

**Chinese Cook House**  
**751 Highway 97B NE**  
**Salmon Arm, B.C.**  
**Circa 1895**

Previous locations: 1159 Passchendale Road, Sorrento, BC (1895-1984), Minion Field on Harbell Road (now 30 Street SW) (1984-1986)

**Description**

The Chinese Cook House is a one-and-a-half storey, hand-hewn log home with a steeply pitched roof. It is situated with its gable end facing the driveway into R.J. Haney Heritage Village & Museum.

The cabin, historically called “China Shack,” was constructed sometime between Thomas Henry Jones’ arrival at Trapper’s Landing in 1895 and the completion of his letters patent in 1897.<sup>1</sup> Jones sold his property to the Shuswap Lake Land and Development Company in 1909, which then became part of the Kinghorn Estate.<sup>2</sup>

The log building was dismantled and moved from Sorrento<sup>3</sup> to Minion Field on Harbell Road (10th Ave SW) in the spring of 1984.

The components of the building were stored at Minion Field until 1986 when it was moved and reassembled on a temporary foundation in the parking lot southeast of Haney House. In 2000 the structure was moved to the amphitheatre site at R.J. Haney Heritage Village & Museum and placed on footings. A taper sawn cedar shingle roof was installed.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BC Archives and Records Service: NW ¼ of Section 16, Township 22 Range 11 W 6<sup>th</sup> M was first homesteaded by Martin Strange (August 28, 1894) but his application was cancelled. Thomas H. Jones subsequently applied for his letters patent on January 18, 1897.

Note: Trapper’s Landing was named by Billy Henstridge, and renamed Sorrento by J.R. Kinghorn in 1909.

<sup>2</sup> “A Coming Center.” *Salmon Arm Observer* March 20, 1909. T. Jones sold his property for \$6000.

J.R. Kinghorn had a new house built on the property in 1909 and moved into the house in 1910, one month before the birth of his daughter. *Salmon Arm Observer*, July 29, 1910 and August 26, 1910. This house became the farm manager’s house after Spes Bona was built by Wm (Billy) Reader of Salmon Arm.

“Historic Log building Levelled”, *Salmon Arm Observer*, March 14, 1984.

Hand forged square nails were found when the doorway and windows were disassembled, indicating the log building was built in the 1800s.

There were two historic log structures originally located on the Kinghorn property that were relocated. Norman Day moved Billy Henstridge’s original cabin from the landing to the Ferry Dock in 1939 and renamed it Sorrento Lodge. The Chinese Cook House was delivered to R.J. Haney Heritage Village in 1986 and identified by Surveyor Joe Johnson as originally located on Thomas Henry Jones’ homestead.

<sup>3</sup> 1159 Passchendale, Sorrento, BC

<sup>4</sup> According to Project Manager Rick Tanaka, cedar shakes were made from shake blocks harvested in Seymour Arm and a new roof was installed by R.J. Haney Heritage Village in 1986. The building was relocated to a natural amphitheatre in 2000. The cedar shake roof deteriorated in the forest setting. Quality Roofing, Armstrong, B.C.

In 2012 the log house was incorporated into the organization's SASCU Presents Dinner Theatre Amphitheatre.

### Values

The Chinese Cook House is valued for its aesthetic, historic, and social significance.

The aesthetic significance of the Chinese Cook House lies in its architecture. The one-and-a-half storey dwelling was constructed from locally available materials. Its simple rectangular massing consists of hand-hewn logs with dovetail joints, and a wooden shingle roof. Its method of construction indicates a level of craftsmanship that is a testament to historic architectural techniques. Also of note was the short door entry into the cabin. This doorway was enlarged in 1986 to address safety concerns for the now public building.<sup>5</sup>

The historic significance of the Chinese Cook House lies in its association with its first owner, Thomas Henry Jones, who established himself as a farmer in the area by 1895. Jones completed his obligation to clear several acres of land, build a home, and plant a garden. Jones also planted an apple orchard. He was granted his letters patent to 157 acres (Part NW ¼ S16 T 22 R 11 West of the 6<sup>th</sup> Meridian) in 1898. It is believed that the Chinese Cook House was his home.

James Reid Kinghorn was the next known owner of the cabin. Kinghorn mistakenly thought the CPR would be re-routed along the shore of Shuswap Lake. He formed a company and set to laying out the township of Sorrento. He chose 36 acres of land for his own home, which straddled the homesteads originally claimed by Thomas Henry Jones and William (Billy) Henstridge. Kinghorn named the development Sorrento, after the Italian town where he and his wife had honeymooned.

Kinghorn had a mansion built on site and the property became a community gathering place. The large home needed many staff and employees were accommodated. The log home became the residence for the Chinese workers who cooked, landscaped, and did the laundry. When the cabin was disassembled in Sorrento, Chinese and Filipino newspapers were found on some of the logs dating back to 1928. They had been used as insulation.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1930s the Chinese Cook House was retrofitted with bunks for migrant farm workers hired to pick apples.

After Kinghorn's death in 1944, the property changed hands several times. In 1963 the Anglican Church purchased the estate and set to running Sorrento Centre. The China Shack became the Sorrento Centre's wash house with two showers and toilet facilities to accommodate campers and cabana visitors. In 1984

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installed a taper sawn shingle roof some years after the building's move to its current location according to Ted McTaggart, former Manager of Construction.

<sup>5</sup> According to Salmon Arm Museum Project Manager Rick Tanaka.

<sup>6</sup> The 1921 census finds Yee Ham, 36, a Buddhist cook from China who had immigrated to Canada in 1908, living in a wood building, employed as a cook. Locals affectionately called the cook "Eye."

In *Voices of Settlers, Stories from the South Shore of Shuswap Lake*, page 48, c. 2012, Ann Chidwick writes of Phyllis Parkes' memory of the when the Kinghorn household caught fire in 1927. Eye was in the kitchen, throwing china out of the window in order to save it. No dishes survived the fire. Meanwhile Walter Dunne was pushing the piano out of the door, trying to save it.

the septic field and wash house needed to be replaced and the building was offered to the Salmon Arm Museum & Heritage Association.<sup>7</sup>

Eventually the log house found its way to R.J. Haney Heritage Village and was repurposed once again—becoming a storage room for theatre props, sound equipment, and museum artefacts. The front door, complete with an overhang for inclement weather, opens on to the stage for theatrical and musical presentations.

### **Character Defining Elements**

Building:

- Hand-hewn square log construction with half dovetail joints
- Rectangular massing
- Simple gable roof clad in cedar

Associations:

- Spes Bona, the Kinghorn Estate (1909-1944) and Sorrento Centre (1963-)
- Two Chinese men who gardened, laundered, and cooked for the Kinghorns sometime after W.W. I began. One was called “Eye”<sup>8</sup>
- Minion Field, the first airstrip in Salmon Arm
- Dinner Theatre at R.J. Haney Heritage Village & Museum circa 2013 -

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<sup>7</sup> *Salmon Arm Observer*, “Historic log building levelled” by Norma Hlina. March 14, 1984.

<sup>8</sup> *Apple of his Eye, the Sorrento Centre Story*. Barker, Dorothy, Editor. 1982. Page 6.