

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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Vancouver's Glory Years: Public Transit, 1890 - 1915

Speaker: Henry Ewert

A mere four years after the city's incorporation, and employing a technology similarly only four years old, Vancouver's state-of-the-art transit was inaugurated. Henry Ewert's presentation explores the greatest of all our quarter centuries, 1890 to 1915, that stupendous era before automobiles when, extraordinarily, everyone, regardless of race, religion or social status, rode to and from work (and play!) in the same shared vehicle.

As residents travelled together, Vancouver, came gloriously, into being. Granville Street. Hastings Street: these thoroughfares were sensational — rich in strength, architecture, newness, trade and commerce. They were filled with citizens, nary an automobile in sight. Almost overnight, however, 1916 brought a huge shift: seldom, except for catastrophe, would railway, streetcar and interurban issues again appear on the front pages of our newspapers.



ABOVE: This photograph reflects the hustle and bustle of the Lulu Island - Eburne Interurban Tram Station for the B.C. Electric Railway which was located at the foot of Granville St. in False Creek. LEFT: A view to the North of the heart of Mount Pleasant at Broadway and Main Street in 1904.

Recession arrived, the Great War came, and automobiles appeared in greater and greater numbers, separating the community that in our city travelled together by streetcar and interurban. The glory years were in the past. The city-creating work of our streetcars and interurbans was absolutely formative and necessary to the growth and very layout of Vancouver. The Canadian Pacific Railway sprang us loose, but it was those streetcars and interurbans which truly made our city what it is today.

Henry Ewert has spoken to us in previous years. Retired from teaching at Handsworth Secondary School in North Vancouver, he is now the author of: Victoria's Streetcar Era and The Story of the B.C. Electric Railway Company.

Thursday, October 23, 2003, at 7:30 pm
Upper Joyce Whalley Learning Centre, Vancouver Museum

Preznotes

Say “Vancouver Historical Society” and what most of us think of is the Thursday night monthly lecture series at the Vancouver museum. Fair enough! For VHS members and the wider public alike, the lectures are our flagship program, often featuring the authors of newly published works on varied aspects of Vancouver history. This fall’s lineup is no exception.

Behind the scenes however lies a less visible VHS program goal: encouraging the research and publication that feeds new life into our historiography. Over the years, the VHS has played a key role in the production of numerous historical works, most recently Elizabeth Walker’s *Street Names of Vancouver*, Nancy Knickerbocker’s *No Plaster Saint*, and, of course, the biggest project of all, first in print and now online, the *Vancouver Bibliography*.

Currently, your VHS Executive is seeking to raise the profile of this quiet but essential aspect of our mission. With the *Vancouver Bibliography* now deemed “complete,” the income stream from our Vancouver Foundation endowment is available for new projects to be funded from a new “Research and Publication Fund.”

This initiative is taking wings almost too quickly! At our October 2 Executive meeting, we received three requests for support from the new fund! One is for the proposed “HistoryLink BC” online Website/database; the others involve original research.

But before we can agree to any requests, we need to develop guidelines for awarding grants and procedures for administering them. We have begun that task and hope to complete it at our November meeting. (We may want a standing committee to oversee the grant program. If that interests you, please let me know.)

Who knows where all this will lead. Vancouver loves its history, and much of it is as yet unexplored. Perhaps one of these days we can enjoy a smashing Thursday night book launch and know that we helped to make it all happen!

Paul Flucke, President
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Mark Your Calendar
for our November Speaker



Building the West: The Early Architects of BC

Thursday, November 27, 7:30 pm
Vancouver Museum

The Vancouver Historical Society
presents
Don Luxton: Heritage Consultant
and President of the Canadian Art
Deco Society.



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

THANKS For Your Support!

Since the beginning of this fiscal year, May 1, 2003 eleven members have made special donations to the VHS, totaling \$445. Thanks to you all! Such special gifts provide vital support for our programs.

Donations may be included with your membership renewal or may be made at any other time of the year. You will receive a tax receipt for any amount over and above your membership dues. If you wish your donation may be designated to the *Research and Publication Fund*.

She Was a Tough, Tough Lady



Jean Barman, Professor of Educational Studies at UBC, used those words to describe Mildred Osterhout Fahrni, in a recent address on British Columbia Personalities.

Speaking to a gathering of Third Age Learners at UBC, Professor Barman, having visited Mildred Fahrni some years before her death, described Mildred as a tough advocate for social change. Professor Barman includes Mildred amongst BC's fifty-five "change makers."

Mildred Fahrni, a crusading socialist and pacifist, was considered one of Canada's pioneer peacemakers. Living most of her life in Vancouver, Mildred Fahrni's tireless dedication to social causes spanned six decades.

Recently the Vancouver Historical Society assisted with the publication of a book on the life of Mildred Fahrni. The book, entitled *No Plaster Saint*, authored by Nancy Knickerbocker, is still available from VHS and can be purchased for \$10 at VHS meetings at the Vancouver Museum on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Donna Jean MacKinnon Named Webmaster

The VHS Executive is pleased to announce that Donna Jean MacKinnon has been appointed our new Webmaster. A former VHS president and newsletter editor, Donna Jean is well acquainted with the VHS and the Vancouver historical community. She also has the technical skills and willingness to undertake this important volunteer task - for which we are deeply grateful!

Donna Jean replaces John Spittle, also a former VHS president, who created the site in the early 1990's and has maintained it until now. John is presently in England. The Executive will find an appropriate way to thank him for his years of service at a future time.

The web site, hosted by the Vancouver Community Network, includes current information about the VHS and its programs, the most recent VHS newsletter, and helpful links to related sites. Check it out at www.vcn.vc.ca/vhs.

History and Heritage

By John Stuart

The following excerpt is reprinted by permission from John Stuart's article in the Heritage Vancouver Newsletter, August 2003. John is an art historian specializing in industrial heritage. Many of us remember the VHS presentation to which he refers. We thought you'd be interested in these comments on the partnership of "history" and "heritage."

Some months ago I had the pleasure of discussing industrial heritage with the Vancouver Historical Society. For many it was an introduction to the world of the heritage advocate. By definition historians talk about events and heritage advocates talk about things. It can be very useful to understand the relationship between history and heritage.

The Random House Dictionary defines history thus: "1. The branch of knowledge dealing with past events. 2. A continuous, systematic narrative of past events as relating to a particular people, country, period, person, etc., usually written in chronological order. 3. The aggregate of past events. 4. The record of past events, especially in connection with the human race" Definitions in other dictionaries are similar. What is absent is a reference to substantial objects.

Heritage is fundamentally different. The Random House Dictionary defines it this way: "1. That which comes or belongs to one by reason of birth; an inherited lot or portion. 2. Something reserved for one. 3. a) that which has been or may be inherited by legal descent or succession. b) any property, especially land, that devolves by right of inheritance." Rather than focusing on events, heritage is more concerned with "any property, especially land, that devolves by right of inheritance."

In the context of heritage conservation the reference to real property, especially (but not exclusively) land, is the critical issue. Heritage comprises the kinds of things passed down in a will, for example land, buildings, grandmother's tea service. It is not the list of crops that were grown on the land. It is the 40 acres. It is not the original plans for the building. It is the building. It is not the reminiscence of the parties where the tea service was used. It is the teapot, the coffee pot, the cream pitcher, the sugar bowl and the tray.

The Intrigue and Mystery of Stanley Park

September Speakers: Paul Grant and Laurie Dickson

Reviewed by Wes Knapp

The opening lecture of Vancouver Historical Society's 2003-04 season began with an inspirational and lively session on September 25, 2003 with Vancouver broadcasters and writers Paul Grant and Laurie Dickson. Sharing stories from their recent book, *The Stanley Park Companion*, Paul and Laurie underscored the significance and beauty of Stanley Park. Close to 60 members and guests enjoyed their stories and added many of their own.

Touching on some of our favourite parts of the park, such as Brockton Oval, Siwash Rock, the Seven Sisters, Third Beach, Lions Gate, and many more, our speakers told of the intriguing history and mysteries surrounding Stanley Park.

Speaking to an audience that included people with a long and intimate relationship with the Park, the speakers discovered some additional tales, including the burial of a famous person's ashes on top of Siwash Rock. Whenever *The Stanley Park Companion* is discussed, people come forward with their own compelling stories of Stanley Park, the park we love to consider part of our backyard.

VHS extends its sincere appreciation to Paul Grant and Laurie Dickson for sharing with us many stories from their book, *The Stanley Park Companion*.



LEFT: Lions Gate Bridge under construction in 1938. Photo by Leonard Frank courtesy VPL 9631.

Stained Glass Windows to be Restored

The administration of the City Square shopping centre at 12th and Cambie is planning to restore the stained glass windows in the original auditorium of the Provincial Normal School (circa 1909).

Please e-mail Brenda Norman at bnorman@ceiarchitecture.com if you have any information (photos, plans, etc) that would help the owners determine the original configuration of the windows.

Vancouver Historical Society - Executive, 2003 - 2004 (elected June 6, 2003)

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