

West Bay Residents Association

Community Update: February 2023

Email: WestBayResidentsAssoc@shaw.ca

Website: www.westbayresidents.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/westbayresidentsassociation

Unbuilding a West Bay Heritage House

Welcome to this edition of our WBRA Update on the topic of *'unbuilding'* the heritage house located at 820 Dunsmuir Road in West Bay, Esquimalt. Heritage homes are an important part of our cultural heritage and architectural history, but sometimes they are no longer viable as homes or they are in disrepair. Unbuilding, also known as deconstruction, is the process of carefully dismantling a building in order to preserve as much of the original materials as possible for reuse or recycling. In this Update, we will explore the process of unbuilding a heritage house, including some of the benefits, challenges, and best practices for preserving and reusing the construction materials and artifacts of these special structures.



Historic homes like Tyn-Y-Coed are important as they provide tangible connections to our past by representing the stories and the events that helped to shape the community.



Tyn-Y-Coed

The house at 820 Dunsmuir Road was 130 years old when it was Unbuilt. Built in 1892 at the corner of Dunsmuir Road and Wollaston Street, the property looked down to a shallow bay of the Victoria Harbour.

The house was named Tyn-Y-Coed, which is Welsh for 'House in the Forest'. The location must have resembled what now remains at Highrock Park with tall Douglas Firs and wide branching Garry Oaks. Few homes would have been in the area. Tyn-Y-Coed was designed by architect John Gerhard Tiarks. He was a young British architect recently emigrated to Victoria.

In England during the late Victorian era, there was renewed interest in architecture from the late medieval period. Architecture that reflected this interest was known as Queen Anne Revival.



John Gerhard Tiarks

Tiarks incorporated Queen Anne style architectural flourishes into his design at 820 Dunsmuir. Specifically, the house featured Tudor style half timbering woodwork on the front gable and contrasting horizontal woodwork across the asymmetric front of the house. The staircase was illuminated by three narrow vertical panels of stained glass windows. The front bay window had a distinctive cupola curved roof. The use of contrasting building textures, in this case, the fish scale shingles, plaster and wood siding, were also part of the Queen Anne vernacular.

Tiarks became a popular architect in Victoria. He designed Clovelly in 1894. This was the mansion that occupied the site which is now Bernard Park, just down the Sea Terrace from 820 Dunsmuir. His residence on Lampson built in 1898, opposite Lampson Street Public School, is

still standing. Tragically Tiarks died in 1901 at the age of 34, the result of injuries sustained from a bicycle accident.

The original owner of Tyn-Y-Coed was Hans Price, who was a stores department clerk at HM Dockyard. Price designed the first golf course in BC in the early 1890's: the Macauley Golf Links. This course covered land which is now Macauley School, Work Point, and Macauley Point. Two years after his house at 820 Dunmuir was built, Price had the same house built for him on 1024 Munro St in an area known as Macauley Plains. This location was more convenient for him to play the Macauley Golf Links! The house, known as Mountain View, is still standing.

Unbuilders

Unbuilders is the company hired by Large and Co., the developers, to deconstruct the heritage building at 820 Dunsmuir Road. They are a well-known and experienced deconstruction and salvage company. Dan Armishaw, a fourth-generation islander who runs Unbuilders's Vancouver Island operations, notes "We dismantle buildings and salvage almost everything, including irreplaceable Old Growth lumber, windows, doors, cabinets, fixtures and appliances."

Deconstruction is the process of carefully dismantling a building in order to salvage and reuse as much of the materials as possible. Traditional demolition of a building including heritage buildings typically involves using heavy machinery such as excavators and bulldozers to quickly bring down the structure. The focus is on speed and efficiency, rather than the preservation of materials or historical elements. This process can cause damage to the building and may result in the loss of significant historical and architectural elements. Additionally, the debris created by traditional demolition is often sent to landfills.



Deconstruction of a heritage building involves a more thoughtful and deliberate approach, as the goal is to preserve as much of the historical and architectural elements of the building as possible. This process typically begins with a thorough assessment of the building to identify any historically or architecturally significant elements that should and can be salvaged. These elements are then carefully removed, tagged and catalogued for storage, reuse or adaptive repurposing. The remaining materials are then carefully removed, with an emphasis on preserving as much as possible for reuse or recycling.

It's worth noting that the deconstruction process may take longer and cost more than traditional demolition, but it can provide environmental, economic and historical benefits that traditional demolition cannot. Additionally, it can help to preserve the character and history of a community.

Dan says that Unbuilders's corporate vision is "a construction industry where deconstruction and remanufacturing replaces demolition and disposal".

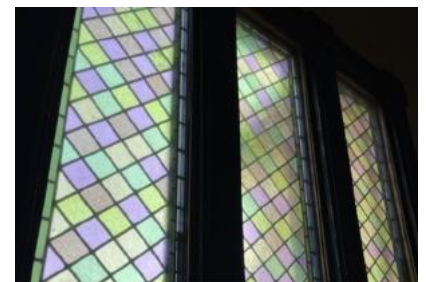
More info about the benefits and challenges of unbuilding a heritage house

Unbuilding or deconstructing a heritage house can have a number of benefits, including:

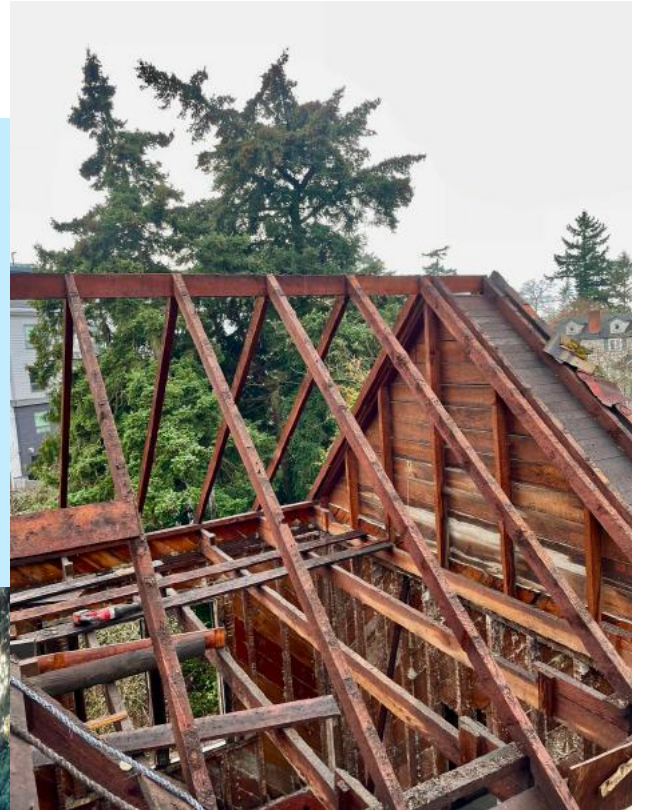
- **Environmental:** Deconstruction allows for materials to be salvaged and reused, reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills and the need to extract and process new materials.
- **Economic:** Salvaging materials from a deconstructed heritage house can be less expensive than purchasing new materials, and may also create jobs in the salvage and construction industries.
- **Historical preservation:** Deconstruction allows for the preservation of historically significant architectural elements, such as moldings, fixtures and wood, that can be reused in other buildings, furniture and art pieces.
- **Reuse of the wood and masonry, etc.** Some of the wood in these homes is original old growth, of a quality not easily found these days.
- **Community development:** Deconstruction can help preserve the character and history of a community, and can be a way to revitalize neighborhoods by making way for new development that is sensitive to the area's
- So, if it's so good, why don't municipalities require unbuilding or deconstruction. Some jurisdictions, such as Victoria, B.C., do just that. They have enacted a Demolition Waste and Deconstruction Bylaw.

• While deconstruction and salvaging materials from heritage houses or other buildings have many benefits, it is not a requirement by many municipalities for a number of reasons that may include:

- **Cost:** Deconstruction may initially be more expensive than traditional demolition, as it requires additional labor and equipment to carefully remove and salvage materials.
- **Limited market for salvaged materials:** Not all materials can be reused or recycled, and there may not be a sufficient market for certain materials in a given area at a given time.
- **Limited availability of deconstruction professionals:** Deconstruction requires specialized skills and knowledge, and there may not have been enough trained professionals available in a given area.
- **Limited regulations:** Not all municipalities have regulations in place to encourage or require deconstruction, and may not feel that they have the resources or personnel to enforce such regulations at this time.
- **Limited public awareness:** Deconstruction is a relatively new concept and not all people are familiar with it, but this is changing rapidly.



The walls come tumbling down.





Victoria's Demolition Waste and Deconstruction Bylaw

The City of Victoria has recently introduced their Demolition Waste and Deconstruction Bylaw (DWDB) in order to salvage valuable wood and other construction materials from homes being demolished in Victoria. Material from the construction sector represents more than one-third of Victoria's landfilled waste. Salvaging reusable and recyclable materials from building demolitions in Victoria has the potential to divert 3,000 tonnes of waste from the landfill every year.

The bylaw will be implemented in two phases to grow industry capacity. Find out more about Victoria's DWDB Bylaw here:

<https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/waste-reduction/construction-waste.html>



The Unbuilding process of Tyn-y-Coed took about 2 months to reveal the foundation of the house. It had rested on beams placed on top of brick and cement pillars that sat in earth. The foundation timbers were still in good shape: "There was barely any rot, just a bit at some beam ends" (One of the Unbuilders)

Repurposed Materials

Here are just a few examples of the many materials coming from the unbuild process, ready for



Skim Sanded Shiplap



Custom cut beams



Slab for furniture/bench



Assortment of historical and architectural materials for use in other homes and buildings

Goodbye to the old and hello to the new.

While we say goodbye to a much-loved piece of our West Bay history, we also look forward to welcoming a new development soon to grace the corner lot of Dunsmuir Road and Wollaston Street. Developer Large and Co will begin construction on their recently approved seven townhouse development there, providing much needed new homes to families in our neighbourhood.

