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The Vancouver Heritage Foundation

# HERITAGE HOUSE TOUR



sunday june 6  
**2010** 10am - 5pm

*get inspired, educated & inside 10 homes!*



The Vancouver  
Heritage  
FOUNDATION

The Heritage House Tour is a fundraising event in  
support of the Vancouver Heritage Foundation





on tour &gt; units 202, 204

**The Earles Street** Substation is an impressive reminder of the once vast BC Electric Interurban railway system that initially linked Vancouver with New Westminster and later to Chilliwack and Richmond. It was constructed to supply electricity to the Central Park Line that ran along Vanness Avenue until the service was discontinued in 1953. A fire insurance map from 1913 shows the "Earls Road Station" at the intersection of Vanness. By 1925 the map shows a small cluster of commercial uses at the southeast corner of Earles and Vanness.

With the opening of SkyTrain in 1985, once again Vanness Road is home to a transit corridor with the 29th Avenue station a short distance away.

Scottish-born architect Robert Lyon designed the substation. As an architectural engineer with the BC Electric Company, Lyon designed many large industrial concrete structures, typically creating a pleasing classical beauty for these utilitarian buildings. On Earles Road, Lyon created large window openings with small windowpanes and a keystone motif, and provided a plain cornice. Lyon also designed private homes and commercial and government buildings, especially in Penticton where he became the first Mayor in 1948.

With the cancellation of interurban service in the 1950s, the substation was shut down and boarded up. This situation lasted for decades due to the high cost of demolition. In the late 1980s, architect Linda Baker recognized its potential

for transformation into a unique residential building and proceeded to assemble a development team. In 1989 Vancouver City Council considered her application for a tailored zoning by-law that would permit the building to be converted into twelve strata apartments, ranging from 1200 – 1500 square feet. Council members of the day noted that "the proposal offered an opportunity to replace an existing ugly building with badly-needed housing".

Under the direction of Linda Baker, this "ugly building" was transformed into a neighbourhood landmark. On the exterior, new balconies, windows and entrances, with a sandblasted exterior, combine the industrial look of the building with residential features. A three storey wood frame structure was built within the cavernous substation's concrete shell. Constructing a "building within a building" also had the benefit of not disturbing any potentially contaminated soil or building material from the original construction. The owners received a 1991 City of Vancouver Heritage Award. In 2009 they received a Restore It! grant from the Vancouver Heritage Foundation for repairs to the exterior concrete on the west wall.

## 4590 Earles St

EARLES STREET SUBSTATION

style DERIVED FROM GOTHIC REVIVAL

date 1912

original owner

B.C. ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY

VANCOUVER HERITAGE REGISTER STATUS 'B'

1990 redevelopment team

Developer, Earles Station Properties Ltd.

Architect, Linda Baker

flower arrangements by **THE FLOWER FACTORY**  
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