

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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October 2005

History of Remembrance Day in Vancouver *October Speaker: Cam Cathcart*

Victory Square Park Heritage Assessment



ABOVE: Townley and Matheson original scheme for City Hall, 1935 (Courtesy Esmee Townlee Mansell) Durante Kreuk/ Donald Luxton & Associates/Robert G. Lemon

BELOW: Victory Square, November 2003.



The Cenotaph at Victory Square has been the site for Vancouver's popular annual ceremony honouring the Canada's war dead. Cam Cathcart will talk about the history of Remembrance Day in Vancouver, with a focus on the history of Victory Square and the construction of the cenotaph. The cenotaph was erected by public subscription in 1924. At its unveiling, Vancouver's Mayor W. R. Owen summed up the purpose of the memorial: "Those whose sacrifices this Cenotaph commemorates, were among the men who, at call of King and Country, left all that was dear, endured hardship, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty, giving their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that their names be not forgotten." The cenotaph has recently undergone a major restoration, thanks to contributions from the Vancouver Park Board, City of Vancouver, The Friends of Victory Square and the Federal Government's Western Economic Diversification Fund. Vancouver is the only major city in Canada that still organizes and conducts the annual Remembrance Day ceremony each November 11. Most other cities leave that task to veterans' organizations.

Cam Cathcart has worked as a broadcast journalist and news editor for the CBC, as editor of a West End community newspaper, as a news editor and broadcaster for CKNW, and recently as a media relations consultant. He is currently in charge of Vancouver's Remembrance Day ceremony.



Next Meeting: Thursday, October 27, 2005, 7:30 pm in the Vancouver Museum

Preznotes

That's right, folks: in 2006, the Vancouver Historical Society will turn seventy years of age. Chuck Davis reports that we began on October 2, 1936, as the new "Vancouver Section" of the Victoria-based British Columbia Historical Association.

In preparation for our 70th, we're getting more serious about rediscovering our VHS history. Executive member Bruce Watson has plowed through 45 years of the VHS Newsletter, starting at Volume 1, 1962, and compiled a list of several hundred speakers and topics, VHS officers, and Award of Historical Merit recipients. Now he's adding a more detailed summary of each presentation, plus current sources of further information on each topic.

Reviewing his work at our October 6 meeting, the Executive enthusiastically agreed that this wealth of information should be made available not only to VHS members but to the general public on an enlarged and redesigned VHS website, and we're now exploring how to do that. Potentially such a site, under our very own domain name, could also include an archive of past VHS newsletters, Award recipients, links to related sites, and other useful features. Who knows? – with enough space we might even be able to "repatriate" the Vancouver Bibliography now housed online at UBC. And a new, more dramatic VHS logo now being sought by Wayne Norton and his committee, could headline the website as well as our printed publications.

All that, plus the DVD of old Vancouver film footage now being developed by Mary-Lou Storey, Wes Knapp and their committee add up to some exciting birthday gifts for the VHS and the great public beyond. Now if someone will just donate seventy candles....

Paul Flucke, President

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Correction

In the Sept. Newsletter report on the June VHS trip to Bowen Island, Lois Meyers-Carter was erroneously identified as Sue Carter. Sorry Lois...we apologize for this error!

Charles Humphries Obituary

It was with sadness that we learned of the passing of Professor Charles Humphries on June 18th, 2005. Charles, a former UBC Professor, taught Canadian History for many years and was a longtime supporter of the Vancouver Historical Society and the British Columbia Historical Federation. He served on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada from 1979 to 1993. In addition to giving many papers at conferences, he was also the first contributor to the *B.C. Historical News* (now *British Columbia History*). We would like to extend our sympathy to his family at this time.

Odd Facts about Vancouver

1. On January 6, 1953 Vancouver's longest wet spell began. It ended 29 days later. There had been recorded rain on every one of those 29 days.
2. Capt. George Vancouver's ancestors came from a small city in the Netherlands called Coevorden. The family name ended "van Coevorden." In Dutch, "coevorden" means "cow crossing."
3. In 1909 Vancouver bought the first mechanized ambulance in Canada. They took it out for a test drive, and ran over and killed an American tourist.
4. Burrard Inlet's first newspaper was called the Moodyville Tickler.
5. The very first telegraph message to be received on Burrard Inlet—it was in 1865—reported the assassination of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln.
6. There are immensely long, solid and completely knot-free cedar beams in the Imperial Palace in Beijing, China. They come from trees cut down in Kitsilano.

Source: www.vancouverhistory.ca

Welcome New Members

September 2005

Sean Kheraj – Vancouver

Alanna Wong – Vancouver

Mary Anne Chu – Vancouver

Christine Miller – Vancouver

Marilyn MacPherson – Vancouver

Sophia & Tammyanne Matthew – Vancouver

VHS launches the Harbeck Film Project



In the late fall of 2004, the Vancouver Historical Society presented an evening of film. There were four films but the centrepiece and most amazing was a short film by William H. Harbeck shot in 1907 on the streets of Vancouver. It is believed to be the first cinematic footage of Vancouver. One hundred years later Vancouver is “Hollywood North” and our streets are on view all over the world.

Mounting his camera on the front of a BC Electric Railway streetcar, pioneer cinematographer Harbeck shot scenes of several well-known downtown streets as the streetcar moved along. The result is a wonderful panorama of a bustling Vancouver. Well-dressed citizens move smartly along the streets as Vancouver landmarks come into view, some still resonate today, 100 years on. Granville Street—including a glimpse of the old CPR station—is seen as the thriving street that it was. West Hastings, Carrall, West Cordova, Cambie, Robson and Davie Streets are shown as well.

Five years after shooting this film, William Harbeck perished in the sinking of the Titanic. Most of his film footage was lost, but the 1907 street scenes shot in Vancouver and Victoria survived.

The Vancouver Historical Society now has a committee that is taking the opportunity to restore the original film and to add new features to create a DVD package. Making the 1907 film the central theme of the package, the VHS would re-film the original route traveled by Harbeck, showing the remarkable city that Vancouver has become. A voice-over with commentary and identification of the Vancouver streets shown in the original film would be provided. Other features are being considered.

The purpose in developing this DVD package is to produce a product that contributes to the definition of the city, a pack-

age that can be shared with citizens and visitors. The timeline would see it completed by early 2007. Significantly, this 100th anniversary of the film provides an opportunity to show a rare portrait of Vancouver, a snapshot in time and an invaluable addition to Vancouver’s historic record.

We plan to re-film the route in May 2006. As in Harbeck’s day, it is our intention to welcome the City of Vancouver to the streets as the camera passes. Hopefully you will join the event. Watch for further notice.

The Harbeck Film Project Committee is looking for new members who would have an interest in researching various aspects of Vancouver history and contributing to this endeavour. If you are interested, please contact Wes Knapp, the chairperson, at twoleos@gulfislands.com or Mary-Lou Storey at mlstorey@shaw.ca.

VHS Founder on DVD

Longtime VHS members may well remember Dr. W. Kaye Lamb, and VHS Secretary Elizabeth Hawkins remembers him very well—he was her father.

During the 1930’s, while Dr. Lamb was working in Victoria as Provincial Librarian and Archivist, he recognized a need for more research and publication on BC history. To meet that need, he played a key role in the founding of the British Columbia Historical Association (now Federation) and, in 1936, of its Vancouver Section (now the VHS). He also founded, and for many years edited, the *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, an antecedent of our present *British Columbia History*.

In 1989, the VHS invited Dr. Lamb to speak at its Incorporation Day Luncheon, but illness prevented him from attending so VHS member Bruce MacDonald went to his home for a videotaped interview about the beginnings of the BCHF and VHS. Bruce recently provided us with a copy of the original 30-minutes tape, and Elizabeth has had it transferred to a DVD for the VHS archives. The VHS Executive viewed it with great interest at its October meeting. If you’d like to see the interview, contact Paul Flucke or Elizabeth Hawkins, and we’ll arrange something.

HISTORICAL RESEARCH REQUEST

Ever been to a Shivaree?

Have you ever taken part in or witnessed a shivaree (aka charivari, serenade, skimmington, etc.)? If so, Dr. Pauline Greenhill at the University of Winnipeg would like to hear from you. If you have any information or stories to share, please contact Dr. Greenhill at 204-786-9439 (collect, she says!) or at p.greenhill@uwinnipeg.ca. She will be very glad to hear from you.

September Speaker - Alan Twigg and the Literary Origins of BC

Is there anyone in British Columbia who knows more about its authors than Alan Twigg? The short answer is no. The long answer is also no. Alan, who gave an informal but information-rich talk to the September 22 general meeting of the VHS, is the founder and publisher of *BC BookWorld*, which has been around since 1987. It's Canada's largest-circulation, independent publication about books. To quote its own excellent web site, www.bcbookworld.com: "It reaches as many people as possible, with as much information as possible, about as many books as possible, via 700 distribution outlets."

Alan brought his two most recent books with him: *First Invaders: Literary Origins of British Columbia* and *Aboriginality*. The first title shows that there is a rich trove of writing by the province's earliest European explorers and visitors, and not all of it is well known. (By the way, Alan noted with pleasure the number of heads nodding at the mention of many of these names. "It's neat," he told us, "to talk to people who already know a lot of this stuff.") Names like John Jewitt, Juan de Fuca, Alexander Mackenzie popped up. One of the more obscure names mentioned was John Mackay, who volunteered to spend some time at Nootka Sound in 1786, nearly 20 years before the more celebrated John Jewitt's adventures. Mackay wrote about his experiences, which included curing Chief Maquinna's daughter of a "scabby disease." That endeared him to the people there, but he ran into trouble later, once when he allowed his musket to be disassembled by a curious member of the tribe, and was unable to put it back together, and then when he thoughtlessly stepped over the cradle of a child, a grievous sin in that society. Mackay was beaten for that, and banished for weeks.

More than 50 early writers (in most cases, this means people writing about their experiences, rather than professional scribes) are featured in the book.

Alan's book *Aboriginality* is wonderfully unique: it describes more than 300 books by more than 170 aboriginal writers, and all within BC! The well known, like Pauline Johnson, Bill Reid and Len Marchand are in here, but dozens of other more obscure writers are treated. And he ended his presentation with a short video clip of an interview he conducted a few years back with Jeannette Armstrong, a poet born on the Penticton Indian Reserve in 1948. She was the first director of the En'owkin International School of Writing in Penticton, a Native creative-writing school, and the video clip included a short session at the school with a number of aboriginal writers discussing their work. It was a revelation to learn that there was so much First Nations literature in British Columbia, and satisfying to know that now it has been recognized in such a concrete way.

Alan Twigg has made two really valuable contributions to our knowledge of our own literature.

Submitted by Chuck Davis

VHS Fall Speakers

The Vancouver Historical Society invites the public to attend the upcoming talk at the Vancouver Museum at 1100 Chestnut Street, close to Vanier Park. Admission is free.

Thursday, November 24, 7:30 pm

A New Visual Perspective on Vancouver's History

Derek Hayes is a map expert. He will give an overview of Vancouver's history from the native-only landscape through to modern times.

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

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Secretary (Membership)

At Large (Newsletter Mailing)

At Large

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Paul Flucke (pro tem)

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