

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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City Reflections Unveiled

May Presentation

One of the Vancouver Historical Society's most ambitious projects will be unveiled at 8:00 PM, Thursday, May 22, 2008.

"City Reflections—1907 Vancouver—2007" will be screened for VHS members and the public at the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre (at the Vancouver Museum). VHS members attending the Annual General Meeting (AGM) at 7:00 PM will have



guaranteed seating. We are expecting a large crowd, so please be there. We can't guarantee a seat, even for members, if you aren't at the AGM.

The video, which is just under an hour long, pays homage to the earliest known surviving movie footage of Vancouver. That footage dates back to Tuesday, May 7, 1907.

On that date, Seattle filmmaker William Harbeck mounted a camera on the front of a B.C. Electric Railway streetcar and shot footage while the streetcar traveled through the streets of downtown Vancouver and the

West End. It is a remarkable record of life in Vancouver 101 years ago.

Discovered in Australia in the 1980s, the film was initially thought to be of Hobart, Tasmania and was only correctly identified in the 1990s. Sent to Canada, the fragile nitrate-based film was painstakingly restored frame-by-frame by the skilled technicians at Library and Archives Canada. The original is now safely preserved in Ottawa as part of our history.

Colin Preston, the CBC's film archivist in Vancouver, showed a restored video copy of the film in November 2004 as part of our VHS series of monthly presentations on local history.

Several VHS members immediately realized the film's 100th anniversary would be approaching in a little over two years. They recognized this would be a unique opportunity to do something special.



A planning group was formed and ideas began to be explored. The group decided to take a really close look at the film and identify all the landmarks. It was also de-

ecided to re-shoot the exact same footage from the same perspective but 100 years later in 2007.

While these ideas were being discussed in 2006, the City Reflections group suddenly realized a key part of the route might not be available in 2007. Parts of Granville Street would be closed in a matter of weeks for construction of the Canada Line rapid transit project.



The street had to be filmed in less than two weeks or the group would lose the opportunity. With less than \$1,000 in the budget, it looked like the project might end before it even began.

Then Canada Line itself stepped in when they heard about the project and the City Reflections group's filming predicament. They became the first corporate sponsor of the project. The CBC also helped out by providing a camera and operator. That allowed the group to finish filming the key section of Granville Street in 2006.

The rest of the route could then be filmed in 2007 as originally planned.

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

PREZNOTES

We have had another banner year reflecting the hard work of your Executive.

Larry Wong and Scott Anderson have been responsible for our field trips as well as our exciting Speaker Series which draws large crowds each time.

Past President and current Treasurer, Paul Flucke, not only comes out with excellent monthly financial statements but also answers the many historical inquiries to our website.

Elizabeth Hawkins who has done an excellent job of overseeing membership and sorting through the wealth of paperwork for our archives, organized and oversaw yet another successful Vancouver Incorporation Day luncheon.

Sidney Madden has pumped out excellent minutes, has organized volunteer adjudicators for events such as Historica and has written many letters of thank you — but alas, will be leaving the Executive because of other obligations.

Jim McGraw who continues to edit and turn out timely and highly readable newsletters, also oversaw the highly successful “George Day” event in June.

Scott Anderson oversees the logistical job of printing and mailing the newsletters.

Lisa Smedman, along with Larry Wong, is setting up the 2010 BCHF conference to be held in our city. Lisa comes up with great ideas to put Vancouver history up front, and turns out articles in the Courier, which are strangely coincidental with our Speaker Series.

Chuck has been another great idea man keeping our historical heads turned in the right direction and continues to turn out historical articles in the Sun. His Award of Historical Merit this year was richly deserved.

The Executive collectively gave input into the Stanley and Devonian Park historical signs, which should be in place by the fall. The full Executive joined in when we reached out to the private sector by giving historical advice to a BC company celebrating its 150th anniversary.

Lastly, Jim McGraw and Wes Knapp, a former member of the Executive, along with a huge number of volunteers are to be thanked for their monumental efforts in bringing to fruition City Reflection: 1907-Vancouver-2007. A crowning jewel for us!

Past Executive member Barbara Coles is also to be thanked for answering VHS phone enquiries.

Lastly, I would like to thank our members for their kind words and continuing support.

Bruce M. Watson, President

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When filming was complete last September, the bits and pieces of video and archival photos were sent to post production to be assembled according to a script and storyboard. Narration and music were recorded and added to the video.

Now, 101 years after William Harbeck shot the original film, the follow-up video is finally ready.

This has been a tremendously complex project requiring the talents and skills of many people. Some were VHS members while others were not. Vancouver’s film, TV and recording industry were instrumental in helping the project. Many individuals and companies offered their services for free or at minimal cost.



Corporations, foundations and individuals contributed the project’s budget so that a piece of Vancouver’s history could be preserved.

The VHS is grateful to everyone for their help.

The City Reflections DVD with many added features will soon be for sale, with proceeds benefiting the Vancouver Historical Society.

For more information visit: www.cityreflections.ca.

We are also looking for people interested in sitting on a small committee to market the DVD. Please send an e-mail to info@vancouver-historical-society.ca or phone 604-878-9140 or speak to an Executive Director on May 22nd.

Memberships Up

The past year has been a banner year for new memberships in the VHS. Thirty new single and family memberships were taken out during the year, bringing our current personal membership total to 222, the highest it’s been for many years. April’s new members are Brian Hall, Frank and Diane Jones, Mary-Lou Stathers and Dr. Rory Wallace. Welcome to you all!

Tragedy Remembered

Tuesday, June 17, 1958 was a warm sunny day, with a gentle westerly. Vancouver's hottest day of the year to that point, the temperature reached a sizzling 80 degrees Fahrenheit. It was the sort of day, Vancouver Sun reporter Jack Wasserman wrote, "that made you think of a cooling dip in a mountain lake."

And then, at about 3:40 in the afternoon, a series of loud disturbing sounds were heard throughout the harbour along Burrard Inlet. The still under construction Second Narrows Bridge had collapsed.

Tuesday, June 17, 2008 will mark the 50th anniversary of the collapse of the bridge, now renamed the Ironworker's Memorial Second Narrows Crossing. Eighteen workers died in the collapse, as well as a diver who drowned while searching for bodies. A total of 27 lives were lost over the course of the bridge's construction.

The Vancouver Historical Society has been invited by Ironworker's Union Local 97 to attend an event they are hosting at New Brighton Park at 1:00 pm. It promises to be an interesting and moving remembrance with several activities planned including archival footage being shown by the CBC, and Gary Geddes, the 2008 recipient of the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Literary Excellence in British Columbia, reading selections from his award-winning book of poetry entitled *Falsework*.

As this tragedy is an important event in the history of Vancouver, arrangements are being made for transportation to and from New Brighton Park for members who wish to attend. We intend to gather at the Vancouver Museum at 11:45am on Tuesday, June 17, and leave no later than 12:00 noon. Please call 604-878-9140 or email the infoline (info@vancouver-historical-society.ca) no later than Sunday, June 1, 2008 to reserve your place. CALL NOW!

Nominees for 2008-2009 VHS Executive

In its role as Nominating Committee, the current VHS Executive is pleased to submit the following full slate of nominees for the 2008-2009 Executive, to be elected at our May 22, 2008 Annual General Meeting.

President	Bruce M. Watson
Vice President	Larry Wong
Treasurer	Paul Flucke
(Recording Secretary not yet assigned)	
Director	Scott Anderson
Director	Chuck Davis
Director	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director	Jim McGraw
Director	Lisa Smedman

All terms of office are for one year beginning June 1, 2008. Additional nominations will be accepted at the AGM, provided that the nominee is a current VHS member and is present.

Cheque Check

Beginning September 2, 2008, all banks in Canada will require all cheques to be dated using digits in DD-MM-YYYY format (eg. "02-09-2008"). Check your cheques — you may need new ones from your bank. We want to be able to deposit your renewal and donation cheques!

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). Special events may be held at other times for which there may be a fee.

Thursday, May 22, 2008, 7:00 pm
(Please note earlier start time)

Annual General Meeting

Our annual meeting where we talk about the VHS — where we've been and where we're going. The election of the VHS Executive will also be held. Right after the AGM, the City Reflections: 1907 — Vancouver — 2007 video will be screened publicly for the first time. The video will be shown in the 200-seat auditorium theatre. VHS members attending the AGM will have first choice of available seats.

Watch this space for announcements of coming summer field trips and the start of another speaker series in September.

Research Anyone?

We occasionally receive webmail inquiries from persons far away seeking to engage a contract researcher who is familiar with Vancouver resources such as the City Archives, Library, vital statistics and newspaper archives. We provide the names of qualified researchers. The researcher and client work out the details. If you have research experience and would consider short-term paid work, please let us know and we'll add you to our list. Respond to: info@vancouver-historical-society.ca.

Volunteers Always Appreciated

The VHS is always looking for volunteers to serve on committees or on a future Executive board. If you feel you would like to volunteer or have questions, please feel free to approach any of the Executive at the next speaker's Meeting. You also may also leave your name with us via our website (www.vancouver-historical-society.ca) or by calling the information line at 604-878-9140. If, on principle you wish to be traditional, you may send your name to: VHS, P. O. Box 3071, Vancouver, B. C., V6B 3X6.

Sorting Through Post Office History

April Speaker: Jim Baine

On April 24th, a full house for the regular monthly meeting of the VHS was treated to a fast, fascinating, frequently funny and fact-filled history of the Vancouver Post Office by Jim Bain, Canada Post's Manager of Employee Communications here. Mr. Bain started working for the Post Office in 1968, and it was particularly appropriate that he was introduced by VHS board member Larry Wong, who once worked there himself.

The starting date for the city's first post office is a little murky. There are some who say it began July 2, 1869 in the Hastings Hotel at the foot of Windermere Street with Maxie Michaud acting as a kind of unofficial postmaster, while others say it began officially April 1, 1874 in the store at Stamp's Hastings Mill, with Jonathan Miller as the *official* postmaster. Whichever date you accept, stamps back then cost half a cent. Revenue for the first year of the post office at Granville — the town's official name at the time — was \$14.75. Last year, Jim said, it was \$65.5 million.

The post office moved around a lot in those early days, before settling in at the northwest corner of Hastings and Granville on February 28, 1910. It would be at that location, with its famous clock tower, for nearly 50 years until the move to the present building on West Georgia in 1958. The old clock-topped building is known today as Sinclair Centre.

There isn't space to fully relate all the goodies Jim Bain passed along. We'll quote a couple of the statistics he cited to give an indication of the growth of the post office here. On May 21, 1888 a letter arrived authorizing the setting up of four postal boxes in the city. Today, there are 784 (their red colour inspired by British boxes). In 1907 the city had four letter carriers — who began wearing uniforms that

year — covering an area from False Creek to the waterfront, and Burrard east to Campbell. Today 120 carriers cover that same area.

Much more detail on the Post Office's history — based on Jim's talk — will go up soon on the web site www.vancouverhistory.ca.



Jim Baine

Early B.C. Adventures

Lisa Smedman, a VHS Director and history writer for the *Vancouver Courier* newspaper, presents "Hilda's Story: Discovering a Grandmother I Never Knew." Lisa will talk about her journey to discover her Finnish grandmother and her adventures in early B.C. and Vancouver, beginning in the 1920's.

Lisa's presentation includes original documents, photos, letters and screenplay excerpts. The talk is from 7:00 pm-9:00 pm on Wednesday, May 21 at the Railway Club (upstairs), 579 Dunsmuir St (at Seymour). It's free. Go early, have dinner. Food and beverages will be available for purchase. Find out more at www.herstorycafe.ca.

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

Vancouver Historical Society Information Line: 604-878-9140
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