

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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Stanley Park's Hollow Tree

February Speaker: Lorne Whitehead and Hal Kalman

Many of us take the Hollow Tree for granted as we drive around Stanley Park. What we may not realize is that the tree – the remains of a millennium-old Western Red Cedar – was formerly one of Vancouver's best-loved tourist attractions. Visitors from all over came to be photographed in front of the tree – they posed with their families, their cars, even with a circus elephant!

And so many were surprised when the Park Board announced a year ago

a nearby gravel bed, planting a cedar seedling to succeed it. Not a bad idea if it were only a dying cedar. However, it is also a highly significant cultural resource, recognized both on the Vancouver Heritage Register and in Parks Canada's commemorative integrity statement for Stanley Park National Historic Site.

A group of concerned citizens – engineers, arborists, historians, heritage consultants – met the challenge. First

called the Friends of the Hollow Tree, then a subcommittee of the Vancouver Heritage Commission, and now the Stanley Park Hollow Tree Conservation Society, the group has convinced Park Board that the tree should be retained. We have produced a design, certified by engineers, to set the tree upright and stabilize it with the use of underground 'minipiles' and internal steel rings. They are undertaking a fundraising campaign to cover costs. (Donations can be made at www.savethehollowtree.com) With help from the Heritage Legacy Fund of BC, the

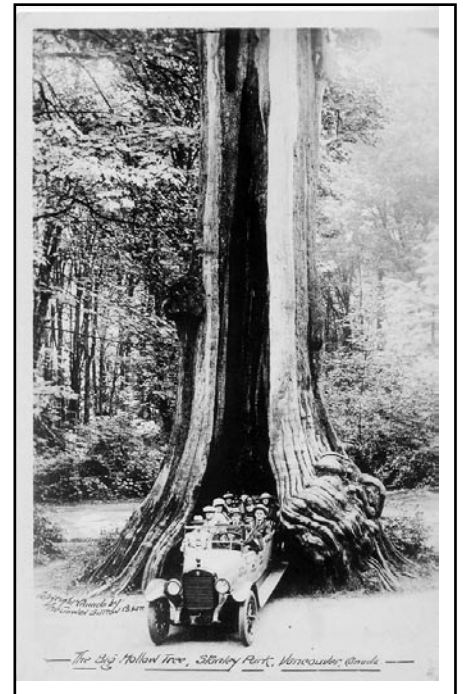


His Excellency the Duke of Devonshire, Governor General of Canada, and his party, 1917

City of Vancouver Archives, TR P 15 N

that it intended to take down the tree. Alarmed by its leaning out of plumb, and viewing it simply as a dead tree, the Board intended to cut it down, split it in half, and allow it to decay on

internal steel rings. They are undertaking a fundraising campaign to cover costs. (Donations can be made at www.savethehollowtree.com) With help from the Heritage Legacy Fund of BC, the



Touring car and passengers pose for a photo, c. 1910-20.

Gowen Sutton Co. photo; private collection)

Heritage Vancouver Society, professionals and trades who have given their time free, and individual donors, they are nearly there. The Park Board approved their plans on January 19th.

Engineer Lorne Whitehead and heritage consultant Hal Kalman will tell the full story of the Hollow Tree on February 26. Be sure to attend to hear the story of this Stanley Park landmark.

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 26 at 7:30 pm at the Vancouver Museum

PREZNOTES

From its inception, Vancouver has experienced many ups and down, booms and busts and through it all, historical appreciation of the city has waxed and waned. In 1894 just eight years after fire wiped out most of Vancouver, the Arts, Historical and Scientific Society, the precursor of the museum, was formed. The first contribution was a stuffed swan. Subsequent to the Klondike Gold Rush and when the original pioneers started moving or passing on, there was a splurge of archival gathering and retrenchment in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia [mainly Victoria]. After the First World War, there was also a surge of historical consciousness even though it once again took on a selectively narrow ethnic tone. Further, it was only after the Second World War that the Vancouver Historical Society decided to look seriously at Vancouver itself as a subject. Traumatic events do lead to introspection, a time to reach out to or retain symbols of the past, touchstones that anchor us — a sense of time and place.

Even though recessions are unpleasant and difficult for some, they do have a positive spinoff for the historically minded. Building development stops. When such development grinds to a halt, older buildings are not indiscriminately bulldozed for the promised better future. In other words, it allows a breathing space for those of us who appreciate and wish to preserve memories of the engineering, design, labour, human activity, not to forget the beauty represented in these buildings.

During the next little while as development slows down, you might consider this period an opportunity or a breather to look at the city's older buildings, especially the ones worthy of saving from a future wrecker's ball. Our sister society, Heritage Vancouver at <http://www.heritagevancouver.org/history.html> is working hard to save the physical heritage of Vancouver. Take advantage of the times, check them out and enrich your understanding of the city's physical history; a nice complement to our society's emphasis on the city's social history.

Bruce M. Watson

City Reflections DVD Sales

For those who wonder how City Reflections DVD sales are going, here are the figures:

On Sept. 10, we received our shipment of 2500 City Reflections DVDs. Since then...

- 218 complimentary copies have been given to City Reflections sponsors and donors, libraries, school personnel, and all the many project volunteers.
- 10 copies have been loaned for promotional displays
- 380 copies have been retailed by the VHS
- 510 have been wholesaled to commercial retailers (City of Vancouver Archives, Videomatica, Vancouver Museum Giftshop, and Bookmark at the central Vancouver Public Library)

That's 1,118 given or sold, leaving 1,382 in inventory.

We'll continue to sell discs at VHS meetings and keep our retailers supplied. And when the supply runs out...we'll probably order another batch. Stay tuned!

Paul Flucke, VHS Treasurer

Jewish Museum and Archives Tour

Sunday, March 29, 2009, 1:00pm – 2:30pm

The Jewish Museum & Archives of British Columbia welcomes VHS members for a special museum tour. Molly Winston, Education Coordinator, will provide a guided tour of the Museum's current exhibits. The Jewish Historical Society of BC's Historian Emeritus, Cyril E. Leonoff, will present his most recent publication, "The Rise of Jewish Life and Religion in British Columbia: 1858-1948". Please join us for a special look at the origins and development of the Jewish communities throughout BC and the Yukon Territory, and the congregations, educational and social institutions that followed.

Please bring your wallets. The VHS is encouraging members to donate \$2-5 to our hosts for this interesting event.

THANKS! to the 22 VHS members and friends who have made donations totalling \$690 during the past September through January. Such gifts (over and above membership dues) provide important support for our expanding program, and each rewards the giver with a donation receipt.

Paul Flucke, VHS Treasurer

Luncheon Speaker Announced

This year's Incorporation Day Luncheon will be held on Sunday April 5, 2009 at the University Golf Club, 5185 University Boulevard, at 12:00 noon.

The speaker will be Daphne Sleight, author of *The Man who Saved Vancouver: Major James Skitt Matthews*. She will speak on Major Matthews, Vancouver's first City Archivist and founder of the City of Vancouver Archives. She will bring to life this controversial and colourful character, who did so much to preserve the history of our city. It should be a fascinating look at this most interesting figure from Vancouver's past and one to whom we owe so much.

The Luncheon is an annual event, celebrating the incorporation of the City of Vancouver on April 6, 1886. The food and service are always great and it's a good chance to meet with others who share an interest in history.

Tickets for the Luncheon for members and friends are \$30.00 each. You can buy your tickets at the February or March monthly VHS meetings or you can order them from Elizabeth Hawkins, 3626 West 1st Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V6R 1H2 (tel.: 604-737-8045). Please enclose a cheque with your request for tickets.

We're looking forward to seeing you there!

Nelson and Kootenay History Tours

The B.C. Historical Federation's annual conference will be held in Nelson, May 14-17, 2009, with its theme being: History in your Neighbourhood. Several tours have been planned including the SS Moyie, Sandon, Nikkei Interment Centre, heritage tours of Nelson. Enjoy a historical play or Kootenay storytelling and much more.

For more information, contact: Ron or Frances Welwood 250-825-4743 or webeditor.bchistory.ca.

Welcome New Members

Diana Becker
Margaret Dinwoodie
Maurice Guibord

Issaku Inami
Kathryn Jamieson
Bruce McBay

Upcoming Speakers & Events

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

Thursday, March 26, 2009

Mary Chan: The Woman who Fought City Hall and Won

Speaker: Shirley Chan

Designated a "slum area" in 1968, the city's oldest neighbourhood — Strathcona — looked like it might succumb to the wrecker's ball in the name of urban renewal. That is until Strathcona resident Mary Chan formed a community group and fought back. Watch "Mother Tongue," the story of how Mary Chan fought for her neighbourhood. Her daughter, Shirley will speak. Shirley Chan is currently the CEO of Building Opportunities with Business in the Downtown Eastside.

Thursday, April 23, 2009

The History of the Port of Vancouver

Speaker: To Be Announced

From the very first shipload of outbound lumber in 1864, the Port of Vancouver has become the fourth largest tonnage port in North America. The operation today is called Port Metro Vancouver and it covers 600 km of shoreline on both sides of Burrard Inlet, the Lower Fraser River to Pitt Lake and down to the border at Point Roberts. Its history parallels the history of Vancouver. Learn more about its story from that first shipload to today.

Thursday, May 28, 2009

The History of the Archdiocese of Vancouver:

The Contribution of Maritimers

Speaker: Jacqueline Gresko

Pioneer French and Irish priests founded missions, parishes and schools in the late-nineteenth century. First Nations, Canadians, Americans, Europeans and Asians contributed to traditions of faith and service in the city. The twentieth century Archbishops from the Maritimes -- Neil McNeil, Timothy Casey and William Mark Duke -- gave new direction to Vancouver's Roman Catholic community promoting the building of various Catholic institutions.

A Walking Tour of Pre-1929 Vancouver

Last Month's Speaker: Lisa Smedman

It was standing room only January 22 when *Vancouver Courier* columnist Lisa Smedman took VHS members on a virtual walking tour of pre-1929 Vancouver. More than 130 of us were there to enjoy her commentary and the pictures to accompany that commentary. Lisa's talk was based on her terrific new book *Vancouver: stories of a city*, with more than 300 pages of text and photographs.

Before January 1, 1929 there were three separate parts to what is now Vancouver: the city itself, and the municipalities of Point Grey and South Vancouver, and she led us through all three with excellent images and occasionally off-beat information: one photo, for example, showed a mixed crew of Chinese and Europeans engaged in loading lumber onto a ship. It seems a rivalry arose between the two groups, sparked by a race to see who could load more lumber in a certain time. An observer could tell which group was fastest by the degree to which the ship *listed!*

We learned that when the name of Granville was officially changed to Vancouver in 1886, some "Granvil-

lians" rebelled and kept the name Granville on their stationery.

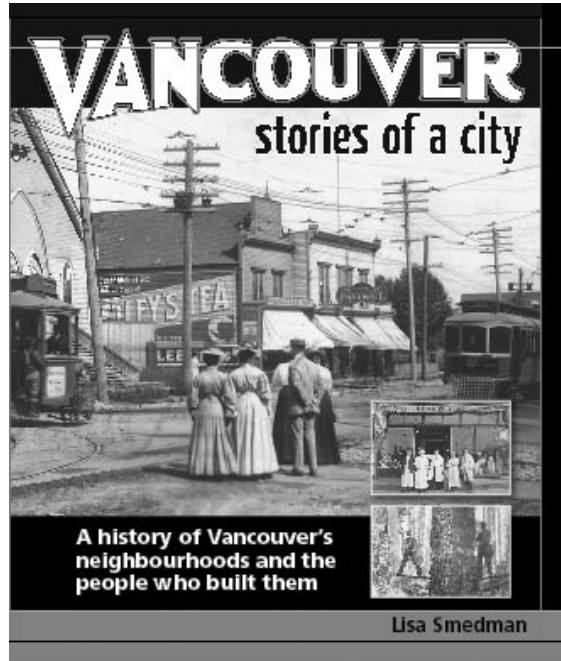
Some of the photographs — she showed dozens — were real revelations. One showed the William Lamont Tait

mansion, Glen Brae, painted in dark colours. Today, we know this striking building on Matthews Avenue in Shaughnessy as Canuck Place, a children's hospice. One fabulous shot, taken in the 1890s, showed a Jerry Rogers crew using what looks like about 16 oxen to pull logs over a corduroy road. Rogers augmented his oxen with a steam engine, and the photo shows a plume of steam behind the team and the men driving them along.

Chinese funerals, roadwork, old hotels and cafes, the "Sudden Jerk" ferry of the 1870s, streetcars, bridge construction

and more — the images unfolding before us were evocative and informative, and so was Lisa's commentary. She got a warm and well-deserved round of applause from the big audience. This was a treat.

Chuck Davis



Vancouver Historical Society - Leadership, 2008 - 2009 (elected May 22, 2008)

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