



Segger-Franklin

BAY STREET SUBSTATION, B. C.
ELECTRIC [1928]

Government at Bay

ARCHITECT: THEO KORNER

Parfitt Brothers, who had worked on Christ Church Cathedral, were contracted for the structural steel and foundation work. Victorians may indeed have been surprised at the final product: next to Vancouver's Marine Building it is one of the finest examples of the Modern Movement or "Art Deco" in the North West.

Art Deco was an outgrowth of the International Style which drew on current fine art movements of the day: Cubism, Fauvism, expressionism, and primitivism. It utilized the forms and motifs of the great "elemental" arts of the past, in particular Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Mayan. The terms "Deco" and "Moderne" were both derived from the very successful and much publicized 1925 Paris exhibition, *L'Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*. "Deco" usually describes that school of artistic and architectural production popular during the 1920s and 1930s which attempted to beautify industrial and functional products through applied abstract decoration.

One of the new building modes of early twenties was reinforced concrete construction. Because it utilized a kind of cribbing and cast technique there was ample opportunity to build in decorative detail by means of the form work. The Bay Street Substation is a particularly fine example of this. The architect has used Deco Egyptoid motifs. Abstracted Egyptian columns with decorated capitals and a plain entablature are applied as single units to the four façades, thus evoking a Nile Valley Pharaonic palace. The dramatic siting, battered profile, and geometric decorations even to the stylised B. C. Electric winged crest on the east façade, have an Egyptian flavour.

In 1929 the B.C.E. building joined a number of local structures illustrating the Deco style. Among them: Kresge's (now Marks and Spencer's) department store, 1100 Douglas Street, the Sussex Block 1001 Douglas, and the Esso gas station of Government Street (812 Wharf Street) overlooking the harbour.

The substation has been restored recently as an office block.