



residential tour 2007

photograph of 3030 W 45th by Eva Cairns

The Modern Movement emerged in Europe in the early 20th century and gained momentum after World War I when there was an urgent need for massive rebuilding. The opportunity was ripe for a way of building based on new materials, technical innovation, and a shift in social values away from appearance and towards practicality and functionality.

The movement soon reached across the Atlantic where it became known as the International Style. The buildings were characterized by clean, elegant lines; little ornamentation; and a construction and layout generated primarily by function. While the movement was realized in much of Vancouver's public architecture such as office towers, libraries, and educational buildings, it was in residential structures that the Modernist influence was most evident.

The International Style in Vancouver found a unique regional expression that became known as West Coast Modernism. Using the post-and-beam structural framework, architects capitalized on local building materials such as fir, cedar, and other lumbers that were cheap and widely available. Between the large posts and beams generous and strategically placed windows and doors framed the region's magnificent views. The large panes of glass blurred the distinction between the exterior and interior while enhancing the veiled coastal light.

Japanese architectural influences were evidenced in both the open floor plans where living spaces flowing freely from one "room" to another, and in the low, flat roofs with wide overhangs that protected the glass from rain and sun.

"By cutting into the typical building footprint, a South-West facing courtyard was formed and became the central hub around which all important rooms were located. Capturing the sun and sky, the forest setting and family life, it provides a continuously rewarding spirit of place" states Architect, Barry Downs of his vision for the Stager house.

Designed by Barry Downs in 1965 for John & Joan Stager, this 2400 sq. ft. home is located on Crown Street in Southlands, opposite Musqueam Park and Musqueam Creek.

"We wake up on the east side of the house with beautiful morning sun in the bedrooms, and the sun follows us all day through the kitchen, the service areas, the family room and patios until the evening, when we usually end up in the western area of the house, where the living room and fireplaces are located" says Susan Alexander, current homeowner.

Each room in the house functions as a complete, intimate environment while the general layout dictates a flow from room to room and from inside to out, creating spaciousness and movement. Simple, neutral colours of white and brown allow for the texture of the building materials to be expressed. Stucco, wood, green areas and floor-to-ceiling windows are repeated both indoors and out enabling an effortless dialogue with the surrounding forest and stream.

The home saw only one addition, an extension to the living room, designed by the same architect in 1976.



**7275 Balaclava
Simpson Residence**

date 1971
Thompson, Berwick & Pratt

image of stable



**3152 W 49th
Gardner Residence**

date 1958
architect Kenneth Gardner



**3030 W 45th
Zack Residence**

date 1973
architect Fred Dalla-Lana



**6187 Collingwood
Smith Residence**

date circa 1957
architect Allen C. Smith

Designed by Thompson Berwick Pratt Architects for Mr. & Mrs. Edward O.T. Simpson, this house is a good example of split-level, shed-roof design.

The monocline roof line is the signature of shed-roof design. It was a departure from the pitched roof with a ridge beam, which is the more traditional symbol of shelter, and which gives greater options for internal forms and lighting.

Mr. & Mrs. Simpson's vision for the house was a building of rural and indigenous character. Thompson, Berwick, Pratt & Partners Architect Richard Mann, in his correspondence with the owners, stated that, "The secret of the design of the house will lie in the roof design. A quiet composition of pitched-roof forms should be keynote, with the supplement being a tailored use of humble materials."

The 4,000 sq. ft. house and complementary shed-roof style 4-horse stable was built for just under \$100,000 by Mel Lauder, a builder who also constructed the Zack Residence on 45th Avenue, also open on tour. The original house finishes were natural stain on the exterior siding (Olympic 715 / 722 and 711 on the doors), and off-white paint inside. The flooring was a mix of sheet vinyl, bronze green ceramic tile, carpet in the bedrooms and quarry tile in the entry.

Not only is the Gardner residence a landmark of modern residential architecture, it has the distinction of being the first heritage-designated residential "recent landmark" in Vancouver.

Because of the flood plain conditions of Southlands, the semi-rural lands near the Fraser River, Gardner designed his own house to have the living level raised up, literally, to the second floor; there is no basement.

He specified a type of concrete construction called "lift-slab" where the main floor, second floor and roof, all of slabs of concrete were poured one atop the other, then hoisted in place with hydraulic motors at each of the eight steel support columns. Blank brick walls give privacy to the north and west street facades, while the south and east wall open to the views and sun. It is probably the only lift slab residence in Canada.

The Gardner residence won an AIBC honour award for architecture in 1960 and was featured on the cover of Western Homes and Living in June 1961. Gardner's wife Cynthia was an artist - a student of Jack Shadbolt - who used the main floor room as her studio. In 1962 Gardner, of South African origin, moved to Barbados.

Designed by Fred Dalla-Lana for the Zack family, this unique West Coast home won architectural awards and editorial recognition during the 1970s. Enclosed by neighbouring houses and shadowed by tall cedars, this 50' lot has few hours of actual sunlight. This aspect coupled with the Zack family's wishes to remove no tress and to have complete privacy ("A summer cabin in the city" was their vision) were the essential motivators of the design.

The result is a large courtyard garden open to the sky with the house looking inwards, not out to the neighbours. This arboretum is partly open to the weather so that potted trees and greenery of all kinds can flourish, but it's roofed with glass like a high shed or greenhouse to give it shelter from the winds and rains. Thus, outdoor living is possible not only on hot summer days but for most of the year.

Natural light is maximized through the extensive use of skylights and the introduction of the large reflecting pool and travertine floor tiles which return light into the house.

Probably the only home in Vancouver built and finished entirely in re-sawn mahogany, the home has a very warm quality to it, while the white travertine marble floors and simple earth coloured furnishings bring a sophisticated air to the space as well.

Designed by engineer Allen C. Smith in 1957, this unique home features a U-shaped plan built around a free-form swimming pool that can be viewed from all principal rooms. A dramatic feature is the high-peaked living room wing with a striking A-frame roof. This is emphasized by the flat roof used on the adjoining rooms.

The front doors of the house are solid brass, possibly made originally as elevator doors for the Marine Building. The main hall of the house is paved in BC black slate and leads directly to the pool deck, which was originally paved in the same material. The vision was to allow for indoor-outdoor traffic without cross-room confusion.

The large master bathroom was designed to be accessed from both the pool and the inside thus serving as a cabana. It originally featured a ceramic-tile sunken tub shaped just like the pool in a miniature version. Another rounded shape in the original plan was the horse-shoe shaped kitchen counter with bar stool seating around the outside and working space inside.

A unique feature of the house is the odd shaped dining room which was built to mirror the shape of the Mr. Smith's living room grand piano.

Although the original A-frame form has been retained, a second floor bedroom has been added, the master bathroom is no longer accessible from the pool area, and the kitchen and bathrooms have been updated.