



ROCKLAND NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

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

Summer 2010 Newsletter

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

TAKING BACK OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD FROM GRAFFITI

Introduction by Tony Wade, March 2010

Graffiti has been with civilization for a long time. Early examples of graffiti can be found in Pompeii and in the catacombs of Rome. Stretching its origins to 30,000 BC in the form of prehistoric cave paintings is probably overstating it because it is likely that prehistoric society endorsed these illustrations. And that is of the essence of graffiti today -- whether it is art or it is not, it is definitely some form of graphical illustration or words which the artist or perpetrator applies to a surface without the permission of the owner of that surface. The argument is not whether it is good or bad in terms of quality but whether the owner of the property wants it or not.



Not very pretty

Rockland is a pleasant treed suburb which grew up just before the end of the 19th century and which owes its character to the architecture of that time, in particular to the work of Samuel Maclure as an important Canadian interpreter of the Arts and Crafts

Movement. Of course it's not a homogeneous snapshot of history but rather the product of a gradual evolution resulting in an eclectic mixture of architecture from 19th hundred to the present. However, it retains enough of its past to be a draw for tourists to Victoria who are interested in urban history. There is not much to mar the effect; there are few commercial enterprises and those that exist are quietly tucked away in plazas that are not immediately obvious.

The exception (isn't there always one?) is in the form of BC Hydro poles. It's a pity that there needs to be poles at all - it would look so less cluttered if the cables went underground. However, if we must have poles, please let them be as insignificant and unadorned as possible so that they can meld into their background rather than be drawn to our attention. But they are not! Some local citizens, probably in the younger age groups, have taken it upon themselves to decorate the poles with so-called graffiti. The form of decoration is usually spray paint applied in the exaggerated letters of hip-hop graffiti tags or incomprehensible scribbles.



The Volunteer Team and Councillor Chris Coleman

Whatever your opinion about graffiti, whether it's art or not, whether it reflects freedom of expression or not, or

whether it is creative or not -- it does not suit Rockland. It is simply out of place and jarring to the eye; a constant source of agitation to the onlooker -- never pleasing and never welcome.

Reflecting this and similar views, a valiant team of volunteers under "heavy pressure" by Don Hamilton have decided to put Hydro poles in their proper place (i.e. in the background) by painting over the existing graffiti with bland colours in the grey, green or brown spectrums. You may have seen teams of two armed with rollers, paintbrushes and cans of paint working all-round Rockland since of March this year.

These volunteers are to be applauded. By giving up 1 or 2 hours of their Saturday mornings, or other important personal time, they can paint over the offending graffiti on about 10 Hydro poles which means that it won't take too long reclaim all poles in the neighbourhood so long as we can maintain volunteer teams and respond quickly to cases of new graffiti on the polls that have already been repainted.

For readers who might like to support this effort (and more volunteers are needed, so be assured that you will be welcome), you should be aware that the paintbrushes, rollers and paint are provided by BC Hydro and the Rockland Neighbourhood Association at no cost. All that is needed is your labour for one, two or three hours. Please contact Don Hamilton at 250 383 5448 or Lloyd Ollila at 250 598 1605 if you're interested in helping make our neighbourhood even more attractive than it is.



Mary and Joanna hard at work

In addition, it can be gratifying to have your efforts appreciated - the team I talked to remarked how many

people smiled and complemented them on their good work -- one gentleman even came dashing out of his garden to thank them wholeheartedly for their work.



Before

After

Of course, it does need some fortitude because the perpetrators will tend to repeat their work -- all it takes is a simple squeeze of the spray can button. However by immediately reacting to such acts with a further coat of paint, experience shows that the "artists" tend to go elsewhere in search of a more congenial "canvas" for their masterpieces.

July Report by Don Hamilton, July 27, 2010

I can report that the neighbourhood has rallied to the call and brought much of the abuse of our Hydro poles under control. I use all these words with a certain hesitation knowing that as I write someone may be out there undoing our fine work.

We are about 20 individuals and teams, who could be called "the Graffiti team", for it is this group who are slowly showing the vandals that fierce determination will make the day. We know that we are under serious pressure to prove that we can stay the course, that we can actually make a difference and over time tame the beast. But it is a hard fought battle. There are those who believe that our painting efforts are merely creating fine new clean pallets for the "artists" to delight us with their fine scribbles and meaningless tags. We are committed to proving that their art is less beautiful than ours and that we have the strength of legal, ethical and social conventions to back us up. We have tackled the majority of poles in the neighbourhood and know that there are more to do. We know that we

have new tags to attack even before we have completed the old. We need help and hope you can assist us. Do send a message to me at donaldhamilton@shaw.ca.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE RECEPTION

The evening of July 6, 2010 was special for the Rockland Neighbourhood Association. Members and their guests were welcomed to Government House for a reception hosted by His Honour Steven L. Point, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia.



On our arrival, we were greeted by His Honour and RNA President Janet Simpson. As part of the official welcoming ceremony, Vice-President Bob June presented His Honour with an honorary membership in the Rockland Neighbourhood Association.

Following this presentation, members and their guests were treated to a sumptuous repast. It was a time to meet old members and to greet new ones. We express our gratitude to all who helped with the organization of the event in Rockland's most prestigious residence.



A good time was had by all.

NEW ROCKLAND WALKING TOURS READY



For the last year, John and Helen Edwards have been working on a reworking of the Rockland walking tours. The new tours are now complete.

The original two tours have been changed to four, intended to be walkable in shorter periods of time. This self-guided walk features several homes of interest designed by leading architects and builders of the last two centuries. It also includes more modest structures, the dwellings of the middle class. The tour starts on Linden Avenue, continues east along Rockland Avenue, down a few side streets, north on Pemberton Road, along Fort Street, south on St. Charles Street, along Rockland Avenue, left on Terrace Avenue, a short walk to McGregor Avenue, and finally along Oak Bay Avenue to Rockland. The final tour is of the area surrounding Craigdarroch Castle. The entire walk may take a few hours.

The walk has been divided into 4 sections. With the first 3 tours, each succeeding tour starts where the previous one leaves off. The fourth tour can be reached by a short 10-minute walk from the end of tour 3.

The finished product shows the result of original research on many of the properties - and has provided the basis for many future articles. It is interesting to trace residents as their fortunes improved and they moved to larger houses. Look for a series of articles in future newsletters.

Copies of the tour brochures will be available at all future Rockland Neighbourhood Association events and can be obtained from City Hall and the Hallmark Society office in Centennial Square. They will also be posted on the RNA website.

1082 RICHMOND ROAD UPDATE



Many months ago, the original University School building (the school is now known as St. Michael's University School) at 1082 Richmond Road was acquired by a developer for in excess of \$1 million.

The developer applied for a demolition permit which was



denied by City Hall. A subsequent legal action was taken against the City.

At present the proposal is to move 1082 Richmond to a vacant lot between 1004 and 1022 Pemberton Road. This will require a rezoning from R1A to R1B and the removal of two trees - a fir and cedar. The developer has set a two-year time frame for this to happen.

It is always preferred to save a potential heritage building where it was built, but secondly to save it in the same locality. Thirdly, it is best to save it - period. Case in point, the Redpath house went from King George Terrace to Saturna Island. Some say it looks better on Saturna than it did in Oak Bay.

This points out how out of date the City of Victoria heritage inventory of potential registry and designated buildings is.

John Edwards
Director

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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.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The Rockland Neighbourhood Association Newsletter is published four times a year. It is distributed electronically to all members. Submissions from members on issues of interest are always accepted and photos are particularly welcome.

Deadlines for the upcoming issues are:

Autumn 2010 - September 15, 2010
Winter 2010 - January 15 2010
Spring 2010 - March 15, 2010
Summer 2010 - June 15, 2010

All submissions should be sent to Communication Chair John Edwards - jsedwards@gmail.com.