

Appendix A

*Woodlands Wall Statement of
Significance and Archival Photographs*

Statement of Significance

From City of New Westminster

(http://arcgis.newwestcity.ca/images/heritageregister/sos/SOS_0017.pdf)

Description of Historic Place

The Woodlands Wall is located at 9 East Columbia Street, New Westminster, running the full width of the Woodlands site, adjacent and parallel to Columbia Street, with a short return along McBride Boulevard. It is composed of a linear concrete wall surmounted by decorative wrought iron railings. The base of the wall is a cast-in-place, continuous concrete wall, with a sloped top with projecting coping on each side. The vertical faces of the concrete are parged on both sides with a mortar skim-coat, scored with lines to resemble traditional ashlar stone construction. The wrought iron fence has regularly spaced ornate filigree panels. A pedestrian gate that provided a central access to the site is flanked by cast concrete posts with flared caps, surmounted by wrought iron scroll-work that formed the base for decorative lighting.

Heritage Value of Historic Place

The Woodlands site represents the long-term evolution of provincial mental health care. The first large-scale mental health institution in the province, for nearly a century Woodlands played an important role in the institutional and cultural history of New Westminster as a care facility for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped. Opened in 1878, the Asylum, renamed the Provincial Hospital for the Insane in 1897, and Woodlands School in 1950, continued to operate until 1982. Its history offers important lessons about nineteenth and early twentieth century attitudes towards mental health issues, and the development of humane treatment and occupational therapy programs. Five early buildings remain on the Provincial Asylum's twenty-six hectare site, and the Woodlands Wall is a significant surviving portion of the site's landscaping and marks its southern and most public boundary.

The heritage value of the Woodlands Wall is additionally associated with its role as part of the ongoing development of the Woodlands complex. Constructed in 1909, this wall replaced a high wooden

fence, and demonstrates the Province's desire to imbue Woodlands with a sense of permanence and respectability. The craftsmanship and design of the wrought iron work is of the highest order. Manufactured in a consistent module, the iron work predates the use of welding. Periodic ornate filigree panels were anchored into the concrete, braced with diagonal struts on the uphill side. These panels are made of intricately rivetted, screwed and bolted wrought iron, and their attenuated swirling vertical lines reflect an Art Nouveau sensibility. Between each fixed vertical panel, a fence panel was installed, rivetted at the top and bottom, passing through square holes in intermediate flat bar rails. This combination of fixed ornate panels with simpler infill panels is a clear and logical ordering element that sets up a pleasing visual rhythm, avoiding a monotonous appearance. The manufacturer, Westminster Iron Works Company Ltd., was established in New Westminster by its founder John Reid (1852-1949) in 1874. The ornamental iron work department of the firm was largely developed and supervised during the company's early years by master ironworker James Auld Blair (1877-1957). This firm was also responsible for the ironwork on the Central Park Gate in Burnaby, undertook most of the early decorative ironwork in New Westminster and was also responsible for some landmark projects in Vancouver.

The City of New Westminster has recognized the outstanding architectural, historical and contextual value of Woodlands, and has participated in a plan for the preservation of historic buildings, landscaping and specimen trees on the site within the context of its redevelopment as a residential community.

Character-Defining Elements

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Wall at Woodlands include its:

- location across a sloping site, at the south perimeter of the Woodlands property, facing Columbia Street and returning along McBride Boulevard;
- parged concrete base wall scored with ashlar lines;
- wrought iron railing with regular spaced decorative panels anchored into the concrete wall, with simpler fence panels attached between each fixed panel;
- pedestrian gate with concrete piers with decorative wrought iron light bases;
- associated landscape features including grassed lawn area and boulevard, and numerous large, mature trees.

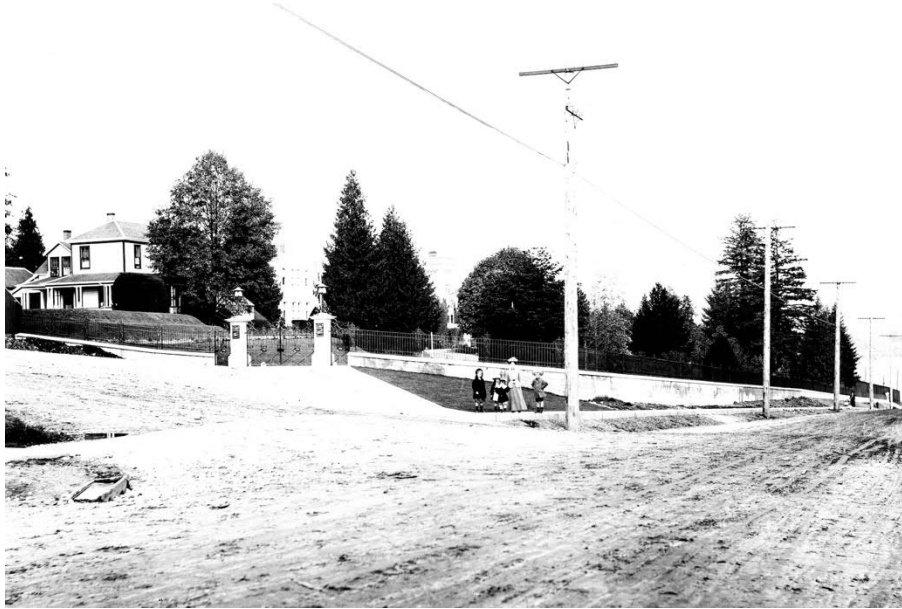


Photo B-1: Woodlands Wall, 1909 (Vancouver Public Library 7553).



Photo B-2: Detail of Woodlands Wall gate columns, 1909 (Vancouver Public Library 7553).



Photo B-5: 1948 oblique aerial with gate columns visible (Vintage Air Photos BO-48-2862).



Photo B-6: 1951 oblique aerial with gate columns removed (Vintage Air Photos 1-9).