

# Vancouver Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

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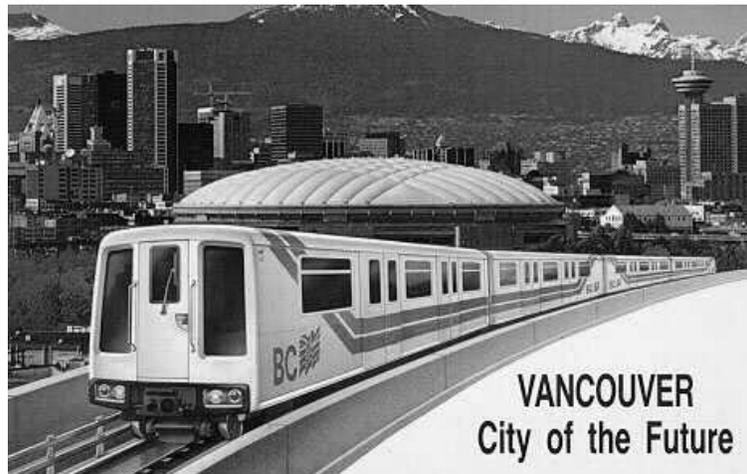
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### Vancouver in Transit: Fast Forward from 1890 to 2016 March Speaker: Henry Ewert

Are we recapturing the wisdom of Vancouver's original transit planners who wanted a livable, easily-accessed city? Transport expert Henry Ewert says yes.

Put in its simplest terms, the sophisticated, state-of-the-art transit that began being installed in 1890, only four years after the city's incorporation and three years after the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway, is mirrored in the city of Vancouver today. Over the years city planners had to glue together the disparate parts, the younger and smaller city and parts of the future city to make it livable. For example, connecting Vancouver's West End, the former Three Greenhorns claim, with the commercial centre, the CPR concession from Burrard to Cambie, was a Robson/Denman/Davie streetcar route, which gave birth to business and social life in the area. Another streetcar line went to the entrance of Stanley Park creating its own dynamic. Still another went east on Hastings Street, through the yet to be incorporated Hastings area (which joined Vancouver in 1911) into Burnaby. The separate interurban took people out to Chilliwack and

Steveston carrying people and returning with produce. Streetcars that went south along Granville Street and into the separate municipalities of Point Grey and South Vancouver created similar livable and residential areas all creating business and social cohesion.



1980s promotional brochure showing an artist's rendering of the coming Automatic Light Rail Transit system.

Over time, however, the streetcar and interurban system declined because of a combination of vehicular traffic's need for greater road space, the Great Depression, etc. After WWII, making room for more cars, the system was replaced with buses, in some eyes, a much weaker version of what had been in place.

A low point was reached in 1967 when Vancouver experienced a potential near death experience when an American freeway planning consulting company and Mayor Tom Campbell wanted to make Vancouver look like a "real" city by criss-crossing it with freeways. In anticipation of this, the Georgia Viaduct was built.

Popular resistance, however, stopped the plan and later, for Expo 86, an alternate system, Skytrain, was built, mirroring the transportation route of an earlier interurban line. Recently plans have been developed to tear down the Georgia Viaduct, the only remnant of the original freeway plan. The old retired interurban route to Steveston is now duplicated in large part by the Canada Line. We are definitely returning to the original public transport concept for Vancouver.

Speaker Henry Ewert, author of numerous books and winner of the Vancouver Historical Society Award of Merit, is the undisputed expert of Vancouver's transit system.

*Bruce M. Watson*

Next Meeting at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 24, 2016 at Museum of Vancouver

## President's Notes

By 1985, I had begun to establish myself as a writer and illustrator of history books, but was still doing some commercial artwork such as layout and design in order to keep the wolf from the door. One of my clients was also my publisher, Whitecap Books in North Vancouver. I was invited one day to meet a just-signed author, Henry Ewert, and to talk with him about the design and production of his forthcoming book, *The Story of the BC Electric Railway Company*.

We discussed which company could keyboard his enormous typewritten manuscript into a commercial typesetting machine. This was just at the transition point when authors were beginning to write on personal computers and typesetting companies were figuring out interfaces between the basic word-processing programs of the day (WordStar was the best in 1985) and their machines.

It was the images that were unforgettable and, in Henry's mind, obligatory. Besides the collection of beautiful photographs, many of which we wanted to run in sepia duotone, he had tickets, passes, timetables, maps, transfers, advertisements, and exact-scale diagrams of every streetcar and interurban that ever ran on the BCER system. Everything had to go in to make it a legitimate railway history, I was told. I took it all home and spent a couple of days sorting through and calculating before calling Michael Burch, the publisher. "This thing's going to be about 320 pages," I said. "It's a monster!" Burch replied, "Just do it. I'll set the price based on how big it gets."

After at least a month of layout work and weeks at the press, it came out as 336 pages, in hardcover, and sold out quickly at \$50, a chunk of change in 1986. As I write, there is only one copy of it for sale on the [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com) website, indicating that people are hanging onto them.

That was Henry — a legendary railway historian. He went on to write three other street-railway books. I haven't seen him for at least 20 years and am eagerly anticipating his lecture at our March meeting.

**Michael Kluckner, President**  
[mkluckner@vancouver-historical-society.ca](mailto:mkluckner@vancouver-historical-society.ca)

## Summertime at Smithe and Granville

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style roof is visible at the top left. The older hotel was being used at the time for returning veterans and their families with World War II having ended less than a year earlier. The magnificent building would be demolished in 1949 leaving an empty lot until the Pacific Centre was developed in the late 1960s.

About to rumble across Smithe is one of Vancouver's newest streetcars having been put into service two years earlier in 1944. These were the PCC or Presidents' Conference Committee cars, the result of streetcar company presidents in the U.S. and Canada meeting and coming up with a standard design that would be modern, fast and attractive to customers who seemed to be abandoning streetcars for the private automobile. The car is running on the *12 Kitsilano* route that crossed a trestle diagonally across False Creek from just west of the Granville Bridge to under the Burrard Bridge on the south side on its way to the terminus at the east end of Kitsilano Beach. The *12 Kitsilano* route would become rush hour only in less than a year and discontinued by January 1949. PCC cars had modern foot pedals for braking and the throttle instead of hand controllers like the older cars. PCC cars were one-man cars with only a motor-man. Passengers would have to board at the front and pay their fare to the motorman like on today's buses. The big "X" on the front gave advance warning to waiting passengers to prepare to board at the front. With two-man cars, passengers boarded at the rear door to pay the conductor.

The car is on the earliest city line. A single-track line was opened here in 1890 by the Vancouver Electric Railway and Lighting Company (a B.C. Electric Railway predecessor) to connect the Canadian Pacific Railway's land grant with the older part of the city east of Cambie, along Cordova, Carrall, Powell and Westminster (Main Street). By 1952, there were no more streetcars on Granville at this location. The relatively new PCC streetcar in the photo was scrapped. Nobody wanted streetcars in the modern 1950s and 1960s. Today, Granville Street becomes a transit mall north of this location with many bus routes using the street to get through downtown. Since 2009, the Canada Line rapid transit rail line also serves the area below street level.

Interestingly most of the buildings seen in the photo are still there. The Silk Hat is now a sports souvenir shop. The Plaza and Paradise theatre buildings (with different names) are still standing although they are closed waiting for another lease on life. The second Hotel Vancouver is conspicuously absent with the Pacific Centre occupying that block today. The Lyric Theatre is also gone with a Nordstrom store in its location.

## Incorporation Luncheon Presentation

While buildings in historical photos are interesting, our eyes are usually drawn to the people. What are they doing? Where are they going? Who are they? Hairstyles and fashions are always good clues to the age of a photo. Fashion during Vancouver's young 130 years as a city will be the subject of this year's Incorporation Day Luncheon.

Part of the Luncheon program features a fashion presentation of what the well-dressed Vancouverite wore through the decades. The collection has been lovingly interpreted by costume and clothing collector and historian, Ivan Sayers.



**Well dressed pedestrians on the east side of the 500-block of Granville Street in the early 1900s.**

Photo: Philip Timms, City of Vancouver Archives, CVA 677-659

As always, the annual Luncheon celebrates the incorporation of the City of Vancouver on April 6th, 1886 — 130 years ago this year. This year's Luncheon will take place on **Sunday, April 10th**, starting at **12:30**, at the **University Golf Club, 5185 University Boulevard**. The \$35 per person ticket price (\$45 per person for non-VHS members) includes the buffet luncheon, prize draws, and the Ivan Sayers historical fashion presentation. The Vancouver Historical Society will also be awarding its Award of Merit at the function.

Tickets will be available for sale at the March 24th regular Thursday talk at the Museum of Vancouver. Tickets can also be bought by calling the **VHS Information Line at 604-878-9140** or through the mail at **P. O. Box 3071, Vancouver, B.C., V6B 3X6**. Please remember to leave enough time for the mail to be received, processed and then delivered.

We look forward to seeing all our members as well as guests. The Ivan Sayers Historical Fashion Presentation is always a hit with audiences so get those tickets early to get a seat.

## 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 28, 2016, 7:30 P.M.

### **Local Protest and Transnational Politics: Vietnam War Resistance in Vancouver and B.C.**

**Speaker: Lara Campbell**

Tens of thousands of Americans left the United States for Canada to avoid the Vietnam draft or to protest the war between 1964-1973. Draft resisters immigrated mainly to three major Canadian cities: Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. Vancouver became a hub for transnational anti-war activism where the student, socialist, anti-imperialist, and women's liberation movements intersected, organized, and criticized each others' positions on the war in Vietnam. This talk will place Vancouver at the centre of antiwar organizing by examining how local organizations and activists built support networks for draft resisters, resisted and criticized American cultural and political influence in Canada, and debated the subordination of women within antiwar and draft resistance movements.

Thursday, May 26, 2016, 7:30 P.M.

### **Sensational Vancouver: The City's Dark Side**

**Speaker: Eve Lazarus**

History books typically show Vancouver as a pioneer city built on forestry, fisheries and tourism but, behind the snow-capped mountains and rain forests, the Vancouver of the first half of the 20th century was a seething mass of corruption. The top job at the Vancouver Police Department was a revolving door. In those early years Detective Joe Ricci's beat was the opium dens and gambling joints of Chinatown, while Lurancy Harris patrolled the high-end brothels of Alexander Street. Later, proceeds from rum-running produced some of the city's most iconic buildings, cops became robbers, and the city reeled from a series of unsolved murders. Speaker Eve Lazarus will illustrate this talk with photos from cases from her books *Sensational Vancouver* and *Cold Case Vancouver: the city's most baffling murders*.

# Peek into the Past

with Jim McGraw



Photo: Don Coltman, City of Vancouver Archives CVA 586-4619

We are looking at a lovely Saturday afternoon in downtown Vancouver, August 24th, 1946 — almost 70 years ago. The photographer appears to be standing on the roof of the Aristocratic Restaurant on the southeast corner of Smithe and Granville. The Aristocratic was part of a chain of restaurants founded in the 1930s. The last one at Broadway and Granville closed in the 1990s. The chain also owned the Silk Hat Restaurants — more a self-serve restaurant chain. One of them is on the northwest corner.

This is theatre row and four are visible. The closest is the

Orpheum showing “Courage of Lassie” starring Elizabeth Taylor. The Orpheum officially opened on Nov. 7th, 1927 as a vaudeville house although the first shows were a day earlier. At 3,000 seats, it was the largest theatre in Canada when it opened. Under threat of being turned into a multiplex by owners Famous Players, the theatre was saved when the city bought it in 1974. After renovations it reopened in 1977 and today is the home of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

Across the street are the Plaza and further north, the Paradise. Look closely and you’ll also

see the Lyric in the distance. The Lyric had several names over the years including the Orpheum. When the Orpheum at Smithe opened in 1927, people called it the “new” Orpheum while the Lyric was the “old” Orpheum.

The Lyric is right behind the large turreted former Hotel Vancouver, the second Hotel Vancouver to occupy the space at Granville and Georgia. A few blocks to the west, opened in 1939, the new third Hotel Vancouver’s chateau-

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

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- Director
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- Robert McDonald
- Jim McGraw
- Brenda Peterson
- Bruce M. Watson
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**APPOINTED POSITIONS**

- |                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Archivist            | Alexandra Allen          |
| Info Line            | Jeannie Hounslow         |
| Membership Secretary | Elizabeth Hawkins        |
| Newsletter Mailing   | Mary Gavan               |
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| Accounting           | Grace Bu                 |
| Communications       | Madeleine de Trenquallye |

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