

# Vancouver Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

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### Top 10 Endangered Sites in Vancouver

February Speaker: Donald Luxton

Which of our city's threatened heritage sites will be on this year's Top 10 endangered list? Will previously listed landmarks reappear, or are there newly-identified heritage resources that need urgent attention? To introduce Heritage Vancouver's recently-announced list we welcome Donald Luxton, well-known author, heritage consultant, and president of Heritage Vancouver.

Heritage Vancouver Society has



Kitsilano Secondary School on last year's Heritage Vancouver Top 10 Endangered List

Photo: Heritage Vancouver Society

deep roots, beginning as the Heritage Committee of the Community Arts Council. In 1991 it became an independent non-profit society whose mission is "to act as the voice of built heritage in Vancouver through education and advocacy."

The Top 10 endangered list began in 2001 as a tenth anniversary project to bring public awareness to some of the most threatened buildings in the city. In the decade since, the list has comprised not only buildings but streetscapes, neighbourhoods and historic trees. This year's list, the eleventh, includes public and private buildings from schools to mansions.

Through its advocacy, Heritage Vancouver has played a significant role in successful campaigns to conserve heritage sites such as the Stanley Theatre, the Victory Square neighbourhood, and the Lions Gate and Burrard bridges. In addition to its yearly Top Ten list, Heritage Vancouver presents a number of talks and tours that further its work of promoting heritage awareness and education. Last year, a program was launched that celebrates conservation projects that have had a

happy outcome, "Success Stories;" this new program has provided recognition for many important projects such as the restoration of the Flack Block and SFU's Segal Centre. Donald Luxton is well known to VHS audiences, having previously

addressed the society in 1991, 1999 and 2003. Born and raised in Vancouver, he is a highly-respected heritage consultant, preservation advocate and educator with a passion for local history and heritage. His diverse heritage projects include consulting on the Mole Hill Community Housing Project and the Heritage Colours program.

Donald is a member of the College of Fellows of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the recipient of the 2009 BC Heritage award. His publications include *Lions Gate* (with Lilia D'Acres, Talonbooks 1999),

*Building the West: The Early Architects of British Columbia* (Talonbooks 2003), and *Vancouver General Hospital: 100 Years of Care and Service* (Heather Heritage Society 2006).



Donald Luxton

Photo: Mark Mushet Photography

Kenneth Campbell

Next Meeting: 7:30 PM, Thursday, Feb. 24 at Museum of Vancouver

## Preznotes

I've had the pleasure recently to chat with many people interested in volunteering with our Society, and I both thank everyone that has thus far stepped forward, and encourage anyone interested in becoming more engaged with our activities to do the same. The scope of our mandate is as wide and deep as the history of Vancouver, so there are opportunities of all sizes, be it for tasks that take a few minutes or hours a month through overseeing an ongoing program.

(I must stress: despite my enthusiasm for folks getting involved, there is absolutely no judgment in not volunteering! Every Member of our Society is important, and needed. We each choose to attach our name toward the goal of preserving and promoting Vancouver's history, and I am grateful.)

Your executive is considering the appointment of two Directors to complete the remaining months of the current term, filling vacancies created by the passing of Chuck Davis, and the resignation of Larry Wong. Please contact me to be considered for one of these appointments.

Larry served on our executive for many years, organizing our monthly speaker series, as our representative to the BCHF, as Vice President, and countless other tasks. His personal responsibilities have increased significantly (including receipt of a grant to write a play, for production later this year!), and he regretfully needed to reduce his commitments. His gentle spirit, insight, and industrious nature will be missed around the Board table.

Thank you, Larry, on behalf of the Society, for your years of service.

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

## Welcome New Members

Burt Montgomery  
Denis Bouvier

Bernie & Caroline  
Laughran

## 2011 Luncheon Speaker Announced

In its 125 years, the City of Vancouver has seen many events start that have gone on to become lasting traditions. Think of the Pacific National Exhibition, the Polar Bear Swim at English Bay, the Dragon Boat Festival at False Creek.

Another annual tradition has been for the Vancouver Historical Society to host a luncheon celebrating the incorporation of the City of Vancouver, which took place 125 years ago on April 6, 1886. Besides the good food and camaraderie at the luncheon, the Society will be handing out the VHS Award of Merit to someone who has done exemplary work in promoting or preserving Vancouver history.

The luncheon also features a keynote presenter who will speak on an aspect of Vancouver history. This year, the VHS is pleased to present Christopher Gaze, who has also started an event in Vancouver that has become a much-loved summertime tradition — Bard on the Beach. .

Born in England, Christopher trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School before going on to perform in Britain, the United States and Canada. He moved to Canada in 1975 spending three seasons at the Shaw Festival. He made the move to Vancouver in 1983 and founded Bard on the Beach in 1990. This award-winning performer is also the host of the Vancouver Symphony's *Tea & Trumpets* series as well as their annual Christmas concerts.

This year's Incorporation Day Luncheon will be held on Sunday, April 10th at 12 noon at the University Golf Club, 5185 University Boulevard.

As usual, we will have door prizes.

Tickets for the Luncheon are \$30.00 each and you can buy them at the February and March monthly meetings, or by mail. Mail orders can be sent to Incorporation Day Luncheon, #606-3362 Wesbrook Mall, Vancouver, BC, V6S 0A7.

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## Course on Writing Local History

If you have an interest in writing about local history, a course at Simon Fraser University may be just what your project needs. The evening course, spread over four Wednesdays, starts at the end of March. The course is most suited to people who already have a project in mind but are uncertain how to put their thoughts into writing. For more information visit the following site: [www.sfu.ca/learn/wp/wlh.htm](http://www.sfu.ca/learn/wp/wlh.htm)

## Historical Information Tour

Are you interested in an old building in your neighbourhood? Perhaps you're interested in how or why a neighbourhood developed? Or you might want to know more about an event that happened in the city years ago? No matter what your interest in Vancouver history, there is a tremendous source of material available in the Special Collections section of the Vancouver Public Library's main branch.

Discover what's in this unique collection with librarian Andrew Martin at 6:30PM on Monday, March 7th. Members of the VHS are invited on a special tour showcasing material like newspapers on microfilm, historical maps including fire insurance maps, city directories and historical photos. The 90-minute tour will conclude with a brief lantern slide show featuring photos of a very young Vancouver taken by Philip Timms. Andrew will be available after the tour to answer any questions.

The tour is limited to the first 30 participants signing up. To reserve your spot, please call or e-mail the VHS info-line [604-878-9140 or [info@vancouver-historical-society.ca](mailto:info@vancouver-historical-society.ca)] by Tuesday, March 1, 2011. We'll gather at 6:30pm in the Special Collections area, on the 7th level of the central branch of VPL downtown.

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## Looking for Help with the Books

The VHS is looking for someone — perhaps you — to become our Treasurer-in-Training who would then be prepared to take on the role of Treasurer by May 2011.

Paul Flucke has been the VHS' very effective and diligent Treasurer for the past 10 years. He would now like to hand over the position to someone else. Paul has agreed to help train his replacement.

You don't have to have an accounting background for this position but you must have good organizational skills and an attention to detail. Over the years, Paul has set up a computer template that works very well for the job and simplifies many of the tasks.

If you have an interest in this position, please let us know through the info-line (604-878-9140), by e-mail ([info@vancouver-historical-society.ca](mailto:info@vancouver-historical-society.ca)), by regular mail (P. O. Box 3071, Vancouver, B. C., V6B 3X6) or talk to one of the Executive at our monthly meetings.

## 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, March 24, 2011 - 7:30 pm

### **The Natural Landscape of Vancouver**

**Speakers: Bruce Macdonald and Celia Brauer**

The amazing original landscape of Vancouver is almost entirely gone today, but our city is so young we have an unusually good record of what has been lost. The list includes towering trees to creeks and streams. But some of the original landscape still exists in small patches. Discover more about them.

*Watch this space in future newsletters for the rest of our 2010-2011 speaker series.*

## BCHF's New Online Book Store

The B.C. Historical Federation announces the opening of their new Website Book Store. Right now it features 21 books on many aspects of B.C.'s exciting and colourful history. Most books are self-published by different historical societies around the province. Check out the selection at [www.bchistory.ca/publications/store/index.html](http://www.bchistory.ca/publications/store/index.html) then view the Book Store inventory. Books can be purchased on line through the Federation's Paypal link.

## Chuck Davis Book Fund

Chuck's last project — *The History of Metropolitan Vancouver* — was just short of being finished when Chuck passed away. His publisher is committed to having the book on bookshelves later this year to mark Vancouver's 125th birthday. To help defray the costs of paying researchers and writers to finish the last chapters, donations can be made to the "Vancouver Historical Society" with "Chuck Davis Book Fund" written on the memo line. Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$100 or more.

# Memories of Spencer's Department Store

by Frances Wellwood

Nineteen-year-old Ed Clay's uniform, worn at his first full-time job, included light-grey gloves and a busboy-type jacket. It was 1928. Ed operated an elevator at the Cordova and Richards Street corner of Spencer's Department Store. Although Spencer's upscale main entrances were on Hastings Street, the Clay family appeared to have laid claim to the lower Cordova Street view of Vancouver's harbour and CPR railway terminus.

As early as 1889, Ed's grand-uncle Theophilus Hardiman, formerly of Winnipeg and Bournemouth England, established Vancouver's first commercial art gallery and artists' supplies outlet. Hardiman's Pioneer Art Gallery was located on the south side of Cordova between Granville and Seymour, just one block from the future site of Spencer's Department Store.

Personable and capable, Ed Clay slowly moved up the corporate 'elevator' and by the early 1940s managed the department that featured lamps, fixtures, pictures, frames and a viewing and retail Gallery. Like grand-uncle Theophilus (d. 1928), Ed was overseeing Vancouver's small but growing collection of art works available to citizens willing to purchase artists' renderings of familiar seascapes, forestlands and majestic mountains.

Ed's wife Mary Devereux (daughter of a Hastings Mill timber-cruiser) and two young daughters were frequent, observant visitors to Spencer's during the 1940s. The high-ceilinged cathedral-like Main Floor had a most peculiar slope as it lead into the central 'nave'. Here stylish, neatly-coiffed salesladies strolled like models behind tall glass cabinets and demonstrated gloves, cosmetics, stockings, scarves, handkerchiefs and other 'fancy goods'.

Untouchable books and stationary items were shelved at the dark, back regions of the Main floor.

A husky, rattling escalator (petrifying the very youngest clients) carried shoppers from the Main to the upper 3-4 floors. Curiously, ceilings tended to be lower and the elevator less thrilling with each level scaled. As the number of shoppers thinned out and the salesladies loomed less ominously, young shoppers succumbed to the temptation to try on openly displayed hats and shoes. Some shyly observed the substantial saleswomen who, wearing measuring tapes about their necks like stethoscopes, assisted Vancouver's matrons in their choice of corsellettes, girdles and other unmentionables.

In the Fabric department magical machines quietly and efficiently measured fabric as it was deftly pulled through a nameless device. The washrooms were of cool, sophisticated, coloured marble. When Ed Clay's daughters had reached the boring furniture, light fixtures and pictures offered in their father's upper-floor department, they were required only to smile politely for Daddy's co-workers before begging to return to the 'other' side of the Main Floor where the Candy and Popcorn counter waited.

Even without mentioning or remembering the delights of Christmas — Santa's Palace, Toyland, magnificent decorations and piped-in music, images of visiting Spencer's remain vivid after 60 years.

*[Editor's Note: Ed Clay was author Frances Wellwood's father. Frances was inspired to write after the November mention of the Spencer's Toyland Christmas train. If you have a Vancouver story, please e-mail the Editor (listed below) for information about submitting material.]*



**Ed Clay in 1940**  
Photo: F. Wellwood

## 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

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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