

# Vancouver Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

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## Life of a Building: The Continental Hotel

April 24th Speaker: John Atkin

*Please Note: Due to unforeseen circumstances, the originally scheduled April 24th talk "The History of Art and Artists" with Gary Sim, has had to be cancelled.*

Although it was referred to in the press as the Kilroy & Morgan Block, and as a six-storey brick office building, the building on Granville 50 feet from the corner of Pacific Street was always a hotel — in 1912 the Bayview Hotel. Architects Parr and Fee designed the building, as they did on many other lots to the north. This project was valued at \$100,000, suggesting Kilroy and Morgan were pretty successful.

In 1911, the year the building was constructed, William Kilroy and Frederick W. Morgan ran a gentlemen's clothing store at 37 Hastings Street, and while Mr. Kilroy lived in rooms at the Hotel Vancouver, was aged 35 and claimed to be retired, Mr. Morgan (who was only 31 years old) lived with his wife, Jenny, and two sons at 1165 Comox Street. It looks like he came from Quebec, while Mr. Kilroy may have come from New

Brunswick (but the census clerk badly needed a new nib for his pen).

The hotel opened as the Bayview in 1912, with Sarah Cusick as the manager, her sister Helena worked there and it looks like her brother Norman lived there too. In 1913 Sarah is still at the hotel, and Helena Cusick is working and living there too, but Norman

Continental. It's still a name it holds today, and it still offers rooms as a single room occupancy hotel, but not for much longer as it's planned that the tired and compromised building (since the Granville Bridge was built in the 1950s) will soon be replaced. The loss won't be the hotel (as the city bought a more recently-built hotel to re-house

the residents — and that building has bathrooms). It will be the mural of whales, painted by Wyland in 1994 and restored in 2010.



**The Continental Hotel as seen from Pacific Street in 1932 (left) with the McCulloch Motor Company in the foreground and today (right) with the whale mural.**

Photo: City of Vancouver Archives CVA 20-109 on left; [www.changingvancouver.wordpress.com](http://www.changingvancouver.wordpress.com) on right

has moved up Granville Street. A year later all this Cusick family have left town, but Lena Cusick is managing the Bon Accord Rooms on Hornby. No name is associated with managing the hotel, which seems to have become the Bayview Rooms, with three staff.

In the 1920s the Hotel changed to the

Atkin will examine the building from its construction to today. Learn the fascinating details of the people who lived and worked there during the past 102 years. Discover the changes the neighbourhood has gone through during same time and what it has meant for the building, which will soon be gone.

Noted civic historian and author John

Next Meeting and Presentation: 7:30 p.m., Thursday, April 24, 2014 at Museum of Vancouver

## President's Notes

Jim McGraw's story (on Page 4) of the ceremonial last run of the "17 Oak" streetcar on April 19, 1952 caught my attention for two reasons. First, it reminds me of the huge bridge construction project at the south end of Oak Street that remains an enduring memory of my first trip to the west coast in 1956. Looking back, we can see that the demise of the streetcar and the building of the Oak Street Bridge were part of the automobile-driven suburbanization of the fifties that fundamentally changed Vancouver. Indeed, Jim's account underlines how stories about symbolically important historical moments serve both to remind us of the city we have lost and to reflect on the meaning of urban growth across time.

The streetcar photo also got me thinking about the man behind the story, Jim McGraw. Jim's interest in communicating stories is informed by a varied career in radio where, over the years, he hosted interview, talk, and other magazine-style programs in Montreal and Vancouver and voiced many national commercials. He fell in love with Vancouver during his first visit in 1975 and moved to the west coast twenty years ago. After being convinced to join the Vancouver Historical Society by his good friend Chuck Davis, Jim has served as Newsletter editor for almost ten. How lucky we are to have as editor a self-proclaimed "nut for trivia" who is able to "peek" into Vancouver's past. This he does by starting with an interesting photograph that illustrates an historical event for that particular month. He then researches it in newspaper clippings, city directories and elsewhere. This month's story on the Oak Street trolley tells us something else about Jim: his life-long passion for streetcars, railroads, and their history.

As one of the VHS executive put it, Jim McGraw is "the consummate behind the scenes guy" who has worked tirelessly to expand the outreach of the VHS and played a key role in bringing to completion our *City Reflections* DVD. He is also, says Elizabeth Hawkins, "one of the nicest people I know." Keep writing, Jim!

*Bob McDonald, President*  
*bobmcdonald@vancouver-historical-society.ca*

## Discover Vancouver's East End Roots: Strathcona North of Hastings

The Vancouver Historical Society is pleased to offer a free members-only walking tour of Strathcona, north of Hastings Street, with house historian James Johnstone. The tour will take place on Saturday, April 26, beginning at 2:00pm, for approximately two hours.

The largely industrialized area of Strathcona North of Hastings is the oldest part of the city of Vancouver. The point of land on the north foot of Dunlevy, where Captain Edward Stamp established Vancouver's first industry, the Hastings Mill (originally the Vancouver Island Spar, Lumber & Sawmill Co.) in 1865, was known as Kumkumalay ("big leaf maple trees"). Before it became the site of the first European settlement on the south side of Burrard Inlet it had been used for millennia by Coast Salish people as a summer camp during their seasonal cycle.

Though many of the physical reminders are now gone this neighbourhood, the oldest part of Strathcona and Vancouver, is very rich in history.

If you would like to participate, please leave a message with your name and phone number at the **VHS info-line (604-878-9140)** by Thursday, April 24, 2014 to reserve your spot. You can also email the VHS at **www.vancouver-historical-society.ca** leaving a phone number and **using the subject line: East End Roots Tour.**

Please note this tour is for Vancouver Historical Society members only, and limited to 20 individuals on a first-come first-serve basis. The group will meet at 2:00pm at 611 Alexander Street at the north foot of Princess Avenue. Please wear comfortable shoes, suitable for walking on city sidewalks.

Our new Tour Director, Jo Pleshakov, has several other exciting VHS field trips and special events in the planning stages for the summer and fall. Please watch for announcements in upcoming newsletters and on our website.

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## Welcome New VHS Members

Joanne & Steve Emmerman

Graham Peat and Diana Haynes

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## B.C. Historical Federation Conference

An exciting series of activities and events have been planned for this year's British Columbia Historical Federation's conference. Being held Friday and Saturday, June 6th and 7th in Surrey in partnership with the Surrey Historical Society, everything will be taking place in Cloverdale, Surrey's historic centre.

As usual, there will be something for everyone. On Friday, there will be a genealogy orientation at the Cloverdale Library. Also that afternoon, Surrey archivist Ryan Gallagher presents a multimedia program exploring the history of Surrey. There is also an option of taking a bus tour to historic Stewart Farm and Crescent Beach. A walking tour of the historical core of Cloverdale will be conducted by Roger Bose, a descendant of one of the early pioneer farming families in Surrey.



Saturday is another full day of activities including a presentation by VHS member, writer and historian Henry Ewert on the B.C. Electric Railway, the interurban that connected Surrey with New Westminster and Vancouver. There will also



be an opportunity to ride one of the interurbans with a visit to the Fraser Valley Heritage Railway. A visit to Surrey's newest museum, the B.C. Vintage Truck Museum, will be a must for vintage truck fans or for anyone wishing to

rekindle memories of the vehicles of the past.

With the centenary this year of the start of World War I, a special presentation will be held by local author and historian Warren Sommer examining the remarkable story of how Canada and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission have honoured the fallen of World War I.

The conference will close with the traditional awards banquet. Visit the B.C. Historical Federation's website at <http://bchistory.ca/conferences/2014/index.html> for details. You can also call **Ken at 604-855-9822** or **Barb at 604-535-9090** for more information.

## Upcoming Speakers

*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 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month except June, July, August, December).*

Thursday, May 22, 2014

### **The Art of the Impossible: Dave Barrett and the NDP in Power 1972-1975.**

*Speakers: Geoff Meggs and Rod Mickleburgh*

Dave Barrett's NDP provincial government reign from 1972-1975 has left us with a legacy that has shaped the province ever since, largely through a damn-the-torpedoes three-year legislative blitzkrieg. Many changes from the Agricultural Land Reserve, to ICBC to a Provincial Ambulance service, etc. have given the province a totally new direction. Leading this onslaught was a complex politician, Dave Barrett. City Councillor Geoff Meggs and reporter Rod Mickleburgh will base their talk on their book of the same name.

Thursday, September 25, 2014

### **The Other Western Front — British Columbia and the Great War**

*Speakers: Mark Forsythe and Greg Dickson*

In the summer of 1914, Vancouver and the Province were in a recession. When war was declared in August, men of British ancestry were the first to enlist, but as the recession continued, many others signed up in order to get work. Premier McBride, an ardent imperialist, led the charge to defend empire, and purchased two submarines to help defend the Pacific Coast. We opened our own submarine factory in Burnaby before the war was over. Just some of the interesting stories Mark and Greg will share along with accounts from CBC listeners about the way the war touched their families.

Thursday, October 23, 2014

### **The History of the Vancouver Police Museum, Morgue and Important Cases**

*Speaker: Robert Noon, Director of the Vancouver Police Museum*

More details coming in next month's newsletter.

# Peek into the Past

with Jim McGraw



Photographer unknown, from Wally Young and Joe Testagrose Collections

The atmosphere was festive although the event was a bit sad, especially for fans of Vancouver's streetcars. The date was Saturday, April 19, 1952 — 62 years ago — and it was the ceremonial last run of the "17 Oak Street" cars. Regular service had actually ended in the very early morning hours of the previous day.

Six of the oldest cars made the trip from downtown across the old Connaught Bridge, up Cambie, west on Broadway and then south on Oak to the Marpole station near Marine Drive. Decked out in bunting, the cars were filled with various dignitaries and long-time employees. As Vancouver streetcar historian Henry Ewert notes in his book on the B.C. Electric Railway, there were even song leaders and accordionists on board to add to the festive mood.

The Oak Street line was a quirky route that became single track on Oak south of 16th Avenue. There were passing sidings where cars met, with motormen exchanging a staff granting them authority to use the next segment of single track. Sometimes the track was in the middle of Oak

Street, while in other areas it was at the side of the street, much of which was unpaved. The tracks weren't very well maintained causing the streetcars to bob and weave especially at speed. Everyone seemed to know everyone along the route and on the cars making for a friendly trip. It could be called Vancouver's "Toonerville Trolley." (*Toonerville Folks* was a popular newspaper cartoon from 1908 to 1955 featuring the rickety Toonerville Trolley.)

Note the Reddy Kilowatt cartoon cutout decorating the front of the car. Reddy Kilowatt was a marketing mascot used by many electrical utilities to promote the wonders of electric power. The character with lightning bolt arms and legs, a lightbulb nose and wall outlet ears, was first used in 1926 by the Alabama Power Company. It was later licensed for use by other utilities including the British Columbia Electric Railway Company, which operated the region's streetcars and interurbans and provided electric power to homes and businesses. Walter Lantz Studios — famous for Woody Woodpecker — even created an animated film of the character in 1946 called "Reddy Made Magic."

Residents along sparsely populated Oak Street came out to watch the colourful parade of streetcars pass. At 47th Avenue members of the Vancouver Gun Club greeted the cars with a loud succession of blanks being fired from their rifles — not something that could be done today.

By the early 1950s, the days of streetcars in Vancouver were really numbered. Just two months later, streetcar service ended on the old Granville Bridge (demolished after the current one opened in 1954). There were just a few routes left, each eventually succumbing to replacement by buses. Just three years later only the "14 Hastings East" route remained. That too finally made its last run in April 1955, ending the era of streetcars in Vancouver.

## Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2013 - 2014 (Elected May 23, 2013)

### EXECUTIVE

President	Robert McDonald
Vice President (Programs)	Bruce M. Watson
Treasurer	Scott Anderson
Recording Secretary	Kellan Higgins
Director (Membership)	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director	Michael Kluckner
Director	Eve Lazarus
Director (Newsletter Editor)	Jim McGraw
Director	Florence Sung

### APPOINTED POSITIONS

Webmaster	Quasar Data Management
Archivist	Alexandra Allen
Info Line	Bruce Watson
Newsletter Mailing	Margaret Dinwoodie

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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