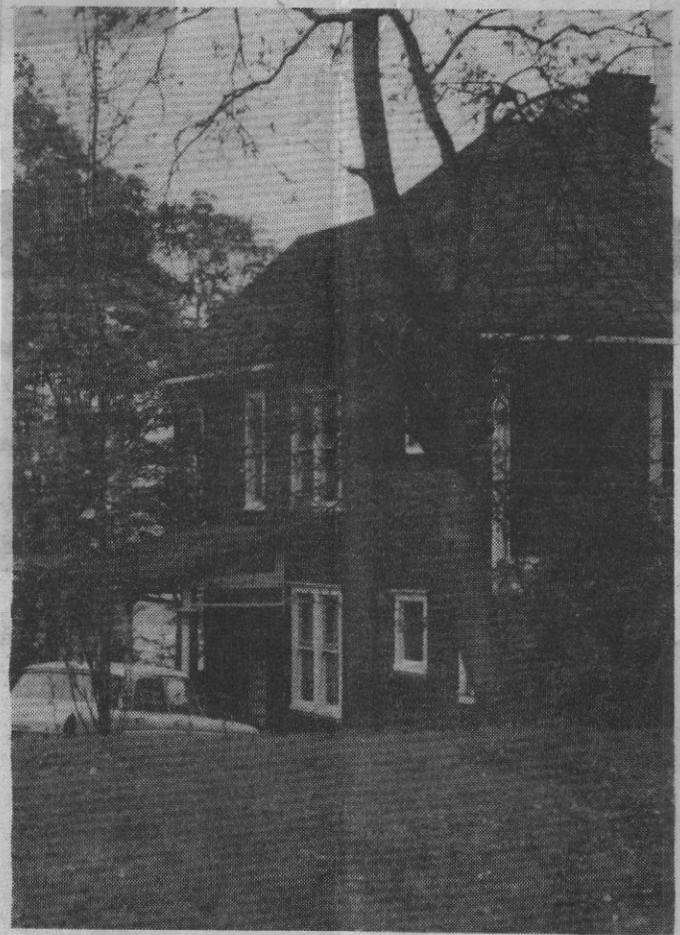


BACK OF HOUSE TOWARDS CATHERINE STREET  
SHOWING GARDENS  
Early 1900's



GODFELDT: June 1979

The View West Paper June '79

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'Maplewood' is the proper name of the house at 1133 Catherine Street known recently as the "Godfeldt property" after the name of its last owner. It stands next to historic Roslyn and overlooks what is now an industrial part of the Gorge.

It was built in 1890 by Beaumont Boggs, a short man with a handlebar mustache, as a present for his bride, Mary Louise Richardson.

Beaumont, known as "Beau" to his friends was born in Halifax but had come West with the 66th Regiment to help quell the Riel rebellion. Afterwards he hopped on one of the first trains through the Rockies for a thoroughly enjoyable trip which he later told his children he had spent "riding on top of the caboose".

He arrived in Victoria at the age of 22 in 1886, after a short stay in what is now New Westminster. He found work as a teller in a bank but soon became interested in real estate becoming a partner in Crane McGregor and Boggs, then in R.S. Day and Boggs, and finally with his own company, Beaumont Boggs and Company, at 78 Broad Street and later at 42 Fort Street. By 1899 the company advertised itself as real estate, mining and financial agents and Boggs was commissioner for Nova Scotia.

Beau asked his fiancée to choose between two lots, one on Dallas Road and one on Alston Street as a site for their home. She chose the Gorge site because in those days of no central heating it was warmer there, and also was in a beautiful natural setting.

She was not allowed to see the house or have any hand in its design while it was being built because Beau was superstitious about such things. He hired an architect, but his daughter can not recall his name. She thinks it may have been William Ridgeway Wilson (who also designed St. John's Anglican Church and the Art Gallery). It was designed vaguely in the Queen Anne style, with verandah overlooking Alston Street and the Gorge. It was built to be light and airy with large windows, and very attractive corner bay windows on the S.E. corner of each floor.

The couple lived in a cottage on Yates Street until the house was finished. Perhaps Mary should have been consulted in the design, because when she moved in she often said it was badly designed because it did not have a central hallway running from the front door to the back. In the days of servants, this meant that the maid was always checking to see if there was anyone in the room before going through it to get to the front of the house. Beau did not find this awkward in the least: he retorted that he couldn't sit in two rooms at once, so there was always a way through for the maid.

Mary soon filled the house with children, Arthur (1891), Herbert (1892), Mary (1893) and Dorothy, who now lives in North Saanich, in 1899. Because Mary was not fond of the name "Boggs" she had each of the children retain the name Beaumont as well.

The children had a pleasant life at *Maplewood*. Dorothy remembers taking their rowboat across the Gorge to collect mushrooms on the land where the mills now stand. They had two horses, a cow and chickens in a barn on the S.W. corner of the property, and their father rented five acres of pasture from the Indian Reserve which ran along the shore. The children also became good friends with the children of Sir Arthur Currie who lived in the house next door, and made a private pathway between the two houses. They also played tennis on their own tennis court, next to Catherine Street.

Needless to say, Beau made good in the real estate boom from 1912 to 1914. He owned property everywhere - Rockland Avenue, Saanich, Sidney and Roberts Bay. He bought one of the first cars in Victoria in 1911, and, so that it could make use of the good roadway on Catherine Street, put in a driveway from there and changed the house so that the front became the back, and it now fronted on Catherine. Other signs of affluence were a Chinese gardener who kept the beautiful grounds in good shape, and a furnace.

Tragedy struck the family with the First World War, when Herbert, a law student, who had gone overseas with the First Expeditionary Force, was killed in action in February of 1915.

Disaster also struck with the financial depression of 1915. The city still collected taxes, but placed a moratorium on rent collection, and this affected landlords badly. Soon Beau was forced to sell all his property.

In the early twenties, *Maplewood* was sold but it fell into such disrepair that Beau bought it back. But he finally sold it for taxes in the late twenties.

The family moved to Oak Bay and then to Ardmore property and for a time tried to make its fortune by running a fox farm, a fashionable craze of the time.

Beau remained very much involved in public life up till the time of his death at the age of 79 in 1943. While never running for office, he was always interested in the Conservative party. He also served on the Real Estate Board, on the Game Board, and was president of the B.C. Historical Association.

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As the house is now, it is somewhat difficult to imagine what it once was like. Several landlords have divided it into suites using plywood panelling in what was once the kitchen and dining-room. All the upstairs ceilings have been lowered, and wall to wall carpeting in shades of red and orange installed in what were once bedrooms. Plywood panels also divide them up. A beautiful glass-ed in sewing room overlooking the Gorge has had all of its windows removed. All the fireplaces are gone, part of the front verandah has been filled in to become a small kitchen. Only the attic with the maid's room is in its original condition.

The present owner of the house is the City of Victoria which acquired it from the Vic West Community Development Association which had purchased it with Neighbourhood Improvement funds. (It was exchanged for city property surrounding Roslyn House which later became part of Banfield Park).

The fate of *Maplewood* is in limbo at the moment. About a year ago, the City Manager's

The Vic West Paper June 79

over

office recommended that the house be torn down as the property was virtually undevelopable with the house on it. Oddly enough, at almost the same time, City Council made an unusual arrangement with Florence and Tony Kovacevic that they become tenants in the house. They were to pay a monthly rent of \$500, and if they carried out repairs to the total of \$4,450, including a new roof, furnace repairs, electrical work and painting, to make the house "suitable for occupation by a reasonable tenant" they would receive a monthly rebate of \$200 off the rent.

This agreement was not lived up to and there is bad feeling on both sides. The Kovacevics are to vacate the premises in June, but they may take their grievances to the Rentalsman.

The Kovacevics who formerly owned several antique businesses and renovated the heritage designated Rose Cottage on Catherine Street felt challenged to restore the house when they moved in as tenants. Unfortunately some of what they did was not called for in their contract with the city and they did not carry out all the listed repairs.

They did repaint the exterior an attractive deep red with white trim, much as Dorothy Beaumont Boggs remembered it, and certainly an improvement over the insipid pink it had been.

Inside, they carefully replaced three doors, and two fireplaces for the den and for the upstairs bedroom, and were planning to do more. An attractive light fixture was installed in the hallway. Most of their efforts were limited to wallpaper and painting. Although they could not afford to lift the carpeting in the upstairs, they did find authentic looking Canadiana wallpaper for the bedrooms. They painted the den a soft blue and the livingroom a green and filled them with antiques so that some idea of the original atmosphere of the house was achieved. Their most successful work was in the hallway where along the semicircular stairs a miniature print wallpaper was hung up to the height of the bannister, and the woodwork painted a French blue to set off the red persian style stair carpeting. They even went to the trouble of repapering in an oldfashioned print the rather makeshift kitchen in what was once the front verandah.

Around the time that the city was acquiring the property the house narrowly missed being placed on the city's Heritage Advisory Committee's list of buildings recommended for heritage designation: it did make the 'B' list of the Hallmark Society's inventory of historic buildings in the Victoria region.

Heritage designation would mean, according to Florence Kovacevic, that the city could afford to renovate the house: property taxes would be paid in full, and money for restoration could come either through a RRAP grant or out of the funds in the city's 1977 Heritage House Financial Assistance Bylaw.

Once renovated, the city could develop the site with cooperative housing but have it designed in a heritage style to blend into the neighbourhood.

Or, she says, the site could be used for a Heritage Village. Other heritage houses, facing demolition could be moved on to it and the whole thing become a tourist attraction. With other heritage houses nearby, such as Roslyn, Montview and Rose Cottage, she thinks the site would be ideal for this.

What is needed now is for the city to come to a decision as to whether the house is worth saving or not. Without that decision, the house will simply deteriorate until the only solution will be to tear it down.

Re: Vic West Paper - June 1979