

MODERNISM IN VICTORIA 1945-1975

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DESCRIPTION

The development of postwar modernist architecture in Victoria displays two major tendencies: the influence of international trends – sometimes directly introduced by Vancouver firms – and the integration of historic buildings within new developments. This local appreciation of the preservation of heritage sites within the urban context displays more affinity with contemporary British architecture than generally found in larger centres on the west coast. Some local architects also developed a highly personal idiom, resulting in strikingly original designs that stand in contrast to the city's historic building stock.

HERITAGE VALUE

Victoria's modernism is valued as a representation of the city's postwar growth and development, as a unique variation on the themes of modernism within a regional context and as a legacy of high-quality buildings and urban design.

The postwar era was a time of optimism, of growth and experimentation. Numerous societal changes, based on a disruption of traditional institutions and values, are illustrated by highly original buildings and urban design ensembles. Wartime activity, and subsequent demobilization, had a tremendous regional impact, requiring the development of new housing, commercial shopping centres and the development of institutions including a major university.

Most significantly, the development of modernism in Victoria followed a unique path, blending contemporary urban design and heritage conservation at a time when historic buildings elsewhere were generally considered expendable or even contemptible. The careful approach to urban renewal in Victoria predated other, better-publicized North American examples, and in retrospect the city can be seen as a leader in understanding the value of its heritage.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

The key elements that define the value of Victoria Modernism 1945-1975 include:

- the influence of the International Style, with the use of modern materials and a clean-line aesthetic displaying such features as exposed structural elements, curtain walls, flat roofs and ground floor podiums
- the use of materials such as: exposed concrete, stucco and metal sash windows in commercial and institutional applications; and the use of natural materials such as wood and stone in residential designs
- individual projects that display personalized influences such as Japanese design and the work of Frank Lloyd Wright
- a careful and integrated approach to the conservation of earlier buildings within an urban design context

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CONTEXT

The world was a new place in 1945. After enormous destruction, the Second World War had ended. Atomic power, and other new and potentially destructive technologies, had been unleashed. As troops were demobilized, they increasingly gravitated to urban centres, causing explosive growth that had to be accommodated. As a wartime defense centre and Canada's major west coast naval port, Victoria especially was affected by the demobilization of thousands upon thousands of troops, returning from duties overseas. The city's population doubled in the two postwar decades. Within this new urban context, there was a widespread acceptance of modernist architecture. Easy to build, inexpensive, economical of scarce materials and expressive of new technology, this new type of construction discarded traditional architectural styles and provided the means to re-conceive the city in a response to current social, political and economic conditions.

The legacy of modernist architecture built during 1945-1975 in Victoria is distinctly different from that of Vancouver. The differences arise in two key areas, first in the careful integration of the city's historic building stock within the urban context – and the subsequent rise of the heritage preservation movement – and the development of highly idiosyncratic variations on modernism by several key architects. Victoria has long been characterized by an expectation of social conservatism. The seat of government and the military, cut-off from the mainstream of commercial activity, and perceived as a retirement community, Victoria could be considered a surprising place to find an effective and intellectual response to the postwar global trends in modern architecture. In most major North American cities, modernism was coupled with a contempt for historic buildings, which were perceived as something to be swept away rather than valued. In Victoria, the introduction of modernism was characterized by a period of transition between the traditional, British ideas of architecture and a determination to rejuvenate and modernize the city. Here, a careful balance was achieved between traditionalism and modernism that in retrospect was far ahead of its time, and a model for current thoughts about sustainability.

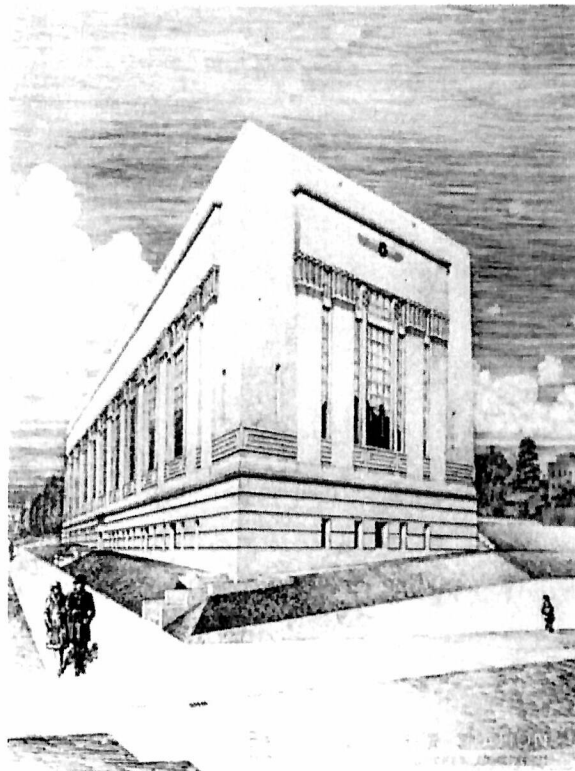
PROTO-MODERNISM 1927-1945

Despite losing metropolis status to Vancouver with the arrival of the transcontinental railway, Victoria remained an active and dynamic city until the economic collapse that preceded and then followed the First World War. Despite economic stagnation, there was a notable body of Art Deco and Moderne architecture that appeared in the 1920s and 1930s, sometimes in stark contrast to the city's traditional architecture.

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British Arts and Crafts influence during the Edwardian era: Hall Residence, 906 Linden Avenue, Victoria, Samuel Maclure, Architect, 1910 [Collection Janet (Hall) Flanagan]



Bay Street Sub Station, 1928 [B.C. Hydro Archives: B-1245]

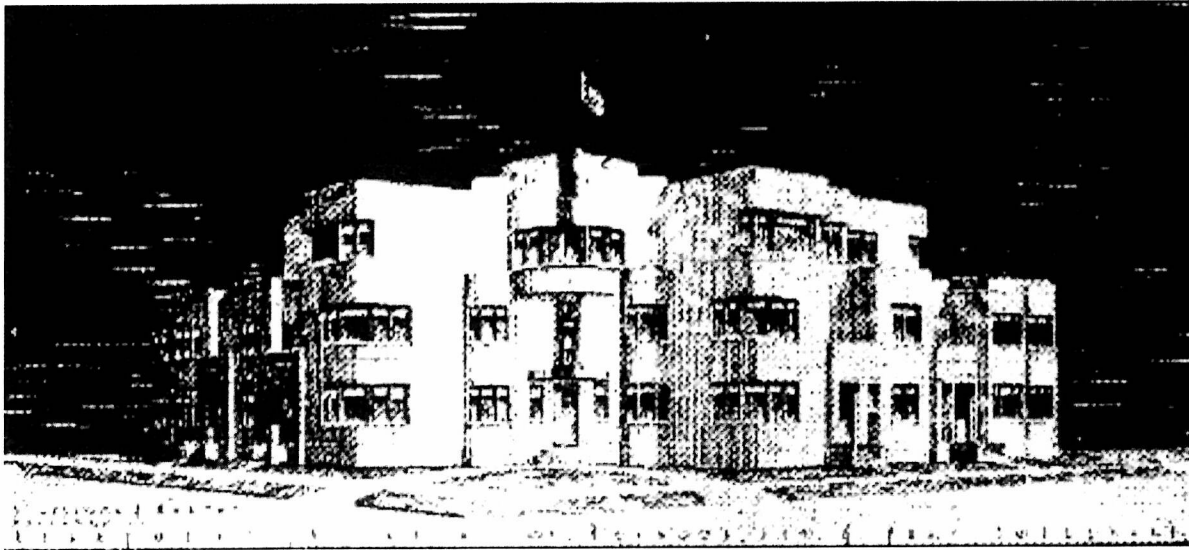
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The architectural styles that arose between the two World Wars – Art Deco and Moderne – symbolized the alliance between art and technology. This period of emerging modernism was broken into two by cataclysmic world events. As prosperity returned after the end of the First World War, there was an artistic flowering that responded to the break with traditional forms and designs. Called Art Deco after the Paris 1925 *Exposition des Art Decoratifs et Industrielles Moderne*, this style was embodied by rich, luxurious geometrical and floral ornamentation, highly coloured surfaces and an exoticism based on archaeological discoveries of ancient cultures. One startling building burst onto the scene in Victoria, the Bay Street Sub-Station, designed by Vancouver-based Architect Theo Körner for the British Columbia Electric Power and Gas Company in 1928. Massive, brooding, heaped with Egyptian symbolism inspired by the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, and built of exposed reinforced concrete, it was unlike anything built previously in the city. Embraced by many major corporations as a marketing image, Art Deco became increasingly visible in the Victoria context, including such examples as Kresge's (later Marks & Spencer), Douglas Street, 1930 – built by the Kresge's dime store chain – and the Causeway Tower, Wharf Street, 1931 – built by Imperial Oil.

The onset of the Great Depression in 1929, and the massive global economic disruption that followed, signalled the abandonment of the exotic Art Deco, and the introduction of a new austerity in architecture. Characterized variously as Art Moderne or simply Moderne – and often called *modernistic* at the time – this constituted a reduction to basics that quickly acquired its own stylistic features. The Moderne reflected emerging technologies, including aerodynamic streamlining as seen in airplanes, trains and ocean liners, and the new discipline of industrial design that was based on ergonomic efficiencies.

The first years of the Depression were grim, and little construction occurred. By the mid-1930s, however, there was an economic resurgence that resulted in increased building activity. In Victoria, many buildings still reflected traditional architectural ideals (an example being the Tudor Revival-style Oak Bay Cinema, Eric C. Clarkson, Architect, 1936) but isolated examples of the Moderne began to appear, such as the landmark Tweedsmuir Mansions Apartments, 1936. Throughout the later 1930s, the Moderne style – with its flat roofs, planar stucco walls, corner and ribbon windows and curved corners – became common-place, as seen in numerous houses, apartments and commercial buildings.

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Tweedsmuir Mansions Apartments, Park Boulevard, 1936
[*Victoria Daily Colonist*, March 29, 1936, p.3]

The onset of the Second World War signaled another cataclysmic shift, and for the duration of the War, domestic construction fell under military control. The approval of housing was tightly controlled, and was limited to conversion of larger houses to apartment units (under the National Housing Administration Act), the construction of Wartime Housing in Victoria and Esquimalt based on standardized designs (provided by Vancouver architects McCarter & Nairne), and small amounts of notable custom housing, such as that built for Dr. J.H. Johns on Somass Drive in Oak Bay, designed by P. Leonard James in 1939, but not completed until 1943.



Dr. J.H. Johns House, Oak Bay, P. Leonard James architect, 1939-1943
[British Columbia Archives D-05512]

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POSTWAR MODERNISM

After the war ended in 1945, the local situation changed dramatically. Finally, North America began to settle into a prolonged period of relative peace and economic prosperity. The once sleepy Victoria grew rapidly, and the city's population more than doubled between 1946 and 1966. Large tracts of suburban housing were built outside in the surrounding region, turning downtown Victoria into an increasingly important urban core. Many new families from widely varied backgrounds moved *'to the coast'*, either seeking new opportunities or retiring to a milder climate. Fuelling this migration was a rapidly expanding provincial economy based on resource extraction. Returning veterans, a pent-up demand for cheap housing, the baby boom, ready availability of automobiles, improved ferry access to the mainland, and new consumer confidence all contributed to this unprecedented growth.

As a government town, Victoria's most dramatic public expressions of urban development were tied to a series of Centennial celebrations that occurred from the 1950s to the 1970s. Each Centennial provoked an introspective built response that symbolized how far the city had progressed and also commemorated historic events. In addition, these were seen as opportunities to establish historic sites as tourist destinations (e.g. Barkerville in 1958).

- 1958: Centennial of the Mainland Colony of British Columbia and the first Gold Rush
- 1962: Victoria's Civic Centennial
- 1966: Centennial of Union of the two British Columbia colonies
- 1967: Centennial of Canadian Confederation
- 1971: Centennial of British Columbia entry into Confederation

One of the most striking manifestations of the continuing population boom was the amount of new housing constructed in a compressed timeframe. The new residents of Victoria shared a willingness to break with tradition, resulting in an unusually wide acceptance of contemporary styles of architecture. This was fertile ground for experimentation in design, and the quality of this new housing stock was surprisingly high.

'This issue will be a surprise to many people who were not aware that a fully fledged modern movement was to be found west of the Rockies. It would be false to think that it was confined to only domestic buildings because schools, libraries, factories and other buildings in the contemporary manner have been built of a standard of design perhaps not equalled and certainly not surpassed, in the rest of the Dominion. In the domestic field, British Columbia leads the other provinces.... They have proved to their clients present and future, by outward and inward visible signs, that the modern house is the only house for a modern family in British Columbia. Nowhere else in Canada has that proof been given.'

Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, #24, June 1947

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In the first several years after the end of the War, there was a transitional continuation of the Moderne, seen in houses such as the Smith Residence, 230 King George Terrace, Oak Bay, 1945-46, and apartment blocks such as the Park Tower Apartments, 1945. Commercial projects, such as the Odeon Theatre, 1946-1948 and Munday's Fine Shoes, Douglas Street, by Birley, Wade & Stockdill, 1947 (demolished), owed their sensuous curves and swooping interiors to the modernism of the 1930s.



Park Tower Apartments, 905 Vancouver Street
D.C. Frame, Architect, 1945 [Collection Donald Luxton]



Odeon Theatre, H.H. Simmonds, Architect, 1946-48
[British Columbia Archives: I-01938]

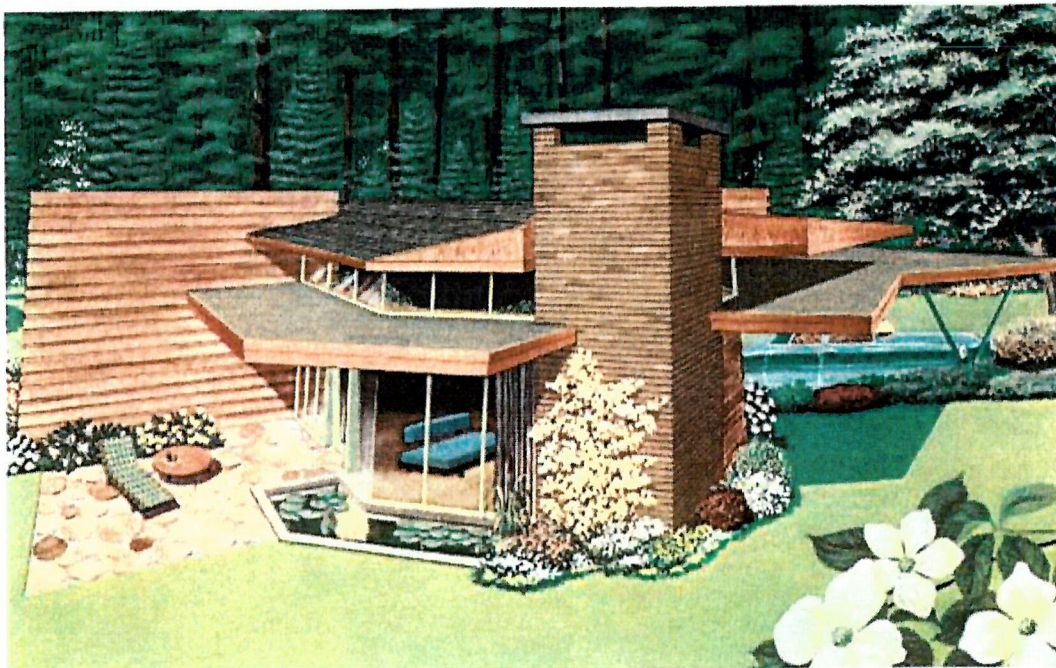
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The influence of the International Style, with a distinctly West Coast twist, began to appear as local designers gained confidence and won over clients to the rationality and economy of the new style. A fine early example of this early flowering of the West Coast style is the Mayhew House, Oak Bay, designed by Vancouver architects Sharp & Thompson, Berwick, Pratt, in 1950-51. Local designers were strongly influenced both by the aesthetics of traditional Japanese architecture and by the work of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, often shamelessly imitating or adapting his designs. The Japanese influence was partly derived through the influence of Wright, and also through a recognition that the West Coast was no longer just an outpost of European culture, but was also part of the vast Pacific Rim. Wright's work was influential, both through his original influence on the International Style architects of Europe (his early work, published in Germany in 1910, was a touchstone of the style) and through his later residential work, beginning with a startling series of modernistic houses in the 1930s such as *Fallingwater*, and his later geometric and low cost housing models (the Usonian houses). His 'organic' architecture blended simple methods of structural framing and the use of natural materials with a formal, Japanese-inspired discipline and open floor plans. Wright's flowing use of space and inventive sculptural forms ultimately were more appealing to West Coast sensibilities than the hard edges of the International Style. This local adaptation came to be known as the West Coast Style, and is also referred to as Post-and-Beam or West Coast Regionalism. Whereas the International Style was primarily an aesthetic of steel and glass, the West Coast Style generally employed wooden post-and-beam structures, which allowed greater freedom in positioning of windows and partitions than standard stud-wall construction.

One of the defining factors in the development of the emerging new modernism was the available pool of committed, energetic and talented young architects who chose to live in the city, and the way in which they were welcomed and accepted. John Wade, in partnership with S. Patrick Birley and Dexter Stockdill, was an unwavering proponent of modernism. John Di Castri developed a highly personal idiom, which reflected the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright. Even women were accepted in the profession in Victoria at an early stage. Overcoming obstacles that would have discouraged a less indomitable person, in 1933 Sylvia Holland became the first woman architect in British Columbia. Marjorie Hill, the first Canadian woman to receive a degree in architecture and the first to be registered in the country as an architect, re-established her failed career in Victoria after the end of the Second World War. One cannot underestimate the strength and focus of the architectural community in the establishment and development of modern architecture in Victoria.

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John Di Castri's career in particular followed a highly individualistic path. The designer of many churches, commercial buildings and residences, in each project he sought unique character based on site, function and client needs. One of his earliest projects, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind Building, 1951 (with F.W. Nichols) demonstrated the direct influence of Bruce Goff, under whom he studied at the University of Oklahoma. Subsequent commercial projects such as Ballantyne's Florists, Douglas Street, 1954, the Royal Trust building, Fort Street, 1963 (now the Mosaic) and the parkade on the north side of Centennial Square all demonstrated an unusual, decorative approach to modernism, more highly articulated than usually seen in other work of the period. The highly inventive Trend House, Saanich, 1954, a demonstration house for the lumber industry, was tremendously influential. Modest in size (825 square feet), it was the smallest of the eleven Trend Houses, but easily the most dramatic, with an angular floor plan and soaring roof anchored by a massive central chimney. Throughout his career, Di Castri retained a singular vision of modernism, one that did not shy away from historical references or decorative elaboration. In his obituary, Di Castri was called "an essential figure in West Coast architecture in the postwar years."

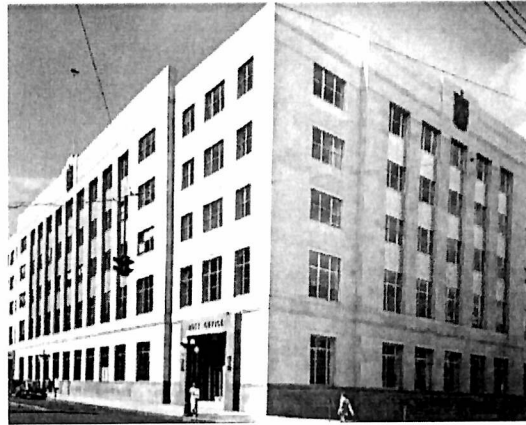


Victoria
TREND HOUSE

A low-angled section of Spanish broom provides the attractive setting for this unique and compact home at 4511 Richmond Road. Here, you see versatile Western Woods used in perfect harmony with areas of glass and brick. Exterior walls of natural stained Pacific Coast Hemlock drop siding illustrate the modern beauty and appeal of this traditionally practiced material. The deep, parallel shadow lines of the handsome Red Cedar Shingle roof are achieved by double covering every fourth row of shingles.

[Trend House Brochure]

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Main Post Office and Federal Building, Percy Leonard James, Architect, 1948-1952
[British Columbia Archives D-05210]

A similar transition occurred in commercial and institutional architecture. As the city grew, new services had to be provided. Banks, hospital and schools had to be constructed rapidly in the first few years after the end of the War. There was initially a conservative architectural response. As illustrated by Victoria's Main Post Office and Federal Building, the first large-scale projects were reluctant to shed the Stripped Classicism of the 1930s, and hedged their bets against which way the new modernism would develop. Banks were notoriously reluctant to embrace modernism, but within a few years cautiously began to accept a new more progressive look as an appropriate business image (Bank of Toronto Building, Yates Street, William F. Gardiner, Architect, 1951). It took designers from Vancouver to break through with pure examples of International Style modernism, as seen in the radically modern B.C. Electric Building by Sharp & Thompson, Berwick, Pratt Architects, 1954-55, and the Bentall Building by Frank Musson, architect for Dominion Construction Co. Ltd., 1963-64. These buildings paid absolutely no attention to their historic context, and reflected the more common attitudes of architects throughout North America towards older buildings.



The B.C. Electric Building, Sharp & Thompson, Berwick, Pratt Architects, 1954-55
[British Columbia Archives I-26564]

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One of the chief influences on the city's architecture was the Provincial Department of Public Works. Responsible for government buildings, the DPW had a large impact on what was built in Victoria. During Henry Whittaker's 30-year tenure as Chief Architect, the DPW's work was generally solid, monumental and competent, suiting the tenor of the times and the needs of the government, even if it tended to lag behind the private sector in its acceptance of progressive design. Some of their more prominent structures included Mount St. Mary's Hospital, 1940 (demolished), the British Columbia Power Commission Building, (1949-1950) and the Douglas Building (1949-1951). Whittaker's retirement in 1949 opened the door for fresh breezes to blow through the department. He was succeeded briefly by Guy Singleton Ford, who had worked with the department since 1919; Ford retired within the year, and was in turn succeeded by Clive Dickens Campbell, who had been with the DPW since 1929. In 1957, Government House was destroyed in a spectacular fire, and because of the impending British Columbia centenary celebrations the following year, with a projected visit by HRH Princess Margaret, its replacement was a priority. Although the AIBC advocated a design competition, Premier W.A.C. Bennett announced that the DPW would design the new building, modelled as closely as possible on the old building, and Campbell was given orders to proceed forthwith. By this time, a new crop of young architects had been hired, including Alan Hodgson and Peter Cotton, and the design environment at the DPW was reinvigorated. Campbell retired in 1959 and went into private practice, where he was involved in the redevelopment of Centennial Square in the early 1960s.

Education facilities also embraced the new modernism. Public schools, such as Central School (Birley, Wade and Stockdill, 1952), reflected rationalized planning principles and strictly functional requirements. Severely restricted budgets provided architects with a perfect opportunity to explore the potential of unadorned modernism and structural rationalism. Planning began in 1961 for a new University of Victoria campus on a 385 acre site. Design work was undertaken by Victoria consulting architect Robert Siddall working with the famed San Francisco firm of Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons, university planner Alfred Baxter Jr., and landscape architects Lawrence Halprin & Associates. The individual buildings on the campus reflected the influence of the New University movement in England, with references to traditional collegiate forms overlaid with tinges of Brutalist design.

Potentially the most significant development of modernism in Victoria was its unique approach to urban revitalization, blending modernist architecture with its historic context. In this regard, Victoria more closely resembles postwar British precedents than North American. The 1958 Norwich Master Plan was considered especially influential, with "gentle, progressive transformation aimed at improving street elevations" and the promotion of street harmony, filling in the gaps rather than wholesale demolition and rebuilding. Part economic reality and part inspired sensitivity, the resulting blend of modernism and heritage conservation predated other North American initiatives. Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco opened in November 1964, and the rehabilitation of Boston's Faneuil Hall and Quincy Marketplace by the Rouse Company did not occur until 1976. With the passage of time, we can now see that Victoria, rather than being stuck in the past, was actually in the forefront of reinterpreting its historic context while simultaneously pointing toward a progressive future

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The city's first major urban redevelopment project was Centennial Square, 1963-1965. By the 1960s the area around the historic City Hall had become seedy and depressed. Mayor Richard Biggerstaff Wilson, with city planner Roderick Clack, worked with a number of architects to establish a scheme for a modern public square behind City Hall, retaining the historic building as a key component of the project while extending its functionality with a new annex. The extent to which the new City Hall Annex, 1963-64 (Wade Stockdill and Armour, with R.W. Siddall Associates) was influenced by its historic setting is vividly illustrated by a comparison with the Brutalist, Corbusian Saanich Municipal Hall (Wade, Stockdill, Armour & Partners, 1965) designed for an entirely different context.



Centennial Square [British Columbia Archives I-03427]

The Bastion Square Revitalization Project arose from a widespread desire to preserve the historic, eclectic Supreme Court Building (H.O. Tiedemann, 1887-89). The Courts left the building in 1962, initiating a scheme to turn it and the Square into a centre of the arts for Victoria. The Supreme Court was rehabilitated as the Maritime Museum, a function that it still serves. The closure and redesign of Bastion Street between Langley and Wharf Streets resulted in a preserved Supreme Court building, improved pedestrian access within the downtown core, and improved links between downtown and the waterfront. The self-conscious historicism of Bastion Square was intended to offset the predominant modernism of Centennial Square - Mayor Wilson emphasized the balance between old and new in his 'Overall Plan for Victoria' (1965), which had a significant influence on the appearance of the city for the next 30 years.

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The 1970s and 1980s brought a new appreciation for Victorian and Edwardian architecture, signalled by the founding of Hallmark Society in 1973 (in contrast, the Heritage Vancouver Society was founded in 1991). This acceptance of the importance of the city's heritage stock also paid dividends in the private sector, which saw the benefits of marketing history and heritage as one of the city's main attractions. The landmark Market Square development dates from the early 1970s, and demonstrated that the private sector could undertake progressive urban revitalization projects. Other landmark examples of West Coast Design built at this time once again resulted from commissions to Vancouver architects, such as Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific, Metchosin (Ron Thom and Downs/Archambault, 1970-1977) and the Home Lumber Office, Saanich (Erickson/Massey Architects, 1972).

The development of Modern Architecture in postwar Victoria may thus be seen as significant within the wider North American context. This was one of the few locations where large amounts of historic fabric were preserved yet invigorated within the context of revitalization. In this regard, Victoria's modernism predated the Post-Modern movement of the late 1970s/early 1980s and also the broader heritage conservation movement, which legitimized preservation while recognizing the validity of interventions designed in a contemporary manner.

THE PRESERVATION OF MODERN HERITAGE: A CHALLENGE

Significant modern buildings are often at risk for a number of reasons: rapidly increasing land value, lack of understanding of their significance, lack of maintenance, and inappropriate alterations have all taken their toll.

The value of these buildings lies not just in their age, but in what they represent through their design philosophy of an earlier era. Socially, historically and architecturally these buildings are of value in defining the development of our modern age. The municipalities in the Capital Regional District have been progressive in their understanding of the value of these buildings. It is hoped that through increased awareness, there will be renewed interest in their preservation for future generations.

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SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTS

ARMOUR, John W.

Victoria, BC 1927 – Vancouver, BC 1986

John Armour began his architectural career by articling with C.D. Stockdill in Victoria from 1946 to 1951. He continued with the renamed firm Birley, Wade, and Stockdill from 1951, becoming a partner in the late 1950s. In 1961 he formed Armour Blewett and Partners in Vancouver and practiced there until his death in 1986.

BIRLEY, Studley Patrick

Manchester, England 1904 – Victoria, BC 1962

S.P. Birley had a varied background, but became one of the more accomplished modernist architects in the traditional context of Victoria, B.C. Born in Swinton, Lancashire, England on March 17, 1904, he graduated with a B.A. Honours in History from Trinity College, Cambridge in 1927, and an M.A. in Latin, and in 1929 was married to Patience Hilda Lloyd. The Birleys moved to Victoria in 1930, where he was appointed Mathematical Master at Brentwood College. By November 1931, S. Patrick Birley was a pupil under Spurgin & Johnson, and then later under J. Graham Johnson alone. Birley established his own practice in Victoria by 1934, and over the next few years designed mainly residences, but also some strikingly modern buildings, including the Sussex Apartment Hotel, 1937-38—one of the first in Victoria to cater to auto tourism—and the streamlined Athlone Apartments, 1940. During the war, Birley continued to design modest projects, several of which were in association with D.C. Frame. On March 1, 1946 Birley formed an architectural partnership with John Wade and C. Dexter Stockdill. The firm was very successful and prolific, but by 1952 Birley was practising on his own, formed a partnership with Ian Simpson in 1955, and then with Donald Wagg in 1958. Birley remained active in the office until his death, after a short illness, on July 29, 1962, at the age of 58.

DI CASTRI, John A.

Victoria, BC 1924 – Victoria, BC 2005

John Di Castri was hired at the age of 16 as an apprentice at the Department of Public Works, and received his education by correspondence. At the age of 25, after a brief stint in the office of Birley, Wade & Stockdill, he left Victoria to study at the University of Oklahoma under Bruce Goff, Frank Lloyd Wright's maverick protégé. Upon his return to Victoria in 1951, he entered a partnership with F.W. Nichols. The following year he established his solo practice. Di Castri remained dedicated throughout his career to expanding his interpretations of Wrightian forms and was a key figure in establishing modern architecture in the relatively small and conservative city. His numerous Roman Catholic churches, inventively designed despite invariably strict budgets, can be found throughout southern Vancouver Island.

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HILL, Marjorie

Guelph, Ontario 1895 – Victoria, BC 1985

Marjorie Hill is remembered as the first Canadian woman to receive a degree in architecture and the first to be registered as an architect. After graduating from the University of Toronto in 1920, Hill found little acceptance in the profession. After moving with her parents to Victoria in 1936, her career was revived when the economy improved after the end of the Second World War. She worked on a series of private residences and apartments blocks, as well as Glenwarren Lodge, completed in 1961, one of the first senior citizen's homes in the country.

JAMES, Douglas

London, England 1888 – Saanich, BC 1962

Douglas James was one of two English-born and trained brothers who had a substantial impact on British Columbia architecture. James was a student of the Royal Academy, and in 1904 obtained a First Class Certificate for Architectural Design from the South Kensington Board of Education. In 1907 James left England for Victoria, where his first job in his new city was with Samuel Maclure as draftsman and assistant on *Hatley Park*. After the completion of this large work, he joined his brother, P. Leonard James, in the James & James partnership formed in 1910. In active service overseas during the First World War, he returned to Duncan and opened his own architectural office there, where his practice consisted of both commercial and residential work. James was also responsible for the design of a traditional campus for a private boys' school at Shawnigan Lake. The school had been founded in 1913, but the original buildings burned down in December of 1926. Starting with the construction of the new Main Building in early 1927, James provided the designs for a number of structures, based on traditional English models. These buildings still form the core of the current Shawnigan Lake School. In 1938 James moved back to Victoria and established his own office. In collaboration with Hubert Savage and D.C. Frame, he designed and completed the working drawings for the Memorial Arena in Victoria. A final business association was formed in 1946 with his brother to assist with the drawings for the new Federal Building at the southwest corner of Yates and Government Streets. At that time Douglas also undertook the design of the Imperial Bank on the diagonally opposite corner. For this bank he chose Haddington Island stone to complement the Federal Building. Douglas James retired in 1948, and died September 30, 1962.

JAMES, Percy Leonard

London, England 1878 – Victoria, BC 1970

Despite having an architect father, in 1893 P. Leonard James articulated with John Elford, Borough Architect and Engineer for the City of Poole, England. Between 1899-1906, he worked as a junior architect with A.W. Saxon Snell & Son, rising to the senior assistant's position. In 1906 James came to Canada. After his arrival in Victoria in 1908 he received several significant commissions, and in 1910 established a partnership with his brother Douglas. In 1921-25, James had full responsibility for the design of the east wing of the Royal Jubilee Hospital, and took Major K.B. Spurgin as his associate architect.

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During the same period, the Rattenbury & James partnership was formed to carry out several projects for the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. James already shared an office with Hubert Savage, but with an increasing work load, they formed a successful partnership in the summer of 1928 that lasted for five years. After years of being busy, James took a sabbatical year in England in 1934, where he was exposed to, and embraced, the new European Modernism. In the 1940s, he joined with Murray Polson and Robert Siddall to design a number of schools and other projects. His last major building, the Federal Building in Victoria, was produced in partnership with his brother, Douglas James. In 1948, two years into the project, Douglas retired, leaving Percy Leonard James with sole responsibility for the Federal Building, which was completed by 1952. James retired in 1955, and died January 3, 1970.

POLSON, Franklin Murray

Toronto 1903 – Toronto 1978

Polson studied at the Royal Military College, Kingston from 1921-25, then worked in New York for B.W. Morris from 1925-26, after which he studied for a year at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Afterwards he worked in London, and moved to Vancouver in 1948, at which time he was employed by Ross Lort. He was in private practice by 1949, and went into partnership with R.W. Siddall in 1951.

SIDDALL, Robert W.

Gull Lake, Saskatchewan 1926

Robert Siddall graduated from the University of Manitoba in 1948 and worked for C.B.K. Van Norman (1948-50) before forming Polson & Siddall with F. Murray Polson in 1951. The firm moved to Victoria in 1954. In 1957 Siddall set up a private practice, R.W. Siddall, which became Siddall, Dennis & Associates in 1965.

STOCKDILL, Charles D.

Winnipeg, Manitoba 1915 – Victoria, BC 1994

A graduate of the University of Manitoba in 1938, Charles Stockdill worked during the summers for J. Graham Johnson (1936-1938). After graduation, he worked for Northwood & Chivers in Edmonton, 1937-38, then in 1938 for McCarter & Nairne and was in partnership with Johnson 1939-1943. After the war he was in private practice until he became a partner in the Victoria firm Birley, Wade and Stockdill in 1949. The firm continued as Wade, Stockdill and Armour, with an office in Vancouver. In 1970 the firm became Wade, Stockdill, Armour & Blewett.

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WADE, John Howard

Singapore 1914 – Vancouver, BC 1997

John Wade was one of the earliest of those who brought the new, modern architectural styles to Victoria, B.C. Born in Singapore in 1914, where his father was stationed with the British Navy, he travelled to China and Japan with his mother before being brought to Northern Ireland to live with his grandparents. He graduated with honours from the Architectural Association in London in 1937, began working for Guy Morgan & Partners in London, and became a member of the RIBA in 1938. While in London, Wade met Margaret Taylor, the daughter of Victoria-born financier and entrepreneur A.J.T. Taylor, who brought the Guinness business interest to Canada to develop the Lions Gate Bridge and the British Properties. After stalling for three years, Taylor gave permission for Wade and his daughter to marry; they moved to Victoria and were wed in 1939. Wade worked for two months in California in 1939 for Richard Neutra, but returned to Vancouver when the Second World War broke out. He registered with the AIBC in 1940 and formed a brief partnership with Ed King that year before enlisting in the Engineer Corps. Then transferred to the Navy, he was on active service until demobilized in Victoria. In 1946, he formed a partnership with S. Patrick Birley and C. Dexter Stockdill, which was very active and prolific until 1952, after which the firm continued with new partners under a new name. John Wade was President of the AIBC from 1953-1954, was later elected a Fellow of the RAIC and RIBA, and in 1983 was named an AIBC Honorary Member. Later in partnership with Terence Williams, he retired in 1987 at the age of 73. John Wade died on November 3, 1997. As remembered by Williams in an obituary in the AIBC Newsletter, "John was a man with a mischievous sense of humour who, even in his failing months, retained a twinkle in his eyes that was an outward demonstration of the wit and will that survived in his slight frame and was but a hint of his effervescent character. He designed progressive buildings at a time when few practitioners had the courage of their convictions or the will to implement new ideas in a city destined to change. He was a fine man, a caring human being and an architect of stature."

WHITTAKER, Henry

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 1886 – Victoria BC 1971

During his many years as the province's Chief Architect, Henry Whittaker had a significant impact throughout British Columbia, and many of his landmark institutional buildings remain in active use. He had a varied colonial background before settling in Victoria in 1913. In May of that year, despite the economic downturn he was lucky enough to land a job as a draftsman with the Provincial Department of Public Works. In 1916, he was appointed Acting Supervising Architect of the DPW, and in 1919 he became Supervising Architect. Whittaker was promoted to Chief Architect in 1934, a position he held until 1949. Following the end of the First World War, Whittaker launched into the design of a series of standardized plans for modest bungalows for the Soldiers' Housing Scheme in South Vancouver. In the increasingly prosperous 1920s, Whittaker was remarkably prolific, working on numerous projects throughout the province, including hospitals, schools and court houses.

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Whittaker's work was solid, monumental and competent, suiting exactly the tenor of the times and the needs of government. During his tenure at the DPW, literally hundreds of buildings, large and small, bore his imprint. In Victoria alone Whittaker's DPW projects included Mount St. Mary's Hospital, 1940, an addition to the Nurses' Home, 1942, the Maternity Pavilion at the Royal Jubilee Hospital, 1944-46, the B.C. Power Commission Building, 1949-50; and the Douglas Building, 1949-51. Although some of these projects hinted at modernism, they never strayed far from a conservative mainstream approach. Whittaker remained professionally active, and served as President of the AIBC in 1935-37. He retired from his government position in 1949, and established a private practice with Donald Wagg from 1949-57; their firm specialized in the design of hospitals. Whittaker retired in 1957.

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