

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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Women of Vancouver: The Early Years

Jolene Cumming, Historical Interpreter



Too frequently our history lessons ignore the frontier women who contributed equally to the development of our city. Indeed, men carved clearings from the forest but women built communities and performed many other tasks that set the stage for the Vancouver we know today.

October is Women's History Month, a time to honour and remember some of the many women who played significant roles in our city's past. First Nations women and women of dual heritage were vital components of Vancouver's early years.

Who were these women who first came to the town of Granville and Burrard Inlet? What was their background? What was the nature of their life together?

This presentation by Jolene Cumming will reveal some of the compelling stories of the women who bucked tradition in the early years of our city's history.

Jolene Cumming is a local historical interpreter who conducts walking tours, gallery talks, school tours, and presentations on the history of the women of Vancouver. Recently Jolene launched her walking tour *The Women of Stanley Park, 1850-1914*, an adjunct to her *Women of Vancouver: The Early Years* tour.

ABOVE LEFT: Jolene Cumming's grandmother, Mintie Castillou (nee Greer) loved to go canoeing with her friends. She grew up in Vancouver's West End.

Thursday, October 28, 2004, at 7:30 pm in the Vancouver Museum

Preznotes

On behalf of the VHS Executive, I'm pleased to announce two new grants awarded from our Research and Publication Fund. The first of these, for \$750, is to the Vancouver Museum for research and publication of an interpretive brochure guide to the history of Vanier Park structures and landscapes.

The second grant, for \$800, is to the Vancouver Maritime Museum for the purchase of a computer program, **Archives Online**, which will assist the museum in organizing its archival collections, improve public access, and increase availability and ease of use for researchers, historians, and students. Both grants enable special projects not covered by the institutions' operating funds, and we're pleased to have a role in this outreach.

VHS Research and Publication grants are funded with endowment income previously used for the Vancouver Bibliography. Grants are awarded annually for projects that extend public appreciation and knowledge of Vancouver history. The next application deadline is April 1, 2005. If you know an individual or organization that might wish to apply, please invite them to contact me and request the complete guidelines, which are updated by the Executive from time to time.

On a less happy note, we're sorry to announce the resignation of Ellen Ramsay as VHS Executive member and secretary. As an art historian, Ellen has been spending part of each summer doing research in England, but she finds it necessary to extend her current stay for several more months. We'll miss her! She has been the VHS secretary for four years and has reviewed our monthly speakers for the newsletter for nearly six years.

The Executive has gratefully accepted Chuck Davis' offer to take over the speaker reviews, beginning with this issue. We're currently seeking someone to fill Ellen's seat on the Executive and her secretarial duties for the balance of the current term, which continues through May 2005. Suggestions are welcome!

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Free! Complete Set of VHS Newsletters

VHS member Neil Sutherland has a complete set of the Vancouver Historical Society Newsletter from its very beginning up to the present. VHS already has the complete series in our archives so Neil is looking for a new home for his. He'll be pleased to donate the set to anyone who has a use for it. If you are interested, please call Neil at 604-274-4108.

Membership Matters

Thank you!

Thank you to the ten VHS members who have made donations totalling \$435 in the first five months of this fiscal year. Any donation over your VHS membership fee qualifies for a tax receipt. Such gifts help us maintain and expand our program on a very limited budget. If you wish, you may designate your gift to the Research and Publication Fund.



New Members

Welcome to our newest members: Kimball R. Pemberton and John Clayden of Vancouver, and Doug Masuhara of Richmond. Doug is a teacher whose students participated in last May's Historica Fair.



Do You Remember Me?

I SAW YOU (or, more accurately, overheard you) saying to Greg Dickson after his presentation on Bill Miner on 23 September that your grandmother had her WEDDING portrait taken by Mary Spencer in Ashcroft. I resisted a temptation to RUSH TO YOUR SIDE and instead finished the conversation I was involved in. A few moments later I looked for you, but YOU WERE GONE. I have long been very interested in Mary Spencer and would LOVE to talk to you about that photograph. If you would contact me, I would be very pleased indeed. (Wayne Norton: wnorton@shaw.ca or 604-734-7858).

JEAN CROWLEY AND YVONNE KLAN

They Will Be Missed

It is with great sadness that we learned of the passing of two members of the Vancouver Historical Society, Jean Crowley and Yvonne Klan. We will greatly miss both of these fine women.

Jean Crowley died on September 16, just a few days short of her 91st birthday. A lifelong resident of South Vancouver, Jean grew up in the Cedar Cottage area and resided for many years in Collingwood, both at the farmhouse at the Crowley family homestead (Avalon Dairy) and later in Collingwood Village. Jean was a UBC pioneer and one of the early female graduates in Sciences in 1932.

As a member of the Vancouver Historical Society, she assisted in the planning and publishing of a number of local histories. To commemorate the 90th anniversary of Avalon Dairy in 1996, Jean wrote and published *The Story of the Avalon Dairy Ltd., 1906-1996*. In 1986 during Vancouver's Centennial, Jean Crowley received the Distinguished Pioneer Award which recognized 100 senior citizens who have made a substantial contribution to Vancouver.

Yvonne Klan passed away on October 4th at the age of 74 after a 5 year battle with cancer. She served on the Executive of the VHS in 1993 -1994. Yvonne was an inspiration to Peter Trower and a number of his books are dedicated to her. One book, *A Ship Called Destiny*, is even subtitled Yvonne's Book. Yvonne published numerous articles on the history of British Columbia including: *The Lone Man: Founding of Fort St. John* and *The Apprenticeship of James Murray Yale*. In 2004, Yvonne published her own book *The Old Red Shirt: Pioneer Poets of British Columbia*. A memorial service in Yvonne's honour will be held at the West Van Senior Center on Saturday, November 13. No further details regarding the memorial were available at time of publication.

British Columbia Historical Federation

The fall issue of the BC Historical/BC History will be mailed out to members before the end of October. You'll find the BCHF Newsletter included in this and future issues. The new title "B.C. History" will appear for the first time on the winter issue of the journal, January 2005. Details of the BCHF Kelowna conference to be held in May 2005 will be included in the both the winter issue and the December BCHF Newsletter.

Barbara Coles

Coming Up

Upcoming VHS Speakers

Thursday, November 25, 2004, 7:30 pm

Vancouver: Early Film Footage of our City with Colin Preston, CBC Archivist; Reuben Ware, City of Vancouver Archivist; John Atkin, Editor, BC History

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.



Vancouver Museum Presents...

Sunday, October 24, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Rest in Peace: Mourning Clothes, Jewelry, & Customs for Adults & Children
Vancouver Museum.

Original Costume Museum Society Members \$18; Non-members \$20. Call 604-734-7366 for more info.

Sunday, October 31, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Spirit of Hycroft

Hycroft Mansion

Vancouver Museum & University Women's Club members \$30, Non-members \$40. Sponsored by the Vancouver Museum and the University Women's Club. Tickets and information can be had by calling 604-734-7368. Reservations required by October 27.

Bill Miner: Folk Hero or Sly Fox?

September Speaker: Greg Dickson

Reviewed by: Chuck Davis

Greg Dickson, director of CBC Radio's Almanac, began the VHS 2004-2005 season September 23rd with a continually interesting and engaging talk on the career of the "Grey Fox," Bill Miner. Greg's interest in Miner is a long-standing one: he'd first heard of this celebrated thief as a boy, when, at the age of 12, he saw a display of old photographs by Kamloops photographer Mary Spencer. She had snapped off mug shots of Miner and the members of his gang shortly after they'd been captured for a robbery in the area.

Miner was born December 27, 1846 in Michigan and named Ezra Allen Miner. By age 16 he was stealing horses, at 17 he joined the Union Army during the Civil War (but deserted after a year), at 18 he was back to stealing horses...and watches and money from his employer.

Miner never worked alone, always had a coterie of younger, dimmer cohorts. He was a bit of a swell, liked "fancy duds," spread money around when he had it, and would not refuse the attentions of young ladies. He was genuinely charming and polite, even during his robberies, and was soon known as the "Gentleman Bandit."

His politeness while robbing a California stagecoach of \$3,000 didn't help him, however. He was caught, charged, and sentenced to 25 years in San Quentin. He was 55 when he got out, having spent 33 years of his life in jail. Not long after his release, following two unsuccessful at-

tempts to rob trains near Bellingham, he fled to Canada. On September 10, 1904 Miner and his gang duo *du jour* robbed a CPR train at Mission. It was Canada's first train robbery, and we were thrilled by it. "This was the most successful robbery in Miner's career," says Greg, "and one of the better planned. He even had a boat waiting." There's a dispute over what he got away with. Some estimates put it at \$7,000, some go all the way up to \$300,000 in bonds. Whatever the amount, Miner was flush enough to show a lady friend a wad of money that included a \$1,000 bill. The lady later recalled that he was also packing two guns.



His success was short-lived. A 1906 train robbery netted the gang "\$15 and some liver pills," and they lost their horses during the heist. And by now everyone was on his trail, including two American detective agencies and a Calgary contingent from the Northwest Mounted Police.

They caught him, of course, and he ended up in the B.C. Pen. He escaped within a year and hurried back into the States . . . where he started robbing trains again. Or tried to. During one of his flights from the authorities, desperate with thirst, he drank some swamp water. It made him ill, and his capture followed swiftly. He died in prison in Georgia in 1913 and the locals paid for his funeral.

It was a greatly entertaining talk, and Greg Dickson gave us a splendid sense of the flavour of the times and of the legendary Grey Fox.

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

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