

# Vancouver Historical Society

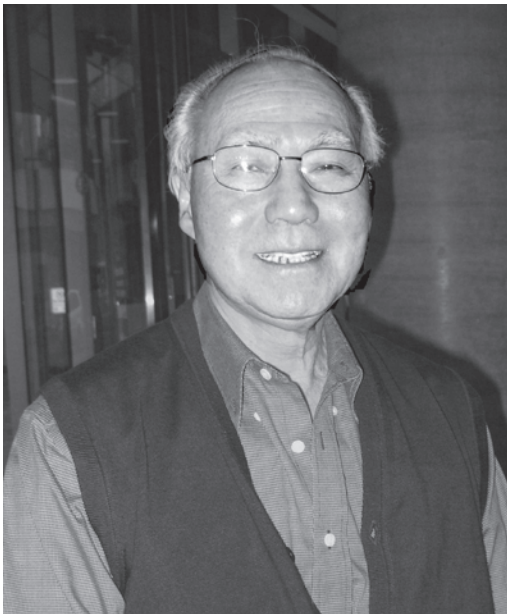
## NEWSLETTER

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### Inside the H. Y. Louie Family

*March Speaker: Willis Louie*



*ABOVE: Willis Louie*

The story of the H.Y. Louie family is a familiar one — a family business arising from humble beginnings in Chinatown as a small wholesale grocery outlet to the present day ubiquitous chain of London Drugs and the Market Place IGA.

There are 68 London Drugs in the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba with a staff of 6,000.

H.Y. Louie Co. Ltd. has a 150,000 square foot warehouse in Burnaby and besides serving a number of wholesale outlets, has over 41 Market Place IGA scattered through the province.

Both of these enterprises are community minded in raising funds for local projects and promoting health issues.

But what isn't known is the racial barrier in every day life of the H.Y. Louie family. They faced colour barriers to getting jobs and even to joining the military. They were also were the subject of a public outcry when they moved their residence to the Dunbar-Southlands neighbourhood of Vancouver.

H.Y. Louie had 11 children and most have passed away but the youngest, Willis, will relate his family's story. He will tell not only the success of the business side of the family but their overcoming the racial discrimination during the Chinese Exclusion years. As high school and university students, he and his siblings broke the colour barriers on the soccer fields and on the basketball courts.

His siblings also answered to the call of war. One of his brothers, Quan, served overseas as a bomber aimer with the RCAF and on a mission over Germany, made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Province of British Columbia honoured Quan Louie's memory by naming a lake after him. Quan Lake is located north of the Vancouver's watershed.



**Next Meeting: Thursday, March 27 at 7:30 pm at the Vancouver Museum**

# PREZNOTES

One of the Vancouver Historical Society's mandates has been to support the preservation of the city's Heritage buildings. An onerous task when coupled with the effort of trying to keep alive our less tangible social history. However in the last several decades the formation of provincial and Vancouver heritage organizations has created a bulwark of preservation fronts made all the more effective by an impressive collection of focused expertise. We genuinely appreciate and welcome their effective sharing of our mandate. However, that does not mean we are inactive on that front.

Lately we have written letters of support for the preservation of the Pantages Theatre on Hastings Street supporting a troop of volunteers who are working towards the restoration and rebuilding of the theatre to be an integral part of that area of the city. This deserves all our support.

We have also written a letter of support for the establishment of Christ Church Cathedral as a national historic site. This would give it future protection should an overzealous developer get a gleam in his eye.

So many historic buildings have met the wrecker's ball in the last couple of decades. Some, of course, could not be saved. Others, and some may consider this blasphemous, should not be saved as their historical significance is marginal.

But much has been saved by dedicated people. The West End's Mole Hill and Barclay Heritage Park as well as chunks of Gastown have been saved by the sheer grit of dedicated people. Residents of Strathcona and other suburbs have done brilliantly restoring older houses. More than a few of our members have faithfully restored their own houses at considerable expense and with heritage colours returned to life by heritage enthusiasts.

Still, many carefully designed buildings may in the future face the wrecking ball. Should that be the case, it is expected that many of our members will rise to the occasion to make sure that Vancouver history lives on in its structures as well.

*Bruce M. Watson, President*

## Welcome New Member

Marshall Letcher

## Last Chance for Luncheon Tickets!

This year's Incorporation Day Luncheon will be held on Sunday, April 6th, 2008 at the University Golf Club, 5185 University Boulevard, at 12:00 noon.



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 who share an interest in history.

*Stephen Hume (University of Victoria photo)*

This year's speaker will be multi award-winning journalist, Stephen Hume. His topic will be "The Search for Simon Fraser," a particularly appropriate subject as this is the bicentennial year of Fraser's explorations of the river that now bears his name. Last year, Stephen wrote a fascinating series of articles for *The Vancouver Sun* on Simon Fraser and his presentation will be based on his very extensive research as he traced the life and travels of this largely unsung explorer.

Our annual Award of Historical Merit will also be presented during the Luncheon and there will door prizes. Don't miss any of it. Time is running out though, so you'll have to buy those tickets soon!

Tickets for the Luncheon for members and friends are \$30.00 each. You can buy your tickets at the March monthly VHS meeting on Thursday March 27th 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!

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## Valuable Photos Sent To VHS

The VHS recently received a very interesting package from history-conscious Carol Johnson of Savona, B.C.

Included in the envelope were a number of old family photos and a map. The map is an early map showing an area of Bowen Island.

The family photos were particularly fascinating as they show the Lions Gate Bridge under construction. The photos were all taken from angles and perspectives that would only be available to someone working on the project. They are a unique record of a giant construction project in Vancouver that fascinated everyone in the late 1930s.

The photos will be passed along to the Vancouver Archives, and the map to the Bowen Island Historical Society. We salute you Carol for wanting these items preserved.

## Historical Conference in Royal City

This year's British Columbia Historical Federation (BCHF) Conference is being held in New Westminster May 8 to the 11th.

Many events are planned including walking tours and a field trip to Fort Langley.

Two workshops will be held concurrently Thursday May 8 at Douglas College. Both of these day-long workshops will be of particular interest to a variety of groups.

One is on Financial Planning and Reporting for Non-Profit Organizations. The fee is \$5 for BCHF members and \$70 for others.

The second workshop is British Columbia's Historic Land Records — The Inside Story. It is a workshop on Land Titles and will include a tour of the New Westminster Land Titles Office. The speakers at the workshop will be Godfrey Archbold, CEO-LTSA, and archivist Walter Meyer Zu Erpen.

The \$200 cost of the full conference registration includes the opening reception, two lunches, a banquet dinner, walking tour and a field trip to Fort Langley.

The registration deadline is April 15, 2008.

Partial registration is available for various events. Attending Thursday's reception only costs \$25. Friday events including the field trip and lunch will cost \$110. Saturday only events including a walking tour, lunch and banquet, will be \$85.

Additional banquet tickets are available at \$45 each.

Registration forms are available online at: [www.bchistory.ca/conferences/2008/Registration2008.pdf](http://www.bchistory.ca/conferences/2008/Registration2008.pdf).

For a Conference package by mail, phone 604-274-4383

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## New Addition to VHS Website

We have added something new to the VHS website ([www.vancouver-historical-society.ca](http://www.vancouver-historical-society.ca)).

It's a monthly calendar of history related events and activities that other organizations are offering around Vancouver and that may be of interest to our members.

All you have to do to access the calendar, is click on the Meetings and Events section. Then click on the History Related Events Calendar. You will then be taken to the calendar.

Just click on any of the announcements on any particular day and you will be taken to the website displaying all of the event information.

Try it out and see how you like it.

## 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).

Thursday, March 27, 2008, 7:30 pm

### *Inside the H.Y. Louie Family*

#### **Speaker: Willis Louie**

From humble beginnings as wholesale grocers in Chinatown, the Louie family went on to own Independent Groceries Alliance (IGA) and eventually also London Drugs. The evening promises to be an intriguing glimpse into one family's history, which is very much tied to that of Vancouver.

Thursday, April 24, 2008, 7:30 pm

### *History of the Vancouver Post Office*

#### **Speaker: Jim Bain**

From 1869 when postmaster Maximilian Michaud first cancelled outgoing letters at his Burrard Inlet post office to the mail sorting machinery of today's giant Vancouver Mail Processing Plant, the local post office has gone through many changes. A former Divisional Manager sorts through its colourful history.

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## *Last Month's Speaker*

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Grant's mother and one other woman.

One of the recurring themes of Grant's talk was the racism he faced, whether he was regarded as a "Chinaman" or an Indian. One especially poignant story he told was of the last public performance the Musqueam gave, in which dancers wearing traditional masks performed at the Kitsilano Showboat in the 1960s.

Reporters, said Grant, wrote about the "grunts and groans" and the "grotesque mask that these savage heathens held in reverence..." As Grant put it, "So that was the last time [we danced in public]. Forget it."

Grant, however, remains positive about the future of the Musqueam people. He remembers the words of his mother.

"She said, 'This is your anchor... You lose your language and you're going to lose your anchor,'" said Grant.

We thank Larry Grant for his heartfelt and fascinating talk.

*Lisa Smedman*

# The Musqueam Community

## February Speaker: Larry Grant

Larry Grant grew up in two different worlds and spoke three different languages as a child.

Through the week, he went by the name Hong Lai Hing and attended Strathcona Elementary and Chinese-language school. Together with his brother and sister, he lived in Chinatown with his father, a Chinese immigrant who grew produce on a farm next to the Musqueam Indian Reserve.

On weekends, Grant lived with his mother and maternal grandparents—the Grant family, who traced their surname to a Scottish immigrant—and learned the traditions of the Musqueam people.

At Lord Strathcona Elementary, Grant spoke English. In his grandparent's "big house" on the Musqueam Indian Reserve—the place that comes to Grant's mind, when he thinks of "home"—he spoke Hun'q'umi'num'.

Grant, right, opened his Feb. 28 talk at the Vancouver Historical Society with a greeting in Hun'q'umi'num', one of the three main Coast Salish dialects that make up the Halkomelem language group. He told the story of how the XwMuthkwium (Musqueam) people got their name—from the muxqui (pronounced "muth-kwee") plant that grew along the trail left by a two-headed serpent that, according to legend, used to occupy the bog where Chaldecott Park is today.

Grant, born in 1936, was originally deemed to be a status Indian, because his mother and father never formally married. Later, the Indian agent "put a line straight through our name" and took him off the roll. "So we were no longer Musqueam by government decree. Now we were Chinese."

As a result, Grant and his siblings weren't sent away to residential school—a fortuitous event, in hindsight, but a source of annoyance to the kindergarten-aged Grant. He was, he said, "devastated" that he couldn't go to boarding school with all his friends.

Today, he realizes the harm this "institutionalization" wrought. For 10 months of the year, children were forbidden to speak their own language and taught that everything about their culture and way of life was wrong. When they came home, their own families were strangers to them.

"So when you come home, you come home to parents you don't know, to siblings you haven't associated with for 10 months," Grant said.

Grant kept his language and culture, learned important life skills from his mother and grandparents, and continued the Musqueam religious practices.



During his talk, Grant spoke of potlatches, and the pride of tracing his descent to the "best war general of the [early 1800s] era" whose name was Anglicized to Capilano. This general, said Grant, led 20 canoes in a retaliatory attack on warriors from Yaculta (Cape Mudge, on Quadra Island) who had attacked Capilano's village. The attack was a success, and captives taken in the attack on Capilano's village freed.

"If anyone claims ancestry to Capilano, then he's my relative, one way or another," said Grant.

Grant said that about 100 Chinese men worked on farms at the Musqueam Reserve. The first Chinese farmers began to settle at Musqueam—"unbeknownst to the Indian agent," said Grant—around 1906.

"They tried to figure out why were these Chinese guys there; who gave them permission," Grant said.

Despite the proximity of the Chinese men—the vast majority of whom were on their own in Canada, without wives—only two Musqueam women wound up bearing children by Chinese men:

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### Vancouver Historical Society - Leadership, 2007 - 2008 (elected May 24, 2007)

#### EXECUTIVE:

President	Bruce Watson
Vice President (Programs)	Larry Wong
Treasurer	Paul Flucke
Recording Secretary	Sidney Madden
Director	Scott Anderson
Director	Chuck Davis
Director (Membership)	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director (Newsletter Editor)	Jim McGraw
Director	Lisa Smedman

#### APPOINTED POSITIONS

Webmaster	Quasar Data Mgmt.
Archivist	Elizabeth Hawkins
Info Line	Barbara Coles
Newsletter Mailing	Scott Anderson
Webmail	Paul Flucke

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

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