

# Vancouver Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

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## Sensational Vancouver: the City's Dark Side

May Speaker: Eve Lazarus

Mainstream history books blithely show a robust Vancouver as a pioneer “diamond in the rough” city built on forestry, fisheries and tourism, idyllically perched between the rain forests on the snow-capped mountains and the ocean. Unspoken is that Vancouver, particularly in its early years, was a seething mass of corruption.

In the early years morality enforcement was a nuanced exercise. For example when opium dens and houses of prostitution were confined to specific areas of the city, the work of Italian-born Detective Joe Ricci included axing his way into opium dens and gambling joints of Chinatown and seizing its proceeds. In those same early years, brothels were not only tolerated, but also were assessed to be an important economic generator for the young city.

A double-standard prevailed for on the one hand, brothel fines helped fill the city coffers; as well, brothels were seen as useful places of employment. Walking a fine line, Nova Scotian born Lurancy “Lou” Harris, the first female cop in Canada patrolled the high-end brothels of Alexander Street as part of the women’s protective division

centering around issues of morality while protecting the safety of wayward women and children.

Then there was rum running. Those involved in the activity produced some



**Detective Joe Ricci, James Thorburn from Inland Revenue and Detective Donald Sinclair in 1918.**

Photo: Vancouver Police Department, City of Vancouver Archives, CVA 480-215

of the city’s most iconic business and residential buildings. These included the Commodore Ballroom, the Vogue Theatre and the Marine Building, all financed by the proceeds of the sale of liquor south of the border. Not only were many grand residences built from the proceeds but also many Vancouverites were employed in the

process. A nudge and a wink, as it were.

The top job at the Vancouver Police Department became a revolving door. A small minority of the city’s finest

beat cops sometimes turned a blind eye to crime and some succumbed to corruption. One gang of four cops, for example, started robbing Dairy Queens and graduated to robbing banks. In the mid-1950s when the city was filled with after hours gambling joints and bootleggers thrived, the police chief fled from a public inquiry, over doubling his salary with kickbacks from gamblers and bootleggers. Such was the underbelly of Vancouver at the time. A diamond in the rough.

Speaker Eve Lazarus will illustrate this talk about the other side of Vancouver with photos from cases from her books *Sensational Vancouver* and *Cold Case Vancouver: the City's Most Baffling Murders*.

Bruce M. Watson

## President's Notes

Many of you will have seen the obituary for Cyril Leonoff, who died on April 7 at the age of 91, just a month after he came on our field trip to St. George's. He was president of the VHS from 1989–91, but more significantly founded the Jewish Historical Society in 1970 and wrote splendid books on Jewish history and the works of B.C. photographers. RIP.

We move on, and note that our upcoming Annual General Meeting will see the election of new directors and the retirements of three people who have made huge contributions to the VHS over the years. Elizabeth Hawkins has been our steadfast membership secretary for longer than I have been a member of the VHS. Jim McGraw is leaving his position as newsletter editor; he has contributed the "Peek into the Past" back-page feature for many years. And, after ten years on the board, filling every role except membership secretary and newsletter editor, including terms as Treasurer and President, Scott Anderson is retiring from the Executive.

You will notice in the Election/AGM story in this issue that we are proposing a reduction of our membership dues by \$10 in each category, with the subscription to BC History magazine becoming a \$20 additional option. As I wrote last month, the \$20 levy from each member for the magazine was leaving only \$10–\$15 to pay for everything the VHS does. We have been only able to balance our budget due to the generosity of a few members who have given substantial donations. With additional funds, we will be certain of solvency and can also consider reviving a part of our mandate that has lagged in recent years: financial support of Vancouver history projects.

I hope you will come to the AGM to support this resolution and endorse the new Executive Committee as well as show your appreciation for our retiring directors. Please be there for 7 o'clock, so we can proceed through the business promptly and get to our speaker, Eve Lazarus, on time.

**Michael Kluckner, President**  
*michaelkluckner@vancouver-historical-society.ca*

## Early Hearses and Undertakers

*Continued from Back Page*

& Hanna Ltd. Undertakers. One must say apparently because while other motorized "professional" cars had been used earlier, they were usually used as ambulances as well as hearses. This one is clearly used only as a hearse because of the intricate wood carvings on the coachwork, which is mounted on a White Motor Company truck chassis.

George Center and John Hanna had been in business together since 1896 at 59 Cordova. After several moves, by 1912 they were at 1049 West Georgia west of Burrard. The business was at that location until at least 1955.

Center and Hanna were not Vancouver's first undertakers. That title belongs to Frank William Hart, who had a great many adventures in life before settling in Vancouver.

Born in Illinois, Hart "fought Indians" with the U.S. Army in Kansas, ran a livery stable and then worked for a furniture maker and undertaker in Washington State before heading north in 1885. Soon after, he opened his own furniture shop on Cordova Street. His business was one of many destroyed by the Great Fire of 1886. Like many other businessmen at the time, he just started up again making furniture and eventually coffins. That marked his entry into his own undertaking business. Just three years later in 1889, he was the proud owner of a beautiful horse-drawn hearse, the first purpose-built funeral coach in Vancouver. One of Hart's oddest assignments was for a ship's master, a Captain Westerlund who had wanted to keep a souvenir to exhibit. Hart was asked to embalm a dead whale that the captain had somehow managed to tow into Coal Harbour. According to John Atkin's Changing Vancouver website, Hart had a home built in 1889 at Cambie and Georgia where the Sandman Hotel is today. Hart went on to make and lose several fortunes over the years. He left Vancouver only to later return after many more adventures. His undertaking business however, didn't last long enough to try one of the new motorized hearses of the early 20th century.

While those earliest motorized hearses have long ago disappeared, it's still possible today to find a working horse-drawn hearse. Should you desire one for your final journey, Gerry O'Neil, who operates the Stanley Park horse-drawn wagons, has a beautiful authentic 1880 Ohio-built hearse in his fleet of horse-drawn vehicles.



# Elections at May AGM

In its role as Nominating Committee, the current VHS Executive is pleased to submit the following full slate of nominees for the 2016-2017 Executive to be elected at our May 26, 2016 Annual General Meeting (AGM):

<b>Michael Kluckner</b>	<b>President</b>
<b>Eve Lazarus</b>	<b>Vice-President</b>
<b>Grace Bu</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
<b>Kellan Higgins</b>	<b>Recording Secretary</b>
<b>Bruce Watson</b>	<b>Programs</b>
<b>Stevie Wilson</b>	<b>Communications</b>
<b>Robert McDonald</b>	<b>Director</b>
<b>Brenda Peterson</b>	<b>Director</b>
<b>Madeleine de Trenquallye</b>	<b>Director</b>

All terms of office are for one year beginning June 1, 2016. Additional nominations will be accepted at the AGM provided that the nominee is a current VHS member and is present.

Financial and other reports will be tabled at the meeting for the membership's approval.

The following resolution will be presented to the membership:

**RESOLVED that, effective June 1, 2016, Vancouver Historical Society membership rates will be**

- **Individual \$25/year**
- **Student/Senior \$20/year**
- **Family \$30/year**
- **Institution \$35/year**

**and, that members may opt to receive BC History magazine with an additional payment to the VHS of \$20/year; and, that the membership term will run for a year from the time of inception or renewal.**

**Please note the AGM will start at 7:00 P.M. with participation limited to Vancouver Historical Society members only, to be followed at 7:30 P.M. by the speaker, which is open to the public.**

## 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, Sept. 22, 2016, 7:30 P.M.

**Made in B. C: Eight Ways of Making Culture**  
**Speaker: Maria Tippett**

Is there such a thing as a British Columbia culture, or a culture that has evolved uniquely within the province? And if so, is there anything special about it? Prolific author and scholar, Dr. Maria Tippett answers this question by discussing the lives of eight cultural producers among who are the playwright, George Ryga, the First Nations' artist, Bill Reid, the composer, Jean Coulthard, the writer Martin Grainger and the architect, Arthur Erickson. The speaker will consider the extent to which the British Columbia landscape and the culture of the First Nations' people has informed what these people have produced. Tippett will also consider how the reputations of her eight subjects were made, variously, through chance and luck, social standing and self-promotion, and travel and external cultural influences.

Thursday, Oct. 27, 2016, 7:30 P.M.

**Direct Action: Left Wing Activism in the 1970s & 1980s**

**Speaker: Eryk Martin**

Vancouver from the time of its incorporation has always exhibited a strong social and labour activism. By the end of the twentieth century the city had become a radical epicenter and, as such, a critical component in the development of radical social-movement activism. An outgrowth of this, Direct Action, saw the creation of a clandestine, guerrilla force, actions about which the speaker will examine to reflect on a much larger and longer pattern of left-wing activism in the 1970s and 1980s. The talk, based on the speaker's doctoral dissertation, will highlight a side of Vancouver about which people know little, while making connections between Vancouver and wider world of radical politics, from San Francisco, to Paris, London and beyond.

# Peek into the Past

with Jim McGraw



**Vancouver's first motorized hearse on Georgia Street.** Photo by Stuart Thomson, City of Vancouver Archives, Str P115

James Ford Garden in December of 1914.

The cortège is heading east on Georgia Street having just passed Seymour and now approaching Richards. On the far left can be seen a small sliver of the 1913 Seymour extension to the Hudson's Bay Company still under construction. The little one-storey peak-roofed building at the corner of Seymour is the Georgia Cafe.

A solemn funeral procession is underway in this month's feature photo from 1914. A well-known person must be making their final journey because the walking pallbearers include several distinguished Vancouverites: Matthew Barr, who was instrumental in establishing the Vancouver Lodge of the Freemasons in 1913; John James Miller, who made his money in real estate and became an alderman; and Samuel Lyness Howe, who started as a druggist but then moved into the mining industry as a chemist. He would later become a Conservative in the B.C. Legislature. Perhaps this is the funeral of former Vancouver mayor,

Other businesses include Leo Malfet's taxidermy shop and to the far right, we see a small portion of A. Chapman's bicycle repair shop. A few doors farther to the right and out of frame is where photographer Stuart Thomson lived. Thomson captured many early Vancouver scenes on film. Perhaps he took this photo because of who the deceased was, or maybe because of the hearse itself.

The hearse is apparently Vancouver's earliest motorized funeral coach put into service around this time by Center

*Continued on Page 2 top right column.*

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

### EXECUTIVE

President  
Vice President  
Treasurer  
Recording Secretary  
Director  
Director (Newsletter Editor)  
Director  
Director (Programs)  
Director

Michael Kluckner  
Eve Lazarus  
Scott Anderson  
Kellan Higgins  
Robert McDonald  
Jim McGraw  
Brenda Peterson  
Bruce M. Watson  
Stevie Wilson

### APPOINTED POSITIONS

Archivist	Alexandra Allen
Info Line	Jeannie Hounslow
Membership Secretary	Elizabeth Hawkins
Newsletter Mailing	Mary Gavan
Tour Coordinator	Jo Pleshakov
Accounting	Grace Bu
Communications	Madeleine de Trenqualye

### CONTACT

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