

**Statement of Significance
Silk Purse Arts Centre
1570 Argyle Avenue
West Vancouver, BC
May 2008**



Historic Place

The historic place is the Silk Purse Arts Centre at 1570 Argyle Avenue, located on the waterfront in the Ambleside neighbourhood of West Vancouver. Built as a summer cottage in 1925 and subsequently converted for year-round residential use, it is now the home of the West Vancouver Arts Council and is used for arts education and performances.

Heritage Value

The Silk Purse has heritage value for being representative of summer cottages built in the early 20th century along the Ambleside waterfront and later upgraded for year-round residential use, for its current use as an arts centre by the District of West Vancouver and the Community Arts Council, and for its association with the families of John Rowland and Tom Campbell.

The building was constructed in 1925 as a summer cottage, reflecting the predominant use of land along the Ambleside shore in the period before the construction of the Lions Gate Bridge. Few tangible reminders of this phase of West Vancouver's waterfront history remain. It was later adapted for year-round use. The house was expanded as a 'honeymoon cottage' and filled with Canadiana shortly after 1970 by John Rowland, a local 'character'. Rowland's son said that his father tried to make a silk purse from a sow's ear, bestowing on the building its present name. Another person associated with the house is former Vancouver mayor Tom Campbell, who inherited the property from his father and sold it to Rowland.

The acquisition of the building in 1991 by the District of West Vancouver and its adaptation as an arts centre reflects changing land uses on the Ambleside waterfront, as public uses gradually replace private residential use. The Silk Purse has value as the nucleus of a developing cultural district along Argyle Avenue.

The landscaping of the long, narrow lot is typical of the area, with trees or shrubs along the property lines and parking facing the street.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the Silk Purse Arts Centre include:

- Location facing the water at Ambleside
- Small, domestic scale
- Low gable roof on the water side, presumably the profile of the 1925 cottage
- Two-storey gabled portion on Argyle Avenue, presumably from the 1970s building campaign
- Horizontal wood siding
- Cast iron sign ('Silk Purse') and lamp
- Large room facing the waterfront