

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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March 2007

The Shake, the Rattle and the Pole: Vancouver's Striptease Past

March Speaker: Becki Ross

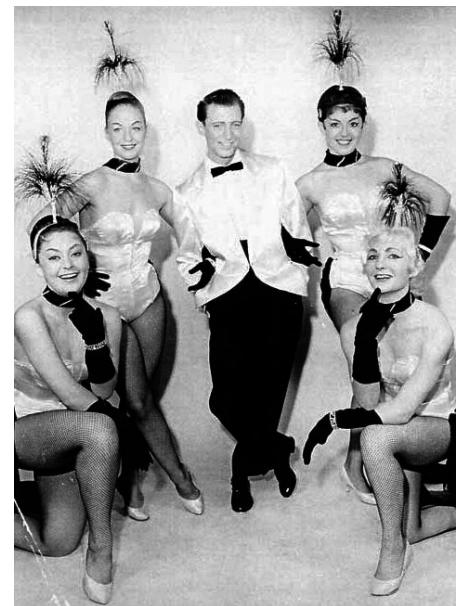


For the past eight years, Becki Ross has been researching a book with the above working title, on post-war erotic entertainment – female burlesque and striptease, from 1945 to 1980. Extensive archival and interview-based research forms the core of her investigation. Her illustrated talk explores themes of Vancouver's racialized east/west divide, dancers' working conditions and efforts to unionize, the roles of jazz musicians as accompanists, and "the tease" in an

era that predates lap dancing, champagne rooms, and stage fees.

Becki Ross teaches Women's & Gender studies and Sociology in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of British Columbia. She has a long history of activism and advocacy for sex workers' rights as well as being active in anti-racist struggles, and reproductive choice.

Burlesque and striptease have had a long and vibrant past in Vancouver and are still very much part of the fabric of the city. A glimpse into post-war Vancouver reveals a cityscape rich in clubs and entertainment personalities. During this period, institutions such as the Penthouse, Isy's and the Harlem Nocturne headlined dazzling female performers with stage names such as Chesty Morgan, Big Fanny Annie and Choo Choo Williams. These dancers and others helped to stoke Vancouver's reputation for being "home of the hottest nightclubs north of San Francisco."



TOP LEFT: Becki Ross; ABOVE LEFT: Nena Marlene; RIGHT: Jack Card Dancers

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 22 at 7:30 pm in the Vancouver Museum

PREZNOTES

VHS Exec Issues a Casting Call

At our March 1 meeting, the VHS stepped into its annual role as Nominating Committee. Looking ahead to the 2007-8 program year, we see openings for three new directors to serve on the Executive. We've received some expressions of interest, but more are welcome before the slate is finalized at our April 5 meeting. How about you?

If you'd like to be considered for nomination, please phone or e-mail me soon.

The Executive consists of four officers (president, vice president, secretary and treasurer) and six directors. We work as a team, reviewing VHS programs, priorities and initiatives, overseeing finance and making occasional grants, sharing concerns, laughter, and a love of Vancouver history. We meet in the Vancouver Museum boardroom from 7:30-9:30 pm on the first Thursday of each month except December, July and August.

Officers and directors are elected at our Annual General Meeting (May 24 this year). All terms are for one year, beginning June 1. The current Executive, as Nominating Committee, will present a single slate, balanced for age, gender, interests and experience. Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor at the AGM. Nominees must be VHS members and have indicated their willingness to serve. Expertise in Vancouver history is not a prerequisite, just interest and an eagerness to learn.

As Martha Piper would say, "Think about it!"

Paul Flucke, President

604-732-7742; e-mail: paulflucke@shaw.ca

Welcome New Members:

Helen Aqua Sue Bigelow
Robin B. Leckie Alan Newberry
 Raymond Reitsma

Donations

THANK YOU! ...to the 14 members who made donations to the VHS totaling \$589 during January and February. Most donations come as extra amounts with membership renewals, but you don't have to wait for your month to come around. Just send us money labeled "donation." We'll send you a donation receipt — and our heartfelt thanks.

Last Chance for Luncheon Tickets

Stanley Park has been very much in the news this past fall and winter. Devastating windstorms wreaked havoc and destroyed many trees in large areas of the park.

Jim Lowden, Parks Board Director of Stanley District, has been overseeing the cleanup and restoration work in our fabled urban park. Jim will take time from his busy schedule to give an illustrated talk on Stanley Park and its history during the annual Incorporation Day Luncheon on Sunday, April 1st. It promises to be a fascinating program.

The luncheon is an annual event celebrating the incorporation of the City of Vancouver on April 6, 1886. The food and service are always great and it's a chance to meet with others interested in the history of Vancouver.

Our annual Historical Award of Merit will also be presented during the luncheon. There will be door prizes too.

The luncheon will be held Sunday, April 1st, at the University Golf Club, 5185 University Boulevard at 12 noon.

Don't miss any of it. Time is running out though, so you'll have to buy those tickets soon.

Tickets for the Luncheon are \$30.00 each. You can buy your tickets at the March 22nd monthly VHS meeting (the fourth Thursday of the month) at the Vancouver Museum or you can order them from Elizabeth Hawkins, 3626 West 1st Avenue, Vancouver, V6R 1H2 (Tel: 604-737-8045). Please enclose a cheque made out to the VHS with your request for tickets. Please remember it must arrive before the luncheon.

We're looking forward to seeing you there!



Re-creation of Vancouver City Council meeting after the 1886 Great Fire about two months after the city's incorporation. Photo courtesy of Vancouver Public Library VPL Accession #1089A.

History Buffs Required

The Historica Fair is looking for enthusiastic history buffs to help adjudicate an always-interesting collection of Canadian history projects created by elementary students.

The Historica Fair is a national program involving more than 100,000 students across the country. Students present projects at school or community based fairs. Selected projects then advance to provincial or regional fairs, with one project from each region advancing to the national fair.

This will be the fourth year for the Vancouver Regional Historica Fair. It is being held on May 4 and 5 this year at the Vancouver Museum.

The Vancouver Historical Society is again supporting the fair with a \$500 contribution. We encourage our members to support this worthwhile project by volunteering as adjudicators. No experience is necessary, just a passion for history. You will in teams examining projects, interviewing students and providing feedback. It's a great opportunity to encourage students' ideas, ingenuity, creativity and enthusiasm for history.

Visit the Historica website at www.histori.ca and the Vancouver Regional Fair website www.vancouverheritagefair.ca for more information, and to see examples of projects from previous fairs.

If you would like to participate, contact Jamie Purves, the Vancouver Regional Heritage Fair Coordinator, at 604-257-8304 or e-mail: fair@vancouvermaritimemuseum.com.

B.C. Historical Federation's Conference to be Held in Victoria

This year's British Columbia Historical Federation conference is being held May 10th to the 13th in Victoria. Hosted by the Victoria Historical Society and the Old Cemeteries Society, this year's venue will be the Harbour Towers Hotel and Suites.

Workshops, symposiums and various tours will be offered. Presentation highlights include: The Dunsmuirs, Hudson's Bay Company and the Colonial Era, and Our Chinese Heritage.

The conference also features trips to Craigdarroch Castle, Uplands and the Chinese Cemetery, Ross Bay Cemetery and an architectural

walking tour. The awards ceremony and banquet will be on Saturday night. For more information on the BCHF conference, registration forms and complete program details, visit their website at: www.bchistory.ca and click on Conferences.



LEFT: Craigdarroch Castle in Victoria

Upcoming Speakers & Events

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

Please Note Program Change

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the talk on the history of St. Paul's Hospital has been replaced by another topic on March 22nd.

Thursday, March 22, 2007

The Shake, Rattle and Pole: Vancouver's Strip-tease Past

Speaker: Becki Ross

Post-war Vancouver was a city rich in clubs and entertainment personalities. During this period, institutions such as the Penthouse, Isy's and the Harlem Nocturne headlined dazzling female performers with stage names like Chesty Morgan, Big Fanny Annie and Choo Choo Williams. These dancers and others helped stoke Vancouver's reputation as being "home of the hottest nightclubs north of San Francisco."

Sunday, April 1, 2007

Incorporation Day Luncheon

Speaker: Jim Lowden

Devastating winds caused untold damage to our fabled Stanley Park this past fall and winter. Jim Lowden of the Parks Board is overseeing the cleanup and restoration. He will be our special guest at the Luncheon, where he will be giving an illustrated talk on the history and evolution of Stanley Park.

Please note tickets are required for this special event, which will be held at the University Golf Club, 5185 University Drive, Vancouver on Sunday, April 1st at 12 noon. Details in story on Page 2.

Thursday, April 26, 2007

Comrade Dad: A Father and a Vancouver Bookstore

Speaker: Karin Lee

Filmmaker Karin Lee will show and speak about her film Comrade Dad, the story of her father who ran the China Arts and Crafts bookstore. This quintessentially Vancouver story is about ideology and family and what it was like to live in Chinatown in the fifties and sixties before Canada recognized China.

Thursday, May 24, 2007

VHS Show and Tell

Speaker(s): To Be Announced

Our last talk of the 2006-2007 season will feature VHS members talking about projects in which they are involved. We hope to show footage from the City Reflections group's re-creation of the 1907 William Harbeck film.

CBC Archival Footage Shows Vancouver's Past

February Speaker: Colin Preston

What a treat members of the VHS had on Thursday, February 22 when Colin Preston of the CBC brought along a program of short movies made in Vancouver at various times in the city's past. There was a real variety of footage, some shot by professional film companies, some by amateurs. Some of the items covered major events in the city, while others were simple visual records of ordinary days in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. The passage of time has made these "ordinary" bits of film quite compelling, and there was a constant murmur of recognition from the capacity audience in the Joyce Walley room. (The VHS really likes having to bring out extra chairs!)

Colin is the Library Coordinator & Television Archivist for the CBC in Vancouver. He's responsible for the preservation of the Moving Image and Sound collection. He referred to the collection he brought along as "Incidental Archives." No film in that collection was taken later than 1951, and he ended with the 100-year-old William Harbeck film. All were silent, most were in black-and-white.

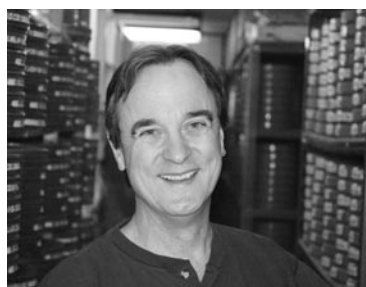
A fellow named Sid Groberman, an amateur film maker, left us some fascinating footage of Vancouver in the 1930s: the brand-new Burrard Bridge, horse racing, a CN ship, a PNE parade down West Hastings Street and more. The parade film had one really arresting image: a float in the shape of Germany's Hindenberg zeppelin, complete with swastika emblem. That definitely dated it pre-war!

There was charming color footage of the 1939 visit to Vancouver of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. We see them being driven through the downtown, and then they emerge from their beautiful McLaughlin Buick and enter Vancouver city hall, greeted by Mayor Lyle Telford.

One poignant series of 1939 images showed smiling young Japanese girls — who, two years later, would be forced into BC's interior internment camps.

There were vintage shots of Bowen Island excursions, log booms at Snug Cove and film of Britannia Mines. And history became visible with Alfred Booth's July 27, 1938 filming of the famous Pier 'D' fire on the Vancouver waterfront, and its thousands of onlookers.

Colin ended his presentation with the six-minute William Harbeck film, taken throughout downtown Vancouver from the front of a BC Electric streetcar in 1907. The big audience thanked him warmly for a fine and exciting evening.



Colin Preston in the CBC archives, left, and speaking to the VHS, below.



Vancouver Historical Society - Leadership, 2006 - 2007 (elected May 25, 2006)

EXECUTIVE:

President	Paul Flucke	Director	Chuck Davis
Vice President (Programs)	Bruce Watson	Director (Membership)	Elizabeth Hawkins
Treasurer (Vacant)	Paul Flucke (pro tem)	Director (Newsletter Editor)	Jim McGraw
Secretary (Historica Fair)	Sidney Madden	Director (Research Service)	Wayne Norton
Director (Newsletter Mailing)	Barbara Coles	Director	Larry Wong

OTHERS:

Webmaster	Quasar Design and Data Management Inc.
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CONTACT INFORMATION

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