

VICTORIA'S RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE



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SITUATION BRIEF # 48

Contributor: H. Edwards

Introduction

Victoria's succession of building styles is both a tangible and intangible heritage. While built form and detail distinguish fashions in the life of the city they constitute a visual vocabulary that remains in play today. The stylistic homogeneity in the residential neighbourhoods provide evidence of different episodes in the growth of the city. Four-square Italianate cottages in Fernwood point to its mid-Victoria roots. Arts-and-Crafts bungalows step back from the ornamental trees lining the streets of Edwardian Fairfield and signal the global influences of City Beautiful planning and the egalitarian social movements of the period. Variants within styles, even among today's contextual infills, signify the personal choices of both builders and residents who seek to make them "homes". Together these make the settlement story of Victoria readable, stories which heritage writer Helen Edwards addresses here.

M. Segger



Hudson's Bay Style

As is common in other areas, residential properties in the early days of Victoria were constructed with materials that were close at hand. In the case of Victoria's early architecture, wood was the most common building material. The land was covered with forests, which were cleared for settlement, and the resulting logs were used to erect permanent homes. The first real style of residential architecture in this area was the French Canadian style, *piece-sur-piece* construction, used extensively by Hudson's Bay builders across Canada. There are several excellent examples in the area, including Tod House in Oak Bay, built by John Tod, Hudson's Bay Company Factor and Chief Fur Trader at Kamloops, and one of the first appointed members of BC's Legislative Council. Erected in 1850, it had a frame addition which enlarged the dwelling. Owned by the municipality of Oak Bay, it is one of Victoria's oldest buildings and is considered to be the longest continuously occupied residence in western Canada.

A second example is the *Helmcken House* (1852). The Hudson's Bay Company built the house for Dr. John Sebastian Helmcken, a doctor for the company. He married Governor James Douglas' daughter, who, at the time, lived next door in a house that has since been demolished. He became a statesman

and helped negotiate British Columbia's entry as a province into Canadian confederation. This house, too, had an addition(1856) using vernacular post and beam construction. A final two-storey gabled balloon-frame addition with a front verandah (ca. 1889), had its mass-produced drop siding contrasting with the cedar shingles of the earlier wings. It is owned by the province of British Columbia and is part of the Royal BC Museum complex.



Finally, *Craigflower* Manor was built by the Hudson's Bay Company between 1853 and 1856 for Kenneth McKenzie, the farm bailiff for Craigflower Farm. The Manor house was built after the completion of the school across the street to serve as a home and office for the management of Craigflower farm. It has post-and-groove framing on the ground floor and a mortice-and-tenoned timber frame system on the second floor. The construction technology combines traditional company construction methods with Scottish architectural influences and craftsmanship adapted to the use of local materials. At the request of Agnes McKenzie, the house used Georgian Revival elements including a five-bay plan, pedimented entrance and moulded window heads and window pediments. In

2012, the manor was restored to the highest standards after a disastrous fire caused significant damage. It is owned by the province of British Columbia and is currently leased to the Victoria Highland Games Association.

Dodd House was built in Gordon Head in 1859 for Captain Charles Dodd and Grace McTavish as a country home. It is a simple frontier cottage. The interior features 12-foot ceilings and is lined with redwood boards. The redwood was imported from California, an indication of the dominant trading pattern of the Island before the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway on the coast in the 1880s as well as Dodd's ability to acquire high-quality materials using professional relationships. *Dodd House* is also valued as the earliest known house on the Island to have been constructed using balloon framing techniques rather than the Hudson Bay Company's method of adzed-log-wall construction.

Steamboat Gothic

Steamboat Gothic Style originated in the American south, where buildings were intended to mimic the steamboats on the Mississippi and Ohio river valleys, but there are examples across North America. Residences feature elaborate wood detailing which highlights the skill of the craftsman. The name was popularized after Frances Parkinson Keyes wrote a novel with that name. An excellent example of the style locally is the *Captain Jacobson House* on the waterfront in Esquimalt. Born in Finland in 1859, Victor Jacobson travelled the world as a young man and came to Canada in the 1880s. The captain was well known as a sealer, making several voyages to the Bering Sea in 1884 and 1885, making a fortune in seal pelts. Victoria was well known as the centre of pelagic sealing in the Pacific, driven by the European demand for seal pelts.

By the time he built this house in 1897, Captain Jacobson was a well-established sea captain and owner of several vessels, some of which were



anchored just outside his back door in West Bay. The exterior is covered with bargeboard accentuated with hearts, butterflies, birds, and anchors apparently carved in wood by the captain himself. The square, three-storey tower with a convex Mansard-type roofline and hooded dormer windows provided a good view of West Bay and his vessels. It was said that his wife Minnie would watch the sea from there to watch for the return of the fleet. The captain and his wife did not live in the house much as they preferred to live aboard Jacobson's ship, *Distributor*, moored nearby in West Bay. As a result, the property was rented to a series of residents, all of whom had a story to tell. Captain Jacobson's son, Victor Alvin, a carpenter, moved into the house in 1949 and remained there until his death on December 15, 1961. The home has been restored twice since then and remains a well-preserved landmark in Esquimalt.

Colonial Bungalow

Vernacular buildings were built as smaller versions of the grand architect-designed efforts built for the higher-income population. One such type is the colonial bungalow. It is a single storey dwelling with a hipped roof and is believed to have been influenced by the residences of the British colonial administrators in India. These were called *banglas*, which Victorian builders called a bungalow. Other versions of the style have one-and-one-half storeys with a dormer to allow light into the upper area. This style was very popular in pre-World War I Victoria, allowing those of more modest means to own a residence. However, due to their small size, many have been demolished in, particularly during the 1970s when early types of architecture were not valued. Thus, the few that survive have more significance.



614 Niagara Street in James Bay is a good example of this style. Built in 1909, the residence has a door directly below the dormer with a porch on the right-hand side of the entrance. Simple Tuscan columns are featured on the front porch rather than elaborate Greek classical columns found on more expensive residences. This home was one of many built by Robert Hetherington, some 70 in total, most of whom are long gone. His early advertising noted, “My specialty

is Modern Cottages and Bungalows at reasonable figures.” Another example is located at 614 Seaforth Street in Victoria West. It was built in 1911 and also features Tuscan columns and a full-width verandah.

Carpenter Gothic

A popular building style was Carpenter Gothic. Inspired by the great Gothic cathedrals, this was a vernacular interpretation of the ecclesiastical style. The abundance of timber meant the houses were built of wood and presented a decorative face to the street. One of the keynote trims was the elaborate gingerbread applied to the gables. The style uses elements that were carved in stone in Gothic architecture, reinterpreting them in the readily available wood, which was also easier to form. Interiors featured elaborate staircases, walls, fireplaces, and ceilings, often coffered. An excellent example in Victoria is *Wentworth Villa* on Fort Street. Built in 1863, a year after the City of Victoria was incorporated, this residence was far from town at the time. It was designed by architects Wright and Sanders, unusual for homes at this time when owners did not use formally trained architects. The first residents were the Ella family. Martha Beeton Cheney, a niece of Metchosin pioneers Thomas and Ann Blinkhorn, married Captain Henry Bailey Ella. They lived in this house with their



seven children. It was built from California redwood, milled in San Francisco and shipped to Victoria; many residences in Victoria used the same building material as it was a stronger building material than any found locally. When the city of Victoria assumed ownership of the property after taxes were not paid, they allowed members of the Ella family to live there as tenants. In 1939, the property was sold to Faith Grant, who paid all the back taxes owing at the time. She had been running an antique store next-door with her husband, George, and soon after purchasing this property, moved the store here. They added a two-room extension to the rear as well as a bathroom. When Faith Grant died, her daughter ran the operation, and on her death, Faith's grandchildren took over. They added a second story to the 1956 addition. The property was sold in 2011 to a developer but fortunately was acquired in 2012 by a sympathetic owner who has restored the property to its former glory and operates it as an architectural museum and performance space. The evolution of the building illustrates how older buildings can be adapted to new uses without compromising their historic integrity.

Italianate Style

Residences based on Italian styles were very popular in Victoria from the 1860s until around 1900. The larger residences, based on the urban palaces of the Italian Renaissance, were generally classified as "villas," but smaller versions soon appeared in the older neighbourhoods. Hallmarks of the style include bay windows, tall narrow windows, a rusticated base storey, and an attic with an elaborately bracketed cornice. Facades are symmetrical, with classical elements concentrated around doors and windows. Also prominent are attached columns and triangular pediments.

A good example of moderate Italianate residences is the grouping on



the 700-block of Vancouver Street. Originally eight residences, six on Vancouver Street and one each on Burdett and McClure, they are six examples of houses built at the end of the nineteenth century for British investor Hedley Chapman. The BC Land & Investment Agency acted as agents and arranged for the construction of the houses by contractors Bishop and Sherborne in 1894. Two years later, the Agency advised Chapman to sell due to a decline in property values. Mrs. Gertrude Cunningham purchased all the lots and houses as an investment, and she held title until 1908, when she subdivided the property into six lots, moved two houses further down Vancouver Street to 435 and 441 Vancouver Street, and sold the remaining six. The houses that were moved made a second move to James Bay and were later demolished. This cluster clearly illustrates the early speculative rental market, a trend that began in Victoria's early building boom. They are excellent examples of modest domestic architecture by architect John Teague, better known for larger institutional commissions in Victoria, such as City Hall, the Church of Our Lord, and the

Masonic Temple. That he was most comfortable with the Italianate idiom is evident both in these examples and his larger commissions for Victoria's elite. The remaining houses on Vancouver Street as well as the one around the corner on McClure Street, have been restored, while the house on Burdett Avenue is the only one of the group still to be covered in stucco and awaits restoration. These buildings are excellent examples of early real estate development.

Second Empire Style

Buildings in the Second Empire or Mansard style are fairly rare in Victoria and are instant landmarks because of their unique features. The style's roots went back to France's Second Empire during the reign of Louis Napoleon, when the mansard roof feature was used extensively. However, it was not used for very long in North America. The style features a mansard roof and overhanging eaves with decorative brackets and ornate door and window hoods. Four public buildings were erected in Victoria, of which three remain, but it is even rarer when used for residential architecture.



One excellent example is *Trebatha* on Fort Street. Built in 1886 for dentist Thomas A. Jones and his wife Susanne, it is a neighbourhood landmark. Dr. Jones moved to Victoria in 1884 and was influential in the proclamation of the first Dentistry Act in BC on April 3, 1886. By 1890, he had the largest dental practice in the city and was the first President of the BC Dental Association. His association with the dental profession was profound, as many of Victoria's leading dentists passed through his office during their earlier years. Dr. Jones also helped to get the first electric streetcar system going in 1890. He moved in 1902 to a new home, and in 1911, *Trebatha* became a boarding house. For a time after World War I, it was an emergency hospital for influenza patients. In 1958, *Trebatha* underwent conversion to 14 housekeeping rooms. It had sat vacant for two years until architect John Keay and his partners acquired it in 1992 and began the lengthy process of returning it to useable form. The ugly grey asphalt shingles that had been nailed over the exterior ironically had the effect of preserving the original wood channel siding underneath, in a grubby yellow. That was changed with a striking paint job based on historic photos. On the interior, plaster arches and ceiling rosettes were uncovered, and much original detail was discovered under layers of paint. One feature not restored in 1992 was the imposing front porch, but that was remedied 15 years later. The building was successfully converted to business offices and continues with that use today.

Shingle Style

There are some Shingle Style buildings in the Victoria. This style was developed in the United States and was used between 1880 and 1900. The use of wood construction made it a logical choice for the Victoria area. Houses were often built on stone foundations that seem to emerge from bedrock. Thus, the massive structures appeared to hug the ground. Porches, balconies, and large



windows encouraged an interaction with the out-of-doors. Roofs are generally steep, and the designs are mostly asymmetrical. There are many windows of varying sizes but with minimal window detail, unlike earlier styles with their hoods and decorative boards. About a third of Shingle Style homes had towers, with tower roofs often blended into the main volume of the house to form a continuous roofline. An excellent example is *Warburton* on McGregor Avenue. Built in 1896 for Robert and Edith Verrinder, who are remembered in a nearby street. Sited on a hill, from the distance the irregular turreted form evokes the effect of ancient monuments, popular images among those caught up in the Romantic aesthetics of the day.

Queen Anne Revival Style

The Queen Anne Revival Style was a very common choice in Victoria's residential architecture. It was most popular in Canada between 1890 and 1914. Inspired by different eras, it incorporated many features into its designs, including asymmetrical facades, steeply pitched and irregular rooflines, front-facing gables, overhanging eaves, circular or square towers with turrets in corners, unusual windows, wraparound verandas, highly ornamented spindles, fish scale siding, detailed textures, and bright colours. Thousands of buildings in



this style were built in Canada and remain popular, with contemporary versions dotting the urban landscape today.

A particularly good example of the style is the second Fairfield home of dentist Dr. Thomas Jones. Built in 1908, the Jones' house is sited on a prominent corner lot and presents a similar image when viewed from either street. A highly unusual feature for a Queen Anne is the four brackets embedded in the bargeboard. The gable has decorative shingles; the first and second floors are clad in drop siding. An entablature decorated with alternating shallow brackets and arches runs under the eaves and continues across the gable. A dominant feature is the set of two one-over-one double-hung windows with horns that are crowned by a shingled and bracketed hood. A belt course runs under the windows. On the ground floor, there is a set of three windows, each 1-over-1 and double-hung with an entablature. The façade of the tower facing the street is flattened by two of its six sides being narrower than the others. The porch on the Linden Avenue side was filled in some time ago to provide additional living space. The building was used for a few years as a bed-and-breakfast but was

then converted to residential apartments. It has recently been rehabilitated to increase the number of suites and to add a new entrance to the basement.

Neoclassical Style

Classical periods of Greece and Rome have also influenced domestic residential architecture. After the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 with its numerous buildings with classical themes, architects throughout North America began to use similar ideas. The most prominent features are classical columns, rigid symmetry, and some sort of portico. A striking example in Victoria is on Moss Street in Victoria. Built in 1913 for James and Josephine Hunter, it is all white, emphasizing its classical simplicity. It is one of architect Crawford Coate's residential commissions and cost \$12,000 for builder Hiram B. Ward to erect. In 1943 the house was divided into five suites, then six, known as the Penkrige Apartments. In 1982 another suite was created, and in 1984, two more. Despite later alterations, the building remains a local landmark, set apart from its neighbours by the monochromatic colour scheme.



Georgian Revival

Another revival style that was popular in the early twentieth century in Victoria was Georgian Revival. Based on the designs of English country homes, the style features symmetry and simplicity. Emphasis is placed on the front entrance, marking a symmetrical facade, with the door often enclosed in a porch. Some structures have classical elements, such as columns and pediments. A good example of this style is *Dreemskerry* on Rockland Avenue. In 1997, five gabled dormers were added to the front, creating a 2½-storey house and producing an uneven number of elements on the top floor. The front entrance has Tuscan columns with a round arched portico. The building was erected in 1922 as a



wedding gift for the daughter of a prominent Kansas banker. The couple moved into the house on returning from their honeymoon, and they lived there until the husband died in 1928, after which she returned to Kansas. Several families lived in the house over the years, and a couple bought it in 1980 and opened it as Dreemskerry Bed and Breakfast in 1987. The name is Manx Gaelic for “by the sea” and reflects the owners’ Manx heritage and origins in the Isle of Man. The name is attached to the front gateposts.

Tudor Revival

One of the most prominent styles in Victoria is the Tudor Revival, popularized by architects like Samuel Maclure. Revivals of previous architectural styles were prominent in the early twentieth century as property owners sought to allude to the stability and glory of former ages. In Victoria, this style can be seen on residential buildings ranging from small cottages to large opulent houses. Characterized by prominent half-timbering, strong masonry foundations, and tall ornate chimneys, the Tudor Revival style is closely associated with the Victorian, Edwardian, and Arts & Crafts styles. The half-timbering found on many houses is derived from Elizabethan England, where heavy timber structural frames were infilled with masonry panels. This building type became popular in Vancouver and Victoria between 1900 and the 1930s, mainly because of political and cultural ties to Britain. Houses were often set in gardens that formed part of the living space. Tudor Revival is the dominant style of the Rockland neighborhood which was originally developed in the 1880 and 90s as a cluster of five to seven acre country estates.



A good example of this style is 960 Foul Bay Road. Built in 1914. It is a refined version of the Tudor Revival style with half-timbering in the rear upper gables and moderate trim elements. The residence represents architect Samuel Maclure's pre-war phase, generally considered to be his most innovative and vigorous period. Henry Graham Lawson, the original owner, was born in Victoria on January 15, 1879. Henry, as a member of The Union Club of British Columbia, was part of a growing network of professionals who discussed business over lunch. It is likely that he addressed the design of his new residence with Maclure at the club.

Henry died in Victoria on February 2, 1945, at his home. Mrs. Lawson lived in the house for a year after his death, then moved to a new home on Cook Street. Descendants of the family still live in Victoria. For the past few years, the building has been operated as rental suites. The heritage home at 960 Foul Bay Road will be restored and protected after a public meeting saw general community support for the project, which includes subdividing the land into four parcels. The municipality and the property owner entered into a Heritage Revitalization Agreement after a unanimous vote on Feb. 26, 2018, but the work has yet to be completed.

A second example of this style that is predominant through the Rockland neighbourhood is 1770 Rockland Avenue, a three-storey stone and stucco mansion. It was built in 1905 for William Biggerstaff Wilson, one of the five sons of pioneer Victoria clothier William Wilson and Isabella Eilbeck. With the Biggerstaff Wilson House, Maclure set the standard for gracious living for the next decade. In 1901 Biggerstaff founded an ice and cold storage business on Store Street in facilities rented from the Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway, and in 1909 built his own cold-storage plant on Herald Street. His son Richard Biggerstaff (Dick) Wilson served as Mayor of Victoria from 1961 to 1965. After



Biggerstaff Wilson died in 1925 in Beverley Hills, California, where he had gone seeking an improvement in his health, his widow lived in the house until 1967. In 2011, 1770 Rockland Avenue was converted into condominiums with townhouses at the rear of the property, but its retention serves as a reminder of its glorious past.

British Arts and Crafts

Residences in the British Arts and Crafts style were popular in Victoria in the early twentieth century. Inspired by the work of William Morris and his contemporaries, houses were built with the idea of “art for art’s sake.” The first residences were built around 1890, with the style continuing until the early 1930s when the Great Depression affected all building. The idea behind the style was to celebrate the work of artisans who created beautiful designs with an emphasis on integrating individual skills into a whole where interior and exterior complemented each other. As Morris said, “Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.”



The residence at 1015 Moss Street is a particularly fine example of the style. Built in the British Arts and Crafts style with American shingle style elements in 1912 during the height of Victoria's building boom, it has remained a landmark since its construction. The home was designed by Percy Leonard James and his brother Douglas for Dr. James Douglas Helmcken, the son of John Sebastian Helmcken, pioneer doctor and legislator, and the grandson of Sir James Douglas. James died in 1919, and in 1923, his widow commissioned Samuel Maclure to build her a smaller home on Beach Drive. After a series of interesting owners, it was purchased by John Archibald Moxam and his wife Blanche, who converted the home into apartments in 1937 and named it Georgian Apartments. On the evening of June 23, 2008, the roof of the mansion was engulfed with flames. Thanks to the efficient work of the Victoria Fire Department, the significant structural damage was confined to the roof area, although suites on lower floors sustained smoke and water damage. Ironically, the re-roofing job then underway was almost finished. After considerable effort and expense, the owner was able to restore the building, having to make modifications to comply

with modern building codes. However, the result looks very much like the original and retains its extensive Edwardian landscaping and provides a welcome green space on a busy residential street. The mansion now sits as a reminder of the past but also looks to the future as it provides much-needed housing in the neighbourhood.

Craftsman Style

The Craftsman style was similar to the British Art and Crafts style but was simpler in design. American designer Gustav Stickley popularized the international Arts and Crafts movement via his influential magazine, *The Craftsman*. Eventually, all houses of the style became known as Craftsman, whether they used Stickley's house plans or not. These houses emphasize simplicity in form, use of local materials, and honesty in construction. They were built for ordinary working people, so most of them are small by current standards. They were designed to be cozy, with warm colours and straight-forward materials, such as wood, which was likely sourced locally. Space saving built-ins are a signature feature, as are fireplaces that serve as the heart of any Craftsman home. Often, the central fireplace is flanked with bookcases or can also have a built-in bench known as



a settle. Most dining rooms had original built-ins with leaded glass doors, along with a beamed ceiling.

The house at 20-24 Douglas Street is a good example of the style. Built in 1911 for William and Charlotte Bownass, the residence features open eaves, exposed rafter tails, and beam ends with brackets under the gables. The plan was purchased from Seattle architect Jud Yoho who sold his plans through magazines, including Bungalow Magazine and the Craftsman Bungalows catalogue. William Bownass was a plumber who came to Victoria in 1892 with his family. He lost his business in October 1910 when the Five Sisters Block was destroyed by fire. He then became a bookkeeper and worked in that profession until his death. The house is now part of an apartment/condo complex and is joined to the adjacent buildings on either side.

California Bungalows

California Bungalows were a variant of the Craftsman style and are generally smaller, with a low-pitched gable roof and complex front porches with exposed rafter tails and knee brackets. They were built in Victoria by the Bungalow Construction Company, who used several architects for their designs,



building them on speculation for middle-class purchasers. Jud Yoho's *Bungalow Magazine* from Seattle published two articles about BCC, the first in January 1913 entitled "Who's Who Among the Bungalow Builders": "From the beginning, the new company specialized in five and six room bungalows, designed with the idea of minimizing the labour of housekeeping and following in a general way the California idea, with adaptations to meet the slightly different climatic requirements." The company built eight houses on Durban Street, perhaps the best collection of them anywhere in the area; they also built on Kipling Street, Carnsew Street, and Pinewood Avenue. However, by 1915, the company was out of business. The residence at 423 Durban Street is an excellent example of the style. Recent research has indicated that this home might have been built for the BCC's Managing Director, Frank Bonnell and his wife, Jessie. That would explain the intricate detail both outside and inside this house. It remains in excellent condition, as do most of the other examples, in particular defining the character of the Fairfield neighbourhood.

Art Deco and Streamline Moderne

Designs in Art Deco and Streamline Moderne were popular in Europe after the *L'Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris in 1925. The style made its way to North America in the 1930s, where its sleek lines soon rose above major American cities. Billed at the time of construction as "the last word in apartment house design and construction," the building represents a change in thinking from classical designs and illustrates the new alliance between art and technology that was characteristic of modernist architecture. New technologies such as refrigerators, electric ranges and clocks, washing machines, and extensive soundproofing were heavily advertised. Art Deco combined modern styles with fine craftsmanship and rich materials.



During its heyday, Moderne represented luxury, glamour, exuberance, and faith in social and technological progress. In the 1930s, during the Great Depression, Art Deco became more subdued. New materials arrived, including chrome plating, stainless steel and plastic. A sleeker form of the style, called Streamline Moderne, appeared in the 1930s, featuring curving forms and smooth, polished surfaces. Art Deco is one of the first truly international styles, but its dominance ended with the beginning of World War II.

One excellent example of Streamline Moderne is *Tweedsmuir Mansions*, located to the north and east of Beacon Hill Park. It was built in 1936 by architect William Jacobus Semeyn for Colin Murray and Florence Forrest. The family moved from Shanghai, China, to Victoria in August 1935. That they were willing to invest considerable funds, no expense was spared, demonstrates their faith in the future of Victoria's economy even in the midst of the Great Depression. It was Victoria's first building with a penthouse suite. Permission to use the name "Tweedsmuir" was obtained from the Governor-General. The Forrests also built the modernistic *Cathay Apartment Hotel* at 855 Douglas Street as well as the Tudor-Revival *Royal Oak Inn* (now renovated as the *Fireside Grill*) at 4509 West Saanich Road. On two occasions, in 1988 and 1991, local citizens resisted extensive changes to Tweedsmuir and made strong cases to City administration.

The 1988 proposal to add eight new apartments was unanimously defeated by Council, and the 1991 changes were modified to be more in keeping with the original style. The building continues to be a landmark in the community. It was converted from rental to strata suites in 1995 with upgrading at that time. A third storey on the west side provided space for two of the suites. The site's location has heritage value. Considered "the most desirable from all points of view," in a 1936 *Daily Colonist* article, on the west and south, it faces Beacon Hill Park, overlooking the lawn bowling and cricket pitches and beyond them to the Olympic Mountains. The park's walking paths, cultivated areas, and natural areas still provide amenities to residents.

Ranch style

The ranch style was popular with returning servicemen after World War II. It features a long, close-to-the-ground profile and an open layout. First appearing in the 1920s in the United States, it became popular across North America in the late 1940s. Many residences feature large picture windows along the front of the house. Most are rectangular, but they can also be built in a "U" or "L" shape. Other common features of ranch style homes include wide roof eaves, and an attached garage, emphasizing the increasing use of the automobile by the middle class. While most ranch style homes don't feature a second floor,



many do have finished basements. Serving as an additional floor, the basement increases the overall space available in the home, and was often used for the coal bin, workshops, laundries, and bedrooms. An example on Langham Court was built by a carpenter after returning from his overseas service. It remained in the same family for over 50 years, was sold, and is now a rental property, still in good shape. A residence on Richardson Street was built for a returning airman, and his family lived there until the death of the airman. It has been purchased by new owners and is still in excellent condition.

West Coast Modern

In the 1950s, Vancouver architects Arthur Erickson, Doug Shadbolt, and Barry Downes, and Victoria architects John Di Castri, Peter Cotton, John Wade, and Alan Hodgson refined an architectural style which was later to be known as West Coast Modern. Designs were inspired by elements of other styles, particularly the “organic forms” of Frank Lloyd Wright. Although there are many post-World War II residences in the Victoria area, good examples of West Coast Modern could be considered distinctive examples. Residences are simple, undecorated houses set at ground level with flat or low-pitched roofs that might contain a clerestory. They have deep eaves and often open ceilings with exposed post-and-



beam structure. There is usually a seamless transition between the interior space and the garden or wrap around a courtyard at the back. An excellent example of this style is located on St. Francis Wood in the Rockland neighbourhood. Built in 1957 by noted Victoria architect John Di Castri for Walter and Mary Thompson, it is sited on a rocky knoll with its foundation anchored to the rock. Windows are large panels of plate glass with mitered corners, which act to emphasize the free-form, floating appearance, and the siting amidst mature Gary Oak trees reflects the connection between residence and nature. Di Castri returned to Victoria in 1951 after studying with Bruce Goff at Oklahoma University. He started his own practice in 1952, working as a sole practitioner for over 50 years. In 2002 this became the first post-1950 house to be designated in the City of Victoria.

Observations

- The two-hundred-year stylistic legacy of Victoria now defines its neighbourhoods. Efforts could be made to encourage continued innovative application of these styles in new construction as a means of respecting and preserving the historic fabric the streetscapes.
- Local literacy in Victoria's stylistic vocabulary could be improved by an ongoing program of exhibitions, expanded programs of awards for preservation, and neighbourhood interpretive signage.
- Period residential architecture could be enhanced by the recreation of historic landscape and garden designs and planting regimes. Courses in period gardening could be offered by the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific, the Victoria Horticultural Society, and local gardening clubs.
- A significant recent loss has been the Province's failure to maintain the recreated H.B.C. farm garden and orchard at Craigflower Manor. It should be restored forthwith.

Resources

Alan Gowans. The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture
1890-1930. (1986)

This Old House series, Victoria Heritage Foundation

Hallmark Heritage Society Archives.

Biography of Canadian Architects - <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/>