

If you walk around the Heather Pavilion at Vancouver Hospital, on the block bounded by Heather, Willow and 10th and 12th avenues, you wouldn't think it one of the city's most important heritage buildings. The pavilion was built in 1906 but has been so altered since then that it is difficult at first glance to see anything worth saving.

What's left of the building is hidden by structures added on over the years. But a study by architect Richard Henriquez, commissioned by the city of Vancouver in 1992, reveals that almost all of the original pavilion still stands. Approximately 90 per cent of the stonework is still in place. If the additional layers were to be peeled away, restoration would be a realistic proposition.

But preservation is not a foregone conclusion. The Heather Heritage Society has been formed to campaign to save the building and find an adaptive re-use — something that neither VH nor the park board have seriously considered. VH plans to demolish all buildings on the site and is concerned that retention of the Heather Pavilion not count against allowable density for new development, although the city has a density transfer policy in place to help save heritage buildings.

The park board, not instinctively enthusiastic about heritage architecture, sees clearance of the site as an opportunity to create green space. But a landscaping scheme by Guzzi Perry and Associates, part of the Henriquez study, shows how park needs could blend with the restored pavilion (which could provide accommodation for community use to complement the recreational facilities that the park would offer).

The pavilion would only take up a fraction of the proposed park site and could be restored along with the landscaping that once contributed to its character (it was built in a park-like setting).

The Heather Pavilion, originally known as the Fairview Building, was designed by architects Grant and Henderson in a rusticated neo-Renaissance style, punctuated by four stone towers (one of which is shown here) each topped with a cupola. The original entrance (now destroyed) faced 10th Avenue and was flanked by four towers and two L-shaped wings.

The building was enlarged in 1910 with four additional

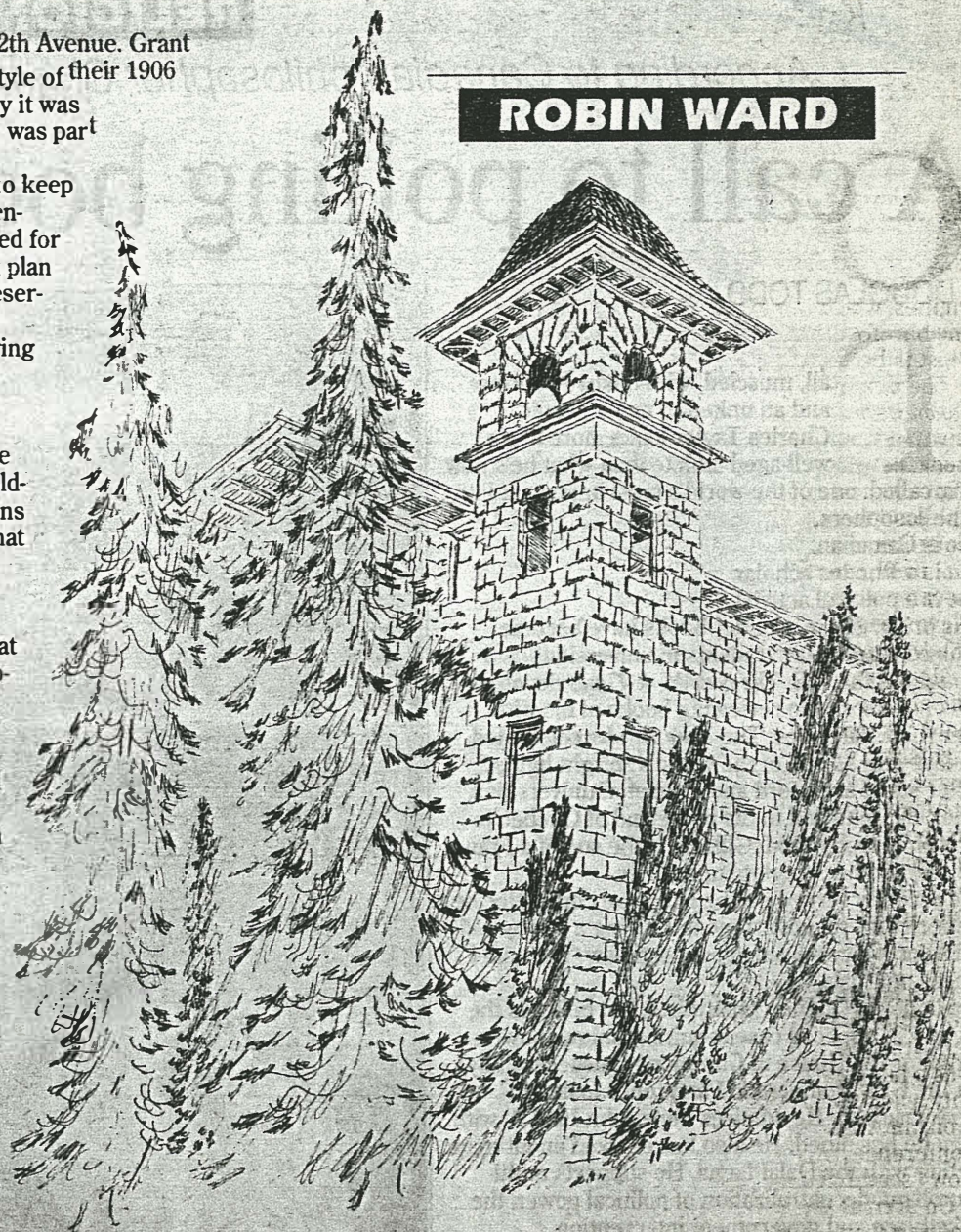
towers and two wings facing 12th Avenue. Grant and Henderson matched the style of their 1906 effort so well that until recently it was thought that the second phase was part of the original design.

While it would be desirable to keep both parts of the structure, Henriquez's study recognizes a need for compromise between the park plan and heritage preservation. Preservation efforts will focus on the 1906 building — with a scattering of relics from 1910 retained as garden ornaments. (My first thought, while drawing the north west corner, was that the surviving fragments of the building would make wonderful ruins or garden follies, something that should be considered as a preservation option if all else fails.)

But Henriquez concludes that the 1906 building could be economically upgraded for new use. What's needed are financially feasible and esthetically appropriate proposals that will persuade all parties that restoring the Heather Pavilion as an historic centre piece of the planned park (and the developing hospital precinct) is a good idea.

The Heather Heritage Society is on the lookout for new members and will hold its inaugural public meeting at Heritage Hall, 3012 Main, on Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. to discuss the issue. Speakers will include Richard Henriquez and Robert Lemon, the city's senior heritage planner. Call 224-3607. ↙

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