

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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Local Protest and Transnational Politics Vietnam War Resistance in Vancouver and B.C. April Speaker: Lara Campbell

In the city's timeline from the early 1960s to the mid 1970s, Vancouver went through a decade of heightened political, social and ecological awareness, counter-culture hippies, publishing, drugs, participatory protest and an influx of thousands of Vietnam War draft resisters. The city had become a hub for transnational anti-war activism where the student, socialist, anti-imperialist, and women's liberation movements intersected, organized, and criticized each others' positions on the war in Vietnam. Spontaneous protests erupted. For example, American activist Jerry Rubin led politicized UBC students into the UBC Faculty Club where he encountered Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, both polar opposites in this heightened period. By mid 1970s, however, fatigue had set in and disco and pursuit of profit had replaced the previous derring-do.

While draft resisters were immigrating to Canada, the country was officially non-belligerent as part of the International Control Commission (Canada, Poland and India) which oversaw the 1954 Geneva Agreements. While officially Canada refused to admit draft dodgers until 1969,

Canada was sending out mixed messages. While officially neutral, Canadian foreign aid was sent to Vietnam but large quantities of war supplies were sent through private companies to the US. Dodgers/resisters were often college educated middle class people of the left. Smaller numbers of deserters, quite a different story, were from lower income and



An anti-war protest march in Vancouver on Georgia Street in 1968.

Photo: John Hill

working class backgrounds. Numbers vary widely from 20,000 to 125,000. When a pardon under President Carter came in 1977, half of dodgers/resisters stayed in Canada. Many, including Vancouver's political activist, Jim Green, excelled in all walks of life contributing considerably to the country.

In the long run, the energy from that decade took different directions. For example, visiting outsiders, American Jerry Rubin became a multimillionaire businessman and died an early death in Los Angeles of a heart attack in Los Angeles in 1994 subsequent to being hit by a car. Lee Kuan Yew, after acquiring basic information on establishing international banking in Singapore, continued to lead that city-state to become a corruption-free Asia Tiger success story.

Speaker Lara Campbell is a professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at SFU and specialized in the history of gendered welfare states and history of political protest and activism. Her talk will place Vancouver at the centre of antiwar organizing by examining how local organizations and activists built support

networks for draft resisters, resisted and criticized American cultural and political influence in Canada, and debated the subordination of women within antiwar and draft resistance movements.

Bruce M. Watson

Next Meeting at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, April 28, 2016 at Museum of Vancouver

President's Notes

On our recent tour of St. George's Junior School, the former Convent of the Sacred Heart on 29th Avenue in Dunbar, I was struck by what a diverse, interesting society Vancouver is. Perhaps it's just that we are a secular society now, compared with a century ago when the convent school opened.

Airlie Ogilvie, who is the keeper of the memory of Sacred Heart, conducted much of the tour. She was raised a Presbyterian but placed by her father as a boarder in this Catholic institution more than 50 years ago; the convent buildings became the property of St. George's, founded as an Anglican school, in the late 1970s. Today, secular St. George's is the steward of the Catholic buildings and welcomes a Presbyterian who is keeping the convent's memory alive.

On another matter entirely, your board of directors is wrestling with the matter of our membership in the BC Historical Federation. When you become a member of the VHS, you automatically become a member of the BCHF because VHS is a member; in practical terms, it's called a bulk membership and it gives every VHS member a copy of the BCHF newsletter as well as the quarterly magazine, *BC History*.

The problem has arisen because of the increasing cost of the magazine and the lack of options for societies like the VHS. As of this year, two-thirds of the membership dues that VHS collects (from a student/senior fee of \$30) goes directly to the BCHF. We have to pay all our programming costs, including room rental, insurance, and speakers' honoraria, plus printing and mailing this newsletter, out of the remaining \$10.

We will be canvassing our membership over the next couple of months by various means, trying to gather as much feedback as we can before making a decision. With luck, the BCHF will provide us with some options, such as a cheap electronic version of the magazine, which we can continue to support.

Michael Kluckner, President
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Seymour Gas Station and Used Car Lot

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the streetcar turning in from Richards in the distance.

Blackburn's is busy on this Wednesday afternoon although some of the salespeople, an auto technician and perhaps a customer or two are taking time out to watch the photographer. Blackburn's — selling Imperial Ethyl gasoline — had opened just four years earlier in 1924. That used Buick next to the refreshment stand could be yours for \$1195, less with a little haggling.

That car and others soon became unaffordable as Vancouver started suffering the effects of the Great Depression less than two years after this photo was taken. That perhaps is why Blackburn's changed the nature of their business. After minor renovations, they reopened as Blackburn's Public Market in January 1933 featuring over 40 stalls, which vendors could rent to sell poultry, produce and so on. It was under the management of S.L. Blackburn.

The corner lot would once again see cars when it became the Robson Motordrome Parking and Service Station in 1954. By the following year, it was the Sangster U-Drive Gas Station and Parking.

Today as in much of downtown, the lot is occupied by a large building with retail on the ground and second floors, office space on the third with residences above that. There are small connections to the lot's past as market and car lot — there is a two-storey market in today's building as well as underground parking.

Remembering Peggy Imredy (1920-2015)

Peggy Imredy, for many years an active member of the Vancouver Historical Society, passed away on August 23, 2015, at Williams Lake, BC. Predeceased by her husband Elek Imredy, an important Vancouver sculptor, Peggy had served as the president of the VHS from 1983-86 during which she presided over the organization and publication of the Society's four-volume Vancouver Centennial Bibliography. She had a special interest in the history of Stanley Park, where friends and family will gather to remember her on Monday May 16th at 10:00 A.M. at her husband's the "Girl in a Wetsuit" statue in Stanley Park. It will be an informal affair. Eric (her son) will give a eulogy. Others are invited to speak as well. Her ashes will be sprinkled there, as were those of her husband a number of years ago.

Test Your History Skills

From 1994 to 2013 the Begbie Contest Society ran a very successful Canadian history contest for high school students from across the country. Since the contest ended, VHS member and retired teacher Charles Hou has redeveloped the contest website to provide an extensive collection of primary source materials on a wide variety of topics in Canadian history.

The website focuses primarily on visual materials, especially political cartoons, gathered from archives, libraries and more than 600 Canadian newspapers and periodicals. Images are organized by theme and can be transferred to PowerPoint presentations for educational use. Charles hopes that the collection will be of use to classroom teachers, university lecturers and academic historians as well as to members of the public interested in our past.

Unlike the mainly content-based examinations most of us wrote in high school, the Begbie Contest focused on critical thinking skills. Beside the challenging multiple choice questions, there were both short and long document-based essay questions on topics ranging from Amchitka to the 1972 Summit Series to the 1944 zoot suit riots in Montreal. Topics of particular interest in BC included the Alaska Boundary dispute, the Potlatch, the Komagata Maru affair and the controversial murals in the BC Parliament Buildings.

If you are interested in seeing what today's Grade 10 students can do, visit www.begbiecontestsociety.org and test your skills!

Welcome New & Returning VHS Members

Maxwell Forsythe

Peter W. Smith

Donna Brendon

Aynsley Wong Meldrum

Jessica Quan

Nan Tang

Thomas Carr

Madeleine de Trenquallye

Robert Errington

Jim Bradbury

Donald Chunn

Hilary Miller &

Bill Plummer

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 26, 2016, 7:30 P.M.

Sensational Vancouver: The City's Dark Side

Speaker: Eve Lazarus

History books typically show Vancouver as a pioneer city built on forestry, fisheries and tourism but, behind the snow-capped mountains and rain forests, the Vancouver of the first half of the 20th century was a seething mass of corruption. The top job at the Vancouver Police Department was a revolving door. In those early years Detective Joe Ricci's beat was the opium dens and gambling joints of Chinatown, while Lurancy Harris patrolled the high-end brothels of Alexander Street. Later, proceeds from rum-running produced some of the city's most iconic buildings, cops became robbers, and the city reeled from a series of unsolved murders. Speaker Eve Lazarus will illustrate this talk with photos from cases from her books *Sensational Vancouver* and *Cold Case Vancouver: the city's most baffling murders*.

Thursday, Sept. 22, 2016, 7:30 P.M.

Made in B.C. Eight Ways of Making Culture

Speaker: Maria Tippett

Is there such a thing as a British Columbia culture, or a culture that has evolved uniquely within the province? And if so, is there anything special about it? Prolific author and scholar, Dr. Maria Tippett answers this question by discussing the lives of eight cultural producers among who are the playwright, George Ryga, the First Nations' artist, Bill Reid, the composer, Jean Coulthard, the writer Martin Grainger and the architect, Arthur Erickson. The speaker will consider the extent to which the British Columbia landscape and the culture of the First Nations' people has informed what these people have produced. Tippett will also consider how the reputations of her eight subjects were made, variously, through chance and luck, social standing and self-promotion, and travel and external cultural influences.

Peek into the Past

with Jim McGraw



Looking east at Seymour and Robson in 1928.

Photo by W.J. Moore, City of Vancouver Archives, AM54-S4: Bu

corners like Burrard and Georgia diagonally across from today's Hotel Vancouver. They were beehives of activity.

These full-service gas stations usually had attendants dressed in spiffy uniforms and caps who would jump to attention changing oil, adding radiator water, washing the windows, checking tire pressure while a senior attendant would do the important work of filling the gas tank.

One business that has almost completely disappeared is the neighbourhood service station. As recently as 1970, the City of Vancouver had 328. Today it's down to about 84. In the downtown/West End peninsula, it's especially noticeable. Whereas there seemed to be one on almost every corner sometimes even facing each other, there are only two left, an Esso at Burrard and Davie and a Chevron at Bidwell and Georgia. Even then, both — like most in the city — are more convenience stores that happen to sell gas rather than the service station dedicated to the well-being of your family flivver.

So what happened? Tougher environmental laws tightened codes for underground storage tanks; cars became more complex requiring expensive diagnostic equipment; and the value of the land itself made the operation of a service station uneconomical, especially in the downtown/West End peninsula.

Let's go back to those earlier times with this delightful photo of Blackburn's Service Station and used car lot at 822 Seymour, on the southeast corner of Seymour and Robson. We are looking east with Robson on the left in this photo taken on May 30, 1928. Note the streetcars on Robson and

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The service station had been everywhere including strategic

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