

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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Len Norris and the Vancouver Imagination

March Speaker: Michael Kluckner

Cartoons in the Western tradition had their origins in the Middle Ages in frescos, tapestries and stained glass windows, all with the purpose of teaching the masses religious values. By the eighteenth century, William Hogarth (1679-1764) skewered the then contemporary social mores or lack thereof, with his gritty satirical engravings. In the nineteenth century, with magazines and newspapers in wide circulation, cartoons also carried a political as well as social message. Attesting the power of cartoons, Sir John Tenniel's 1890 *Punch* cartoon of Otto von Bismarck leaving his office, or in this case, a ship, under the title of "Dropping the pilot" has been copied as a concept for over a hundred years.

By the twentieth century the scope of cartoons had widened into forms such as animated films and comic strips.

However, the editorial cartoon still carried with it a powerful message and Canada has had its bountiful share of first-rate cartoonists. For example, when the Parti Quebecois won the Quebec election in 1976, Terry Mosher ("Aislin") took the edge off the panic with a memorable cartoon of Rene Levesque stating: "O.K. everybody take a valium!"

British Columbia has also had more than its share of excellent cartoonists. Al Beaton, Bob Bierman, Roy Peterson and Adrian Raeside are just a few of the notables, but the one individual who rose head and shoulders above everyone else with his humour, incredible drawing skills, droll wit and sense of satire and place was Len Norris.



"Remember the days we used to laugh at the old myth about all Vancouverites having web feet...?"

Len Norris cartoon, *Vancouver Sun*, August 13, 1951

The *Vancouver Sun* cartoons of London, England-born 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. As well, Norris created memorable landscapes of places like "Amblesnide and Tiddlycove" and Victoria that have coloured perceptions of them for a half-century.

Permanently embedded in our psyche, thanks to Len Norris, is that all West Vancouverites have one leg shorter than the other in order to negotiate the endless slopes of that city. And who can forget the hats of the Socreds and Wacky Bennett, or the flower pots on the PGE (Pacific Great Eastern) railroad...

Our March speaker, Michael Kluckner, served as a cartoonist for the *Vancouver Province* and *Victoria Times* before taking up more serious forms of illustration including those in his historical books about Vancouver. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Vancouver Historical Society.

Bruce M. Watson

Next Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 26, 2015 at Museum of Vancouver

President's Notes

The VHS has nominated **Scott Anderson** to be its representative on Vancouver's Civic Asset Naming Committee, which creates names for public streets, parks, and other civic assets. He will replace **Elizabeth Walker** as our representative, a tall order indeed. I can't think of a more appropriate choice.

Scott and Amber (his wife) joined the VHS in 2006 when Scott came to a VHS talk to ask Chuck Davis and others about an historical photograph he was trying to track down through his work with the College Of Physicians and Surgeons, where he has been with the library for over 15 years. He quickly joined the Society and has since served as president (2010-13) and treasurer (2012-15), created walking tours, and worked actively with **Bruce Watson** to identify speakers. This year with Amber he is organizing the Incorporation Day Luncheon. He must never be allowed to leave!

You may know Scott as an important leader and genial presence in the Society, but did you know that he has been a mad drummer for 30 years, and still plays regularly with a group of friends. They call themselves *Kenji Must Die! Toro! Toro! Really?*

But in addition to drumming, Scott hopes to write a book tentatively called "An Indigenous Gentlewoman in British Columbia: Recollections of Nora Yakimtikum." "Nora" was Scott's great-great-grandmother, a member of the Similkameen First Nation who in the 1860s had a relationship with the Similkameen Valley rancher John Fall Allison, one of the founders of Princeton, BC. Nora and John Fall had one girl and two boys, but when in 1868 John Fall found a white partner, Susan Louisa Moir, the daughter of a Ceylon tea plantation owner, he started a second family. Nora's sons accompanied her to the reserve and remained within First Nations culture, while her daughter Lily stayed within the Allison household as a servant, and after Lily married, her family, from which Scott descends, shifted more towards European culture. Scott plans Nora Yakimtikum's story as a "sister-volume" to the published recollections of Susan Allison and a response to the considerable effort exerted from Susan's time to erase any connection between John Fall Allison and his "Indian" family. What a great story. Best of luck, Scott.

Bob McDonald, President

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Two and Three-Wheeled History

In Vancouver, the Deeley name has been synonymous with motorcycles since the Bromsgrove, England-born Fred Deeley opened his first shop at 1075 Granville in 1914. Just three years later, Fred acquired a Harley-Davidson franchise. By 1925, Fred owned the motorcycle shop, a bicycle shop and one of the largest car dealerships in Canada. In that year, his son Fred Jr. took over the motorcycle business, which would eventually move to West Broadway. In 1953, Fred Sr.'s grandson, Trev, became the company's General Manager.

Although Trev passed away in 2002, the business continues today in a huge complex on Boundary Road just north of Broadway.

The building houses a unique museum showcasing over 250 historic

motorcycles. The collection — representing over 50 manufacturers from around the world — is considered to be the finest private collection of motorcycles in Canada.

Join our affable host, Terry Rea, for a tour of this fascinating museum on Saturday, April 25th at 1:00 p.m. Now retired, Terry is a former Deeley employee, who has been involved with motorcycles and car racing in the Lower Mainland since his teens. Terry will talk about the Deeley family history as well as the motorcycle collection. Even if you have never had an interest in riding a motorcycle, the Deeley story and collection is a unique part of Vancouver history and not to be missed.

This tour is free for VHS members and \$9 for non-members (if space is available). There are a limited number of tickets so please reserve early by calling the Vancouver Historical Society's **Info-Line** at **604-878-9140** leaving your name, phone number and email address (if available) so our tour coordinator can reply with a confirmation.



Although not in the collection, this April 29, 1932 photo shows a fine example of a Harley-Davidson messenger and delivery motorcycle belonging to the Northwestern Company on Richards Street. Note the SEYmour telephone exchange.

Photo: Stuart Thomson, City of Vancouver Archives, CVA 99-4152

Luncheon Tickets Selling

Peter Ladner will be the guest speaker at this year's Incorporation Day Luncheon on Sunday, April 12th at 12:30 p.m. With roots that go back to a pioneer family in Delta, the former City Councillor will speak on the urban food revolution and how local food has come full circle. Citizens, communities and municipalities across North America are working to get more control over their food in response to the growing insecurity of globalized industrialized food supplies. This new priority on "local food" harkens back to the days of the first European settlers and First Nations when all food was local and farmland was plentiful. It promises to be an interesting topic.

The Incorporation Day Luncheon celebrates the 129th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Vancouver in April 1886. Held at the University Golf Club, the event always features terrific food, an entertaining talk, door prizes and much more. It's a great way to celebrate our interest in the history of Vancouver (and a great way to celebrate Spring in the city).

Tickets are available at the March 26th talk. Prices are \$35 for members and \$45 for non-members. Tickets are also available by emailing sanderson@vancouver-historical-society.ca or by phoning the Society's **Info-Line** at **604-878-9140** and leaving your name and phone number.

Don't miss out. Buy your tickets today.

Historical Federation Conference

The British Columbia Historical Federation's (BCHF) three-day 2015 conference takes place May 21-23 in Quesnel.

Several interesting presentations have been lined up including: "The Road to the Gold Fields" as documented in 1865 by Carlo Gentile, an Italian photographer. Gentile was asked to accompany Frederick Seymour, the Governor of British Columbia who was travelling to the Cariboo. Another presentation will be about the works of early 20th century Quesnel photographers C.D. Hoy and C.S. Wing.

A trip to Barkerville is also on the agenda. There will be many other events and seminars at the conference. Please visit the BCHF website for more information on the program and on how to register:

<http://bchistory.ca/conferences/2015/activities.html>

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, April 23, 2015

Bread & Roses: The History of Women in the Vancouver Labour Movement

Speaker: Joey Hartman

Since the earliest days of recorded history in the Vancouver area, women have played important roles as supporters, activists and leaders in the labour movement. This talk introduces key individuals and events since the late 1800s that brought women's issues around work, equality and social concerns to where we are today – and identifies some priorities for the future. Joey Hartman who has a keen interest in labour and women's history, and incorporates these subjects into her work wherever possible, is president of the Vancouver & District Labour Council.

Thursday, May 28, 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.

Welcome New & Returning VHS Members

Margaret Cadwaladr

William Haberl

John Gadsby, Astrid

Sanchez & Susan Gadsby

Mike Mangan

Clint Meyers

Anthony Norfolk

Peek into the Past

with Jim McGraw

On Wednesday, March 4th of this month, a fire in a container loaded with chemicals at the harbour on Burrard Inlet caused concern as people were asked to remain indoors and some traffic was rerouted. Ironically, the event came almost to the day of a similar event at the port 70 years ago.

The time was 11:45 on a partly cloudy 47-degree (Fahrenheit back then) Tuesday, March 6th, 1945. World War II was in its final months although few knew it yet. While it looked like the European campaign might soon be ending, people were apprehensive about war in the Pacific theatre continuing. In Vancouver, there were shoppers on Granville, Hastings and other downtown streets. Many nearby workers were looking forward to the coming lunch hour.



Fireboats work on extinguishing blaze on Greenhill Park off Stanley Park.

Jack Linsay, Photographer, City of Vancouver Archives, CVA 1376-687

Suddenly a huge explosion rocked the downtown area. Windows blew out in many of the downtown stores and office buildings. Some thought the Japanese armed forces had somehow dropped a bomb on the city.

In fact, flammable cargo had exploded on the freighter

Greenhill Park, which was being loaded at Pier B-C, site of today's Canada Place. Firefighters from all over the city responded. Some off-duty men even travelled by streetcar to the harbour to help.

The ship would eventually be towed to near Siwash Rock off Stanley Park where the blaze was extinguished. Eight men were killed in the explosion and 19 injured. Seven firefighters were also treated at hospitals.



Some of the damage caused by the ship explosion.

Don Coltman, Colmer Steffens, photographers, City of Vancouver Archives CVA 586-3596

which then spread to the flares and sodium chlorate. The sodium chlorate was also missing warning labels noting its potential danger so there was also a question of lax cargo handling procedures.

The ship was rebuilt by 1946 and continued to sail under other names until 1967 when it was scrapped. To read more, visit: http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/archives_greenhill_park.htm

A later inquiry found that the ship's cargo of sodium chlorate, 60 proof whiskey and distress flares (among other items) was a recipe for trouble. Carelessness with a match supposedly set the highly explosive fumes from spilled whiskey on fire,

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

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