

Ladysmith Heritage Homes and Neighbourhoods



Tyee Smelter Manager's home

Remarkable Homes and Gardens

In the early years, Ladysmith was made up of mostly modest working class housing for miners and their families. One of the few exceptions was the home of the manager for the Tyee Smelter, built on company property with a private beach. It was probably the most elegant home ever built in Ladysmith. It had fixtures of marble, chandeliers and high ceilings, and fireplaces in almost every room. Sadly, the home was demolished in 1970.

One of the few early architecturally-designed homes is located at 641 Third Avenue. It was built in 1903 by John Coburn, who became Ladysmith's first mayor a year later. Arthur Verchere bought it in 1917 when he moved to Ladysmith as the manager of the Canadian Bank of Commerce on First Avenue, and the home still belongs to the Verchere family.



Coburn / Verchere Home



Glen House and Gardens

Ladysmith has long been known for its beautiful gardens and landscaping. Glen House on Methuen Street, below First Avenue, was famous for its beautiful gardens in the 1920's. The beautification of neighbourhoods continued with Mayor Kathleen Grouhel's (1964–1976) vision for planting trees throughout the downtown area. Ladysmith won the National Communities in Bloom Award in 2003 and maintains a focus on beautiful landscaping, including edible gardens which are harvested and donated to the local food bank and introduce children to gardening.

Early Cultural Neighbourhoods

Our early residents were from diverse ethnic backgrounds. They came from Finland, Belgium, China, Italy, Croatia, as well as England and Scotland. Chinese labourers were mostly single men and congregated on the waterfront side of Esplanade. Other ethnic groups were able to bring families and settled in distinct cultural neighbourhoods. There was a Belgium quarter, an Italian quarter, and Finn Town, which stretched between Fourth and Sixth Avenue, and between Gatacre and White Street. The first Finn Hall was located on Fifth Avenue, and was used as a community gathering space. By teaching the Finnish language and songs to the children, these new Canadians tried to retain their cultural identity.



First Finn Hall on 5th Avenue

"The greenest building is the one that is already built" (Carl Elefante)

Moving the Past into the Future

Ladysmith is an "instant town" that appeared virtually overnight, thanks in part to the relocation and re-use of entire homes and buildings from other settlements. Ladysmith's heritage neighbourhoods include many miner's cottages that have been beautifully preserved and now house modern families. In addition to the miner's homes, some of Ladysmith's larger heritage buildings have been retained and converted into housing, such as the former Convent School (Heritage Manor), the former Extension Hotel (Bayview Apartments), and the Island Hotel. Rehabilitating historic buildings is an effective way to reduce, reuse and recycle, and "the greenest building is the one that is already built" (Carl Elefante, Architect). While an environmentally sustainable choice, Ladysmith's heritage homes and neighbourhoods also contribute to the wonderfully unique appearance of our Town, and allows the past to continue into the future!



LADYSMITH

For more information, please visit the Ladysmith Museum at 721 First Avenue and the Ladysmith & District Historical Society Archives at 1115 First Avenue.