

Statement of Significance – 644 Beach Drive

Description:

644 Beach Drive is a two-storey residence sited on a rocky ledge overlooking the Oak Bay waterfront. Built in 1927, it represents the late 1920s trend away from large multi-room mansions to smaller, more modest seven or eight room dwellings. The disappearing wall in the main living space demonstrates Maclure's fascination with new technology. Maclure designed alterations in 1933 and John di Castri made further alterations in 1959.

Heritage Value:

644 Beach Drive is valued as a good example of a Georgian Revival residence. Revivals of previous architectural styles were prominent in the early twentieth-century as property owners sought to allude to the stability and glory of a former age. In Victoria, this style can be seen on residential buildings ranging from small cottages to large opulent houses. Originally this style arose during the reign of the four King Georges, and was filtered through three American regions, before making its way to the Pacific Coast. In British Columbia, Georgian Revival homes are generally two-storeys in height and rectangular in footprint, featuring rigid symmetry, based on well-defined geometric proportions and order.

The heritage value of 644 Beach Drive lies in its association with architect Samuel Maclure (1860-1929). Born in New Westminster, BC, he became the foremost domestic architect in British Columbia from 1890 to 1920 and established a building style that gave Victoria and parts of Vancouver a distinctive Canadian West Coast flavour. His works influenced a generation of British Columbia architects and Maclure's influence on BC building design was so pervasive that into the 1940s government buildings and schools throughout the province continued to emulate his early commissions. Maclure utilized many stylistic influences and could adapt his use of indigenous materials with versatility. This historic place is an excellent example from his post-war phase, when those who could afford to hire architects to design their homes wanted simpler, more compact structures. Maclure used technology to deal with the need for open spaces in a smaller building. In this home, he designed a disappearing wall which was suspended from a hidden space in the ceiling by heavy weights. One, two, or all three sections could be lowered to create a division in the main living space. There are also unique carvings on the fireplace surrounds.

644 Beach Drive has value due to its original owner and his connection to early logging in British Columbia. Gardiner Cust Boyd (known as Cust) was born on September 21, 1885 in Bobcaygeon, Ontario to Mossom Martin Boyd (1855-1914) and Lillian deGrassi (1857-1942). He was educated at the prestigious Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ontario with university education at Oxford. The Boyd family were known for their lumber holdings in Ontario and across the county. Cust married Grace Edith Henderson (1894-1987) in Toronto on December 15, 1915. The following year, Cust and his brother Laurence were sent to British Columbia to run the Cowichan Lumber Company. The family moved from Lake Cowichan to Victoria so that their children could have a quality education.

Character-defining elements:

The heritage character of 644 Beach Drive is defined by the following elements:

- location overlooking the Oak Bay waterfront on Beach Drive
- views of the waterfront from the residence
- siting on a rock base
- characteristics of the Georgian Revival including wood frame construction, brick chimneys, roughcast stucco exterior, symmetrical design with windows on either side of entrance, restrained ornament
- unique interior features including the disappearing wall and the carved heads on the fireplaces
- connection with Samuel Maclure
- connection with the pioneer Boyd family



644 Beach Drive: front from the southwest



644 Beach Drive: rear



644 Beach Drive: west exposure



644 Beach Drive: carved head on fireplace

Sources

Archives:

- Oak Bay Archives.
- Hallmark Heritage Society Archives.
- Royal British Columbia Museum and Archives vital statistics records.

Publications:

- Janet Bingham, "Samuel Maclure Architect," Horsdal & Schubart, 1985.

Online sources:

- British Columbia City Directories online at Vancouver Public Library - <http://www.vpl.ca/bccd/index.php>
- Family trees and vital statistics on ancestry.ca.
- Dictionary of Canadian Biography - http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/boyd_mossom_martin_14E.html
- Boyd Family Fonds, Trent University Archives - <http://www2.trentu.ca/library/archives/88-011.htm>
Boyd, Mossom Martin – Volume XIV (19=811-1920) Dictionary of Canadian Biography: http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/boyd_mossom_martin_14E.html
- Architectural Plans of Samuel Maclure, University of Victoria Special Collections- https://www.uvic.ca/library/locations/home/spcoll/findaids/maclure_inventory.pdf