



## ROCKLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 5276, Station B, Victoria BC, V8R 6N4

### Winter 2009 Newsletter

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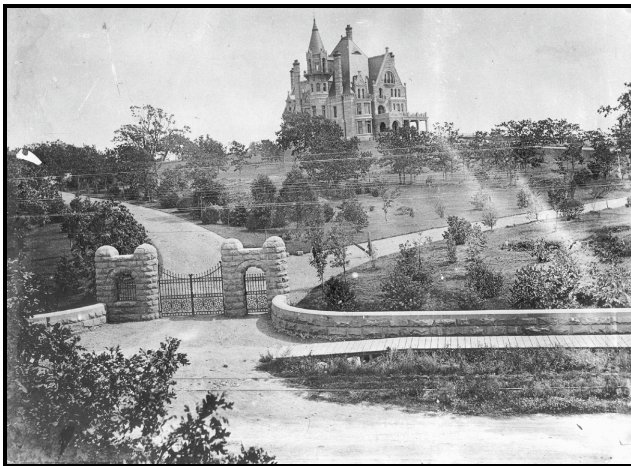
#### CONTENTS

**Craigdarroch Castle Gates**  
**Offer to be a Board Member for a year**  
**Councillor's Report**  
**Rockland Heritage – a series**

**Please share a copy of the RNA Newsletter with a neighbour.**

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#### CRAIGDARROCH CASTLE GATES



*Craigdarroch Castle with gates circa 1895.  
Courtesy, Craigdarroch Castle*

The Craigdarroch Castle Historical Museum Society is in the midst of reconstructing the sandstone and wrought-iron gates that once stood at the intersection of Fort Street and Joan Crescent. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, this location of the Fort Street entrance to the Dunsmuir estate. The original gates were installed soon after Mrs. Dunsmuir moved into the residence in 1890 with three of her daughters and two grandchildren. By 1909, Mrs. Dunsmuir was dead and the 28-acre estate was being subdivided and sold off. The gates and the massive stone wall that spanned the entire north boundary of the property were removed during the process, and they

have never been found. Fragments of the wrought iron railing that once topped the north wall have been located in front of three Victoria houses and two Oak Bay houses.

The new gates are being built using the best-known photograph taken of the originals (see photo in this newsletter). The stonemasons are copying the block sizes and shapes depicted in the photograph. They are using sandstone quarried near Nanaimo. Since there are no known photographs of the back of the wall, the work on that side will involve some conjecture. The overall dimensions of the gates will match the originals, meaning that the two main gateposts will be almost twelve feet high. The wrought-iron components of the gates will be made next year. These too will be faithful reconstructions of the originals because the old photograph, when enlarged, is clear enough to provide the needed information.

The gate posts will naturally not be as close together as they once were because Joan Crescent is now a much wider city street. In the old days, Joan Crescent was simply the Dunsmuir's driveway up to the Castle's porte-cochere.

Installation of these gates is part of a larger landscape project that The Castle Society has been engaged in for some months now. The project involves: reconstruction of the original pathways and granite staircases on the Castle's south lawn; diminishing the size of the museum parking lot and re-paving it; improving lighting on the site and building; installing new granite stairs on the old carriage drive that runs between the west parking area and Craigdarroch Road; and, placing benches and interpretive nodes at various locations on the grounds. It is all very expensive work that it is conveniently paid for by Castle visitors.

To put a little historical perspective on things, readers might enjoy the following editorial published in the June 6, 1909 edition of The Daily Colonist:

## A SALE AND ITS MORAL

*The news that Craigdarroch has been sold and will be subdivided will be of interest not only to all persons now resident in Victoria, but to many others. The stately stone house on the hill has long been an object of interest to all visitors, and with its spacious grounds produced an impression upon them as no other building in the city did. It seemed emblematical of affluence, and there was nothing much more amusing than to sit on a steamer deck and hear the marvelous stories told by the passengers to each other about "the castle" as they loved to call it. Now that the grounds are to be subdivided, the air of romance and mystery that surrounds the place, albeit the age of the establishment was not great, will disappear.*

*The Colonist has on many occasions spoken of the prominent part which Mr. Robert Dunsmuir, the builder of Craigdarroch, took in the affairs of this province, and it would be superfluous to repeat what is within the knowledge of all readers; but the sale of the property marks an epoch in the history of the city. When this house was built most of the region round was in great fields, and not long before that time the flatlands which it overlooked in the direction of the Jubilee Hospital were hopyards. Built almost on the very outskirts of the city proper, Craigdarroch has seen the city grow around it and it must have felt itself to be a bit of an anachronism. It will not be many years before others of the close-in spacious grounds will have to submit to the surveyor's line and be desecrated with subdivision posts. We have come to an era of change. In the case of Craigdarroch the family having been scattered for some years and its revered owner having gone to her rest, there is nothing like a rude shock in this complete change in its history; but there are some old homesteads, which can only be given up to the progress of the city's growth with a good deal of heart-burning by those who live in them. But these things*

*happen in every growing city. Homes that were once far out become close in by the expansion of business districts. Excellent people, who in other matters are full of progressive ideas, wonder how it is that any one should be so inconsiderate as to build stores, factories, railway stations and such things close to the homes where they have lived so long and learned to love so well. But that is the way of the world...An era of progress and change has come to Victoria. Many of us may not like some of the aspects in which it will present itself, but we will have to make the best of the new conditions. Doubtless the old ones have been very lovely and Victoria of the past was certainly what Victoria of the future can never be; but our children look at things differently from what we do. The day of the new people has arrived. That the Dunsmuir Estate should seek to sell Craigdarroch was a matter of course; but that anjmhgy one should want to buy it and should cut it up into lots and put them on the market is striking evidence of the change in the progress of the city.*



*Craigdarroch Gates, under construction.  
John Edwards photo.*

**Bruce Davies**  
**Curator,**  
**Craigdarroch Castle Historical Museum Society**

# OFFER TO BE A BOARD MEMBER FOR ONE YEAR??

## WHY?

- It's a chance to meet your neighbours.
- It's an opportunity to develop your skills (in leadership, in diplomacy, in public speaking, in writing letters, in organizing people and events, in advocating for your neighbourhood, in public relations . . .)
- It's a way to increase your knowledge about Rockland.
- It's a great addition to your resume!
- It's a chance to try out new roles!
- It's a perfect way to become known in your community!
- It's a way to take positive action on issues that concern Rockland!
- Once you're a board member, you'll be aware of other opportunities:
  - Invitations to work on protecting the urban forest!
  - Invitations to volunteer on advisory committees to the City!
  - Invitations to share your ideas on new plans for Victoria!

Check out the Rockland website at

[www.rockland.bc.ca](http://www.rockland.bc.ca)

and contact the president.

Your Neighbourhood needs you!

## ..... COUNCILLOR'S MESSAGE

### IT'S OUR DOWNTOWN AND WE SHOULD MAKE IT WORK FOR EVERYONE

While often we focus on what City Hall is doing as it relates to the neighbourhood we live in; it is just as important to understand how City Hall is addressing the use and "quality of life" issues in the Downtown we all share. It is the economic, & employment, center of our region, as well as the most recognizable face we present to the world.

Over the past few years, however, there has been a great deal of concern about increasing negative activity in our Downtown, particularly in the late

night/early morning period. As well, there is a recognition that these negative actions can overflow into the adjacent neighbourhoods. In order to address these issues, the Mayor commissioned a "Downtown Late Night Task Force" to address the issues of excessive intoxication (and the vandalism that comes with it), fighting and aggressive behaviour, crowded streets after bar closing time, noise, public urination, and a lack of coordinated late night transportation. The membership consisted of Mayor Dean Fortin, Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe, and Chief Constable Jamie Graham of the Victoria Police Department.

After several months of consultation with stakeholders and users of downtown, the Task Force is recommending strategies to deal with these late night issues. The recommendations are based on interviews with downtown business owners and workers, transportation providers, and security personnel. The Task Force also sought input from late night downtown users (including students and youth) while the "downtown experience" and approach of other cities around the world was also considered.

The Task Force has released six coordinated strategies to address the issues:

- diversification of activities available at night in downtown, such as food carts and festivals that are not alcohol-related, bringing more people downtown who will contribute positively to the lively atmosphere
- additional late night enforcement from police with dedicated downtown responsibility
- more substantial training and compliance from licensed liquor establishments
- launching of public awareness campaigns to promote a positive image of downtown
- establishment of a coordinated downtown late night transportation plan utilizing three late night central taxi stands and late night bus service on a trial basis
- establishment of a "late night-great night" coordination committee, in partnership with the Downtown Victoria Business Association.



Some of the recommendations, including increased policing and the late night taxi stands, can be implemented within the next few weeks.

It is very clear that's what's wanted for Victoria is a vibrant & exciting Downtown, but one that is safe and healthy for all. It is, after all, **our** Downtown.

**Councillor Chris Coleman**

**Liaison to North Jubilee, Rockland, and South Jubilee**

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## ROCKLAND HERITAGE – A SERIES

### 1501 Fort Street



*1501 Rockland Avenue after restoration. Photo courtesy Hallmark Society.*

The Amethyst Inn at Regent's Park is one of Victoria's most recognized heritage buildings. Built in 1885 for David W. Higgins, a prominent Victoria newspaperman, the house was designed as a country retreat set in a ten-acre estate, on land that was once part of the J.D. Pemberton estate. In 1852, Higgins, a native Nova Scotian, went to California where he founded the *Morning Call*; in 1858, he came to Victoria aboard the

*Sierra Nevada* with a shipload of gold seekers. *Within* a year, he was a reporter for Amor De Cosmos's British Colonist. In 1862, Higgins established the Victoria Daily Chronicle. Four years later, he took over the Colonist newspaper merging it with his earlier enterprise. Under Higgins' ownership, *The British Colonist* became the area's first daily newspaper. He also wrote two books portraying colonial life in the early days of Victoria: *The Mystic Spring* and *The Passing of a Race*. He entered politics, serving as a city alderman, then representing Esquimalt in the Legislative Assembly. He was the first president of the National Electric Tram and Light Company, whose line coincidentally ran right past his home. The home is a rare survivor, providing a glimpse into the high society life in early Victoria.

In 1963 the property was purchased by Carl Rudolph, a shipwright at the Esquimalt Naval Base, who rescued it from demolition. Over the next twenty-three years, he worked to bring Regent's Park back to its former grandeur. He scoured demolition sites for artifacts and building materials that he incorporated into the house. 1501 Fort Street was the first privately owned residence in Victoria and BC to be designated heritage. In 1975, Heritage Canada presented Carl Rudolph with an Award of Honour for his tireless efforts. However, the years passed and he was no longer able to maintain the building. Carl Rudolph died on September 24, 1997. An open house at his former residence drew crowds of curious Victorians.

The next owners were Karl and Grace Sands who undertook the task of completing the restoration work while turning the building into an economically viable enterprise. They proposed to accommodate 13 guest rooms in the 8,500-square-foot man house and three in a coach house at the rear of the property. An examination of archival photographs showed the building as essentially intact on the exterior, with the most significant alterations occurring in the area of the front porch and entry stair.

The project was complicated by the desire to retain the original interior finishes that in particular were extant on the main floor. Along the way, a continuous re-evaluation of the additions made to the decor by Carl Rudolph was necessary. Although much was removed, particularly of the donnaconna board edged with rope variety, much of his contribution remains, and is now an integral part of the history of the building.

The design concept was based on the retention of the main and second floor rooms as restored to the maximum practical extent, while completing additional rooms on the basement and top floor levels in a period style, sympathetic to the remainder of the house. Seismic upgrading and the resolution of several structural issues were required, and a sprinkler system was installed to establish acceptable levels of protection for the building and occupants. The Sands wishes to provide bathrooms

for each guest room. Incorporating these upgrades while retaining the interior and exterior finishes was a complicated process, requiring a high degree of co-operation between the consultant team, the owners, and the project manager.



*1501 Fort Street, dual grand staircase, after restoration. Hallmark Society photo.*

Exiting proved to be a difficult problem, the house had an existing metal fire stair at the rear and it was eventually decided to rebuild this stair as being the least intrusive solution available. This stair, combined with the sprinkler system, permitted the opening up and restoration of the original grand staircase. Changes to the exterior were clearly directed toward restoration as based on archival photographs. The house originally had a conservatory on the south side; this was replicated as a bedroom for one of the guest suites. The exit stair and rail is based on archival photographs. The front verandah, stairs and handrails were rebuilt, based on one of the two available options, using archival photographs while the window in the attic dormer was replaced to match the original.

The finished project provides an exceptional blend of comfort and ambiance and allows the Higgins house to remain a key component of the Fort Street/Rockland

heritage area. Although the Sands have sold and moved on, the mansion remains as a quiet testament to over a century of Rockland life - and, due to the efforts of both Karl Rudolph and the Sands, will last far into the future.

*Helen Edwards,  
Newsletter Production*

## RNA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## RNA Email Server List

Would you like to hear more about events in Rockland? Please join the neighbours list through the RNA website at [www.rockland.bc.ca](http://www.rockland.bc.ca).