

The Prospect

Your Historic Neighbourhood Newsletter

York Place, Prospect Place, San Carlos Avenue, Broom Road, and part of Beach Drive and Oak Bay Avenue



Photo by Rick Marshall

What a day for a Jane's Walk!



PICTURE PERFECT WEATHER

drew a crowd of 50 people interested in learning more about the cultural and architectural history of the proposed Heritage Conservation Area.

Jane's Walk—named for writer and urban activist Jane Jacobs—is a network of citizen-led walking tours held in May each year, around the globe. Led by volunteers

and offered for free, a Jane's Walk is a means of community building.

Participants enjoyed the sunshine, trees, rock walls and rural atmosphere of this historic seaside community as resident Sharman Minus entertained listeners with colourful stories of historic homes and their early occupants. The talk was titled, "Mansions and Cottages."



Q: What house is this?

A: It's the Gibson House, 1590 York Place, designed by Francis M. Rattenbury, Samuel Maclure, and Ross Lort.



Q: Where is this?

A: It's Prospect Place, the power pole removed in Photoshop.





Francis M. Rattenbury

Visionary Developer

OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD is unique and rich in cultural history. Its treasure trove includes 25 homes by notable architects, a boat house, and four carriage houses, for a total of 29 significant structures out of 57 properties.

Francis Rattenbury features prominently in this historic gold mine, having designed five of these homes. As Stephen Ruttan, local history librarian, says of him in *Tales from the Vault*: “Francis Rattenbury looms larger than life over the city of Victoria. Although he died nearly three quarters of a century ago, his Parliament Buildings and Empress Hotel still define the city to the world. . . . His own home on Beach Drive (now Glenlyon Norfolk School) is a local landmark for residential architecture. . . . But architecture was only part of his life. As a town planner his ideas were far in advance of his time, and he had a particularly strong effect on the development of Oak Bay. . . . He appreciated the beautiful asset the Victoria Golf

Club was to Oak Bay. When it was threatened with development he ran for Reeve of Oak Bay, on a platform of stopping the development. He won the election, and the threat receded. But he knew that green space was needed. He directed Council therefore, to buy the land that became Willows Park. He also gave the municipality land of his own. He had bought Mary Tod Island (also known as Jimmy Chicken) in the early 1900s to make sure it was not developed. By the 1920s he realized that its best use was as a park, so he gave it to the municipality.”

How grateful we are to Rattenbury for his philanthropy. Today walkers, joggers, bikers, and motorists—residents and tourists alike—enjoy the view of Mary Tod Island as a piece of undeveloped wilderness. We are the beneficiaries of the actions of a visionary developer who left a great legacy to Oak Bay.

I think

that the Oak Bay district is one of the most lovely residential areas that I have ever seen, and it is my desire to retain this beauty as far as possible. . . .

—F. M. Rattenbury, 1913

Questions? Want to get more involved with this neighbourhood initiative?

Visit ProtectOakBayHeritage.ca or visit us on Facebook

NEWS FLASH:

THE PROSPECT HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREA WINS FAVOUR AND GAINS TRACTION

Oak Bay Council has allocated funds to help establish our neighbourhood as Oak Bay’s first Heritage Conservation Area (HCA).

COVER STORY PHOTO CREDITS

Jane’s Walk: Karen Wallace-Prince
Gibson House and Prospect Place: Ian Robertson

Background photo, this page, *lechinihl* by F. M. Rattenbury, 1701 Beach Drive: Ian Robertson