



EAST VAN CROSS

Year Established: 2010 | **Sign Status:** New

As early as the 1940s, an East Van cross could be seen on anything from abandoned billboards and gang graffiti to bathroom stalls and high school yearbooks. In 2010, local artist, Ken Lum, modernized the iconic symbol by rounding out the corners and re-purposed

it as a beacon for East Vancouver. Its official name is *Monument for East Vancouver*. While some high profile “organizations” have tried to claim rights to the symbol, it remains firmly in the ownership of the city, and the proud people of East Van.

Welcome to East Van

THIS IS OUR COMMUNITY – a place where artists, musicians, activists, entrepreneurs, and misfits can co-exist in the same coffee shop.

Few places are as proud or as protective as East Van. Its long history as the hard-working middle class is the reason behind much of its fierce independence and no-filter attitude. When we moved into the neighbourhood, in the heartbeat of Chinatown, we immediately appreciated its identity.

Take a look around. These are more than just buildings; they're neighbours, icons, and great stories. The history of hard work and manual labour is even more evident in the signs bearing their name. Each sign has its place on the timeline of this community, marking

important periods like the Neon Era, during a time when the outside mattered, and the ruling principles for signage were craft, art, and design.

Looking at these signs today, some are in total disrepair, some have vanished, some are slated for redevelopment, some are being preserved by the Museum of Vancouver, and others are brand new. All of these signs in their various conditions are very much reflective of East Van – a diverse community in transition, rich with history, and surrounded by art, culture, and beauty.

THE DRAKE HOTEL

The building has taken many names since it was built in 1914, and sometime in the '50's it became The Drake Hotel. Vancouver was still enjoying its post-war prosperity, and the city's club scene was regarded as one of the hottest in North America. When full nudity was legalized in BC in 1972, owners transformed the Drake into a show lounge notorious for its raunchy stage acts and "live nudes." By the '80s, Vancouver was a hotbed of exotic nightclubs, attracting rock stars and bachelors by the busload. Eventually, drugs and crime took hold of the scene, resulting in multiple strip club closures, including the Drake in 2007. The building was bought by the City of Vancouver and is now being developed as a low-income housing project - one of the largest in the city with 147 units. Wanting to preserve a piece of its legacy, owners of the popular Gastown bistro, Boneta, salvaged a brass rail from the stage during the venue's closeout and anchored it to their short bar.

Year Established:

Early 1950s

Sign Status:

Preserved at the Museum of Vancouver.



TED HARRIS PAINTS

For nine decades, the Harris family owned the East Hastings landmark. It first operated as a thrift shop, then as a bicycle shop. During World War II, bicycle parts became scarce and owner Ted Harris switched to the paint business. For over 60 years, the retro sign has been a signature part of the landscape, ushering folks in and out of East Van. Too big for local museum curators, the building was bought by Kris Rennie (of Rennie Marketing Systems), who currently leases the space to a local artist.

Year Established:

1947

Sign Status:

Despite visible wear, the sign was restored to light up from 7PM to midnight daily.

PAINT

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COMPARATIVE VALUES

TED HARRIS

WERD

BAO BEI BRASSERIE

One of the more recent additions to Chinatown, Bao Bei is decidedly modern, swapping out Lazy Susans for antique furniture and raw wood tables. The scene is highbrow chic with a vintage feel, offering a selection of small-plated portions appropriate for its fashion-conscious clientele. Outside, the sign fits perfectly with the area's rich history of neon and bears the Chinese characters for Bao Bei, meaning, 'precious'. Like Harvest, The Union, Oyster Express, and East of Main Café, Bao Bei represents the new youth and dynamic energy in historic Chinatown.

Year Established:

2009

Sign Status:

New, in great condition.



EMPRESS HOTEL

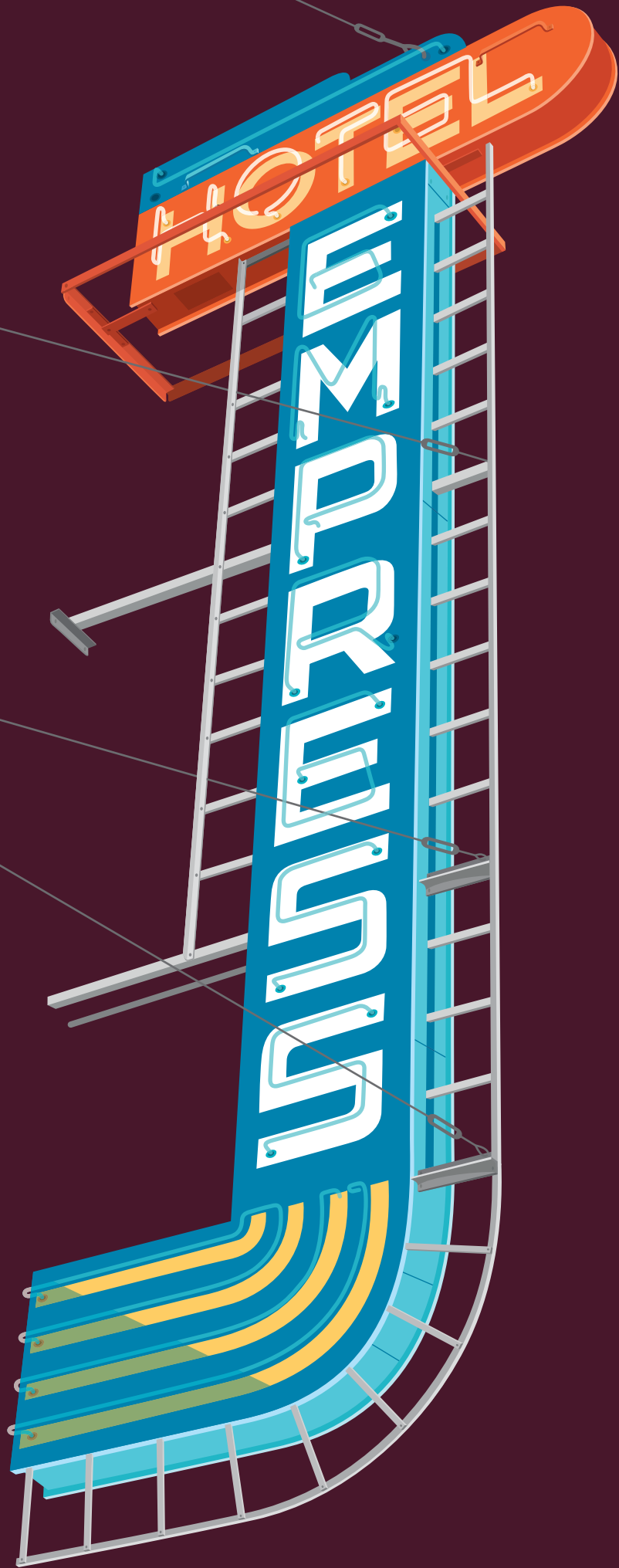
This Edwardian-style hotel was once a landing pad for wealthy travellers. When it was first built, owners anticipated a steady flow of guests with the completion of the Canadian Northern Railway and the Panama Canal. At just eight storeys tall and sandwiched between two buildings, the Empress was touted as the world's tallest and narrowest building at the time. Today, however, the city's tallest building is the Shangri-La hotel, at 62-storeys high. The Empress now caters to seniors, providing a safe place to socialize and share a drink.

Year Established:

1912

Sign Status:

Poor, requires repairs.



HO HO CHOP SUEY

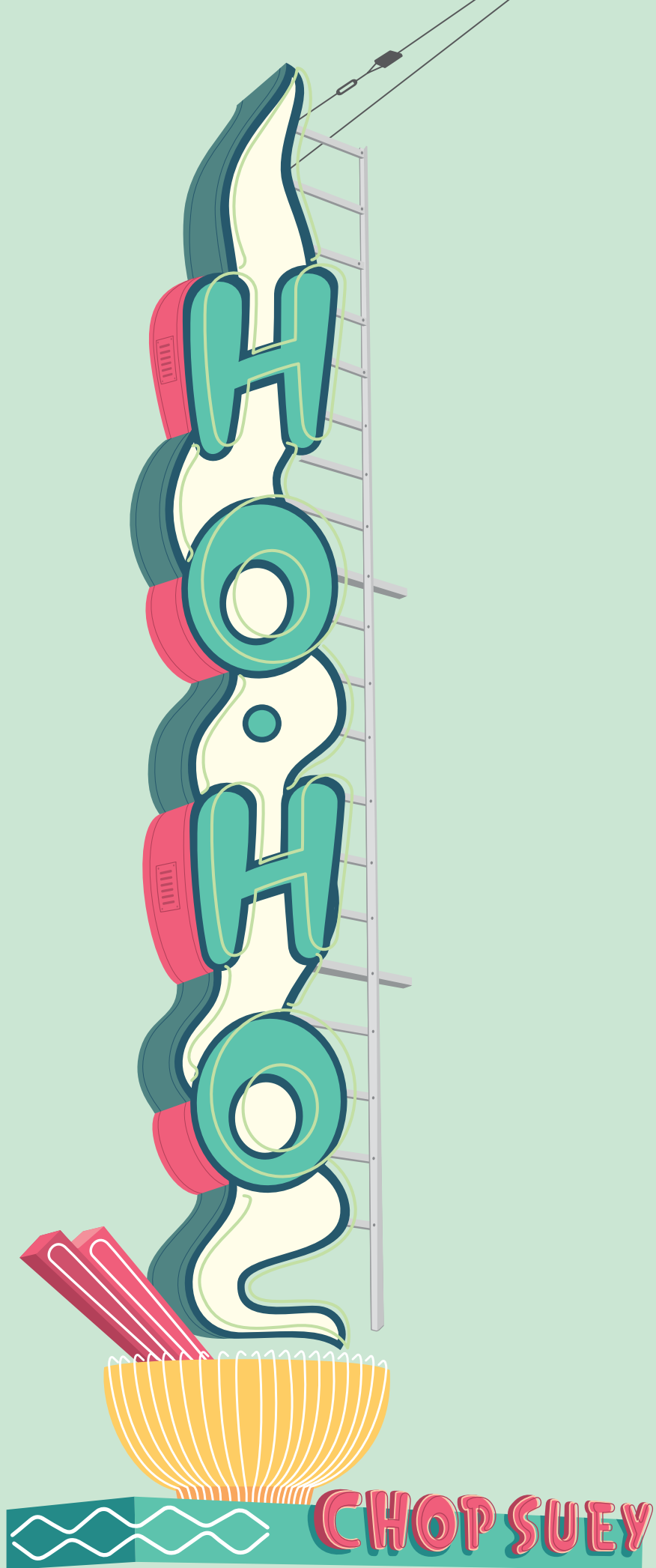
After World War II, Ho Ho Chop Suey was one of the first restaurants in Chinatown to offer “Canadian-Chinese” cuisine, catering to Westernized palates. Up until the ‘70s, the restaurant was just one of many businesses that made up Chinatown’s sea of neon signage. In 1974, a city bylaw restricted the use of neon, making the towering three-storey sign one of the last-built neon signs in the area. It remained a Chinatown landmark until it closed in the early ‘90s. Age, rust, and rowdy neighbours eventually wore the sign out, with its signature rice bowl no longer intact. Some say it was stolen. In 1998 the well-established Foo’s Chinese restaurant, relocated to Ho Ho’s vacated space, and was re-named Foo’s Ho Ho. “Ho Ho” translates to “very good” in Cantonese.

Year Established:

1954

Sign Status:

Surviving remains of the original sign are currently in storage.



THE WALDORF HOTEL

In 1947, the Waldorf operated as a motor hotel, boasting one of the largest pubs in the city. Then in 1953, after a trip to Hawaii, owner Bob Mills transformed the pub into a Tiki bar, inspired by Polynesian art. The bar attracted the area's large population of blue-collar workers, but in the '70s, economic hardship forced Mills to sell. Under new ownership, the bar closed and was only opened for special events.

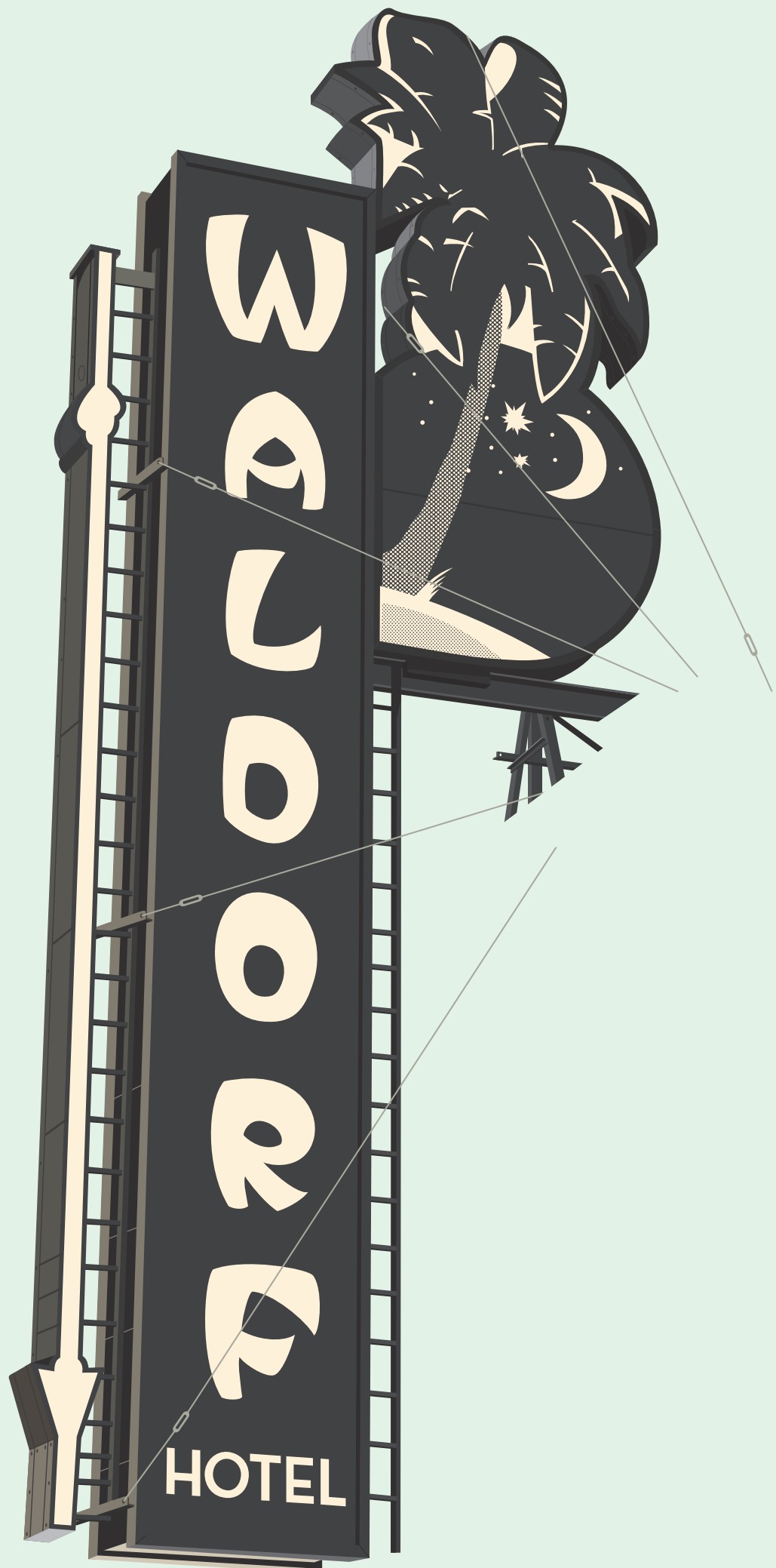
In 2010, new owners had a vision to create a space that would nurture the city's arts and culture scene. It was immediately embraced by the locals, including indie bands, DJs, artists, and novelist, Douglas Coupland. The Waldorf was dubbed a "cultural oasis" where art and music lovers could congregate for cheap drinks and great dance parties. In spite of community protest, the Waldorf closed its doors in January 2013 after the site was bought by a local real estate developer.

Year Established:

1947

Sign Status:

Re-installed in 2010, future unknown.



BALMORAL HOTEL

In 1912, J.K. Sutherland opened the Chicago-style skyscraper, which replaced the family-owned Scotch Bakery. In its heyday, the Balmoral catered to suited-up businessmen and wealthy travellers. Sometime in the early '50s, the crowd shifted to derelicts and drifters. In 2009, local advocacy groups labelled the Balmoral “one of the seven worst hotels” in the city as the hotel owners faced allegations of abuse and neglect. Three years later, police raided the hotel and discovered a makeshift meth lab.

Year Established:

1912

Sign Status:

Very poor.



WOODWARDS

In 1944, the iconic 'W' sign was installed, replacing a pre-war searchlight beacon for fear that the light could be used as a landmark for aerial attacks. Once Vancouver's premier department store, Woodward's was a one-stop shop known for carrying a variety of specialty and hard-to-find items. It was also famous for its stunning Christmas window displays. In 1993, Woodward's went bankrupt and closed its doors.

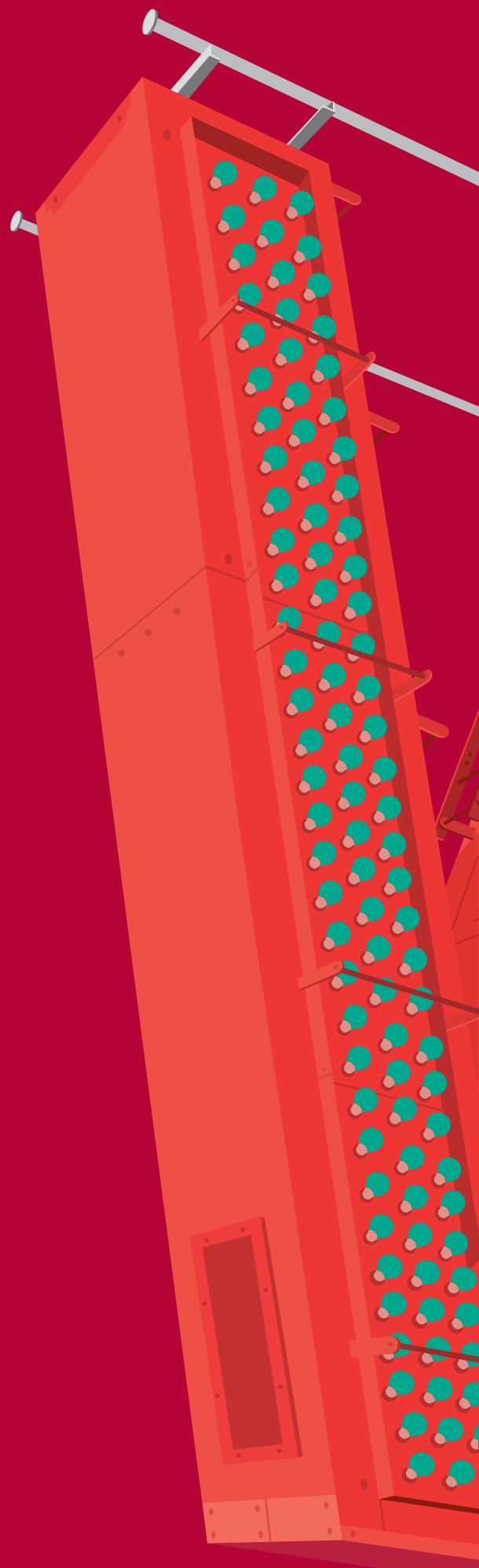
In 2003, former city councilor and housing activist, the late Jim Green, led the redevelopment of the historic building. After seeking counsel from the community, Green and the City of Vancouver completed a 400 million dollar transformation which included both market and low-income housing, retail space, civic spaces, a daycare, and an extension to the Simon Fraser University campus: the School for Contemporary Arts.

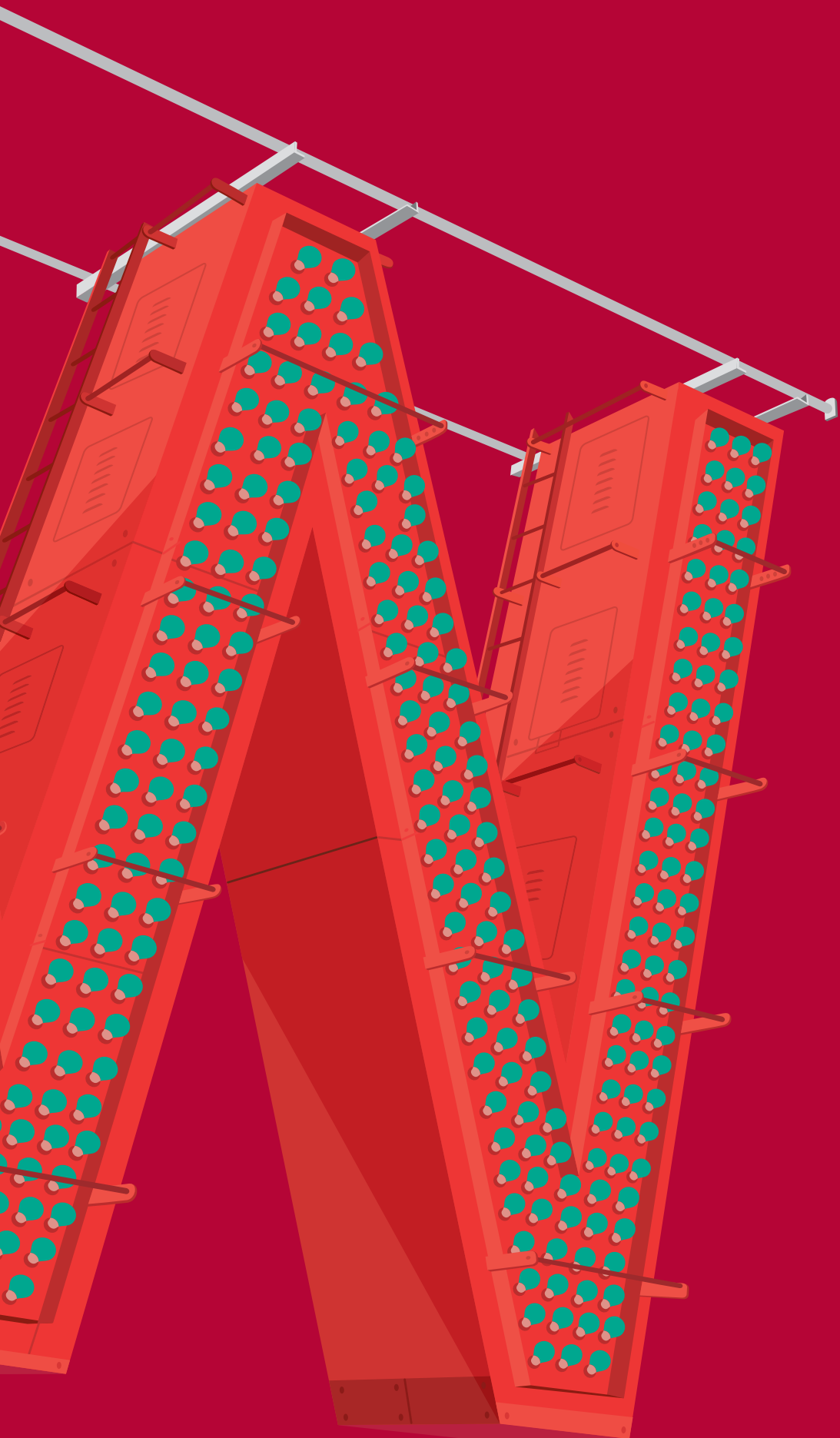
Year Established:

1903

Sign Status:

Great condition, re-installed in 2010 with energy-saving LED lights.





PENNSYLVANIA HOTEL

Built in 1906, it was formerly known as the Woods Hotel and was one of the first major hotels on Hastings Street. Around the mid 1920s, it became the Pennsylvania. The hotel was considered upscale and advertised itself as having a telephone in each room, which back then was kind of a big deal. Over the next eight decades, the hotel took a variety of different names, including The Portland and The Rainbow. The hotel eventually closed in 2000 and was purchased by the Portland Hotel Society. Eight years later, it underwent a \$14-million restoration, including a replication of the art deco-style sign, and serves today as a low-income housing unit for the Downtown Eastside.

Year Established:

1906

Sign Status:

New sign installed in 2008, in great condition.





SMILIN' BUDDHA CABARET

During the '50s and '60s, the Smilin' Buddha symbolized the city's post-war prosperity and was often at the center of Frank Herzog's iconic street photography. The 800-pound sign greeted would-be rock legends like Jimi Hendrix and Jefferson Airplane and took a chance on many struggling bands. When punk music took hold in the '70s, the Smilin' Buddha became a regular pit

stop for police. A 1979 article in UBC's Student newspaper describes the crowd as "young short-haired fans in regulation denim or leather jackets. A few exotic women wearing fluorescent dresses and purple lipstick mingle with the hippies, Hastings Street drunks, cowboys and assorted yahoos..." When the club closed in 1992, the band 54-40 acquired the sign, restored it, and named their 1994 album after it.



Year Established:

Early 1950s

Sign Status:

Stored in You Say You Want
a Revolution Gallery.

THE ASTORIA

This East Hastings bar has had its share of skeletons, including serial killer, Robert Pickton, once on the list of regulars. In the mid-to-late 2000s, a younger, cleaner crowd started to move into the area, giving new life (and new customers) to the Astoria. Today, the bar is credited with giving start-up bands and struggling artists a fighting chance. As one of the few live music venues in Vancouver, offering cheap drinks and even cheaper cover, the Astoria is a good time as long as you can excuse the mess.

Year Established:

Sometime in the 1930s

Sign Status:

Restored in 2009 to its original condition.



Cold
& WINE
BEER
STORE

Astoria

SAVE-ON-MEATS

When the meat shop opened in 1957, the city tram practically dropped customers off at the front door. A 20-something Al DesLauriers ran the meat shop under founder, Sonny Wosk, after learning to cut meat from a book. Passionately stubborn, DesLauriers refused to sell the building to anyone who would not operate the meat market. Its popular \$6 burger was sorely missed by the community when the Vancouver landmark closed in 2009. In 2011, the meat shop got a second chance when it was reopened by social entrepreneur, Mark Brand, and featured on the TV docu-drama, *Gastown Gamble*.

Year Established:

1957

Sign Status:

Good condition, renovated in 2011.



SAVE-ON-MEATS

OVALTINE CAFÉ

Bearing an inward-pointing arrow, the Ovaltine Café sign was used by its makers, Wallace Neon, as a selling tool to show new customers the process of designing, producing, and hanging a sign. While the café has never been high on the hit lists, its sweet spot has been the three-dollar breakfasts and nostalgic interior. It's also one of the last spots in the city, aside from care homes, where you can order a mug of Ovaltine. Now an eastside icon, the creaky-floored café is perhaps more appealing nowadays as a film set rather than a restaurant, with appearances in *iRobot*, *The X-Files*, and *Fringe*.

Year Established:

1942

Sign Status:

Partially lit, repairs required.



THE ONLY SEA FOODS

Family-owned and operated, the Only was the place for fresh seafood from the early '50s to the late '70s. Part seafood shop, part restaurant, the Only served an eager 300-400 customers a day, though the dining area could only seat twenty. Aside from its legendary clam chowder, low prices, and never selling a fish older than 24 hours, the Only was also known for its generous servings of bread and coffee. Unfortunately, the Only fell on hard times in the '80s and eventually shut its doors in 2009. Up until the day it was taken down, the sign served as one of Hastings Street's main landmarks.

Year Established:

1951

Sign Status:

Re-furbished and re-erected. Lightbulbs were replaced for a more sustainable option.





The
ONLY

SEA FOODS

FISH

OYSTERS

CLAMS



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Wayward Arts is an inspirational monthly magazine showcasing the pure unfiltered spirit of Canadian graphic design. Each month a prominent Canadian design studio will design a new issue filled with innovative design, featuring specialty printing and finishing techniques. Every issue will be an unpredictable expression of creativity!

W/A

Saint Bernadine – the man, was the patron saint of advertising and design. (And gambling and lung disease.) Saint Bernadine – the agency, is a creative communications firm specializing in branding, advertising, graphic design, and digital. Proudly located in Vancouver’s Chinatown, they are growing aficionados of steam buns, noodle soups, and assorted Asian snacks.

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