

Vancouver Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

ISSN 0042 - 2487

Vol. 48 No. 1 Sept. 2008

BC's Olympic Athletes: Past and Present

September Speaker: Tom Hawthorn

Canadian athletes did very well at this past Beijing Summer Olympics picking up 18 medals. The first was a gold in wrestling for Carol Huynh of Hazelton, BC. Another B.C. resident, Simon Whitfield of Salt Spring Island, won silver in the Triathlon. Over the years there have been many Olympic champions who called B.C. home.



Percy Williams

This month, sportswriter Tom Hawthorn gives a fascinating illustrated talk on some of those athletes including Vancouver's Percy Williams who won two gold medals, winning both the 100



Alison Sydor

1936 Berlin Games. Tom will also talk about the Men's Rowing event at Melbourne in 1956, and at the 1960 Rome Games. You'll hear about Alison Sydor, a cross-country mountain cyclist and winner of a silver medal at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

There are many others too — sprinter Harry Jerome, hammer thrower Duncan Gillis, rower Kathleen Heddle, skier Nancy Green, and figure skater Karen Magnussen.

With the 2010 Vancouver/Whistler Games just 17 months away, there will probably be many more medallists from

and 200 meter races at the 1928 Olympic games in Amsterdam.

You'll hear about Chuck Chapman, a basketball player at the

B.C. Discover more about the athletes who have made B.C. their home.



Writer Tom Hawthorn

Tom Hawthorn attended the Montreal Olympics in 1976 as a spectator and the Atlanta Olympics in 1996 as a reporter. He is a columnist for the *Globe and Mail* and a magazine writer for such publications as *Reader's Digest* and *Canadian Geographic*. He is just now finishing a book about the war experiences of the McGill University football team. Called "A Greater Share of Honour," the book will be published soon by Harper Collins.



Harry Jerome

Correction

Please note that the June 2008 newsletter had the wrong Volume and Issue number. It was supposed to be Vol. 47 No. 9.

Next Meeting: Thursday, September 25 at 7:30 pm at the Vancouver Museum

PREZNOTES

In spite of the summer being our off season, the VHS Executive has been busy.

Several Executive and VHS members turned out for the June 17th 50th anniversary of the collapse of the Ironworkers Bridge. It was a truly touching event. The following month, on July 12th, because of reasons beyond our control, we had to inform an enthusiastic capacity VHS member group that the *Sins of the City* tour put on by the Police Centennial Museum had to be cancelled, all of which kept organizer Scott Anderson very busy. On the other hand, on July 19th in Stanley Park, a talk by our own Chuck Davis had them rolling in the aisles at the 150th celebration of the founding of the Oppenheimer Company, now a thriving multinational firm. Larry Wong went to Seattle on behalf of the Chinese Canadian Military Museum Society while Larry, Jacqueline Gresko and Scott searched Vancouver for a suitable 2010 BCHF venue. Elizabeth Hawkins was kept busy catching up on membership renewals, subbing for Barbara Coles on the VHS Info-line and preparing items for the newsletter. While Jacqueline scribbled correspondence, she continued editing her latest book on the Catholic Church in B.C. Jim McGraw spent several weeks throughout the summer wrapping up the loose ends of the *City Reflections* DVD, which is now being distributed.

On August 24th, a small number of VHS members and several from the Executive had a great ride on Interurban Car 1231 to the car barn and back, all the while being informed and entertained by dedicated VHS member Henry Ewert. August also saw the announcement of VHS Executive member Lisa Smedman's latest book: *Vancouver, Stories of a City: a history of Vancouver's neighbourhoods and the people who built them*. Former President and now Treasurer Paul Flucke spent considerable time answering web inquiries and keeping the books while yours truly attended historical events and gave fur trade talks around the lower mainland.

And now to get on with the VHS fall events....

Bruce M. Watson, President

Welcome New Members

Melanie Turner
Bud Kerr
Janice Feld

Rene Picard Interiors
Susan Norton
Teresa Conkin

Riding 95-year-old Interurban

Torrential rain reduced our numbers on Sunday, August 24 for the VHS field trip on refurbished B.C. Electric Railway interurban car #1231, which had originally gone into service in 1913. For brave souls such as VHS member Harvey Lui, his whole family and several other individuals the event was well worth it.

After we boarded the car under the Granville Street Bridge, Henry Ewert treated us to a history showing how forward thinking Vancouver was from the 1890s when the city began bringing in the latest streetcars, which were often modified for use here. Two cars of the interurban, which had routes running from Vancouver to Steveston and Chilliwack, have been beautifully restored bringing back their gleaming wood and brass features in the smoking and non-smoking sections. Driven by former councilman and B.C. Electric Railway streetcar motorman Don Bellamy, our car took us down track, which had been a former freight route. On this trip we were able to go only about a mile because of Canada Line construction. However, we were treated to another fully-restored interurban car and an old bus, now a rolling museum at the car barn.

These tracks will soon be replaced for more modern as well as vintage streetcar use. For those who missed this field trip, there is still time left to take a ride on a 1913 streetcar before this work begins.

The Transit Museum Society (TRAMS) DVD, "*Then and Now*" is a must buy for all interurban fans. It is a moving journey through practically all the stations along the complex routes and can be purchased at the car barn for \$25. The saddest part of the DVD was the 1958 burning of the vintage cars, a time when we should have but weren't paying attention to our own history.

Bruce Watson

Thank You!

We thank the eleven members who donated a total of \$685 to the VHS during June, July and August. Contributions like these provide important support for our expanding program, and we reward you with a donation receipt.

City Reflections DVDs now Released

Order online at www.cityreflections.ca or pick up your copy at any monthly VHS talk.

VHS Members Remembered

Alida (Badenhorst) Kulash, 1948-2008

It was with regret that the VHS learned of the passing of Alida Kulash on June 27, 2008. Alida joined the VHS in 1995 and served as a member of the Executive from 1995-96 to 2002-03, twice serving as Vice-President. During her years with the VHS, she also organized several of the Incorporation Day celebrations. Alida was an active member of a number of organizations in addition to the VHS, she spoke four languages, was an enthusiastic traveler, and operated several businesses as well. She will be remembered for her enthusiasm and outgoing personality, and the positive contribution that she made to any project she undertook. We extend our sympathy to her husband Steve and to all her family in both Canada and South Africa.

Helen (Manning) Akrigg, 1921-2008

The British Columbia historical community lost an important member this summer with the death of Helen Akrigg on July 15, 2008. Helen was an active member of the Vancouver Historical Society and the British Columbia Historical Federation for many years, reflecting her deep and abiding interest in British Columbia history. Helen first became fascinated with B.C. place names as a UBC student,



and wrote her graduating essay on Cariboo place names in 1943 under the direction of Dr. W. Kaye Lamb. She later shared this interest with her husband Philip (G.P.V. Akrigg) whom she married in 1944. After raising her family, Helen returned to UBC in 1964 and obtained her M.A. She held

several academic positions at UBC in the following years. Together she and Philip (who died in 2001) co-authored a number of books, making a significant contribution to the study of B.C. history. Prominent among these were the two volumes published in 1975 and 1977, the *British Columbia Chronicle, 1778-1846* and the *British Columbia Chronicle 1847-1871* and probably their best know work, and a most valuable information source, *1001 British Columbia Place Names*, first published in 1969, with several later editions. The VHS extends our sincere sympathy to their son Mark and daughters Marian and Daphne and their families at this time.

Elizabeth Hawkins

Upcoming Speakers & Events

The VHS invites everyone (including non-members) to attend our monthly talks. The talks are free and are held at the Vancouver Museum, 1100 Chestnut Street (close to Vanier Park) at 7:30 pm on the fourth Thursday of every month (unless noted). Special events may be held at other times for which there may be a fee.

Thursday, October 23, 2008, 7:30 pm

Vancouver and Its Counter-cultural Music Scene

Speaker: Scott Beadle

Counter-culture historian Scott Beadle, explores the rise of the “punk rock” music scene in Vancouver. Starting with the social landscape from which British Columbia’s folk and hippie counter-cultures evolved, Scott will explore why Vancouver rose to become one of the world’s significant cities in this worldwide movement and how it all ended in the mid-1980s. (For those worried about their eardrums, please rest assured no music will actually be played!)

Thursday, November 27, 2008, 7:30 pm

The CPR and Vancouver

Speaker: Frank Leonard

Learn about the CPR’s dealings in the late 1880s. The CPR had plans for an area far to the west of today’s facilities near Waterfront Station. Then again, a conflict with investors almost ended the Vancouver extension from Port Moody before it was even built. Dr. Leonard teaches at the Department of History at Douglas College in New Westminster. He is the author of *A Thousand Blunders: The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway and Northern British Columbia*.

Watch this space in future newsletters for the rest of our 2008-2009 series of historical talks.

Devonian Park Signs To Be Unveiled

The VHS-sponsored historical interpretation sign at Devonian Park will be unveiled in a very short ceremony Tuesday, October 7, 2008 at 2:00 pm. The sign will be located near a large stone on the Georgia Street pathway about 75 meters from the Denman Street intersection. Everyone is welcome. (Please consult www.vancouver-historical-society.ca for any last minute changes.)

Marking 50th Anniversary of Second Narrows Bridge Collapse

June 17, 2008 was the 50th anniversary of the collapse of the Second Narrows Bridge. A poignant ceremony to mark the anniversary was held at Bates Park, on a bluff above the bridge. Some 300 people showed up, on a cool and cloudy day intermittently marked by a light sprinkling of rain. Wreaths for the men who died were lined up in a long row before the audience.

Phil Nuytten told the crowd he was 16 at the time and running his own dive shop. He had an illegal scanner in the shop, the kind supposed to be used only on vessels. He heard men screaming about “the bridge” collapsing, and men in the water. He raced to load his diving gear into his truck while a colleague called to arrange a police escort. They were at the accident scene in 20 minutes. Spans four and five of the bridge had collapsed. Some 79 men had dropped into the waters of the inlet. Many were killed instantly. Nuytten and others saved as many as they could.

Two days later another diver, trying to recover dead men still submerged, ran into grief and was himself drowned, bringing the disaster’s death toll to 19.



Photo courtesy of Vancouver Public Library VPL 40002

One of the disaster’s survivors, Lucien Lessard, spoke. He had been a foreman that day, just 29 years old. “One minute I was supervising a crane lifting a 55-ton steel beam. Then, without warning, the bridge dropped beneath our feet.” Lessard fell more than 100 feet into Burrard Inlet, and went another 30 feet below the surface. He spent 20 minutes floating on a plank with a broken left leg, a broken right

arm, damaged vertebrae and other injuries. Recovery took more than a year, starting with four months in hospital. Afterward, he went back to work on the bridge, using a cane.

That terrible day 50 years ago is still keenly remembered. “Nobody was a stranger,” Lessard said. “We all knew each other . . . I think of them very often.” An interview with Lessard is at www.vancouverhistory.ca/archives_second_narrows.htm

www.vancouverhistory.ca/archives_second_narrows.htm

In 1994, in tribute to the men who lost their lives, the bridge was officially renamed. It is now the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Crossing.

Chuck Davis

Vancouver Historical Society - Leadership, 2008 - 2009 (elected May 22, 2008)

EXECUTIVE:

President	Bruce Watson
Vice President (Programs)	Larry Wong
Treasurer	Paul Flucke
Recording Secretary	Jacqueline Gresko
Director	Scott Anderson
Director	Chuck Davis
Director (Membership)	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director (Newsletter Editor)	Jim McGraw
Director	Lisa Smedman

APPOINTED POSITIONS

Webmaster	Quasar Data Mgmt.
Archivist	Elizabeth Hawkins
Info Line	Barbara Coles
Newsletter Mailing	Scott Anderson
Webmail	Paul Flucke

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 Submissions: jmcgraw@vancouver-historical-society.ca