

# HERITAGE Vancouver Newsletter



## Being a Kid in Kits

by *Stephen Mikicich*

Writing a piece on growing up in Kitsilano sends 40 years of wonderful memories racing through my mind. Many are of the iconic images of Kitsilano — the beach, saltwater pool and Showboat stage; the Maritime Museum and Planetarium; the Hollywood and Ridge theatres; the fortress-like Kitsilano High School and four pre-WWI elementary schools (Gordon, Bayview, Hudson and Tennyson); vibrant shopping areas, tree-lined streets and row upon row of well-preserved Craftsman houses.

But the story of Kitsilano is really about the people who made their homes here, established their businesses, and built this community. In my world, Bernard and Winifred Lunn represented this heritage. Mr. Lunn was born in Basingstoke England on April 26th, 1889. He came to Canada in 1911, enlisted to serve in the Great War on September 23rd, 1914, became a company sergeant major in the 16th Battalion (Canadian Scottish) Canadian Expeditionary Force, and was wounded in the Battle of the Somme in October 1916.

Returning to Vancouver with his childhood sweetheart Winifred as his new bride, Mr. Lunn became a house decorator and painted many of the city's finest homes. (Years later, my father made good use of one of Mr. Lunn's old painter's ladders to do a number of jobs around our house.) The Lunn's built their first house in 1919, a tiny structure at the rear of 2737 West 13th Ave. As did most other early residents, they left room at the front of the lot for construction of a more substantial home when finances allowed; in 1926, the original dwelling became the kitchen of the larger, charming Craftsman house.

The Lunn's were foster grandparents to many neighbourhood children. My sister and I loved playing in their front-yard 'fun house' — a miniature Craftsman cottage with child-sized upholstered furniture, a little piano and a play kitchen. But my special joy lay in scooting across the lane and through the sliding garage door, to sit on the Lunn back porch for hours and hours, listening wide-eyed to Mr. Lunn's many stories. Some were about England and WWI, but most were about the neighbourhood — how it developed, who lived where and when, and where he kept his ducks and chickens. The marvellous tales turned me on to Vancouver's history and seeded my life-long interest in sketching old houses, exploring side streets and alleyways, looking for remnants of old streetcar tracks, and appreciating old buildings as a testament to the people who built them.

In the early 1970s, the whole neighbourhood joined the Lunn's to celebrate their diamond wedding anniversary, sharing tea and cake, and cheering as the Queen's greetings were read aloud. The Lunn's presented each granddaughter and neighbourhood foster granddaughter with a souvenir from their china collection — my sister still cherishes her 1901 Aynsley tea cup and saucer.

Mr. and Mrs. Lunn passed away in 1974 and 1975 respectively. The house at 2737 West 13th Avenue is now in its third ownership; lovingly updated, it still looks pretty much as it did then. The fun house still stands next to the greenhouse, in the midst of an English country garden. Mr. Lunn's flowers — transplanted as cuttings many years before

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## Burrard Bridge

Irritation at the City's inaction escalates. Nothing has happened since the public open house in March. While the City hems and haws, traffic patterns on the bridge show that people are actively lessening their car dependency: single-occupancy vehicular traffic on the bridge is not only not increasing, but may well decline as gasoline prices go up. Pedestrian and bicycle usage of the bridge is dramatically increasing; use of the recently approved new downtown bike lanes will swell the numbers. June is Bike Month and the last Friday of the month will probably see the largest "Critical Mass" ride — from Vancouver Art Gallery across the Bridge — ever.

Heritage Vancouver continues to support those proposals that do not compromise the heritage integrity of the bridge, including an 'underslung' structure and 'reassignment of 2 existing lanes'. HV has joined SPEC and BEST and other groups, in writing Council to support "lane-reassignment" the win-win solution.

## Charles Dickens — and other — schools.

Debate about seismic upgrading of schools rages on. Good news is that the City has asked the School Board to describe its intended approach for dealing with all its heritage building stock. This proposal will be reviewed by the Vancouver Heritage Commission. Plans for individual schools, however, cause ongoing concerns. Sexsmith Community School (7455 Ontario Street) has joined Charles Dickens in the queue for seismic upgrading and possible demolition — it too is a heritage structure not included in the existing Heritage Register. The agenda of the first public meeting, held June 1, made clear the intent to demolish and replace — here we go again! With regard to Charles Dickens, the VSB is about to submit a Development Application to replace the school. However, there is still some room for manoeuvre: the VSB consultant has confirmed that Dickens has historic merit; the VSB application will be considered 'contentious' and will, therefore, go to the Development Permit

Board (DPB) not just to the Director of Planning for a decision (and an appeal of the DPB decision is possible through the Board of Variance.) Public consultation will begin once the application is filed and the community supporters of Charles Dickens have mounted an persuasive campaign on a website at <http://www.dickenselementary.ca/>.

Meanwhile we mourn the imminent loss of Little Flower Academy. "We're really upset about it," the Vancouver Courier quotes Heritage Vancouver president Don Luxton. "It's the loss of two very significant buildings and it indicates to us there's not a lot of understanding, at the institutional level, of the value of these cultural artifacts," he said. "It's also yet another nail in the coffin of the destruction of the character of Shaughnessy." The academy can move ahead with its demolition plans without objection from the City of Vancouver because it's not asking for any density bonuses or relaxation of the zoning. "So the city can't kick in any of the usual heritage incentives or regulations," Luxton said. "It's really sad to see this happen."



Little Flower Academy sod turning 1931.

Heritage Vancouver will explore the schools issue in detail at its "Back-To-School" September meeting.

## Evergreen Building

Lots of reasons for optimism re: Evergreen. First, the City made a critical decision at its March 31st meeting. Council listened to Laxton, who argued

that cost prohibited preservation of the iconic building, and to Heritage Vancouver and Heritage Commission reps, who spoke eloquently on behalf of the building. (A bouquet to Vancouver Heritage Commissioner Cheryl Cooper for her admirable work.) It then instructed City staff to collaborate with the owner to look at any opportunity to maintain or save the existing structure, while not interfering with the applicant's proposal for a new building through the development application process." Then, in an ironic twist, IBI Group, the last remaining Evergreen tenant, clarified their intent to stay in the building until their 10-year lease is up in 2013; a development permit does not in itself give Laxton the right to evict a tenant, unless specified in the lease. Stay tuned, the saga continues. .

## Firehall No.15

The City's RFP for designs for a replacement Firehall No.15 on the same site has prompted action from both the Heritage Commission and Heritage Vancouver. At its May 16th meeting, the Heritage Commission, arguing that the building is a significant 'neighbourhood landmark,' recommended that the Firehall be evaluated and added to the Vancouver Heritage Register. Heritage Vancouver has written to the City's Fire Chief, both to second the Commission's recommendations and to express its support for local groups working to preserve the structure and rehabilitate it for community uses. "We believe demolition of the existing facility would be wasteful and unnecessary. Instead the building could be relocated at reasonable cost across the street in Renfrew Park, perhaps adjacent to the library or at the old wading pool. The old Marpole Firehall saw new life as the Marpole Place Seniors' Centre; Firehall No.15 could make a similar contribution to its community."

## Hastings Park/PNE

The process has slowed markedly since last year's decisions about Hastings Park/PNE, so the fate of the Livestock Building is still unknown. City staff are to submit their recommendations to Council in May 2006.



"Park's New Asset", Province 1934

### **Malkin Bowl**

Theatre under the Stars (TUTS) is celebrating its 60th birthday this year in the 72-year-old Malkin Bowl, and it's good to see how all the advertising enthusiasts about the historic value of Malkin Bowl. However, TUTS, now under new management, still intends to "redevelop Malkin Bowl." In January 2005, the Parks Board extended the current operating agreement for the year to "facilitate the efforts of TUTS in raising the required funds." This bodes ill for this historic structure.

Heritage Vancouver has written to the

Park Board to argue for retention of the Bowl: "Malkin Bowl is a special and unique asset within the city which merits preservation. In 1934 William H. Malkin, a successful Vancouver merchant and former mayor, financed the construction of the Bowl, believing that the city deserved an impressive outdoor performance venue. His vision led to the completion of a modern, Hollywood type, 'shell' theatre with special provisions made to supply superior acoustics. The theatre is situated in a magnificent natural setting amidst brilliant flower-beds, rockeries, and towering trees with vistas of the mountains, Burrard Inlet and the Narrows. . . . Although the Bowl has deteriorated, it could, if preserved, again become a functional and viable performance venue. ." Heritage Vancouver encourages the City to facilitate a discussion among stakeholders about preservation possibilities for the Malkin Bowl.

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— grace neighbourhood gardens. My mother, who still lives across the lane, cherishes the plants given to her by Mr. Lunn and other earlier neighbours; her gardening skills nurture this heritage. I get an immense sense of comfort whenever I see this house — no matter how much Vancouver changes, the heritage of these houses remain. I am proud to be a part of Kitsilano's heritage and to have known so well some of its pioneers.

### **Living Heritage**

The Hastings Mill Store Museum, owned by the Native Daughters of BC, needs Volunteers. Vancouver's oldest building, the museum's main floor serves as an eclectic museum of pioneer artifacts. The upper floors house storage and the lodge room for the Native Daughters. If you are a BC-born woman interested in preserving a living piece of history, please contact Dana Bowman, phone 604-986-0863.

## **The Case of the Missing Inventory**

**T**errific news: the VHR will be updated. A wonderful by-product of the Council's March 31 discussion of the Evergreen Building was the decision to update the once much lauded but now woefully inadequate and outdated inventory. This will be a massive undertaking, not only to include modern landmarks such as the Evergreen Building, but also to capture buildings overlooked in the first go-round. Roselawn Funeral Home and the Yaletown houses spring to mind as do the heritage houses of First Shaughnessy District.

One could call this tale "The Case of the Missing Register." In 1982 — that is, 4 years before the compilation of the Vancouver Heritage Inventory (VHI) — the City adopted the Shaughnessy Architecture and Landscape Inventory (SALI). The SALI list included 360+ houses — that is, nearly all of the pre-1940

houses in First Shaughnessy, the original CPR subdivision between 16th Avenue and King Edward Avenue, and between Oak and Arbutus. All houses were ranked according to the A/B/C criteria.

Despite the thoroughness of the SALI inventory, however, only 76 of the houses made it onto the 1986 VHI. Luckily, however, until 1994, the SALI list was used, referenced with every development application submitted for review by the First Shaughnessy Advisory Design Panel. In 1994 the City Planning Department assured the Panel that the SALI list would be integrated into the renamed Vancouver Heritage Register. Alas, it did not happen.

The results were disastrous for Vancouver's premiere heritage neighbourhood: up to 1994, there had been only 4 demolitions, mostly due to neglect and irreversible renovations;

after 1994, as developers learned that any house not designated could be torn down, the demolition rate exploded, quadrupling by the end of 2004. Things went from bad to worse: the panel no longer received applications flagged with the SALI ranking; their task became one of endless frustration and disappointment. Applicants were not told at the beginning of the enquiry process that the subject property had heritage value and should not be torn down. If challenged, applicants responded that they (and their realtor) had done due diligence and found no heritage evaluation.

We look forward to having FSD fully integrated into the new version of the Register! We pledge our support to City staff to ensure that all work related to updating the Register proceeds in a comprehensive and timely matter.

## WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members

Things are booming in Vancouver, putting ever growing pressure on our fragile heritage resources. There is of course good news and bad news, and many issues yet to be resolved. On the positive front, our advocacy efforts seem to be paying real dividends — an example is the recent work by the City of Vancouver's Heritage Group to evaluate the heritage significance of Firehall No.15, and the motion by the Vancouver Heritage Commission on May 16th to recommend adding it to the Vancouver Heritage Register. We are also continuing to support neighbourhood groups battling to preserve Charles Dickens School.

Once again, the Burrard Bridge issue will be coming before Council. We continue to advocate for the best possible solution from a heritage standpoint, and remain adamant in our opposition to any widening of the bridge at the roadbed level. Stay tuned — we will need letters of support when a date is established for the Council presentation.

Heritage Vancouver continues its active role as the local voice for heritage preservation. Now, more than ever, we need your help — Get involved! Come to our meetings! Join a subcommittee! Send a letter! There is lots to be done, and we have fun doing it.

We look forward to seeing you, particularly on June 23 & 25 when we join Kitsilano in celebrating 100 years!

Sincerely



Don Luxton  
President  
Heritage Vancouver

### Kitsilano @ 100!!!

On Thursday June 23rd,  
Vancouver Museum, 7-9 pm,  
John Atkin, historian and  
heritage expert, will entertain us  
with historic tales of Kitsilano;  
on Saturday, June 25, from 10 a.m.  
he will guide us through the area.

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