

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

ISSN 0042 - 2487

October 2013

Vol. 53 No. 2

Liquor, Lust and the Law

Speaker: Aaron Chapman

Few Vancouver nightspots evoke such a fabled history as the Penthouse Nightclub.

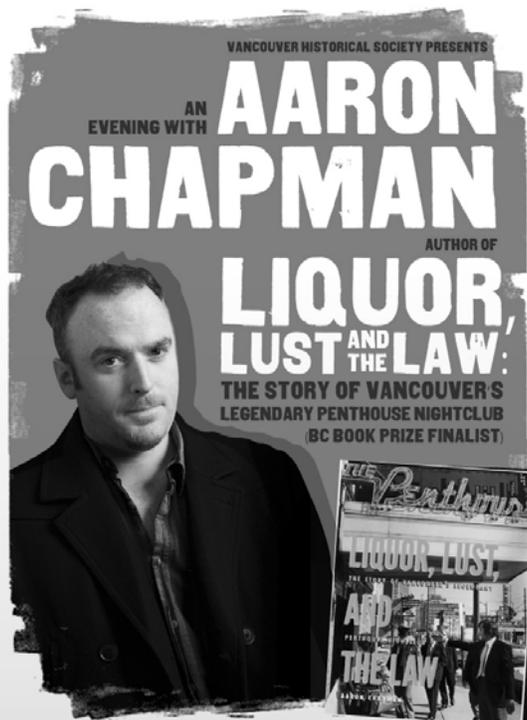
From the time the Italian immigrant Filipone brothers — Joe (Joe's last name was spelled Philliponi due to an immigration officer's mistake), Ross, Mickey and Jimmy — opened the Vancouver Penthouse Nightclub in 1947, the after hours watering hole on Seymour Street was a place to go and a place in which to be seen.

A friendly escape for everyone from world famous entertainers to some of the city's most notorious, the nightclub welcomed all equally within its doors. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s the Penthouse billed Harry Belafonte, Ella Fitzgerald and Sammy David Jr. but it also doubled as an after-hours hangout for others denied admittance elsewhere.

In the 1970s, the Penthouse also became infamous for its amply endowed exotic dancers with monikers such as Chesty Morgan and Big Fanny Annie, resulting in a colourful history involving vice squads, politicians, judges, con men and members of

Vancouver's underworld.

In December 1975 activities caught up with them when police raided the nightclub. They charged the



THURSDAY OCTOBER 24TH 7.30 PM

MUSEUM OF VANCOUVER

1100 CHESTNUT STREET - VANCOUVER - FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
@THEAARONCHAPMAN MORE INFO AT VANCOUVERHISTORICALSOCIETY.CA

brothers with living off the avails of prostitution alleging they received kickbacks in the form of cover

charges and tips paid by the 80 to 100 prostitutes who were entering and re-entering the club to pick up customers. Joe's defense was very personal saying that a jail term would kill his mother even though evidence through undercover tapes showed among other things that liquor inspectors were on the take. During the investigation and sensational trial, the Penthouse was closed for three years. After winning an appeal, Vancouver City Council reinstated the brothers' licence to run the Penthouse in 1979.

Fate caught up with Joe, "the Godfather of Seymour Street" in 1983 when he was shot dead during a robbery.

The first ever book on the Penthouse, *Liquor, Lust and the Law* uses material kept under wraps for decades and is a unique look at some of Vancouver's history after dark.

Author and speaker, Aaron Chapman, is a contributor to a variety of local publications as well as CBC Radio and is an emerging voice in the

Vancouver historical narrative.

Bruce M. Watson

Next Meeting: 7:30 p.m., Thursday, October 24, 2013 at Museum of Vancouver

President's Notes

Stanley Park is without question one of the identifying landmarks of the city of Vancouver, a place that we love because, as the Vancouver Sun recently pointed out on the occasion of the park's 125th anniversary, "it is us." But what part of "us" is it? In the early years of the park's history, an elite group argued strongly that the park's wilderness quality should be preserved, that Stanley Park should be a place of spiritual reflection that stood outside the encroaching artificiality and materialism of modern Vancouver society. As the Sun noted in its tribute, Pauline Johnson viewed the park "as a constant source of mythic renewal and communion with nature." Emily Carr was "attracted by the solitude and richness of the park's natural palette," and Malcolm Lowry saw in it "a literary analog for paradise holding fast against the encroaching and infernal city."

Yet, another view also emerged from the pre-1914 debate, one that valued Stanley Park not as a "holy retreat" but as a "practical breath spot," a place to be "considered at its used value." Jean Barman was amazed by "the big crowds including lots of families, indigenous folk, Asians, recent immigrants and visitors," who were drawn to the park during the SP125 celebration. Stanley Park is quite clearly, a "people's park," a place that is meaningful to Vancouverites because it is "practical" and "used." It is, as she says, "the centerpiece of Vancouver heritage, and for good reason." But what is that reason?

Is Stanley Park our utilitarian play space, a place filled with cars, tourist buses, cyclists and the flow of city life that is popular but far from spiritual? Or, as the Sun suggests, do we love Stanley Park because even though the machine has been allowed into the garden, it remains "a sanctuary, a retreat where everyone rich or poor, young or old, may seek respite from the hurly-burly of contemporary life in the Information Age?" What do you think?

Bob McDonald, President
bobmcdonald@vancouver-historical-society.ca



The Sultan of Swat Visits Vancouver



The Bambino leaving Vancouver on the CPR's "Empress of Japan" Photo: Stuart Thomson (Photographer) City Of Vancouver Archives CVA99-2852

Baseball fans in Vancouver were thrilled when a group of American baseball stars arrived by train on Thursday, October 18th, 1934 — 79 years ago this month. Among the group were Lou Gehrig, Lefty Gomez and the Bambino, the Sultan of Swat, or George Herman "Babe" Ruth. An exhibition game was played the next day at Athletic Park, which was at West 6th and Hemlock. Although pouring rain had turned the field into ankle-deep mud, three thousand fans stayed for the entire game. By Saturday, the players were leaving on Canadian Pacific's "Empress of Japan" for a month-long tour of Japan.

Become Our Tour Coordinator

The Society organizes members-only walking tours throughout the year, and is seeking a volunteer to assist in coordinating these trips. There is generally a tour in autumn, spring, July, and August. This is an excellent opportunity to contribute to an important program of the Society and meet other members of the historical community. Duties involve brainstorming tour possibilities, contacting potential tour leaders or organizations to negotiate details, writing promotional material and follow-up material for the newsletter, tracking participants as they sign up, and generally ensuring the process runs smoothly. The time commitment is minimal, perhaps all combined 2-3 hours every few months, not including the tour itself. If you are organized, like talking to people, and interested in all aspects of Vancouver history, this is for you! Contact the info-line for further information if you're interested!

Prospect Point Lighthouse Keeper

Continued from Page 4

carved cedar mask decorated with deer teeth, given to him by Chief Joe Capilano. According to family legend, the mask was intended to be worn by the guardian or “policeman” of the potlatch ceremony. The giving of such a gift was an honour for Grove.

It was not his only accolade. John Grove was inducted into the Vancouver Pioneers’ Association, an esteemed social club for residents who had arrived in Vancouver prior to 1891 and provided the city with a valuable service. In 1928, after nearly 40 years tending the lighthouse, Grove received the Imperial Service Medal and a letter from Whitehall commending him for saving the lives of 83 drowning persons in First Narrows.

By the 1920s the lighthouse at Prospect Point was both a landmark and popular tourist destination. But in 1926 a new technology, electricity, was set to replace the carbon cylinder and mercury pool system at BC lighthouses. The keepers would be phased out. A marine agent wrote to Grove that year, informing him “the Prospect Point Light and Fog Alarm Station will be operated from the Prospect Point Signal Station and the your services will no longer be required.”

After thirty-eight years of service, the Groves retired. A thankful Harbour Board wrote, “If it is your desire to remain on in your present dwelling, I am prepared, in view of your long, faithful and satisfactory service, to recommend to the Department that this privilege be granted to you.”

On March 21st, 1938, John Grove passed away in his home. An unassuming man whose life had been shaped by icons of Canadian history – Louis Riel, the Beaver, and Stanley Park — Grove saved more than 100 lives, countless ships, and has himself become one of the lights of Vancouver’s history.

Author’s note: The story of John Grove was first brought to my attention by his great-great grandson, Bryce Daynard. While studying Grade 10 Social Studies, Bryce generously shared his personal connection to Riel, the North-West Uprising, and the Prospect Point Lighthouse. Much thanks goes to Bryce, as well as Janet and Pat Grove and the Grove family for the contribution of their personal accounts and private family photographs. Thanks go, too, to Sharon Walz and Jill Teasley of the Vancouver Archives for their tremendous knowledge and assistance.

About the author: Jenise Boland earned her Master of Education at Cambridge before accepting a post teaching History, Law and Social Studies in Vancouver. Co-author of many textbooks and teaching resources, Ms. Boland makes her home in Arbutus Village with her young son, Joah, and their fish, Walter.

Upcoming Speakers

The VHS invites everyone (including non-members) to attend our monthly talks. The talks are free and are held at the Museum of Vancouver, 1100 Chestnut Street (close to Vanier Park) at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month except June, July, August, December).

Thursday, Nov. 28, 2013

The History of Theatre in Vancouver

Speaker: Jerry Wasserman

From the earliest theatres and opera houses mainly for vaudeville to an explosion of Vancouver and BC-based original theatre of the 1970s and 80s, to today, Vancouver’s theatre history is explored by our speaker, an actor and author of several books on Canadian theatre and a professor of English and Theatre in the Department of Theatre and Film at the University of British Columbia.

Thursday, Jan. 23, 2014

Suspect Properties: Liquidation of Japanese-Canadian Property during WWII

Speaker: Jordon Stanger-Ross

When people of Japanese origins were uprooted from B.C.’s west coast in 1942, they were assured Canada’s Custodian of Enemy Property would “protect and preserve” their homes and farms for the duration of the war. By the spring of 1943, the government was selling all Japanese property. What had changed? Were the assurances of 1942 deliberate lies? Was it an attempt by racist British Columbians to rid the province of the Japanese, once and for all?

Thursday, Feb. 27, 2014

Empire of Ice: History of the Pacific Coast Hockey Association, 1911-1926

Speaker: Craig Bowsby

Vancouver’s first (and so far) only Stanley Cup was won by the Millionaires of the Pacific Coast Hockey Association in 1915. The league was founded by the Patrick brothers, who went on to build an indoor hockey rink in Vancouver and to modernize many aspects of the game. Learn more about this fascinating but short-lived period of Vancouver hockey glory.

Manning Prospect Point's Lighthouse

by Jenise Boland

The Lighthouse at Prospect Point is celebrating its 125th anniversary along with Stanley Park. John Grove was the first and only keeper of the light.

This is Part 2 and the conclusion of the story. Part 1 was in the September issue of the newsletter.

Over the years Agent Gaudin visited the family regularly, making notes and recommendations to both Ottawa and the Harbour Board. In 1901 he noted the station was "in good working order" but lamented for Mrs. Grove, who "evidently does her best, but it is difficult to keep the room as tidy as she would wish with the whole family living in one room." Ottawa agreed, and made funds available for the construction of a larger home and, in 1910, a wooden stairwell and semaphore station.

The new cottage, which the Groves referred to as "The Ranch", was located not far from the south entrance of today's Lion's Gate Bridge. In addition to the homestead, the Groves also built a "cow house", where they kept Jersey cows, goats, and a large flock of chickens. Before the Vancouver Mounted Police Squad opened a stable in the park, they would board their horses at the family ranch.

As the sons grew, they took full advantage of life in Stanley Park. They rode horses, and later cars, past the Seven Sisters and the Hollow Tree. They set up a clandestine lemonade stand at the top of Prospect Point, which did a roaring trade with tourists. The Parks Board shut them down numerous times

until the threat of jeopardy to Mr. Grove's position closed the lemonade stand for good. Prior to WWI, and after his graduation from Lord Byng High School, John Henry married. He and his wife, Muriel, continued to live at the ranch, and took over management duties of the Tea House in Stanley Park. At one point, Grove senior wrote to Ottawa, requesting that his daughter-in-law be employed as his assistant. The response was negative, citing official regulations that specified competent men hold the post. Grove responded, "I am getting better service from [her] than I ever got from single men, but orders are orders and I will try to get another man."



Prospect Point Lighthouse

Photo: City of Vancouver Archives CVA 1376-462

Visitors to the lighthouse were frequent. Neighbours included Henry Avison, the first park superintendent, and venerable Vancouver lifeguard Joe Fortes (who arrived in Vancouver the same year as the Groves, in 1885). Although the potlatch had officially been banned, Grove noted in his personal diary and official log frequent gatherings of First Nations groups at Siwash

Rock and other locations throughout the park. These events included "large fires and lots of noise, drumming and yelling (singing)." During this time Grove was presented with a

Continued on Page 3 top left

Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2013 - 2014 (Elected May 23, 2013)

EXECUTIVE

President	Robert McDonald
Vice President (Programs)	Bruce M. Watson
Treasurer	Scott Anderson
Recording Secretary	Kellan Higgins
Director (Membership)	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director	Michael Kluckner
Director	Eve Lazarus
Director (Newsletter Editor)	Jim McGraw
Director	Florence Sung

APPOINTED POSITIONS

Webmaster	Quasar Data Management
Archivist	Alexandra Allen
Info Line	Bruce Watson
Newsletter Mailing	Margaret Dinwoodie

CONTACT INFORMATION

Vancouver Historical Society Information Line: 604-878-9140
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3071 Vancouver, BC V6B 3X6
Website: www.vancouver-historical-society.ca
Newsletter Editor: jmcgraw@vancouver-historical-society.ca