

# HERITAGE

# Vancouver

Newsletter



## Hycroft Generations

by Maida Price

It's a given that Hycroft has seen its share of generations. When the Alexander Duncan McRaes moved into their brand new Shaughnessy mansion in the summer of 1911, they had three daughters. Blanche, Lucile and Peggy grew up and married—although only the youngest, Peggy, was married in the house—and during the course of their lives they and their children moved in and out of the family home.

When in 1942 the McRaes sold the house to the federal government for one dollar, it was transformed into a military hospital. Hycroft became home to an earlier generation who were now the elderly: the young men who went off to the Great War and came home to spend the rest of their lives under medical care. Eventually the government closed the hospital and put the mansion up for sale and it sat empty until the University



Women's Club managed to purchase it for use as a clubhouse. They regenerated it with elbow grease and hard work, transforming it from the linoleumed bleakness of a veteran's hospital back to a mansion.

During the boom years of the film industry in Vancouver, the refurbished Hycroft became a favorite location for filming and a significant source of income to be plowed back into the building and grounds. And it's perhaps the source of another kind of *generation* going on at Hycroft: the generation of spirits and astral bodies and poltergeists and unusual sightings....

Hycroft was a party house and these 'generations' like parties. They're often glimpsed during movie weddings and balls. One director, during the rehearsal of a ball scene in the central hall, was using a videocam to plan shots when he saw

see page three **Hycroft**

**What's ahead in Gastown?**  
**Post Heritage Management Plan**  
**Wednesday, September 18, 7:30 PM**  
**Water Street Café, 300 Water St.**

On Aug. 1, Vancouver City Council gave final approval to the long awaited Gastown Heritage Management Plan. Over the past two years staff, consultants and the community have been actively working on a program to facilitate the conservation of heritage resources and economic revitalization. The plan outlines a vision for heritage management in Gastown and provides incentives such as bonus density, property tax relief and façade improvement grants to encourage owners to restore heritage buildings. Marco D'Agostini, City of Vancouver and Jon Stovell, President of the Gastown Business Improvement Association will let us in on what they hope to see in Gastown. In addition, Jon will give us the BIA's perspective on the future of the Woodward's building. Join us and be part of the *buzz* in Gastown. Free for members, \$5.00 for non-members

**Walking Tour of Grandview**  
**Sunday, September 22 at 1:00 PM**  
**1730 William Street**

Bruce Macdonald, author of *Vancouver: A Visual History*, will lead this walking tour of the neighbourhood he has lived in for the last 15 years. Originally touted to the wealthy in the West End as *The* premiere location to relocate, Grandview was soon eclipsed by the CPR's big new real estate development, Shaughnessy, and subsequently developed into a more middle class neighbourhood. Today, the Drive (Commercial Drive) has more diversity — architecturally and socially — than any other part of the city. This walking tour will feature a tiny home from the 1890s that was built before there were any roads in Grandview, as well as mansions from the early 1900s, and everything in between.



Hassell house, showing deck enlarged in early 1980s renovations.

## Trendsetting tree house

by *Robert Moffatt*

**Hassell house**  
5791 Telegraph Trail, West Vancouver  
Robert Hassell 1966

Robert Hassell designed and self-built his compact house and studio while still a student at the UBC School of Architecture, and it became a prototype for many West Coast houses in the late 1960s and 1970s. Hassell drew upon BC's early wooden industrial structures, native Haida longhouses, and Charles Moore's influential Sea Ranch on the California coast, adapting their forms to a small, steep site overlooking Fisherman's Cove.

The key innovation of the Hassell house is its vertical, rather than horizontal, arrangement of interior spaces. A simple cubic volume is organized on three levels around a spiral staircase, the partial second floor and upper loft opening up the space vertically. Outdoor decks and terraces extend beyond the building envelope, while high-level slit windows and a huge sloping skylight open the house to natural light and views of the water and treetops. The

play of space and light create a sense of intimate shelter, integrated with the surrounding forest and sky. Hassell's design also proved to be extremely cost-effective: point foundation footings, minimal floor and roof areas, and walls of reject vertical cedar siding inside and out kept building costs to only \$9,000.

Later houses by Hassell and architectural partner Barry Griblin followed similar design concepts, responding to impossibly mountainous sites and the West Coast climate with woody tree houses constructed for a modest \$15-\$20 per square foot. Located mostly on the North Shore, these include the Weill house at 5873 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, the Szijarto house at 249 Bayview Road, Lions Bay, the Hemsworth house at 1921 Cardinal Crescent, Deep Cove, and a seven-house subdivision on Cartelier Place in North Vancouver. Two award-winning urban projects are the Chesterfield Courts townhouses at 177 West 6th Street, North Vancouver, and infill townhouses at 1934 Barclay Street in Vancouver's West End.

from cover **Hycroft**

movement on the central stairs. His camera viewer showed three figures, a middle-aged woman in a gold ball gown gracefully descending the staircase between two elaborately correct gentlemen—not part of the scheduled action. When he lowered the camera and looked at the trio, there was nothing on the stairs. But there they were on the viewer. The director turned off his camera and fled.

The woman was in her middle years. Was it Blanche McRae coming to take a turn around the ballroom? She's often heard in the former master bedroom, and once got so annoyed at a woman who took her morning coffee breaks in the solarium off the bedroom that she spread broken glass in a line across the threshold of the room. Other times, she's locked people out of the house.

Her husband apparently spends his time in the McRae lounge, smoking. At least, a man in uniform appears there and McRae smoked cigars. Step out of the ballroom and into the lounge—the smell of cigars. Step back out—nothing. And perhaps he's not so fond of the parties—a chair from the lounge was thrown 25 feet across the room at a set carpenter working in the ballroom. On another evening, during the shooting of *Excess Baggage*, the Hycroft caretaker heard heavy boots walking across the ballroom after it had been readied for the morning's shoot. He yelled, "The set is hot. Get off the set!" No response. More steps. No motion on the detector. The caretaker decided not to wait for the location manager. He went home. And probably avoided the Rose Garden on the way. A man in uniform often appears there.

Sometimes rooms left tidied are found in a mess the next day, with food out and chairs scattered around. There are strange noises at odd hours. The veterans? They were troublesome but smartened up after a lecture and started to pitch in, doing chores and finding lost objects. However, an apparition appeared after film crewmembers spoke German, exploded with negative energy and left bodies cold and icy. The vets? McRae?

In another 50 years the mansion will have ghostly directors yelling at actors and crew members hanging around sets. And probably a few UWC members tearing their hair. Ah! the next generation.

from page two **HV PRESENTS**

Come and partake in this rare chance to learn about this interesting and unique Vancouver neighbourhood, favoured as a home and hangout by many movie industry workers, artists and professionals. \$5.00 members, \$10.00 non-members.

**Shaughnessy: Successes, Failures, Secrets, Scandals & Sins**  
**Saturday, October 5, 1:00 pm**  
**The Crescent at the top of McRae Ave.**

Join Richard Keate and Margot Keate West on this intriguing tour of Vancouver's only residential heritage character area. From MacLure mansions to in-fills, and a full gamut of architectural styles, this tour will feature both successes and failures in preserving Shaughnessy's unique character. It's also a chance to hear some of the secrets, scandals and sins of the early residents in this wealthy enclave. The tour will end at Hycroft in time for the Jubilee Tea being held to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee. HV and UWC members \$5, non-members \$10.

As a bonus for those in the walking tour, individuals can sign up for the 2:30 sitting of the English-style Jubilee Tea and a special tour of Hycroft hosted by the University Women's Club. Please call 604-731-4661 or e-mail [admin\\_uwc@telus.net](mailto:admin_uwc@telus.net) to reserve your space for tea, sandwiches and scones with Devon cream. \$15 for the tea & tour.

**Annual General Meeting of Heritage Vancouver**  
**Wednesday October 16, 7 pm**  
**Vancouver Museum**

Following the business portion of the annual meeting, HV will host a panel of mayoralty candidates for the upcoming civic elections. Invitations have been sent to the NPA, COPE, vcaTEAM and Marijuana parties and discussion will focus on heritage issues facing the City.

Heritage Vancouver always needs fresh faces around the table. If you're interested in joining the Board of Directors please contact Janet Leduc or Art Perret.

## Colour of the City

A public lecture, workshop, and bus tour on October 3–5, 2002

The events, entitled Colour of the City, features paint conservation expert, Susan Buck, who in a public lecture and workshop will be discussing the history and contemporary analysis of buildings and their colours. Local heritage consultant Don Luxton will give the local perspective.

### About the Presenters

Susan Buck, a Paint Conservation Expert on Shaker Furniture and Historic buildings in the Eastern United States, particularly, Monticello, Williamsburg and Mount Vernon. She is from Delaware.

Don Luxton, Vancouver Heritage Consultant, and chair of the Vancouver Heritage Foundation's True Colours, a heritage colour exterior paint granting program.

The City Program,  
SFU at Harbour Centre  
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[www.sfu.ca/city](http://www.sfu.ca/city)



## HV in Pride Parade

Heritage Vancouver was once again a hit at this year's Gay Pride Parade. This is a major event in Vancouver and our members, dressed as Burrard Bridge columns topped by the distinctive lights, got the message out front and center: Save Burrard Bridge!

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## WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

# The Historic Places Initiative

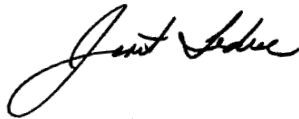
## Bright light on the heritage horizon

Dear Members,

The Federal Government is for the first time set to initiate a very significant set of heritage policies, including substantial financial incentives for heritage conservation. The proposed National Historic Places Initiative was first announced in the federal budget of 2000, which outlined the Federal Government's commitment to support the restoration and preservation of Canada's built heritage. In May 2001 Prime Minister Jean Chretien committed \$24 million to these initiatives, and the following month Minister of Canadian Heritage Sheila Copps explained that this was just Phase One of a much broader initiative. In addition to financial incentives (likely tax credits), national heritage standards and guidelines are being developed. This is an enormously important initiative, one that heritage advocates have been fighting for since a similar system was instituted in the United States—over twenty years ago!

As we await the Initiative we can't help wondering if the legislation will happen in the fall or the spring session and if the political controversies over leadership will postpone or propel this legislation. This is the best chance we have had to see a senior level of government show some leadership in heritage conservation and we will continue to advocate for an early introduction of the National Historic Places Initiative.

The City of Vancouver has stated that they will adopt the national standards and guidelines when they are available. In the meantime, we encourage the city to position itself by updating its sixteen-year-old Heritage Register so that eligible property owners are clearly identified.



Janet Leduc  
President, Heritage Vancouver



While she was in England last June, Heritage Vancouver President Janet Leduc visited King's Lynn, England, the birthplace of Captain Vancouver. She is seen here with Bryan Howling, former Mayor of King's Lynn and the force behind the initiative to erect the statue honoring George Vancouver, one of King's Lynn important but forgotten citizens. The City of Vancouver contributed to the statue and Councillor Lynne Kennedy, who worked on the project, arranged for Janet's visit as our representative. She was also received by the current mayor and given a tour of the historic town. King's Lynn is very interested in maintaining a connection between the two municipalities.

## Join Heritage Vancouver

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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Individual: \$25

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Donation: \$

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for Heritage Vancouver

Please send cheque or money order to: Heritage Vancouver, P.O. Box 3336, Vancouver, BC V6B 3Y3