

## Statement of Significance

### The Black Cat

3396 Marine Drive

West Vancouver, BC

May 2008



## Historic Place

The historic place is the Black Cat, part of a tiny commercial development located at 3396 Marine Drive, midway along an undulating road that hugs the shoreline between Dundarave and Horseshoe Bay. The original Black Cat was a tea house and grocery store located at the bottom of the steps on Radcliffe Avenue. It was built in 1922 and operated by a Mrs. Lohead and a Mr. Gillis. The store was later lifted up to the level of Marine Drive. For a time its supporting framework was open but this was later enclosed. It remains today to provide a dramatic change of level from the 2-storey front to the 5-storey rear.

## Heritage Value

The Black Cat has social and historical value as a commercial landmark and architectural value as a survivor of the first generation of permanent development in West Vancouver.

The odd location at a sharp curve along Marine Drive is a reminder that this was once the terminus of Marine Drive, before it was connected to Horseshoe Bay. There was a stop on the PGE railway here and day-trippers would descend to the beach at Sandy Cove via steps down the steep slope.

The small group of shops and accommodation hints at a former time when it marked the end of the road. This was a popular stopping place for refreshments and groceries for picnickers and campers. The Black Cat has long been a landmark and the location of well-loved local businesses, such as the Savory Island Pie Co. Records document its importance to the life of the local community, having been, at various times, the 'Wadsley' post-office, the polling station, a tearoom, coffee bar, confectionary store, and the official meeting place of local

clubs such as the West Bay Swim Club and a whist club. In recent years it has been an antique store, an art gallery and is at present houses the office of an architect and interior designer.

The siting of the building and its relationship to its surroundings are important. They reveal its original location below the end of the road, facing the water. The building was subsequently raised and reoriented to the street, as automobiles had replaced boats as the primary means of transportation in West Vancouver.

The building also has value as an early example of West Vancouver's year-round architecture. Although it has been much modified over the years, the wood structure, rectangular massing, and low hipped roof likely reflect an early design.

### **Character-defining Elements**

The character-defining elements of the Black Cat include:

- Rectangular massing
- Red-framed extension bay on the street frontage, which gives an indication of the size of the original store.
- Low hipped roof
- Brown-painted cedar shingle siding
- Two amusing 'Black Cat 1922' signs in wood and metal situated just under the eaves on the north and south façades
- Wood-sash windows, including some with decorative art glass
- Continuing commercial use
- Location at a sharp curve on Marine Drive
- Relationship to the water on the side away from the road