

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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Growing Up in the Vancouver of the 1940s and 1950s

April Speaker: Bob Ross

What was it like growing up in the 1940s and 50s in Vancouver?

To many, these were simpler times when rules of behaviour, dress, loyalty and obligations were clear, reflecting the voice and cultural boundaries of the population of the time.

To children in Kerrisdale, however, it was an unfettered life: building forts, shooting slingshots, catching muskrats and making campfires in the local woods. It was a world without television or computers, when kids played outdoors from dawn 'til dusk without supervision.

They were also the war years when families were forced to be creative in the absence of a fighting father.

Backyard freedoms were symbolized by a tree that was pivotal in Bob Ross' childhood adventures. Dubbed

the "Cucumber Tree", it was actually a type of magnolia, deriving its nickname from its gherkin-like seed pods. High in its branches, the neighbourhood gang met to plan garden raids, war parties and hunting

excursions to far-off frog ponds. Later in life, the tree came to represent all that a childhood in early Vancouver could be.

Summer holidays included summer camps at Pasley Island, driving trips to the south Cariboo. During the school year, traditional private school imbued a sense

of grounding, loyalty and duty. In the 1950s however, contradictions began to emerge with the advent of television, rock and roll and Elvis Presley. An otherwise idyllic childhood was also haunted by the dark shadow of the Cold War when

America and the Soviet Union were engaged in their feverish race to develop atomic warheads. The installation of air raid warning systems only reinforced his belief that the Russians would soon bomb Vancouver. The author's answer to this drama was to build a canoe and develop his own survival plan.

Ross captures the era with warmth, humour and clarity to which anyone, no matter when and where they were raised, can relate.

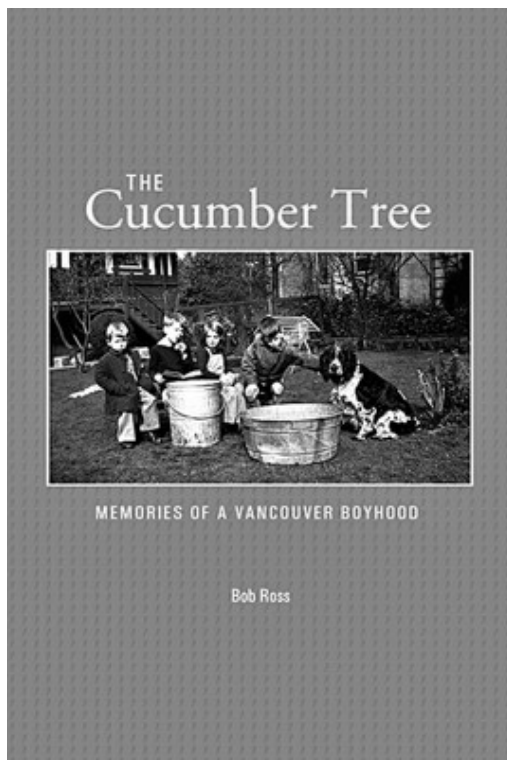
Bob Ross, a retired engineer who spent much of his professional life working for the City of Vancouver, has deep pioneer roots in



Author Bob Ross

the city and British Columbia. After retirement, he wrote *The Cucumber Tree: Memories of a Vancouver Childhood* and volunteered his expertise to public projects in the Downtown Eastside.

Bruce M. Watson



MEMORIES OF A VANCOUVER BOYHOOD

Bob Ross

Next Meeting: 7:30 PM, Thursday, April 28 at Museum of Vancouver

Preznotes

There is an ongoing discussion about the impact of social media, such as Facebook or Twitter, and whether the Society should utilize these tools to publicize our activities and increase our membership. As an extension of this question I've been told the Society is virtually unknown to the general public.

I tend to respectfully disagree. Any time I tell an acquaintance about my involvement with the Society, there is instant recognition, bordering on jubilation. In fact, the next immediate comment generally gives me the impression we are a well-regarded organization, with a highly respectable track record of achievement.

What I do agree with is that we tend not to make what we do into a vehicle for self-promotion. Talking about ourselves has always taken a back seat to the tenets of our mandate – we are here to preserve and promote the history of Vancouver, not shout from the rooftops about how great the VHS is. I'm proud of our humble work ethic: we see what must be done, put our heads down, and get it done... there's no need to boast, just to do. For a fully volunteer-run organization, the results are no less than astonishing. I can attest that we are an active group behind many scenes, involved with the projects and issues of our community.

All that is not to say we should continue as we have. We are coming up, in October, to the seventy-fifth anniversary of our formation. On October 2, 1936, an organizational meeting was held to create a Vancouver Section of the British Columbia Historical Association, which ultimately became the Vancouver Historical Society. Perhaps it *is* time to start talking about the Society itself a little, in addition to our ongoing efforts to preserve and promote Vancouver's history.

Scott Anderson, President
sanderson@vancouver-historical-society.ca

Monumental Cleanup



Five of the eight cleanup crew from left to right: Rory Wallace, Jolene Cummings, Bruce Watson, Scott Anderson, Jean Wilson.

Photo: Amber Anderson

Eight VHS members (Scott & Amber Anderson, Les Mobbs, Jolene Cummings, Charles Hou, Jean Wilson, Rory Wallace and Bruce Watson) helped return the overgrown, overcrowded and algae-covered 1966 VHS Hastings Mill Monument to its original elegance and grace in time for Vancouver's Incorporation Day. The refurbished stone tribute to the Mill can be viewed in the lawn on the north side of the Flying Angel Seaman's Club at 401 East Waterfront Rd.

Substantial Donations Made

Thank you to the eighteen members who made contributions totaling \$865 to the VHS Operating Fund during January, February and March. Additional contributions have been made by members and friends to the Chuck Davis Book Fund. We'll report on those in the May newsletter and at the Annual General Meeting on May 26.

Welcome New Members

Wayne Cummings
Robert James

Michael O'Hagan
Marian Seeley

VHS Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will be held starting at 7:00 PM, Thursday, May 26 a half-hour before our scheduled monthly talk. Reports will be presented and elections for a new Executive will take place.

In its role as Nominating Committee, the current VHS Executive is pleased to submit the following full slate of nominees for the 2011-2012 Executive to be elected at our May 26, 2011 Annual General Meeting.

President	Scott Anderson
Vice President	Bruce M. Watson
Treasurer	Kristen Wong
Recording Secretary	Jean Wilson
Director	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director	Kellan Higgins
Director	Jean Mann
Director	Robert McDonald
Director	Jim McGraw

All terms of office are for one year beginning June 1, 2011. Additional nominations will be accepted at the AGM provided that the nominee is a current VHS member and is present.

Upcoming Speakers & Events

The VHS invites everyone (including non-members) to attend our monthly talks. The talks are free and are held at the Museum of Vancouver, 1100 Chestnut Street (close to Vanier Park) at 7:30 pm on the fourth Thursday of every month except in June, July, August, December). Special events may be held at other times for which there may be a fee.

Thursday, May 26, 2011 - 7:30 pm

Passing Time

Speaker: Trevor Martin

Black and white photographer Trevor Martin will demonstrate through his immense collection of prints that even though time gradually changes our perceptions of the city in which we live, photographs are a stark reminder of the changes we have gone through as a city and society.

Watch this space in future newsletters for a preview of our 2011-2012 speaker series starting in September.

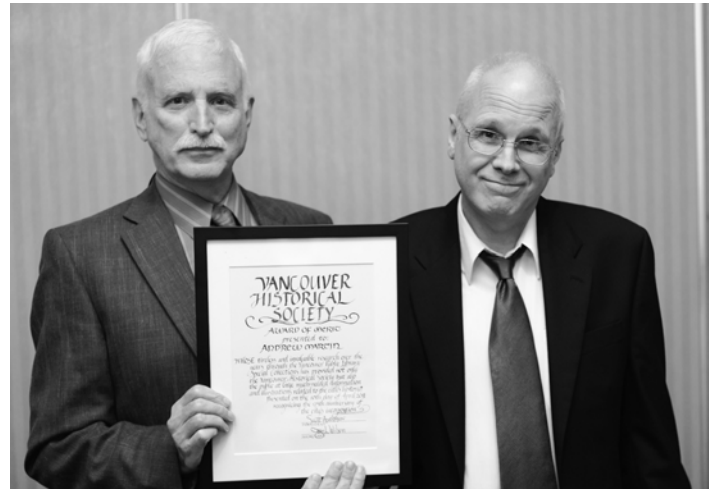
Moments from our 2011 Incorporation Day Luncheon



VHS members and guests enjoy Incorporation Day Luncheon on April 10th.

Photo: Kellan Higgins

April 6, 2011 marked the 125th anniversary of the Incorporation of the City of Vancouver. The VHS celebrated the event with our annual Incorporation Day Luncheon held on Sunday, April 10th at the University Golf Club. A good number of our membership were



VHS Vice-President Bruce Watson presents the Award of Merit to Andrew Martin.

Photo: Kellan Higgins

there to enjoy the luncheon and listen to keynote speaker, Christopher Gaze, the founder of Bard on the Beach. The VHS' Award of Merit was also presented to Andrew Martin, librarian in the Special Collections Department of the Vancouver Public Library's Main Branch.

Before & After

This year we celebrate the 125th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Vancouver. As part of this special year, we look at different locations in the city as

they looked years ago and how they look today. VHS member Kellan Higgins visited the locations and took our present day photos.

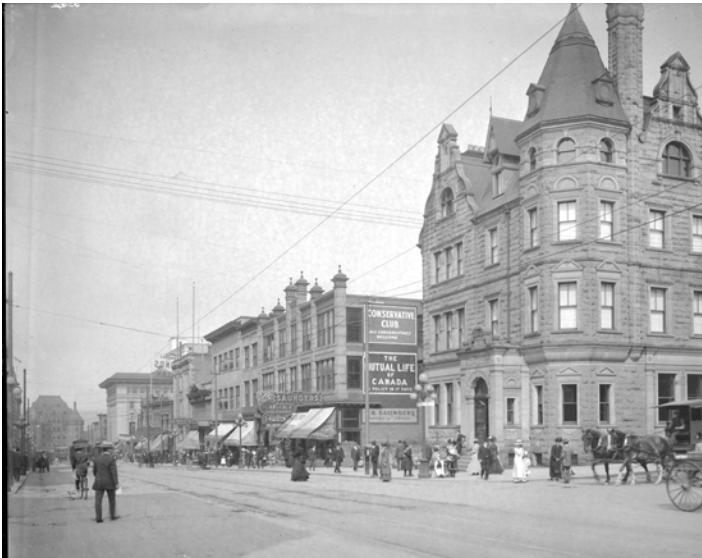


Photo: R. Broadbridge, Vancouver Public Library 8412



Photo: Kellan Higgins

In both photos, we are looking northeast at the corner of Granville and Dunsmuir. About a century separates the two views of this intersection. This pre-1912 photo shows the turreted Bank of Montreal building at the corner. Beyond the bank on the east side of Granville are the low-rise Fee Block and the Mackechnie Building. Amazingly one of the low-rise buildings is still there although the Fee Block has been replaced by the low-rise facade of a new office tower behind it. The Bank of Montreal (and later Imperial Bank of Canada) was torn down in the 1950s to make way for the more modern building shown in the present day view. Look north, down Granville Street. The large Canadian Bank of Commerce (now Birks) building is seen in the distance at Hastings. The 10-storey Rogers Building opened in 1912 at Pender — seen in the distance

near the left side of the “After” photo — has yet to become part of the streetscape. The building’s developer, Jonathan Rogers, liked to claim he was the first to step off that very first train from the east in May 1887 when he was 22-years-old. Later in life, Rogers reminisced about simpler times in the city, recalling horse races being held on Granville Street. The chateau-styled Canadian Pacific train station is seen at the very end of Granville. This station — the CPR’s second — would be replaced in 1914 by the one we know today as Waterfront Station. Although cars and buses have replaced the horses, wagons and streetcars, some things never change. Almost 100 years later, Granville Street is still a major downtown artery full of shops and busy with pedestrians.

Jim McGraw

Vancouver Historical Society Leadership - 2010 - 2011 (Elected May 27, 2010)

EXECUTIVE

President	Scott Anderson
Vice President (Programs)	Bruce Watson
Treasurer	Paul Flucke
Recording Secretary	Jean Wilson
Director (Memberships)	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director	Jean Mann
Director (Newsletter Editor)	Jim McGraw

APPOINTED POSITIONS

Webmaster	Quasar Data Management
Archivist	Elizabeth Hawkins
Info Line	Barbara Coles

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