



GABRIOLA
1523 DAVIE STREET
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

JANUARY 2017

DONALD LUXTON
AND ASSOCIATES INC 

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: *GABRIOLA*



Address: 1523 Davie Street, Vancouver, British Columbia

Original Owner: Benjamin Tingley Rogers

Architect: Samuel Maclure

Date of Construction: 1900-1901

Description of the Historic Place

Gabriola, located at the corner of Davie Street and Nicola Street in the West End neighbourhood of Vancouver, is a two and one-half storey estate house characterized by its Gabriola Island sandstone block construction, a bellcast hipped roofline, sandstone chimneys, dormers, and decorative brackets. The house is located on a large, landscaped lot, with views to English Bay.

Heritage Value of the Historic Place

Gabriola is valued for its association with the early development of Vancouver's West End neighbourhood; its ownership by the influential Rogers family and later, the Bentall family; and its transitional Victorian-era architecture, as designed by prominent architect Samuel Maclure, along with stained glasswork by Henry Bloomfield and Sons, and stonework by John Wills Bruce.

Completed in 1901, *Gabriola* is one of the oldest surviving houses and last of the mansions to be built in the West End neighbourhood. The West End was close to downtown, yet far enough from

the working harbour and industrial activity to attract the growing city's professionals and many handsome residences, such as *Gabriola*, were constructed. Originally dominating half a city block, the *Gabriola* estate would come to feature a gardener's cottage, conservatory, greenhouses and tennis courts before being subdivided and converted to apartments. Although the building's use and the surrounding context and density have changed significantly over time, *Gabriola* remains an historic community landmark that is linked to the original character of the West End.

Gabriola exemplifies ties to a wealthy industrialist, American-born Benjamin Tingley Rogers, who became one of Vancouver's most well-known, influential, and successful businessmen of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Rogers family had been in the sugar refining business in the United States since the late 1860s. Following the death of his father, B.T. Rogers struck out on his own, first in New York and then Montreal, before settling in Vancouver and establishing the B.C. Sugar Company & Refinery. The success of the refinery ensured the Rogers family enjoyed an opulent lifestyle that included many servants, extensive travelling, and rare luxuries; Rogers was one of the first in Vancouver to own an automobile. Originally settling on Georgia Street, the Rogers' had their second family home constructed on Davie Street, with commanding views of English Bay. The Rogers family lived in the Davie Street mansion while beginning construction on their third, and biggest, home, which would become the *Shannon* estate on Granville Street at 57th Avenue. However, B.T. Rogers' sudden death in 1918 altered the family's course. Left with multiple properties, Mrs. Rogers entered into a business agreement with Charles Bentall, of the powerful Dominion Construction Company, in 1925, under which Mrs. Rogers financed the adaptation of *Gabriola* into six apartments, along with the addition of a new, adjacent building. The new development was known as the Angus Apartments, after Mrs. Rogers' maiden name, and Charles and Edna Bentall eventually moved into the building. Charles later relocated to the main floor of the *Gabriola* mansion with his second wife, Marion, where he would remain until his death in 1974. Dominion Construction would subsequently refurbish the estate for use as a restaurant, beginning in 1978.

Gabriola is an excellent and unique example of transitional Victorian-era, Picturesque Eclecticism architecture in Vancouver. Designed by prolific local architect Samuel Maclure, the estate house features an expanded foursquare plan with hallmarks of Victorian styles, such as Queen Anne and Richardsonian Romanesque, including its stone construction and elaborately carved terracotta fireplace, while also incorporating elements of more progressive Classicism. Built at the conclusion of the Victorian era, the house was one of the largest early commissions for Maclure; the contract afforded him extensive press coverage and an elevated reputation for sophisticated design. Samuel Maclure is recognized as one of the most influential architects in British Columbia and *Gabriola* remains one of his most well known designs. Additionally, *Gabriola* features intricate stained glass throughout, which was designed by the renowned firm of Henry Bloomfield and Sons; their work is exemplified by the elaborate art-themed tripartite assembly on the main stair landing. The mansion also features intricate stonework, both on the interior and exterior, carved by John Wills Bruce, who is also known for carving the stone lions at the Vancouver Courthouse, which is now the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Character-Defining Elements

The elements that define the heritage character of *Gabriola* are its:

Exterior:

- location on Davie Street in the West End neighbourhood of Vancouver;

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- estate-like setting with house set back from both Davie Street and Nicola Street and an extensive landscape featuring mature trees and a surrounding wrought iron fence with stone pillars, detailed panel motifs and gates;
- grand residential form, scale and massing, as expressed by its: asymmetrical plan; two and one-half storey plus basement height with main floor set above grade; exaggerated, bellcast, slate-covered hipped-roof with flat top; carved closed brackets; bellcast hipped-roof dormers, clad in wood and flanked by vertical wooden knee brackets; flat-roofed extension to the east; and flat-roofed porte-cochère with coffered soffits, metal dentil coursing, robust square stone-columns, and wood columns;
- masonry construction, featuring smooth, pitch-faced, and tooled Gabriola Island sandstone block with tuck pointed red mortar, accented by wooden elements; and concrete foundation and basement;
- transitional Victorian-era architecture, featuring: an enclosed circular corner gazebo, originally open, with conical roof structure and wood columns; carved frieze with stylized seahorses and human profiles separating the first and second floor; Art Nouveau carved figures fixed to pilasters that flank the front door; stone front door surround featuring chamfered edges with carved detailing; wooden column-style mullions with capitals; 'R' and 'BTR' cartouche sculptures; wooden dentil coursing at the dormer, main roof structure, and mid-section trim levels; semi-circular main floor bay window; wooden balustrade of the front entryway; rectangular bays; and masonry water table;
- variety of original wood window assemblies, including: tripartite fixed stained glass panels on the main staircase featuring female figures with native plants and the Latin motto "Sapienti omnis gratissima ars" (to a wise man all arts are most welcome); fixed stained glass transom panel above the front door assembly; single-hung windows with stained glass transoms, including the rounded bay grouping on the main floor; and triple assembly double-hung windows in the dormers with ornamented wood mullions;
- original solid oak double front door assembly with iron accents, original hardware featuring the 'BTR' monogram on the door knobs, and sidelight windows; and
- four internal Gabriola sandstone stack chimneys with corbelled stone caps and multiple pots.

Interior:

- progressive succession of rooms radiating from the central entry hall;
- grand, dog-leg staircase with turned balusters and square newel posts and facing rounded 'balconies' at the landing and second floor levels;
- hardwood floors;
- multi-coloured marble mosaic on the entryway floor that reads 'Angus' and was installed during the 1924-1925 apartment conversion;
- multi-coloured marble mosaic floor at the base of the main fireplace that reads 'O Ye Fire and Heat Praise Ye the Lord';
- massive Arizona sandstone overmantle in the main entry, intricately carved, featuring columns, vine and plant details (Byzantine acanthus), and a central 'BTR' cartouche sculpture;
- fireplaces, mantles, and tilework throughout;
- wainscoting at various heights and in various woods, including Australian tallow wood, blonde oak, and red bean;
- original moulded and beamed ceilings;
- original solid wood doors with original hardware; and
- original woodwork, including columns, mouldings and trim throughout areas of the interior.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

CIVIC ADDRESS: 1523 Davie Street, Vancouver, British Columbia

LEGAL ADDRESS: Lot 14, Block 49, District Lot 185

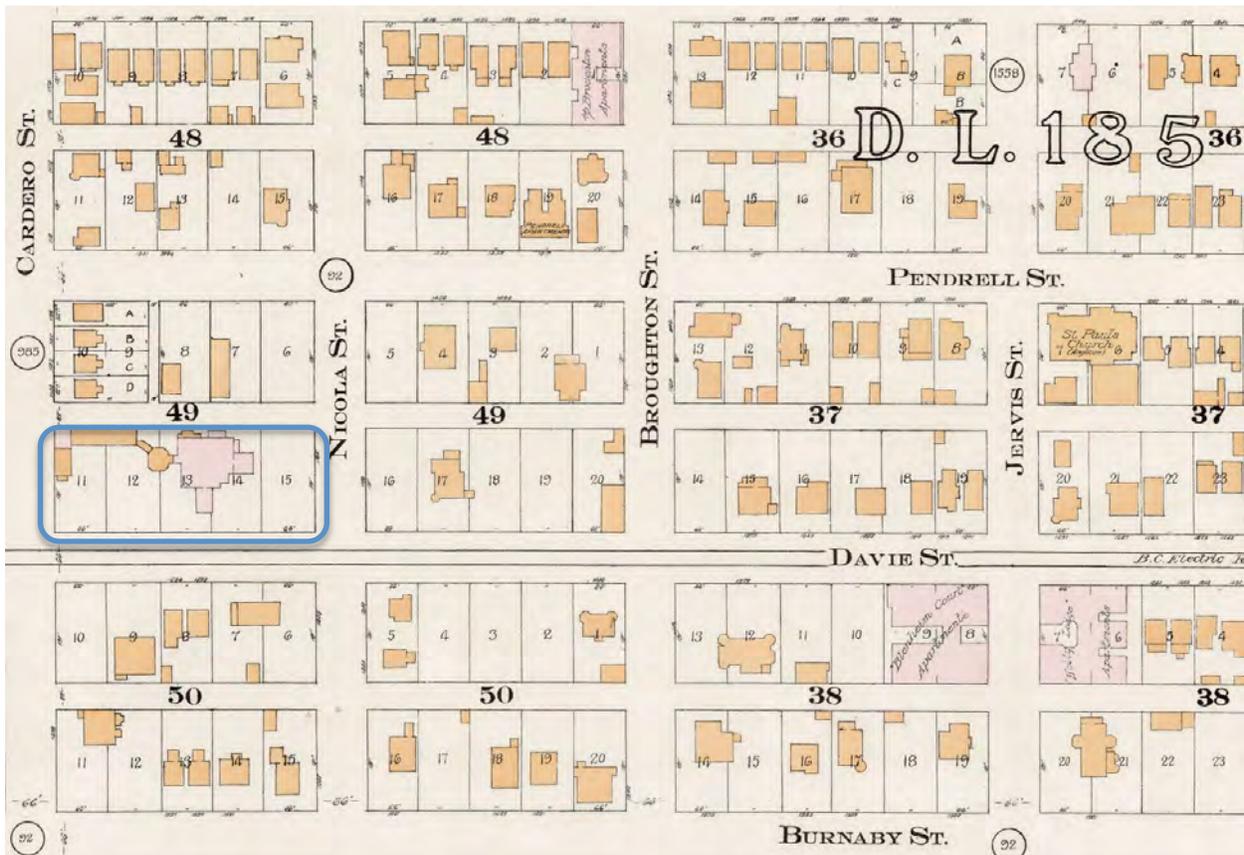
ORIGINAL OWNER: Benjamin Tingley Rogers

ARCHITECT: Samuel Maclure

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1900-1901

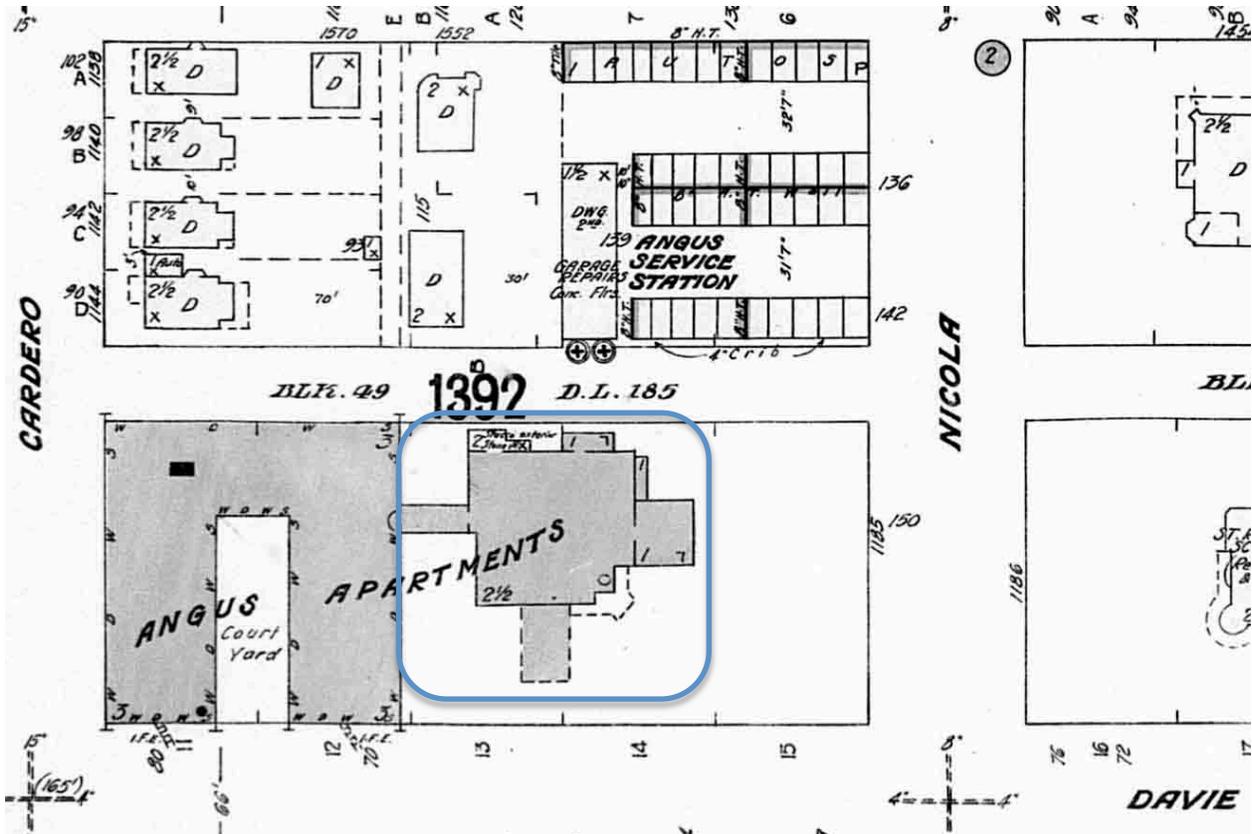
PUBLICATIONS:

- Bentall, Shirley. *The Charles Bentall Story: A Man of Industry and Integrity*. The Bentall Group Limited, 1986.
- *City of Vancouver Heritage Interiors Project*. F.G. Architectural & Planning Consultants, 1996.
- Kalman, Harold and Ward, Robin. *Exploring Vancouver: The Architectural Guide*. Vancouver: D & M Publishers Inc., 2012.
- Kluckner, Michael. *Vanishing Vancouver*. North Vancouver: Whitecap Books Ltd., 1990.
- Luxton, Donald. *Building the West: The Early Architects of British Columbia*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2007, 2nd ed.
- *Vancouver Daily World*. July 15, 1901, page 2.

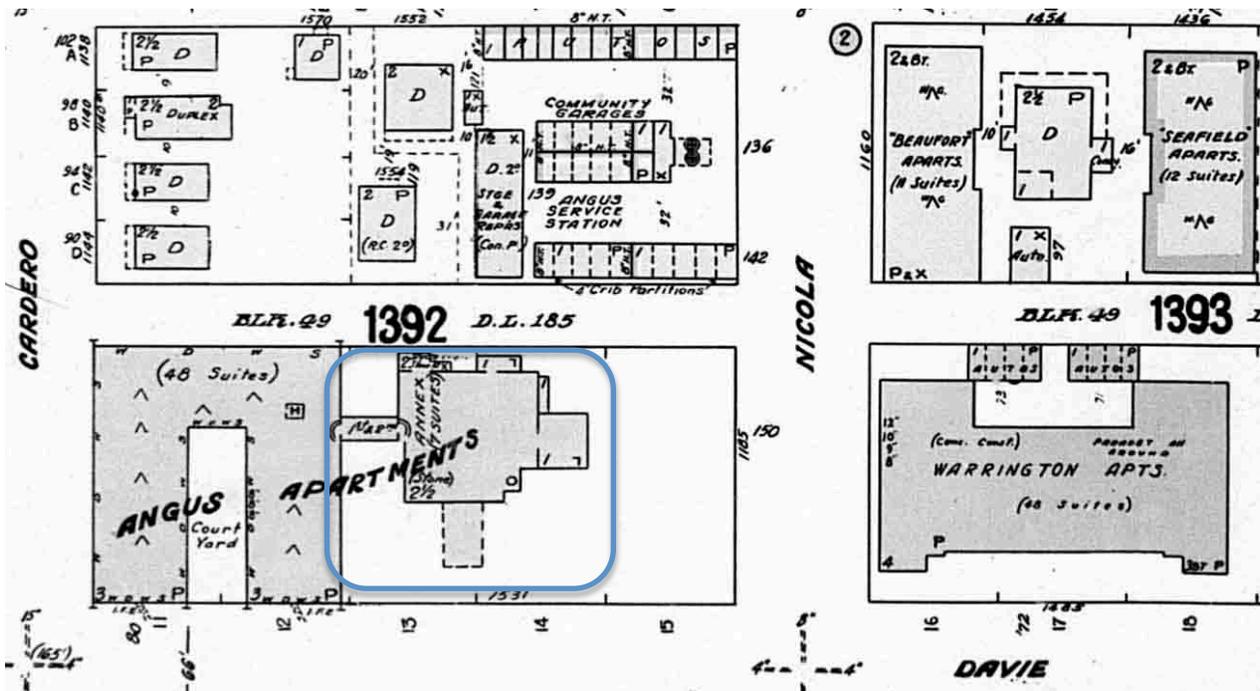


1912 City of Vancouver Fire Insurance Map

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1928 City of Vancouver Fire Insurance Map



1955 City of Vancouver Fire Insurance Map

ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Gabriola, showing front facade with porte-cochère, *The Charles Bentall Story: A Man of Industry and Integrity*, page 87



B.T. Rogers' residence on Davie Street at Nicola, Vancouver Public Library (VPL) 7624



1904, B.T. Rogers' residence on Davie Street at Nicola, VPL 7161



1904, B.T. Rogers' residence *Gabriola* on Davie Street at Nicola is the background for a small child on horseback, VPL 7125

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Gabriola, southwest view, from Broughton



Gabriola, postcard

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Gabriola, 1925 or 1926, City of Vancouver Archives (CVA) Bu N233



Angus Apartments, *The Charles Bentall Story: A Man of Industry and Integrity*, page 103

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Left: B.T. Rogers, 1914, in *Howay and Scholefield*, page 992



Right: Charles Bentall, at *Gabriola*, 1972, *The Charles Bentall Story: A Man of Industry and Integrity*, page 183



Left: *Gabriola*, staircase showing the entrance to the Bentall Apartment to the left, *The Charles Bentall Story: A Man of Industry and Integrity*, page 156



Right: *Gabriola* restored in 1978 by Dominion Construction Company, *The Charles Bentall Story: A Man of Industry and Integrity*, page 178

CURRENT MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS



1523 Davie Street, view to north, Bing Maps



1523 Davie Street, view to east, Bing Maps

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1523 Davie Street, view to west, Bing Maps



1523 Davie Street, view to south, Bing Maps

EXTERIOR



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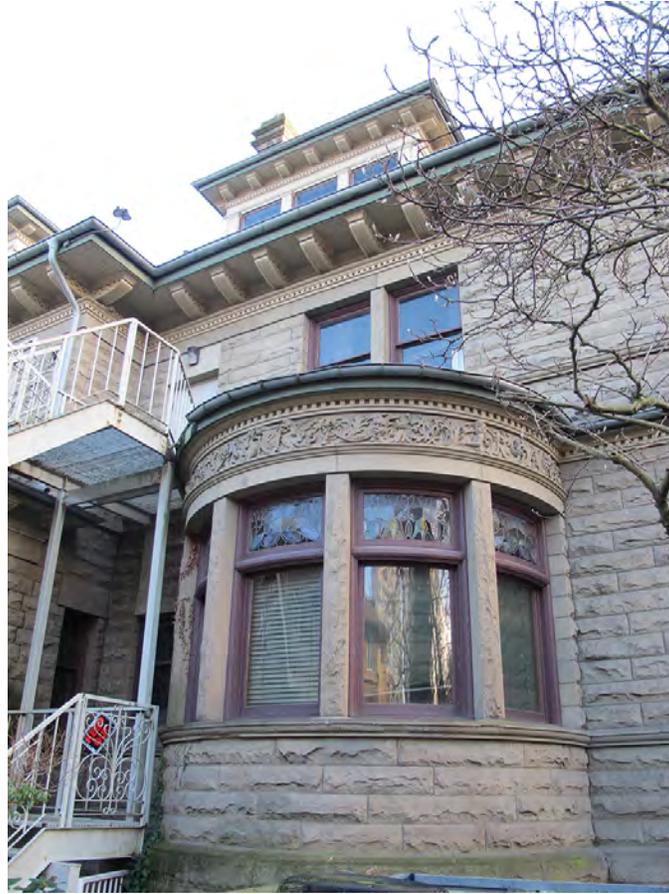


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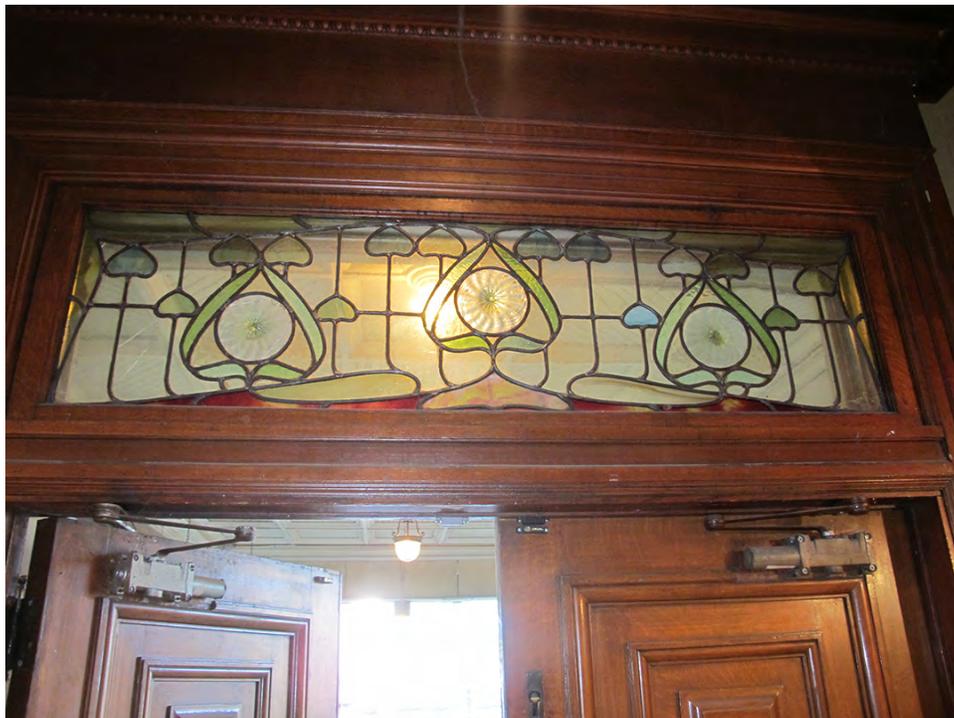
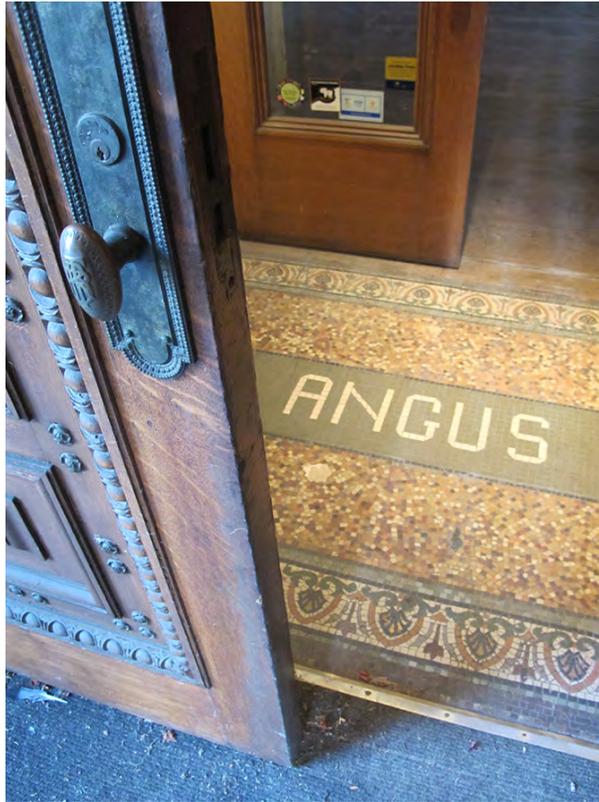


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INTERIOR



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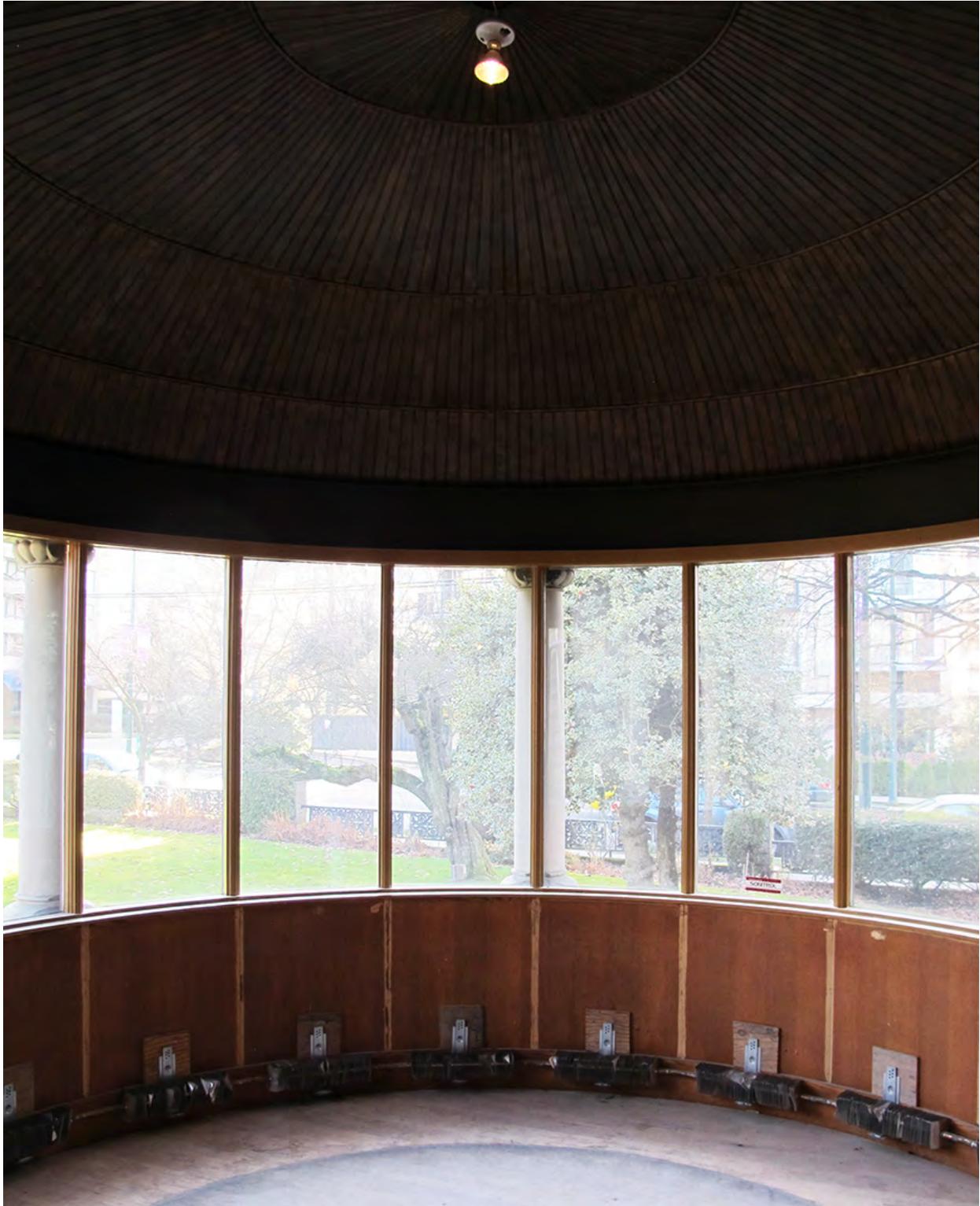


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APPENDIX A: HERITAGE INTERIORS SURVEY (1996)

Built for Benjamin Tingley Rogers, early industrialist and founder of B.C. Sugar, this was one of Maclure's largest early commissions, and the only house he ever designed to be built entirely of stone. Rogers was wealthy, dynamic, and a trend-setter - he was the first person in Vancouver to own an automobile. In anticipation of building this house, he bought a whole block of property facing Davie Street. This grand, two and one-half storey residence certainly established an image of solidity and prosperity; the main block of the house is built entirely of stone quarried on Gabriola Island, topped with a high hipped bellcast slate roof. The boxiness of the house is relieved by a prominent projecting porte cochère, a circular corner verandah, and originally, a conservatory on the east side. A carved frieze, with stylized seahorses and native profiles, separates the first and second floor. This carving, plus the Art Nouveau figures that flank the front door, and the enormous terra cotta overmantle in the main entry, were the work of John Wills Bruce. The downstairs oak panelling was carved by Edward F. Baston, who was employed as a chauffeur, but carried out woodworking commissions in his off hours. In total, the house had nine fireplaces, and an up-to-date refrigeration system. The fully excavated concrete basement was the first to be used in a Vancouver residence.

The highlight of the house is a superb stained glass panel that crowns the main staircase landing, the work of Henry Bloomfield & Sons. Its three panels each contain a female figure, with native plants, such as fireweed, arum lilies and dogwood at their feet. A Latin motto in the window may be translated as 'Every Art is Most Pleasing to the Wise Man'. This is probably the most spectacular stained glass window ever installed in a local residence.

When the West End became less fashionable, Rogers began an even larger estate home, 'Shannon', at Granville Street and 57th Avenue. Following a long period of construction, during which Rogers passed away, his widow finally was able to move into the new house in 1925. She was, however, unable to sell the Davie Street property. She asked Charles Bentall for assistance, and he proposed a company which would develop the site with an apartment building, to be named after Mrs. Rogers, whose maiden name was Angus. The main house itself was retained and converted into six elegant apartments. The conservatory and greenhouse on the west facade were removed to allow the construction of the new building; when it was complete the complex was called the 'Angus Apartments'. Many of the original interior features were retained during the 1924-1925 renovations. The billiard room that had been added to the east side in 1908 was converted for use as the living room for the main suite. In an unusual treatment, the original stained glass windows in this room were covered over on the inside, but not removed - they are still visible on the exterior of the building.

During the Depression, the complex suffered serious rental problems; a number of stockbrokers had been the first to leave. The original drawing room had been converted into a lounge for the use of the tenants; but this was now enclosed as an additional suite. Eventually, in the 1940s, Charles Bentall and his wife moved into one of the apartments. After the death of his first wife, Bentall remarried, and he and his new wife moved into one of the second floor apartments. Following Bentall's heart attack in 1955, they moved into the main ground floor apartment, and the Rogers' former billiard room became their living room. In the 1970s, the later 'Angus Apartments' building caught fire and burned down, but the main house survived, and continued to be used as a residence. Charles Bentall, after living in this house for several decades, died in his

apartment in 1974, at the age of ninety-two. 'Gabriola' was refurbished for use as a restaurant in 1978 by the Dominion Construction Company at a cost of well over a million dollars; the house was then leased to Hy Aisenstat for use as 'The Mansion'. It has now been renovated again for use by another restaurant.

Despite the checkered history of the use of this building, a surprising amount of its interior features have survived. Original interior features that can still be seen include the entry vestibule its panelled oak wainscotting; the multi-coloured marble mosaic floor, that reads 'Angus' was installed in 1924. This leads through to the entrance hall, with its magnificent overmantle. The grand staircase rises to the east of the hall; it is a superbly crafted dog-leg staircase with turned balusters and square newel posts. Throughout the rest of the house, much period woodwork survives; other features include a number of fireplaces, and s superb cast plaster ceiling in the ground floor west sitting room.

APPENDIX B: VANCOUVER DAILY WORLD, JULY 15, 1901

OF GABRIOLA STONE

Description of B.T. Rogers' Monumental Residence

It is a Credit to Designer and to Craftsmen – It Marks a Great Step in Home Building on the Mainland

A noteworthy addition to the residential architecture of the city during 12 months past is "Gabriola", the new residence of Ben. T. Rogers, overlooking English Bay, at the corner of Davie and Nicola streets. Though in some respect, on points of architectural detail, open to criticism, the house marks an important advance in domestic architecture, as hitherto practised on the Mainland, insomuch that it is substantially the first distinct endeavour at home building in the monumental and lasting sense in which the word is understood in the old world, that has yet here been made, and has given opportunity for the application and local development of the art industries which are so closely allied with architecture, more perhaps than any other yet recorded on the Mainland.

Of two stories, high-roofed, with dormers, the house had a massive bulk. The Gabriola island stone, of which the exterior walls are built, of a greenish gray, shows itself capable of use, either rough, dressed or carved. The facility with which it can be worked is exemplified in some excellently carved lintels over the library windows and the porte-cochère. In respect of this last and commanding feature, it is a matter for regret, from an architect's standpoint, that wooden columns should have been used for the ostensible support of such an excellent example of stone-carving. On the side of the porte-cochère opens out a wood verandah, leading to a pavilion, the ceiling of which, together with that of the former, deserves attention, being pannelled with native woods. That of the pavilion is a specially good bit of wood work, since the wood, in strips, is laid radially outwards from the centre of the circular dome to its springing line.

Standing within the hall, after passing through a mosaic floored vestibule, to the left, its bow window commanding English Bay and the gulf beyond, is the drawing room; balanced on the other hand by the library, and a broad stair that goes easily up to a window and balconied landing, on which three high windows, rich with stained glass, cast varied light into the main and the bedroom hall on the floor above. The walls of the hall, pannelled in Australian tallow wood to shoulder height, are left with a sand finish, whose roughness serves to foil the smooth faces of panel, stile, rail and mold beneath. A scheme of decoration will shortly be carried out upon the frieze, which will give the wall the note of color now lacking. The ceiling of the hall is beamed out in tallow wood, with the soffits pannelled and molded, having an alternation of bold projection and deep recess.

ATTRACTIVE TO THE EYE

Over the opening of the stairs, the ceiling of the hall proper is taken to the floor by square posts, with semi-classic bases and caps. At the end of the hall is a chimney piece of Arizona sandstone, in height to the ceiling, Rather heavily ornamented, displaying in the upper panel the monogram of the owner, amidst foliage of Byzantine acanthus, it is a commanding feature of the hall, being withal an excellent bit of craftsmanship in stone, for which, together with the exterior lintels previously mentioned, much credit is due to Mr. Bruce, the stone cutter. Flanking the chimney piece are oak settees, with carved ends, set at either side of a mosaic hearth. An extension of the

hall to the right from this points open widely into a conservatory, while directly in front is the dining room; on the other hand being the door of communication with the domestic offices.

The dining room is wainscoted and pannelled to a height of eight feet, with red bean and tallow wood; the frieze above to the veiling being covered with a handsomely figured woven stuff. The ceiling is moulded in relief, on a Jacobean model of intersecting bands having a common point in a richly foliated centre piece. In this, as in all other reception rooms, and the hall, the floor is of polished hard wood.

The drawing room, in a scheme of white and cream, shows many features of interest, principal among which is a richly coppered ceiling in moulded plaster, the ribs of which intersect each other on rectangular lines, carrying at the intersections boldly cut bosses of acanthus foliage. The ceiling is coved on to the wall, and the half spaces of intersection that fall upon the cove are taken down upon it by cleverly designed corbels, which, while acting as support, simultaneously repeat the motif of the bosses. The ceiling of the semi-circular bay in this room is a clever adaptation of the principal motif to an irregular space. The mantel, finished in cream enamel, is extended upwards into a series of small cabinets, with glass doors set in oxidized copper, and which are continued on either side of the chimney breast to the bounding wall on either side, against which, flanking the fire place, are seats. For...

[ARTISTIC COMPLETENESS] the library is possibly the best room in the house. Wainscoted to shoulder-height, with red bean, simply pannelled and molded, with window casings, heavily beamed ceiling, and mantel with side cabinets, whose glass is set in silver bars, and lockers of the same material, over a dark hardwood floor, it has a quiet solidity of design and soberness of color, lightened by the antique silver lock and hinge plates of cabinets and lockers, and the rich tones of stained glass in the transoms, that renders it a pleasant environment of personal retirement and reflection.

An interesting feature of the house is the stained glass which adds a touch of softly luminous and brilliant color to the hall and principal apartments of the ground floor. The foremost of this is the hall window, of three lights, each eight feet high, upon the landing of the stairs. In this, against a background of native flowers ornamentally treated, are three figures, of which the centre, against a halo-like swirl of blue wave, snowy crest and drifting weed, extends her hands wide in welcome. Those on either side, respectively, with book and classic hydrin, distaff and spinning wheel, typify each the arts of life. The figures, statuesquely draped, show in softly tinted whites against the carried greens of the background, which is again lightened here and there by clusters of button-berry flowers, with at the feet of the salal, bracken and pigeon-berry. Overhead, the ground of the window is broken into small oblongs of tinted white, on each of which, in outline and clear yellow is an ornamental spot, also derived from native flora. Across the base of the light beneath a narrow band of sea shells and seaweed, runs a broad band of deep rich greens, in form of skunk cabbage (which, slightened hitherto more by reason of its ill name than anything else, here shows itself to be, to the artist, a plant of splendid decorative possibilities), and pond lilies (these last having both buds, flowers and leaves), against a background of broken blue. Upon this, in the centre light, lies a riband, the Latin motto upon which – *Sapienti omnis gratissima ars* – to a wise man all arts are most welcome – sufficiently points the pose and gesture of the three figures above. In the dining room are five transoms, in which...

[IN SPARKLING WHITES] and soft greens, disposed with balanced conventionalism, is shown the butter-berry against deep blue. A similar number in the drawing room exhibit ornamental forms derived from the salal and wild bleeding heart, in quiet tones of opalescent browns, yellows, whites and greens, with here and there a touch of cleverly lightened ruby. The transoms in the library, four in number, are specially unique, showing each the swirl and surge of wave, the drifting seaweed, and riding bravely upon it, richly dark, against a flaming sunset sky and distant mountains, an Indian canoe, with a pair of brawny paddlers. The effect of these is rich in the extreme, and as mosaic glass they are excellent. The fan light over the hall door and its side lights are a brilliant example of purely abstract ornament in glass, being made up of lines and forms that while suggestive of those seen in nature are yet purely ornamental, an effect contributed to in no small measure, as indeed in all the windows, by the rich jewel-like quality of the glass, which is mostly English antique. In the cabinet work of the drawing room and the library also, are some examples of abstractly ornamental work in clear sheet and oxidized copper bar, the lines of which show the craftsman to be strongly influenced by the modern school of design. In the case of the library the glass is set in silvered bar, with a dull antique finish, in harmony with the lock and hinge plates. The work described has further and added interest from the fact that it was designed and made in Vancouver by Messrs. Henry Bloomfield & Sons, of Mount Pleasant. The whole of the work was done at their shop, and the production of such work in a comparatively young community denotes a gratifying advance in the artistic crafts in Vancouver. The apartments...

[OF THE UPPER FLOOR] are very simple in their architectural appointments, but are well planned in respect of readiness of inter-communication and the personal requirements of the owner and his family. The domestic offices are complete to a degree, and of them no unimportant feature is the cellarage, which, containing coal and wood stores, furnace rooms and laundry so extends under the whole of the house, bounded only by the concrete foundation walls. Throughout the house is heated by hot water, a most complete system, embodying all the latest improvements of appliance and application, having been constructed by Wm. Leek & Co.

Small appointments, such as locks, handles, fastenings, etc., are of a specially fine order, many of them being designed and made for their special places, together with all other hardware of the kind, by the Yale & Towne Manufacturing Co., and supplied by the Vancouver Hardware Co. For the woodwork in the reception rooms and other apartments of the house, much credit is due to Robertson & Hackett, while its finish and polishing, together with the painting, were in the hands of E. Spillman. Responsible for construction of an important task is John McLuckie, the contractor for the work.

Gabriola marks an epoch in the residential development of Vancouver, being, as it is, the most costly and complete domiciling building yet erected here. On the successful completion of the work, Samuel Maclure, of Victoria and Vancouver, its architect, is to be congratulated.