

Victoria Heritage Foundation's Four-Volume Series, *This Old House: Victoria's Heritage Neighbourhoods*

Published by the Victoria Heritage Foundation (VHF) between 2004 and 2009, the series originated in the 1970s to document every house on Victoria's Heritage Register. The first version of *This Old House: Victoria's Heritage Neighbourhoods* appeared in 1979 as a slim paperback containing 124 pages that recorded 268 properties. The volume was updated twice, in 1984 and 1991, before a decision was made to revise the project's scope in 2000. By then, the number of houses on the register had doubled, new photos had been acquired, some research had proved obsolete, and some properties had been updated while others had disappeared.

Working from 2000-2009, VHF volunteers (and two part-time researchers) made use of newly available resources, acquiring impressive research skills along the way. They worked tirelessly, combing through the City's building files to create a huge searchable database of houses. Others transcribed records from dusty old City plumbing, water and building permit books, and catalogues of house plans from 1892-1950, making almost 30,000 electronically searchable records available. The data will also soon be available online.

The new volumes go well beyond a simple inventory. The convergence of technology, expertise and volunteerism can be seen in the depth of information and the range and quality of photographic material for each new house added. Entries in the older versions were also elaborated and many new photos included. A total of 670 houses were examined, researched and described, and more than 2,000 new images found—many of them architectural plans.

Ultimately, the project required not just one volume, but four, totalling 838 pages. Maps and introductory chapters on each neighbourhood were solicited from local historians, and designated schools and churches were added to provide broader dimension to Victoria's historic communities. Nothing of this scale had been attempted in British Columbia before.

Starting in 2004, a new volume was issued every two years. Prior to this, very little information was available on the hundreds of houses listed on the Heritage Register, making it challenging for City planners to respond to issues of rezoning or proposed alterations to heritage properties. *This Old House* now provides heritage professionals, homeowners, historians and visitors with a valuable resource on the social and architectural heritage of Victoria. To date, more than 6,000 copies have been sold.

This Old House, produced by the VHF and its volunteers is the culmination of 35 years of dedicated research that chronicles the growth and changes that define Victoria and the province of B.C. The project would not have been possible without the generous support of the City of Victoria, the Heritage Legacy Fund of B.C., the Real Estate Foundation of B.C., Young Canada Works in Heritage, B.C. Heritage Trust, and Human Resources Development Canada. The books will play an important role in the future of heritage conservation activities in the city of Victoria.

This Old House: Victoria's Heritage Neighbourhoods project was nominated by the Hallmark Society of British Columbia.