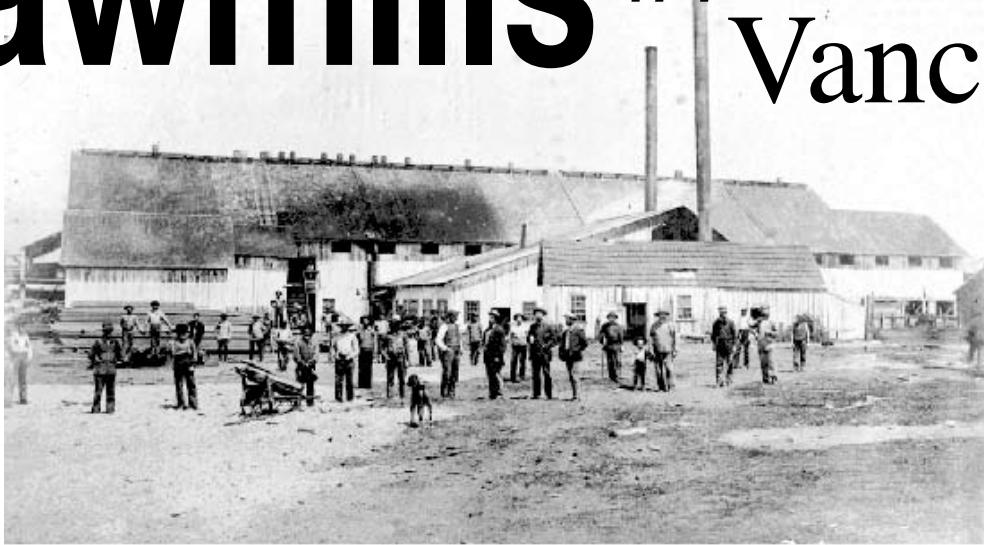


HERITAGE
Vancouver
 Newsletter

Sawmills *in* Vancouver

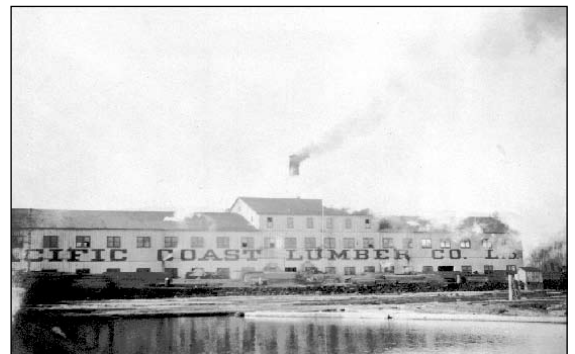


Hastings Mill

by *Susanna Houwen*

When large sawmills were established on Burrard Inlet in the 1860s, there was next to no settlement there. “At that time the area where Vancouver was to be built was mostly forest, with two small hamlets, Moodyville and Hastings, each with its own sawmill.”¹ The lumber produced by these sawmills was not to satisfy local demand, but for export. Ships from this salt-water harbour headed for destinations as distant as Australia. Built for an international purpose, the buildings were of an international style.

The sawmill operators were experienced men from the east. After Quebec and Ontario banned the export of logs, and Michigan and Wisconsin forestry stocks were running low, investors flocked to the seemingly limitless forests in British Columbia, available for almost nothing. “If a settler arriving in the Canadian wilderness was poor in most respects, he usually had no trouble obtaining as much wood as he needed.”² These imported timber men rode the succeeding booms in the Vancouver area, sparked by the gold rush, the arrival of the trans-Canadian train and the flood of settlement in the 1910s.

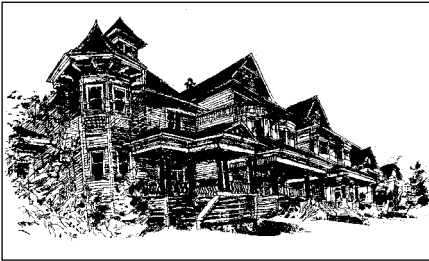


Pacific Coast Mill

UPCOMING EVENTS

2000 Speakers Series

We have an exciting line-up of speakers and related activities for the year. Heritage Vancouver's 2000 Speakers Series will focus on Vancouver's historic areas, including Mole Hill, Gastown, and Mount Pleasant. Speakers will discuss the history of these areas, and what lies ahead in the future. The lectures will act as primers to follow-up activities such as walking tours.



Robin Ward

Mole Hill

Wednesday, January 19, 2000

Mole Hill

Exciting new plans are underway for this West End neighbourhood, since the provincial government announced its intention to fund social housing here. Sean McEwen, the project architect, will update HV members on the proposed plans. He will be joined by Norm Hotson, Don Luxton, Blair Petrie and Peter Kreuk, who are also involved in the project. This panel will reflect on the process that led to this point, and about the neighbourhood's bright future.

General Meeting third Wednesday of each month

Vancouver Museum
Ray Whittick Lounge
(business meeting 7:30,
speaker's program 8:30)
There's plenty of free
parking—please join us!

Non members are
welcome by a suggested
--donation of \$2.00

A Productive Year!

As you all know, last year in October we brought an almost completely new slate of board members, nine out of twelve. We had high hopes for these new people, and they have come through for us.

We started off with a written and phone survey to review member satisfaction. The results show that we have a solid core of support. We assembled a large number of nomination packages for the 1999 City of Vancouver Heritage Awards, and all but three won awards. A professional graphic designer took over the development of our newsletter, and has received many accolades for his efforts. We hosted the successful Working Heritage conference on industrial architecture in BC, and produced a binder gathering together the presented papers. We had one of our most successful speakers series ever, with Arthur Erickson as our grand finale. We hosted the surprise hit Hallowe'en Mountainview Cemetery Tour, which we will re-present next year as well. We gathered together various advocacy groups to have a presence at the Heritage Fair, and produced bus tours to show off the True Colours houses. Some long-term projects, the walking tours brochures, building permit database, and H is for Heritage, have made progress, with the walking tours brochures being launched at the Heritage Fair. And of course, there are our many advocacy efforts, for Southeast False Creek, the Bank of Nova Scotia, the CPR Telegraph Building, the BC Electric Showroom and Trader Vic's.

All in all, not a bad year! Reviewing this list made us all feel very buoyant at our annual retreat, and we have a great (and ambitious) list of projects in the work for this year.

Heritage Vancouver
PO Box 3336, Main Post Office
Vancouver BC V6B 3Y3

604.254.9411

<http://home.istar.ca/~glenchan/hvsintro.shtml>

Mark Your Calendar

Thursday, January 27, 2000
Vogue Theatre Restoration Society
Evening with Dionne Warwick
8 P.M. 918 Granville Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6Z 1L2
tickets \$150 each
T 331-7904

A New Vice-President

The president Susanna Houwen felt her main task this year was to decentralize tasks, to offload some of the burden of time from the president's position and to make other board members feel more involved. We now have a quite even distribution of tasks, and the task of being president is less daunting. In fact, Stephane Hoffman has agreed to take the position of vice-president (picking up from Peter Vaisbord, who has been acting vice-president for a year), so he will become the president of Heritage Vancouver at the beginning of April.

Please refer to the masthead for the list of other board members and their positions.

Chinatown Liaison Needed

Heritage Vancouver's involvement in the review processes at City Hall has been recognized by the creation of an official seat on the Chinatown Heritage Area Planning Committee, or CHAPC for short. Unfortunately, that seat is now vacant. Heritage Vancouver is looking for someone with an interest in the Chinatown area and heritage to attend monthly CHAPC meetings representing HV, and to report back about any current issues. Contact Susanna at 734-2933 if you are interested, or know someone who is.

from cover **Sawmills**

To take advantage of the growing markets and the seemingly unending supply, sawmills were mechanized and steam-powered very early. In the East and in Britain the supply of raw logs had been scarce,

while labour was plentiful, with the result that timber was still often finished by hand. In British Columbia, where material was plentiful and skilled labour expensive and difficult to get, it was necessary to use more capital-



Eburne Mill

intensive methods in order to take advantage of the possible scale of production. Band-saws and steam-power offered the significant advantage in speed over manual methods that was necessary to cater to the growing market for prepared wood products.

The sawmill buildings in Vancouver do not have a unique regional architectural expression. These buildings were similar in appearance to sawmills built in the East. The men who built them moved from place to place, following the timber market, sometimes even taking their machinery with them. It is understandable then, given the mobility of the industry, that the buildings used to house the machinery would have a certain commonality of construction, form, and style.

Using simple building methods, carpenters created spaces which were quite modest in their intentions, but sometimes astonishing in effect. The effect is created through the complexity of construction, the accretive effect of one wooden member added to another. The sawmill buildings were heavy timber buildings with steel connectors, rather than the traditional mortise and tenon joints. Despite persistent prejudice against them, by 1870 wire-cut nails in Canada were so cheap it was not worth a carpenter's time to pick them up if dropped.³

Water-driven sawmills had required

specialty-built structures, but steam-driven sawmills did not. "The sawmill in its most basic form was a shed-like structure with solid plank walls or upright posts with no enclosing walls-in either case, covered by a slightly pitched roof."⁴ At least one side was

left open to allow easy access for logs. "Furnaces and machinery were protected from the weather by a building which was little more than a wind-break and a shelter."⁵ Larger sawmill buildings greatly resemble barns in form, and often had a continuous vent at the roof ridge,

which would act as a clerestory to help illuminate the interior. The most often have a single ridged roof, but are sometimes ell-shaped or cruciform in plan. Through-out North America, they are interestingly characterized by square diamond-shaped windows along their sides.

These first examples of international architecture disappeared as commercial and residential development chased out the sawmills through the 1870s to 1920s.

¹ T. Ritchie, *Canada Builds 1867-1967* (Toronto:1967) p.122.

² Ritchie p.149

³ C.D. Eliot, *Technics and Architecture: the Development of Materials and Systems for Buildings* (London: MIT Press, 1992) p.9

⁴ C. Priamo, *Mills of Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1970) p.146

⁵ A. Raistrick, *Industrial Archaeology: an Historical Survey* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972) p.144.

Susanna Houwen is an architect-intern with Pro-Pacific Architecture Ltd. and President of Heritage Vancouver.

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Montreal Eaton's Ninth Floor Dining Room, which is now vacant and threatened!

Montreal Art Deco

The Canadian Art Deco Society is pleased to sponsor an illustrated talk by Montreal author Sandra Cohen-Rose. Her talk is known as one of Montreal's *Best-Kept Secrets* as it reveals the previously unknown vibrancy and richness of the city's Art Deco legacy. Her book *Northern Deco* will be available for sale.

Thursday, January 6, 2000 7:30 P.M.,
Vanier Room, Vancouver Museum,
1100 Chestnut Street

Canadian Art Deco Society
Members \$5.00 Non-members \$8.00

For further information contact
Donald Luxton at 688-1216

THE CANADIAN ART DECO SOCIETY
800 - 626 West Pender Street
Vancouver, BC, Canada, V6B 1V9

**Roedde House
Salon Concert Series
Winter 2000**

Saturday, January 22, 2:00 P.M.

Giuseppe meets Giles

Lute, voice and violin

Works from 17th Century

England and Italy

Tickets \$25.00 per seat or \$70.00
for all three concerts.

For tickets phone 684-7040

Words from the President

Heritage in the Year 2000

Dear Members,

Well, we've now entered the next millennium. There has been an emphasis on modernity in the media, a return to predictions about life in the future, cars that fly, space-age materials, the colour silver... Where does heritage fit in?

Many would have you believe that heritage advocates wish not only to freeze time, but to return to a past way of life. On the contrary, heritage advocates think about the future most of all. We are always thinking about what present decisions will mean to future generations. In an effort to make our city a pleasant place to live in the future, we are trying to retain good examples of buildings and build on that stock. We think about a time when people will look back with regret at decisions to demolish buildings, and try to remind those who are more short-sighted to consider not only present conditions, but the future as well.

The purview of the house museum, and other attempts to create an experience of being in the past, is limited to representative sites of special historic significance. Most old buildings are not so significant, and so we ask only that as few changes be made as possible, lest those changes be regretted in the future. Least altered, soonest mended. Heritage advocates guard not only your past, but your future as well.

Susanna

Susanna Houwen,
President, Heritage Vancouver

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Join Heritage Vancouver

Annual membership runs from October 1st to September 30th. 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: _____

Individual: \$25

Supporting (no newsletter) \$5

Family: \$30

Corporate: \$50

Donation: \$ _____

Patrons: \$100

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