

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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Vancouver's Third CPR Station & WWI Sites in the City

August and September Field Trips

One hundred years ago in 1914, Vancouver was already a major city on the West Coast. Barely 28 years after the incorporation of the city, Vancouver's population had soared from about 1,000 in 1886 to 115,000 by 1914. From the 1890s, these had been boom times in the city with lots of investment and building. Vancouver was experiencing breakneck expansion as it became a major shipping centre.

The Canadian Pacific Railway had already built a newer and larger terminal on Cordova to replace the original building that opened with the coming of the railway in 1887. This newer and second terminal — opened in September 28, 1899 — was already woefully inadequate for the business it was handling. By June 1911, the railway was studying whether it should keep expanding the existing terminal building or build a new one.

Thomas Shaughnessy, the President of the CPR, was visiting Vancouver on September 5th, 1911 when he made an announcement to the local press: "Vancouver will have a new and splendid depot from the CPR that will

surpass the expectations of the most sanguine."

Construction of the new building just to the east of the older terminal started on May 30, 1912. This was to be the Canadian Pacific's third and final passenger train terminal — today's Waterfront Station.



A July 29, 1914 photo shows the second CPR station in the foreground being demolished while the newer third station is beyond it and just days from opening to the public.

Photographer Unknown, City of Vancouver Archives CVA 152-1.065

As the new station neared completion, the collapse of international financial markets starting in 1913 put the brakes on investments in the city and the seemingly endless prosperity. Jobs dried up and Vancouver along with the rest of the country was in a recession.

Under these circumstances, the new station opened August 1, 1914.

Celebrate the 100th anniversary of today's Waterfront Station — the former CPR station — by joining well-known civic historian John Atkin for a tour of the building at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, August 1, 2014.

Discover many of the fascinating historical details of this iconic

Vancouver building. This was where soldiers would depart just days after the station's opening for the trenches of Europe during World War I. This was where King George VI and Queen Elizabeth arrived for a first ever visit by a reigning monarch on May 29, 1939. The building even had one full-time resident in the 1940s and 1950s.

Katherine Faint, a registered practical nurse who looked after passengers' needs, had a two-room suite in the building because her job required her to be "on call"

24 hours a day.

This tour of Waterfront Station is a benefit of membership in the Vancouver Historical Society, and is for members only. The tour will be limited to 20 participants. Please call

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Next Meeting: Thursday, Sept. 25, 2014 at Museum of Vancouver

President's Notes

We know the basics of the *Komagata Maru* (KM) story. We acknowledge the importance of the event that unfolded in Vancouver's harbour a hundred years ago this month when most of the KM's 376 Sikh and Muslim passengers from Asia were held hostage in the Japanese ship chartered by a wealthy Sikh businessman to test Canada's racist immigration laws. We recognize the disturbing implications of pictures showing nearly 30,000 Vancouverites crowded along the city's shoreline on July 21, 1914 to cheer on the *H.M.C.S. Rainbow* as it tried to intimidate the ship's passengers into leaving. "Thousands lined the wharves and piers," the *Vancouver Sun* reported, and "filled the street ends" that opened onto the harbour, even crowded the roof garden of the Spencer's building, "buying field glasses from the store below and having their food sent up to them from Spencer's dining room" while breathlessly waiting for what the *Vancouver Province* called the "Hindu Excursion" to end. Yes, people say, but we know the KM story. Let's move on.

What interests me is the larger meaning of *Komagata Maru* for our understanding of Vancouver today. When I first started teaching British Columbia history at UBC in 1978 the KM story and that of the history of South Asians in British Columbia more generally was not well known. As Hugh Johnston, a former president of the VHS, recently told *The Georgia Straight*, when the local Sikh community was small and on the fringes of community life, almost no attention was paid to its history. But as the many displays and exhibits around Vancouver this month are telling us, *Komagata Maru* is about more than a recounting once again of the racism that we reject as an unacceptable part of our past. It is also an assertion of the fact that Sikhs and other Asian peoples are no longer on the fringe of city life and are making their history part of Vancouver's narrative, as they wish to tell it. It is worth considering how we in the VHS as historically-minded people are adjusting to this new reality of Vancouver as a Pacific City.

Bob McDonald, President
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Summer Field Trips and Tours

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604-878-9140 and leave a message with your name and telephone number or email the VHS Infoline (info@vancouver-historical-society.ca) by Tuesday, July 29 to reserve your spot.

Our September field trip continues the theme of 1914 although several other years are represented as well.

Peter Moogk, UBC professor emeritus and currently the curator of the 15th Field Artillery Regiment Museum, will lead a walking tour through Stanley Park from the Hollow Tree to Siwash Rock point and then to Ferguson Point to identify surviving evidence of the harbour defences from both World Wars.



The Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve at the gun emplacement near Ferguson Point in Stanley Park sometime between 1914 and 1918.

Photographer unknown, City of Vancouver Archives AM54-S4-: St Pk P228.1

Several of Greater Vancouver's parks and green spaces, from Central Park to Point Grey to Stanley Park, owe their existence to military planners rather than to nature-loving politicians. Protection of the mainland's sheltered, deep-water anchorage was the primary concern of the naval and army officers who selected these sites.

The history of the military and naval reserves around Burrard Inlet began in the 1860s. It was not until 1914 however that the reserved lands were used for their intended purpose: to

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Summer Field Trips and Tours

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accommodate guns to defend the Port of Vancouver from seaborne attack. In the Second World War a complex array of observation posts, searchlight emplacements, gun batteries, and military camps ringed the harbour.

Stanley Park, the best known of the reserved areas, has vestiges of the First and Second World War coastal gun batteries.

Join Peter for this fascinating tour on Sunday, September 14th. Again this field trip is for VHS members only and is limited to 20 people. Please call **604-878-9140** and leave a message with your name and telephone number or email the VHS Infoline (info@vancouver-historical-society.ca) by Wednesday, September 10th to reserve your spot.

If you have successfully reserved your place, we ask that in the event you can't attend, to please notify us using the same phone number and email so that someone else may attend. For both field trips, we recommend comfortable walking shoes.

— Peek Into the Past —

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promoted by Donald Mann and William Mackenzie. The Canadian Northern Railway was to be Canada's third transcontinental railway (after the CPR and the Grand Trunk Pacific).

Mann and Mackenzie promoted Port Mann as "The City of Big Things," a substantial city that would compete with Vancouver. It was not to be. World War I cut off investment from England and further financial problems forced both the Canadian Northern and the Grand Trunk Pacific to eventually become part of the future Government-owned Canadian National Railways. Port Mann stayed a small settlement by the rail yards. Instead of being the name of a grand new city, Port Mann became more familiar as the name of the new highway bridge.

The bridge became a key component in the new limited access Trans Canada Highway opening the Fraser Valley to what today we might call suburban sprawl. The former two-lane Trans Canada Highway became the Fraser Highway.

Unlike the new Port Mann Bridge of 2012, the 1964 version was toll-free from the day it opened until it closed.

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, September 25, 2014

The Other Western Front — British Columbia and the Great War

Speakers: Mark Forsythe and Greg Dickson

In the summer of 1914, Vancouver and the Province were in a recession. When war was declared in August, men of British ancestry were the first to enlist, but as the recession continued, many others signed up in order to get work. Premier McBride, an ardent imperialist, led the charge to defend empire, and purchased two submarines to help defend the Pacific Coast. We opened our own submarine factory in Burnaby before the war was over. Just some of the interesting stories Mark and Greg will share along with accounts from CBC listeners about the way the war touched their families.

Thursday, October 23, 2014

The History of the Vancouver Police Museum, Morgue, and Important Cases

Speaker: Robert Noon, Director of the Vancouver Police Museum

Once the site of the Coroner's Court, the city morgue and autopsy facilities and the city crime laboratory, the Vancouver Police Museum is North America's oldest police museum. Over 20,000 documents, photographs and artifacts dating from the mid-1800s come to life in interactive displays, while 12,000 elementary and high school students a year learn the secrets of forensic science to solve crimes. Special displays focus on the still unsolved 1947 "Babes in the Wood Murders," the 1959 autopsy of movie legend Errol Flynn, and the 1965 "Milkshake Murder" that sent a CKNW disc jockey to prison for life.

Peek into the Past

with Jim McGraw



Photo: Kam Abbott

Who could have guessed 50 years ago that the new Port Mann Bridge would be replaced by an even larger bridge 48 years later? On June 12, 1964 — 50 years ago this month — the Port Mann bridge opened spanning the Fraser River between Coquitlam and Surrey. There really wasn't much on either side of the bridge back then. Photographs of the area at the time show mostly empty land.

The Port Mann Bridge became the third crossing of the Fraser in Greater Vancouver. The 1904 railroad bridge at New Westminster was the first. It featured a roadway on a second deck that was available for horse-drawn wagons and later cars. In 1937 the road component was replaced

by the Pattullo Bridge next to the railroad bridge. The Deas Island (later the George Massey) Tunnel became the second crossing of the river in 1959 (together with 1957's Oak Street Bridge over the North Arm of the river).

According to newspaper accounts, the first person to cross the new Port Mann bridge was in fact an intrepid radio reporter who snuck across in his car before the bridge officially opened.

The Port Mann was named for the nearby community, which was at one time the terminus of the new Canadian Northern Railway (Canadian Northern Pacific in B.C.)

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