

HERITAGE

Vancouver

Newsletter



Christmas



at Roedde House

by Justyna Krol

In 1893 Gustav Roedde built a house on Barclay Street in Vancouver's fashionable West End. It was a stately home, designed in the late Victorian manner, and served as a testament to the success and perseverance of the German-born immigrant who became Vancouver's first printer and bookbinder. The design of Roedde House is attributed to the B.C. architect Francis M. Rattenbury, notable for his work on the Parliament Buildings and Empress Hotel in Victoria and for Vancouver's Art Gallery (formerly the Court House).

Rattenbury, a friend of Gustav Roedde, conceived the house in a Queen Anne Revival style with a cupola, bay windows, an upstairs porch and a downstairs veranda. Terence Brunette, City of Vancouver's heritage planner and past curator of Roedde House, has noted that Rattenbury came from a professional climate that was associated with some of the most advanced and sophisticated developments in architectural thinking of the time. It is likely that the Roedde House would have been seen as a designer's house in the way that the homes of those involved with applied design often employ cutting-edge product.

Today the house is a fully restored museum. It's the centerpiece of Barclay Heritage Square, which features a total of nine Victorian homes, most of which serve as community spaces and public housing facilities. The development of the Square introduced an unusual combination of inner-city parkland and heritage buildings, thereby turning the site into a functional – and historical – community asset. The Museum maintains community involvement by providing a number of elementary-school tours as well as guided visits for the public. It also hosts teas and salon concert series, and is particularly known for its wonderful Victorian Christmas events.

While the Victorian décor of the Museum makes time-honoured Christmas customs come to life, the Roeddes' German background makes such celebrations even more fitting. The traditions which most of us associate with a *Victorian* or *English* Christmas originated in Germany and were brought into England by Prince Albert after his marriage to Queen Victoria in 1840. Prince Albert became one of the greatest authorities on the English Christmas, and introduced Windsor to the first Christmas tree – with all of its trimmings – which

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A Victorian Christmas Party

The Executive and Board of Directors of Heritage Vancouver Request the pleasure of your company at the

**Roedde House Museum,
 1415 Barclay Street
 December 13th, 6 to 9 pm**

The Roedde House will be decorated in authentic Victorian style for Christmas and this gathering will be an opportunity for volunteers, members and friends of Heritage Vancouver to celebrate the festive season.

It will also be a chance to do some Christmas shopping: Vancouver authors will be on hand with copies of their newest books on heritage in Vancouver. (Cheques or cash accepted.)

Light refreshments will be served. RSVP to 604-254-9411 if attending.

**Heritage Unlimited 2002:
 Challenges/Opportunities/
 Commitment
 Wednesday, January 16, 2002**

Join us as President Janet Leduc, Heritage Consultant Donald Luxton and Program Chair Art Perret present a wide-ranging and informative overview of challenges and opportunities facing Heritage Vancouver in 2002:

- The overhanging future of Burrard --Bridge
- Health of the Heather Pavilion, VGH
- The China Gate Project
- The Top Ten List – 10 months later

Preview the exciting program plans for the year, mark your calendars and commit your time and expertise to make 2002 another successful and fun-filled year.



Photo: Robert Moffatt 2002

Between rainforest and river

by *Robert Moffatt*

**Chow house
 1319 Riverside Drive, North Vancouver
 Blair MacDonald and Barry Downs 1960**

Set into a rocky, forested site bordering the Seymour River, the Chow house exudes a Zen-like tranquility amid native evergreens and vine maples.

In designing the house, architects Blair MacDonald and Barry Downs looked to Japanese design principles to maximize the rainforest setting. The Japanese theme was established by framing dark-stained structural members around white stucco wall panels inside and out, their regular cadence creating a serene atmosphere and minimizing visual distractions from the site's natural beauty. A raised clerestory continued the theme and floods the entrance and hallway with natural light, the effect varying throughout the day.

As Riverside Drive is several feet above the site, the house's rooftop

is prominently visible from the entry drive. Roofing of flat stones and cedar shakes helps visually integrate the structure into the surrounding trees and river rock, and the house is further anchored to the site by the grey concrete blocks used for retaining walls and the raised rear terraces. The proximity to the river is capitalized upon by enclosing the living and dining area with glass outer walls; the openness creates a feeling of hammock-like suspension above the rushing water.

Selected for the 1964 Massey Medals for Architecture exhibition, the Chow house is one of several projects that MacDonald and Downs designed together during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Both architects enjoyed further success in Vancouver: MacDonald with McCarter and Nairne, and Downs most notably in partnership with Richard Archambault.

Burrard Bridge Alert

The City of Vancouver is currently conducting a *False Creek Crossings Study*.

One of the options still being considered is the widening of the Burrard Street Bridge to accommodate pedestrian/cyclist lanes on the outside of the structure. It would involve either the complete removal or replacement of the historic railings or, at the very least, the hanging of outriggers on the sides of the bridge. If you can't visualize what this would look like, go see what has been done to the Port Mann Bridge, and then try to imagine that kind of cantilevered structure hanging off the side of the Burrard Bridge. It would destroy the heritage fabric of this unique landmark.

Almost any other suggestion—for example, modifications to the Granville Bridge or a completely new structure dedicated to pedestrians and cyclists—would be preferable to the destruction of this “A” heritage structure. Heritage Vancouver is completely opposed to this option and we have embarked on a campaign to stop it. We need all of you to write a letter to the city objecting to the idea and asking that the integrity of the bridge be maintained. Heritage Consultant Donald Luxton has just completed a comprehensive heritage study of the bridge and will be making a presentation at our January meeting.

from cover Roedde House

quickly became an institution throughout England and eventually throughout the Western world. Prince Albert also helped to popularize carol singing.

The Roedde family celebrated thirty-two of their Christmases at the house on Barclay Street. While most of the family's stories recall holidays filled with lavish decorating, gift-giving and elaborate supper preparations, a narrowly-averted tragedy nearly brought these traditions to an end in 1913. The Christmas tree, standing in the wide bay of the dining room and lit by candles attached to the branches by clips, caught on fire just as everyone was about to sit down to dinner. The family tried to extinguish the flames with buckets from the kitchen until the fire engine from No. 6 Firehouse (now restored) on Nelson Street arrived in

time to save the house. The dining room was gutted, panelling burned and furniture and china destroyed, but no one was hurt. The fire accounts for the fact that the dining room was redecorated in a completely different style from the rest of the house – with high dado, horizontal panelled doors, and framing in the new *mission* (or Arts and Crafts style) for the insides of the windows.

Since the Museum's inception, the Christmas season has been celebrated at the House with the accoutrements of times past: mulled cider and fruitcake, carolling in the parlour to the accompaniment of a Victorian Steinway piano, and the fresh scent of evergreens from the luxuriously decorated lintels hung with cedar, spruce and holly.

Justyna Krol is a curator at Roedde House.

THE PENTHOUSE: A POPULAR SUCCESS



UBC teacher and author Becki Ross, discussing the history of stripping at The Penthouse, addresses a full house at Heritage Vancouver monthly meeting November 21.



Becki Ross, Penthouse owner Ross Filippone and HV President Janet Leduc



WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

Dear Members,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to wish all of our members a happy holiday season and best wishes for the year ahead. You are our greatest asset. Thank you so much for your continued support for our advocacy efforts, and here's hoping that 2002 brings us an expanded heritage register, protection for derelict heritage buildings and increased tax relief for owners.



Janet Leduc
President, Heritage Vancouver

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Letter to the Editor:

Dear Editor:

It was a delight to see the historic Beatty Street Drill Hall given such a terrific boost in your last issue. As Robert Moffatt pointed out, this year is the 100th anniversary of the Drill Hall, the proud home of the British Columbia Regiment, the oldest regiment in the province. While the Drill Hall may look its age, this heritage building continues to function as the modern base for the men and women of The BC Regiment, which is an operational Reserve Army unit of the Canadian Forces 39 Brigade Group in BC.

In his article, Robert referred to its opening by the man who would become King Edward VII. In fact, the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and Kent later became King George V and Queen Mary, grandparents of our present Queen. Edward VII was the Duke's father. There is also reference to the two cannons standing guard outside the Drill Hall. These are of Crimean War vintage and formed part of the British Columbia Garrison Artillery, established by Governor Seymour as the colony's coastal defense following the US-originated Fenian Raids in eastern Canada. This year, the Two 1863 Cannons and the BC Regiment received the City of Vancouver Heritage Award of Recognition for 2000. The cannons were completely refurbished, re-mounted on gun carriages, and their muzzles capped with a brass engraving of the original Garrison Artillery badge. Last, a small but important factual point regarding the two tanks outside the Drill Hall: the one on the north end is a bona-fide Sherman, the kind used by the BC Regiment in NW Europe during WW2. Standing at the south end is a Ram, used primarily as a troop carrier after the turret had been removed.

We really appreciate the salute given the Beatty Street Drill Hall by your organization and would like to invite your members to tour the Drill Hall and the Regimental Museum at a mutually convenient time in the future. We can accommodate up to 20 people on one tour. Thank you again for your interest, and our congratulations to Robert Moffatt for highlighting the oldest building in downtown Vancouver that is still used for its original purpose.

Cameron Cathcart
The BC Regiment Association