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Province of
British Columbia

Ministry of
Provincial Secretary
and Government Services

Heritage Conservation Branch
Parliament Buildings
Victoria
British Columbia
V8V 1X4
387-6956

July 6, 1979

Members of the
Historical General Committee

Re: New Denver Japanese Internment Houses

This item had been returned to the Branch at the June 1 meeting of the Historical General Committee. I have attached a brief memo from Don Tarasoff and a site plan that should clarify any ambiguities.

Art Charlton

A. S. Charlton, Chief
Research and Planning Division

ASC/dh
encl.

P.S. - Have also enclosed Vol. II + III of
the Herbert report on plaguing.

- Will send copies of June 1 H.G.C.
went final draft is typed ... have
been held up as secretarial staff
working on Trust business.

Art

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To: Art Charlton
Chief
Research and Planning Division

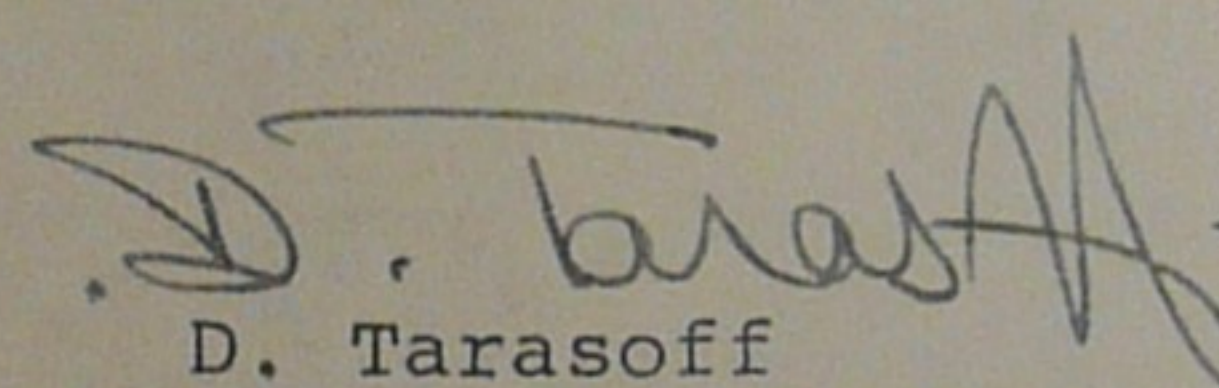
Date: June 28, 1979
FILE:

Re: Japanese Internment Houses, New Denver

I have re-read our Report of March 28, 1979, on the Japanese internment houses at New Denver. Regrettably, it could be ambiguous; in the opening paragraph we discuss three internment houses owned by B.C.B.C., but on page 8 we introduce another internment house adjacent to the Community Centre. It is this latter house, which we only discovered after the historical portion of the Report was written, which is proposed for preservation.

Any ambiguities should be resolved through reference to the attached site plan of the Japanese area of New Denver.

I have ^{enclosed} 12 blue prints of this plan, should you wish to send copies to the Board or Trust.


D. Tarasoff
Research Officer

DT:nk

Encl.

cc: B. Till

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JAPANESE INTERNMENT HOUSES
NEW DENVER

These mountains now,
New Denver, rise up round a slow lake windblown sometimes, seeming to
go nowhere. By Carpenter Creek, Orchard so humanly overgrown, a
ghetto for evacuees: small shacks again crammed side by side,
brown shingled this time, fronting the lake. Two thousand Japanese
in a few square blocks. Uprooted from the flats, the muddy river,
saltwind. Trucked in or deported by train to landlocked winter
where the clear air, frozen water's good for TB they say
(hemorrhaged in Hastings Park building human pens), "It was a
good experience." "How can you say that?" "For the next generation.
Look at my daughter, she's a pharmacist!"

And so curiously pulled out of
the delta's restraining ring of debt broken by mass theft
(seizure at government level), these impoverished "enemies of
the state," transplanted & forced into new growth, shed a
mass of memoirs that evidence their real estate the four
walls testify to, over the years, room after room added, still
not finished.

To the man who gardens, cares for
the old folks' home, caretaker of the ghetto water tower (invisible
geese under one arm), marker of past loves & past faces gone
with a river cresting, Immoveably settled here like some crustacean
in this valley where nothing runs to sea except the water, "one of
the few remaining lakes of B.C. . . . sufficiently pure & unpolluted"
to drink from / To: the pool, the still lake of our muddy &
intermingled present.

- Spud Matushita

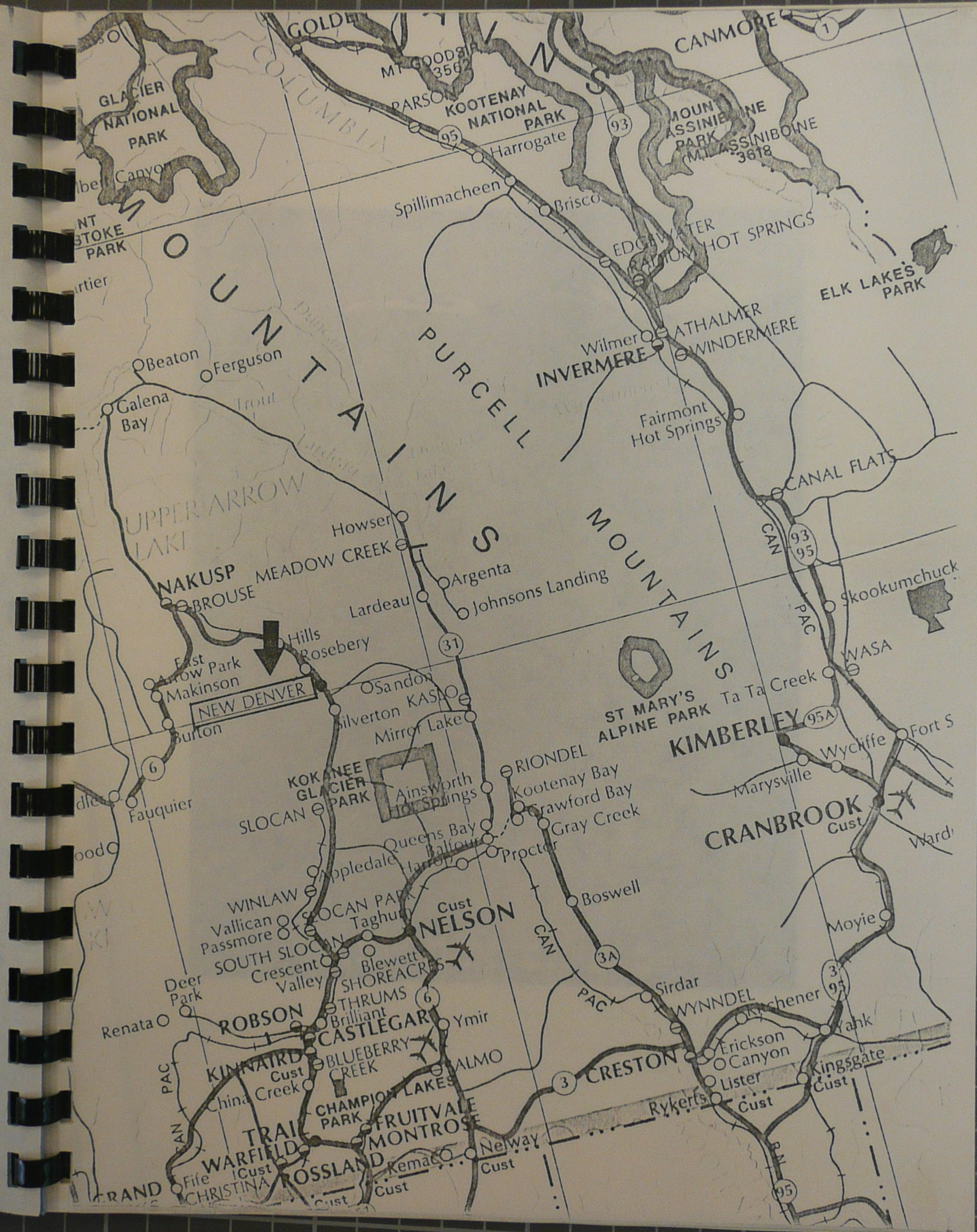
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NEW DENVER B.C.

JAPANESE INTERNMENT HOUSES, NEW DENVER

Introduction

There are three 1942 Japanese Internment houses on the B.C.B.C. property in New Denver. They are identified as A-category structures in the Heritage - B.C.B.C. Report. These buildings are scheduled for demolition by September, 1979, to make way for a Health Care Centre. Rather than demolish them, the New Denver Health Care Society has recommended that one or more buildings be re-located and preserved within the local Japanese community.

History

Attracted by fishing off the British Columbia Coast, from 1877, Japanese immigrated to Canada, settling in the Fraser Valley and the southern coastal areas. By World War II, Canadian-born Japanese (Nisei) outnumbered immigrants (Issei) by three-to-one. Among the immigrants, over half were Canadian citizens.¹

In March, 1941, as a precautionary measure, Japanese in Canada were required to register with the police. However, following the December 11, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbour, all Japanese were classified as aliens and their newspaper offices and language schools were closed.

¹ The Dominion Bureau of Statistics for June 2, 1941 recorded 16,848 Canadian-born Japanese living in B.C.; there were 5,248 Japanese in B.C. born in Japan. Of these, by December 31, 1944, 3,288 were naturalized Canadians, according to the Dept. of Labour Report for that date.

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On January 13, 1942, by order of the Dominion Government, Japanese fishing boats were impounded; on February 28, all vehicles, weapons and cameras were confiscated by the authorities.²

Initially, the authorities planned to evacuate only Japanese males between ages 18 and 45 from the coastal defense area.³ In February-March, 1942, the Provincial Department of Public Works set up a number of Japanese work camps for road-building in the Interior. However, the alarming success of the Imperial Japanese forces in the Pacific, their occupation of islands in the Aleutians, and decades of anti-oriental prejudice in British Columbia, induced the Dominion Government to order the evacuation of all Japanese, regardless of legal and civic status, from the coastal defense area.⁴ On March 4, 1942, the British Columbia Security Commission was created to carry out the evacuation.

With Hastings Park in Vancouver as a transit centre, the Commission dispatched Japanese to a variety of remote interior towns, particularly those with numbers of unoccupied or derelict buildings, such as Sandon, Kaslo, Greenwood, Slocan City and New Denver.⁵

²British Columbia Security Commission Report, October, 1942, p.3

³Order-in-Council, P.C. 365, Jan. 16, 1942. The defense area was defined as extending from the Pacific Ocean and all off-shore islands to the Cascade Mountains.

⁴Order-in-Council, O.C. 1665, 1666, Feb. 26, 1942.

⁵The B.C. Security Commission consulted with the local authorities before the Japanese were interned in these towns. With few exceptions, there was little prejudice against the Japanese. See Joseph C. Harris, "Notes and memories of the coming of the Japanese to the Slocan Lake country, 1942: Their reception by the inhabitants, their reactions, etc." P.A.B.C., Add. Mss. 807. March, 1944.

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During April-May, over 1,000 Japanese carpenters, plumbers and electricians prepared the buildings for occupation.⁶ Nevertheless, by late spring only two-thirds of the 23,480 Japanese in Vancouver had been evacuated. Of these, the majority were men. Consequently, on June 24, 1942, the commission announced its intention to build houses in the Slocan Valley.⁷

New Denver Internment Camp

In 1942, New Denver, formerly a mining town, had 350 residents, principally miners and farmers. The Commission leased the 80 acre Harris Ranch, a half-mile south of town. In late July or early August some 30 Japanese tradesmen arrived from Slocan City. Plans called for 200 houses to be built in the ranch's "Orchard", with an additional 75 at Roseberry, 16 miles north.⁸

⁶"Arrow Lakes Weekly", April 16, 1942. K. Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was. Toronto, (1976), p. 252.

⁷"Nelson Daily News", July 22, 1942. K. Adachi, op. cit., p. 252. J.C. Harris, op. cit., claims a factor in the building of the family houses was the refusal of some Japanese on road construction to leave their quarters without the prospect of being re-united with their families. New houses were built in Slocan City, New Denver and the adjacent areas of Lemon Creek and Roseberry; no new houses were built in Kaslo, Greenwood or Sandon, cf. B.C. Security Commission Report, op. cit., p. 12. The Report has a numerical distribution of the Japanese on Oct. 31, 1942:

Road Camp Projects	986
Sugar Beet Projects	
Alberta	2,585
Manitoba	1,053
Ontario (males only)	350
Interior Housing	11,694
Self-Supporting Projects	1,161
Independent and Industrial Projects	431
Special Permits	1,337
Repatriation to Japan	42
Evacuated voluntarily prior to March 1942	579
Internment Camps	699
In Detention, Vancouver	57
Hastings Park Hospital	105
	<u>21,079</u>

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spud Matsushita

4thbl jarved wen



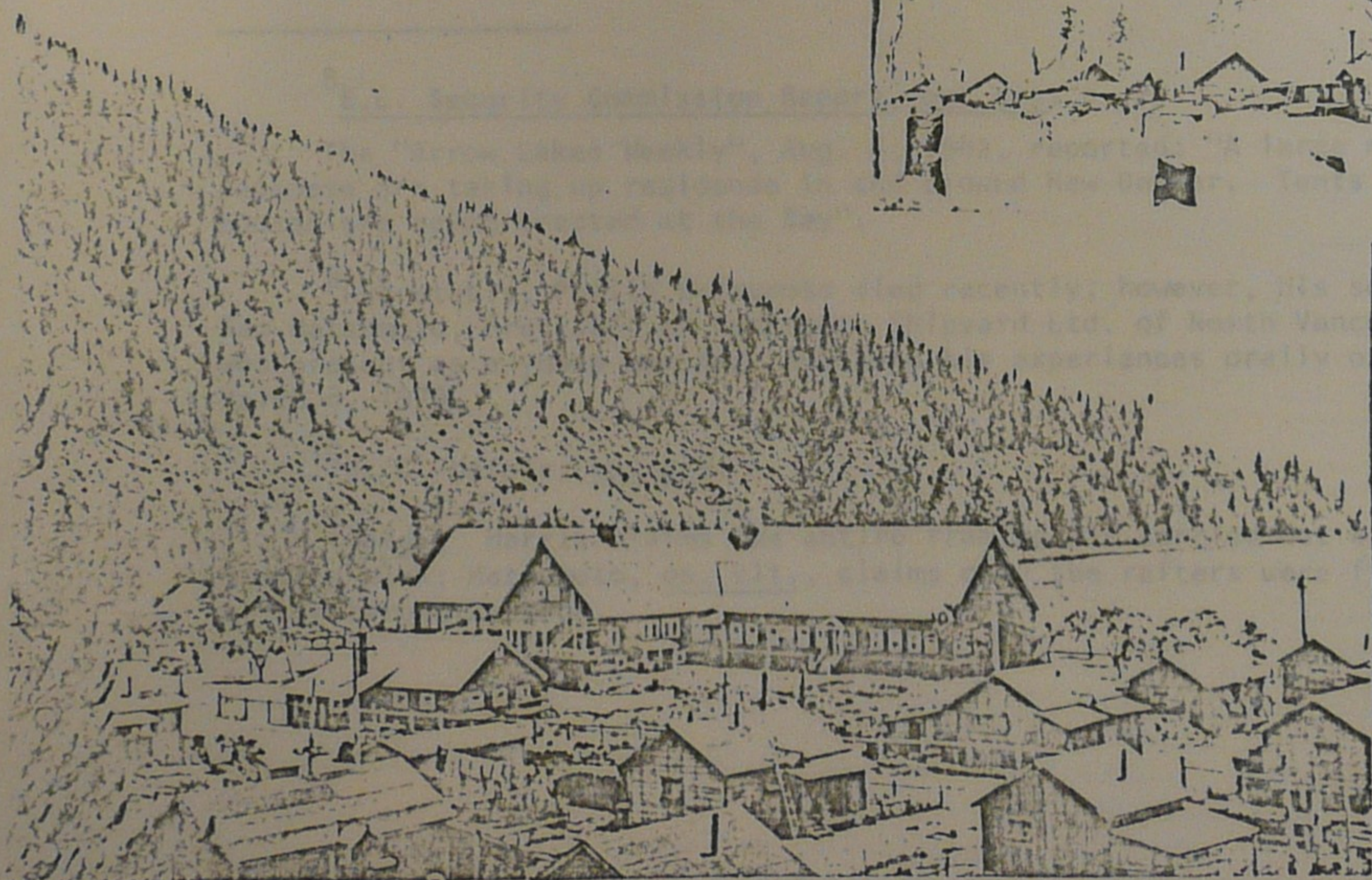
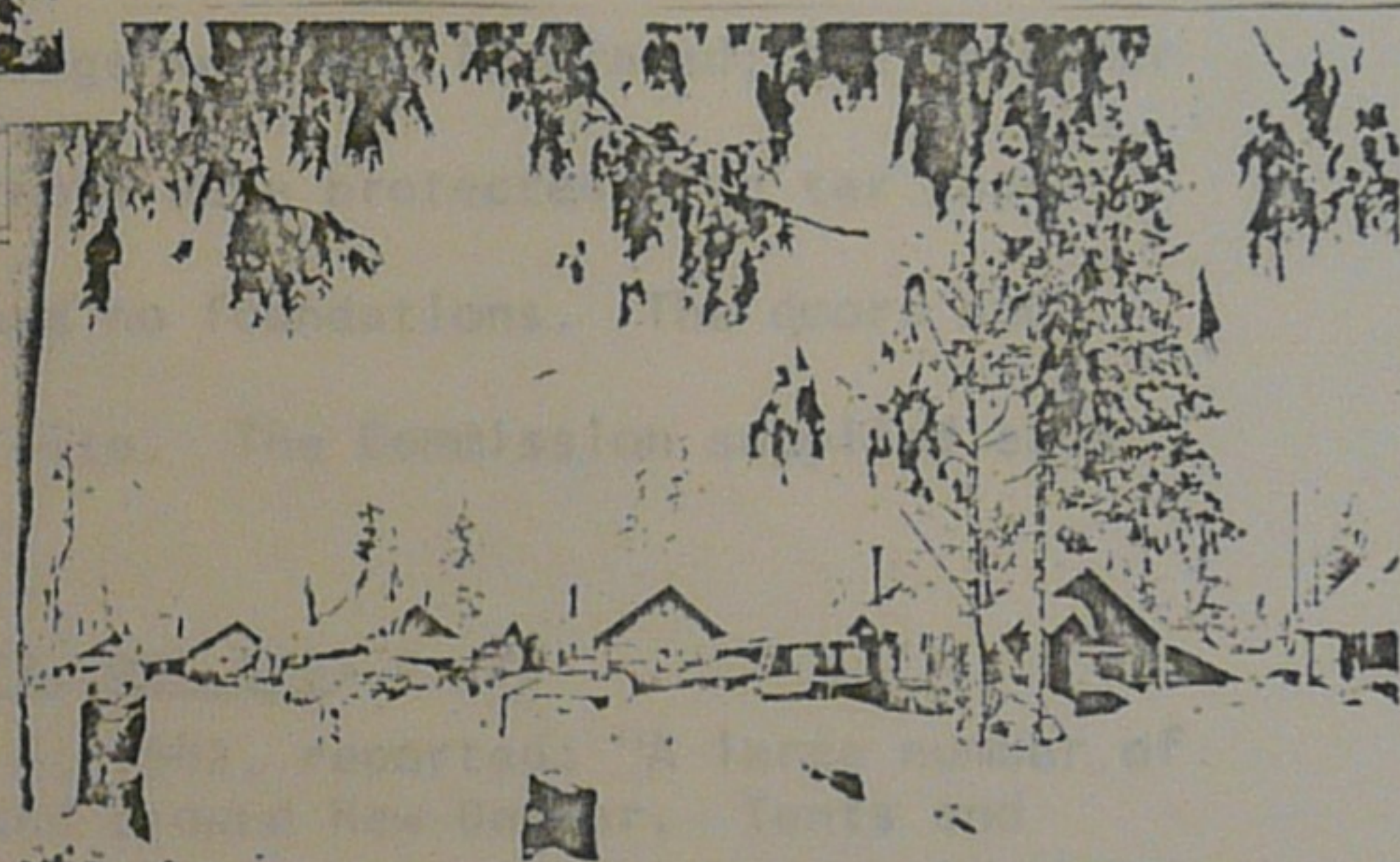
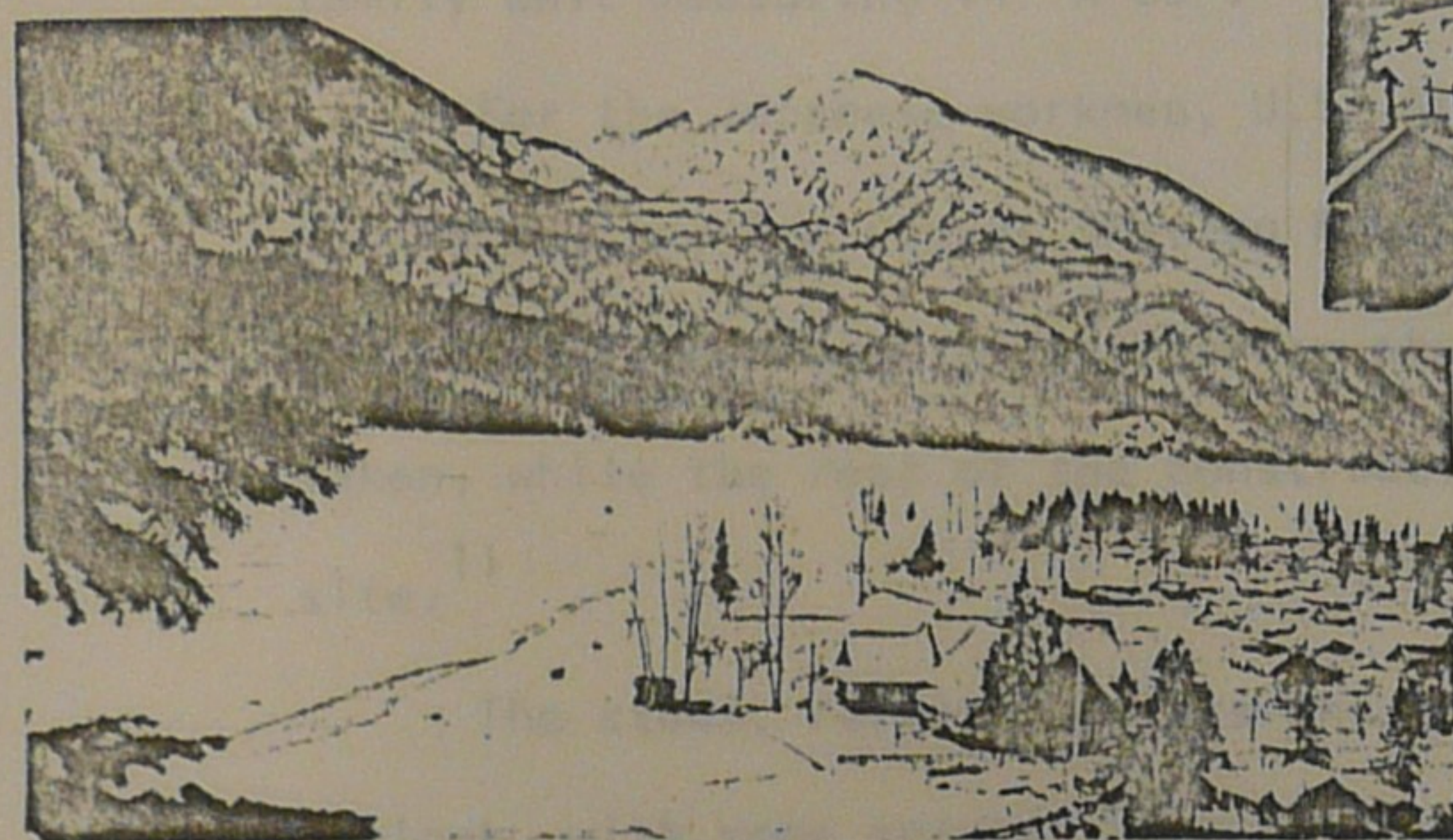
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— spud Matushita

The prototypes of the internment houses were built adjacent to the Security Commission office in Slocan City. These were designed and constructed by Philip Matsumoto in consultation with the authorities. Because of differences in family sizes, two standard plans were adopted: the larger, two-family house measuring 14' x 28'; and a smaller single family unit measuring 14' x 20'.⁹

For the Japanese workmen, U.S. Army tents were set up in the "Orchard"; the New Denver Skating Rink, leased from the town, served as a mess hall, barracks and carpentry shop.¹⁰ Here the framing was undertaken, while the rest of the construction was completed on the building site.¹¹

The studs, rafters, joists and exterior shiplap were mostly green hemlock, with some spruce. The buildings were not insulated; the interior walls were covered with paper. The roofs were protected with tar paper; there were no ceilings. The houses had no foundations. The doors and windows were shipped complete to the site. The Commission supplied each

⁸ B.C. Security Commission Report, op. cit. p. 23.

The "Arrow Lakes Weekly", Aug. 6, 1942, reported: "A large number of Japanese are taking up residence in and around New Denver. Tents and houses are being erected at the Bay".

⁹ Regretably, Philip Matsumoto died recently; however, his son, Sam Matsumoto, President of Matsumoto Shipyard Ltd. of North Vancouver, was present as a young man and recounted his experiences orally on March 6, 1979.

¹⁰ J. C. Harris, op. cit.

¹¹ Ibid., Harris claims the entire framing was carried out at the skating rink; Matsumoto, op. cit., claims only the rafters were framed at the carpentry shop.

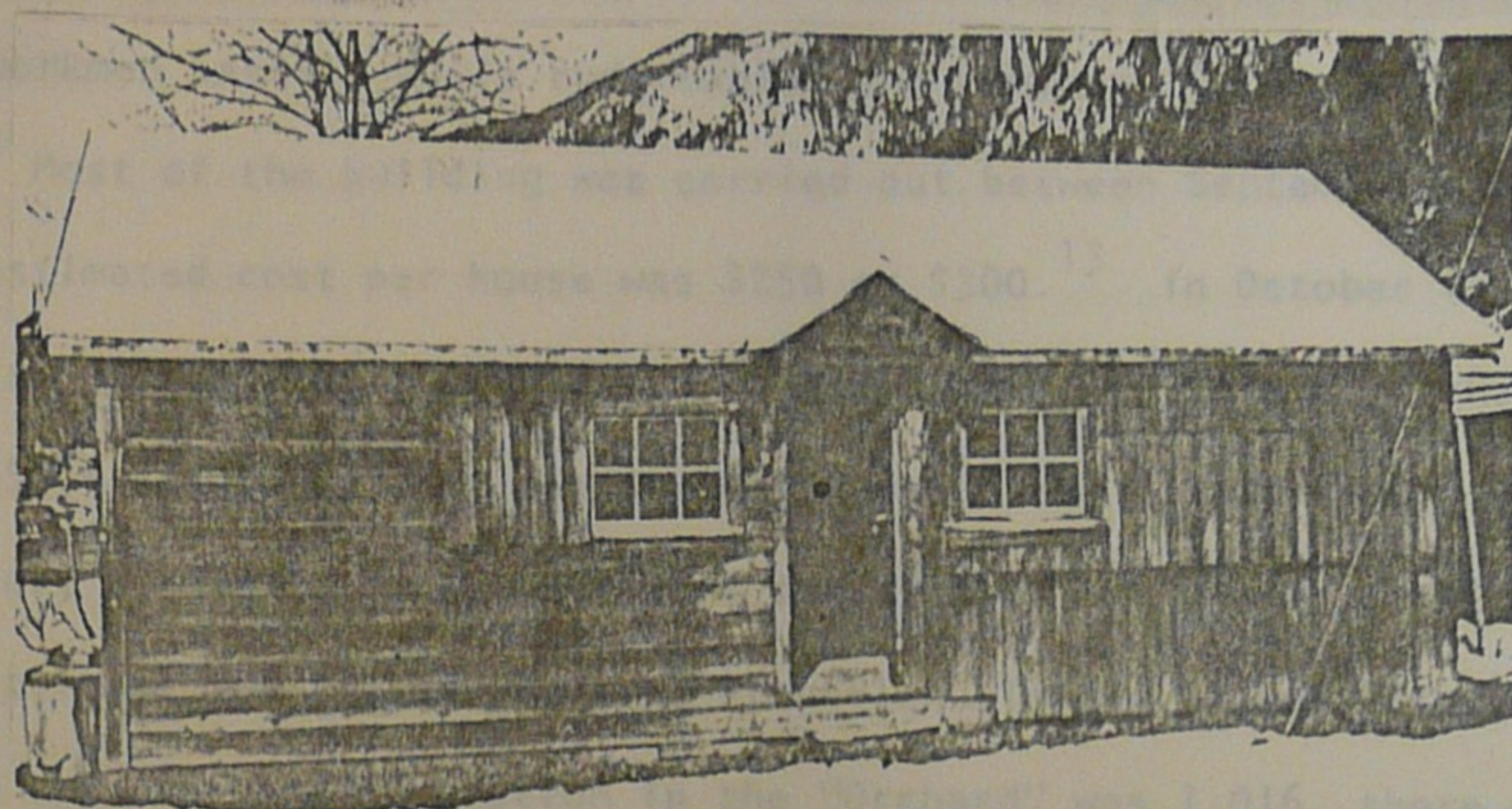
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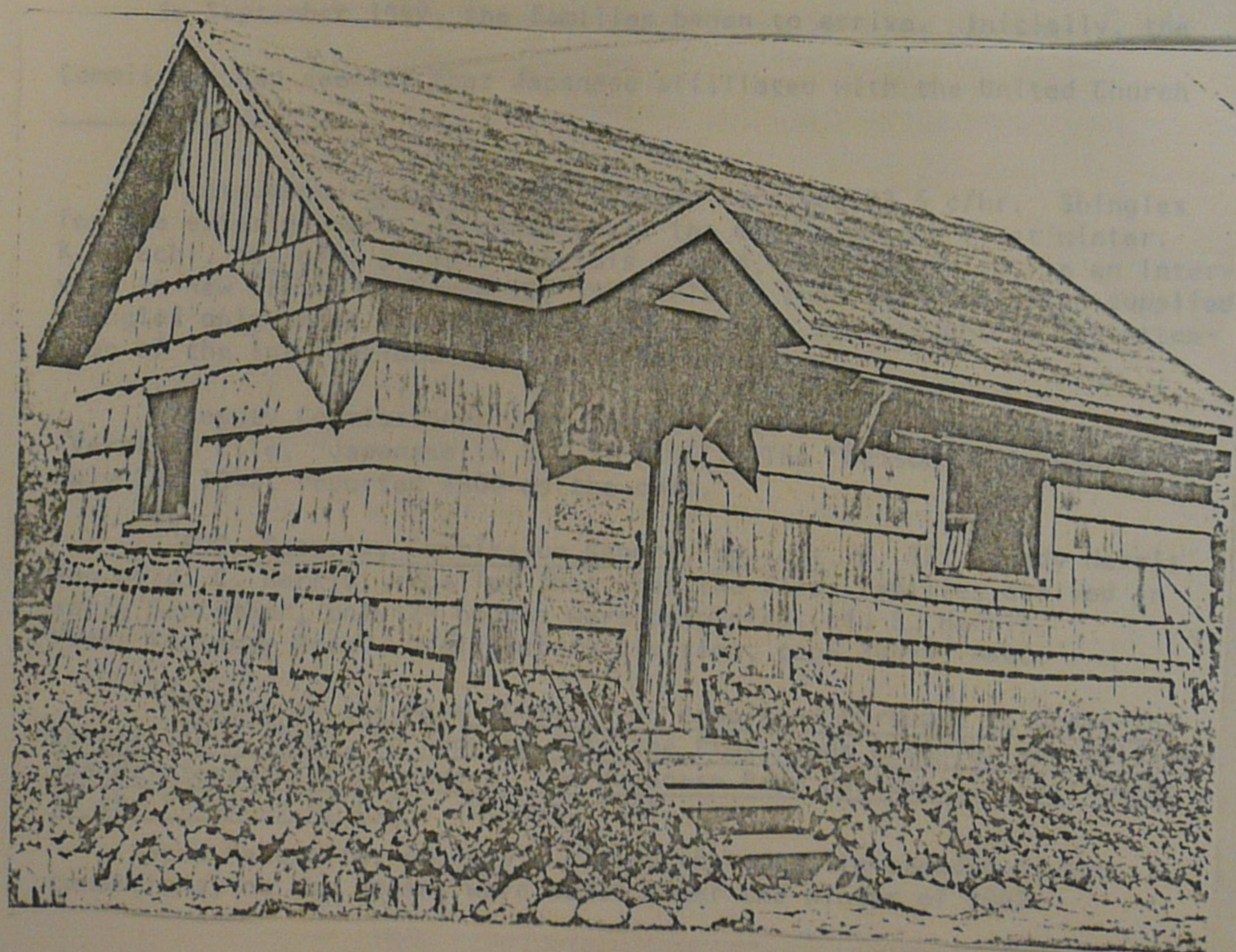
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(HCB)

A two-family dwelling No.37A



(S. Matushita)

A single-family dwelling
New Denver, 1944

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house with a heater, a cook stove, a wooden sink and straw mattresses. The workmen hastily built rude tables and benches.¹²

Most of the building was carried out between September and October. The estimated cost per house was \$250 or \$300.¹³ In October 1942, the Commission reported that 200 houses had been built in the "Orchard", and 75 in Roseberry; 244 single-family units and 31 two-family units.¹⁴ However, a Royal Commission Report compiled in the winter of 1943-44, in outlining the "Actual Housing Situation" in New Denver, stated that while the Japanese population in the "Orchard" was 1,016, there were only 148 houses (52 short of the Commission's figure), with 124 two-family dwellings and only 24 single-family dwellings (an average of seven persons per house).¹⁵

In September 1942, the families began to arrive. Initially, the Commission had decided that Japanese affiliated with the United Church

¹²Matsumoto, *op. cit.* The workmen received 22.5 ¢/hr. Shingles for the exterior were not added until the middle of the first winter. K. Adachi, *op. cit.* p. 254. In this regard, Spud Matushita, in an interview in New Denver on March 12, 1979, claims that the Commission supplied shingles only after the plight of the Japanese was brought to the attention of the International Red Cross in Geneva.

¹³Deputy Commissioner John Shirras gave \$250 as the cost per unit (Vertical File, "Japanese in B.C.", PABC). The "Nelson Daily News", July 22, 1942, reported \$300 as the cost.

¹⁴B.C. Security Commission Report, *op. cit.* p. 12. Sandy Harris, son of J. C. Harris, recalled that when the first families arrived in early September, only 24 houses were completed, cf. S. Harris, "West Kootenay Area", Oral History Division, tape 345-4, PABC.

¹⁵Report on the Royal Commission Appointed Pursuant to Order-in-Council, P.C. 9498, To Enquire Into the Provisions Made for the Welfare and Maintenance of Persons of the Japanese Race Resident in Settlement in the Province of B.C., Ottawa, 1944.

Spud Matushita, *op. cit.*, claims that despite crowded living conditions, no new houses were built after the winter of 1942.

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of Canada would settle in New Denver, with Anglicans in Slocan City and Buddhists in Sandon. Their intention was only partially achieved.

Although the Japanese internees formed a committee to co-operate with the authorities, their living conditions were deplorable. The hastily constructed dwellings were scarcely adequate for the rigors of the winter. Built from green timber, the boards shrunk, creating drafts. Some Japanese tacked cardboard on the walls. For heat the Commission provided a small stove, but stove pipes were scarce. Fuel for the stove was green.¹⁶ At night, the moisture from breathing would condense on the roof boards, dropping back on the bedding. Some placed their coal oil lamps under the beds for warmth. A missionary for the United Church in New Denver has written:

On an early morning visit to a family I had known well in Vancouver, I found the lady of the house sweeping up some greyish-looking stuff from the floor and putting it into a bucket. When I asked her what it was she replied: "Oh, this is the frost we have to scrape off the walls every morning. We usually get about two buckets of it."¹⁷

Electricity was installed in the spring of 1943. Each room had a 25 watt bulb. During the winter there were regular power cuts to the camp when the town needed the current. Before electrification, the Commission supplied candles and coal oil lamps - a situation described by the 1944 Royal Commission as "unimaginably inconvenient".

¹⁶ A small mill was set up at Roseberry, where the Japanese cut 20,000 cords of wood the first winter. cf. B. Broadfoot, Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame (Toronto, 1977) pp. 184-185.

¹⁷ Gwen Suttle, "With the Nisei in New Denver", B.C. Historical News, Feb. 1972, p. 17.

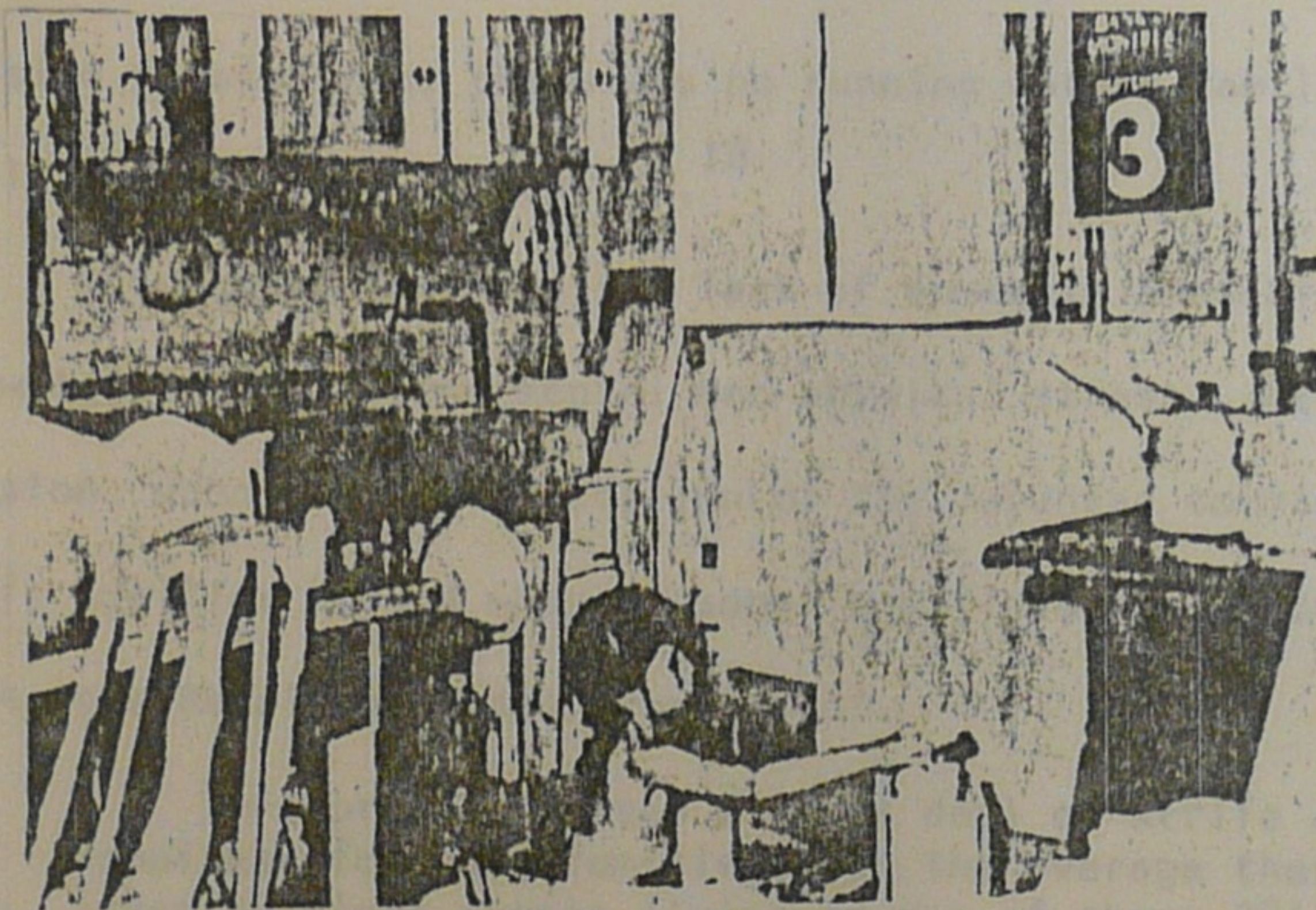
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In a small, crowded house a little girl takes her bath in a washtub.
(UBC Special Collection)

In Tashme camp, families, living two to a hastily built shack, had to share a common kitchen. (Public Archives of Canada)



B. Broadfoot, Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame.

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Although each house had a wooden sink, which drained into an outside grease trap, there was no running water; families had to wait in line at outside standpipes.¹⁸

Inadequate housing, the lack of domestic amenities and overcrowding led to severe mental and physical stress. At most, the Commission, upon the recommendation of the Japanese committee, would shift families around when personal conflicts became too great. In 1944, the Royal Commission concluded:

This problem caused a great deal of strife and unhappiness for many families. On the average there are from seven to eight people living in one of these 28' x 14' houses. They all eat and sleep and work in these houses. This congested living is not conducive to the people's health and morale. Also, the necessity for two families to share the kitchen sink and cook stove, etc. is bound to cause much misunderstanding and unhappiness.

At least a few Japanese suffered mental breakdowns.

At the end of the war, the internees were offered a choice of repatriation to Japan or re-location in eastern Canada. A few refused to leave New Denver; of those who left, some came back. At present there are about 60 Japanese Canadians in New Denver. Most are retired.

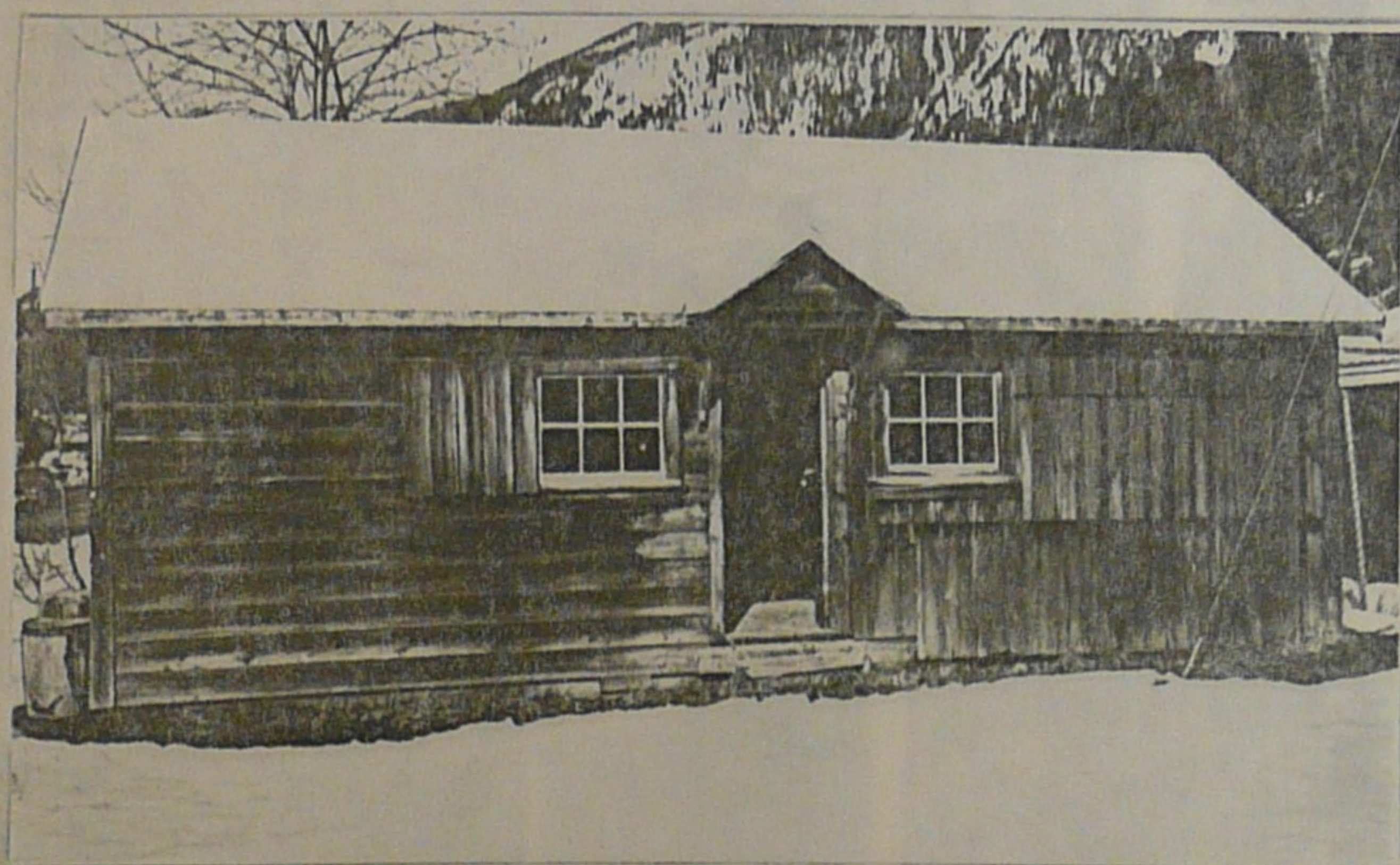
Site Survey

There are three Japanese internment houses on the grounds of the New Denver Extended Care Unit. All were two-family dwellings. These were moved from Block 3, Lots 8, 9 and 10, on Josephine Street, in 1958. The houses have been used for the storage of tools and hospital supplies.

Of the three houses, the most easterly, originally No. 37A, is in the least altered condition. Although the stove, sink, bunks and fur-

¹⁸Spud Matushita, op. cit.

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37 A



37 A

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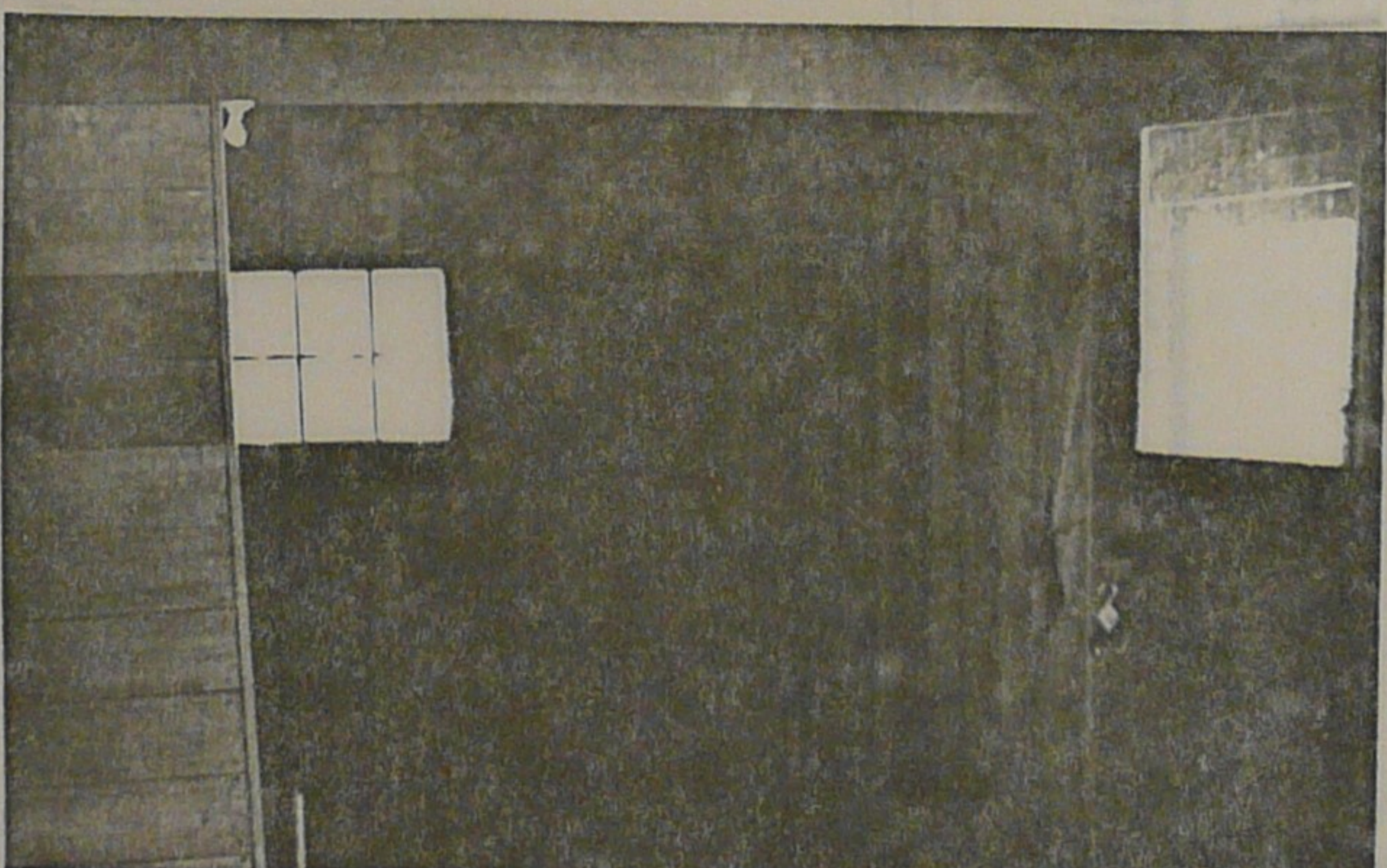
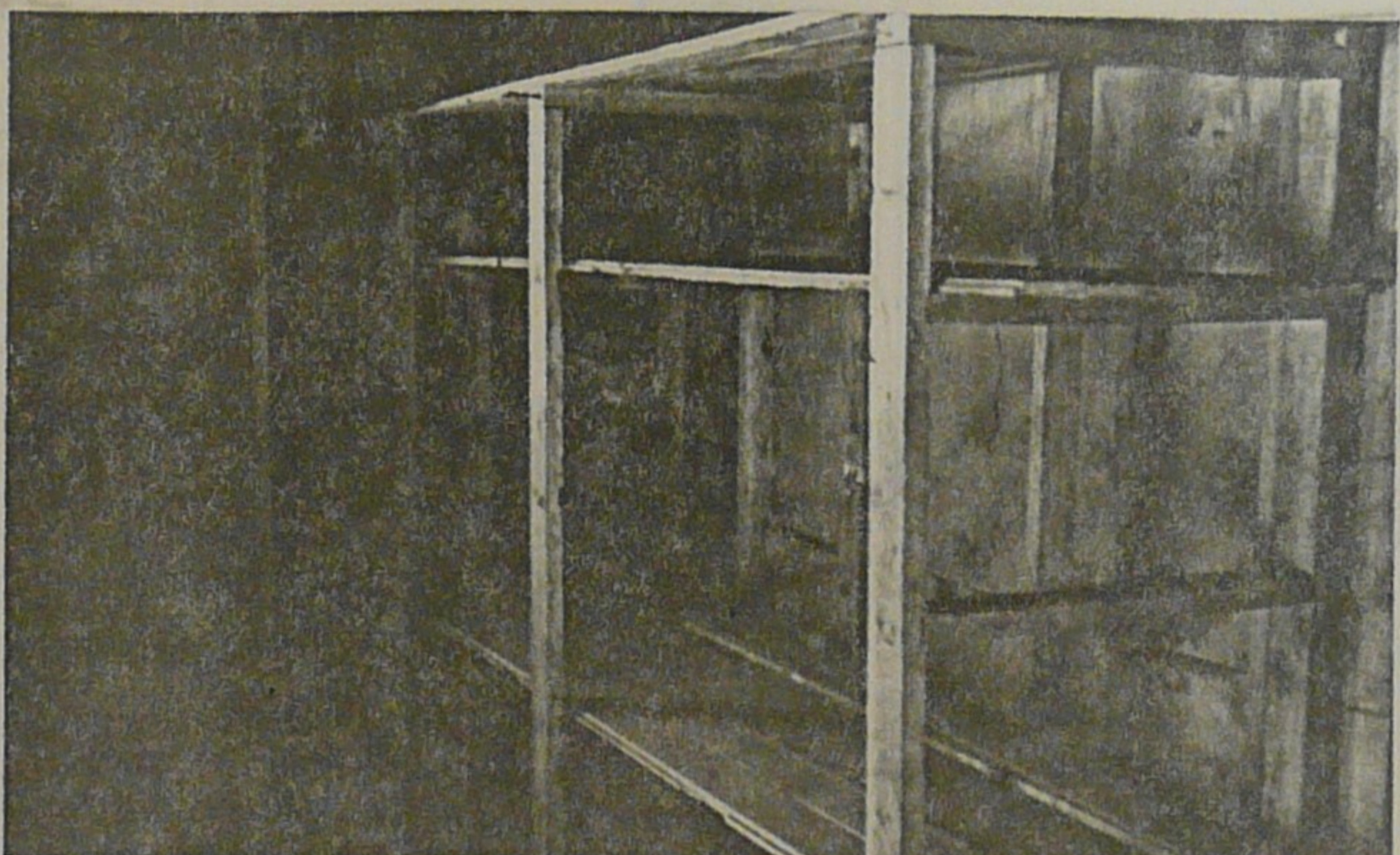
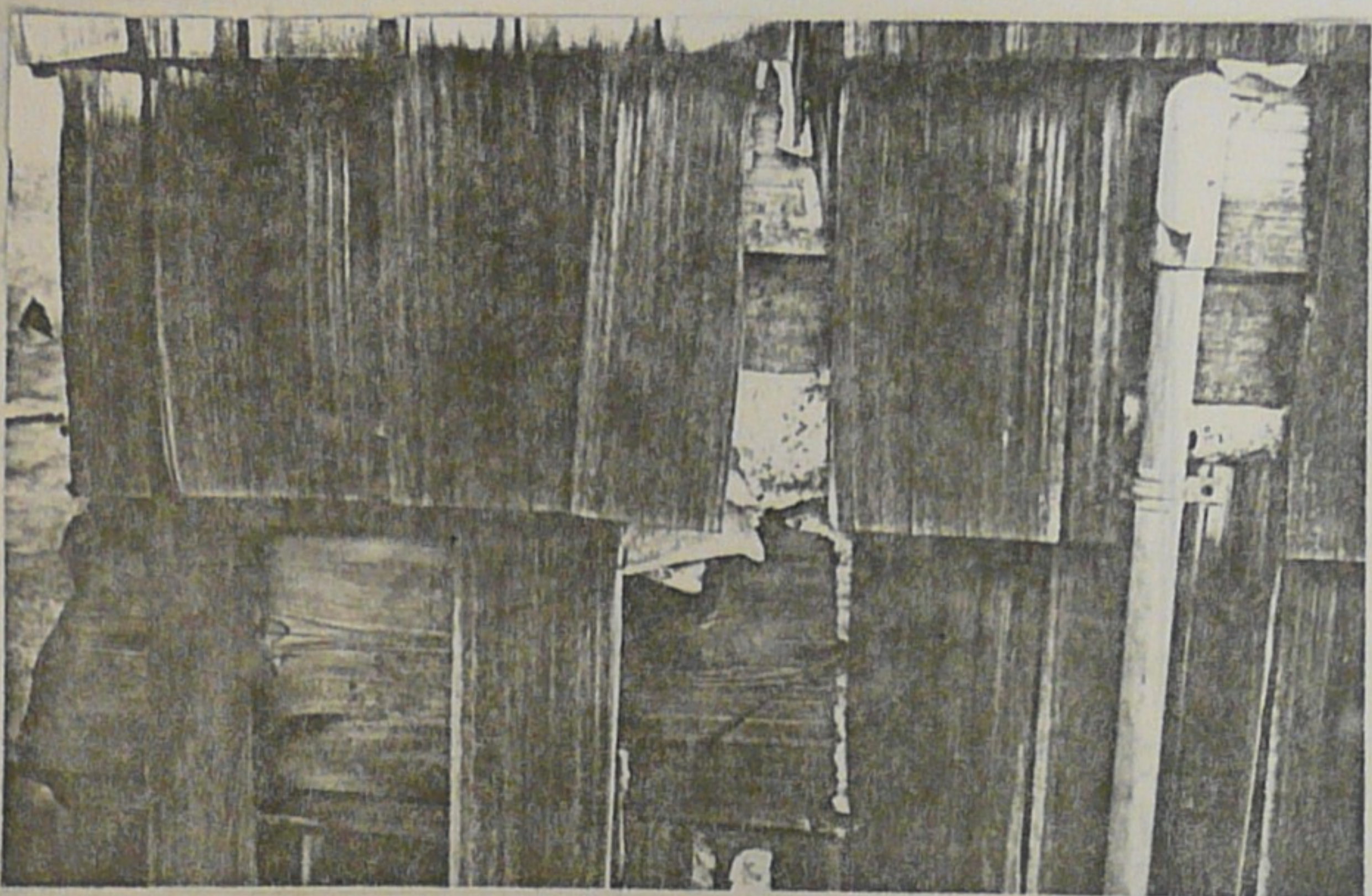
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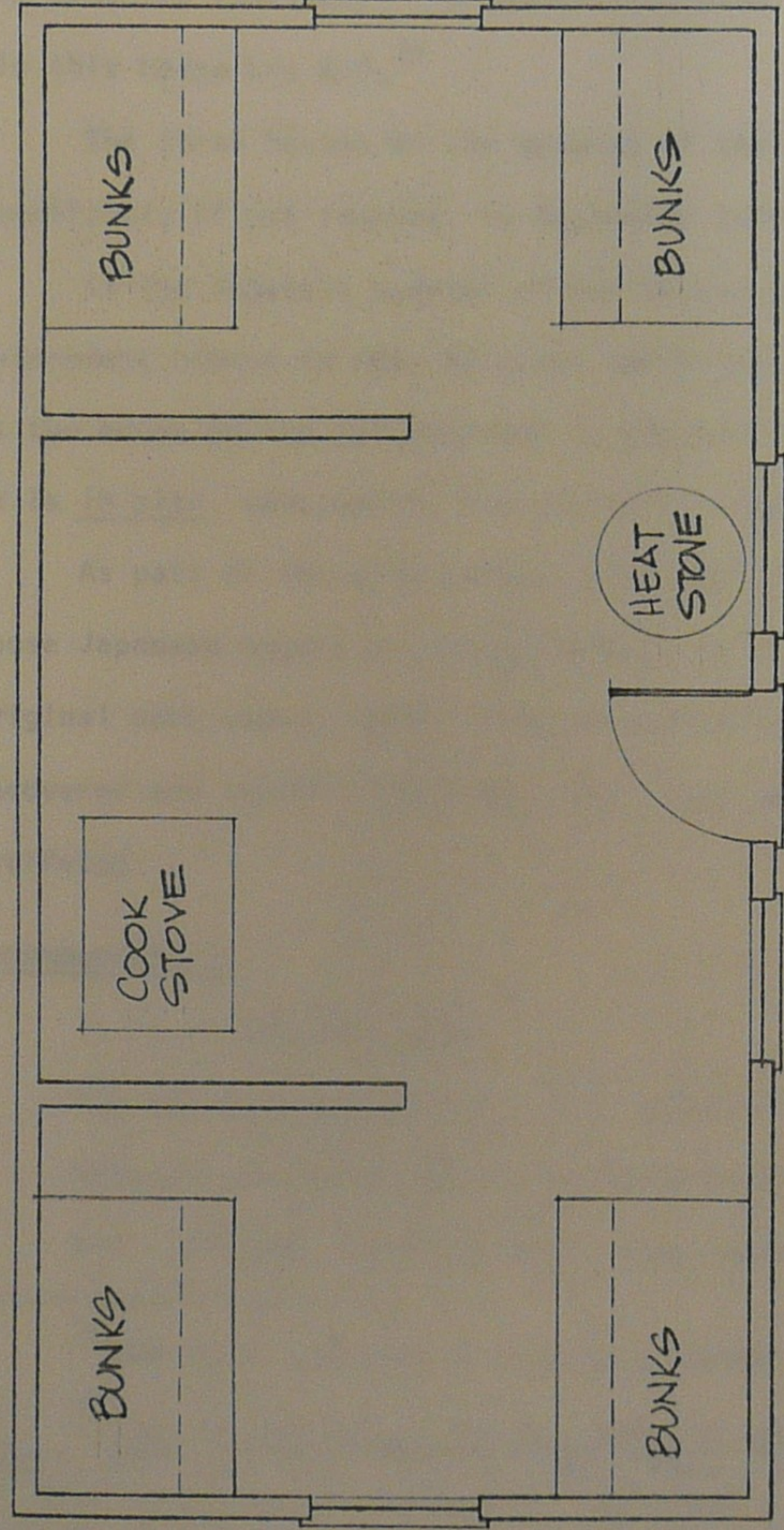
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NEW DENVER, B.C.

TWO FAMILY INTERNMENT HOUSE



FEET
8 4 2 0
SCALE

nishings have been removed, the wiring, shingles, windows and door (although a glass panel has been added) are original.

This house was shared until the early 'Fifties by the Koyanagi and Isoshima families.¹⁹ A subdivision plan for 1956 shows a Kamakawo in this house Lot E-9.²⁰

The three houses on the grounds of the Extended Care Unit will be demolished, if not removed, by September 1979.

In the Japanese quarter of New Denver there are a few other internment houses in near original condition. Of particular interest is the house on the lot adjacent to the new Japanese Community Centre. It is in situ, unoccupied, but privately owned.

As part of the site survey, a collection was made of artifacts in those Japanese houses on the grounds of the Extended Care Unit. An original cook stove, tools, articles of clothing and crockery were recovered and stored. No doubt, the local Japanese have additional artifacts.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The Heritage Trust or B.C.B.C. acquire the lot and internment house adjacent to the Japanese Community Centre at an estimated cost of \$10 - \$15,000. Failing this, that house No. 37A be moved to the

¹⁹Tad Mori, New Denver interview, March 12, 1979.

²⁰Plan of New Denver Project Showing Location of Houses on Subdivision, Boyd C. Affleck, BCLS, July 6, 1956. This plan is in the possession of Mr. Spud Matushita of New Denver. It gives a detailed description of the location of the internment houses and their occupants in 1956.

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grounds of the Japanese Community Centre. This is a less desirable alternative because house 37A is not in situ, and there is scarcely room for it on the grounds of the Community Centre.

2. The Heritage Conservation Branch co-operate with the Kyowakai Society of New Denver to ensure the authentic restoration and interpretation of a two-family internment house. In addition, this house should have a concrete foundation and protective outer shelter.
3. The Heritage Conservation Branch co-operate with the Kyowakai Society of New Denver to create a small Japanese museum/archives in their Community Centre.
4. The Village of New Denver be requested to maintain the Japanese internment house.
5. The Kyowakai Society of New Denver be requested to interpret their history for the public.
6. A copy of this proposal be sent to the Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association in Vancouver for their information and possible comment.
7. Total costs should not exceed \$30,000.

J. Boss
J. Boss
Research Officer

/nk
March 28, 1979

D. W. Tarasoff
D. W. Tarasoff
Research Officer

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Matushita, Spud, "New Denver Internment Camp," March 12, 1979. Heritage Conservation Branch.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mrs. Chie Kamegaya, President, Kyowakai Society of New Denver.

Mr. Tad Mori, New Denver.

Mr. Spud Matushita, New Denver.

Mr. S. Matsumoti, President, Matsumoto Shipyards, Ltd., North Vancouver.

Mr. K. Pattison, B.C.B.C., New Denver

Mr. N. Manson, Regional Manager, B.C.B.C., Nelson.

Poem at frontispiece - Daphne Marlatt and Robert Minden, Steveston, (Vancouver, Talonbook, 1974), p. 68.

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d.p.fairbank
architects

nelson, b.c., 404 vernon st., v1l 4e5, ph. (604) 352-5371
invermere, b.c., 1202-7th ave., v0a 1k0, ph. (604) 342-9431

March 14, 1979
Nelson, B.C.

MAR 20 1979

Heritage Conservation Bureau
Research and Planning Division
765 Broughton Street
Victoria, B.C.

ATT: Mr. Don Tdrasoff

RE: Japanese Huts, New Denver, B.C.

The New Denver Health Care Society is acquiring the site of the detention camp which housed the Japanese during World War II for the purpose of constructing a New Health Care Centre adjacent to the Pavilion which now serves as an Intermediate Care Facility.

The development of the site for the Health Care Centre will displace two huts and a Japanese Pavilion which have some historic significance.

Mr. R.H. Proctor, Administrator for the Society has requested that I communicate with you to ascertain the possibility of your Division relocating and restoring these structures as a Heritage conservation project.

We would anticipate that these structures will require to be removed or otherwise disposed of by this September to permit construction of the site circulation systems and landscaping.

Your response will be of interest.

Yours very truly,

David P. Fairbank
David P. Fairbank, MRAIC

DPF/lc
Encl. Site Plan
c.c. Mr. R.H. Proctor

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