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Conservation Guidelines for Modernist Architecture in the Victoria Region

Martin Segger

2019

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# **Conservation Guidelines for Modernist Architecture**

**in the Victoria Region**

**Martin Segger**

**2019**



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## **Project advisory committee**

Chris Gower B. Arch. AIBC FRAIC, MCIP, RPP, architect/planner ; John Keay B. Arch. Architect, AIBC; Don Lovell B.A. (Hons) RMC, March, CD, AIBC architect retired; Steve Barber MCIP, heritage planner retired; Alan Collier, decorative arts author/curator; Beth McDonald, B.A. art historian; Pamela Madoff, former city councilor, urbanist and architecturist; Claude Maurice B. Arch. AIBC architect retired.

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# INTRODUCTION

## The Challenge

"Modernist Heritage" of the built environment is neither well identified nor appreciated by the general public. It does not garner the same enthusiasm as conventional (i.e. 19th C.) heritage buildings. Consequently, as re-development pressures rapidly increase in our urban landscape, a unique cultural resource is under serious threat.

Only recently has Modern architecture been accorded official international "heritage" status. A mere handful of monuments represent the modern period among the 1000 sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List. But the 2016 addition of a seven country portfolio of Le Corbusier designed buildings, unprecedented in term of transnational cooperation, has proven a major breakthrough. Recognizing Modernist restoration work is even more unusual. However in 2015 the prestigious RIBA Sterling Prize in architectural design was awarded for the restoration and extension of the 1950s Sir Leslie Martin's Burntwood Comprehensive School near London.

The *Charters of Athens* (1931) and *Venice Charter* (1964) underpinned architectural conservation methodologies in the late 20th Century. In North America these found expression in foundational documents such as the U.S.A. *Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Restoration of Historic Buildings* (1979) and *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* (2003).

Conservation practice in the western world first focused primarily on the "archeology" of the built resource as defined by expert advice. Following the wholesale destruction of urban landscapes during WWII the Venice Charter placed greater emphasis on context, symbolic values and evidence of use over time. More recent conservation practice has democratized the conservation process embedding it more firmly in the general community planning process. Contemporary approaches to preserving the built environment are therefore underpinned by more deeply considering the sociology of place. This includes shared memories and narratives carried by historical markers such as buildings and landmarks, but also patterns of use. Updates to the Canadian document (2010) have reflected this evolution.

The conservation of Modernist heritage, particularly 20th Century built heritage, is a more recent phenomenon. Current practice now considers ideas articulated for instance in the *Eindhoven Statement* (1990/2002) and work of *DoCoMoMo (Documentation and Conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement)*. Accordingly, Modern Architecture conservation methodologies include a process of research and documentation, a focus on authorship and design intentionality, adaption for carbon efficiency and life- safety, use of improved materials and construction technologies, and environmental sustainability. In addition, the theoretical underpinnings are based on the idea of a moral imperative (i.e. respect for "design intent") rather than an administrative framework of heritage designation and control - which has been very difficult to achieve for the built Modernist heritage.

These guidelines, therefore, apply to new approaches for preserving modernist elements of the urban landscape and presume they are most likely to be "conserved" outside of the normal legal and administrative structures of heritage preservation. However, procedures outlined here are designed to fit within the standard practices of heritage conservation planning, and to intersect with more commonly referenced conservation values and practices.

*Conservation Guideline for Modernist Architecture* is intended for use by building owners, the professional design and construction professions and trades as well as educators, government and civil society.

## Methodology

Standard practice in the methodology of site or monument analysis can be summarized in four steps:

- Describing the historic context
- Defining a Statement of Significance
- Articulating conservation guidelines
- Outlining a conservation strategy.

What follows, therefore, is an examination of how "*authorship/design- intent*" (or "*design-expression*") can fit within each step of the process. This process is

intended to supplement or enhance the standard heritage considerations such as political and social histories, associations with historical events and personalities, rarity, location, visual impact, build quality and site/structural integrity as articulated in *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (2010)*.

**Historical Context:** Noting where the building fits within the evolution of the Modernist aesthetic agenda.

- An appreciation of the stylistic phase (Moderne, Deco, International Style etc.) and the degree to which the overall design works within the vocabulary of the style.
- Links of the design team to the sources of Modernist expression (schools, architects, publications etc.)
- Involvement in major progressive events by which Modernism, nationally or locally, advanced the core values espoused by the Modernist agenda (rationalism, functionalism, egalitarianism, liberal democracy etc.)

**Statement of Design Significance:** as applied in an evaluation of contextual elements (above) to the site or monument.

- Considers reference sources such as documented expressions of design intent by the project authors (builders, users, architects etc.), or those who observed or used it “as built”.
- Articulates design elements as expressions of design intentionality evident in the extant fabric along with a consideration of original production/construction quality and integrity as evident today.
- Assigns a comparative value to both the design intent, its expression, and the quality of the surviving fabric.

**Conservation Guidelines:** provides direction as to management of the preservation process.

- Statement of the framework within which the site or monument will be provided with a sustainable future that preserves or references the original design.
- Underpinning preservation values such as degrees of intervention to be considered: artefactual conservation, rehabilitation, restoration, reconstruction; repair, replacement, retrofit, addition, adaptive re-use, informed re-creation.
- A summary of conservation context: economics, zoning, building codes, energy efficiency.

**Conservation Strategy:** constitutes a practical overview of the resulting work undertaken and its impact on the next life-cycle of the resource.

- Summary of interventions in the as-built, or as-designed, heritage fabric, with an analysis as to how these preserve original design expression.
- Analysis of the resilience, i.e. ability of the monument or site to continue its readability of expression: form, style, detail, within the constraints of its next life-cycle, including economic sustainability, and a maintenance or protection regime.

### This Guide

- Provides a brief narrative which locates the Victoria's Modernist built heritage within European and North American architectural history.
- Illustrates a set of features which characterize Modern design in the local urban landscape.
- Utilizes illustrative case-studies to demonstrate how the history of Modern Movement can be documented, within both a broader world and more specific local context.
- By means of critiques appended to each case-study, analyzes the degree to which the application of specific guidelines and conservations strategies may succeed or fail in respecting the articulated “significance” and also conserving the building or site.

The hope is that the following pages will assist first with identifying and defining modernist cultural monuments in our community, then articulating approaches to their conservation for future generations of users.

Martin Segger  
Victoria, 2019.

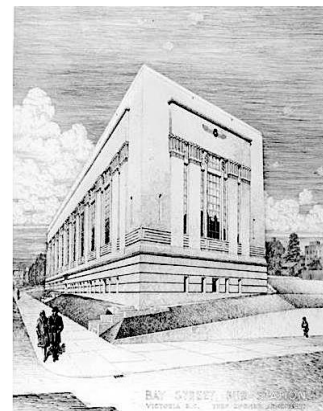
# A BRIEF HISTORY OF MODERNISM

The DNA of architectural Modernism is rooted in the artistic Secessionist Movement of Vienna in the 1890s. The Secessionists, part of a new wave of liberal intellectuals, found inspiration in the flowering of the rationalist enlightenment in the arts, sciences and politics flooding across Europe at the time. They rallied to abandon the entrenched artistic establishments, the stifling constraints of bourgeois patronage, and along with it the creative strait-jacket of history and tradition. Founding members were artist Gustaf Klimpt (1862-1918) and architect Otto Wagner. Wagner published his seminal textbook *Modern Architecture* in 1896. Architect and colleague Adolph Loos released his even more radical polemic *Ornament and Crime* in 1910. So began the search for a reimagined vocabulary of built-form liberated from stylistic references to past “dead” cultures and the search for a new rationalist approach to designing building types and forms expressive of the this new spirit of freedom, individualism and democracy. As Loos proclaimed, ornament “belonged to primitive pre-modern man”.

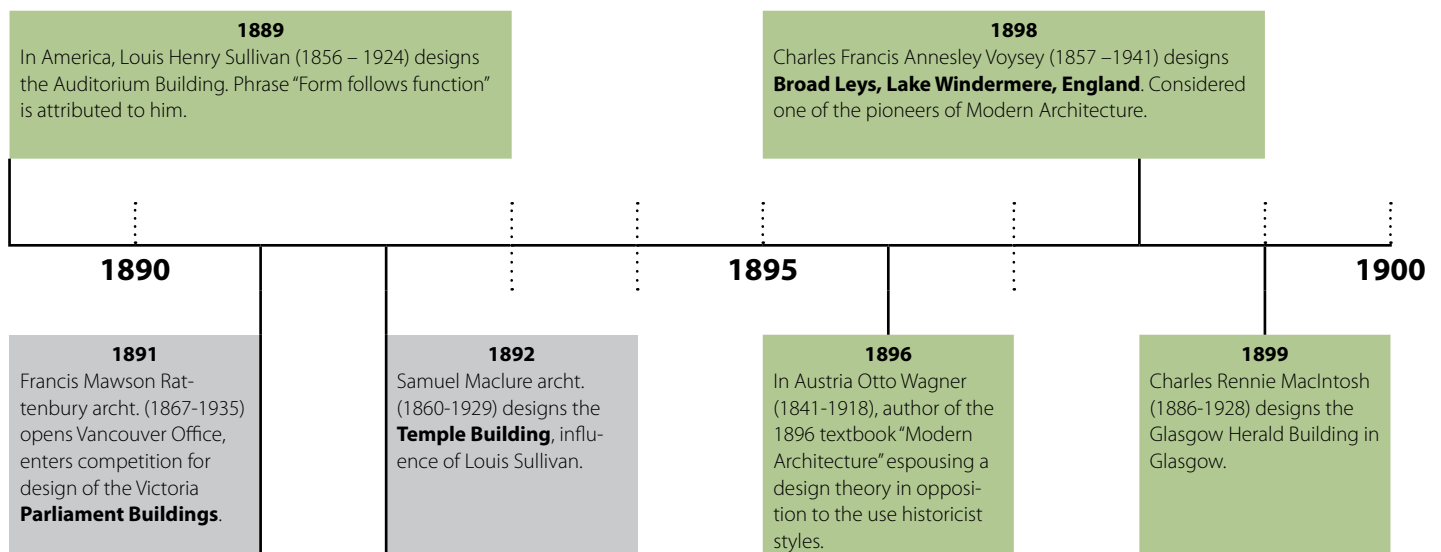
This new spirit soon found its expression in Art Deco, where decoration was reduced to mere surface ornamentation, abstracted from its historical or cultural roots. Art Deco, so named after the most extravagant celebration of the style at the *Paris Exposition internationale des arts decorative et industriels Modernes* in 1925. The style peaked in popularity when applied lavishly at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1933. Deco marks the

Victoria landscape in buildings such as the British Columbia Electric Bay Street Substation (Theo Korner archt. 1928) and the Atlas Theatre (E. C. Clarkson archt. 1936).

The *Staatliches Bauhaus* emerged in Weimer, Germany, in 1919 as a school dedicated to training in all the design craft skills. Principal Walter Gropius had trained under Peter Behrens (1868-1940), noted for his highly functionalist factory designs. Other students were Paul Jenerette (Le Corbusier) and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The radically *Functionalist* abstract style, a response to the “machine age” of mass manufacture, rooted its designs directly in the expressive use of space, and industrial materials such as concrete, glass and steel. A late Victoria expression of these industrial influences was Victoria’s



Bay Street Substation, proposal drawing, 1928. Credit Victoria City Archives





Memorial Arena (Savage, Frame and James archts. 1948). Aerodynamic design for speed - airplanes and locomotives - inspired the almost totally stripped-down curvilinear forms of *Moderne*. *Streamlined Moderne* became the style of preference for airport terminals world-wide, as well as the ubiquitous roadside “diner” across North America. Numerous Victoria examples include the Bay Street B.C. Electric Substation (Theo Koerner archt. 1928) Inner Harbour Imperial Oil Gas Station (Townley & Matheson archts. 1931), the Dr. T.H. Johns House (P.L. James archt. 1943) and the Odeon Theatre (H. H. Simmonds archt. 1947).

Ultimately, however, the search for a Modernist aesthetic vocabulary lies in its links to wider visual arts movements, in particular the Paris centred, but equally anti-establishment theoretical constructs of *Abstract Expressionism*. The work of George Braque (1882-1963) and Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) as they moved into *Cubism*, or the sculptural constructivists such as Russian but Bauhaus based Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), prompted the belief that through the manipulation of form, line and colour one

could participate in a universal aesthetic language subject only to personal expression. This would bridge all ages, languages and cultures: an “*International Style*”. These ideas underpinned Le Corbusier’s 1921 manifesto *Toward a New Architecture*, then formalized in the 1928 meeting, *Congres Internationale d’architecture moderne*, (CIAM) he organized in Switzerland.



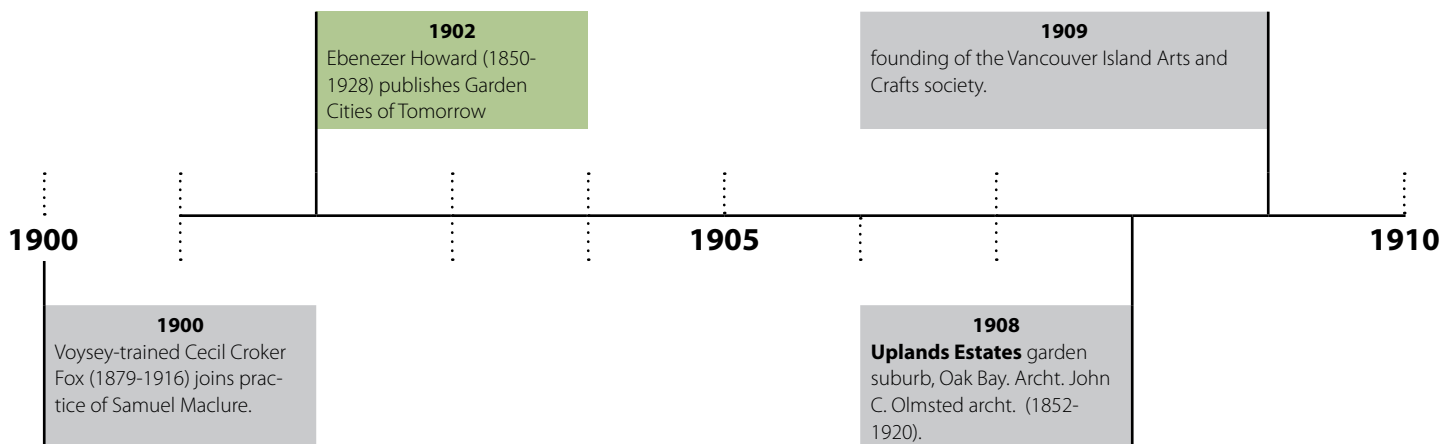
Imperial Oil Gas Station 1931. Credit: Victoria City Archives



Memorial Arena 1948. John Taylor photo 2007



Odeon Theatre 1947. John Taylor photo 2019





Shortly afterwards, the rise of anti-semitism and purge of socialists under the Third Reich dispersed an entire generation of European intellectuals. The Bauhaus closed in 1933, its faculty scattered mainly to Britain and the United States. By the mid-1930s International Modernism was well ensconced in the United States, its practitioners leading some of the most influential schools of architecture.

The well-springs of Modernism in North America were slightly different. Sharing the same enlightenment beliefs in rationalism and democracy, American architects sought liberation from the encumbrances of “Old World” traditions, in favour of a New World idealism. At first expressed in the *Arts-and-Crafts* aesthetic based on local materials and colonial building traditions, what emerged was a new pragmatic environmental functionalism underpinned by belief in the liberating promises of technology. This contrasted with the European attempts to identify the style with Marxist Socialism in Germany, Russia and Holland on the one hand, and state-endorsed fascist corporatism in Italy. Here the eastern American *Shingle Style* found early Victoria converts in the domestic architecture of Samuel Maclure and Francis Mawson Rattenbury. The influential “Chicago School” of architects applied these ideas to a larger scale urban landscape. Louis Sullivan (1856-1924), famous for coining the phrase, “form follows function” espoused an “organic design”, where materials, form (often symbolic) and abstract decoration are rooted in a sense of place and homage to nature. Samuel Maclure’s Temple Building (1892) on Fort Street well illustrated the “Sullivan-esque”. The seminal figure in American Modernism was Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959)

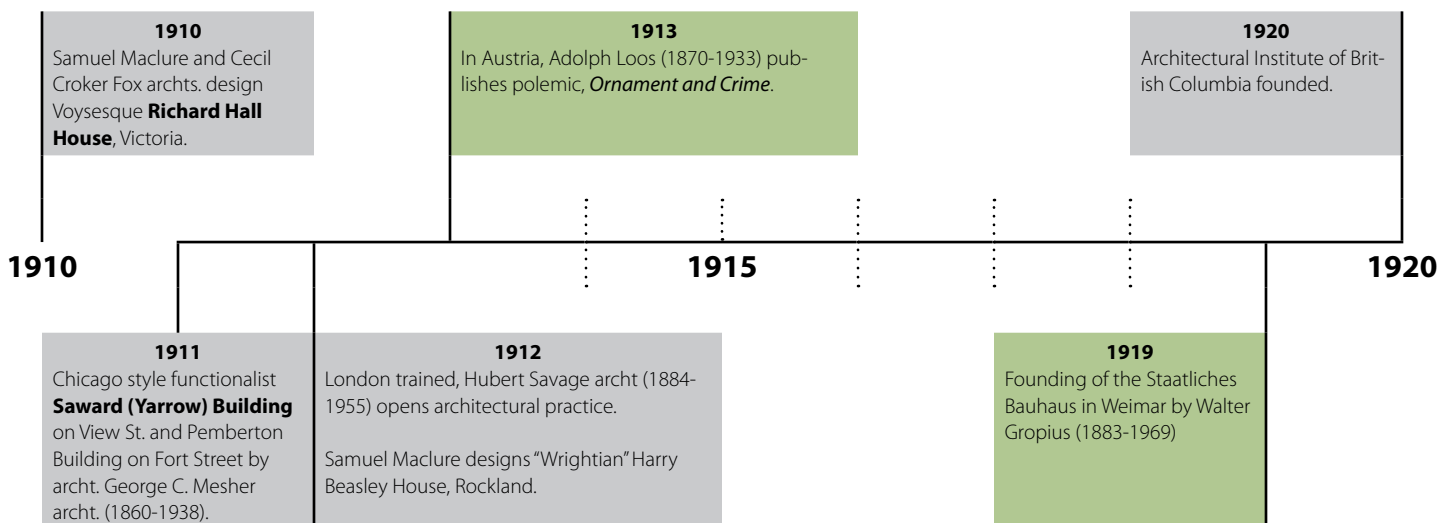


Temple Building 1892. Martin Segger photo 2019

who inherited the Functionalist banner from Sullivan.

Wright, both in his writings and prolific practice gave America a new design vocabulary based on the specificities of use, site, and materials. Samuel Maclure’s H. Beasley House (1913) in Rockland directly demonstrates his interest in Wright’s suburban house types. However, Victoria would have to await the post war practice of John DiCastri to witness Wright’s “Prairie School” influence demonstrated in projects such as the Uplands’ Achtem House (1965) and in commercial work, such as the CNIB Building on Blanshard Street (1951).

British Modernism, similar to American, was Arts-and-Crafts based, generated from the late 19th C. architects and designers such as William Morris, C. F. A. Voysey, C. R. Macintosh and the profoundly influential Glasgow School of Art. In the colonies, British influence was exported, as a spare classicism via the large- scale



institutional projects undertaken by practices such as Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944). Maclure brought in an English partner to his Victoria practice, Cecil Croker Fox, who had articulated with Voysey. The cottage architecture of Voysey, distinguished by its spare use of detailing, emphasis on the roof, and simplicity of form, prevailed in Victoria during the interwar years through numerous practitioners including Hubert Savage (1884-1955), Ross Lort (1889-1968) and the James brothers, Douglas (1888-1962) and Percy Leonard (1878-1978). The Maclure/Fox designed Richard Hall House (1910)) in Fairfield is almost pure Voysey.

### The “isms” of Modernism

The critical literature of Modernism quickly fractionalizes into a plethora of “isms,” each with its own etymological ancestry. However, reading a building through this lens



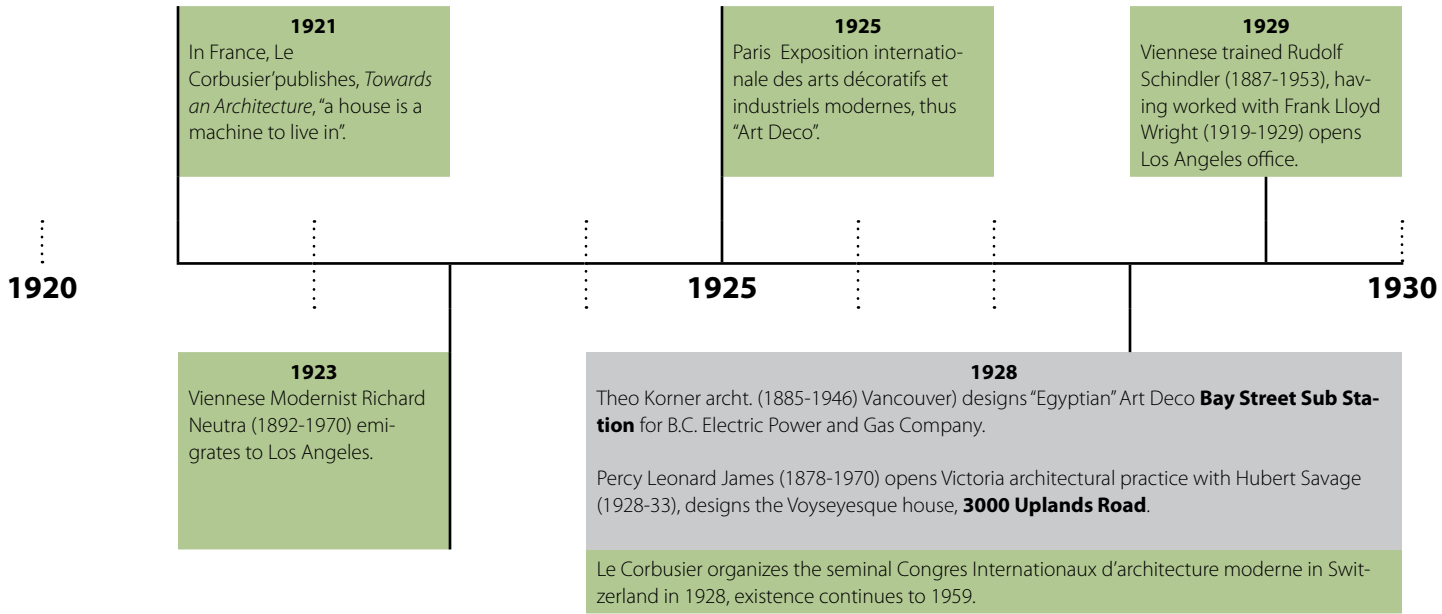
Harry Beasley House 1913. Martin Segger photo 2019



Richard Hall House 1910. Martin Segger photo 2019

helps understand what a designer is trying to do as it helps define the design vocabulary being applied.

**Functionalism** provides an over-arching design rationale that all building components from form to finish to materials must express patterns of use, engineering principles utilized, and the construction elements used. Ultimately **Functionalist** - so also ‘economically efficient’ - the style lent itself easily to the mass production of its building parts and construction systems. Summing this up, the term **Progressive** became synonymous with the **International Style** during the period that the New York magazine *Progressive Architecture* (1945-1995) reigned as an influential proponent of the style and its practitioners. The over-arching term “**International Style**” was actually applied retroactively by Americans academic Henry-Russell Hitchcock (1903-1987) and architect Philip Johnson (1906-2005) in their co-curated 1932 exhibition *Modern*



**Architecture: International Exhibition** at the New York Museum of Modern Art. Featuring the work of Europeans Marcel Brauer, Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, along-side American emigres Richard Neutra and Alvar Aalto, critical elements of the style observable in the projects on display included rectilinear forms, plain unornamented surfaces, open interiors, gravity-defying cantilever construction. Glass, steel and less visible reinforced concrete were the characteristic construction materials. Fabricated composites allowed for the creation of distinctive forms such as umbrella shells, waffle slabs and folded plates. The British Columbia Electric building (T.B.P. archts. 1954) on Pandora and the Bentall Building (Frank Musson archt. 1963) on Douglas Streets in Victoria lie solidly within this refined geometric design tradition.

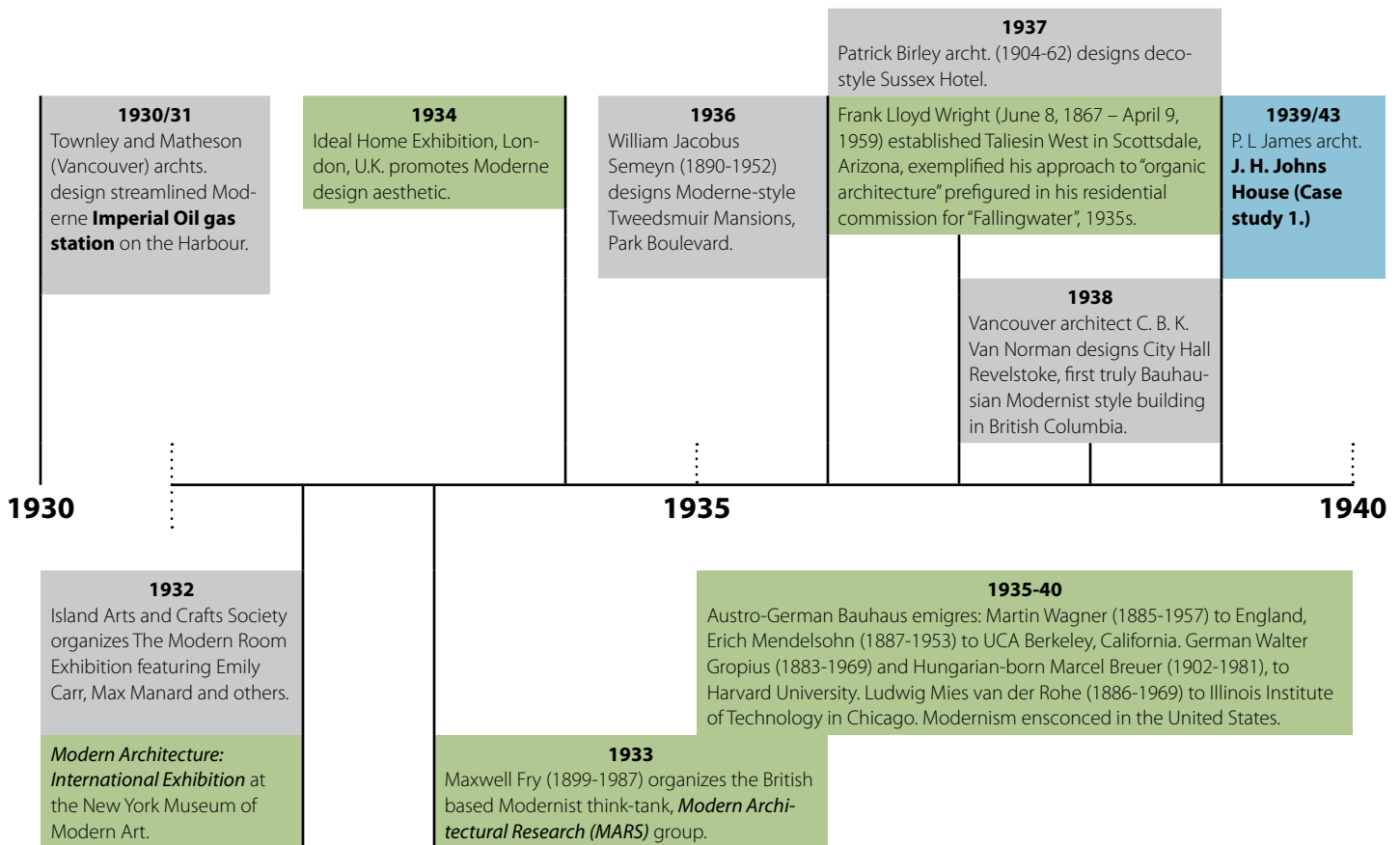
**Formalism** (or **New Formalism**) emerged in the United States during the mid 1950s 1960s in response to the pure abstraction of the International Style. Abstracted classical elements including symmetrical elevations, columns, highly stylized entablatures and colonnades were consciously utilized. The style was favoured for particularly for high-profile cultural, institutional and civic buildings. They were typically constructed using rich materials such as marble and polished granite. Victoria's Dominion

Post Office Building (James & James archts. 1948/52) on Government Street is an example.

**Structuralism** in architecture and town planning referenced the French linguistic anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss' (1908-2009) belief that an overarching system or structure underpins all cultural phenomena. This makes the language of abstract expression universally "readable"; so visible parts must express their relationships to the whole. This thinking underpinned a design approach that



Bentall Building 1963. John Taylor photo 2019







Dominion Post Office 1945/52. Martin Segger photo 2019

built on abstract aesthetic systems to drive form and detail, geometric grids and the proportional relationships of building elements.

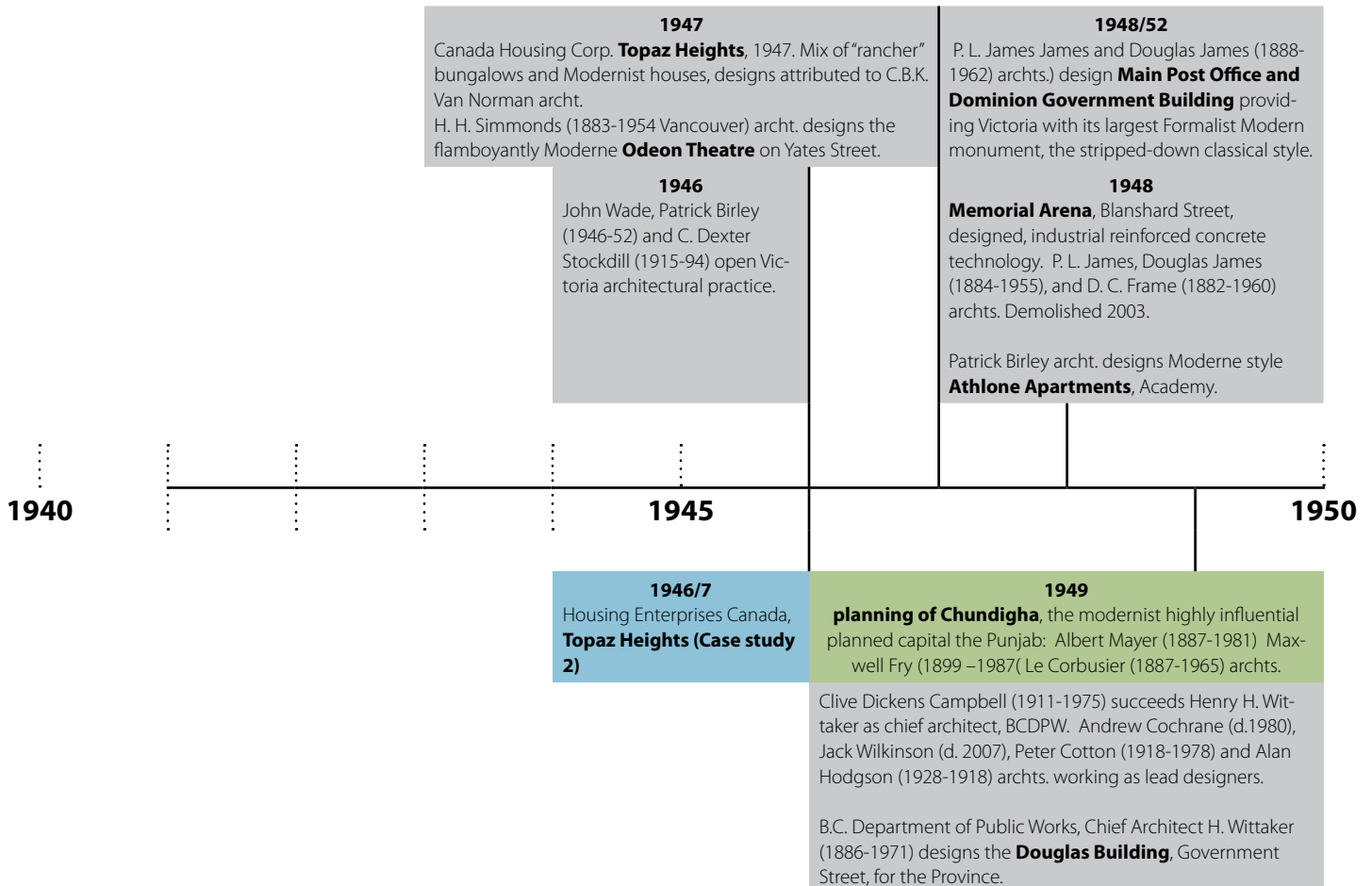
**Brutalism** (from the French “brut” = “raw”), retroactively applied to Le Corbusier early work, was championed in Britain in the 1950s. Its scaled-up expressive forms came to be the preferred style for public institutional commissions such as universities, government buildings and public housing schemes. The style was

bureaucratized as it aligned with political socialism in Eastern-Block countries and many developing nations. Saanich Municipal Hall (Wade Stockdill Armour archts.) 1965) is a local expressive essay in the style.

**Critical Regionalism** is another retroactively applied stylistic variant of Modernism. Its purpose was to critique the “placelessness” of International Style architecture in favour of a design approach which mediates between the global and the local, situating



Saanich Municipal Hall. Ca. 1965. Credit: Saanich Municipal Archives



buildings within a geographical and cultural context. Critical Regionalism describes the design approach applied to the University of Victoria Gordon Head Campus in 1961 by San Francisco consulting architects Wurster Bernardi & Emmons archts.

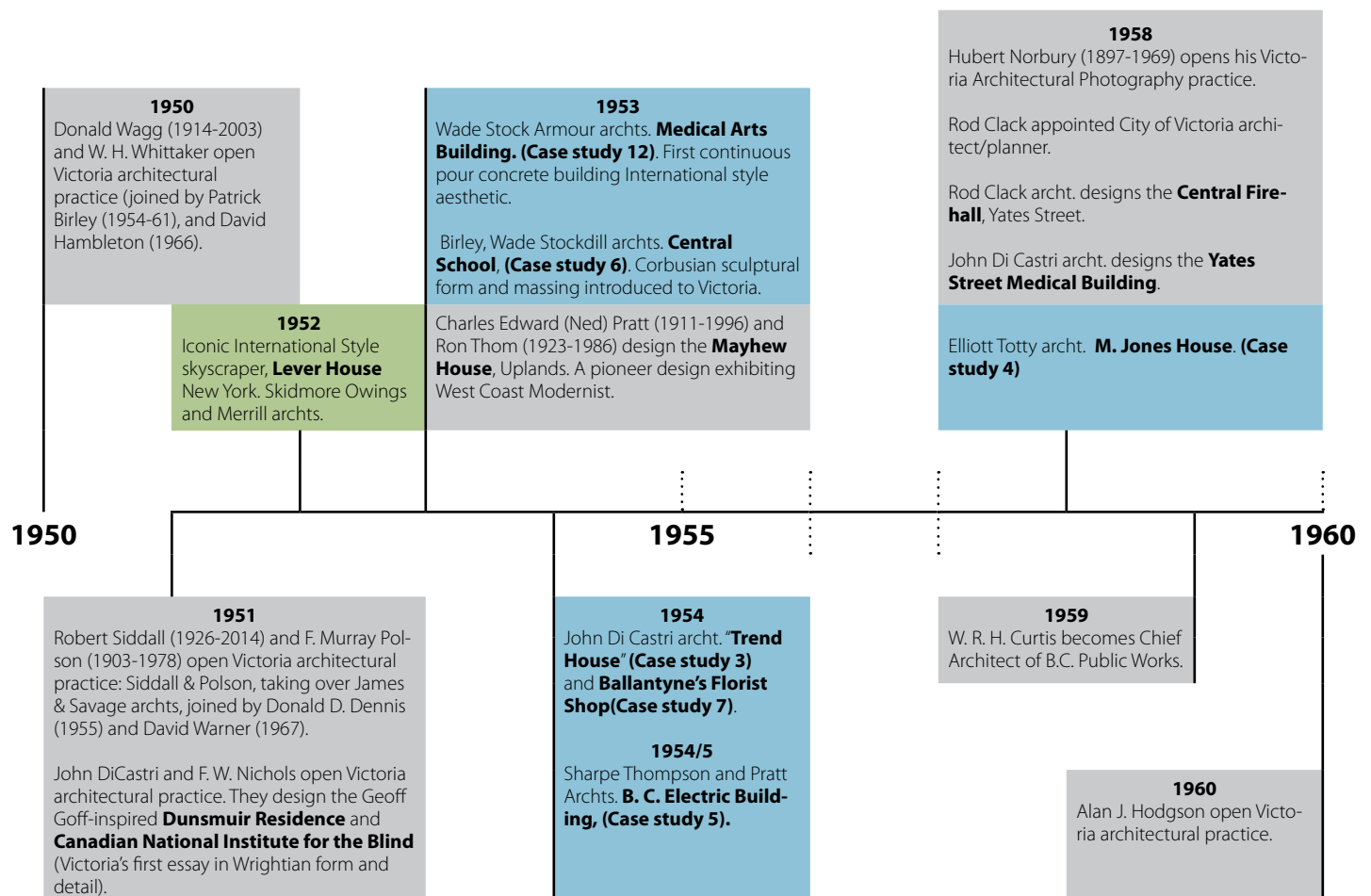
## Victoria's Post-war Modernist Landscape

While Victoria might be perceived as perilously inhabiting the geographical and cultural fringe of the western world, in fact its role as a provincial capital and hub linking communication and transportation networks on both an East/West and North/South axis put it well within the confluence of post WWII economic events and cultural influences. Victoria's architects shared the idealism of their international colleagues: the vision of a new world-order of international peace and economic prosperity underpinned by equality and democracy.

The passage through Victoria of so many people associated with the armed forces no doubt formed the

basis for Victoria's attraction to demobilized soldiers after the War and the doubling the City's population in the 20 years between 1946 and 1966. Industrial growth in the British Columbia prompted the rapid expansion of services provided out of Victoria, from health and educational facilities to law courts. The B.C. Department of Public Works had a long history of serving the entire Province. DPW housed a large architectural office with some projects commissioned from private firms, a practice that intensified after WWII.

As local architectural practices expanded or were established to provide infrastructure for this growth, young architects and design professionals followed from across Canada, from the U.K., and some qualifying and moving out from Public Works. Wilfred Lougher-Goodey, Percy and Douglas James, John Wade, David Warner and David Hambleton articulated in London. Jack Wilkinson trained in Wales, Donald Wagg in Manchester, Frank Poulson in Paris; Robert Siddall, Andrew Cochrane, Peter Stockdill at the University of Manitoba; Alan Hodgson, Rodd Clack, Donald

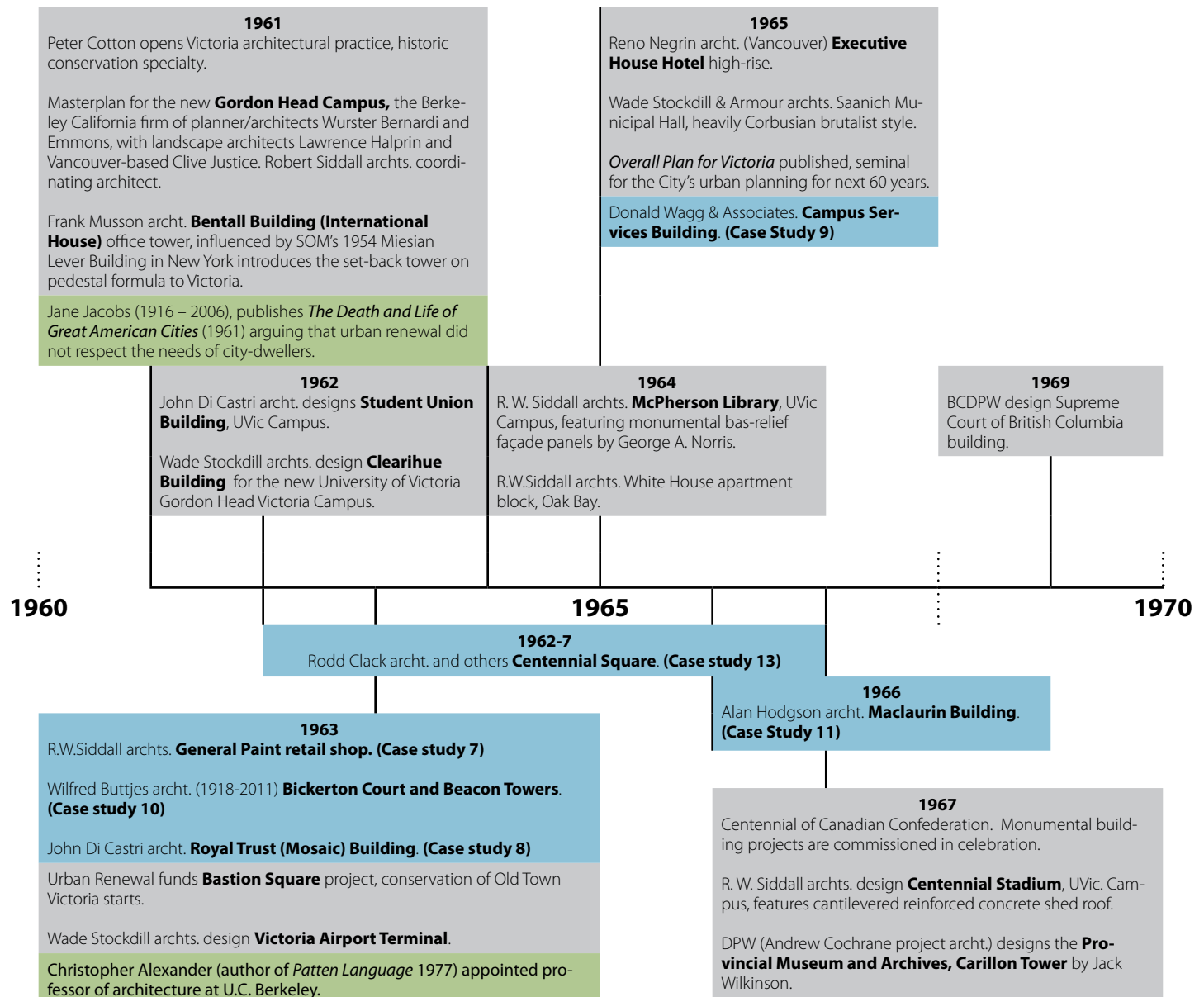


Dennis, Nick Bawlf and Peter Cotton were early graduates of the new UBC School of Architecture of Architecture. Although trained in Public Works Di Castri studied under Wright's disciple Bruce Goff (1904- 1982) at the University of Oklahoma and then set off on an America-wide tour of Wright's buildings, including meeting the master at his Taliesin West studio in Arizona. Along with Di Castri, Hodgson, Cochrane, Cotton, Wilkinson started their careers in DPW.

The small bungalow subdivision, Topaz Heights (1946-1947), designed by the Central Housing & Mortgage Corporation and financed by Canadian Insurance Companies created a new standard for the modern suburban planning. Ultimately over 15 years this program added some 3,213 units to Victoria's housing stock. Slightly more up- market, for infill in Rockland, Fairfield and on

the Landowne slopes, the ubiquitous Rancher became a popular form. It owed its origins to F. L. Wright's "Prairie House". But a unique variant soon defined its own place in the mushrooming suburbs. One of the earliest examples of the domestic West Coast Modernist Style was an Uplands seafront house for local businessman Logan Mayhew designed by Charles Edward (Ned) Pratt (1911-1996) and Ron Thom (1923-1986).

The same team provided the City with its first major corporate example of the International Style, the B. C. Electric Building (Sharpe Thompson Berwick and Pratt Architects, 1954/5) and the first use of machine-made curtain-wall in the Province. Wrightian influence in the City's was expressed in architect John Di Castri's work, Ballantyne's Florist shop (1954) the Royal Trust building (1963) and his highly inventive Structuralist-style "Trend





House”(1954). The major private firms provided for a confluence for American, British, Canadian and local talent. British-trained Don Wagg joined ex-Public Works chief architect William Whittaker to produce severe International Style designs for hospital projects throughout the Province. Wagg was joined by Brit, David Hambleton. Alan Hodgson and Victoria’s first architect/planner, Rod Clack, were UBC alumni. John H. Wade, British educated, joined with Manitoba graduate Charles D. Stockdill in a practice that produced a full range of institutional, public and residential buildings. International Style projects included schools such as Central Secondary School (1953-1954) and the Clearihue Building (1962) for the new University of Victoria Campus, and the overtly Corbusian Brutalist-style Saanich Municipal Hall (1965). This cluster of firms had a profound influence on the City’s Modern landscape. However, a relatively silent but pervasive influence was

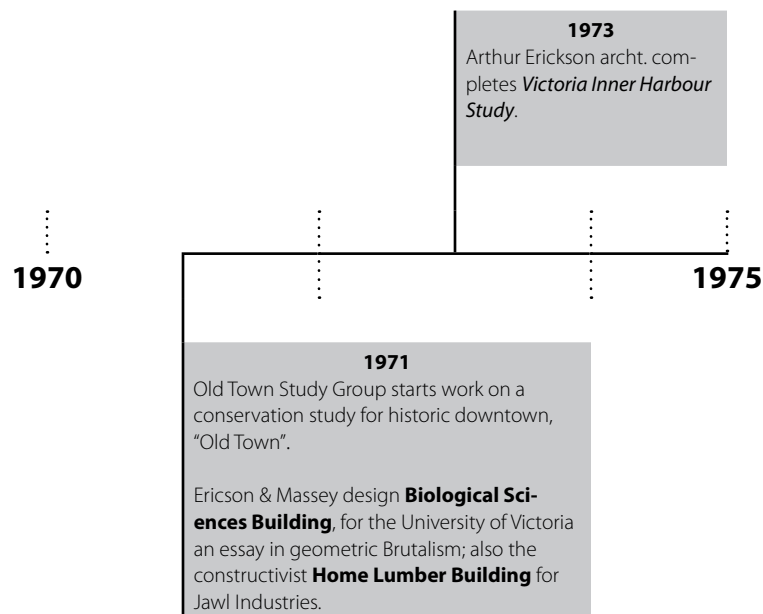


Clearihue Building 1962. Presentation Drawing, Allan W. Edwards 1962. Credit: UVic. Special Collections



Logan Mayhew House 1950. John Taylor photo 2017

the Berkeley California firm of planner/architects Wurster Bernardi and Emmons, with landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. Under the direction of local businessman William Biggerstaff Wilson, University Development Board Chair and later Victoria Mayor, this firm provided the Masterplan for the new Gordon Head Campus (1961) then later City’s urban planning initiatives: Centennial Square (1962-1967), Bastion Square (1963) and the conservation of Old Town. Canadian, but Berkeley trained, landscape architect Clive Justice provided the ground plans for both the new Campus and Centennial Square. WB&E, committed Critical Regionists, insisted that the University commission local architects, applying their own philosophical and design solutions to the University’s evolving needs. The buildings



Bastion Square 1963. Credit: Victoria City Archives ca.1965

themselves were to be subservient to and linked by a garden landscape, an approach reflecting both minimalist thinking in California (particularly at UC Berkeley where Wurster was dean of the architecture school) and a Wrightian Organic approach – the philosophical and aesthetic precepts of the emerging West Coast Style. The conservation plan for Old Town, centering on the two squares, owed much to the mediated social planning theories of Jane Jacobs and Berkeley based Christopher Alexander rather than the rigorous scientific architectural conservation principles of the 1964 *Venice Charter (International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites)*.

The local University of Victoria consulting architect was Manatoban Robert Siddall whose practice was joined by Franklin Polson, who had trained and worked in Paris, London, New York and Vancouver. Londoner David Warner and UBC graduate Donald Dennis would join the firm in the 1950s. Their work was heavily European influenced, from the studied Formalism of the University's MacPherson Library (1963-1974) to the more strident Brutalism exhibited in their Student Residential buildings (1969) executed under Arthur Erickson's brief reign as Campus Consulting Planner. Di Castri contributed Wrightian design solutions for his Student Union Building (1963) and Social Sciences Building (1966.) Alan Hodgson's Arts and Education Building (1966-1978) was a more Corbusier-inspired Brutalism softened via contemporary Scandinavian influences. It should be seen in contrast to nearby the Biological Sciences building, an essay in more expressive geometric Brutalism by Erickson and Massey (1971).



McPherson Library, University of Victoria, Credit: UVic. Special Collections

On a regional scale, probably the most profound influence on the built form of Greater Victoria from these years, and a lasting legacy to this day, was the Victoria Overall Plan (1965). Produced for the Victoria Capital Regional District Committee but closely guided by Victoria Mayor R.B. Wilson and planner Rod Clack, this rationalized the region's growth. Defined by transportation corridors, densities were distributed. Victoria's down-town core was to be reinforced through its new public squares and the preservation of its historic "old town" supported by a ring of auto parkades. On the city's urban boundaries a "necklace" of shopping malls were intended to anchor the growing suburbs and capture the resulting retail trade to enrich the core City's coffers. Within 20 years the City had transitioned from a sedate Victorian/Edwardian townscape to a modern metropolis.



Student Union Building, University of Victoria, Credit: UVic. Special Collections

# VOCABULARY OF MODERNISM: ELEMENTS

## Functionalism/rationalism

The Modern design process is an exercise in abstraction. Driven by a functional program the plan, massing, and ultimately the elevations are driven by decisions around functional relationships of use, density, traffic-

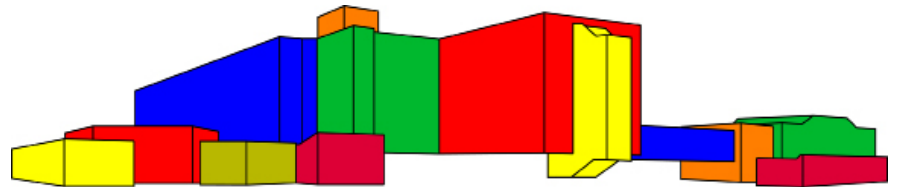
flow, systematically organized along orthogonal spines. These determine aesthetic considerations such as sight-lines and hierarchies of building elements and details.

Arts & Education (MacLaurin) Building 1966

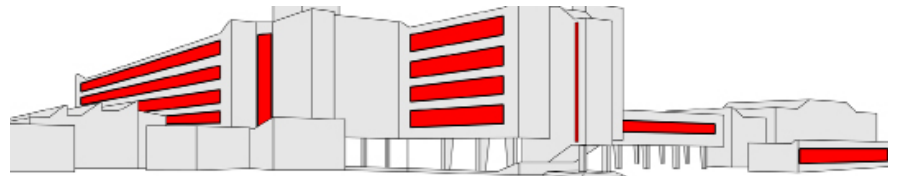


MacLaurin Building 1966. John Taylor photo 2017

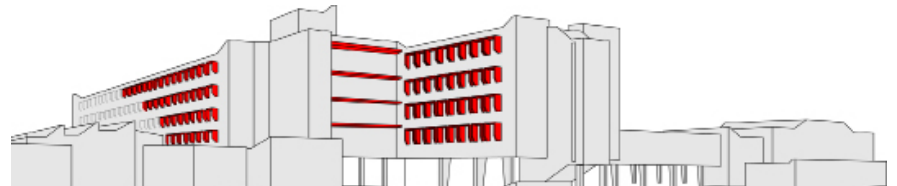
Orthogonal and functional massing



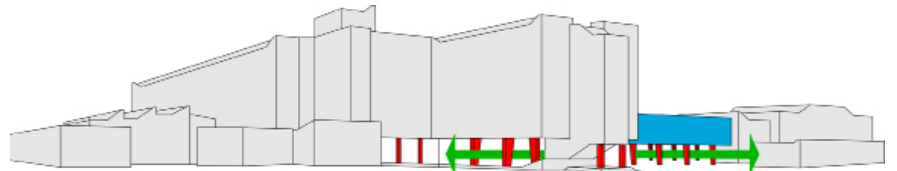
Ribbon windows



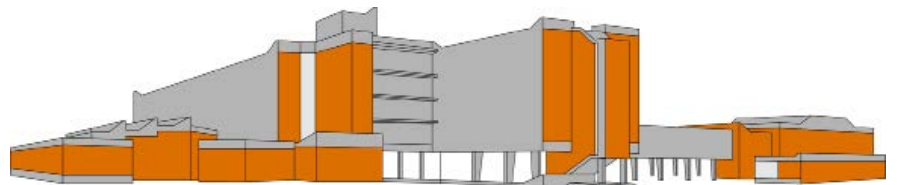
Sun shades/Brise soleil



Pillars/Pilotis



Materials expression





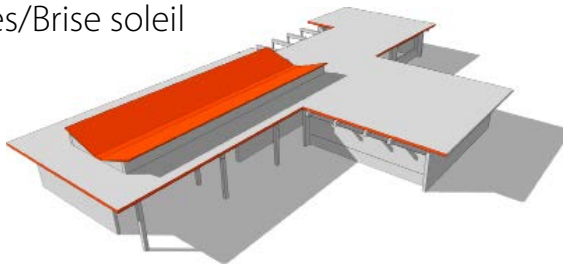
Core precepts of rational functionalism called for frank expressions of construction elements and materials. Exposed post-and-beam structural systems became a hallmark of the “West Coast Modern” style. Floor-to-ceiling glazed walls and free-flowing interior spaces signaled a democratic sense of freedom replacing the traditional hierarchical strictures both within the family and in

work-life. Building surfaces often expressed bold newness of both the building technology and the materials: reinforced concrete, tempered plate glass, extruded steel and aluminum. Newness, symbolic of the promises for a rational (= better) age, was itself imbedded in the industrial or factory (= efficiency) design aesthetic.

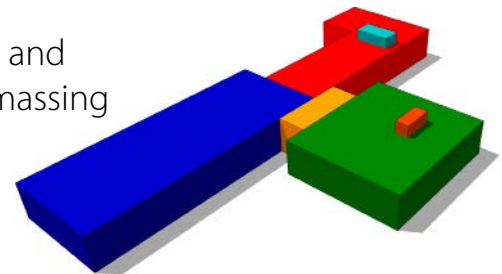
Logan Mayhew Residence 1950/51



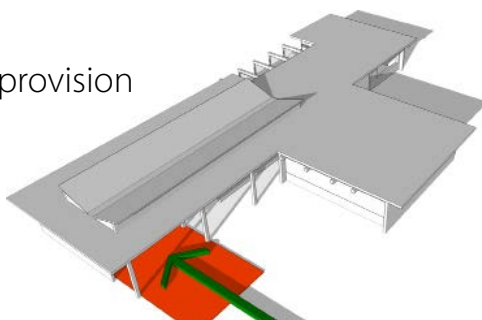
Sun shades/Brise soleil



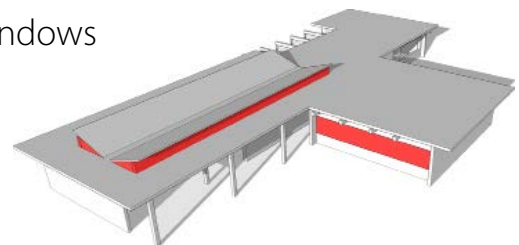
Orthogonal and functional massing



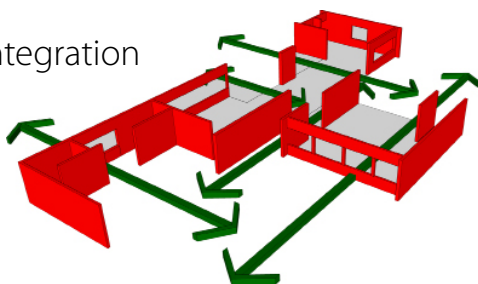
Automobile provision



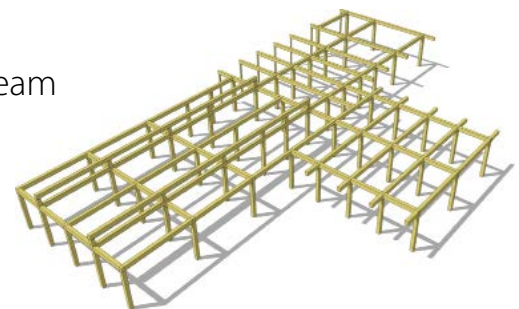
Ribbon windows



Landscape integration



Post and beam



## Responding to climate: overhangs/sunshades



Opening up the building envelope required features to enhance comfort. Extended roof overhangs, balconies were obvious starting points. “Brise soleil” or sunshades took the form of extended slab ledges, cantilevered eaves, louvres – both vertical and horizontal, slats, and window hoods. These elements along with

screens, perforated metal or sometimes composed from decorative concrete breeze-blocks, provided not only shade but privacy. Balcony balustrades served this dual purpose in high-rise apartment buildings, becoming individualizing decorative features in their own right.

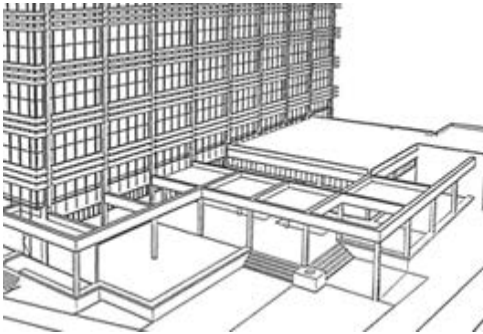




## Inside/Out structural transparency

Transparency, visual connectivity between inside and out, was valued as both a functional and democratic tenet in Modern design. Breezeways, interior atriums, curtain-walled ground-floors, open or glazed stairwells, the ubiquitous “picture window”, even open car-ports,

became major design elements. In addition, these provided opportunities to integrate structure and landscape. In residential design the attached deck, visually extending the living space out into the garden by attached treillage and sympathetic fencing.



## Pilotis/Pillars/Ground floor curtain walls

Lifting the main structure on “pilotis” or pillars was driven by a democratic value of giving the ground level over to the public. Generous setbacks and orienting ground level access around atriums, patios, and plazas was intended to support this idea, and improve the effect of inside/outside transparency.





## Concertina roof: elliptical cantilevered canopies

Elliptical and concertina roof forms, cantilevered canopies and open truss work provided an opportunity to not only celebrate new materials and construction techniques

such as pre-stressed concrete, but give the building a more dramatic presence in the landscape.



## Clerestorey and strip windows

Ribbon or strip windows, horizontal in roof-top and soffit-level clerestoreys, or vertical often to demark stairwells, expressed not only a functional requirement

but provided a creative opportunity to manipulate direct, indirect and reflected light.



## Decorative brickwork, low relief panel sculpture, bold colours

Applied decorative brickwork and low relief panel sculptures softened the effect of concrete wall surfaces. These also provided an opportunity to engage artists whose abstract designs would complement the

conceptual intent of the architect. "Sgraffito", mosaic and decorative metalwork were all popular mediums. Balconies in particular provided a ready opportunity for such displays of creative applied craft-work design.



# CASE STUDIES

## Case Study 1

### Dr. T. H. Johns House Oak Bay, Victoria, 1943

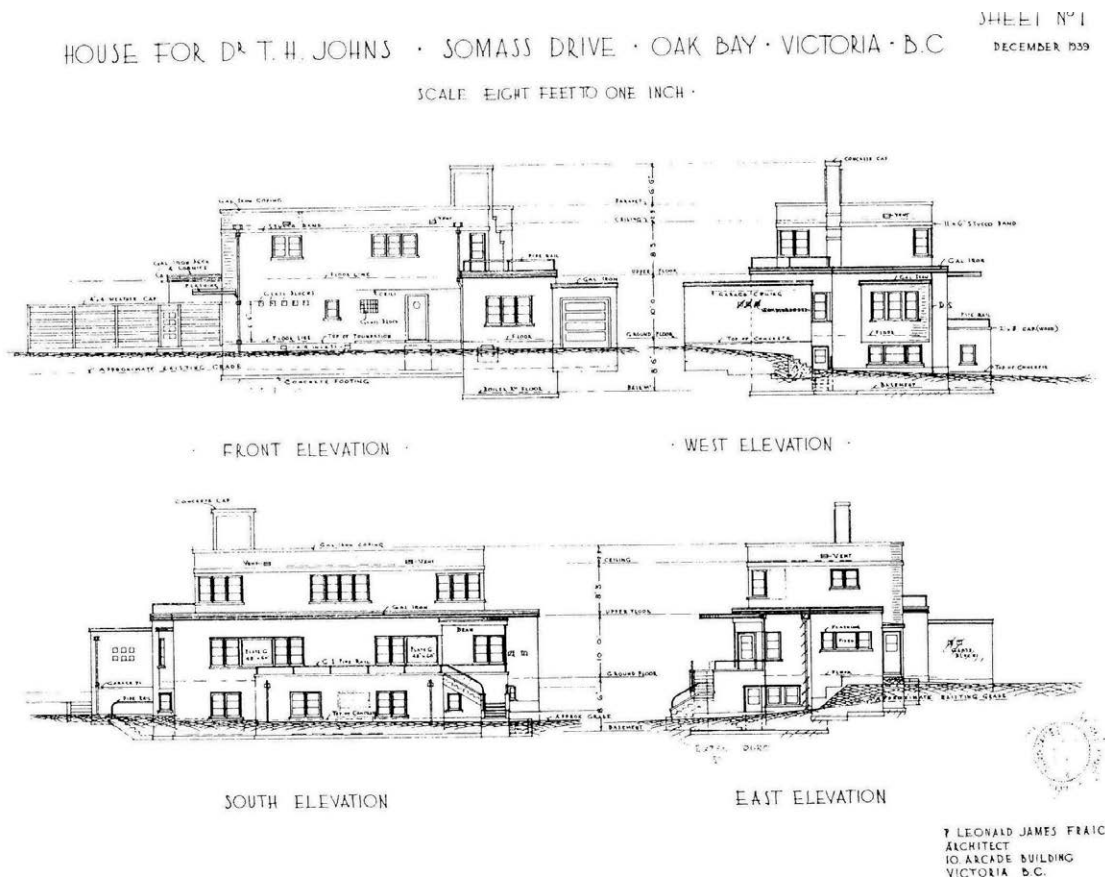
Percy Leonard James architect (1878-1970),  
Renovation and Restoration 2015, Leonard Cole owner/  
designer



T. H. Johns House, south elevation, 1943. Photo courtesy L. Cole 2015

## Historical Context

By the end of the 1930s the Moderne style, now shorn of even of its “Deco” detailing, had generated various progeny including “Streamlined Modern” reflective of its industrial design roots in the machine age, and particularly inspired by the aerodynamic aesthetic of automobiles and aircraft. Houses and offices proudly broadcast their aesthetic lineage rooted in the German industrial warehouses of Peter Behrens and post-WWI social housing influenced by the Weimar- based Staatliches Bauhaus. As the recession bit deeper into the Victoria economy local architect P. L. James ‘took a sabbatical’ and travelled to England with his daughter, Rosemary. In her biography of her father, Rosemary recounts how during a trip with her father to England in 1933/34, they visited the Ideal Home Exhibition at Olympia. “Thirty-five display homes, chosen from 500 plans entered into a competition, made the Modern Homes Exhibition at Gidea Park the largest exhibition.” She further noted, “The Royal Institute of British Architects offered lectures on the formalism of the new International Style.” The Johns house was a development of this idea and an almost literal expression of those European precedents.



T. H. Johns House: elevation drawings, 1943. Credit: Oak Bay Archives



## Statement of Design Significance

Rosemary Cross describes this house: *"Inspired by designs and ideas he had seen in London and the many examples of the Bauhaus idiom that appeared in architectural magazines, James branched out with examples of the Modern style, later to be called Art Moderne... the Streamlined Moderne-style house for Dr. T. H. Johns, the dentist, built ... on the Oak Bay waterfront in 1941, has stucco walls with a semi-circular bay window, some rounded corners and canopies. Glass blocks, then enjoying their first popularity, were used minimally on a curved wall, which was dubbed a "piano wall" to indicate its shape".*

Although the house has been altered, the street-front was meticulously maintained within the grammar of the Moderne style; the house constitutes a major presence both on its water front site and its residential street frontage. The house remains one of Victoria's most literal statements of the style demonstrating the immediate European roots of the Moderne style by the principal of Victoria's leading architectural office of the day. The house is well documented.

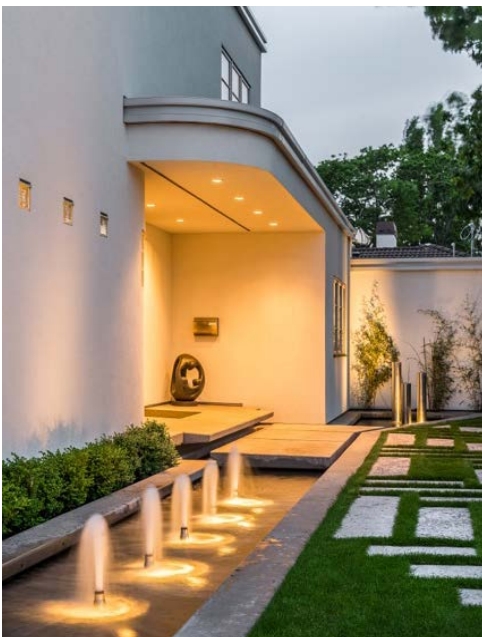
(Rosemary James Cross on the design work of her father, in *The Life and Time of Victoria Architect: P. Leonard James* (2005).

## Conservation Framework and Strategy

The fabric of the house has responded to numerous modifications:

- expansion of the footprint by means of a second garage added to the east side which balances the single storey wing and garage on the opposite side, respects James' design vocabulary.
- changes in fenestration patterns, particularly opening up the south water-side front, no doubt responding to contemporary aesthetic (and economic) demands for unobstructed views across Oak Bay. This included extending the window opening at all three levels.
- The front elevation and entrance are enhanced by a Moderne-inspired water garden executed in a geometric arrangement of pavers inset into the lawn turf, framing a linear fountain pool.
- Glazed panel garage doors and creative night-scaping now lend the facade street presence, exploiting the 1930s interest in expressive potential of electric lighting and translucent screening.

**Together the services upgrade and the modifications to the original design, while compromising the original aesthetic of the waterfront façade, have adapted it to contemporary domestic life-styles and the economics of the market. Changes to the street façade however have reinforced and respected the Moderne aesthetic.**

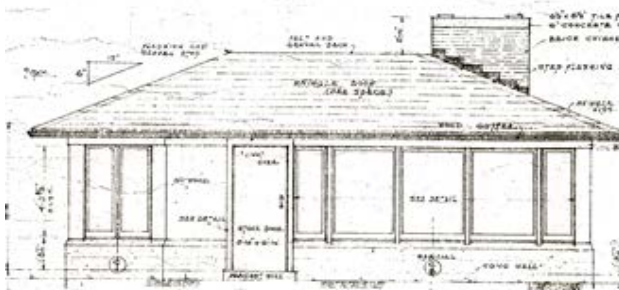
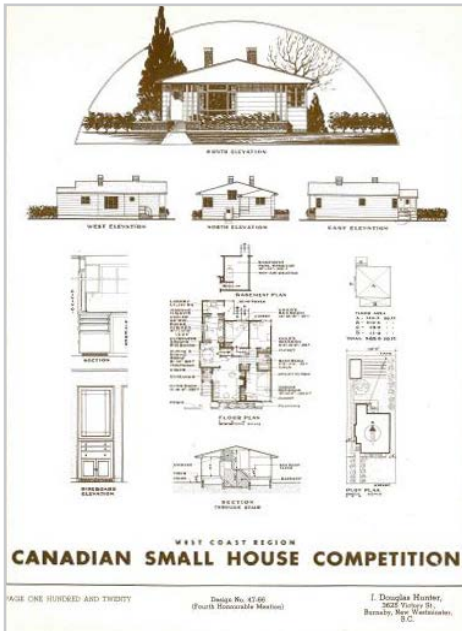


T. H. Johns House, north elevation views, 1943. Photo courtesy L. Cole 2015

## Case Study 2

### Topaz Heights Subdivision 101 Houses, Victoria, 1946-7

Housing Enterprises of Canada Ltd  
Supervising architects: (Attributed) C.B.K. Van Norman



Illustrations, "67 Homes of Canadians" Central Housing and Mortgage Corporation. n.d.  
Topaz Heights Bungalow elevation drawing, Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation, 1946. Courtesy: Beth McDonald

## Historical Context

Topaz Heights comprises a small subdivision of 101 houses, developed by Housing Enterprises Canada for returning veterans starting families. It was one of several across the country responding to Canada's booming economy and youthful demographic. Between 1946 and 1966 Victoria's population doubled in size. Luxton writes "Initiated by Housing Enterprises Canada Ltd., the development was mandated and financed by the Federal Government and operated by insurance companies. Topaz Heights symbolized the new era, with its simple, stucco and wood-clad bungalows capturing the new modern spirit of domestic ideals; its subdivision plan sought to create an appealing neighbourhood that was not based on a grid system, but rather featured broad curbed streets, small parks and inner-street pedestrian paths. With the passage of further revisions to the National Housing Act in 1954, the CMHC's mandate was significantly broadened, and the Public Mortgage Loan Insurance Programme was established to replace the CMHC's direct lending plan. Parallel changes to the federal Bank Act in 1954 removed the long-standing injunction against bank lending being secured by real estate, and for the first time allowed chartered banks to make chattel mortgages." Modern suburbia was born.

(D. Luxton, *Essay: Modernism in Victoria in the Victoria Heritage Registry Update*, City of Victoria, n.d.)

## Statement of Design Significance

Architecturally, Topaz Heights represents the first foray into mass, domestic modern architecture and planning in Victoria. The Modern features included the open living area, galley kitchen and large segmented front windows while the rear open onto the rear yards. On the exterior



Street view. Topaz Heights Subdivision 1946/7. Martin Segger photo 2019



the Westcoast characteristics of the Modern appear in the hipped or flat roof, lap siding, and extended eaves. The two-storey houses have few windows on the street but deep lots in the rear. Designs were probably provided by the Vancouver architectural firm of C.B.K. Van Norman, noted and active throughout the war years for economical war-time housing schemes for military bases and industrial developments both in Canada and abroad. Van Norman was also a pioneer in West Coast Modern design. Topaz Heights reflects aspects of Critical Regionalism which is defined as Modern design principles adapting to local conditions, traditions, and geography.

The best articulation of the tenets of post-war small house design appear in the design brief for the Canadian Small House Competition.

*“Mr. and Mrs. Canada” have two children, a girl aged five and a son of two years. He has Victoria Bonds and savings to make an equity investment on a new house valued at \$6,000 within the terms of the National Housing Act of 1944. Mr. and Mrs. Canada would like:*

- *“Rooms as large as possible within their budget*
- *“No preference concerning style but “dislike the freakish or bizarre and picturesque”*
- *“Interested in” contemporary ideas of utility and livability and would like “built in furniture”, but do not want gadgets”.*
- *“A no basement house appeals to them if this can be provided without sacrificing accommodation, especially storages pace, laundry, utility and heating facilities*
- *“A well-lighted and healthfull interior and ... the trend to larger glass areas*
- *“Don’t own a car so garage is optional*
- *“Mrs. Canada expects to do her own housework and supervise the children. She wants the rooms planned and arranged to make her household tasks easier and more pleasant, and allow her as much free time as possible”.*

(Competition Design brief, in **67 Homes for Canadians... including winners of the Canadian Small House Competition** Central Mortgage & Housing Corporation, Ottawa, Canada, 1947)

This mix of house-types: bungalow, rancher, flat-roof Modern, one and two storeys, characterize the Topaz Heights neighbourhood - a series of residential streets centred on a small open park. The technical and design simplicity of these wood frame houses has allowed them to easily accommodate changes, adapting to the circumstances of their handyman ownership:

family expansion, car-ownership, gardening enthusiasm to ultimately produce a kind of individualized “folk-art” architecture so evident in the neighbourhood street frontages today. Topaz Heights is representative of a major Canadian post-war social and economic initiative, and model for suburban planning and development in Victoria during the years immediately following.

## Conservation Framework and Strategy

The intent was to design homes that were affordable to build, own or to rent. Design and construction technology allowed for alterations, additions and adaptations to accommodate growing families and increased wealth. Zoning controlled the overall densities of the 45-foot frontage lots, setbacks and building profiles.

- Alterations to the houses reflect what the users saw as original deficits in design compounded by the arrival of more children, changing architectural fashion, adapting interior spaces to changing lifestyles: i.e. separate dining areas.
- Attached open car-ports were added in side gardens, additional rooms and decks opening into the rear yard.
- Houses became homes, easily individualized on the street, through creative landscaping, fencing and paint-schemes with a minimum of intervention in the overall fabric.

**The adaptability of original subdivision plan and house-types has supported retention of both the social and architectural design intent. Under this “natural” conservation scheme of incremental building change but overall control through zoning and building codes – and the fact that the subdivision retains a cohesive sense of community – longevity is all but guaranteed.**



Bungalow. Topaz Heights Subdivision 1946/7. John Taylor photo 2017



### Case Study 3

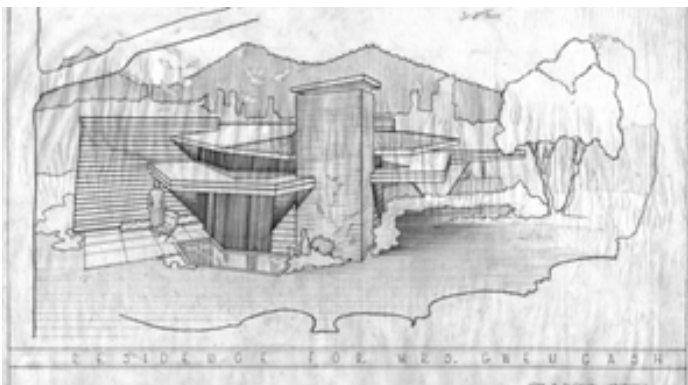
## Trend House / Cash Residence Mount Tolmie, Saanich, 1964

John DiCatri archt. (1924-2005)

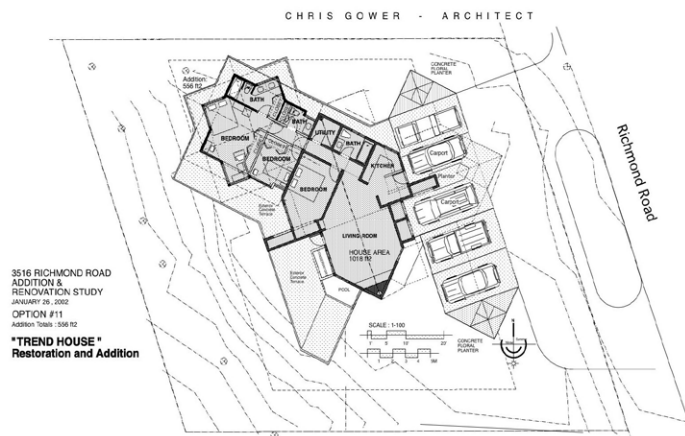
Expansion concept plan, Chris Gower archt. 2002.



Trend House: Illustration: "Western Woods presents 10 Canadian Trend Houses" n.d. Credit UVic. Special Collections



Trend House: perspective drawing, J. DiCatri 1964. Credit UVic. Special Collections



Trend House: renovation scheme, plan. C. Gower archt. 2002.  
Courtesy C. Gower

### Historical Context

Winding down from the War effort, industry was transitioning to new products. In the interim, sales of British Columbia wood products fell sharply. In 1953 The British Columbia Lumber Manufacturer's Association, The Plywood Manufacturers Association of British Columbia and The Consolidated Red Cedar Shingle Association of British Columbia formed a joint organization called Western Woods. Modeled on the public relations success of the Case Study Program (sponsored by *Arts & Architecture Magazine*) in the US, the organization sponsored a design competition for eleven "Trend Houses" in cities across Canada. Architects, who were selected from local firms as proponents of modernist design, were directed to create houses that were ahead of the current building technology with a view of what residential homes might look like 5

or 6 years in the future. General Electric Canada installed the latest mechanical, lighting and electrical systems, including the "WeatherEye" control system for the furnace, fluorescent lighting throughout the house, and a remote-control wiring system.

(A History of the Calgary Trend House <http://www.calgarymcm.com/history/> Nov. 3, 2019)

Local architect John Di Castri had recently graduated from the Oklahoma University School of architecture. There he had studied under principle Bruce Goff, one of the most creative but radical followers of F. L. Wright's approach to "organic design". Goff had successfully melded consideration of materials, structure and environment with a idiosyncratic, sometimes even whimsical, treatment of form as primarily a sculptural entity. Di Castri was to become the primary advocate for the Goff's Wrightian approach to Modern design in Victoria.

### Statement of Design Significance

Architect John Di Castri was quite clear in describing his design concept:

*"(It) was based on 45 degree angles" designed for "an artsy-craftsy-lady", "what is line and design but creating a setting for people?"* (John Di Castri archt. Interview with Angela Anderson and Kim Reinhardt, May 5, 1999)

Under the heading, "The Ten Most Significant House of the Decade" Western Homes & Living offered the following:

*"... the most talked about house in British Columbia... (in) the progressive architectural style of the ever-inventive*

*John Di Castri... (It) served to introduce such now popular features as the use of drop siding as both exterior and interior panelling, an ingenious truss roof design that cuts labour costs and providing a floor-plan free of supporting walls, a soffit to bring the high ceiling down to human scale ... for its size, we think this one of the interesting houses in British Columbia.*

(*Western Homes & Living*, August 1953)

DiCastri pushed technology and materials to the limit with this striking design for journalist Gwendolyn Cash, drawing on Wright's pioneering work in the 1930s, creating the Usonian Houses, small-scale, affordable but artistic houses. In doing so, he boasted of "throwing out the box"! The Trend house, essentially a garden pavilion dominates and rock bluff, commanding majestic sweeping views across the Saanich suburbs and Victoria Harbour to the distant Sooke hills.

Although it was the smallest Trend House at only 850 square feet, DiCastri created a sense of flowing space by using an open, polygon-shaped floorplan and a limited palette of materials inside and out. The wing-shaped roof forms are pinned in midflight and grounded to the site by massive fireplace chimney of concrete and brick. The roof is supported by diamond-shaped wood trusses, the wide, low-hanging eaves and warm-toned interior woods enhancing the house's snug, sheltering feeling. Natural illumination filters through recessed clerestory windows. Design and space respond to a rigorous geometrical grid defined by angles and planes. But overall, although utilizing the contemporary palette of materials, post-and-truss construction techniques, and open-space organization in plan, it pushes the envelope of the West Coast Modern style. Within its tight wood frame-and-truss envelope DiCastri managed the impossible, including a bedroom, galley kitchen, bathroom, laundry room, carport and living-room oriented to frame the dramatic vistas from the hill-top site, at same-time transitioning out to an adjoining reflecting pond and deck.

Of all the Trend Houses DiCastri's got the most publicity, extensively covered in local newspapers and magazines such as *Western Homes and Living* and the national *Canadian Homes Journal*. Articles even included photographs of the construction process. Client Gwen Cash published her own appreciation of the design headlined "My Trend House". *"It's a tiny home, but its tailored to my needs and temperament. It has a sense of space that is terrific. The butterfly-winged red-cedar plank ceiling that is an overall of every room and part of the out-doors as well, the clerestory windows that let in light from every side and*

*angle, the fireplace of misty gray brick that soars skyward all contribute to it..."*

(*Western Homes & Living*, 1953)

## Conservation Framework and Strategy

Architect Chris Gower was asked to investigate preserving the house while adapting it to a higher value residential use to justify the value of this large and prestigiously sites lot on the Mount Tolmie escarpment.

- On a large high-value lot the very small house faced both economic and lifestyle challenges to its preservation as a "garden pavilion".
- Gower worked with later owners on a series of additional designs which would extend its life as a more usable family home.
- The proposed plan called for preserving the as-built structure by considerably enlarging the footprint.
- Both plan and elevation retain but extend the form and spatial geometrics of the original design.

**The economics of the higher use, within existing zoning, would thus open up the opportunity for retrofit and new construction that would support an overall upgrade to meet new building code requirements for life safety (seismic) and energy efficiency. At the same time Di Castri's creative functionalist modern design program is preserved, albeit embedded in a larger house.**



Trend House: renovation scheme , S.W. elevation, C. Gower archt. 2002. Courtesy C. Gower



## Case Study 4

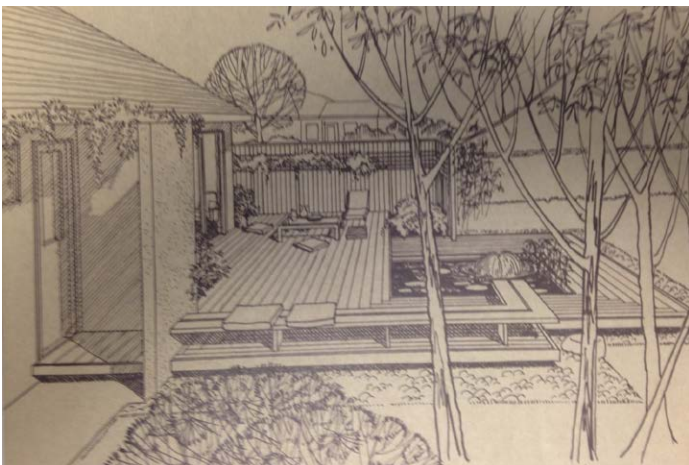
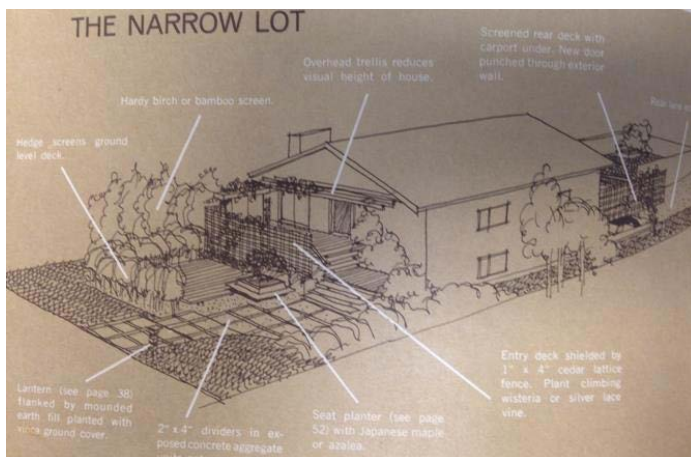
### M. Jones House Rockland, Victoria, 1958

Elliott Totty Architect (1890-1960)

House restoration and gardens by the owners, 2017



M. Jones House 1958. John Taylor photo 2017



Illustrations, garden plans. "How to Build Rooms without Ceilings"  
F. Hollingworth & B. Downs, archts. B.C. Lumber Manufacturers  
Association, B.C. n.d.

## Historical Context

By the late 1950s, as a capital city, Victoria was responding to British Columbia's soaring economy and booming population with marked growth in government services, a civil service expansion and expanding professional, financial, health and educational services. A prospering middle class supported up-scale suburban growth (Oak Bay and Saanich) but also single-family infilling of traditional neighbourhoods such as Fairfield and Rockland. Variations of the Wrightian "Prairie House" included the simplified low-rise "Rancher", often split-level with functions such as sleeping, entertaining and recreating clustered into functional zones. These modernist principles underpinned the development of what came to be identified as the West Coast Modern style for domestic architecture.

Architect Ned Pratt of the Vancouver firm Sharp, Thompson Berwick Pratt, outlined the essentials of this style:

*"There are five key West Coast characteristics that should drive local house design: rainfall (so, generous roof overhangs); muted sunshine (hence, huge windows to bring it in); view (shift priority from the street-front façade and focus on glazing the walls that face trees and ocean); exterior treatment (natural unpainted locally sourced wood); and plan (flat roof, high ceilings and few interior partitions)".*

(Ned Pratt from a text for the 1949 exhibition "*Design for Living*" at the Vancouver Art Gallery, cited in the *Globe and Mail*, June 22, 2012)

## Statement of Design Significance

The M. Jones House, as built within the subdivided garden of an Edwardian Rockland Edwardian estate, is typical of this new mid-range progressive modern house. It responds directly to a call for quality design in suburban living: *"But isn't the idea of the garden as a personal oasis, a pocket of quiet rural life, still valid? ... Our solitude and privacy today are pressured from all sites: the mushroom growth of cities hems us in; its services from utility poles to garbage cans, clutter the landscape; the population explosion crowds us .... We need a better more private, more satisfying environment for personal living. "The concept of "the total development of property in harmony with the home" has been created to meet this need for a better environment for living...The ground-level*

*deck comes very close to answering all the family's outdoor living needs... always within view of either the kitchen or living-dining areas.*

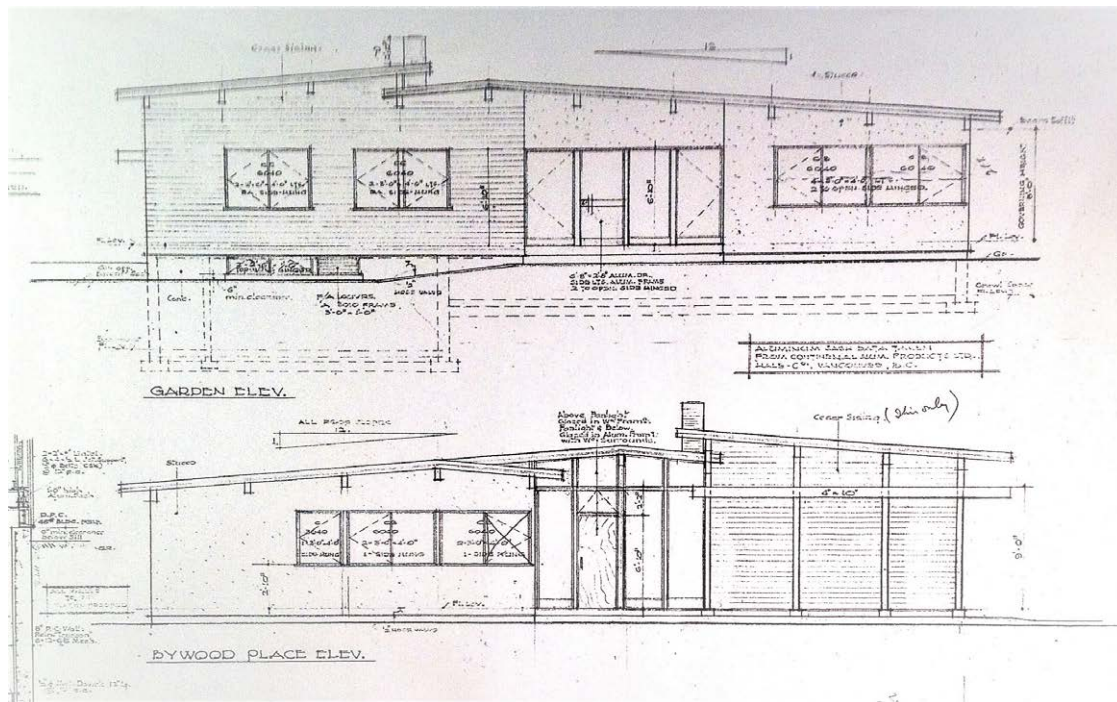
(*How to Build Rooms without Ceilings*. Fred Thornton Hollingsworth, MRAIC, and Barry V. Downs, MRAIC. B.C. Lumber Manufacturers Association. Vancouver, B.C. n.d.)

The architect Elliott Totty articulated before WWI in the conservative Victoria office of Jesse Warren (c.1888-1953), returning to practice after War in 1949. He revealed a sensitive familiarity with West Coast modernism. This house is essentially a post-and-beam pavilion within a single lot garden. Nestled into a woodland setting of mature Gary Oaks and tall conifers, a generously glazed vaulted central living room communicates to the garden, through it to the main entry on the North side, and through to an intimate private garden at the rear. The "living hall" links two wings, a kitchen and dining area on one side, bedrooms on the other.

## Conservation Framework and Strategy

- The meticulous restoration, with minimal alterations, mainly provides for the insertion of a modern kitchen; also a general upgrading to meet contemporary code and particularly energy efficiency requirements.
- Original exterior and interior surfaces have been preserved and restored.
- The recreation of a period garden in the Modern manner enhances the basic design features, an extension of the spatial geometry of the house.
- This integrates the existing open carport and also new treillaged deck extensions on the south and north sides of the house.

**Together these improvements, well within the vocabulary of the West Coast Modern style, assure a substantial life-extension as a single-family residence, and a good fit for its garden-suburb context.**



M. Jones House: elevation drawing, E. Totty archt. 1958. Courtesy owners



## Case Study 5

### B.C. Electric Building Victoria, 1954

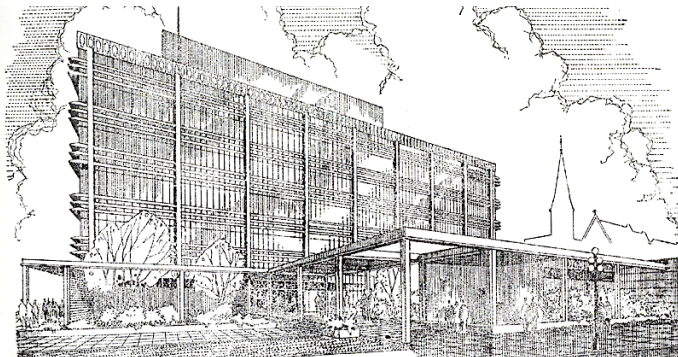
Thompson, Berwick and Pratt Architects. Ned Pratt (1911-1996), Ron Thom (1923-1986), Bob Gibson (Design team)  
Engineers: Fred Severud & Otto Saphir. Mosaic artist: B.C. Binning

Addition: (renamed) Richard Blanshard Building, Siddall, Dennis, Warner Architects, 1974

Retrofit: Wade Williams Architects, Chris Gower executing architect (2002/4)



B.C. Electric Building 1954. John Taylor photo 2018



B.C. Electric Building 1954. Illustration. Daily Colonist. Credit: Victoria City Archives



B.C. Electric Building, 1954. Renovation scheme, 1974. Wade Williams archts. Courtesy C. Gower

## Historical Context

The British Columbia Electric Company, undergoing rapid expansion to serve the demands for power to meet both industrial and residential growth, looked to its two new head offices in Vancouver and Victoria as opportunities to signal its corporate dominance in the province's post-war economy - and also its technological prowess. The "Meisian"-inspired International Style, the choice of corporate headquarters redefining the urban cores from New York to Los Angeles at the time, was a perfect fit for both image and budget. On the design team, Ned Pratt and the youthful Ron Thom were both enthusiastic exponents of Modernism. The design effectively symbolized the progressive nature of the enterprise itself and was forward looking in terms of technological sophistication and in its aesthetic newness. The façade treatment was the first in Victoria to utilize glazed curtain-wall. Predating the Vancouver BC Electric Building by more than four years, this can be seen as a dry run by the same design team, including the engineer, Otto Safir.

## Statement of Designs Significance

The design concept called for a *"six-to-eight storey, narrow, linear building located on the long north side of the corner site with offices facing south, a continuous corridor on the north side. The decision saved huge mature trees on the south side of the property, which provide some sun screening. But more importantly, it created a park-like setting at the intersection of two major streets. Design proceeded on a simple reinforced concrete frame with full-bay widths strip windows for each floor between the columns. The distinguishing feature of the building is the sun control device on the windows on the south and west elevations. It consists of three horizontal aluminum louvres, curved in cross-sections, supported on brackets across the top half of the strip windows of each floor"*. (Shadbolt, Douglas. *Ron Thom: The Shaping of an Architect*, Vancouver, 1995)

According to Paul Merrick, another driver in the design was that Pratt and BCE Company C.E.O. Dal Grauer shared a philosophical position that no worker in the building, from manager to receptionist, should be without natural light. This prompted the narrow floor plate, lack of floor dividers, and glass curtain-wall design.

The clean-lined minimalist soaring tower is pure



International Style, but the design program driven in part by the egalitarian office lay-out and the nod to local site conditions and natural environment, made this office tower a pioneer in made-in-British Columbia Modernism.

### Conservation Framework and Strategy

The 1970s witnessed a change of owner and use, to that of housing a large Provincial government ministry. Architects Siddall, Dennis Warner chose to set off Pratt and Thom's spare, minimalist, International style structure with a larger abstract expressionist (i.e. "Brutalist") concrete addition.

- In the process the main entrance was moved to the Blanshard street side although the pillars supporting the recessed entrance continues the main floor podium treatment of the earlier building.
- This change resulted in orphaning the ground-level canopy and façade decorative elements which marked the original front doors.
- It also significantly obliterated the north façade.
- The new addition, integrated with the original on the North elevation, assured a new extended life for the building and its tenant, the British Columbia Ministry of Health – at the cost of severely compromising the integrity of the original design..

In 2003 Wade Williams Architects (executing architect Chris Gower) undertook a complete restoration and retrofit, including seismic upgrades and energy efficiency upgrades of the original Blanshard Street facing tower. *"The new wall elements replicated the original while improving thermal isolation values. Energy efficiency would be gained with a new deluxe triple glazed high-performance curtain wall... The seismic upgrade utilized Canada's first pneumatic-strut dampers."* *"An extensive computer simulation study ... demonstrated that one array of screens at each level could be eliminated. This also allowed for the use of more transparent glazing and thus better natural lighting, and higher visibility through the glass. The curvature of the sunscreens also allowed for reflection of sunlight against the office ceilings and thus brought higher levels of natural light into the central floor areas. A colour-tone of glass was selected that closely matched the original 'BC Electric Blue' of the original curtain wall in deference to Binning's original choice".* (Chris Gower, project architect, correspond. with author, 2019)

- The exterior restoration reinforced the building's monumental presence within its Blanshard Street set-back.
- The retrofit enhanced the original design intentions of Pratt and Thom, improving the functionality of their original design as well as bringing the building systems into conformity with contemporary energy efficiency and life-safety norms.
- Unfortunately, security considerations for the tenant did not permit reinstituting the Blanshard Street main entrance; this to some degree compromising the functionality of the street-level garden courtyard.
- Replacement of the curtain-wall, and extent of the efficiency and life-safety upgrades ensure a significant extension to the life expectancy of one of the major monuments in the early history of Victoria's Modernist building history.

**The net result of the restoration and structural improvements preserved the overall International Style aesthetic, changes to detail growing out of the original design concept. The structural update assures another office-use life cycle for this monument to early Victoria Modernism.**



B.C. Electric Building, photo c. 1954. Courtesy Chris Gower

## Case Study 6

### Central School Victoria, 1953

Birley Wade Stockdill, architects

Additions: John Di Castri, architect, 1971

Retrofit: Garyali Architects, 2010



Central School 1953. John Taylor photo 2018

### Historical context

As suburbs expanded in the 1950s, young families flooded in. Victoria became a test-bed for new urban development. Schools were at the forefront of the public infrastructure needs list, along with roads and hospitals. Victoria's architectural practices, characterized by young immigrant hires and expanding partnerships, looked to socialist Europe, and particularly to Britain under its post-war Labour government, for design precedent. A dominant feature of town and neighbourhood skylines were these new schools set within extensive playing fields and built to plans and specifications standardized by the B.C. Ministry of Education. Larger versions in major cities were purposely commissioned from major architectural practices with the intention that such monuments would make public statements about a reinvigorated school system and a progressive curriculum expressed in forward-looking innovative architectural designs.

### Statement of Design Significance

John Wade, a recent British immigrant trained in London at the Architectural Association, current with European design trends, was profoundly influenced by abstract rationalism. Wade also spent a year in the California office of ex-Berliner and Modernist pioneer, Richard Neutra. Le Corbusier's brutalist sculptural forms, used to great dramatic effect, can be seen in the firm's monumental but later Saanich Municipal Hall (1965). Central School is a much more restrained essay in the style, in the manner of the influential British follower of Corbusier, Maxwell Fry (1899-1987) who counted Gropius, Corbusier and the Scandinavian architect/engineer Ove Arup both as colleagues and some-time partners. British and Scandinavian influences run through the veins of Victoria



Central School, 1953, east façade before renovation. Courtesy Garyali Architects 2010

Modernist design culture during the immediate post-war years.

DoCoMo BC notes:

*For Central School architect John Wade designed a T-shaped plan of reinforced concrete, organizing circulation around a central stair tower. The classroom wing is balanced by the mass of the gymnasium block, and the main entrance is marked by the curving wall of the administration offices. Huge windows allow natural light to flood into classrooms, stairwells and corridors, a key element in the humanization of school buildings.*

(<http://docomomo.ca/bc-2000/docomomo/index.html> October 8, 2019)

### Conservation framework and Strategy

Garyali Architects' seismic upgrade and retrofit of Central School provided an opportunity to reorder both the interior and exterior. Working closely with the teachers and students, the architects developed a contemporary narrative for the design. The goal was to conserve the integrity of the original structure but further humanize both function and aesthetics.

- The functional geometry of the original building provided a template on which quite playful elements could be introduced.
- Seismic reinforcing provided an opportunity to introduce new bas-relief concrete sculptural elements: the central façade seismic buttress is treated as a stylized fir tree, the auditorium exterior shear-wall sports a low-relief mural illustrating a building history of Victoria.
- Reworked fenestration patterns adopted a period but Mondrian inspired grid treatment and colour scheme, a reference to the abstract Expressionist roots of Modernist architecture itself.

- A contemporary design process involving community, students and teachers resulted in a new aesthetic treatment of the original building, further softening the severe Brutalism of form.
- The design update respects the main structural elements and the original functional program while adapting it to contemporary approaches in teaching and curriculum design.
- Interior spatial arrangements were redesigned to provide a transparent flow through rooms and create meeting and gathering places.

**The reordering of interior space to a more open plan has adapted the school to 21st century teaching practices and curricula. The full seismic and services upgrade to contemporary codes has dramatically improved building resilience ensuring further generations of educational use.**



Central School, 1953, west façade and detail. Courtesy Garyali Architects 2011



## Case Study 7

### Ballantyne Florists Victoria, 1954

John DiCatri architect

Renovation: de Hoog & Kierulf archts. 2014

### General Paint Store Victoria, 1963

R. W. Siddall & Associates, architects



General Paint Store 1963. John Taylor photo 2018



Ballantyne Florists 1954. John Taylor photo 2018



Ballantyne Florists 1954. Perspective drawing, J. Di Catri archt.  
Credit: Uvic Special Collections.

## Historical Context

A parallel revolution in the aesthetics of popular industrial, interior and commercial design was led by the automobile industry with highly publicized annual roll-outs of ever newer and better cars. Just as the advertising industry adopted psychosocial methods of product promotion, architects and designers were also applying innovative, but science-based, retail designs for high streets shops. Professional journals provided advice to architects.

*"The design of stores should start on the inside... layout is to expedite the flow of goods to the customer ... a proper plan for the customer and employee to give maximum service to the customer will produce the maximum productivity per square foot of sales area. The customer should be considered from the point of attraction to the store to the departure of the goods... A fault that architects must guard against is emphasizing the store front itself rather than the goods displayed"*

Further, open shop fronts are *"logical results of relating exteriors to interiors ... the trend in store design is similar to the trend in all branches of architecture. The exterior of a building should be a reflection of the interior... It takes a person less than 10 seconds to walk past the average store, and less than 5 seconds to drive past"*.  
(Earl Morgan. "Random notes on Storefront Design". *Journal of the RAIC*, Aug 1948)

## Statement of Design Significance

Two Modernist shop fronts have survived in Down Town Victoria through adaption to changing economics and manner of use.

*"DiCatri says every attempt has been made to make the store front enticing to passersby. The design is based on 30/60 triangles in geometric agreement with the sunken doorways ... a cantilevered canopy... (providing) indirect lighting has been planned for the windows and exterior ceiling in the canopy. Construction will be of such strength and adaptability that three more storeys may be added if required."*

(*Victoria Daily Times*, 17 Jan 1955)

While the Ballantyne building shop-fronts well illustrated Di Catri's debt to the expressive angular plan and elevation treatments of Frank Lloyd Wright, they also retain the use of the glazed clerestorey façade treatment which is a tradition in the City's Victorian and Edwardian street retail design.



For the Ballantyne shopfront, DiCastrì's design responds to the tenets outlined in Random Notes: the angled inset demarking each shop entrance, fronts open to maximum glazing, extruded canopies which march up the street façade inviting the potential customer to hug the inside of the side-walk. Extruding angular canopies focus attention on each front and act as light-shelves for the shop interiors while the ribbon clerestorey extended across the shop fronts floods the interiors with daylight.

The General Paint Store gave Siddall the opportunity to produce a custom design for retailing paint, although the original layout followed the formula of the old-time general store. Shop assistants behind the long counter served customers directly from the long shelves of paint cans arrayed immediately behind them against the north wall. Siddall's design is an almost literal expression of Earle Morgan's dictates. A reticulated glass curtainwall set above a paneled concrete base (that does double-duty as a planter) teases the pedestrian viewer along its length. The planter introduces a brief landscape reference to the more park-like ground level treatment of BC Electric Building next door.

### Conservation Framework and Strategies

- Both shops fronts had to adapt to changing market-place conditions to support economic viability.
- Recent restoration of the **Ballantyne** shopfronts to accommodate a single tenant (Chain Store Pharmacy) involved only minor external modifications such as centralizing a single entrance.
- However, Ballantyne's current chain-store type tenancy compromises the individualized treatment of window bays and street access, intended to enhance and

support the original individual boutique businesses. It would still be possible however, to treat each window bay by individualizing product display arrangements.

- A sensitive restoration of the structural elements of Ballantyne's refocuses attention on DiCastrì's striking design and the decorative details.
- The exterior of the **General Paint Store** has been essentially maintained adapting changes in use from retail to the office/retail requirements of a walk-in insurance broker.
- While the linear floor plan of the paint shop might create some circulation inefficiencies for the current tenants, the extended street front presence provides the significant benefit of a promotional presence on the street.
- However, full transparency of the display windows becomes redundant or compromised in both store fronts. Street retail is changing, replacing goods with services. The market for things moves to "Big Box" and the internet.

**Street retail is in constant flux as shopping patterns and the very modes of product and service distribution constantly evolve and change in response to demographics, economics, and the digital market place in particular. The historic fabric and design intent in both these retail cases has been conserved to a large degree, however survivability for these low-density land-uses without legal intervention (i.e. heritage designation) will remain fragile.**



General Paint Store 1963, exterior. Photo Hubert Norbury ca.1964. Credit: UVic Special Collections



Ballantyne Florists 1954. Photo Hubert Norbury ca. 1955. Credit: UVic Special Collections

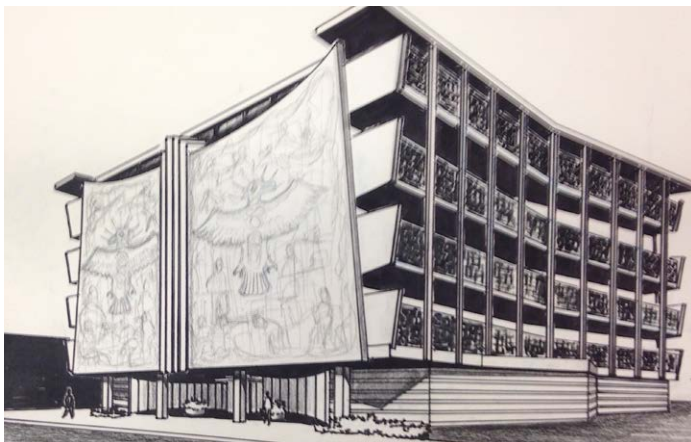
## Case Study 8

### Royal Trust Building (Mosaic) Victoria, 1963

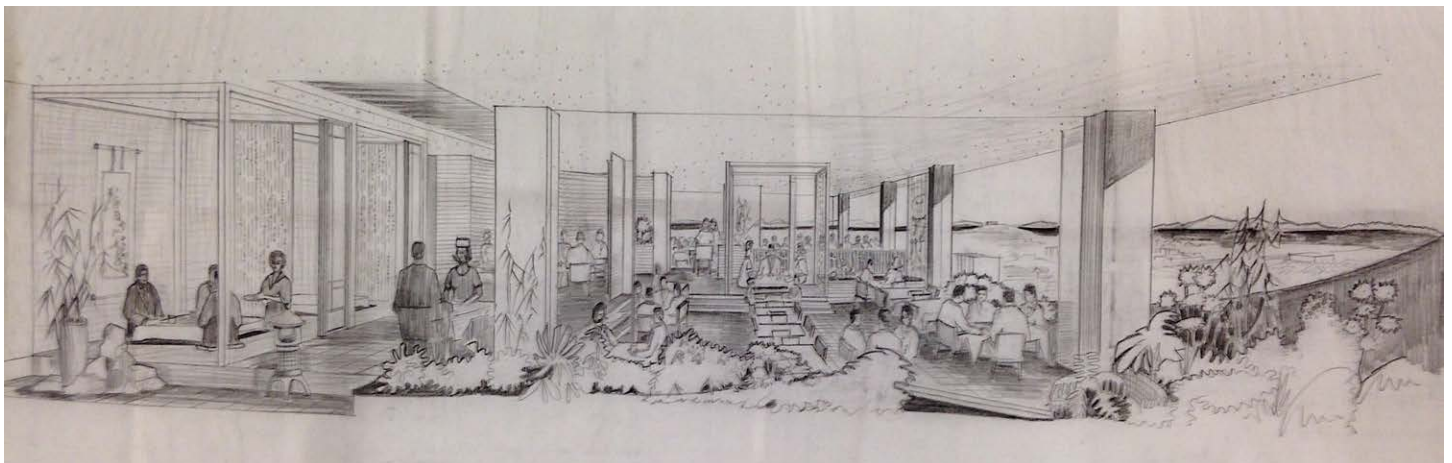
John DiCatri, architect; Andres Salgo mosaic muralist,  
Conversion to retail/condominiums: Jan Zak architect,  
1999



Mosaic Building 1963. John Taylor photo 2018



Royal Trust Building 1963. Concept drawing, J. Di Castri archt. n.d.  
Credit: Uvic Special Collections



Royal Trust Building 1963. Concept sketch roof top restaurant. John Di Castri archt. n.d. Credit: Uvic, Special Collections

## Historical Context

North American Modernism, from its roots in the American East Coast Arts-and-Crafts Movement, the Chicago School and Louis Sullivan's de-constructed but functionalist classism, was finally defined by the seventy-year career of Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959). Wright promoted a form of "organic rationalism". Function underpinned plan and form. Final expression however was subject to the conditions of place, environment, and materials. The final design often pushed the limits of building technologies in favour of sweeping abstract sculptural statement, rich mixes of materials, and purely artistic detailing – sometimes utilizing concrete block or applied sculptural elements. Wright's design approach was to provide the inspiration for the emergence in the Pacific North West of the West Coast Modern Style in residential design. Oddly however, while Wright's impact on the residential work of Ned Pratt, Charles Van Norman, Arthur Erickson and others is obvious, there is much less evidence of it in Vancouver and Victoria commercial and institutional commissions.

## Statement of Design Significance

John DiCatri was an exception to the prevalence of the European/International Style influences popular in most West Coast offices during the 1950s and 60s. Di Castri started his career in the B.C. Public Works office but resigned to study under a Wright disciple, Bruce Goff (1904-1982) at the University of Oklahoma. Goff was noted as a highly idiosyncratic interpreter of the organic approach to design, and Di Castri treasured his own portfolio of Goff's inventive designs. Following graduation, DiCatri went on an extensive tour of Wright's buildings



across North America, stopping at Wright's studio at Taliesin West in Scottsdale Arizona to meet the great man himself. Built as the Financial Centre, this was DiCatri's, and Victoria's, first full-blown in essay in the manner of Wrightian large scale urban/commercial work.

In a newspaper interview the developers described the project design.

*"... recessed from Fort Street sidewalk in a gently swooping arch right into the building will be a garden foyer ... this new office block does not stand firmly on the ground but is suspended, much like a baby's cradle, from several concrete pillars... The foyer is to be open air. Receding from the Fort Street sidewalk in a gently swooping arch right into the building will be a garden foyer."*

*Other features include "a roof top open garden restaurant (and a) 7,000 square foot mural". "More floors are planned for the building too... We figure in about five years we could put three more floors on top, and perhaps a penthouse above that."*

*(The Daily Colonist, March 17, 1963)*

As built, the four-storey bulk of the building floated above its open entrance floor base. Four murals book-end the structure like large doors left ajar, a sort-of "do come in" gesture. DiCatri was noted for his innovative designs and this was certainly one.

A through-block building with two major street fronts, this was Victoria's only major attempt to mirror the aesthetics of the popular residential walk-up apartments then becoming popular in the adjacent neighbourhoods. Also unique was the treatment of the main facades, which at the request of client, presented as winged vertical slabs hosting four murals. On the east and west sides the offices opened onto external strip verandahs or balconies. The concept was daring but even the mosaics were controversial, executed by a Mexican rather than local artist.

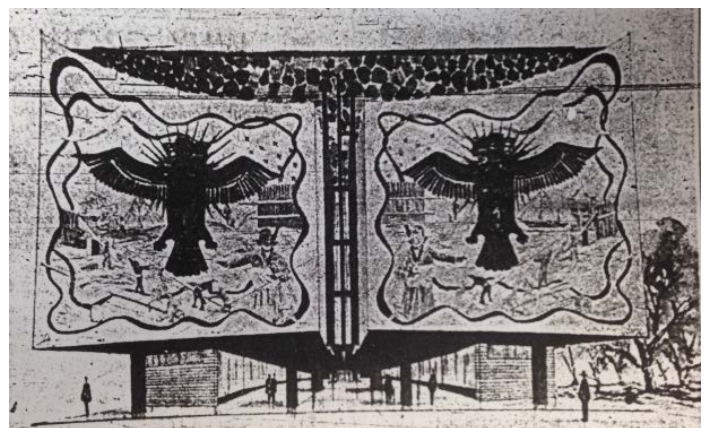
## Conservation Framework and Strategy

An adaptive reuse converted building from retail/office to residential retail. In doing so a complete retrofit was carried out to address both seismic and related code compliance issues. This involved stripping out the structure including the east and west window walls. Pushing out the replacement curtain-walls to edge of the slab at each level added significantly to the saleable square footage.

At street level secure entrances for the residential floors and expanded retail floor space was accomplished by expanding the envelope.

- Jan Zak's conversion, in a sense completing the building as originally anticipated, adds a penthouse level and distributes 85 suites over six levels above the ground floor.
- Zak further exploits DiCatri's obtuse angular expressionism in his treatment of the rooftop additions.
- The strip balconies, however, are sacrificed for constructivist extruded "Juliet" balconies opening off each suite, although utilizing decorative steel screens stays true to 60s Modernist practice.
- Piercing the mural walls with small triangular windows to light the small studio suites while not seriously compromising the artistic integrity of the murals might still be considered a defacement by some.

**The most jarring change from the original concept however is perhaps the translation of the street-level open foyer into a "controlled entrance" lobby for the suites. The glass curtain-wall at ground level visually respects DiCatri's open galleria concept, although it is functionally compromised. The resulting effect more firmly anchors this floating bird to the clay at its feet. However, the new use adapted the building to the changing market - away from leasable office to saleable condominium, and the complete retrofit and services upgrade ensured a new life for what is now called "The Mosaic".**



Royal Trust Building 1963. Concept drawing, J. Di Catri archt. n.d. Credit: UVic Special Collections



## Case Study 9

### Campus Services Building Gorden Head Campus, University of Victoria, 1965

Architect: Donald Wagg & Associates, Architects, South Addition: Wagg & Hambleton Architects, 1986. North addition and new entrance: Jenson Group Architects, 1996. West addition HCM Architecture + Design (Gordon Condon Architects) 2015



Campus Services Buildings 1996 addition. John Taylor photo 2018



Campus Services Building 1965. Credit: UVic Special Collections



Campus Services Building 1986 addition. Credit: UVic Special Collections

## Historical Context

The expansion of higher education facilities across the western world in the 1960s and 70s responded directly to the maturing of the “Boom One” generation and the demand for higher levels of education and skills. Britain engaged in the construction of the so called “Red Brick” new universities and polytechnics; North America with a host of new suburban campuses. The University of Victoria engaged the services of Wurster Bernardi and Emmons, noted San Francisco-based university campus planners. William Wurster’s career included serving as dean of both the MIT and Berkley Schools of Architecture, ushering in the new College of Environmental Design at the latter in 1959. Under their direction, and in sympathy with this philosophy of wholistic design, UVic’s new Gordon Campus was planned as essentially a series of pavilions in a garden-woodland setting. Visually and functionally the landscape should prevail.

## Statement of Design Significance

The Campus Services Building was purposely produced within this aesthetic. A two-storey low-scale reinforced concrete building with masonry walls is compressed to the ground into which the first-storey almost disappears. Included was a cafeteria, bank, drug store, a barber shop, a beauty salon and a book store. The exterior elevations, structural grids with block infill panels, is dominated by a roof-form of massive pre-stressed concrete T beams which float above the strip-window clerestorey. A simple play of textures and a colour palette natural to the materials relieved the wall surfaces. Breezeway corridors on a “T” grid oriented along a central spine provided access to the various services. Like a small-scale shopping mall, the Bank provided an anchor at the head of the “T”.

## Conservation Framework and Strategy

As the university grew from its initial 3000 faculty and student population to some 20,000, the demand for retail services dramatically increased. The challenge was to grow the retail services while respecting the overall campus plan, particularly the educational “public” nature of the institution as reflected in its garden setting, and so contain the presence of for-profit sales of goods and services.

- As the bookstore expanded and included a Campus Shop in its operations, the north-south breezeway on the main floor was enclosed (1983), a mezzanine floor was added and the north breezeway entrance was sealed.
- In 1986, on removal of the bank a one-storey student services office addition was built on the southern (Ring Road) side using the original materials, palette and structural elements.
- The 1996 major addition, a formal essay in Modern Rationalist design, extends the geometry of the original structure with its modular steel components, open glass curtain wall, and perforated sun screen. A dramatic swept-up entrance canopy is in marked

contrast with the earlier masonry structure, but does respect its scale, and provided a welcoming gesture to a new use of the forecourt as a bus terminal.

- The new entrance reinterpreted an earlier entrance breezeway in the first design that remained unbuilt.
- The first two additions, under the hand of the original architect, extended the design in absolute respect of the original design.
- The second addition preserved the envelope, but provided a creative response to the original design concept.
- The insertion of the visually dramatic cantilevered entrance canopy responded to the buildings new use as a major pedestrian entrance to the Campus, fronting on the main campus transit exchange.

**The building continues the tradition of the overall campus “landscape-dominant” design intent of the Wurster Bernardi Emmons planning team. The various additions and interventions have been generated out of the geometry and scale of the original Wagg design although interpreted in different materials and construction technologies. The building may well continue to adapt, change and grow in this manner.**



Campus Services Building 1986 addition. Credit: UVic Special Collections



## Case Study 10

### Bickerton Court and Beacon Towers James Bay, 1963

Architect: Wilfred Buttjes architect (1918-2011) Balconies  
retrofit: 2018



Bickerton Court 1963 retrofitted balconies detail.. M artin Segger  
photo 2019



Bickerton Court 1963 retrofitted balconies detail. Martin Segger  
photo 2019



Beacon Towers 1963. John Taylor photo 2017

## Historical Context

Both post-war Europe and post-war America confronted the prospect of massive re-urbanization. In Europe, bombed-out cities were being rebuilt. In North America immigrant-driven population growth and the parallel concentration of new and expanded industries in towns and cities fueled the need for massive infrastructure investments and a flood of new blood into the design and building professions. Innovations in building science, much gained from war-time defense related engineering projects, led to radical improvements in the economics, speed, and efficiency of construction. Urban skylines were punctuated by the vertical. At street level, planners and architects sought to integrate this vertical, high density reality within traditional neighbourhoods: traffic, parking, services emerged as flashpoints of public debate. Vertical cities in Germany, Scandinavia, Britain the coastal U.S. cities constituted contemporary precedents for design solutions.

## Statement of Design Significance

Local architect, John Wade, translated the global phenomenon of urban growth directly to Victoria in an interview with the Daily Colonist:

*"Mr. Wade, a regional vice-president of the Canadian Housing Design Council, said Canada's population explosion will result in a demand for multiple-dwelling developments of the high-rise and garden type of apartment. He said two high-rise buildings to be known as the Good-acre Towers will be built on Douglas Street opposite Beacon Hill Park... Canada's good living conditions are attracting more immigrants, said Mr. Wade. Besides this, about 43 per cent of our total population is under 21. Apartment buildings will move even closer to town than they are now..."*

(Daily Colonist, March 17, 1963)

The two buildings referenced by Wade were under construction and opened as Beacon Towers and Bickerton Court. The latter exemplifies the new higher-density urban profile that was to usher in a period controversy and citizen protest as traditional low-rise single-family neighbourhoods gave way to the "efficiency" of modern stacked housing. The pioneer high-rises of James Bay tried to meet some of the criticism by attempting to relieve the towering mass of these structures by breaking up and decorating the sheer facades with functional elements such a sun screening (*brise-soleil*), "traditional" patterned



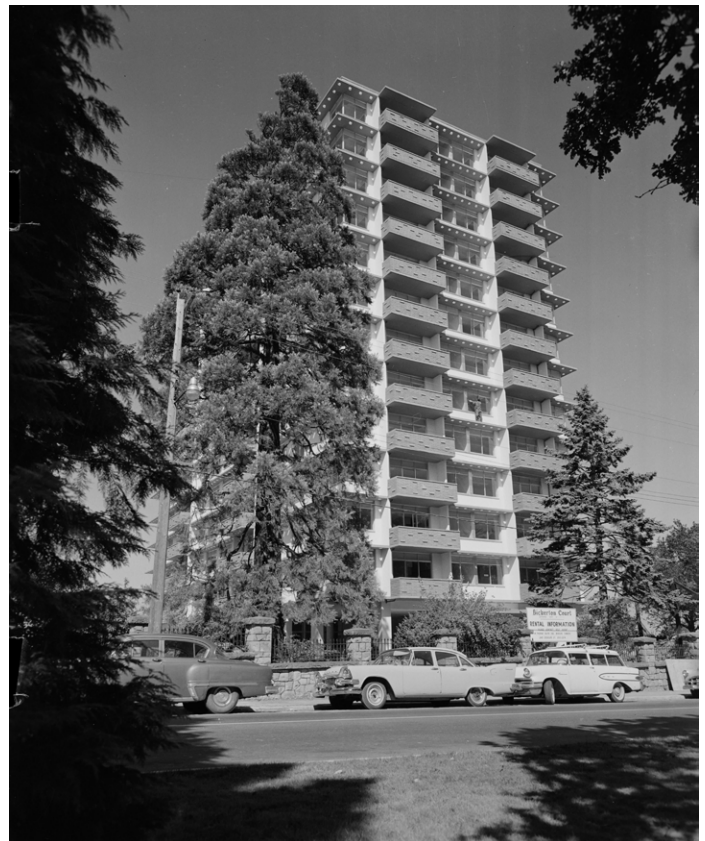
brick balconies, or decorative breeze-block screens. Beacon Villa, a neighbouring lower-rise block, features park-view continual concrete-screen balconies at each floor level. The neighboring high-rise with its ground-level pool pavilion is set back within a generous landscaped garden easily accessed visually and actually from an open-glazed entrance lobby. Together the perforated *brise-soleil* and low-relief extruded brick patterns on the balconies created a visual symphony of cast shadows, ever changing of the course of the day.

## Conservation Framework and Strategy

These early modern monuments now cycle through their 50-year infrastructure refits to meet maintenance requirements but also upgrades for new seismic and life-safety codes. For instance, the fashion for the unobstructed view prompts demand for the replacement of decorative balcony parapets with transparent laminated glass.

- Bickerton Court has recently experienced such a retrofit. The effect is to dramatically change the architectural style from “Decorated Modern” to “International Style” Functional Modernism.
- Gone with the solid brick balconies are both privacy from street and neighboring views and also a significant degree of thermal transfer mitigation.
- Beacon Towers remains as-built for the moment, well maintained and fully occupied, the close-town-and-park location assuring a steady value stable demand for these desirable condominium units.
- Surviving decorative concrete-block screens and balconies of Beacon remained threatened as they do not meet current codes, in particular seismic.

**In both cases a resolution which to some degree preserves the design intent, would be to retrofit the balconies with etched glass or similar materials which repeat or reinterpret the original decorative patterning of the surfaces, maintaining both privacy and a fit with neighbourhood context. Here is an illustrated lesson as mass-produced balustrade systems, now a popular remedy for balcony refits compromise the individualized character of early Modernist residential towers across the city in favor of a homogenized aesthetic.**



Bickerton Court 1963. Photo H. Norbury ca. 1964 Credit: UVic Special Collections



Bickerton Court 1963. Photo C. Gower n.d.

## Case Study 11

### Arts & Education (MacLaurin) Building University of Victoria, 1966

Alan. J.Hodgson Architect

Program: Alfred Baxter & Associates 1965/66 Additions:

Alan J. Hodgson Architect, 1971, 1978



Arts & Education Building 1966 showing undercroft infill n.d.  
John Taylor photo 2017



Arts & Education Building 1966. Photo ca 1967. Courtesy: UVic,  
Special Collections



Arts & Education Building, bridge link to addition 1978. Photo  
John Fulker ca. 1979. Credit: North Shore Museum & Archives  
Vancouver

## Historical Context

Large scale structures, particularly those serving educational and healthcare uses, dominated the institutional build-out as socially responsive governments coming to power in Western democracies sought to reward their war-weary returnees from the allied fronts.

The economies and efficiencies of Modernist functional design proved attractive on both sides of the Atlantic. Under the influence of post-Bauhaus Modernists in Europe, the Continental and Scandinavian influences clustered under the direction of the London based MARS (Modern Architectural Research Studies) group. North America, now captive to the power-house architecture schools at MIT, Harvard, Berkley and the Illinois Institute of Technology, fell directly under the sway of the German ex-Bauhaus faculty who now ran or dominated their faculties. Already adopted by the capitalist plutocracy for their new shiny corporate office buildings in New York, Chicago, Boston and elsewhere, the International Style provided a ready design language. Victoria, perhaps because of the innate conservatism inherited from its colonial roots, shared a European socialist idealism remembering the 1930s labour struggles, and the origins of many of the new local émigré architects.

Victoria's unique brand of Modernism was often filtered through contemporary British experience. This included not only rather restrained decorative expressionist work celebrated by London's 1951 "Festival of Britain" but also the attraction of the shared sense of isolation, climate and landscape which invited influences of post-war Scandinavian design.

## Statement of Design Significance

Early architectural commissions on campus required a design brief from the architect. Hodgson's read as follows: *"The building should confirm the philosophy behind the teaching process that is inherent in the University at present and established at Victoria College. That is the individual in his environment for learning... Architecture which must be of our time, yet timeless... a world somewhat apart from the community ... a world with emphasis on the individual scholarly way of life."*

On the enclosed external spaces: *"The provision and development of these exterior spaces are the means to the interchange of ideas that support and enrich the everyday life of the student."*



*"We feel that the use of brick will introduce an intimate scale. Its' warm natural character will support the spirit and strength of the earthy hues that have been used to integrate the campus buildings... The use of stonework in the planters and walls in the landscaped areas similar to that used around the other buildings will ensure a harmonious relationship".*

(Alan Hodgson, *Design Brief for the Arts and Education Complex(Maclaurin) Building* (n.d.). Special Collections University of Victoria)

The largest building on the new campus, the Maclaurin was intended as a riposte to the monumental McPerson Library. The library, essentially a modernist temple form, anchored the geometric formal landscaping on the eastern side of a grassy sward that provided the organizing principal for the overall campus plan. The Maclaurin building was characterized by a ground floor which opened into the informal naturalized landscape occupying the western quadrant of the campus. The design utilized open and glazed concourses connecting the woodland landscape to hard-surface concourses and a plaza to the east, then north to the central quad. Hodgson readily admitted to Scandinavian influences witnessed by his craft-like attention to detail and the expansive concrete wall surfaces softened by brick panels or, on the south side, the grid of window hoods executed in stained cedar. These applied elements both reinforce and alleviate the rigid geometry of the cast concrete elevations.

## Conservation Framework and Strategy

Hodgson exerted continued aesthetic control through two major additions. In 1971 a major addition created a second

storey for the northern ("D") wing, closely following the style of first floor.

- Then the School of Music was accommodated in a major expansion to the southwest, a two-storey "pavilion" joined to the main structure by a roofed but open pedestrian concourse.
- The sensitive handling of the scale, the massing and detailing of the Music Wing eases the transition from the monumental formalism of the high-rise main building and informality of the more recently developed woodland University Gardens in the south-west quadrant of the campus.
- In 1999 the open undercroft of the west end of the main block was enclosed to form a coffee shop although the expansive glazing retained the open visual effect of original pillared gallery.
- More recently ongoing seismic upgrading has included the addition of a reinforced concrete elevator shaft on the south plaza facing elevation. The steel panel finish, stepping away from Hodgson original pallet of materials, does compromise his design intentions.

**Overall the additions to accommodate growth, meet the needs of changing educational technologies and improvements to meet life-safety codes, ensures Maclaurin a continued central role as home to the Education Faculty and School of Music, within the terms of Hodgson's design brief, and the overall campus plan.**



Arts & Education Building Presentation Drawing 1966 Allan W. Edwards. Courtesy UVic Special Collections



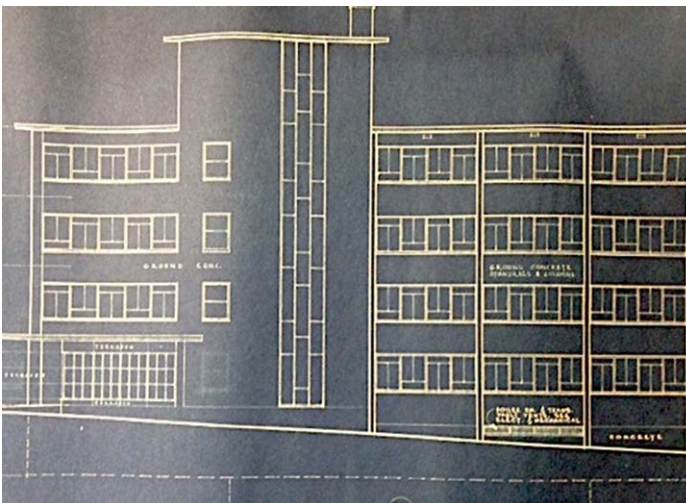
## Case Study 12

### Medical Arts Building Victoria, 1953

Wade Stockdill Armour architects  
Adaptive re-use: Christine Lintott Architects



Medical Arts Building 1953. Martin Segger photo 2019



Medical Arts Building. Elevation drawing Wade, Stockdill & Armour archts. 1953. Courtesy UVic Special Collections



Medical Arts Building 1953. Martin Segger photo 2017

## Historical Context

By the early 1950s, the building design profession was awash with “names” well on their way to defining the new architecture for America: Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Louis Kahn, Phillip Johnson and what was to become the architectural power-house with considerable longevity, Skidmore Owings & Merrill (“SOM”) with its lead designer Gordon Bunshaft - all adherents and effective promoters of the International Style. Running separate practices with cross-appointments to Ivy League architecture schools such as Harvard, Princeton, Yale and MIT their leadership was uncontested. Here were the first generation of “starchitects”, the darlings of professional journals such as *Progressive Architecture*, *Architectural Record* and popular national magazines such as *Time*. Their work captured the spirit of a new (“the modern”) age, idealism and dreams for a better, wealthier, healthier, happier world- leaving behind the previous two troubled decades of depression and war. Rationalist design principles, expressed in purified abstract forms, and executed in the latest high-tech materials became the hallmarks of good architecture.

In large and small offices across the United States and Canada “Modernism” came to be defined in these terms. In Vancouver, where large-scale building was already underway, practices such those of C. B. K. Van Norman, Frank Musson, McCarter & Nairne, Thompson Berwick & Pratt and Peter Busby Architects were pushing out International Style corporate offices for their ever more successful resource industries clients. By the early sixties Frank Musson, in-house architect for Bentall Corporation, was designing his “Bentall Centres” large scale office developments in Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary and Edmonton.

## Statement of Design Singnificance

Manitoba University trained Peter Stockdill (1915-1994), a principle in the Wade Stockdill partnership, was an early adopter of the International Style in Victoria. The firm's first essay in the style, and a first in Victoria, the Pandora Street Medical Centre, wrapped in a *faux* curtain-wall (actually steel-framed window panels set into the grid of the reinforced-concrete skeleton) which never- the- less achieved the stripped-down clean aesthetic of the style. Its concrete skeleton was itself a technological feat, the largest continuous pour for a structure of this size. The siting was also a master-piece. Set back from the intervening treed landscape of the Pandora Street median (Harris Green), the smooth glistening surfaces of the facades are caught in glimpses from the road through the mature deciduous canopy of oaks and maples. The mass of the L plan building is contained within three geometric blocks, one of which functionally expresses the multi-level stairwell. Cornice levels are defined by the extended-shelf (*brise- soleil*). A corner entrance is indented, its expression suppressed to a minimalist canopy shelf, so as not to mar the studied rationalism of the fenestration grid. Following rationalist principles, this stripped-down minimalism is the hallmark of the "International Style".

## Conservation Framework and Strategy

Shortly, the building will commence a new life, repurposed as part of a residential condominium complex, the original configuration and envelope treatment inspiring the new look. The original design is being re-created in an adjacent second block.

- The structure will be stripped down to its floor-plates and skeleton.
- New energy-efficient curtain-wall panels will be inserted in the seismically upgraded concrete frame. Signalling the new use as residential condos, perforated steel-paneled balconies will be inserted, reinforcing the original grid geometry.
- A complete services upgrade is included.
- The financial viability of the project is underpinned by the addition of a second, larger block, following Stockdill's original design concept which is being built on the Johnson Street frontage behind the original.
- Parking needs to be met in a multi-storey parkade under the new block.
- The two book-matched L plans allow for the development of a garden court-yard in the centre. Each building will feature a roof-top garden.
- In honour of the architectural firm that played a significant role in introducing Modernism to Victoria the two buildings are to be named The Wade and The Stockdill.

**While at the extreme end of fabric intervention, including adaptive re-use to a new purpose, the scheme preserves Stockdill's design concept so memorializing a major pioneering exercise in the Victoria's early Modernist history.**



"The Wade" proposal sketches, elevation and birds-eye views, 2019. Courtesy Christine Lintott archts.



## Case Study 13

### Centennial Square Victoria, 1962/1964.

Rod Clack Architect, Justice & Web Landscape Architects, in conjunction with Mr. W. H. Warren, Parks Administrator. Design archts: Rod Clack and Clive Justice. Redevelopment of NW Quadrant, Alan Hodgson Architect, 1995.

Revised Master Plan, Roger Hughes Architect, 1996  
Revitalization: Bill Pechet and landscape architect Joe Daly. 2007/8. Totem poles by Butch and Bradly Dick and Clarence Dick.

Future development concept: Chris Gower, Architect/planner 2012/2015.



Centennial Square. John Taylor photo 2018



Centennial Square ca. 1966. Courtesy Clive Justice

## Historical Context

Urban life is lived in spaces. The rebuilding of bombed-out cities centres across Europe provided the opportunity for public benefit projects such slum-clearance and historic restoration. In North America the revitalization of decaying urban cores and the transitioning of redundant industrial zones to higher-use office/retail/residential became the order of the day. Historic districts and new housing estates alike featured various attempts to re-create public civic spaces inspired by the much admired late-medieval and renaissance European cities and towns. An added value was their function as popular attractions in the emerging, and increasingly competitive mass- tourism industry. A profound influence on these ideas was Jane Jacob's monumental text, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). Introducing the notion of "social fabric" Jacobs, who had been an editor of the stridently modernist *Progressive Architecture Magazine* turned on the Modernist agenda for over-rationalized functional planning and soulless design that neglected the patterns, histories, habits and traditions of ordinary people in their habituated environments. These ideas, toward more humanized architecture and urban planning were further developed by the Viennese architect, Christopher Alexander, trained variously at Cambridge and Harvard, during a long teaching career first at MIT and then from 1963 at Berkeley. His research and teachings were finally summarized in his immensely popular co-authored text book, *A Pattern Language* (1977). Theorists like Jacobs and Alexander also provided a counter-Modernist, although progressive, boost to the popularization of urban heritage conservation.



The Canadian Government in conjunction with the Provinces spearheaded urban renewal schemes across the country by offering major infusions of cash through competitive grants programs to municipalities.

## Statement of Design Significance

The 1961-5 project in Victoria to blend the old with new in the creation of a major public square to anchor the revitalization of downtown Victoria anticipated the following quote from Prof. Alexander.

*"...people gravitate naturally toward the edge of public spaces. They do not linger out in the open. If the edge does not provide them with places where it is natural to linger, the space becomes a place to walk through, not a place to stop. It is therefore clear that a public square should be surrounded by pockets of activity: shops, stands, benches, displays, rails, courts, gardens..."*

(Christopher Alexander et alia, *A Pattern Language*, 1977)

Victoria's newly appointed and first professional urban planner, Rod Clack, described a vision of the new square for the mayor and council, and also the tax-paying public, to garner their support.

*"Here is believed to be a design planned to preserve some of 'vanishing Victoria' by accepting historic values and at the same time pointing the way to a progressive urban future"*

(*The Centennial Square Project: A precis of preliminary and introductory information*. City of Victoria, Feb.7, 1963)

Commenting on the Centennial Square scheme, a writer for Canada's leading professional architectural journal wrote: *"the overall scheme and pattern to integrate all the spaces and order that the whole square feel as one unit, flowing in and out and between the various buildings and using the proposed fountain as the focal point with the square expanding out to the perimeter... a gradual or gentle terraced effect"*

(*Journal of RAIC/Canadian Architect*, Nov 1963)

Supporting and advising the Mayor, Richard Biggestaff Wilson, was the UVic Campus consulting architects Wurster Bernardi Emmons. They were already at work on a massive pioneering urban heritage conservation project in the heart of San Francisco's industrial district, Ghirardelli Square. As Dean of the Berkeley's School of Environment Design, Wurster was in the process of the appointing Christopher Alexander to its faculty. Landscape architect Clive Justice, already at work on the UVic campus, was a recent Berkeley graduate.

The idea behind the new city central square was to create a public space that would celebrate

Victoria's past while anticipating a promising future. A street was closed and another realigned, the old city market demolished to make way for a new urban space. According to Clack's visionary report to Council it *"would be architecturally defined by enclosing buildings and enriched by urban decorative elements in paving, texture, planting and fountains ... a comfortable urban scale of related buildings and landscaped spaces making a lively meeting place imaginatively combining civic functions, shopping, entertainment, and relaxation in a manner intended to enrich the community."*

A restored city hall with new additions, revitalized playhouse and lawcourts, shopping arcade and parkade, and a senior-citizens centre clustered around a gently stepped garden courtyard, anchored by the totemic mosaic fountain by artist Jack Wilkinson. A sheltering arcade consisting of an open retail galleria, a raised backstage for the theatre, and arched undercroft of the new council chamber bordered three sides of the Square, open at the east end. The City proclaimed in its brochure produced for the dedication of square: *"Blight is being held in check and healthy tissue is growing outward; a greater civic pride is apparent, reflected in the enthusiastic downtown paint-up program..."*. Centennial Square provided a riposte to the more historicist Bastion Square four blocks to the south. Both are anchored by a multi- storey parkade.

## Conservation Framework and Strategy

In the ensuing years numerous schemes have attempted to adapt the Square to the changing economic realities and patterns of pedestrian use. A focus of many of the plans was adapt it to support a more active "festival" usage. A major blow to Square life was the closing of a significant downtown anchor on its northern side, the Hudson's Bay department store. A more positive recent phenomenon is the growth of adjacent very-high density residential developments requiring additional park and recreation spaces.

The 1996 revised master plan responded to the removal of the Police Station both on the north side of the Square.

- Providing an opportunity to reimagine the square in the context of its original planning principles.
- Improving access by penetrating the periphery with alleys to neighbouring streets.
- Increasing green space.
- Re-anchoring the Square by re-developing the North side with a library or art gallery.

A rework of the Square, 2004-6, and 2007/8 followed the replacement of the Senior Citizens Centre by multi-storey office of the Greater Victoria Regional District (2007) government.

- Demolition of the two raised pods containing the MacPherson Theatre restaurant under the B.C. "Spirit Square" funding program, celebrating British Columbia's 150 anniversary of union of the Crown Colonies.
- Main elements of the Square were retained including fountain, benches, planters and the curved steps.
- Three new components were inserted in the SE corner creating a new entrance to the Square:
  1. A "Spirit Beach", and water feature;
  2. A "Spirit Garden" two totem Poles.
  3. Adjacent to the rear of the McPherson theatre a canopied performance stage and seating area replaced the Knott Garden.

In 2017 a public process under the direction of the City Planning Services department suggested a restoration of the original 1963 design intent, returning the Square to its original more passive role as "quiet oasis" for meeting, greeting and unstructured family recreation. It recommended:

- Vastly improving basic maintenance
- Reinstitution of boutique shopping in the arcade galleria
- Re-introducing a feature restaurant facility
- Re-configuring the Brazilia-inspired concrete seating "crown" and treating the pool more as a children's inter-active water-park feature.
- Adjusting the landscape to a scale more in keeping with the intimacy of the space.
- Re-introducing a major public anchor to the North side of the square, such as a public library.

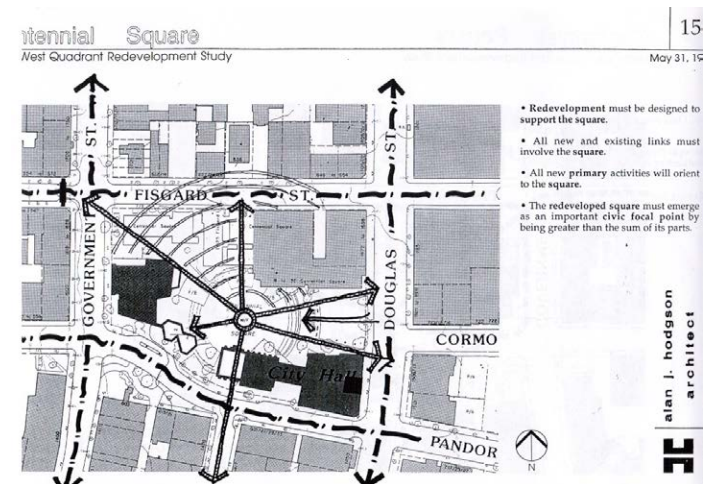
**Centennial Square, once a much-celebrated symbol of urban revitalization, and an eloquent statement for building a vibrant future building on the City's storied past and using all the tools of Modernist design, is currently a neglected underutilized space. The new plan, if executed, would:**

- **Ensure continued use as a revitalized urban community meeting room**

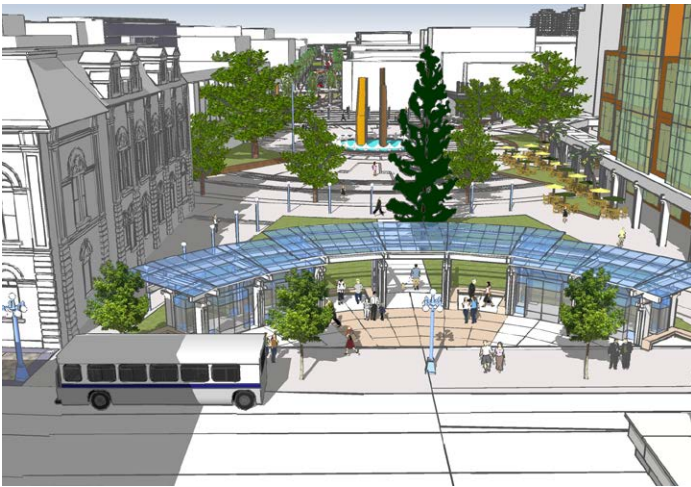
- **Provide much needed recreational space for the nearby rapidly expanding down-town population**
- **Preserve the setting for the restored Victorian City Hall.**
- **Support the City's cultural facilities on the Square**
- **Respect the early Modernist buildings and monuments on the Square as a heritage legacy in its own right.**
- **Return the Square to a role respecting the original design intent of Mayor Biggerstaff Wilson, Rod Clack and their collaborating design team.**



Centennial Square concept model, 1962. Credit: UVic Special Collections



Centennial Square N.W. Quadrant Study, A. Hodgson archt. 1995. Credit: UVic Special Collections



Centennial Square revitalization concept drawings ca. 2015. C. Gower archt. Courtesy C. Gower



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