



In 1929, Gertrude Lawson purchased two lots of land at 17th Street and Esquimalt Avenue. In designing her home, Lawson was influenced by a trip to Scotland, during which she toured a number of small stone castles. In 1939, Lawson was one of the earliest single woman in BC to get a mortgage to build her house. Her home was completed in 1940.

The original house had a wood frame, stone walls with interlocking corners, and a slate roof with copper sheeting over the front and south entrances. The stones that face the exterior are thought to come in part from the Capilano River. Additional stone came from New Zealand as ship ballast, originally intended for a home designed by Gertrude's father, John Lawson, which never came to fruition.

The original pegged hardwood floors, still in place today, are made from light oak with narrow dark oak to emulate the deck of a ship. In the house, there are two stone fireplaces, one in the basement and one on the main floor, which are currently covered, but remain intact behind false walls.

GERTRUDE LAWSON

Gertrude Lawson earned her teaching certificate in 1914. She began teaching in Barkerville and then Squamish, BC. During the First World War, she returned to West Vancouver to be with her mother, while her father, John Lawson and her brother, Duncan, served as soldiers in the war. From this time, Lawson taught at Lonsdale School, Hollyburn School, and then Pauline Johnson Elementary, where she worked from 1919 until her retirement in 1952. Her many interests included music, poetry, and painting. Her artwork was exhibited widely, including at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and some of her work is held in the West Vancouver Archives today.

Lawson's home was designed to be a social hub for her friends and family. She hosted teas, traditional Scottish dances, and weddings throughout her life at the house. She also rented rooms in the house to teachers, artists, friends, and young married couples, charging a modest fee to cover her own costs and later to subsidize her pension after retirement.

Lawson died on January 22, 1989 at the age of 96. The house was acquired by the District of West Vancouver in 1994.

GERTRUDE LAWSON HOUSE



WEST VANCOUVER
ART
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PHOTOS

Gertrude Lawson House during construction, photographer unknown, c. 1940, West Vancouver Archives. 269.WVA.LAW

Gertrude Lawson, photographer unknown, c. 1915, West Vancouver Archives. 039.WVA.LAW

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