

FALSE CREEK URBAN HERITAGE TRAIL GUIDEBOOK



Welcome to the False Creek Urban Heritage Trail. An Urban Heritage Trail combines elements of a greenway, public and community art, and heritage interpretation. Its approach to heritage is one that emphasizes the landscapes and buildings where history took place, rather than isolated artifacts. We hope your visit will create the incentive for the city government of Vancouver to establish a False Creek Urban

Heritage Trail as a physical reality. The Trail covers a lot of ground, so we recommend doing it in pieces or taking your bike. For those who don't want to depart too far from the seawall, we recommend taking a "shortcut" which involves jumping directly from stop #19 (Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaducts) to stop #46 (Concord Pacific). See the schematic map on the next page for the route.



1

Totem Pole at the foot of Cypress Street -



Carved by Mungo Martin (1881-1962), this 100+ foot totem pole is a replica of the one given to Queen Elizabeth II. The original totem stands in England's Windsor Great Park. Mungo, a hereditary noble of the indigenous Kwakwaka'waku people, was renowned for his woodcarving skills. Mungo's production of ceremonial artifacts and cultural monuments contributed to the survival of aboriginal traditions during the period when the Potlach ceremonies were prohibited by the federal government and practitioners jailed. This totem pole was dedicated in 1958, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the colony of British Columbia (1858). The figures and faces illustrate the mythical ancestors of the Kwakwakawaku people. In the near future, the Squamish will be erecting a carved figure on the water to greet visitors to their traditional territory, and the Maritime Museum [see next entry] will develop new exhibits on the Squamish people and their maritime history.

2

Heritage Harbour in Vanier Park -



Associated with the Maritime Museum built in 1958, the harbour contains a floating collection of historic vessels including fishing boats, racing boats, steam tugs, and rescue vehicles significant to the marine history of the BC coastal waters. Vessels of international interest such as HMV St. Roch, an 80 ton RCMP patrol boat built at the Burrard Dry Dock in 1928, are located on the grounds. In service until 1948, the St. Roch was the first boat to traverse the Arctic Ocean from west to east, and the first to circumnavigate the continent of North America. It was acquired by the City on its retirement in 1954 and has been housed in purpose built shelter since 1966. A contemporary voyage by the St. Roch II to retrace the route taken by its predecessor on that Arctic journey disclosed the relative absence of ice in the Northwest Passage, seen by some as evidence of advancing global warming. The SS Sea Lion, a tugboat, has also joined the harbour's flotilla. The Sea Lion was used in police action to prevent immigrant Sikhs challenging Canada's immigration laws in 1914 from disembarking off the SS Komagatu Maru. Vanier Park is the site of a 1885 photograph of a Chief of the Squamish nation, Khahtsalanough (1877-197) after whom the Kitsilano district is named, and his wife, Swanamia, rowing a boat just off shore. The Vancouver Museum and Planetarium complex, and the City of Vancouver Archives are also located in the park.

3

Vanier Park Forest -



This five acre forest on the shore at the False Creek mouth was once the heart of the Kitsilano Reserve of the Squamish First Nation. The Reserve was created in 1870 by the colonial government of James Douglas to encompass the aboriginal village site of Sun'ahk or Snauq. In the colonial period, the 37 acre Reserve was the area roughly bounded by First Avenue, Chestnut Street, and the waterfront on the east. The aboriginal Snauq village, established around 1839, consisted of houses, the community's longhouse, a cemetery, and orchards. The 4,000 square foot longhouse, where the Sun'ahk potlach ceremonies took place, sat directly under what is now the Burrard Street Bridge. Between 1900 and 1913, the provincial government, planning to develop major industry projects on the site, coerced the aboriginal residents into selling their Reserve lands. The village and the longhouse and cemetery vanished. That alleged sale was recently litigated by the First Nations people, resulting in the Government of Canada



agreeing to pay out some \$92 million dollars to the Squamish First Nation as compensation for a number of lost reserve sites, including the Kitsilano one. The Reserve land was logged in the early 1920s by unemployed ex-servicemen and served as an RCAF storage depot during the World War II years and after. The present woodlot is the largest in the False Creek basin, and is significant as a wildlife habitat which includes coyote. The woods are used as a campsite by homeless people. Photo: Chief Jack Khahtsalanough in a dugout with his wife Swanamia at the foot of Chestnut Street 1895

4

Burrard Bridge -



This major public work project opened Dominion Day, July 1st 1932. There was a parade and a band concert, and a dance on the bridge in a summer evening illuminated by lanterns. Burrard Bridge is the most decorated in the city: the steel structure was camouflaged with massive concrete pylons embellished with marine motifs in an Art Deco style. Each end of the bridge is flanked by enormous representations of the cylindrical glass and wrought iron braziers that soldiers in World War I used to keep warm. The undercarriage of the ridge could accommodate a second deck where architect Peter Reese has suggested the creation of what he calls "Snauqway," combining a pedestrian and cyclist bridge with a mix of First Nations interpretative kiosks, commercial enterprises, and art studios.

5a

Kitsilano Trestle -



Following the railway tracks from the intersection of First Street and Fir Avenue, a section of track leads to the left into the Molson Brewery property. The track turning to the right dead-ends on a high point of land overlooking False Creek. This is the place marking the former location of the Kitsilano railway trestle which spanned the Creek. Built in 1886 by the CPR, the trestle became an obstacle to navigation since it could not swing open to accommodate tall ships. The CPR was granted more property on the north shore of False Creek in exchange for remedying this problem. The Kitsilano trestle was used as part of the electric inter-urban tram route, the BC Electric Railway, and then demolished in 1982. Just to the left of the trestle head is a huge tree stump buried in black-berry bushes, a remnant of the old-growth forest that once covered the False Creek basin down to the water's edge.

5b

Grove of Cultural Harmony -



At the mouth of False Creek, near the bridge's south footing, is a park called the Grove of Cultural Harmony. This little park, built on the former derelict house-boat flats of the depression era in the shadow of the bridge by the water's edge, honours Vancouver residents who have contributed to a civic spirit of intercultural unity.



6

Federal Fisheries Wharf



The wharf between the Burrard Bridge and Granville island is home to part of the west coast fishing fleet. The number of boats has been reduced by the crisis in the salmon fishery caused by over fishing and destruction of habitat through urbanization and forestry activity. At certain times of the year, one can buy fresh fish and shellfish off the docks. The wharf was centre of the ancillary marine industry on the Creek and was once home to the first drum seiner used in the BC fishing industry.

7

Granville Island -



Granville Island is among the most highly successful examples of adaptive reuse of industrial land in Canada. In the colonial period, Granville Island was a mere tidal sand bar at the mouth of False Creek, shored up and filled in by the federal government beginning in 1915. Reconstructed under federal leadership in the 1970s as a "people place", Granville Island features the most successful public market in North America. Art galleries, craft studios, the provincial art college, theatres, a hotel, and marinas are operated under the direction of the Granville Island Trust. Its redevelopment was initiated with \$25 million of federal investment and has been self-sufficient ever since. The Island's planning and design work were inspired by the writings of E.F. Schumacher (*Small is Beautiful*) and Christopher Alexander (*A Pattern Language*). As a commercial district not dominated by multinational chains, Granville Island attracts over eleven million visitors a year. Three original heavy industries have been left intact on the Island, including a cement plant, as a link to its former sixty year history as an industrial site.

8

Alder Bay -



The Bay was the location of a major Squamish and Musqueam fisheries harvesting site. The First Nations people constructed a fish trap that enabled fish to enter the Creek at high tide, leaving the fish stranded at low tide. Recently, the Friends of False Creek created an experimental habitat enhancement project on the Bay's low marsh-end by replanting native sedge and rush plants. A commemorative kiosk for the Trans Canada Trail project, which runs along the False Creek seawall, is located in Alder Bay along with an artistic plinth erected by the local neighbourhood. The Bay is a favourite spot on the Creek for people learning to kayak and may become a marina for non-motorized boats in the future.

[NOTE: From the entrance to Granville Island, one can catch a heritage interurban streetcar east past the next eight sites. The streetcar operates every half hour from 1 to 5 on weekends and holidays from mid-May to mid-October, and costs \$2.00 return. (One can also get off once mid-way and get back on.) There are stops at Leg-in-Boot Station and Ontario Street near the Vancouver Salt Building. The final destination is Science World.]

9

False Creek South -



This highly successful medium density, ground-oriented housing development on the south slope of the False Creek basin is an enclave home to over 6,000 people. Redevelopment of False Creek south began officially in 1973 with an extensive public consultation process initiated by a newly elected group of municipal councillors. The area is characterized by diversity of tenure, a range of housing costs, good design, and generous public amenities. Despite these desirable features, and high resident satisfaction, the City has not replicated this model demonstration of liveable community, in part because the densities are not high enough to maximize revenue in today's land market. Now, twenty-five years later, the community is embroiled in conflict with the City's real estate division over proposed land lease increases of up to 500%. The huge group of properties located between the Granville and Cambie street ridges was originally acquired in a complicated swap involving the province, the municipality, and CP Rail. The province got the top of Burnaby Mountain for the Simon Fraser University campus, land owned by the City of Vancouver for a future cemetery.



This area of False Creek, and the adjacent upland Fairview Slopes, used to be plagued by terrible dense fogs and smog, the product of wood-burning saw mills that ringed the Creek. The bee-hive burners are gone, the air quality much better and the water quality, while still poor, is much improved.

10

Charleson Park -



While not a truly "naturalized" park, Charleson conveys an idea of how bold park design can build an imaginary wilderness in the middle of an urban environment. A favourite haunt of children the park features a major constructed waterfall and a "green" pedestrian bridge over the 6th Avenue traffic corridor. Ironically, this re-made wood is named after Donald Brims Charleson, a logging contractor hired by the CPR to log off the forest covering the south slopes of False Creek from the water edge to the basin rim, now the east-west transportation artery of Broadway. Until recently, boats could moor illegally in False Creek off the park because the City had no jurisdiction to evict squatters at this location.

11a



Mackie Creek & Mackie Landing -

Named after William Mackie, the first European to settle in the central-south part of the False Creek watershed in 1874, the creek outfall was used to bring in supplies for Jeremiah Roger's logging camp further up the slope and to dump logs into the Creek. Later it was a favourite swimming hole for children from Mt. Pleasant. J.S. (Major) Matthews, who served as the archivist for the City of Vancouver for over forty years (1930-1973), lived in the homestead at Mackie Creek with his family from 1899 to 1902. Today it is Leg-in-Boot Square, a commercial space named after a severed leg that washed up on shore in the late 1800s. Leg-in-Boot Station is nearest stop for the heritage streetcar (see #8).



11b



Garden City Junction -

Reg Jennings, a local resident, began construction of this garden from the garbage and blackberry canes at the south foot of the Ash Street in 1995.



12



City Works Yard -

The City's Engineering Department operated this yard beside the Cambie Street bridge in the 1920s. The yard is being phased out and relocated to the head of the Creek on the flats. An incinerator on the southwest corner of the site had a ramp that enabled residents to drive up and dump off their garbage. This unsorted material was burned and left highly contaminated soil. Another contaminated spot coincides with the former asphalt plant close to the water's edge. This part of southeast False Creek has been designated as a future park largely because the cost of environmental clean-up of the parcel would make the price of the land prohibitive for market housing or other usage. Some have suggested the City Works Yard be made into an infrastructure theme park, to educate people about the role and environmental effects that infrastructure plays every day in our urban lives.

13

Canron Building -



The Canron Building was built in 1935 by the Western Bridge Company and contained 135,000 square feet of space under a clear span. It was demolished in 1998 despite a vigorous campaign by the heritage community to preserve and redevelop this unique structure. Some \$100,000 was spent to salvage irreplaceable parts of the building for adaptive reuse in the future. Pre 1935, the property housed the Coughlan's shipyards, and was adjacent to the Dominion Bridge Company operations, the builder of many of the girders for Vancouver's bridges and office towers. The first shipyard here was the largest shipyard in the British Empire and played a crucial role in building the naval tonnage required for World War I. A considerable number of women worked in nearby war industries. The site is afflicted with serious soil contamination which is in the process of being remediated.

14

Southeast False Creek, Bayard Sailing Sloop -



The waters of the southeast corner of False Creek are the final resting place of the SS Thomas F. Bayard, a sailing sloop built in Brooklyn NY in 1880. This tall ship worked as a pilot boat, sealing schooner, light ship, and provisoner in the Klondike gold rush. The City moved the Bayard from the slip where it was under restoration to a mooring buoy. On September 6, 2002 it washed ashore and sank, ending 122 years of service on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

Photo: Former berth of the SS Bayard. See also photo next page.

15a

Domtar Salt Building -



Built in 1931 with old-growth timbers, the Salt Building was formerly a sawmill operated by Sauder Industries. Both this structure, and the Vancouver Mill Machinery plant to the west, are the last remnants of False Creek's significant industrial heritage. The building was constructed on top of a platform over False Creek. Earth fill was dumped around it later. The waters of the Creek still lap at its pilings underneath. The building will likely be used as a community centre for the Southeast False Creek neighbourhood once the proposed residential development is built.



15b

Southeast False Creek, BCER railcar -



The site is home to a vintage electric streetcar, one in the first inter-city train network in North America - the B.C. Electric Railway (BCER). This early non-polluting system linked the towns and villages of the Fraser Valley from Vancouver city to the community of Steveston on the Fraser river and across the delta to the town of Chilliwack. The area served today is known as the Greater Vancouver Regional District and encompasses parts of the Fraser Valley Regional District as well. The BCER operated from 1891 until the early 1950s. This restored streetcar runs in the summer time from its new garage shed in front of Science World to Granville Island. There are ambitious plans to expand the route all the way around the north side of the Creek to Stanley Park.

15c

Southeast False Creek, Molson Indy -



From the glorification of the automobile to a model of sustainability, it is the hope of many that the southeast corner of False Creek will be reborn as a new type of urban community which exists in harmony with the environment. The noise from this international motor car race over a midsummer weekend is dreaded by local residents, yet attracts thousands of spectators and generates considerable revenue for the city.



16

Creekside Park -



The park at the farthest reach of the eastern waters of False Creek is the site of an art installation created by Collective Echoes, a group of young artists. Their project, "Systems of Sustenance," highlights the respectful food-gathering practices of the First Nations people who depended on a dynamic interaction with a healthy natural environment. A McDonald's restaurant located across from the Creekside Park sits on the site of the old public market building which had two Edwardian period "ginger bread" towers and which was demolished after WWI. Since 1996, a group of youth and environmental technologists have worked to establish an Eco-Café and Sustainability Centre on this location to highlight technologies that will likely be utilized in the sustainable community proposed for the Southeast False Creek.

17

Science World & Expo '86 Folklife Centre -



The southern part of Creekside Park was the former site of the Folklife Centre, a part of the Expo'86 international exposition held in 1986. The Folklife buildings were later transported to Gabriola Island and made into a mall. The only trace of Expo'86, apart from the Skytrain, is the Science World geodesic dome, whose programs make it a popular draw for tourists and local residents alike. This world fair brought Vancouver to the attention of offshore investors, and resulted in the conversion of single-room occupancy hotels (lived in by people with limited means) into tourist hotels for out-of-town visitors. Several of those evicted subsequently died, and the fair changed Vancouver forever. One of the Creek's major sewer outfalls, which contributes to its poor water quality, is located under Science World. Most sewers in Vancouver are of the combined variety, that is, in a heavy rainstorm untreated sewage is flushed along with storm water directly into the receiving body of water.

18a

Thornton Park/ Women's Monument -



Thornton Park is named after Sir Henry Thornton, president of Canadian National Railway from 1922-1932. The park has some of the oldest specimen trees in the city and contains an art installation, "Marker of Change" , by Beth Albers. The artwork is a memorial to the eleven women murdered at Concordia University in Montreal in 1989. It is protest against violence against women everywhere.

18b

Thornton Park/ CN Railway Station -



Behind the park is a neo-classical revival building serving as a bus depot and train headquarters and the transcontinental passenger train yards. The CN Railway station, opened in 1919 as the Great Northern Railway Station, is now designated a heritage building of the first order. It once had a sister station one block to the north, the Union Station, designed in the Beaux-arts style and opened in 1917. The Union Station was offered to the City in 1965 for a museum and library. The City turned it down and Union Station was demolished. Its site is now part parking lot, part wasteland.

Photo below: The filling in of the False Creek Flats.



19

Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaducts -



This six lane highway is all that was built of a freeway that would have razed much of the Gandview-Woodlands and Strathcona neighbourhoods and the historic Gastown area in order to connect the suburbs with the city's central business district. A campaign by the Chinatown community and others to stop the freeway led to the 1972 defeat of the Non-Partisan Association (NPA) who had controlled city council for almost thirty years, and their replacement by a new group – TEAM (The Electors' Action Movement). The freeway was halted – but too late to save Hogan's Alley, Vancouver's only black community enclave near the corner of Main and Georgia. *(Note: If you want to stick to the Seawall, we suggest that you now proceed to stop #46 – Concord Pacific.)*

20

Artists' Live-Work Studio -



This part of the Mount Pleasant area has a number of buildings zoned as "live-work" space. The original live-work concept was developed to enable artists to own affordable housing which could be customized to facilitate small scale art manufacturing activities using industrial materials and processes not permitted under residential zoning. Live-work housing units are somewhat cheaper than ordinary condominium apartments but still not very affordable to the practising artist. A re-created dry creekbed symbolizing the Brewery Creek which flowed through this neighbourhood and emptied into False Creek is built on 5th Avenue between Scotia and Brunswick.

21

Native Education Centre -



The Centre is designed with the traditional architectural characteristics of an aboriginal longhouse and is an important educational resource for the urban First Nations community. Active since 1975, the Native Education Centre offers adult education and cultural programs ranging from land use and resource planning to aboriginal language literacy. The grounds feature a First Nations heritage garden illustrating native plants used for sustenance and ceremony by indigenous peoples.

22

Brewery Creek -



Scotia Street and 6th Avenue is the site of an old brewery built in 1908 and a soda plant that used the pure creek water. Brewery Creek was first dammed in 1867, and water transported to Burrard Inlet by means of a flume to provide fresh water for boilers at the Hastings Mill plant. Also located here is one of several historical cairns [see next page] along the Brewery Creek historical drainage route celebrating and describing Mount Pleasant history. (See www.lesliefield.com/bchs/) The chain of cairns was created by the Brewery Creek Historical Society and historian Bruce MacDonald. There are a number of other cairns at various locations along the Creek's historical drainage. The original creek mouth near Scotia Street and 1st Avenue was the site of two slaughterhouses torn down in 1904 to make way for railway expansion.

Photo below: Mount Pleasant looking north on Main Street, 1889.



23

Western Front -



The Western Front Lodge at the corner of Scotia Street and 8th Avenue has been a focus for the alternative arts community in Vancouver since 1973. The Front is one of the founders of the artist-run centre movement in Canada, and has earned an international reputation for showcasing video, performance art, new music, installation and other art forms. The building was built in 1922 by the Knights of Pythias, an American fraternal order. Major restoration is planned in the near future.

24

Mount Pleasant's Community Fence & Garden -



The community garden at the corner of 8th Avenue and Fraser Street became the site for a community art project in 1993-94 to help protect and beautify the garden. Organized by artists Pat Beaton, Lycia Trouton and others, the Mount Pleasant Fence project involved some four hundred residents who carved fence posts that symbolized what was significant to each of them. The pickets were installed as fencing around the Garden. Through this art making, people without wood-working skills - children, parents, seniors, people with disabilities, residents from many ethnic background - became part-time sculptors and, in the process, strengthened their sense of community.

25

Finning Campus Parcel -



The Finning Corporation, a manufacturer of heavy equipment, collaborated with the City to redevelop a 27 acre property on the False Creek Flats, one of several to eventually cover one third of the land area of the Flats. The City implemented comprehensive new zoning to facilitate development of the parcel into a commercial complex for the emerging high tech and computer sector. One company, QLT, a biotech firm, soon moved in. As a result of that rezoning, the Province relocated the Skytrain station planned for Broadway and Glen to this location, necessitating a rerouting aligned through the Grandview Cut. However, as international markets in the high tech sector failed, the redevelopment plan was shelved. Finning then donated most of its property to post-secondary institutions which are now taking the lead in developing the parcel for educational use.

26

China Creek Ravine & Maddams Ranch -



China Creek Park is the former site of the China Creek ravine where the old stream flowed into False Creek. A five acre agricultural operation known as Maddams' Ranch, farmed by Charles Cleaver Maddams, was located here around 1888. The Maddams' farmhouse was the first house built in Mount Pleasant and reachable only by boat in the early days. The ravine later became a city dumping ground and later this park. It had been proposed that the China Creek be "daylighted" - that is, re-created by redirecting its stream along a channel flowing out of Trout Lake into the Grandview Cut, to eventually empty into the False Creek near Science World. However, with Skytrain construction in the Grandview Cut, it is unlikely that China Creek will see the light of day again.

27



Columbus Monument -

This tiny plaza, graced with a statue of Christopher Columbus as a boy, is a gift from the city of Genoa, Italy, and built in collaboration with the local Italian community. The plaza honours the memory of Supreme Court Justice Angelo Branca (1903-1984), boxing champion, lawyer and judge, and leader of the Italian community. This monument is one of the city's small secrets and certainly the most difficult Vancouver public space to gain safe access to in the midst of heavy truck traffic.

28



Grandview Cut -

This corridor was dug out around 1913 to increase rail access and the earth used to fill in the tidal flats at eastern end of False Creek. Some ninety years later the Grandview Cut supports a diversity of flora and fauna. Despite the fact that the Cut is not easily accessible, it has become a symbol of the regenerative power of nature for the green space-starved east side of Vancouver, and proposed as a greenway and natural stream corridor. Residents and environmental activists alike were horrified when the Province changed the alignment of the Skytrain route and redirected this new section through the Cut. Vast swaths of trees and vegetation were uprooted to build the track and station.

29



Grandview Uuqinak'uw Naturalized Schoolyard -

This lovely combination of a butterfly garden, grove, and community growing plots has been in progress since 1998. The schoolyard now has a Coast Salish longhouse with open sides, an ethnobotanical garden of plants commonly used by First Nations, and mural paintings. The project was initiated by Illene Pevac and Tracy Penner in collaboration with teachers, children and parents at this largely First Nations school. Schoolground naturalization projects are beginning to occur all over the Lower Mainland, many facilitated with money and support from Evergreen (formerly the Evergreen Foundation). For more information, see Evergreen's web site at www.evergreen.ca.

30a



Mosaic Creek Park -

This sparkling urban oasis at the corner of McLean and Charles Streets is built on three vacant lots purchased for the project by the Vancouver Park Board. Mosaic Creek park was created in 1996 by a group of over 300 residents led by Sarah White, and artists Glen Andersen and Kristine Germann. The centerpiece of the park is a stream bed made of brightly coloured mosaic pieces and 'found objects', and fringed with indigenous plants and benches. As a collaborative art project, Mosaic Creek Park is a model for other communities to adopt.

Refreshments -

You have travelled halfway round the False Creek basin and are now heading west. Before you visit the north side of False Creek, which includes Vancouver's Edwardian townsite and pioneer ethnic neighbourhoods, and the future city rising from the edge of the downtown core, would you like some refreshments? Here are two which have a city-wide reputation: Uprising Breads Bakery Co-operative [1600 block Venables Street] and La Casa Gelato International Ice Cream Factory [1000 block Venables].

31

Pedestrian bridge over the Great Northern railway -



This pedestrian overpass between Raymur Avenue and Glen Drive is the product of direct community action in the 1970s by parents in the public housing project who were concerned at the risk to their children who had to cross the railway tracks in order to go to Kiwassa school. The mothers demanded that the City and the railroad put in a foot bridge so the children could cross safely. It was only after the women blockaded the tracks that the mothers got their way and the overpass was built. In the colonial period, this area of low-lying land was used as a portage route between False Creek and the Burrard Inlet at high tide.

32

Stamp's Place (Raymur) Public Housing project -



This 376 unit high density housing development stretching over four city blocks along Campbell Avenue was built in 1967. The housing project, first named Raymur Place, is the product of the misnamed urban renewal schemes of the 1950s and 1960s which gutted the inner city neighbourhoods of most north American cities. Large areas of downtown were expropriated and demolished and the housing replaced with blocks of high density concrete apartment buildings. These public housing projects quickly turned into ghettos for the poor and dispossessed. Canada's urban renewal program was abandoned by the federal government after intensive citizen lobbying across the country. In Vancouver, the actual number of people displaced is not known. 835 units were built in the Raymur project and in the Maclean project, beginning in 1959, five blocks to the west. Another large project was built at the city limits, miles to east. The City later added the Raycam Community Centre to Stamp's Place to provide recreation and community development activities for the residents of the project. Across the street is the Rectory of the Sacred Heart built in 1905 by the Italian community.

33

33. Russian People's Home -



A plain auditorium on Campbell Avenue is down the street from the Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church, with its sky-blue traditional onion shaped dome. Built in 1940, this Russian community centre was purchased from the Croatian community by the Federation of Russian Canadians at the end of World War II when that group's population began returning to Europe. Around the corner, at 805 East Pender, is the Ukrainian Cultural Centre, at one time the Ukrainian Labour Temple. Between the wars, this end of Strathcona was heavily populated by Russians and Ukrainians of often conflicting political views.

34a

Strathcona Rehabilitation Project 1971-1975 -



An original partnership among three levels of government and the community, represented by the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association (SPOTA). Its purpose was to formulate and implement a \$4.9 million rehabilitation scheme to replace urban renewal expropriation and demolition with neighbourhood improvement and rehabilitation. Two million dollars each was allocated to public works and housing rehabilitation assistance. The Project operated out of a site office at Hawks and East Georgia Street. Two hundred and thirty homes were upgraded at a cost of \$700,000 with the majority of homeowners investing more from their own pockets than they received through the grant/loan rehabilitation assistance formula. The city spent some \$2.5 million

on sidewalks, sewers, and streets upgrading which had not been maintained since 1958. The SRP was the prototype of federal programs for neighbourhood improvement and rehabilitation introduced across Canada in 1973. SPOTA went on to build 47 affordable housing units on all available vacant lots in the neighbourhood, utilizing the first "infill" design permitted in the city, eg, three houses on two adjacent lots and family homes on single 24 foot lots.

34b

Strathcona Linear Park, 1974-75 -



The park is a green east-west corridor winding its way through Strathcona, from Venables street to commercial Chinatown. Conceived as a safe pedestrian walkway through the community to commercial Chinatown, and designed by Don Vaughn and Tad Yeung, the Linear Park was financed with uncommitted funds from the Strathcona Rehabilitation Project. The design linked street ends and vacant lots, crossed intersections and borrowed pieces of boulevard; it also prevented truck traffic from using residential streets. In 1978, the work of the Strathcona residents in their community received the Massey Foundation Award for Excellence in the Urban Environment. In the 1980s, the small row houses built for railway workers and others which bordered the park along Hawks avenue were purchased by a new generation of Strathcona residents. Note also the mosaics in the sidewalks, here and elsewhere in Strathcona.

36

Strathcona & Cottonwood Gardens -



This garden complex is Vancouver's premier community gardens project. The property has an interesting and complicated history. Originally, the site was the dump for city garbage on the flatlands reclaimed from False Creek which lapped up against Malkin Avenue. During the Depression decade, the area was as a "hobo jungle," a camp of unemployed single men where Reverend Andrew Roddan from the First United Church set up soup kitchens to feed the transients who rode the rails looking for work. Community garden construction began in the late 1980s on the rough site of the first Adventure Playground in western Canada. The playground, modeled after postwar European examples, had been built as an interim land use a few years before by the Strathcona Community Centre Association while an intensive consultation process took place with local residents and government agencies over what to do with the land. The result was rezoning from industrial use, the relocation there of the City's main fire hall, and affordable housing for seniors and families. The unallocated portion was later transformed into the Strathcona Gardens, which features a state-of-the-art eco-pavilion with composting toilets, an orchard of heritage fruit trees, individual family plots, a wildlife marsh, and regular education events. The gardeners removed tons of old debris and hauled in fertile soil to transform the site into an oasis in the city. On the south side of the Strathcona Park, which contains some of the largest trees on the reclaimed tidal flats, is the satellite Cottonwood Garden created with assistance from the Environmental Youth Alliance in the mid-1990s. The Strathcona and Cottonwood Gardens and garden wetlands are also a wildlife habitat and a wide range of predators - including coyotes and raptors - live here.

Photo next page: Reverend Roddan and the residents of the hobo jungle.



35

Schara Tzedek Synagogue 1917/ Gibbs Boys Club 1947



Located at Pender and Heatley, this building served as a focal point for the Jewish community before it began relocating to the Oakridge District. In 1990, after serving as the Gibbs Boys Club for a number of years, it was converted into condominiums. The project is an example of the adaptive reuse of a heritage building.

37

Mau Dan Gardens Housing Co-operative -



The Mau Dan Gardens is one of several housing co-operatives of innovative design built in Strathcona and the nearby downtown Eastside in the last thirty years. The built configuration of the large site of land leased from the City resembles a historical village enclave. Every townhouse has a walled courtyard garden. Architect Joe Wai has played the role of "community architect" here and in other award winning projects in Chinatown and Strathcona over the past three decades. The land on which the Co-operative sits - between Pender and Keefer, east of Gore - was cleared of houses in the first phase of the urban renewal process.

38

Sun Yat-sen Garden & Park -



The renowned Sun Yat-sen Gardens was constructed without nails or screws from traditional materials by Suzhou craftsmen sent by the Peoples' Republic of China. The Ming period (1368-1644) Garden was completed in 1986 - the first full-sized Chinese garden built outside China. The Garden and adjoining city park are named in honour of Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Kuomintang and first President of the Republic, who visited Vancouver twice and whose local headquarters built in 1920 still stands at the corner of Gore and East Pender Street. The garden and park are linked to the Chinese community centre complex. The heritage buildings in this section of East Pender street feature many examples of adaptive period architecture, such as the Chinese Freemason Building at the corner of Carrall and Pender built in 1901.

The World's Narrowest Building -



Said by Ripley's "Believe It or Not" to be the narrowest building in the world, the Sam Kee Building was constructed in 1913 by Chinese businessman, Chang Toy (aka Sam Kee) in defiance of City authorities who expropriated most of his lot in order to widen East Pender Street. The building is only 1.8 metres wide. It currently houses an insurance business. Too narrow to accommodate customers, the proprietor served them on stools outside on the sidewalk through bay windows. The glass blocks in the sidewalk which allowed light into the underground steam baths housed in the basement below were recently damaged by workers carrying out a City contract. Harassment of Chinese residents and business people by City inspectors and police was a common occurrence for many decades. Many of the buildings built along East Pender Street late in the nineteenth century were built on pilings over False Creek before its edges were filled in.

Shanghai & Canton Alleys -



Shanghai Alley and its compatriot to the west, Canton Alley, were once home to self-contained dormitory enclaves for single Chinese men. The enclave included a large theatre. Since Chinese immigrant labourers paid a federal levy called the "head tax" - which increased from \$50 to \$100 to \$500 - the tax effectively prevented single immigrants from bringing their wives and families to Canada. In 1923, a law was passed that prohibited Chinese persons from immigrating altogether; this federal legislation was not repealed until 1947, largely as result of Chinese-Canadian service to their country in WWII. The original Charter for the City of Vancouver also excluded Chinese and First Nations people from voting in municipal elections, and of course women did not have the vote. The Chinese community constructed the buildings on short alleys that could be quickly barricaded to protect residents from racist attacks. There are only two heritage buildings remaining on Shanghai Alley, but new seniors' housing and social agencies serving Chinese speaking residents have been built in the last decade. A multi-panel education installation, with a commemorative bell, assists in interpreting the contributions of the Chinese community to the history of Vancouver.



Chinatown Gate -



Spanning East Pender Street, the Chinatown Millennium Gate, is a contemporary arch built to celebrate the new century and was officially opened by Prime Minister Chretien in 2002. It's hoped the Gate will help attract new visitors to a revitalized Chinatown. Another gate was put up in the same location in 1912 to celebrate a visit by the Duke of Connaught. The orientation of new buildings along East Pender Street at this point have been planned with a clear view north, along the old BC Electric Railway tram line, to the wedged-shaped VanHorne building located in the historic Gastown precinct.



Pendera Housing Project & Sun Tower-



The Pendera housing project at the north foot of Beatty Street was developed by the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, led by community activist Jim Green in the early 1990s. Pendera was designed by architect Ron Yuen on the basis of feng shui principles. Across the street is the Sun Tower built in 1912 for Louis D. Taylor, who was also the city's longest-serving mayor. For a brief period, the Sun Tower was the tallest building in the British Empire. It now presides over heritage buildings in the 500 block of Beatty, one of which served as the headquarters of Vancouver's labour movement from 1929 to 1949. An infill development at 550 Beatty Street was designed by noted architect, Bruno Freschi.

Victory Square-



The approximate boundary between the original townsite survey and what became the central business district as the city developed westward, Victory Square has witnessed the city's most turbulent history. Victory Square's attractively landscaped vista of the north shore mountains was the site of a violent battle between the labour movement and police on April 23rd 1935, when Mayor Gerry McGreer confronted a large group of workers protesting conditions in government relief camps and read them the Riot Act. Across Hastings Street, the 1910 Dominion building with its beau-arts roof frames the monumental cenotaph of Victory Square honouring the dead of both World Wars. In 2003, the park was the site of a tent-city of protesters demanding housing for the homeless.

44

The Del Mar Inn -



The small hotel at 553 Hamilton Street is an example of a property owner with conscience. This building has been preserved against all odds as a residential hotel and art gallery by its owner, George Riste, who resisted BC Hydro offers to buy the property as part of land consolidation for its new headquarters fronting Dunsmuir Street. Riste also refused to turn the hotel into an expensive tourist facility during Expo '86. The sign above the doorway reads "Unlimited Growth Increases the Divide." The hotel is now operated by his son. Hamilton Street is named after Lauchlan Hamilton, a CPR commissioner who laid out the original Vancouver townsite while speculating on lots that he himself had drawn up.

45

New Vancouver Public Library -



Located at 350 West Georgia Street at Hamilton, the new downtown library was designed by Moshe Safdie and Associates, and partly resembles the Roman Colosseum. Opened in 1995, it replaced the old library building at Burrard and Robson, long considered a jewel of modernist architecture and now remodelled to house Virgin Music. Six thousand truckloads of materials were moved to the new library. Readers formed a human chain to help move books from the old site to the new. The library is configured with stacks placed in centre of the floor circled by study areas around the outside, and features an airy building-height glass arcade.

46

Concord Pacific -



Concord Pacific is the largest urban redevelopment project in recent North American history. It occupies the former Expo lands which were sold at bargain basement prices by former BC Premier Bill VanderZalm to Hong Kong billionaire, Li Ka-shing, without consulting the City of Vancouver. Li later sold some of the land to the municipality for affordable family and seniors' housing at three times the price he paid. The resulting development, stretching from Chinatown to the West End along the entire north side of False Creek, is seen by the city Planning Department as a successful example of community planning and urban design. Although this ensemble of towers and vacant green spaces is well-liked by pedestrians and motorists on Pacific Boulevard, there is not much of an identifiable sense of place.

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Public Art -



Along the sea wall at the foot of Davie Street is a controversial art installation illustrating images from the history of False Creek. Some residents in adjacent buildings claim the art is ugly and blocks their view. There are several other examples of intriguing public art further west along the sea wall. Henry Tang's work, "Welcome to the Land of Light," explores the connection between fibre optic communication - the Concord Pacific development is fully wired - and the former trading language, known as Chinook, that was spoken up and down the coast. Other art works deal with the moon and the tides and other environmental features of the Creek.

Roundhouse -



This last remnant of False Creek's transportation and industrial history on the north shore was built in 1887 together with railyards and shops by CP Rail in exchange for tax exemption on 75 acres of False Creek real estate. The Roundhouse was saved from the wrecking ball by heritage activists and now serves as a community centre with a strong focus on arts programming. Part of the Roundhouse structure was a turntable that enabled railway workers to shunt locomotives into berths for maintenance and repair. The Roundhouse is home to Locomotive 374, which pulled the first train into Vancouver on the completed CPR transcontinental in 1887. Railroad workers lived in the adjacent Yaletown district, named after a former railway camp in Yale, BC. The City of Vancouver fireboat was berthed nearby; it had its own waterfront stationhouse. Across Pacific Boulevard from David Lam Park, other examples of public art can be found in the sidewalks and the heat vents of the buildings.



Buildings Underneath the Granville Street Bridge -



On Granville Street, immediately under the north end of the bridge, there are two small eccentric industrial buildings which were threatened by demolition so that the City's impound lot could be moved further west, giving Concord Pacific more room to expand. However, thanks to an enterprising pair of building material recyclers, the building on the left has been saved, thoroughly renovated with salvaged materials, and turned into a space for social events.

Living Wall -



This container garden and art project by street youth on the side of the Vancouver Aquatic Centre was organized in the summer of 1997 under the auspices of Farm Folk/ City Folk. It is rather faded now, but is still testament to an experiment in "place-making" that had multiple benefits, including the partnering of youth with master gardeners and the development of their entrepreneurial skills. The site itself was the birthplace, in 1922, of the SS Master, the last remaining wood-hulled steam tug on the BC coast. What is now the Vancouver Aquatic Centre was once the Beach Avenue Shipyard.



Congratulations !

You have now completed the False Creek Urban Heritage Trail. We hope you have enjoyed your tour with us.

If you are visiting Vancouver on-the-ground, not on the Internet, you can take the ferry from the dock behind the Aquatic Centre, across the mouth of False Creek back to the Trail's starting point on the Heritage Harbour beach at the Maritime Museum in Kitsilano. Please note that this ferry route is only available on weekends and holidays between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., with departures every fifteen minutes. An alternative is to take the ferry to Granville Island which leaves every five minutes between 7 am and 9 pm daily. Unfortunately, the ferries do not take bicycles. For more info visit www.granvilleislandferries.bc.ca/.

Credits

The False Creek Urban Heritage Guide was researched, written and produced by Don Alexander, Charles Dobson, Patricia Canning, and Brendan Hurley. Assistance was provided by Laurie Flahr, Charlie Christopherson, Rider Cooley, Bruce MacDonald, Cynthia Lau, The Vancouver Archives, and the Maritime Museum. Funding was provided by the BC Heritage Trust.

Below: False Creek (middle-top) and Vancouver's waterfront 1898.

