 - Box 2 folder 2
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-4-2	Item - [Architectural drawings for bunk house and mess building]	[1942]		MsC 140 - Box 2 folder 3
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-5	File - Jasper	1 Apr. 1942-28 Apr. 1942	Access to some records in this file may be restricted due to personal information. Consult staff for more information.	MsC 140 - Box 2 folders 4-5
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-6	File - [Camp nominal rolls, correspondence and other records]	3 Apr.1942-22 Jan. 1943	Access to some records in this file may be restricted due to personal information. Consult staff for more information.	MsC 140 - Box 2 folder 6
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-6-1	Item - [Letter] Re: Yellowhead-Blue River project, Japanese nationals	6 Oct. 1942		MsC 140 - Box 2 folder 6
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-6-2	Item - Personnel list - Japanese nationals, Camp 6, Rainbow	[Apr. 1942]		MsC 140 - Box 2 folder 6
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-7	File - [British Columbia Security Commission correspondence]	11 Sep. 1942-29 Jan. 1943	Access to some records in this file may be restricted due to personal information. Consult staff for more information.	MsC 140 - Box 2 folders 7-8 MsC 140 - Box 3 folder 1
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-8	File - [Road camp administration correspondence and related records]	11 Sep. 1942-29 Jan. 1943	Access to some records in this file may be restricted due to personal information. Consult staff for more information.	MsC 140 - Box 3 folders 2-3
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-9	File - [Lempriere Camp]	27 Nov. 1942-10 Nov. 1943	Access to some records in this file may be restricted due to personal information. Consult staff for more information.	MsC 140 - Box 3 folders 4-6
MSC-140-0-0-0-0-10	File - [British Columbia Security Commission correspondence]	12 Jan. 1943-30 Apr.1943	Access to some records in this file may be restricted due to personal	MsC 140 - Box 3 folders 7-9

	information. Consult staff for more information.
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