

TURKISH BATH HOUSE, 819-823 FORT STREET, VICTORIA

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: TURKISH BATH HOUSE



**Address:** 819-823 Fort Street, Victoria, British Columbia

**Construction Date:** 1908; with second storey expansion in 1913

**Original Owner:** G. Bergstrom Bjornfelt

**Original Architect:** Hooper & Watkins

**Original Builder:** Luney Bros.

### Description of Historic Place

The Turkish Bath House is a two-storey commercial building situated on the south side of Fort Street, just east of downtown Victoria. This historic building is distinguishable by its pronounced cornices at the roof and storefront levels and its double-hung windows with multi-pane upper sashes and tapered keystone lintels.

### Heritage Value of Historic Place

The Turkish Bath House is significant for its association with the Edwardian-era development of Victoria and its unique purpose-built function as a Turkish Bath House and Swedish massage parlour. The building is valued additionally for its commercial architecture, as designed by the firm of Hooper & Watkins, and constructed by prolific contractors, the Luney Brothers.

Constructed during the upswing of the pre-World War One real estate boom, The Turkish Bath House is valued as part of the surge of development that characterized Victoria's gateway economy during the Edwardian-era period. Built in 1908 and expanded in 1913, the building has



been used continuously for commercial purposes, and significantly contributes to the historic character of this block of Fort Street. Originally constructed for Swede, G. Bergstrom Bjornfelt for use as his Swedish massage parlour and Turkish Bath House, this two-storey commercial structure represents the eastward expansion of Victoria's commercial core. The building was originally built as a one-storey brick Turkish Bath House, complete with state of the art facilities, for Bjornfelt, who travelled across Europe in order to research the latest technologies and equipment he would implement in his new Victoria business. The interior of the building was originally fitted with tiled floors and marble walls and was staffed entirely by Swedish attendants. Following the addition of the second storey in 1913, which Bjornfelt had planned from the beginning, intending to double the size of the facility, the building changed hands and incorporated furnished rooms on the second floor while maintaining the bath house on the ground level. The bath house function ended in 1914 and a variety of businesses subsequently occupied the building, including a cake shop, a furniture store, and a curiosity shop. The variety of commercial uses attest to the adaptability of this structure and the commercial vitality of Fort Street, one of the major thoroughfares to the eastern part of the City and the adjacent municipality of Oak Bay.

The Turkish Bath House is additionally significant for its vernacular Edwardian era architecture as designed by the architecture firm of Hooper & Watkins. The partnership was made up of Thomas Hooper (1857-1935), one of the province's most prolific architects, and C. Elwood Watkins (1875-1942), who first entered his office as an apprentice in 1890. The firm designed many architecturally important projects that continue to define the character of Victoria, including the Victoria Public Library (1904), additions to St. Ann's Academy (1908), and many impressive residences. The firm also designed numerous projects in Vancouver including the Winch Building (1906-1909) and the Odd Fellow's Hall (1905-1906). The partnership dissolved in 1909 just following the completion of the Turkish Bath House, which had been designed in 1908. This building has additional value for its association with local contractors, the Luney Brothers. William and Walter Luney, originally from Toronto, came to Victoria in the late 1880s and established their building company in 1906. Some of the company's contracts included the CPR Terminal Building (468 Belleville Street), and the Crystal Garden (713 Douglas Street). This building exemplifies vernacular commercial Edwardian-era architectural design, and remains a valued example of the work of Hooper & Watkins and the Luney Brothers in Victoria's Old Town.

### **Character-Defining Elements**

The key elements that define the heritage character of the Turkish Bath House include its:

- location on south side of Fort Street;
- siting on the property lines, with no setbacks;
- continuous commercial use;
- commercial form, scale and massing as expressed by its two-storey height, rectangular plan and flat roof; and full retail storefront on ground level facing Fort street;
- masonry construction;
- Edwardian-era architectural features including its simple decorative pressed metal cornices, one at the roofline featuring horizontal brackets and one above the storefront featuring corner brackets; and
- original fenestration on the second storey of the front elevation, including double-hung wood frame and sash windows featuring multi-pane upper sashes, wooden horns, projecting sills, and lintels with tapered rectangular keystones; as well as wood frame arched window assemblies on the rear elevation, with some sashes featuring stained and leaded glass upper sashes.

## RESEARCH SOURCES

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### Building Permits:

- July 8, 1908, Lot 277, issued to Bjornfelt, 1 building, 1 storey, brick, purpose: Turkish Baths, estimated cost \$4,000
- July 24, 1913, Pt. Lot 277, 278, issued to Western Lands Ltd., 2 storey, brick addition for stores, estimated cost \$2,500

### Publication:

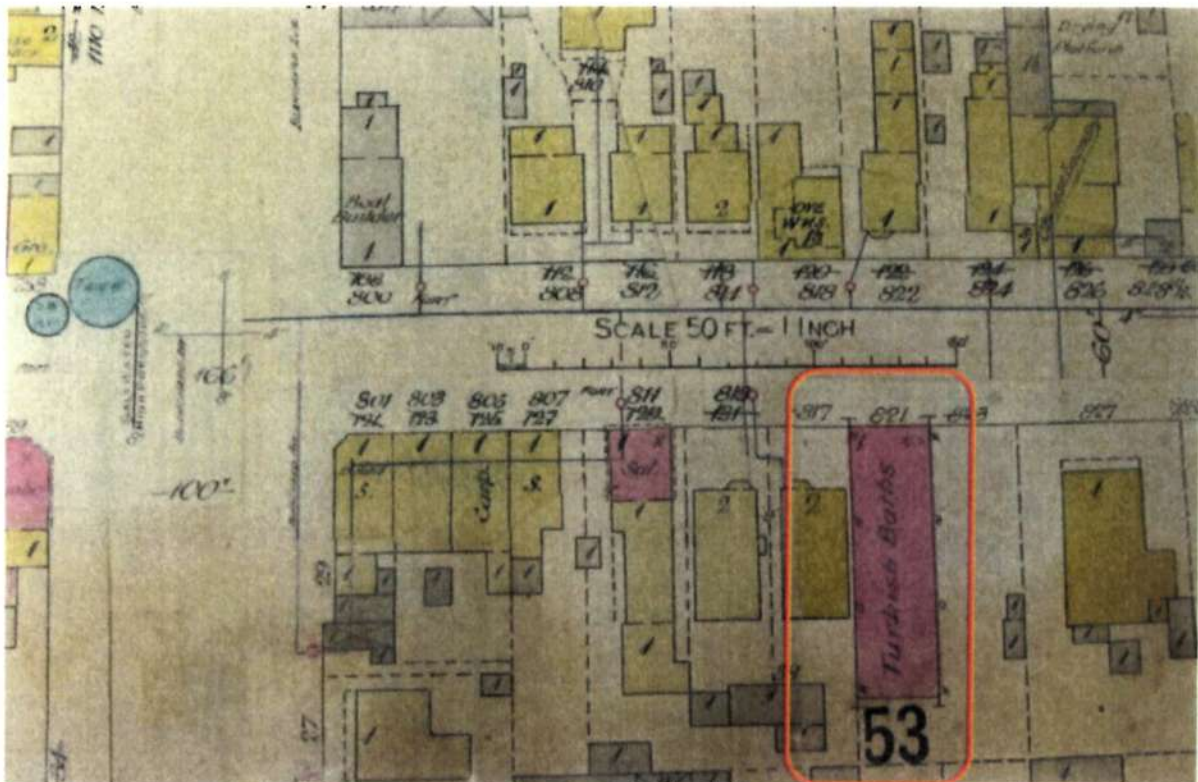
- Luxton, Donald. *Building the West: The Early Architects of British Columbia*. Vancouver, Talonbooks, 2007 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed.

### Directories:

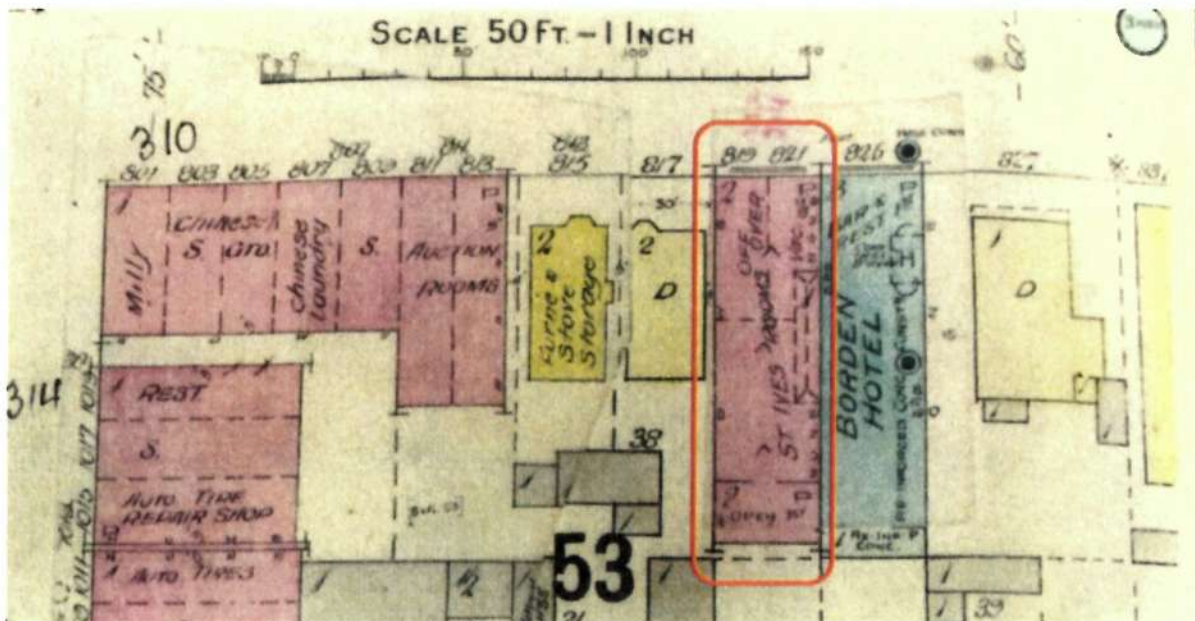
1909-1912	<i>Turkish Baths</i>
1913	819 – <i>The Arlington, furnished rooms</i> 821 – <i>Larsen, R.H. baths</i> 821 – <i>Robt. H., residence same</i>
1914	819 – <i>The Arlington, furnished rooms</i> 821 – <i>De Caluive, Joseph</i>
1915	819 – <i>The Arlington, furnished rooms</i> 821 – <i>vacant</i>
1917	819 – <i>St. Ives Rooms</i> 821 – <i>Colonial Cakes Co.</i>
1918	819 – <i>St. Ives Rooms</i> 821 – <i>vacant</i>
1920	819 – <i>St. Ives Rooms</i> 819 – <i>Mayor, A.C.</i> 821 – <i>Sanders, Chas. furniture, residence same</i>
1921	819 – <i>four names, including St. Ives Rooms</i> 821 – <i>Sanders, Charles</i>
1928-1935	819 – <i>St. Ives Rooms</i> 821 – <i>Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe</i>
1940-1945	819 – <i>Selkirk Lodge Rooms</i> 821 – <i>Fallows, A.S. – proprietor of Selkirk Lodge</i>
1953	819 – <i>Selkirk Lodge rooms</i> 821 – <i>vacant</i>



TURKISH BATH HOUSE, 819-823 FORT STREET, VICTORIA



Fire Insurance Map ca. 1909



Fire Insurance Map 1916



## MANY PERMITS IN A SINGLE WEEK

Structures Aggregating \$40,-  
000 in Value Taken Out—  
Turkish Bath Project.

The first week of July has seen a decided growth in building figures as indicated by the value of the buildings for which permits have been taken out. For the six week days on which it was possible to take out permits since the first of the month, permits for building which will cost in the aggregate \$10,000 have been issued and plans for a considerable number of others for which permits will soon be applied are at present being prepared. Should the past week's showing be continued until the end of the month, July will be one of the best months in the year in the building line.

Yesterday a permit was issued to B. Bjornfelt, who intends to establish an up-to-date Turkish bath and massage establishment in a new building to be erected on the south side of Fort street just east of Blanchard street. The building which will be one story in height, of brick construction, will be 30 by 100 feet in dimension and will cost \$1000. Mr. Bjornfelt has left for the east and south where he will get some of the latest ideas as to such establishments. It is his intention to so erect this building that it can be later added to so as to double its capacity. Hooper & Watkins are the architects and Luney Bros. the contractors.

The Daily Colonist, July 9, 1908 (left) and February 10, 1909 (right)

## TURKISH BATHS

Thoroughly Modern and Scientific Institution in Operation Here

Perfectly equipped Turkish baths and Swedish massage parlors have been completed and are now in operation at 821 Fort street. They are conducted by G. Bergstrom Bjornfelt, a qualified Swedish masseur who, before work was started upon the handsome brick structure, visited France, Germany and Sweden and obtained a first-hand knowledge of the latest equipments and devices in use in the various centres of these countries.

The bath is complete in all departments. Hot rooms, steam rooms, electric baths, chemical baths, needle and shower baths, have been installed, together with cooling and massage apartments.

The interior of the building is fitted with tiled floors and marble walls throughout, and special regard has been paid to sanitary considerations. The hot room is kept at a temperature of 180 degrees. In the steam room any heat may be attained, while the rubbing slabs are situated in separate apartments and are two in number.

The attendants are all Swedes, and are four in number. Two female attendants are present upon ladies' days—Monday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

In addition to the electric bath, in which the whole body with the exception of the head, is heated, a local electric bath is provided, where the arms and hands, or leg and foot, may receive the application of dry heat separately.

To ensure sanitary precautions, the masseurs, after each treatment, disinfect hands and arms in a carbolic bath.

In the steam room eucalyptus may be added, which is especially beneficial in the case of bad colds.

Mr. Bjornfelt has the patronage of many of the leading medical practitioners of the city.

## VICTORIA TURKISH BATHS

821 FORT STREET.

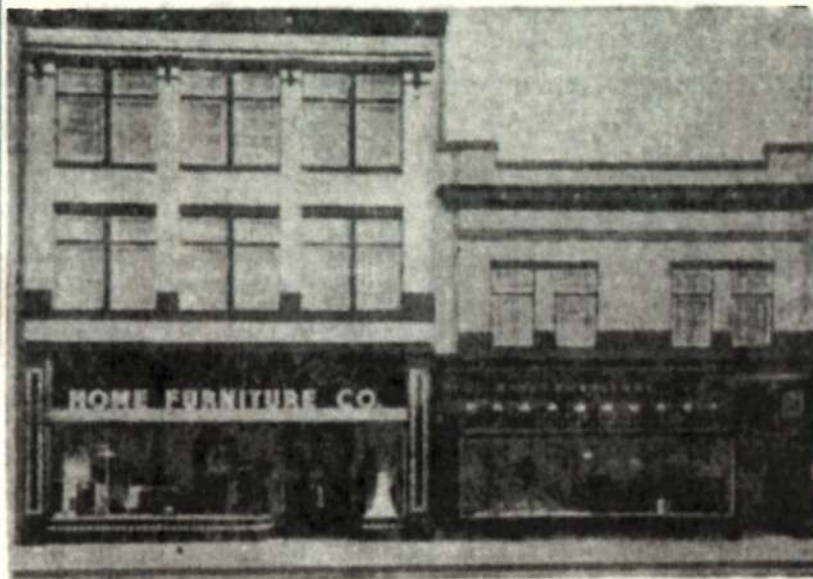
PHONE 1856.

Most Modern Baths on the Coast.

Ladies Days are Monday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

SWEDISH MASSAGE

## For Variety and Value "There's No Place Like HOME"



### Six Floors of Furniture and Home Furnishings

#### STORE DIRECTORY

##### Basement—

McCLARY RANGES.  
Linoleum, Congoleum Rugs, Etc.  
Breakfast Room Suites.  
Kitchen Furniture, Etc.

##### Ground Floor—

Chesterfield Suites.  
Living-Room Furniture.

##### Ground Floor Annex—

Bedroom Suites.  
SIMMONS Beds, Springs and  
Mattresses.  
Studio Lounges, Etc.  
Lamp Department.

##### Mezzanine—

Nursery Department.

##### First Floor—

White Wood Furniture.  
Cedar Chests, Tea Wagons.  
Occasional Chairs.  
Occasional Furniture.

##### Second Floor—

Dining-Room Suites.  
Dinette Suites, Etc.

# HOME

FURNITURE  
COMPANY

ON FORT ABOVE BLANSHARD

*May 13, 1945*

Victoria Daily Colonist, May 13, 1945, showing 819 Fort Street on the right



TURKISH BATH HOUSE, 819-823 FORT STREET, VICTORIA



819-823 Fort Street, 1960, City of Victoria Archives M03921\_141



Fort Street streetscape, 1960, City of Victoria Archives M03925\_141

TURKISH BATH HOUSE, 819-823 FORT STREET, VICTORIA



819-823 Fort Street, unknown date