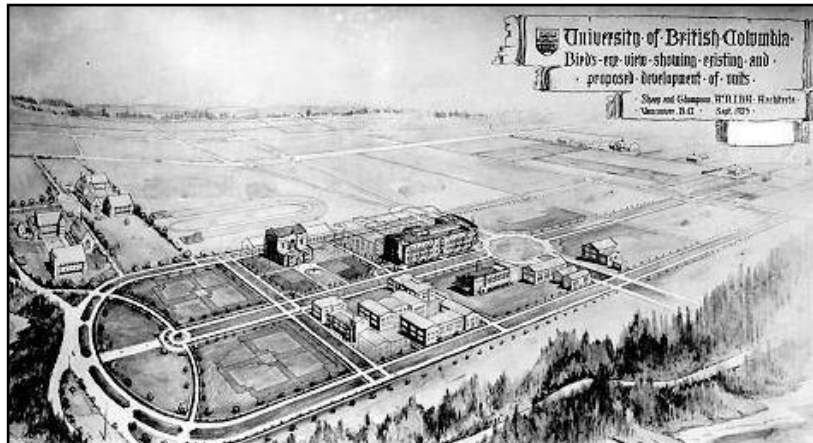


HERITAGE Vancouver Newsletter



Architects' sketch of the campus with present and proposed buildings, September 1925
University of British Columbia Archives (hereafter UBCA), Photo [UBC 1.1/4500]

COMPANY TOWN

Destruction of UBC and UEL Heritage Highlights Urgent Need For Elected Governance

This summer, Vancouver lost one of its finest examples of English Arts and Crafts architecture. Built in 1927 for the Anglican Theological College, the Chancellor Building/Canterbury House complex was one of the oldest and most important structures on the University of British Columbia (UBC) campus. The Theological College, although a separate administrative entity, was designed as an integral part of architects Sharp and Thompson's 1914 Campus Master Plan and was one of the few campus buildings to fulfill the Plan's ambitious design.

If the Chancellor/Canterbury complex had been located within the City of Vancouver, it would have been listed in the 'A' (highest) evaluation category of the City's Heritage Register and may well have been legally designated. Its listing would have carried a range of demolition controls and reten-



Chancellor Building/
Canterbury House
Exploring Vancouver
by Kalman, Phillips, Ward (1993)



Aerial view of Vancouver
School of Theology
(Iona Building)
UBCA, Photo [UBC 3.1/1450]

tion incentives. Heritage and community groups would have been notified and the City's heritage staff involved.

Not so at UBC and its associated colleges. Why? Because UBC — despite being a 'public institution' — is essentially a company town no different from the dozens of privately owned resource towns across the province. Along with the UEL, the University campus is part of Electoral Area

A. There is no elected municipal government and only minimal public accountability. The provincial government holds ultimate jurisdiction, with on-the-ground operations delegated to the UEL and UBC administration. In the UEL neighbourhoods, there is some development overview but absolutely no heritage protection for the significant pre-war residential

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architecture and an important post-war modernist legacy.

At UBC, heritage protection is at the whim of an administration intoxicated with the windfall proceeds of large private donations and rampant campus development. Apparently nothing is sacred, as UBC's independent theological colleges appear eager to board the development gravy train before the bottom drops out. The Chancellor/Canterbury complex is a case in point — demolished to make way for condos. Another victim is Vancouver School of Theology's granite-clad 'Iona' building. The imposing Collegiate-Gothic college with its landmark tower was one of three campus buildings that most fully embodied the scale and architecture of the 1914 Plan. (The others were Main Library and the Science Building.) In a shocking disregard for basic heritage standards, the building's once formal, landscaped forecourt has been plugged up with townhouses, its central tower transfigured by the outward extension of floor space.

Most appalling of all is UBC's wanton desecration of Main Library — the

THE HEART OF THE CAMPUS



Top: The Original UBC Main Library central block
UBCA, 1925 Frank Photo 1925 [UBC 1.1/1037]

Left: North study area of Main Library
UBCA, c. 1925 Frank Photo [UBC 1.1/1050]

Right: Inside the Main Library, The Entrance Hall
UBCA, 1925 Photo [UBC 1.1/1071]

university's historic centre. With funds received by a major donor, Irving K. Barber, UBC has embarked on a multiphase project to replace the Library with a new high-tech facility. Most of the historic landmark has been demolished, except the original 1925 central block — and its interiors have been fully gutted, leaving only the façades. The Main Reading Room/Card Catalogue with its massive beamed ceiling, the secondary reading rooms, and the foyer/grand staircase — all have been stripped to the bare concrete shell.

Ex-post-facto re-creation of historic interiors should be a last resort, not a heritage retention strategy. As the cost of seismic upgrades likely drove the decision-making, expediency and bottom line clearly outweighs heritage preservation at UBC. In a triumph of pragmatism over design, the renderings for the planned high-tech facility show a massive, concrete bunker designed for optimal book storage and retrieval. Already under construction, the new edifice bears absolutely no architectural relationship to, and completely overwhelms, the original 1925 structure. This will be the UBC pictured in postcards of the future. See: http://www.ikebarberlearningcentre.ubc.ca/images/sw_new.jpg

The damage is done. The question remains: 'What of the future?' Can we save what is left of the historic core campus or will the token remnants of the old Main Library be our only reminder that this university ever had a past? What will become of the old Science Building — poster child of the Great Trek — whose uncompleted frame provoked the legendary protest to complete the campus? What is the plan for other buildings of the old campus, including Hennings (Physics), Brock Hall, the Old Auditorium, and the cluster of 1925 'semi-permanent' buildings, most notably Math, Math Annex, and the original Power House?

And what of UBC's significant

THE HISTORIC CORE



Top left: Entrance to Hennings (Physics Building)
UBCA, 1947 photo [UBC 1.1/16323]

Top right: The Old Auditorium
UBCA, [1932] Timms Photo [UBC 1.1/1735]

Bottom left: Old Auditorium Interior
UBCA, 1941 Cox Photo [UBC 72.1/6]

Centre: The Power House
UBCA, 1926 Photo [UBC 29.1/63]

Bottom right: Brock Hall
UBCA, 1945 Photo [UBC 1.1/2671]

post-war Modernist legacy? In alarming news, incoming UBC President Stephen Toope recently identified replacement of the Law Faculty building as a personal priority. Designed by Sharp, Thompson and Berwick, the original 1949-50 section was the first Modern building on campus and is an important milestone in Vancouver's early Modernist legacy. As well, the Buchanan (Arts) Building is currently undergoing questionable renovations, and the Geophysics & Astronomy building is slated for demolition because of the cost of seismic rehabilitation. Also slated for demolition is the historic Empire Pool, built for the Empire Games in 1954. Other early Modern buildings include the Faculty Club (which at one point was threatened by a proposed hotel development), Lasserre Building (Architecture), International House, the Ponderosa Cafeteria, and the Wesbrook Building — one of the earliest structures in the medical precinct.

The fact that UBC is not techni

THE MODERNIST LEGACY



Top left and right: The Law Building
UBCA, 1951 BC Jennings Photo [UBC 41.1/2624]
http://www.law.ubc.ca/alumni/old_pics/building.html

Bottom left: The Empire Pool
UBCA, 195- Photo [UBC 1.1/1471]

Bottom right: The Geophysics and Astronomy Building
UBCA, 1980 Photo [UBC 41.1/1561]

cally within the City of Vancouver's boundaries should have no bearing on its importance to citizens of Vancouver, not to mention the region and the province. This has been increasingly evident in controversies, such as those about negative impacts on regional beaches and traffic impacts on city neighbourhoods, over UBC development generally. But the situation is equally applicable to UBC's rich architectural heritage — a heritage that belongs to the citizens of Vancouver and British Columbia — not just to University and Theological College administrators.

We are all stakeholders in what happens at UBC, yet these CEOs prefer to do business as if UBC were a private company responsible only to its shareholders. Consultation rarely goes beyond token involvement of faculty, staff, students and residents. As far as we are aware, the broader heritage and architectural community has not been invited to participate in development decisions affecting the UBC campus.

What we have seen to date offers faint hope that this would make any difference.

Campus governors and administrators, quite naturally, must advance corporate priorities and will not be accountable to community input and oversight until — by means of municipal jurisdiction — they are legally required to do so. A change in governance is clearly overdue, and that change must be in the form of municipal government for all of the lands west of the Vancouver/UEL boundary. Recognizing that a self-governing UBC/UEL would be inefficient and financially unsustainable, the obvious alternative would be to bring the UBC/UEL lands within the jurisdiction of the City of Vancouver, which, to its credit, has a respected planning department and a sophisticated heritage program. Such an outcome may be the only hope for UBC and UEL's beleaguered heritage.

To get a sense of the crisis threatening the heritage at UBC, go to our website — www.heritagevancouver.org/advocacy/ubc.html — for recent photographs of the devastation.

Lone Survivor From UBC Fairview Campus to be Demolished

Before a permanent UBC campus was established at Point Grey in 1925, classes commenced in 1915 at the Fairview campus adjacent to VGH. Known as the 'Fairview Shacks', the university consisted almost entirely of simple frame buildings. Later used by the hospital, the shacks were finally demolished in 1955. Until recently, it was assumed that nothing of the original campus remained. In fact, there is one exception: the concrete and masonry Arts and Administration Building shown here. Tucked away in the shadow of the Centennial Pavilion, this last vestige of the Fairview campus has survived all odds as the westernmost portion of the Willow Chest Centre. Sadly, the entire Willow complex is slated for imminent demolition as part of the approved VGH redevelopment. Pay your last respects soon.

THE ORIGINAL UBC



Top: The Fairview Campus
UBCA, 1919 Photo [UBC 11.1/12-4]

Left: The Arts & Administration Building
UBCA, 1925 Frank Photo [UBC 1.1/155]

Right: The Congregation [of graduates] entering the Arts Building.
UBCA, Photo [UBC 1.1/519]

WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's September, and the traditional time to head back to school — if there is one left to go to... As you will see in this issue, we are seeing real pressure being exerted on our educational institutions. The wanton destruction of the landmark Chancellor Building/Canterbury House at UBC, and the ongoing issues regarding the province's seismic mitigation program raise extremely serious concerns. Although we are seeing private developers line up for heritage incentives, our publicly owned buildings are being lost. It's time to re-examine our array of heritage incentives and who is eligible to receive them.

However, in a bold move, City Council voted to retain the landmark Fire Hall No.15. Not listed on the Heritage Register, its fate was almost sealed by the Fire Department's bid to replace it with a new hall. Council's decision was based on strong vocal community opposition to demolition. When the local community gets behind an issue, we can make a difference — a lesson that we continue to learn in our neighbourhood preservation battles. Kudos to Council for recognizing that a compromise was indeed possible and then doing the right thing.

Don't forget our Annual General Meeting on Thursday October 19th — we are still looking for new board members and volunteers, so please let us know in advance if you can help out.

Sincerely,



Don Luxton
President
Heritage Vancouver

HV Annual General Meeting

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