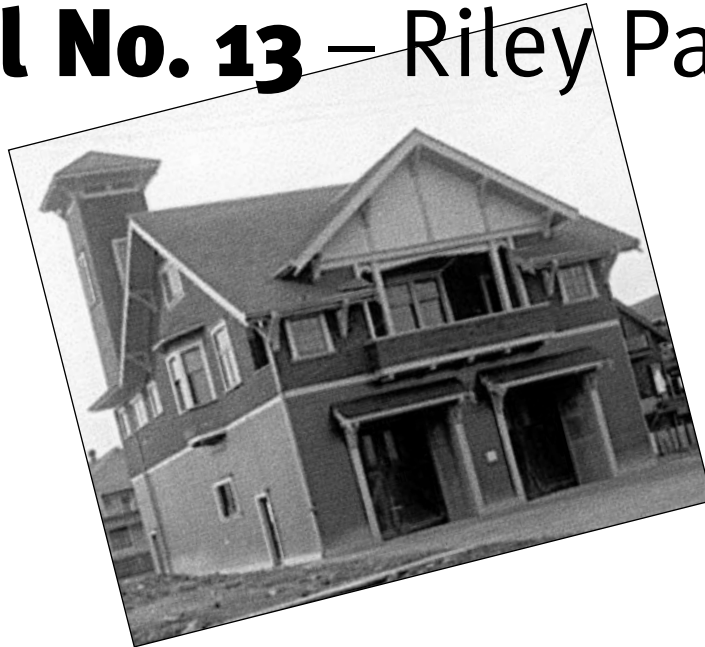


# HERITAGE

# Vancouver

N e w s l e t t e r

## Firehall No. 13 – Riley Park



by Maida Price

**F**riday is hose day at Firehall No. 13. The hose tower occupies a back corner of the hall, and the firemen open a small outside door to access the workings. These hang from the top of the tower's interior, which seems impossibly high because the room is so narrow. Two bars edged with graceful U-shaped notches stretch across the top. The whole space is full of light and shadow from the tower windows, and richly patterned with rough wooden walls and supports and zigzag ladders and hanging hoses.

The wet hose is dragged in through the door and the nozzle is attached to the rope looped on pulleys and extending the height of the tower. The man at the base pulls the rope and the hose ascends to the top, where another fireman waits to slot the nozzle into one of the carved U's. The hose is re-released and hangs straight and loose, drying until next hose day.

Firemen have been hauling hose around this hall, on one day or another, and interrupted only by a hiatus during the first war, since October of 1913. The rooftop cap on the hose tower has disappeared, along with the overhanging upper porch, but the work and the building have remained essentially unchanged since the first alarm sounded at this hall.

The Riley Park hall looks good for another few hundred

years. Even though it's a firehall, it has charm. Its Craftsman-influenced style, with the overhanging eaves, is to Vancouverites today a durable and comforting reminder of days past when life in the city was simpler. To the builders it was up-to-date, state of the art. In a photo taken around the time it was built, it stands in virtual solitude with only two homes to protect. These remain standing, part of a neighborhood dotted with Craftsman-style homes and Victorian dowagers (along with all the other styles from down the years) that grew around the intersection of 24th and Prince Albert. Trees are everywhere and the firehall now stands in a pleasant grove of its own. It looks like it has been there forever, and, relatively speaking, it has.

The hall was built for horse and wagon. In 1916, it housed a combination hose and chemical wagon and two horses, two thousand or so feet of hose, and six firemen—the Captain, his lieutenant, a driver and three hose men. The horses champed on hay over in the corner near the hose tower, lined up and facing the door, just like the trucks today, waiting for the alarm. Pitching hay and cleaning the horse gutter was part of the daily routine for the firemen. They used, and use, a handsome stairwell to reach the living quarters upstairs when done. The dark wainscoting and trims throughout the main

*see Firehall page three*

**May 16th Meeting CANCELLED!**

Due to the Provincial Election we have cancelled our May meeting. The series *Looking Back Without Anger* will start in September. Join us now for a walking tour, as we move in to our spring and summer program.

**Mystery Walking Tour**

**Tuesday, May 22nd, 7:00 PM**

- meet at Main St. Skytrain Stn.  
(at the base of the stairs at Thornton Park Entrance)

John Atkin of Heritage Vancouver will lead us on a mystery walking tour. Approximately 2 hours long, we'll set off to our location and return to the Skytrain station.

**Walk the Heritage Gateway to Our City**

**Saturday, June 23rd, 1:30 PM**

- meet at King Edward and Cambie  
(on the median)

Our town planning commission had the vision, over 70 years ago, to create a beautiful, linear park as a gateway to Vancouver. Join the President of the Cambie Heritage Boulevard Society, Ethel Karmel, as she relates the history of the boulevard and names the trees that grace the median.

**Vancouver's Forgotten Treasures**

**Wednesday, July 18th, 7:30 PM**

Meet on the Northeast corner of Granville & Georgia (front of the Bay) Join Heritage Vancouver on a tour of the 500-600 blocks of Granville and Seymour, which contain some of the oldest buildings in the city, outside of Gastown. See some of Vancouver's most interesting landmarks. We'll end the evening with a stop for a pint at one of Vancouver's oldest pubs.

Register for the above walking tours by calling Heritage Vancouver at 254-9411. Leave your name, phone number and the name of the tour(s) you want to join.

\$5 members \$10 non-members/per tour



Photo: R. Moffatt 2001

# Wright in the woods

by *Robert Moffatt*

**Plommer house**  
**543 Eastcot Road, West Vancouver**  
**Fred Thornton Hollingsworth 1953**

Fred Thornton Hollingsworth is, along with the late Ron Thom, probably Vancouver's most dedicated devotee of Frank Lloyd Wright. In a career spanning over fifty years, Hollingsworth has completed hundreds of commissions, primarily residential, and expanded on his Wrightian influences to ensure his legacy as one of Vancouver's most renowned architects.

The Plommer house was built in 1953 in the lower British Properties and is closely inspired by Wright's Usonian houses and Japanese residential architecture. It is also one of Hollingsworth's largest and most lavish early houses, with a high level of materials and fine detailing throughout, and has been lovingly maintained in virtually original condition.

Hollingsworth designed the house as a low, cruciform-shaped mass integrated with the heavily wooded site. A wide-eaved hipped roof clad with cedar shakes gives a sense of shelter, counter-balanced by the openness created by large areas of glass. The glass was often mitre-edged at the corners to visually dissolve the separation between inside and outside. Horizontal cedar board-

and-batten walls and strip windows reinforce the ground-hugging lines, and green-gray colours, natural wood tones and warm red brick further integrate the house into its surroundings.

Inside, the influence of Wright becomes even more apparent in the intricate spatial arrangements. Low ceilings at the entry and in the interior hallways abruptly burst upward over the living and dining areas, the soaring effect enhanced by a sunken floor. A tall brick fireplace at the far end of the living area draws the eye upward into the ceiling peak, which is lined with clerestory windows and framed by indirect light troughs running the perimeter of the room. The soft light filtering downward creates a magical sense of sky above a forest clearing.

Fine craftsmanship is evident in the built-in cabinets, bookshelves and a Wright-inspired dining table and chairs, all carefully preserved and glowing with the patina of aged natural wood. Outside, French doors open onto patio areas set off with native ferns, vine maples and flowering shrubs. True to Wright's principles, the overall effect is of complete harmony between indoors and outdoors and between the house's exterior and interior.

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# Heritage Vancouver Updates

## Gastown Management Plan Committee

At our April board meeting, Marco D'Agostini, a planner with the City of Vancouver presented a draft of the Gastown Management plan. As a result, Heritage Vancouver has formed a committee to review, make recommendations, write letters, and make presentations on the plan. The first meeting of the committee is Tuesday, May 8th, 2001 at City Hall to go over the draft plan in detail. To obtain a copy of the plan, check [www.city.vancouver.bc.ca](http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca) or call 604-873-7716.

## Christ Church Cathedral

This Anglican Church, located at Burrard and Georgia, is A-listed on the Heritage Register. Recently they submitted a request to the Heritage Commission for permission to change certain interior elements of the building. They have also offered to designate other elements if a heritage bonus were offered. Heritage Vancouver is studying the proposal and preparing to visit the cathedral prior to determining our position and actions to take on this issue.

All Heritage Vancouver meetings start at 7:30pm, the 3rd Wednesday of each month at The Vancouver Museum.  
Free for members and \$5 for non-members.

## Firehall from cover

floor of the hall match the stairs and contrast with the light cream paint on the upper walls and the patterned tin ceiling. The building, inside and out, has an old-fashioned elegance, like grandma's house, but bizarre. Someone has parked two great big shiny red fire trucks in her living room after ripping up all the rugs.

This contrast illustrates perfectly the reason for the planned demolition of No. 13, one of the only two remaining wooden firehalls in use in the city (No. 15 is the other). Fire trucks keep getting heavier and the old floors can't take the weight. The trucks are also bigger. Bringing the building up to code is costly. Earthquake readiness is a concern.

These are all perfectly sensible reasons for building a new firehall, but sometimes being sensible gets in the way of what's important. This is a fine old building. It's a heritage building because of its architecture and because generations of men have worked here in a demanding and necessary service. We should keep it. It's important.

*Maida Price is an editor and writer in Vancouver.*

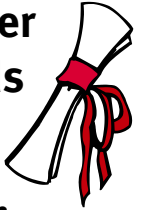
## Heritage Vancouver Memberships

We'd like to welcome our members who have joined us over the last few months. You may have joined us as a result of our work at the Heritage Fair, our public programs or advocacy work and we encourage you to get actively involved in your new organization.

To better accommodate new members and to facilitate recruitment on an ongoing basis, we have introduced a new membership system. Memberships will expire one year after the purchase date and you will receive a renewal notice one month prior to your expiry date.

Please take advantage of the new system to invite someone you know to join Heritage Vancouver. Wouldn't it be wonderful to double our membership by the end of the year?

# City of Vancouver Heritage Awards 2001 Winners!



## Awards of Recognition

- *House of Blues Concerts Canada* for interior revitalization of The Commodore Ballroom
- *The British Columbia Regiment* for the preservation of two 1863 Cannons
- *Fred Thirkell and Bob Scullion* for the book *Vancouver and Beyond*

## Awards of Merit

- *Hugh Wong* for the rehabilitation and restoration of row houses at 800-816 Hawks Avenue
- *Pacific Mineral Museum Society* for the restoration and rehabilitation of the Pacific Mineral Museum
- *Holy Rosary Cathedral* for conservation and repairs to the Holy Rosary Cathedral
- *John T. Ivison* for heritage advocacy

## Award of Honour

- *Allied Holdings* and *SFU* for the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue

## Comments or Articles

Do you have comments or articles for our newsletter? Send them to: Janet Hansen, Newsletter Coordinator c/o Heritage Vancouver, P.O. BOX 3336, Main Post Office, Vancouver, BC V6B 3Y3  
Or e-mail Janet directly at [j\\_i\\_hansen@hotmail.com](mailto:j_i_hansen@hotmail.com)

Heritage Vancouver  
PO Box 3336, Main Post Office  
Vancouver BC V6B 3Y3

604.254.9411

# Heritage & Taxes


Dear Members,

Gastown is the birthplace of the City of Vancouver, and remains a valuable reminder of the City's origins. The collection of buildings within the area, almost all of which date from between the Great Fire of 1886 and the onset of the First World War in 1914, are among the most historic and distinguished pieces of Vancouver's architectural heritage. In recognition of Gastown's heritage significance, and the equal importance of the adjacent area of Chinatown, the Province enacted heritage designation in 1971 that was intended to protect the two areas.

Gastown is an extremely significant heritage resource for the entire City, region and province. However, conservation incentives to private owners are limited to sites where redevelopment will occur. The net result is that over time the physical fabric and economic viability of many of the buildings has deteriorated. Despite almost thirty years of provincial heritage designation, there are no conservation standards, design guidelines, or significant heritage incentives in place. Given the overall marginal economics of the area, restoration and upgrading of individual buildings is unlikely to occur without some assistance. In recognition of the crisis that the area faces, the City has commissioned a comprehensive Gastown Heritage Management Plan from a team led by the Spaxman Consultant Group.

One of the most effective ways to promote the restoration and upgrading of heritage buildings, and ensure their long-term maintenance, is to provide a range of appropriate conservation incentives. The experience of many other cities has proven that, if applied properly, financial incentives for the rehabilitation and restoration of heritage buildings are a sound investment for all parties. The City of Victoria has been using financial incentives with demonstrable success for over twenty years, and has now instituted a program of tax incentives for seismic upgrading. Recent analysis of Victoria's financial incentives, based on property tax assessments, have proven that these initiatives promote long-term economic viability, benefit both the public and private sector, and provide tangible results in the revitalization of individual properties and heritage areas. Other Canadian cities such as Edmonton and Toronto use tax incentives as an essential part of their heritage programs.

Vancouver, as usual, is lagging behind in its approach to heritage conservation. We don't need to invent the *tax incentive* wheel, but we certainly need one right now if we want to preserve Gastown for future generations!



Janet Leduc  
President, Heritage Vancouver

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Wednesday, May 23rd,  
Historic Strathcona**

**7:00 PM**

There's no pre-registration required for this tour, which is part of a Summer Evening Heritage Walks Series. Just meet at the Strathcona Community Centre (Keefer & Princess). Tickets are \$5 for Strathcona residents and \$10 for non-residents.

**Sunday, May 27th, New Westminster  
Heritage Homes Tour & Tea**

This tour includes a selection of Victorian and Edwardian homes, the Burr Theatre, a surprise commercial building and much more. Of special interest, the James L. Galbraith family home, the Irving House, and the Hezekiah Stead mansion. There will be a catered traditional tea at the Pearson cafeteria at New Westminster Secondary School.

Tickets are \$25 and go on sale at 9:00 AM, May 12, Contact Christopher Bell, Heritage Preservation Society of New Westminster, at 524-9502 for information on where to purchase tickets.

**Wednesday, June 13th,  
Fire Walk**

**7:00 PM**

Trace the infamous route of the great fire of 1886. Sponsored by the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Museum. Space is limited. Call 734-7368 for details and to register.

## Special Event!

**Wednesday, June 20th,  
Wine & Cheese Reception**

**7:00 PM**

Vancouver City Councilor *Lynne Kennedy* has generously offered to host this reception for Heritage Vancouver at her home in the West End. Councilor Kennedy is a past-Chair of the Heritage Commission and will discuss *the evolution of heritage in Vancouver over the past decade*, followed by a dialogue on directions for heritage in the next decade. An event not to be missed! Tickets \$25 to reserve, please send a cheque to Heritage Vancouver, PO Box 3336, Main Post Office, Vancouver, V6B 3Y3. We will be in touch with those who pre-register to provide the address and directions.