



The Gastown Steam Clock is one of the city's most photographed landmarks

GASTOWN

Let's Go Down in History

BY SHERI RADFORD

Vancouver began in Gastown. In 1867, a feisty fellow by the name of “Gassy Jack” Deighton set up the Globe Saloon, and Gastown soon developed around this hub of beer and conviviality. Though Gastown declined over the years and was almost demolished in the 1960s, its recent revitalization has made it once again near and dear to Vancouver hearts.

Everywhere you look in this neighbourhood, stretching mainly along Water Street from Richards to Carrall, you come face-to-face with a mix of history and modernity. Elegant Victorian-era buildings abut flashing-neon ATM machines. Gorgeous old loft buildings, newly renovated, bear the urban scars of graffiti. Gastown is located a few blocks from some of Canada's most expensive condominiums, but also a few

blocks from troubled Hastings Street. It's a fascinating place to visit in daylight hours.

Shops hawking t-shirts and souvenirs flank high-end clothing and shoe stores such as Obakki, Tabu and John Fluevog, with its soaring glass ceiling and sweeping ocean view. Fast-food outlets and cigar shops compete for attention with unique home-accessories stores such as Inform Interiors, in its expansive space. Numerous galleries explore First Nations history and culture: among them, Hill's Native Art, Marion Scott Gallery, Inuit Gallery of Vancouver and Spirit Wrestler Gallery.

Gastown is Vancouver's oldest district, but it keeps pace with the contemporary dining scene at So.cial at Le Magasin, European-style dining; Chill Winston, tapas; Boneta, modern bistro fare; and Jules, casual French. The most unusual dining concept to emerge is a restaurant with a minimal kitchen and no chef; at Salt Tasting Room, meals consist of cured meat, cheese and condiments, paired with wine. The old stalwarts remain popular: Steamworks Brewing Co., The Old Spaghetti Factory and The Irish Heather. Rogers' Chocolates is happy to oblige the sweet tooth.

Evidence of the past is everywhere in Gastown, from the working train tracks between Water Street and the waterfront, to the old-fashioned street signs, the much photographed steam clock and the statue of “Gassy Jack” himself, overlooking Maple Tree Square. Now, as then, Gastown looks forward to good times.



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