

Definition of Heritage Property

The Great Northern Railway Bridge “Red Bridge” located on Highway 97 in Keremeos, British Columbia.

Statement of Significance

1. Description

The bridge is known as Similkameen River Bridge No. 6 at mile 163.8 on the Great Northern Railway’s Cascade Division. It is 942 feet long. The bridge is called a “through timber truss span” with three spans involved in this particular bridge. It was built by Victoria, Vancouver and Eastern Railroad (V.V. and E) in 1907, during the gold mining era. Train service began in December 1909. The railway put an end to horse drawn freight service and led to renewed prosperity at Hedley. The Kettle Valley line was completed between Penticton and Princeton in 1915 and through the Coquihalla to Hope in 1916.

The Red Bridge spans the Similkameen River and is an integral reminder of the bygone time when the V.V. and E. Railway ran up the valley. This line has been abandoned for many years. The Red Bridge is used as a highway bridge to the south side of the river and to the Ashnola. It serves as a passage to the world-renowned Cathedral Lakes Park.

2. Heritage Value

The Red Bridge is the last of three such structures which could be seen in the lower valley only a decade ago. The Red Bridge is one of the only bridges of this type in Western Canada. In greater Canada, the Red Bridge is one of the only covered bridges that remains standing and is still in use by public and industry. The Red Bridge is one of the last historic standing structures in the Similkameen.

3. Character-Defining Elements

The Red Bridge is unique in that its timber structure is enclosed with red painted board sheathing to protect the wood from the elements, and as a result protection from dryness and or wetness and rotting.

4. Image before Restoration



5. Press Release Picture



Historic Red Bridge Ready for the Future

- July 28, 2005

Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon joins Don and Anna Bartlett, owners of Don and Anna's Greenhouse and members of the Red Bridge Heritage Committee; Okanagan Similkameen Regional District Area Director Roger Mayer and residents of Keremeos to unveil the upgraded Ashnola Bridge across the lower Similkameen River. Members of the Red Bridge Heritage Committee, the Okanagan-Similkameen Regional District and Ministry of Transportation staff have worked for two years to restore and upgrade the historic bridge. Known locally as the Red Bridge, the Ashnola Bridge was constructed in 1911. The bridge first served Keremeos and the Ashnola Valley as a railway bridge and more recently as a highway bridge. It is the last remaining covered bridge in the lower Similkameen Valley, one of the last covered bridges in North America and an enduring symbol of the turn of the century Gold Rush in the area.