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## West Van's special house

■ West Coast masterpiece

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WHEN B.C. Binning built his wartime home on Mathers Crescent in West Vancouver, the house was so unusual that people flocked to its front door.

"My husband just let them in and I just grumbled," recalls his widow, Jessie Binning, who resides in the home to this day.

With its flat roof and post-and-beam structure, the Binning residence is one of the foremost examples of West Coast design during the Modern era. Last year it was declared a national historic site.

For Bert Binning, one of Canada's leading promoters of Modernist ideology, the house was an exploration of the union of art and architecture. Its design took an innovative approach to postwar housing that was economical in its construction and sensitive to its setting. It was designed to maximize the potential of its sloping site, as well as take advantage of natural light and views.

Recalls Jessie Binning of her husband's pioneering spirit: "When we decided to build this home, he wished to show what we could do with inexpensive (building) materials." Those materials included cedar V-joint boards for exterior and interior walls, fieldstone for the fireplace and fir plywood for bathroom and kitchen cabinets. Built-in furniture, including shelves, beds and a desk, was made by local artisans and ensured the most efficient use of space.

The house was completed in 1941 at a cost of \$5,000. It was designed by Binning and constructed in collaboration with young architects C.E. Pratt and R.A.D. Berwick. Binning, who founded UBC's department of fine arts and taught at the School of



**NEWS photo Mike Wakefield**  
**JESSIE Binning** stands inside the West Vancouver house designed by her late husband **B.C. Binning**. The home is a heritage site.

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Architecture, was later to further explore the union of art and architecture through the design and execution of murals for other Thompson Berwick Pratt and Partners projects: the BC Electric Building and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce among them.



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