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'Woodlands,' the Goward House, 2495 Arbutus Road

Barry F. King

LANDMARKS

40 years later, Goward son enhanced family home

Geoffrey Castle

Arbutus Road was not fully constructed when Bernard Goward built his home, "Woodlands," in 1908. The lumber and stone had to be hauled across a neighboring farm. Even when the road was completed a year later, there were no automobiles and it was three miles to the nearest streetcar at Mount Tolmie.

Goward had worked for a time for the Chartered Bank of India, in London, England. He heard about the opportunities in British Columbia and came to Victoria around 1890. He studied law, married Mary Beale and took a partnership in the law firm of McPhillips, Wootten and Bonar. A short time later, his father, Henry Goward, and Bernard's mother arrived. They all lived on St. Charles Street. It was there, in 1906, that Owen Goward, who would eventually become a well-known watercolor painter, was born.

When Owen was growing up at "Woodlands," his interest in painting was encouraged by his governess. Unfortunately, Bernard Goward

suffered a stroke in 1917, and Owen had to look after his mother, three sisters, and several acres of wooded property, until his father recovered. After graduating from Oak Bay High School, Owen attended college. Meantime, he studied art by correspondence from the Royal Academy in London. His uncle, Albert, president of the B.C. Electric Company, was instrumental in getting him a job in Oregon where he took up logging engineering.

It was on a visit to Victoria that Owen Goward was introduced to Elizabeth Remington. The couple soon discovered a common interest in art. Elizabeth started painting portraits when she was 10 years old and later graduated from the Art Institute of Philadelphia. She loved to work in pastels.

They were married in 1939, seven years after Bernard Goward died, and lived in Oregon until 1946 when they returned to live at "Woodlands."

Owen decided to make improvements to the already interesting British Colonial vernacular bungalow, which his mother planned nearly 40 years earlier in conjunction with designer George Phillips (former superintendent of Esquimalt Dockyard).

The overhang of the eaves was shortened to brighten the interior and the unfinished upper storey was completed with dormers added to the north, east and south sides of the house. A two-room addition and bay window were added.

In 1959, while recuperating from a heart attack, Owen Goward started his art gallery in his home. However, as a result of rising costs, but not wishing to have the lovely property subdivided, the Gowards sold the house and land to Saanich municipality in 1973. Their reluctance to do this was tempered by an agreement that they could still live there for 10 years and the hope that it could remain "an oasis of green and quiet in an urban environment."

Geoffrey Castle is a local writer, historian and archivist.