

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

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September 2004

Bill Miner: Folk Hero or Sly Fox?

Greg Dickson, CBC, Director, BC Almanac

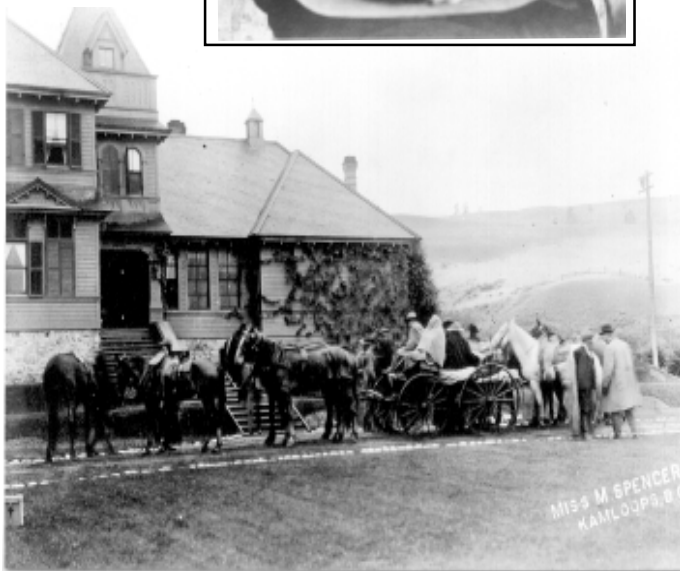


One hundred years ago, in September 1904, Canada's first train robbery occurred. An aging Bill Miner held up a CPR train near Mission, BC. British Columbians are still as ambivalent about Miner today as they were in 1904. Some people are appalled that his name graces a mountain, a pub, and a restaurant. Others see him as a folk hero, a Robin Hood who took on the CPR, the BC Provincial Police, and the Pinkertons' Detective Agency, and outfoxed them all for a time.

Our speaker, Greg Dickson, currently the Director of BC Almanac on CBC Radio, will show, through the reporting of *The Province*, how Miner charmed his way into celebrity status. Even after Miner's arrest in 1906, neighbours and friends in the Similkameen sided with him, and when he escaped from the BC Penitentiary, some people said publicly they they hoped he wouldn't be recaptured. The editor of *The Province* rebuked those people in a scathing editorial. Even Prime Minister Laurier was accused of covering up Miner's choreographed escape from the BC Penitentiary.

Some bandits seem to capture the public's sympathy and imagination. Billy Miner was one of them, perhaps because he was a good dancer and knew his Bible pretty well. Judge for yourself after hearing Greg Dickson's account: was he a folk hero or a sly fox?

ABOVE LEFT: Portrait of Bill Miner taken after his capture in May, 1906. Miss M. Spencer photo; VPL 748. LEFT: Posse bringing in Bill Miner to Kamloops after capture in May 1906. Miss M. Spencer photo; VPL 755.



Thursday, September 23, 2004, at 7:30 pm in the Vancouver Museum

Preznotes

For most folks, September means back-to-school or back-to-work. For the VHS Executive, it meant back-to-meetings—and our season starter came on September 2, even before Labour Day! But the effort is worthwhile if good things are happening, and they are. For example:

The word must be getting around: summer brought us twelve new members! Among them are four Vancouver school teachers who had students in last May's Historica Fair. The teachers responded to our letter inviting them to join the VHS. We intend to support this annual event again in 2005, and Executive member Wayne Norton has agreed to be our liaison to the Vancouver Historica Fair's planning committee.

Program chair and vice-president Wes Knapp has lined up excellent speakers for the upcoming year. The program is printed on the back of this issue of the VHS Newsletter. At our general meeting on Sept. 23, we will have extra copies of the 2004-2005 program for you to put up around your neighborhood or pass on to a friend.. Also, VHS newsletter editor Kathleen MacKinnon will be sending monthly program notices to local newspapers.

Planning has begun for next year's Incorporation Day Luncheon. Executive member Elizabeth Hawkins will again oversee arrangements for the event, which will be held on April 3, 2005, at the ever-popular University Golf Club. Put it on your calendar! Wes will arrange for an outstanding speaker, and we'll try to hold the ticket price at \$25.00.

Since June, we've also received two proposals for grants from our Research and Publication Fund. The Executive will consider these at its October meeting. We'll let you know what happens. The next deadline for proposals will be April 1, 2005.

Finally, here's a tip for those of you who have access to the Internet. Executive member Chuck Davis, hard at work on his forthcoming book, *History of Metropolitan Vancouver*, has started up a new website on which he generously shares some of the fruits of his research. You'll find it at <http://www.vancouverhistory.ca>. Thanks Chuck!

So that's it for now. Let's make September Back-to-History Month. See you on the 23rd!

Paul Flucke, President
paulflucke@shaw.ca, 604-732-7742

Membership Matters

Twelve New Members

From Vancouver, we welcome Jean Bodlak, Kenneth D. Brock, Donna Brown, Joanne Carlton, Bruce Inglis, Judy Maxwell, Rev. Harold McSherry, Malcolm Page, Eve Simon, and Edgar Wickberg.

In addition, we are pleased to welcome Derek Hayes of White Rock and Mark Weiler of Burnaby.

Baby Boy for Past President

Donna Jean MacKinnon gave birth to a healthy 6 pounds, 10 ounce baby boy, Jack Calum MacKinnon Kwan, Tuesday morning August 31, 2004. A few photos of Calum can be seen at <http://www.djmackinnon.com/bebe>. Congratulations Donna Jean and Richard!



VHS Member Bruce Ward Dies

It is with regret that we learned of the recent death of one of our members, Bruce Ward. Bruce was actively involved with a number of associations and institutions related to BC history and heritage activities. He had a special interest in historical maps of BC and West Coast marine history. We extend our deepest sympathy to his family at this sad time.

Programs at the Vancouver Museum

1100 Chestnut Street
604.736.4431 (www.vanmuseum.bc.ca)

Neon and Twilight

September 22nd, 7:00 pm

A walking tour of new and old neon downtown.

\$5 members/\$10.00 non-members.

No reservation necessary.

Meet at the Hornby Street entrance to the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Speaking of Colour Series — Bungalow Colours: Exteriors

September 30, 2004, 7:30 pm

Vancouver Museum

\$10 members/\$15 non-members, plus GST



Historical Short Courses Offered by UBC Continuing Studies

The Fabric of Society: A History of Women's Fashions from the Baroque to the Modern Times - Ivan Sayers

6 Tuesdays, Oct. 5 - Nov. 9, 2 - 3:30 pm; University Women's Club,

1489 McRae Ave., Vancouver. \$90+GST=\$96.30, seniors \$85+GST=\$90.95

Neighbourhoods Explained - John Atkin

4 Saturdays, Oct. 16 - Nov. 6, 10 am - 12:30 pm; First class meets at the entrance to Strathcona Community Centre, 601 Keefer St., Vancouver. \$45+GST=\$48.15.

For more information on either course call 604-822-1444 or check out www.cstudies.ubc.ca.

VHS Summer Tours Appreciated by Members

This summer the VHS offered members and guests three tours within our city: Hycroft House, Marpole Midden, and Hastings Mill. Approximately 15 - 20 people attended each tour. Thanks to Barbara Cole, a member of the VHS Executive, for her review of the Hastings Mill tour.

Hastings Mill Museum Field Trip

On July 15 about 20 members of the VHS and several guests were treated to an entertaining and informative visit to the oldest building in Vancouver, the Hastings Mill Museum. We were welcomed by Mrs. Gladys Hepburn, a volunteer from the Native Daughters of BC, Post. No. 1. The Native Daughters of BC own and operate this fascinating museum. Mrs. Hepburn a wonderful guide, described the Museum's evolution.

The Hastings Mill Store, built in 1865, was the only building to survive the 1886 fire which destroyed Vancouver. In 1921, the Native Daughters hearing this historic building was to be destroyed, were determined to save it. With financial support from Vancouver citizens they bought the building and had it barged from the foot of Dunlevy Street to its present site. The store was officially designated a museum in 1932 and now houses an eclectic display of Vancouver history including: photographs, native basketwork, firearms, tools, household items, jewelry, animal pelts, and many items seldom seen in the more conventional museums.

An added treat to our visit was meeting and hearing from Hanna Smyth, a grade 7 student at Queen Elizabeth School. Hanna won a trip to Montreal at the Vancouver Historical Fair for her project on the Hastings Mill Museum. We were able to examine her booklet on the museum and hear of the work she had done and her trip to Montreal. If we are lucky, she will be an exceptional future member of the VHS!

If there are any members who have not yet visited the Hastings Mill Museum put it down for a fun winter outing. You will not be disappointed.

Vancouver Historical Society

2004-2005 SPEAKERS

The Vancouver Historical Society extends an invitation to members and the public to attend the following talks held at the Vancouver Museum, 1100 Chestnut Street, the 4th Thursday of the month, starting at 7:30 pm. Admission is free.

Thursday, September 23, 2004, 7:30 pm

Bill Miner: Folk Hero or Sly Fox?

Greg Dickson, CBC, Director, BC Almanac

Bill Miner was a bandit who captured the public's sympathy and imagination.

Thursday, October 28, 2004, 7:30 pm

Women of Vancouver: The Early Years

Jolene Cumming, Historical Interpreter

A recognition of the women who bucked tradition in our city's early years and set the stage for the Vancouver we know today.

Thursday, November 25, 2004, 7:30 pm

Vancouver: Early Film Footage of our City

Colin Preston, CBC Archivist; Reuben Ware, City of Vancouver Archivist; John Atkin, Editor, BC History. John conducts walking tours of Vancouver.

A screening of some delightful early films, including *Vancouver Honeymoon*, and a film used by Vancouver's planning department in its early days. The films underscore the richness of our city and confirm that many early vistas are still with us.

Thursday, January 27, 2005, 7:30 pm

Chinese-Canadians in World Wars I & II: Their Vancouver Connection

Judy Maxwell, Researcher in History, UBC and former Director with the Chinese-Canadian Military Museum Society

Vancouver was home to many of the Chinese-Canadians who fought in World Wars I and II and are now recognized in the Military Museum in Vancouver's Chinatown.

Thursday, February 25, 2005, 7:30 pm

The Black Community of Strathcona and Hogan's Alley in Vancouver

Wayde Compton, SFU Instructor, Author *Bluesprint: Black British Columbia Literature and Culture*

The mid-twentieth century saw a significant presence of black people in Strathcona and Hogan's Alley. The nature of that black community is now being carefully documented.

Thursday, March 23, 2005, 7:30 pm

Backstage Vancouver: Entertainment Legends in our City

Red Robinson and Greg Potter

Red Robinson was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1995 and the Canadian Broadcast Hall of Fame in 1997. Greg Potter has covered pop culture for *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Georgia Straight*, and *The Vancouver Courier*.

Vancouver has an extensive entertainment history, from legendary entertainers who performed here, to talented stars who made Vancouver their home. Much of the folklore of this history protected by industry insiders is now emerging.

Thursday, April 28, 2005, 7:30 pm

Political Cartoons: Their History in Canada

Charles Hou, Educator, Recipient of the first Governor-General's award for excellence in teaching history.

Often described as mightier than the sword, the editorial cartoon has been a powerful weapon of social commentary throughout history. Many brilliant political cartoonists, past and present, have called Vancouver home. Their work is considered amongst the most incisive in the country.

Thursday, May 26, 2005, 7:30 pm

Annual General Meeting of the Vancouver Historical Society Speaker: To Be Announced

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

EXECUTIVE:

President
Vice President
Treasurer (Vacant)
Recording Secretary
Past President
At Large (Newsletter Mailing)
At Large
At Large
At Large
At Large
At Large

Paul Flucke
Wes Knapp
(Paul Flucke pro tem)
Ellen L. Ramsay
Barbara Coles
Imbi Harding
Elizabeth Hawkins
John (Jack) Spibey
Wayne Norton
Chuck Davis

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Webmaster
Info Line
Archivist
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