

HERITAGE

Vancouver

Newsletter



Celebrating Asian Heritage

explorASIAN, the month-long annual celebration of Asian Heritage is largest in Vancouver. From the Heritage Vancouver perspective, there is much to celebrate, with excitement about Chinatown top of the list. First, there is the terrific news about the purchase of the Wing Sang building, a regular on the HV Top Ten Endangered Sites list. The new owner, Bob Rennie, plans a full heritage restoration of the brick structure.

Hopes are high for another Chinatown Building, the former Chinese Freemasons Building (1 West Pender at Carrall). The building has been purchased by SFU chancellor Milton Wong, whose father established his business, Modernize Tailors, there in the early 1900s and remained for 50 years. The building has been altered over the years and it is not yet known how the building will be developed.

A wonderful new resource to learn about Chinatown's heritage is [murmur]. Launched in September 28, 2003, [murmur] is an archival audio project of stories about specific locations throughout Vancouver's Chinatown. A [murmur] sign marks each location, and gives a location code and telephone number (cellphone is required). Some stories suggest that the listener walk around,

following a certain path through a place, while others allow a person to wander with both feet and gaze. Stories are available in both English and Chinese. For more information see www.murmur.ca

Chinatown is the focus of HV's May meeting. In a presentation entitled "Chinatown: Tomorrow's Community by Design Today," heritage planning staff will describe the City's proposed Heritage Plan, an initiative to support Chinatown revitalization by increasing the area's population by 10,000. This growth will in turn provide a market for retail and commercial growth and the revival of social and cultural institutions in the community. For Heritage Vancouver, the key is that the historic character and fabric of the district be retained through thoughtful rehabilitation of existing buildings and appropriate infill new construction.

Elsewhere in Vancouver and environs, there is also news. While the long-term future of the Joy Kogawa House is still uncertain, there is some good news: the new owner did not demolish the house and has undertaken only minimal renovations/repairs to the house, all of which are reversible. For example, windows that were removed (to be replaced by heat-efficient windows) have

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been donated to the city and are in storage at the Japanese heritage centre in Burnaby. The Kogawa Homestead Committee continues to raise funds for a future purchase of the building, and the Vancouver Heritage Foundation has agreed to oversee this fundraising venture.

In Steveston, regular tours of the Murikama House and Obaachan's Garden during the explorAsian festival are special events. Built in 1885, and occupied between 1923 and 1942 by the twelve-member family of Otokichi and Asayo Murikami and their boat works, the house was boarded up in 1942 when the family was interned. It was restored as part of the Britannia Heritage Shipyard project and opened to the public in 1996. Then, in spring 1998, Murikami's family restored the garden, called Obaachan's Garden, which Asayo Murikami had created 50 years earlier. The final tours of the explorASIAN Festival are listed in Mark Your Calendar.

For further info see

www.explorAsian.org

www.kogawa.homestead.com

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

May 23, 1-2pm/ Asian Elements of Britannia/Guided Tour or Obaachan's Garden Video & Guided Tour
Britannia Heritage Shipyard, 5180 Westwater Dr. Richmond, BC V7E 6P3
Learn the stories behind the Murakami House and Boatworks, Richmond Boatworks, Chinese Bunkhouse and the Japanese Duplex buildings at Britannia.
(www.city.richmond.bc.ca/britannia)

May 27, 7.30 p.m./Vancouver Historical Society @ Vancouver Museum
"Vancouver in View: Its Planning and Development History."
Speaker: Gordon Price.

June 4-5/Heritage Society of British Columbia, Annual Conference
Members, \$135; non-members, \$150.
June 4, 9.00 a.m. - 8.30 p.m.
Shadbolt Centre, 6450 Deer Lake Ave.
Burnaby BC V5G 2J3
Workshop: Cultural Landscapes - Precincts, Places & Parks.
June 5, 9.30 a.m.-3.30 p.m. Deer Lake Park
Heritage Walk: Discovering the Cultural Layers. <http://www.heritagebc.ca/>



The 301-317 block West Hastings in its heyday, c.1907. Flagpole indicates burned building, damaged building is to the east.

Courtesy of the Walker/Eveleigh family

Heritage is Always at Risk

The April 25th fire in the 300 block Hastings Street demonstrated yet again the vulnerability of our built heritage. The buildings, the first structures built on Hastings Street, were on Vancouver's heritage register. These pioneer three-story buildings were in excellent shape with exquisitely detailed facades. Tragically, the building at 311-317 West Hastings was completely destroyed; as reported in the Vancouver Sun, it was "a wonderful building with an amazing sheet metal facade to it, lots of pressed tin. It was very rare in Vancouver because the original overscale pediment that sat on top of the building was still intact."

To Our Members

At a recent planning meeting, the Heritage Vancouver Board reconfirmed its primary commitment to advocacy and programming. To best use its volunteer resources, the Board has decided to change the newsletter to a bi-monthly distribution. This will allow us to maintain the high quality newsletter that you have come to expect while enhancing our ability to focus our resources on advocacy of important heritage issues.

We will continue to keep you up to date basis through regular or electronic mail, web information and/or telephone contact.

Sincerely,
The Board of Directors



Chinatown: Tomorrow's Community by Design Today
May 20 2004, 7:30 p.m.
Vancouver Museum.
Gerry McKeough et al, City of Vancouver, Heritage Planning Department.

We're declaring summertime: no indoor meetings are scheduled for the months of June, July, & August. Instead, we propose to have a monthly tour & expedition to take advantage of what will probably be a swell summer. Proposed expeditions include the Urban Heritage Trail, featured in our April newsletter, and the Murikami House & Britannia Shipyard in Steveston.

Once again, on Sunday August 1, Heritage Vancouver will be participating in the Gay Pride Parade, Vancouver's largest parade.

Information will be posted to the HV website, as well as mailed to HV members without email.

Much has happened since the publication of this year's list of Top Ten sites. Much of the news is good!

To ensure that you are absolutely up-to-date on what's happening where, we've reviewed all sites — including the heritage buildings within Hastings Park/PNE site — to provide you with this report.

Burrard Bridge

Burrard Bridge is back on the front burner of public discussion. At its May 4th meeting, Council approved the City's participation in the Canada-BC Infrastructure Program Seismic Upgrading Project. This adds \$2.5 million to the \$2 million to make the bridge earth-quake proof. But, as a sign that the City may rethink bridge strategy, Council directed staff to give more priority to heritage and other aspects of the Bridge; as reported in the Vancouver Courier, City staff promise to return to Council in Fall 2004 with up to four options for improving the bridge for pedestrians and cyclists.

For Heritage Vancouver, the issues remain the same: how to accommodate increased numbers of cyclists and pedestrians without compromising the heritage architecture and iconic status of the bridge. To date, the solution has seemed an either/or choice — either outriggers, which could deface the bridge and cost more than \$10 million, or the closing of two lanes of traffic, which would cost less than half that amount and have less impact on heritage.

In this either/or scenario, HV, adamantly opposed to outriggers, has supported the closing of traffic lanes. However, if the City will consider other scenarios, then HV proposes a complete rethinking to find the most creative solution to the issue — for example, a new dedicated crossing for pedestrians and cyclists or dedicated additional structures under Granville and/or Burrard bridges.

Charles Dickens Elementary School

(3351 Glen Drive)

Inclusion in Heritage Vancouver's Top Ten list sites put the media spotlight on Charles Dickens and the other schools at high risk of being damaged in an earthquake — at last count 47.

The issue is: do we have to demolish our historic schools in order to ensure safety in an earthquake?

Heritage Vancouver believes that demolition is an “incredibly wasteful and wrong-headed” approach because seismic upgrades can satisfy safety concerns in a cost-effective manner. For example, as reported in the Vancouver Courier, a feasibility study on Kerrisdale Elementary School, classified as a Heritage A building, indicated that upgrading would require \$5.8 million, compared with \$7.2 million for a replacement school or \$6.5 million for a smaller capacity school. HV believes that the Vancouver School Board should identify the best candidates for preservation in terms of architectural and historical importance and develop a comprehensive policy for these older, needy buildings.

Firehall No. 15

(E. 22nd and Nootka)

We hear that a Collingwood resident group is working to retain the building for possible community use.

First Shaughnessy District

Demolition of “A” & “B” listed character houses in the First Shaughnessy District continues apace: the total at press time was 46, an increase of 4 from our report of February 2004. Heritage Vancouver continues to be concerned about the loopholes in policy and process that allow the continued assault on the area.

Heritage Vancouver is also concerned about the lack of incentives for retaining heritage in First Shaughnessy and is therefore watching carefully the development at “Greencroft,” an A listed house at 3838 Cypress St. For the first time, the City offered a trial incentive — a transfer of bonus density — in approving the development. Greencroft will be painted and finished with its two infills this summer. First Shaughnessy residents are currently split on the effectiveness of this bonus. We will report further on the City's assessment of this trial and future developments.

Hastings Park/PNE sites

The City unveiled its four approaches to the future of Hastings Park and the PNE on April 25th. All four approaches build on the key elements of the 1997 Restoration Plan; Heritage Vancouver is disappointed that none of the options retain fully the Livestock Building and hope that this may still be rectified.

HV prefers approach No.4, which retains both the Roller Coaster and the front portion of the Livestock Building for mixed commercial and community use. Approach No.3 is less desirable because, while it retains the Coaster, only the facade of the Livestock Building is retained. Approach No.2 also retains the facade of the Livestock Building but eliminates the Coaster; Approach No.1 eliminates the Livestock Building, Playland and the Coaster all together.

The timelines of this consultation process have been extremely tight: the questionnaire only became available in late April with a request for response by May 5. A report goes to the Parks Board May 17 and to City Council May 18. Council will consider a request from Hastings Racecourse to install 600 slot machines at the track at its June 8th meeting. Once Council has resolved that issue, it will quickly make a final decision re: Hastings Park/PNE.

The City's Hastings Park/PNE website (www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/pnepark) says that they “want to hear from you”; we therefore advise you to fill out the city's questionnaire (available at Vancouver Public Library branches and community centres) and send it in regardless of the date! Also participate in any random surveys of public opinion if invited.

Imperial Oil Service Station aka

Malone's (2210 Cornwall Avenue)

We're hoping for good news here. Malone's Sports Bar restaurant, the current leaseholder of the 1970 wing of the building, is actively promoting its retention. Earlier this spring, Malone's sent mailouts to 6,000 households, held two block parties, circulated petitions and sent letters to City Council. Hopes are high that the owner will consider retention options.

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presents

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A hit with locals and tourists alike, the Vancouver Museum Store has an eclectic blend of art, jewelry and exhibit related merchandise, from hand-crafted First Nations jewelry to beautiful coffee-table books, you will truly find the best gifts in history.

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1100 Chestnut St., Vancouver
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tel: 604-736-4431 ext. 387
www.vanmuseum.bc.ca

Advocacy update, cont.

Heritage Vancouver continues to support retention of this landmark building, arguing that even the developer will benefit from the superior economic return on a character development.

Pantages Theatre

(152 E. Hastings Street)
Rescue for the Pantages Theatre may be at hand if the negotiations with Worthington Properties Inc. complete successfully. The rescue of Pantages depends on successful redevelopment of the four adjacent properties to the west of the theatre, also bought by Worthington. If the deal goes ahead, the Pantages Theatre would be restored at a cost of \$3+ million.

Heritage Vancouver is reasonably optimistic about this news.

VGH Nurses' Residence

(2880 Willow at W.12th)
[entrance at Heather]
The fate of the Nurses' Residence is now known, albeit not in full detail. The VGH land, including the Nurses' Residence, has been sold to local developer Concert Properties for \$18.5 million. The intent is to partly demolish the Nurses' Residence and build two residential towers worth an estimated \$80 million. The remaining portion of the nine-story Nurses' Residence will contain 153 residential units, while a new six-storey concrete building will house 94 suites. Concert Properties will submit development plans to the City in the near future.

This could be good news but we'll have to wait to see the extent of demolition in the plans.

Wing Sang Building

(51 E. Pender St.)
Terrific news re: the Wing Sang building. Bob Rennie, king of the condo market, recently purchased the building (for \$1 million). Rennie grew up in East Vancouver and has always been fascinated with the Wing Sang building and its unique second-storey 'door-to-nowhere' facing the street. As reported in the Vancouver Sun, Rennie plans a full heritage restoration of the brick structure, possibly installing his offices and an art gallery in the front building, and converting the six-storey building in the rear to loft condos.

Woodward's Department Store

(101 W. Hastings Street)
On one hand, there is not much to report in a formal manner about Woodwards: proposals are due late spring; City staff will make a recommendation to Council on RFP selection early summer. On the other hand, Heritage Vancouver is concerned that the public open houses originally scheduled for June may not be held. The City website re: public process now says only that "community meetings *may* [italics ours] follow to review RFP selection."

Join Heritage Vancouver

Membership valid one year from date of issue. Members receive a monthly newsletter and reduced rates for tours and other activities.

Charitable donation
#1073758-52.
Membership fees are not tax deductible.

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www.heritagevancouver.org

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YES

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