

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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Mr. Roedde's Neighbourhood: Vancouver's West End 1891-1913

January Speaker: Chris Stocker

Many Vancouverites are familiar with the West End's Queen Anne revival-style Roedde House Museum and the accompanying Barclay Heritage Square with its carefully preserved and renovated houses and manicured green space. However not everyone is familiar with the Roedde family itself or with those who lived in the other houses within the Square or immediately around it. These were the Roedde family's neighbours, but in what sense did they constitute a 'neighbourhood?' Considering that contemporaries identified the whole West End as a Vancouver neighbourhood, Mr. Roedde's neighbourhood must be a neighbourhood within a neighbourhood. How then is it to be defined, for it is neither distinctly ethnic (although overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon) nor shaped by a distinct topography? Could the residents themselves determine the character, and, if so, was the German-born bookbinder Gustav Roedde a typical representative of those who chose to settle with their families in this neighbourhood?

Taking Roedde House as its geographic focus, our speaker will review the chronology and geographic pattern in the process of constructing

a neighbourhood between 1891 and 1913, which at the time included 48 family homes and seven buildings which served other purposes: retail businesses, private hospitals, a nurses' centre and three multiple occupancy structures. By 1913 the neighbourhood had clearly begun to lose its original character as a residential neighbourhood of single



Roedde House in the West End Photo: Torecles

family homes and the transition to multiple occupancy residences would only accelerate after the depression of 1913 and the First World War.

A collective profile including birthplace, ethnicity, religious affiliation and occupation(s) of the 181 neighbours (identified as heads of households) offers a basis for comparing the residents of Mr. Roedde's neighbourhood to the West

End's elite residents (as examined in Angus Robertson's well-known study) and to the population of Vancouver as a whole. There survives sufficient documentary and visual material concerning several of Gustav Roedde's neighbours to make it possible to tell their stories, or at least follow their occupational and social trajectories from their arrival in Vancouver

through their settlement in the neighbourhood to their subsequent departure from it. Under the notion 'becoming Vancouverites' the neighbours' membership in elite clubs, inclusion in early social registers and service on civic boards and committees will be noted.

These individual stories underscore two fundamental features of life in Vancouver's first decades: the high

incidence of mobility — residential and occupational — and its direct relationship to the pendulum swings of the economy during that time.

Chris Stocker is retired from the UBC Department of History as an Associate Professor Emeritus. Since 2010 he has served as a volunteer with the Roedde House Preservation Society.

Bruce M. Watson

Next Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 22, 2015 at Museum of Vancouver

President's Notes

She is an “absolute opera nut” who has taken opera trips to places such as Milan (La Scala), London (the Royal Opera), and New York (the Met); has met the famous tenor Plácido Domingo — her “favourite” — on numerous occasions; is addicted to Wagner’s opera the *Ring*; has a passion for art, particularly Italian Renaissance art, the Dutch Masters, and the Impressionists; goes to a lot of concerts; and loves to travel. She is also a fanatic about horses, has had considerable success showing quarter horses, and now, no longer able to ride, trains three miniature horses to pull carts, which, she says, is “quite the subject of attention at Southlands.” My goodness, who is this interesting person?

I am writing about **Elizabeth Hawkins**, the person you first meet upon entering the Joyce Walley room at the MOV for our monthly talks. Currently our Membership Director, Elizabeth has served on the VHS executive in various capacities since 2002 and for ten years organized the annual Incorporation Day Luncheon. Her work for the Society draws upon extensive experience in the field of cultural heritage. Having graduated with a degree in Library Science, Elizabeth worked for thirty-one years with the federal government in Ottawa, where her entire career was related to historical collections.

Given that her family had deep roots in the area, dating from 1872, “it was only natural,” she says, that upon moving back to Vancouver she “would join the VHS.” “History has always been part of my life. Being the daughter of a historian (Dr. W. Kaye Lamb) where even the dinner conversation often centred on historical issues, it simply became part of me.” How interesting those conversations must have been. Her father, who trained as a historian in the 1930s, not only wrote about British Columbia’s early history but had a long and distinguished career as both a provincial and a national archivist/librarian, and is known internationally for his role while Dominion Archivist “in modernizing the nation’s Public Archives.” (Chad Reimer, *Writing British Columbia History*).

Elizabeth plans to step down from the executive this year but promises to continue to manage the Society’s memberships. Say hi to Elizabeth when you next attend a talk. And thank you Elizabeth, for your outstanding contribution to the Vancouver Historical Society.

Bob McDonald, President

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Amalgamation 86 Years Ago in 1929

Continued from back page

the working man could afford a home. Taxes were kept low and budgets balanced so development of roads and other civic improvements was slow. Many residents worked on roads and other improvements themselves in lieu of taxes. Some of the wealthier residents in the western part of South Vancouver were frustrated and persuaded the Province to allow them to create a separate Municipality of Point Grey west of Cambie. Point Grey’s secession became legal January 1, 1908. (Not all of the residents of Point Grey were wealthy. There was a sizeable working class around Eburne, today’s Marpole area.)

As the real estate boom ended a year before World War I, South Vancouver ran into financial trouble and had to be administered by the Province until 1924. Point Grey carried on independently thanks in part to the steady payment of taxes by the Canadian Pacific on their land holdings, most of which were in Point Grey.

Amalgamation had been discussed as early as 1911 but nothing came of it. A vote on the issue in 1911 between South Vancouver and Vancouver was positive but the Provincial Government refused to enact legislation unless Point Grey was part of the deal. South Vancouver and Vancouver tried again in 1913 without success. A revised amalgamated budget proposal question was voted on again in 1925 but this time Vancouver ratepayers turned it down. A 1927 plebiscite involving Vancouver, South Vancouver and Point Grey finally settled it. Amalgamation’s time had finally come.

When incorporated April 6, 1886, Vancouver had been 27.1 sq. km (10.5 sq. miles) in size. When Hastings Townsite and District Lot 301 were added in 1911, its area grew by 13.3 sq. km (5.1 sq. miles). With the 1929 amalgamation, Vancouver was now 114.97 sq. km (44.39 sq. miles) in area.

Point Grey resident W. H. (William Harold) Malkin, who with his two brothers operated a successful major wholesale grocery business, became the first Mayor of the enlarged or so-called Greater Vancouver having defeated incumbent Louis D. Taylor in the previous autumn’s election. On his first day in office on January 2, 1929 (terms at the time were for one year), Malkin lauded the previous Mayor by declaring: “Seven years he served the city conscientiously and well.” Taylor had been a major advocate of amalgamation. (Taylor would be back a year later, defeating Malkin.)

So while the New Year in 1929 got off to an exciting start, little could residents of the new larger Vancouver imagine the tough decade to come starting with events at the New York Stock Exchange on Tuesday, October 29th less than 10 months away.

VHS Christmas Book Fair

For our last meeting of 2014, the VHS combined a talk by noted author and historian **Jean Barman** with our first ever Christmas book sale featuring Jean and 11 other VHS member/authors. Author/historians **John Atkin, Aaron Chapman, Cynthia and Charles Hou, Michael Kluckner, Eve Lazarus, Bruce MacDonald, John Madden, Jo Pleshakov, Lisa Smith and Jason Vanderhill** (photo below) were on hand to sign their books and chat with members. (Photo by **Florence Sung**)



Opinions on Digital Newsletters

In the November issue of the newsletter, we asked our members if they would be interested in receiving the newsletter in a digital (PDF) format. This might make it more convenient for some members and would save the Society money as postal rates have been dramatically increased by the Post Office.

Many of you responded but we are still hoping to hear from all of our members. The newsletter would look the same but would be emailed to you. It could then be printed out at home if you choose. Paper copies would still be sent to members who choose to receive them in the traditional printed format.

If you have already emailed us, your request has been noted (even though a reply was not sent).

If you haven't yet emailed us, we would like to hear from you. If you would be interested in receiving the newsletters via email, please send your preference to **membership@vancouver-historical-society.ca**. If the email address (where you would like the newsletter sent) is other than the one you used to send the email, please include that as well. The VHS never releases email addresses or any other personal information to third parties.

We hope to start our digital newsletters as soon as possible.

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, February 26, 2015

Hogan's Alley, Black Vancouver and Public Memory

Speaker: Wayde Compton

Black people have been in Vancouver since its earliest days, but the closest thing the city had to a centralized black neighbourhood was in what is now Strathcona in the early to mid-twentieth century. Professor Compton will discuss details of the community, its prominent individuals, social conditions, collective actions, and important institutions, with an eye to the recent memorialization work being done to link the community, and specifically its legacy at Hogan's Alley, to the present.

Thursday, March 26, 2015

Len Norris & the Vancouver Imagination

Speaker: Michael Kluckner

The *Sun* cartoons of Leonard Matheson Norris (1913–1997), drawn between 1950 and 1988, captivated generations of Vancouverites and, unusual for editorial cartoons, continue to be as relevant and funny today as when he created them. With their "everyman" cast of characters and universal themes of hypocrisy, pomposity and the fate of the downtrodden little guy, they differ from the hard-edged political content of most of Norris's contemporaries. Norris created memorable landscapes of places like "Ambleside and Tiddlycove" and Victoria that have coloured perceptions of them for a half-century.

Welcome New & Returning VHS Members

**Denis Bouvier
Daniel Francis**

**Imbi & Phillip Harding
Angus McIntyre**

Doug, Lisa, Hillary, Bobby Smith

Peek into the Past

with Jim McGraw

The New Year in 1929 — 86 years ago — began as most do, on a note of optimism. The front page of *The Vancouver Sun* of Monday, December 31, 1928 featured a banner wishing everyone a Happy New Year. Above an article entitled:

“Vancouver Ready to Welcome 1929” was another short one from the Editors headlined: “This is Vancouver’s Year.” Among several reasons the article cited, was this one: “A smelter for Vancouver vicinity is practically assured.”

The final paragraphs however summed up the real importance of the New Year: “As the bells and whistles welcome 1929, they also herald the actual institution of a Greater Vancouver — a city united for progress and prosperity.” A front page message from outgoing Mayor Louis D. Taylor, who had been defeated by W.H. Malkin in the October 17th election, concurred: “The coming of 1929 marks the birth of a new city. Tonight we should have the greatest New Year celebration in our history.”

Indeed, there was good reason to celebrate. As of January 1, 1929, Vancouver had become the third largest city in Canada after Montreal and Toronto. The City had finally amalgamated with the Municipalities of South Vancouver and Point Grey

to form a city with a population of over 240,000 passing Winnipeg as Canada’s third most populous city. The city’s southern boundary was now the north arm of the Fraser River instead of mostly 16th Avenue. An earlier amalgamation with the Provincially-administered Hastings Townsite in 1911 had already moved Vancouver’s eastern boundary from Nanaimo Street to Boundary Road and a few streets south



1928 map from Harland Bartholomew & Associates 332-page city planning report with added bold municipal borders showing Vancouver (dashed lines show 1911 annexations) with the separate Municipality of Point Grey below it on the left and the Municipality of South Vancouver on the right prior to amalgamation.

City of Vancouver Archives

of Mount Pleasant with the further annexation of District Lot 301.

South Vancouver and Point Grey had been one entity when incorporated in April 1892 until Point Grey broke away in 1908. South Vancouver had prided itself as a place where

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Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2014 - 2015 (Elected May 22, 2014)

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