

# Vancouver Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

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### Bread & Roses: Women and the Labour Movement April Speaker: Joey Hartman and the Re: Sisters

*“As we go marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,  
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray,  
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,  
For the people hear us singing “bread and roses, bread and roses.”*

These lyrics speak to the need for sustenance, as represented by bread, and beauty in our lives, by roses. Based on a poem by James Oppenheim and inspired by a speech given by Rose Schneiderman, it is associated with a successful 1912 Massachusetts textile strike; however, the message is universal.

With photographs, quotes and music, April’s speakers, Joey Hartman and the Re: Sisters feminist chorus, will describe events and general trends of significance to women in labour, with a particular focus on individuals in Vancouver and B.C.

It is not surprising that Aboriginal women, having lived and worked in the lower mainland since time immemorial, were at the vanguard of the 700 mostly aboriginal women cannery workers who struck in 1900. They helped win a settlement and improved piece rate for salmon.

By the first International Women’s Day in 1911, almost 6,500 women of all nationalities represented 8% of the paid workforce in Vancouver. Most worked as domestic servants, while other jobs included fish workers, telephone operators, seamstresses, teachers and laundresses.



**Women building airplanes at Boeing plant on Sea Island in Richmond in the mid-1940s.**

Photographer: Briddick, City of Vancouver Archives, AM54-S4: Air P1.3

From the end of WWI to the end of WWII, it was a roller coaster ride for women in labour. In the 1920s, desirable work became available but disappeared in the 1930s only to return in WWII when women entered manufacturing in huge numbers. However at war’s end, over 80,000 Canadian women were laid off to clear their jobs for returning vets.

Subsequently in the 1940s, most women found their union activism limited to women’s auxiliaries. Their husbands earned a “family wage” and few women participated in waged labour.

By the 1970s however, feminism and economic necessity drove women

into the workforce in large numbers. Unions started to bargain women’s issues such as maternity leave extensions and top up, family leave, flexible hours, the ability to use sick leave for family members and affirmative action.

By the early 1980s, the struggle shifted to equal pay for work of equal value, and other forms of equity. Two feminist based unions were formed to advance women’s issues in a labour climate that did little to recognize the need for change. Today, the aims of women in labour

still reflect the need for sustenance and quality of life.

Join us for this very unique approach to women in the labour movement, an under appreciated but very important part of Vancouver and British Columbia history.

*Joey Hartman and Bruce M. Watson*

Next Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Thursday, April 23, 2015 at Museum of Vancouver

## President's Notes

Joey Hartman's talk this month on the history of women in the Vancouver labour movement draws my attention to **Irene Howard**, a longtime Vancouver Historical Society (VHS) member who joined the Society almost fifty years ago. Hartman's talk will introduce us to key Vancouver individuals who sought social rights for women. One such individual was Helena Gutteridge, a trade unionist and social activist whose story Irene tells in *The Struggle for Social Justice in British Columbia: Helena Gutteridge, The Unknown Reformer* (1992).

A cartoon from the book speaks volumes about the difficulties that Vancouver women faced in their struggle for social justice. Published on the front page of the Vancouver Sun on March, 27, 1937, the cartoon shows Helena standing in the City Council Chambers, a rolling pin in hand, saying: "Now let's see — new curtains over there — flowers — ash trays — and er— the language!" Helena Gutteridge, a member of the socialist CCF party, had become the first woman elected to Council. Clearly, being taken seriously as a woman in politics was going to be a challenge.

Helena had arrived from England in 1911. Born into the working class, trained as a tailor, and active as an English suffragist, she immediately made her mark in Vancouver as a trade unionist, labour researcher, correspondent, and voice for working class women about suffrage. She fought to make visible the issue of female unemployment and in 1918 successfully promoted the passage of BC's first bill to establish minimum wages for women. In the 1930s, housing became Helena's main issue, prompting her to question housing conditions in the West End and spearhead the struggle for social housing.

Helena offered an attractive subject for a writer like Irene Howard. Born in Prince Rupert to Swedish immigrant parents, Irene grew up in mining camps around Smithers and the Bridge River area. Their lives were shaped by her father's work as a miner, a story she told in her fourth book, *Gold Dust on His Shirt: The Story of an Immigrant Mining Family*. But it is her first book that connects her most directly to the VHS. Presented first in 1968 as one of a series of papers on Vancouver's ethnic history, the talk emerged in 1970 as *Vancouver's Svenskar: A History of the Swedish Community in Vancouver*, the Society's first major publication. Congratulations, Irene.

**Bob McDonald, President**

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## Bicycles and Motorcycles since 1914

In Vancouver, the Deeley name has been synonymous with motorcycles since the Bromsgrove, England-born Fred Deeley opened his first shop at 1075 Granville in 1914. Just three years later, Fred acquired a Harley-Davidson franchise. By 1925, Fred owned the motorcycle shop, a bicycle shop and one of the largest car dealerships in Canada. In that year, his son Fred Jr. took over the motorcycle business, which would eventually move to West Broadway. In 1953, Fred Sr.'s grandson, Trev, became the company's General Manager.

Although Trev passed away in 2002, the business continues today in a huge complex on Boundary Road just north of Broadway.

The building houses a unique museum showcasing over 250

historic motorcycles. The collection — representing over 50 manufacturers from around the world — is considered to be the finest private collection of motorcycles in Canada.

Join our affable host, Terry Rea, for a tour of this fascinating museum on Saturday, April 25th at 1:00 p.m. Now retired, Terry is a former Deeley employee, who has been involved with motorcycles and car racing in the Lower Mainland since his teens. Terry will talk about the Deeley family history as well as the motorcycle collection. Even if you have never had an interest in riding a motorcycle, the Deeley story and collection is a unique part of Vancouver history and not to be missed.

This tour is free for VHS members and \$9 for non-members (if space is available). There are a limited number of tickets so please reserve early by calling the Vancouver Historical Society's **Info-Line at 604-878-9140** and leaving your name, phone number and email (if available) so our tour coordinator can reply with a confirmation. Tickets are available on a first-come basis.



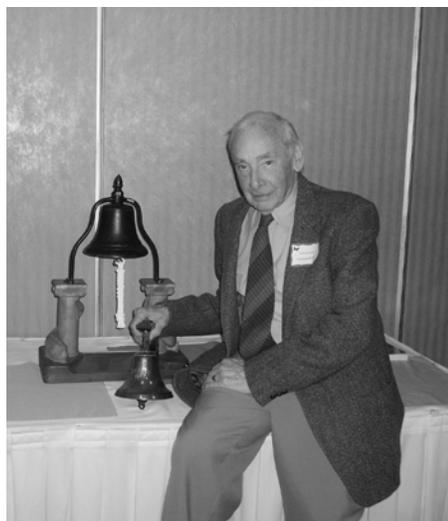
**The Deeley shop at 563 West Broadway in 1926, where it had now been for a year since moving from Granville. An advertisement in the window touts "80 miles per gallon" for one of their motorcycles.**

Photo: Trev Deeley Collection

## The Society is Looking for You

The Vancouver Historical Society is a volunteer organization that depends on members for its success and continuity. The Society is always looking for individuals with talent and skills that help the organization to promote an interest in Vancouver history. If you have any background in accounting, publicity, media, organization, writing, event planning, management, or similar fields, we would be interested in meeting you. That kind of background is always needed on the Society's Executive Board. You don't have to be an expert or even know much about Vancouver history. (You'll pick that up easily enough if you're interested.) The Executive Board meets for about 90 minutes once a month, nine times a year to direct the Society's goals. Terms for Board members are one year. Please contact [bobmcdonald@vancouver-historical-society.ca](mailto:bobmcdonald@vancouver-historical-society.ca) for more information.

### Len McCann 1927-2015



We are all saddened by the death of Len McCann, one of the Vancouver Historical Society's longest serving members. Born in Shanghai where his father's family had lived since the 1860s, the young Len with his mother survived four years in a Japanese

internment camp in the Philippines before migrating to Victoria in 1945. In 1968 he became an assistant curator with the Vancouver Maritime Museum, later to become Curator of Maritime History. A walking encyclopedia on the shipping world, he could identify almost any ship on sight. Very active in the VHS from the time he joined, Len served as president from 1978 to 1983 and acted as our representative at numerous Historical Federation meetings. He will be most vividly remembered for his ringing of the bell of the *Robert Kerr* at our Incorporation Day Luncheons, a tradition that he began in 1979 and continued for thirty-five years. This kind and generous man, a dear friend of the VHS, will be much missed.

## 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 28, 2015

### **Daughters in the City: Mennonite Maids in Vancouver**

**Speaker: Ruth Derksen**

In the early 1930s, young Mennonite women — mostly adolescents — began to arrive in Vancouver, seeking work as domestic servants. Most had recently come to Canada as refugees from Russia, having escaped from the terror of Stalin's regime and consequently their desperate families owed a substantial debt to the Canadian Pacific Railway for their journey. These indomitable young single women, however, were pioneers of their community for they broke through the barriers of the "evil city," the English language and the upper-class British culture. Significantly, they shaped the settlement patterns of not only Vancouver, but also western Canada. The author and speaker, Ruth Derksen, pays tribute to their impact and their long lasting legacy.

Thursday, Sept. 24, 2015

### **Raincoast Jews: Integration in British Columbia**

**Speaker: Lillooet Nordlinger McDonnell**

The speaker will explore the lives and contributions of five leading Jews living in British Columbia between 1860 and 1970: Cecelia Davies for her charity work in early Victoria, Hannah Director who rose in a small mining camp to become head of the school board, Leon Koerner the Czechoslovakian refugee who was associated with the lumber industry and became known for his philanthropy, Harry Adaskin who started the first UBC music school and Nathan Nemetz who rose to become the first Jewish chief justice of British Columbia. Emphasis will be placed on how their Jewish heritage shaped their professional legacy and contributions to Canadian society.

# Peek into the Past

with Jim McGraw

Take a close look at the open-sided crate in the truck and you can just barely see an outstretched arm near the back. That is one of the outstretched arms of the bronze statue of Lord Stanley laying on its back. The crated statue is being readied for the move to its final spot in Stanley Park on an April day in 1960 — 55 years ago.

The statue would be dedicated on May 19th, 1960 by Canada's Governor-General Georges Vanier.

According to the Chuck Davis' website, [www.vancouverhistory.ca](http://www.vancouverhistory.ca), J. S. Matthews, Vancouver's archivist, had discovered a letter written October 19, 1889 by an unknown person, promising a suitable future monument to commemorate Stanley Park's dedication in that year by Lord Stanley. When

Matthews discovered the letter in 1950, he realized the promise had not been fulfilled. For the next few years, Matthews went about campaigning for the funding of a statue.

Stanley was Frederick Arthur Stanley, Lord Stanley of Preston, serving as Canada's Governor-General, from 1888-1893. (In 1892 Lord Stanley gave a cup to be awarded an-

nually to Canada's best hockey team, which the Vancouver Millionaires won in March 1915).

British sculptor Sydney March was commissioned to create the eight-foot-tall Lord Stanley statue. March was the second of nine children,

eight of whom would become artists. The March family is noted for having completed the National War Memorial in Ottawa begun in 1926, a monument designed by their brother Vernon, who would die before it was finished.

Johnston National Storage, whose workers are moving the statue in the photo, also has a long history in Vancouver. John Atkin's research shows it had its start in 1913 as "one man, a team of fine horses



**Sydney March's Lord Stanley statue being readied on April 26, 1960 for the move to its eventual Stanley Park home.**

Williams Brothers Photographers Ltd., City of Vancouver Archives, AM54-S4- Mon P105.5

and a wagon." The "one man" was Elmer Johnston originally from Ontario. Johnston had great success and by mid-century, his group of companies had become one of the largest warehousing and distribution networks in the west. Johnston himself was very active in the community becoming the head of the B.C. Automobile Association and the Vancouver Tourist Association in the early 1940s.

## Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2014 - 2015 (Elected May 22, 2014)

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Archivist  
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Tour Coordinator

Alexandra Allen  
Jeannie Hounslow  
Mary Gavan, Diane Switzer  
Jo Pleshakov

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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