

## DRAFT

# HERITAGE REGISTRY SCHOOLS REPORT

### Preamble

The City of Victoria has a special character and charm which is due in part to its unique collection of remarkably well preserved historic buildings dating back to the earliest days of the settlement of British Columbia. These superb examples of turn of the century architecture create a sense of pride not just among the owners of these buildings, but throughout the community. In recent surveys carried out for the Capital Regional District's Tomorrow Task Force it was found that "preservation of heritage of the region also rated high on the value chart and people want to see new development fit in well with heritage characteristics".

Victorians' pride in the heritage character of their City is also evident in the promotional material produced by Tourism Victoria which declares "Some cities have heritage buildings. We have a heritage city." It also says "The character of the city has grown out of the heart and soul of its people. Genteel and conservative, with a desire to keep their city on 'the human scale', they have fought to save and nurture the distinctive and occasionally quirky heritage of their city."

Since the early 1970's, the City of Victoria has developed a series of heritage conservation policies to promote the preservation, restoration and adaptive re-use of its important heritage buildings. These include protective regulatory measures such as heritage designation and financial assistance programs such as the Victoria Heritage Foundation's House Grant Program and the Building Incentive Program of the Victoria Civic Heritage Trust. Through these policies, Victoria has been able to preserve a wide range of different types of buildings including churches, government buildings, offices, hotels, shops, banks and residences.

A few heritage schools in Victoria have also been preserved and protected by heritage designation. Craigflower Schoolhouse, constructed in 1854, is the oldest surviving school building in Western Canada and is designated a national historic site. South Park School, built in 1894, is the oldest operational school in the Capital District, and was designated a municipal heritage site in 1978 as a result of initiatives by the parents in James Bay and the School Board. The City has also designated the Chinese School (1909) at 636 Fisgard Street and the former Mt. St. Angela's "Girl's Collegiate School" (1866).

Historic buildings physically and tangibly recall the era in which they were constructed, and as such, are non renewable educational and social assets. In a constantly changing world, the retention of old buildings lends a sense of permanence and perspective to our lives. Rather than relegating our history to a fabrication in a museum for once-yearly visits, historic buildings which are preserved and continue to function, surround us with every day educational experiences that can enhance our everyday living. It is easier to understand and appreciate history by experiencing actual environments and buildings in which people lived. Their destruction would result in a loss of our past that cannot be replaced. Failure to take advantage of these educational resources means that our children must depend upon institutions and books for this facet of their education rather than the world itself.

Victoria still has a number of school buildings constructed between 1910 and 1914, a period representing a veritable boom in school construction in the early part of the twentieth century. These include:

- 1910 Sir James Douglas
- 1910 George Jay
- 1912 Bank Street
- 1912 Victoria High
- 1913 Burnside
- 1913 Oaklands
- 1914 Beacon Hill
- 1914 Margaret Jenkins
- 1914 Quadra

Many of these schools have had additions constructed over the years to accommodate the increasing numbers of students. They also now require serious upgrading to meet the demands for seismic safety, the electrical requirements for the increasing use of computers and other needs of contemporary educational philosophy. It can now be demonstrated that our heritage schools can be upgraded to meet these new demands. The recent rehabilitation of Lampson School, built in 1903 and closed since 1976, has shown how these older structures can be completely seismically upgraded and renovated to provide a new educational facility while preserving the character and quality of the original heritage building; and, in the case of Lampson School, this was less than the cost of constructing a new school.

Victoria's heritage schools from the early twentieth century are prominent landmarks on the skyline of the older residential neighbourhoods with their steep pitched black slate roofs and tall brick walls. They were constructed when a prosperous local economy and a rapid 70 per cent increase in school enrollment to 3,374 precipitated a boom in school construction during the years 1909-1914. The following is a brief description of each of these schools, highlighting their architectural and historical significance:

1. **George Jay Elementary**  
1118 Princess Street  
1909 (Additions in 1956, 1967, 1971)  
Architect: Thomas Hooper & C. ELWOOD WATKINS

The first of the new schools, George Jay, is a Beaux-Arts Academic style building named after Magistrate George Jay who was chairman of the Victoria School Board for many years. The building is faced with light brown brick with a concrete base rusticated to give the appearance of masonry. The building is a prominent landmark in the Springridge/Fernwood neighbourhood and a significant work of the noted Victoria architect, Thomas Hooper. It is reportedly the first school in Canada to use a new structural system called the "Kahn" system which employed reinforced concrete to provide a fireproof structure.

In a 1987 report to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada on Urban Schools in Canada to 1930, the Architectural History Branch of the National Historic Sites Directorate nominated George Jay School as a candidate of potential national significance.

2. **Sir James Douglas**  
401 Moss Street  
1910 (Addition 1958, 1965) (Annexes 1913, 1919, 1930)  
Architect: J.C.M. Keith

Early archival photographs of the Fairfield neighbourhood show Sir James Douglas School as one of the most prominent buildings in this historic neighbourhood. Heavy massing and sparse ornamentation characterize this building. The twin gabled slate roof is articulated by brick corbelling and the large areas of buff coloured brick contribute to its image of solidity and permanence. The building opened in 1910 with four classrooms and 125 pupils.

3. **Bank Street School (Victoria College of Art)**  
1625 Bank Street  
1912  
Architect: D.C. Frame

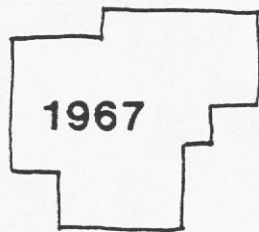
Built in 1912, this school is an excellent example of a small masonry school in a nearly original state. It features a chateau roofline capped with bold cresting which repeats the profile of the dentils under the eaves. The elevations are particularly attractive through the use of a "battered" concrete base, red brick walls and window transoms which also reflect the detailing of the roofline. The school is a notable structure in the south Jubilee neighbourhood.

1623 BANK ST.

Page 378: Although altered, Frames own residence at 1143 Munro Street Esquimalt still stands. Sherri Robinson



Leighton Rd.



Bank St.

Fell St.

**BANK ST. SCHOOL** (Victoria College of Art)  
**1625 Bank St.**