

# North Shore Heritage Highlights

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## The Green-Armytage House

*In this article, Peter Miller documents the restoration of the Green-Armytage Residence in North Vancouver.*

This charming Tudor Revival house was moved from the northeast corner to the southwest corner of the property at West 23rd Street and Western Avenue in North Vancouver, to accommodate five units in the development of 29 apartments. In so doing, the developer gave the heritage house a more prominent position in the neighbourhood. The house, fronting apartments constructed in a similar style, is now an impressive landmark and makes a wonderful contribution to the streetscape.

The house, built around 1909, is associated with notable figures from the area's early development. The original owner, Henry Dodson Green-Armytage, was a dry goods supplier with a store at the foot of Lonsdale Avenue. He was aware that extension of the Lonsdale streetcar line was planned from Keith Road to 21st Street, so he selected the site of his new house, at 23rd Street, close to the highest end-point of the line.

The property was sold to the McDougall family in 1938. Wilfred "Mickey" McDougall

served as principal of North Vancouver High School for 25 years from 1936-61; the recreation centre across Lonsdale is

named after him. His wife, Jessie, was well known for her community work, while their daughter Anne MacDonald founded the North Vancouver Community Arts Council and Presentation House. Anne helped save the 1899 St. Johns Anglican Church in North Vancouver, which is now sited next to Presentation House and known as Anne MacDonald Hall.

In more recent years, the house, known as United Lodge, served as a care home.

The house represents one of a limited number of surviving buildings designed by prominent North Vancouver architects Honeyman and Curtis; other examples include Hamersley House and the First Church of Christ Scientist at 185 East Keith.

The Green-Armytage project's careful workmanship, attention to detail and use of authentic materials are clues to the background of the current property devel-



oper. Francis Connolly of Newport Developments has lived on the North Shore for 26 years, but he began his career in the UK in building construction as a tradesman in purpose-made joinery. He worked for a company renowned for restoration work in churches and cathedrals and also the reconstruction of the Judges' Chambers of the Old Bailey central criminal court in London after damage from an IRA bomb. That woodwork originated in the 1600s, while material in cathedrals could be considerably older. Connolly's work entailed the meticulous reproduction of such features as linen-fold paneling, mortise-and-tenon joints and nail-less assembly using only wooden dowels. His training is evident throughout the Green-Armytage project.

The developer took pains to retain and reuse as much of the original material as possible in the reconstruction of such elements as the window  
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## Green-Armytage ...



**The Green-Armytage House before restoration**



**The front porch**



**The house after restoration**

openings, the replacement of the house's south facade damaged by a later, now-removed extension, and retention of the original decorative glass window which is now a feature in the new apartment building's entrance hall.

The exterior was carefully restored using authentic contemporary building envelope details such as galvanized steel flashings and galvanized steel rainwater eaves troughs and down pipes. The bulk of balustrade railings and handrails have all been constructed of unplaned wood, much of it reclaimed from posts and beams replaced during the house restoration, and painted a dark charcoal color. Other exterior features include a pergola constructed in part of timbers removed from the basement of the original house.

All the windows in the original building were replaced to meet present-day building codes that specify minimum heat-loss standards. The windows throughout the project are gas-filled double-paned units set in wood frames, but the window type is an authentic sliding sash with the added capability of being unlocked to open inward to permit easy cleaning of the exterior glass surfaces.

Inside the building, care has been taken to reproduce original features such as classic solid wood-paneled doors, wooden door- and window surrounds, and hexagonal ceramic tiles based upon the original tiles found under

layers of material removed from the original bathroom floors.

For aesthetic reasons, the developer would have preferred to have left the original roof construction exposed as the interior ceiling. The roof of the 1906 house was so well constructed that, even after the building had been moved more than 100 feet, it was undamaged. The roof was constructed of perfectly cut and fitted 2" x 10" members with an overlay of diagonal 1" x 8" tongue-and-grooved boards, all held in place with cut nails and forming a monolithic membrane roof structure akin to a geodesic dome. The developer was unable to leave this "wonderful piece of workmanship" exposed due to fire protection requirements. However, the shape of the original form has been followed in the interior dry-wall and results in dramatic cathedral ceilings.

The original house did not have insulation in the cavities of the exterior walls, and to achieve the minimum heat-loss standards required by current building codes, a spray-on foam insulation was used. Rather than using a urea-formaldehyde foam, which can continue out-gassing for years, the developer sourced a soya-based foam which does not have any environmental problems.

Interior amenities throughout this project include a concrete substrate to upper floors to provide a sense of stability and a reduction in sound transmission from

floor to floor, and underfloor heating in bathrooms. "Age-in-place" features include level, step-free access to all suites; extra-wide doorways; wheelchair-accessible kitchens and bathrooms; and pre-installed backing in bathroom walls for the future installation of safety grab-rails.

At the corner of 23rd and Western, the developer retained a landmark English white oak tree, estimated to be more than 300 years old, with a trunk of about 48" in diameter. With the cooperation of City of North Vancouver's street engineering department, the oak tree was given more room to breathe by the realignment of the sidewalk road. The landscaping along Chesterfield Avenue even incorporates the reinstatement of a watercourse that had been irrigating the oak tree before being diverted by the construction of the nearby Upper Levels highway. The original stream has been recreated by the formation of an 8-foot deep swale filled with organic matter and topped by river stones directing all the building's rainwater into this watercourse. The stream bed is enhanced by glistening metal sculptures of leaping salmon.

**Peter Miller**

See page 4 for project source list

## The Real Estate Market for Heritage Homes

*Grant Stuart Gardiner, a North Shore Heritage board member, gave a talk on the real estate market for heritage homes at the society's AGM on Nov. 18. Grant has worked as a local realtor specializing in heritage homes since 1991.*

Approximately 15 heritage homes have been sold in North Vancouver annually since 2000, ranging from a peak of 25 in 2003 to around 10 in 2008. This includes only houses listed on municipal heritage inventories.

Heritage homes have consistently attracted a premium to the market for detached homes since 2000, with exceptions in only two years. On average, heritage homes sold for \$40,000 more than detached homes in that period.

A stereotypical buyer for a North Vancouver heritage home is a family working in the movie industry moving from Vancouver's West Side. However, an analysis of buyers from 2009 reveals a much more varied demographic, including a software programmer, professional tennis player, banker, musician, architect, midwife, journalist, accountant, chief executive and police officer. The average age of buyers that year was 40.

There is a relatively select number of people interested in buying heritage homes -- but they are very targeted and motivated buyers, competing for a limited number of listings.

Twenty years ago, buyers were happy to buy fixer-uppers and put in the sweat equity. These days, most buyers want to buy a house where the work has already been done.

Popular selling points include: front veranda, large entrance hall, original flooring, kitchen, bathrooms (not necessarily old fixtures) and old fireplaces. Other selling points include: ensuite bathroom, closet space, mechanical upgrades, relatively new roof (up to 10 years), basement suite as mortgage-helper, and quiet, central location.

In terms of renovations, refinishing floors and painting walls in neutral colours tend to produce the best returns on investment if selling a property. Kitchens and bathrooms can also give strong returns, and an attractive kitchen can close a deal. Renovations should respect the original integrity to be sure of good returns. Other good investments tend to be mechanical upgrades and basement suites.

In general it is harder to get the full investment back when extending the building envelope (a \$200,000 investment may add only \$150,000 to the property value), spending a lot of money on a garden, or installing top-end kitchen appliances. In these cases, you are spending more for your own enjoyment, than for payback when selling.

Common issues that arise in sales include knob-and-tube

wiring (a new buyer may have trouble with their insurer, although this can be resolved); an outdated electrical system; vermiculite insulation (can contain asbestos, and any such insulation typically must be removed by the seller at a cost of about \$10,000-\$15,000); and oil tanks (these cost around \$1,500-\$2,000 to remove, but this tends to be a bigger problem with homes built in the 1950s).

Insurance can be an issue for any heritage home, especially if taking out a new policy after a purchase. If a property is on the municipal inventory but not legally protected or designated, this is usually a misunderstanding on the part of the insurer -- problems are resolved once it is explained that there is no legal protection on the property. Recently, there have been some problems with designated houses, but this can also be overcome.

There are common misconceptions among buyers about the need to replace single-glazed windows with double glazing. Payback on replacements can take 30-plus years, while the life expectancy of vinyl frames is just 20-25 years. Replacement windows also have a much higher, invisible cost in energy consumption for manufacture. The best option: keep those gorgeous old wood windows and install heavy drapes!

*For photos of heritage homes sold in North Vancouver, visit [www.iloveheritage.com](http://www.iloveheritage.com)*

**“Heritage homes have consistently attracted a market premium since 2000”**



**Grant addresses the North Shore Heritage AGM**

**NEWSLETTER  
OF THE  
NORTH SHORE  
HERITAGE  
PRESERVATION  
SOCIETY**

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**NORTH SHORE HERITAGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

The North Shore Heritage Preservation Society was created in 2005 with a broad aim of promoting the restoration and preservation of heritage and distinctive buildings in North and West Vancouver, by raising awareness in the community through events and publications.

The society also provides resources for the preservation of such buildings, and advocates for the protection of buildings under threat.

It believes these buildings enhance the spirit and character of the community, embody a sense of history, preserve qualities of craftsmanship and provide aesthetic pleasure.

Membership is open to anyone interested in preserving historic and distinctive buildings in the area. The North Shore Heritage Preservation Society is registered as a not-for-profit society in British Columbia (# S-49292) and as a charity (# 83070 2478 RR0001).

Annual membership fees are: Individual \$20, Family \$30, Senior/Student \$15, Corporate \$100, Life \$200. To join, please send a cheque to the society's address, or visit [www.northshoreheritage.org/membership](http://www.northshoreheritage.org/membership) for a membership form.

**Green-Armytage Project Source List**

Rainwater Goods: North  
Shore Home Services  
604-988-5294

Landscape Contractor:  
John Sperling  
604-710-0284

Mechanical Engineer:  
Caulfield Design  
604-986-6285

Window Manufacturer:  
Marvin Windows  
604- 291-9411

Architects:  
Integra Design  
604- 688-4220

Electrical Engineer:  
Nemetz  
604-736-6562

Door Supplier: National  
Door 604-817-3919

Structural Engineer:  
Tabet Engineering  
604- 984-2994

Soya-Based Foam  
Insulation: Insul-Twin Systems  
604- 942-4948