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"Seaview," 652 Battery Street

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LANDMARKS

'Seaview' represents transition of architectural styles

Battery Street, which derives its name from the former coastal gun emplacements at nearby Finlayson and Victoria Points, retains much of its earlier charm. Interest is maintained in a number of homes constructed starting in 1890 which have received their owners' painstaking care and heritage designation in recent years.

One important house forming an anchor in the Battery and Paddon streets cluster is 652 Battery Street. Originally called "Seaview" when there were fewer buildings to impair its outlook, the 2½-storey house was built for George and Mary Campbell in 1892. It represents a transition from stick style to the later shingle style of construction. Noteworthy external features are the unusual appearance of the shingles and the type of fenestration. Although there is drop siding lower down, the upper part is shingled including within the gable. The diaperwork pattern of the shingling creates an unusual basketweave effect. The double sash windows have three panes above one pane in the upper frame, and the lower frame

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has two panes. Only one other house with similar features (located on McClure Street) survives.

A small gabled extension at the northwest rear corner used to be an open porch and the front verandah extends partly down the west side of the house, where the entrance is located.

George Campbell, a local businessman, came from a large Montreal family. His wife was the daughter of a British army surgeon-general and her mother was the daughter of a Polish countess. The couple's youngest girl, Mildred, attended Miss Alice Carr's nearby kindergarten. Their son, Gordon, once went to Emily Carr's art classes, though somewhat unwillingly. He was enrolled at the Collegiate School on Rockland Avenue later. The eldest child, Gladys, received her education in England where she lived with her aunt.

On Victoria Day, 1896, Mary Campbell and her children intended to catch a streetcar to take them to the Gorge festivities. Gordon was told to delay the vehicle for a few moments. He did not succeed and was duly scolded.

Fortunately, they did not travel on that streetcar, otherwise they might have gone to their doom when the Point Ellice bridge collapsed, plunging the car and its passengers into the water.

In 1904, Campbell had architect Samuel MacLure design a new home on Pemberton Road. Four years later, he moved to Vancouver where he established the Burrard Knitting Mills, in partnership with his son.

The exterior of "Seaview" has been restored but is mostly original. Listed heritage, it is one of eight listed or designated heritage dwellings in the Battery Street grouping.

Geoffrey Castle is president of the Victoria section of the B.C. Historical Federation.