

HERITAGE

Vancouver

Newsletter



A night at the Waldorf

One of the legacies of the Second World War was a craze for all things Polynesian, Hawaiian and Oceanic. Interest in the Pacific Region was high, with the acceptance of Hawaii as an American state, and the return of many soldiers who had spent time in the South Seas. Movies like *South Pacific* and *PT-109* and television shows like *McHale's Navy* fueled the popular appetite, and Honolulu began its rise as one of the great vacation destinations. This fad also manifested in many theme restaurants and Tiki lounges; increasing leisure time and a postwar mood of frivolity kept this trend alive until it became instituted in high-end establishments such as the chain of Trader Vic's restaurants, and in Tiki lounges across North America. Tiki rum drinks in Tiki mugs were all the rage, and what was a Tiki party without a lot of leis?

The epicentre of Vancouver's Tiki life was the now-lamented Trader Vic's at the Bayshore Hotel, opened in 1961. The design of Trader Vic's was flamboyant and quirky, yet the overall effect was sublimely orchestrated, raising it well above the level of *kitsch*. The unusual design created some unique problems for the architects. One hour before the restaurant opened, the Liquor Control Board refused to issue a license, because half a dozen of the Tiki poles had fertility figures with erect penises; the problem was resolved with a hacksaw, and the restaurant opened on schedule. Trader Vic's was closed in 1996, and the building was later moved to Vancouver Island.

However we do retain one intact monument to Tiki, the fabulous Waldorf Hotel. The original eastern portion was designed by Mercer & Mercer in 1947 for the Mills

see page three **Waldorf**

Boom and Bust a Commission in Distress!

January 22, 2003
An Evening of Tiki at the Waldorf Hotel
Doors open at 7:00PM

Join Heritage Vancouver and Renowned Tiki expert, Donald Luxton for an evening of fun and laughs as we explore the history of Tiki at the fabulous Waldorf Hotel's Polynesian rooms. Admission is \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members.

What's in the Works?

Heritage Vancouver continues to plan exciting events for 2003. Looks forward to tours of Granville Island and False Creek South as well as a planned tour of Gastown that may have a few surprises. If you have any ideas for walking tours and other programming events please call heritage Vancouver or the Programming Chair, Kevin Stuart. Lets all make 2003 a great year for heritage!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

February 7

Deadline for nominations for the 2003 City of Vancouver Heritage Awards.

Week of February 17

Heritage week returns in February for many exciting heritage events put on by a host of organizations around the city. Watch the Heritage Vancouver website for events during heritage week. This year's theme is Heritage of Our Town — Public Buildings, Places and Spaces.

April 7

City of Vancouver Heritage Awards. The City of Vancouver will recognize outstanding heritage projects at this annual events.

To Scott Barrett and Richard Keate — two HV directors who also serve on the city's Vancouver Heritage Commission — it seems that 2002 could be summed up as the year in which A rated structures *don't get no respect*.

The first project seen by the commission was Christ Church Cathedral's initial proposal to add glass exterior canopies and to remove the 1905 balcony, not to mention other more minor indignities. Fortunately however, after careful consideration of the impact that these changes would have had on this important building, there has been a fair amount of positive movement by the church's committee towards an authentic restoration. The church is to be commended for their willingness to undertake the restoration of the interior roof complete with newly found stenciling, as well as choosing to use appropriate materials (for instance, the original fir floors are being refurbished rather than replaced, the dark wood finishes are being matched to the 1905 Gothic Revival balcony, and cues for metal finishes are being taken from the original lanterns (bronze) rather than the more fashionable pewter and brass). Unfortunately the huge organ cases, the position of which have been decided by the English manufacturer, will block out the last third of the hammerbeam-like trusses and south stained glass windows. Commission members will continue to monitor the design of the organ cases in the hopes of reducing their bulk.

The other maligned A listed structure is the Burrard Bridge. Having seen option after option and participating in five workshops in order to accommodate heritage needs while attempting to add a safe cyclist route, the commission has unanimously declined to support any of the options, as they all compromise the heritage fabric of this iconographic structure. Our only hope now is that the new council will look at all of the crossings (especially the Granville Bridge

which is functioning at a 1970's capacity) and forego this expensive boondoggle.

This said, there is much that is positive to report! Over 20 buildings, including schools, hotels, and houses — the majority of which are on the east side — were put on the Vancouver Heritage Register. Among the proposed restorations was the Dal Grauer Substation which is scheduled to be returned to its Ned Pratt designed 50's splendor. HV members will remember the elegant great hall space of the Bank of Montreal building at 640 West Pender from the 600 block Granville walk last year. Soon to be the Segal Centre for Dialogue as part of Simon Fraser University's downtown campus, the great hall space will acquire a sensitively designed mezzanine, which will move it from a cavernous Grand Central Station type of space into more of a processional two storey hall. An extra floor is being installed behind the painted terra cotta cornice to meet spatial needs without transforming the building envelope.

The exciting news is that the faded pink Opsal Steel building — number 7 on our endangered list — may be spared from the wrecking ball! This important industrial building was recently removed from the Vancouver Heritage Register due to its deteriorated condition — the City considered it beyond rehabilitation. A proposal to move the two part building slightly west in order to allow the construction of a residential high rise would subsidize the restoration of this unique building complete with its sign, siding and industrial artifacts. Given its placement at the southeast corner of the proposed False Creek sustainable development, this restoration could insure the character of this area while also enhancing the heritage value of the threatened Domtar Salt building (Number 9 on the HV 2002 endangered list). Peter Busby and Robert Lemon are entrusted with rehabilitating the Opsal Steel building — we wish them the best in setting the standard by which further development is measured in this area.



Photo: D. Luxton

from cover **Waldorf**

Holding Company, and featured a ground floor beer parlour. In 1954-1955, spectacular tropical theme additions by the same architects were made to the west side, including a ground level lounge, a descending spiral staircase, and a lower level dining room. The lounge features a midnight blue half-domed ceiling, reflected in a wall of mirrors to complete the illusion of a night sky, with inset twinkling star lights. The effect is heightened by fake palm trees, bamboo matting, floral carpets, and a series of superb black velvet paintings, produced by the Hawaiian artist who invented the genre.

Join renowned Tiki expert Donald Luxton at the Waldorf Hotel on January 22nd for a riotous exploration of the Tiki movement, its place in our cultural history, and its ongoing revival.

Burrard Bridge Update

In the past year Heritage Vancouver has been very proactive in trying to protect the heritage fabric of the Burrard Street Bridge. In the many meetings we have attended, multiple options have been brought forward. Although it seemed that heritage concerns were irreconcilable with the concerns of cyclist, pedestrians and other groups, recent events have proven otherwise.

Throughout the process of public consultation about changes to the bridge the city has consistently offered options of either widening the bridge or hanging extra sidewalks off the side. The consultants on the project were instructed to only explore the concept of a widening using outriggers or suspended walkways. Although these options were developed well, they did not address the primary heritage concerns of Heritage Vancouver. The problem was that the scope of options, as dictated by the city, was too narrow.

Recently, in a private meeting, the external stakeholders met to discuss a mutually agreeable option. At long

last cyclists, pedestrians and other users of the bridge were able to come to a solution with heritage. We have all agreed to support the closure of two traffic lanes for the use of non-motorized transportation.

This accomplishes many things that previous options did not. Primary among the reasons for altering the bridge were concerns of pedestrian and cyclist safety. Unfortunately, widening the bridge also meant destroying many of the heritage features, such as the railings, the road and seagate parti and the vertical massing of the piers. By closing a lane of traffic in each direction, not only is the city making a commitment to environmental non-motorized transportation, but also to the unique heritage of the city.

Protecting this important gateway structure is important to the history of our city and the sustainable environmentally friendly movement of people in the city. The Burrard Bridge issue goes before council in January.

Notice regards the December Newsletter

Due to a lack of pressing advocacy issues and the busy holiday season the December Newsletter was cancelled. If you have concerns regarding this please contact the President directly. Thank you for your understanding on this matter.

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WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Fun and Important Start to 2003

Dear Members,

January proves to be a very important month for Heritage Vancouver as we gear up not only for Tiki at the Waldorf Hotel, but also for a pivotal point in our battle for the Burrard Street bridge.

This month Heritage Vancouver and members of the community will celebrate the history of Tiki in an evening at the Waldorf Hotel's Polynesian Rooms. Renowned Tiki expert and local heritage consultant, Donald Luxton MRAIC, will guide a well entertained audience through the history of Tiki. A sneak peek at some items revealed surprises and laughs. Following in the footsteps of An Evening at the Penthouse, of last year, this is sure to be one of Heritage Vancouver's most entertaining evenings this year. I hope you can join us!

Also in January the Burrard Street Bridge will go before council for consideration of options for increasing pedestrian and cyclist traffic. As mentioned in my previous article, Heritage Vancouver believes that other options are available and should be seriously reconsidered. Heritage Vancouver will be there to advocate for the historic gateway structure.

Finally, look forward to our top ten list reappearing in February.

I hope the new year finds you all in good health and ready for an exciting year of heritage awareness and advocacy.



Scott Barrett:
President, Heritage Vancouver

Fun and Fab Food Had By All At HV's Xmas Party

On the evening of December 18, 2002, Heritage Vancouver celebrated its 2nd annual Xmas Party at Roedde House located at 1415 Barclay Street in Vancouver's west end. Like last year, many of our members not only arrived in festive moods, but brought homemade goodies as well. Thanks to all of you who helped make this another successful HV event. Special thanks go to Janet Bingham, Shirley Sexsmith, and Andrea Hamel at Roedde House for making us feel so welcome and sharing their gorgeous heritage home. An honourable mention goes to Doug McKay, *special friend* of Heritage Vancouver Society, for *servng it right* for us as well as all of his help hauling dishes, food and of course, the libations for the evening.

For those of you not familiar with Vancouver's only house museum, it was built in 1893 by Gustav Roedde, who ran Vancouver's first bookbinding business in early Vancouver. HV feels very fortunate to have the opportunity to rent this authentically restored late Victorian home. If you have never been to visit this gem in the heart of the west end, the public is invited to tour the house and attend concerts and special events held throughout the year. Please visit the Roedde House Preservation Society's website at www.roeddehouse.org.

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.

Name _____

Address _____ City: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Individual: \$25

Family: \$30

Donation: \$

Supporting (no newsletter) \$5

Corporate: \$50

Patrons: \$100

YES

I would like to volunteer
for Heritage Vancouver

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