

# Vancouver Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

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November 2004

### Vancouver: Early Film Footage of Our City

*Colin Preston, Reuben Ware and John Atkin*



*This month's speakers are Colin Preston, CBC Archivist; Reuben Ware, City of Vancouver Archivist; and John Atkin, Editor, British Columbia History.*

*LEFT: 1907 still, courtesy Colin Preston.*

ground and facilitate a discussion on how to keep our historical images alive and available to the public. VHS Executive Committee member, Chuck Davis, will moderate the follow-up discussion.

As images of today's Vancouver undergo astonishing changes, it is comforting to see scenes of a much younger but very vibrant city, and to realize that many of those early vistas are still with us. On November 25, the evening of our next speaker, we will see some extraordinary short films depicting Vancouver's early days: a 1907 film by William Harbeck which shows street scenes of Vancouver and Victoria from the front of a streetcar; *Diamond Jubilee*, a 1946 film that brings back fond memories of the city so many of us remember; a 1959 film used by the Vancouver City Planning Department in its early days; and *Vancouver Honeymoon*, a 1960 film that captures Vancouver just before it began its dramatic change and became the city we now know. All the films are a delight to watch. Each helps to underscore the richness and depth of Vancouver.

In this presentation, the Vancouver Historical Society would like to explore the possibilities of a wider public distribution for these films, perhaps in DVD format. Our speakers will provide us with back-

### Happy Holidays!

Just a reminder to you all that in December there is no newsletter and no speaker. However, mark your calendars for January 27 for our very interesting speaker Judy Maxwell, Graduate Student in History, UBC and Director of the Vancouver Chinese-Canadian Military Museum. Judy's talk is entitled: Chinese-Canadians in World Wars I and II: Their Vancouver Connection. Have a wonderful holiday and a very happy New Year! ED.

Thursday, November 25, 2004, at 7:30 pm in the Vancouver Museum

# Preznotes

“So why does the Vancouver Historical Society exist?” you ask and if you aren’t asking, I’ll tell you anyway. Our constitution says we exist to stimulate public interest in history in general and Vancouver history in particular and to encourage historical research and publication.

But to sharpen the focus a bit, your Executive in September 2003 adopted some specific objectives for the coming year. At our meeting earlier this month we reviewed how we’re doing and extended the same objectives for the another year. Here’s a summary of that review.

- a) **Increase the visibility of the VHS.** Good progress! Membership and attendance are increasing, programs are publicized in posters, press releases, the VHS website. and regularly by the Museum.
- b) **Strengthen relationships with other historical organizations.** Also good. We’re active in the BC Historical Federation, and our newsletter goes to some 20 neighbouring historical societies.
- c) **Membership vitalization.** Ongoing. We’re planning to experiment with nametags at meetings, and we’re still looking for a refreshments coordinator.
- d) **Outreach to students and teachers.** The centrepiece here is our support of the Historica Fair, begun in 2004 and to continue in 2005.
- e) **Advocacy on public policy issues.** Nothing specific yet, but a couple of issues are pending. Stay tuned!
- f) **Proposed Vancouver history database and website.** Just talk and dreams so far, but the Vancouver Museum is now involved and prospects are improving.
- g) **Use and management of the VHS Research and Publication Fund.** The Fund is up and running. See “Help Us Spread the Word” elsewhere in this issue.

Your feedback on these and other possible objectives is always welcome. How are we doing? What can we do better? What should we be doing? Let us know!

*Paul Flucke, President*

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## Membership Matters

### Help Us Spread the Word!

And the word is that the VHS welcomes applications for grants from its Research and Publication Fund.

The Fund was started early in 2004 and is supported by income from our Vancouver Foundation endowment. So far we have made five grants totalling \$5,750 to individuals and organizations for projects which extend the scope of Vancouver’s written history and make it available to a wider audience.

So help us get the word around to researchers and writers of Vancouver’s history. The grants aren’t huge (we can’t pay anyone’s salary) but sometimes a few hundred or a few thousand dollars can help get a project started or bring it to completion.

The next deadline for applications is April 1, 2005. Application guidelines and procedures are available from the VHS president.

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### Judy Maxwell named VHS Secretary

The Executive is pleased to announce that Judy Maxwell is our new recording secretary, completing the unexpired term of Ellen Ramsay, who is pursuing her art history research in England.

Judy is one of our newer members, having joined the VHS last summer, however her Vancouver roots go way back. Her great-grandfather settled here before the city’s founding, and through her Chinese mother she connects with another vital stream of local history. As a graduate student in history at UBC, Judy focuses on immigration studies, and is rapidly building a reputation as a researcher and speaker in that field.

In fact, she’ll be the featured speaker at our January 27th VHS meeting, on the topic *Chinese-Canadians in World Wars I & II: Their Vancouver Connection*.

# ? How Well Do You Know ? Your Local History?

*Excerpts from the November Quiz*

(For complete quiz check out Chuck Davis's cool site, The History of Metropolitan Vancouver at <http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/quiz.html>)

**November 3, 1862:** Three fellows named Morton, Brighthouse, and Hailstone filed a claim today for the land that is now Vancouver's West End. They paid more than \$1 an acre, which led scoffers in New Westminster who thought the land was of little value, to call them "The Three \_\_\_\_\_."

**November 4, 1864:** The first foreign-bound cargo from Burrard Inlet 750 board feet of lumber left for Australia today on the Ellen Lewis. With today's equipment loading that amount would take 48 hours. Within 10 per cent, estimate the time it took in 1864.

**November 7, 1896:** Burnaby hired its first law enforcer today, at \$2 a day, to, among other things, put down rowdiness, enforce the wide tire by-law for wagons, and notify owners of \_\_\_\_\_ running at large. Fill in the blank, he grunted.

**November 8, 1927:** A vaudeville performance today inaugurated a new theatre in Vancouver, an elegant palace of entertainment that's still around. Name it.

**November 11, 1935:** It has been called the best building in Vancouver. The design is very unusual for a church. It=92s at Gore and Cordova. Can you name it?

**November 13, 1914:** Col. Albert Whyte was agent for the developers of White Cliff City in West Vancouver. Today he requested, successfully, the area be renamed. What's the name?

**November 17, 1910:** She has been called the most famous dancer who ever lived. She performed in Vancouver today, and the town went gaga. Name her.

**November 22, 1894:** What Vancouver hospital opened today? It's not VGH.

Answers:

Nov. 3: *Greenhorns*, Nov 4: *Just under two months*, Nov. 7: *Swine*, Nov. 8: *The Orpheum*, Nov. 11: *St. James Anglican Church on Cordova Street at Gore*, Nov. 13: *Whytecliff*, Nov. 17: *Anna Pavlova*, Nov. 22: *St. Paul's*.

## Coming Up

### Upcoming VHS Speakers

Thursday, January 27, 2005, 7:30 pm

***Chinese-Canadians in World Wars I & II: Their Vancouver Connection*** with Judy Maxwell, Master's Student in History, UBC; Director, Chinese-Canadian Military Museum Society

Admission is free to all VHS speakers.

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### Vancouver Museum Presents...

#### *Secrets of the City Series*

Saturday November 20, 10:00 am

On the third Saturday of each month we set out from the Vancouver Museum to a secret location in the city (clue: A Place of Honour).

Preregistration is required. Call 604-734-7368. Members \$15; Non-members \$20 + GST.

#### *Nihonmachi - A Walking Tour*

Sunday, November 21, 10:00 am

Museum members and Madama Butterfly ticket holders \$5; All others \$10

Rain or shine

Join local historian John Atkin and special guests, for a tour of Vancouver's Powell Street District. The tour will place Puccini's Madama Butterfly in the context of contemporary Japanese life in Vancouver in the early 20th century. This tour is part of Vancouver Opera's *Views of Japan* community-wide events, celebrating the centenary year of the creation of Madama Butterfly. Meet at 487 Alexander Street. For tickets and info, call 604-734-7368 or visit [www.vanopera.bc.ca/community/viewsofjapan.html](http://www.vanopera.bc.ca/community/viewsofjapan.html).

# Women of Vancouver: The Early Years

*October Speaker: Jolene Cumming*

Reviewed by: Kathleen MacKinnon

Even before local historical interpreter Jolene Cumming moved to her second slide the audience at the Vancouver Museum was captivated. Jolene told us the stories of the women of Vancouver in the early years from 1950 to 1914: Pauline Johnson, Cougar Annie, Mary Capilano, Mintie Castillou, Clara Gravenor, Helen Gregory McGill, Sarah Ann McClure, Helena Gutteridge, working women, First Nations, Chinese, and Japanese women - women who tamed our city, raised its moral tone, and contributed to its economic and social development.

Jolene's research into the women of early Vancouver included pioneers from her own family: her grandmother, Mintie Castillou and her Aunt Clara Gravenor, who died when the dynamite her husband was drying out in the kitchen exploded.

First Nations women were healers, midwives, business-women, and teachers. Mary Capilano paddled across the dangerous rapids of the Burrard Inlet daily to sell her berries, clams and woven mats. Many early settlers, such as James Douglas and Gassy Jack, married resourceful and hardworking First Nations women.

White women settled and populated Vancouver, many looking for better lives, and they had good reason to expect it. Travel within Canada was easier with the railway completed and wages were better in Vancouver.

Japanese women came in 1908 as 'picture brides'. Chinese women did not immigrate in great numbers because of the prohibitive head tax of \$500. Only wealthy Chinese

women married to merchants, female domestics, and prostitutes were exempted from the tax. Consequently by 1911, of the Chinese population in Vancouver only 4% were women.

Women worked in the paid workforce during these years. Their jobs were repetitious and paid little. They worked as telephone operators and in canneries, some with their babies swaddled to their backs. Women taught school, ran boarding houses, and worked in the vibrant sex trade industry, some keeping high-end brothels. Yet, women did not get the right to vote until 1919, and then only some did. Chinese and East Indian women had to wait until 1947; Japanese and First Nations women until 1949.

Luckily in the 1880s and 90s, women movements such as the Suffragists and the Women's Christian Temperance Union attracted women from all walks of life. These women forged changes to the laws, reforms to benefit women and families. And they changed the way society viewed women. Looser clothing too meant women could be more physically active. Women took to cycling, for example, in great numbers despite the purported health risk of 'bicycle face' (the scrunched up face of a women learning to ride).

Jolene Cumming has done a remarkable job of reconstructing the lives of our foremothers. She left us with a renewed appreciation for the sometimes forgotten women pioneers who contributed to the history of Vancouver. We sincerely hope their contributions are at last included in Vancouver's public school curriculum.

## Vancouver Historical Society - Executive, 2004 - 2005 (elected May 27, 2004)

### EXECUTIVE:

President  
Vice President  
Treasurer (Vacant)  
Recording Secretary  
Past President  
At Large (Newsletter Mailing)  
At Large  
At large  
At Large  
At Large  
At Large

Paul Flucke  
Wes Knapp  
(Paul Flucke pro tem)  
Ellen L. Ramsay  
Barbara Coles  
Imbi Harding  
Elizabeth Hawkins  
John (Jack) Spibey  
Wayne Norton  
Chuck Davis

### OTHERS:

Research Service  
Webmaster  
Info Line  
Archivist  
Newsletter Editor

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D.J. MacKinnon  
Nancy Stubbs  
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