

HERITAGE

Vancouver

N e w s l e t t e r



HISTORIC HASTINGS STREET

by *Maida Price*

A photo of Hastings Street, held in the City of Vancouver Archives, is labeled The business centre of Vancouver 1911. The photographer, standing at Cambie, has captured a prosperous street lined with imposing stone buildings. Well-dressed citizens walk briskly or wait to cross the street; a horse-drawn cart, an automobile and a streetcar are among the vehicles moving towards the horizon. Power lines web across the sky. The street stretches into infinity, a nice trick of early cameras, and it looks as if there is nothing in the way and the city will continue along this street forever.

Not so, as we know today. But the promise was there, and earlier less-sturdy buildings had been replaced by expensive and solid and often quite beautiful structures designed to last.

Anchoring the street, at the corner of Main and Hastings, was the Carnegie Free Library, opened in 1903 and funded by a \$50,000 grant from the Carnegie Foundation. Built adjacent to an earlier building which served as City Hall, it used the resources of the city and the province: an architectural firm from New Westminster, locally-quarried granite, stone brought from Gabriola Island.

A few years later a Pantages Theatre was built just west of the Library. At \$100,000, it was an expensive project but indicative of the firm belief that Hastings was the center of town and the spot to build a grand theatre that would beat out its rivals. Baroque and Moorish decorations embellished the state-of-the art theatre with its large stage, nine dressing rooms and an orchestra room under the stage. To ensure the building lasted, it was brick construction with an asbestos

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HERITAGE
Vancouver
PRESENTS

**Hastings Street:
Vancouver's Heritage Corridor**
Saturday, April 20, 10:30am
Walking Tour begins at Victory Sq. Park

Hastings Street between Granville and Main was once Vancouver's centre of trade and commerce. Many of our most prominent early office buildings and institutions were located here, and many still survive. Although the western section is still a bustling business district, the eastern section between Cambie and Main now suffers from neglect, and many wonderful heritage structures sit vacant and abandoned. Join heritage consultant Donald Luxton for a walk along Hastings Street, which will end with a real treat—a tour of the 1907 First Pantages Theatre, the oldest surviving purpose-built vaudeville house in Canada, and the oldest surviving Pantages theatre. Meet at the Cenotaph in Victory Square. Members \$5, non-members \$10.00

Special Event
Friday, May 24th, 6:00pm
Wine & Cheese Reception

Vancouver City Councilor Jennifer Clarke has generously offered to host a reception for Heritage Vancouver at her home. This is a unique opportunity to mingle with other heritage minded people and discuss current heritage issues. An event that should not be missed!

Tickets \$25.00
To reserve please telephone
604-254-9411. We will contact you
to provide directions and the address.

VANCOUVER MODERN



Photo: Graham Warrington, 1953

Sanctuary in the trees

by *Robert Moffatt*

St. Anselm's Anglican Church
5210 University Boulevard, Vancouver
Semmens and Simpson 1952-53

Nestled in a tranquil forest clearing on the University of British Columbia Endowment Lands, St. Anselm's Church recast traditional Christian symbolism within a fresh A-frame architectural form.

Eschewing the ornamentation of traditional church design, architects Harold Semmens and Douglas Simpson integrated Christian references into the structure of the church itself. The massive, steeply-pitched roof planes suggest shelter from the elements, hands raised in prayer, and the pointed arch associated with Christianity, further echoed by the cross-shaped form inset above the entrance. The

vertical emphasis of the A-frame structure is countered by horizontal fieldstone walls and an extended entrance canopy.

Inside, glue-laminated Douglas Fir beams frame a soaring, light-filled interior space seating 200, the chancel and the imposing fieldstone wall behind the altar softly illuminated by flanking clerestory windows. The clean-lined altar, pews, and other interior elements are of oak and black walnut and were also designed by Semmens and Simpson. A shed-roofed rear wing provides space for parish activities and defines a side court. The church's air of calm repose was somewhat upset by the jagged angularity of the extension to the entrance vestibule, added in 1998.

from cover **Hastings**



City of Vancouver Archives M-14-71

B.C. Electric Railway Company's building 1912

curtain protecting the audience from fires starting backstage.

Another significant structure was the BC Electric Railway Building at 2 West Hastings. In a variation of all roads leading to Rome, all the lines in *the largest interurban system in Canada* led to this depot. Another picture in the City Archives, dated 1912, shows the streetcar lines curving gracefully in and under the building.

Such a loss turned out to be the fate of Hastings Street. No matter what is planned, a city is a concept that is constantly changing—in often-unpredictable ways. Although the street remained an important part of downtown until mid-century, the center of the city had, by 1917, begun its shift away from the Cambie-to-Main section of Hastings Street. Alexander Pantages, no slouch as a



City of Vancouver M-11-51

Woodward's first store early 1900s at Hastings and Abbott Streets.

Despite its size it is quite graceful and elegant; it had a *copper clad hipped roof*, since lost to progress and expansion.

businessman, saw it coming, put his theatre up for sale and built himself one that was bigger and better elsewhere in the city. One by one, over the years, most of the other enterprises

in these blocks have followed suit, until today it is a section of the street dying by neglect.

The concepts of *city* and *fashion* have a lot in common. Fads and styles come and go. Certain styles disappear, reappear as retro or vintage, are reworked or paired up with something else and transformed. Social, aesthetic and financial values change, and clothing—and architecture and neighborhoods—change right along with them. We may not like the changes, but they are real, so we throw away our old clothes. However, think about the beautiful and beautifully made garments of the past, a genuine early Chanel suit, for instance, which is a work of art worthy of saving and exhibiting and bound to be useful or even wearable some day, and then think of those remarkable old buildings on Hastings between Cambie and Main.

Vancouver Museum Presents

Arts & Crafts Day - Thomson & Page
Arts & Crafts Series
Sunday, April 21, 10am to 3:30pm
Vancouver Museum
Call 604-734-736 for details.
Tickets are \$75 for members and \$95 for non-members (plus GST).

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Its Election Time



Vancouver City Hall

1936 CVA 877-117

Guest Editorial

Municipal elections are being held this November—and this is our chance to send our elected officials a clear message. Heritage Vancouver will be actively soliciting opinions and facts to help you make your decision when you vote. Recent events indicate that this will be a volatile campaign, and we must work to ensure a *heritage-friendly* Council is elected.

Vancouver's current Council has a spotty record on heritage—some successes but many failures, mainly as a result of an unclear vision on what constitutes *authentic* heritage conservation. To date, Council has not yet officially adopted appropriate conservation standards and guidelines as the basis for its Heritage Program. We need look no further than the Dance Centre to see the extent to which compromise has been considered acceptable. Council has to deal with many competing priorities, but heritage seems to have slipped to the bottom of the list—an unacceptable and unnecessary situation. As heritage watchdogs we are dealing with

crisis situations all too often lately—and the worst offender is by no means the private developer. The Burrard Bridge is just one example where a City-owned heritage resource is being threatened; despite a clear recognition of its heritage value the Engineering Department is determined to hang huge outriggers on it—and in a spirit of compromise Council could easily let this happen. There are numerous other issues that seems to have slipped through some rather large cracks—don't forget that we also get to elect a new Parks Board and School Board—think of the loss of Magee School and the potential loss of Malkin Bowl when you vote!

Clearly we need to revitalize and reinvigorate our approach to heritage conservation, especially in the face of potentially significant Federal heritage initiatives. Vancouver should be prepared for the challenge of finding new and innovative ways to conserve heritage resources in an authentic and meaningful, not compromised, manner. We need to start at the top. Over the next few months we will be assembling a *report card* on the current Council members, asking their views and holding them accountable for their votes on heritage issues. We will report back to you what we hear, so that you can make an informed choice when you vote in November.

Guest editorial by Don Luxton, an expert on heritage in Vancouver.

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Membership valid one year from date of issue. Members receive a monthly newsletter, free admission to monthly speakers' programs and reduced rates for tours and other activities.

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

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I would like to volunteer for Heritage Vancouver

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