

Statement of Significance

Vinson House

1425 Gordon Avenue

West Vancouver, BC

May 2008

Historic Place

The historic place is the Vinson House and its property. The house, built in 1913, is a large one-and-a-half storey, Craftsman-style bungalow on an over-sized lot on Gordon Avenue, in the lower Ambleside area of West Vancouver.

Heritage Value

The historic place has heritage value for its architecture, its age, the development patterns it illustrates, and the significance of its original owner.

The Vinson House is an excellent, very early, and unusually intact example of a Craftsman-style bungalow (also called a California bungalow) to be built in the area. It provides a valuable link with the early architecture and the history of West Vancouver. It illustrates many features of this style, which was so important to architectural development in the Lower Mainland. The style was just coming into its own in 1913, when the house was built.

The house also has value as a very early example of a large permanent residence in West Vancouver, built at a time when much construction was restricted to second homes and cottages. It sits on the southern edge of what was originally a 5.4-acre lot, which stretched north from Gordon Avenue to Inglewood Avenue and half a block west from 14th Street. This represents one-quarter of a District Lot (the NE ¼ of DL 1054), which was a typical real estate purchase at the time. Unusual for West Vancouver and particularly for Ambleside, the property was not subdivided until 1940. It now sits on one-quarter of an acre. The mixture of ages and lot sizes of the houses in this neighbourhood, which reveal subdivision patterns, illustrates the themes of peopling West Vancouver and creating neighbourhoods.

The house also has historical value for having been built for Valient Vivian Vinson, who was born in Ohio, arrived in Vancouver from Oregon around 1907, and decided to settle in the Ambleside area of West Vancouver. The residence befitted a man of his means. Vinson was one of West Vancouver's more prominent pioneers. He played a very important role in the early development of both the municipality and the community, serving as Councillor in 1915 and holding the office of Reeve in 1918-20, 1922, and 1927-29, having been defeated

at the polls only once. During his term as Reeve in 1918 West Vancouver Municipal Council published an illustrated publicity brochure entitled *Visit West Vancouver*, which extolled the virtues of living here: "The garden spot of Greater Vancouver ... on the sunny side of English Bay" and encouraged people to make it their home. The Vinson House is featured prominently on the front cover of the brochure.

Much was accomplished during Vinson's terms in office, and represents the theme of governing West Vancouver. His death in 1934 at the age of 56 "threw the whole municipality this week into a state of gloom. And in view of his long and faithful public service it is only right and proper that this should be so. In his death West Vancouver has lost a very true and faithful citizen and we a loyal friend." (*West Vancouver News*, March 29, 1934)

Vinson was a well known professional photographer who owned and ran the King Studio on Hastings Street, one of the oldest established photographic studios in Vancouver. Many early West Vancouver school photos were taken by the King Studio. Vinson would have commuted to and from work on the ferry from the foot of 14th Street in Ambleside. His business life therefore represents the themes of making a living and moving to and from.

Vinson Creek, which runs through the British Properties and Ambleside, and through what used to be the Vinson estate, was named after him.

Character Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the Vinson House include:

- The location at the rear of a ¼-acre lot and the relationship to the streetscape on Gordon Avenue, which remains unchanged from the original construction and suggests the original estate-sized property.
- The mature gardens at front of the property.
- The mixture of post-1940 bungalows and other house-types that surround the house on all sides, and which reveal the later patterns of development.
- The exterior features of the house, typical of the Craftsman style, which include a front-gable roof with hipped dormers on the side slopes; the symmetrical massing, with paired and triple square tapered porch pillars; the original entry doors; the flared window surrounds; the triangular eave brackets, and the second-floor porch (now glassed in).
- The wood -frame construction, typical of the Craftsman style, clad in original cedar shingles.
- Interior features typical of a Craftsman-style house, including the original fir floors and fir and plywood doors (reportedly an example of one of the earliest uses of plywood); original staircase and built-in cabinets in the dining room and master bedroom; original corner brick fireplace in the

living room; original pocket doors between hall and dining room; and the beamed ceilings and wooden detailing on the walls of the living room, dining room and master bedroom