

**HERITAGE**

# Vancouver

N e w s l e t t e r



**The Hastings corridor:**  
The shabby grandeur may benefit from policies developed for other heritage areas.



**The Dominion Building:**  
This steel-structured boomtown wonder is a prime HPI candidate.



**UpCountry:** A powerfully imposing building attracted a warm retail outlet.



**Opsal Steel:** An innovative but sympathetic plan awaits this hulking industrial monument.

## NOW FOR SOME GOOD NEWS

*Four examples show how hard work, determination  
and ingenuity bring lasting rewards*

### Hope for Hastings via Gastown and Chinatown

**V**ancouver was born in Gastown and a century ago the city's commercial and institutional life centred on the corner of Main and Hastings. But for many years economic decline plagued the district. Although it retains a rich stock of historic buildings, many are deteriorating and are at risk, as indicated by last July's catastrophic fire in the 300 block of West Pender Street. Without seismic protection and life safety upgrades (including sprinklers), these early buildings could be lost at any time. Many of these structures are abandoned and in some cases open to the elements. Even in our heritage areas, many buildings are not considered worth fixing

in the current economic climate. They're left to rot due to inertia — or in some cases, heritage protection that has done nothing to enhance the building's financial viability.

Both Gastown and Chinatown were designated as heritage areas in 1971, and a local area plan has been developed for the Victory Square area. Until recently, however, there were no significant financial incentives for heritage preservation. This is now changing.

The City of Vancouver is finally undertaking significant and bold new initiatives to turn this situation around. One such initiative is the Gastown Heritage Management Plan, completed in 2001 for the City of Vancouver by the

see page two **Hope**

from cover **Hope**

Spaxman Consulting Group, with Robert G. Lemon Architecture & Preservation and Donald Luxton & Associates. This plan outlines a new vision for Gastown (and by extension Chinatown), introducing significant incentives for heritage conservation. These include facade restoration grants, tax incentives and density bonuses that will be used to cover the shortfall costs of upgrading buildings. This is an enormous step in the right direction. The city is now accepting the first applications for these new incentives.

The city is also considering extending these same incentives to the very significant heritage buildings that line the Hastings Street corridor. Once one of Vancouver's main shopping streets, Hastings was never included in the Gastown or Chinatown boundaries, and very few of these buildings ever received heritage protection. There are many real gems in this area that would benefit from these incentives. This is all good news for the protection and upgrading of heritage resources in the Downtown Eastside.

## HPI spells good news for Vancouver

by Karen Russell

Some \$30 million in grants will go a long way to reducing heritage advocates' frustration with Ottawa. The money is part of the much-anticipated Historic Places Initiative (HPI).

For years, advocates have been lobbying the feds for tax credits for heritage properties, similar to the long-standing policy south of the border. Parks Canada and the Department of Canadian Heritage insist that the credits have merely been postponed. But in the meantime, Ottawa is offering \$30 million in HPI grant money over three years for conservation efforts across the country.



Hotel Europe:  
An example to  
Hastings Street.

The HPI will document heritage structures through a newly created Canadian Register of Historic Places. The provinces and territories will manage the HPI within their own jurisdictions. In B.C., the Heritage Branch of the Department of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services got \$920,000 in federal funds to launch the program and get municipalities onside. Municipalities that already have heritage registers will participate first.

They've already received HPI funds.

Vancouver got the largest chunk of B.C.'s funding and has already prepared a Call for Expressions of Interest to invite the help of consultants. According to Abigail Riley, a heritage planning analyst with the city, Vancouver will provide at least 146 records by next spring for inclusion in the National Register.

This is a daunting timeline. Each record requires considerable research, including a Statement of Significance and documentation of the information in a format that's compatible with the provincial and national Web-based systems. The first records will focus on Chinatown, Gastown and the Hastings corridor, with many more records expected to come. Some of them might be eligible for federal grants.

Finally, Canada can join other countries in promoting a national register with consistent standards and guidelines for ongoing conservation and maintenance. This is a giant step forward — not the last, we hope — and a tremendous benefit for Vancouver's heritage.

## Adaptation goes UpCountry

by Susan Boissonneault

A walk down Fourth Avenue toward Yew will bring you to a store offering all the latest in modern home furnishings. But you'll be looking at a 1911 building, one of the oldest

on this street. Indeed the UpCountry store is one of the most impressive examples of adaptive reuse in the Kitsilano area.

Although credit might seem due to UpCountry for endowing the former CIBC building with new purpose, it was actually the vision of developer Brian Bell. Three years ago he learned the building was on the market and immediately took action. "I have always been drawn to old-style architecture," Bell says. He chose the site because of its curb appeal and location. "You don't often find a building like this in the epicentre of Kitsilano."

But conserving heritage buildings is never a smooth process. One of the more significant challenges in this case was restoring the plaster ceiling. After years of modern additions like air conditioning, the ceiling suffered tremendous damage. Bell spent considerable time finding tradespeople familiar with heritage plasterwork to restore the ceiling's original appearance. He also ensured that the 15-foot addition to the right side of the building didn't interfere with the historic exterior.

The renovation retains all the grandeur and power of the former bank, at the same time creating a comfortable and modern retail space. UpCountry management are happy with their new location and enjoy the juxtaposition of their modern furnishings with heritage architecture.

Successful conversions like this demonstrate that heritage buildings can satisfy modern needs. And if that's not enough to convince developers, then the financial viability should.

## A post-industrial renovation for False Creek

by Scott Barrett

For years heritage advocates feared the Opsal Steel building in False Creek South would never survive the hand of a developer. Standing near-



The Sun Tower:  
Another potential  
HPI landmark.



UpCountry entrance:  
A classical approach.

derelict, it was slowly deteriorating to the point that demolition seemed certain. After losing the nearby Canon building, False Creek's industrial heritage seemed doomed. Making a case for industrial heritage is difficult at the best of times.

Finding new uses for these hulking structures makes conservation especially challenging.

Built in 1918 by Dominion Construction and designed by architect T.H. Bamforth, the building originally housed the Columbia Block and Tool Company. Although Opsal Steel was the second occupant, the building is known by that name because of the prominent lettering on the street-side facade.

False Creek was once lined with industrial operations ranging from steel machining at Opsal to barrel-making at Sweeney Cooperage. The north side got a radical facelift with Expo 86 and redevelopment by Concord Pacific. As a result, the district's industrial heritage has largely disappeared, making what remains all the more important.

Luckily, however, a developer keen on retaining the building came to the city last year with Peter Busby and Robert Lemon. The architect-and-heritage-consultant team devised an ingenious plan to incorporate the structure into a new development. City of Vancouver heritage incentives will make this project economically viable.

A major part of the site, and of False Creek South itself, will be a tall, narrow residential tower. It will sit beside the Opsal building, which will be shifted to accommodate both structures. The industrial building will contain both residential and commercial spaces but reuse of original material will help retain the building's character. The restoration will include some modernization and renovation, but the project is one that brings great hope for Vancouver's often-neglected heritage.

From a building that seemed destined for the wrecking ball, to a site that will be preserved — the Opsal Steel story is truly worth celebrating.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Sept. 7 The City Halls of New Westminster, 1860 to Today. Walking tour with Archie Miller. 3 p.m. Free. Memorial Plaza, 511 Royal Ave.

Sept. 9 Stimson-Green Mansion and Dearborn House. Tour two of Seattle's most stately historical residences with Larry Kreisman. Second Tuesday of each month, 1-2:30 p.m. Pre-register at (206) 622-6952. [www.cityofseattle.net/commnty/histsea/events/](http://www.cityofseattle.net/commnty/histsea/events/)

Sept. 10 John Stuart discusses a sample of North Van Museum artifacts for their historical connections and as examples of early 20th-century material culture. 7 p.m. North Shore Historical Society. 209 West Fourth St., North Van.

Sept. 13 Bellevue Modernism Tour. Self-guided driving tour presented by DoCoMoMo and Historic Seattle. 10-4 p.m. [www.cityofseattle.net/commnty/histsea/events/#DHSGTOURS](http://www.cityofseattle.net/commnty/histsea/events/#DHSGTOURS) (206) 622-6952.

Sept. 14 Wales Street Heritage Day Festival. A John Atkin walking tour at 2 p.m., tours of Avalon Dairy, displays, music and a variety of activities for the whole family. Stop by the Heritage Vancouver display. 12-4 p.m. 5805 Wales St.

Sept. 17 The Streetcar System Of Victoria. Illustrated talk by transit historian Henry Ewert. Free. New Westminster. Public Library, 716 Sixth Ave. 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 18 Vanishing Barns. Talk and slide show about Richmond barns by historian Graham Turnbull. 7 p.m. By donation. Richmond Museum, 7700 Minoru Gate. [www.city.richmond.bc.ca](http://www.city.richmond.bc.ca) (604) 231-6460.



Sept. 19 Building the West: The Early Architects of B.C. Heritage advocate Donald Luxton discusses his award-winning book. 7 p.m. North Vancouver District Hall, 355 West Queens Rd.

Sept. 19-21 North Shore Heritage Weekend. A wide range of events including talks, home tours, boat tours and walking tours. See the online brochure at [www.dnv.org](http://www.dnv.org), [www.cnv.org](http://www.cnv.org) or [www.westvancouver.net](http://www.westvancouver.net)

Sept. 25 The Stanley Park Companion. Paul Grant and Laurie Dickson discuss their recent book with the Vancouver Historical Society. 7:30 p.m. Van. Museum, 1100 Chestnut St. [www.vcn.bc.ca/vhs/](http://www.vcn.bc.ca/vhs/)

Sept. 27-28 Bungalow & Craftsman Home Fair & Arts & Crafts Lectures. 1119 Eighth Ave., Seattle. [www.cityofseattle.net/commnty/histsea/programs/bungalow.htm](http://www.cityofseattle.net/commnty/histsea/programs/bungalow.htm). (206) 622-6952.

Sept. 29 Hallmark Society AGM. Ken Johnson and Ed Schaefer discuss their stonework and stained glass restoration on Christ Church Cathedral. 7:30 p.m. 234 Menzies St., Victoria. (250) 382-4755.

Sept. 30 Oh What a Lovely Home: Craftsman Farm. Illustrated lecture by Beth Ann McPherson, curator of the Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farm. 7:30 p.m. \$10 Vancouver Museum members, \$15 non-members. 1100 Chestnut St. Pre-registration suggested. (604) 734-7368.

Oct. 8 Landscape Modern with Charles Birnbaum. The author and heritage advocate talks about cultural landscape preservation. 7:30 p.m. \$10 Vancouver Museum & Heritage Vancouver members, \$15 non-members. Pre-registration suggested. (604) 734-7368.

### Ongoing

Walking tours with John Atkin. The historian and heritage advocate has a schedule too busy to list here. Does anyone know Vancouver better? [www.johnatkin.com](http://www.johnatkin.com)

Chinatown walking tours. Tues.-Sun. 11 a.m. & 2 p.m. \$6 adults, \$4 seniors, students, kids. Chinese Cultural Centre, 50 East Pender St. (604) 658-8883.

A Century of Technology. An exhibit showing the evolution of "The Tower" through technology and architecture. Mon.-Fri. 8:30-5 p.m. to Sept. 12. Starting Sept. 19: Image Building — Architectural Photography. Opening reception Sept. 18, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Free. Architectural Institute of B.C. 440 Cambie St.

Roedde House Museum, 1415 Barclay St. Tour this 1893 Queen Anne Revival house. Wed.-Sat. 1-5 p.m., Sun. 2-4 p.m. \$4 adults, \$3 seniors, under 12 free. (604) 684-7040 to confirm, arrange group tours or inquire about Sunday tea-and-tours. Afterwards, walk along Barclay Heritage Square.

Irving House, 302 Royal Ave., New West. Tour an 1865 home. Sat.-Sun. 12:30-4:30 p.m. By donation. The adjacent museum opens the same hours.

London Heritage Farm, 6511 Dyke Road, Richmond. Tour an 1880s house and 4.6-acre farm. Sat.-Sun. 12-4 p.m. By donation. (604) 271-5220 or [londonhf@telus.net](mailto:londonhf@telus.net) for group tours or teas. Nearby sites include Britannia Heritage Shipyard Park, Gulf of Georgia Cannery, Steveston Museum and Steveston village itself.

Downtown Historic Railway takes passengers between the Science Centre and Granville Island. Weekends and holidays from 12:30-5 p.m. \$2 adults, \$1 kids & seniors. [www.trams.bc.ca](http://www.trams.bc.ca) (604) 665-3903.

**WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT**



# Looking back, and forward too

Dear Members,

This will be my last letter as president of Heritage Vancouver. Due to personal commitments I have to step down. I have enjoyed the term and would like to highlight a few of the year's successes. Heritage Vancouver has worked hard to bring you exciting events and fight for heritage conservation.

Our programming committee brought you unforgettable presentations such as An Evening at the Waldorf, which celebrated Tiki heritage in Vancouver and across North America. An often uproarious evening, it confirmed Heritage Vancouver's reputation of combining serious purpose with fun. Few will forget Don Luxton's presentation and I'll never forget wearing a grass skirt in front of the largest crowd ever seen at a Heritage Vancouver event.

It has been my pleasure to work with a dedicated board of directors whose ideas have inspired great programming and effective advocacy campaigns. We have made considerable headway on issues like the Burrard Bridge and Shaughnessy, as well as producing our annual Top 10 list of endangered sites. This issue of our newsletter also marks an important step. Through meetings with the city we have published our first-ever Good News edition. What a great note for me to leave with — we have to remember that despite all the work ahead of us, there is much to celebrate.

Thank you for a rewarding term. I look forward to working with all of you for the conservation of Vancouver's unique and exciting heritage.

Scott Barrett  
President, Heritage Vancouver

**Industrial Heritage: A Talk by John Stuart**  
**Wednesday, Sept. 17, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Vancouver Museum, 1100 Chestnut St.**

**Free for Heritage Vancouver members,**  
**\$5 for non-members**

Heritage programs often focus on prominent public buildings and on the houses of leading citizens. But in many cases these structures exist only because the community rested on a firm economic foundation created by its industries. On Sept. 17 join us when John Stuart presents slides and commentary about industrial heritage. These buildings will be considered as local monuments with potential re-use as everything from shopping malls to amusement parks.

**Heritage Vancouver AGM**  
**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 7:30 p.m.**  
**Vancouver Museum, 1100 Chestnut St.**

Elections will be held for a new board of directors. If you'd like to put your name forward for a board position, please call (604) 254-9411. We will strive for the shortest AGM ever, followed by an entertaining and informative presentation. Watch for details.

## Join Heritage Vancouver

Membership valid one year from date of issue. Members receive a monthly newsletter and reduced rates for tours and other activities.

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

Heritage Vancouver  
PO Box 3336, Main Post Office  
Vancouver BC V6B 3Y3  
604.254.9411  
[www.heritagevancouver.org](http://www.heritagevancouver.org)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual: \$25       Supporting (no newsletter): \$5       YES

Family: \$30       Corporate: \$50      I would like to volunteer

Donation: \$       Patrons: \$100      for Heritage Vancouver

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