

HERITAGE COMMITTEE

September, 1990

Student Show Meeting

Please note the paragraph in the minutes. The meeting noted on the minutes page is the "put up or shut up" notice; if you have an opinion on this, please attend on Wednesday, September 26 at 7:30 in the CAC offices at 837 Davie.

Jim Green: Housing and Heritage

The coordinator of the Downtown Eastside Residents Association will speak at our next meeting--8:30 p.m., Wednesday, October 10. Please tell friends and associates.

Volunteers: is anyone willing to help phone reminders to members about upcoming meetings? Phone me at 263-2795. Want to help the Save The Convent Society? Phone Marcelle O'Reilly at 263-9285. Want to help with the Trilea Walking Tour? Phone Peter Vaisbord at 734-4319. Want to work on the Hallowe'en Heritage Tour? Phone Fiona Avakumovic at 224-7940.

Endangered Buildings: one to be struck from the list is the 1894 Shaw house at 570 West 7th Avenue on the Fairview Slopes, the oldest stylistically intact house on its original foundations in that district. It has been gutted and vandalized and will likely be razed soon as a public nuisance or fire hazard.

Provincial Heritage White Paper: although a subcommittee met last winter to discuss the ramifications of the provincial government's foray into improved heritage legislation, no submission from us ever was sent to Victoria. Can all those who at that time or since formulated opinions on the white paper please send them to me c/o the arts council by October 10th?

Michael Kluckner
Chairman

Why This?

One of the things that has concerned me specifically about the Heritage Committee, and generally about the heritage movement in this city, is that very few people are privy to the vast majority of the information and opinions on current issues. In the arts council's Heritage Committee, meetings have often been to-and-fro discussions among four or five very up-to-date members, witnessed by an audience of ten or twenty-five people who have nothing to contribute because they are learning about issues more or less for the first time. When meetings such as these are combined with too much arts council business, including budgets, committee structures, and other administrative questions, the result has been often an alienating, lengthy and boring experience for people who have been attracted to the meetings because of a concern for the city's heritage character and buildings--rather than because of a desire to join a committee or even, initially, to volunteer for anything. I am not sure that our newly instituted meeting format will be successful in its first aim: that is, to get people who want more knowledge to arrive early, between 7 and 7:30, in order to read correspondence and minutes and to discuss details with me and some of the other very active people. The one-hour meetings between 7:30 and 8:30 will probably turn out to be a blessing, as people are urged (even forced) to be succinct and to avoid going off on wild tangents, but some of the background detail which on occasion came out in those old three-hour meetings cannot be wedged in now. On the basis of our first evening discussion on the schools question that we held on the 12th of September, described below, the speaker/discussion part of the evening will be excellent. We may decide to have a second monthly meeting, probably in a quiet pizzeria, as a sort of "executive meeting" if we get behind on the committee details.

So this letter is an attempt to keep more of us more up-to-date. Its awkward format is experimental, but intended not to increase our use of paper, clerical time, or postage.

Heritage and Schools/ Convent of the Sacred Heart

The discussion, which was originally intended to range widely over the philosophical issues of school preservation, very quickly focused on the St. George's/Convent issue, largely due to the brave presence of John Parry, the St. George's headmaster. Also in attendance were Jacquie Murfitt, the city's heritage planner; Wolfgang Gerson and Rob Smith of the city's Heritage Advisory Committee; Robert Lemon, also of the H.A.C., whose study of the school for the Board of Governors is the authority on the school's current condition and prospects for restoration; and Marcelle O'Reilly and Catherine Kinahan of the Save The Convent Society, who--as Sacred Heart alumni--are the main force in the campaign to save the building. Rather than attempting to be front and centre, we (the heritage committee) are acting as a resource, and working behind the scenes to lobby and influence the influential.

Probably the most significant result of the evening is that it brought together Jacquie Murfitt and John Parry, and helped (we hope) to further the process that will see the building and grounds saved. Whether this will mean a land swap, with St. George's relocating elsewhere, or public involvement in the restoration of the school building is anyone's guess. An added feature for us is the following:

Tour The Convent!!!
3851 West 29th Avenue,
Saturday morning, October 13th, 10 a.m.

Please RSVP to Michael Kluckner at 263-2795 in advance, as John Parry indicated that they might want to serve us tea and sticky buns afterwards.

Our best strategy on this issue--at least in my opinion and that of the Save The Convent Society--is to continue to raise public awareness of the convent's potential fate. It does not appear to be worthwhile to come out with guns blazing at St. George's; our best consensus is that they are in a real (over \$10 million) financial bind, and that some members of the school's Board are developing the mindset that the building is unsaveable. They have made some decisions--specifically the ones that they are unwilling to sell off any land, and that they have rejected the simplest restoration option from the Lemon report--that make it difficult to think that the building is their highest priority. However, the Board of Governors is perfectly capable of shooting itself in the foot in public, so we don't think it is necessary to give them the opportunity to appear aggrieved by raving at them publicly.

We are making them aware of the amount of serious and imaginative public input there could be towards saving the building, and preparing public opinion and awareness in the case that they announce they can't restore the building. In that eventuality, they will come out either for demolition, or else they will try to wash their hands of the building and property and move somewhere else. In either case, we will have to ensure that the municipal and provincial governments feel that it is an important issue. In this election year, we must make this the acid test of heritage conservation in the city.

To help the cause and that of the Save The Convent Society, PLEASE GET THE ENCLOSED PETITION SIGNED, whether on your block or at your work or wherever, and return it to the CAC office at 837 Davie Street, Vancouver, V6Z 1B7. If you want more blank petitions or information sheets, contact Marcelle O'Reilly at 263-9285. Do it now!!

Post-1940s

Heritage Inventory

The first test of council's will on post-1940s buildings will likely involve the Customs Building at the northwest corner of Burrard and Pender, built in the early 1950s in the International Style to the design of the local architect Charles B.K. Van Norman. The fate of the main branch of the Vancouver Public Library will likely be decided soon after. In addition to these proposed demolitions, there will likely be modifications such as the one inflicted upon the 1955 Burrard Building, also by Van Norman, which removed much of its Fifties colouring and finishing in order to bring it up to the "modern standard" evidently demanded by most downtown office tenants.

Downtown South

Due to a heavy schedule of public hearings, city council has put off consideration of rezoning of the Downtown South area until the New Year. City planning department will be submitting its report and proposals to the new city council early in December. Our report, which is a detailed inventory of the heritage buildings in the area written and photographed by Peter Vaisbord and Richard Cavell, will be circulated to strategically placed officials before the election and to the new council immediately after.

Vanishing Vancouver

The show opening in the gallery on October 30 went very well, and revenue to the arts council from the sale of watercolours and to the heritage committee from the sale of the books is already way beyond expectations. The heritage committee made about \$230 on opening night from commissions on the sale of the books. The books are selling to CAC members for \$32, of which \$5 goes to the Heritage Committee. The full show continues in the gallery until Saturday the 10th, and unsold watercolours and some other related things will be exhibited in the upper gallery for the following two weeks. The arts council has purchased two of the watercolours and is raffling them as a fundraiser: tickets \$5, maximum 400 tickets sold per painting, draw December 21.

I (Michael Kluckner) will be speaking about the Vanishing Vancouver project and showing slides at 8:30 on November 14--that is, after our 7:30 committee meeting.

Walking Tour

Peter Vaisbord and John Atkin will be conducting a tour of the proposed Trilea project area north of the Hudson's Bay Company on Sunday, November 25 at 1 p.m., leaving from the SkyTrain station on Granville Street. Cost is \$5, proceeds to the heritage committee. Tell your friends.

New Membership Coordinator

Veronica Story will be coordinating and working to expand our membership, and will be telephoning reminders to members of upcoming meetings and events. Her number is 738-0838.

Michael Kluckner
Chairman

Next Meeting!

Wednesday, November 14,
7:30 p.m., 837 Davie Street

HERITAGE COMMITTEE

November, 1990

Sacred Heart Convent

The saga of the old Sacred Heart Convent on West 29th Avenue, now in use as the Junior School of St. George's boys' school, marches on.

About fifteen or twenty of us showed up at the convent on Saturday morning, October 13, to tour the building and grounds at the invitation of the headmaster, John Parry. We saw much evidence of the clay tile which unfortunately forms most of the building's structure and is the cause of its serious seismic problems--it was interesting to note that even the stone wall along 29th Avenue is comprised of these tiles faced with granite. Also interesting were the elegant wrought iron and timber fire escape along the rear facade, the remains of the orchard behind the convent, and the interesting trees, including an unusual sequoia, in the parklike front garden. Many of the interior spaces in the convent were also very fine, seemingly from another era--the hallways were very airy and open, ceilings very high, and many of the rooms and the entrance hallway had simple Gothic detailing. The only part of the building we did not tour was the warren-like dormitory/residence floors at the top of the building.

The arguments about the building's future are becoming increasingly convoluted. St. George's has rejected much of the original Robert Lemon report largely because it has decided that the convent, occupying about 90,000 square feet, is about 40,000 square feet bigger than what they need for their operation. Do they want to expand the junior school's size? No. Then why don't they sell off some of the unused acres of bush to the north of the school? Because they need the land potentially for expansion, at least for playing fields. What are the unused portions of the convent building? Well, actually, it's all being used. Then why is it too big? The hallways are very wide--it is a huge volumetric space, and thus difficult to heat. Umm . . . you [that is, John Parry] said at the September heritage committee that you needed the 16 acres at the Senior School for playing fields for that school's enrolment, and that the junior school's students ideally need all of the convent's 10 acres for playing

fields, so how come the school's building committee says that they are seriously considering the option of building a new junior school to share the senior school's 16 acres?

Life was never meant to be simple. The Save the Convent Society was invited to make a presentation to the St. George's Board of Governors on October 23, and so Marcelle O'Reilly, Louise Schwartz, a couple of other Sacred Heart alumnae, and I attended the meeting. We were very well received amidst hosts of hearty platitudes, Marcelle spoke well and attracted significant interest on the seismic research she had found about the Point Grey peninsula, and I was invited to attend a future Building & Grounds Committee meeting (formal invitation still pending). After Marcelle's presentation, we spoke at some length with board member Brian Legge, who has been the school's intermediary with city heritage planner Jacquie Murfitt; Legge repeated that the school was considering building a new junior school at the senior school site, which would naturally mean that they would sell off and vacate the convent site.

Thus, the issue seems to be devolving onto two possibilities: firstly, and at the moment least likely (in my opinion), that the school will commit to the convent building and will mount a massive fundraising campaign and seek public help to restore the convent building, thus allowing them to continue to use it as a school; and, secondly, that the school will wash its hands of the site and sell it to a city-approved "heritage" developer who will restore the building for housing and/or public use and pay for the operation by multifamily or seniors' infill construction.

In an ideal world, we would see the edifice continuing to operate as a school, but perhaps its conversion to housing would not be so bad. Marcelle O'Reilly suggested that the Vancouver School of Music, which is bursting at its Kits Point seams, would be an ideal occupant for the convent. Any other ideas? The Save The Convent Society will be distributing a press release in the next couple of weeks; MLAs Tom Perry and Darlene Marzari have toured the convent, and written letters expressing support for the building's preservation; we the heritage committee will continue our behind-the-scenes efforts. For further information or to volunteer, call Marcelle at 263-9285.

Heritage Conference

Cathy Barford attended the heritage conference in Edmonton at the end of last month, and will be reporting to us about its deliberations. One of the potentially interesting results of the conference is the contacts she made with members of the Victoria

heritage community, specifically the Hallmark Society, and we will at some point perhaps arrange a "field trip" to Victoria and be toured about there, and reciprocate here.

Jim Green at Last Meeting

A week or two before Jim Green was scheduled to speak at our last meeting, he announced his candidacy for mayor under the COPE banner; on the evening of our meeting, he had to debate the mayor on women's issues, and thus arrived late and tired at our meeting. Nevertheless, he spoke in detail about DERA's adventures in restoring old buildings in the Downtown East for social housing. Thanks are due to him for appearing in the midst of his arduous campaign schedule, and also to Gordon Price, who was at our meeting and led a discussion on housing and affordability in the half hour or so before Jim Green arrived.

Gallery Shows

Jo Scott-B. will be coordinating our February, 1991, Heritage Week show/installation in the Arts Council gallery. On October 15, she sent a letter to Vancouver art teachers inviting them to participate in a show that "will interweave art work by Vancouver students in elementary and secondary schools with a Heritage Committee installation show." She has encouraged students "to go out and study their own neighbourhoods, examine local houses and commercial buildings, and pick out the older, more interesting structures." Veronica Story is assisting in this stage of the project; the installation part of the show will require artistic and conceptual input--call Jo (738-2419).

The Visual Arts Committee of the arts council, which coordinates the use of the space at 837 Davie, has put out a call for submissions for exhibitions to be held from April, 1991 to April, 1992. We the heritage committee will be sponsoring a couple of shows during that period, and will discuss at our November meeting a proposal from Jo Scott-B. for a show around an urban development theme. Please bring your ideas.

Vancouver Public Library

Please prepare to discuss possible alternate uses for the current library main branch at Burrard and Robson. It appears that the library, with full support from the mayor, is budgeting to raise about \$25 million from the sale of the site, and if we expect to be able to save the building there we had better have a pretty good idea of where they will get that kind of money from someone who wants to reuse the existing building.

*Members and others present at 7:30 p.m. meeting commencement were Michael Kluckner, Peter Ross, Heather Ross, Peter Vaisbord, Richard Cavell, Christine Allen, Mary Ferrasin, Hugh Jansen, John Atkin, Eliza Massey, Sue Andrews, Janine Bond and Lindsay Stibbs. Minutes taken by Richard Cavell.

*There was a suggestion by Ann Gabrielson at the meeting that we circulate a membership list, so that is included in this mailing.

Next Meeting--December 12th

The arts council's Christmas Craft Sale is occupying every nook and cranny of the premises at 837 Davie Street, so we will be having our December meeting (Wednesday the 12th, 7:30 p.m.) in the 8th-floor boardroom of the Sandwell Building--the office tower, with entrance on Hornby Street, which contains the CAC gallery on its Davie Street side. Please be as punctual as possible, as we need to delegate someone at the door to help with security as we enter, and please also wear at least a three-piece suit so as not to trigger the patented non-executive-detector-system in the vicinity of the boardroom. Our presentation at 8:30 p.m. will focus on future downtown developments and their impact on heritage buildings: it will begin with a few slides to put us in the mood and get some use out of our expensive new projector, followed by a casual discussion featuring downtown planner Larry Beasley from City Hall and city heritage planner Jacquie Murfitt.

Christmas Party!--December 21st

Jacquie Murfitt has kindly offered her home for our heritage committee Christmas party, which will take place on Friday the 21st after 7:30 p.m. at 1466 Hope Road in North Vancouver (one block north of Marine Drive, three-and-a-half blocks east of Capilano). Please bring your own booze, a snack for the table, and a constant companion if you wish.

Michael Kluckner
Chairman

HERITAGE

COMMITTEE

December, 1990

The Trilea Tour

On Sunday, November 25, John Atkin and Peter Vaisbord conducted a walking tour of the site of the proposed Trilea project--the two blocks north of the Hudson's Bay Company. We were not terribly well organized in the publicity department, and managed to get out a press release only the week before, but it appears that media and others are responding to our programs, as a CBC television crew showed up. Their report of the tour on the 11 o'clock news showed very dramatic buildings (especially the Seymour Building), an indeterminately large crowd (in fact, there were somewhere around a dozen present), and some very reasonable and well-reasoned commentary from John and Peter. The Courier also published a brief article announcing the tour in their Sunday edition, which was probably not much of a draw as the paper does not reach many houses until about midday.

Of great interest is the fact that the developers' architects, the ubiquitous and prolific Aitken Wreglesworth Associates, dispatched architect Bruce Sinclair and planner Jim Lehto to observe and participate in the tour. Obviously the firm has been stung by the criticism, levelled at it by us and various arms of the city octopus, that it is insensitive to the architectural and contextual value of local buildings. Aitken Wreglesworth is evidently having some difficulty getting city approval for a replacement of the 1950s Van Norman Customs House Building at Burrard and Pender--its first design was considered to be not sufficiently inspired, and its second was too much of a knock-off of the existing building without adapting anything for reuse. Throughout it all, we are being perceived as occupying the authoritative middle ground, which, as W.S. Gilbert would have said, is a glorious thing.

On a related matter, the developer Ron Shon, to whom we owe the demolition of the Georgia Medical-Dental Building, was quoted in West Magazine that "Vancouver is approaching maturity." A reasonable translation of this statement is that Vancouver is beginning to look like everywhere else.

Letter to The Sun

At our November meeting, John Atkin raised the matter of the article entitled "Solving a Design Dilemma" in The Sun's "New Homes" section; it concerned the efforts of an architect who had demolished a somewhat dilapidated but historic cottage on Prior Street and replaced it with a duplex which he suggested had "historical links to the original house." We felt that it bore a great resemblance to the fortifications on the French coast that greeted Allied troops on D-Day. Anyway, we discussed and agreed on the need for correcting this specific dollop of misinformation, and for making progress on a press-kit-cum-heritage-handbook that would help reporters to understand more of the background of these heritage and redevelopment issues.

I then wrote a letter to The Sun criticizing the article and the new house design, which it published with great enthusiasm, a picture of the new house, and a "before" picture--actually, the old cottage as it appeared in the early 1970s. The newspaper's caption under the photographs did not make it clear that the cottage had fallen into disrepair in the years since the photograph was taken, but nevertheless the point was made that the cottage could have been restored. Regrettably, the editor chopped off the last half of the letter's last sentence, replacing a colon with a period (and I wish they hadn't). The original letter read: ". . . your newspaper owes its readers a more balanced analysis of what happened on Prior Street: firstly, that a historic old house on the city heritage inventory needed renovation and updating, and while city heritage legislation allows for the creation of a list of historic buildings it does little to protect them from demolition; secondly, that the architect's bald statement about the house fitting into the neighbourhood is questionable, to say the least."

The day after the letter was published, I received a call from the realtor who had handled the sale of the cottage to the architect/contractor. He thought I had been very unfair, and stated that the old cottage had been in terrible shape, shot through with rot and un-restorable. I asked him if he had seen the Davis houses on West 10th in Mount Pleasant, which conventional wisdom had said were un-restorable; he had not. He claimed that the interior spaces in the new duplex were wonderful; I said that was irrelevant, and that the issue of new design in areas such as Strathcona was the way the exterior related to the street and surrounding community. He said that the new house was only one-half of the development that the architect had created for the site, and if I had seen the whole thing I would not have gone off half-cocked; I asked him why, if the development was conceived of as a completed unit, they rushed out to the newspaper for publicity when only half of it was done.

The upshot of all of this is, I hope, that developers and architects in residential areas are becoming aware of the potential for bad press when they demolish heritage buildings--the contrast between the old and new pictures was startling, and poor Fensom-the-architect standing in front of his new mausoleum looked like he had just seen the burning bush.

Notes to Last Meeting (November, 14, 1990)

(In an effort to reduce the amount of paper we consume and photocopying we require, and to lessen the workload on the arts council's over-worked secretary Charlene, I am continually tinkering with meeting formats and distribution of minutes. At our October meeting, there was a dispute about whether minutes could be changed before their circulation, resolved by the agreement that minutes would be circulated only to those members who had been present at the meeting. At the next meeting, there would theoretically be agreement on these minutes, at which point they would be circulated to the general membership. This method of gaining approval for minutes greatly added to Charlene's workload, because of the restricted first mailing and subsequent remailing, and I therefore proposed and we discussed and agreed at the November meeting, that formal minutes would be taken and posted in the CAC offices and that I would include a very brief summary of them in this newsletter. So here goes. . . .)

*Motion (Allen/Massey) approved unanimously to support the creation of a National Trust and a federal building registry, and to streamline the interdepartmental responsibilities for heritage within the federal government. Letter to be written on our behalf by Cathy Barford.

*A sub-committee comprised of Eliza Massey and John Atkin will coordinate the non-student part of the February heritage gallery show.

*Motion (Atkin/Massey) approved unanimously to support Jo Scott-B.'s "Marching Houses" exhibition for the fall of 1991 in the CAC gallery.

*Motion (Lowe/Allen) approved to nominate Allan Diamond, Michael Kluckner and Geoffrey Massey to the city's Heritage Advisory Board. (After further investigation and discussion, Michael Kluckner withdrew so that HAC member Rob Smith could be renominated for a second term.)

*Motion (Atkin/Allen) approved to send a letter to The Sun about the house at 711 Prior (see above) and to work on press kit and heritage handbook.

*Speaker was Michael Kluckner with slides on his book "Vanishing Vancouver." By the time the talk started at 8:45 there were about 35 people present.

Monday, February 18th, at the Sound Spectrum (Tom Lee Music) on Granville Street. That is the actual official cast-in-bronze no-fooling Heritage Day (deadline for nominations is January 25th).

Notes to Last Meeting (December 12th)

The "experiment" of holding our meeting in the upstairs Lecture Room of the Sandwell Building worked very well--it was a very commodious space, good for slide showing, raving, and other conversational gambits. I have sent letters of thanks to Larry Beasley and Jacquie Murfitt of the Planning Department for participating. We will probably alternate our meetings between the regular arts council gallery space at 837 Davie and this upstairs room, although when we use the latter we will need volunteers to shepherd people through the building's security system (that was done in December by Christine Allen, whom we thank).

*The only two motions were to approve previous minutes and to adjourn. Minutes taken by Jo Scott-B.

*Correspondence from Lois Meyers-Carter of University Women's Club about the possibility of involving them with us and vice-versa. I will be meeting with her in January to discuss.

*We discussed our attitudes towards the plaque program and the Customs House, and received information from Eliza Massey and Jo Scott-B. about the February gallery show, all mentioned above. No motions taken.

*Anthony Norfolk mentioned the need to begin thinking about a possible art space use for the Roundhouse, following the successful Artropolis extravaganza.

Next Meeting--January 9th, 7:30 p.m.

Because of the number of things to discuss, we will not be having a speaker or presentation at our regular January meeting. We can thus rave on at greater length than recently. The meeting will be at the regular old location--the C.A.C. gallery, 837 Davie.

Plans for speakers and topics in subsequent months are: February--Facadism, slides by John Atkin and discussion; March--John Clarke, photographs of the city; April--Delamont Park in Kitsilano (perhaps we will run a walking tour there the weekend before); May--Postcards From The Middle, idealized and realistic postcard views of Vancouver from the turn of the century through the 1960s. June--??

Michael Kluckner
Chairman

HERITAGE

COMMITTEE

January, 1991

The Customs House

As expected, the meeting on December 13 of city council's Planning and Environment Committee gave its blessing to CN Real Estate to proceed with the development permit application for the northwest corner of Burrard and Pender--the Customs House site. Although there is a microscopic chance that representations directly to the developer could convince it to look again at the possibility of adapting the Customs House for reuse, I don't know who has the time or inclination to do that. Certainly there is little possibility that anyone from the city's architectural community, such as the Vancouver League for Studies in Architecture, will make a further attempt to come to the Customs House's and CBK Van Norman's rescue, as they made no direct pitch to city council. It might be interesting to do a calculation of how much demolition waste will make its way into the city landfill (such as, the equivalent of the amount of household waste from the West End for six months, or something) and then use that to embarrass the developer, but perhaps we are too mature for that sort of guerilla tactic. Maybe.

My statement in front of the council committee began with: "I am not here to defend the Customs House . . . ," but nevertheless I was attacked by Alderman Price and Mayor Campbell for defending it. The heritage lobby, they said, was not being helpful on this issue. I think that we were not helpful to them because I pointed out that the developer and its architects (Aitken Wreglesworth) had set out to discredit the Customs House, and had manufactured highly subjective arguments about the impossibility of renovating it, in order to get what they wanted--a vacant site for a new AAA office tower (without any heritage baggage), which I bet they will sell as soon as the real-estate market picks up. If these arguments were accepted, I argued, it will confirm a precedent already set whereby architects will be able to discredit any city building by claiming that it can't be made good enough to justify the investment (anyone remember the Georgia Medical-Dental debate? The Birks Building?). In the debate that followed in the committee, the developer's architects lost their point that they should automatically be allowed the "highest and best use" of the land, as Mayor Campbell stated

that the city felt no obligation to provide for AAA office space on every site; however, they won the main point that they should be allowed to continue with the project, as their application and some work had predated council's approval of the concept of a post-1940s heritage inventory. Our side won a minor point, perhaps, in putting across the idea that a building should not be deemed useless because its floor plate or facade did not meet current taste--I tried to say that I felt that CN had more of a marketing problem here than an architectural problem. Council seemed to agree with that point in rather an oblique way--I get the impression that they agreed with the developer that such renovated space could never be more than a C+ building, but felt that that would be potentially tough luck for the developer; I wanted them to agree that renovated and modernized space, retaining its 1950's style, could be marketed as AAA. (This, admittedly, is me being subjective, as I rarely feel part of the same civilization as the people who spend eight hours a day in those buildings. I wish someone would feed us some comparable rental figures for restored 1950s buildings elsewhere on the planet.) However, I think that the truly significant part of the meeting that afternoon was that most of the members of council, and the mayor, looked at me and Stuart Howard (of the Heritage Advisory Committee--he spoke first with a straight architectural heritage argument) as if we were nuts.

The Customs House is just an incident in the development of the city's attitude towards the things called "heritage buildings." Although the vote to establish a post-1940s inventory was unanimous (in the old council last June), I get the feeling that the majority opinion in council is that heritage buildings are "old buildings that we all like," and thus that the retention of 1950s buildings, which are not now widely liked but obviously were liked by some people way back when or they would never have been designed and built, will not receive wide support. The side of the debate led by Alderman Price, who does not feel that 1950s buildings such as the Customs House could ever become "heritage," is that the erection of such buildings caused the demolition of earlier, worthier examples of architecture. My (I don't know exactly who the "our" is on this issue) opinion is that a city heritage policy involves stewardship of the most significant buildings of each generation regardless of our current appreciation of their style. Only through that will we have an architecturally diverse city, although it doesn't mean that we must preserve everything until it falls down.

For the record, Ald. Davies moved a motion in the committee to delay the processing of CN's development permit application until further study could be completed on the reusability of the Customs House. It was lost 4-7, with (I think I remember this correctly) Davies, Ericksen, Wilson and Rankin for, and Pull, Price, Campbell, Bellamy, Chan, Owen, and Yorke against. The media coverage I have seen is a story in each of The Courier and the West Ender--both elucidating quite well the issues of architectural diversity and developers' attitudes to the adaptability of

old buildings. For anyone who wants to refight the Battle of Britain without "the few," the development permit board is having another look at the Aitken Wreglesworth-CN proposal on January 21. (At our May meeting, I will be showing slides of postcards of the city, including some ones I recently acquired of the Customs House and its vicinity in the 1940s and 1950s.)

The Plaque Decision

At the same committee meeting where the Customs Building was discussed, council very quickly approved the most expensive plaque option--the bronze one, at a cost of almost \$90,000 and an ongoing cost of \$9,500 a year. There was no discussion of other options, and the opinions we arrived at at our meeting the previous evening were not even considered. Attending that part of the meeting was a great waste of time. Evidently some effort will be put into creating a smaller version of the triangular bronze plaque that will be more suitable for houses, but, because of the cost, it is unlikely that this could ever be used as a tool to promote heritage awareness through recognition of non-designated buildings that are on the heritage inventory.

Heritage Week

Our annual fifteen minutes of public attention will occur in February during Heritage Week.

Tuesday, February 12th, will be the opening of our gallery show at the Community Arts Council. If you want to get involved in the show, or help with the opening, contact Jo Scott-B. (738-2419), John Atkin (254-1429) or Eliza Massey (926-0959).

We will be conducting walking tours of various bits of the city on the weekends of the 16th-17th and 23rd-24th of February. Tentative tours will be:

[redacted], afternoon or maybe morning--[redacted] Street/Downtown South, organized and conducted by some or all of me, Peter Vaisbord, Richard Cavell, and John Atkin, with assistance by others, who should phone me at 263-2795 to get involved.

[redacted], 8 a.m.--John Atkin will reprise the [redacted] tour.

Saturday the 23rd, afternoon--[redacted], again by John Atkin.

[redacted], afternoon--Kensington and [redacted] Embassy (the "Pitts Stop" area), by Michael Kluckner. It will be quite a hike, probably about a mile and a half. Anyone who wants to help research and organize this tour, and has day-time free during the week, should contact me at 263-2795. If there is enough interest, we can use the preparation of this tour as a workshop on archival research.

The city will be holding its annual heritage awards presentation on

alternate representative. For the Gastown committee, our permanent representative for the past two years has been Richard Henriquez, with Brian Murfitt as alternate; for Chinatown, Susan Baker has been permanent for the last two years and David Mah alternate. Now, after two years of Henriquez and Baker, Murfitt and Mah become the permanent members and we nominate or renominate two alternates.

This is all very straightforward and highly useful, but I find it appalling that we have never received any regular reports from these people, although they are our nominees. I will be attempting to establish some regular communication with our representatives, and thus with the broader heritage community. Think about potential nominees.

Notes to Last Meeting

On January 9, 1991, neither rain nor sleet nor snowdrifts could stop Jo Scott-B., Christine Allen, Mary McDonald, Richard Cavell, Laurie Kerrin, Rob Smith, Peter Vaisbord, me, Anthony Norfolk, Ann de la Hey, Sue Andrews, Eliza Massey and John Atkin from attending.

*February meeting will need a volunteer to shepherd members through the security at the door for the upstairs lecture room. Will someone please phone me at 263-2795 before February 10th, and volunteer?

*Lindsay Stibbs and Mary McDonald volunteered to help research the Kerrisdale/Third Shaughnessy walking tour.

*Mention of endangered structures included Burlington Northern warehouses near CN station and Ballantyne Pier. Other discussion included an epilogue to the Customs House debate which led into a discussion about the future of the Library (see above), a mention of possible unsympathetic additions to the Jones Tent & Awning Building on West 11th, and a request for information and research on the Heather Pavilion.

*Brief discussion of the plans of the owners of the Fraser Arms Hotel to sell out to a project that would dig underground parking into the remains of the Marpole Midden. Comment that the Musqueam band were on top of it, and that we were to write a letter supporting their efforts to buy the site (I haven't done it yet).

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, February 13th, 7:30 p.m.

8th floor Lecture Room, Sandwell Building,
1190 Hornby Street.

BE ON TIME OR BE LOCKED OUT

(A schedule of door openings will be posted)

8:30 presentation: FACADISM, by John Atkin

Michael Kluckner
Chairman

HERITAGE

COMMITTEE

February, 1991

The Public Library building

At the somewhat snowbound last meeting, the subject of the potential fate of the Vancouver Public Library building came up again, and I expressed my concern that we were once again going to be boxed into a situation where we were defending a building with all our moralistic flags flying but with no chance of winning. The library has two things going for it--it is a very significant "1950s-style" building in Vancouver, and it is historically significant as the main branch of the library system for 35 years--but a far greater number against it. Where to begin . . . where to begin It completely occupies its property, at a density far below what could be built there, and thus there is no chance of transferring its potential density elsewhere on its site; the city seems to be moving in a direction away from density transfers to off-site properties, fearing a negative public response to the impact of an extrabig development elsewhere; appreciation in this city of its design value is, as yet, something of a minority intellectual exercise; the library organization (that is, the city) is counting on raising somewhere between \$25 and \$30 million by the sale of the property; the sale of the property with an undemolishable building on it would probably net between \$5 and \$15 million; the library's funding campaign, as evidenced by the plebiscite in November, is supported by the vast majority of the electorate, so that any group which threw a spaniard into the works would likely be seen as purely obstructionist; and, the aesthetic strength and heritage value of the library building, as with most buildings of that period, is in its clean sculptural shape, making it difficult to add to without destroying the thing that ought to be saved.

If we want to mount a serious campaign to save this building, we will have to get together a concept that will pack density onto the site, and do it before the building is sold, and before the city or any future developer or architect takes a position on what a new development there would look like, so that we can avoid the good building-better building war-of-the-egos that characterized the Georgia Medical-Dental and Customs Building fiascos. I suggested at the meeting that what we needed was an architect's rendering, which could be something like the library

building impaled upon the spike of a taller Westcoast Transmission building, and phoned Bing Thom, who last summer expressed interest in preserving 50s buildings. He was interested in the idea of coming up with a design concept and rendering, but bowed out because of potential conflict of interest due to his involvement with the library board; he suggested that I call Richard Henriquez, which I did, but the latter was very doubtful that it would be possible to add density to the library site without destroying the effect of the library building, and suggested that the site with building might only sell for \$5 million. If his guess is right, that's about a \$20 million "heritage gap" in a public project. So, has anybody got any suggestions? Know any architects? If we do nothing and then react against a pending demolition, do you want to bet who will then lead a campaign against the heritage lobby? (Insert name here: M _____ C _____) With these odds, I think I would rather enter the Polar Bear Swim than go before the firing squad, err . . . council, and say: "you gotta save it because it's very important." Phone me at 263-2795 with your ideas--operators are standing by.

A House

According to reliable sources, a very important house in good condition with excellent landscaping on an interesting lot with possibilities of profitable infill in First Shaughnessy is threatened by a bogeyman--A NEW HOUSE. Evidently, the new owner of the property has no interest in the existing house, classified as an A on the good old inventory, and cannot be bullied through First Shaughnessy rules and guidelines into keeping it because he wants the outright use guaranteed by the zoning, which is single-family. The real-estate agent's behaviour was, I am told, impeccable, as the house was advertised as a heritage property, and the agent had even spent some money to get an infill sketch done to show to prospective buyers. The address is 1037 Matthews, and we should all go by and familiarize ourselves with it.

This could potentially be an interesting test of the city's mettle, because the new owner cannot claim that he is disadvantaged by heritage policy due to his ownership of the house longer than the policy has existed. He also cannot claim to be disadvantaged on the matter of land use, because he can easily convert the old house to an extremely elegant single-family use. Thus, it seems that the city could refuse to issue a development permit without any worry about having to pay compensation (as threatened by provincial heritage law) to the owner. I hope to have more information on this at our next meeting.

New Walking Tour Schedule

Please note among the enclosed bumf the revised walking tour schedule: Downtown South is going on Saturday morning February 16th at 9:30, and the Kerrisdale/Third Shaughnessy tour that afternoon at 1:30 p.m. Thanks

to Laurie Kerrin who has arranged ticket sales. The reason for the change is that I am going to Australia on the 20th, which brings up the following

Downtown South Rezoning

On February 21st, City Council is holding its long-anticipated public hearing for rezoning the brave new Downtown South neighbourhood. Someone from the heritage committee must be delegated to attend and make a brief presentation, which could include slides, but which must reinforce our sentiments about the value of the hotels/rooming houses/social housing on Granville Street and elsewhere, and make a pitch for some of the bits of urban texture, for lack of a better term, that we have included in our report.

Our 78-page report in cerlox binding, researched and prepared mainly by Peter Vaisbord and Richard Cavell, was printed last week and distributed to the mayor and members of council. Whoever does the presentation could read from its introduction and refer to specific pages of the report if slides seem to be too cumbersome. We want to tie our efforts quite closely to those of DERA, and I will be meeting soon with Jim Green to figure out the tack we will take. There are copies of our lavishly illustrated report available at \$10 each (cost price, this is not a fundraiser) from the arts council.

I got the impression from talking with Mayor Campbell earlier this week that he is in favour of a lowrise Granville Street and a concept for the adjoining neighbourhood that would be a departure from the point-tower model seen elsewhere in high-density areas of the Lower Mainland, including the West End. I am not sure if this acts in our favour for the pre-First World War, mainly Parr & Fee-designed, unreinforced-masonry hotels on Granville Street that are the main features of that streetscape. Much depends on who owns what on the street, and how many people own large, consolidated parcels that could be bonused to help the old buildings. Another possibility is that the city will zone Granville Street to such a low PSR that the old hotels will be too overbuilt to demolish; if the city then allowed a lower structural and gewgaw standard than that demanded for new buildings, they might stand a good chance. But, as they used to say at Lansdowne Shopping Mall, it's a horse race.

Gastown & Chinatown Advisory Committee Nominations

By February 18th, we must come up with nominations for the Gastown and Chinatown Advisory Committees, two groups that report to the Planning Department, meet monthly, and are comprised of representatives from such special-interest groups as us, the architectural institute, and local businesses. The appointments are for a four-year term, and the system works so that from each group there is a permanent representative and an

as a public course--the first public golf course in the province. The clubhouse itself is one of the oldest three or so in the province. It needs a saviour and a new use, as the Park Board has decided it cannot be adapted to a planned new course layout. Ann Gabrielson has indicated an interest in working on it; it will be on the April agenda.

*The so-called Nabata house--the proposed demolition of a large Craftsman house at 1037 Matthews in First Shaughnessy and replacement by an 11,300 square-foot fake Tudor--is still under discussion, as the owner has alleged that he will lose more than \$1 million on a heritage restoration, and is still threatening to sue the city if it denies him a demolition permit. This particular building will, I feel, be a real test of the city's mettle on the credibility of its Heritage Management Plan. There will be an update at the April meeting.

*A little house at 243 East 5th Avenue, which dates at least to 1893 and was missed from the city's heritage inventory, is allegedly threatened by a proposal from the next-door Native Education Centre to tear it down and replace it with a parking lot. Mary McDonald is investigating, and will report.

*The May meeting will, I hope, feature a presentation on art deco by Don Luxton and Valda Vidners, well known for their expertise and involvement in heritage conservation for many years, although I was unable to confirm it by the time this had to be mailed. The presentation at the June meeting, preceded by a walking tour the Sunday before, will be by me and will focus on Delamont Park in Kitsilano, an existing enclave of old houses and a potential park site.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, April 10, 7:30 p.m.

Community Arts Council Gallery,

837 Davie Street. (NOT in the upstairs lecture room)

At 8:30, Cathy Barford will be giving a slide presentation on the architect Thomas Hooper.

Michael Kluckner
Chairman

HERITAGE

COMMITTEE

March/April, 1991

The Stanley Theatre

The crisis about the pending closure of the Stanley Theatre on Granville demonstrates how complex some heritage issues can become. The proposed redevelopment of the site, involving the conversion of the theatre building into retail space and the restoration of many of its architectural features, is a model of the kind of the development we always hoped we would see in this city. For once, the developer is starting from the position that he wants to restore and adaptively reuse a building rather than demolish it.

However, the architectural issue of preservation is not the same as the need for the retention of The Stanley. The theatre is much more than a piece of "A"-listed architecture, as witnessed by the response from the community to retain it as a theatre. The special "Save The Stanley" meeting we sponsored in the arts council gallery on Tuesday the 19th attracted about 80 people, almost none of whom had previously been at heritage committee meetings or had been active in the bread-and-butter architectural-historical issues that normally preoccupy us. This is one of the new kind of "soft heritage" issues, rather like the neighbourhood preservation crises that have attracted hordes to meetings in Kitsilano and Kerrisdale and elsewhere, and mixes a bit of architecture and a bit of heritage with a lot of quality-of-life and neighbourhood ambience and personal history. Besides, the theatre itself is superb acoustically and technologically, and will be sorely missed if it is sold for \$4 million and that money ends up expanding the rabbit-warren known as Capitol 6.

The "Save The Stanley" group is working through the Community Arts Council with Dirk Beck (253-4442) coordinating it. Their next general meeting was on Wednesday, April 3 at 7:30 p.m.--the week before the next heritage meeting.

Walking Tours

All of the tours held during heritage week were runaway successes, demonstrating in the residential ones through Strathcona and Kerrisdale/Shaugnessy that one guide could handle 80 people. Thanks to Laurie

Kerrin who organized tickets and ticket sales, Hager Books and Book Warehouse for helping to sell the tickets, John Atkin and Peter Vaisbord for conducting tours, and Mary McDonald and Lindsay Stibbs for helping with the Kerrisdale research. Chuck Davis in the "Province" was one of many media types who publicized the tours and helped them to sell out.

The coffee shop, Strathcona and Kerrisdale/Shaghnessy tours have been or are about to be rerun, again as sellouts, and John Atkin will be rerunning his tours again in April as demand dictates. I have postponed my Delamont Park tour, mentioned in our Spring Programs brochure, from May till June, as mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter in the bit about upcoming meetings. Everything in my schedule is a bit of a disaster because of a book I am writing, and this newsletter was actually written in a motel room in Ladysmith on March 26. I will be somewhat more organized sometime around the turn of the century.

Notes Since February

The March newsletter was not done because we went to Australia to study heritage policy, beaches and hot weather.

*Janine Bond has taken on the task of preparing a heritage inventory of the University Endowment Lands, which was never properly examined in previous go-rounds by city staff for the Vancouver heritage inventory, and will probably not get a really detailed look, because of time constraints and a strong focus on the downtown, in the preparation of the city's 1940-1970 heritage inventory additions. The UEL has a great variety of buildings, some of the 1950s tract-house type, but others that are the best combinations of 1930s to 1950s residential design and landscaping in the city, and will probably prove to be a gold mine of residential work by some of the city's well-known architects. Clusters of houses built between 1926 and 1930 by some of the city's big architectural names, all of which had been overlooked in the Vancouver heritage inventory, were found in the walking-tour research in the Third Shaghnessy area, and I hope the same will happen on the UEL.

*Rob Smith is a new member of the Gastown Historic Area Planning Committee, at a very crucial time in its existence (because of the current influence of local business groups and the uncertainty surrounding the province's draft heritage legislation).

*Jo Scott-B.'s "Marching Houses" exhibition, to open in the gallery in October, is making great progress and attracting potential contributors both to the show's artwork and to seminars and workshops on the themes of disappearing rural architecture and suburban sprawl. We will be trying to repeat the stimulative atmosphere of the heritage committee's group show "You Are What You Grow" in the fall of 1989. Jo will also make a presentation on the committee's behalf to the Vancouver School Board.

*Plans are well underway to move Greyhound from its Dunsmuir Street terminal to a shared operation with VIA in the Canadian National station on Main Street. The plans are being discussed between the principals and

the city's heritage advisory committee design panel to ensure that a "B" building near Terminal Avenue is retained and reused. It looks to be a good development and a boost for the station, which has needed one since the VIA cutbacks. The move will free the Cambie-Beatty-Dunsmuir-Georgia block for return to parkland, which it has been since it was cleared in the 1880s and called the Cambie Street Grounds; it has been known since about the 1930s as Larwill Park, after park commissioner Albert Larwill, and was leased as a temporary measure to the B.C. Electric long-distance bus operation in 1946, by Mayor McGeer, because the city could not decide exactly what its plans were for a civic centre in the area (this is an oversimplification, for purposes of brevity, of what actually happened). The bus terminal building itself is quite an interesting piece of Moderne design, and will likely be highly rated on the pending post-1940 portion of the heritage inventory, which will likely lead to an interesting brawl with the Park Board over whether it should be retained.

*The city's long-awaited Downtown South rezoning plan sets a floor space ratio of 3.5 for Granville Street, which should save the old hotels there that define the character of the street, mainly because most of them are at about that density or above. No provision is made in the plan for off-Granville heritage buildings, mainly single-room-occupancy hotels and rooming houses, whose fate is probably going to be left to the market. It is all very complex: nearly everyone who spoke to council, even arch ogres such as Peter Busby, seemed to accept that the old hotels on Granville should be retained, although there is no mechanism to help finance their restoration; off Granville, there is a minimum site-size requirement for developers wishing to get the maximum density for new projects, which could help heritage buildings because a development on a big site has more potential for a density transfer and bonusing, but will have the unwanted effect of discouraging architectural diversity and encouraging land speculation; the planning department is encouraging a point-tower model, which I think will clash terribly both with Yaletown and all of the lower-rise streetscapes incorporating old buildings. Very serious to heritage interests is the inference that a southward expansion of Nelson Park would provide needed (on the basis of some mathematical equation of square-foot-per-person) open space for the new neighbourhood--that means potentially the demolition of the Comox-Pendrell houses. I made a presentation to council at its meeting on urban form, reiterated our concerns and asked specifically for the designation of the Yale Hotel and the Leslie house (Umberto's). I will probably go again to their upcoming meeting on public space and make a pitch for Comox-Pendrell.

*The Abbey del Santo, an interesting property at 3545 Kingsway containing some ruins and an old watering hole dating probably to Granville Townsite days, was discussed at the March meeting; Carol Hackett will be at the April meeting with more information.

*The possible demolition of the Langara Golf Clubhouse was brought up at the March meeting. Langara was laid out and opened in 1926 by the CPR

Handbook," which will be ready (promises promises) for September. Andrew Young, home phone number 734-2446, is willing to lead a researching tour of downtown and UBC libraries for those interested--please call him. All should be aware and plan to attend the second annual Clayburn Heritage Festival on July 21st; this beleaguered little historic town needs help from throughout the region, and only huge amounts of public support will convince politicians to divert development away from the surrounding hillsides and away from its major roadway. Also, we discussed speakers for the fall--anyone with ideas should phone me at 263-2795.

Next Meeting

This is the text of the press release that went out at the same time as this newsletter:

"To focus attention on the unique city-owned heritage assets at Delamont Park and Nelson Park, the Heritage Committee of the Community Arts Council is hosting two free walking tours in June. Delamont Park and Nelson Park are city-owned blocks of heritage houses, the former in Kitsilano and the latter in the West End, that are slated for park development. The Delamont Park walking tour will leave from the corner of 6th and Arbutus at 1 p.m. on June 9th; the Nelson Park walking tour will leave from the corner of Thurlow and Comox at 7:30 p.m. on June 12th. Both tours will be conducted by Michael Kluckner. "The Heritage Committee believes that these parksites offer unique opportunities for creating heritage enclaves in the midst of the high density modern city. The walking tours will focus on the history of the areas and the architectural styles of the houses, and will suggest ways in which public park uses could be integrated with the retention of the houses.

"Following the walking tour on Wednesday, June 12, the Heritage Committee will retire to Nelson Park on Comox Street (opposite the houses) and hold its regular monthly meeting, at which the broader issues of conservation of these areas--including the affordability of the rental accommodation there--will be discussed. Both walking tours will take place rain or shine; in the event of rain, however, the meeting following the June 12 walking tour will be held in the Lecture Room at 1190 Hornby Street at approximately 8:45 p.m."

Michael Kluckner
Chairman

HERITAGE

COMMITTEE

May, 1991

The Stanley and The Vogue

The campaign to save the Stanley is in a hiatus as we await the outcome of the city's efforts to meet with Famous Players and suggest alternatives whereby the latter would keep the theatre open. The Save Our Stanley committee is still meeting regularly--its next meeting is June 3 at 7:30 p.m. at the CAC offices at 837 Davie Street.

At its committee meeting on April 18, city council members were remarkably supportive of the retention of the Stanley as an operating theatre. Several motions were passed unanimously, and only the mayor demurred on a motion to seek a meeting with Famous Players and to become "pro-active"--as the current jargon has it--on the issue. Regrettably, on the first of May developer Sandy Cox pulled out of his conditional offer to purchase the building, indicating that at the moment he was not interested in working with the city and Famous Players to try to find a combination to keep the heritage use of the Stanley. Perhaps he will be back.

At the council committee meeting, it was particularly interesting to see such "old-guard" city councillors as Harry Rankin and Don Bellamy making very positive pro-heritage statements about the retention of the Stanley's use--to them, the heritage value is a building's historic use, and in the past they and a number of other councillors have been either unsupportive or indifferent to facadist proposals that retained portions of buildings or changed the uses of buildings away from their original purpose. These councillors' opinions contrast strongly with city heritage policy, which seeks to save buildings of architectural merit regardless of any change of use.

The other old theatre whose fate is in question is The Vogue. The city is doing its best to bend its own rules to ensure the retention of it as a theatre, as it is counting on the entertainment industry to rejuvenate that part of Granville Street. Evidently, there is a group wishing to buy and operate the Vogue; it is currently seeking city approval for a heritage density bonus calculated on the restoration cost, a transfer of density off the block (going against council's current policy), and a liquor license.

The Roundhouse

Saved from demolition in the mid-1980s by railway historians, the old CPR Roundhouse on False Creek is now the property of Concord Pacific, which has undertaken to turn it into a community centre to the public's specifications as part of its development of the former Expo lands. The surrounding buildings that made up that very historically significant precinct were removed in the 1980s and the Roundhouse itself has been greatly altered, but the building still works historically because of the operating turntable, Engine 374, and the fact that the latter can still move in and out of the building.

I have gone along for a number of months hoping that what had been saved once did not have to be saved all over again, and that we did not need to get involved, but it seems that there is some discussion among park board planners and groups in the community about the "railway option" for a portion of the Roundhouse. According to this line of argument, the storing of 374 in the Roundhouse is an option, not a given; we, of course, disagree, but would gladly let the squash players and libraries and artists scratch and fight among themselves for space within the Roundhouse once everyone agreed that railway use was required for a portion of the building. We could even get enthused about working on a planning process to build adjoining community centre buildings to complement the Roundhouse. Fortunately, our view is held unequivocally by the city's heritage planner, Jeannette Hlavach, who confirmed the position of her predecessor and of the Heritage Conservation Branch in Victoria that 374 had to be stored in the Roundhouse and move to the turntable on a regular basis "as a pre-condition of approval for [its] adaptive re-use." The roundhouse, the plaza, the turntable, and Engine 374 are all provincially designated, so the Minister of Municipal Affairs must approve all alterations--hopefully, that means that they are safe.

The Nabata House and First Shaughnessy

On April 18, the same day that the city's Planning and Environment Committee passed its positive resolutions on The Stanley, the committee considered the matter of Mr. Tony Nabata's request for a development and demolition permit for 1037 Matthews Street. I think we managed to convince the committee that Nabata was trying to use a developer's arguments to prove that he could not retain a house on a property where he intended to live--Nabata said that he was "only trying to protect his down side"--and that he could in fact use the city's heritage incentives to restore the house and save money compared with his own option of building a new house. However, the issue has been by no means resolved. The planning department was instructed by council to prepare a report on an imposed heritage designation for the property (the first ever in Vancouver, though not in the province), and that night at a public hearing

council voted to downzone First Shaughnessy, effectively limiting the size of the house that Nabata could build and thus reducing the incentive to demolish. However, as Nabata is so convinced that his Craftsman-style house is inappropriate as a mansion in an area like Shaughnessy, the house may still be in jeopardy--it is conceivable that he might pursue the matter of demolishing the house, meanwhile taunting the city to designate it and threatening to sue for compensation, in order to build a new house and prove his point that he knows best on heritage matters.

Part of his argument is that strata-titled properties--which 1037 Matthews would be if it were redeveloped using the city's heritage infill incentives--are not as good an investment as fee-simple properties. Therefore, he has applied to the city to subdivide from the large lot its lower, eastern portion--this would give him a fee-simple piece to build a sympathetic infill house, but it would "grandfather" the main house even more than it is now (that is, the main house would be much bigger than anything that could be rebuilt). Although one can see Nabata protecting his down side with this ploy, it negates his previous strongly stated arguments that he wanted the entire property on which he would build a "mansion," which he felt was the only correct use for First Shaughnessy property. The city planning department meanwhile is pursuing its report to council on designation, but many in that august body seem to be hoping that Nabata will simply go away. We want the city to take a stand on the property and designate it in order to demonstrate that it is willing to back up its heritage management policy with legal action. For our efforts in support of the issue, we received a letter of thanks from the Shaughnessy Heights Property Owners Association.

Ralph Block

In the works is a proposal from DERA to do a facadist redevelopment of a few historic buildings on Hastings Street across from Woodward's. The development, which will back onto the Pendera Project, will retain the facades of two "B" buildings--the 1899 Victorian-Italianate-style Ralph Block at 126 West Hastings and the similar building adjoining it to the east--and build a 10-storey seniors' building behind them; the seniors' building will occupy the street frontage at 130 West Hastings, adjoining the Ralph Block to the west, and will thus wrap around the old facades. Something like 20 feet of the old storefronts will be maintained on the main floors of the old buildings, but their upper two storeys will be a galleria for the apartments in the tower behind. Our concerns, and those of the Heritage Advisory Committee, are that the facades still "work" from street level and do not become propped-up false fronts, and that the much larger building behind drops back visually through subtle colouring and detailing. If it works out, this will probably be a good example of adaptive re-use of heritage buildings in an era of tight money, and will reinforce the moves begun in the Victory Square and Downtown Eastside areas to incorporate existing buildings into public

housing projects. It is well worth having a look at the old buildings now, and assessing the impact of a ten-storey building set back from them, to determine whether the heritage nature of the area is being properly maintained.

Nelson Park et al

The fate of the city-owned houses on the block bounded by Thurlow, Pendrell, Bute and Comox popped into the news a couple of weeks ago when it was announced that the Parks Board was set to approve the demolition of a duplex at 1132-34 Comox. There was some confusion as to whether the house was on the heritage inventory and even whether it ought to be, but there was no doubt that many thousands of dollars of public money had been spent quite recently on upgrading it and that its demolition would be the beginning of a nibbling away at the houses on the block with the long-term intention of clearing the site for parkland.

Janet Bingham and I went along to the Park Board meeting on May 13th to argue against the demolition. Janet recounted the extremely successful restoration of the houses on Barclay Heritage Square; I suggested that the Park Board forget forever the notion of moving houses to create parkland (as it violates the conservation guidelines in the city's Heritage Management Plan) and sketched out a park plan of restored houses with some open space in the form of historically authentic "vacant lots" on the streetscapes. Reversing its staff's recommendation, the Board then voted to defer the demolition until it investigated a long-range vision for the block--this fits in with our planned June events detailed below.

Hallmark Society Visits

Cathy Barford has arranged an "exchange" with the Hallmark Society whereby all of us who so wish will visit Victoria for heritage tours in September and the Hallmark Society executive will come to Vancouver in October for a couple of tours and participation in the workshops that will be part of our "Marching Houses" gallery show. This should be interesting because, to oversimplify the situation, Victoria is miles ahead of Vancouver in attitude but considerably behind Vancouver in innovative heritage policy.

Downtown South Zoning

The exhaustive rezoning process for the Downtown South neighbourhood has passed through its "workshop" and discussion stages and appears to be on its way to a public hearing. All of us who have paid attention to its peregrinations have been somewhat bemused by the support for retention of the heritage character of Granville Street by groups such as the Downtown South Improvement Society. The heritage buildings off Granville

Street are quite likely going to be left to fend for themselves, but they will have some assistance from heritage bonuses, SRO (single-room occupancy) bonuses for the hotels and rooming houses, and the minimum site-size requirement for the 5 floor space ratio (FSR) zoning which has been proposed by the planning department. Minimum site size could mean that a heritage building would be part of a larger land assembly, allowing for the full range of transfers and bonuses and so forth. The planning department has proposed postponing the rezoning of the 800-block of Cambie/Beatty pending the negotiation of some kind of heritage zoning with the owners (an interesting sideline to this little heritage enclave is the request by the Law Society of B.C.--owners of 839 Cambie Street and the adjoining modern high rise office building--to designate 839 Cambie in return for a change of use of some of the already existing space within the new building; 839 Cambie is a 1913-vintage three-storey Gothic Revival warehouse by Gardiner & Mercer, recently used as L'Orangerie restaurant).

The one building where there is the biggest gap between existing use and potential zoning is the Leslie house (Umberto's) on Hornby, which is the only "A" building not accounted for off Granville Street (the other "A," along with three nearby houses, is to be incorporated into a major development on the 800-block Hamilton); because of the way development has happened on that block of Hornby, the Leslie house sits on a site that does not meet the minimum site size and so, if planning department gets its way, the zoning there will be 3 FSR, rather than the 5 which a larger site would get. There is some question which would benefit that house more, and whether it has a snowball's chance in hell of surviving in either case without a purchase by the city or a heritage designation with compensation.

Amid all the jolly common purpose about Granville Street is the real question--what will the density there be. Most of the heritage buildings are SRO hotels, many by Parr & Fee from the years just before World War One, and most of them are at FSRs of 4 or 5. Thus, the planning department's proposal to zone Granville Street at 3.5, and to inaugurate a very liberal SRO and heritage bonus (a density transfer equal to the cost of upgrading a building), seems to be a good bet for retaining the buildings. They will be too big to be worth knocking down. Downtown South Improvement Society and a number of other interests have argued that Granville Street should be at 5, where it is now, and said that they are willing to limit new development to a height of less than 100 feet; they have asked rather audaciously for enormous heritage bonuses for restoring the hotels (25,000 square feet per hotel), but have indicated their willingness to play along with the retention of the heritage nature of the street.

I went to the Planning and Environment Committee meeting of city council on May 16th, and stated that I thought 3.5 FSR was the best for Granville Street. The successful pedestrian-oriented heritage-type areas

in the province, such as Gastown, Chinatown, Old Town in Victoria and downtown Nelson are typically about 3 FSR; as well, the problem with a higher density is that it would become profitable to tear down a heritage building, even if design guidelines forced an owner to build a fake heritage building in its place. We don't want that.

Jones Tent & Awning

As part of the Kitsilano Local Area Planning process, the so-called Arbutus Industrial Area--on either side of Arbutus Street in the few blocks south of Broadway--has been subject to intense scrutiny. The city's long-term planning aim is to redevelop such outmoded industrial areas with housing, as has been seen and will be seen further around False Creek and on the flats to the east of the CNR station. In Kitsilano, the main foofurrah has been directed at Molson's for its plans to develop a residential/retail complex on the old Vancouver Brewery/Carling O'Keefe site immediately to the east of Connaught Park. The brewing company, which--like MacMillan-Bloedel on Galiano Island--is trying to figure out whether it is in the real-estate business, has proposed a development that will be massively more dense than the housing on surrounding streets. Arguably, they have a point in doing this--fairly high-density housing perhaps takes some of the pressure off the surrounding streets and does not necessitate a direct attack on neighbourhoods. However, the neighbours feel that the amount of traffic and number of people in the new development will wreck their neighbourhood.

From a heritage standpoint, the brewery is not really an issue, but the wave of public support for low-density residential has a potential impact on the Jones Tent & Awning building on 11th Avenue between Arbutus and Maple. It is a very fine old brick factory and a local landmark, but the direction of the planning process may force it to fit into a residential neighbourhood by making its continued use as a factory or commercial building impossible. Enter Bastion Developments, which bought the building from its original owner, has since converted it into a mini-storage warehouse, and wants to erect an apartment complex on the balance of the block to the east of the warehouse. Bastion came before the Heritage Advisory Committee requesting the latter's support for its residential building (which, at 2.5 FSR, is considerably more dense than the surrounding neighbourhood) in return for the designation of the facade of the Jones Building. The HAC supported the proposal, but a lot of reservations were expressed about the future of the space behind the designated facade; this may become a local issue, although it seems to be bizarre to force an already existing building to become something else (that is, a residential building) when the economics of restoration lean strongly in favour of a commercial or light-industrial use.

The Post-1940s Inventory

The city-sponsored registry of significant buildings erected between 1940 and 1970 has been completed and is a "landmark" list mainly of major downtown buildings but including significant residences that were written up in magazines and journals of the period. It will probably end up consisting of about 150 buildings.

Although this inventory will likely contain the best of the best, it is not likely that it will capture the flavour of the period, architecturally or otherwise. Thus, we are going to research and publish our own post-1940s heritage inventory, including everything and anything including bowling alleys and builders' houses and as many supermarkets as we can find, especially anything with bubble roofs and zigzag awnings. I hope that everyone will prowl his own neighbourhood and look for candidates for this list--we will meet late in the summer or in the fall and begin the research process for the ones that make our arbitrary grade.

"A"s for Sale

In addition to the Nabata house mentioned above, there are three buildings listed as "A"s on the city's indubitable heritage inventory whose fate is in some doubt. Firstly, the coffee-shop tenant at the Henry Abbott house on Jervis Street (built in 1900 in the last years of "Blueblood Alley") just above Georgia Street has evidently been given notice to vacate. There has long been a rumour that the block has been assembled for a massive redevelopment; the good news is that, with such a large-scale project, there will be enough conditional approval power in the city's hands that the Abbott house may get a proper restoration as part of the development. Secondly, "Oakherst" on 59th just east of Oak Street is evidently for sale; it is a beautiful stone and log mansion that sits on nearly five acres, a portion of which is occupied by a private hospital. Asking price is apparently about \$14 million, which works out to about \$700,000 a lot. "Oakherst"'s rockery gardens were so beautiful that, in the 1930s, Kodak photographed them as part of its promotional campaign for colour film. Maybe the house and gardens could be restored as part of a clustered townhouse development like "Shannon" on South Granville? Thirdly, and probably not in jeopardy at all, the George Thornton Sharp house at 2427 West 37th is on the market; the 70 or so people on my second Kerrisdale tour in March received an impromptu tour of the interior thanks to its owner, Alan Dixon. It is for sale at way above lot value, as a heritage property, listed as "truly a classic" in the Real Estate Weekly.

The Future of the Heritage Committee

We had a meeting recently to discuss future directions and decided, as we do every year, that the first priority was to publish a "Heritage

a public hazard. All are in an advanced state of decrepitude. Yuen's proposal is to save one, rebuild it using the best salvageable bits from the others, and retain it at the front of the project as the library and reading room. In theory, the cottage will be like a little commemorative piece of sculpture--a reminder of workers' housing near the old industrial waterfront.

*Busby Bridger Architects presented a proposal on behalf of the congregation of Christ Church Cathedral to make very significant modifications to the exterior and interior of that designated heritage building. This is potentially very, very contentious, as the congregation accepted about \$17 million, payable over 40 years from 1974, for the old church's air rights, which were bought by Park Place; in return, the church building was then designated. However, the agreement between the church, the city and Park Place is quite unclear about whether the use was being preserved or whether the actual physical form of the building as it existed in 1974 is what was to be saved. The church states that it wants to improve its public presence--its welcomingness or visibility or something from the street--and also make changes to the interior to reflect current trends in liturgy. If this proposal proceeds further, I am certain that there will be a first-rate war on whether the building is a social and architectural artifact (as defined by the city's heritage program), or whether the church's role (defined by itself) as a functioning religious institution is the important thing. I personally would be very opposed to significant changes to the building's exterior, especially in the high-tech style suggested by the architects, and to additions such as a bell tower. Some of us are conservative conservationists, just as some of us are conservative Anglicans. It will be as difficult for us to accept alterations such as those proposed as it has been for some Anglicans to accept the demise of the King James Bible and the 20th anniversary of "Jesus Christ Superstar."

Next Meeting

It being summer, at least according to the calendar, we will not be holding our regular meetings in July and August. However, on Wednesday, July 10, after 6 o'clock, Christine and I are hosting the annual Heritage Committee Summer Soirée and Barbeque at our place, 2775 West 42nd. Pray for sunshine and bring something to drink and cook in the back garden.

Michael Kluckner
Chairman

Published by the HERITAGE COMMITTEE
of the Community Arts Council of Vancouver
837 Davie Street Vancouver B.C. V6Z 1B7
[604] 683 4358

HERITAGE

COMMITTEE

June, 1991

Downtown South

After seemingly endless months of workshops and meetings and finally two nights of public hearings, throughout which the same thirty people said the same things over and over again (including me), city council finally voted on June 25 to approve new zoning for the Downtown South area. All of the blathering finally came down to two contentious issues: whether Granville Street would be rejuvenated with a comparatively low floor space ratio for new development, and minimum site sizes. We (our position) "won" both, by the narrow margin of one vote, with councillors Davies, Wilson, Rankin, Yorke, Erickson and Price defeating the others.

The latter issue, minimum site sizes for land off Granville Street, requires developers to assemble about 175 feet of street frontage in order to get the maximum 5 FSR; smaller parcels, which could be as narrow as 25 feet, would be developable only to 3 FSR. Planning department's rationale is livability--open space and air and views and design. I was initially, as a matter of personal opinion, against minimum site sizes as I felt that it would create dull blocks of highrises set on podiums, by comparison with the highrise West End, which is diverse and interesting; I also thought that it would negatively affect the affordability of new rental housing built there (the whole idea of creating the Downtown South neighbourhood in the first place), because speculators holding strategic lots could command huge prices as they held the key to 2 FSR of density over a large site. Anyway, after copious amounts of sober thought, it seems to me that minimum site sizes are the way to go, and might make it easier to save the scattered buildings on the heritage inventory in the blocks off Granville. Although a number of speakers from the development community stated that every property owner should have the same development potential regardless of the size of his site (the old level-swimming-pool argument), in the end only Alderman Puil moved an amendment that there be no minimum site sizes only in the so-called Burrard-Granville area north of Davie Street. It was defeated.

On the matter of Granville Street, a majority of council approved

zoning at 3.5 FSR and a mid-rise envelope for new construction, following several rather fractious hours in which loud applause greeted everyone who spoke in favour of 5 FSR and rustling, muttering, snorting, gasping, sighing and hissing was dished out to anyone speaking in favour of 3.5. The new zoning is the best possible situation, in our opinion, for preserving old buildings and creating a distinctive heritage-oriented "main street" character in the midst of the new urban jungle. The hope is that, now the zoning is settled and development is beginning on adjoining streets, Granville Street owners will get down to the business of kicking out their sleaze-shop tenants, renovating suitable buildings, and building sympathetic new ones that will rejuvenate the street without blocking sunlight and dominating the old hotels.

The Nabata House

The saga of 1037 Matthews in First Shaughnessy is not yet over. Since last winter, Tony Nabata has been trying to get a demolition permit for an A-listed Craftsman house in the midst of Vancouver's lavish Edwardian showpiece, and has threatened on several occasions to sue the pants off the city if it thwarts him. One of his ploys, as mentioned in last month's newsletter, was his reaction to what he saw as a problem with the heritage infill policy in First Shaughnessy: it creates strata properties, which are not as marketable and are thus less valuable than fee-simple properties. So, he applied to subdivide the lot at 1037 Matthews down a line separating the house from the lower part of the garden to its east, which was potentially not a bad idea. But the city had to reject it because it could not approve a subdivision that created a non-conformity: that is, the heritage house would have been over the allowable density on the subdivided lot.

All of this skirmishing was like the weighing-in before the main event, which occurred on June 25, in camera, at city hall, with council considering the report it had requested on April 18 on whether or not to designate the house against Mr. Nabata's wishes. Mr. Nabata had been playing a very effective game of chicken by suggesting that he would sue for compensation for his time and gasoline and expectation of a big new house--in short, compensation for his business losses, which he gamely estimated at between four and six million dollars--rather than compensation just for any loss in market value which designation might create (he bought the house at the fire-sale price of \$1 million last August, in the midst of the real-estate slump). The Heritage Compensation Act states obliquely that compensation may be payable for loss of market value, but there have only been a few precedents in the province of imposed designations since the Act was passed in 1977, and none at all in Vancouver. The rumour is that the city's legal and housing departments submitted very conservative opinions to council, full of CYA, suggesting

that Nabata's demands might be sustained in court and the city might thus be hosed; planning department was rumoured to be more bullish, arguing that the credibility of the Heritage Management Program was riding on this one issue. I sent in a letter indicating that heritage interests throughout the province were following the saga and, if the city capitulated because of Mr. Nabata's brinkmanship, the provincial government (especially a new one) might eliminate the potential for loss of buildings by eliminating compensation for designation entirely from the Act, as had been suggested in the Project Pride report in 1987 and had existed in the original legislation in force before 1977. I'm sure that a number of other local groups, such as the Shaughnessy Heights Property Owners Association, also submitted letters in favour of designation.

I understand that, at the in camera council meeting, there was surprisingly strong support from quite a range of councillors for designation. They want to ensure that the building is saved, and have requested more information from their staff, which will be considered for a final decision probably in August.

The Stanley

A brand-new "For Sale" sign on the Stanley last week proves Yogi Berra's truism about the adaptive re-use of buildings. After all of our efforts to meet with the developer, organize public support for the theatre and try to convince council to retain the use, it appears that the developer has decided that his retail numbers do not work and has folded the deal or, perhaps, decided to resell. If this is in fact what is happening, it is bad bad bad for the city's tolerance and enthusiasm for bonused adaptive re-use proposals for heritage buildings; the city did, in its own way, make the effort to retain the building and keep future options open, but may have wasted its time. Needless to say, we-the-unpaid-public wasted a good deal of time, too, although I think heritage awareness in the city went up several notches during the campaign, and will stay up permanently. Dirk Beck, Dave Watson, Ingrid Lae, John Atkin, Jim Lowe and all of the others who worked on the Save Our Stanley campaign deserve congratulations from everyone in the city who cares about the theatre and wrote letters or came out to meetings and the demonstration.

The only bitter taste is that remaining from the city council meeting on June 4th. Although it had brought the issue to the city's attention, S.O.S. was excluded from all discussions and meetings between the city, the developer and Famous Players. Everything that Famous Players said about single-screen theatres was taken by the mayor at face value. Although it had done no analysis itself and was obviously not prepared even to discuss the issue, the city--responding allegedly to the urgency of the developer's timetable--let the word leak on the last Friday in

May that it would make a decision about endorsing conversion of the theatre to retail on the following Tuesday. It was good luck that Dirk Beck heard about it at all. Although requests to speak to council on the matter had to be made by 5:30 on the Friday afternoon before the council meeting, the agenda and manager's report on The Stanley were not made public until 8 o'clock that evening! Because it was a council meeting (not a committee meeting), the councillors had to vote on whether or not to hear delegations. Dirk and I heard just after 2 o'clock on the Tuesday afternoon that council had voted to hear us, and that we had better get to City Hall as fast as possible because the item was to be heard at about 3 o'clock.

At the council meeting, the manager's report was presented as gospel, although no financial analysis had been done and they weren't even sure how much of a density transfer the theatre would be entitled to under their own regulations. We presented what the mayor charmingly referred to as a "back-of-an-envelope" analysis, which nevertheless was the only hard information that council received on the subject. Then, the mayor pulled a rabbit from his hat, in the form of a very odd letter from Leonard Schein which appeared to confirm Famous Players' arguments that single-screen cinemas were dinosaurs. We were absolutely torpedoed, and effectively made to look like silly idealists. The only tiny consolation was that Mr. Schein was later quoted in The Courier newspaper that we were indeed correct: that the density transfer we proposed would reduce the cost of the theatre to the point that it could be operated. Now, with the theatre for sale once again, perhaps that option will get a chance.

I think it is fair to say that none of us who argue heritage principles and projects in front of city council mind losing, as long as we're not shafted. Over the past couple of years, there have been a number of occasions when our position has not been supported by council, but they have generally made their decision in a reasonable sort of way, with all the facts and opinions laid out and discussed. In other cases, council has agreed with our point of view. The long-term value to the city of heritage preservation is a matter of opinion, and although we have been successful at raising the consciousness of some of the councillors, others are marching so far behind the band that they can't even hear the music. But the right of the public to express its opinion has been well established, and usually we get as much respect as we would at, say, a Speedy Muffler shop. However, the meeting on June 4th was different--it was reminiscent of the days of Bill Rathie and Tom Campbell, when citizen input might as well have been from outer space (a complete contrast to this was the efforts of Councillors Davies and Wilson, especially, to convince some of their colleagues to look for a way to keep the theatre open). As one of the senior planning-department officials said after the Stanley vote: "there's too much goddam public process now."

The proposed new Heritage Conservation Act

Although its future is potentially in some doubt because of the pending provincial election, the new Heritage Conservation Act has been working its way slowly through the goddam public process. The Heritage Conservation Branch has done an admirable job of producing a piece of draft legislation that is, on the whole, positive and comprehensive; a measure of its balance is that all of the different interest groups in the Big City have their gripes about it. To paraphrase W.C. Fields about small dogs and boys, if the Gastown Business Improvement Society doesn't like the draft legislation, it can't be all bad.

The complexity of the legislation, and the changes it precipitates in the Municipal Act, the Commercial Arbitration Act, the Land Title Act and the Vancouver Charter, causes one to drift into a stupor after a few minutes of reading. Nevertheless, it is possible eventually to filter out the good from the bad and, on the basis of this, to write a critique, which I will do and send along to Victoria. If anyone wants to be involved in this, please call.

The new legislation has evolved from the Project Pride taskforce of 1987, chaired by then-MLA Kim Campbell; it appeared first in the spring of 1990 as a white paper entitled "Towards Heritage Legislation," which was variously applauded and savaged and then re-emerged with revisions this spring. The white paper contained two significant proposals, for heritage zoning and for a sunset clause for existing designations, that have been dropped in the draft legislation. Heritage zoning has been replaced by a mixed bag of legislative tools--development-permit areas, Conservation Covenants, and Heritage Revitalization Agreements (something like Vancouver's CD-1 zoning schedule)--these, in the hands of a very willing council and some willing owners, might result in some legitimate conservation, rather than heritage-style redevelopment. The sunset clause proposed to review all previous designations, a potential nightmare for heritage interests and for planning departments, which would have to fight battles all over again, especially in Gastown and Chinatown where many of the owners are restless, to say the least.

The major changes to provincial heritage legislation that have survived from the early white paper include a provincial heritage registry, the statement that compensation will be payable for designation (rather than "may be payable" as it has been since 1977), the potential for interiors to^{be} designated, the proposed use of binding arbitration through the Commercial Arbitration Act to settle compensation disputes, expanded powers for heritage advisory committees, changes in assessments to take into account designation, and tax exemptions for heritage-building owners. There is a very feeble Landmark Tree Protection clause, with loopholes big enough to throw a chainsaw through. Most significantly, the "tools" such as tax exemptions and delegated powers to local

heritage commissions are allowed but not required: in other words, it will still be up to city councils to enact legislation that will ease the tax burden and so on, something that Vancouver city council has so far been unwilling to do because it doesn't want to tamper with the tax base.

The more time I spend thinking about the new Act, the more I come to the conclusion that the provincial government has made a very clever statement in favour of individual property rights, with lots of opportunities available for willing owners and willing councils to conserve buildings if they wish to, but with almost no mechanisms to enforce a conservation program--in the name of heritage preservation--in an area subject to redevelopment pressure. I can see it working very well in the towns of the province where heritage revitalization is a salvation, through tourist dollars and community spirit, but I doubt that it will be much of an improvement to existing legislation in the fast-growing areas of the province. It will continue to be a rare occasion where we will be able to contribute to anything approaching a heritage plan, such as what has just happened with the new zoning on Granville Street downtown. More often, we will be reacting at the eleventh hour to crises, with only occasional successes, much as we have been doing for years. The upshot is that public education of the value of heritage will become even more important once the new Act has passed.

As I mentioned above, anyone who wants to put his oar in on a Heritage Committee critique of the legislation should give me a call at 263-2795.

Delamont Park & Nelson Park

The two little free tours I ran of the so-called Delamont and Nelson parks in June attracted good publicity and good crowds, about 40 to 50 to the Kitsilano one and probably a dozen more than that in the West End. The closer you look at these enclaves of old houses the more fascinating they become. Several of the houses on 5th and 6th just east of Arbutus are considerably older than I thought, as they date from 1901, four years before the interurban started to run through the area and the Kitsilano Beach streetcar commenced operation; many of these eccentric houses, and the little Arbutus Grocery, are like the builders' houses that twenty years ago dotted the edges of the Central Business District and still exist in Strathcona, especially in the little pocket between Clark Drive and the Raymur project. By comparison with these, most of the surviving houses in Mount Pleasant are lavish and stylish; the rest of surviving old Kitsilano is a Craftsman-style suburb, dating from about a decade after the houses near 6th and Arbutus. Everything else has been ploughed.

The West End block bounded by Comox, Pendrell, Thurlow and Bute is layered with history: the house that was the French consul's residence

in the late 1890s; a row of 1890s Queen Annes probably developed by a one-time city mayor, with the mayor's own house at the end of the row; a 1908 infill project on the grounds of an early-1890s house, with the earlier house still visible peeping through a hideous stucco extension. It is a beautiful opportunity for a restored heritage park, as it contains all of the styles of middle-class housing that were once typical of the West End. Tourists would love it, and people could live there and pay taxes or rents for the privilege.

Both of these blocks may be beautiful opportunities for good heritage conservation mixed with a little open space and some family housing, but there is an extraordinary torpor stalling their restoration. No one at either City Hall or the Parks Board wants to touch it, because it means innovation and management and commitment and the problem of uprooting long-term tenants, so instead the city has become a slumlord. This is convenient, because the independent fiefdom known as Permits & Licenses can then step in and condemn buildings and have them flattened, as happened at 1132-1134 Comox last month. Problem over. No worries--it wasn't a political decision that removed the houses, they can say.

Janet Bingham, who was one of the prime movers in saving Barclay Heritage Square from the bulldozers and is currently president of the Roedde House society, has spoken very forcefully of our need to make the city and the Parks Board stand up and take responsibility for these irreplaceable assets. I hope to take whatever momentum we have developed through these walks and the ensuing publicity and turn it into a report and campaign this fall.

Heritage Advisory Committee Notes

*The Carnegie Centre at Hastings and Main needed a new roof to replace its neoprene and plywood "green copper" one, but the city's budget came up about \$60,000 short of what was required for a proper replacement with copper sheeting. They were faced with using the quilted copper on a rubber backing that can be seen on the domes of some new churches in the Vancouver area, including the large one just west of Cambie Street at about 15th. Instead, they decided to look elsewhere for money, and submitted a grant request to the B.C. Heritage Trust, which agreed to fund the extra cost of a proper copper roof. So, nearly ninety years after it was built, the Carnegie Library is getting a new roof that matches the specifications of the original one!

*Ron Yuen, of Davidson & Yuen architects, presented an interesting project for 328-340 East Cordova, the site of a group of hipped-roof workers' cottages, each about 460 square feet, dating from 1901. They had been vandalized and defiled while the site awaited redevelopment for seniors housing by the St. James Church. One cottage had actually been torched, and the others were in danger of being condemned by the city as

Sandwell Building, hopefully without the other tradition of heat and airlessness whenever more than a dozen people occupy the room. We will not be printing a brochure to publicize our speakers, as we already fill the available space; however, please tell friends whom you think would make good members and are interested in our programs. We simply must find a new location for our meetings that can accommodate upwards of 50 people, and the faster our membership grows the quicker we will have to act. For those who have never joined the arts council or have let their memberships lapse, we will be culling the mailing list in a month or so of non-members; please join and pay up, as the arts council definitely needs the money.

At the September meeting, city planner Rob Whitlock will be showing slides and speaking on the RT-6 "heritage" zones of the city, including West Mount Pleasant, and discussing the successes and failures there of restoration and new design. In October, Valda Vidners and Don Luxton will be showing slides and talking about "Miami Deco." In November, probably, we will have a discussion and presentation on heritage real estate, marketability and other issues, led I hope by Jacques Khouri, who has done a number of restoration and conversion projects in the city and is establishing as a specialty of his practice the selling of Vancouver heritage homes. And, in December, we will be screening vintage planning department films from the 1950s and 1960s, describing visions of the city from that era; they evidently are hilarious.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, September 11, 7:30 p.m.
8th floor lecture room, Sandwell Building, 1190 Hornby Street.
Be on time or be locked out until 8:30 p.m.!
The speaker at 8:30 p.m., as mentioned above, will be Rob Whitlock.

Michael Kluckner
Chairman

Published by the HERITAGE COMMITTEE
of the Community Arts Council of Vancouver
837 Davie Street Vancouver B.C. V6Z 1B7
[604] 683 4358



HERITAGE

August, 1991

The CN Station

The very complex project to convert the CN station into a combined VIA passenger station, freight depot, and Greyhound bus station is moving on apace while attempting to resolve some difficult heritage and design issues. The architects' first attempt to design the concourse, which will extend behind the train station as did the old passenger sheds, resulted in an interconnected set of bubble-roofed teflon-covered pavilions; not to put too fine a point on it, the design was stomped by the Urban Design Panel and others.

As part of its development proposal, the consortium has requested the removal of the "CANADIAN NATIONAL" sign that runs like a parapet along the station's front facade. The sign was designated in the 1980s at CN's request when the federal government insisted that it, and all other signs on federal buildings, become bilingual, and it remains today the only designated sign in the city. The consortium suggested that the sign was advertising for one of the three partners, and the architects suggested that, along with the removal of the sign, the front facade could be restored right back to its original 1917 state (the sign was erected at some point in the late 1920s), including the restoration of the incised "Canadian Northern Pacific Railway" stone panel below the pediment on the main tower. This was, at first blush, quite an interesting suggestion and a possible compromise that would forestall any new attempts to festoon the building with bus signs, for example, and I initially supported it in the Heritage Advisory Committee. But after some thought and conversations with a number of people, I changed my mind completely.

The sign is a landmark in the city that has nothing to do with advertising, and is part of the evolution of the building--its second stage of existence, as it were. The station's first stage as the western terminus of the CNPR lasted only a few years; its second stage, including the sign, lasted from the twenties until now; its third stage, including possible bus signage and significant additions to the rear and sides of the station building, is about to commence. All are relevant to

the building's heritage, as were the 1940s marquee and signs on the 1931 Stanley Theatre. Regardless, the consortium will probably be submitting a request to remove the sign along with its development applications to the city; the decision on the de-designation and removal of the sign will be made by city council. The HAC has voted in favour of the sign's retention on the station and in addition has requested the restoration of the old CNPR sign and the removal of the VIA sign.

The Haigler House

Council's decision in early August to allow the saving of the Haigler House at 3537 West 30th is more a victory for the sane re-use of an old house than it is for heritage preservation, but it shows how persuasive and effective the city's heritage planners can be--in this case Robert Lemon, who talked a very reluctant developer into reversing his publicly stated, militantly anti-heritage and anti-city position. The issue arose because the former owner of the house, which is a unique granite-faced Craftsman building on a 100-foot lot, believed that she was selling it to a developer who wanted to preserve it and build a sideyard infill dwelling, and so did not have the house designated before selling. After a couple of half-hearted meetings with the city, during which the developer presented no detailed proposals for an infill house, the latter announced himself to be fed up with the complexity of the strata-conversion and heritage process and began work on plans for two houses which would occupy 50-foot halves of the 100-foot lot and would naturally result in the demolition of the heritage house. The city could not, under its own bylaws, approve a subdivision of the lot into a 65-footer for the old house and a 35-footer for an infill fee-simple house, as the standard lot width on the block was 50 feet.

A proposal then went into the city (evidently from the architect Peter Busby) to shoehorn the house onto the westernmost 50 feet of the lot, thus freeing the other side for a new house. This also violated the city's subdivision bylaw, as the heritage house would be above the allowable density on a 50-foot lot; however, after a close reading of its own bylaw, the city discovered that it could in fact allow such a move and subdivision. The developer then fell into line, and eventually agreed to retain the stone wall along the front of the 100-foot property and to use the left-over stone from the heritage house's original foundation on the new house to be built next door. All in all, it was quite a happy compromise, which mollified the restive neighbourhood.

The issue is quite an interesting one, as it shows how far the city can bend to save a house in response to neighbourhood pressure and letters from the likes of us and Dr. Tom Perry. The pity (and I know this is quibbling) is that the new house built beside the heritage house will not be a small, exquisitely designed stone-faced coachhouse on a 35-foot

sidelot, with the landscaping and stone wall of the old property preserved. Instead, the new house will be roughly equal in scale to the old one, and the sense of landscaping and siting of the old house will be lost; the new house will likely be occupied by a small single family, the same as would have occupied a small coachhouse, and more garden will be paved over. Anyway, these are the concerns of purists and painters. A more pertinent problem is that the city does not have the flexibility to subdivide lots in whatever way is required to save heritage houses; strata properties, as pointed out by Tony Nabata in Shaughnessy and this developer here, are more difficult to set up and do not sell as easily as fee-simple properties. But regardless of such hair-splittings, the somewhat modified Haigler House, missing only a side dining-room bay and its original foundation, is now a designated heritage building.

Victoria Heritage Tour

We have arranged, through the diligence of Cathy Barford, an excursion to Victoria for Saturday, September 28. Our day in Victoria will be hosted by the Hallmark Society, which will provide a tour of Old Town, led by Ken Sudhues and Pamela Madoff, beginning at 10:30 in the morning. After lunch in a suitable heritage location (possibly the Captain's Table/Pendray house on the waterfront), Stuart Stark will guide us through a couple of heritage houses, and take us to tea at his own 1894 Oak Bay home. Plan to come along--we will be arranging cars and drivers by mid-September, and I hope that about 20 or so will be able to come. The cost will be a share of the transportation and one's own lunch. To put your name down for it, phone me at 263-2795 or John Atkin at 254-1429.

Freighthouse Group

Somewhat unexpectedly, the Freighthouse Group received a nod of approval in principle on August 1 from the city in its bid to occupy and convert into artists' studios the railway warehouses at 940 and 990 Station Street just north of the CN station. The group proposes to convert the buildings, which are "B"s on the inventory and were in danger of demolition, into about 40 live-in studio spaces, a foundry, and two storefront commercial galleries.

Bosa Development Ltd., which is just completing the "City Gate" housing development on the west side of Main Street at Terminal, received approval on that day to develop the long, 48-acre strip immediately to the south of the Strathcona community into an industrial park. Included in that land are the Station Street warehouses. It was a bit surprising that the city agreed to rezone the land, as the engineering department had its hopes pinned on a roadway through the site to connect the

Georgia Viaduct with the Grandview Cut, and the city was about to embark on an industrial lands study. However, Bosa appeared to be in the right place at the right time with its proposal, and to have something of an ally in the Freighthouse Group, without which it might be unable to get the required permits and easements unless it demonstrated that it was giving something back to the city, such as an artists' enclave and the adaptive re-use of heritage buildings.

Freighthouse Group, whose representatives Frances Semple and Bill Baker attended our meeting in June, do not appear to have the funding together to convert and occupy the buildings, but they have certainly cleared their first major hurdle.

Central Area Plan

Although there is a body of opinion in this city that a heritage committee such as us should only be concerned with the future of the past, I think that is rubbish, and so jumped in with both feet into the Central Area planning process, which is attempting to write goals and land-use policies for the downtown and Broadway commercial areas. It is not unreasonable for so-called heritage people to care about the patterns of future developments, because we are concerned that the heritage buildings of the future get created now, that new land uses do not make old buildings obsolete and unusable, and that a street-oriented, environmentally responsible use of the downtown be promoted. The real battle downtown is going to be to stop the spread of malls, although it may be too late to stop the Trilea juggernaut. Rather than attempt to paraphrase what I submitted to the city's senior central area planner, I am reprinting much of the deathless prose below [CBD means Central Business District]:

"We support the reduction and reshaping of the CBD to focus it closely around the Skytrain line and stations, and expect that uptown office-space expansion along Broadway west of Cambie and housing development east of Cambie will likewise be in proximity to a high-capacity rapid transit line. We also support the creation of affordable downtown neighbourhoods, both for environmental reasons and because the health of the CBD office area is dependent on a nearby pool of well-housed office workers; it was the same situation in the 1960s, when the development of a modern CBD could not have happened without some sort of redevelopment of the West End. Now, because the West End has evolved and no longer completely fulfils that role, new neighbourhoods such as Downtown South must be created.

"Because we are as interested in the creation of excellent new architecture as we are in the retention of excellent old architecture, we feel that the proposed controls on office-supply capacity in the CBD, and stable long-term zoning, will result in a better-considered develop-

ment of AAA sites, with correspondingly fewer speculative developments and "tower sprawl" into inappropriate areas. We believe that the reduction of AAA capacity in the CBD is the only sane, regionally aware policy that Vancouver can adopt.

"Goals 7 and 8--to target street-fronting retail to pedestrian shopping streets, and to retain heritage through mixing uses and downzoning--are closely related. Most of the heritage buildings in the Victory Square area and along Granville Street contain ground-floor retail which, if it is not disadvantaged by zoning that permits new, large-scale shopping malls, will be rejuvenated and become a significant part of Vancouver's retail downtown. We believe that, once the zoning is stabilized at a level which makes the existing buildings the "highest and best use" (such as the 3.0 FSR and 70-foot height limit in the current interim policy for Victory Square), owners will cease to allow their buildings to deteriorate.

"In our opinion, street-fronting retail in buildings containing a variety of uses is the best possible type of retail design in an urban downtown--it keeps the streets bright and alive, encourages a diversity of design and architecture and a wide range of rental opportunities, and supports a walkable, friendly, "neighbourly," safe city. Throughout the older parts of the Lower Mainland, retail "villages" such as Robson Street, Denman Street, South Granville, West 4th and West Broadway in Kitsilano, and Kerrisdale attract clientele with their low-scale zoning and street-oriented shops. There is no logical reason to presume that downtown retailing should be any different, and the city has already chosen that model by deciding to use 3.5 FSR and a heritage-oriented streetscape on Granville Street in the Downtown South neighbourhood.

"We urge you to resist the blandishments of development groups wishing to construct large concentrations of new retail, and suggest that any new retail developments face towards the streets and away from internally oriented and interconnected shopping malls, especially those of the underground variety. There is a popular misconception among some that the construction of Pacific Centre rejuvenated the downtown in the early 1970s, and that its success and continued expansion has been due to the fact that it is a mall and is climate-controlled. On the first point, it is far more plausible to claim that downtown Vancouver was already rejuvenating itself by the time ground was broken on Pacific Centre (as witnessed by the MacMillan-Blouedel and 777 Hornby Street buildings, to name two that come to mind), because the combination of office-space demand and a nearby residential neighbourhood already existed. Pacific Centre, when combined with the Granville Mall, probably killed more retail than it created. Although it provided a focus for a specific type of fashion-oriented market, Pacific Centre was the only successful mall built--Royal Centre and the Vancouver Centre mall have always been underpatronized and prone to vacancies, and the underground shop-

ping areas in developments such as the Bentall Centre are only attractive at lunchtime on soaking-wet November days. There is no conclusive recent evidence that high-end retail malls are successful: for example, the recently redone Arbutus Village fashion mall is almost a ghost town, but the Kerrisdale shops, although quite close to the megamall at Oakridge, are always crowded and busy.

"New retail development has another negative impact on the city: it makes existing retail buildings less viable and drains away their clientele and the fealty of the buildings' owners. We need to restore and adaptively reuse our existing buildings, rather than create new ones and cause the abandonment and eventual demolition of our old ones. In an era that is becoming aware of the need for obeying the three R's of environmentalism, it is a short-sighted policy to create new communities or business opportunities and by so doing to destroy already existing ones.

"As well, the Vancouver climate is considerably more tolerable throughout the year than is that of Montreal or Toronto or Minneapolis, where the heat is switched off the day before the air conditioning has to be turned on. Development policies in the downtown must reinforce Vancouver's distinctiveness, one aspect of which is its temperate climate and outdoor-oriented ambience. Rain awnings are more environmentally friendly than are extensive climate-controlled interiors.

"The heritage buildings in the high-density CBD are, in most cases, either already designated or else incorporated into modern developments. There are some notable exceptions to this that come to mind: the Rogers Building, the Georgia Hotel, and the buildings on the Trilea site, to name a few. Although most of these are built at very substantial floor space ratios, this is no guarantee of their retention. The rumoured pending demolition of Thomas Hooper's 1912 Bauer Building on Granville Street demonstrates that even a well-constructed 8- or 9-storey character building on a mixed-use street is not a candidate for adaptive reuse. According to the first concepts prepared by Aitken Wreglesworth & Associates, the several very large and fine heritage buildings on the Trilea site, most notably the Yorkshire Trust and London buildings, were to be demolished, with elements of their facades re-erected elsewhere on the site; this is a kind of facadism and tokenism not of a character to be expected in a major city in the 1990s. . . ."

Parks Board Matters

Refined design proposals for the conversion of the Roundhouse into a community centre were presented to the Heritage Advisory Committee in early August. They are much improved over earlier ones, as most of the so-called doo-dads such as fussy planters and landscaping and so on have been removed. Of particular interest to us is the \$64 question--where

will the locomotive go?--and the architects presented two possibilities. One would see the locomotive moving back and forth between the turntable and one of the central bays of the heritage building, while the other would see it moving back and forth between the turntable and a glass-sided new building, designed to fit in with the historic Roundhouse, on the side of the Roundhouse closest to Pacific Boulevard. There is unanimity that the steam-engine-powered turntable should continue to work and that, regardless of which option is chosen, the locomotive should move in and out of its house.

On the matter of the Nelson and Delamont parks, about which we agitated in the late spring, I attended a meeting with commissioners Nancy Chiavario and Gerry Thorne late in July. They are very positive about doing something during this term on Nelson Park, and appear to see the advantages to leaving most of the houses standing, and interspersing little parks like vacant lots among them. Delamont Park will probably have to wait awhile for any will to be marshalled, as the community there is much more entrenched and the houses in most cases are in reasonable condition.

Wolfgang Gerson Obit.

A notable member of the community and a most admirable individual, Wolfgang Gerson, died on the last weekend in July. His service to architecture in Vancouver was exemplified by his years on the faculty at UBC and his designs in the 1950s of his own house at 1040 Aubenau Crescent in West Vancouver, and of the light-filled Unitarian Church at 49th and Oak, where his memorial service was held. To the heritage movement he was a central figure in the preservation of Heritage Hall on Main Street, and served for years on the city's Heritage Advisory Committee, retiring as chairman only last winter. It was especially interesting, at his memorial service, to see the complete man reflected in the recollections of his friends and colleagues: he had been a pillar of his church for 35 years; he was an excellent pianist, and before the service a tape played of him performing a Haydn sonata; his home was the scene of widely known musical evenings. At the service, a trio performed movements from a few chamber works, evidently those that had been played at the last musical evening at which Mr. Gerson had been well enough to perform; as the last chord faded away, his church interior, which had been continuously bathed in the bright sunlight of a hot summer day, suddenly dimmed. A cloud was passing.

Fall Speakers

Our four autumn meetings will continue the tradition established last year of interesting speakers and discussions in the upstairs lecture room of the

chitects would have us believe; I think they realize that they are in for the fight of their lives if they try to bring this proposal forward into the glaring public light, and thus they are regrouping and have postponed further presentations until probably November.

The fate of the remaining industrial architecture along the south shore of False Creek was discussed because of the pending demolition of the Martin & Stewart Hides building at 365 West 2nd Avenue. An interesting wooden edifice atop stone foundations, the Martin & Stewart Building has been used for generations for the storage and processing of furs and hides; this sharply limited its potential adaptive re-use because of the aromatic nature of that enterprise. The owners of the property have applied for (and will receive, as it is an outright use) a development permit for the site, which will demolish the old industrial building and replace it with a Canadian Tire-type auto-service centre--a style of development typical of Kingsway and elsewhere. Other buildings in the area, including the surviving ones at Canrom Shipyards, may also soon face the chop. The problem is at least in part the industrial zoning--an outright floor space ratio of 5, and little limitation on use or design.

Next Meeting

On October 9, at 7:30 p.m. in the 6th floor lecture room at 1190 Hornby Street, we will be holding our monthly meeting. All are welcome--please be on time or face the prospect, because of the building's security system, of hanging around on the street until 8:30, when the door will be opened again (this weather can't last forever).

At 8:30 p.m., Jacques Khouri will be speaking informally about heritage developments and heritage real estate. Mr. Khouri's involvement in heritage and neighbourhood issues goes back to the early 1970s in Kitsilano with the West Broadway Citizens' Committee; in more recent years he has done some heritage developments, most notably the restoration of the apartment building at 6th and Cypress in Kitsilano, and as a real-estate agent is specializing in the sale of heritage-type homes.

Michael Kluckner

Published by the HERITAGE COMMITTEE
of the Community Arts Council of Vancouver
837 Davie Street Vancouver B.C. V6Z 1B7
[604] 683 4358

HERITAGE

COMMITTEE

September, 1991

The Nabata house (yet again)

One of the most pathetic heritage issues ever is whimpering its way to a conclusion this week in late September. Through his persistent efforts to redevelop the property at 1037 Matthews Street, Tony Nabata has effectively rewritten the rules of the First Shaughnessy Official Development Plan, as he has managed to get much more development and to wring many more concessions out of the city than anyone before him. (About the only thing he did not get that he asked for was the removal of a nearby traffic light on Oak Street and the downgrading of Wolfe Avenue from a minor arterial to a side street!) At the public hearing held this month to consider the rezoning of the property to meet Mr. Nabata's demands, the mayor expressed dismay that the city was not receiving kudos from heritage interests for saving the heritage house from demolition; instead, the four speakers at the hearing (including Mary Macdonald from our committee) criticized the deal, not least because there was no guarantee in it that the heritage house will be restored.

When the issue surfaced almost a year ago, Mr. Nabata was challenging the city's (and First Shaughnessy's) heritage inventory, as he wanted to demolish his recently purchased house and build a much larger mock-Tudor on the large site. In April, after months of difficult negotiations, the city downzoned First Shaughnessy, reducing the size of any new house in the area and thus reducing the incentive to demolish existing buildings. But, as he demonstrated throughout the process, Tony Nabata was fundamentally a developer, even when he was looking at building his own residence: following the rezoning he shifted gears and applied for a subdivision of the property so that he could build a fee-simple infill building, rather than a strata-titled infill building like those that had been the norm for heritage redevelopments in Shaughnessy since the early 1980s. The subdivision was initially not approvable, because the heritage house would be above the allowable density on its new smaller lot, but Mr. Nabata was so persistent (while carrying with him the threat of heavy litigation like Teddy Roosevelt's big stick) that the

city eventually agreed not only to give him the subdivision but, as well, to give him additional density on the divided-off lot. The trade-off was the heritage designation of the old house, which the city perceived to be important in isolation from the major aim of the First Shaughnessy Official Development Plan--the estate-like relationship of historic main house, small infill house and landscaped grounds.

The final humiliation for the city came at the public hearing, when Mr. Nabata stated that he would not take out a building permit for the rehabilitation of the heritage house and would not, in fact, be really restoring it. It appears that he will take out only a repair permit for the house, and will be spending his repair budget on what are basically cosmetics--redecorating--rather than on fundamental structural restoration. The city is pinning its long-term hopes for the designated house on the fact that it is way over the allowable density, and thus too valuable to allow to deteriorate further. Mr. Nabata has evidently stated that he will sell it off once he has tarted it up, and presumably anyone who would then buy it would budget for its proper restoration as it is, after all, a designated building that cannot be torn down.

The Stanley (again)

The announcement by Famous Players that, on September 26, the doors on the Stanley Theatre would be closing forever, brought the issue back into the public prints, proving that this is an issue from the Yogi Berra School of Heritage Preservation. Elizabeth Aird wrote a wonderfully scathing article in The Sun; Dr. Tom Perry, the NDP candidate for Vancouver-Little Mountain, attended a performance of "Fantasia" with his wife and son, watched over by various media representatives who interviewed him, me, and dozens of people lining up to get in; Olson, the cartoonist in The Courier, did a wonderful comic-strip cartoon entitled "Ken Korporate Explains: 'Why We Don't Need The Stanley'"; and, tonight (September 26), the three provincial candidates in Vancouver-Little Mountain will be meeting in a neutral cafe near the theatre to make statements about what they would do about it if elected, moderated by Denny Boyd. Who knows what will happen now?

My comments to the various media types have been that we made our point in May that the theatre could be made economically viable if enough of its unused development potential were sold off site; we would not be attempting to rejuvenate the Save Our Stanley campaign, as the mayor had indicated that he felt it was only an architectural preservation issue. The building is the only thing that is important, the mayor claimed, not the use of it or its cultural value. Okay, so as it is now an architectural issue, the city's heritage management plan will have to deal with it.

The Garden City? and Public Place

Everyone is invited to attend the opening, on October 22 from 7 to 9 p.m., of the fall exhibition sponsored by the heritage committee (us) in the CAC gallery at 837 Davie Street. Entitled "The Garden City? and Public Place," the exhibition is a combined mixed-media installation by John Atkin, Laurie Kerrin, Jim Lowe and Eliza Massey, and paintings by Jo Scott-B, focusing on the changing suburban/rural landscape of Richmond. The exhibition came out of Jo Scott-B's idea that the rural landscape vista was a shared public experience, and that it is being displaced with roads and buildings that make no contribution to the sense of place, community and individual identity that were once typical of the area. The installation will combine images of the past and present with proposed design suggestions for the future; the issues addressed by the exhibition include commuting, environmentalism, farmland preservation, and the type and quality of new construction.

Please also plan to attend the four evenings of lectures which we are hosting as part of the exhibition, all of which begin at 7:30 p.m. in the gallery. On October 24, Dale Michaels will be speaking on Telecommuting; Ms. Michaels is a former vice-president of B.C. Transit and is a consultant to businesses which want their employees to stay home and be linked electronically to a central office. On October 28, I will be speaking and showing slides about my new book "Paving Paradise," which is an environmentalist and heritage-oriented critique of contemporary design, particularly in the burbs, and history of suburban development in British Columbia. On October 29, UBC professor Alan Artibise will be speaking on "Future Shock," the subject of the widely read series of articles in The Sun and his book "From Desolation to Hope," delineating a future scenario for the Lower Mainland. And, on October 30, there will be a general discussion on planning and development issues, focusing on Richmond but pertinent to all of the fast-growing areas of the province.

Notes from the Heritage Advisory Committee

I mentioned in one of these newsletters several months ago about a proposal from the congregation of Christ Church Cathedral and Busby-Bridger Architects to effect some radical and quite modern modifications to their building. The architects proposed an extensive program of changes to the building to reflect current trends in Anglican liturgy, open it up more to the street and, they said, to make it more inviting to the general public. The most contentious aspect was to be a glass room acting as a new narthex on the southwestern corner of the building--the corner of Georgia and Burrard. In the HAC design review meetings, this received little support, and we have been led to believe that the congregation is by no means as united on the issue as the ar-

cuss our relationship with the Community Arts Council itself, our ability to raise and spend money for our own purposes, and the venue of our monthly meetings.

At the October meeting, a number of people signed a "list for organization" that was circulated, indicating that they wanted to be involved in the process. All of those people will get a call to remind them of the meeting, which we will hold at November 27 at 7:30 p.m., in the upstairs lecture room at 1190 Hornby Street (where we are currently holding our meetings). Everyone is welcome, but we will be talking about the committee itself rather than about heritage, so be forewarned!

Win a Painting!

The CAC is raffling one of Jo Scott-B's luminous paintings from the current "Garden City and Public Place" exhibition in the gallery, and using the proceeds for its projects. Entitled "Clayburn Barn," the watercolour is valued at \$600 and could be yours, yes yours, for the purchase of a \$5.00 ticket. Only 400 tickets will be sold and the draw is on December 20.

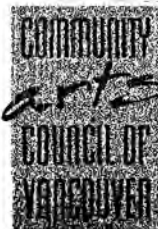
Next Meeting

After the above-mentioned detailed discussion on the fate of the Hotel Georgia, Don Luxton and Valda Vidners will present slides and commentary on Miami and the Miami Deco style. Luxton and Vidners are the principals of Foundation Group Designs, a locally based architecture and heritage consulting firm, and are internationally known authorities on historic architecture. Valda Vidners is in addition a member of Vancouver's Heritage Advisory Committee. Foundation Group Designs has researched and authored many of the heritage inventories developed for British Columbia municipalities. Their slide presentation will commence at about 8:30 p.m. Wear beach clothes, a concealed revolver and sunglasses, please.

The meeting is on Wednesday, November 13, at 7:30 p.m., at 1190 Hornby Street, in the lecture room upstairs. Because of building security, please be on time or risk being locked out! The door will be checked for stragglers around 8:20 to 8:30 p.m.

-Michael Kluckner,
Chair

Published by the HERITAGE COMMITTEE
of the Community Arts Council of Vancouver
837 Davie Street Vancouver B.C. V6Z 1B7
[604] 683 4358



HERITAGE

COMMITTEE

November, 1991

The Heritage Foundation

At the Vancouver Book Awards ceremony, part of the Writers' Festival, held on Granville Island on October 23, Mayor Campbell got up on the stage and--seemingly almost embarrassed that he was giving the award to "Vanishing Vancouver," which had trashed the city and citizens for their lack of sensitivity to heritage issues--blurted out that the city had the previous night voted to establish a heritage foundation and accept as a bequest "Glenbrae," otherwise known as the "Mae West House," in Shaughnessy Heights. I nearly fell out of my shoes with surprise.

The Vancouver Heritage Foundation was a project that some of us worked on in 1988 and 1989; it then was taken over by the mayor, and for the last several months had been in camera at numerous rumoured discussions of council and staff. Mayor Campbell had been scheduled to speak to the Heritage Advisory Committee in September, but cancelled at the last minute, could not make the October meeting, and was tentatively scheduled to speak in November. We all felt that he would be announcing the establishment of the Heritage Foundation at that time, so it was rather odd to have it announced at a writers' festival. I said to him that we had heard nothing about the previous night's decision, to which he replied that the city likes to do some things quietly--probably a reference to what he considers to be our histrionics about the Stanley, etc. Anyway, he then softened up and explained that the whole matter had been in camera because of the terms of the will of Mrs. Wlosinski, the late owner of "Glenbrae." The formal announcement will be made tomorrow (October 31) at "Glenbrae"--we will certainly be recognizing the mayor and council for their achievement in securing this landmark and establishing the foundation. As many of our activities lately have put us in opposition to the majority will of council, it will be nice for a change to be unequivocally positive about a city initiative.

I will have a lot more details about this, including the future use of "Glenbrae" as Heritage Foundation offices and cultural centre and the operation of the foundation itself, at our next regular meeting.

The Hotel Georgia

We will be devoting most of the November 13th meeting to exploring the issues raised by the probable pending demolition application for the Hotel Georgia. As I mentioned at the October meeting, the hotel was purchased quite recently by a corporation made up of Weston-family money from Toronto (the majority partner) and Bentall-family/"Dominion Construction" money locally. It has been leased back to the previous owners and is to be operated in its current form over the next one to three years while the new owners make plans.

They claim to have four options under perusal (three really, because option three is a non starter, both for them and for us): firstly, to retain and restore the Hotel Georgia as a hotel; secondly, to retain a significant amount of the hotel, and build a large building on the back of the lot; thirdly, to retain the hotel's facade and build a new building, probably for offices, behind it; and fourthly, to demolish the Georgia, build a very substantial new building on the site and--in return for the loss of the Georgia--to restore a significant heritage building elsewhere in the downtown.

The owners' representatives made a preliminary presentation to the Heritage Advisory Committee in early October, and then invited us at short notice to meet with the architects and "open a dialogue." The meetings have been very forthright and quite friendly, almost chatty, but it amazes me how many of their cards have already been laid on the table. Here are a few of the twists and turns of this amazing proposal:

-although we have not yet seen the "retention study" being done by the local architect J.K.M. Cheng, it is pretty evident that the numbers won't add up for option one; the owners want to do something significant at the corner of Georgia and Howe, and do not appear to be willing to transfer the Georgia's significant air rights elsewhere.

-the owners have hired the renowned Chicago firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, and its architect Adrian Smith, who has designed the well-thought-of NBC and IT&T buildings in Chicago; we in the colonies are to be pleased that the owners are thinking world class and not hiring locally; the owners are reasoning that Vancouverites could stomach the loss of a local landmark in return for a really major building.

-Mr. Smith has done a number of preliminary sketches of replacements for the Georgia which, to my jaundiced eye, look remarkably like the NBC building in Chicago; all of his sketches and clay massing models have that post-Sears Tower Chicago look, a kind of 1920s or 1930s stepped back Skyscraper Gothic style. The best local example of the mode is the Royal Bank Building at Hastings and Granville, built about 1930; the Empire State Building in NYC has a similar feel, which you will instantly recognize the next time you watch King Kong.

-Mr. Smith was rather blunt about the Georgia, which he considered to be a "mediocre building"; in addition, he feels that, because of the lack of architectural quality of the Bank of Hong Kong, Cathedral Place, the plaza of the Four Seasons, and the Toronto Dominion tower, the Georgia can no longer hold together the historic and urban quality of the Courthouse Square. We countered that its warm and fuzzy nature was the very essence of urbanity, historic ambience and heritage; I said that the Georgia was obviously good design in a good location, as it was the place of choice for Vancouverites when they wanted to have a riot (viz. Grey Cup fans 1964, Unemployed vs. Police 1938).

-The owners's representative, George Sexsmith, stated that they had singled out the Vancouver Public Library as the building they would save (and, naturally, transfer its air rights, being a stupendous number of square feet, plus a heritage bonus, to the corner of Georgia and Howe); this indicates, I think, both their architectural sophistication and political naivety. I mentioned the proposed library restoration to a group of average citizens at a dinner party last week; they all laughed.

It is very evident that the architect and the owners want to do a new building; this, in an abstract sense, is not necessarily a bad thing, as the owners have deep-enough pockets to pay for the best of the best, and lord knows that the city could use a few really excellent buildings. But they are going to have to demonstrate a number of things before they can get this proposal through, including:

-that their "retention study" is not going to compare apples with oranges, that is, the economic feasibility of running an historic hotel with the economics of a brand-new office building;

-that they have put enough design time into option two (the retention of a significant volume of the Georgia Hotel and the construction of a tower behind it) to allow it to be compared with the new building;

-that the city will accept a VERY LARGE building at Georgia and Howe--I get the impression that the owners want to move a tremendous amount of density onto the site from elsewhere, to add to the FSR 9 already there, and to dominate the skyline the way the Bank of Nova Scotia tower at Georgia and Seymour does now;

-that it is not worthwhile for the city to retain the old-fashioned scale of the Hotel Georgia on the courthouse square, and force the density transfer to go in the opposite direction, that is, to sell off the Georgia's air rights to some other property elsewhere.

Committee Reorganization

As I mentioned at the October meeting, we need to become a little more formal and better organized as a committee, and to put together something of a structure to ensure that new people become involved and that there will be a transition to new leaders whenever. We also have to dis-

that side of the argument would be well represented, but as it turned out I was one of three out of about 26 speakers in favour of the plan. Downtown business interests turned out in force against the plan and what they perceived to be an antimall, antigrowth sentiment in council, but were given a pretty hard time of it by councillors of all stripes.

"Improvements" to the road system in Yaletown, proposed by the city's engineering department, were discussed in great and lively detail at a recent Heritage Advisory Committee meeting. The subtle changes proposed by the engineers, including widening traffic lanes and eliminating angle parking on Mainland Street, will have a serious effect on Yaletown's character, certainly because they will reduce the uniqueness of the area, allow traffic to speed up, etc. These schemes will be fought tooth and nail when they go to council, probably early in January.

I will have more information at the meeting on December 11th about the heritage restoration and infill project proposed by Actual Developments for the 4500-block West 7th Avenue, which has been strongly opposed by some local residents who do not want to see any subdivision of the 66-foot lots on the block, even for the retention and restoration of a character building. This one is an interesting example of NIMBYism, and a harbinger for future neighbourhood response in the area--it seems to me that the opponents of the project have learned little from the monster-house saga of the past few years, and have a very strange idea of what neighbourhood character means.

Next Meeting

The regular December meeting will be held in the usual location, 1190 Hornby Street on the 8th floor, at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 11th. City heritage planner Jeannette Hlavach will speak briefly on the new heritage foundation, and answer any questions. At about 8:30 p.m. we will indulge in some Christmas cheer and then watch vintage planning department films--visions of the city from the 1950s and 1960s. Bring your sense of humour and be on time, because of the building's security system.

Michael Kluckner
Chair

Published by the HERITAGE COMMITTEE
of the Community Arts Council of Vancouver
837 Davie Street Vancouver B.C. V6Z 1B7
[604] 683 4358

HERITAGE

COMMITTEE

December, 1991

The Georgia Hotel (again)

At our November meeting, George Sexsmith and Chuck Brook (respectively the vice-president of the Dominion Company and the development consultant to the Georgia Place project) dropped by and answered questions about their proposal to demolish the Georgia Hotel and, potentially, to restore the Library as part of the complicated density transfer scheme and new construction which were described in last month's newsletter. Although many people asked questions and made comments about the Library aspect of the proposal, very few made any comments about the impact on the city of the loss of the Georgia, which I found quite interesting.

We have since found out that it was Gordon Price who suggested to the developers that they look at the Library as a preservation project and a potential source of additional density/height for the corner of Georgia and Howe; he believes that the city skyline is becoming flat-topped, and would be enhanced by a very tall building at Georgia and Howe, creating an apex for the skyline. The current proposal is, he believes, the right one at the right time and place, although he has stated no opinion about whether future councils would look at this as a precedent somewhere else, on another high point of land. Councillor Price has been looking for support within the heritage community for the preservation of the Library as a trade-off for the Georgia Hotel, but has so far not found it; at the last Heritage Advisory Committee meeting, there was little support for the proposal as it has been presented as a sort of Hobson's choice--we lose the Georgia in order to save the Library.

Although there are a myriad of legitimate arguments on both sides of this proposal, I think that anyone who looks at it as strictly an architectural issue is missing the boat. Even though the Library is certainly a very fine example of 1950s architecture, and is possibly a better example of its ilk than the Georgia is of its, the issue of the designs of the buildings seems to be very minor compared with the buildings' histories, functions and their relationships to their sites and the streetscape. The fundamental point is the one of use: can a heritage building in downtown Vancouver be preserved in toto and doing what it

was designed to do? With the exceptions of the Randall (Cavelti) Building and the Sam-The-Record-Man Building on Seymour Street, I cannot think of any buildings in the Central Business District that have actually been preserved and restored since 1974, when city council used the original Heritage Conservation Act to designate without compensation many of the landmarks that are the core of our downtown historic character. Certainly there have been examples of adaptive re-use and facade retention of downtown buildings, in cases such as the Cineplex and the Tom Lee Music buildings on Granville, and ridiculous examples of facadism, such as the Hudson's Bay Insurance Company on Hastings or the remains of the Jaeger's Building on Granville, but these are hybrids at best.

In the last several years, every time we have argued for the preservation of a commercial building in Vancouver, the aldermen have chorused: "tell us the use, tell us who will rent it or buy it." In the case of the Medical-Dental Building, the developer claimed that he could not rent a facadist building at AAA rates; when the Customs House came up for the chop, the architects and developer said that the window openings and floor plate and floor-to-floor heights were not what people wanted these days, and to spend millions on restoration and conversion would be nuts; when the Stanley was about to close, we could not come up with an operator for it as a theatre. With the current council makeup (and probably in an absolute sense anyway), it is futile to argue against these development decisions--the demands of downtown office-space renters have changed so drastically that even the MacMillan-Bloedel Building, erected barely 25 years ago, has been largely abandoned by its namesake company because it could not be technologically updated.

However, in the case of the Georgia, there is a use. It's a hotel. People are still about 5'9" on average and sleep in beds, as they did in 1927. Since the demolition of the Grosvenor and the Ritz, the Georgia is the last 3-star hotel in the central downtown; it fills that niche very successfully and, according to owners' representative George Sexsmith, makes money. But does it make a good rate of return? No, because the property has become so valuable. Why has the property become so valuable? Because it has been inflated in price in the expectation that a 9 FSR office tower could be built there. Mr. Sexsmith has referred to the 9 FSR on two or three occasions as their "right to build," even though the zoning in the downtown is entirely conditional. If the city were serious about its heritage management plan, it would state unequivocally that the only outright density at the corner of Georgia and Howe is the 5.75 FSR currently occupied by the hotel, and would make generous offers of density transfers and bonuses and bylaw relaxations to ensure that the hotel could be restored as a hotel without placing an onerous financial burden on the owners. This hotel use may not be the "highest and best" use in a downtown, but it is the existing use in a conditional

zone (and I believe an important use to keep the downtown exciting and diverse), so any other proposal, or the payment of any money in anticipation of a more profitable use or a 9 FSR building, is nothing more than speculation. Although the city cannot decree that the property at Georgia and Howe be used as a hotel, if they refused to allow anything bigger than 5.75 FSR on the site I'll bet that the building there would continue to rent rooms to tourists and serve drinks and food.

This chronic question of the future use of heritage buildings is hanging around the neck of the Library like an albatross. The developer is proposing to transfer all of its density to the Georgia site, leaving the empty building (with restored exterior) stripped of all potential commercial use and awaiting a public cultural use. But what about the efforts on behalf of the purpose-built Vogue and Stanley theatres, to set them up for semi-public use? What about the entertainment complex proposed for Coal Harbour? The real danger with the Library proposal is that the restored building will become a major white elephant, without a realistic use, which will tar the cause of heritage preservation for years to come. (We always speculated that the Library could be adaptively reused as a department store; Holt-Renfrew came to mind and, hey presto!, the majority owners of the Georgia Hotel also own Holt-Renfrew. But, they say, they are intending that Holt-Renfrew occupy the lower floors of the new office tower on the Georgia site.)

The other possibility is that council, in its current mood, will reject the Library-preservation proposal but will allow the demolition of the Georgia in return for a donation of some big bucks to the Heritage Foundation. Anyone want to give odds on that eventuality? It is also worth noting that research being done currently by Cathy Barford on the Georgia's architect R.T. Garrow and its consulting architect indicate that the hotel is somewhat more pedigreed than was previously believed.

Other Concerns

The heritage nature of Nelson Park appears to be resolved in principle, although there is probably a long way to go before the Parks Board and the city resolve the issue of compensation by the latter to the former for loss of dedicated parkland. Parks Board Chair Nancy Chiavario agrees that the heritage houses should be restored on their sites; there seems to be agreement among all involved that the block of houses is a unique and irreplaceable asset, so we will see what public meetings are held and private deals struck before all the houses fall down.

I spoke at the city council public meeting last month on the Central Area Plan--in favour of shop-front retail, proposed heritage areas, transit, downtown residential districts, and a myriad of other related issues that will make downtown Vancouver more environmentally responsible vis-a-vis the GVRD. I initially was not going to go, as I thought