

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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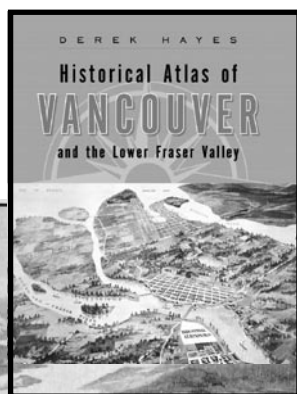
November 2005

A Visual Perspective on Vancouver's History

November Speaker: Derek Hayes

Derek Hayes is a map expert. In his upcoming presentation, he will give an overview of the entire period of Vancouver's history, from the native-only landscape through to modern times. Derek will show and discuss historical maps relating to explorations by the Spanish and George Vancouver, Simon Fraser's arrival at Musqueam, and the establishment of Fort Langley. His survey of maps will include those documenting the development of the Vancouver we know today: the Livable Region of the GVRD, Expo 86, and the subsequent development of False Creek.

Derek Hayes, a geographer trained in England and at the University of British Columbia, is well known to most people interested in Canadian history. Over the last fifteen years he has produced atlases of the North Pacific Ocean, British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest, the exploration of America, the Arctic, and Canada, as well as illustrated books on Alexander Mackenzie and Canada. He specializes in writing history using maps as the primary illustrations and likes to design his own books. He excels at the task, having won the Bill Duthie Booksellers Choice Award in 2000, the Lela Common Award for Canadian history from the Canadian Author's Association, and three Alcuin Awards for his work in packaging his own materials. For his presentation, Derek will draw from his newest book, the Historical Atlas of Vancouver and the Lower Fraser Valley (Douglas & McIntyre, 2005).



*LEFT: Cover of Derek Hayes' book;
BELOW: Bird's eye view of Point Grey from a map provided by the company wishing to sell some of the properties, "starting at \$600."*



Bird's-eye view of Point Grey showing Properties (in red) For Sale by **ALVO von ALVENSLEBEN, Limited** 405 Hastings St. West, VANCOUVER, B.C. — Call or Write for Maps and Price Lists —
Prices: \$600 up. Terms: One-quarter Cash, Balance 6, 12, 18 and 24 Months.

PLEASE NOTE:

There will be no general meeting or publication of the VHS News in December.

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 23, 2005, 7:30 pm in the Vancouver Museum

PREZNOTES

Herding Cats

A university dean, asked how he liked presiding over meetings of the faculty, is said to have replied, "Well, it's rather like herding cats." That line pops into my head these days as I lead meetings of the VHS Executive. I don't think the dean was complaining, nor am I. It's wonderful to work with creative people brimming over with insights and ideas—and if it's sometimes challenging to get them all moving in the same direction, the results are worth the effort.

Your VHS Executive is that kind of group. There are twelve of us—ten elected and two co-opted—with near perfect attendance at our monthly meetings. Each member brings unique competence to an ongoing aspect of our VHS program, but it's in the special projects that unity emerges from diversity and the sum is more than it's parts.

Currently, two such projects are well under way. One is a new, expanded VHS website. We've engaged Quasar Design and Data Management (highly recommended by Chuck Davis) to arrange for a domain name and hosting and design the new site, which we hope to have online early next year. Meanwhile, the "Harbeck" DVD committee meets almost weekly and is making dramatic progress. Over the years, the VHS has helped produce many books, but this will be our first DVD. Welcome to the 21st Century!

So here's to our VHS Executive! To each of them a big Thank You and a scratch behind the ears!

*Paul Flucke, President
Phone (604) 732-7742;
email: paulflucke@shaw.ca*

Welcome New Members

October 2005

Joan Seidl Barnes – Vancouver
Wendy Stephenson – Vancouver
Valerie Whitehead – Vancouver

Thank You!

To the six VHS members who made donations totaling \$280 during September and October. Remember, donations received by December 31 will qualify for a donation receipt applicable to your taxes for 2005.

VHS Grant Supports

New History of the University Women's Club

The VHS Executive has voted a grant of \$1,000 from our Research and Publication Fund toward the printing costs of a forthcoming history of the University Women's Club of Vancouver, which celebrates its centennial in May, 2007.

As described by its writers, the history traces "the evolution of the Club, highlighting its influence on and adaptation to evolving material, political, social and cultural circumstances," with a special focus on the changing role of women in society from the Victorian era to the present.

The VHS grant will help to assure that this important work reaches the widest possible audience.

Interpreting Vanier Park Project Completed

On your next visit to the Vancouver Museum, the City Archives, or the Academy of Music, pause on the way in to enjoy the handsome new plaques interpreting the architecture of the buildings. The plaques are part of a larger project by the Vancouver Museum to engage the public in interpreting the architecture and landscape of Vanier Park. VHS members attending the October 27th meeting received copies of two new interpretive brochures produced by the project. You also can request copies of the brochure at the Museum's admission desk.

The Vancouver Museum is grateful for the VHS's contribution of \$750 towards the project, which was largely funded by the Canada Council for the Arts Promotion of Architecture program. Architecture student Paul Crowley and design student Adam Sharkey won the competition among emerging designers to design the plaques and brochures. The research and writing was done by Timothy Savage with the assistance of Jana Tyner.

*Submitted by Joan Seidl
Curator of History at the Vancouver Museum.*

Book Review by Lisa Hale

Barman, Jean. (2005). *Stanley Park's Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch, and Brockton Point*.

Vancouver: Harbour Publishing. 288 pp.

Stanley Park is one of the most recognizable symbols of Vancouver. The park occupies an iconic status in the culture of the city, drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. But it is also a space scrubbed clean of its checkered and fascinating past. Despite its claims to wilderness, the park has a complex human history that has been all but erased.

Before the creation of the park, there was a long history of use and inhabitation of the area by Squamish and Musqueam people. It is a relatively unknown fact that beginning in the mid-1800's, mixed race encampments of Metis, Portuguese and Hawaiian residents were also established in the area. Starting in the late 1800's, the newly established city of Vancouver began fighting fierce court battles against these communities, as it sought to impose a park over their homes. By the end of the decades long court cases, only a few families were able to prove their right to be there, and were allowed to maintain their homes in the park. The last Brockton point resident, Tim Cummings, died there in 1957.

Despite the popularity of the park and the recent resurgence of interest in local history, little has been written about the rich history of the area. Jean Barman's new book "Stanley Park's Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch and Brockton Point", addresses the silence that surrounds the creation of the park and the dispossession of its residents. Barman, a UBC professor of Educational Studies and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, was approached by descendants of the families that once lived there and asked to write their story. The families gave Barman unprecedented access to the letters, photographs, oral testimonies and documents that had been passed from generation to generation. These resources give the book a depth and richness that allows the story to unfold as though told by the residents of the park themselves.

Barman writes that "in a public place resplendent with statues, monuments and decorations of many kinds, no sign acknowledges the generations of men, women and children who lived (there)". All that is left today is a lilac bush at Brockton Point planted by one of the former residents. The lilac serves as a metaphor that runs through the book, reminding the reader of the tenacious spirit of the people that lives on despite the concerted attempts to erase the park's human history.

Barman's book gives the reader an insider's look at life in the early days of our city and the ways in which one of our most beloved and iconic spaces was created. The park's history deserves to be more widely known, as it is "only when we are given the opportunity to value the past as well as enjoy the present day will Stanley Park's secret be no more".

Jean Barman will talk about "Stanley Park's Secrets" at the next VHS public meeting, Thursday, January 24.

Coming Up...

Researching Female Ancestors Workshop

Sunday, December 11, 2005, 1:30 pm
Vancouver Museum, 1100 Chestnut St.

With Diane Rogers, of the British Columbia Genealogical Society and the Women's History Network of British Columbia. Researching female ancestors can seem frustrating. See examples of strategies to use in searching for information about women in genealogical sources, and learn about women's history resources. \$10 pre-registration required at 604-734-7368 or 604-736-4431. Limited seating. Book early!
http://www.vanmuseum.bc.ca/event_special.htm

Upcoming VHS Speakers Winter/Spring 2006

The VHS extends an invitation to the public to attend their monthly talks. Admission is free. Talks are held at the Vancouver Museum, 1100 Chestnut Street, close to Vanier Park, at 7:30 pm on the 4th Thursday of the month

Thursday, January 26, 7:30 pm
Stanley Park Secrets - Jean Barman

Thursday, February 23, 7:30 pm
Greenpeace, The Inside Story - Rex Weyler

Thursday, March 23, 7:30 pm
A History of Prohibition in British Columbia - Douglas Hamilton

Sunday, April 9, 12:00 noon
Jean Coulthard: A Life in Music - William Bruneau and David Gordon Duke (Incorporation Day Lunch)

Thursday, April 27, 7:30 pm
Railroading a Renegade: Great Northern Ousts John Hendry - Frank Leonard

Thursday, May 25, 7:30 pm
The Dunbar History Project - Helen Spiegelman

October Speaker - Cam Cathcart History of Remembrance Day in Vancouver

On October 27, **Cam Cathcart** gave the VHS an illustrated talk on the history of the Cenotaph at Victory Square and its surroundings. Cam is master of ceremonies for Remembrance Day services at the Cenotaph, having succeeded Tom Robinson, who performed that function for *more than 40 years*.

According to Cam, our first courthouse stood at the site from 1890. Not long afterwards (1892), a row of maple tree saplings were planted. The old courthouse is gone now, torn down in 1912, but those maples are still there, towering majestically over the square after 113 years, the oldest street trees in Vancouver. The saplings had been purchased for \$1 each from the Dominion Experimental Farm in Agassiz! Cam also said that Major Matthews once claimed that an immense dead tree stood where the cenotaph now stands.

The Canadian Club first petitioned to have the land—known originally as Government Square—set aside as the site for a war memorial, long before that idea was finally approved. In fact, more than 30 different schemes had been advanced for the land, including using it as a site for a city hall. In November 1918, the City of Vancouver leased the property from the federal government for \$1 a year, and changed its name to Victory Square. In 1918, Cam told us, returning soldiers dug trenches in the square and charged visitors \$1 to tour them! The money went to widows of slain soldiers.

In 1923, a committee of 24 local people was formed and the move to erect a cenotaph was on. A three-sided obelisk of Nelson Island granite was created, under the direction of architect G. Thornton Sharp. The total cost was \$10,000. A further \$11,000 was donated by Southam, owner of the Province newspaper, to have the park “spiffed up.” The Province was located right across the street in the Carter-Cotton Building. The site was dedicated April 27, 1924, Mayor W. R. Owen presiding, and with a crowd of 10,000 looking on.

Five flags grace the cenotaph: the Union Jack, the Canadian flag, Canadian Army ensign, the Royal Canadian Navy ensign, and the Royal Canadian Air Force flag.

Two highlights of the history of Victory Square stand out. In 1935, Mayor Gerry McGeer stood there and read the Riot Act to a Depression-weary mob of angry unemployed men. And in 1963, a group of protesting Freedomite Doukhobors, led by the formidable Fanny Storgoff, occupied the square for *seven months*.

A poignant moment in the history of the cenotaph was the 2004 ceremony when Sgt. Ernest Alvia “Smokey” Smith, a Seaforth Highlander, who had won the Victoria Cross in 1944 for bravery in action in Sicily attended for the last time. Smokey died last August, aged 91.

A group called the Friends of Victory Square has raised \$200,000 to have the square fixed up: the lawns have been made steeper, creating a natural amphitheatre, the trees were lighted, and striking new lamps with hoods shaped like First World War helmets were installed. Victory Square used to be a gathering place. Thanks to the Friends, it’s becoming that again. Cam told us 10,000 people attended last year’s November 11 service.

A superb talk, and splendidly illustrated.

Reviewed by
Chuck Davis



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

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