

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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Chinese Canadians in the First and Second World Wars: Their Vancouver Connection

Judy Maxwell



Canada's military legacy in both the First and Second World Wars is well known, yet few people are aware that Chinese Canadians served in both wars with distinction.

In the Great War, Chinese Canadians fought in Ypres, while in the Second World War they served in all theatres of operation. Some were wounded, some lost their lives, others returned to Canada where they had to wait a few years before they could even vote. Most of the Chinese Canadians came from British Columbia, with the majority being from Vancouver. The forgotten contributions of Chinese Canadians in both World Wars are now being examined with renewed interest. Their heroic struggles at home and at war are being recognized in new and significant ways.

Our speaker, Judy Maxwell, is a native of Vancouver completing her Master's in History at UBC. Her research areas are Chinese Canadians and Canadian military history. She is involved with the Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society, located in Chinatown, where she has fulfilled the roles of Director and Research Associate. Judy's great grandfather, George R. Maxwell, was the first Liberal MP for Vancouver. An important component of Judy's research is the ways in which Chinese Canadian veterans brought about ground-breaking changes for minorities in Canada.

Please join us on Thursday, January 27 for this presentation.

*LEFT: Force 136:
Chinese Canadians in India, 1944.
BELOW: Speaker
Judy Maxwell.*



Thursday, January 27, 2005, at 7:30 pm in the Vancouver Museum

Preznotes

The VHS is not a political organization, but when a priceless archive of historical records appears to be at risk, it's time to speak out.

That's what your Executive decided last fall when a column in the *Vancouver Sun* by Stephen Hume (October 16, 2004) alerted us to the BC legislature's passage of Bill 68, transferring the responsibility for provincial land use and survey records from the government to a new not-for-profit authority. The new authority's mandate appeared to be sorely lacking in provision for care of the records and guarantees of their public accessibility.

Further inquiry led us to University of Victoria history professor John Lutz, who was preparing a letter to the new authority suggesting remedies in these areas. A draft of his letter was circulated to VHS Executive members, who offered several suggestions and subsequently voted their approval of the final draft. On November 25, the letter was mailed to Godfrey D. Archbold, Chief Executive Officer Designate of the new BC Land Title and Survey Authority, signed by seven concerned organizations including the VHS and the BC Historical Federation.

So far, the results are encouraging. Mr. Archbold's response, in a letter dated December 14, promises remedies on several points and offers to include a representative of the petitioning groups (probably someone from the BCHF) on the authority's Stakeholder Advisory Committee. Now it's a matter of monitoring the implementation of these commitments.

Copies of Stephen Hume's article, our letter to Mr. Archbold, and his letter of response will be available for your inspection at our VHS meeting on January 27. And if you become aware of similar situations in which VHS action might be appropriate, please let us know!

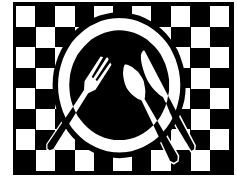
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Don't Miss The Incorporation Day Lunch

Sunday April 10, 2005

The 2005 Annual Incorporation Day Lunch, celebrating Vancouver's birthday will be held on Sunday, April 10th at the University Golf Club, 5185 University Boulevard at 12 noon. There will be a buffet lunch and a cash bar.



The #10 bus stops in front of the Golf Club on University Boulevard and there is ample parking at the club. We sincerely hope you can join us.

Our speaker this year is John Mackie, a writer with the *Vancouver Sun*. Mr. Mackie writes regularly on historical aspects of Vancouver. He uncovers little-known features about our city's past, conveying fascinating details about the people and places he discovers. John recently co-authored with Sarah Reeder, *Vancouver: The Unknown City* published by Arsenal Press. He was also one of the 2004 winners of Vancouver's Heritage Award of Merit for his contribution to public awareness of historical issues.

Tickets for members and friends will be \$25.00 each, up to March 31st after which they will be \$30.00 until April 5th, which is the absolute deadline. You can buy your tickets at the January, February, and March monthly VHS meetings (the fourth Thursday of the month), or you can order them from Elizabeth Hawkins, 3626 West 1st Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6R 1H2 (tel. 604-737-8045). Please enclose a cheque with your request for tickets.

New Members

Welcome to our newest members: Anne Mathisen, Jolene Cumming, Richard Salter, Jennifer Sweeney, Daniel Ouellet, Rider Cooley, Linda J. Quiney, Mary-Lou Storey, Olive McEwan and Anna Wellbourn of Vancouver; Marla Armitage of North Vancouver, M. Diane Rogers and Virginia Van Der Wall of Burnaby; Mark Thorburn of Delta.

Thank You

Thanks to the eight VHS members who made gifts totaling \$260 during November and December. One gift was given in memory of Jack Roff, who died on December 21. Jack and his wife Joan were longtime members of the VHS.

Heads Up!

If you've received a Renewal Notice with this newsletter showing your renewal month as Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec., or Jan., **we need your renewal by January 27** to ensure you receive the Winter issue of *British Columbia History* — the first issue of the familiar *British Columbia Historical Federation* quarterly under its new name. Send your renewal to us at P.O. Box 3071, Vancouver, V6B 3X6 or bring it to the Jan. 27 meeting.

VHS Brings Opera to AGM

The Vancouver Opera will present excerpts from its new opera, *Naomi's Road*, immediately following our Annual General Meeting on May 26, 2005. Based on Joy Kogawa's novels *Naomi's Road* and *Obasan*, the opera captures the compelling and tragic events surrounding the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War Two. The novels by Vancouver-born Kogawa recall the agony of a Japanese Canadian family uprooted from Vancouver in the early 1940s.

Naomi's Road will be Vancouver Opera's 2005 "Opera in the Schools" production. We are privileged to have this opportunity to enjoy excerpts from the opera before it travels to BC schools in the fall of 2005. As an historical society, we are interested in supporting new and creative ways to teach history to young audiences. In addition to excerpts from the new opera, a speaker will provide an overview of the curriculum materials being used in conjunction with the opera.

Circle May 26, 2005 on your calendar for this unique presentation at our AGM. The AGM is set for 7:30; the performance will begin at 8 p.m.

Storyeum, Anyone?

If you've been wanting to visit this new dramatized presentation of BC history, here's an opportunity to go with other VHS members. If we number 15 or more, we'll qualify for the group rate of \$15.41 for seniors or \$17.12 for other adults—a 20% saving.

We'll meet at Storyeum, 142 Water Street, at 11:15 a.m. on Sunday, January 30. The show starts at 11:30 am and lasts for just over an hour. Call Elizabeth Walker, 604-873-1130 if you plan to come.

Coming Up

Upcoming VHS Speaker

Thursday, February 24, 2005, 7:30 pm.

The Black Community of Strathcona and Hogan's Alley in Vancouver with Wayde Compton, SFU Instructor; Author *Bluesprint: Black British Columbia Literature and Culture*.

Chinese Canadian Historical Society Research Fair

Sat., January 22, 2005 - 10:30 am - 4:00 pm
Vancouver Museum - 1100 Chestnut Street
Free Admission

The Research Fair will offer a sampling of the various kinds of research on Chinese Canadian history currently being done in this province. Subjects will include genealogies and family histories; artifacts from Chinese sites; plans by the Kamloops Chinese Cultural Association to honour Chinese railroad workers; presentations on Alexander Won Cumyow, Nellie Yip, and Chinese women aviators in BC; and Simon Fraser University Library's project to facilitate online access to research material about the Chinese.

The CCHS is a newly-formed society whose major objective is to bring out the unknown history of the Chinese in British Columbia. For more information about the organization, see the website: <http://www.cchsbca.ca>.

New Local History Book Published

A new book *Place Names of West Vancouver* by Peter Hall, published by the West Vancouver Historical Society, is available from the West Vancouver Museum for \$15.00. The book describes the neighbourhoods, streets, parks, creeks, and beaches in West Vancouver. Congratulations WVHS!

Vancouver: Early Film Footage of our City

November Speakers: Colin Preston, Reuben Ware, and John Atkin

Reviewed by: Chuck Davis

What a terrific session for VHS members on November 25! The Joyce Walley Learning Centre at the Vancouver Museum was packed with what we think may be our biggest audience ever, approaching 200.

Three seasoned veterans of historical matters - Colin Preston, Reuben Ware and John Atkin - appeared with several vintage films, the most impressive being a movie shot in Vancouver nearly a century ago. CBC archivist Colin Preston wowed the crowd with a 1907 silent, black-and-white movie filmed from the front of a streetcar! A Seattle movie-maker, W.H. Harbeck, mounted a camera on the front of a BC Electric Railway tram which took us along Granville and Hastings, Westminster Avenue (now Main Street), Robson, Carrall, Cordova, and Cambie Streets, while Colin pointed out familiar landmarks and buildings.

This is the earliest surviving film on Vancouver. Its discovery was something of a miracle: it was found in the basement of an abandoned building in Australia! It had apparently been dumped there by movie house managers along with other movies no longer wanted.

It was fun to see streets full of horse-drawn wagons; men (every one of them wearing a hat) strolling into long-gone shops; women hurrying along in their dark, ground-length skirts; and the occasional recognizable sign: Knowlton Drugs; P. Burns (meat packer); the *Province* newspaper; the Edison Grand Theatre; Woodward's; and "Cascade: A Beer Without Peer." Andrew Martin, of the Special Collections Division at the Vancouver Public Library found a *Province* story, dated May 8, 1907, that

described the making of a film which jauntily reported that Vancouverites had been "Stricken with Kinetoscopyitis."

The second film was a boosterish 1946 film made by Lew Parry for the BC Electric, a colour film with narration that extolled the city's industry and beauty. The audience roared at the sight of the city's "modern" airport. (You could fly to Prestwick, Scotland in only 23 hours.) Then Canada's Governor General, Field Marshal Viscount Alexander of Tunis, was seen at a native ceremony where he became Chief Nakupunkim and was presented with a Kwakiutl thunderbird headdress and ceremonial blanket. Next Reuben Ware, the city's new archivist, introduced a 1961 film entitled *Vancouver Honeymoon*, another Lew Parry production, featuring a young newly-married couple enjoying the sights of the city. Parry, one of the fathers of the film industry in Vancouver, also designed a lot of neon in our city.

Finally, John Atkin brought us down (by his own cheerful admission) with a 1964 film called *To Build the City*, a product of the Vancouver Planning Department and what was then the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. To the accompaniment of gloomy music and talk of "blight," it showed how vast tracts of the city could be covered with apartment blocks to bring about a brighter tomorrow.

Many fine suggestions came from the audience as to how Vancouver vintage movies could be preserved and shown to more people. The VHS executive will be discussing these ideas at its next meeting. Our thanks to these three gentlemen for a terrific evening.



Vancouver Historical Society - Executive, 2004 - 2005 (elected May 27, 2004)

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