

# HERITAGE Vancouver

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## 2004 Top Ten Endangered Sites

Once again, Heritage Vancouver presents its Top Ten Endangered Sites. Time certainly flies — this is already our fourth annual list — and, through wider media attention, our ‘Top Ten’ has generated significant public awareness. The former Woodward’s building is this year’s No.1 endangered site, with First Shaughnessy and Burrard Bridge a close second and third. All the sites on this list are in imminent danger or will likely be coming forward as issues in 2004.

**1. Woodward’s Department Store** (101 W. Hastings Street)  
With redevelopment proposals now before Council, decisions affecting this landmark will determine the future of the building and its neighbourhood, for better or for worse. Woodward’s has anchored the Victory Square district

since the building’s construction in 1903, when Charles Woodward chose the northwest corner of Hastings and Abbott to build his second department store. Despite twelve additions occupying almost an entire city block, the building maintains a strong sense of architectural cohesion. Its muscular massing, red brick façade, and continuous streetwall define the area’s historic character. The red neon ‘W’, atop an 80-foot steel tower, is a city icon. Hidden, but no less significant, is the massive, first-growth, ‘heavy-timber’ structure supporting the original building. Since Woodward’s closed in 1993, the building has remained vacant. A parade of development proposals have come and gone. In 1996, the City designated Woodward’s a heritage building, and finally purchased it in 2003. Last May, the City relit the neon ‘W’ as a gesture of its commitment to revitalization of the Woodward’s site

and the wider neighbourhood. Unfortunately, that commitment does not extend to preservation. In contravention of its own heritage standards and guidelines, the City's 'proposal call', (to potential developers) contains no specific requirement for retention of this designated building, or even portions of it, stating only that proposals should "[take] advantage of heritage opportunities" and "[celebrate] the symbolism of this historic building." So it should be no surprise that many of the schemes now before Council propose major demolition and fail to respect the character of the building and the streetscape it anchors. Aside from the obvious degradation of an historic landmark, there's a serious risk of losing the district's historic ambience if the building's exterior, or major parts of it, are destroyed. Let's hope City Council does the right thing.

## 2. First Shaughnessy District

Demolition permits were issued for four First Shaughnessy heritage houses in 2003. This is the only residential character area identified by the City, and yet 42 A and B listed heritage houses have been lost in the last 11



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years alone. Aggressive developers, architects and owners have learned that, if they fight their way through the City's Planning Department and Advisory Design Panel, the City neither has any convincing incentives to offer owners to retain these homes nor has the power to prevent demolition. A new variation on "Demolition by Neglect" developed this year — we call it "Blight by Intent". In the case of three recently demolished houses, the character-defining elements (windows, doors, fireplaces) were stripped out of the houses and sold, leaving derelict shells open to the elements and vandalism. The applicants (or "House Pirates", if you will) then pled that the houses were uninhabitable and unsal-

vageable, and must be torn down. No demolition permit is required to undertake this kind of work, and while deplorable, is not technically illegal. Another loophole developed at 1498 Angus Dr. where, because the heritage house straddled two legal lots, the owner sought and received a demolition permit with no development permit in place and no consideration for the heritage merit of the house. The Advisory Design Panel and heritage community were not consulted before the house was demolished: there was no inquiry, no neighbourhood notification, no plan in place for new structures. This is unprecedented and of great concern to the Design Panel and Heritage Vancouver. This character area belongs to the residents of Vancouver, not just to the residents of Shaughnessy. It is critical that the City rectify the problems present in the design guidelines and Official Development Plan for this area, neither of which have been reviewed since they were enacted in 1982.

## 3. Burrard Bridge

Completed in 1932 to provide a high-level crossing to the western neighbourhoods, the bridge is a triumph of civic architecture and a key gateway structure. Architects Sharp and Thompson, conscious of the bridge's ceremonial 'gateway' function, embellished the utilitarian steel superstructure with imposing concrete towers, torch-like entrance pylons, and art deco sculptural details. Unifying the parts are heavy concrete railings, originally topped by decorative street lamps. To facilitate cyclist and pedestrian use, the previous City Council was considering demolition of the concrete railings and the addition of 'outrigger' sidewalks. Without the original railings, the bridge will lose its strong edges, and its architectural features will be isolated. The proposed outrigger structures will radically alter the external appearance of this landmark structure. A coalition of stakeholders, including Heritage Vancouver, has written the present Council stating that the proposals are unacceptable — from both a transportation and heritage perspective. The coalition is asking Council to consider

instead dedicating the two outer traffic lanes to non-motorized traffic, a solution that would involve little alteration to the bridge itself. Other non-intrusive options could also be considered.

## 4. Pantages Theatre

(152 E. Hastings Street)

Behind a modest brick façade half a block west of Main and Hastings, is the oldest remaining Pantages Theatre in North America. Built in 1907 by Alexander Pantages as part of his emerging vaudeville and movie empire, this theatre is one of the oldest purpose-built vaudeville theatre interiors in Canada. Its interior is breathtaking — its stepped balconies, vaulted ceiling and arched proscenium frame a jewel box of ornate plasterwork. Although a group purchased the building several years ago to convert it into a licensed resto-lounge, it has remained empty for more than a decade. The property is now under the gavel for unpaid taxes, with the City selling at tax-sale prices to the highest-bidder. We had high hopes the City itself might purchase the theatre to use as a community arts centre or music school, but there seems to be no interest at City Hall. Unless a sympathetic use can be found, the future of this landmark Canadian theatre is again highly uncertain.

## 5. Imperial Oil Service Station

(2210 Cornwall Avenue)

Designed in 1932 by Townley and Matheson (the architects who brought you City Hall), this Kits Beach landmark was built at a time when period revivals were all the rage. This one may be the last surviving example of its kind in Vancouver. Listed as a 'B' on the Vancouver Heritage Register, the building's neo-Spanish Colonial design, with arched windows and red-tiled roof, reflects a strong Californian influence still visible in some homes and storefronts. In the late 1970s, Imperial Oil closed the station. The new owners added a perpendicular wing abutting Cornwall to accommodate a 7-Eleven store, and the original building became a restaurant. Over the years, various restaurants have occupied the entire building, the most recent being Malone's Sports Bar,

which now occupies only the 1970s wing. The original structure is vacant, and the current owner plans to demolish the entire site to throw up yet another mini mall. We believe this would be tragic, as the layout of the existing building is well-suited to multiple tenants. With the aid of heritage incentives, the owners could achieve a win-win result: retention of a landmark building and a character development that would provide a superior return on investment.

## **6. Wing Sang Building**

(51 E.Pender St.)

Reputedly the oldest structure in Chinatown, the original Wing Sang building is a tiny two-storey 'Victorian Italianate' dating from 1889. Between the two upper-floor windows is a doorway through which furniture was winched to bypass narrow stairways. Although a cornice still marks the original roofline, the little building is literally enveloped by a larger structure built in 1901 by owner Yip Sang and designed by architect Thomas Ennor Julian (best known for Holy Rosary Cathedral). The new building was three times the width of the original (extending to 69 E. Pender); it featured a row of bay windows along the second floor and added a third floor. In 1912, Yip Sang built a six-storey brick building across the alley behind Pender to provide a separate floor for each of his families — he had three wives simultaneously and 23 children — as well as extra room for social gatherings and a warehouse. An elevated passageway connects the two buildings. Beneath it runs Market Alley, once a thriving retail area with small shops and services fronting on the lane and the pungent aroma of opium wafting from the Wing Sang's factory. The building housed Chinatown's first Chinese doctor and two of its best-known restaurants — the BC Royal and the Yen Lock. Except for a curio shop at street level and a family association on the second floor, the front building is vacant. The rear tenement has been abandoned for decades and is deteriorating. The Chinese Benevolent Association considered converting the structures into a seniors' residence but balked at the

cost. The buildings remain on the market, reportedly with an asking price of \$1.2 million. Meanwhile, the future of much of Chinatown may soon be threatened by a plan currently being developed by the City; the intent is to jump start the area's economic revitalization by encouraging large, out-of-scale condo developments in much of the existing commercial area.

## **7. Firehall No.15**

(E. 22nd and Nootka)

Featured (along with Firehall No.13) in our first annual Top Ten Endangered list (2001), Firehall No.15 is the last remaining of its kind still in use — Firehall No.13 was demolished in 2002. The hose towers and distinctive bracketed eaves of these Craftsman-influenced structures were once familiar landmarks in neighbourhoods across the city. Built around 1914, Firehall No.15 features extensive interior woodwork, ornate pressed-metal ceilings, and its original brass pole. As a new firehall could be located on adjacent City land, the existing firehall could be re-used if an appropriate community function can be found. Architectural drawings are being prepared as we speak, so this is our last chance to save a community landmark.

## **8. Malkin Bowl (Stanley Park)**

'Marion Malkin Memorial Bowl' was built in 1934 with funds donated by William Harold Malkin, grocery wholesaler, former Mayor, and Park Board Commissioner, in memory of his wife Marion Malkin. Originally designed as a band shell, the venue has been used for most of its history for the summer musical series, Theatre Under The Stars (TUTS). The building, known for its crescent-shaped proscenium arch, is a delightful example of the Moderne style and a beloved city landmark. The Park Board considers Malkin Bowl a liability — its isolated location and wooden construction make it vulnerable to squatters, vandalism and arson. If TUTS and the Park Board have their way, Malkin Bowl, a heritage and cultural landmark for nearly 70 years, will be demolished. It will be replaced by a high-tech, slab-mounted structure designed by Busby and Associates, architects of One Wall Centre. TUTS is only too happy to replace the existing landmark with a state-of-the-art facility that will provide more space for drop scenery and

backstage activities, and has already begun fundraising efforts. Neither the Park Board nor TUTS has given serious consideration to upgrading and preserving the existing facility.

## **9. Charles Dickens Elementary School (3351 Glen Drive)**

Yet another of Vancouver's historic schools could bite the dust because the cost of seismic and other upgrades apparently cost more than a new school. Similar to other early Vancouver schools, Dickens Elementary's brick walls, pitched roof and decorative pilasters are emblematic of the history of our city and its neighbourhoods. The possibility that the fate of Dickens could well set a precedent for the loss of these landmarks across the city raises bluntly the question of our commitment to heritage: do we value our public heritage buildings, and how much are we willing to invest to save them for future generations?

## **10. VGH Nurses Residence**

(2880 Willow at W.12th

[entrance at Heather])

Designed by Townley and Matheson, this nine-storey modern landmark was built to accommodate student nurses enrolled in the former VGH School of Nursing. Constructed in two phases, the central block (fronting Heather St.) was completed in 1948, and the north and south wings completed in 1951, creating a U-shaped footprint that enclosed a garden courtyard. The front entrance is flanked by the wings of a graceful butterfly-shaped podium evoking the curvaceous lines of the Moderne style. Interior finishings are spectacular and remarkably intact. The entrance foyer has a gold-leaf ceiling. The main floor lobby areas, a dining pavilion, and meeting rooms are richly finished in wood, rippled glass and chrome, and provide a fine example of period interior design. This fall, the Vancouver Health Authority (VCHA) retained Colliers International to call for bids for the 'purchase and redevelopment of the Nurses' Residence site ... the VCHA's objective is to sell the entire site to a developer/builder.' The Colliers offering describes the site as an excellent opportunity to redevelop a full city block on Vancouver's Westside. The closing date for bids was December 11, 2003.

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## Mark Your Calendar

### Feb 16-22 Heritage Week

The theme for Heritage Week 2004 is "Defending Canada: Heritage of Military Places".

"From the militia drill halls and reserve regiments in every town across B.C., to the huge naval base in Esquimalt, and the defence emplacements along the coastline, the military has shaped our province and our communities. The earliest mapping of the BC coast was carried out by the Royal Navy. Royal Engineers laid out the first town sites and roads. Every major BC community has an armoury, which, in addition to being an imposing architectural presence in small town BC, was also often a focus for social life. The legacy of Second World War construction of airfields, bases and fortifications on Canada's west coast has left a mark that is present to this day."

See  
[http://www.heritagebc.ca/heritage\\_week.htm](http://www.heritagebc.ca/heritage_week.htm)  
for more details.

### Feb. 18-22nd The Vancouver Heritage Fair (formerly the Heritage & Antiques Fair [1999-2001] at BC Home & Garden Show, BC Place

With the cooperation of the Vancouver Heritage Foundation, the Vancouver Heritage Fair comes to the BC Home & Garden Show for the first time. The Fair will highlight a group of companies who will assist you in renovating, maintaining, designing or purchasing your heritage home.

<http://www.dmgworldmedia.com/2004/BCHome&GardenShow/press>

### Feb. 26 "A History of Kitsilano" John Atkin discusses this fascinating neighbourhood with the Vancouver Historical Society. Free. 7:30 p.m. Vancouver Museum, 1100 Chestnut St.

(604) 878-9140  
<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/vhs/>  
<http://www.johnatkin.com>

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P R E S E N T S

### 7:30 p.m. Vancouver Museum

### It was Fun While It Lasted: 25 Years of the Heritage Trust. Thursday, February 19th, 2004

With new funding and new organizations in place, it's time to look back at the influential projects funded by the former B.C. Heritage Trust. The evening will also offer a glimpse of the new Historic Places initiative from the federal government and what it means for BC.

### And Who Are They? Thursday, March 18th, 2004

Vancouver's Heritage Commission is an all voluntary body which offers advice to council on heritage issues. Did you know they have influence in other ways? A get together of former chairs of the commission (you'll be surprised at who's been at the helm over the years) will provide a lively discussion.

### The Future: Where Do We Go From Here? Thursday, April 15th, 2004

A panel discussion with various experts in the field on what the future holds for heritage in Vancouver, BC, and Canada.

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Charitable donation #1073758-52. Membership fees are not tax deductible.

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