

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

ISSN 0042 - 2487

Vol. 45 No. 8

May 2006

This Month: A VHS "Show-and-Tell"

May 25 will be the final program of this season's VHS Speaker Series, and we're trying something new. Instead of the usual guest speaker, we'll feature three of our own VHS historians with glimpses of their current work in progress. All three of these projects are being supported in part by grants from our VHS Research and Publication Fund.

- Our Harbeck Committee will show the current version of their demonstration DVD for the "City Reflections" project, contrasting Vancouver today with 1907 views from the historic film by William Harbeck. Members of the committee will tell us about the April 23 "shoot" and what lies ahead as the DVD moves toward completion in 2007.

- VHS vice president Wayne Norton will describe, in word and picture, his current research on Women's Hockey in Vancouver and the West. Our title (not his) would be "My Search for the Amazons." Maybe you can help him find them.

- Chuck Davis, VHS Exec member and historian-at-large, will give us glimpses of his forthcoming *History of Metropolitan Vancouver*. It's sure to contain some stories you've never,



ever heard, told in Chuck's inimitable factual-but-funny style.

These presentations will begin at 7:30 pm, followed about 8:30 by our Annual General Meeting. Refreshments and social time will follow at 9:00. Plan to stay for a while and get acquainted with other VHSers. Visitors, as always, are

welcome throughout the evening, but only VHS members can vote in the AGM.

The Dunbar History program originally scheduled for this evening has been postponed to next fall because of publication delays in the eagerly-awaited book. Stay tuned!

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 25, at 7:30 pm in the Vancouver Museum

PREZNOTES

Family Time

I dearly love the VHS and have enjoyed working with it for six years now. But one thing continues to frustrate me: It's hard to get to know the VHS family!

It comes from the fact that our monthly meetings are also our Speaker Series, with visitors in attendance and little time for members to simply "hang out" together and get acquainted.

We're like a family who only see each other at meals—and all our meals are in the Granville Island Market Food Fair. The food is delicious and nourishing, but who are all these people?

So when it was necessary to postpone our scheduled Dunbar History program, the Executive decided to tackle this "Who Are We?" problem with an experiment: this month's VHS Show-and-Tell. Visitors will be welcome, of course, but the focus will be on the VHS, and after the AGM we'll enjoy refreshments and some genuine family time.

It's a departure from past practice. Will it work? We think so, but nobody knows for sure. Should it be an annual event? Let us know what you think. We're not all historians but we're family, and every family member has a voice!

Paul Flucke, President
604-732-7742; paulflucke@shaw.ca

Congratulations

VHS member Gavin Hainsworth has been awarded the 2005 Bernie Legge Cultural Award by the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce. The award recognizes distinctive and valuable contributions to the cultural life of New Westminster.

Gavin co-wrote *A New Westminster Album* with his wife, Katherine Freund-Hainsworth, also a VHS member.

Tour HMCS Discovery

on Deadman's Island

Members of the Vancouver Historical Society are in for a rare treat. At 2:00 o'clock Saturday afternoon, June 17, we will be given a tour of HMCS Discovery in Stanley Park. This Naval Reserve Division has been there since 1944, a famous landmark on Deadman's Island—which, now landlocked, is no longer an island.

Our guide will be the base's executive officer, Lt.-Cmdr. Elaine Fisher. She tells us that she'll give us a tour of the base and relate some of the history of the island itself, why it has that name, and more.

The Commissionaire at the entrance gate to Discovery will be alerted to our arrival, and we can drive right onto the island and find free parking. When you enter Stanley Park, keep to the right on Park Drive. You can't miss the base.

Everyone is welcome, and of course there is no admission fee.

It's Your AGM – Be There!

The Annual General Meeting, May 25 at 8:30 pm, marks the end of the Vancouver Historical Society's 70th year. The 30-minute business meeting will include the President's report, Financial report for the 2005-2006 fiscal year, and the election of officers and Executive members for the year ahead.

The Executive, as Nominating Committee, will present a strong slate for new year. All terms are for one year, through May 2007. The nominees are as follows (* indicates incumbent, standing for re-election):

- President: Paul Flucke*
- Vice President: Bruce Watson (programs) (currently Executive at-large)
- Secretary: Sidney Madden
- Treasurer: Vacant (Paul Flucke pro tem)

Executive at large:

- Barbara Coles* (Newsletter mailing)
- Chuck Davis*
- Elizabeth Hawkins (currently Secretary)
- Jim McGraw* (Newsletter Editor)
- Wayne Norton (Research Service) (currently Vice President)
- Larry Wong

Additional nominations may be made from the floor, provided that both the nominator and nominee are members of the VHS and are present at the meeting, and that the nominee has agreed to serve if elected. The first meeting of the new Executive will be Thursday, June 1, 7:30 pm at the Vancouver Museum.



First Phase of *City Reflections* Completed



Left to right: **Andrew Martin**, *Special Collections, Vancouver Public Library (research)*, **Jason Vanderhill**, *photographer (graphic design)*, **Chuck Davis**, *writer (research)*, **John Atkin** (*above Chuck*), *researcher; writer; facilitator*, **Mary-Lou Storey** *film professional (team leader)*, **Mike Varga** *CBC-TV's senior cameraman (most recently at the Torino Olympics)*, **Jim McGraw**, *writer (writer; researcher; promoter; fund raiser)*, **Andy Gilmore**, *camera car driver (and former Canadian Navy diver!)*, **Ernst Schneider**, *our computer and technical guru.*

Last month, Vancouver Historical Society members and other heritage advocates completed preliminary filming for a project that will re-create 1907 movie footage of downtown Vancouver streets.

Known as *City Reflections*, the project uses the 1907 William Harbeck film as the centrepiece of an ambitious project that will capture a moment in Vancouver's life, 100 years apart.

Plans were well underway to shoot the re-creation on May 7, 2007, the centenary of the 1907 film, but downtown construction quickly meant a revised filming schedule. The north end of Granville Street, which is prominently featured in the film, is in the midst of great construction activity for the new Canada Line rapid transit route. The crew now had to film on very short notice to be able to include Granville Street.

With great help from the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Police Department, permits were secured. The CBC helped out with camera equipment and the expertise of their senior cameraman, Mike Varga. Precision Camera Cars, a company in the local film industry, supplied a car and skilled driver, Andy Gilmore. The filming was also made possible through the timely assistance of Scott Hanna, Vice-President of Environmental and Regulatory Affairs for Canada Line Rapid Transit Inc.

The project and the Vancouver Historical Society received major media coverage with stories in *The Vancouver Sun*, *24 Hours* and a long piece on *BC CTV News*.

Tentatively scheduled for a late summer 2007 release, *City Reflections* will be available in a DVD format. Besides the 1907 film, the DVD will feature the 2007 footage showing the same locations but almost a century later. You will be able to view the two films side-by-side to see the changes. A digital "time capsule" of Vancouver life in 1907 and 2007 will also be a part of the DVD.

VHS Helped Out at Historica Fair

Historica Fair is an historical fair modeled loosely on the Science Fairs. Students in grades 4 to 10 create historical projects first at their schools, and then, if chosen, at the regional fair.

This year several members of the VHS again worked at the regional Historica Fair in Vancouver. Imbi Harding served as the VHS Historica Fair representative on the Historica Fair committee, which started last fall to organize the event. Chuck Davis and John Atkin joined Imbi as adjudicators for the evaluations of the projects on Friday May the 5th. All were impressed with the quality of the research, writing, design and exposition of the projects. Several of the projects dealing with Vancouver were particularly outstanding.

On Saturday May the 6th, the Vancouver Historical Society had a good representation of members presenting the first Vancouver Historical Society Awards.

Chuck Davis presented a copy of his book, *Vancouver, Then and Now*, to Alex Wiecke from Lord Kitchener School, for his project "Humble Beginnings: The History of Vancouver General Hospital." John Atkin presented a copy of his latest books, *Vancouver Walks* and *Skytrain Explorer* to Sherry Gu from Sir Richard McBride School for her project "Chinese Communities." Imbi Harding presented a copy of the book she had worked on with the Women in Architecture entitled *Constructing Careers, profiles of five early women architects in British Columbia*, to Neha Varshneya, also from Sir Richard McBride School, for her project called "All about Little India."

Elizabeth Walker presented copies of her book, *Street Names of Vancouver*, for each student's school.

April Speaker - Frank Leonard

Railroading a Renegade: Great Northern, John Hendry and the Battle for False Creek Flats

Frank Leonard from the Department of History at Douglas College showed his passion for railroads at the April 27th meeting. He regaled the audience with an account of the century-old struggle between an American transnational company and its Canadian subsidiary for control of False Creek tidal flats, the area roughly east of modern-day Main Street, then awash with garbage and sewage.

On one side of this contest were Ontario-born James Jerome Hill (1838-1916) and his son Louis Warren Hill (1872-1948), presidents in succession of the Great Northern Railway Company (GN). Their company had extended its railway north from Seattle to south of the Fraser River and was on its way to complete a Pacific terminus at Vancouver.

On the other side was New Brunswick-born John Hendry (1854-1916), who came to an understanding with Hill senior in 1901 to build his charter, the Vancouver, Westminster and Yukon Railway Company (VW&Y), as the last leg of the GN terminus line and then transfer it to the American concern. Owner of B.C. Mills and Timber Trading Company, with mills at New Westminster, Burrard inlet, and False Creek, Hendry had long sought a railway south as an outlet for his lumber.

Though the 13.8-mile main line was completed in 1905 despite protests from the City of Vancouver, Hendry made huge cost overruns on Hill's account. But the American ignored the complaints of his officers because Hendry had

demonstrated his influence with the regulatory agencies of the Liberal government in Ottawa in overcoming CPR opposition to the GN terminus. By 1906, however, it became obvious that Hendry was using Hill's investment as his own. A series of applications for railway branches across the tidal flats revealed that Hendry intended to create another terminus railway independent of the GN with its own dock, switching yard, depot, and access to the Second Narrows, which could be marketed to another transcontinental such as the Grand Trunk Pacific.

In 1907 President L.W. Hill slowly began the process of transferring the assets of the VW&Y to another GN subsidiary. But after using GN's control of VW&Y shares to force the transfer, Hill's vindictive attempt to humiliate Hendry led to a war of words, and the possibility that the subsidiary would blockade the parent company from its terminus! When the transfer was finally completed, a GN officer telegraphed "Thank God!" Great Northern relations with its subsidiary and its renegade president had been, in the words of another officer, "a horrible muddle."

False Creek Flats were eventually filled in during the period 1917-21 to create an international rail terminal for both the Canadian National (CN) and Great Northern Railway companies, each with its own station building. The CN station survives today as Pacific Central Station, a rail and bus terminus.

ABOVE: April Speaker Frank Leonard.



Vancouver Historical Society - Leadership, 2005 - 2006 (elected May 26, 2005)

EXECUTIVE:

President
Vice President (Research Service)
Treasurer (Vacant)
Secretary (Membership)
At Large (Newsletter Mailing)
At Large
At Large (Historica Fair)
At Large
At Large
At Large
At Large

Paul Flucke
Wayne Norton
Paul Flucke (pro tem)
Elizabeth Hawkins
Barbara Coles
Chuck Davis
Imbi Harding
Jim McGraw
Jack Spibey
Mary-Lou Storey
Bruce Watson

OTHERS:

Program Chair
Webmaster
Info Line
Archivist
Newsletter Editor

Charles Hou
Donna Jean MacKinnon
Nancy Stubbs
Elizabeth Walker
Jim McGraw
email: jmcgraw@direct.ca

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