



ORIGINAL RATTENBURY HOUSE, part of Victoria's history.

GLENLYON—*a school* *"where a good thing happened"*

Victoria's Oak Bay has many rambling Sunday walks, a particularly interesting one being in the vicinity of Glenlyon School, on Beach Drive. We stop to have a look at this cluster of buildings with its stately house. Peeping into its history, we find it played a prominent part in Victoria's past.

Oak Bay's records are often linked with Victoria's, especially in the case of Glenlyon School, whose mainhouse on the property was formerly the home of Victoria and world famous architect, Francis Mawson Rattenbury.

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In 1893, he came to Victoria to live. In England he had worked with an architectural firm. One of his designs was accepted by the Royal Academy in London.

As a young man in Victoria, he won the contest held to find a designer for the new legislative buildings, and from then on, his reputation grew. (Washrooms, strangely, were omitted in the construction of the buildings.)

Rattenbury, as a designer, was involved in a great deal of construction in Victoria. He designed two CPR depots, the present one and its forerunner, which had brown shingles; the Oak Bay Hotel, later

to become the Old Charming Inn, demolished in 1962; as well as a host of other buildings and homes in Oak Bay and elsewhere.

Around 1900, Rattenbury erected a "cottage" with thick stone walls, about 16 inches in width. This is the stately home we see today. The larger building was built around 1914. In 1913, incidentally, he served as reeve of Oak Bay. He named his home *Ichineel*, which, translated from the Indian, means "a place where a good thing happened."

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Not every Victoria schoolboy has the plush surroundings of such an historic home. The house retains many of the features so admired during the past century. A fireplace in every room, a lavish use of marble and wrought iron, massive doors and leaded windows add charm to this building.

Although the Rattenbury home is now a thriving boys' school, a youthful place full of study and energy, it was not always so.

Glenlyon was founded by Mr. James Ian Simpson, M.C. M.A., an Honors Graduate and Gold Medalist in mathematics from Glasgow University, who named the school after Glen Lyon, the beautiful Perthshire Glen in Scotland, where he had spent most of his boyhood life.

Following the 1914-18 War, he came to Canada (in 1921) and after three years of teaching and farming in Alberta, moved to Victoria in 1926 to teach at University School, where he was Headmaster from 1929-1932.

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In September 1932, he founded his own school in small, rented premises on St. David Street and opened with an enrollment of 13 boys. The enrollment soon outgrew existing facilities, and in the summer of 1935, Simpson and his wife purchased the former Rattenbury home and property at 1701

Beach Drive, which has been the location of Glenlyon School ever since that time.

Although the Rattenbury home had had a resident caretaker for the previous six years, the Simpsons faced years of hard work when they accepted the challenge of moving to this property with so many repairs and changes needed in order to convert a large home into a boys' residential and day school.

At this point, just when the Simpsons had completed negotiations to purchase the property, Victorians were stunned to learn that Rattenbury had been murdered by his chauffeur in his country home in southern England.

With a mixture of curiosity and dismay Victorians followed the details of the Rattenbury murder. In 1927, Rattenbury's first wife divorced him. The following year, he married a woman much younger than he was, and retired with her to England. In 1935, he was found severely beaten with a carpenter's mallet. He died shortly after.

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Rattenbury's widow and her young chauffeur were arrested and charged with murder. Mrs. Rattenbury was found not guilty.

The chauffeur's sentence was eventually changed from guilty in the first degree to life imprisonment. The public felt the young man had been a pawn in the second Mrs. Rattenbury's hands and thousands signed a petition for clemency. King Edward VIII granted life in place of death. Mrs. Rattenbury later stabbed herself, then waded into deep water to drown.

Unfortunately, Rattenbury's home in England had turned into a place where tragedy struck. Glenlyon, in Victoria, has no such unhappy past.

The interior of what was once Rattenbury's home on Beach Drive is a showpiece of elegance.



By Betty Funke



A heavy front door with large, wrought iron hinges opens to oak paneling and floors, handsome fireplaces, fronted with English-style brass grates, some marble, some carved oak, and to ceilings decorated with plaster garlands.

Now a day school, educating boys up to and including grade 10, the school's headmaster is J. Ian Simpson's son, Hamish. (His father died in 1969.) The present headmaster's credentials include degrees from the University of British Columbia, Princeton and Oxford University. In 1970, Glenlyon School became a non-profit society.



Enrollment now stands at 220 with 16 teachers. One of the major attractions of this school from the parents' point of view is not only thorough teaching in a strong academic program, but the fact that discipline is highly regarded and the development of character is a cornerstone of school philosophy.

The maximum number of students per class is 24. A growing enrollment has called for many changes.

Before the earthquake of June 23, 1946, one of the rooms on the main floor of the original house, now a library, had an unusual blue ceiling, a Prussian blue, "almost a translucent shade," as Mrs. J. Ian Simpson, wife of the school's founder, describes it.

Restoration was necessary after the quake, which registered just over seven on the Richter Scale. More practical measures were taken in case of future quakes. Plaster garlands were retained on the ceiling but cut glass chandeliers were removed. Modern fixtures were installed to replace Rattenbury's cove-lighting and a white ceiling replaced the Prussian blue one to give improved lighting.

Marble fireplaces, paneled walls, mahogany and oak floors remain in this attractive room. French doors open onto a marble terrace facing the sea.



The kitchen retains many of its original features, including a large walk-in cooler. Ventilators are used here, one in the floor and another in the wall, to draw in fresh air. Opinions vary as to how this system works; nevertheless, the air has a definite chill. Floor, walls and shelves of this cooler are marble, so cool to the touch; in fact, the entire kitchen has marble walls.

In the hall a massive glass case stands, criss crossed with strips of wood. Complete with drawers and solid brass handles, this majestic piece was designed by Rattenbury to hold dishes.

The original library has another beautifully designed fireplace with a leather and brass fender. The Rattenbury drawing-room faces the ocean, again with a fireplace, and is now used as a board room.

The living room, thought of as probably Rattenbury's sanctum, is now Hamish Simpson's office. A green marble fireplace adds to the beauty of the room. A sunroom adjoins.



Rattenbury designed several Victoria houses with a powder room adjoining the hall and a back staircase off the staircase landing, as he did at Glenlyon. However, the Simpsons built a small reading nook on the landing and had the back stairs removed, replacing them with a cupboard.

A massive colored glass window dominates this landing, its rays reaching down to the entrance hall, reflecting a rich and mellow light.

Bedrooms in the original home have presented a challenge to the Simpsons, being difficult to furnish. According to Mrs. J. Ian Simpson, most have many eaves and few straight walls. The master bedroom features a white brick fireplaced with wrought iron hood. Possibly Rattenbury's at one time, it has an adjoining bathroom with pink marble walls. It did have a shower with every spray imaginable, but it has since been removed.

The Simpsons had extensions built to the house for added classroom space, attempting to conform to the architectural style of the Rattenbury home.

Since 1970, three new wings have been added, a science lab, art studio, and classrooms building, all white with black trim. Facilities for primary grades 1-3 have also been added. The old coach house has been revamped to serve as residential staff quarters and special teaching rooms.



And so, rooms that once hummed with the low murmur of conversation, or with the strains of a string quartet, now echo with the boisterous ring of young Canadian voices.

Parents of sons who attend Glenlyon for graduation or other functions cannot help but agree with the Simpsons that Rattenbury's gracious old home in Oak Bay is a landmark well worth preserving.

Here at Glenlyon, the distinction of the past is linked with a boyish look to the future lechineel was a good name, for it is truly "a place where a good thing happened." (And continues to happen!)

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