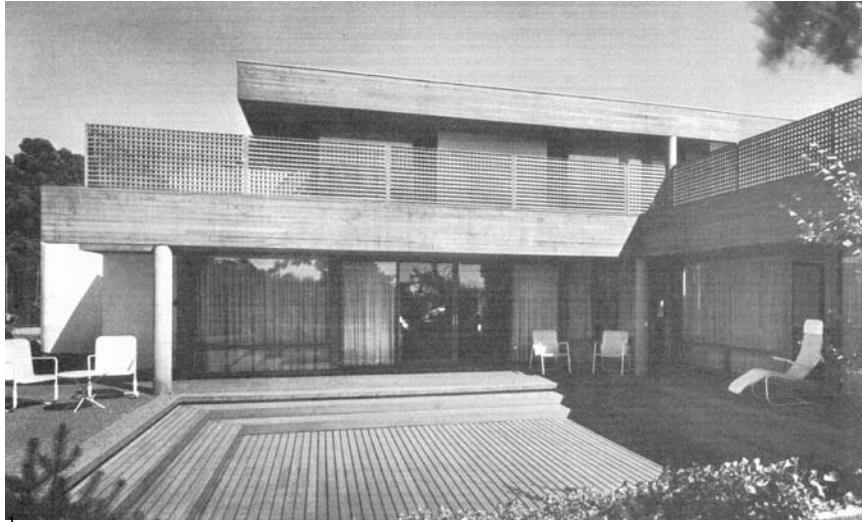


# HERITAGE

# Vancouver

Newsletter



## AFTER ERICKSON

### Early houses by Dalla-Lana/Griffin

by Robert Moffatt

**K**ey transitional figures between the first and second generations of Modernist architects in Vancouver, Fred Dalla-Lana and Ray Griffin formed Dalla-Lana/Griffin Architects in 1972. Both graduated from UBC's School of Architecture in 1961; Dalla-Lana worked with Arthur Erickson and Barry Downs, and Griffin worked with Louis Kahn in Philadelphia before returning to Vancouver to join McCarter, Nairne & Partners. "Fred and I had known each other and were friends at UBC," recalls Ray Griffin. "Arthur and Barry would refer clients to us for houses, and that's how we got started."

Fred Dalla-Lana was particularly inspired by Erickson's residential work, and Dalla-Lana/Griffin's early houses adapted and updated many Ericksonian design characteris-



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tics. Typically heavy, muscular posts and beams frame glass window-walls, the thick beams providing a forceful horizontal emphasis and the rough-sawn wood contrasting with the smooth transparency of the glass. The supporting posts are often peeled cedar logs, as in the Semke and Chang houses, or wood slabs equal in width and thickness to the horizontal beams. The equal dimen-

sions of the posts and beams relieve the visual tension between the supported and supporting elements to produce a restful balance, a favourite Erickson technique used to great effect in the Clement house. Exterior woods are continued inside to help unify interior and exterior spaces.

Natural light is a crucial element in all the houses. In addition to the floor-to-ceiling glass walls, extensive skylights

see page three **Dalla-Lana/Griffin**

HERITAGE  
Vancouver  
PRESENTS

**BC Genealogy & History Day**  
**Saturday, November 2, 10am-4pm**  
**Vancouver Public Library,**  
**Central Branch**

Heritage Vancouver will be there, and we need volunteers. The Vancouver Public Library's 2nd annual BC Genealogy & History Day features a variety of exhibits and workshops of interest to genealogists and local historians. Start thinking about your family tree. Free.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

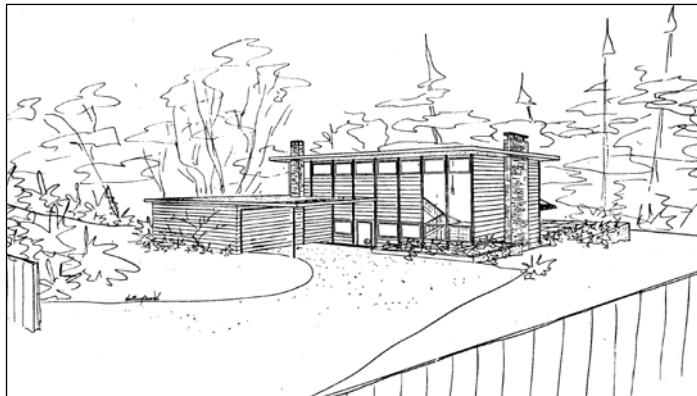
**Beatty Street: Commemorating BC's Military History**  
**Saturday, November 9, 10am-1pm**  
**Meet at International Village (Tinseltown)**

Explore the 101-year-old Beatty Street Drill Hall and remember those that served our country. Tour concludes with refreshments in the Officer's Mess.  
Members \$10, non-members \$15.

**Vancouver Museum Neon Bus Tour**  
**Saturday, November 23, 7-11pm**  
**Vancouver Museum**

Hop aboard a vintage BC Electric Transit Coach with historian John Atkin for a magical tour of Vancouver's existing neon nightlife. Refreshments provided by Wally's Burgers.  
Members/students \$20, non-members \$25.

**VANCOUVER MODERN**



Perspective sketch by Fred Hollingsworth, 1947

## Saba house

by *Robert Moffatt*

**Saba house**  
2870 West 47th Street, Vancouver  
Sharp & Thompson, Berwick, Pratt 1947

Architect Charles Edward (Ned) Pratt was a key figure in the development of post-and-beam construction in the Vancouver area during the late 1940s. Using inexpensive and readily available cedar and fir timber, Pratt devised a modular post-and-beam system to create radical-appearing yet functional and cost-effective houses specifically suited to the West Coast climate. For the Clarence Saba family he designed a purist two-story rectangle with a sloped roof and an attached garage, revealing the structural posts and beams inside and out for visual bravura.

Inside, Pratt arranged the interior spaces for maximum liveability. The main entry, stairwell, and living and dining areas are all open to one another to increase the sense of space, and the floor-to-ceiling glass wall in the living and dining areas visually extends the room even further. The open-treaded staircase is displayed to dramatic effect through huge sheets of glass, the flood of soft northern light balancing the stronger

southern light and reducing glare. The adjacent kitchen was designed for efficiency according to the latest planning principles and, like the living areas, is oriented to the south-facing view and sunlight. Three bedrooms upstairs also face south, the two children's bedrooms opening onto inset play decks.

Responding to the lack of storage in many postwar houses, Pratt integrated considerable storage space into the interior. Tall built-in cabinets line the upstairs hallway, topped with clerestory windows to admit natural light. Downstairs, a free-standing storage unit divides the living and dining areas, another houses books and hi-fi equipment, and a third separates the entrance hall from the living room.

In 1995 the Saba house was renovated and a new master bedroom suite and family room added. Pratt designed numerous other houses using similar structural systems, including the 1949 Smith house at 520 West 29th Avenue, Vancouver, and the Craighead house, also built in 1949, at 3097 Connaught Avenue, North Vancouver.



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allow light to penetrate deeply into the interiors while maintaining privacy. Natural light softly illuminates hallways, highlights artworks on walls, and divides interior spaces. Circular or half-circle windows are a repeated motif and neatly frame perspectives of the site and view. The houses' spatial arrangements also show strong Erickson influences. Floorplans are asymmetrical yet formal, with spaces arranged on axes at right angles to one another and visually connected by carefully considered sightlines. Main living areas are often divided by subtle changes in floor and ceiling height,

and focus around a fireplace fronted by a sunken conversation area. The overall effect is of elegantly uncluttered space flowing from inside to outside.

The sites are fairly restricted suburban plots and thus present a challenge in introducing light and views while maintaining privacy. Dalla-Lana and Griffin used earth mounds to provide privacy to the street and dense plantings on the other sides to shield the houses from neighbouring properties. Cedar lattice screens ensure further privacy. Water is a recurring feature—most houses have a shallow reflecting pool guarding the entrance and psychologically distancing the house, and some also have a swimming pool integrated into the landscaping. Roof decks and large patios extend the living areas during the warmer months, while the glass-covered courtyard of the Zack house allows outdoor living virtually year-round.

Through the 1980s and 1990s Dalla-Lana and Griffin continued designing houses as well as medical-dental complexes, schools, churches, and other commercial and institutional buildings. Fred Dalla-Lana died in 2001, but the firm he co-founded still carries on today as DGBK (Dalla-Lana Griffin Dowling Knapp) Architects.

Selected early houses by  
Dalla-Lana/Griffin:

1 Chang Residence, 1976  
7651 Sunnymede Crescent, Richmond

2 Zack Residence, 1974  
3030 West 45th Avenue, Vancouver

3 Semke Residence, 1976  
3535 West 50th Avenue, Vancouver

4 Clement Residence, n.d.  
(demolished 1999)  
6880 Granville Avenue, Richmond

Somerville Residence, 1975  
2757 Lawson Avenue, West Vancouver

McFarlane Residence, 1977  
6290 Collingwood Street, Vancouver

Photos:

Chang residence

Zack residence

Semke residence

Clement residence, shortly before  
demolition in 1999

All photos: John Fulker.

Clement residence: Robert Moffatt



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# Goodbye and Thank You

Dear Members,

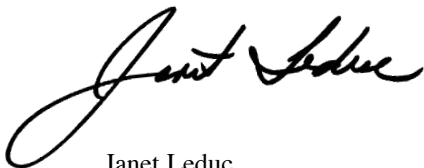
This is my last letter as President of Heritage Vancouver. It has been an amazing two years and I have many unforgettable moments etched in my mind. My favorites include the *most-fun booth* at the Heritage Fair, the tour of Granville Street with 90 participants, houses chased by the wrecking ball in the Pride Parade, our top ten endangered buildings, the opening of the Chinatown Millennium Gate and, of course, a very special evening at the Penthouse. As I move on to my next endeavor, a run for Vancouver City Council, I will take with me these memories and, most importantly, all of the great friends I have made at Heritage Vancouver. I want to thank all of you for your support and enthusiastic participation, with a special thanks to past and present members of the board: John Atkin, Scott Barrett, Steve Brouwers, Terry Brunette, Ian Fisher, Hillary Haggan, Janet Hansen, Richard Keate, Don Luxton, Hugh McLean, Art Perret, Brock Piper, Karen Russell, Maida Price and Peter Vaisbord. What a team!

We are now into the municipal election. I urge you to promote a heritage agenda and to find out how candidates stand on issues of importance to Heritage Vancouver:

- the preservation and restoration of the Burrard Bridge and other important heritage assets
- the economic revitalization and heritage rehabilitation of Gastown, Chinatown and Hastings Street
- the revision and updating of the Heritage Registry and the adoption of the interiors register
- the development of a ten year strategic heritage plan and the introduction of municipal heritage conservation standards.

It is with fond memories that I bid farewell to all of you. However, I will not be far away and you can count on me to push the heritage agenda no matter where the future takes me.

Thanks for two very special years.



Janet Leduc  
President, Heritage Vancouver

## REPORT ON THE AGM

The Heritage Vancouver AGM, slated for the Vancouver Museum on October 16, 2002, was moved to the media room at the Roundhouse Community Centre. The change allowed members a chance to voice their opinions at an open house on changes to the Burrard Street Bridge, held by the City the same evening.

Janet Leduc, our outgoing president, has done an outstanding job over the past two years. At a small social gathering after the meeting, her contribution to Heritage Vancouver was recognized by Peter Vaisbord, who thanked her on behalf of all the members. He also expressed best wishes for success in her run for a City Council seat.

Art Perret, slated to be our next president and also active in city politics, has stepped aside to avoid any conflict of interest during the upcoming election. Scott Barrett has agreed to take the role of president as an interim measure.

The new board members are:

- Scott Barrett: President
- Karen Russell: Treasurer
- Maida Price: Communications
- Ian Fisher: Membership Chair
- Brock Piper: Newsletter Design
- Peter Vaisbord: Advocacy Chair
- Steve Brouwers: Member at Large, Gastown Committee Representative
- Richard Keate: Member at Large, Heritage Advisory Committee Representative
- Don Luxton: Member at Large
- Susan Boissonneault: Member at Large
- Kevin Stuart: Member at Large
- Janet Leduc: Past President

Get involved—contact board members to find out what you can do for heritage in Vancouver.