



Seymour Franklin

RESIDENCE FOR F. M. RATTENBURY [1908]

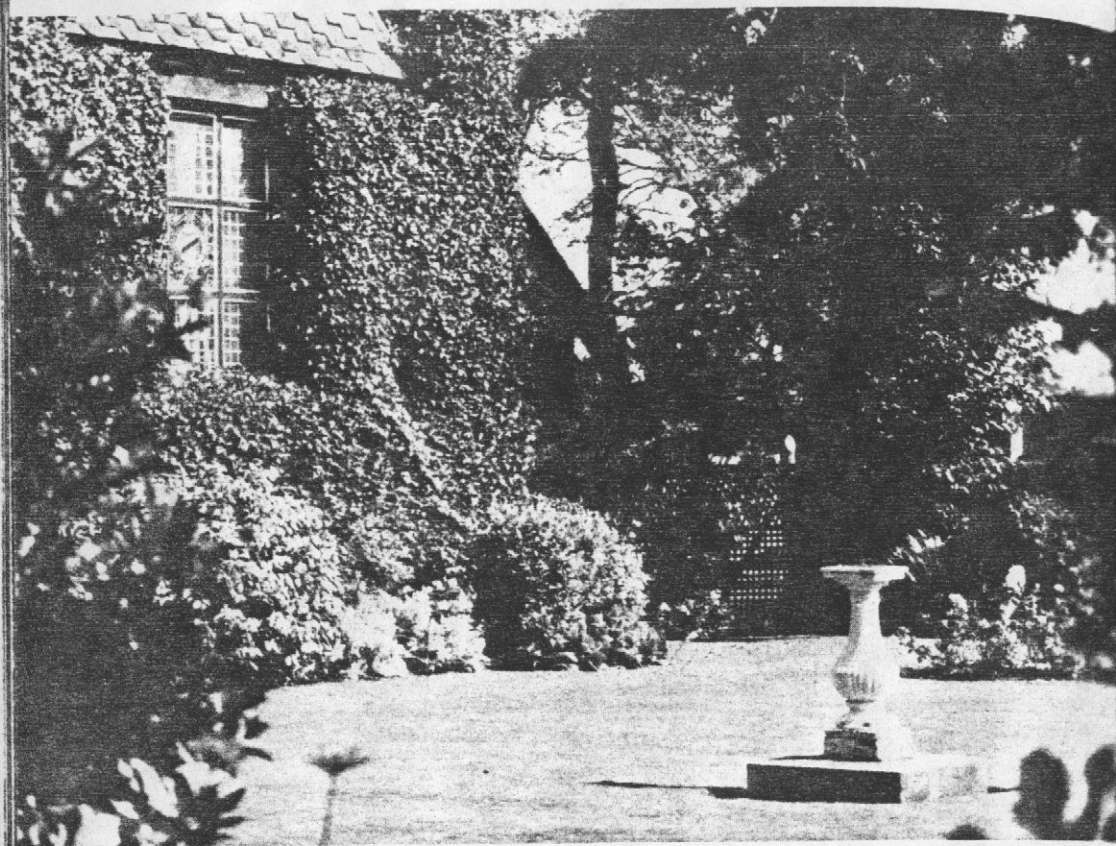
1701 Beach Drive

ARCHITECT: F. M. RATTENBURY

It is often said of Francis Mawson Rattenbury, British Columbia's premier public architect, that he was obsessed with the grandeur of the magnificent vista. In this light, many people see his monuments to the province's progress—The Parliament Buildings, The Empress Hotel, the C.P.R. Terminus—as monumental megalomania, brutal in the classical starkness of their imposing processional sitings. Rattenbury is one of that select group of architects who could lay claim to designing a cityscape. Though the buildings confining the inner harbour compose a spectacle that is monumental in scale, Rattenbury's *œuvre* was never so inhumanly conceived as many have intimated.

"Ratz's" monuments were exotic inventions within the grand romantic tradition. He was thoroughly dismayed when the trees surrounding the newly-built Parliament Buildings were cut down. "It is rarely that an individual is so fortunate to have the opportunity of erecting a large building amongst the delicate tracery of woodland scenery—and the peeps of the huge masses of masonry through the trees give so distinctive a charm, so different to what one can usually see—that words fail me to express my grief at seeing their charm disappear," he wrote in an 1897 letter to *The Victoria Daily Colonist*.

Rattenbury's own home is the ultimate evocation of this romantic potpourri of old world charm, Arts and Crafts architectural innocence, and English country rusticity. The house itself is an additive combination of seventeenth century half-timber (the second-floor fenestration tucked under the eaves), nineteenth century English Gothic revivalism, and additive picturesqueness in the manner of George Devy. One also recognizes Butterfield dormers and roofline, and the Queen Anne treatment of the shingled walls in the manner of Norman Shaw. And, as in Shaw, there is a delight in heightening and emphasising those picturesque qualities which lend credence to the rambling nature of the juxtaposed vertical and horizontal forms. The informal garden with its creeping ivy enveloping the house unites building and grounds in literal accordance with Arts and Crafts principles.



A walk through the house is an artistic experience. Each window captures a different vista of the gardens through hanging ivy and copses of trees, with every now and then a glimpse of sea through alternating sequences of shady glades and pools of sunlight. Each room is differently treated. The rosette motif is carried through the decorative plasterwork in the ceilings of the reception and dining rooms. Marble-patterned fireplaces are a high point in each room, and oak panelling and beams convey a baronial grandeur to the library. Solid mahogany floors, thick oak doors with cutglass doorhandles, and stained glass windows are recurrent features which continually heighten the delicate crafted atmosphere reminiscent of the ideals of William Morris.

In 1935, Mr. Ian Simpson bought the estate to found a boys' preparatory school, subsequently naming it Glenlyon after his former Scottish home on the Lyon River. Although the house has remained for the most part unaltered, various additions have been made in the grounds, including the renovation of the 1914 coachhouse, which Rattenbury had built for his Cadillac, "Black Pearl."