

DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE AS “BETTER HOUSING SCHEME”



IN 1920, ERNEST GLENESK HIRED CARPENTER ANDREW YATES to build his \$4,500 bungalow at 2978 West 5th Avenue in Vancouver's burgeoning suburb of Kitsilano.¹ The bungalow was one of the first of 153 to be built as part of Vancouver's "Better Housing Scheme," a component of a federal government program initiated to finance and construct veterans' and low-cost homes during the period of severe housing shortage and economic recession that

by Jana Tyner

A SOCIAL INDICATOR: THE BUNGALOW IN VANCOUVER



followed the First World War. The modest one-and-one-half storey bungalow was built in the Craftsman aesthetic, with shingle siding, rustic brick supporting piers and chimney, wide eaves with exposed timber rafters, a simple gable roof, and a wide veranda (figure 1). Its simple plan combined a unified living-dining area and adjoining kitchen with a private enclave of bedrooms separated from the public area by a narrow corridor.

Figure 1. 2978 West 5th Avenue, Vancouver, built as part of the Better Housing Scheme for \$4,500 in 1920. (J. Tyner, 1995)



Figure 2 (left). 3478 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, built as part of the Better Housing Scheme for \$3,300 in 1920. This bungalow has been raised since its construction to make room for a basement suite, and the facade has been sided with vinyl. (J. Tyner, 1995)



Figure 3 (right). 3250 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, built as part of the Better Housing Scheme for \$3,500 in 1919. (J. Tyner, 1995)

While the 153 homes constructed under the Vancouver scheme were not identical to the bungalow located on West 5th Avenue, there was an underlying pattern to them (figures 2, 3). Through their design, these bungalows evoked associations of sheltered domesticity, artistic sensibility, practical simplicity, efficiency, and craftsmanship.

Although part of a broader federal housing program, Vancouver's Better Housing Scheme is distinctive within Canada in the manner in which its homes were integrated into the existing real estate market, rather than located in a planned community setting; in its adoption of the Anglo-American Craftsman bungalow, in combination with its ideological associations, as its model; and in the role played by the provincial lumber industry in influencing this choice of an Arts and Crafts aesthetic. Like other federal housing schemes, Vancouver's program adapted the contemporary rhetoric regarding the importance of a home-owning population to the economic and social stability of the nation, and to the renewed emphasis on domesticity and the nuclear family which followed the First World War.

These Better Housing Scheme bungalows illustrate how various discourses—political, economic, and familial—functioned together in post-First World War Vancouver to support a move towards a more modest house type and to maintain the existing system of land ownership. The economic and cultural developments that form the context of the development of this move were not unique to Canada: similar developments occurred in the United States and Great Britain.² How, then, did the bungalow find its way to a lower-middle-class suburb in Vancouver, and how did it come to be adopted as the model for a civic housing program?

In choosing an Arts and Crafts model for its Better Housing Scheme, Vancouver differentiated itself from its eastern Canadian counterparts, where housing scheme participants typically favoured two-storey brick Edwardian-inspired houses. Adoption of the Craftsman-style bungalow embodied broad social and economic forces in post-war Vancouver: the social forces were associated with emerging ideological concerns—the single family home presented as a national goal, the changing role of women in the domestic environment, the rhetoric of economy and efficiency and its relation to the Arts and Crafts tradition; the economic forces were tied to Vancouver's real estate and lumber industries, thus capturing the two major components of the city's economic engine.

The rapid population growth in Vancouver leading up to and immediately following the First World War, coupled with post-war material shortages, had resulted in a serious housing crisis during the 1920s. Vancouver's severe housing congestion was characterized by rising rents and diminishing vacancies: between 1916 and 1918, building costs rose an average of 48 percent, and rents increased 50 percent across Canada.³ In October 1919, the *Vancouver Sun* reported that

Vancouver has more families than there is living room for. Many of these groups are jammed in with friends or relatives and all are at the mercy of the landlords Every apartment house is filled and many have long 'waiting lists.' Medium sized, and priced, houses are greatly in demand.⁴

1 City of Vancouver Archives, Council Minutes, 1920 [13-E-6]; Finance Department, Better Housing Scheme Ledger Account 1920-1925 [113-A-15]; Better Housing Scheme Ledger 1920 [117F-2].

2 For a history of the move towards a modern house type in America, see Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), and *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Anthony King, *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984); and Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work and Family Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984).

3 Bruce Macdonald, *Vancouver: A Visual History* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1992), 36-41; Michael Simpson, *Thomas Adams and the Modern Planning Movement: Britain, Canada and the United States, 1900-1940* (London: Alexandrine Press, 1985), 95.

4 "Housing Problem Presages Progress," *Vancouver Sun*, 26 October 1919, 8.

Vancouver experienced regular bouts of unemployment during this period due to the intermittent influx of seasonal workers from the canneries, forests, mines, and farms. Strikes were common. Labour unrest culminated in August 1918 with Canada's first twenty-four hour general strike, instigated in protest over the murder of labour activist Ginger Goodwin by a Dominion police officer.⁵ In support of the June 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, which had erupted from a desire for adequate employment and collective bargaining power, Vancouver workers participated in a second general strike. *The Labour Gazette* reported that thirty-two strikes involving 22,788 employees had commenced across Canada during June, and that there were in existence at some time or other during the month eighty strikes, involving about 87,917 workers.⁶

Following the devastation and demoralization engendered by the First World War, many Canadians felt a strong desire to return to "normalcy" and the "traditional" ways of life typical of pre-war times. Women who had become active in the workforce during the war were expected to return to their role as wives and mothers, relinquishing their jobs to the returning soldiers. It is generally accepted that the First World War, while not precipitating the trend, did dramatically accelerate the process of integrating women into the workforce. The result had been a temporary influx of women into almost every trade.⁷ Beginning in 1916, women were regularly employed in traditionally male-dominated jobs, working as engineers, clerks, managers, and inspectors in the railway, steel, and cement trades. In 1916, the Imperial Munitions Board published an illustrated pamphlet entitled "Women in the Production of Munitions in Canada" to encourage women into this area of manufacturing.⁸

Yet by 1920 the mood had changed. In Vancouver, returning soldiers pushed the unemployment rate to 22 percent,⁹ resulting in increased pressure on women to leave their jobs in the city and return home to their families. Veronica Strong-Boag has proposed that the vehemence with which women were scapegoated for men's loss of jobs following the war suggests just how much many Canadians had invested in ideas about family, home, and women's place.¹⁰ In 1918, the Canadian Civil Service Commission determined job competitions on the basis of sex so male veterans no longer had to compete with women for jobs.¹¹ A bulletin from 1919 circulated by the Canadian Department of Labour stated:

To women workers: Are you working for love or for money? Are you holding a job you do not need? Perhaps you have a husband well able to support you and a comfortable home? You took a job during the war to help meet the shortage of labour. You have "made good" and you want to go on working. But the war is over and conditions have changed. There is no longer a shortage of labour. On the contrary [the country] is faced by a serious situation due to the number of men unemployed. This number is being increased daily by returning soldiers. They must have work. The pains and dangers they have endured in our defence give them the right to expect it. Do you feel justified in holding a job which could be filled by a man who has not only himself to support, but a wife and family as well? Think it over.¹²

It was at this moment that the federal Unionist government under Prime Minister Borden acted by implementing a housing scheme designed to alleviate the immediate housing shortages throughout Canada's large cities, to provide the "comfortable home" alluded to by the Department of Labour.¹³ In 1919, the Federal Government approved the recommendation put forth by the Minister of Finance to loan monies to the provincial governments to promote the creation of better housing for the industrial population of Canada's larger cities. Due to the apparent urgency of the housing situation, the Order-in-Council was authorized under the provisions of the War Measures Act, thereby requiring neither debate in the House of Commons nor legislation. In so doing, the federal government labelled the scheme as a temporary, expedient measure to address an emergency situation, rather than a long-term plan for affordable housing in Canada. The Order-in-Council provided \$25 million to the provincial governments, to be loaned over a 20-year-period at a deflated interest rate of five percent. The provinces would lend this money to municipalities, which would then make repayable loans to individuals who satisfied the requirements of the housing scheme to build their own homes.

The Housing Committee of the Privy Council was subsequently appointed to formulate the general principles and regulations to be followed in any housing

5 Graeme Wynn, "The Rise of Vancouver," in *Vancouver and Its Region*, Timothy Oke and Graeme Wynn, eds. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 114.

6 *The Labour Gazette*, July 1919, 792.

7 For information on women in the work force during the First World War, see Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, "Women During the Great War," in *Women at Work: Ontario, 1850-1930*, Janice Acton, Penny Goldsmith, and Bonnie Shepard, eds. (Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974); Barbara Riley, "Six Saucepans to One: Domestic Science vs. the Home in British Columbia, 1900-1930," in *British Columbia Reconsidered*, Gillian Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag, eds. (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1992); Graham S. Lowe, "Women, Work, and the Office: The Feminization of Clerical Occupations in Canada, 1901-1931," in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, Anita C. Fellman and Veronica Strong-Boag, eds. (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1991); Mary Vipond, "The Image of Women in Canadian Mass Circulation Magazines in the 1920s," *Modernist Studies* 1, no. 3 (1974/1975): 5-14; Barbara Latham and Roberta J. Pazdro, eds., *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia* (Victoria: Camosun College, 1984); Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988).

8 Ramkhalawansingh, 274.

9 Macdonald, 40.

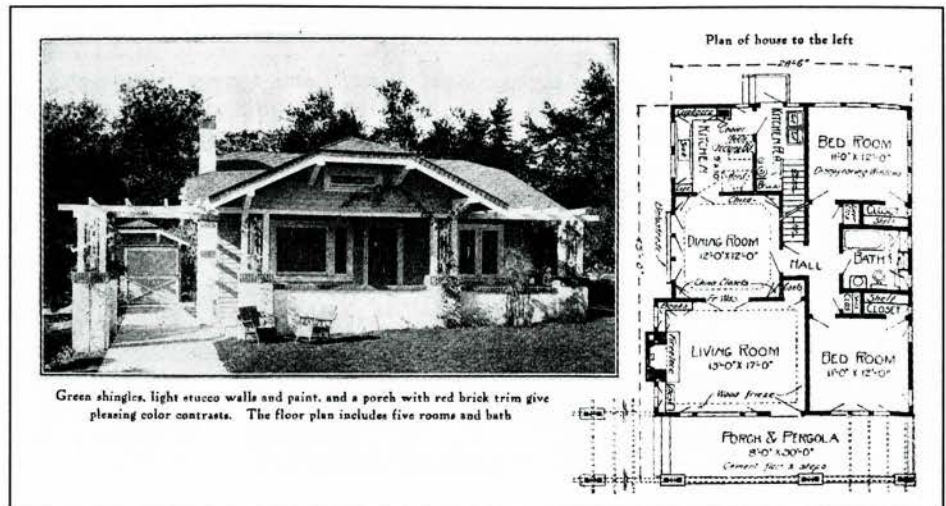
10 Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*, 47.

11 *Ibid.*, 62.

12 Ramkhalawansingh, 288.

13 For a study of the Federal Housing Scheme, see Andrew Eric Jones, *The Beginnings of Canadian Government Housing Policy, 1918-1924* (Ottawa: Centre for Social Welfare Studies, Carleton University, 1978). For a detailed study of British Columbia's participation in the scheme, see Jill Wade, "The 'Sting' of Vancouver's Better Housing 'Spree', 1919-1949," *Urban History Review* 21, no. 2 (March 1993): 92-103, and *Houses for All: The Struggle For Social Housing in Vancouver, 1919-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994). For a study of the housing scheme in Ottawa, see Jill Delaney, "The Garden Suburb of Lindenlea, Ottawa: A Model Project for the First Federal Housing Policy, 1918-24," *Urban History Review* 19, no. 3 (February 1991): 151-65.

Figure 4. Plans for a modest bungalow (*Sunset Magazine* 45, no. 6 [December 1920]: 70)



scheme developed by the provincial governments. In their report of 18 February 1919, the committee identified the objectives of the proposed scheme:

- a. to promote the erection of dwelling houses of modern character to relieve congestion of population in cities and towns;
- b. to put within the reach of all working men, particularly returned soldiers, the opportunity of acquiring their own homes at actual cost of the building and land acquired at a fair value, thus eliminating the profits of the speculator;
- c. to contribute to the general health and well-being of the community by encouraging suitable town planning and housing schemes.¹⁴

This “Better Housing Scheme” represented the first nationwide intervention by the federal government in housing. British Columbia participated extensively in the scheme, being the only province to exhaust its allocation. In the spring of 1919, the federal government agreed to loan \$1.5 million to the province, a figure which was eventually increased to \$1,701,500, with Vancouver, South Vancouver, and Point Grey receiving approximately \$500,000 of this amount.¹⁵ British Columbia’s housing scheme was distinct in Canada because of the special preference it conferred to returned soldiers; other provinces granted loans to working and middle-class citizens regardless of their participation in the Great War. In the early stages of the scheme, war veterans and war widows earning less than \$3,000 were the only recipients of government loans.¹⁶

In spite of Vancouver being predominantly a city of renters (the 1921 census of Canada reveals that 65.5 percent of Vancouver’s families rented, compared to 53.1 percent in Toronto and 57.4 percent in Winnipeg),¹⁷ the Better Housing Scheme advocated the detached, single-family home and individual ownership as its standard, and adopted the Craftsman bungalow as its model in Vancouver.¹⁸ By the 1920s, the bungalow was widely associated with the aesthetics and social tenets of the Arts and Crafts movement. Established in England in the mid 19th century by William Morris and inspired by John Ruskin, proponents of the Arts and Crafts devoted themselves to the crusade against what they perceived as the evils of Victorian industrial life. Their objective was to counteract mass-produced, cheap goods by promoting design based on the intrinsic qualities of materials, structure, and craftsmanship, and to integrate art into every aspect of society.¹⁹ The popularization of the tenets of the English Arts and Crafts movement were transmitted to Canada by way of the United States through publications such as Gustav Stickley’s *The Craftsman*, or *Sunset Magazine* (figure 4), through British Columbian interpretations of this literature, and through British-trained architects.

Transported to a new set of historical circumstances in North America, the movement was adapted to fulfil a different set of needs and functions. Whereas Morris conceived of the Arts and Crafts movement as a means of improving the lives of the working class, the North American counterpart was most readily embraced by the middle classes, who viewed it as the antidote to their highly urbanized world. Yet, despite these differences, the Arts and Crafts movement in North America maintained its concern for the artistic and the rational. With its emphasis on unity with nature,

14 From “Report of the Housing Committee of the Dominion Government,” *The Labour Gazette*, April 1919, 447.

15 Statues of British Columbia, 1919, chapter 8 (Victoria: King’s Printers), 27-31.

16 Jones, 28.

17 From the 1921 census of Canada, as quoted in Jill Wade, *Houses For All*, 8-16.

18 The majority of the 153 houses built under this initiative in Vancouver were modestly priced examples of the Craftsman bungalow. The remaining houses were generally modest one-storey homes, often in the Cape Cod or Dutch Colonial modes.

19 King, *The Bungalow*; David Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Robert Stacey, *The Earthly Paradise: Arts and Crafts by William Morris and His Circle* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1993); Florence Boos, ed., *Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris* (Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press, 1990); Eileen Boris, *Art and Labour: Ruskin, Morris and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

simplicity, and natural materials, the Craftsman bungalow was seen to embody the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement. The movement was readily embraced in British Columbia, where the British umbilicum was strong in political and cultural life. In 1900, Robert McKay Fripp, an architect trained in England, established the Arts and Crafts Association of Vancouver. The association consisted of a dozen members who met regularly, attending weekly classes in painting, drawing, modelling, furniture design, architectural history, and drawing, and holding annual public exhibitions to display their products. The aims of the association included the encouragement of individual effort in the practice of the Arts and Crafts and the “encouragement of artistic feeling and knowledge, to bring the designer and the workman or craftsman into closer relationship.”²⁰

Popular literature similarly promoted the aims of the Arts and Crafts movement in Vancouver. Beginning in 1910, E. Stanley Mitton, a Vancouver architect and business person, joined with the Society of the Master Builders to publish the *Mitton Home Builder*. The journal, modelled loosely on Stickley’s *Craftsman* magazine,²¹ contained articles on planning a bungalow, advertisements for Vancouver craftsmen and designers, and house plans for purchase. Articles emphasized the beauty of homes built of natural materials such as wood and stone, quoting John Ruskin as further endorsement of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic. In the tradition of Stickley, who on the verso of each issue of the *Craftsman* included maxims endorsing a simple way of life, Mitton inscribed on his publication:

I believe in the religion of the family. I believe that the roof-tree is sacred, from the smallest fibre held in the soft, moist clutch of earth, to the smallest blossom on the topmost bough that gives its fragrance to the happy air. The family where virtue dwells with love is like a lily with a heart of fire—the faintest flower in all the world.²²

The Craftsman-style bungalow emphasized the importance of the family and its integrity: low-density, detached homes in semi-rural garden city settings in particular evoked associations of a “traditional” nuclear family that appealed to an urban society which feared the loss of traditional structure. In pre- and post-First World War North America, during its most rapid growth in popularity, the bungalow had come to represent the traditional values of the blissful nuclear family, with the husband and father as master of the home.²³ These values are illustrated by this ode to a bungalow from 1915:

Here neighbourly spirits shine clearly
And family life is implied
From the smoke of the brick built Dutch chimney
To the billowy curtains inside.
Here the home of American manhood
Independent and true in his life
With a welcome for friends and for neighbours
To share with his children and wife.²⁴

The formulation of the Canadian housing scheme in 1919 had been couched in rhetoric emphasizing the importance of the home to the family and the family to the stability of the country. Newton Rowell, the chair of the Privy Council and the primary advocate of the scheme, asserted in the House of Commons that:

We all recognize that the home is the unit of the nation, and that it is in the national interest that a man may have opportunity to rear his family in a comfortable house of his own, equipped with modern sanitary conveniences. The fact that a man owns his own home undoubtedly induces him to take a more practical interest in the affairs of the country and thus tends to the strength and stability of our national life.²⁵

E. Stanley Mitton, who frequently alluded in his journal to Ruskin and Morris as experts in design, advised readers in “The Bungalow Home” that

Whatever the material of which your bungalow is composed remember that boldness and simplicity of outline is the goal you must strive to reach. There is no element of character we admire in men and women so much as the quality of simplicity—nothing more to be abhorred than trickery or deceit, and as with people so with houses, for every dwelling is in a great measure the visible expression of the mental and moral standing of its occupants.²⁶

20 City of Vancouver Archives, Arts & Crafts Association of Vancouver, 1900-01, Minute Book, Add. Mss. 142.

21 “The Arts & Crafts Tradition in Vancouver,” exhibition catalogue, Cartwright Gallery, Vancouver, July 1986, p. 2.

22 *Mitton Home Builder* 1, no. 1 (March 1910).

23 For a history of the bungalow in Vancouver, see Deryck Holdsworth, “House and Home in Vancouver: The Emergence of a West Coast Urban Landscape, 1886-1929,” unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1981; “House and Home in Vancouver: Images of West Coast Urbanism, 1886-1929,” in Gilbert Stelter and Alan Artibise, eds., *The Canadian City: Essays in Urban and Social History* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1984); “Cottages and Castles for Vancouver Home-Seekers,” in Jean Barman and Robert A.J. McDonald, eds., *Vancouver Past: Essays in Social History* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986).

24 From *Keith’s Magazine on Home Building*, 1915, as quoted in Robert Winter, *The California Bungalow* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1980), 18.

25 Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 16 May 1919, 2532-33.

26 *Mitton Home Builder* 1, no. 1 (March 1910): 2.

The exterior form and materials of the Craftsman bungalow suggested a private, wooded retreat for the single family. Roughly finished wood, stained in browns and dark greens, covered the typical facade, and the bungalow was almost always surrounded by a private garden. In plan, the Craftsman bungalow privileged the values of the nuclear family, with an emphasis on the living room and its central hearth, a private garden, and spatial relationships that presumed to relieve the tedium of the housewife's domestic work. Its interior layout conveyed the notion of family intimacy in its focus on the living space, with the interconnected dining and living areas comprising approximately one-half of the main floor and forming the prominent space of the home, with the front door often opening directly into the living room (see **figure 4**). This area was typically decorated in natural materials, coloured in greenish browns and ochres, and accoutered with roughly hewn Mission furniture, exposed wooden beams, and weathered oak walls to replicate a wooded hunting or fishing lodge and to provide the working man a restful space in which to withdraw from his chaotic world in the city.

The masculine aesthetic of the living areas contrasted to the areas considered in the woman's sphere—the kitchen, the bathroom, and the bedroom. These spaces, painted light, cheerful colours to accord with the perceived feminine ideal, revealed a gender-based separation of spaces. Unlike the living areas that flowed together to encourage family unity, grouped around a central, prominent fireplace, the kitchen was physically separate, thus isolating the woman in her traditional domain. The bungalow kitchen was designed as a modern, efficient factory, taking up the minimum amount of space and accommodating but a single person. It was equipped with built-in cupboards and drawers, with mechanical gadgets such as vacuums and stoves that were intended to liberate the woman from mundane drudgery and to ensure that everything in the kitchen was “kept out of sight and spotlessly clean.”²⁷ Walls were enamelled or plastered and tiled for easy cleaning, and were painted white or pale green to convey cheeriness as well as hospital cleanliness. In “The Bungalow Home,” Mitton described the kitchen as “so sensibly planned, so economically arranged with regard to using every foot of space to the best advantage, that the painful drudgery of ‘keeping house’ is transformed into light, healthy, pleasant exercise. The old saying that ‘woman’s work is never done’ is no longer applicable. Now she has a distinct advantage over mere man, forced to toil ‘from sun to sun.’”²⁸

The use of the Craftsman aesthetic for Vancouver's Better Housing Scheme was supported by those connected with British Columbia's substantial real estate and lumber industries. Real estate was Vancouver's most important commodity, and in the first quarter of the 20th century, as today, real property was seen as a key to economic and social expansion. In addition, it could serve as insurance against social unrest; in 1918, for example, Vancouver realtors advocated a property-owning democracy as a guarantee of social stability, claiming that “selling houses on a monthly plan encourages the thrifty and the industrious.”²⁹ One-third of the top business people in the city worked as entrepreneurs involved with real estate,³⁰ including Harry Gale, Vancouver's mayor from 1918 to 1921 and a prominent railway and real estate promoter.

Vancouver's building industry had prospered before the war: the yearly value of building permits issued in Vancouver rose to \$18.5 million in 1911 as the city witnessed a dramatic increase in population and urban development. While the value dropped below \$1 million during the First World War (the 1911 figure was not equalled again until 1929),³¹ the frenzied pace of land development led Thomas Adams, the federal government's town planning advisor, to comment during one of his visits to Vancouver that the city “suffered from haphazard growth and speculation in real estate.” Vancouver City Council ignored Adams' urgings to abandon the orthogonal grid system of land division which had been adopted because of the ease with which plots could later be subdivided and sold.³²

An early-20th century *British Columbia Magazine* article entitled “Vancouver, A City of Beautiful Homes” linked the real estate market in Vancouver with B.C.'s resources: the author noted that British Columbia's “forests are fast being converted into lumber, and in their place, homes, unique and beautiful, are springing up Vancouver may well be proud of her beautiful homes, and of her great industries that are directly concerned with their promotion.”³³ Lumber was a pervasive economic force in Vancouver, as demonstrated by the numerous saw, shingle, and sash and door mills established along False Creek from the 1880s through to the 1910s. With the completion of the Panama Canal in 1914, the lumber export economy expanded

27 Jud Yoho, *Craftsman Bungalows* (Seattle: Judd Yoho & Merritt, 1920), 39, 49.

28 *Mitton Home Builder* 1, no. 1 (March 1910): 2.

29 Simpson, *Thomas Adams*, 95.

30 Macdonald, *Vancouver*, 36.

31 *Ibid.*, 37-41.

32 Wynn, “The Rise of Vancouver,” 105-122. Adams visited Vancouver throughout his term as national town planning advisor from 1914 to 1921.

33 “Vancouver, A City of Beautiful Homes,” *British Columbia Magazine* 12 (December 1911): 1313.

Figure 5 (left). Aladdin homes advertisement for "readi-cut" homes. (*Sunset Magazine* 46, no. 3 [March 1921]: 69)

Figure 6 (right). Plans for "A Popular Six Room Bungalow." (*Western Lumberman* 17 [April 1920]: 55)

with the growth of markets in South America, Africa, Australia, India, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Annual lumber exports from British Columbia increased by almost 300 percent between 1911 and 1920, to more than 146 million feet. This rise in exports was reflected in the construction of new port facilities such as Ballantyne Pier and Piers B, C, and D along the shores of Burrard Inlet.³⁴

The Craftsman-style bungalow was not only constructed of wood, as were most West Coast residential buildings at this time, but also finished with cedar shingles and siding and detailed with wooden dentils, brackets, and exposed beams. During the early 1920s, the use of wood as a decorative finish for residential designs was being progressively overshadowed by the use of other finishes, including stone, precast concrete blocks, and stucco. The bungalow became the ideal tool of lumber manufacturers to promote their products, and one was frequently offered as a prize at building trades exhibitions. The Shingle Association of B.C. raffled a \$5,000 bungalow at their 1921 Building Show, while a Western Home Building Exposition offered a "modern" \$4,000 bungalow, described as "electrically heated, and painted an ivory colour with buff trimmings, while the shingles are stained a light red. The interior finish shows oak, hemlocks, birch, pine and maple, all of which woods were used in construction."³⁵ The B.C. Red Cedar Shingles Company offered a miniature bungalow to school children as a prize for the best essay on "Why B.C. Red Cedar Shingles should be used for Roof and Siding." The winning essay outlined durability, economy, adaptability, and appearance in support of shingles, finishing with the assertion that "Bungalows look particularly artistic and cosy when shingles are used on the outside walls as well as on the roof. 'It pays to use them!'"³⁶

The *Western Lumberman*, a monthly journal published from Vancouver "representing the lumbering and woodworking interests of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba," similarly promoted the construction of homes in Vancouver and looked forward to the building boom that many believed would follow the First World War. In May 1919, in reference to the Better Housing Scheme, the journal noted that, "if the plans of the Vancouver City Council work out right, the housing scheme, which will mean much to the lumber industry, will be under full swing within a short time The scarcity of houses in the city of Vancouver alone is such that it has become a serious factor in the economic life of the community."³⁷ The *Western Lumberman* advised its readers to prepare for this anticipated building boom by ensuring adequate supplies of building materials and by branching out into areas of housewares, decorative trims, plumbing, and furniture.³⁸

Lumber manufacturers and mail order companies such as Aladdin Homes (figure 5) began to compete in the pre-designed house market. In June 1919, the *Western Lumberman* began publishing house plans with accompanying promotional text, including many for Craftsman style "homey looking" bungalows (figure 6). These plans were to be provided free of charge to the buyer by the lumber yard with the purchase of

34 *Western Lumberman* 18 (January 1921): 20.

35 "Winnipeg Holds Home Building Exposition," *Western Lumberman* 18 (May 1921): 44.

36 "B.C. Shingles Featured Building Show," *Western Lumberman* 18 (June 1921): 28.

37 *Western Lumberman* 16 (May 1919): 23.

38 *Western Lumberman* 16, January to March 1919.

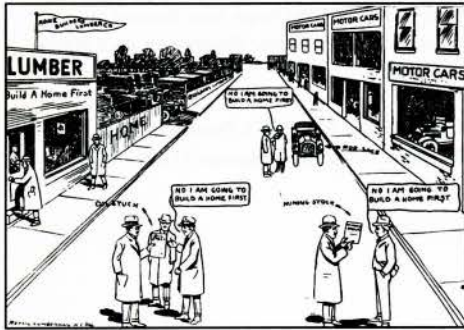


Figure 7 (above). The lumber industry encouraged home building through patriotic measures following the First World War. (*Western Lumberman* 16 [June 1919]: 28)

Figure 8 (right). Advertisement for the "Own Your Own Home" campaign, published in journals and newspapers throughout the country. (*Western Lumberman* 16 [July 1919]: 25)

Figure 9 (far right). "Build Your Own Home" advertisement. (*Western Lumberman* 16 [July 1919]: 26)

**You asked her to share
YOUR HOME but
you've given her a
Rented House**

Remember with what joy and your sweetheart talked over plans for a home? You had great hopes, then, and of course you wanted a HOME OF YOUR OWN. But you've put it off and gone on from day to day in a rented house. Your wife isn't satisfied, and neither are you.

Do it today

The longer you put it off the harder it will be. Own a home now while your family is with you and you can enjoy it together. Make up your mind to give your wife her heart's desire. Of course she wants a home!

We will help you

If you need help of ANY KIND, financial or otherwise, our business is prepared to give it to you. Come in and talk it over.

Our Services are Free

lumber. The journal encouraged retailers to promote lumber through the new "Own Your Own Home" campaign, with a patriotic plea to potential buyers (figure 7):

Don't risk your money on doubtful investments. Put it into something permanent and sure. "Build a Home First." That's what the Government wants you to do because a revival of building activity will help the nation back to a peace basis quicker than any other thing. You did your part to help to win the war—now do all you can to help us get back to a peace basis. Come in and talk it over with us—Retail Lumberman.³⁹

The "Own Your Own Home" campaign was advertised extensively in the *Vancouver Sun*, the *Vancouver Daily Province*, and the *Western Lumberman* (figure 8). The campaign was initiated in 1919 as a means of reviving the poor Canadian economy following the devastation of the war, but was taken up by advocates of varying causes, including Vancouver city planners and the National Lumber Manufacturers Association. The campaign advanced the benefits of home ownership, emphasizing the inherent moral superiority of home owners over renters, even going so far as to claim that "[your friends] who own their homes have a different look on their faces than the fellows who don't," with more "spring to their step" when returning home from work at six o'clock.⁴⁰

The National Lumber Manufacturers Association published an article in the *Western Lumberman*, stating that "Owning a home should be the aim of every man in Western Canada, and to boost a campaign 'Own Your Home' there is nobody better placed than the retail lumber dealers. They can increase their sales considerably by planning live campaigns, and by the use of a plan service create a demand for modern homes."⁴¹

The bungalow was frequently represented in the *Western Lumberman* as the most appealing house type to female customers, and by extension the most potentially lucrative to the lumber yard owner. An article entitled "Bungalow Lumber Yard: A Story Which Tells the Building Material Merchant How to Enlist the Interest of Women" described the story of Jake, the owner of a neighbourhood lumber yard, who built a model bungalow on his lot to encourage customers to invest in a home rather than just lumber. The author, Bernice Harrison, described the interior of the bungalow: "I had walked into what appeared to be a real cosy 'front room,' with fireplace, tile mantel and all. In one corner stood a large sectional bookcase, filled with books—I didn't notice their titles at the time. A built-in seat under the wide front window was fitted comfortably with cushions."⁴² The "homey bungalow" became the location for talks on home building and homemaking for the local women, with Jake providing simple architectural drawings and plans as examples. Jake ended his diatribe on the benefits of his bungalow lumber yard by exclaiming that his competition "sells lumber," while I 'SELL HOUSES.'"

Like the *Western Lumberman*, West Coast- and British Columbia-based sawmills similarly encouraged home building and the Craftsman aesthetic through the

39 *Western Lumberman* 16 (June 1919): 28.

40 *Western Lumberman* 16 (August 1919): 38.

41 *Ibid.*

42 Bernice Harrison, "Bungalow Lumber Yard: A Story Which Tells the Building Material Merchant How to Enlist the Interest of Women," *Western Lumberman* 17 (May 1920): 58.

publication of books of house plans and ready-cut homes. From their Vancouver offices, Twentieth Century Mill Cut Houses and the B.C. Mills, Timber & Trading Company sold plans and pre-cut materials for bungalows adapted to the B.C. climate to home buyers in the 1900s and 1910s, with other sawmills continuing a similar marketing formula into the 1920s. Promotional material by American builders and designers, including Jud Yoho's pamphlet of Craftsman bungalows and Aladdin advertisements, circulated in Vancouver, transmitting the Arts and Crafts aesthetic and linking it to B.C.'s lumber industry—not coincidentally a major exporter of lumber to the United States.

THE BETTER HOUSING SCHEME WAS NOT INTENDED primarily to supply adequate housing for the working classes, but was devised to curb social unrest and unemployment and to bolster private interests in the real estate market, evidenced by the choice of the Craftsman bungalow typology as its model. That is, the Craftsman bungalow was appropriated for the Vancouver Better Housing Scheme for economic and ideological purposes, wedding economy and aesthetics with the government's desire to bring morality and family values to all classes through domestic architecture. Through the Housing Scheme, proponents of the bungalow attempted to establish the detached single-family home as a national goal for everyone, thereby promoting long-term stability, economic growth, and recovery from the post-war depression. As the author of a 1919 *Vancouver Sun* article reported in outlining the municipal housing scheme:

The writer was privileged to visit one of these [soldier settlement scheme] bungalows, the first to be completed, and found there the dependents of a former soldier. Fully modern in every respect, the new home assured the family of the comfort that is rightly theirs Protected against the menace of soaring rentals and safe in the knowledge that every dollar paid is that much nearer sole ownership, the dependents of he who died in the service of the Empire are enabled to meet the future with greater confidence than if they were at the mercy of an uncertain fate.⁴³

The Arts and Crafts-inspired bungalow engendered notions of the traditional nuclear family, with the husband and father as sole wage earner and the wife and mother as housekeeper. Through its plan and design, and through a comprehensive marketing strategy (figure 9), the bungalow reaffirmed the accepted roles of family members during the post-war period of economic recession, instability, and uncertainty about the past and the future. The Better Housing Scheme solicited the Arts and Crafts bungalow as its primary model in part because of its adaptability of materials: the Craftsman aesthetic, emphasizing natural wood, fit well into British Columbia's thriving lumber economy. Moreover, the modest detached home set on a single lot interspersed in one of Vancouver's existing neighbourhoods bolstered the sagging real estate market, which had stagnated during the First World War.

It is clear that the working classes to whom the Better Housing Scheme homes were initially directed were ultimately passed over by the Vancouver program's administrators. Instead, the housing scheme was imbued by middle-class values and ideals, which were translated through the rhetoric of real estate companies, the lumber industry, town and residential planners, and popular literature. While census data suggests that Vancouver's working classes may have been better served through the provision of rental or smaller-scale housing units, the housing scheme provided single-family detached homes at a price unaffordable to low-income earners, thereby preserving the middle-class order in the transitional post-war period. By considering these apparently disconnected discourses as functioning simultaneously in relation to one another, and by linking them with the notion of space as socially constructed, with architecture as one such aspect, they unite to convey an *aperçu* of post-war Vancouver society in the 1920s.

43 "Housing Problem Presages Progress," *Vancouver Sun*, 26 October 1919, 8.

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