

Cottages and Castles for Vancouver Home-Seekers

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At the turn of the century Vancouver, like other west coast North American cities far from the main centres of population, developed a distinctively urban landscape. Plentiful and cheap land, an extensive streetcar system and the financial rewards of a resource-based boom economy expedited the acquisition of comfortable home settings for middle-class life in a low-density city. In the boom years working-class people were able to share in that prosperity, albeit modestly. Home-ownership was widely accessible. In time, the costs of land and of housing would increase, and the wage advantage of Vancouver over eastern cities would moderate.¹ Indeed, from the beginning, the uneven circumstances of capital and labour, of families and single men, and of racial minorities made Vancouver clearly part of, rather than distinct from, the industrial world.² Yet Vancouver was also special, a place different from the towns and cities in eastern Canada and Britain, whence most Vancouverites had come.³ It was a place at a particular moment in time on the western North

¹ E. R. Bartlett, "Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Vancouver, 1901-1929," *BC Studies* 51 (Autumn 1981): 3-62, is ambiguous on housing costs, an issue that still needs a full analysis in light of the longer amortization of mortgages by the early twentieth century, and which made home acquisition a different matter than earlier. One attempt to focus the analysis is offered by D. McCririck, "Opportunity and the Workingman: A Study of Land Accessibility and the Growth of Blue Collar Suburbs in Early Vancouver" (M.A. thesis, Geography, UBC, 1981), who has argued that, in a small sample of residents in Grandview over a limited span of time, 25 percent of the people rented; therefore, opportunities were limited. Others might look at the other side of the coin and draw the more optimistic conclusion that 75 percent did not rent. An excellent analysis on the continental scale that points the way for future work is M. J. Doucet and J. C. Weaver, "Material Culture and the North American House: The Era of the Common Man, 1870-1920," *Journal of American History* 72, 3 (December 1985): 560-87. See also footnote 40 below.

² For class manifestation at the urban level, see R. M. Galois, "Social Structure in Space: The Molding of Vancouver, 1886-1901" (Ph.D. thesis, Geography, Simon Fraser University, 1979). For attitudes to oriental labour, see H. Glynn-Ward, *The Writing on the Wall* (Vancouver: Sun, 1921) reprinted by University of Toronto Press, 1974 and containing a useful introduction by P. E. Roy (pp. vi-xxxi).

³ N. MacDonald, "Population Growth and Change in Seattle and Vancouver, 1880-1960," *Pacific Historical Review* 39 (1970): 297-321.

American frontier where a booming land market, the possibility of good wages in a number of industrial or service jobs, the ease and cheapness of building in wood, and the popularity of imported housing styles from which to execute charming settings for family life combined to encourage many Vancouverites to identify with their new city.⁴

In 1913 Frank Yeigh provided a typical observation of Vancouver's residential landscape:

While the fine business section is steadily improving and building up, the excellent streetcar system is assisting in a rapid suburban expansion. The trolley line to Steveston, for instance, shows the battle that is being waged against forest and stumps by the makers of homes. On one lot will be seen a neat frame cottage, with a bit of lawn, a profusion of flowers, and a kitchen garden, while adjoining it the once fire-swept forest awaiting the more complete subjugation at the handle of man. More room, more homes for more people is the cry of Vancouver, and the homes of the new city are models of architectural style, all embowered with a wealth of flowers and vines.⁵

Such a description was common throughout Vancouver's first half-century. It described fringe locations up to six or eight miles from the city's original mill-town focus. The term "cottage" was broadly and warmly associated with "home" and could describe a cabin or a mansion, its "lawn" a 25-foot lot or a two-acre estate. Gradually, through a succession of building booms, the stump-filled spaces between the cottages were built upon, the earlier homes were joined by houses of different styles, and street frontages emerged in unusual, somewhat variegated wholes.

Vancouverites were convinced they were part of a unique urban landscape. And unique it was, by the standards of the day in the British Isles and eastern North America, because in most segments of Vancouver's society home-ownership levels were high and urban residential densities exceptionally low. A 1928 study revealed that 72 percent of the houses in the city of Vancouver were single-family, detached homes;⁶ in the neighbouring municipality of South Vancouver single-family houses comprised 75 percent of all residential accommodation and 84 percent of

⁴ P. E. Roy, *Vancouver: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1980), provides the best scholarly overview of the city's development. Another useful perspective is offered by W. G. Hardwick, *Vancouver* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974). The residential landscape is the focus of D. W. Holdsworth, "House and Home in Vancouver: The Emergence of a West Coast Urban Landscape, 1886-1929" (Ph.D. thesis, Geography, UBC, 1981).

⁵ F. Yeigh, *Through the Heart of Canada* (Toronto: Gundy, 1913), p. 303.

⁶ H. Bartholomew, *A Plan for Vancouver Including Point Grey and South Vancouver* (Vancouver, 1929), p. 217.

houses were owner-occupied.⁷ In the municipality of Point Grey owners prided themselves on being part of an exclusively residential suburb. (See map, page 17, for places mentioned in text.) While Vancouver had been touted as the “Glasgow of the North West” and the “Liverpool of the Pacific,” it could hardly have borne such monikers. Over 60 percent of Glasgow’s population lived in one or two rooms in tenements joined end-to-end in bleak rows, while Liverpool faced problems common to most English cities in trying to cope with housing inadequacy.⁸ At the turn of the century, when Vancouver was an exuberant town of 25,000 and anticipated outstripping New York, Robert Hunter’s seminal survey of poverty revealed that 94 percent of New Yorkers were renters.⁹ At every turn Vancouver seemed a departure from old ways. It was defined by internal greenery and flowers as much as by sea and mountains. Its “models of architectural style” were almost entirely single-family houses, not the apartments, tenements, courts and row housing of other industrial cities.

Vancouverites, alert to their unique opportunities, rarely failed to appreciate the distinctive nature of their emerging city. The diary of J. J. Miller, resident and real estate agent in Vancouver’s Grandview neighbourhood, is particularly graphic on the city’s merits.¹⁰ Miller arrived in Vancouver from Australia in 1905 on his way to establish himself in the Winnipeg wheat trade. Sidetracked by the opportunities in Vancouver, he stayed and prospered. In the spring of 1912 he embarked on a four-month trip to attend the coronation of King George V, and, while passing through Port Moody and into the Fraser Valley on the CPR, noted Vancouver’s “vast possibilities for the workers and the home-seekers.”¹¹ In his observations along the route, Vancouver was always the standard against which other places were measured. Between Winnipeg and Fort William, “snow was falling . . . and we thought of our beautiful daffodils and hyacinths and green lawns at Grandview,

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 311, 357.

⁸ *Census of Scotland, 1881*, quoted in Loomis, *Modern Cities and their Religious Problems* (New York, 1887); see also J. Butt, “Working Class Housing in Glasgow, 1815-1914,” in S. D. Chapman (ed.), *The History of Working Class Housing* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971), p. 64. On London, C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London* (London: Macmillan, 1902); on York, B. S. Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (London: Macmillan, 1901).

⁹ R. Hunter, *Poverty* (New York: Macmillan, 1904); J. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (New York: Scribner, 1890).

¹⁰ J. J. Miller, *Vancouver to the Coronation* (London: Watts, 1912).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Vancouver and the lively spring weather there."¹² Of Toronto, he observed that

for miles and miles of suburbs nothing but substantial brick houses greet the eye. The only objectionable feature is the sameness of architecture. Evidently brick construction does not lend itself to the adoption of attractive architecture so well as the wooden buildings of Vancouver.¹³

New York stood in even greater contrast for him:

The main part of the city extends for miles upon miles of four and five-storey brick buildings. The life of the people is essentially a city life. Nowhere within easy reach of the city can be seen the beautiful suburban bungalows or private residences with flower gardens and lawns such as may be seen at Vancouver.¹⁴

Between Miller's west and his urban east there was no choice: Vancouver was in a league by itself.

For Harry Archibald, similar contrasts were evident. A civil engineer who had come to Vancouver from Nova Scotia, Archibald regularly sent letters to his father in Musquodoboit, where the family had lived and worked since arriving as Loyalists. He was fascinated by the pace of change, and from his stable Maritimes background could not help but observe:

Everything is raw, crude, and unfinished, as the work is still under progress. It is a very expensive operation — as stumps here cannot be pulled out with a yoke of oxen as back East. What do you think of clearing trees four feet in diameter and one hundred feet high off land to make room for a city residence?¹⁵

Some of his responses were cautious and tentative. The priorities of socialists were unfamiliar to him, and in his view somewhat un-Canadian. As he observed:

This Vancouver is full of Socialists. A peculiar thing is that the Socialists are nearly always foreigners — Englanders, Germans, Americans, etc. They have meetings nearly every evening and on Sundays. Their big meeting is on Sunday evening. Was there once, but do not think I will join for a while at least. Their ways are not my ways, and at present we have nothing in common. But nearly every evening at the street-corners one can see a crowd of them holding forth. Many of them remind me of the great unwashed.¹⁶

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁵ W. C. Archibald, *Home-Making and its Philosophy, as Recounted by a Nesting Branch of the Archibalds* (Boston: Archibald, 1910), p. 499.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

Yet for all his observations of an unfinished place and unfamiliar people (not only socialists but also remittance men and Chinese and Japanese workers), Archibald was a booster: "the land of Evangeline is a good country, but this is a long way ahead of it."¹⁷

The opportunity of owning a home in the city distinguished Vancouver from its eastern Canadian counterparts. Land was available to many more than in the east, and working- and middle-class people could either buy houses finished from developers or begin themselves to build a cottage on a cheap city lot. One such cottage is illustrated on page 18. A simple one-family house surrounded by a garden and fence typify working-class housing in Vancouver's east end; it was built in 1892 by one John Mason, a worker who settled about one mile from Hastings Sawmill. Such small cottages and cabins were common. One storey high, one room deep and balanced symmetrically around a central doorway, they presented a folk classicism as elegant as more expensive structures elsewhere in the city. The surroundings may have been chaotic, but the disorder of stumps testified to clearing done. Inside the picket fence was "home," the pivotal space of the family. While the house was like thousands built as temporary homes by farmers on the Canadian Prairies, or by companies in mining camps in the Rockies, here, in a city, the cabin had become a special castle. A Vancouver woman, writing of her childhood, noted that:

A picket fence ran around the whole from the backyard and separated it from a half-vacant lot on the other side. Through the fence one could see blackberry vines growing on the lot and one could hear birds chirping in the morning sunshine . . . Up Powell St., about 2 houses from where we lived, stood a small and very white cottage behind a snowy white picket fence. Flowers grew in the front yard and green shrubbery banked the fence from the inside. A broad flight of steps, four or five in number led from the garden wall to the verandah of the cottage whose front door was often left open.¹⁸

Twenty blocks to the west the men who owned the sawmills and factories and who managed the docks and railway were building their own castles in a similar mould. For them too the same criteria of home as sought by the city's workers were being applied. In her somewhat autobiographical account of the construction of the family home of leading merchant W. H. Malkin, Vancouver novelist Ethel Wilson provided a colourful picture of the evolving landscape:

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 504.

¹⁸ G. C. Schwesinger, *Recollections of Early Vancouver in My Childhood, 1893-1912* (Vancouver: Vancouver Historical Society, Monograph #4), p. 38.

Down came the forests. Chop. Chop. Chop. The blessed forests came down. The men of the chain gang were driven up in a wagon and with lumbering movements cleared away the fallen trees while their guard stood near, and interested passers-by watched and then speculated on their past and their future. The forest vanished and up went the city.

Aunt Topaz's nephew Stephen soon began to build a large house halfway between the town and English Bay. This was very pioneering of him, as there was yet no streetcar near there. . . . Stephen's house was painted red. It was with a doll's house kind of pleasure that Topaz, fresh from brick England, saw painters painting little wooden houses red, white, green and even yellow among the standing cedars, fir trees and maples. The houses all had wooden trimmings and verandahs, and on the verandah steps when day was done the families came and sat and talked and counted the box pleats of the backs of fashionable girls' skirts as they went by, and visitors came and sat and talked, and idly watched the people too, and watched the mountains grow dark, and the stars come out above the mountains. And then they all went in and made a cup of cocoa.¹⁹

The early West End homes were built in a greater variety of Victorian styles than those of the East End, many of them designed by architects and featuring prominent turrets, broad verandahs and elaborate shingle or gingerbread decorations (page 18). Inside, dining and living rooms were used for formal social entertainment, including "At Home" afternoons,²⁰ as well as for private family life. For over twenty years the city's elite occupied streets of impressive home settings between the harbour and English Bay, adjacent to the city's premier open space, Stanley Park.²¹

Workers' cottages nestled among the castles, just as castles occasionally protruded above the cottages. Photographs of early Vancouver reveal many such arrangements within the cleared bush, built from similar sawmilled parts, covered with similar clapboard or shingle, and decorated with much the same gingerbread trim. As the city grew, a mix of one- and two-storey houses, speculatively built by contractors from a small range of pattern-book designs,²² joined the extremes of owner-built cottage

¹⁹ E. Wilson, *The Innocent Traveller* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1944), p. 124.

²⁰ A. E. Robertson, "The Pursuit of Power and Privacy: A Study of Vancouver's West End Elite, 1886-1914" (M.A. thesis, Geography, UBC, 1977), pp. 31-45; also D. W. Holdsworth, "House and Home in Vancouver: Images of West Coast Urbanism, 1886-1929," in G. A. Stelter and A. F. J. Artibise (eds.), *The Canadian City: Essays in Urban History* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977), pp. 198-201.

²¹ Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-31.

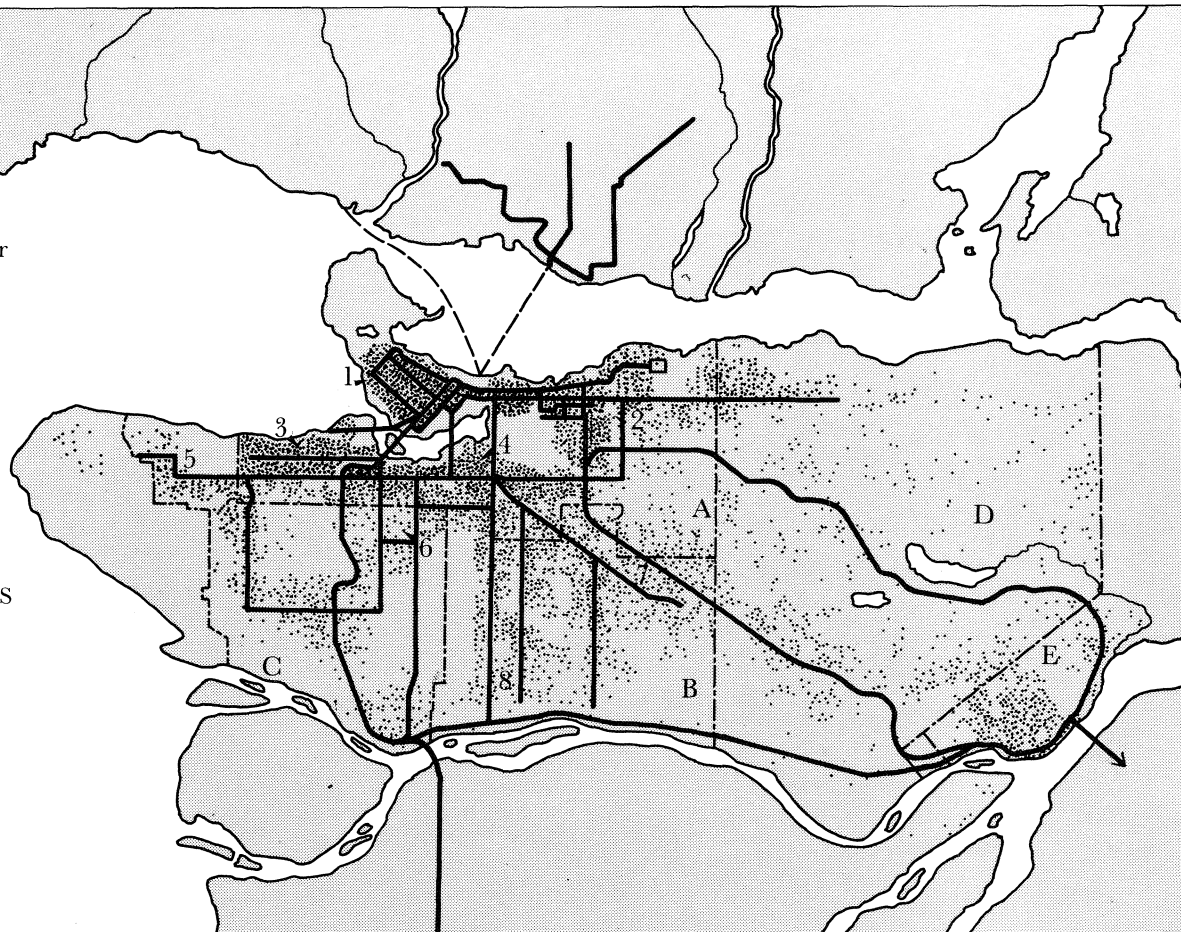
²² Important pattern books at the time included *Palliser's Model Houses* (Bridgeport, 1878); *Shoppell's Modern Houses* (New York: Cooperative Building Plan Association, 1900); *Radford American Homes* (Chicago: Drake, 1903). These and other

POLITICAL UNITS

- A City of Vancouver
- B South Vancouver
- C Point Grey
- D Burnaby
- E New Westminister

NEIGHBOURHOODS
mentioned in text

- 1 West End
- 2 Grandview
- 3 Kitsilano
- 4 Mt. Pleasant
- 5 West Point Grey
- 6 Shaughnessy
- 7 Cedar Cottage
- 8 Grimmett

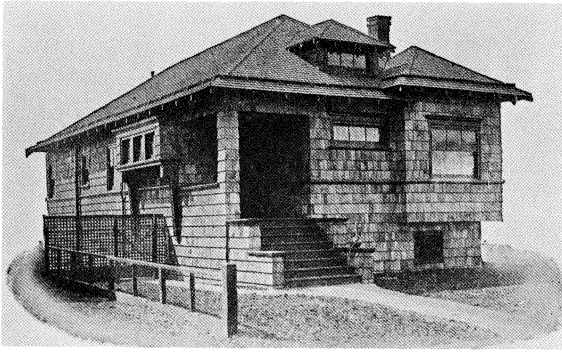




Cottage, Grandview, constructed 1892



Turreted house, West End, ca. 1890



*Designs for
workingmen's
homes from
Hodgson's
pattern book*



Half-timbered house, Third Shaughnessy, 1920s



California bungalow, 1920s



Stucco cottage, Point Grey, 1920s

and architect-designed mansion, as the West End, Yaletown and Strathcona districts filled up. Although there were shacks and cabins congested near the sawmills and the railroad round-house, Vancouver had no close counterpart to St. Henri in Montreal or to the back-to-back housing that was still being built in Britain.²³ In large part this was because land was available south and east of False Creek, and wood houses could be easily built. Construction was relatively simple, and owner-built cottages were possible. For the enterprising person, the low cost of land together with high wages meant that a house could often be acquired rapidly.²⁴

As in other developing cities of the North American west at the turn of the century,²⁵ a broad swath of land was available in Vancouver for suburban growth. Its dimensions had already been set by the initial speculative steps taken to develop an interurban and suburban transportation system. Interurban Railway lines to New Westminster and later Steveston and some 114 miles of electric streetcar tracks by 1928 would make it possible to open up vast areas ahead of settlement, while competition between land speculators kept building lots affordable.²⁶ Some people travelled out to the end of the streetcar lines and virtually into the bush to reach their own piece of the world, a cheap suburban lot. The following was noted of the behaviour of suburbanites:

pattern books are discussed in Holdsworth, 1981, pp. 109-61; see also Doucet and Weaver, *op. cit.*

²³ See H. B. Ames, *The City Below the Hill* (1897) (Toronto: University of Toronto reprint, 1972); also T. Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), who observes: "the typical Montreal family in 1897 was made up of a husband, wife and three children who lived in a five-room, cold-water flat located on a narrow, densely populated side street in what is now the inner core of the city" (p. 29). According to W. Beresford, in Leeds, England, poorly lit, cramped and potentially unsanitary back-to-back houses were still being built in the early twentieth century: two-thirds of all new construction until 1903, still 49 percent in 1909, and 31 percent in 1912; "The Back to Back House in Leeds, 1787-1937," pp. 93-132 in Chapman, *op. cit.*

²⁴ H. J. Boam, *British Columbia: Its History, People, Commerce, Industry and Resources* (London: Sells, 1914), narrates the case of a carpenter who arrived in March 1911 with \$200 and had built a house worth \$2,000 in nine months, only owing the \$200 cost of the site (p. 173).

²⁵ The impact of this land availability is summarized by studies of Los Angeles, California. See, for example, S. B. Warner's essay "The New Freedom," in *The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 113-49. That this new urban realm was a product of the streetcar rather than the freeway is amply illustrated by R. M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

²⁶ Holdsworth, 1981, pp. 59-108; see also Roy, *op. cit.*, on streetcars (p. 38) and on South Vancouver Island (p. 68).

It is a trait noticeable in the people of Vancouver that the homemaker would rather live in a large comfortable residence a few miles out of town than exist in a shack in the heart of the city. The best, even if he has to go to some daily trouble to get it, is an aim characteristic of the Vancouverite. This idea he carries out in his everyday insistence on the best in the way of homes that has brought about the rapid upbuilding of the suburban districts tributary to Vancouver.²⁷

Step by step outward from the core of the city, suburban home building was typified by the process of seeking "the best."

Immigrants arriving in large numbers before 1914, many from Britain, brought with them memories of the industrial city of their past. Before they emigrated, the prospect of home-ownership was beyond the imagination of clerks and artisans in British cities. Most had rented, and only long-term membership in a building society, backed by secure employment and sound domestic management, could make the prospect of independence from landlords even a remote possibility. For the majority, a suburban alternative to terraces or tenements would materialize only as local governments intervened to purchase land and construct estates.²⁸ Canadians who moved to Vancouver from Toronto often brought similar residential experiences, having lived as tenants in "flats," in rooms within subdivided brick houses or in frame and rough-stucco cottages in Cabagetown or "the Ward." There too attempts at garden city-style reform housing were often too expensive for the people who needed it most.²⁹ Yet what was only a dream in such older cities seemed a reality in the "fresh" new city on the Pacific.

If the supply of cheap land in Vancouver was the product of competitive land speculation, the hope of home-ownership lay behind much of the demand for land. Real estate interests in the city skilfully played upon

²⁷ "Vancouver Today Hallmarked by Capital," *Vancouver Province*, Saturday Magazine, 18 June 1910, p. 8.

²⁸ A. A. Jackson, *Semi-Detached London* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973) describes the circumstances of railway clerks in Edwardian London who were advised to be earning £90 (sterling) a year before marrying, and then only being able to rent: "a difference of a shilling or two in a white collar worker's weekly outgoings really mattered" (p. 42). The critical changes in salary and transport costs are traced through into house accessibility for an earlier period of London housing by H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: The Growth of Camberwell* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1962), especially pp. 114-37. See also J. Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1970* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1978).

²⁹ R. F. Harney (ed.), *Gathering Places: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1985). On attempts to develop low-cost housing, see S. Spragge, "A Confluence of Interests: Housing Reform in Toronto, 1900-1920," pp. 247-67, in A. F. J. Artibise and G. A. Stelter (eds.), *The Usable Urban Past: Planning and Politics in the Modern Canadian City* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1979).

the immigrants' desire to own a home. "Rent" conjured a specific set of unequal associations and unpleasant memories; "home" evoked dreams. A house owned was the safest form of security — so argued the land and housing industry. One advertisement for suburban land included a sketch of a mother kneeling beside her baby's crib, and suggestively asked: "Try and figure out what the land values of Point Grey will be when your boy or girl becomes of age. Do you not think a piece of property in this beautiful locality would lighten their path along life's highways?"³⁰ Such advertising played on the hopes for the future and on the doubts of the undecided. In a city where "the future was guaranteed" (as every booster maintained), a purchase when the opportunity was "right" ensured security later when the city filled and its land would be expensive. A building lot purchased would lead to a house being built and a home begun. Mercilessly, the hype for land was parlayed into immigrants' hopes for homes and their fears of the future, not to mention tidy profits for the speculators.

Oftentimes, the company selling land was also selling houses, and consequently boosting the ideal of home-ownership was doubly needed. In one article Vancouver was hailed as a "City of Beautiful Homes":

The measure of a city's stability, financial soundness and attractiveness to the newcomer is not to be found in its palatial hotels, skyscraper office buildings and apartment houses. The dweller in flats is an uncertain and unsettled quantity. The man in the office may be a foot-loose adventurer. Homes alone indicate the extent and quality of citizenship. The home is the heart, the life and the index of a city. Vancouver may well be proud of her beautiful homes, and of her great industries that are directly concerned with the promotion of home-building — sawmills, sash and door factories, and home-building companies. Among those who have come here from the great schools of older lands and from the great republic to the south of us are many brilliant young architects who have brought to us their genius, unfettered by effete convention and worn-out tradition. They have evolved new and attractive types of bungalows and mansions that are a revelation to the town dweller from the east or from overseas, where they are familiar with terraced rows of cottages that seem to have been made by the gross to one dreary pattern. The immigrant has brought with him a deeply implanted love of home life.³¹

The design being promoted in this case was a California Bungalow, to be set on a lot spacious enough to be free of neighbourly nosiness and no

³⁰ Vancouver *Province*, 28 April 1910, p. 17 (advertisement for Highbury Park, D.L. 320, Point Grey. Marriott and Fellows, Real Estate agents).

³¹ F. Pemberley, "Vancouver, a City of Beautiful Homes," *British Columbia Magazine* VII, 12 (December 1911): 1313-15.

doubt appointed with roses and other blooms. Other firms promoted the historic and bucolic associations of a stuccoed cottage with half-timbered trim. Both were visual contrasts to the brick and grimy rows in cities to the east and overseas, and both exploited the imagery of openness as the antidote to industrial life.

The distinction between residential densities in working-class Vancouver and other industrial cities was recognized, valued and defended. In the Vancouver *World* of 1912 it was insisted that

there will be no slums in South Vancouver, no tenement district, and the living factories that grace themselves with the name of apartment houses dare not enter where there is room for neat cottages and gardens and chicken yards; where the working man may bring his family up in the fresh air; and the rays from the sun in Heaven may enter without restraint.³²

Here was a residential image that had characterized parts of Vancouver for more than twenty years — gardens for fruit, vegetables and poultry, detached houses in healthy, almost rural settings. The real estate interests, promoting for their own profit an image of contented home-ownership in a garden setting, could not easily be condemned for their self-interest given that the workers of Vancouver might benefit by attaining standards of life well beyond those of their old industrial world cousins.

The case history of Jesse Enefer, labourer, highlights some of the benefit working men could derive in Vancouver's cheap suburban land market. In 1908 Jesse lived in rooms near the docks while working for McDonald Marpole Coal. His neighbours included many like him, all part of an unskilled labour pool close to the waterfront.³³ Two years later, now working for a plumbing contractor digging pipe-lines, he moved a mere half block to another set of rooms, but also in 1910, just two years after coming to Vancouver, Jesse made the transition to the city's suburban ideal of home-ownership. He moved three-and-a-half miles south to East 48th Avenue in South Vancouver. Three years later he had moved eleven blocks further south to the Grimmatt area at the south end of Main Street, where five other house-owning Enefer kin also lived. All

³² "South Vancouver: Where the Renter Ceases Trembling and the Landlord is at Rest," Vancouver *World*, 1912, Progress and Building Education, p. 92.

³³ Prior Street three blocks east of Westminster (later Main Street) in 1907 listed: teamster, motorman, Italian, labourer, waiter, junk store, labr., logger, 2nd-hand store, clerk, labr., longshoreman, stonecutter, dress-maker, widow, labr., grocer, teamster, feed lot, boat builder, insurance, stoves, laundry, manager, hotel keeper, engineer, 2nd-hand store, grocer, motorman, machinist, inspector, painter, janitor, engineer, gasfitter, millman, conductor, labourer.

the Enefers were listed in the directory as labourers.³⁴ Their achievement in obtaining homes in the suburbs was repeated by many others in the Grimmatt district.

The area was scantily settled. There was just one person per acre,³⁵ and, between houses, forest and scrub mixed with the gardens, orchards and cow pastures of city workers. Most of the occupants of the isolated houses were unskilled labourers or artisans — sawmill workers, teamsters and carpenters — yet they were close to downtown employment by street-car and as close to sawmills at Eburne and New Westminster via the Interurban Railway. Here, at a time when English planners were experimenting with Garden City alternatives to high density working-class housing, Grimmatt had already been created as a residential environment that fitted South Vancouver's confident boast of being the "Garden Suburb of the West."³⁶

Grimmett homes were far different than the consciously "arts and crafts" cottages being contrived for the British garden cities.³⁷ Very few of the houses in this neighbourhood, or in South Vancouver as a whole, developed from blueprints that had an architect's signature. Most incorporated the innate design sense of contractors or owner-builders, assisted by a newer generation of pattern books than those that had influenced late nineteenth-century contractor-built houses.³⁸ Many were designs for "workingmen's cottages" (page 19). Most were simple rectangular structures, usually oriented gable-on to the road with a verandah across the front, or else variants of the cabin shown on page 18. Setbacks were irregular; some houses stood in the middle of several lots, surrounded by a nascent orchard, while others were placed at a roughly standard dis-

³⁴ Holdsworth, 1981, table 1, "The Enefer Clan: Residential and Occupational Mobility," p. 13.

³⁵ For a 22-block, 180-acre area bounded by Ontario Street, 58th Avenue, Prince Edward Street and River Road, 160 dwellings, occupied land at a density of less than one per acre (*Henderson's Vancouver Directory*, 1913, 1922, 1926). Grimmatt took its name from a pioneer settler whose name was used for that of the local post office.

³⁶ Municipality of South Vancouver, Publicity Bureau, "Garden Suburb of the West," 3 pages, 1924 (City of Vancouver Archives Pamphlet Collection). South Vancouver as a whole had a density of nine persons per acre in 1928: Bartholemew, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

³⁷ W. L. Creese, *The Search for Environment: The Garden City, Before and After* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

³⁸ These included *Hodgson's Low Cost American Homes* (Chicago: Drake, 1906), *Hodgson's Practical Bungalows and Cottages* (Chicago, 1912), *Radford's Artistic Bungalows* (Chicago, 1908), H. Wilson, *The Bungalow Book* (Chicago, 1911), J. Yoho, *Craftsmen Bungalows* (Seattle, 1913).

tance back from the sidewalk, as if nominally acknowledging the urban order that would gradually follow. In many cases houses grew in stages around a kitchen and bedroom, additions being the product of the owner's "sweat equity" or his participation in the "informal economy" of neighbourly help. Cottages were raised to provide a deeper or sounder basement or expanded by raising the roof to add an upper storey, and such changes were sometimes associated with moving the house to a different lot. Some houses were totally prefabricated — such as the cottages made at the B.C. Mills factory on False Creek largely for construction on the lumber-scarce prairies, but also popular on Vancouver's east side.³⁹ By middle-class standards, these suburban fringe developments were little more than "shacktowns," but for their occupants architectural conformity was secondary to the sense of a private realm, of arcadia,⁴⁰ that Jesse Enefer undoubtedly felt in contrast to the dockside rooms he had occupied during his early days in the city.

The upper-class counterpart of Jesse Enefer's search for the suburban ideal was exemplified by the move of Edward P. Davis, a prominent lawyer who left the West End in 1912 for a house at the tip of the Point Grey peninsula. Pressures of change prompted by the expansion of downtown had begun to erode the West End's earlier exclusiveness. Davis had lived on Seaton Street (now Hastings), very close to the waterfront but in circumstances quite different from Jesse Enefer's. Originally part of the area of CPR executives' homes, Seaton Street in 1905 included the residences of Davis; F. C. Wade, later proprietor of *The Sun* newspaper; Ed Mahon and W. Nichols, two of the city's leading real estate figures;

³⁹ E. G. Mills and D. W. Holdsworth, "The B.C. Mills Prefabricated System: The Emergence of Ready-Made Buildings in Western Canada," *Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History*, no. 14, Ottawa, 1974, pp. 127-69.

⁴⁰ R. Knight, *A Very Ordinary Life* (Vancouver: New Star, 1974), pp. 209-10 and 225-31, contains a fascinating portrait of a small cabin on Wall Street, in Vancouver's East End, acquired after World War II. Although minimal, it was a step up from the two decades of mobility and seasonal work across Canada; indeed, it became home for a life in post-war Vancouver.

Such experiences should not be overlooked in the search for more objective measures of home-ownership or of standards of living as discussed in footnote 1 above. In many cities the "informal sector" housing supply, with shacks and cabins gradually turning into houses, was a critical element of working-class independence and self-worth. On the fringes of London, England, for example, they become the subject of an important book by D. Hardy and C. Ward, *Arcadia For All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape* (London: Mansell, 1984); for the same phenomenon in Paris, France, see N. Evanson, *Paris: A Century of Change, 1878-1978* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 226-38. For Canadian examples, see J. T. Saywell, "Housing Canadians: Essays on the History of Residential Construction in Canada," Economic Council of Canada, Discussion Paper No. 25, 1975, pp. 114-36.

T. O. Townley, a past mayor; and several bankers and merchants. But the change underway meant that by 1908 the street also included a brewery, and the conversion of large private houses to apartment functions had begun. The visual amenities had been altered too by expansion of port and rail facilities that interrupted the view of the harbour and mountains. Davis withdrew to a location with a dramatic view of the coast mountains where he built a half-timbered mansion set in one and a half acres of garden.⁴¹ Others of his profession and class also left the West End, most moving to Shaughnessy Heights, where estate-lots along treed crescents were marketed by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

In Shaughnessy, as in Grimmett, society tended to be comfortably homogeneous, the neighbourhood being especially favoured by barristers, managers, owners and company directors as well as by leading public service professionals. Restrictive covenants and high real estate prices for large lots helped codify exclusivity amid acceptable architectural variation. The dominant house style echoed English Tudor manors. Their aged appearance belied their newness and provided a sophisticated and "rooted" setting for families to enjoy their position in society. The drawing rooms were larger than those used for "at Homes" in the West End, and the central hallways were sometimes impressively two storeys high with open staircases and galleries in the manner of medieval halls; an inglenook seating area provided cosy corners within such voluminous spaces. Tudor Revival houses shared treed streets with revivalist interpretations of rough-stuccoed English farmhouses, smooth-stuccoed and red-tiled Spanish Missions, gambrelled-roof Dutch Colonial farmhouses or even flamboyantly porticoed mansions modelled after those in the American South.⁴²

Such structures were built in Shaughnessy for over twenty years as the CPR opened further segments of the subdivision to the south. One of the most impressive half-timbered houses from the 1920s was the residence of Alvah Hager, an American from Boston who came west, built up a

⁴¹ Davis's house, initially called "Kanakla," is now known as the Cecil Green Park and is the home of the University of British Columbia Alumni Association; as such it is one of the most accessible houses of that class in Vancouver. Other Tudor Revival mansions along the Point Grey shoreline that are also publicly accessible include one built for J. S. Rear (later called "Aberthau" and now the home of the West Point Grey Community Centre) and "Thorley Park" (now the Brock House seniors' centre). These houses receive treatment in J. Bingham, *Samuel Maclure, Architect* (Ganges: Horsdal and Shubert, 1985), pp. 79-82. Similar mansions were built on prominent sites in the East End and near Burnaby Lake.

⁴² H. D. Kalman and J. H. Roaf, *Exploring Vancouver* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1974), pp. 145-64.

fortune and then enjoyed it in one of the most emphatically English houses anywhere in the city (page 19). Several reasons may explain why a Bostonian chose to live in Third Shaughnessy in an imitation thatched cottage near Vancouver's school superintendent, who resided in a Dutch Colonial-style house, and near a wholesale grocer in a stuccoed English farmhouse. Possibly Vancouver was merely replicating what Cleveland's Shaker Heights, Philadelphia's Main Line or developments in other eastern cities had already achieved — gracious rustic homes as a foil for work in the industrial city — but on a more modest scale as befitted its location on the fringe of a continental economy.⁴³ Alternatively, the litmus of success for a largely English city was the country house and not an urban townhouse,⁴⁴ and so the informal and bucolic Tudor Revival set in a pastoral subdivision was more apt than the streets of denser Victorian housing in the West End. Whatever the reason, the frequency and apparent ease with which these successful men changed residence, many of them having at least two distinguished addresses within a decade, suggests a restlessness in the “city of homes.” Grimmett and Shaughnessy shared a great deal, albeit at the opposite ends of the social scale.

Grimmett and Shaughnessy, two homogeneous but socio-economically distinct residential areas, illustrate the spatial sorting of Vancouver's suburban population that developed as suburban sites became available. The distinction between east-side and west-side Vancouver, noted as early as 1891 (“the West End is the home of the merchant and professional, the East that of the lumber king and mechanic”), clearly persisted as the suburbs developed. Yet the city was not totally compartmentalized on rigid class or occupational lines.⁴⁵ In Kitsilano, Mount Pleasant,

⁴³ E. Johannesen, *Cleveland Architecture, 1876-1976* (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1979), pp. 101-09; for similar grandiose housing in Philadelphia and other east coast settings, see V. Scully, *The Shingle Style* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955).

⁴⁴ This preference is explored by M. J. Weiner, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); see also J. S. Duncan and N. G. Duncan, “A Cultural Analysis of Urban Residential Landscape in North America: The Case of the Anglophone Elite,” pp. 255-76, in J. A. Agnew, J. Mercer, D. E. Sopher (eds.), *The City in Cultural Context* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1984).

⁴⁵ *Williams Vancouver Directory* (1891), p. 128.

⁴⁶ E. M. Gibson, “Lotus Eaters, Loggers and the Vancouver Landscape,” pp. 57-74, in L. J. Evendon and F. F. Cunningham (eds.), *Cultural Discord in the Modern World* (Vancouver: Tantalus, 1973), suggests some of the broad patterns of segregation. A more precise analysis of working-class fractions is offered by R. M. Galois, *op. cit.*

Cedar Cottage and Grandview — all neighbourhoods beyond False Creek but still within the limits of the pre-1929 city of Vancouver — socio-economic strata overlapped. The juxtaposition within a single neighbourhood of people in different economic circumstances led to complex residential landscapes in this belt of “middle-suburbs” two or three miles from downtown. A range of pioneers — some farmers, others labourers, yet others professionals — provided widely different initial housing stock, and a variegated cadastral plat of 25, 33 and 50 foot lots created a range of density options for subsequent booms that filled the blocks with a variety of contractor-built bungalows and cottages.⁴⁷

Both the California Bungalow and the English Cottage shared the aesthetic inspiration of the Arts and Crafts Movement then prevalent in Britain and North America,⁴⁸ and both found popularity with middle-class as well as working-class purchasers. Bungalows and stucco cottages were built with many variants of decoration and volume, and their rusticity and garden settings made them comfortable neighbours on many city streets.

The California Bungalow was typically a one-storey wooden house with broad verandahs, decorative brick porch supports, exposed rafters and shingled siding (page 20). The sense of spaciousness was reinforced by an informal indoor-outdoor floor plan. It was a pattern-book interpretation of elegant wood houses designed by the Pasadena, California, architectural firm of Greene and Greene.⁴⁹ In Vancouver, as in other more northern settings, a high basement for the furnace made it look taller than its southern cousin.⁵⁰ Larger and more expensive variants were known as “Swiss Chalet” bungalows, which incorporated a large upper-floor dormer and balcony. In Vancouver contractors specialized in building one or two plans from these California design books, and their interpretations brought distinctive variants of the style to different

⁴⁷ For a case study of Grandview, see Holdsworth, 1981, pp. 17-24; for Kitsilano, the range of houses is recorded in D. W. Holdsworth, “Vernacular Form in an Urban Context” (M.A. thesis, Geography, UBC, 1971).

⁴⁸ William Morris was central to this movement: see E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955); also A. Briggs (ed.), *William Morris: Selected Writings and Designs* (London: Pelican, 1962). For the leading American exponent, see M. A. Smith, *Gustav Stickley, The Craftsman* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1983).

⁴⁹ R. Winter, *The California Bungalow* (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1980); C. Lancaster, *The American Bungalow, 1880-1930* (New York: Abbeville, 1985).

⁵⁰ D. W. Holdsworth, “Regional Distinctiveness in an Industrial Age: Some California Influences on British Columbia Architecture,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* XII, 2 (1982): 64-81.

Vancouver neighbourhoods.⁵¹ Few really expensive bungalows were built in the “pure” Greene and Greene style, however, since the Vancouver elite preferred the more traditional Revivalist styles. Most bungalows, copied from pattern books, were built by small-scale contractors. By the 1920s only the single-storey versions were being built, both in the west-side suburbs and in less elaborate manner on the east side. In its least expensive form the bungalow was little different than John Mason’s cabin of the 1890s, with perhaps the addition of stone or pebble piers supporting the verandah and a few exposed rafter-ends.

The other popular house-type connected with the Arts and Crafts Movement was a stucco cottage that featured some half-timber trim.⁵² It was a vernacular cousin of the Tudor Revival mansions found in Shaughnessy Heights, and its broad pattern-book popularity led to its adoption in suburbs of quintessentially American cities such as Minneapolis⁵³ as well as the Anglo-Canadian Vancouver suburb of Point Grey (page 20). Typically a half-hip (or jerkin) gable suggested thatched-cottage roofing, an illusion reinforced by asphalt tiles curved around the eave and also by small eye-lid dormers. The front facade might also utilize fake end-buttresses that suggested a thick cob wall, or an exaggerated sloping gable (a “cat-slide” roof) whose lines were inspired by the designs of the English architect C. F. A. Voysey.⁵⁴ Half-timber trim was added in lesser or greater amounts, although only architect-designed cottages went so far as to add pargetting, nogging or other infill material for the “authentic” vernacular touch.⁵⁵ Most were built on the western flanks of Shaughnessy, in Kerrisdale, West Point Grey and Dunbar Heights during the 1920s. Very few had the spacious hallways or inglenook detail associated with the architect-designed versions. In its more minimalist form, the cottage approximated the early cabin, only now with a jerkin roof and stuccoed walls.

Whether a cottage, a bungalow or a mansion, housing for Vancouver home-seekers developed in response to urban images that had been

⁵¹ Holdsworth, 1981, pp. 162-205.

⁵² J. D. Kornwolf, *M. H. Baillie Scott and the Arts and Crafts Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972); B. Palmer, “Development of Domestic Architecture in British Columbia,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (November 1928): 405-16; also Holdsworth, 1981, pp. 206-48.

⁵³ T. Harvey, “Mail Order Architecture in the Twenties,” *Landscape* 25, 3 (1981): 1-9.

⁵⁴ D. Gebhard, *Charles F. A. Voysey, Architect* (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1975).

⁵⁵ A. W. Jackson, *The Half Timbered House: Its Origins, Design, Modern Plan and Construction* (New York: McBride Nast, 1912).

framed elsewhere and experiences that pre-dated Vancouver. The sense that here was a world apart came not just from the boosterism of the place itself, but most strikingly from a common appreciation of the distinctive opportunities in Vancouver. Miller and Archibald, Mason and Enefer, Davis and Hager each reveal something of the specific links between Vancouver and a prior world. Emotionally and experientially, the reference points were largely eastern Canadian or British. Vancouverites looked back to other remembered places and saw a measure of themselves. They looked at the landscape of Vancouver and enlarged their vision of what was possible in a city. The detached single-family house as home — an external object set within a garden world and an internal space where family developed — was at the heart of that vision.

In 1929 the city of Vancouver amalgamated with its two suburban municipalities, South Vancouver and Point Grey, to confirm legally a spatial reality that had existed for the previous quarter century. This period had seen the skeleton of the modern metropolis laid out, neighbourhoods defined and stabilized social gradients developed. Throughout this process, there had been little reform rhetoric. In the minds of civic leaders and embryonic planners there were few tenements and few areas of abject poverty, overcrowding and disease.⁵⁶ For nearly all men and women the city seemed to offer adequate shelter together with the hint of further affluence. Little reformist planning was thought to be needed, because the vision of an appropriate future for Vancouver, originating in the attitudes of landowner/developers and embraced willingly by immigrant home-seekers, seemed to be realized in the landscape.

To a large extent this optimism was justified. Vancouver on the eve of the Depression was emphatically suburban.⁵⁷ Patches of land (indeed, building lots on most streets) were still available on the Burrard Peninsula, and the urban fringe extended clear into the Fraser Delta and Fraser Valley to the south and west, and north across the harbour to the lower slopes of the North Shore mountains. Then so too was there a sense that housing was still accessible. Second and Third Shaughnessy might seem beyond reach, but its western flanks offered more affordable homesites on serviced and landscaped streets. While the east side was a more chaotically developed region of smaller houses, it was nonetheless

⁵⁶ For the broader Canadian context, see J. C. Weaver, *Shaping the Canadian City: Essays on Urban Politics and Policy, 1890-1920* (Toronto: Institute of Public Administration of Canada, 1977); P. Rutherford (ed.), *Saving the Canadian City: The First Phase 1880-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

⁵⁷ Hardwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-40; Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 113; and J. Barman, "Neighbourhood and Community in Interwar Vancouver," this issue of *BC Studies*.

well away from occupants' workplaces. If there was not a uniform suburbia, Vancouver was still a city of predominantly single-family homes — some tiny, others small, yet others comfortable and even palatial. Together they shared a peninsula on the edge of the Pacific and at the foot of coastal mountains. The perception that Vancouver provided a unique urban opportunity in a magnificent natural setting, and in a verdant landscape of parks and treed streets, was not always to be confirmed for everyone, and the essentially conservative notion that the best city was a low-density suburban region would create mounting problems for planners and later generations of home-seekers; but for those who were part of the city's first half-century of growth, the dream of a "neat frame cottage, with a bit of lawn," seemed realizable.