



11 LANE HOUSE

300 block Lane > circa 1891 (between Powell & Cordova)

This Lane House is among the oldest standing buildings in Vancouver. Alleyways were much more utilized historically than they are today. Some lots became completely built up, front to back, when individual service buildings became joined to other buildings. Lanes were accessed by "breezeways" between buildings, and typically had not only stables and storage sheds but also houses, businesses and vegetable gardens. Unfortunately, most breezeways have been filled in, so access to lane buildings today is mostly from the alleyways.

KOMURA BUILDING 10

269 Powell Street > circa 1905

Although only two historic buildings are left on the 200 block of Powell St., this is where the Japanese Canadian community began and from where it radiated. The first property bought by Japanese immigrants circa 1898 stood at 230 Powell. 269 Powell is an early Edwardian corner building built sometime in 1905 for George Stevens, and first appeared in the city directories as the location for Komura Bros. General Store in 1906. Hiyaquiro Komura evolved from tenant to building owner in 1911, when he purchased the site, probably the best testimony to a growing and successful business. The Komura Bros. General Store was one of the longest, continuous Japanese Canadian owned businesses in the area. Present and active at this location from 1906 until relocation of the community began in 1941, the landmark quality of the building is still evident in the mosaic floor-tile entrance marked with the Komura name.



9 FUJI CHOP SUEY

314 Powell Street > 1931

An interesting mix of Chinese and California influenced architectural features, this 1931 building was home to the Fuji Chop Suey restaurant, serving Chinese style Japanese cuisine. In the late 1920's the trend was to design buildings in revival styles: updated traditional English, Dutch and Spanish designs. The Japanese community in Vancouver was attuned to current trends and experimented boldly in non-traditional architecture, "fusion" cuisine and modern fashion styles. This building is a charming hybrid that boasts a Chinese style colour, with California Mission style roofline, terra-cotta roof tiles and ornamental appliques. It is the only balcony building in this style outside of Chinatown. The Fuji Chop Suey restaurant, owned by Fuji Tadaichi, was one of the few restaurants where Japanese Canadian families could be served. Most other local



restaurants were for men only, and many restaurants outside of the Japantown neighbourhood would not serve Asians. The second floor was rented out for weddings. Ironically, in 1942, this very hall was used by the federal government to plan the uprooting and internment of the Japanese Canadian community and the disposal of their properties.

MORIMOTO & CO. DRY GOODS 8

326-328 Powell Street > 1912

The very first tenants in this mixed-use building were a Japanese Tea-Room on street level, Japanese Rooms in the upper floor dwellings and the Kane Shooting Gallery in the basement. Over the years, the rental portion changed names to Stanley Rooms then King Rooms, and continues to be a rooming house today. The Tea Room evolved into a dry-goods store, run by various Japanese owners: Yamarichi, Morimoto and Higashiyama. Although U. Morimoto & Co. leased the store for only 2 years (1920-1921) the Morimoto name is still visible on the tiled entrance today. This building was also the address for the Canadian Japanese Social Athletic Club in the 1920's. Other examples of rooming house buildings with retail space on the ground floor can be seen on this block.



7 MAIKAWA DEPARTMENT STORE

365 Powell Street > 1908 & 1936

The Maikawa & Co. General Store opened in 1908 and quickly became the largest commercial operation on Powell Street. Owner Tomekichi Maikawa's two brothers also opened stores on the same block in the same period. Behind their stores was a boarding house for their employees, most of whom were new Japanese immigrants destined to apprentice in these businesses. Maikawa family businesses took over most of the north side of this block in the 1930's. In 1936, two lots were consolidated to construct a new Art Deco style store designed by architect T.L. Kerr, reflecting a prosperous and stylish community (the first store still stands behind the Art Deco facade). The modern "Streamline" Maikawa department store, its name still visible across the facade, carried the latest fashions but operated in its new, expanded version for less than 5 years before it was confiscated by the government when the Japanese Canadian community was expelled from Vancouver.



HOTEL YEBISUYA

358 Powell Street > 1907

Built in 1907 for its Japanese Canadian owner, Jinshiro Nakayama, this building reflects the early success and desire for Japanese Canadians to settle down with their families. Its Edwardian-Commercial, bay-windowed design (originally three floors) is typical of other retail areas of the time in Vancouver, and similar examples can be seen all along Main St. and Commercial Dr. The Japantown neighbourhood physically resembled other Vancouver neighbourhoods as its residents strove to assimilate into Canadian culture. Hotel Yebisuya was a rooming house for seasonal workers while the retail spaces had Japanese run businesses such as the Ikeda barbershop, Nabata shoemaker, cafés, restaurants, a meat shop, a tailor and a pool room.



SISTERS OF ATONEMENT MISSION 12

255 Dunlevy Avenue > 1929

The Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement arrived in Vancouver in 1926 to run the Catholic Japanese Mission School, founded in 1912. The Mission school and centre was the first of its kind in all of Canada. It ran language programs, a kindergarten, a day care, a health care clinic and adult convert classes for the local Japanese Canadian community. The Mission building was built in 1929. The house next door (right) at 385 E. Cordova was purchased in 1932 to provide additional space. That house is the oldest surviving house in Vancouver, built in the 1880's. In 1942, the Sisters protested to the government against the relocation edict of the Canadian Japanese community. Their protests were unheeded, so the Sisters decided to leave the ministry in Japantown and to follow their community and set up schools in the internment camps. Those schools ran from 1942-49. After the war, few Japanese-Canadians returned to the Powell Street neighbourhood. The kindergarten and day care programs continued until 1993, when re-zoning brought about other priorities. Today, the Franciscan Sisters Benevolent Society is a non-profit charitable organization owned and operated by the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement, providing a free lunch program, and emergency food and clothing/supplies daily for hundreds of needy men.



Major Matthews Collection S2M-295 c.1890

DALES HOUSE

414 Alexander Street > 1889

One of the oldest buildings in Vancouver, this home was built for T.J Dales in 1889. Alexander Street was the first part of the city to get piped water in 1889 and due to its proximity to the Hastings Mill, a residential area of substantial houses quickly followed. Alexander Street was a major residential street for Japanese pioneers, and this address housed Japanese tenants as early as 1911. In 1927, the home was purchased by Isokichi Yamazaki - evidence of the growing prosperity of the Japanese Canadian community in the 1920s which saw them move from predominantly tenants to property owners. This building is important for its era, size, scale, and rarity, the last of its kind in Vancouver. The archival photo of this house (left, circa 1890) is strikingly different from the structure remaining today, as the building's high Victorian pediment and turret were both removed at some point. Despite these changes, and the fact that the house was raised and covered in asphalt shingles, it still stands testimony to the thriving residential past of Japantown.

VANCOUVER JAPANESE LANGUAGE SCHOOL 14

475 Alexander Street > 1928

The Vancouver Japanese Language School & Japanese Hall (VJLS-JH) was established in 1906, and began in a rental property on Alexander Street that was later destroyed by fire. As the community grew, many Japanese Canadians struggled to teach their children Japanese, and so in 1919 the school eliminated the general Canadian curriculum to focus on Japanese language instruction only. Children attended regular public schools in English and went to learn Japanese language after school. This Spanish-Mission Revival building was designed for the VJLS-JH in 1928 by Sharp & Thompson Architects to serve not only as a school but also as a cultural centre. From 1942-49, the VJLS-JH facilities were occupied by the Army. A portion of the complex was sold to pay for the maintenance of the Government-occupied portion. In 1949, many members of the community fought to reopen the school, and in 1953, the unsold portion of the VJLS-JH property was returned to the Japanese Canadian community. Out of all the Japanese Canadian properties, cars, boats, homes, and businesses that were confiscated, the VJLS-JH stands alone as the only property to retain ownership during and after the internment. To this day, the VJLS-JH is dedicated to the learning and promotion of Japanese language, culture and arts. It is also the only municipally designated heritage building on Alexander Street.



UCHIDA BUILDING 3

437-441 Powell Street > 1891

This building began as Russ House Hotel, housing a variety of European residents. In 1902, brothers Kino and Chiyohichi Uchida bought this site and converted it into a boarding house. Retail space was rented as a tobacco or grocery store for many years, and from 1910 to 1912 there was a pool room in the building. By the 1930's, one of the Uchida's sons, Motasaburo, became a doctor and set up a practice in the building. Although covered in vinyl siding today, underneath it is in its original state, as is the Yamagashi Building at 451 Powell. Note the "breezeway" leading to the lane at the east wall of 451 Powell (read about breezeways in site 11). The neighboring buildings to the west, which were all reconstructed in the 1980's, boast replicated wooden facades that reflect what the original "boomtown" or "pioneer" storefronts on this block would have looked like in the 1890s. Historically, the buildings were separate structures, with "breezeways" running back to the lanes between them. During their reconstruction, these passages disappeared as buildings were combined.



4 NEW WORLD HOTEL

390 Powell Street > 1912

This grand four-storey commercial building was designed by architects Townsend & Townsend for Shinkichi Tamura, a Japanese merchant who served as Canada's first Commissioner of Trade to Japan and who later returned to Japan to pursue a political career. The building's exterior exhibits unique and graceful sheet metal ornamentation cornices, corbels and Corinthian pilasters that were used on other Townsend & Townsend commissions in Vancouver such as on the Quebec and Shaughnessy Mansions. Although the owner was of Japanese origin, the name and design of this building reflect the community's integration into the North American culture, unlike the more traditional approach that is evident in Chinatown. The "New World Hotel" was known



as the 'heart of Little Tokyo' and was the most substantial rooming house in the neighbourhood. A variety of Canadian Japanese-owned businesses were run in the street level spaces over the years, including a newspaper office, drugstore, bakery, confectionery, toy store, dentist, tailor, salmon packing outfit, dressmaker and Tamura's own Canada and Japan Trust Savings Bank.

5 SHIBUYA CLOTHING

376 Powell Street > 1912

Designed in 1912 by architect William F. Gardiner for owner David Sanguineti, this was the location of the Sun Theatre from 1912-1918. Sono Shibuya became owner in October 1919, and moved his clothing business into the building after some renovations. Upstairs was the Showa Club, the neighbourhood's only night club and gambling joint. Some former residents remember a sign on the front door that read "Don't gamble; but if you must, don't go to the Chinese gambling house". Apart from the colourful theatre and night club elements of the history of this site, the building provided an eclectic mix of uses including rental rooms, light industry, offices and retail.



other significant sites

A McRae Houses 230-248 Jackson Avenue, 1905 HISTORICALLY, THIS ROW OF SIMPLE HOMES CONTAINED RENTAL SUITES WHICH HOUSED VARIOUS TENANTS (INCLUDING JAPANESE CANADIANS) SUCH AS ENGINEERS, CARPENTERS, MACHINISTS AND PAINTERS DUE TO THEIR VICINITY TO THE PORT, MILL AND COMMERCIAL CENTRE (GASTOWN). THIS DEVELOPMENT'S LATEST INCARNATION IS AS THE JACKSON STREET COMMUNITY HOUSING PROJECT MAINTAINING ITS AFFORDABILITY AND USE AS FAMILY-ORIENTED SOCIAL HOUSING.

B Leatherdale-McKelvie House, 511 E Cordova Street, c.1891 BUILT FOR JOHN LEATHERDALE WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THE YUKON GOLD RUSH, THIS IS A TYPICAL RESIDENTIAL HOUSE FOR THE AREA.

C Secord Hotel, 401 Powell Street, 1889 POSSIBLY THE EARLIEST REMAINING HOTEL OUTSIDE OF GASTOWN, IT PROVIDED LONG-TERM HOUSING AND MAILING ADDRESSES FOR PROMINENT BUSINESSMEN AND CITIZENS. ORIGINALLY, THE UPPER FLOORS HAD WRAP-AROUND BALCONIES.

D St. James Anglican Church, 303 E Cordova Street, 1936 THIS LANDMARK CHURCH DESIGNED BY ADRIAN GILBERT SCOTT IS IN ART DECO STYLE, INCORPORATING BYZANTINE MOTIFS. THE ST. JAMES PARISH DATES BACK TO 1881, AND WAS ORIGINALLY LOCATED ON ALEXANDER STREET. ST. JAMES PARISH CHURCH HAS BEEN PRESENT ON THIS SITE SINCE 1886.

E Coroner's Court, 238 E Cordova Street, 1932 THIS ORNATE BUILDING ONCE HOUSED BOTH THE CORONER'S COURT AND THE CITY ANALYST'S LABORATORY. THE VANCOUVER POLICE MUSEUM TOOK OVER THE TOP FLOOR IN 1986 AND ENCOMPASSES THE ORIGINAL CORONER'S COURTROOM, OFFICES, MORGUE AND AUTOPSY FACILITIES.

F Firehall #1, 280 E Cordova Street, 1906 THE FIREHALL BUILDING FUNCTIONED AS VANCOUVER'S NO. 1 FIREHALL AND THE FIRST MOTORIZED FIREHALL UNTIL 1975 WHEN THE FIREMEN MOVED OUT AND THE ARTS MOVED IN. AFTER A VARIETY OF TENANTS THE FIREHALL THEATRE SOCIETY WAS FORMED IN 1982 AND CURRENTLY OPERATES AS ONE OF THE BUSIEST VENUES IN VANCOUVER.

G 385 E Cordova Street, c.1887 (Possibly Earlier) PART OF THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF ATONEMENT MISSION COMPLEX, THIS MAY BE THE OLDEST STANDING HOUSE IN VANCOUVER.

H Armstrong & Co. Funeral Home 304 Dunlevy Avenue, 1912 and 1938 AN ART DECO CHAPEL AND FUNERAL HOME THAT REFLECTS THE DIVERSITY OF BUSINESSES THAT EXISTED IN THE AREA. THE ADDITION OF THE CHAPEL IN 1938 INCLUDED AN AUTOMOBILE DRIVE-THROUGH FOR HEARSES (PERHAPS ONE OF THE FIRST DRIVE-THRU'S IN THE CITY). THE COMPLEX HAS RECENTLY BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO CHAPEL ARTS, A CULTURAL MULTI-USE VENUE.

I Sailor's Home, 500 Alexander Street, 1912 DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT WILLIAM TUFF WHITEWAY (ALSO THE ARCHITECT FOR THE SUN TOWER), THIS APARTMENT BUILDING WAS DESIGNED AS A BROTHEL PERFECTLY LOCATED IN THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT CENTERED ON ALEXANDER STREET. IRONICALLY, IN 1921 THIS BECAME THE HEADQUARTERS FOR THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN SAILORS SOCIETY WHOSE STATED AIM WAS THE 'MORAL AND RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT' OF SEAMEN LIVING IN THE AREA.

J J.B. Henderson House, 502 Alexander Street, 1888 BUILT FOR JOHN AND ISAAC HENDERSON WHO RAN A PORT BASED TOWING AND FREIGHTING BUSINESS, THIS EARLY VICTORIAN HOME WAS THE RESIDENCE FOR THE MANAGER OF THE HASTINGS MILL GENERAL STORE FOLLOWED BY THE MILL'S BOOKKEEPER.



1 VANCOUVER BUDDHIST CHURCH

220 Jackson Avenue

In 1904, 14 Buddhist followers decided to build a Buddhist church in Vancouver. Reverend Senju Sasaki arrived as the first minister for the congregation in Vancouver on October 12, 1905. One year later, the property at 32 Alexander Street was purchased. This location became the centre of activity for Jodo Shinshu followers. From 1942-1949, the Vancouver Buddhist Church was closed and the shrine was taken to a Slocan Valley internment camp. By 1951, enough of the community had returned to re-organize. However, the building had been sold. In 1954 the Methodist Church building at 220 Jackson Avenue was purchased. The building was renovated and served the Buddhist congregation until 1979 when the existing church was built on the site.

The Powell Street Grounds at Powell and Dunlevy, has always been a significant public space for all who live in this area. The park was officially opened in 1898 and was eventually named for Vancouver's second Mayor, David Oppenheimer. It was a social gathering place where sports were played and festivals held. The (Japanese Canadian) Vancouver Asahi Baseball team played many of its games here beginning in 1914. The team competed against other groups in their community, and eventually expanded to take on external teams. The accomplishments of the team have been recognized with introduction into both the BC Sports and Canadian Baseball Halls of Fame. Through the Great Depression, the park served as a meeting ground for protesters and the starting point for labour action and protests. The best known action was the "On to Ottawa" march during the Depression. In October 1936, the park was declared the only park where political, religious and other views were permitted to be publicly voiced. Many Japanese Canadians celebrated 1977 as the centennial year for Canada's first known Japanese immigrant, Nagano Manzo. Part of the centennial festivities that year included the ceremonial planting of 21 memorial Sakura (flowering cherry trees) by issei pioneers (first generation Japanese immigrants) which was coordinated by Tonari Gumi (Japanese Community Volunteers Association). Many Legacy Sakura continue to blossom every spring and are enjoyed by park users to this day. Currently the park serves the diverse and complex needs of the area residents. In addition to traditional park uses, it is a social gathering place for a variety of community activities including the annual Powell Street Festival which is held in the park on the August long weekend.

2 OPPENHEIMER PARK



Thank you

to the National Nikkei Museum & Heritage Centre for providing essential information, consultation and resources for this publication. www.nikkeiplace.org

For other resources on Japantown visit:

vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/dtes/oppenheimer.htm
City of Vancouver DTES Revitalization

www.powellstreetfestival.com
Powell Street Festival Society

<http://jccbulletin-geppo.ca>
Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens Assn BULLETIN

www.vjls-jh.com/en
Vancouver Japanese Language School & Japanese Hall

www.vancouverbuddhistchurch.com
Vancouver Buddhist Church

www.thefranciscansisters.com
The Franciscan Sisters of Atonement Mission

www.japanesecanadianhistory.net
Japanese Canadian History

www.najc.ca
National Association of Japanese Canadians



kimono banner no.1

Norman Takeuchi
2007 CITY OF VANCOUVER STREET BANNER PROGRAM

This kimono image, one of three designs by Ottawa artist Norman Takeuchi, combines contemporary brushwork with a collage of archival photographs. Commissioned by the City of Vancouver, more than 800 banners in this series were displayed in Vancouver in 2007 as part of the City's Street Banner and Flag Program.

Norman Takeuchi grew up in Vancouver and attended the Vancouver School of Art. After graduating in 1962 with a scholarship, he moved to London, England to concentrate on painting. Shuttleing between London and Canada, Takeuchi worked as a designer on Expo 67, Expo 70 and the Canadian Museum of Nature. In 1996, he left his design career to become a full-time artist and has since participated in many solo and group exhibitions. In 1995, Takeuchi saw Itchiku Kubota's exhibition of kimonos at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. The Kubota kimonos transformed his thinking, and Takeuchi seized the opportunity to delve into his Japanese heritage.

"By combining the traditional shape of the kimono with contemporary imagery and painting techniques, the pictures reflect my identity as a member of two cultures," Norman Takeuchi.



POWELL STREET'S JAPANESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

The Powell Street area has a unique historical tie with Japanese Canadians who were its majority ethnic group from the 1890s until the Canadian government forcibly relocated the entire community in 1942.

The original reason for the community's development in this location was access to jobs at the nearby Hastings Mill. Once established financially, the men were able to send for their families or a "picture bride" since the quotas enacted in 1908 and 1928 on Japanese immigrants applied only to men.

New Japanese immigrants worked in the forestry, fishing and canning industries. To secure employment, they often had to accept lower wages than non-Asian workers. This caused workers of other ethnicities to be displaced, feeding existing anti-Asian racist sentiment in the general population. The hostility erupted in violence in 1907 in the form of an anti-Asian riot that left many Japanese stores along Powell Street extensively damaged.

The area, referred to as Japantown today, was commonly referred to as "Poweru Gai" or simply Powell Street by the Nikkei (people of Japanese descent). By 1921, 578 ethnic Japanese stores and organizations thrived in Japantown, and middle and working class residential districts made it a comfortable place for the Japanese community. In 1936, T. Maikawa's Department Store, selling Japanese and western goods, expanded in the midst of and in spite of the Depression. It is an example of the success of Japanese Canadian businesses. Katsuyoshi Morita recalled that Powell Street's buildings "looked no different from those in the neighborhood, but once you stepped inside, it was totally Japanese."

Japanese Canadians served every need of their community with stores, boarding houses and restaurants. Cultural institutions that were established include the Vancouver Japanese Language School, Vancouver Buddhist Church, Japanese United Church, Vancouver Japanese Catholic Mission School as well as various martial arts clubs.

AFTER THE WAR

Although the war ended in 1945 and the War Measures Act expired in 1946, a new act called The National Emergency Transition Powers Act kept Japanese Canadians from returning to the coast until 1949. During that time, Japanese Canadians were encouraged to show "loyalty to Canada" and follow Prime Minister Mackenzie King's suggestion to disperse across the country or to "repatriate" to Japan.

Of the 4000 who returned to Japan, more than half were born in Canada and 75% were Canadian citizens. By 1949, few Japanese Canadians were in a position, or had the interest, to return to Vancouver.

Post WWII, the economic base of Powell Street and the surrounding neighborhood had been dramatically eroded by changing times. Trucks began to move goods, so proximity to rail lines was not important to manufacturing and warehousing operations, which moved to the suburbs. Vacancy rates in the area remained high and buildings continued to deteriorate. The few Japanese Canadians who did return to the area had very strong sentimental attachments.

In the 1950s some stores selling ethnic Japanese groceries and goods reappeared as did some restaurants and even a gambling club on the main floor of the Lion Hotel at 316 Powell. However, as one Japanese Canadian said, "After the war everyone spread all over. There was no more community."

One important cultural centre did manage to re-open in 1953, drawing Japanese Canadians from all over the Lower Mainland for classes and cultural activities. The Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall returned to half of its former building; it was the only example of a confiscated property that was returned to its owners. During the war, the Canadian Army had used half the building for administration and sold the other half to pay for expenses. It was because of this portion that had not been sold that the requests to have it returned were successful.

The Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall conducted a major expansion in 2000 to accommodate its growing role as a centre for multi-cultural education. The other major institution to return to Japantown was the Buddhist Church which was set up in 1954 when the Buddhists bought the United Church building at Powell and Jackson.

The area known as the Downtown Eastside, including the area of Japantown, went through a period of decline from the mid-1950s through to the mid-'70s. To rescue and revive the area, a grassroots movement in the 1970s helped secure grants to enhance the community as a whole. As a result, improvements were made to the Japanese Language School, and the Buddhist Church built a new gymnasium that became home to the Nisei Karate-do School.

In 1977, the Japanese Canadian Community celebrated the centennial of the arrival of the first Japanese immigrant to Canada with a national touring exhibit of historical photographs titled "A Dream of Riches". The recognition of the centennial created a new community spirit which sparked the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association into activity. They managed to purchase 374-378 Powell St., renovate the rundown hotel on the site and open the Sakura-so senior's residence. A new Vancouver Buddhist Church and auditorium were built at 220 Jackson St.

The very successful annual Powell Street Festival also began in 1977 as a celebration of Japanese and Asian culture through fine arts, martial arts, amateur sumo wrestling tournament, craft vendors, traditional displays and Japanese food. The festival continues to unite the community in celebrating a victory against racism, and furthers the growth of a vibrant cultural community.

Photo on Cover:
Dominion Photo Co.(1928) VPL 21733
children outside Bunka Shokai store at 250 Powell Street

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The Vancouver Heritage Foundation is a registered charity committed to the conservation of Vancouver's built heritage in recognition of its importance to the culture, economy and the sustainability of our city. The VHF does this by:

- Giving the public practical tools, information and incentives to be successful in conserving buildings.
- Creating opportunities for the public to access and learn about Vancouver's historic buildings.
- Attracting public and private sector support for an endowment to protect buildings into the future.
- Developing strategic relationships that nurture a civic culture supportive of heritage conservation.

