

# Vancouver Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

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### Passing Time: Photographing Vancouver Over Four Decades

May Speaker: Trevor Martin

What better time than Vancouver's 125th anniversary to look back at the last four-decade transformation that has taken place than through exquisitely shot black-and-white photographs. The change has been dramatic, both in terms of bricks and mortar and attitudes.

In 1971, Granville Island is still piled with the refuse of industry waiting to be transformed. In Stanley Park the defiantly challenging smoke in the air from the "be-ins" of the 1970s can clearly

be seen. These participants' newfound voice and their sense of being duty-bound to change society certainly brought them to what is now Devonian Park to protest the construction of high rises. Waterfront piers and waterfront that no longer exists have since been transformed into Convention Centres; an open car park into the Erickson-designed courthouse. The

widely accepted 'girlie' shows at the PNE have been quietly buried by the change in attitudes, whereas fashions have been modified yearly. Chinatown street scenes and parades are endearing for their familiarity and predictability. More recently, Iraq war



Trevor Martin's photo of Granville Island in 1971

protests in front of the Art Gallery and images of the 2010 Olympics now fresh in our minds will soon become fleeting. Black-and-white photographs, no matter how old, by their very nature cause one to pause and reflect.

Cornwall, England-born photographer Trevor Martin will share with us part of his immense collection of black-

and-white prints. Many of his archival silver image prints are now in major collections including the National Archives of Canada.

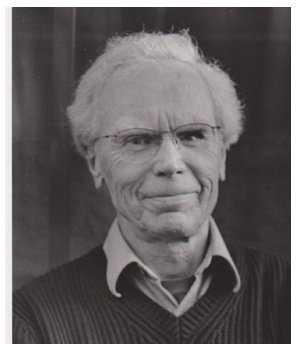
Although attendees at the May 26 presentation will be the first to view an exclusive selection of his Vancouver body of work, he has exhibited elsewhere. For example, in 1996 he

exhibited at the Exposure Gallery with his Cornish photographs. Together with Fred Herzog, Brian Wood, and Gary Chapman,

Trevor participated in a group show

entitled *Place* at the Art Gallery of the Evergreen Cultural Centre in 2006.

In November and December 2010, in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Nitobe Memorial Garden, Trevor exhibited at the Nikkei Japanese Cultural Centre photographs of the garden from the early 1970's to the present.



Photographer  
Trevor Martin

*Bruce M. Watson*

Next Meeting: AGM starts at 7:00 pm, Thursday, May 26 at Museum of Vancouver

## Preznotes

I recently had the pleasure to adjudicate the 2011 Vancouver Heritage Fair. The enthusiasm of the students, and the quality of the research projects (chosen from Grades 4 through 7 across the Vancouver School District) is undeniable. If you think history is only interesting to those with somewhat more-experienced sensibilities, this event challenges that assertion.

Addressing the Women's Canadian Club in 1958, neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield spoke about the advantages of "direct" methods of learning. While Dr. Penfield spoke about linguistics (embodied now in our "immersion" schools), I believe his point applies to history as well.

"For the child," he said, "the learning of language is a method of learning about life, a means of getting what he wants, a way of satisfying the curiosity that burns within him almost from the beginning."

Vancouver's Heritage Fair process encourages young people to directly explore their world in a thoughtful and contemplative way, satisfying curiosity.

I spoke with a boy about Japanese internment in World War Two. He concluded the internment was an extension of Mackenzie King's attitude toward immigration, as illustrated through the government's response to Vancouver's 1907 Anti-Asian Riot (in which King was the government's representative in determining compensation), and how failed multi-cultural integration was a lesson painfully learned. While I reserve comment on the defensibility of his position, I revel in the fact we are discussing the conclusions of a 9-year-old.

Vancouver's history is not a sterile list to memorize. It is a record of human triumph and struggle applicable to today. Engaging the minds of tomorrow is certainly one way to preserve and promote the history of our great city!

*Scott Anderson, President*  
*sanderson@vancouver-historical-society.ca*

## Archives Special Event

On Sunday afternoon, May 29th, the City of Vancouver Archives is celebrating the digitization and online launch of Major Matthews' extensive seven-volume *Early Vancouver*. The project was made possible through the support of the Vancouver Historical Society. You are invited to visit the archives from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm to take part in the launch party.

Lee Henderson, author of the award winning book "The Man Game", will present material from the *Early Vancouver* volumes, highlighting the many inspirations he found for his book, and drawing parallels between early and contemporary Vancouver. Lee's presentation will be followed by a special acoustic performance depicting the sounds, music and experience of early Vancouver. After City Archivist Les Mobbs opens the event, Sue Bigelow will demonstrate the online version for everybody.

A temporary internet café will be set up. Pastries and finger food will be served, along with refreshments including juice and espresso-based beverages. You are encouraged to bring your laptop to the event to search through the *Early Vancouver* volumes. The café will be a great environment for Vancouver enthusiasts to share ideas and interests.

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## VHS AGM Starts Earlier

Please remember we hold our Annual General Meeting on Thursday, May 26th. To allow time for the reports and Executive Board elections, the AGM will be held starting at 7:00 pm, a half-hour before our scheduled monthly talk.

In its role as Nominating Committee, the current VHS Executive is pleased to submit the following full slate of nominees for the 2011-2012 Executive to be elected at our May 26, 2011 Annual General Meeting.

President	Scott Anderson
Vice President	Bruce M. Watson
Treasurer	Kristen Wong
Recording Secretary	Jean Wilson
Director	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director	Kellan Higgins
Director	Jean Mann
Director	Robert McDonald
Director	Jim McGraw

All terms of office are for one year beginning June 1, 2011. Additional nominations will be accepted at the AGM provided that the nominee is a current VHS member and is present.

# 1886 Great Fire Tour

On Sunday, June 13, 1886, barely two months after the City of Vancouver was incorporated, a devastating fire tore through the little community destroying everything in its path. A brush clearing fire suddenly roared out of control as a wind picked up.

One eye witness said: "It had gained such momentum as to completely obscure the sky; the air was just one mass of fiery flame driven before a strong northwest gale." The fire roared across the tinder-dry landscape consuming everything in its path. The flames raced toward the wooden buildings that made up the little city of Vancouver.

Another eyewitness recalled, "The city did not burn, it was consumed by flame. The buildings simply melted before the fiery blast. The fire went down the sidewalk on old Hastings Road, past our office, so rapidly that people flying before it had to leave the burning sidewalk and take to the road; the fire travelled down that wooden sidewalk faster than a man could run."

Noted historian and award-winning author John Atkin will lead a walk through the area of the fire explaining what happened on that fateful day. This unique walking tour on Saturday, June 11th will take approximately two hours.

There is no charge for VHS members but you must register ahead of time. You can do that by leaving a message on our Infoline at 604-878-9140. We have a limit of 30 spaces so please make sure to register by the deadline of June 6th. Our group will meet on the corner of Davie and Pacific at 10:00 am on Saturday, June 11th.

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## Donations to Chuck Davis Book

Thank you to the sixteen VHS members and friends who made special donations to our "Chuck Davis Book Fund" during February, March and April. The \$5,100 received has now been passed on to Harbour Publishing to help defray the costs of publishing Chuck's *The History of Metropolitan Vancouver*, expected later this year.

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## Welcome New Members

John Christopherson

Annette Wegiel

Jak King

## Upcoming Speakers & Events

*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 pm on the fourth Thursday of every month except in June, July, August, December). Special events may be held at other times for which there may be a fee.*

Another season of fascinating talks about the history of Vancouver begins with our 2011-2012 season on September 22nd.

Former educator **Sarjit Singh Jagpal** will be speaking about Canadians of Indian heritage and their contributions to the history of Vancouver.

Journalist **Kim Bolan** of *The Vancouver Sun* joins us in October to talk about notable criminal activity over the years in Metro Vancouver, a story she has been following for over two decades.

In November, we'll learn more about noted artist, journalist, poet and social justice activist **Mildred Valley Thornton** from speaker **Sheryl Salloum**.

**Jak King** joins us in January for an entertaining history of Vancouver's one and only Commercial Drive. Jak has lived on "The Drive" for more than 20 years and has written a book about its social, retail, architectural and political history.

In February, civic historian **John Atkin** speaks about the myth of tunnels in Chinatown.

The new season of talks promises to cover many more interesting facets of Vancouver history and we hope you'll join us for all of them.

*Watch this space in future newsletters for more information about our 2011-2012 speaker series starting in September.*

# Before & After

This year we celebrate the 125th anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Vancouver. As part of this special year, we look at different locations in the city as

they looked years ago and how they look today. VHS member Kellan Higgins visited the locations and took our present day photos.



Photo: Artray, Vancouver Public Library 81483



Photo: Kellan Higgins

About 61 years separate these two photos of Davie Street looking northwest to Denman. The most obvious difference is the disappearance of the Simpson Block on the corner. Built by the Simpson Brothers for \$75,000, the building with its 13 apartments and ground floor commercial space was finished in late 1912. It was one of the early ones of its type in the West End. A July 13, 1912 *Province* article reports: "The interior of the building will be modernly fitted up and will contain an elevator for the use of its patrons. Telephones in each of the suites will be among the other conveniences." In 1972 the Simpson Block was sold and eventually torn down to make way for its modern replacement. Development really began in this part of the West End with the coming of public transit in 1899/1900. This corner became the endpoint of streetcar

routes making a circuit on Robson, Denman, Davie and Granville. That in turn attracted a confectionery shop and soon other businesses. The West End of 1950 was mostly a collection of former large mansions turned into rooming houses, more modest homes and older apartment buildings. In the mid-1950s, zoning regulations were updated and soon the West End changed as newer and taller apartment buildings went up. This corner however, still has many familiar facets. Transit vehicles still rest here before doing another circuit of the West End. Denman and Davie are still major commercial arteries in the neighbourhood as they have been since streetcar days. And there are coffee shops in both photos: the Bayview Coffee Shop in the 1950 photo and the ubiquitous Starbucks in the 2011 photo!

*Jim McGraw with thanks to Andrew Martin*

## Vancouver Historical Society Leadership - 2010 - 2011 (Elected May 27, 2010)

### EXECUTIVE

President	Scott Anderson
Vice President (Programs)	Bruce Watson
Treasurer	Paul Flucke
Recording Secretary	Jean Wilson
Director (Memberships)	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director	Jean Mann
Director (Newsletter Editor)	Jim McGraw

### APPOINTED POSITIONS

Webmaster	Quasar Data Management
Archivist	Elizabeth Hawkins
Info Line	Barbara Coles

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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