

HERITAGE Vancouver N e w s l e t t e r



OUT ON A LIMB FOR HERITAGE

by *Emma Hall and Clint Robertson*

Trees — living documents that reflect the natural and cultural record of our tastes and values over time. Blessed with a mild climate and long growing season, Vancouver boasts an enviably diverse and healthy urban forest of nearly half a million trees. This priceless resource, consisting of several hundred different species and cultivars, includes native west coast woodlands, regal park specimens and boulevard trees. The oldest street trees are the big leaf maples (*Acer macrophyllum*) planted in 1897 on Pender Street next to Victory Square; the largest street tree, a giant sequoia on the Cambie Street median near King Edward Avenue, has a trunk circumference of over 18 feet.

From the beginning, City Council led the charge to protect Vancouver's arboreal richness. The very first decision of the first (1886) City Council was to save the 1,000-acre (404 hectare) peninsula, now known as Stanley Park, from further logging. Instead, the City leased the land from the federal government for use as a park and recreation area. Council

then appointed a Committee to manage this park and future acquisitions such as Hastings Park, acquired in 1888 from the provincial government. By 1890, the Park Board had become an autonomous and separately elected body with a mandate to care for Vancouver's park and recreation resources. In 1896, Council passed its first bylaw relating to the planting of street trees; in 1916, responsibility for street planting passed to the Board of Parks and Recreation. In 1926, the newly established Vancouver Town Planning Commission authorized a comprehensive town plan from American consultants Harland Bartholomew and Associates. While Council never formally adopted the Bartholomew Plan, its recommendations shaped city planning, particularly the construction of wide tree-lined boulevards such as Cambie Street south of King Edward, King Edward/West 25th and Boundary Road with its median of 100 Canadian maples.

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City residents enthusiastically followed the lead of their Council. Salsbury Garden, one of our 2006 Top Ten endangered sites, illustrates this clearly: Charles Reid, first owner of the Napier/Salsbury property, deliberately planned his property to include a substantial corner garden. Arthur Greenius, the next owner, committed himself to fulfilling Reid's garden vision and planted many unusual trees such as a giant butternut tree and a California spicebush. On private property on 12th Avenue east of Cambie Street, we find collections of Monkey Puzzle trees (*Araucaria araucana*) that were brought to Vancouver via the Panama Canal. In many instances, trees stand as 'silent witnesses' or informal transition markers for legal boundaries — one example is the Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) located at the rear of 1781 East 15th Avenue, believed to be planted near a 'line' shack to delineate the edge of one of Vancouver's original cattle ranches.

For the 1986 BC Centennial, the BC Society of Landscape Architects compiled Vancouver's first official registry of 100 heritage trees deemed particularly significant owing to size and/or age, rarity and/or connection to a historical event. Highlights, owing to their immense size, include: the Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) within the grass triangle at 15th Avenue, Kingsway and Fraser Street; an incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*) at 4687 Marguerite Street; and a horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) outside of 3390 The Crescent — all tower 65+ feet above street level.

Unfortunately, in 2006, few mechanisms protect these old friends. Only a few trees presently enjoy specific by-law protection — a Copper Beech (80 cm trunk diameter) and 2 Douglas Firs (50 and 90 cm trunk diameter) on the property adjacent to the corner of Wales Street and East 44th Avenue. Then, although the Vancouver Heritage Register does include some trees, the list is very short — only 30 are currently listed. All entries are trees on public property and thus trees in private gardens such as Salsbury Garden remain vulnerable.

How do we conserve our living heritage? Sometimes, public awareness and action can save special trees — such was the case of two Soulange Magnolias (*Magnolia x soulangiana*). Planted in 1912 outside the then newly built Court House (now the VAG) they were slated for disposal in 1966 to make room for the new provincial government fountain. The Public outcry was such that landscape contractor K. Johnsen could not destroy the trees and instead transported them to his own property. In 1968 the Vancouver Park Board acquired the trees and moved them to their present home, flanking the ramp entrances to the H.R. MacMillan Planetarium.

We look to our municipal leadership to continue its strong tradition of civic pride and protection of our trees, both public and private. We must be aware that only through the foresight of succession planting can trees retain their strong presence in our neighbourhoods. One of the first rules of current conservation theory is that we must protect, maintain and rehabilitate our cultural resources. With the construction boom in Vancouver, many trees are at risk. If protection and retention mechanisms have been exhausted (possibly due to life span), then replacement in kind is the best solution. In a best-case scenario, this entails perpetuating vegetation though propagation by conserving seed collections and genetic stock cuttings from existing material to retain the genetic pool — perhaps this option could be explored through the UBC Department of Botany or VanDusen Gardens. If propagation is not a possibility, then the replacement should match the old tree in terms of character, form and shape. The best method for this is one of inter-planting, a strategy to maintain the canopy and appearance of an area so that the juvenile specimen can get established and the mature tree can remain for as long as possible.

Vancouver ranks at the top of the list of livable cities and trees work hard to keep us there, providing shade, promoting air quality, reducing soil erosion and providing vital habitat for the city's fauna. Long may they bloom and flourish!

MUST SEE HERITAGE TREES

- 6 English elms (*Ulmus procera*), English Bay south end, once sheltered Joe Fortes' cottage
- English oak (*Quercus robur*) in Queen Elizabeth Park was planted in 1951 by Queen Elizabeth II
- a Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) in Queen Elizabeth Park
- A Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*) at 3545 Dunbar Street — more often seen in southern Vancouver Island.
- Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), at corner of Willow and 14th Avenue, is an example of one of BC's most important coastal commercial timber conifers
- a pair of Nootka cypress (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis 'pendula'*) and a Madrona (*Arbutus menziesii*) in McCleery Park at 49th Avenue and West Marine Crescent
- the rare Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*) outside the historic Hastings Mill Store in Pioneer Park
- a Carolina Allspice (*Calycanthus floridus*) in the 140 block of East 22nd Avenue.
- the row of Cappadocian maples (*Acer cappadocicum*) in the 1300 block of Barclay Street
- the Caucasian Wing Nut (*Pterocarya fraxini folia*) located at 2020 Comox Street
- the Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) in the 1200 block of Harwood Street
- the Dove Tree (*Davidia involucrata*) at the southeast corner of Southwest Marine Drive and West 49th Avenue; best seen in spring
- Silk tree (*Albizia julibrissin*) at 1735 Collingwood Street.

QUIZ TIME: DO YOU KNOW????

1. How many trees line Vancouver streets?
2. How many varieties of trees are there on Vancouver streets?
3. How many flowering street trees does Vancouver have?
4. How many street trees are planted annually?
5. How many ladybugs does the City release annually to contribute to Vancouver's greenness?
6. How many full-time arboricultural staff does Vancouver employ?

For the answers, go to <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/Parks/trees/factsnfigures.htm> or see page 4.

ADVOCACY UPDATE

“Black Swan Records”

Commercial Kits Building
(circa 1922) 2936 West 4th Avenue

As all redevelopment permits have been issued for a new building, City staff are making a last-ditch effort to relocate the existing building to a site a couple of miles southwest of its present location. The final outcome will depend on whether some tricky legal issues can be overcome. Otherwise, the building will be demolished by April or May.

Brockton Point Lighthouse Jericho Marginal Wharf

The historic viewing area and staircases around the lighthouse are included in the Park Board's Capital Plan for major repair and upgrade. We are very concerned about the potential loss of original materials and fixtures, and introduction of inappropriate interventions. **Also urgent** in the Parks Capital Plan budget is the possible demolition of the Jericho Marginal Wharf, one of the last remaining structures from the former Jericho Seaplane Base. Also historic is the wharf's perimeter, which is formed by the original 1938 railings from the Lions Gate Bridge and installed during the 1976 Habitat Forum after the Lions Gate north section was widened.

Burrard Bridge

City staff are finalizing an RFP for the two options requested by Council in December 2005. Both options involve outward widening of the sidewalks by constructing outriggers, which Heritage Vancouver has consistently opposed as destructive of the bridge's architecture and appearance. One option threads the widened sidewalk through the arched piers and the other goes around the outside of the piers. The RFP is scheduled to go out by late spring with results reported back to Council sometime in the summer. We are working to have the RFP broadened to consider options other than outriggers.

Evergreen Building

HV has written a letter to Council in support of retention. Council referred the retention option to Public Hearing for consideration of a Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA). As the office market is improving, there is uncertainty as to whether the final retention proposal

(if approved) will be a residential conversion with added floors, or primarily an office building with townhouse infill along Cordova Street.

Gastown

We are monitoring with concern the current process regarding the proposed Whitecaps Stadium to be built on a platform above the CP rail tracks north of Gastown. The 15-30,000 seat open stadium would be built on a massive 4-storey concrete platform, with the upper stands towering 6-8 storeys over Gastown between Seymour and Cambie. Moreover, we have learned that the Whitecaps owners have purchased the land behind Gastown as far east as Main Street, raising the prospect of future developments on a similar raised platform along Gastown's entire northern flank.

Kogawa House

The Land Conservancy's (TLC) campaign to save Joy Kogawa's childhood home continues. There is both relief and urgency as City Council recently granted a one-month extension to raise the funds needed for acquisition and rehabilitation.

Malkin Bowl

The Park Board 2006-08 Capital Plan lists the Bowl for replacement. As there is a 'zero' dollar figure attached, this suggests that TUTS must raise all replacement funds. HV will approach TUTS and the Park Board to consider alternatives for rehabilitation.

Salsbury Garden & Houses

Developer Richard Niebuhr has appealed to the Supreme Court of BC the August 2005 Board of Variance decision in favour of the Friends of Salsbury Garden. (This decision had overturned the development permit.) We await the outcome of the current appeal. The two 1907 BC Mills prefabricated cottages remain vacant. We will request the City of Vancouver to conduct a heritage evaluation of the cottages and garden.

South Granville Apartment District

This is one of the only intact pre-WWII apartment neighbourhoods in the city. The brick and stucco walkups, designed in period revival styles, are increasingly under

threat of redevelopment for condo towers — an accelerating process that is eroding the integrity and built form of the area as a whole. One developer — Polygon Homes Ltd. — has been aggressively buying up properties in the area, the most recent being in the vicinity of 11th and Birch. In 2005, Polygon bought a site in the 1400 block West 14th Avenue that is now being redeveloped. We fear this is just the beginning, and believe the area should be comprehensively evaluated, with recommendations for additions to the Register and possible zoning changes to discourage redevelopment.

The “2400 Motel”

(1946) 2400 Kingsway

As the City's Norquay 'Neighbourhood Centre' planning process has now commenced, HV will be drafting a letter of concern to City Council. As the City purchased the site many years ago as a development site, the '2400' is seriously at risk.

Vancouver East Cultural Centre

A \$13.5 million expansion and upgrade for this facility has recently received rezoning approval. The development proposal may well gut the much beloved space before identified 'character-defining' elements are stuck back in place. We fear the building's worn, but warm and funky, ambience will be scraped away in the process, as happened with Christ Church Cathedral. A detailed development permit must still be approved, proving some opportunity for input.

Vogue Theatre

(1940) 918 Granville St.

HV has been working behind the scenes collecting letters of support from arts, performance and musical groups for preserving the theatre. We have now seen plans for the conversion to a supper club/cabaret, and it's even worse than feared, with runways and overhead walkways connecting the 'kitchen' (former stage) and table seating for food and beverage servers. We hope to build an arts and heritage coalition to save the Vogue as a theatre. Stay tuned.

WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members

On April 6, 2006, Vancouver City Council took a bold and progressive step forward with the long overdue update of the City's Heritage Register. We are delighted that Council would prioritize the Register update so early in their term and are optimistic that they will approve the funding to begin work in 2007 on this three-year process.

For years, the update of the Register has been Heritage Vancouver's single greatest priority. How often have we seen yet another historic site bulldozed because "it wasn't on the Register"? Through this update, effective community interaction and rigorous research will provide an opportunity to include sites that have been previously misunderstood or overlooked, including sites considered too modern to include in 1986 but now two decades older (e.g., the Evergreen Building), sites of cultural significance (e.g., the Joy Kogawa House), historic interiors, landscape features and many other previously unidentified sites.

Heritage Vancouver is uniquely positioned to help with this initiative with our new Neighbourhood LINK program, announced at our AGM in October. With this program, Heritage Vancouver reaches out to the community through neighbourhood-specific programming. We will participate on the Heritage Register Task Force to set the strategic direction for the process, and will work to ensure that this initiative includes a strategy for the ongoing maintenance of the Register, so another twenty years doesn't pass before it is reviewed again.

We commend staff and City Council for initiating this update. We invite our members to get involved by attending meetings, by working with neighbourhood groups, by nominating sites for the updated Register, and by supporting our efforts financially. Stay tuned for more details as this process unfolds over the next four years.

Sincerely



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Quiz Answers

1. 130,000
2. 600
3. 50,000
4. over 3,500
5. 3 million
6. 50

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