

Last Spike Stone Cairn

Location: Cliffside Station, Cliffside Road, Shawnigan Lake, BC

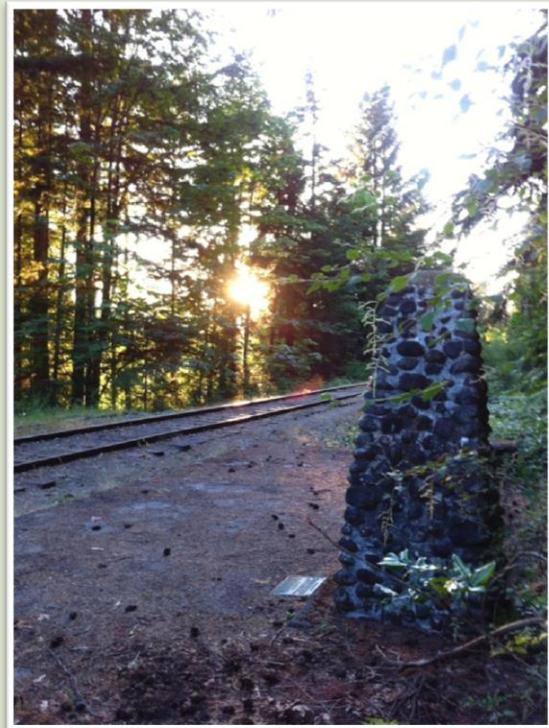
Formally Recognized: 2015/07/08

Other Names: The Last Spike

Construction Dates: 1886



Front View of Last Spike Stone Cairn



Back View of the Last Spike Stone Cairn

Statement of Significance for the Last Spike Stone Cairn

Historic Place

The Last Spike Stone Cairn is a six foot tall stone cairn embossed with two plaques. It is located on the old Cliffside Station site of the E&N Railway, at the top of Cliffside Road, Shawnigan Lake, BC. The historic site includes the stone cairn, the railroad section where the last spike was driven, and the land the site is located on.

Heritage Values

The Last Spike Stone Cairn has significant heritage value as a representation of local achievement in technology. The site is also associated with important historical figures that helped develop the community of Shawnigan Lake. The stone cairn is also a representation of important ideas to the Shawnigan Lake people, such as the idea of providing a lasting transportation link between the central and south island communities.

The Last Spike Stone Cairn has significant heritage value from its association with the first Prime Minister of Canada, Sir John A. MacDonald. The plaque adorning the stone cairn states “August 13th 1886, Last Spike On E. & N. Railway, Driven Here By Sir John A. MacDonald”. It is reported that this was the only visit Sir John A. MacDonald paid to British Columbia, marking the Last Spike Stone Cairn as a hugely important historic site. This historic site was also visited by Robert Dunsmuir, who played a significant role in the development of British Columbia, especially the Cowichan Valley. These two individuals greatly contributed to the development of Shawnigan Lake with their influence on the E&N Railway.

The Last Spike Stone Cairn is a representation of both national and local achievement in technology. On the national scale, this site marks the true completion of Sir John A. MacDonald’s dream: a railway linking coast to coast. On the local scale, it represents the completion of the E & N Railway and the growth of the Cowichan Valley, with the reliable E & N Railway linking the farmlands of the Cowichan Valley to the bustling capital city of Victoria. These two achievements have significant value as they are a source of community pride and character.

The site of the Last Spike Stone Cairn has significant heritage value as it is the location of the original Cliffside Station, a highly important central location for the settlers of the original Shawnigan Lake community. This site symbolizes the cultural importance of the railway to many early settlers of the valley, as the railway provided a direct link to city services not yet found in the developing area.

The second plaque found at the site illustrates the century-long importance of this historic site to the Shawnigan Lake community. It states “August 13th 1986, This Plaque Commemorates The Centennial Of The Driving Of The Last Spike On The Esquimalt And Nanaimo Railway”. This site has been a cultural point of pride for the Shawnigan Lake people and commemorates a highly significant event in the history of the community.

Character-Defining Elements

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Last Spike Stone Cairn include:

- The stone cairn’s position in its original location
- All historic materials dating to time of construction, such as the original plaque and stone pieces
- The past use of the site as an important station for the community
- The unobstructed view of the Last Spike Stone Cairn and old Cliffside Station site from the railroad tracks



View of the Stone Cairn across the tracks

Historical Information

Timeline

- 1884. Construction begins on E&N Railway.
- 1886. August 13th, Sir John A. MacDonald drives last spike into the E&N Railway.
- 1986. The Centennial of the E&N Railway is celebrated with the placement of a new commemorative plaque and bench at the old Cliffside Station site.

Important Facts

- The Last Spike was driven into the railway by Sir John A. MacDonald, the first Prime Minister of Canada. This was also said to be MacDonald's only visit to the west coast of Canada.
- Robert Dunsmuir, the Coal Baron of Vancouver Island, was the founder of the E&N Railway and is said to have been also present at the driving of the Last Spike.



1886 Plaque on the Stone Cairn



1986 Plaque at the foot of the Stone Cairn

Current Information

Function

- The Last Spike Stone Cairn is currently owned and maintained by the Island Corridor Foundation, who also owns the entire E&N Railway.
- The Last Spike Stone Cairn is known to be a tourist and hiking destination, but be aware that this railway is active. Maintenance cars and crews frequent this track, so use caution, avoid walking along the tracks and instead use the hiking trails behind.

Construction

- No Recent Construction.

Heritage Status

- Pending Provincial Recognition.

