

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

ISSN 0042 - 2487

June 2015

Vol. 54 No. 9

Summer Field Trip: Jericho Park History Walk on Saturday, July 25th

During World War Two, Jericho Park and the adjacent lands south of 4th Avenue were part of the largest military operation in western Canada, Canadian Forces Base Jericho Beach. The foreshore was hemmed with an apron of concrete wharfs, four large airplane hangars, a marine and stores building, officers' messes and a host of other buildings.

Although designated for military use in 1859 when the Royal Engineers set aside 500 acres for defence purposes, the area was not used for military operations at that time.

In the late 1860s Jeremiah (Jerry) Rogers began logging operations supplying the Hastings Sawmill Company at the foot of Dunlevy Street. He built a logging camp and home at the water's edge and in, 1878, received a grant of Crown land around the cove that eventually took his name, Jerry's Cove.

After his death, Rogers' son Lincoln gradually sold off the Crown grant land. The Vancouver Golf Club purchased some of this land and started the first golf club in Vancouver in 1892. Golf was played there until the course was destroyed by a winter

dream home in 1913. Thirteen other lots were sold for development as private homes.

Later, a strip of land 200 feet wide was leased in 1920 to the Canadian Air Board as one of Canada's first air stations, Jericho Beach Air Station. Four years later, the Royal Canadian Air Force took over the air station, renaming it RCAF Station Jericho Beach, and three aircraft squadrons began operating from the base. By 1940, wartime operations had started and air crews were being trained on "flying boats." In 1942 the army's Pacific Command Headquarters

moved to Jericho Beach and in 1947, the army took control of the station. The Defence Lands were forbidden territory for Vancouverites until most of the base was returned to the City of Vancouver in 1969 and the area renamed Jericho Park.



R.C.A.F. Jericho Beach Air Station with golf course behind it.

Photo: City of Vancouver Archives CVA 371-894

storm in 1894. Golf returned to Jericho Beach in 1907 when the Vancouver Country Club started, expanding across West Fourth Avenue in the 1920s. The remainder of Jerry Rogers' Crown grant was subdivided and sold as building lots. Philip Gilman purchased three waterfront lots in 1906 and 1909 and completed his

Continued on top right of Page 2

President's Notes

It is an honour for me to become president of this venerable organization, and I wish to thank Bob McDonald, my predecessor, for steering the ship during the last few years.

Unlike Bob, who has had a distinguished university career as an historian, I came to the study of history through a casual personal interest – something more akin to cultural geography than history itself. My brief flirtation with tertiary education gave me a degree in mathematics and some knowledge of fine art; I drifted from there into work as a commercial artist and cartoonist before finding my feet, in the early 1980s, writing and illustrating books about cities and their histories. Heritage advocacy followed, then sheep farming, then a move to Australia, with each change documented in books and artwork. My recent project is a graphic novel (that is, a “comic book with pretensions”) set in 1944 and exploring the pitfalls and prospects of Japanese-Canadians living independently in the BC interior.

My other volunteer activity is the Vancouver Heritage Commission, and through it I chaired the 2015 Heritage Awards. Most of the projects submitted to the jury involved rehabilitations of buildings, but there were a few of a more historical nature given to individuals and organizations.

Firstly, Eve Lazarus, who is a director of the VHS, won for her book *Sensational Vancouver*. Chris Hay's discovery and research on the Stanley Park Rock Garden also received an award, as did the extraordinary building-permit database created by Heritage Vancouver volunteers.

Over a period of years, the city's chronological permit ledgers were painstakingly transcribed into a web-based, searchable form, accessible for free on www.heritagevancouver.org. It has been a game-changer for people doing historical research on Vancouver houses.

And, finally, Janet Bingham, well-known in the city a generation ago for her writing (on architect Samuel Maclure and the Roedde family) and her advocacy, beginning in the 1960s with the campaign to save Gastown, received a posthumous lifetime achievement award.

Michael Kluckner, President

michaelkluckner@vancouver-historical-society.ca

Jericho Park Summer History Walk

Continued from Page 1

Over time, the remaining buildings were converted to the public places we see in the park today: the youth hostel there in 1971, Jericho Sailing Centre opened on the waterfront in 1974 and the Jericho Arts Centre opened in 1991. And no one who lived in Vancouver in the 1970s can forget how the military buildings were converted for the 1976 Habitat Forum, also the year when Greenpeace launched its “Save the Whales” campaign from the wharf. Heritage buildings just to the east of the park boundaries include the Gilman house, now Brock House, and the Hastings Mill Store Museum, which survived the Great Fire of June 13, 1886. The Hastings Mill Store was saved as a heritage building in 1930 by the Native Daughters of British Columbia Post No. 1 and relocated to its present site. Stepping through the doorway of Old Hastings Mill Store Museum is like stepping through a portal to the past. You will see why during your visit!

The walk will be led by Mike Cotter of the Jericho Sailing Centre, Jo Pleshakov of Brock House Society, and Lisa Smith of the Hastings Mill Store Museum.

Date: Saturday, July 25

Time: 10 A.M. to 12 noon

Start: Jericho Arts Centre, 1675 Discovery Street, Vancouver (pay parking lot or street parking)

End: Hastings Mill Store Museum, 1575 Alma Street, Vancouver (street parking) Carpooling recommended.

This tour is free for VHS members. There is a limited number of tickets, so please reserve by July 18th via email at info@vancouver-historical-society.ca or by leaving a phone message, which includes your email address and/or phone number at **604-878-9140**. The tour co-ordinator will confirm your reservation early in the week prior to the walk.

Jo Pleshakov



“Flying boat” at R.C.A.F. Jericho Beach Air Station between 1940 and 1948.

Photo: Philip Timms, City of Vancouver Archives CVA 677-380

Old Roller Coaster Thrills

Continued from back page

Standing about 20 metres (60 feet) high with a top speed of 65 km/h (40 mph), the new Giant Dipper roller coaster was ready to test the courage of Vancouverites young and old. Designed by Tom Prior, an amusement park entrepreneur, and Ontario-born California resident Fred Church, an engineer, the ride cost \$65,000 — not an insignificant amount in 1925. The two men had built several roller coasters for various amusement parks using the same Giant Dipper name.

The coaster stood in the northwest corner of Hastings Park near McGill and Renfrew Streets. This was an area of the exhibition where other rides and amusements were located. By the following year, the name of the amusement area became Happyland and soon it was a full-fledged summer-long amusement park.

Happyland was indeed a good name. The coaster was introduced at a time when Vancouver's economy had regained its footing after stumbling in the years after World War I.

The 1920s soon gave way to the '30s and again the economy slowed with the Great Depression. Money became tight and maintenance was deferred on the coaster. Several times during the decade, special funds had to be allocated to make temporary repairs according to newspaper accounts of the day.

The Giant Dipper continued to operate for several years after war broke out in Europe in 1939. Finally in 1942, the Giant Dipper closed for the war years. It reopened for one more season in 1947, two years after hostilities had come to an end.

News slowly filtered out that the Giant Dipper would be demolished after the 1947 season to make way for a larger horse racetrack. By early March 1948, it was mostly rubble. A *Province* newspaper photo from March 6th showed a youngster standing in front of the partially demolished coaster. Part of the caption read: "Shown viewing the crumbling skeleton with nostalgia and sorrow is 14-year-old Bob. Said Bob, 'If they want to rip things apart in this town, why don't they start in on a few schools?'" If Bob is still with us, he would be about 81 today.

Happyland itself closed 10 years later in 1957. A new modern amusement park — renamed Playland — opened in 1958, now at the opposite corner of the park and it even had a new wooden roller coaster! That coaster continues to delight Vancouverites as it celebrates its 57th birthday this year.

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, Sept. 24, 2015

Raincoast Jews: Integration in British Columbia
Speaker: Lillooet Nordlinger McDonnell

The speaker will explore the lives and contributions of five leading Jews living in British Columbia between 1860 and 1970: Cecelia Davies for her charity work in early Victoria, Hannah Director who rose in a small mining camp to become head of the school board, Leon Koerner the Czechoslovakian refugee who was associated with the lumber industry and became known for his philanthropy, Harry Adaskin who started the first UBC music school and Nathan Nemetz who rose to become the first Jewish chief justice of British Columbia. Emphasis will be placed on how their Jewish heritage shaped their professional legacy and contributions to Canadian society.

Thursday, October 22, 2015

Vaudeville: The Great White Way
Speakers: John Atkin and Tom Carter

Many people think of Granville Street as "the Great White Way" or entertainment district of Vancouver. In fact, Hastings Street was the original where vaudeville flourished at the many theatres like the Pantages, the Rex and the Columbia. Vancouver was very much on several vaudeville circuits so there was never a shortage of acts to grace the stage. Vaudeville was a form of theatre started in the 1880s that featured several different acts in one show, everything from dancers, comedians, jugglers, singers and more. Silent movies and then the talkies gradually pushed vaudeville off the stage of many theatres. Historian John Atkin and artist Tom Carter explore a bygone era in this fascinating look at a world of dreams, escape, wonders and thrills.

Peek into the Past

with Jim McGraw



The now 15-year-old Giant Dipper roller coaster being enjoyed by thrill seekers at Happyland in this 1940 photo.

Photo: Pacific National Exhibition, City of Vancouver Archives CVA 180-0797

Summer in Vancouver always means looking forward to the PNE or Pacific National Exhibition during the last weeks of August. The exhibition first opened in 1910.

In 1925 — 90 years ago — there was even more anticipation than usual. A new permanent thrill ride was going to open at the fair, then still called the Vancouver Exhibition.

Continued at top left of Page 3

Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2015 - 2016 (Elected May 28, 2015)

EXECUTIVE

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| President | Michael Kluckner |
| Vice President | Eve Lazarus |
| Treasurer | Scott Anderson |
| Recording Secretary | Kellan Higgins |
| Director | Robert McDonald |
| Director | |
| Director (Newsletter Editor) | Jim McGraw |
| Director | Brenda Peterson |
| Director (Programs) | Bruce M. Watson |

APPOINTED POSITIONS

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Archivist | Alexandra Allen |
| Info Line | Jeannie Hounslow |
| Newsletter Mailing | Mary Gavan, Diane Switzer |
| Tour Coordinator | Jo Pleshakov |

CONTACT INFORMATION

Vancouver Historical Society Information Line: 604-878-9140
 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3071 Vancouver, BC V6B 3X6
 Website: www.vancouver-historical-society.ca
 Newsletter Editor: jmcgraw@vancouver-historical-society.ca