BELCARRA O T COTTA E STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: BELCARRA SOUTH COTTAGES



Belcarra South Cottages Belcarra and Port Moody, BC

Description of the Historic Place

The Belcarra South Cottages property is situated along the eastern shoreline of Indian Arm, south of the Belcarra Peninsula near Burrard Inlet. Facing Boulder Island and Dollarton along the North Shore, it is located within two jurisdictions, the Village of Belcarra and the City of Port Moody, with the border dividing the first and second cottage on its northern boundary. The property is currently owned by Metro Vancouver and is part of Belcarra Regional Park.

The property comprises a narrow tract of land, approximately one to two hectares, with 250-300 metres of forested shoreline that includes two small pocket beaches separated by a low-rising rock outcrop. A gravel access road defining its northeastern border meanders parallel to the shoreline. The property, formerly known as the "Bole Estate", includes the historic Bole House and seven waterfront cottages (cabins) of varying style and scale, built from the early twentieth century through the 1930s. Today, all seven cabins are occupied by members of the Belcarra South Preservation Society.

Heritage Value of the Historic Place

The Belcarra South Cottages property is significant for its historic and cultural values, including its association with the influential Bole family and continuing through the mid-twentieth century as a summer destination for the urban middle-class of the Lower Mainland. The Cottages property is also valued for its surrounding natural splendor and for its longstanding preservation by the Belcarra South Preservation Society.

Solicitor William Norman Bole, known locally as Judge Bole, was a noteworthy figure in Belcarra's history, having at one time owned the southern portion of Belcarra Peninsula and lands including the Belcarra Picnic Area. He was also responsible for naming "Belcarra" after Belcarra, County Mayo in his native Ireland. Bole was an active British Columbian, known for his excellent marksmanship and yachting skills as well as for his service in a variety of organizations, including acting as: Captain of No. 1 Battery, B.C.; Bencher of the *Law Society*; Chairman of the *Dominion License Commissioners*; and president of the *Board of Trade*, the *Royal Columbian Hospital*, and the *Hastings Sawmill Company*. Judge Bole passed away in New Westminster in 1923.

The Bole family began acquiring property in Belcarra in 1883. In 1907, the family purchased the parcel where the seven Belcarra South Cottages would later be constructed. Judge Bole's son, lawyer John Percy Hampton Bole purchased a second parcel of land in the area in 1914. This is the property on which John Bole's permanent residence, the Bole House, now stands and where he and his wife, Kathleen, lived from 1934-1962, raising one daughter.

Likely, the Bole family began constructing the small cottages on the property over the years as their family grew and as the area became a popular location for summer gatherings and getaways. The seven single-storey cabins lining the waterfront were constructed at different times, beginning in the early twentieth century and continuing through the 1930s. The cottages, which were used as summer homes until the early 1970s, represent a cultural tradition once common to urban middle-class families and are an important aspect of the social history of Metro Vancouver. Without road access, telephone service or electricity until 1959, refuge in Belcarra South provided a sense of adventure, freedom, privacy and tranquility. Summer 'cottagers' enjoyed typical seasonal activities such as fishing, swimming, crabbing, sun bathing, beach combing, boating and water skiing. Significant to the values of the era, the cabins have names: La Soledad, Los Lobos, Mayo Point Lodge, Bay, Skeleton, Wellwood and the Wee cottage. From 1956 to 1974, an annual regatta was held at Bay cottage, with guests arriving by boat and in costume.

Located along the picturesque shoreline of Indian Arm, the forested area surrounding the cottages is home to a variety of flora including: salmonberry, salal, huckleberry, sword ferns, vine maple and native blackberry that grow beneath the mature second growth forest. The area is also home to a number of local wildlife species, including: river otters, grey heron, loons, mergansers, buffleheads, seagulls, harbour seals, bald eagles, Douglas squirrel, deer, raccoon, lynx, owls, coyotes and the occasional cougar and black bear. An important part of the local ecosystem, the cottages exist in harmony with the natural environment, integrating both the human and natural aspects that constitute Belcarra Regional Park.

Today, the Belcarra South cabin community is the only surviving example of the numerous cottages that lined the shores of Burrard Inlet. The Port Moody area of Burrard Inlet was home to cottages beginning in the 1890s in locations such as Pleasantside and Sunnyside. The Belcarra South community has survived because of the efforts of the Belcarra South Preservation Society

(BSPS), which was formed in 1976 in order to prevent their demolition after Metro Vancouver had acquired the property in 1971. The continuous care and full-time occupation by the BSPS has preserved the seven simply-designed cabins and their representation of one of the Lower Mainland's historic summertime destinations.

Character Defining Elements

The key elements that define the heritage character of the Belcarra South Cottages are their:

- Location in a mature second growth forest along the eastern shoreline of Indian Arm, south of the Belcarra Peninsula;
- Continuous occupation since the early twentieth century;
- Connection to the historic Bole family and the Bole House and property;
- Arrangement of seven single-story cottages;
- · Original form, scale and massing of each cottage;
- Utilitarian, wood-frame, single story design, built on wood block supports without foundations and composed of materials transported to the site by small boats;
- Front porches facing the water;
- Original wood-frame windows, including double-hung, two-over-six, six-over-one and two-over-two assemblies;
- Original solid wood doors, some with glass;
- Original tongue and groove fir flooring on all but Cabin #4;
- Original siding types including: sawn cedar shingles, wooden drop siding, and tongue and groove fir board and baton siding;
- Timber frame structure of two cabins;
- Annex building of Cabin #2;
- Overall expression of a 'family cottage', with simple alterations over time.