

BUILDING HERITAGE

Celebrating the Register and Inventory of Historic Resources in Edmonton

Valleyview Manor, Municipal Historic Resource

Valleyview Manor, 12207 Jasper Avenue, was designed and marketed in 1961 as Edmonton's first luxury high-rise apartment building. Seven stories high, with a flat roof, honey-coloured brick exterior, projecting balconies, sleek lines, and 45 spacious suites equipped with modern conveniences, it was advertised (and sold) as "Edmonton's New Home of Gracious Living." Francis Winspear, accountant, businessman and philanthropist, backed the project financially and then moved into a river-view suite on the top floor with his wife, Bess. But it was Harriet Snowball, the manager hired by the developers to rent suites and see that the building was well maintained, who ensured that Valleyview Manor would become the home of gracious living it was intended to be.

By the time Harriet Snowball Winspear died, on March 13, 2008, Valleyview Manor's glamour had long been eclipsed by adjacent and nearby high rises – "condos" whose developers used variations on the old gracious-living theme to sell units. Shortly before Harriet's death Valleyview was converted from a luxury apartment building to an aging and somewhat dowdy condominium. What were new owners to do to re-claim the moniker, "home of gracious living" for themselves? What they have done



Valleyview Manor looking south from Jasper Avenue, July 6, 2010.
Photo credit: City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department

is to celebrate their building's age, quality and historical associations by seeking a new status for Valleyview Manor as a "Municipal Heritage Resource."

If the bylaw designating Valleyview Manor a heritage resource is approved by Edmonton City Council the building's condominium board will be bound by rules regarding the kinds of changes it can and cannot make. It will also be eligible to receive some funding for approved upgrading projects. But, further to this, the board will have added to Edmonton's historical fabric by preserving an important piece of the city's built and social heritage.

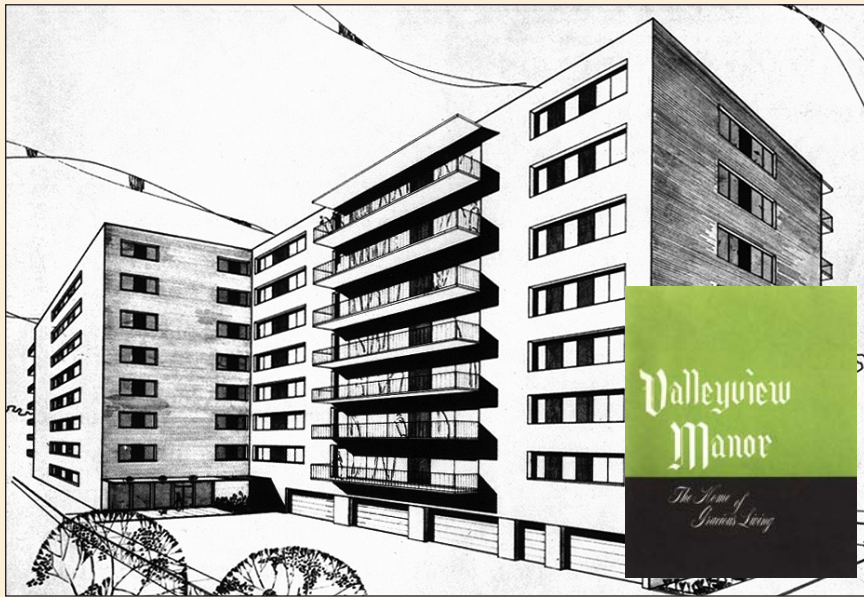
Valleyview Manor cost approximately \$1,000,000 to build in 1960-61, a substantial figure for the time. Gordon

K. Wynn, the building's designer, was a principal and founding partner of Rule Wynn and Rule Architects, a firm which Linda Fraser, in her article on the company in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, refers to as "an influ-

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Valleyview Manor brochure from 1960. If you look closely you will notice that the drawing of the building is slightly different from the finished product.

Photo credit: Jim Jamison and Kathryn Merrett

ential western Canadian architectural firm” and one which “played a critical role in the establishment of modern architecture in Canada.” Valleyview Manor was constructed by another Edmonton company, A.V. (Art) Carlson Construction and, according to Harriet, it was well built. If it had not been, she assured me several years ago during an interview; she would not have undertaken to manage it.

For Harriet, managing a building involved appropriate measures of

astuteness, wit, tact, hard work, curiosity, energy, generosity and humour. A tenant, once admitted to the fold, either never left or left something of him or herself behind. Dinners before the Edmonton opera, excursions to the San Francisco Opera, bridge parties, care packages delivered to the ailing or downhearted, the occasional trick or antic, were all in her repertoire. After her husband’s death in 1976 and after the death of Bess Winspear in 1979, Harriet’s ministrations

to her bereaved tenant, Francis Winspear, led to an eventual decision on their part to marry. They “reigned” together at Valleyview Manor for 17 years before Francis’s death and Harriet remained another 10 years before she herself had to leave her beloved Valleyview Manor.

All buildings have stories and all cities are palimpsests. Memorable cities develop character by incorporating their past into their present so that both inhabitants and visitors sense the layers as they go about their daily life. Valleyview Manor, as a building and as a collection of personal stories, takes us back – not too far – to a time when gracious living was not incompatible with sturdy simplicity. The building’s modest scale, warm and welcoming features, and classic lines appealed to doctors, lawyers, University professors, teachers and business people, all of whom contributed to the life of the city and some of whom, like the Winspears, helped to shape it. Valleyview Manor was a phenomenon of its time and place; designation as a municipal heritage resource will help to locate it in the city’s present and future.

The preceding article was first published in the Edmonton and District Historical Society Newsletter in June, 2010 and has been reprinted with permission from the EDHS.

■ **Kathryn Chase Merrett**
Historian

Beth Shalom Synagogue

The Jewish community in Edmonton began in 1893 with the arrival of Abraham and Rebecca Cristall. By 1901, 17 of Edmonton’s 2,626 residents were Jewish. Though small, this budding group had by 1906 organized the Edmonton Hebrew Association, and in 1912 the foundation was laid for the Beth Israel Synagogue at the corner of Syndicate Avenue and 101st Avenue (now 95th Street and Grierson Hill). In the fall of 1928 Beth Israel Synagogue was becoming overcrowded and, with the blessing of the congregation, a number of members chose to hold services in the basement of the Talmud Torah School,



Beth Shalom Synagogue, August 2010.

Photo credit: City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department



Beth Shalom Synagogue during construction, July 24, 1950.

Photo credit: City of Edmonton Archives

built in 1925 at 10023-103 Street. This group of dedicated Jews would develop into the Beth Shalom congregation, so named in 1932.

In the following years Edmonton's Jewish population grew, as did the membership and activities of the Beth Shalom congregation. By 1941 Edmonton's population was 93,817, almost 1,500 of whom were Jewish. Reflecting this growth, in 1943 a committee was established to explore the feasibility of erecting a house of worship for the congregation. Fundraising began, and in December of that year the Beth Shalom congregation was incorporated. Though the money was soon raised, the actual construction was delayed. As told by Rabbi Louis Sacks at the 1951 dedication ceremony, "Two factors were responsible for the delay. The nation was at war. It was not deemed advisable to divert money, material and manpower at that time. Second, a new feeling had sprung up among the congregation members, especially the younger people. It was felt that if a new building is to be erected it should be more than a synagogue; it should have the facilities for and aims of a community centre to serve the needs of the entire community."

In accordance with the wishes of the congregation, plans were altered and delayed, with the sod-turning ceremony not occurring until May 23, 1950. When the building officially opened on November 4, 1951, it was known as "Beth Shalom Synagogue and Jewish Community Centre".

The new building had a synagogue in the right wing, an auditorium in the left wing, and classroom space for elementary and adult education in the basement, as well as space for a rabbi's study and choir loft.

The striking new building was designed by architect Neil McKernan and built by Dominion Construction at an estimated cost of \$250,000. McKernan was responsible for several other buildings in Edmonton, including Wellington School, the Oliver Building, the Salvation

Army Family Services Centre and Kirk United Church.

Travelling through Oliver along Jasper Avenue, one cannot help but notice Beth Shalom Synagogue, prominently located between 119th and 120th Streets. Measuring 180 feet by 50 feet, Beth Shalom Synagogue is a handsome example of Modern architecture. Its flat roof, use of yellow brick and balanced vertical and horizontal composition are common hallmarks of the Modern style in Edmonton. Details incorporated to provide visual interest include the impressive Tyndall stone entrance with broad flaring steps, repeated punched windows and cast stone window surrounds.

For nearly 60 years the Beth Shalom Synagogue has served an important part of the spiritual and social life of members of Edmonton's conservative Jewish community. Its prominent location on Jasper Avenue has made it a local landmark, and its distinctive Modern style contributes to Edmonton's diverse architectural character. In recognition of its importance to our city's past, present and future, Beth Shalom Synagogue was added to the Inventory of Historic Resources in February, 2009.

■ **Tim O'Grady**
Graduate Heritage Planner



The impressive entrance of the Beth Shalom Synagogue.

Photo credit: City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department





Current Heritage Inventory Projects

Heritage inventories are an important tool in the conservation of Edmonton's built history. Inventories identify, document, and research potential resources for inclusion on the City of Edmonton's Inventory of Historic Resources; an important first step towards future municipal designations. We are very pleased to have three heritage inventory projects currently underway.

Phase II of the Heritage Inventory for the Neighbourhood of Strathcona and Area

This project involved a survey and inventory of potentially significant resources in the neighbourhoods of Strathcona and Garneau north of Whyte Avenue, excluding the Old Strathcona Provincial Historic Area. It is the second of a three phase inventory identifying all significant sites in Strathcona and surrounding communities. Over the course of the project, the consultant, Heritage Collaborative Inc., identified 44 resources, mostly single family homes from the 1910s, 20s and 30s. The consultants began presenting their findings to the Historic Resource Review Panel in September for review. Based on their recommendations, by early 2011 we anticipate a number of new additions to the City of Edmonton's Inventory of Historic Resources.

McCauley-Alberta Avenue Inventory

This inventory encompasses the communities of McCauley, and parts of Alberta Avenue and Parkdale not included in the 2008 Alberta Avenue Inventory. These areas are currently underrepresented on the Inventory of Historic Resources, despite being among the older residential neighbourhoods in Edmonton. The inventory, conducted by planning firm Urban Systems, will identify possible heritage

areas in addition to individual resources, and when complete will make a valuable contribution to the City's Inventory of Historic Resources.

Westmount-Inglewood Inventory

This inventory is studying the communities of Westmount and Inglewood for potential additions to the Inventory of Historic Resources. Residential development in these communities began in the early 1900s, and they have retained much of their original fabric. However, increasing redevelopment pressure in the form of renovations and alterations threaten to change the feeling of these neighbourhoods. As such, the Westmount-Inglewood Inventory also being conducted by Urban Systems, is a timely project and is expected to have a positive impact on conserving the built heritage of the communities.

If you have any information, including historical photographs and plans of older homes in McCauley, Alberta Avenue, Parkdale, Westmount or Inglewood, please contact David Johnston of Urban Systems at djohnston@urban-systems.com or Heritage Planner David Holdsworth at david.holdsworth@edmonton.ca.

■ **Tim O'Grady**
Graduate Heritage Planner



(Top Photo) A collection of houses along 92nd Avenue in Strathcona.

Photo credit: Heritage Collaborative Inc.

(Middle Photo) Church Street (95th) at 106A Avenue.

Photo credit: City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department

(Bottom Photo) Homes in the community of Westmount.

Photo credit: City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department

The Grotski Residence Represents the Last Cardinal House Design

A series of fortuitous events over some 35 years transpired to make the Douglas Cardinal-designed Grotski Residence available as a candidate for the Municipal Heritage Inventory of Historic Places. Most recently, the house was being touted by the listing real estate agent as a ‘possible tear down’, best sold – not for its heritage as the last residence completed by Alberta’s most highly awarded architect – but for its spectacular view of the North Saskatchewan River in the Capilano neighbourhood.

Part of the consideration was that the house had been allowed to deteriorate after having been redesigned by Cardinal in 1978. The brick chimney, a Cardinal signature at the time, will probably need to be rebuilt – as will the expansive sidewalk leading to the streetside entrance; floor to ceiling front windows will also need replacing and the cedar siding requires extensive repairs.

In fact, if prominent Edmonton obstetrician/gynaecologist Nan Schuurmans had not been shown the residence by a newly-minted real estate agent who lives around the corner from the location (and who had long appreciated the house) the next purchaser in line apparently intended to destroy the house and rebuild. Fortunately, Dr. Schuurmans’ appreciation of Cardinal’s design and the location convinced her to purchase the property and embark on a dramatic restoration program under the direction of local architect David Murray.

The redesign of the house was the last residential project that Mr. Cardinal completed. He points out that although he had started his practice in the 1960s and worked on residences, the Grotski commission stemmed from his relationship with John and Helen Grotski. “I’m doing larger projects. I’ve only done a few residences because they’re very time-consuming,” he says, “but I would spend time with them [the Grotskis].”



The Grotski Residence is significant for its association with the theme of urban development in post-World War II Edmonton. The Capilano neighbourhood was one of the new communities developed to accommodate a greatly expanding population. The neighbourhood is one of only a few that has direct river valley access and was an ideal location for Douglas Cardinal to experiment with his nature-based design aesthetic.

Cardinal recalls the project began as a kitchen renovation for Helen Grotski, whose husband John was a prominent member of the legal community during his work life, which extended from the mid-1950s to the late 1990s. “He said, ‘my wife and I want to be able to renovate our house so we can really enjoy the area. Rather than build a new home, we want to be in the same place where we brought up our children... Helen felt that the house hadn’t really served her. She wanted to be at home and she had so many things and magazines and ideas. We started off with the kitchen and began renovating that, and then they wanted to do the living room and dining room and open them up.’”

The project continued until the end result did not resemble the original single-storey bungalow in any manner. The style of the Grotski Residence does not fall into a convenient stylistic category. The design



The Grotski Residence in the summer of 2010.
Photo Credit: David Murray

is unique to this architect and there is great consistency in the evolution of his work. The roots of this particular design can be found in the West Coast Post and Beam Style, but the execution displays Cardinal’s curiosity to explore his unique stylistic inventions that include a nature-based, “organic” design aesthetic. The residence is an important component in the career evolution of Douglas Cardinal who has been nationally and internationally recognized as a master architect. The design reflects Cardinal’s native identity and his association with the environment, the prairie landscape, his academic roots in the fluid designs of numerous previous architects and his unconventional personality – all available because of a series of improbable events.

■ **Stuart Adams**
Author

The John T. Radford House



The Radford Residence, June 4, 2009.

Photo credit: City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department

Sometimes modest houses have important stories to tell. The John T. Radford House, a 1902 clapboard farmhouse, still stands in Old Strathcona reminding us of what life was like for early settlers to Northern Alberta.

John Radford with his wife Annie arrived in Strathcona from Winnipeg at the end of the nineteenth century. They began to farm south of Whyte Avenue between 106 and 107 Streets. We know this because their cows were impounded for wandering onto Whyte Avenue and Radford paid a fine to have them released.

Despite his wandering cattle, Radford identified himself as a farmer on the 1901 census and again when he purchased two lots on 84th Avenue in 1902. There he built a farmhouse and a stable. With the train tracks nearby, Radford abandoned his farming ambitions and used his horses to transport goods and newcomers. He established a moving and storage company and as a businessman became increasingly influential. John Walter signed his nomination papers in 1910 and Radford was

elected alderman, calling for the amalgamation of Strathcona and Edmonton.

Radford's farmhouse has its own file at the Provincial Archives. The two-story house, with a kitchen in the back, high ceilings on the main floor and a steep staircase up to the two rooms above, was the focus of a Northwest Territories Supreme Court case in 1903. The man hired to plaster the house sued Radford and the builder because they didn't pay him. A counterclaim was issued on behalf of Radford by future premier Alexander Rutherford. The counterclaim tells how plastering was done in 1902, with horse hair and lime and a man to keep the fires burning in cold October.

The archival documents also tell of the Radfords' decline. During the 1920s the horse and cart were no longer essential to life in Edmonton and the couple fell on hard times, made even worse during the Depression. In 1932 Edmonton Relief Officers visited the elderly, impoverished couple and recommended they be allowed to stay in their home, said to be "kept in first class repairs," although they could no longer pay the mortgage. They both died in the house and are buried in unmarked graves in Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

The Radfords shared their small house with lodgers and when Ida Stewart bought the house from the city in 1935 she too had tenants. We purchased the house from the Stewart family and for two years we experienced the same dark rooms, the steep staircase, the frozen pipes, the unstable river rock basement and the poor insulation before deciding to bring Radford's house into the twenty-first century. Although the interior of the house was altered over time and is not considered worth preserving, the river rock basement, the two chimneys, the roof and the clapboard walls will remain on 84th Avenue.

The 1902 farmhouse will continue to mark the place where Radford farmed, served the city and suffered and died during the Depression. It stood for over a century and will hopefully continue to stand and share its stories for another hundred years.

■ Peigi Rockwell, Owner

The Edmonton Iron Works

The Edmonton Iron Works, located at 10415-96 Street, was built in 1909 after demand for iron surpassed what the original building could accommodate. It was built by Pheasy and Batson, respected builders in Edmonton responsible for other major projects at the time, including Norwood (1908), Oliver (1910), McCauley (1911), Parkdale (1912) and Ritchie (1913) Schools. Its basic brick Edwardian façade belies a cavernous interior. Exposed steel girders create a large open



The Edmonton Iron Works.

Photo Credit: City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department



space, topped with a monitor roof and clerestory windows, which allow natural light into what was once no doubt a dark and sooty place.

The Iron Works was the largest foundry north of Calgary and West of Brandon, Manitoba, and was a major employer in the Boyle Street area. Coke and pig iron was shipped by rail from Vancouver and unloaded at the Iron Works' private rail yard. Huge furnaces were then used to melt the ore down and cast various fittings and parts for use in construction and machines. It was loud, smelly, dirty, backbreaking work, but the fruits of this labour helped propel Edmonton's early growth, literally building the city we know today.

Under the guidance of the company's first President James "Peace River Jim" Cornwall, a well-known adventurer, businessman, politician, and soldier, the Iron Works produced material for a variety of clients. Clips for Edmonton's street railway, survey posts for the Government of Alberta, and parts for the Canadian

Northern Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway as well as all the mills, shops and factories in Edmonton were produced in this building. The Iron Works is credited with producing parts for some of the City's major structures, including the King Edward Hotel, the Royal George Hotel, the Merchants Bank, the Adams Block, Jackson Block, Empire Block, Ashdown Block, Mortlake Block, the Swift Canadian plant, and the Canadian National Railway Station.

In addition to Edmonton's urban development, the Iron Works contributed to agricultural development as well. The famous Van Slyke Ploughs were manufactured here, prized by farmers for their ability to break prairie sod and prevent it from falling back into the freshly excavated furrows.

In 1926 the Edmonton Iron Works was taken over by Maple Leaf Steel, and Senator P.E. Lessard became President of the company. Production increased and the Iron Works expanded, however the Great Depression was just around the

corner and it would take some years for the Iron Works to recover.

The Edmonton Iron Works continues its industrial function, currently operating as a scrap metal yard. In August, 2010 the building was added to the Inventory of Historic Places in Edmonton. One of the few surviving pieces of early Edmonton's east side, it is a rare local example of the Industrial Edwardian style. Furthermore, its association with the city's industrial and agricultural growth, as well as the involvement of notable public figures such as Cornwall and Lessard, make it a significant part of our built heritage which should be conserved for future generations.

■ **Tim O'Grady**
Graduate Heritage Planner

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House Public Seminar Series is
coming. Go to www.edmonton.ca
for more info!



Message From Tim Marriott, Chair Edmonton Historical Board

The Edmonton Historical Board (EHB) is an appointed advisory board of City Council. The EHB is charged with encouraging, promoting and advocating the preservation of properties, resources, communities and documentary heritage in Edmonton. Building on the solid work of its predecessor organizations, and collaborating with the many individuals and groups of today interested in Edmonton's heritage, the EHB believes that our city is being animated by a new sense of the importance of Edmonton's past.

Among the key activities of the Edmonton Historical Board is the Historical Plaque programme. Working with the City of Edmonton Heritage Planners, these plaques provide a way for Edmonton's historically significant buildings, streetscapes, and neighbourhoods to be recognised and celebrated. Interpretive plaques are strategically located so that

passersby may appreciate the city of decades past. Another key activity is the EHB's Recognition Awards, which similarly honour individuals and groups who have contributed to Edmonton's history or its preservation. Soon much of the information on these two activities will be available online as well!

A very important project of 2010 was EHB's collaboration with the Edmonton Heritage Council in the appointment of a Historian Laureate for the City of Edmonton. The Edmonton Historical Board is very pleased that this innovation, the first such position in Canada, is now a reality.

Thanks to the hard work of so many we are confident that as Edmonton evolves over the next decades the awareness, knowledge and respect for our built heritage will enable our modern city to reflect the best of our past.



The Garneau Theatre

The iconic Garneau Theatre, located on 109 Street just south of the High Level Bridge, has long been a landmark in Edmonton. One of the few surviving WWII-era theatres in the city, the Garneau was designed by prominent local architect William G. Blakey and is a significant example of Art Deco style in Edmonton.

City Council declared the Garneau Theatre a Municipal Historic Resource in October, 2009 as part of an ambitious conservation plan overseen by owner John Day and architecture firm Arndt Tkalcic Bengert. The restoration included stucco and brick repairs, the replacement of speedlines on the storefront, new stainless steel front doors, and the restoration of the exterior lighting, billboards, and original Terrazzo floor in the lobby.

The Garneau is once again open for business under the operation of Magic Lantern Theatres, an Edmonton company specializing in friendly neighbourhood cinemas. Retail space in the building is currently occupied by Transcend Coffee, Whimsical Cake Studio, and Kabuki Sushi and Grill. The Garneau Theatre's ability to attract locally owned, independent businesses is an excellent example of the important role historic buildings play in supporting Edmonton's unique and diverse character.

■ **Tim O'Grady**
Graduate Heritage Planner



Garneau Theatre as seen in 1943. Photo credit: Provincial Archives of Alberta



Garneau Theatre after restoration, July 9, 2010.
Photo credit: City of Edmonton Planning and Development Department

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WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Please send your responses to:

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