

**Legislative and
Regulatory
Services
Department**



Legislative Services

June 27, 2008

#1 Centennial Square

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Dear Mr. Sir or Madam:

**Re: Examples of the Modern Movement –
Proposed Addition to the Heritage Registry**

Please be advised that Victoria City Council will be holding a public hearing on **Thursday, July 10, 2008 at 7:30 p.m.** in the Council Chambers, City Hall, #1 Centennial Square, to consider a recommendation to add your property at:

Address: 637 Bay Street
Legal Description: LOT A, SECTION 3, VICTORIA PLAN 32052
PID: 001-105-442

to the Heritage Registry. This building is considered to be of heritage significance and the City will be considering the adoption of a resolution in accordance with Section 954 of the Local Government Act. You will be given an opportunity to address City Council on this issue. A copy of the most recent staff report dated May 15, 2008 is enclosed for your information.

Heritage Registry and Heritage Designated properties are both listed in the Heritage Inventory. A Heritage Registry property is officially listed in the Inventory because it may have sufficient heritage value to warrant preservation actions by the City in the future. Heritage Registry status is not the same as Heritage Designation. It is a system to ensure the *review and monitoring* of proposed changes to properties with heritage value.

Should you have any questions on this matter please contact Steve Barber, Senior Heritage Planner at 250-361-0289, or e-mail sbarber@victoria.ca.

Yours truly,

Robert Woodland
Corporate Administrator

:jh

C: Deb Day, Director, Planning & Development
Victoria Heritage Foundation

MODERNISM IN VICTORIA 1945-1975

CONTEXT

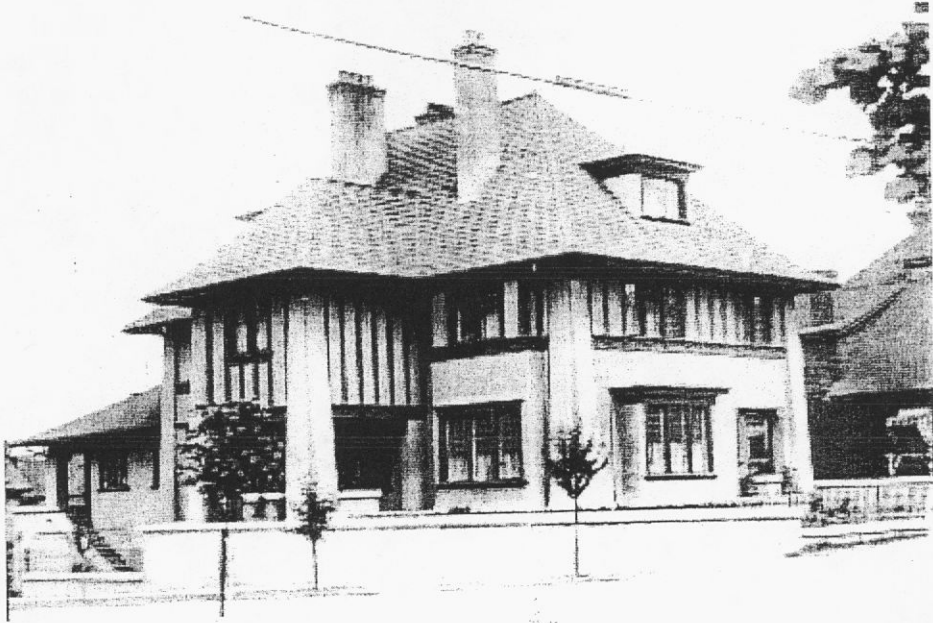
The world was a new place in 1945. After enormous destruction, the Second World War had ended. Atomic power, and other new and potentially destructive technologies, had been unleashed. As troops were demobilized, they increasingly gravitated to urban centres, causing explosive growth that had to be accommodated. As a wartime defense centre and Canada's major west coast naval port, Victoria especially was affected by the demobilization of thousands upon thousands of troops, returning from duties overseas. The city's population doubled in the two postwar decades. Within this new urban context, there was a widespread acceptance of modernist architecture. Easy to build, inexpensive, economical of scarce materials and expressive of new technology, this new type of construction discarded traditional architectural styles and provided the means to re-conceive the city in a response to current social, political and economic conditions.

The legacy of modernist architecture built during 1945-1975 in Victoria is distinctly different from that of Vancouver. The differences arise in two key areas, first in the careful integration of the city's historic building stock within the urban context – and the subsequent rise of the heritage preservation movement – and the development of highly idiosyncratic variations on modernism by several key architects. Victoria has long been characterized by an expectation of social conservatism. The seat of government and the military, cut-off from the mainstream of commercial activity, and perceived as a retirement community, Victoria could be considered a surprising place to find an effective and intellectual response to the postwar global trends in modern architecture. In most major North American cities, modernism was coupled with a contempt for historic buildings, which were perceived as something to be swept away rather than valued. In Victoria, the introduction of modernism was characterized by a period of transition between the traditional, British ideas of architecture and a determination to rejuvenate and modernize the city. Here, a careful balance was achieved between traditionalism and modernism that in retrospect was far ahead of its time, and a model for current thoughts about sustainability.

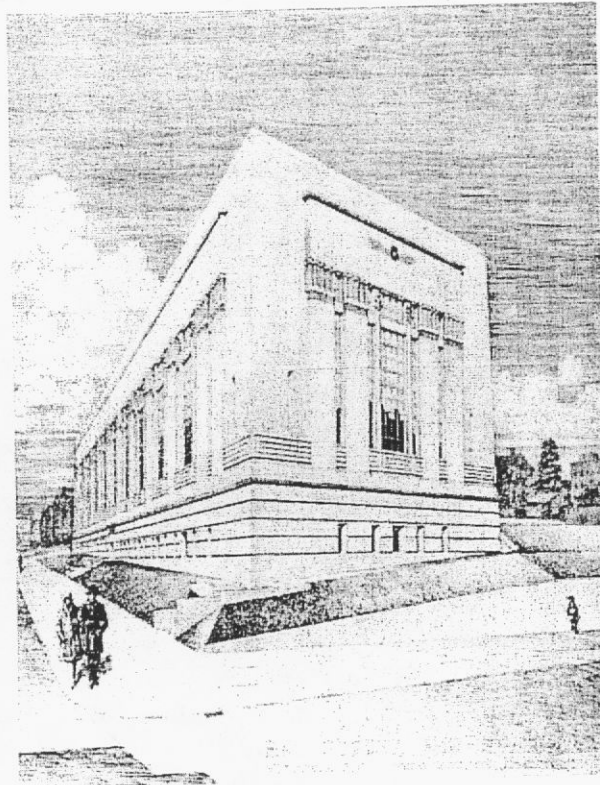
PROTO-MODERNISM 1927-1945

Despite losing metropolis status to Vancouver with the arrival of the transcontinental railway, Victoria remained an active and dynamic city until the economic collapse that preceded and then followed the First World War. Despite economic stagnation, there was a notable body of Art Deco and Moderne architecture that appeared in the 1920s and 1930s, sometimes in stark contrast to the city's traditional architecture.

MODERNISM IN VICTORIA 1945-1975



British Arts and Crafts influence during the Edwardian era: Hall Residence, 906 Linden Avenue, Victoria, Samuel Maclure, Architect, 1910 [Collection Janet (Hall) Flanagan]



Bay Street Sub Station, 1928 [B.C. Hydro Archives: B-1245]

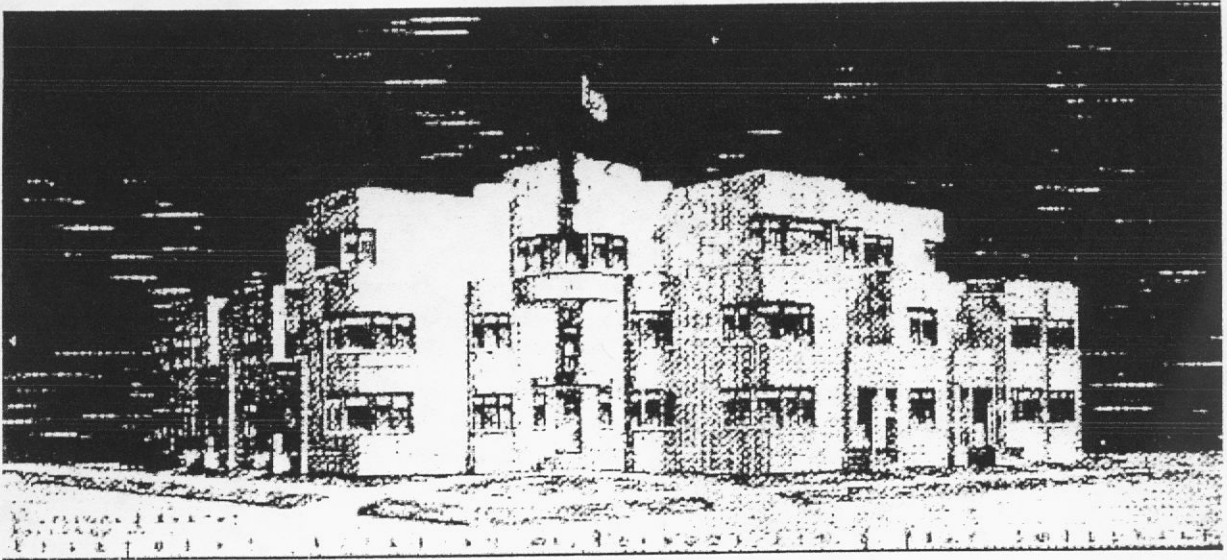
MODERNISM IN VICTORIA 1945-1975

The architectural styles that arose between the two World Wars – Art Deco and Moderne – symbolized the alliance between art and technology. This period of emerging modernism was broken into two by cataclysmic world events. As prosperity returned after the end of the First World War, there was an artistic flowering that responded to the break with traditional forms and designs. Called Art Deco after the Paris 1925 *Exposition des Art Decoratifs et Industrielles Moderne*, this style was embodied by rich, luxurious geometrical and floral ornamentation, highly coloured surfaces and an exoticism based on archaeological discoveries of ancient cultures. One startling building burst onto the scene in Victoria, the Bay Street Sub-Station, designed by Vancouver-based Architect Theo Körner for the British Columbia Electric Power and Gas Company in 1928. Massive, brooding, heaped with Egyptian symbolism inspired by the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, and built of exposed reinforced concrete, it was unlike anything built previously in the city. Embraced by many major corporations as a marketing image, Art Deco became increasingly visible in the Victoria context, including such examples as Kresge's (later Marks & Spencer), Douglas Street, 1930 – built by the Kresge's dime store chain – and the Causeway Tower, Wharf Street, 1931 – built by Imperial Oil.

The onset of the Great Depression in 1929, and the massive global economic disruption that followed, signalled the abandonment of the exotic Art Deco, and the introduction of a new austerity in architecture. Characterized variously as Art Moderne or simply Moderne – and often called *modernistic* at the time – this constituted a reduction to basics that quickly acquired its own stylistic features. The Moderne reflected emerging technologies, including aerodynamic streamlining as seen in airplanes, trains and ocean liners, and the new discipline of industrial design that was based on ergonomic efficiencies.

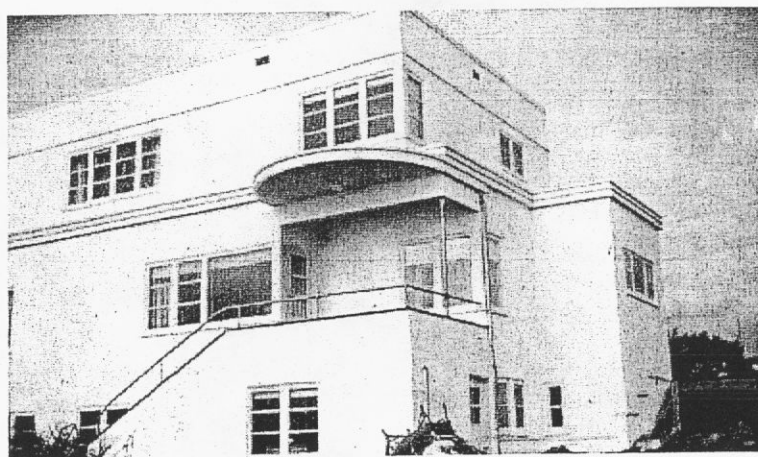
The first years of the Depression were grim, and little construction occurred. By the mid-1930s, however, there was an economic resurgence that resulted in increased building activity. In Victoria, many buildings still reflected traditional architectural ideals (an example being the Tudor Revival-style Oak Bay Cinema, Eric C. Clarkson, Architect, 1936) but isolated examples of the Moderne began to appear, such as the landmark Tweedsmuir Mansions Apartments, 1936. Throughout the later 1930s, the Moderne style – with its flat roofs, planar stucco walls, corner and ribbon windows and curved corners – became common-place, as seen in numerous houses, apartments and commercial buildings.

MODERNISM IN VICTORIA 1945-1975



Tweedsmuir Mansions Apartments, Park Boulevard, 1936
 [Victoria Daily Colonist, March 29, 1936, p.3]

The onset of the Second World War signaled another cataclysmic shift, and for the duration of the War, domestic construction fell under military control. The approval of housing was tightly controlled, and was limited to conversion of larger houses to apartment units (under the National Housing Administration Act), the construction of Wartime Housing in Victoria and Esquimalt based on standardized designs (provided by Vancouver architects McCarter & Nairne), and small amounts of notable custom housing, such as that built for Dr. J.H. Johns on Somass Drive in Oak Bay, designed by P. Leonard James in 1939, but not completed until 1943.



Dr. J.H. Johns House, Oak Bay, P. Leonard James architect, 1939-1943
 [British Columbia Archives D-05512]

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July 15, 2008

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Dear Sir or Madam:

**Re: Examples of the Modern Movement –
Proposed Addition to the Heritage Registry**

At the Victoria City Council meeting on July 10, 2008, Council passed the following motion:

It was moved by Councillor Madoff, seconded by Councillor Fortin, that Council add 637 Bay Street – Bay Street Hydro Substation to the Heritage Inventory as a Heritage Registry property, as it is considered to be a significant example of modernist architecture in Victoria. Carried

Should you have any questions on this matter please contact Steve Barber, Senior Heritage Planner at (250) 361-0289.

Yours truly,

Robert Woodland
Corporate Administrator

:jh

C: Deb Day, Director, Planning & Development
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