

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

ISSN 0042 - 2487

Vol. 45 No. 4

January 2006

A History of Prohibition in British Columbia *January Speaker: Douglas Hamilton*

This month, Douglas Hamilton will be speaking about the history of prohibition in British Columbia. [Jean Barman has traded places with Douglas and will give her talk “Whose Park is it Anyway? Race and Remembrance in Stanley Park” on March 23.]

In 1778 Captain Cook introduced liquor to the residents of Friendly Cove. The consumption of alcohol spread until prohibition was introduced for Native people in 1854 and for everyone else in 1917. Prohibition ended in 1921. Since then our laws dealing with alcohol have gone through a slow process of evolution to what Douglas Hamilton terms the “illogical liquor laws in use today.”

Douglas Hamilton will trace the colourful ups and downs in the evolution of our liquor laws as they were affected by the fur trade, gold rush, fishing, forestry, and mining industries and by urbanization, religion, wars, American prohibition and tourism. He characterizes the process as “a hopeless morass of corruption, scandal, favouritism, class conflict, freelance informants, bureaucratic ineptitude and racism.” This topic alone should make for an interesting evening but Douglas provides something more, detailing lessons we can learn from history in our current attempt to deal with drugs.



In her introduction to Douglas Hamilton’s book, *Sobering Dilemma: A History of Prohibition in British Columbia*, Jean Barman wrote:

“An engaging account of why some British Columbians have been willing to control the rights of others to drink beer, wine or spirits. Racism, moral certainty, and fear of drunkenness — they’ve all played a role in prohibiting, regulating and demonizing liquor. *Sobering Dilemma* reminds us of the dangers of smugness in thinking that we have the answers on behalf of others.”



Douglas Hamilton was born and educated in California. As someone relatively new to the province, he brings fresh insight to his research in local history. Douglas has written articles for BC magazines and *Raincoast Chronicles* on such topics as the smallpox epidemic of 1862, the Pig War, rum running, Typhoon Frieda and the submarine attack on Estevan Lighthouse in 1941. His latest book is *Sobering Dilemma: A History of Prohibition in British Columbia*, published by Ronsdale Press.

Next Meeting: Thursday, January 26, 2006, 7:30 pm in the Vancouver Museum

PREZNOTES

History in a Time Warp...

Like many of you, I devoted several hours earlier this month to Stephen Hume's excellent Vancouver Sun series on Simon Fraser and his role in the "opening" (to Europeans) of the Canadian West in the days when a fur trader, sending a message back to Montreal, would do well to get a reply within a year.

I thought of that this morning when I opened my email and found ten messages from near and far, some sent within the hour, some needing immediate replies. Whether we like it or not, both time and space have been drastically compressed over the past two centuries, much of that change occurring within our lifetimes. Today, with the abundance of resources available on the Internet, the Past seems only a mouse-click away. For history lovers, it's like living in a time warp.

Soon, with the launching of its new, enlarged website, the VHS will be adding its own contribution to the digital depository of times past. We'll start with an indexed database of 70 years' worth of VHS program topics and speakers, a growing archive of past newsletters, photo and art images old and new, and links to other historical websites, with plenty of space for further growth and enhancement.

I'm glad to see the VHS "going digital." But at the same time, let's promise to remember that the Internet is a tool, not an end in itself. Stephen Hume used the Net in his search for Simon Fraser, but he also paddled and hiked the brigade trails, explored the fort sites, pored over the old ledgers and journals. Good historiography means straddling the time warp, not being swept along by it. While we surf the Net, let's keep our boots and paddles, cotton gloves and magnifiers close at hand.

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Thank You!

To the eight VHS members who donated a total of \$330 during November and December and to all the others who have made gifts over and above their membership dues in recent months. Donations in this fiscal year now total \$1,110 – up 43% from the same point last year!

Mapping Pioneer Passes Away

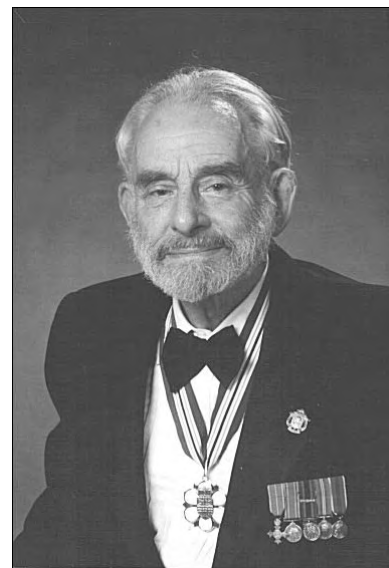
Although his list of degrees, honours and titles was long, Lt. Col. Gerald Smedley Andrews, RE, MBE, FRGS, BScF, PEng, RPF, BCLS, was known simply as "Gerry" to his many friends.

B.C.'s longest-serving surveyor-general, died last month in Victoria, a week short of his 102nd birthday. Widely recognized and honoured in his profession, Andrews was known for his expertise in mapping using aerial photography. He earned membership in the Order of the British Empire for his aerial photography work during the Second World War. Andrews, who served as B.C.'s surveyor-general from 1951 to 1968, later received the Order of British Columbia and the Order of Canada.

Born in Winnipeg, Andrews began his career as a teacher in B.C. at Big Bar Creek and Kelly Lake in 1922. He started land surveying eight years later.

A keen historian of British Columbia, he was the author of some 50 books. In 1979, Andrews gave a Vancouver Historical Society-sponsored talk on pioneer land surveyors. He served as President of the B.C. Historical Federation from 1972 to 1974, and as Honorary President from 1983 to 1986.

Photo courtesy of Order of British Columbia, Protocol and Events Branch, 1990, Government of British Columbia.



Welcome New Members

November 2005

Bernadette Woollam — Vancouver
Phyllis Grant Lavelle — Vancouver
Bob & Betty Anne Meek — Vancouver
Sharon Wyatt — Vancouver

Coming Up...

VHS Celebrates 70th Birthday With Music

The annual Incorporation Day Luncheon will be held on Sunday April 9th, 2006 at the University Golf Club, 5185 University Boulevard at 12:00 noon.

This is a very special year for the VHS because we are celebrating our 70th anniversary as a local historical association. Music will be a feature of the program as we learn more about the life of Vancouver composer, Jean Coulthard. Renowned and recognized for the significance of her work, Jean Coulthard's music is played in concert halls and other venues around the world. **William Bruneau and David Gordon Duke** will speak on their book *Jean Coulthard: A Life in Music*. This presentation will include a vocalist and Bill playing some of Jean's pieces on keyboard.

Tickets for the Luncheon for members and friends are \$30.00 each. You can buy your tickets at the 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, V6R 1H2 (tel.: 604-737-8045). Please enclose a cheque to the VHS with your request for tickets.

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It Happened in January...

January 17, 1887 First Hudson's Bay store opened in the city on Cordova Street, on property leased from the CPR.

January 4, 1889 The first Granville Street bridge opened. (The current bridge is the third.)

January 5, 1912 The first professional hockey game ever played in Vancouver was enjoyed by the crowd at the Patrick brothers' Denman Arena. The Vancouver Millionaires beat the New Westminster Royals 8 to 3.

January 1, 1922 At 2:00 a.m. motor vehicles in British Columbia changed from driving on the left, to driving on the right hand side of the street. The change went surprisingly smoothly; there were no accidents.

January 21, 1935 Vancouver got 43 centimetres (17 inches) of snow, with gale winds and a minus 26 Celsius temperature. That's still the 24-hour record for snowfall.

January 23, 1939 Sculptor Charles Marega's lions were installed at the south approach to Lions Gate Bridge. Marega had wanted the lions to be of bronze, but budget restrictions forced him to use concrete.

January 16, 1949 Streetcar service on the Kitsilano Beach run was discontinued by BC Electric.

January 29, 1965 Grouse Mountain Skyride opened.

January 15, 1971 Vancouver got title to the old Shaughnessy Golf Course lands that would later be developed as Van Dusen Botanical Display Garden.

Courtesy of Chuck Davis' www.vancouverhistory.ca

Upcoming VHS Speakers

Winter/Spring 2006

The VHS invites everyone (including non-members) to attend our monthly talks. Admission is free. Talks are held at the Vancouver Museum, 1100 Chestnut Street (close to Vanier Park), at 7:30 pm on the 4th Thursday of every month.

- Thursday, January 26, 7:30 pm
A History of Prohibition in British Columbia – Douglas Hamilton
- Thursday, February 23, 7:30 pm
Greenpeace, The Inside Story – Rex Weyler
- Thursday, March 23, 7:30 pm
Stanley Park Secrets – Jean Barman

- Sunday, April 9, 12:00 noon
Jean Coulthard: A Life in Music – William Bruneau and David Gordon Duke
(Incorporation Day Lunch to be held at the University Golf Club, 5185 University Boulevard — see *Come Celebrate the VHS's 70th Birthday* at top of page)

- Thursday, April 27, 7:30 pm
Railroading a Renegade: Great Northern Ousts John Hendry – Frank Leonard
- Thursday, May 25, 7:30 pm
The Dunbar History Project – Helen Spiegelman

Please note that our previously announced January and March speakers have switched dates due to scheduling conflicts.

November Speaker - Derek Hayes

Historical Atlas of Vancouver

A fresh and fascinating way to look at Vancouver's history was presented at the VHS's November 23 meeting, when Derek Hayes showed members a sampling of the hundreds of maps (374 of them, to be exact) in his new book *Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley*.

Mr. Hayes' talk, because of time limitations, could give only a tantalizing taste of the many goodies in his book, so this report is a brief review of the book itself.

Every map is annotated with historical notes, making the book a rich source of information on our past, with an emphasis on the physical aspects: housing developments, industrial areas, topographical features, the international border, transportation routes and the like.

The book, like his talk, begins with the earliest maps of this region: the sketchy 1791 Narvaez chart, on which Burrard Inlet is Boca de Florida Blanco (mouth of the Floridablanca River); the 1792 Galiano map in which the inlet's name is corrected to Brazo de Florida Blanco, with the realization that it is not a river (a "brazo" is an arm of the sea); and the very fine chart of George Vancouver, also from 1792.

Fine as it is, Vancouver's map doesn't show the Fraser River, but an 1851 Russian explorer's map of the same area does! A map drawn by the late city archivist James S. Matthews—with the assistance of older native people—shows place names (Who! Who!, Snauc, Ulk-Sen, many more), the locations of villages and local wildlife: elk, bears, raccoons, wolves, birds and fish.

This book will reward hours of study and fun: an 1859 German map has a notation on the Fraser just to the west of Fort Langley: *Das Ufer ist hoch und mit Fichten bedeckt*. A quick visit to the Internet gives a translation: "The bank is high and covered with spruce."

Sometimes the sources of the maps sound unpromising: on Page

127, for example, is a bird's-eye map of the city in 1932, published in a brochure of the David Spencer Department Store. It's a treasure trove of information! A lot of the maps in the book were created by real estate companies promoting new developments, and these are always interesting: a 1956 map of British Properties on Page 131 shows which lots have been sold (at prices that ranged from \$3,800 to \$6,800) and which were still available.

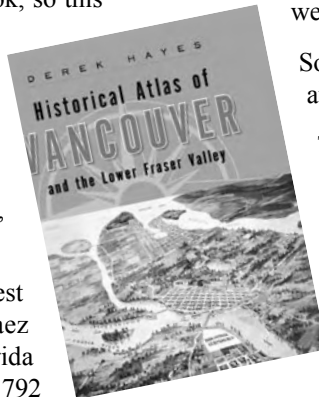
Some of the maps are works of art, pleasing just to look at.

There are lots of photographs in the book, too: one on Page 146 shows George Massey in about 1950 pointing to a map he had drawn on which his proposal for a tunnel just east of Ladner was shown. "After the Second World War," Hayes writes, "traffic using the ferry at Ladner increased, and demands for a bridge were heard once again. In 1947, a Ladner machine shop operator, George Massey, came up with the idea of a tunnel after reading about the new Maas Tunnel in Rotterdam. That tunnel had been completed in 1943, during the German occupation of Holland. Massey wrote to the designers of the Maas Tunnel, Christiani and Nielsen, who had developed a method of tunnel building that used floating cranes to sink a series of tubes into a 'sandjetted' foundation."

It took 12 more years for that tunnel to be built, but Massey's name is on it. The four pages devoted to maps, charts and photographs of the construction of that tunnel are just a tiny sample of the riches of this splendid new book

The final "maps," bringing the book up to the present day, are a satellite image of the lower Fraser Valley, and a GIS (Geographic Information System) chart. Going on line, viewers of GIS maps can draw out huge amounts of data simply by dragging their cursors over the maps.

Reviewed by Chuck Davis



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