

District of Oak Bay • Oak Bay Heritage



Statement of Significance

The Prospect Heritage Conservation Area Oak Bay, B.C.



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One of the Storybook houses at Patio Court on San Carlos Avenue.

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Prepared by:
Denise Cook Design
604 626-2710
denise@denisecookdesign.ca

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

Historical Chronology

- 1858 The Hudson's Bay Company consolidates its land holdings in the area around Oak Bay by signing treaties with local First Nations including the Chekonein and Chilcowitch bands.
- Joseph D. Pemberton surveys Oak Bay. He owns 1200 acres of land, including Section LXIX that includes Oak Bay Avenue, Prospect Place, San Carlos Avenue and a portion of Mt. Baker Avenue (later Beach Drive) and the future York Place, using the land primarily for livestock farming.
- 1889 The Haynes and Johnston families settle in the Oak Bay area.
- 1890s The Oak Bay Camp, a summer resort organized by the Haynes and Johnston families, operates in tents on Rattenbury's Beach.
- 1891 The Oak Bay Land and Improvement Company is formed to develop the land near Oak Bay Beach. The development is called Oak Harbor and includes the seaside part of Section LXIX with the properties on the east side of York Place, between Oak Bay Avenue and the boundary of Section LXI.
- Oak Bay Avenue is listed in local directories. Originally surveyed by Joseph Pemberton, it provides access to the seafront and beach.
- The Oak Bay tramway line opens.
- 1892 The consolidation of land that will result in the Prospect area begins with property transfer: "John Edward Crane to Ellen Turner, 1/3 of 15 acres of Section 69."
- 1893 The Mount Baker Hotel opens, solidifying Oak Bay as a popular seaside resort.
- Land is transferred from "B. Boggs, W.D. McGregor and Ellen Turner to C.A. Vernon." This portion of land later transferred from C.A. Vernon to J.G. Tiarks and F.M. Rattenbury as part of their 15 acre estate
- 1898 Prominent Victoria architects, John Gerhard Tiarks and Francis Mawson Rattenbury, purchase 15 acres of land extending from Oak Bay Avenue northward to present day San Carlos Avenue.

The legal transfer reads: “J.G. Tiarks and F.M. Rattenbury, 15 acres Section of 69 except lots 15, 26, 41 and 46, Map 396.”

Historical Chronology Continued.

- 1898 John Tiarks designs five homes within the 15 acre parcel, including *Annandale* for Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada, and its twin *Garrison House* (destroyed c1930s) built for the Honourable Frederick Peters, Premier and Attorney-General of Prince Edward Island. Francis Rattenbury, architect of The Empress Hotel and Parliament Buildings, plans the grounds for, and constructs, his residence *Iechinihl* (Indigenous term meaning “a place of good things”) on the Oak Bay waterfront overlooking the beach with Mount Baker and the Cascade Range beyond.
- Mount Baker Avenue is listed in local directories.
- 1900 Samuel Maclure designs the Captain Mallascott Richardson House on York Place (subsequently the site of Gibson House) which includes a summer house and tennis court.
- 1906 The Corporation of the District of Oak Bay is established.
- 1910 Land speculation spurs subdivision and development in Oak Bay and farms begin to give way to significant residences.
- 1919 The Gibson House (built on the former site of the Captain Mallascott Richardson House moved down the hill to Woodlawn Crescent) begun by Francis Rattenbury and completed by Samuel Maclure and Ross Lort, is built on York Place, perched high on an outcrop.
- 1920s An active decade of significant residential development in the area by notable architects: one home designed by Ralph Berrill, four homes by Samuel Maclure, and seven homes by K.B. Spurgin and J. Graham Johnson.
- 1935 The Glenlyon School moves to its present Beach Drive location in the former Francis Rattenbury home.
- 1980s
- 1940s- Ongoing infill of houses, most successfully absorbed into existing character and street plan.
- 1990 The York Place development is constructed as a quiet cul-de-sac of seven homes around the estate of the Rattenbury designed Judge Peter Secord Lampman House at 1630 York Place.

Site Context

Approximate proposed area of The Prospect HCA. Future expansion of this boundary could be a consideration.



Note: The solid yellow line depicts the proposed HCA boundaries. The dashed yellow line identifies the adjoining Glenlyon Norfolk School campus with its three heritage designated buildings on the original Rattenbury estate.

The Area: The Early Vision Most of the proposed Heritage Conservation Area is within the original boundary of the larger Oak Harbor development of 1891.



Oak Harbor c. 1891. (District of Oak Bay Archives)

The Area: Present Day



Note: The solid green line depicts the proposed HCA boundaries. The dashed green line identifies the adjoining Glenlyon Norfolk School campus with its three heritage designated buildings on the original Rattenbury estate.

Statement of Significance

Description

The Prospect Heritage Conservation Area includes York Place, San Carlos Avenue, a portion of Beach Drive and Oak Bay Avenue, and includes both Prospect Place and Broom Road. It also includes the Glenlyon Norfolk School, formerly the Francis Rattenbury residence, the shoreline of Rattenbury's Beach and Haynes Park.

The area is a significant cultural landscape with a sloped topography, narrow scenic roads, significant architecturally-designed houses and a location fronting the Oak Bay beachfront.

Values

The Prospect Heritage Conservation Area is significant for its aesthetic, historic, social, natural history and educational values, particularly its representation of the origins of the Oak Bay community in the late 19th century, the leafy suburban character of its evolved cultural landscape, and its mix of architecturally-significant and more modest residences.

The area is important for its integration into a landscape with features such as steep topography that rises in elevation from the foreshore to the higher elevations of York Place, which give some homes a prominent physical status and considerable views; bedrock outcrops; and Rattenbury's Beach and foreshore, all of which have a physical and visual influence on the form of development and overall character of the neighbourhood. The landscape is important for its ecologically significant areas including rare wildlife and plant species, and its lush vegetation, both native and ornamental, safeguards habitat for birds and small mammals.

Originating in 1858 with politician and surveyor Joseph D. Pemberton's survey of Oak Bay and evolving up to the present day, the area has historic value as part of the pattern of growth of the Oak Bay community in the late 19th century. It charts the evolution of the area from Pemberton's large estate subdivision and farm to a unique leafy garden suburb. It provides an understanding of the upper classes of Victoria society, first as a beachside resort destination and later as an aesthetically pleasing and high-quality residential neighbourhood.

As designed by its British architect-owners, this area of Oak Bay is centred on prominent architect Francis Mawson Rattenbury's c.1898 estate plan, which saw Prospect Place constructed as the original roadway leading through the 15 acre property to Rattenbury's house overlooking the beach. The remaining buildings of Rattenbury's estate – including the Residence,



A Rattenbury designed Shingle and Tudor Revival home.



View of Rattenbury's Beach, mature trees and houses on Beach Drive.



Samuel Maclure designed summer house overlooking site of former tennis court.



Trio of historic houses along Beach Drive.



Wrought iron Art Nouveau gates at Annandale.

Coach House/Garage, and Boat House – are important for their adaptive re-use and integration into the grounds of Glenlyon Norfolk School.

Of particular importance in the area is the presence of significant residences built with superior material and craftsmanship of the time, and designed by some of B.C.'s most prominent late nineteenth and early twentieth century architects such as Francis Rattenbury, Samuel Maclure, Karl Spurgin, John Tiarks, Ralph Berrill, Percy L. James and others, often interpreting classic residential building styles such as Queen Anne, Tudor Revival and Classical Revival. The inclusion of contemporary buildings by well-know late 20th-century architects including a 1996 house designed by Pamela Charlesworth and Campbell Moore's 1992 Barwin House makes the area a showcase for some of B.C.'s most prominent architects' residential work for over a century.

As a complement to these significant architectural works, the neighbourhood has maintained its primarily single-family residential nature, with generous lots, careful siting of buildings and lush landscaping contributing to the successful integration of new residences of varying style and scale. Important landscape features include building setbacks and boulevards and a variety of lot sizes and configurations. Public open spaces such as Beach Drive, Rattenbury's Beach, and Haynes Park alongside the work of early architects including the summer house designed by Samuel Maclure suggest the lifestyles and activities of early Prospect area residents.

Significant streetscapes have evolved into a harmonious integration of narrow roadways, buildings, trees, garden and natural vegetation, with remaining evidence of early large-estate development and the adaptation of neighbourhood design to the site's natural topography.

The eclectic arrangement of buildings and traces in the landscape, such as openings in walls, overgrown gates, small pathways and laneways, public staircases, a decorative well-head, and vegetation and tree patterns, are valued for their physical manifestations of past patterns of land use. Layers of vegetation are important for their contribution to the bucolic nature of the neighbourhood and for softening harder elements such as buildings, structures and roadways. Trees and plantings provide screening between the street and private spaces, and create a peaceful rural atmosphere, including large sequoia trees associated with the garden development at Briarbrae, and others planted around 1912.

The eccentricity of the streets and lanes that curve, vary in length, or have no outlet are important for their reflection of the early design of this upscale neighbourhood. While originally designed as both a response for the topography and to emphasize the elite nature of the original neighbourhood, these irregular streets form part of the character and charm of the area today.



Unique, historic concrete sidewalk with decorative scored pattern.



Rock outcrop adjacent to informal pedestrian path.



P.L. James designed Beach Drive home built in 1912.

Landscape details are fundamentally integral to the character of the place. They include stone walls, some with capped pillars, along most streets; gates such as the Art Nouveau designed gates in front of the Annandale property on York Place; fences; narrow sidewalks; lack of curb and gutter; and the Lych Gate and stone wall at York Place and Oak Bay Avenue.

Contributing to the aesthetic value of the place are key views to the waters of Oak Bay and to mountains such as Mount Baker, the Cascades and the Olympics, and to Mary Tod, Chatham, Discovery and other offshore islands. Internal views include layered vistas of houses at different elevations, trees and shrubs, and views up and down streets and lanes.

The important rural character of the place and country lane feel has been retained, even in the presence of new construction which, to date, manages to mostly fit into the character of the neighbourhood.

Character-defining Elements

Evidence of land use

- Primarily residential character and use of the neighbourhood
- Educational use through Glenlyon Norfolk School (former Rattenbury estate)
- Beach use for recreation
- Streetscapes of diverse character on all roadways
- Haynes Park
- Mix of public and private land uses

Land patterns

- A variety of lot sizes and configurations

Spatial organization

- Location fronting Rattenbury's Beach
- Streets conforming to original neighbourhood plan
- Streets that vary in length and width and some that have no outlet
- Groups or clusters of significant buildings
- Varied landscape setbacks and boulevards between roadways, properties and buildings

Visual relationships

- Layered internal views
- Views up and down streets
- Mountain views from all streets
- Views from Rattenbury's Beach
- Views to Mary Tod, Chatham, Discovery and other offshore islands

Circulation

- Curved narrow roadways, generally without curbs, and on some streets, no sidewalks



Prospect Place stone wall with natural vegetation.

- Narrow sidewalks on other streets, some with distinct patterns in the concrete
- Streets and lanes with a rural character and natural features
- Pedestrian dominated streets
- Small parking areas tucked amongst vegetation
- Minimal access points from most properties onto roadways

Ecological features

- Native and naturalized vegetation
- Wildlife and bird life habitat, both terrestrial and marine
- Rattenbury's Beach, foreshore and bank with natural vegetation

Vegetation

- Layered vegetation of trees, ornamental mature shrubs and groundcovers
- Significant coniferous and deciduous trees such as Sequoiadendron and Garry Oak, and deciduous canopy trees along streetscapes and individual properties
- Cultivated gardens
- Natural planting in boulevards and along road edges
- Native shrubs and mosses
- Hedges
- Marine plants in beach areas



Samuel Maclure designed decorative well-head.

Landforms

- Sloped topography that rises in elevation from the foreshore to the higher elevations of York Place
- Bedrock outcroppings

Water features

- Rattenbury's Beach
- Ornamental well-head

Built features

- Significant residences built with superior materials and craftsmanship, designed by some of B.C.'s most prominent late nineteenth and early twentieth century architects
- A wide variety of residential buildings of varying types, scales, styles and ages
- Summer house designed by Samuel Maclure
- Buildings protected by designation, registration and covenant
- Remaining historic, neighbourhood-scale stone walls along streets and lanes such as York Place, Oak Bay Avenue, Prospect Place, Broom Road and Beach Drive
- Presence of fences along property lines, and gates at driveway and walkway entrances

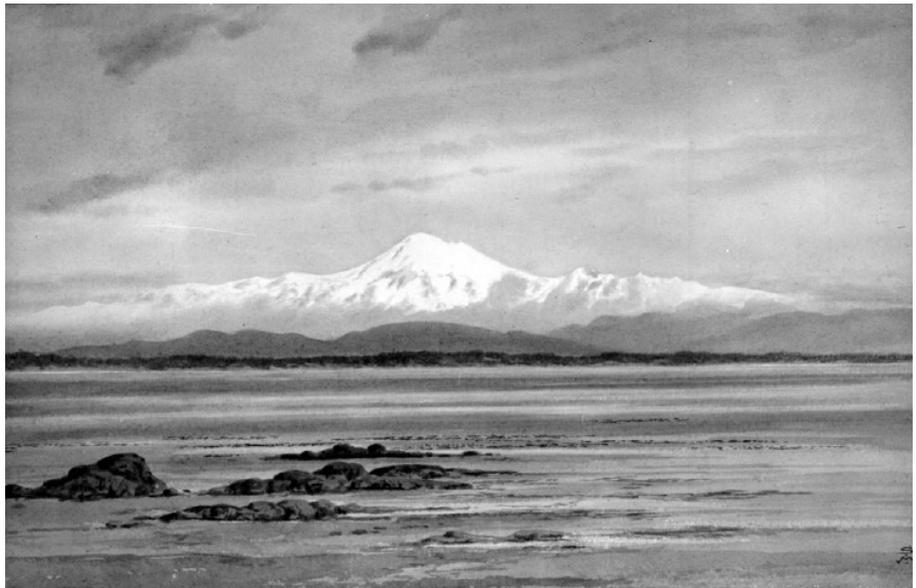


Lych Gate at York Place and Oak Bay Avenue.

- Art Nouveau gate in front of the Annandale property on York Place
- Lych Gate and stone wall at York Place and Oak Bay Avenue
- Samuel Maclure-designed decorative well-head
- Public stairs and public benches

Intangibles and social traditions

- Historical and current street names and their meanings, including Mt. Baker Avenue/Beach Drive; Prospect Street/Prospect Place; Beach Avenue/Broom Road
- The ability of the neighbourhood to convey stories, connections to colourful residents, historical scandals, dramatic lives and notable figures through its character-defining elements.
- The ability of the neighbourhood to be a place for historical walking tours



Mount Baker painted by Samuel Maclure, c.1890.
(BC Archives PDP03773)