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# Mole Hill Community Housing Society

# MISSION

The Mole Hill Community Housing Society provides and advocates for secure, affordable housing for low and middle income singles, seniors and families within enviro-conscious, intact heritage housing and streetscapes. MHCHS aims to foster community that integrates partnerships and diverse service groups and to create open public spaces for the enjoyment of tenants and the wider community.

Mole Hill Community Housing Society will ensure the provision of affordable, sustainable, well maintained, safe housing in a vibrant community.

## VALUES

## We value dignity

We value ethical conduct.

We value dedication.

We value community and member participation.

# **ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS**

The development partners of Mole Hill have won many awards for their participation in the success of the project

- City of Vancouver Heritage Award 1996 (Blair Petrie and Linda Diano on behalf of the community) and 2004 (Blair Petrie on behalf of the community); Heritage Canada Foundation & Heritage Society of BC Award 2004 (Don Luxton)
- Canadian Construction Association, Environmental Achievement Award 2004 (Kindred Construction)
- Vancouver Regional Construction Association Award of Excellence 2004 (Kindred
- Canadian Society of Landscape Architects Award 2005 (Durante Kureuk)
- Royal Architect Institute of Canada (RAIC) National Urban Design Award, Commu nity Improvement Projects - 2006 (Hotson Bakker and Sean McEwen)
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation award for Best Practices in Affordable
- Architect Institute of BC, Lt. Governor of BC, Special Jury Award 2007 (Hotson Bakker, Sean McEwen, Sandra Korpan)
- Smart Growth Project of the Year in BC 2007

# Welcome to Mole Hill

Mole Hill Community Housing Society is the oldest, most intact and fully restored square block of heritage houses in the City of Vancouver, a testament to thousands of West Enders and Vancouver residents who worked hard for over ten years to save the block from a demolition that was to make way for condominiums. Due to their vision, the buildings were restored to their original state, with the highest possible environmental standards available; public spaces, community gardens and native plant wildlife habitat areas were created and affordable rental housing for low and moderate-income singles, couples and families was developed in keeping with the history of the block. Most of the Mole Hill homes have had lodgers and renters in them from the time they were first built in 1888.

The Mole Hill Living Heritage Society, sister organization of the Mole Hill Community Housing Society, is the grassroots community group that actively and successfully fought to preserve Mole Hill along with the coalition "...friends of Mole Hill." The Mole Hill Community Housing Society redeveloped Mole Hill in partnership with BC Housing, an agency of the Provincial Government, and the City of Vancouver. This public trust is now owned and managed by the Mole Hill Community Housing Society through a long-term lease from the city and an operating agreement with BC Housing. The society operates 28 buildings with 178 units of non-profit rental housing and manages the surrounding land including the lane verges and north and south greenways. The Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation operates 24 supportive housing units and a day centre for people living with HIV/AIDS in a new building and heritage house at 1110 Comox Street.

# Mole Hill Partners

Mole Hill has numerous partnerships with community service organizations, including:



# **Heart House Society**

Temporary housing for non-locals recovering rom heart surgery at St. Paul's Hospital.



# **McLaren House**

Ten units reserved at Mole Hill for people who are living with HIV/AIDS



## MODO The Car Co-op

Four parking spots reserved for vehicle sharing.



# Vancouver Farmer's Market

Saturday market from June to October along the 1100 block of Comox Street.



Coast Foundation Society, a live-in program for young people with mental health issues.



## West End Resident's Association

Helps co-ordinate garden plots for community residents and oversaw the community project that created the light in the community square.



Main floor and basement of one of the houses.



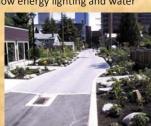
# Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation

Day health program and 24-hour nursing care residence for people living with HIV/AIDS. They also rent some units at Mole Hill.

# More About Mole Hill

Three principals provide the foundation for Mole Hill: affordable housing, environmental sustainability and heritage preservation. In Mole Hill, affordable housing was retained, improved and expanded. Large amounts of material were diverted from the landfill, buildings were upgraded with state of the art geothermal heating systems, low energy lighting and water

saving devices; parking spaces were reduced by over 80 per cent with stalls being reserved for a car co-operative and the lane narrowed for traffic calming and public benefits. Units in the buildings are modest in size, follow original floor plans where possible and are of high density, with about 80 units per acre, so that the grounds could be retained and heritage plants and mature trees preserved for storm water management and public space. Houses were carefully restored to preserve interior, as well as exterior heritage features, with sixty to seventy per cent, on average, of original material per house being retained, unlike most market restorations. Mole Hill can house up to 300 people and is a healthy mix of low end of market and subsidized units.





The public space was created to provide opportunities to view the heritage houses from a variety of angles, promote urban food production, and create naturalized areas. Community gardens were built with discarded materials from the renovations as well as donated materials from local businesses. Mole Hill tenants and local residents, through WERA (West End Resident's Association) partnered to do the actual construction of the garden areas. Tenants, with the assistance of Van Dusen Master Gardeners, volunteered to preserve heritage plants by moving, storing and

caring for them in temporary nurseries while construction occurred, then transplanted them back to their original or new locations. Naturalized areas (wildlife habitat areas) were created along the lane verges and in the north greenway to restore the original heritage context: the lane was originally a narrow dirt track with native vegetation bordering it well into modern times.

Many of the plants are native shrubs with edible berries to create an organic food source for people without access to specialized stores or gardening opportunities and because the public has always enjoyed picking berries in the Mole Hill lane. The native plants provide habitat for native bee populations and other beneficial insects such as butterflies and ladybugs, and safe habitat and food sources for many bird species, local and migratory, all of which help pollinate the plants in the community gardens. Before the wildlife habitat areas were established, many community gardeners had to hand pollinate their crops. These areas also act as traffic calming measures which allows the Mole Hill lane to be the heart of the community, as it has been throughout it's history.



# Tour



# Tendrell Street: The best restored Victorian-era streetscape in Vancouver.

#### 1103 Pendrel

Catherine Costello was the first resident and owner of this house that she had built in 1907. She was born in either 1855 or 1858 in the United States and her husband Michael was born in 1844 in Ireland. The Costellos were some of the earliest Vancouver residents arriving here before the great fire of 1886, which destroyed most of Vancouver in a mere twenty minutes. The Costellos first lived on a small farm in the area around 11th and Sophia while Michael was active in building and operating hotels and real estate speculation in the building boom that followed the fire. Costello also built and operated several canneries in New Westminster and Steveston, had interests in Alaska and organized and became president of the Alaska Fisheries Union. Costello seemed to be a genuinely decent fellow and was popular. Likely because of this and his many business interests, he was elected as an Alderman in 1889 and 1890. He died suddenly on October 14, 1901, at the age of 56 of a "racing heart" after only a few days illness. Catherine owned this house until her death on December 22, 1926 of a creerbral hemorrhage and after that ownership appeared to pass to her niece Kate. The family continued to own the house into the late 1930s and possibly until after WWII.

#### 1115/1117 Pendrell

Little is known of the original house that stood here except it was built around 1902 and was either burnt down or demolished around 1961 four years after the City of Vancouver purchased it. The current house is the Leslie Lane House, a Victorian cottage built in 1901 as a stable behind Umberto's Yellow House restaurant on Hornby St. It was donated to the Vancouver Heritage Foundation and moved to this site during the renovation of the block. It was restored by the Heritage Foundation and converted into two strata units, which were sold as a fundraising venture.

#### 1125 Pendrel

Watson House was built in 1897 and originally located at 909 Thurlow. In 1986 the house was sold to City of Vancouver for a dollar on the condition it be moved to a permanent location. The Mole Hill Community Housing Society restored the house in 2004 and now operates it as supportive housing in partnership with the Coast Foundation. The original house on this site was built in 1904 and was the mirror image of 1127 Pendrell next door, built by James Gillott. Its first resident was David Robinson who worked at the Dominion Government Assay Office. Mrs. Annie Oliver, a long time Mole Hiller, was the last resident and after she died in the late 1970s the house was demolished by the City of Vancouver.

#### 1127 Pendrel

James Gillott, a Newfoundlander who built this house in 1904-5, had experience in almost all aspects of the trade and shows up in city directories of the time listed as a plasterer, contractor, mason and builder. He built, and likely, designed Orange Hall at 297 East Hastings around the time he was building 1127 Pendrell Street and the original house next door. The first resident/owner was Charles D. MacKenzie who was usually listed in some profession relating to the real estate business. He lived here for over twenty years.

#### 1129-31 Pendrell

John and Isabella Evans were the first residents of this interesting house built in 1899, a Victorian house on the cusp of the Edwardian age with features from both eras.

#### 1133 Pendre

The house that stood here where the southern, more formal part of the Mole Hill greenway now winds through, was built in 1899 and was a typical Victorian house. The first residents were John McMillan, a clerk, his wife Maggie or Mary and their two children. The house was gone by 1970.

#### 1137 Pendrell

This is one of the oldest houses on the block and therefore in the city. Built in 1889 on the same full city lot as 1139 Pendrell, it seems likely that the first owners, who knew each other, purchased the property together. Robert Cosgrove was a labourer and worked for Thomas Tomkins and was about 28 when he built his home here. Cosgrove likely met Nelson Martin, his soon-to-be neighbour, on a construction site. Martin married Elizabeth Cosgrove, Robert's sister in 1888, the year they arrived in Vancouver.

The house was "modernized" in 1909 with a new concrete foundation, Edwardian style front porch and second front entrance. It may also have been moved back on the property, as originally it would have likely had a "setback" similar to 1139 Pendrell.

## 1139 Pendrel

Nelson Martin was born in Musselburgh, Scotland and came to Canada at the age of 21. He was in Winnipeg during the Reil Rebellion and served in the Canadian Home Guard. Nelson moved to Vancouver shortly after the Great Fire of 1886 and worked as a plasterer. He helped construct the first Hotel Vancouver at Georgia and Granville as well as other large city buildings of the time. Nelson was 25 and his wife Elizabeth was 24 when they built their home here. They had a daughter, Jean, in 1890. At one time, Martin was contracted to plaster several homes on Sea and Lulu Islands (now Richmond). To get there he had to walk to Eburne, now Marpole, and then row across the Fraser River to work (and presumably home again!). This has been dubbed "the Martin Walk". He died at the age of 88 on December 31, 1949 and his wife Elizabeth died at the age of 92 in December 1956.

This Victorian house, built in 1889, is a rare gem in Vancouver and resembles the famous "painted ladies" of San Francisco. The house is virtually intact inside and out and has been fully restored by Mole Hill. This house became the home of the first French Consul in Vancouver at the end of the 19th century. The Consul, Baron de St. Laurent, lived there with his wife Eva, a Canadian from Quebec.

## 1145 and 1147 Pendrell

1147 Pendrell was built in 1898 for Henry de la Vallee Poussin who owned the property but may not have ever lived here. It is not known who he was, what he did, where he came from or where he went but it is known that Colin Chisholm and Sarah Ralston and their four children were living here by 1901. Before restoration this house was virtually surrounded by additions with the original building mostly intact inside. There was also an addition where 1145 Pendrell is today that was attached to 1147 Pendrell across the front of both buildings. These were completed during the beginning, and at the end of WWII as people flooded to Vancouver for jobs in the various war industries that sprang up which created a huge demand for housing. Front porches were enclosed and additions added to houses wherever possible. At the end of the war soldiers were returning home, families were forming or reuniting and there was similar surge in the demand for housing. Unfortunately, the addition where 1145 Pendrell now stands was poorly done and could not be saved as a stand alone building, as was originally planned, and a stylistically sympathetic new building was built on the same spot. However, 1157 Pendrell next door still has its original rear addition, added during WWII. Its front addition was removed in order to restore the front facade of the house.

# 1157, 1159, 1163, 1169 and 1173 Pendrell

The first four of these Victorian houses (1157-1169) were built in pairs by Alex Bethune, a sort of jack-of-all-trades, in 1898 and 1899. Bethune himself lived in, and probably built, 1173 Pendrell, which was likely built in 1898, but possibly earlier as there were two young working class families, the Pitts and Powells, renting one of these properties from at least 1891. Bethune had a varied life and was born in 1852 in Peterborough, Ontario. He married Mary McIntosh at Pilot Mound, Manitoba in 1882 where he had become involved in the hardware and lumber business and was the Postmaster in Manitou, Manitoba. He arrived in Vancouver in the fall of 1891 and worked with Mills and Bethune: boots and shoes, and was also involved in building and contracting. Starting in 1894 Bethune was elected as an Alderman several times and eventually became Mayor of Vancouver in 1907. Hilda Fuchs was a long-term Mole Hill tenant at 1173 Pendrell from the 1950s until 2001.

# Bute Street: Varied development patterns of pre-World War I West End.

#### 1086 Bute

Strathmore Lodge was built in 1911 by Jacob Valdone Lightheart (who continued to live there until quite recently) and G. E. Lightheart and was originally named the Royal Alexandra. It was one of the early great apartment buildings in Vancouver and was built on the site of Albert Edward Beck's original 1891 house, which fronted onto Comox. In 1927 the Royal Alexandra suffered a fire that was one of the worst in Vancouver's history. Several people died in the blaze and it likely destroyed the original house at 1180 Comox. The building, though badly damaged, was repaired with much alteration (interior and exterior) and became the Strathmore Lodge.

#### 1104 Bute

This Victorian house originally fronted onto Pendrell Street and occupied the entire lot along Bute to the lane with a stable where the house currently stands. It was built in 1893 by Lister Nevile Smith and occupied by the Smith family until 1911. Around 1907 Percy Nevile Smith (then listed as the owner) probably moved the house to its present location and by 1908 had subdivided the lot into four sections on which he built three identical Edwardian houses and proceeded to rent them out. In 1911, George W. S. Withers, an assistant relief officer with Associated Charities, was renting at 1104 Bute. The house was remodeled into a rooming house in 1928 with additions added around 1939. The current owner made extensive changes to the interior and exterior and little of the original house remains, although most of the additions were retained along with the shingle detail on the gable ends.

# 1110, 1116 and 1122 Bute

These three identical houses are excellent examples of Edwardian architecture with large open front porches. They were built in 1908 and have had a variety of renters and owners since they were first built. 1110 and 1122 Bute have been restored to their original interior and exterior appearance, including the heritage colours, by the society. 1116 was converted to a strata title with some interior restoration and original exterior restoration with the exception of the original colours which were likely similar to the other two.



# Thurlow Street: Speculative housing and its evolution alongside modern architecture.

## 1077-79, 1083-89 and 1069 Thurlow

By 1930 many of the Mole Hill homes had many tenants living in tight quarters. For example the house at 1069 Thurlow, demolished in 1977 by the City of Vancouver, had three families and four roomers living in a building that probably had two shared water closets and one bath. This was typical of most of the Mole Hill homes at the time. This house, built by Peter Agren in 1906, was very similar to 1136 and 1140 Comox and stood along with 1077-79 and 1083-89 Thurlow where the current Dr. Peter Centre is today. 1077 to 1083 Thurlow were sometimes known as the Thurlow Apartments and were two wood frame, house-like apartment buildings that were later joined together along with the house at 1069 Thurlow. All were built in 1906-7.

## 1101, 1107, 1113 and 1119 Thurlow

These houses sit on what was originally one city lot. They were built in 1903 by contractor B. Davidson, for the owner Robert C. Boyle, an MD who seemed more interested in real estate speculation than medicine. Most of these were purpose built rental housing and were originally identical with the exception that 1101 Thurlow was a mirror image of the rest. In the 1920s, 1107 Thurlow was altered and slightly enlarged in a rather well done renovation. 1101 Thurlow, privately owned, has been altered several times in recent decades, including stucco, enclosing the front porch, adding the garage and deck, all of which left the interior relatively intact. The last alteration, a few years ago, removed most of the heritage features from the interior and many remaining ones from the exterior. There is still original cladding under the stucco exterior. The other houses, including 1107 Thurlow, have survived well and when restored by the society were found to have a remarkably high degree of interior heritage features (though some were hidden) as well as most of the original exteriors, intact.

The first resident of 1119 Thurlow was William J. Massey who was with the Queen's Own Rifles, Northwest Field Force at Batoche, in 1885 during the Riel Rebellion. He and his wife, Dorothy, were originally from Ontario and were living in Vancouver by 1899. Massey had a number of occupations from wholesaling wines and spirits to autos and cycles. He died in 1952 at the age of 88. A number of other residents came and went in these homes, such as Kate Moore, a widower, who was the first resident in 1107 Thurlow followed by John P. McConnell, vice-president and editor of *BC Saturday Sunset* "The Finest Family Weekly in Canada- Subscription \$2.00 a year". It lasted only about a year, in fact, along with McConnell's residency. Taylor Hanna, a barber, and Daniel Anderson, a carpenter, had much longer tenures in the years leading up to 1924.

# Comox Street: Examples of working and middle class housing from 1888-1950.

#### 1180 Como

The current house on this property was built in 1950 but was not the original, which was a Victorian house likely, built by Edward Hobson, who built 1170 Comox in 1898. The house here was probably destroyed in 1927 in the fire at the Royal Alexandra Apartments next door. The lot was vacant until 1950 when the first resident of the new house, Fred Eaton, a philatelist at the Stanley Stamp Co., moved in. It is privately owned and part of Strathmore Lodge.

#### 1170 Como

This house, built in 1898 by Edward Hobson who likely lived here for a time, is a fine example of the transition between Victorian and Edwardian architecture.

#### 1164 Comov

Built in 1894 for Francis Bowser, this house sits on an original full city lot, one of only two in the block, in a setting that is decidedly rural.

Bowser came to Vancouver in 1888, he had been born in Kingston (now Rexton) New Brunswick. After going to sea at age 17 he made his way, via Michigan, Wisconsin and Brandon to Moose Jaw where he worked in and owned a general store. He came to BC in 1883 and was working on the construction of the CPR in the Yale District. He then moved to Port Hammond, then to Victoria where he worked for the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company in 1885 and married Julia Sinclair. In Vancouver, Bowser worked at Dominion Customs and invested in real estate. Bowser eventually became instrumental in the development of Kerrisdale where he lived and was Reeve of Point Grey, then a separate municipality, in 1910. His brother William Bowser became Attorney-General and later Premier of BC for most of 1916 before being ousted due to various

#### 1160 Comox

This is the oldest houses on the block and one of only a few oldest surviving houses in the city, and the only one in its original streetscape context. When William Mace built his home in 1888, it was practically alone on the summit of this hill and the city of Vancouver was barely two years old. Mace, a house carpenter, his wife Frances and their three young children all came to BC from the Maritimes. This is a unique house and has a number of features that stand out such as the large windows, a beautiful spiral staircase and remarkable handmade interior detail. The Edwardian front porch was likely added in the early 1900s.

#### 1154 Comox

Built around 1906 this house boasts a beautiful and intact interior. The first resident was Charles Rummel who worked for the BC Electric Railway. At some point the front portion of the house was literally sawn off and an extension inserted in, probably to increase the living space for lodgers. This may have occurred when the rear addition was added along with some alteration to the front facade, likely in the early 1920s by the Marr family when it became Braemar Lodge.

#### 1150 Comox

This house was designed and built in 1903 by John Matheson, an early Vancouver contractor and builder who also had the expertise to provide architectural designs. He later went into business with his son, Robert Matheson, who eventually went on to fame as a founding partner in Townly and Matheson architects. This house is a relatively rare late representation of Queen Anne Revival architecture. The first residents were Roy MacGowan, born in 1869, and his wife Emma Snowden, born in 1880, married in 1904. MacGowan was the son of businessman and MLA Alexander MacGowan and worked for his father's company, MacGowan and Company, one of the largest shipping commission and insurance enterprises in the city. Within a few years, a variety of renters lived in the house and an addition to the rear was built. Around 1954 the last owners, David and Pauline Gilmour, moved in and lived at this address until their deaths in 2009 and 2010.

#### 1146 Comox

This house was built around 1904. Henry Anstie, a jeweller, with his wife Kathleen and their children were the original owners and residents. In 1904 Anstie was working at his own establishment at 148 Cordova Street, later moving into the Arts and Crafts Building at 576 Seymour St., which coincided with the slow movement west and north of the downtown of Vancouver. The Anstie family continued to live here until 1939. Before restoration this house was not considered to be heritage as the exterior was covered to stucco. With its hexagonal turret, the somewhat exotic looking hipped roof and bell-cast eaves, finely detailed interior trim, casings and stairs, this house is a fine example of middle class housing of its period.

## 1136 and 1140 Comox

Peter Agren, a rather active speculative builder in this area between 1905 and 1911, built both these houses in 1907. These properties were owned by Jane Curry and sold or transferred as one parcel to D. R. O'Neill and J. B. Paine sometime in late 1906 before being sold to Agren in 1907. Agren himself, along with an M. Agren, a carpenter and possibly his brother, were the first residents of 1136 Comox. Another tenant besides M. Agren was James Thomas Williams, a clerk. Like most other homeowners in Mole Hill at the time, Agren had lodgers. It was not unusual for an owner to have several relatives and non-relatives renting in their home. Peter Agren also built Washington Court at 998 Thurlow in 1911 and 859 Thurlow in 1910.

Benjamin Williscroft, contractor, and family were the first to live in 1140 Comox. Jean Williscroft was a dressmaker and bodice maker employed at W. Goldbloom and Mabel Williscroft worked at Charles W. Hills & Co., 940 Granville St. In 1914 William Oscar Black, employed in auto supplies moved in. He had also been a contractor until the worldwide depression in 1913. Black was originally from Orillia, Ontario and was a veteran of the Fenian Raid of 1886.

## 1132-1134 Comox

The house that stood on this property, now part of Mole Hill's public access greenway, restored with native plants and a daylighted stream, was built in 1889 by the Curry and Earle family as a duplex on what is now 1126 to 1140 Comox Street inclusive. The house was originally straddling the lot line between 1136 Comox and the greenway. This may have been a small farm as there were only a scattering of buildings in the area and it was a long horsehide on muddy roads to downtown Vancouver, which was then around Cordova Street. Water was drawn from wells (or the creek that ran through here) and the backyard would have featured an outhouse or two and a stable. The house was surreptitiously demolished by the City of Vancouver in 1991 thus setting the stage for the future of the entire block.

## 1126 Comox

This house was built in 1942 for Marta and Wall Rivers by P. Carlson. The Rivers built their house on the vacant east quarter of the Curry and Earles original property. The rather ferocious looking dragon heads on the bargeboards are based in Norse legends and are rumoured to repel beings with evil intent. The Rivers were originally from Norway and were in the restaurant business and operated the reputedly popular Rivers Cafe in Vancouver. Mr. Rivers painted as a hobby and some of his murals may still be on the walls and french doors of the house. Marta Rivers was reputed to be a "crack shot" and both were outdoor enthusiasts. Marta outlived her husband by a couple of decades and died, still living in her home at the age of 97, in 1998. She was amongst the longest residing community member in Mole Hill. The house is privately owned.

## 1120 and 1122 Comox

These houses were built in 1904 by Stanley Judson Steeves with 1122 Comox being designed by the well-regarded architectural team of Thomas Fee and John Parr. 1120 Comox is a mirror image that Steeves did with some minor differing details such as porch columns and gable shingle design. Andrew Johnson, a tailor, was the first resident in 1122 Comox and William Moore, a commercial traveler, the first at 1120 Comox.

## 1114 and 1110 Como

These two Edwardian houses were built together in 1906 as a mirror image pair by Sam Castleman, an entrepreneur typical in Vancouver at the time, who was involved anywhere a dollar was to be made. Castleman and others in these houses were not long at these addresses and quickly moved on, some to wealthier parts of town and some to obscurity. One unusual occupant in 1912 was the Vancouver Sanitarium (located at 1114 Comox) but the following year it had moved.

It is postulated that the turret on 1110 Comox was originally either round or meant to be round, however, even in renovation this couldn't be determined for certain. By 1911 it was square so there may have been a fire and it was repaired in that manner, although a grander house built for H. T. Ceperley on West Georgia St. in 1889 had a much larger, square turret. For many years these houses and the ones adjacent at 1120 and 1122 Comox were the most well-known and visible of the Mole Hill homes. Both feature expansive neo-classical front porches, bell-cast eaves and hipped roofs. Currently, 1110 Comox Street has been restored and is part of the Dr. Peter Centre, built in 2003.