

Either the federal government will begin to negotiate in good faith with the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en and other First Nations or it will be forced

into litigation once again. For First Nations peoples who are struggling to survive "on the ground" the future is, it seems, still quite shaky!

*Paldi Remembered:
50 Years in the Life of a
Vancouver Island Logging Town*

Joan Mayo

Duncan: Paldi History Committee, 1997.

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(Paldi History Committee,

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At the beginning of this century about 5,000 East Indian men arrived in Canada from the Punjab province in northern India. Virtually all of them were Sikhs who came to British Columbia to do labouring jobs on railway construction, in lumber mills, and in forestry. Being uneducated but physically and spiritually strong they were prepared to work hard in this cold and hostile land and return to India with their savings. Only a few of these men had an education, and they soon recognized the economic opportunities open to them in the forest industry. These men were visionaries and were vital to the economic success of the entire group. *Paldi Remembered* is the story of Mayo Singh, a legend among Canadian Sikhs who became a successful businessman and community leader.

The author, Joan Mayo, Mayo Singh's daughter-in-law, describes him as "a small man, no more than 5'3" in height and, more importantly, not

cut out for hard labour." So he became the "wheeler-dealer" for his people. They supplied the physical labour and he the business acumen, as both these qualities would be needed to succeed in the lumber business.

Mayo Singh gets his start in business in 1912 by operating a potato farm, with thirty-five employees. It failed due to a poor market. Undaunted, he went on to buy a failing lumbermill, and his thirty-five employees became shareholders in Cheam Lumber Company, near Chilliwack. They then went on to buy the Marcum Lumber Company, near New Westminster, mainly for its timber holdings. This search for timber led Mayo Singh to Vancouver Island and brought onto the scene two other educated countrymen: Kapoor Singh, who was summoned from Ontario to become the lumber company's bookkeeper and shareholder, and Rahim, a lawyer, to be their business advisor.

They then built their first mill in 1918 near Duncan, later named Paldi. This becomes the centre of Mayo Singh's business empire. The business did well, the other partners were bought out, and Kapoor Singh remained his sole partner. A community formed around the mill, and it had a schoolhouse, a temple, and separate living areas and bunkhouses for the Japanese, Chinese, White, and East Indian workers. Mayo relates many stories of community harmony. There are so many of these stories of compassion between the nationalities it would seem that there was little evidence of racial prejudice in the workplace in 1918. But down the road, in the town of Duncan, the situation differs. Even Mayo Singh could not get a room in a hotel or get a haircut at the White barbershop.

The lumber business continued to do well despite several mill fires, and Mayo Singh's empire grew. In 1925 he returned to India to get married; he returned with his wife Bishan Kaur, and his family life began. There are many interesting stories of temple events, children growing up, neighbours, business associates, and com-

munity characters. I especially enjoyed the story of his Rolls Royce, which he had modified to ride the rails so that he could inspect his logging operations.

The good use of photographs helps to tell the story of Paldi as well. Many are very rare and have never been seen outside the Mayo family. The International Woodworkers of America Local 1-80 in Duncan could make good use of the work and mill photos by adding them to their collection. The school photos add yet another dimension to this story, bringing in a sense of future growth.

But this growth did not last, and today the town of Paldi is deserted. The story of its decline is not presented with the same clarity as is its growth. Perhaps being a member of the family makes it difficult to write about these events. The chronology is confusing in Chapters 34, 35, and 36, which deal with events during the war years. Mayo's temple stories are very interesting, as are her insights into the lives of the women in this very unique Vancouver Island community. This book is a significant addition to the history of local communities in British Columbia.