

BRIDGE AREA

This area is the location of the bridge built in 1912 by the government after the 1912 dam flooded Devils Creek. This bridge was submerged in 1941.

16. "Bridge Foundations"

1912 Bridge
Date: 1912

Location: Bridge Area - a little more than 100 m along the causeway - off the information plaque on Two Jack road. Feature is orientated east - west.
Description: Bridge remains consisting of two abutments and two piers, all rock-filled log cribs. The deck is gone. The abutments are approximately 4 m wide and 2.5 m long with a dirt ramp with rock retaining side walls leading onto them. Both piers are built in a similar fashion and are 4 m wide and 2.5 m across. The 1912 Lake Minnewanka shoreline is still clearly visible.

Dive Conditions: Depth varies from 15 m (50') to 26 m (85'). Interesting dive due to the size of the structure and as it is an example of early century construction. Accessible from shore - steps along the shoreline. Visibility diminishes quickly as the number of divers increases. Boat traffic is limited. Most visited feature of the Minnewanka submerged townsite.

Cautions: Deeper areas for experienced divers only. To get from one pier to another, divers need to swim over deeper water - good buoyancy control is necessary to avoid going deeper.



Car on Banff/Minnewanka Road, 1920

All photos courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies

HISTORY OF LAKE MINNEWANKA



"Hotels" - Lake Minnewanka, 1890

Lake Minnewanka has a rich history. There are recorded archaeological sites showing pre-contact occupations that cover an entire 10,000 year period. Artifacts have been found from the early, middle and late pre-contact periods. The Minnewanka site is one of a series of such early sites in the lower Bow Valley. There are also historical sites like the old Cascade Power Plant and the submerged features of the Lake Minnewanka townsite - Minnewanka Landing.

The resort village of Minnewanka Landing was established in 1888, when the first hotel - the Beach House - was constructed. Development continued at the site as wharves were built, cottage lots were made available for lease, hotels and restaurants were constructed, and lake tours aboard cruise boats were offered.

The changes to the lake and the area surrounding it began in 1895. A dam was constructed on Devils Creek to improve the lake's shoreline. A second dam was built by the Calgary Power Co. in 1912 in Devils Canyon for water storage.

This dam raised the lake 3.5 m (12'), creating a new shoreline for the townsite and flooding Devils Creek. The government built a bridge over Devils Creek to maintain the original road from Banff to Minnewanka.

In 1923, the government built the Cascade Power Plant and three employee residences in Devils Canyon. This power house supplied Banff with electricity. It was abandoned when the third and present dam was built by the Calgary Power Co. in 1941 under the War Measures Act. This dam raised the lake 30 m (100'), flooding the townsite, the 1912 dam and the bridge at Devils Creek.

The historical activities surrounding Lake Minnewanka reflect the development, growth and changing attitudes towards national parks. This townsite is the best preserved, rare example of a submerged historic village in Canada. It contains unique specimens of early 19th century technology that are in the same location as they were when they were submerged.

1895 DAM

This small log dam is the earliest structure associated with the site. Marine archaeologists have assessed its condition to be extremely fragile. This structure would be destroyed if it was leaned on or touched by divers. You can help us protect this unique structure by avoiding it.

Protection of Lake Minnewanka's Marine Heritage

The submerged features of Minnewanka Landing are important cultural resources, rare within a national park. This submerged heritage belongs to each and every Canadian. Anything altered or removed from it diminishes this heritage. Individual visitors may not have a great impact on the site, but hundreds of divers and heavy boat traffic for sightseeing and fishing causes major cumulative and irreversible damage to the sites. Activities such as artifact retrieval, attaching objects to the features, graffiti, anchor dragging and down rigging fishing are all very harmful to these resources. Under the National Parks Act, anyone removing, damaging or destroying prehistoric or historic artifacts or structures, is subject to a fine of \$2000.00.

Please help us to protect this resource by minimizing your impact and reporting any vandalism to the Warden Service at 1-888-WARDENS (toll free)



Ice boat on Lake Minnewanka, 1890

Diving Safety

- 1. Certification:** All divers should be trained and certified by a recognized organization. Trainees must be under the supervision of a certified diving instructor.
- 2. Never Dive Alone:** The buddy system is your protection in the event of unexpected problems.
- 3. Cold Water:** Low water temperatures in this area can create special hazards. Only experienced divers should attempt deeper dives. Regulator freeze-up can occur, so divers should take appropriate precautions.
- 4. High Altitude:** High altitudes alter dive times. Dives at Lake Minnewanka are high altitude dives, and most are deeper than 14 m (50'). This shortens dive times dramatically.
- 5. Use the Dive Flag:** Always display a fully visible dive flag when in the water. Restrict all diving to within 30 m (100') of the flag and do not confuse boaters by flying the flag when no activity is underway. Do not attach your dive flag to the structures. Attachment anchors for this purpose are provided at many sites.
- 6. Boat Diving:** Never leave a boat unattended, especially when it is used for diving. At least one person must be left on board when the boat is anchored or moored.
- 7. Night Diving:** Only experienced divers should engage in night diving. Each diver should be equipped with an adequate underwater light and a backup light.

For further information:
Alberta Scuba Diving Council - (403) 453-8566

In case of an emergency:
Warden Service - 762-4506

DIVING

LAKE MINNEWANKA SUBMERGED CULTURAL RESOURCES

BANFF NATIONAL PARK

Photo courtesy of Mark Gibeau

SITE DESCRIPTIONS

Lake Minnewanka is 1450 m above sea level, 18 km long with a maximum depth of 100 m. All dives at Lake Minnewanka are cold water, altitude dives. Visibility fluctuates depending on the time of year and the number of divers at the site. Depths vary depending on the time of year, rising up to 5.5 m (18') from spring to fall. Depths listed below were taken in October.

There are 16 features located in three main diving areas.

TOWNSITE AREA

This area is the location of the Minnewanka Landing townsite. The water level increase from the 1912 dam partially submerged the townsite. The 1941 dam flooded the townsite completely.

CAUTIONS: A boat is needed to access the Townsite Area. This is a fishing area, with heavy boat traffic. There is a buoy located at site #7 to mark the site and to provide boat mooring. Please use it to avoid anchor damage to the sites.

1. "Hotel"

House foundation #1
Date: 1912 - 1942

Location: Townsite area - 200 metres from shore. Townsite's northernmost feature. Follow the clearly identifiable old road.
Description: Concrete, L-shaped foundation with partially excavated basement. Two entrances that lead to the main floor, a third leads down to the basement. Large cement fireplace with a brick hearth has fallen into the basement.

Dive Conditions: Depth is 17.5 m (57'). Very interesting dive - offers divers a lot to observe and explore.

2. "Fireplace"

Oven and cellar
Date: 1912 - 1942

Location: Townsite area - 120 metres SW of Hotel. Hard to find - remote from any other feature.
Description: Oven or fireplace with a rock-filled concrete base covered in rubble that is spread over a 2 m long area. Fifteen metres southeast of this feature lies a 1.5 m deep square hole with a plank crib - possibly a root cellar.
Dive Conditions: Depth is 17.5 m (57'). Recreational interest is limited due to the deterioration of the structure.

3. "Sidewalk"

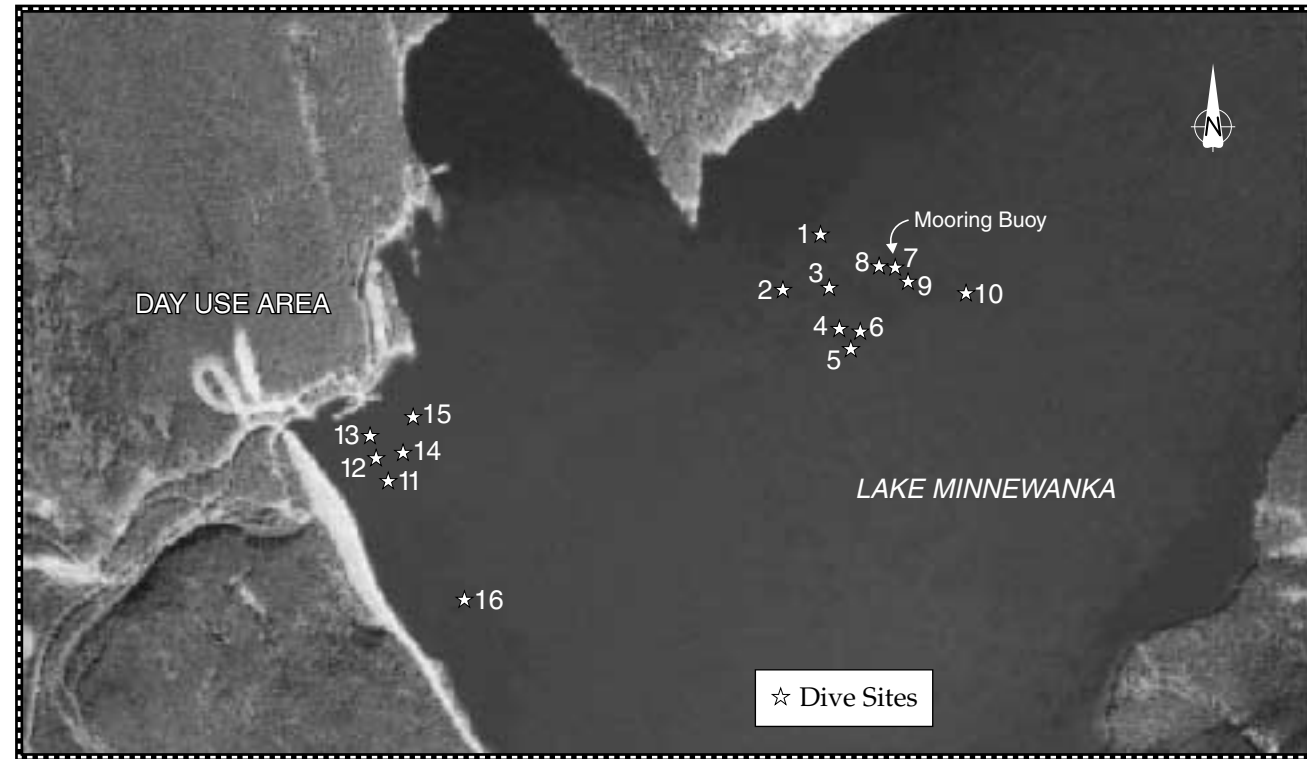
Sidewalk and cellar
Date: 1912 - 1942

Location: Townsite area - approximately halfway between the Hotel and House Foundations #2 and #3. Easy to find by following the old road southwards from the Hotel.
Description: Two level cement sidewalk, 10 m long. Culvert-like pipe lies 5 m away. Two holes nearby - one rectangular with plank crib (possibly a root cellar), the other square with no crib. Remains of a small picket fence are nearby.
Dive Conditions: Depth is 18.3 m (60'). Low recreational interest - remaining structures are small and limited.

5. "Outhouse Hole"

Cellar
Date: 1912 - 1942

Location: Townsite area - over 400 m from shore. Situated close to House Foundation #2 and #3 in a southerly direction.
Description: Cribbed hole approximately 90 cm square and 1 m deep - possibly a root cellar. Probably owned by N.K. Luxton.
Dive Conditions: Depth is 17.5 m (57'). Good complement dive with the nearby house foundations. Limited recreational interest due to the deterioration of the structure.
Cautions: Very fragile resource. Do not lean on or touch. Practice careful buoyancy control in the area of resource.



4. House foundation #2

House foundation #2
Date: 1912 - 1942
Location: Townsite area - 420 m from shore and 200 m south of Hotel. Follow old road - feature lies at its southern extremity.
Description: Square concrete footing 6.82 m x 6.75 m. Approximately 25 cm thick and 20 cm above bottom. Probably owned by N.K. Luxton.
Dive Conditions: Depth is 18.3 m (60'). Interesting dive, especially if combined with House Foundation #3 and nearby cellar.

6. House Foundation #3

House foundation #3
Date: 1912 - 1942
Location: Townsite area - 420 m from shore and 200 m south of Hotel. Situated very close to House Foundation #2. Follow the old road.
Description: Square concrete footing 9.20 m x 6.75 m. Approximately 30 cm thick and 10 cm above bottom. Two wood stoves are on site. Probably owned by N.K. Luxton.
Dive Conditions: Depth is 17.5 m (57'). Interesting dive especially if combined with House Foundation #3 and/or nearby Cellar.

7. "Long Wharf"

Long wharf
Date: 1912

Location: Townsite area - over 400 m from shore and 120 m NE of House Foundation #3. Can be found from the old road, or the two adjacent breakwaters.
Description: Rock faced concrete ramp followed by a succession of cement piers with occasional timber supports and rock-filled log cribs. The wharf is ended by an L-shaped crib partially decked. Wharf is 90 m in length.
Dive Conditions: Depth of 24.5 m (80'). Interesting dive. Relatively easy to find because of its length. Length makes it harder to cover the site entirely in one dive.
Cautions: Recommended for experienced divers because of the depth. Anchor dragging to locate these wharves permanently damages these structures.

8. "North Breakwater"

North wharf
Date: post 1912

Location: Townsite area - over 400 m from shore and 120 m NE of House Foundation #3. Lies north of the Long Wharf, more or less parallel to it.
Description: Long continuous crib-like log structure. Over 35 m long, turning obliquely southwards in its later section. Height increases from a single log to five superimposed logs. Probably used as both a wharf and a breakwater.
Dive Conditions: Depth of 23 m (75'). Interesting dive especially if combined with the Long Wharf. Visible from the Long Wharf when visibility is fair.
Cautions: Recommended for experienced divers because of the depth.

9. "South Breakwater"

South wharf
Date: post 1912

Location: Townsite area - over 400 m from shore and 120 m NE of House Foundation #3. Lies south of the Long Wharf, more or less parallel to it.
Description: Long continuous crib-like log structure. Its height increases from a single log to five superimposed logs. Two parallel rows of logs that are filled with rocks, running for 34 m and then turning north to run for another 4.7 m. Narrower extension, 7.3 m long, comes back towards the southwest. On the south side of this small addition are four slips divided by large horizontal logs supported by large upright posts.
Dive Conditions: Depth 23 m (75'). Interesting dive especially if combined with the Long Wharf, and because of its size and complexity. Easy to locate from Long Wharf.
Cautions: Recommended for experienced divers because of the depth.

10. "Old Wharf"

Old wharf
Date: pre 1912

Location: Townsite area - over 640 m from shore and 220 m SE of the Long Wharf's L-shaped platform. Easternmost feature of the townsite. Hard to find as it is not close to any other feature.
Description: Four rock-filled log cribs in a SW to NE axis. Part of the deck lies to the south. The highest crib rises to a height of four log rows. Feature is in poor condition.
Dive Conditions: Depth of 24.5 m (80'). Interesting dive as the feature predates the partial flooding of the townsite after the second dam was constructed.
Cautions: Recommended for experienced divers because of the depth.

1912 DAM AREA

All the features in this area are related to the second dam built by the Calgary Power Company in 1912, and to the dam operators residences built in 1923. This area was submerged in 1941.

CAUTIONS: 1912 Dam Area is accessible from the shore. Steep descent on rocks along the shoreline. Heavy boat traffic from nearby wharf and boat ramp.

11. "1912 Dam"

1912 Dam
Date: 1912

Location: 1912 Dam Area - 70 m from the causeway and 120 m from the boat ramp. Orientated north - south across from Devils Canyon.
Description: A three spillway concrete dam over 12 m high topped with a 3 m high earth-filled crib upper structure. Adjacent to the dam is a two-storey concrete building (blockhouse), with two openings on its roof and another at the bottom. Inside the building two other openings allow passage from one level to another.
Dive Conditions: Depth varies from 12.2 m (40') to 27.5 m (90'). Penetration possible inside the blockhouse. Unique diving experience due to the size and complexity of the structure. Visibility diminishes greatly when a large number of divers visit the site. Most visited feature of the Minnewanka submerged townsite.
Cautions: Penetration and deeper areas for well-prepared, well-equipped, experienced divers only.

12. "House Foundation #4"

House foundation #4
Date: 1923

Location: 1912 Dam Area - 80 m from causeway and less than 40 m north of 1912 Dam.
Description: Rectangular concrete footing approximately 30 cm thick with a small sally in one wall. Divided in two parts by a concrete division. A quarter of its surface has been dug out for a basement. Built for Superintendent Smith or dam operators.
Dive Conditions: Depth 13.7 m (45'). Good complement to the 1912 Dam. Good for inexperienced divers, as it is one of the shallower sites. Easy to locate from 1912 Dam, swimming north.

13. "House Foundation #5"

House foundation #5
Date: 1923

Location: 1912 Dam Area - 80 m from causeway and 90 m off the boat ramp.
Description: Large rectangular concrete footing approximately three times the size of House Foundation #4. Built for Superintendent Smith or dam operators.
Dive Conditions: Depth 12.2 m (40'). Limited recreational interest, as it is presently hidden by weeds.

14. "The Well"

Well
Date: 1923

Location: 1912 Dam Area - 125 m from causeway and 40 m NE of house foundations. Easy to find from House Foundation #4 by going to the northeast over the ledge.
Description: One metre square and 4.6 m deep hole with a wooden crib rising above the lake bottom. A few metres from the well is an alignment of five fence posts heading in an easterly direction. Associated with the three nearby house foundations.
Dive Conditions: Depth 16.8 m (55'). Interesting dive offering a dramatic image.
Cautions: Well would be a hazard to divers if they attempted to slip into it. Very fragile resource. Do not lean on or touch the resource. Practice careful buoyancy control in the area of the resource.

15. "House Foundation #6"

House foundation #6
Date: 1923

Location: 1912 Dam Area - 100 m NE of 1912 Dam and 40 m NE of the Well.
Description: Two division house foundation of concrete. One of the divisions seems to be a small square addition to the main foundation which has an overall rectangular shape, with one wall showing three recesses. Built for Superintendent Smith or dam operators.
Dive Conditions: Depth 16.8 m (55').