Fig. 1. Corner of Bastion Square (right) and Langley Street (left), Victoria, before restoration, *ca* 1959. Nearest building is Law Chambers, architect Francis M. Rattenbury, 1899.
(Photo by Peter Cotton. Collection of Chris Gower)

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Victoria Moderna (1945-1970): of Civic Myth and Difference in Modern Architecture

Modernist theory and design nearly always accommodated more variety than their apparent universalism suggested. A building's scale, programme, and location, its region or nationality, and its architect's design-intentions always made a difference. Cities had different characters, too, as the case of Victoria, British Columbia, demonstrates. Though it is only fifty-eight miles from Vancouver, as the gull flies–and today is almost a psychic suburb of the larger city–Victoria, until the 1970s, was more isolated than it is today, and it generated a body of modernist architecture rather different from Vancouver's. This article, which arises from a larger study of postwar architecture in Greater Victoria,[1] argues that Modernism as practised in the city, while hard to generalize, is nevertheless distinctive and it brings up the question "Why"? It introduces several architects who worked in Victoria during that period and uses the career of one of those, Peter Cotton (1918-1978), and the urban project of revitalizing Bastion Square in the sixties to illustrate the way in which a type of Modern planning developed in the city, strikingly combining old with new elements.

Phrases such as "Modernist Victoria" and "Victoria Modern" sound at first like oxymorons, for most Canadians associate the city with British imperial tradition in its stuffiest forms (fig. 2).[2] Countless postcards of the sedate Garden City showing the Inner Harbour, the imperial-seeming provincial Parliament Buildings (1897), and the Empress Hotel (first stage, 1908)–both designed by Francis Mawson Rattenbury–have been mailed to envious friends and relatives elsewhere in Canada each winter and spring; and, to this day, spuriously anglicized double-deck tour buses painted with Union Jacks ply city streets.[3] The image is not one entirely projected on Victoria from the outside. When the dowager imperial city, "more English than the English,"[4] embarked on urban renewal in the early sixties, it looked to England for inspiration, by adopting the 1958 Norwich Master Plan of the advanced facelift of Magdelen Street in the English provincial city.[5] And just like it, downtown Victoria underwent a gentle, progressive transformation aimed at improving street elevations, especially where buildings of "character" had become

'Management asks that you do not venture into the palms as the natives seem unusually restless...'

submerged in an array of inharmonious shop-fronts and signage. The demographics of Victoria, a retirement centre with the mildest climate in Canada, add to its perceived conservatism: Greater Victoria still has the highest percentage of residents over sixty-five of any city in the country, and is, in addition, a "white-collar" town, being the provincial capital and the seat of a mid-sized university.[6] So, one expects Victoria to be socially conservative, and that expectation is often realized. Beneath the surface, however, is the story that simple?

Myths or narratives are commonly spun and popularly accepted about cities. New York, born from a Dutch colonial village at the Battery, grew into the biggest, rudest, fastest-moving, most brutal and glamorous city in America. London, of Roman origins, is drenched in pageant, ritual, and tradition. Stereotypes like those, while more or less accurate, correspond only loosely to historical truth. But, however susceptible to analysis and deconstruction, such civic myths become potent sources of direction and energy for writers, artists, and other cultural and political leaders. Victoria's prevailing myth, or narrative, goes somewhat like the following. Although the choice in the 1880s of the town site (called Granville) on Burrard Inlet–that became Vancouver–to terminate the Canadian Pacific Railway began the process by which Victoria lost its standing as the metropolis of B.C.,[7] Victoria remained a fairly dynamic business and cultural centre until the eve of World War I. Then, continues the myth; the city remained comatose till 1959, when fast ferry service to Vancouver was introduced.[8] Its proximity to Vancouver thus rescued Victoria.

As might be expected, twentieth-century Victoria's history is far more complex than the Sleeping Beauty story suggests.[9] It is truer to say that, on the whole, from 1913 to the early fifties, the city stagnated as a business centre but not as a place of retirement and residence. During the 1930s, 40s, and earliest 50s, it accommodated a notable body of Art Deco and Moderne architecture.[10] Then intervened the period after World War II, which is the subject of this paper, when Victoria grew rapidly, if less so than Vancouver. That quarter-century of growth until approximately 1970 is easy to overlook, however, because the period that

succeeded, the heritage-conscious seventies and eighties, had eyes for little except Victorian and Edwardian architecture, a critical perspective that only served to reinforce the already dominant narrative of Victoria as a turn-of-the-century imperial city. The Victoria of Maclure and Rattenbury was the natural darling of such criticism, which led to the founding, in 1973, of the city's Hallmark Society, the premier and oldest surviving–if no longer largest–local-preservation society in B.C.[11] A newer critical viewpoint, however, conveniently labelled "New Modernism," is making its impact on the way architectural history is practised. Since the mid-eighties, that sensibility has worked to document and preserve the modernist heritage of early and mid-twentieth-century architecture and to extend–if occasionally superficially–modernist social and architectural experiments in contemporary design.[12] New modernist design is making its impact felt on the Yaletown and False Creek areas of Vancouver, perhaps more than anywhere else in Canada. New Modernism, and the way it foregrounds postwar modern architecture, which–like Victorian architecture in the seventies–is seen as threatened in its turn by new development, draws attention to another Victoria, previously not much recognized, a postwar *Victoria Moderna*. Through that period–approximately 1945 to 1973–Victoria, though decidedly the province's second city, remained a middling retail, milling, and industrial centre, while neighbouring Esquimalt continued to serve as Canada's leading naval port on the Pacific. Seeing Victoria in that light helps to keep the city's alleged torpor and social conservatism in perspective.

In contrast to Victoria's, the dominant civic myth of Vancouver focuses on youth and novelty, and it would not be worth mentioning here except that it indirectly bears on that of Victoria. This is not the place to anatomize Vancouver's civic myth–a task worth undertaking, to be sure–but its flavour is easily caught as that myth touches architecture and design. Arthur Erickson, Peter Cotton, Cornelia Oberlander, Fred Hollingsworth, and many other artists and architects identified with the city have, for decades, popularized a version of Vancouver as uniquely receptive to principles of the "New" and the "Natural." The myth remains alive and well and has recently been resurrected, if retrospectively, in Rhodri Windsor Liscombe's book and exhibition *The New Spirit: Modern Architecture in Vancouver, 1938-1963*.[13] Liscombe's sympathetic and thoroughly documented project commended the communitarian ideology of postwar Vancouver to

Fig. 3. Ron Thom and Ned Pratt, for Thompson, Berwick & Pratt. British Columbia Electric Building, Victoria, *ca* 1953-1955. (photo Chris Gower)
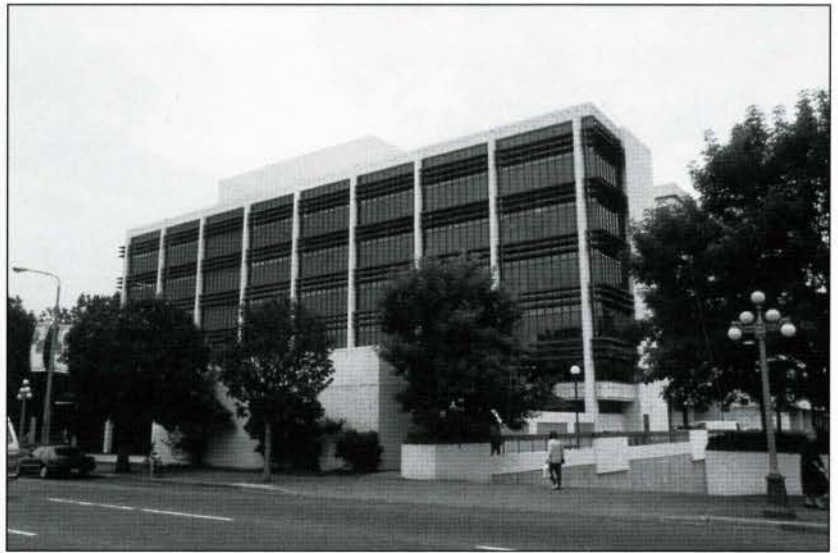
the attention of the city during the mid-nineties, another period of record-breaking growth, but one with a quite different tone. And the Vancouver of Douglas Coupland's best-selling *City of Glass*, an intuitive, appreciative "tour" of contemporary Vancouver, is of a city without a past, born yesterday morning–and Coupland likes it that way.[14] Though it succeeds in averting its attention from the remarkable old Eastside downtown and residential areas–where few intellectuals live or often venture–that version of Vancouver is cherished by many of its residents, an "imaginary" which has been a powerful, effective tool of city-building and city-boosting. Although (as here) they can have ethical implications, such myths are neither true nor false; they are narratives that crystallize around selected historical memories and serve as uniquely effective, concentrated vessels of cultural energy.

The Vancouver myth, in fact, is a coastal version of the pioneer myth, or frontier thesis, of North American history, according to which effete, aging European and Eastern American society recovered virility only by wrestling with the frontier and pushing it westward.[15] That was the source, so local boosters claimed, of Vancouver's unique energy. A corollary to the myth, added after World War II, saw the city as a unique bridgehead over which artistic and architectural Modernism entered Canada. That narrative of Vancouver's "Modernist Self" can be found, distilled to unusual purity, in an article that appeared in *Canadian Art* two years after World War II ended, written by Fred Lasserre, founder and first Chair of the architectural programme–the province's first and, so far, only one–at the University of British Columbia.[16] Following the conventional Laurentian School dogma, Lasserre's mythical builders of British Columbia started in the East and worked westward. In Eastern Canada they had shown "cultivated and in-bred sensitivity," he said, but only once on the West Coast did they recover true, native vitality. The result was a paradox. In B.C., on the one hand, traditionalizing, historicizing architecture "became diluted and adulterated," a set of "distorted" memories; on the other, meeting "a wealth of easily workable building lumber," mountainous terrain, and "a temperate and seasonally wet climate," the hardy pioneers created an architecture that sprang straight from the rock, rain, and Douglas fir, marked by such now-familiar features as adaptation to sloping sites, post-and-beam construction, sheltering overhangs, and window-walls. Lasserre's argument for an organic, autochthonous architecture raises problems that cannot be discussed here and is relatively easily discredited;[17] its

corollary, that Victorian and Edwardian period-revival styles only got worse the further west they went, is what bears on Victoria. For Lasserre and company, *that* third-rate stuff is what the old provincial capital on the island was full of–"a depressing, ugly, and chaotic array of buildings." In short, Lasserre's true or essential West Coast did not admit Victoria, or, for that matter, the rest of B.C.: "We shall not include Greater Victoria which has its own special conditions keeping it a unique and architecturally more conservative spot." What contemporary designs are found there "are designed in Vancouver" and calibrated to Vancouver conditions.

The myth of Modern Vancouver, then, made Victoria into the city's "Other," a place of incurable "pastness" and eccentricity. To be sure, as we have been at pains to argue, Lasserre's case, and its accompanying claim of metropolitan dominance of the architectural profession, had some basis in fact, though it irritated local architects: to this day, many Victorians cheerfully embrace a view of themselves and their city as quaint and curious, to the point that the local resident occasionally wonders whether Victoria, the westernmost city in Canada, is part of the West at all! (That is a dilemma coastal cities throughout the world often face with respect to their hinterland regions.) In an unpublished response to the material cited here, Victoria architect and historian Chris Gower writes: "*Versus* this [Lasserre's] perception was set the longstanding perception that Victoria was a seat of colonial culture, an 'island' of imperial European values set in isolation on the West Coast–still a potent factor in the city's always developing role as a centre for education, theatre, civic politics, tourism, retirement, culture, etc. This city's colonial and turn of the century architecture always strove to meet the standards of European administrative and domestic civics." So, there was some basis in fact for Lasserre's claim. Nor was he altogether wrong to observe that Vancouver's modernist architectural offices were at work in Victoria. The B.C. Electric Building at Pandora and Blanshard Streets was one of two major structures begun downtown in the early fifties, breaking "a construction halt of decades" (fig. 3).[18] Slightly earlier than its better-known

Fig. 4. Ron Thom and Ned Pratt, for Thompson, Berwick & Pratt. Logan Mayhew house, The Uplands, Victoria, B.C., 1950-1951. (University of Victoria, History in Art department slide collection)

Erickson, flushed with success from his work at Simon Fraser University, served as campus architect for the young University of Victoria. He began but did not finish the massive, concrete Cunningham Building for the sciences, whose paternity he now denies, and was unable to persuade the Board of Governors to adopt a plan to reconceive the university as no longer clusters of discrete buildings set loosely in "an open *garden* campus," but a denser, more unified architectural system–Simon Fraser on level ground.[21] It is clear that his work at the University of Victoria is a painful memory for him.[22] Nevertheless, on his watch, Erickson was responsible for a number of major additions to the campus architecture, one of which many consider one of the most successful buildings on the campus: the memorably ground-hugging, wooden Sedgewick complex, which snakes naturalistically across and through a partly-wooded site, opening attractive vistas and landscaped courtyards (fig. 5).[23] It was designed by Vancouver modernist Barry V. Downs. Erickson's relatively brief presence at U Vic, even at a date toward the end of our period, when the city had a number of modernist design-firms of its own, tends to support Lasserre's claim of metropolitan presence, if not of dominance.

Fig. 5. Barry V. Downs. Sedgewick Building, University of Victoria, 1968-1969. (University of Victoria, History in Art department slide collection)

counterpart in Vancouver and, like it, designed by Ron Thom and Ned Pratt of Thompson, Berwick & Pratt of that city, it was built on modernist lines with contemporary materials that included aluminium louvers shielding the windows exposed to the sun.[19] B.C. Electric may indeed, Chris Gower observes, be the earliest glass curtain-wall building in western Canada. Thom and Pratt had first worked in Victoria on the striking Logan Mayhew House on Beach Drive in The Uplands, with its open T-plan, exposed post-and-beam construction, window-walls opening toward the view of Cadboro Bay, and roof-forms that drop with the site as it slopes gently toward the water (fig. 4).[20]

Those are far from the only cases of Vancouver architects working in the city. For three years–1967 to 1970–, Arthur

Though not without basis, polarizing the two coastal cities in B.C. as representing Old and New entails real distortion of the historical record. First, it is simply not accurate to portray Victoria as static in the period, for in fact the city underwent sudden and startling changes after World War II. From 1946 to 1966, Greater Victoria's population more than doubled, from just over 75,000 to 175,000.[24] In the fifties, as we have observed, the first new buildings erected downtown since World War I were begun, and the physical changes to the city were not confined to the downtown area. The baby boom created a housing shortage, which turned Gordon Head, northeast of the city, and the so-called Western Communities of Langford, Colwood, and Metchosin, into dormitory suburbs; for the first time, the growth was guided (some would think, misguided) by professional city planners. As elsewhere in

Fig. 6. Wade Stockdill & Armour. Clearihue Building, University of Victoria, 1962. (photo Chris Gower)

Canada, arterial streets were joined, straightened, and widened to speed the movement of automotive traffic, and merchandizing began its move to a necklace of suburban malls. In 1963, Victoria College, a normal school, became the University of Victoria, which took occupancy of a former army-base at Gordon Head, augmented by lands purchased from the Hudson's Bay Company in contiguous Oak Bay.[25] The new university immediately added several thousand new residents, some seasonal, to Greater Victoria. By 1970, local historian Harry Gregson could rightly say: "In the last two decades... [t]he city has been transformed from a 'Sleepy Hollow' to a bustling modern city."[26] Rapid changes of that order greatly complicate Victoria's somnolent stereotype.

Moreover, though it did not house an architectural school, Victoria had a number of architects of its own to meet the demand for new design and construction. Lasserre's arrogant claim of Vancouver's leadership in the profession must certainly have annoyed them. But if the body of new design in the Lower Mainland is hard to characterize formally, this is even truer of Victoria, where

Fig. 7. Alan J. Hodgson. MacLaurin Building, University of Victoria, 1966. (photo Chris Gower)

postwar Modernism leaves an impression of intense variety. That can be accounted for partly by the wide range of practitioners' backgrounds and partly, we argue, by metaphoric uncertainty, and even contradiction. With a less unified story to tell of their city–a story that sometimes supported and was sometimes at odds with the dominant myth of Victoria as conservative Little England–and addressing an audience of residents drawn in many cases not from the Canadian West, modernist architects in Victoria could not coalesce around governing themes as the Maclure-Rattenbury generation could, and as their own modernist counterparts in Vancouver could.

A few examples will suffice to demonstrate the formal variety of modernist Victoria. To begin with, least unconventional of the Victoria modernists, perhaps since he specialized in the design of schools and institutions, was John H. Wade.[27] Born in Singapore, Wade had trained at the school of the Architectural Association in London and worked briefly with Richard Neutra in Southern California before settling in the city. His designs for

schools in the Greater Victoria and Sooke school districts were strong statements of progressive ideals in postwar education and community-building; they became models for other new schools, built in rapid succession under the direction of the provincial Department of Education, based in Victoria. Wade also made a formative contribution to the new University of Victoria. The Clearihue Building–housing offices, classrooms, and two lecture theatres–was one of the first academic buildings erected on campus (fig. 6).[28] Wade's design lost its variegated, rather Corbusian character, when the building was altered in the seventies to become simply "A" wing, one of four that now compose Clearihue and frame a central landscaped courtyard. In its original form, Martin Segger observes (in conversation), the design established themes that largely determined the university's early visual character–use of *pilotis*, clerestories, and passages of natural materials; sensitivity to the light of Vancouver Island; and preference for open design-elements, including stair-towers and landscaped courtyards.

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Fig. 8. John DiCastri, architect. Trend Home, Victoria, B.C., 1954.
(University of Victoria, History in Art department slide collection)

Other modernist designers in the city were more colourful than Wade. An especially intriguing example is the activity in postwar Victoria of Canada's first woman architect, Marjorie Hill (1895-1985); though she might not have chosen the city as a place to live and practise had family factors not intervened, her presence suggests a heterogeneity and relative openness in the architectural profession one might not have expected to find in Victoria.[29] There are other, wide-ranging examples. Alan J. Hodgson, after studying architecture at UBC, worked in the architectural branch of the B.C. Works Department, after the war an energetic and stimulating office. In private practice later, he built one of the largest edifices at the University of Victoria, the MacLaurin Building (1966), and the Music Wing (1978) attached to it, the technics of which were extremely demanding and refined.[30] The whole complex forms a highly differentiated and articulated–almost muscular–composition, which is studied in exquisite detail (fig. 7). Most individual of all local modernists, certainly, was John Di Castri (1924-...) who, like Hodgson, is still active. Returning to his native Victoria in 1951 after training at the University of Oklahoma under the eccentric Wrightian Bruce Goff,[31] Di Castri sought to give his designs maximum individual character. He has tended all along to specialize in places of worship, where expressiveness is valued as a sign of "spirit." Like most young architects, though, especially in the family-minded fifties, he made houses his "bread and butter." Di Castri's Trend Home of 1954 (fig. 8), a demonstration house in Victoria in a series sponsored by the B.C. timber industry, was the most individual of that group, "the most talked-about house in B.C."[32]

As those examples show, the work of Victoria's modernizing architects defies ready categorization. It cannot be absorbed into a simple, memorable narrative, as happened in Vancouver, where postwar modernist architecture continues to be read following tropes established in the period itself.[33] Victoria's experience may, indeed, invite alternate readings of postwar architecture in the metropolis–readings that cut across the grain of the existing narrative.

If aesthetic and philosophical variety marked modernist architecture in Victoria, can no generalizations be made of it at all? One, we argue, can be supported: a tendency at a very early date to juxtapose in single designs, especially on urban sites, old and new, contemporary and historic elements. Such practices are more often identified with the sensibility labelled "post-modern," not conspicuous in architecture, until the seventies; but, in Victoria, for local and international reasons, they can be seen at work within modernist design from as far back as the early sixties. Locally, the downturn in business before World War I and

Fig. 9. West side, Douglas Street, north of Pandora, *ca* 1959. Large building is City Hall, 1878-1891, main designer John Teague.
(photo by Peter Cotton. Collection of Chris Gower)

the city's failure to regain metropolitan status in the interwar period meant that, as late as the fifties, Victoria's public and commercial core had seen virtually no new construction for over thirty years. While that was true to some degree of most Canadian cities–barring a burst of new building in the late twenties–Victoria was an especially bizarre case. As late as the end of the fifties, when architect Peter Cotton (whom we will discuss below) took slides of areas considered for redevelopment, downtown Victoria resembled a port city of 1912 sealed in glass (fig. 1).

By 1960, fortunately, civic officials realized that, however down-at-heels that urban landscape looked, it had economic and symbolic value. Not only was Victoria already deeply committed to tourism but, notes Chris Gower, Victoria and British Columbia, generally, celebrated a series of centennials between 1958 and 1971–events that by nature invite retrospection and put a premium on preserving "memory sites."[34] Other, less local factors were at work, too. Nowhere in Canada–except in Jean Drapeau's pre-Expo Montreal–did urban renewal reach the horrific extremes it did in the United States: in Canada municipal affairs were a provincial (not federal) responsibility, and there was no HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development).[35] Furthermore, the orientation of Victoria–ever the littoral port-city–to Europe and especially Britain caused the city fathers to look for ideas there, where the rebuilding of blitzed cities in a hurry and on the cheap required new, modernist architectural experiments to be butted up against surviving fragments of the historic fabric. The British seldom razed the high street of a bombed-out medieval town as American urban renewers did, but instead filled the gaps between its teeth. That restorative model of urban renewal is the one Victoria looked to, as two cases–two-and-a-half, really–will demonstrate: the creation of a new Centennial Square and the renewal of historic Bastion Square in the early sixties, and the distinctive architectural career of Peter Cotton (1918-1978).

Bastion Square, a corner of which is seen in figure 1, before the restoration, takes its name from the fact that it stands just outside the line of the long-vanished north wall of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Victoria, in which the modern city originated. Although the character of a square had been preserved, by 1960 (the photo suggests) Bastion Square was distinctly distinctly decrepit. The plans to revitalize it were connected with the centennial in 1962 of the founding of the City of Victoria, an occasion

which Mayor Richard Biggerstaff Wilson, a human dynamo, exploited to introduce surgical urban renewal to downtown. He did so first with a project for a Centennial Square, further north, incorporating the old City Hall. (As the two projects are connected, Centennial Square will be discussed first.)

The construction of the Victoria City Hall began in 1878 on Douglas Street at Pandora, several blocks north of the centre of gravity of downtown, which had located on and around the site of the former fort.[36] As with Bastion Square, some distance to the south, by the early sixties the neighbourhood of the City Hall had grown particularly "seedy [and] depressed, [and] badly lit, defunct shops stood empty" (fig. 9).[37] Under Wilson's leadership, city planner Roderick (Rod) Clack worked with a group of modernist architects–including Di Castri, Hodgson, Wade, Robert Siddall, Clive Campbell, and Donald Wagg–on a scheme to establish a Centennial Square behind and beside the old City Hall as a new focus for downtown and a catalyst to revive the blighted environs.[38] An irregular, three-and-a-half-acre site, Centennial Square would be brick-and-tiled and terraced, and surrounded by a shopping arcade, theatre, City Hall, a parking garage, and other public buildings–some new, others renovated or expanded (fig. 10). The City Hall itself received a new western addition, designed in the decorative modernist manner, fashionable at the time. In younger, rising cities, like Vancouver, a progressive initiative of such magnitude might have triggered further modernist projects throughout the city; in Victoria it generated a scheme to modernize the city while simultaneously preserving and restoring old buildings and gardens–a set of goals then often termed "beautification." So, the aims of Victoria's planners, while enlivened by a similar liberating social vision and buoyant confidence in social engineering to that Rhodri Windsor Liscombe sees at work in postwar Vancouver,[39] were complex and polyvalent. "[W]e must not lose sight," said a publicity release, "of the fact that their [the planners'] primary aim was to restore man to his natural surroundings, with space, grass and trees, to
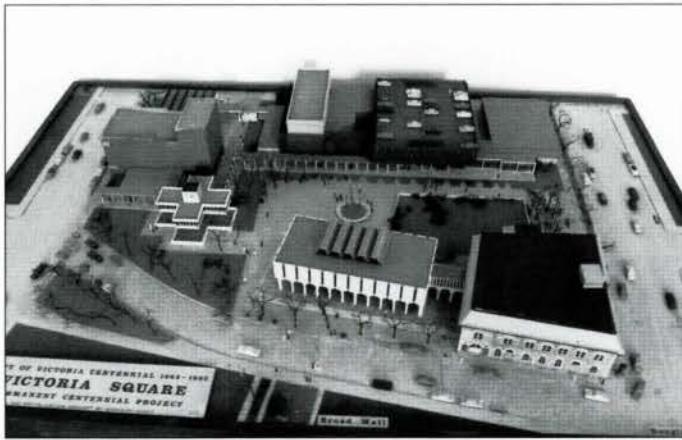
Fig. 10. Model of Centennial Square as completed, *ca* 1963. City Hall is in the right foreground.
(collection of Martin Segger)

Fig. 11. H.O. Tiedemann, B.C. Supreme Court (now Maritime Museum of B.C.), Bastion Square, Victoria, 1887-1889.
(collection of Martin Segger)

halt the deterioration of a city's core and to set the standard for further developments that will ensure the well-being of this community."[40]

The Bastion Square Revitalization Project, initiated in the same year as the Centennial Square project, was a major component of the overall strategy. Although Mayor Wilson proposed it in the context of the 1962 centennial, a movement to preserve Bastion Square had been afoot for some time, arising from a widespread desire to preserve one building–the B.C. Supreme Court, of 1887-89, designed by surveyor and civil engineer H. O. Tiedemann–which occupied a strategic corner of the square (fig. 11). An eclectic, eccentric design comprising Italianate, neo-Moorish, and Richardsonian features, the Supreme Court also holds an ornate open-cage elevator, installed by Rattenbury in 1900-1901 and now the oldest operating lift in B.C.[41] After the Supreme Court vacated the building in 1962, the building's future became a "hot potato" that fall, when Jack Barraclough, president of the Victoria Symphony Society, advanced a scheme to turn it and Bastion Square, generally, into a centre for the arts. Although, with a view all too typical of the period's contempt for Victoriana and Edwardiana, he thought the old building "a horror," he insisted that it be saved: "it represents the architecture of its time–is wrapped up in the history of Victoria and should be preserved."[42] Suggestions for how the square and its key buildings should be used kept being made, but no one in a responsible position questioned that they should be preserved–at a time when, in most cities, nineteenth-century buildings were being mowed down right and left! Mayor Wilson's Bastion Square Revitalization Project would preserve the Supreme Court, improve the depressed core of downtown, and, furthermore, would have an impact on the Inner Harbour, for the square slopes gently to the waterfront. In that period the harbour itself was on the skids, with maritime shipping in decline and ferry traffic redirected, since 1960, to a new terminal at Swartz Bay, on the Saanich Peninsula, far to the city's north.[43] The restoration of Bastion Square as a historic ensemble was intended to offset the deterioration and, at the same time, balance the predominating Modernism of Centennial Square, so that the two squares would "book-end" downtown. A series of connecting pedestrian malls along Broad and View Streets would link the historic square with Centennial Square, metaphorically uniting the City government's two aims–to preserve Victoria's intrinsic character and attractiveness by admitting historic values while simultaneously pointing toward a progressive future. Mayor Wilson emphasized that balance of old and new in his *Overall Plan for Victoria*, of 1965.[44]

In the end, the former Supreme Court and Bastion Square, around it, did not become a centre for the arts (fig. 12). Instead, an equally controversial use for the building–as the Maritime Museum of British Columbia–was adopted in 1965. That possibility had occurred about the same time as the scheme for an arts centre but had met powerful opposition. Victoria Chamber of Commerce President, John Wallace, had criticized it as a misuse of taxpayers' money for "gimmicky schemes aimed at promoting the tourist trade." Victoria, he said, needed "beautification, not short-lived gimmicks to attract tourists." Local artist and businessman Brian Travers-Smith also opposed moving the maritime museum to the square, arguing that developing Bastion Square as an arts centre could turn Victoria into "another Stratford… [and] one of the educational centres of Canada."[45] Today, nearly forty years later, one wonders whether the idea of Barraclough and Travers-Smith might not have been better than what was actually done: the museum has only minimal impact on the square and is lost in a bustle of cafés, craft markets, and buskers. Meanwhile, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, for example, is hamstrung financially, largely for lack of a central location. Whatever its specific successes and failings, however, the Bastion Square project begun in 1963 was an exceptionally early example for Canada of a campaign to revitalize a crumbling downtown area. It was undertaken several years before the renovation of Gastown in Vancouver, which began late in the decade in emulation, to some degree, of Victoria's programme.[46] The character of the renewed Bastion Square, which did not exclude contemporary

Fig. 12. Eastern (Government Street) entrance to Bastion Square, after restoration.
(collection of Chris Gower)

architecture and which complemented the Modernism of Centennial Square, sprang from the anomaly that Victoria's Old Town, unaltered for half a century, represented.

The revitalizing of Bastion Square set the tone of downtown. At one end of the spectrum, big-league architectural firms such as Birley, Wade, Stockdill; R.W. Siddall Associates; Wagg & Hambleton; and John Di Castri were busy inserting modernist monuments into the downtown core. At the same time, and with comparable influence, architects like Nicholas Bawlf, Peter Cotton, Clive Campbell, and Alan Hodgson were actively restoring heritage areas such as Old Town, Government House, Bastion Square, and, later, Market Square[47]

The Bastion Square Revitalization Project illustrates the process of fusing architectural Modernism with conservative urban and social character in postwar Victoria. We call it a "process" because the plan was developed in negotiations between city officials, citizens, special interest groups, and architects, a type of consensus-building that continues to characterize city planning in Victoria–indeed, the civic ethos as a whole, including that of the University of Victoria. Compromise was reached through debate that oscillated between positions representing old and new. While characteristic of an older city, to be sure, such strategies were actually ahead of their time, leading one to wonder whether in fact Victoria may not have been more progressive, because more complicated, than Vancouver!

Victoria's distinctive character, especially the work in Bastion Square, gave rise to an unusually early architectural practice in heritage restoration and contemporary historicism–that of Peter Neive Cotton–which tellingly fused commitment to architectural Modernism with adaptation to postwar Victoria's historic fabric.[48] A native British Columbian, Cotton had served in World War II, then studied architecture in the new program at UBC, which indeed he was instrumental in starting.[49] Cotton was among the school's most vocal and determined modernists, and after graduation he started a business, called "Perpetua," that designed and manufactured contemporary wooden furniture. Without doubt, in Vancouver in the fifties, Cotton was an uncompromising modernist.

Late in the decade, however, he moved to Victoria and joined the energetic architectural branch of the B.C. Works Department. In the Province's employ, along with young Alan Hodgson, Cotton the modernist immediately faced the reality of a conservative capital-city endowed with a large stock of traditional buildings. Among Victoria's key social centres or "courts" was the Lieutenant Governor's residence, Government House, or "Cary Castle," built to Samuel Maclure and Francis

Rattenbury's design in 1902-1903.[50] When the Castle burnt in 1957, the Department rebuilt it, with Cotton and Hodgson as designers. They took their cues from the old plan, which had included a spectacular ballroom, and in particular from the *porte-cochère*, which had survived and which they incorporated (fig. 13). For the rebuilding they adopted a transitional, neo-Tudor *cum* Wrightian character, like that of many postwar churches. The rebuilding of Government House was a turning point in Cotton's career, seemingly the moment that opened his eyes to the value of history, even in reduced and straitened form. He continued to have mixed feelings toward traditional Victoria, Cotton's writings suggest, but, from then on, his practice alternated new design when building on pristine sites with historicism when the existing context furnished clues.

Leaving the Provincial service in 1961 and opening his own office, Cotton received commissions to restore a number of historic buildings. These included Craigflower Manor, a Scots-style farmhouse west of the city, built in 1856 on a farm of the Hudson's Bay Company, which has a lower storey of "Red River" or *pièce-sur-pièce* framing;[51] and the Italianate home in James Bay of merchant Richard Carr (1863)–the "House of Small" in which Carr's daughter, the painter Emily, grew up.[52] For historic buildings such as those, Cotton made as-found drawings that set a national standard, and the success of his restoration projects in Victoria led to his involvement in others elsewhere, such as Fort Langley, in the Fraser Valley east of Vancouver, and Fort Garry, in Winnipeg.[53] His particular responsibility in restoring Bastion Square was Francis Rattenbury's Law Chambers, of 1899, in a corner of the square (fig. 1), one of the first buildings treated in the project. Its facade toward the square, with fine brickwork details and form, recalls that of a Renaissance palazzo, and, when completed in 1970, the restoration created a new Langley Street entrance to the square.

Those were only the opening moves in Cotton's campaign to draw attention to history. Before the sixties were out, he helped
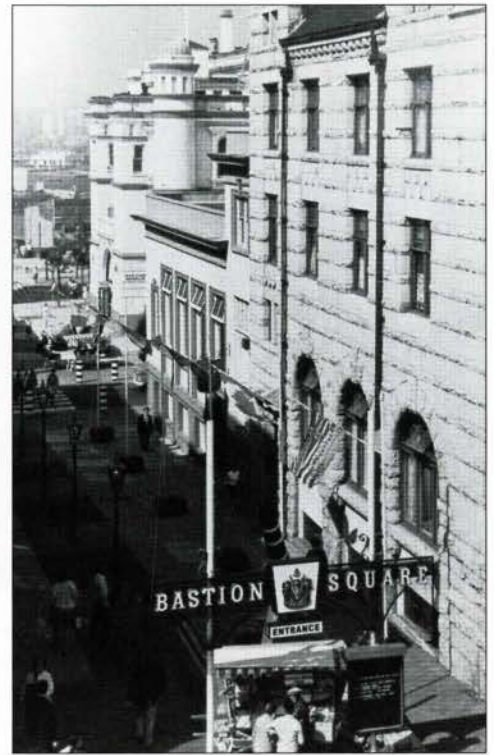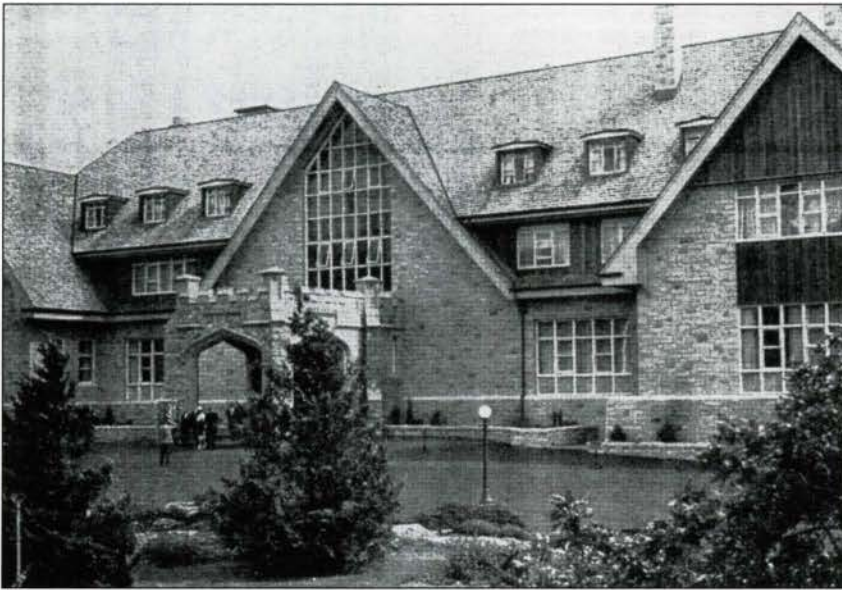
Fig. 13. Alan J. Hodgson and Peter Cotton, for B.C. Works Department. Government House, Victoria, B.C., as rebuilt after fire of 1957. (newspaper photo, source unknown)

New. Modernism developed in Victoria along very diverse lines, inspired and motivated by multiple and international sources–by no means only West Coast regionalism–and may, in its own way, have been more cosmopolitan than that of Vancouver, having no galvanizing local myth of progress to pilot it.

found an early preservation society called the Building Revival Coalition and then, when the Province passed enabling legislation in 1973, the former crusading modernist became Chairman of Victoria's Heritage Advisory Committee.[54] From that bully pulpit he railed against builders and architects who destroyed or defaced old buildings, protesting the mowing-down of historic houses in James Bay and their replacement by apartment high-rises and stopping redevelopment there in its tracks. All along, Cotton ran a parallel bread-and-butter practice of modernist design, especially of houses, which, to be sure, tended often to refer to traditional motifs. Cotton, it seems, tried endlessly to harmonize his modernist training and ideology with his growing interests in history and urban context.

Cotton's career has more than local implications, for it illustrates the way in which Modernism and historic preservation were unexpectedly not–at least, not always–polar opposites, but interwoven threads. His story is not unique: Eric Arthur in Toronto, John Bland in Montreal, and Blanche van Ginkel were other Canadian modernist architects and educators in the mid-century who stood stoutly for appreciating and preserving the old.[55] Historic preservation, in fact, emerged from the heart of Modernism, just as, a decade or so later, in the work of Kahn, Venturi, Moore, Stern, and others, Post-Modernism would grow out of Late Modernism, from frustration at its limits.[56] In Cotton's case, the history and character of Victoria largely determined the path his career took.

Nowhere was Modernism a single hegemonic bloc, but few cases dramatize that more than Victoria and the contrast between that city and Vancouver. Architects practising in postwar Victoria exploited a variety of strategies to adapt modern architecture to a relatively conservative environment, for, in the capital city, love for the past mingled closely with a desire to point the way to a progressive future. The restoration of historic Bastion Square, designed to counterpoint the more contemporary scheme for Centennial Square, epitomizes the direction Modernism took in Victoria, as does the distinctive career of Peter Cotton, who established a comfortable niche between Old and

Notes

Based on presentations at conferences of the Universities Art Association of Canada (1999), the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada (1999), and of the Society of Architectural Historians (2000), this article has benefited from the comments of other speakers and listeners, especially Alan Elder, Claude Bergeron, and Annmarie Adams. Help and insight have also come from Allan Collier and Chris Gower (the latter supplying several photos). We wish, especially, to express gratitude for the unselfish advice of Martin Segger, who has literally written the book on Victoria's architecture and who, we believe, is the ultimate source of the article's theme.

1   It results from a collaborative exhibition project undertaken about 1998 between the University of Victoria's Maltwood Museum, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, and the Architectural Institute of B.C. The exhibition has yet to happen, but the study generated by the project produced several graduate and senior undergraduate seminars at the university and has recently been affiliated with a province-wide attempt, under DOCOMOMO-BC, to document and conserve outstanding examples of modernist design. On DOCOMOMO, see note 12, below.

2   In his well-known cartoons of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s in the *Vancouver Sun*, cartoonist Len Norris delighted in poking fun at British imperial tradition in B.C.,

especially Victoria, which he often personified as retired colonels and dowager duchesses conversing, as in figure 2, amid the potted palms in the lobby and greenhouse of the Empress Hotel. Norris was referring to the practice, common until the 1960s, of permanent or seasonal residence in the hotel. A selection of his cartoons is displayed in the hotel's lower-level corridor by its house archives; see also Godfrey Holloway, *The Empress of Victoria* (Victoria: Pacifica Productions Ltd., 1968), esp. p. 60-69.

3   An adamant promoter of the image of Victoria as "the Other England" was San Francisco-born George Warren who, during a long tenure of office for the Victoria and Island Publicity Bureau and the Victoria Chamber of Commerce (1922-1960), tried without much success to have service station operators substitute "petrol" for "gasoline" on signs and pumps, campaigned to have street-cars renamed "trams," and fought to have Victoria policemen retain the English "bobby" uniform Warren, ironically, had never been to England. See G. E. Mortimore, "George I. Warren," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 23 September 1951, and 3 December 1960. See also Kenneth Lines, "A Bit of Old England: the Selling of Tourist Victoria," M.A. thesis, University of Victoria (1972). An early dissenter to such representations was C.W. Stokes who argued that Victoria was equally "a little bit of Japan, China, and Hindustan by the shores of the Pacific."

C.W. Stokes, "A Bit of England that is not England," *Canadian Magazine*, August 1919, 291.

4   The phrase comes from the painter Emily Carr who, in *The Book of Small* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1942), 112, wrote of her father that "He saw that nearly all the people in Victoria were English and smiled at how they tried to be more English than the English themselves, just to prove to themselves and the world how loyal they were being to the Old Land." She was referring to the colonial period, before B.C. entered Canada in 1871. The late Terry Reksten appropriated Carr's phrase for the title of her book *"More English than the English." A Very Social History of Victoria* (Victoria: Orca Book Publishers, 1986). Reksten notes, however, that the phrase is misleading, for it suggests that Victoria was and is like old England. "And of course it isn't and it never was. Instead it was 'San Francisco on The Solent,' a unique combination of English social values and American architecture with a population that included English, Blacks, Chinese, Scots, Irish, Germans, Indians and Americans" (p. ix).

5   "Norwich Master Plan–Victoria Copies English Facelift," *Daily Colonist*, October 4, 1962, 19. See also Roderick (Rod) Clack's notes on downtown beautification in Victoria City Archives, CRS 47, 4 F 4, files 7-11, "Architectural and Special Projects Division project files–1943-1964 (predominantly 1960-1964)." For an outline of the Magdalen Street's Norwich "facelift," see Gerald Burke, *Townscapes* (Middlesex, England: Pelican Books Ltd., 1976), 139-140.

6   In 1996, Victoria residents over sixty-five accounted for 21.4 percent of the total population, according to census figures provided by Statistics Canada. The University of Victoria ("U Vic") was founded in 1963 by the same provincial act that created the better-known Simon Fraser University in Burnaby. See Peter Smith and Martin Segger, *The Development of the Gordon Head Campus* (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1988), 14.

7   On the role of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the development of Vancouver, see Robert D. Turner, *The Pacific Princesses: An Illustrated History of Canadian Pacific Railway's Princess Fleet on the Northwest Coast* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1977).

8   On the development of sped-up ferry transportation between Vancouver Island and the mainland, see H.L. Cadieux, *Dogwood Fleet : The Story of the British Columbia Ferry Authority from 1958* (Nanaimo, BC: Cadieux & Griffiths Limited, 1967).

9   A standard, though inadequate, civic history is Harry Gregson, *A History of Victoria, 1842-1970* (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1977).

10   Donald Luxton, *Capital Regional District Art Deco and Modern* (Victoria: Hallmark Society, 1983).

11   For information on Hallmark's origins, we are grateful to Helen Edwards, whose forthcoming study of its history has the working-title "A Quarter-Century of Heritage Preservation."

12   A convenient barometer of the new sensibility is the emergence of the international working-party DOCOMOMO, standing for "Documentation and Conservation of the Modern Movement," founded in Holland in 1988, governed by goals set out in the "Eindhoven statement," and now active in forty countries. As this is written, Canada hosts three chapters of DOCOMOMO: in B.C., Ontario, and Québec. For more information, see the website: http://bk.tudelft.nl/docomomo.

13   Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, *The New Spirit: Modern Architecture in Vancouver, 1938-1963* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1997).

14   "If you're a Vancouverite, you find the city's lack of historical luggage liberating it dazzles with a sense of limitless possibility." Douglas Coupland, *City of Glass: Douglas Coupland's Vancouver* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), 58 ("History… or lack thereof").

15   The frontier thesis, propagated in the 1890s and 1900's by American historian Frederick Jackson Turner, captured Americans' anxiety that, with the closing of the territorial frontier, they needed new challenges to galvanize the national spirit: see Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (Huntington, NY: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Co., 1976), esp. foreword by Ray Allen Billington, p. vii-xviii. Something of a parallel in Canadian historiography is the "Laurentian thesis" advanced by Donald Creighton in *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937), according to which Canada has grown, basically, from east to west, with the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence valley as its heartland. But this fails to explain the early development of B.C., which was settled from west to east–inward from the coast–and was not, at first, part of Canada at all!

16   Fred Lasserre, "Regional Trends in West Coast Architecture," *Canadian Art*, V, 1 (Autumn 1947), 7-8. We are grateful to Alan Elder for bringing that article to our attention.

17   The chief problem is that all the features of Vancouver's "native" modernist architecture are to be found in that of the American North- and Southwest, and that B.C. architects took their inspiration from its leading figures, such as Richard Neutra, Harwell Hamilton Harris, and Pietro Belluschi.

18   Gregson, *A History of Victoria*, 225. The other was the Douglas Building. On B.C. Electric, see Martin Segger and Douglas Franklin, *Exploring Victoria's Architecture* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1996), 47; and Douglas Shadbolt, *Ron Thom: The Shaping of an Architect* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1995), 35-37. To be precise, Thom was the project architect but, because he was still serving articles of indenture to the Thompson office, Pratt was partner-in-charge. For that distinction, and other new information on the building, we are grateful to Chris Gower, interviewed by Christopher Thomas on September 11, 2001.

19   On the B.C. Electric (later B.C. Hydro and now Electra) Building in Vancouver, see Liscombe, *The New Spirit*, 27-29 and 172-177.

20   Shadbolt, *Ron Thom*, 20-25.

21   "Open." Donn Emmons, preface to Smith and Segger, *The Development*, 7.

22   That impression is based on interviews between Christopher Thomas and Erickson in December 1993 and March 1995; on the omission of Cunningham (a project he did not complete) from the list of his works in Arthur Erickson, *The Architecture of Arthur Erickson* (Montreal: Tundra Books, 1975), 223-228; and on the account in Smith and Segger, *The Development*, 18. There is additional, supporting material in U Vic, McPherson Library, Special Collections, campus planning records. The list of Erickson's works cited above includes relatively few projects in Victoria, suggesting he has had little success with clients in that city.

23   On Sedgwick, see Smith and Segger, *The Development*, 40-41.

24   See the *Victoria Directory* (1946 and 1966). Then as now, Greater Vancouver's population

was seven or eight times that of Greater Victoria. Indicative are the relative sizes of the two labour forces, shown in the 1951 census of Canada as 148,534 for Vancouver, and 21,129 for Victoria.

25 Smith and Segger, *The Development*, preface, p. 7.

26 Gregson, *A History of Victoria*, 221. For individual buildings in the city, the indispensable basic source is Segger and Franklin, *Exploring*.

27 On Wade, see Segger and Franklin, *Exploring*, 308. He is also mentioned in Liscombe, *The New Spirit*, 10. The short biography here is based partly on facts supplied by Chris Gower.

28 Smith and Segger, *The Development*, 23; and Segger and Franklin, *Exploring*, 223.

29 On Hill, see Annmarie Adams, "Designing Woman," *Victoria Times-Colonist*, 15 June 2000, B7; "Readers help uncover architect's life," *ibid*, 3 August 2000, B8; and Peta Tancred, *'Designing Women': Gender and the Architectural Profession* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 4 and *passim*. The latter does not refer to her residence in Victoria.

30 Smith and Segger, *The Development*, 36-37 and 61. On Hodgson, see Segger and Franklin, *Exploring*, 297.

31 On Goff, see David Gilson DeLong, *Bruce Goff: Toward Absolute Architecture* (New York/Cambridge, Mass.: Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1988).

32 "Ten Most Talked about Houses in BC," *Western Homes & Living*, May 1954, 11-15.

33 Liscombe, *The New Spirit*, 27.

34 "Memory sites" is a–but not the only–translation of the title-phrase of the collection *Les lieux de mémoire*, Pierre Nora, ed., 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1997). The celebrations referred to were: 1958, centennial of the mainland colony

of B.C.; 1962, centennial of the City of Victoria; 1966, centennial of the union of B.C. with the colony of Vancouver Island; 1967, centennial of Canada; 1971, centennial of B.C.'s entry to the Canadian confederation. For help in compiling that list, we are grateful to Chris Gower.

35 See Vincent Scully's damning comments on urban renewal, especially in New Haven, Conn., in *American Architecture and Urbanism*, new revised edition (New York: Henry Holt, 1988), 226-230.

36 The original city plan had made no provision for a town hall, so in the 1870s land had to be bought for one. The civic elite wanted a city hall, but a public market mattered most to other residents. The site at Douglas and Pandora was bought because land at the periphery was cheaper than land at the centre and because it would be convenient to farmers bringing in produce from surrounding farms. For that information, we are grateful to Dorothy Mindenhall, who has researched the career of architect John Teague for her forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation in the Cornish Studies programme of Exeter University.

37 Avis Walton, *About Victoria and Vancouver Island*, 6th revised edition (Victoria: Felindical Publication, 1970), 32.

38 On the initiative as a whole, see "Leading Citizens Approve Plan for Civic Precinct," *Victoria Daily Times*, 11 December 1962, p. 27; and "To Revitalize Victoria," *idem*, 12 December 1962, p. 4.

39 Liscombe, *The New Spirit*, esp. p. 136-79.

40 Centennial Square Victoria, B.C., information package published by the City of Victoria, 1970 (copy in City of Victoria Archives, city records CD# 13).

41 On the building, see Segger and Franklin, *Exploring*, 90-91; and

the City's Downtown Heritage Registry. For additional information on Tiedemann, who had earlier designed the so-called "Bird Cages"–Colonial Administration Buildings (1859), on the site of the present Parliament–we are grateful to Dorothy Mindenhall.

42 "Bastion Project Gaining Support," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 24 October 1962, p. 13. On the overall debate, see also "Arts Centre Mooted For Bastion Square," *idem*, 20 October 1962, p. 13; "Museum Fits Square Plan," *idem*, 25 October 1962, p. 21; "Sun Now Shines Bright on Old Bastion Square," *idem*, 25 October 1962, p. 17; "Wallace Plan Backed Mildly," *idem*, 28 October 1962, p. 26; and "Council Direction Urged on Square," *idem*, 26 October 1962, p. 17.

43 On the plan for Bastion Square see "Bastion Square Plan Revealed," *Daily Times*, 25 May 1964, p. 13. On the opening of the Swartz Bay ferry terminal, see Cadieux, *Dogwood Fleet*, 14-15. Only a decade later, stimulated in part by a study by Arthur Erickson, would the Inner Harbour be reinvented as the post-industrial "people place" it has since become.

44 On the plan and the origins of the heritage-preservation movement in Victoria, generally, see Segger and Franklin, *Exploring*, 121-123.

45 "Square Shareable," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 28 October 1962, p. 26.

46 On Gastown, see Harold Kalman et al., *Exploring Vancouver : The Essential Architectural Guide* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 18-19.

47 Market Square is a half-block of heritage buildings restored in 1975 by Nicholas Bawlf, framing a partly covered central courtyard. The following year it won a regional award of honour from Heritage Canada. On the complex,

see Segger and Franklin, *Exploring*, 93. The other projects listed here are discussed elsewhere in the article.

48 On his work, see British Columbia Archives, MS-1336–Peter Cotton Papers, 1924-1979; and *ibid*, CM-C2008 Peter Nieve Cotton Collection: Architectural Plans.

49 Liscombe, *The New Spirit*, 198.

50 On Government House, see Segger and Franklin, *Exploring*, 129; and Peter Neive Cotton, *Vice Regal Mansions of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Elgin Publications for the B.C. Heritage Trust, 1981). Cotton's book was published posthumously. A portion of the manuscript, titled "From Out of the Ashes," is found in his papers, BC Archives, MS-0351.

51 Segger and Franklin, *Exploring*, 273-274.

52 Segger and Franklin, *Exploring*, 142; and, on Carr, see note 4, above.

53 These projects are documented in Cotton's papers in the B.C. Archives (see note 49, above).

54 Segger and Franklin, *Exploring*, 122-123.

55 On Arthur, Bland, and van Ginkel see Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), 2, p. 806-810, and 783.

56 On the work of the postmodernists, see Scully, *American Architecture*, 257-266. Scully, incidentally, does not favour that term.