

British Columbia HISTORY

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Our Neon Nightmare

The Role of the Civic Arts Committee in Dismantling
Vancouver's Sign Jungle, 1957-1974



Alexander's Ashes

Unclaimed ashes lead to
the story of a WWI veteran

Almost a Crystal Palace

A shimmering tower in
early Victoria

One-Eye Lake Plane Crash

A day off for a kinda green
GP in Williams Lake

British Columbia HISTORY

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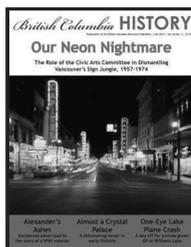
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Cover Image: Neon signs of businesses and theatres on Granville Street in 1959: the White Lunch restaurant, Allen Hotel, Canadian Bank of Commerce, Capitol Theatre, Medical Arts Building, Paradise Theatre, Commodore Cabaret, Plaza Theatre, Vogue Theatre, and the Orpheum Theatre. Read the story on page 5.

CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES, AM1531-: CVA 672-1

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The British Columbia Historical Federation is an umbrella organization embracing a variety of membership categories which are interested in the preservation and promotion of British Columbia's history.

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Editor's Note

Community



The *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* defines community as a “fellowship of interests”. The definition of community is evolving from our traditional idea of neighbours looking out for each other and delivering casseroles to include the idea of social communities. Through online communities such as *facebook* I am able to watch a video from the Swansea University where they reconstruct the face of an archer from the *Mary Rose* and participate in conversations about history around the globe. I am proud member of a large historical community that has many neighbourhoods. I belong to a local family history group where we compete for who has the most notorious ancestor but we also share resources and tips. I have several friends and colleagues who send me things they come across that they think will be of interest. Annette Fulford, Canadian WWI War bride researcher, sends me anything she comes across with the names Dewolf and Edgeworth as she knows they relate to my family tree somehow. Marie Elliott, former editor of *British Columbia History* and author of numerous books and articles about BC history sends me historical documents she encounters during her

own research that relate to Johnny Ussher, my first cousin four times removed, who was murdered by the McLean Gang in 1879. In May I travelled to Kamloops for the Historic Grasslands conference and was able to enjoy the company of fellow history buffs and listen to a variety of speakers share their knowledge.

Community is an underlying theme of many of the articles in this issue of *British Columbia History*. Katherine Hill’s winning essay for the W. Kaye Lamb relates how the Community Arts Council of Vancouver’s Civic Arts Committee efforts to control signage led to a reduction in the number of neon signs in Vancouver. Also in Vancouver, Jak King relates how a community worked together to convince city council to build the First Avenue viaduct. This is a timely story with the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts slated for demolition in 2018.

The community of colleagues is a key element of Sterling Haynes story of a plane crash at One-Eye Lake while our photo essay tells the story of a community uprooted from their coastal lifestyles and forced to start again in Greenwood.

I hope you enjoyed some of BC’s community over the summer by visiting some historic sites or reading some history books on your porch.

Enjoy,
Andrea Lister, Editor

Submission Guidelines

Manuscripts that have been published elsewhere or are under review for publication elsewhere, will be considered at the editor’s discretion.

- Word Count 1000 to 5000.
- Electronic version, with file extension (either .doc or .rtf), will be required should the article be accepted for publication.
- Endnotes must follow Chicago Manual of Style, do not insert notes in text.
- Photocopies/scans of research material/quoted material (pages from books, documents, or journals you have used) for fact checking are appreciated.
- Illustrations are encouraged:
 - submit copies of permissions (or assurance of permission) for the images;
 - sufficient resolution for high-quality reproduction, 300 DPI (dots per inch) minimum or a pixel dimension of 1200x1500 pixels, (with the exception of images such as coins; minimum 600x600 pixels) preferable in jpg or tif format;
 - Not embedded in text—send as separate files;
 - Please provide suggested captions for the illustrations;
 - Image credit information must be provided with all illustrations;
 - Low-resolution images may be sent with initial submission in cases where images would need to be purchased from an institution.
- A two-three sentence biographical note about the author and photo.

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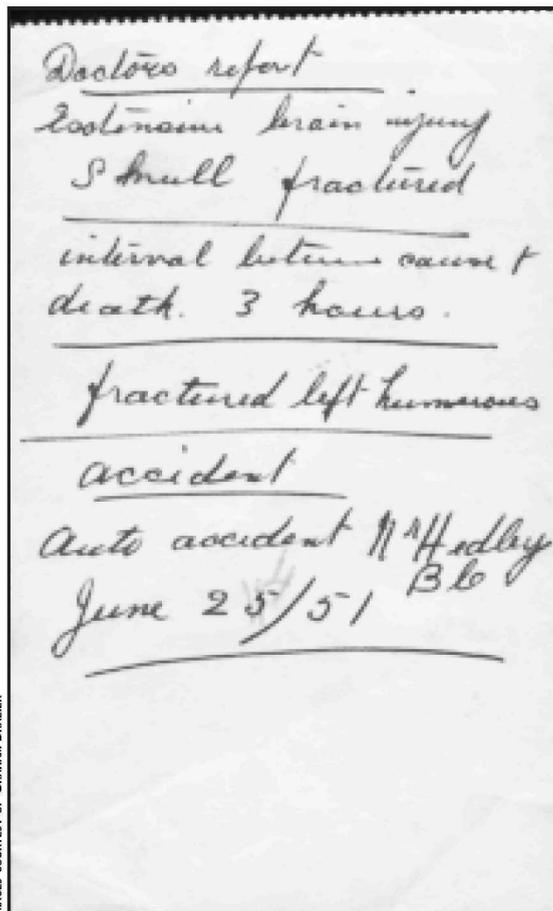
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Inbox

Letters from Readers

Note Annie Watson wrote in 1951.



Annie Watson's Notepad

Hello, Andrea,

I'm probably not the first person to mention this, but on page 41, Annie Watson's notepad, I'll suggest "internal [illegible] cause of death 3 hours" is probably "interval between cause and death 3 hours".

I can't reproduce it in an e-mail, but the character between cause and death is similar to an upside-down "4", and was (is?) a common shorthand for "and".

Great issue, as usual.

Cheers,
Gary Ogle
Surrey

Enjoyed Graham Brazier's Article

Thank You so much for another great issue of *British Columbia History*! I've poured over every page.

I particularly enjoyed Graham Brazier's article "Annie Watson's Curious Suitcase of Sorrow."

If I may, I'd like to suggest a different assessment of Annie's handwritten note. On page 40, Mr. Brazier noted that "Charles... died three hours after the accident..." Then, looking at the note [page 41, line 4], he interprets the word after 'internal' as illegible, followed by 'cause of death' [my underline]. However, if you read that first word as 'interval' then the phrase flows as 'Skull fractured... interval between cause + death 3 hours.'

Lori James Derry
[retired RN, with 30 years of reading Doctors' handwritten notes!]

Harry Ferguson an Irishman

Your footer re Harry Ferguson notes him as an Englishman — poor Harry would be very miffed as he was Irish!

Cheers,
Peter Heaster

Henry George "Harry" Ferguson was born 4 November 4, 1884 Growell, near Dromore, County Down, Ireland. The Summer 2013 issue of *British Columbia History* incorrectly called Harry an Englishman.

Send us your thoughts.

- *British Columbia History* welcomes
- reader's letters and emails, while
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Our Neon Nightmare

by Katherine Hill

Each year, the British Columbia Historical Federation offers two W. Kaye Lamb Scholarships for student essays relating to the history of British Columbia. Katherine Hill is the winner of the \$1000 prize for a student in 3rd or 4th year university or college in British Columbia.



Katherine Hill graduated with a bachelor's degree in history from the University of British Columbia in May 2012. While growing up in Whitehorse, Yukon, Katherine spent most of her summers in the remote gold rush town of Atlin, BC, which sparked her interest in the history and development of British Columbia. She is currently working in communications for the Government of Yukon and working on grad school applications. She is planning to do her Master's degree in communications or education, but her love for historical reading and research will continue to fill much of her spare time.

Student's Assignment

This essay was done as an assignment for Professor Robert A.J. MacDonald's History of Vancouver course (HIST 490). Her essay was inspired by the Museum of Vancouver's exhibit *Neon Vancouver, Ugly Vancouver*. The winning entry has been edited, by Hill, to suit *British Columbia History*.

In the late 1950s, the city of Vancouver proudly boasted over 19,000 neon signs – one for every eighteen residents in the lower mainland and more per capita than any other city in North America.¹ Tales are told of the extravagant, flashy signs that lured crowds of tourists to the city, and of the “warm glow and jewel-like quality of the lights, [which] created an aura of glamour and opulence on the city's streets.”² By the 1960s though, these glowing beacons had stirred an impassioned debate, played out in the chambers of City Council and on the pages of the city's newspapers, over whether or not a new by-law should be created in order to restrict the presence of projecting signs, billboards and third-party advertisements, including those that were made of the once-popular neon, on Vancouver's buildings and streets. From 1959 to 1974, the Community Arts Council of Vancouver's Civic Arts Committee played the leading role in the effort to cut back Vancouver's “neon jungle,” and encountered relatively marginal opposition from local sign companies, unions and a few city aldermen. However, despite the fact that the committee faced little public or private opposition, and that it generally enjoyed support from the media, it took over a decade of lobbying for the *Sign By-law* (1974) to be passed and the committee's demands to finally be carried out.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the rise of the automobile led to the rapid and unprecedented commercialization of public space in North America. Both national advertising companies

and local businesses took advantage of unused roadside space to market goods and services, and industry spokesmen enthusiastically proclaimed that billboards “cultivated the ‘spirit of growth, of development [and] of economic progress’ that ‘every city desires.’”³ Many citizens, however, were not so eager to embrace such a blatant and pervasive commercial invasion of public space. The proliferation of outdoor advertising directly coincided with the advent of the City Beautiful movement, which emerged among professional circles of engineers, architects and surveyors in both the United States and Canada after the success of the well-planned Chicago World's Fair of 1893. One of the chief aims of City Beautiful professionals was gaining “uniformity along the street,”⁴ although most architects and engineers involved in the movement focused on the architectural coherence of houses and buildings rather than on street side advertising. However, Catherine Gudis notes that a vocal group of what she calls “roadside reformers,” whose ranks were drawn largely from local level women's clubs, civic associations and similar elite organizations, emerged in the 1920s and 1930s and were undoubtedly inspired by the City Beautiful movement's focus on the beautification of urban streets. By framing their opposition in a way that “pitted the beauty of nature against the beast of commerce,” as embodied in outdoor advertising and on billboards, these roadside reformers began a “national battle over aesthetic rights to the

roadside environment...that lasted more than forty years."⁵

By the 1920s, roadside advertising was undoubtedly also a concern of those Canadian professionals and elites who had taken up the cause of city beautification. As Robert A.J. MacDonald notes in his article on class perspectives of Stanley Park during the height of the City Beautiful movement in Vancouver, one of the main arguments of the elite who fought against development in the park was that any sign of "artificiality would clash with the lines and form of the nearby forest."⁶ Although there is an absence of scholarly evidence to show that City Beautiful supporters in Vancouver were specifically concerned with outdoor advertising before the Second World War, it is clear that an elitist sense of natural beauty was strongly positioned against any development that "symbolized the mechanized, bustling world of commerce."⁷

McDonald's evidence of the existence of an elite-dominated City Beautiful movement in Vancouver prior to the Second World War demonstrates the historical role of the city's lay elite in successfully opposing City Council's development plans. While the presence of these vocal elites in city development was notable during the City Beautiful movement, the Great Depression of the 1930s and the Second World War during the 1940s provided a "crucial interregnum" that "delayed the ambitions of planners and elites alike."⁸ Certainly, the Great Depression and the Second World War would have similarly disrupted calls for roadside beautification and anti-outdoor advertising in cities across North America, including Vancouver, until the renewal of city planning in the 1950s.

Even before World War II had ended, municipal governments across Canada began to turn their attention away from the war

Granville Street between 3rd Avenue and 4th Avenue, Vancouver BC in 1932. Shows Ruddy-Duker Company billboards advertising Beach Gas Ranges, Nugget Shoe Polish and others and signs for Nabob Coffee and Tea and B.C. Electric, and Coke sign.



CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES, AM54-54-1-1: CVA 20-73

effort and focused on urban renewal and reconstruction as a way to avoid returning to the economic and industrial stagnation of the Great Depression.⁹ Fortunately, the end of the war did not bring stagnation, but instead unprecedented affluence, and with it, the rise of a consumerist society, the proliferation of the automobile, and housing shortages that necessitated the construction of sprawling suburbs. Encountering a previously unknown prosperity and ease of employment, the rapidly expanding middle-class in Canadian cities not only demanded homes but also roads on which to drive their cars to and from work. In order to keep up with the demand for development, most municipal governments began to employ professional city planners to ensure new developments were carried out in the most efficient and economical ways possible. Particularly in Vancouver, city planners came to occupy a place of privilege in deciding how the city should both look and function. As in cities across Canada, "high modernist planning" became the practice in Vancouver following World War II. According to anthropologist James C. Scott, high modernity is "an exaggerated belief in the capacity of scientific and technological progress to meet growing human needs and bestow social benefits."¹⁰ When high modernist principles were applied to city planning in post-war Vancouver, the effect was to remove citizens, and even City Council, from the decision-making process and give professionals the responsibility of reconciling the existing urban landscape with rapid new development. Indeed, planners "believed that they acted as delegates of the citizenry as a whole, and not on behalf of the whims and desires of individuals or groups."¹¹ In Vancouver, this view was largely unchallenged by both City Council and the general public until the late 1960s. The advent of the Community Arts Council of Vancouver's Civic Arts Committee in 1950/51 coincided with the rise of high modernist planning in the city and provided a challenge to the dominance of city planners in deciding how Vancouver should be both renewed and developed.

Historians generally situate the emergence of a "new ideology of liveability in urban development" in the context of the late 1960s.¹² With regards to city planning in

Toronto, however, Keith Brushnett points out that "[m]any of the same issues, ideas, sentiments, and even personalities, which occupied community organizations during the 1960s can be traced back to the [reconstruction] movement during the post-war period."¹³ Writing about Vancouver, Historian David Ley asserts that an emergent professional, technical and administrative elite would oversee its transition from an industrial, growth-centred city to a service-oriented, "liveable city" with "a landscape in harmony with human sensibility."¹⁴ The emergence of this elite vanguard actually occurred over a decade earlier, immediately following the war. The first Community Arts Council in North America was established in Vancouver 1946,¹⁵ and over the course of the 1950s and early 1960s the Community Arts Council of Vancouver (CACV) was an unfaltering voice on matters of city planning and development.

Following the creation of the CACV in October 1946, Dr. Ira Dilworth, the CACV's first President, proclaimed that "the organization would 'act as a clearing centre for various cultural fields, [would] offer cultural advice to struggling groups' and would ensure proper publicity for the activities of all its (group) members."¹⁶ However, by the beginning of the next decade, the CACV had taken on a much more active role in defining the aesthetic character of the city, becoming the chief voice of dissent to a complacent City Council and ignorant public that allowed privileged city planners to single-handedly determine the course of the city's development. In 1950/51, the CACV established a Civic Arts Committee ("the committee") in order to press city hall for the "improvement of the appearance of downtown Vancouver."¹⁷ According to a statement by early council member Frank Low-Beer, committee members seem to have seen themselves as occupying the same role as advocates of the citizenry at large with regards to urban planning and city development as city planners believed themselves to hold. As Low-Beer put it, "[a]t that time we were the only people around. I think it's fair to say that the Arts Council and what the Civic Arts Committee stood for was the conscience of the city."¹⁸

While Low-Ber's claim that the committee stood for the conscience of the city may have been inflated and elite-centric, it is true that the CACV was the only organization interested in challenging the authority of city planners in determining the appearance of Vancouver in the post-war period. Historians Laura Madokoro and Donald Gutstein concur that other groups in Vancouver, specifically the large Chinese population of Strathcona, did not play an important role in city development issues until the "Great Freeway Debate" of the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁹ Furthermore, research by both David Ley and William Langford confirms that it was not until the late 1960s that any significant number within Vancouver's citizenry became aware of, as Langford puts it, "the dehumanizing and undemocratic nature of high modernist planning expertise."²⁰ According to Ley, the doubling of white-collar professional and technical employees in Vancouver between 1951 and 1971 predicated mass interest in city planning, but their "new ideology of urban development" would not be articulated until the late 1960s.²¹ In contrast, however, Low-Ber's assertion establishes there was in fact a small group of existing white-collar citizens in Vancouver who had been interested and involved in matters of city development for well over a decade by the late 1960s – the Civic Arts Committee.

Initially concentrated on beautifying the city's streetscape, it seemed a natural step that the committee would eventually turn its attention to the "clutter of commercial signs [that] dotted almost every building" on the city's downtown streets.²² However, it is crucial to note that although historians and journalists today blame the "civic beautifiers" of the Civic Arts Committee for the loss of the thousands of neon signs that once lined Vancouver's streets,²³ the eventual removal of such a great number of the city's *neon* signs was not a stated goal of the committee. Instead, the committee simply wanted Vancouver's major streets to emulate those architecturally pleasant boulevards and pedestrian "malls" in the great cities of the United States and Britain.²⁴ These cities provided examples to committee members of how much more pleasing streets could look and feel if garish, projecting advertisements

and billboards were swapped for tasteful street furniture, landscaping and unobstructed vistas. Therefore, it was not neon signs that the committee was to target specifically, but rather any and all large, projecting signs, roof signs, billboards and advertisements that were responsible for much of the perceived visual clutter and disorderliness of the downtown area.²⁵

In 1957, in response to Section VI on Civic Design of the Technical Planning Board's 1956 "Downtown Vancouver Development Plan Report," the Civic Arts Committee first began to push City Council for "an improved plan for the downtown area which would include open spaces, trees on Georgia Street and street furniture in better design."²⁶ Despite the fact that Section VI of the Downtown Report stated that the design and structure of roof signs and blank wall signs should be improved, very little was done by City Council to clarify or follow through on this recommendation in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By 1960, the committee noticed that its demands for action with regards to Section VI had not been acted upon. In a 31 March 1960 letter from the CACV to Mayor A.T. Alsbury and City Council, CACV President Ian S. McNairn wrote "with regret [about] the number of projecting signs which [had] recently appeared on Georgia Street...[and with] fear that the tardiness in implementation of recommendations for these amenity streets [would] prevent their distinction from any other street." McNairn continued by referring to a number of cities across Europe and North America that "today contain streets in the downtown areas where projecting and roof signs are prohibited," and finished by urging City Council to carry out the recommendations of the Downtown Report, especially with regards to the designated "amenity streets" of Georgia and Burrard.²⁷

Over two months later, at a 21 June 1960 meeting, the committee discussed the fact that the Mayor's office did not receive, or perhaps chose to ignore, McNairn's letter, and determined that simply mailing letters to the Mayor and Council was not having the desired effect.²⁸ Following a number of meetings in 1960, the committee decided to pursue other strategies besides merely pressuring City Council to follow through on its promises of



almost five years earlier. Perhaps in recognition of the powerful role of the Technical Planning Board, which was comprised of expert city planners, the committee decided that it would solicit the support of more “lawyers, architects [and] designers...who would be able because of their experience to tackle the problem efficiently.”²⁹ The decision to use expert opinion to bolster their argument for the need to regulate signs on the downtown streetscape shows that the committee was well aware of the privileged place that the expert held with regards to city planning in the post-war period. However, it also demonstrates that the committee, while recognizing the privileged place of planners, was not satisfied with allowing all responsibility for the appearance of the city to be placed in the hands of those experts employed at city hall. Indeed, many of the members of the committee and the larger CACV were professionals themselves, their ranks including lawyers, University of

British Columbia faculty members, architects, and the wives of professionals.³⁰ As members of the professional elite that emerged in post-war cities across Canada, the weekday professionals/weekend community organizers who made up the CACV and the Civic Arts Committee saw themselves in a similar role to that of the city’s expert planners and believed that “by virtue of their expertise [they] knew the correct path, and because they operated from ‘general principles’ their solutions could be depended upon to represent the public good.”³¹ Interestingly, it seems that the professionals who made up the ranks of the CACV may have been more perceptive towards the actual desires of Vancouver’s citizenry, at least when it came to sign regulations, than were the employed experts at City Hall.

In order to garner more support for sign regulation in Vancouver, the Civic Arts Committee revamped its strategy in 1961 and 1962. While it continued to lobby City Council

Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (819 Granville Street), and buildings and businesses including the Coronet Theatre (851 Granville Street), and the Western School of Commerce (712 Robson Street) circa 1967.

to act on Section VI, as well as to uphold its subsequent pledge to start regulating signs on the city's amenity streets, the committee also began writing letters to architects, lawyers, and other community organizations in the city asking for support.³² Elizabeth Lane, who chaired the committee from 1960 until 1962, recalls that members at the time also found new inspiration in a film produced by the British Civic Trust called *Magdalen Street*.³³ Filmed in Norwich, England, *Magdalen Street* was "the story of a highly imaginative but simple plan to restore a decaying downtown core by use of paint, minor architectural alterations, planting and street furniture."³⁴ The film gave the committee an idea of how they would like the amenity streets of Vancouver to look, absent of projecting billboards and flashy signs. Now aware of the fact that City Council did not intend to follow through on sign regulation in an expedient fashion, the committee realized it would once again need to expand its campaign efforts.

With the streets of Norwich in mind, the committee began a two-pronged attack on signs that included both public education and private condemnation. Starting with the latter, the committee wrote letters to private businesses in Vancouver. Letters were sent to the Hotel Vancouver in February 1962 and the Granville Street Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) in March 1964 in order to express the committee's dislike of the businesses' choice of signage, to ask that the signs be removed, and to notify the businesses that City Council would be contacted regarding the offending signs. To the committee, the sign erected on the historic Hotel Vancouver was particularly offensive because it was a third party advertisement for the Vancouver Sun that defaced the imposing building and obstructed views for no other purpose than to make both the hotel and the newspaper more money.³⁵

Although such personal appeals to businesses did not work and the signs remained, the continued construction of offensive

signs on buildings and amenity streets like Georgia motivated the committee to accelerate its opposition campaign. By April 1964, the committee had failed to convince the CIBC to remove its Granville Street sign and thus also "decided to include bridge approaches *as well as* the amenity streets" in its future briefs to City Council requesting action on the proposed sign regulations.³⁶ This was a key moment in the sign debate that had an important, if somewhat accidental, effect on the provisions eventual *Sign By-Law*. Indeed, were it not for the committee's decision to push for regulation of signs near bridge approaches, perhaps the *Sign By-Law* would not have included the incredibly restrictive provisions for signs in all of those areas,³⁷ including on Granville Street, which was home to many of the now legendary neon signs and advertisements.

The lack of response from both private business and industry also moved the committee to try another approach to rally support for their cause – public education. Emulating an exhibit that it had shown at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1959 to promote good design in street furniture (i.e. bus shelters, telephone booths, litter bins), the committee set up a photo exhibit, called "Signs of Our Times," on sign control at Vancouver Public Library branches in Kerrisdale, Dunbar and East Hastings.³⁸ The exhibit ran for a few months and encouraged visitors to "write personally in support of sign control" to City Council.³⁹ Although it is difficult to quantify how much public support the committee received as a result of the exhibit, it is clear that the attempt did begin to attract media attention to the group's efforts in an unprecedented way.

A few months after the "Signs of Our Times" exhibit was erected, *Province* writer and humourist Eric Nicol became the first Vancouver journalist to write about the sign debate in any meaningful way. Prior to his 2 December 1962 article called "Cutting Back the Jungle," very little had been written on the topic besides basic reporting on the aforementioned city zoning plans that promised to restrict signs on amenity streets.⁴⁰ Following the publication of Nicol's article and the committee's exhibit, however, journalists embraced the cause of waking up from "Our Neon Nightmare."⁴¹ Finally, public and media backlash against the

Metal nameplate for Neon Products signs, baked enamel paint. Neon Products was one of the largest neon signmaking companies in Vancouver.



“hideous jungle of signs” seemed to awaken at least some members of the sign industry to the fact that, as President Colin T. Martin of Neon Products of Canada Ltd. put it in a 1963 interview with the *Vancouver Sun*, “small areas of people...do not particularly like the product.”⁴² While Martin was confident that merchants, who would pay higher taxes if a more restrictive sign by-law were in place, as well as citizens’ pride in bustling commercial streets like Granville,⁴³ would prevent a sign by-law from ever being passed, it seems his assumptions about the power of business and the wants of the public were increasingly out of touch with reality.

In the years following Martin’s 1963 interview, while the over-confident sign industry ignored the supposedly “small areas of people” that wanted stricter sign control, the Civic Arts Committee worked hard to increase support for the cause of their little group. In the spring of 1966, the committee organized another successful campaign that involved distributing 1,400 pre-typed postcards to “interested citizens” who then signed and sent the postcards to City Hall to show their support for a new sign by-law. About 600 of the cards, which stated, “I support the enactment of a bylaw for regulating the position, size and aesthetic suitability of commercial signs on amenity streets,”⁴⁴ were mailed to City Hall. Although most of the postcards mailed in were representative those already involved in the sign control effort — almost half of the cards printed were sent to members of the CACV for signing — and not the general population of Vancouver,⁴⁵ the campaign was nevertheless successful in garnering media support. Indeed, following the postcard campaign, to which the sign industry failed to produce any response or defence, Vancouver media coverage became heavily weighted on the side of sign control.⁴⁶ While the effect of this increase in media coverage in favour of a sign by-law on the public is difficult to determine, it is clear that the committee’s expanded campaigning efforts and the resulting media attention had finally attracted due attention by City Hall.

The committee immediately followed the postcard campaign by delivering a ten-page brief to City Council “showing what other cities [were] doing to control signs” and

demanding that advertising in Vancouver “be carried out with a great deal more taste.”⁴⁷ The brief reportedly earned the consideration of city planning director Bill Graham and most of the eight aldermen present but Graham nevertheless maintained that sign control was not a priority of the Planning Department at that time. Instead, Alderman Bob Williams suggested that the committee undertake its own survey “on which the city could base a bylaw.”⁴⁸ Williams’ suggestion indicates that both City Council and the Planning Department had become not only receptive, but also accommodating to the committee’s demands by the late 1960s.

Certainly, the committee’s tireless campaigning efforts, along with an increase in media attention to the cause of sign control, would have influenced City Council’s newfound willingness to work with the committee in the late 1960s. However, the coincidental rise of the heritage movement, which was aimed at preserving historic areas and buildings in the city, and the Great Freeway Debate, must not be overlooked. The greater issues of urban renewal and development in the late 1960s, under which questions over heritage and freeways both fell, contributed to a view in City Hall and among the citizenry in general that, as former CACV council member Peter Oberlander put it, “[p]lanning [was] too important to leave to the professionals.”⁴⁹ According to William Langford, Oberlander’s observation was indeed correct, since “the lack of political decisiveness...[and] problems with deference to planning experts and the centralized exercise of authority towards high modernist goals were increasingly evident” by the mid-1960s.⁵⁰ Instead, both City Council and ordinary citizens turned to community organizations like the CACV as an alternative to city planners.

While CACV president Ralph Flitton still believed that drafting a new sign by-law was “something that [had] to be done by the planning department,”⁵¹ throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s the committee continued sending letters and presenting briefs to City Council suggesting measures to be included in the eventual legislation.⁵² Although the planning department would not have the new *Sign By-law* prepared until 8 October 1974, the

CACV and Civic Arts Committee continued to be involved and provided many suggestions that would eventually shape the provisions of the by-law. For example, in an 8 April 1970 letter from the CACV to Mayor Tom Campbell, City Council and Bill Graham, President Frank Low-Beer told the council that a new or amended sign by-law should include "a restriction on animated or flashing signs" on the amenity streets of Georgia and Burrard and that all "third party signs be removed at the expiration of the contract."⁵³

The influential role of the CACV in shaping the provisions of the 1974 *Sign By-Law* is clearly reflected in By-law 4810 ("Sign By-law") itself. An information brochure sent out to interested stakeholders and industry in October 1974 stated that the Sign By-Law was not only the result of "many months of study and research [in which] the sign industries in Vancouver co-operated with the civic authorities,"⁵⁴ but also was created in "the interest of the community."⁵⁵ The *Sign By-Law* provided for most of the measures demanded by the Civic Arts Committee throughout the 1960s, including limits on how far signs could project beyond a building face, provisions on the aesthetic appearance and maintenance of signs, and a clause that restricted all third party advertising except in a few specified locations.⁵⁶ The *Sign By-Law* also reflected the committee's concern over signs on major downtown streets, like Georgia and Burrard, and at bridge approaches, such as the aforementioned CIBC sign on Granville Street.⁵⁷ An entire schedule was included in the legislation in order to restrict the size and messages of signs in these areas, and no third-party advertising was allowed.⁵⁸

It is important to note, however, that the committee only want to see third party advertisements and projecting signs removed from the sections of Granville Street immediately on either side of the bridge, and that they did not specifically call for the removal of neon signs further down the street. In fact, the committee actually wanted the large, flashy signs, which advertised cultural and historical landmarks such as the Vogue and Orpheum theatres, to remain as a feature of the city's theatre row, providing for a single "Great White Way" like London's Piccadilly

area or New York's Times Square. Since the committee aimed to model the streetscapes of Vancouver after those found in cities in Europe and the United States, they would have undoubtedly wanted to follow the advice of planners like London's Desmond Heap, who visited Vancouver in 1968 and spoke of the wonderful effect that restricting and removing signs had on that city's aesthetic. While advocating for the removal of most signs, Heap also reminded Vancouverites that neon signs did have a place in a city's entertainment district, such as they were found in London's Piccadilly area.⁵⁹ It is not a stretch then to believe that the committee wanted the existing theatre row, Granville Street north of the bridge, to remain as Vancouver's own modern, flashy entertainment district. Indeed, Elizabeth O'Keily, author of *The Arts and Our Town: Community Arts Council of Vancouver, 1946-1996*, attests that "[t]he Arts Council [actually] encouraged the use of colourful neon signs in the intensely commercial areas of Broadway, Kingsway, Granville and Chinatown" while advocating that they be regulated elsewhere.⁶⁰ With this to consider, the 1974 *Sign By-Law* was certainly successful in achieving the committee's goal of restricting and removing offending signs from amenity streets like Georgia and Burrard and from the entrances to bridge approaches. With regards to Granville, however, the new regulations were too strict for even the sign control champions in the Civic Arts Committee, who wanted to leave Granville as Vancouver's solution to the modern city's need for a glowing entertainment district.⁶¹

Although the *Sign By-Law* did include special provisions to allow "flashing and animated signs" on Granville Street,⁶² after 1974 many of the street's neon signs and billboards nevertheless disappeared. While most of the signs that vanished from Granville's streetscape were third-party advertisements and billboards clustered on rooftops and building walls around the approach to the Granville Street Bridge, many of the flashy neon signs that lined the remainder of the street were also taken down. With their removal, Granville's aesthetic character was strikingly changed.⁶³ It is difficult to determine which provisions within the *Sign By-Law* would have specifically led to the removal of so many of

the street's neon signs, but it is certain that the disappearance of these signs was not the intent of the Civic Arts Committee in their efforts for sign regulation in the city.⁶⁴ However, in recent exhibits at the Museum of Vancouver and in related articles in newspapers across Canada, blame for the disappearance of neon on Vancouver's streets was placed on the "neon haters" in the CACV and the supporters they earned in the media and City Hall.

The citywide dismantling of Vancouver's "neon jungle" was, in fact, not the intent of the CACV or the Civic Arts Committee in their campaign for sign control. While contemporary journalists and historians like John Atkin bemoan what they see as the result of a "debate" won by "[o]pinion-makers and civic leaders,"⁶⁵ the almost complete disappearance of neon signs from the city's intensely commercial streets, including Granville, was in fact an unintended outcome of an onerous *Sign By-Law* written by the City of Vancouver Planning Department. The true conflict over sign control in the city was not between those for versus against neon signs, as the Museum of Vancouver has claimed in two recent exhibits.⁶⁶ Rather, it was a power struggle for control over the city's aesthetic development between privileged planners and a group of concerned professionals and patrons of the arts who made up the Civic Arts Committee. While the Planning Department did eventually consider the recommendations of the committee with regards to provisions that should be included in the 1974 *Sign By-Law*, the committee did not intend for provisions that would lead to such a dramatic reduction of neon signs on all of the city's streets. In truth, the almost complete removal of neon signs from all Vancouver streets, including Granville, seems to have been an unintentional yet clear consequence of this larger power struggle. As such, it is unfair and untruthful for contemporary journalists, historians and museum curators to blame the disappearance of Vancouver's "Great White Way" on the "civic beautifiers" of the Civic Arts Committee.●

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Alexander's Ashes

by Peter Broznitsky

A report of unclaimed ashes leads to unexpected connections and the unfolding story of a Russian-Canadian First World War veteran.

This detective story begins, as many do, while reading the morning newspaper, April 10th. Except it was in 2006, and I was reading an electronic *NewsDesk* on a computer. An item and a location caught my eye. "Princeton RCMP releases list of names with 39 unclaimed remains." Princeton: I've been there, a little town in the Okanagan-Similkameen, driven through it many times, filled up with gasoline, eaten there, even had a beer there.

I read on. A defunct funeral home was under investigation for fraudulent bookkeeping. The probe discovered fifty-one remains still in the home, cremated ashes. A list followed, in the hope that family members or anybody who knew how to contact the families would contact the Princeton Detachment.

My eyes scanned down the list. Infant twins — what was the story there? Somebody from 1953. Finally, the last name. Zubick, Alexander — 1985. I straightened, no doubt my eyes widened, my nostrils flared. Zubick. Alexander. A couple of weeks earlier, I had purchased his Great War service medals! Or at least, I purchased medals that had been issued to a man of that name. What was he doing in Princeton?

Flashing back (as detective stories often do), an Internet acquaintance had emailed me about a month before. A medal dealer he knew in London, Ontario had First World War medals for sale, amongst them some to Russians who had served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. No, I couldn't email the dealer, or check his web site. He was old school, did everything over the telephone, even used postage stamps!

So I phoned him. Crusty, gruff. Yes he had some medals. A single British War Medal, and a pair, BWM and Victory. Yes, I could have them. No, he

wouldn't move on the price. Yes, they included service records from Library and Archives Canada. Okay, he would combine the shipping. He said he would ship the next day. Trusted me.

And the next day, I handwrote and sent a cheque. In an envelope, with a stamp. Old school. And shortly thereafter, a package appeared; the medals and records as promised. I looked through the records. No Russian heroes here. One fellow got over to England, but no farther. And Zubick? He had made it to France, but promptly fell ill, and spent the rest of the war in and out of casualty clearing stations, hospitals, and convalescent depots. Ah well, at least he survived the Great War. I put his file into my cabinet, to wait a time for further research.



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Alexander Zubick's medals: British War Medal and a Victory medal.

COURTESY PETER BROZNITSKY

That April night I retrieved Zubick's file from the sedimentary layers in my office. Born in Russia in 1897, he was living in Dreamwold, Saskatchewan when he was conscripted in January 1918. He left for England in April and spent time in a reserve battalion. In July he reported for duty with the 1st Battalion. Canadian Railway Troops, who were working around Etaples and Boulogne. A week later Zubick was ill, with eczema so bad he was hospitalized. He served a total of about four weeks with his unit, the rest of the time being treated in the war-time medical system. He returned to Canada in May 1919 and was finally discharged as medically unfit in September in Quebec. The address given on the Medal Index card was Denzil, Saskatchewan, but this was crossed out, and Okeefe Avenue, Vernon, BC written over. Vernon. Was this the Princeton connection?¹

In the olden days, I would have worked the phones or driven around the province in a '52 Mercury Meteor. Now, I began Googling. No Zubicks in Princeton. Next, British Columbia Vital Statistics. Ah, here we go. On October 12th 1985 Alexander Zubick, aged 88, had died in Vancouver.² If this was my man, how did his ashes wind up in Princeton? More searches. A Bertha Zubick, aged 79, had died in 1981, in Princeton.³ Were they married? More searches. In 1921 Alexander Zubick married Bertha Skaley in Vernon.⁴ Had to be a match, right? He left the army, moved to Vernon, married this Bertha, they moved to Princeton. After his wife's death, a sad Alexander left Princeton for the big city, maybe for medical treatment. My story was coming together.

I phoned the Princeton RCMP Detachment the next day and spoke to the clerk. No, nobody had claimed Zubick's ashes. About all she could tell me was that Zubick was 89 when he died. Not quite a match. Three angles now. Was my man, the Russian Zubick who said he would be living in Vernon, the same as the fellow who died in Vancouver aged 88, and the same as the box of ashes with the name Zubick aged 89 reposing in Princeton?

More Googling. I found an earlier newspaper article in *The Vancouver Sun* that described a Princeton woman receiving the wrong ashes from the funeral home, but nothing about Zubick. Then a *Penticton Herald*

article, even earlier, that had broken the story. A reporter's name. Find the Herald's website, get his email address. He's busy but flips me to his colleague. That night, the reporter calls on the phone. We talk, I describe my story as it stands so far. The next day, an article appears in the *Herald*. I'm quite pleased that the journalist got everything just about right.⁵

But I needed to keep moving. The minimum details provided by Vital Statistics weren't enough. I would have to go to Cloverdale. Yes, Cloverdale, famous for the rodeo and Superman's Smallville. But also home to the Cloverdale Branch of the Surrey Public Library, with large genealogical holdings and microfilm readers.

Everything was in disarray. They were under reconstruction, water dripped into a bucket on the stairs. The boxes of microfilm were all over the place. I couldn't find the deaths for 1985. Finally, I had to be a man and ask for directions. "Oh, we don't have them yet," the librarian replied. "Victoria says we should get them any day." Arrgghh.

Move on, let's try Deaths for 1981. Yes, there she is. Print it off. Born in North Dakota in 1902, Bertha's parents were from Russia. She was married at the time of her death, to Alexander Zubick. Getting closer. The informant on the certificate, whose name I will change here, was her daughter Edna Korner, also living in Princeton.

Next, the City Directories. Princeton 1940, a Mrs. Bertha Zubick. Princeton 1956, Mrs. Bertha Zubick, Proprietor Home Laundry. Mrs. Edna Korner, widow. If Bertha was Alexander's wife and Edna their daughter, why hadn't Edna picked up her father's ashes? And was the Princeton Alexander the same as the Vancouver Alexander? And was the Princeton Alexander my Russian Alexander? I had to link the two.

Let's try Marriages for 1921. Bingo, print it off. Alexander Zubick, born in Russia, aged 24, had married Bertha, born in North Dakota. His signature. It looked like the signature on his conscription attestation and other military records. Everything is so close now, everything almost matches perfectly. Why can't I get his death certificate to confirm date of birth and next of kin?

I Google Edna Korner. Yes, she still lives in Princeton, at the same address as given on her mother's death certificate. She's involved with the Royal Canadian Legion. But if she is Alexander's daughter, why hasn't she claimed the ashes? I don't want to contact her, in case I stir up something.

Days pass. Nothing. No call from the *Penticton Herald* reporter, telling me our article has busted the file wide open. No call from the Princeton RCMP, asking me for further information. Finally I crack. I email the non-commissioned officer in charge Princeton, asking him if anybody has claimed the Zubick ashes, as I believe I have the Zubick medals, and that the Last Post Fund could step in to properly honour the remains. He replies that somebody has claimed the ashes!

Okay, now what? A letter, with a postage stamp and a Princeton address. I respectfully tell Edna that we may both know something about Alexander Zubick, and if she so desires, she can contact me. If she doesn't, I will understand.

A few days later, a phone call. Yes, Mrs. Edna Korner had claimed the ashes. No, she didn't know her father very well. He was born in Russia and had been in the Great War. He left her mother and her in Princeton in the 1930s, when she was 7. She saw him next at age 19 at her wedding, and then at the George Derby care home in Vancouver. He was living in Vancouver, she thought, with his mother. He suffered from a rare skin disease. So the untreatable eczema that may have saved his life by keeping him out of the front line in 1918 was misdiagnosed back then by the Canadian doctors.

When he died in 1985, Edna was in Greece on holidays, and her daughter handled things. She must have arranged for the ashes to be sent from Vancouver to Princeton, and then, for whatever reason, they sat in the funeral home, to be forgotten for twenty years. Edna doesn't bite when I mention I have his medals. Where were the ashes now? Edna had sprinkled them on her peony bush in the garden.

Postscript 2013

In 2009 a distant relative found my website with Zubick's name and provided me with a picture of Alexander in George Derby in 1975/1976.

In 2012 I did go back to Cloverdale and locate his death certificate. He had died at Shaughnessy Hospital, at the time a Veterans care centre. On this form he was aged 89, born on April 11, 1896. He had been suffering from Chronic Brain Syndrome (dementia) leading to malnutrition. Poor guy had wasted away.

Recently, I contact Edna again who replies with the name of the disease and a photo of Alexander from 1918. Three generations of Zubicks suffered from Hailey-Hailey Disease, which was not discovered until 1939.

It's almost time to close the file, but like in all good detective stories, some threads will be left dangling. How did his medals wind up in London, Ontario? Some Zubicks live there, run a scrap metal business. Are they related to Alexander? Maybe a connection to his brother, John James Zubick, from Omsk, Siberia, who enlisted in Saskatchewan in May 1916?●



COURTESY *EDNA KORNER

Alexander on left in 1918 with unknown soldier.

Endnotes

1. Alexander Zubick, *Soldiers of the First World War: Attestation Papers*, Regimental number 126377. <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/cef/001042-100.01-e.php>. His complete service record can be found at Library & Archives Canada Record Group 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 10682 - 61.
2. Alexander Zubick, Certificate of Death 1985-09-017979, 12 October 1985, Vancouver, British Columbia. (British Columbia Archives).
3. Bertha Alvina Zubick, Certificate of Death 1981-09-010035, 20 June 1981, Princeton, British Columbia. (British Columbia Archives).
4. Alexander Zubick and Bertha Skaley, British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency, Certificate of Registration of Marriage 1921-09-236973, 21 December 1921, Vernon, British Columbia. (British Columbia Archives), microfilm B12907.
5. John Moorhouse, "Mystery of unclaimed ashes remains unsolved," *Penticton Herald*, Thursday, April 13, 2006.

Almost a Crystal Palace

by Robert Ratcliffe Taylor



Raised in Victoria BC one city block from the Willows Fairgrounds, Robert Ratcliffe Taylor has degrees in History from UBC and Stanford. At Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, he taught History for thirty-four years and supported the architectural heritage movement. His publications include studies of German architecture, local Ontario architecture and the history of the Welland Canals.

A shimmering, architectural tower in the middle of the countryside, the Willows exhibition hall at Victoria, BC 1891-1907, captured the confidence of an era.

From 1891 to c. 1948 in the municipality of Oak Bay in Victoria, an autumn agricultural and industrial exhibition was held, at a complex of buildings, including a race track, grandstand, and later a riding academy. During World War I, these fairgrounds were used as a military camp. In the 1930s and '40s they housed a film studio. The most striking element in their history, however, was the first main exhibition hall which, said a contemporary, was "almost a Crystal Palace".¹

The "palace" was the brainchild of the British Columbia Agricultural Association which for several years had sponsored fall fairs at Beacon Hill Park. Here, the exhibitions were held "in a ram-shackle, barn-like structure, affording neither accommodation nor light at all suitable."²

For several years, moreover, attempts were made to have an annual fall show in New Westminster, alternating with Victoria. To this end, in 1889 New Westminster built a large exhibition building.

Victoria was not to be outdone. 1890s confidence in the local economy was high and more than one million dollars' worth of buildings was erected in the city in 1891 alone.³ Many locals agreed with the journalist who wrote that "the Capital City of the Province should be the capital in reality as well as in name" and so should have an annual fall fair.⁴

At a meeting on October 9, 1890, the city council discussed the need to hold a permanent annual exhibition starting the following year in Victoria. The "Driving Park" (race track) in Oak Bay was suggested as a site. (Still unincorporated as a municipality, Oak Bay was mainly rural and agricultural in nature.) Inspired by the city council's support, in 1891 the Agricultural Association purchased 2.42 hectares (6 acres) of land just south of the track. On this property, at the end of Willows Road, near what is now the junction of Haultain Street and Eastdowne Road, the main exhibition hall

would be built. Costing \$45,000, the enterprise was supported by a city by-law through which the council borrowed \$25,000, ratified by public vote.⁵ Like most yearly exhibitions, Victoria's offered local producers the chance to exhibit and advertise their fruit, vegetables and livestock as well as manufactured items. The exhibits in the "palace", of course, did not include livestock which were housed elsewhere on the grounds. The fairs were held in late September and early October, lasting about one week.

The success of London's Great Exhibition of 1851 with its stunning "Crystal Palace" inspired the construction of similar buildings throughout Canada, the United States and Europe. The new availability of sheet glass and (in the case of the English structure) cast iron for construction meant that such buildings could have transparency and lightness, well lit on the interior and often dazzling in the exterior sunlight.

In the *Victoria Daily Colonist* in June 1891, the architect Cornelius Soule called for tenders for "Agricultural Exhibition Buildings" to be constructed at what would become the Willows Fairgrounds in time for the September event.⁶ The contractor was William Lorimer who "lost no time in rushing forward his work to completion" in sixty-five days. Some locals had "doubts about his sanity" in accepting the contract to build the hall so quickly.⁷ Such fears were justified because the structure was actually not fully ready when the exhibition opened on September 29 and was completed only by October 30 1891. It would have to be "renovated" in time for the 1892 fair.⁸

Before the construction of the provincial Legislative Buildings, the Willows Exhibition Hall was the most imposing building in Victoria or even in British Columbia. Understandably, local people were deeply impressed by Cornelius Soule's creation. The city directory for 1892 described this "magnificent exposition building ... [as] an ornament to the city,

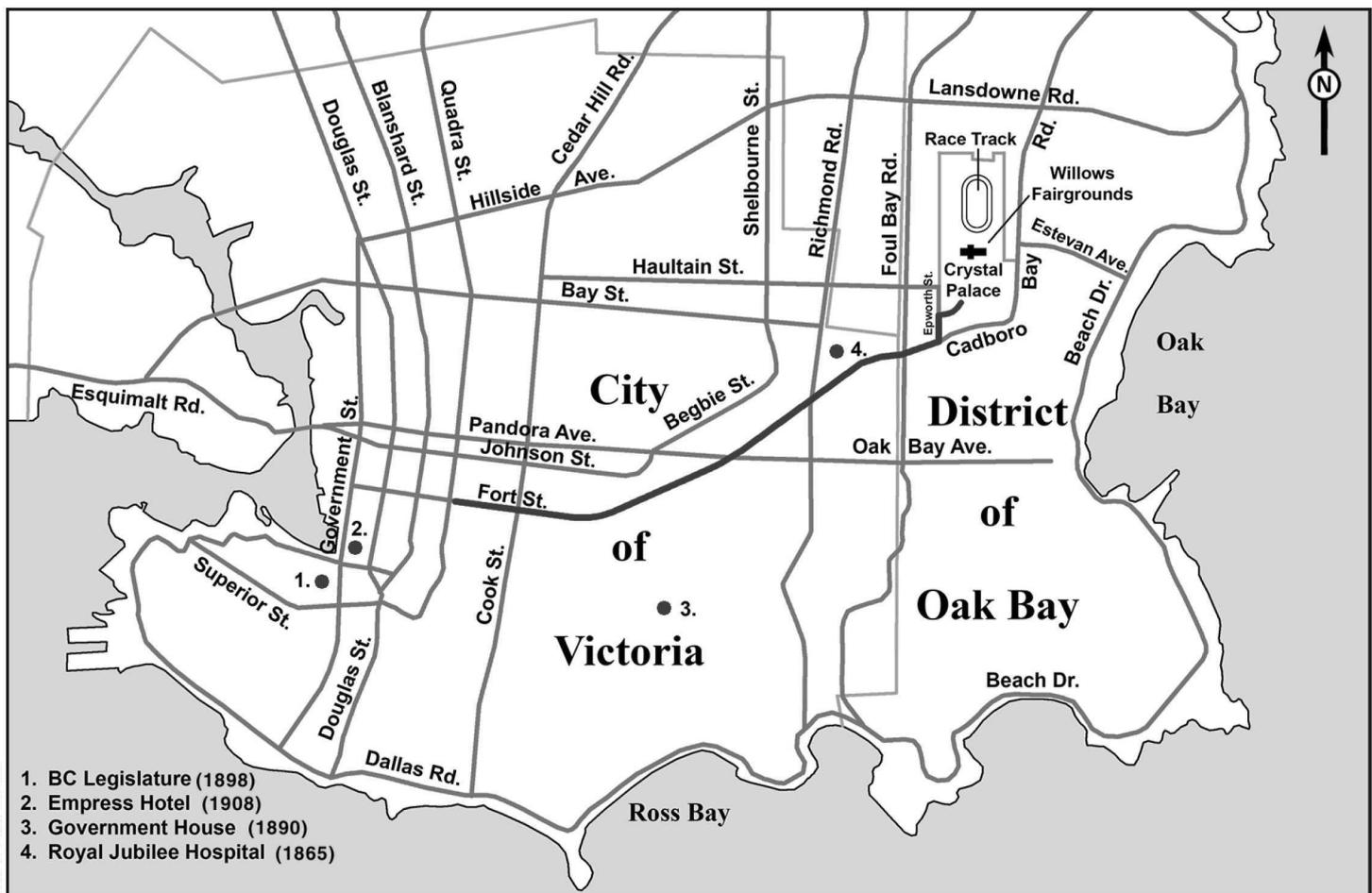
... [and] of inestimable value to the entire Province."⁹ Reminiscing in 1908, the *Colonist* opined that it was "generally admitted to be the most handsome building of its kind in western Canada"¹⁰ Perhaps local pride inspired this praise, but such opinions have been buttressed by those of architectural historian Fern Graham who calls the structure "remarkable".¹¹ On the other hand, some writers have stressed the incongruous appearance of the new hall in what was primarily agricultural land. The setting was "fit for *The Brothers Karamazov* in 19th century St Petersburg" said a journalist in 1975.¹² Clearly, the "palace" was impressive and, in retrospect, remains so.¹³

The hall was distinguished by its towering verticality. The structure was of wood, which appears brown or black in early photographs but after 1901 was painted a lighter shade with a green trim. The shingled exterior walls reflected the popular "Stick Style" with rectilinear gridwork and latticing. The ground plan was that of a Latin cross; i.e. a long nave and a shorter transept (two projecting wings) at the middle. This "nave" was over 18 m (60 ft.) wide by over 54 m (180 ft.) long; the wings each extended 7 m (25 ft.) from the crossing. The roof rose over 17 m (56 ft.)¹⁴ and was surmounted by an octagonal tower with a dome on top of which was a cupola. At either end of the "nave" was a turret

*The Willows
"Crystal Palace"
as it looked new in
1891, showing the
public entrance in
the porch at the
left.*



IMAGE C-09021 COURTESY OF ROYAL BC MUSEUM, BC ARCHIVES



The street layout above is from a later era, but the map clearly shows the Willows Fairgrounds as remote from downtown Victoria in rural Oak Bay, accessible mainly via Fort Street.

or open cupola. At the four corners of the base of the dome's platform were four smaller towers capped with cupolas. Each of these four towers was connected to the dome structure by a walkway. Windows wrapped around the base of each tower. The dome itself had six windows. Around its outer edge was an open balcony, reached by an exterior staircase. From here, fairgoers enjoyed magnificent views of the countryside, the Olympic Mountains and the Sooke Hills — and the games and races on the grounds to the north. Flags and banners flew from the towers and from poles on each of the building's twenty-two gables.

Most visitors approached the fairgrounds from the southwest at Willows Road, passing under a large wooden pedimented arch at the main or western entrance to the hall. Flower beds, lawns and shrubs flanked the building.¹⁵ Porte cochères — one at each end of the building — marked the entrances to the hall. The western one had a staircase for

public access, while the eastern one had a ramp to facilitate the entrance and exit of heavy exhibits.

In the centre of the ground floor stood a fountain surrounded by exotic ferns and flowers. Above it rose two arcaded galleries which were used for lighter-weight exhibits. A wide staircase at each of the hall's corners drew visitors to the upper floors.

"One of the best features" of the hall, wrote an observer, was "the large and airy windows". There were "no dark or shady corners" inside.¹⁶

The fifty-two large plate glass windows appeared to extend almost uninterruptedly from the floor to the roof. Those on the ground floor were tall, narrow and rectangular. Those above were arched. Bull's-eye windows were set under the four gables of the main cross-wing and half-moon windows were set into the gables on the side of each wing. At either end of the "nave" were large almost square



IMAGE C-06072 COURTESY OF ROYAL BC MUSEUM, BC ARCHIVES

windows. In the daylight hours, therefore, the interior was indeed well lit and occasionally stunningly illuminated. "The setting sun," wrote a local journalist, "shimmering through the haze of the warm October sky, shed an orange-tinted lustre through the large glass windows of the exhibition, on the faces and attire of the throng."¹⁷

By 1890 electric lighting was to be found in many of Victoria's offices and in some well-to-do homes", but at night the artificially illuminated hall was a revelation to many, "like a scene from fairyland".¹⁸ When the hall opened in 1891, twenty electric lamps were installed on the ground floor and a further 25 on each of the galleries. R.B. McMicking, who was the electrician in charge of Victoria's street lighting system, supervised the installation.¹⁹ In 1903 a searchlight was mounted on the dome, sweeping the countryside each evening for several hours during the fair. In 1907,

the entrance to the hall was outlined with coloured lights. On the ground floor, a three-horsepower gasoline engine provided power for the illumination and for the machinery in the exhibits.

Inside the Palace

A visit to the Willows hall was a feast for senses other than the visual. Entering the buildings, fair-goers were confronted with the various fragrances of the floral exhibit. In several years, they inhaled the aroma of hot coffee and freshly baked biscuits prepared by one of the exhibitors. As well as the splash of the fountain, there was much to hear as well. The bandstand was often occupied by "Professor" Emil Pferdner's orchestra²⁰ and occasionally by groups such as the Nanaimo Cornet Band and the Fifth Regiment Band.

Looking south, the "Palace", circa 1901, looming up out of the countryside like a Hollywood fantasy. Between the Chinese market gardens in the foreground and the hall is the racetrack with the grandstand on the right.

In its inaugural year the “palace” interior was “artistically attended to by Mr. McNeill” of the Victoria Theatre. Later, J.C. Richards, an upholsterer, was in charge²¹ of the decoration. Determining the look of the hall could become a family affair. In 1894, the “sisters, wives and daughters of the contestants” made “pretty decorations” and the bandstand was decorated with “lovely specimens of Japanese wallpaper”.²²

In this year, the Agricultural Association had shields painted, one for each part of the province (including one for Washington State) that were hung about the hall. In 1902, Japanese lanterns, flags of the nations, and coloured bunting were affixed to the balustrades of the galleries.

Exhibits

Within the Willows “palace”, wrote the Agricultural Association, “the products of the Province of every conceivable kind will have ample room and light for exhibiting their various excellencies”.²³ Indeed, at least in its first year of operation, the hall attracted many exhibitors. On the day before the 1891 fair opened, “more room was the cry heard on every hand”.²⁴ Several would-be exhibitors who had neglected to reserve space were turned away. In most years, the main floor of the hall housed the displays of manufactured and agricultural products. Two businesses perennially exhibiting their “excellencies” were Victoria’s Albion Iron Works and the Pendray Soap Factory. Local farmers presented their fruit and vegetables as did occasionally producers from the Fraser Valley. There were many and various exhibits. The BC Mining Association often showed examples of coal and other ores. In 1903 on the first gallery the local Manual Training School displayed several boys working on projects. On this and the second gallery were usually the exhibits of crafts and art, including, in two years, the work of Emily Carr.

Some of the exhibits document how much has changed over the past century. On one of the galleries was shown “ladies’ fancy work”, deemed to be “an exemplification of the virtues of the careful house-wife.”²⁵ In Victoria, by the 1890s, the “machine for writing” was as new and fascinating as the computer a century

later and provided a challenge to “muscular” calligraphers. Over the years, typing contests were held in the “palace”, with the contestants judged on speed and accuracy. In 1904, the second gallery saw “a special exhibit of Palmer’s system of muscular penmanship”.²⁶

Some exhibits may surprise 21st century readers. In 1894, for example, R. P. Rithet and Co. (“wholesale merchants, ship and insurance agents”) put up an arch “of peace and plenty”, under which stood a lifesize plaster cast of Aphrodite, the work of Edwin A. Harris. The goddess of love was shown with a bow and arrow and an expression “sweet, pleasing and dignified, with a typical Greek nose, rounded cheeks, and well-carved lips”. The *Times* reported that she stood in an “attitude somewhat like that of the Venus de Milo ... the drapery of course being omitted.”²⁷

Plagued by Problems

An impressive piece of architecture, the hall was beset with problems from the start. The electrical plant was unreliable, even dangerous. On one evening in 1892, all the lights went out. After a few minutes, some were made operational but none functioned in the art gallery all that evening. A standby generator was to be set up but, in October 1894, the power failed again. Renovations to the hall’s fabric were undertaken in winter of 1892-93 but, in 1894 the dome leaked when it rained, damaging the exhibits. In that year, too, the floor of one of the galleries began to sink and had to be shored up while the observation towers, deemed unsafe, were closed to the public.

Between 1896 and 1900, the Palace was abandoned and seems not to have been used at all. The *Colonist* lamented that “this fine big building ... was allowed to fall into a state of premature decay, while the grounds were neglected”.²⁸ In a 1900 response to a petition to revive the annual fairs in the following year, however, Mayor Charles Hayward raised the issue at a city council meeting on 9 October. The councillors were unanimous in favour of the project, but the Association had found that the building’s fabric had deteriorated and was in need of repair. The fact that Victoria was to host a royal visit in 1901 was an added impetus to renovating the structure.

Consequently, the City allotted \$4500 for improvements. Two coats of white paint were applied on the outside and one on the interior. Over a period of ten weeks, the hall's fabric was "strengthened" and brace rods were installed in some areas, so that the city engineer could pronounce the hall "perfectly safe".²⁹

Royal Event

The work was completed mere days before the most impressive event to occur in the hall took place on 1 October, 1901, when the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, later King George and Queen Mary, visited the Willows Fair.³⁰ Accompanied by Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, Lieutenant-Governor Henri-Josèphe Joly de Lotbinière, Mayor Hayward, as well as their own retinue, they were greeted tumultuously. Also present were directors and the board of management of the Agricultural Association and their wives, friends and invited guests.

A band played patriotic music and a crimson carpet was laid out from the main floor to the first gallery. From the ceiling hung a banner emblazoned with the words "The Secret of England's Greatness" and the image of a Bible. Two four year-old girls dressed in white, strewed flowers in the royal couple's path. On the gallery, the Duke thanked the Mayor for the gift of a gold medal and declared the Exhibition formally opened "in a fine loud voice that could be distinctly heard at quite a distance from him".³¹ On a brief walk-about, the Duke and Duchess paid special attention to the exhibit of the British Columbia and Alaska Bazaar (a local collection of aboriginal art), where an "Indian chief" give the Duke a stone carving. The royal party also admired the work of a local taxidermist and the exhibit of applied art. After just under one hour, the visitors left the "palace".



The renovated and repainted "Palace" during the Fair of 1902 with the horseraces underway. The large shed in front of the hall exhibited machinery. The turreted structure on the left housed in different years a maritime exhibit, a creamery, and a restaurant.

Questionable Wiring

Three days after the royal party had been through the hall, on the evening of 4 October 1901, a fire broke out. Several hundred fairgoers were still "promenading" on various floors of the structure when someone noticed flames and smoke coming from the southwest window of the hall's ground floor, near the entrance steps. The flames were reaching up to the first gallery. A stampede ensued but no one was injured. A young employee of one of the electric companies "made a desparate [sic] effort to check [the fire] by getting under the stairway and was nearly burned in consequence".³²

Provincial Constable Daniel Campbell and one F.G. Hall identified the source of the blaze as a small room under the stairway. Campbell raced up to the top floor "three steps at a time" to get the fire extinguishing chemicals stored there. There he found a fireman already unreeling the necessary hose. They threw the hose down to the main level and turned on the fluid, which extinguished the fire almost immediately. A "bucket brigade" was also formed to pour water on the smoldering woodwork. By the time the Victoria fire brigade arrived, they were not needed.

The blaze resulted from the crossing of wires and the lack of proper insulation on certain wiring. Damage turned out to be slight and repairs were made during the night.³³ Eventually, the city Fire Department, headed by Chief Thomas Watson maintained a "squad of men on duty night and day" at the hall during the fairs. Also present was "the old Tiger engine with steam up on hand". The fair authorities would maintain "an ample supply of watchmen . . . night and day".³⁴

Despite these problems, Victorians continued to praise the beauty and magnificence of their "Crystal Palace". In 1907, for example, the *Colonist* exulted, "the main building never looked as well as this year".³⁵ Moreover, safety precautions seemed to have been intensified. By 1907, the authorities had stipulated that "articles will not be admitted [in the exhibits] which by reason of their odor, appearance combustible or explosive nature are injurious, offensive to health or destructive to life and property".³⁶

Demise of the Palace

The demise of the "palace", however, was near. Around 8:00 pm on December 26 1907, the superintendent of the Old Men's Home on nearby Cadboro Bay Road noticed smoke and flames pouring from the front windows and notified the fire department. Meanwhile, the windows shattered, admitting the strong southeast wind which fanned the fire.

By this time of year, the equipment and men present during fair days were long gone and only one fire hydrant stood in the grounds. Fire Chief Watson, upon receiving the alarm, arrived at the site in his horse-drawn buggy in fifteen minutes, but could do nothing. He was followed by the department's hose cart which made "a fast run" but the men found that the aforementioned hydrant gave only a "feeble stream of water" and "proved of little value". On its way to the fire, a "combination chemical and hose cart" became "mired and stuck in the roadway" leading up to the exhibition entrance. Soon a "big four-ton steamer was also mired". It took until 11:00 pm to extricate these vehicles from the mud.

At 9:00 pm, the roof and upper floor of the hall fell in and half an hour later nothing was left but smoking ashes. From the southeast corner of the building (where the blaze started) the fire sent showers of sparks through the air to the nearby restaurant, machinery and poultry halls which were also destroyed. "The central part of the city was lit up as by day", while thousands of citizens", said the *Victoria Daily Times*, came to watch the blaze. Upon seeing the red glow in the sky, some thought that the Royal Jubilee Hospital was on fire. The blaze was said to be visible from Seattle.³⁷

The fairgrounds caretaker, J. Bothwell, who lived in a small house near the grandstand, said that the building had been safely locked up and that he had seen no "suspicious characters" lurking about the hall. Unfortunately, when Bothwell looked for a hose to attach to the only hydrant near the building, he found none. If he had been provided with one, he said, he might have been able to quench the blaze before the firemen arrived.³⁸

The exact cause of the fire was unknown, although the *Colonist* speculated that the blaze was the "work of incendiaries",³⁹ which seems possible given the fact that the structure was

unused at the time and that unexplained fires were the fate of the later exhibition buildings in the 1940s.

The demise of Victoria's "Crystal Palace" was not greeted with universal dismay. Mayor Alfred J. Morley found the fire to be a "blessing in disguise", because the building, he said, had always been "a sort of white elephant, as the cost of repairing it was so great", adding that "it cost almost as much to put up a scaffold as it did to do the work". He looked forward to the erection of "modern buildings".⁴⁰ This was accomplished in time for the 1908 Fair — including a main exhibit hall — but none of them had the confident bravura of the first Willows exhibition hall.

And none of them survived the mid-twentieth century. Today no trace of Cornelius Soule's masterpiece or its successors can be found, for the whole area is covered in suburban housing. In fact, few Victorians have ever heard of their "crystal palace". •

Endnotes

1. *Williams' Illustrated Official British Columbia City Directory ...* (Victoria: R.T. Williams, 1892), 194.
2. *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 1 October 1891, 1.
3. Christopher Hanna, *William Wilson: Pioneer Entrepreneur*, (Victoria: Trafford, 2002), 192.
4. *Victoria Daily Times*, 30 September 1891.
5. \$1 in 1891 converts to approximately \$25 in 2010 money. \$45,000 ≈ \$1,110,000.00. \$25,000 ≈ \$618,000.00. Lawrence H. Officer and Samuel H. Williamson, "Purchasing Power of Money in the United States from 1774 to Present, accessed June 10, 2013. www.measuringworth.com/ppowerus/.
6. Cornelius John Soule (1851-1939) studied architecture at the South Kensington School of Science and Art where he excelled. After articling with a London architect, he emigrated to the United States c. 1871. In Boston and Cleveland, he partnered with other architects before settling in Ontario. Drawn to the west coast, he designed a residence in Victoria in 1890 and St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in early 1891. After designing the Willows hall, he partnered with Robert Day on the Point Comfort Hotel on Mayne Island and North Ward School in Victoria in 1893.
7. *Colonist*, 30 September 1891, 1. Glasgow-born Lorimer (1846 -1918) later described himself as a carpenter, patternmaker or mechanic.
8. *Colonist*, 28 September 1892, 1.
9. *Williams' Illustrated Official British Columbia Directory, ...* 104. "One of the handsomest pieces of architecture on the Pacific coast", said an 1891 publication, *Victoria Illustrated* (32) published by W.H. Ellis who, incidentally, was president of the Agricultural Association.
10. *Colonist*, 1 September 1908, 11.
11. "The Crystal Palace in Canada", *Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada. Bulletin.* (March 1994):Vol. 19, no. 1, 11. R.H. Soule (the architect's great-grandson) notes that the hall was "hailed as a significant landmark in the history of exhibition architecture in Canada." (*Building the West: the Early Architects of British Columbia*, (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2003), 183.) On 5 October 1891 (2), the *Vancouver Daily World* published a description (which may have been inspired by Victoria opinion): the building was "one of the finest agricultural buildings in Canada and by far the handsomest edifice west of Toronto".
12. *The Brothers Karamazov* is the final novel by the Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky, completed in 1880.
13. The hall "dominated the pastoral scene like a gothic mansion." Ab Kent, "Weep for Willows", *Times*, 12 February 1965, 6.]
14. *Williams' Illustrated Official British Columbia Directory ...* 104.
15. But later photographs show cattle grazing in front of the building. Early in the hall's history, a wooden fence about nine feet high surrounded the building but by 1901 it no longer appears in photographs.
16. *Times*, 28 September, 1891, 5.
17. *Colonist*, 2 October 1901, 1.
18. *Colonist*, 28 September 1892, 5.
19. McMicking (1843-1915), from Queenston, Ontario, was also manager of the Victoria and Esquimalt Telephone Company and, later, an alderman.
20. Pferdner (1856-1923) emigrated from Germany to the U.S. and thence to Victoria, where he was a military bandmaster and later music director for the Royal Victoria Theatre as well as a piano teacher.
21. *Colonist*, 29 September 1891, 1.
22. *Colonist*, 27 and 30 September, 1894, 2 and 3.
23. *B.C. Agricultural Association: review of its history, what it has accomplished: the new grounds and Crystal Palace*, (1891), 4.
24. *Colonist*, 29 September 1891. *Colonist*, 28 September 1892, 1.
25. *Colonist*, 28 September 1892, 1.
26. *Colonist*, 28 September 1904, 8. Developed in the United States in the 1890s, the method focussed on shoulder and arm movements, rather than on the fingers.
27. *Colonist*, 2 October 1894, 1.
28. *Colonist*, 2 October 1901, 12.
29. *Times*, 26 September 1901, 2.
30. They were touring the Empire at the time. The Duke was actually Prince of Wales but had not yet been invested with the title.
31. *Colonist*, 2 October 1901, 1. No public address system was in effect yet.
32. *Colonist*, 5 October 1901, 1.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Colonist*, 28 September 1904, 1.
35. *Colonist*, 25 September, 4.
36. *Ibid*, 8 September 1907, 17.
37. 27 December 1907, 1; *Colonist* 27 December 1907, 1.
38. *Times*, 27 December 1907, 1.
39. *Colonist*, 27 December 1907, 1.
40. *Times*, 27 October 1907, 1.

One-Eye Lake Plane Crash

by Sterling Haynes



Sterling Haynes received his medical degree from the University of Alberta. He served as a colonial officer in Nigeria and practiced medicine in the Cariboo, Alberta and Alabama.

A day off for a kinda green GP in Williams Lake in August 1961 turned into a flight without a map to the scene of a plane crash.

In 1961, on Tuesday my day off in August, I was called to go to One-Eyed Lake in the Chilcotin region, a few miles from the Puntzi U.S. Air force Base. A light plane had crashed with three people aboard and Cappy Lloyd, the radio-telephone operator at the One-Eye Lake Lodge asked me to go to the wreck immediately. I gathered my bag, Thomas splints, yards of bandaging and dressings and 16 pints (10 L) of IV fluids and soon I was at the dock by Colonel Joe's float plane on Williams Lake. Joe, a southerner, had been a U.S. fighter

pilot on the Burma Road in WW11. Joe was getting ready for the trip and was gassing up his Cessna 180 by hand from a 45 gallon drum of high octane fuel when I arrived.

I was in my second year of frontier practice in Williams Lake with four other Docs when I got the call about 9 on a sunny morning to fly on a mercy flight into the Chilcotin. I was 33 years old country Doc and 'kinda green' but was big, strong and ready to go. I drove down to the Lakes' dockside and located the 'bush pilot' Colonel Joe and his Cessna 182.



IMAGE I-05158 COURTESY OF ROYAL BC MUSEUM, BC ARCHIVES

"What do ya no good Doc? Don't want to hear no troubles – jist give me the positives," said Joe. "Here, I'll help load your stuff in the back of my plane. Then we'll be off like a dirty shirt to One-Eye Lake."

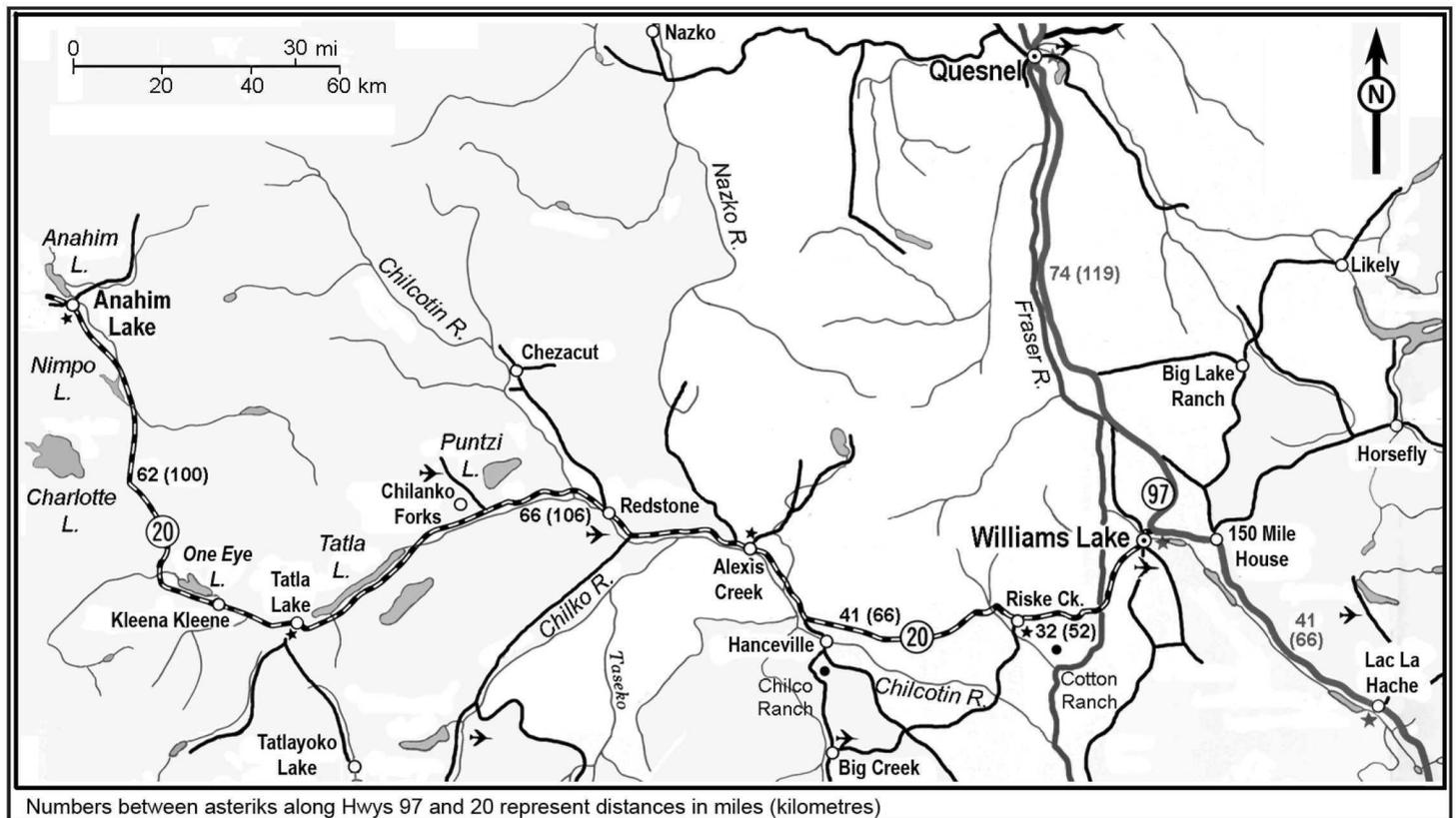
Once we were in the air Joe asked me to find the section of the maps that showed One-Eye Lake. I searched the back of the plane but that topographical map section was gone. In the hazy, smoke from forest fires we searched, flying at 300 feet (100 m) west of the Puntzi Mountain US airbase until we heard and saw a man on a small lake firing shotgun shells. It was Cappy. He waved us in and we landed on One-Eye Lake.

With the U.S. sergeant medic and a PFC soldier from Puntzi Mountain and two young First Nations lads we set down the trail with Cappy in the lead. We walked about half a mile (800 m) and heard screaming, and then we saw the front end and the prop buried in the mud. I was first one there and the boys followed with all the medical equipment. The sergeant carried the Thomas splints and mesh metal stretcher. I

managed to pry open the door and found Jack, the pilot dead. Kenny Huston was still strapped in the co-pilot's seat and Jack's 'teen age son was sitting on sleeping bags at the back of the plane nursing his ankle. Kenny's scalp was on the dashboard. I remember throwing Kenny's bagged tomato sandwich on the floor and stuffing Kenny's scalp in the brown bag and putting it in my pocket. All five of us managed to gently get Kenny onto the padded metal wire stretcher and I placed one leg in a Thomas splint for his badly fractured femur. Then I threaded two intra-catheters into each broken arm's veins. The two young men carried the bottles of saline. Cappy assisted the young lad out of the plane and helped him hobble back to the lodge. A few hundred yards along the trail Kenny stopped breathing and I intubated him on the muddy path.¹ Then his stertorous breathing reassured me as we carried Kenny along the swampy lakeshore.²

While we were away Colonel Joe had gassed up the plane in anticipation of flying the injured back to Williams Lake.

*Left on page 26:
A tranquil scene
at One Eye Lake,
1969.*



Map of the Cariboo Chilcotin.

Lt. Col. Hammy Boucher in full military regalia in the Canadian Medical Corp, 1962.

“Doc, what say we strap Kenny to one of the pontoons? We don’t have room in my plane.”

“Colonel Joe, are you out of your mind? I’ll get the RCMP’s large Beaver aircraft to fly down from Prince George. When you get back to Williams Lake notify the hospital matron, Doreen Campbell, of our problems, we’ll be back in three or four hours.”

“OK, Doc.”

We had a great trip back in the *Beaver*. Once back at War Memorial hospital in Williams Lake, my partner, John Hunt, and I in the splinted some of the 43 fractures and transfused Kenny with six units of blood. I retrieved the scalp from my brown sandwich bag and re-attached Kenny’s scalp with many stitches. At dawn the next day Kenny was transferred by an “Air-Sea Rescue’s” Grumman flying boat to the Richmond docks and then to the Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) under the care of Hammy Boucher. Kenny was to remain a patient in VGH for three years. Kenny returned to town with no crutches and after a long 40 months, married Doreen Campbell, the hospital matron. Ken’s recovery was due to the great treatment provided by Hammy and Hec Gillespie and the resident staff of VGH.●



COURTESY BARRIE BAYLIFF

Endnotes

A version of this story titled *Hammy and Hector* was published in the *BC Medical Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 8, October 2010.

1. intubate: insert a tube into (a person or a body part, especially the trachea for ventilation). *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1998).
2. stertorous: (of breathing) noisy and laboured. *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*.

In the Winter 2013 issue of *British Columbia History*

Emory Creek Revisited

Emory Creek: The Environmental Legacy of Gold Mining on the Fraser River - Revisited
by G. B. Leech and Joan Cardiff

The White Sultan of Victoria

The Extraordinary Adventures of Brigadier Sir James Timothy Whittington Landon KCVO
by Paul G. Chamberlain, PhD

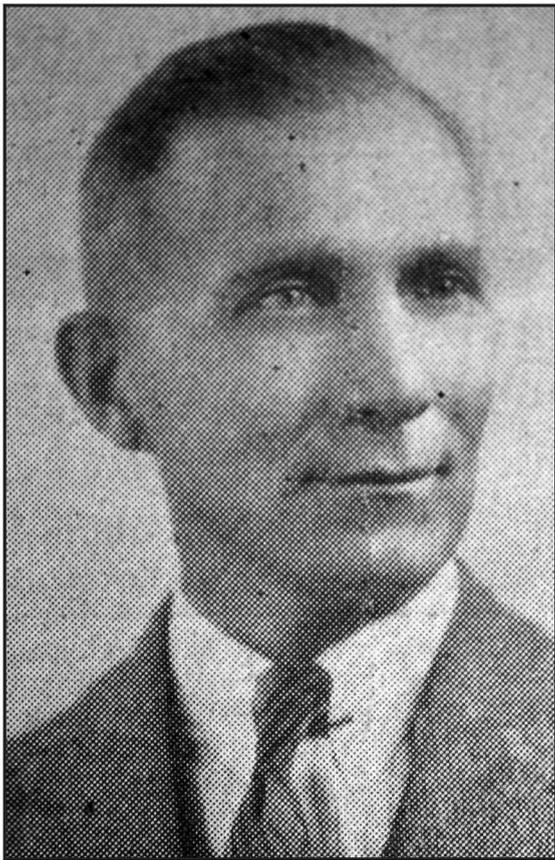
The Viaduct that Saved Commercial Drive

by Jak King

The story of Charles Smith and the First Avenue Viaduct is the creation story of the Drive, a story without which East Vancouver's history would have been markedly different.



Jak King is an historian who has lived in the Commercial Drive neighbourhood for more than 20 years. He has published two books on the history of the Drive and is currently working on volumes three and four. He is a founder member of the Grandview Heritage Group which works to identify, preserve and celebrate the history and heritage of this East Van district.



effect on the people and households in Grandview. Hundreds of lots in the district were surrendered to the city for failure to pay taxes. With the vast number of empty lots and the consequent lack of any need to provide reasonable transportation to those sections, the City had not felt it necessary to spend any of their limited resources on grading, paving or servicing many of the streets running east of Victoria Drive.

As the economic conditions of the Depression were slowly alleviated, the eastside was being left behind in the recovery. For example, while almost 1400 houses and apartments were built in the west side of Vancouver in 1935, fewer than 300 were constructed east of Ontario Street that year. Most of the houses in Grandview were already considered older stock and many were run down and dilapidated, causing locals to campaign often about what they called the "slumification" of East Vancouver.

A City Engineer had contemptuously described Grandview in these years as the City's "back door": it wasn't that important in the scheme of things and could be allowed to become shabby in a way that a front door never would be. The *Highland Echo* was no doubt accurate when it editorialized that westside and downtown interests, including the daily metropolitan newspapers, saw Grandview as an unpleasant sort of place inhabited by an unpleasant sort of people, namely the working classes. By 1935, Grandview had become identified, in one newspaper's words, as "the Cinderella in the family of Vancouver suburbs."¹

Part of the problem stemmed from the urban planning consequences of Grandview's geography. Grandview and Commercial Drive sit on the high ground just east of the, then-undeveloped, False Creek Flats. Trapped behind this barrier, Commercial Drive was cut off, in a material way, from the developing city. Motivated partly by the need to detour

July 1st 2013 was the 75th anniversary of the opening of the First Avenue Viaduct, an event that rescued and re-invented what was then a failing Commercial Drive suburb and linked it firmly once and for all to the growing city of Vancouver.

The boom for building in Grandview, of which Commercial Drive is the retail and social heart, was in the decade before the First World War, and by 1914, the neighbourhood was filling out and thriving. Unfortunately, the impact of the War and the business downturns immediately after, left the Drive without much opportunity for further development and expansion. These difficulties were exacerbated a decade later by the economic disruption of the Great Depression which had a devastating

*Charles E. Smith,
the man behind
the grand plan for
Commercial Drive.*

THE HIGHLAND ECHO, DATE, PAGE.



COURTESY JAK KING

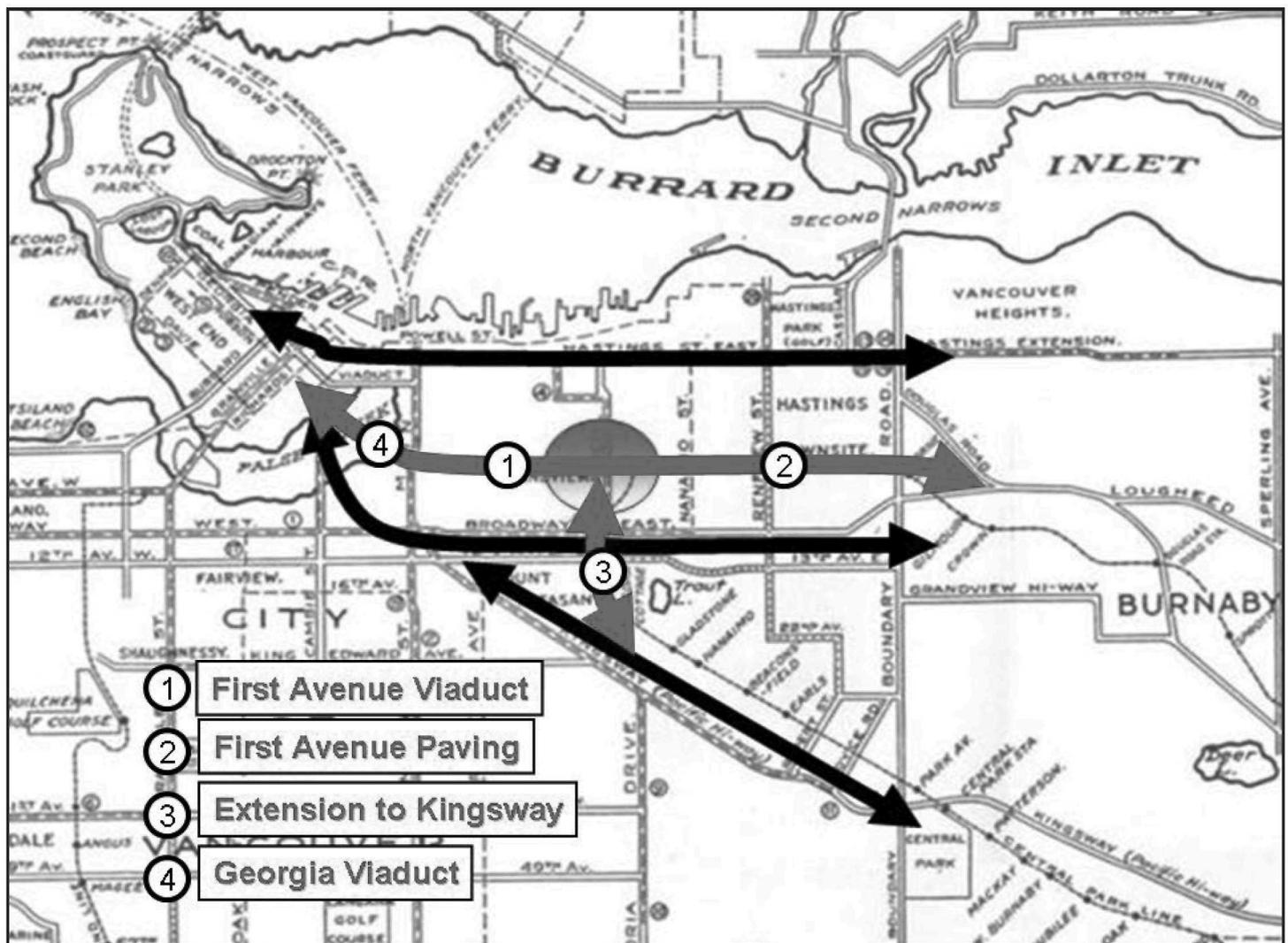
Grandview's isolation.

around the Flats, city planners had developed the primary east-west routes to and from downtown Vancouver north of Grandview along Hastings Street and south of Grandview along Broadway. Traffic coming along Kingsway was also prevented from visiting the district because Commercial essentially ended at Clark Park, leaving no direct road connection from Kingsway to the Drive.

This configuration left Commercial Drive stuck in the middle of nowhere, and it seemed quite possible to some that the suburb might simply disappear as an independent business centre. But there were ways out of this transportation trap. In fact, a grand plan had been proposed by Charles E. Smith since at least the early 1920s.

Smith was an Australian who landed in Vancouver in 1907. He arrived in steerage and with a tourist landing permit, but within two years he held many thousands of dollars' worth of property on Commercial Drive. Between 1909 and his early death in 1948, there was little of importance that went on around the Drive that Charles Smith did not have a part in. As a realtor, building manager, legal advisor and insurance agent, Smith was the consummate insider and he covered all the big deals.

Smith's grand plan included a major new east-west thoroughfare right across Vancouver with First and Commercial as a primary intersection. He proposed that the newly constructed Lougheed Highway bringing traffic from the east and the south be linked



COURTESY JAK KING

to First Avenue at Boundary Road. The traffic would then be carried through the centre of Commercial Drive's shopping district, and onto a viaduct or bridge over the False Creek Flats from First & Clark to Terminal Avenue, and thence down to Main Street. From there, he suggested another viaduct that would take this traffic downtown to Georgia Street. The Fraser Valley would thus be linked through Commercial Drive and Vancouver to the new Lions Gate Bridge by an almost straight thoroughfare.

At the same time, Commercial Drive would be extended south to connect with Kingsway in an attempt to divert some traffic away from an already clogged Main Street and, not incidentally, to divert that traffic from downtown to Commercial's retail interests.

If such a plan could be achieved then riches indeed would flow to the merchants of Commercial Drive. However, looking back from today it is difficult to understand just how much a leap of the imagination was needed for this vision. The very idea of First Avenue as a major east-west thoroughfare was a fanciful idea in the 1920s and early 30s. The First Avenue of those years was an unimpressive roadway at best; from its intersection with Commercial, it traveled five blocks west down the steep hill to Clark Drive, where it simply stopped as it had nowhere else to go, with the cliffs and the Flats in the way. Gravel-topped and with grass verges where the sidewalks should be it could have been a country lane.

Traveling east from Commercial, First Avenue wasn't fully graded, it was narrower

Charles Smith's Grand Plan.

than standard, and travel east beyond Victoria Drive was very uncomfortable over a series of short, sharp hills all the way to Rupert Street.

There were few cars on that route and the intersection with Commercial had no traffic control of any kind; it didn't need any so long as you watched out for the streetcars. It took a strong dose of imagination — and probably a pro-Commercial Drive bent — to see First & Commercial as a thriving urban centre, let alone as the hub of a miles long highway corridor linking the eastern borders of the metropolis with downtown Vancouver.

This was a desperately ambitious program and the barriers to success were very high. In order to have any chance of success at all, the boosters of Commercial Drive needed to tell a really good story, to develop a master narrative within which they could position their proposals, a background against which the proposals made some sense. The master narrative that Commercial Drive's boosters chose was a story of neighborhood victimization.

They launched claims of a constant discrimination against the east end of the city in general, and against Commercial Drive in particular, in favour of downtown and westside interests. They positioned Grandview as the neglected colony of the indifferent Vancouver empire, and they pitched their demands as reasonable requests for deserved equal treatment.

A man with aristocratic bearing and a fine voice, the grand plan's author Charles E. Smith was happy addressing an audience. He spoke often and eloquently to anyone who would listen on the discrimination he claimed Vancouver and its civic bodies had shown against Commercial Drive. He ran for alderman in 1930 on this very program, claiming that he and Grandview should not suffer another two years of stagnation and vacillation.

The First Avenue Bridge or viaduct was the key component of Smith's grand plan to free Commercial Drive from its transportation trap. The viaduct would make it easy for traffic to cross the False Creek Flats and access Commercial from First Avenue, which itself would become a thoroughfare from Commercial to Main. Crucially, once First Avenue had been thus established at its

western end, pressure could be brought to extend it eastward toward Boundary Road and the Lougheed Highway.

The history of this project fed directly into the narrative of the neglected suburb: Commercial Drive merchants, following Smith's lead, had demanded the viaduct for years without any satisfaction, and this had bred resentment. The target of all that resentment tended to be City Council. However, it has to be said that Vancouver City Council had on three separate occasions put all the money needed for the First Avenue Bridge to the electorate as part of City Council's overall plans for the following year. And on all three occasions — in 1930, 31 and 32 — the bylaws had been defeated by the voters. Apprehensive for the future in troubled financial times, and not seeing any advantage for themselves, the majority of voters elsewhere in the city had pulled tight the drawstrings on the public purse and denied the Drive its desires.

However, the discrimination narrative was useful; a monumental spin for effect, and successful, too, in many ways. Whenever an occasion arose, speakers from the eastside continued to harp on the terrible conditions that, they said, were the result of a cumulative process of deterioration due entirely to neglect by the civic authorities. By mid-1938 it had been said so often that the *Vancouver News Herald*, at least, seems to have bought into the story. They wrote that "the people of Grandview have been very patient, and repeated defeats would have daunted less courageous people."²

The abolition of the Vancouver City ward system in 1935 removed the most obvious political avenue for a local party of municipal discontent. But the group of leaders, Charles Smith and his friends, that emerged on the Drive in the 1930s and 40s were in general independent merchants and salaried professionals who were far more interested in commerce than they were in ideology. In fact, they were stridently agnostic when it came to party politics. However, without an alderman of their own, the purveyors of Commercial Drive's grand plan and the narrative that supported it needed to find another institutional base from which to launch their proposals. They also needed a propaganda

outlet not controlled by the downtown interests.

The Grandview Chamber of Commerce, originally founded in 1917, and its mouthpiece the *Highland Echo*, a successful weekly neighborhood paper, neatly filled both roles.

The Grandview Chamber of Commerce had had a number of high points in its history. In 1928, for example, it led the fight to create Grandview Park on Commercial and they managed to persuade City Council to invest \$10,000 in new park facilities. Two years later, this time led by Catherine Buffton and the Ladies' Auxiliary, the Chamber had a War Memorial built in the Park and consecrated by Archbishop Depencier. On both occasions, the events were concluded with large and popular street dances.

At the height of the Depression, Mrs. Buffton, Charles Smith, and the Chamber of Commerce were front and center in turning Victoria Park into the greens and clubhouse for the new Grandview Lawn Bowling Club. They managed to persuade both provincial and municipal governments that this was a work relief program and many local craftsmen got useful employment as the park was rebuilt. And as recently as the summer of 1936, the Chamber organized a popular weekend long event — with a parade, the selection of a neighbourhood Queen, and a party in the Park — to celebrate Vancouver's Golden Jubilee.

But, like many local organizations, the Chamber was reliant on the interest of unpaid volunteers to keep it going, and there were times over the years when the organization almost ceased to exist. After the success of the Jubilee celebrations that summer, the Chamber entered one of these periods of quiescence. But these were important and difficult times and some thought the Chamber was needed now more than ever. A small group of businessmen with definite plans for the future, and strongly supported by the *Highland Echo's* weekly editorials, gathered around Charlie Smith, "Pete" Brown of Brown Bakeries, and Alf Higgins of the Commercial Drive Garage. Their nominations got Brown elected president of the Chamber in November 1936, along, of course, with Higgins and Smith.

Looking back a couple of successful years later, Higgins would claim that the

new Chamber had worked to a pre-planned program so that they could "tick off the achievements one by one".³ That was, no doubt, an over-statement of their pre-planning, but at least they were awake and active. Their renewed agitation about the slowness of the Lougheed Highway construction, for example, was already being noticed by the *Province* newspaper in April 1937. More directly, they were keen to see progress on the First Avenue Viaduct.

When the flamboyant lawyer and monetary theorist Gerry McGeer was elected Mayor of Vancouver at the end of 1934, a deputation from Commercial Drive led by Charles Smith took pains to visit the new mayor and discuss their issues, most notably the First Avenue Bridge. Smith and his allies were careful to pitch their arguments to include benefits to sections other than Grandview. For example, they claimed that such an artery as they proposed along First Avenue would be of tremendous assistance in helping to solve the daily problem of incoming and outgoing commuter traffic that had already resulted in what everyone agreed was a serious aggravation of traffic conditions on Kingsway, Broadway, and Main Streets, with a consequent high accident rate at the points where those thoroughfares converge. But it would not have been missed by anyone hearing the proposal that the area most benefited by it was Commercial Drive. No matter. McGeer gave his immediate and enthusiastic support. He declared that he would have the bridge built before the end of his first term in office.

Unfortunately, by January 1936 there had been no movement on the project and the financing the Mayor had said he would use for the construction appeared to have been "diverted to other uses," as stated in the *Echo*.⁴ Annoyed, the Grandview Chamber passed a resolution of complaint and sent it off to the Mayor. The resolution noted McGeer's previous assurances that the First Avenue Bridge project was second in importance only to the new City Hall. The resolution and the resulting press coverage seemed to do the trick. McGeer came to Grandview and gave a rousing speech confirming his assurances about the viaduct, and a Council committee was struck straightaway.

First Avenue Viaduct, Dominion Construction Company Limited, Contractors. Construction progress photograph showing work horses looking east from bent No. 15 (foundations for pedestals of steel bents). May 26, 1937.

In February 1936, the committee members visited, some for the first time, the site of the proposed crossing. After the visit, during which the Councilors were educated at length by Charles Smith, the *Echo* recorded the impression that "opinion is veering towards the view that the bridge is vitally needed".⁵ The only problem, of course, was funding. Under the circumstances of the Depression, and after three failed plebiscites, no funds from general revenues could be expected. No matter. Mayor McGeer was sure his baby bonds could be stretched to fit the need.

Baby bonds were a controversial municipal financing measure that McGeer was pushing through to pay for the new City Hall

and for other civic work projects. At the time of the Council Committee's visit to the bridge site, provincial authority for the bonds had not yet been granted and so the Committee could not make a final decision. But that spring "baby bonds" were approved in Victoria, and the Mayor's enthusiasm for the viaduct cleared away all other delays.

The preliminary surveys and test holes were completed that summer and contracts were signed with the Dominion Construction Company in January 1937. The lump sum bid for the work was \$208,000. Substantive construction work began that March and the building would take a year to complete. In anticipation of the new traffic from the Bridge,



CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES, AM54-54-1-1: M-13-11

the City Board of Works approved \$5,500 in improvements to First Avenue from Clark Drive to Commercial, and the widening of First Avenue by three feet between Commercial and Victoria at an additional cost of \$1,000.⁶

Charles Smith's history with the Town Planning Commission in the 1920s, and his negotiations with Mayor McGeer, along with whatever motives crossed the mercurial mind of the Mayor himself, probably had most to do with getting the bridge built. However, in a mighty gesture of self-congratulation, the Grandview Chamber of Commerce hosted 250 residents and friends at a banquet in the Masonic Hall on First Avenue. Guests included

Reeve Solomon Mussallem of Haney and Reeve J.B. Leyland of West Vancouver. These two individuals symbolized the two ends of the string that the grand plan's boosters saw linking Lougheed Highway with the brand new Lions Gate Bridge.

City Council gave \$3,000 to help celebrate the opening of the viaduct that took place on Dominion Day 1938, and tens of thousands thronged to witness the opening of the bridge and the subsequent revelry. There was a parade that stretched 12 blocks and included huge animal balloons that bounced along the route. Bands included contingents from the American Legionnaires and the Kitsilano Boys

First Avenue Viaduct construction looking west from east abutment showing general construction, August 19, 1937.



CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES, AM54-S4-1-1-M-13-29, PHOTOGRAPHER STUART THOMSON

Band. When the parade arrived at the central span of the bridge, the dignitaries disembarked and at 9:45 am, Mayor Miller cut the twisted strands of blue and yellow ribbon with a special set of golden scissors presented to him by Charles Bentall of the Dominion Construction Company. There were cheers all around.

Alderman John Bennet declared the day to be "the dawning of a new era for Grandview and the city. It is the realization of a dream of twenty-five years of a thriving community."⁷ Many in the crowd held placards proclaiming "This Is Grandview's Great Day - Watch Grandview Grow." The crowds stayed throughout the day, enjoying the carnival

games that lined the bridge. In the evening, at 8:00 pm, the crowd sang *O Canada* and the dancing began. Fun was had until the rain started about 10:30 pm; this was Vancouver after all.

There were differing views as to the purpose of the First Avenue Bridge and they depended on where you were standing. Downtown and on the west side, the bridge was seen as a way for people on Commercial Drive to have direct access to Vancouver's shopping centres. They also saw it as an exit from the city to the Fraser Valley: a "valuable new artery," as Mayor Miller called it.⁸ On Commercial, however, it was seen as making the Drive an

First Avenue viaduct under construction, 1938.



CITY OF VANCOUVER ARCHIVES, AM54-54-1-1: M-13-29, PHOTOGRAPHER STAN WILLIAMS

easy destination for the growing numbers of Vancouver's car-driving shoppers. The *Echo* prophesied that "once traffic has discovered this new convenient route more vehicles will cross at First Avenue & Commercial in a day than crossed it in a week before."⁹ In addition, realtors were sure there would be a general increase in property values as a result of the tremendous amount of home building they expected to take place.

The immediate success of the First Avenue Bridge was confirmed as early as February 1940 when a survey from the Town Planning Commission showed that in one two-hour period 565 vehicles had used First Avenue east of Clark Drive. In 1937, three years earlier, a similar survey had shown only 17 vehicles on that same stretch. In the hindsight of just a few years' use, it became clear that routes to and from downtown Vancouver and the westside had changed significantly to take advantage of the improved connection the bridge afforded. It is hard to imagine today Vancouver traffic without the First Avenue connection and that the building of the Viaduct turned First and Commercial into a well-known and popular intersection is clear.

Perhaps more importantly, the very existence of the First Avenue Viaduct and its obvious success gave the Grandview Chamber

of Commerce and others the confidence to push for more changes — the improvement of First Avenue east, for example, more transit links, and the extension of Commercial to Kingsway. When these were finally achieved, the Drive thrived and I would argue that the success of the campaign to build the First Avenue Viaduct created the very foundation on which the modern Commercial Drive was built. ●

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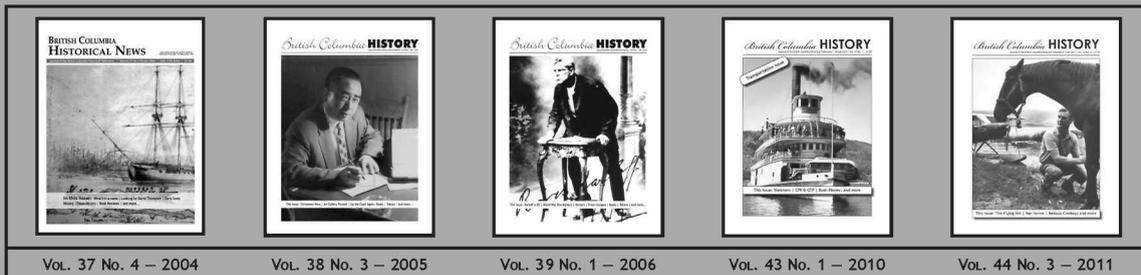
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Endnotes

1. "back door": *Highland Echo* 30 July 1936; "Cinderella" *Highland Echo* 13 Feb 1936.
2. *News Herald* 1 July 1938.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Highland Echo* 16 January 1936.
5. *Highland Echo* 20 February 1936.
6. \$208,000 CDN in 1937 converts to approximately \$3,366,315 CDN in 2013 money; \$5000 ≈ \$80,920; \$1000 ≈ \$16,180. "Inflation Calculator," Bank of Canada, accessed July 8, 2013, <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>.
7. *Vancouver Sun* 2 July 1938.
8. *Highland Echo* 30 June 1938.
9. *Ibid.*

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Greenwood, BC: Arrival of Nikkei Photo Essay

by Jacqueline Gresko, images courtesy Alice Glanville

Alice Glanville attended school in Greenwood and Grand Forks and taught school in Brown Creek (1939-1941), Greenwood and Grand Forks. Her *Schools of the Boundary: 1891-1991* covers south-central B.C. from Anarchist Mountain on the west to Paulson on the east. She has long been active in the Boundary Historical Society.

Jacqueline Gresko is the honorary president of the British Columbia Historical Federation.

In April 1942 1200 Japanese Canadians (Nikkei) were required to abandon their coastal lifestyles and were interned in Greenwood, BC, northwest of Grand Forks.

Andrea Lister, Editor of BC History asked me for help writing captions for these 1942 photographs from Alice Glanville's collection. They were printed as postcards but other than "1942" on the back there was no information on them. From research on schools for the Japanese Canadians during World War II, I knew that evacuees from the Coast were sent to mining "ghost towns" in the Interior, like Greenwood. Would it be possible to identify the people and the buildings in the photographs? I suggested we contact Linda Kawamoto Reid, archivist

at the Nikkei National Museum in Burnaby. She consulted Chuck Tasaka, the museum's Greenwood expert, and Todd Belcher, whose mother and grandmother appear in the pictures. We would like to thank Alice Glanville and her sister Sheila Rosen for the use of the images, and Linda, Chuck and Todd for contributing living memories to accompany the photographs.●

Note

The term Nikkei Nikkei means Canadian of Japanese descent and is used to discuss the history of Japanese emigrants and their descendants.

Late in April 1942 the first group of Nikkei families arrived at Greenwood and waited to be assigned to accommodation. Below is Building No. 7 or the Hallett Block. Chuck Tasaka says he does not know the name of the RCMP officer in the photograph. He thought the other men might be Mayor McArthur, the BC Security Commissioner Mr. Leonard Cowdrill, and Dr. Burnett. "The crowd was too small" for him "to spot people's faces but David Hamaguchi's family [was] right in front."

Todd Belcher corroborates that this scene is of the Hamaguchi family arriving "that is my mother, Maryanne Asako Hamaguchi, in the white coat smiling at the camera." However, she was unable to identify the girl beside her, with the hand to her mouth.





To the right of the pole, Grandson Todd Belcher says “you can see my grandmother in the white hat. She is holding the hand of her son, Thomas Hikaru Hamaguchi.”

According to Chuck Tasaka families waited in front of No. 7 Building, the Hallett Block, for their assignments to buildings. This image shows buildings No. 5, 7 and 11. Mr. Tasaka also noted that these buildings had indoor plumbing, and Ichio Miki stated that No. 11 Building had an indoor toilet. Greenwood had the infrastructure whereas places like Lemon Creek and Popoff did not have tap water and electricity at the beginning. Although in later years families were able to get larger living spaces. In 1942 they “were squeezed into these buildings so it must have been hectic and chaotic at the beginning. They had to make schedules for cooking, cleaning and using the sink.”



The old Armstrong Hotel in Greenwood. It was called No. 2 Building in the 1940s and was turned into a hospital. The laundry hung on the porch here gives a sense of the difficulties of daily life, especially during the first years.



Japanese Canadians who arrived at the Greenwood train station in April 1942 were met by Franciscan Sisters and Friars of the Atonement. Mitsuo Yesaki's Sutebusuton: A Japanese Village on the British Columbia Coast (2003), p. 120, says that Sisters Koppes and Kelliher and Father Benedict Quigley, all Franciscans of the Atonement, made the 18 hour rail trip from Vancouver to Greenwood ahead of the Japanese Canadian families so as to assist them on their arrival.

Chuck Tasaka identifies the Sisters in this photograph as Sister Jerome Kelliher and her taller companion Sister Eugenia Koppes. Mr. Tasaka says "the little kids behind them are the Miki family. Mary (Miki) Nomura is the little girl carrying a doll. Ichio Miki is holding a bag. He was 10 when he arrived in Greenwood."

Todd Belcher says that a different photograph of the same scene appears in Toyo Takata, Nikkei Legacy, (1983) p. 124, "is a well known picture". In it, Todd explains that "the woman with the white hat and her hand to her face is my grandmother, Ruth Hamaguchi, nee Ruth Martha Oyama. The nuns supposedly sought out my grandmother on arrival in Greenwood because they knew grandmother Ruth was born and raised a Christian in Cumberland, Vancouver Island." Ruth Hamaguchi is not visible in the not as "well known" image above shared by Alice Glanville.

Archives & Archivists

by Hugh Ellenwood; edited by Sylvia Stopforth

Sylvia Stopforth is a Librarian and Archivist at Norma Marion Alloway Library at Trinity Western University.

Hugh Ellenwood is the Archives Manager at the White Rock Museum & Archives. The WRMA has been located in the former Great Northern Railway station on the waterfront in White Rock since 1976. The archives contain 20 metres of textual material and approximately 10,000 photographs.

A concern for preservation of the originals and a desire from genealogists for digital access led to the newspaper digitization project at the White Rock Museum & Archives.

From 2004 to the present, the White Rock Museum & Archives has been engaged in a project to digitize our collection of local newspapers dating from 1940 to 1986. We are currently digitizing the year 1971, with 1940 to 1970 available to view on our web site (<http://www.whiterock.museum.bc.ca/archives/newspaperarchives.php>).

The idea for the project was formed in 2004 when we became concerned about the amount of handling of some of our older and more fragile newspapers. Our newspaper collection is a very popular resource and signs of wear and tear were beginning to show. Also, there was increasing pressure from researchers such as genealogists who wanted electronic copies of obituaries or articles emailed to them

if they were unable to visit our archives in person.

Since the early 2000s the WRMA has had a digitization policy in place for small photographs (decreasing the amount that they are handled to almost zero, and greatly increasing their accessibility), but any item larger than our scanner bed (30 x 22cm.) was not being digitized.

We decided to take a digital photograph of each page of a newspaper to see how that would turn out. First results were poor, until a local photographer donated a vertical camera mount which we attached to a platform. Finally, based on advice from the Archives Association of BC and the Cultural Resources Management Programme at the University of



IMAGE COURTESY OF WHITE ROCK MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

Tom Saunders, volunteer at the WRMA digitizing a page of the White Rock Sun.

Victoria, we designed a pilot project to digitize several newspapers.

After the trials of the pilot project we began work in earnest with the following work plan: the photographer creates an image of each page of a newspaper; the images are then transferred to a computer where they are given a unique, purely numeric file name representing the publication title, date and page number of the newspaper; the images are then saved on the hard drive of the computer and onto CDs which are stored in our archives vault; a second set of CDs is stored at an off-site location.

The work proceeded well, employing volunteers trained by the archives staff. By 2005, we had created over 3,000 images digitizing the *Semiahmoo Sun* from 1940 to 1955. That year we received a grant from the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre at UBC to digitize the years 1956 to 1966 and make them available on the internet. We completed the requirements for the grant within a year and posted the images on our website using flickr.

Digitization has continued in subsequent years. Since all of the equipment was donated, or already in place, and the labour is done mostly by volunteers, the cost of the project is very low. A new addition to our volunteer team, someone with web design experience, recently created a page on our website posting the entire collection of digitized papers from 1940 to 1970, about 18,000 images. This means we no longer have to use flickr, which was not as efficient, cost us a small annual fee, and limited the number of images we could post.

The image quality is not as good as scanned images would be, but the purpose of the project was not to replace the paper originals with digital surrogates, but rather to provide access to the information in the newspapers without having researchers handle the paper originals.

As a parallel but separate project we are indexing the newspapers by subject using Inmagic DBtext software. Currently, the newspapers on our website are not indexed by subject. It's something we hope to achieve in the future.

With the digital alternative available, the paper originals are hardly ever handled, and stay safe in our climate controlled vault.

The only time we access a paper original is when we digitize it, or when the scope of someone's research falls outside the date range of digitized newspapers.

For more information about the White Rock Museum & Archives, visit us online at <http://www.whiterock.museum.bc.ca/>, or in person on Marine Drive in White Rock.●

One of the digitized newspapers available online at the WRMA's website.

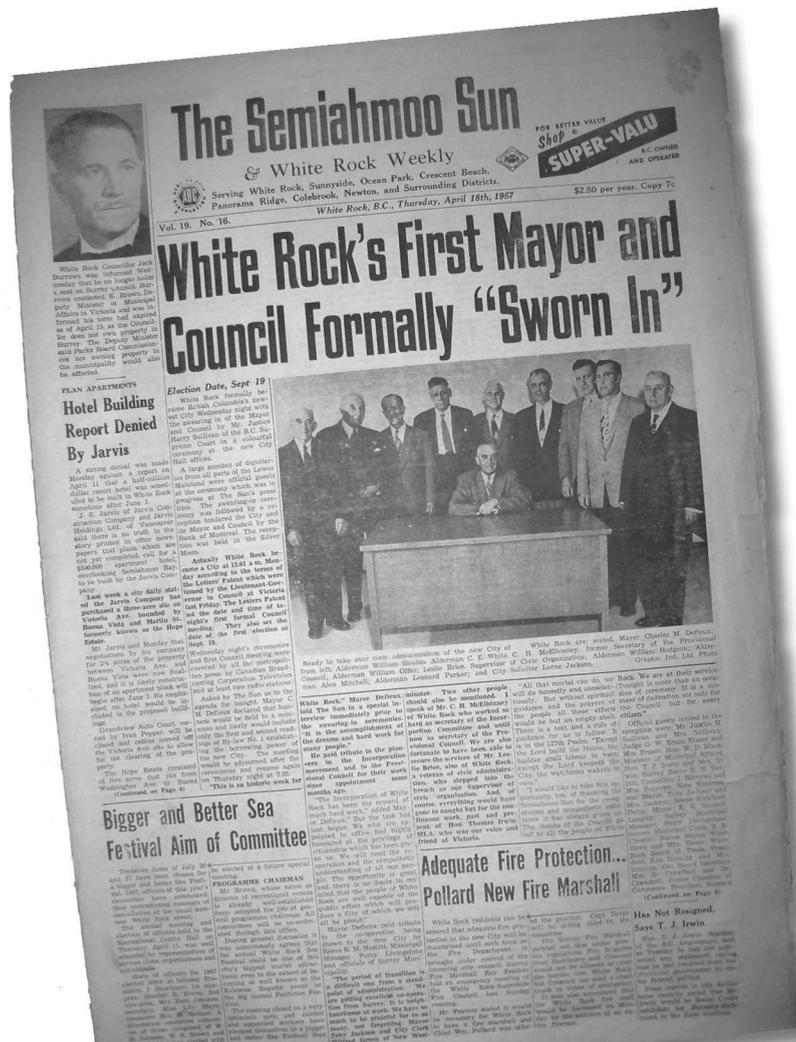


IMAGE COURTESY OF WHITE ROCK MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

From the Book Review Editor's Desk

K. Jane Watt

Walking In History



I am writing in the height of summer – and together with my family, I have been enjoying the work of the Hope Mountain Centre in gathering a coalition of people – including Spuzzum First Nation, New Pathways to Gold Society, the Ministry of Transport, and Recreation Sites and Trails BC – to get historic trails signed and passable for the public. We have taken tentative steps along part of the Tikwalus trail, an ancient route of the Nlaka'pamux (Thompson) First Nation, from the waters of the Fraser up – and a way around the sheer canyon walls around today's Hell's Gate. It was used for a short time by the HBC in 1848 and 1849 – with brigades of up to 400 horses and perhaps 50 men, but lack of forage for pack horses and the sheer difficulty of the route meant that it was abandoned by the HBC in favour of a route eastward out of Hope from 1850 onward. Later in the 1850s and 1860s, it was used by gold miners seeking to avoid the arduous canyons on the Fraser, and has continued to be used through time by the Nlak'pamux. Our new favourite is the Hope Mountain Trail, a climb to a rewarding lookout over the town of Hope, the Fraser River, and Kawkawa Lake. The folks at the Hope Mountain Centre have also been working hard on historic trails leading eastward from

Hope into Manning Park. The HBC brigade trail is one such example. Developed in the 1850s from its more humble origins as a wildlife trail and First Nations corridor, it was used officially by the HBC to move furs from diverse northern posts southward to Fort Langley for transshipment – perhaps to London, perhaps to Hawaii, perhaps to China – part of BC's early resource extraction economy that serviced a network of HBC sales points around the globe. Unofficially, the brigades were also well used as an annual holiday for the families of northern traders who converged at Fort Langley for a month each summer before travelling home again with new outfits containing trade goods, agricultural implements, seed, and "luxury" items such as tea, sugar, ribbon, and rum. These brigades became so large that Company brass found itself having to restrict family access to the brigades.

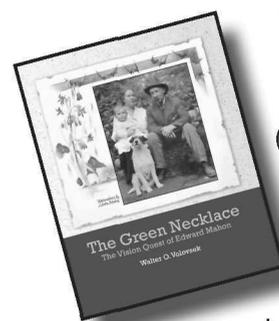
We have travelled on some pretty busy trails this summer, and much of this travel and the information offered trailside or on



View from partway up Tikwalus trail.

the web, has been made possible by hard-working volunteers who tell the stories of the past through interaction with a changing landscape. It is humbling and inspiring to see the breathtaking breadth of work being produced that tells the many histories of British Columbia in profound and wonderful ways.

Such pathways into the past are explored by Castlegar writer Walter Volvosek in his historical work as well as his *Trails in Time* website "dedicated to the contemplative walker." His latest work, on visionary and developer Edward Mahon



is called *The Green Necklace: The Vision Quest of Edward Mahon* (Castlegar: Otmar Publishing, \$25).

Edward Mahon emigrated to BC in 1890 to seek out business opportunities for his Irish family interests. He was an active player in the Slocan mining boom, and the founder of the Kootenay city that would commemorate his Irish roots – Castlegar. Although his vision for Castlegar was not realized, he achieved immortality with his legacy of greenways in North Vancouver, collectively known as the Green Necklace. The book is based on exclusive family records and photographs, which provided the basis for complimentary exhibits in North Vancouver and Castlegar.

North Vancouver has recently revitalized its plans for Mahon's Green Necklace – a system of parks within walking distance of a dense urban core – adopted in 1906 by the council of the time. In Volvosek's work, Mahon's interest in the benefits of green space sounds strangely modern. "Completion of

Book Reviews

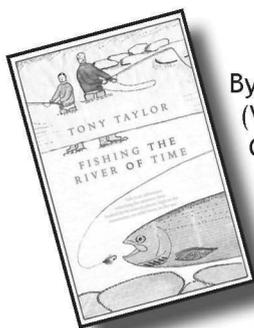
Books for review should be sent to:
K. Jane Watt, Book Review Editor, *British Columbia History*
Box 1053, Fort Langley BC V1M 2S4

this great public way [called the Grand Boulevard],” he writes just after the turn of the twentieth century,

with supporting parks and gardens, will perpetuate health areas and pleasure grounds within a short distance of every resident of the present city of North Vancouver, and our municipality will have the distinction of possessing the most spacious boulevard contained within the limits of any city in the world – a great artificial lung, compassing the central town, breathing, pressing, forcing it into health and vitality with that concomitant physical tone the normal expression of which is sound-bodied cheerfulness.

By the time you receive this issue, you will be feeling the turn of the seasons, maybe a crisping of the air, certainly the drawing in of night. It will be a perfect time to stoke up the fire and read.

Fishing the River of Time – A Grandfather’s Story.



By Tony Taylor
(Vancouver:
Greystone, 2013)
\$19.95.

One of my favourite reads this season has been this memoir. At age eighty, palaeontologist Tony Taylor returns from Australia to retrace his steps around the Cowichan River – a formative place he has not visited for many years. Here he hopes to connect with his grandson, Ned, whom he has never met (and his son, I think) – and

teach him the importance of fishing. But fishing is more than simply casting a line into moving water – it includes the lore of the tackle and flies, the natural history of place, the human connections the past and with the changing world around him. And, unexpectedly, information flows both ways: “My small grandson had got my brain working,” Taylor writes, “We were each good for the other.”

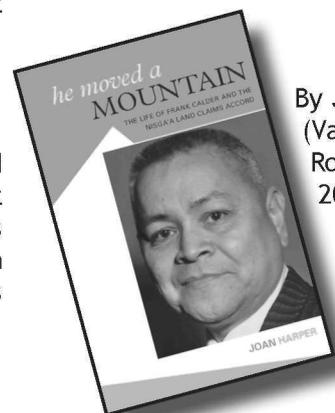
He tells young Ned, “The next best thing to fishing ... was reading about it, and reading was marvellous because there were so many great books.”

Beyond books, Taylor’s intimate observations about the nuances of the world he returns to and remembers, are heartfelt and carefully crafted and remind us of the vast changes that have taken place in our wild spaces over a couple of generations. “When I first started fishing near Meade’s cabin,” he writes,

it seemed that the fish from each of the local rivers were slightly different: the giant coho in the river I called the Chief and the long, lean athletic steelhead in the Lost. The steelhead that I had caught in the Cowichan was plumper and I took it for salmon. I suppose I was beginning to recognise that each river had its own unique population of fish. I hesitate to use words like race or nationality but steelhead in the Lost River were excitable and friendly in the way I remember Italians, and the steelhead in the Cowichan were more distant and reserved like the English. Their characters were just a little different but whether it was due to their environment or genetics I was unable to decide. Nevertheless, after a while I could just look at a fish and make a fairly good guess about its provenance.

The trails Taylor travels through time and memory, through the geography and natural history of a corner of the province, are linked by his stories of people he has met, fish he yearns to catch, and those he, sometimes miraculously, is able to lay his hands on. His work eloquently extends local history into the realm of the personal.

He Moved a Mountain: the Life of Frank Calder and the Nisga’a Land Claims Accord.

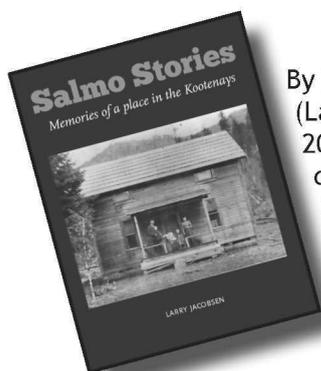


By Joan Harper
(Vancouver:
Ronsdale,
2013) \$21.95

This biography of Dr. Frank Arthur Calder begins with his birth into the Nisga’a nation on the Nass River. His father declared before an assembly of the Nisga’a that Frank would be educated “to move the mountain” preventing the Nisga’a from obtaining land title. He was a hereditary chief of the Hose of Wisinxbitkw from the Killerwhale Tribe. In August 1924, at the age of nine he travelled by Union Steamship Cardena from Nass Harbour down the coast to Vancouver and took the Interurban to Coqualeetza School in Sardis and stayed there until he graduated from Chilliwack High School in 1937. His education stuck with him, and during his political life, he remembered, “What I learned of the English language at Chilliwack High enabled me to read law books later in life.” He returned home to fish in the

summers and graduated from UBC before becoming MLA in 1949, the first aboriginal person to be elected to any Canadian legislature. He served as the MLA for Atlin until 1979. Calder founded the Nisga'a Tribal Council. He was the driving force behind Canada's decision to grant recognition of aboriginal land title to First Nations people (the 1973 Supreme Court of Canada case *Calder vs. Attorney General of British Columbia*, argued by Thomas Berger). Although he received many honours in his lifetime, including the Order of Canada, the one he most cherished was bestowed by the Nisga'a Nation: "Chief of Chiefs." He died in 2006. Harper's research for this biography was facilitated by Calder's wife, Tamaki Calder, and members of his family.

Salmo Stories: Memories of a Place in the Kootenays.



By Larry Jacobsen, (Larry Jacobsen, 2012). Available directly from the author at larry.jacobsen@gmail.com.

This book is a compilation of family stories and photos from the Salmo Museum spanning the period between the late 1880s and the 1960s, including Jacobsen's interviews of over 100 people "who were loggers, farmers, miners, prospectors, and business people ... who came to the Salmo area." As Jacobsen notes, "These stories show just how tough people had to be to survive in a wilderness community far from family, friends, and access to common amenities. This

applies even more so to the women, for many of them bore a load equal to, or greater than, that of their menfolk." *Salmo Stories* also includes appendices containing the work of other Salmo historians, Rollie W. Mifflin's "The Early Salmo Story and Other True Stories" (1958) and Cliff McIntosh's "Salmo as Remembered" (1978).

For King and Country: 150 Years of the Royal Westminster Regiment.



By Robert Harley, (New Westminster: Royal Westminster Regiment, 2012) \$80.

When I asked Robert about the beginnings of this book, he replied, "It was a idea I had back when I was 13 years old. I was always interested in

history. When I was a cadet in 2316, The Royal Westminster Regiment Army Cadet Corps, the only book written on the Regiment was a World War II war diary, but there was no concise history, so I always thought I would like to write that history. This year marks the 150th year of service and the regiment is celebrating the anniversary. What I really want to accomplish with the book is to give the citizens of the County of Westminster (Burnaby border to Boston Bar) a sense of the rich history of the regiment has paved and ensure our past is never forgotten."

The Royal Westminster Regiment is the oldest active military unit in British Columbia, Colonel Karen Baker-MacGrotty of the Royal Westminster Regiment celebration 150 committee says, "With a fighting Westie spirit and incredible record of duty, tradition and service commencing before Confederation, the book will be of interest to readers of all ages and backgrounds....This book is produced as a tribute to all our brave men and women who have served our country with such distinction."



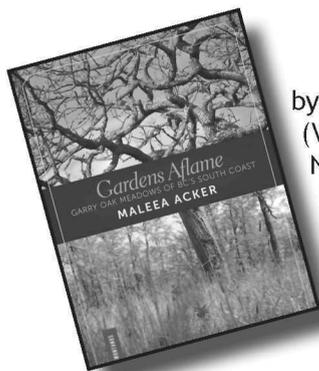
80 mile Route March from Cloverdale to New Westminster, 1916. From King and Country: 150 Years of the Royal Westminster Regiment by Robert Harley.

The Royal Westminster Regiment has a long history of community involvement. When the Great Fire swept through New Westminster in 1898 and again when record flooding afflicted the Fraser Valley in 1948, the Regiment supported the community through times of crisis. More recently, the Regiment helped fight the Okanagan wild fires of 2003 and provided support to the Vancouver 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

As a fighting force, the Westies have been involved in every major conflict of the post-Victorian era. The Primary Reserve Light Infantry Battalion has served in the Boer War, World War I and World War II. It has also augmented numerous overseas deployments on UN and NATO missions in Bosnia, Croatia, Cyprus, the Golan Heights, Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan. Members are currently serving overseas in Afghanistan and the Sudan.

Robert Harley's book can be purchased at (<http://150.royal-westies-assn.ca>) and through red tuque books (www.redtuquebooks.ca).

Gardens Aflame: Garry Oak Meadows of BC's South Coast.



by Maleea Acker
(Vancouver:
New Star, 2012)
\$19.00.

Gardens Aflame is a compelling and wonderfully poetic discussion of many issues surrounding the history of southern Vancouver

Island's Garry oak ecosystems. The book is a non-judgmental conversation about our human relationship to the biotic environment and its dynamism, both "natural" and culturally produced. The book jacket notes that what "newcomers failed to appreciate is that these meadows were not the work of nature alone, but were the result of generations of cultivation by the Coast Salish peoples who lived there. The establishment of a fort at Victoria began a process of encroachment on these Garry oak meadows that continues today."

As a plea for maintaining Garry oak ecosystems in some form, *Gardens Aflame* links aboriginal gardens of camas and meadows of community and ritual that mark lives with seasons of growth and rest within the natural world. *Aflame* refers to the brilliant colour of emerging Garry oak foliage when it buds out in the springtime — a visual treat usually reserved for the autumnal turning of other deciduous trees.

A full chapter devoted to the nomenclature and history of the Garry oak ecosystems, including a brief history of taxonomic philosophy, provides the labels and origins for a discussion of human emotion and interpretation surrounding the gardens and the plants and the spaces beneath and among the trees themselves. Further discussion and reference can be developed from the fabulous bibliography that includes selections on aboriginal societies, botany, and various fields of philosophy.

Through recall, story, and the consideration of the modified Garry oak landscape that exists today, Acker weaves a full circle of aboriginal husbandry, societal decimation through disease and occupation, to land abandonment. Finally, she closes the circle with the attempt a few generations later to once again change a landscape from what it was to

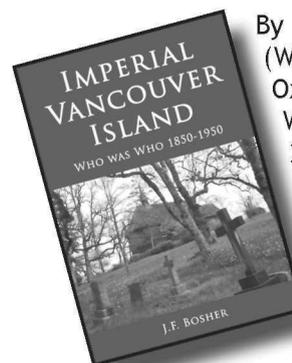
something we perhaps collectively feel it should be based on our societal bias, our retrospective vision, our hard-to-articulate reasons.

Most chapters are prefaced by the author's diary-like entries of her thoughts and movements within a Garry oak meadow. The entries perhaps describe a certain time of year or a progression of seasonal growth, and reinforce Acker's point that beauty and our perception and recognition of it are important. How we collectively create ideals and how we see them as individuals and within a community are central discussion points with respect to why we might wish to preserve or restore a meadow or forest. Is it because the place is beautiful to us now? Are decisions about species continuity and diversity that favour stasis themselves shaped by culture?

Gardens Aflame ends, by way of epilogue, with Acker's summary of the force behind our societal need to sometimes preserve, sometimes restore, or sometimes remake what is around us. "We love what is beautiful. We love what is rare and fleeting. And many of us will work our fingers to the bone to protect what gives us not just physical sustenance, but a sense of emotional or spiritual connection and belonging to the place we live."

Reviewer **Greg Antle** is a hardwood specialist who lives in Fort Langley.

Imperial Vancouver Island: Who Was Who 1850-1950.



By JF Boshier,
(Woodstock,
Oxfordshire, UK:
WritersWorld,
2012Kindle
\$10.48,
hardcover by
arrangement
with author.

JF Boshers' tome *Imperial Vancouver Island: Who Was Who 1850-1950* is now available. Boshers notes in his preface that, "If the twenty-first century did not find rambling Victorian titles intolerable, this book might have been called *Some Imperial Campaigners and their Friends on Vancouver Island from the Cariboo Goldrush and the Indian Mutiny to the Invasion from Mainland Canada after the Second World War, 1850-1950*. Along with Boshers' previous volume, the new *Imperial Vancouver Island: Who Was Who 1850-1950* tells "how settlements like Victoria, Nanaimo, Duncan and most of the rest were founded by sea from England, Scotland, and Ireland, not overland from Canada." Boshers' lively style informs his biographical work, as an excerpt from his entry on Captain Walter Colquhoun Grant (1822-1861) demonstrates:

Landing at Victoria on 11 August 1849, he set about founding a settlement at Sooke, 25 miles to the northwest. He stayed for only about four years and three months because he was short of funds, not very experienced, or committed, and ultimately daunted — like many others before or since — by the many tasks of pioneering life, even in that benign climate. Nor was he always on good terms with the government, the local tribes, and others he had to deal with. He is remembered with sympathy for importing the yellow-blooming Scottish broom, which now brightens many parts of southern Vancouver Island..."●

SAVE THE DATE



BRITISH COLUMBIA HISTORICAL FEDERATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE JUNE 6–7, 2014 CLOVERDALE: SURREY'S HISTORIC CENTRE

Mark your calendars now for next year's conference in Surrey.

This exciting two-day event will be centered in the community of Cloverdale and will include activities such as: a field trip, speakers and author programs, rides on a restored interurban car operating on the original BC Electric route and a visit to the new vintage truck museum along with walking tours and other activities of interest to historians.

Registration is open to anyone interested in history; you do not need to be a member of a historical society or of the British Columbia Historical Federation.

Registration details will be available in early 2014.

Presented in partnership with Surrey Historical Society

Image: Courtesy of Cloverdale Business Improvement Association

For information contact:

**BCHF Conference Coordinator, Barb Hynek
pastpres@bchistory.ca**

Cabinets of Curiosities

by Jim Bain

Workmen at the Vancouver post office uncovered a memorial plaque that had been hidden from public view for over 30 years.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JIM BAIN.

In the late Summer of 2009 workmen completing renovations to the retail lobby of the Vancouver Main Post Office came across a memorial plaque dedicated to 14 Vancouver Post Office employees who volunteered for service in WWI and II and were lost during the conflicts. The plaque was cast in 1919 to honour 11 employees and then recast following WWII to add three additional names. In 1919 it was placed in the lobby of the Post Office located in what is now the Sinclair Centre on the north-west corner of Granville and Hastings Streets. In 1958 it was moved the current Main Post Office and placed in public view in the lobby. Renovations to the lobby over the next decade removed it from public view and located it in a secluded area. As part of the renovations Canada Post placed the plaque back in public view on a pillar in the south-east corner of the newly renovated lobby.

Canada Post and the Van-Fraser Heritage Club, an association of long service and retired Canada Post employees, felt that as the Plaque had been out of public view for over 30 years it would be appropriate to hold a rededication ceremony to honour the 14 individuals listed on

the plaque. As part of the ceremony a short profile was prepared and printed on each individual. A number of interesting stories were uncovered on each individual.

Letter carrier, Matthew Henry Harlock, serving with the Canadian Army Medical Corps, was lost at sea in one of the most infamous incidents of WWI when a U-Boat sank the Hospital Ship *Llandoverly Castle* and then rammed the lifeboats. Postal clerks Henry Jackson and James Pender and letter carrier John Jamieson joined the Seaforth Highlanders on the same day in 1915. All three fell within days of each other in 1916. The oldest WWI volunteer was Alexander F. Quinn who joined the BC Regiment at the age of 34 in 1914. He fell in 1916, has no known grave, and is listed on the Menin Gate. Of the 11 WWI honourees, five, including Quinn, have no known grave. The youngest volunteer was letter carrier James Richardson who was just 20 and recently married when he joined the Garrison Artillery in 1916. He died of wounds in August 1918. Perhaps the most poignant story is that of Letter Carrier Thomas Morris-White who died in June 1918 and was survived by his wife and ten children.

The Van-Fraser Heritage Club continues its research of Canada Post employees across Canada serving in the Great War. To date we have located over 702 employees, including



IMAGE COURTESY OF JOHN S. HARLOCK.

Matthew Henry Harlock, killed when his Hospital Ship was torpedoed June 27, 1918.

75 who were lost. Our goal is to build a profile on each individual and find family members who may be able to provide us with personal insight and possibly, photographs.

To honour their service the Van-Fraser Heritage Club holds a Remembrance Ceremony each year, immediately prior to Remembrance Day inviting family members to attend.●

.....
: Every object has a story. Do you have an object
: of curiosity in your cabinet?
:

• Send me 300 to 400 words together, with a high-resolution image of
• the object, telling me the story of the object. Email your story to:
• bcheditor@bchistory.ca.
.....

Awards and Scholarship Information

for complete details go to <http://bchistory.ca/awards/index.html>

W. KAYE LAMB Essay Scholarships

Deadline: May 15

The British Columbia Historical Federation awards two scholarships annually for essays written by students at BC colleges or universities, on a topic relating to British Columbia history. One scholarship (\$750) is for an essay written by a student in a first or second year course; the other (\$1000) is for an essay written by a student in a third or fourth year course.

To apply for the scholarship all candidates must submit (1) a letter of application and (2) a letter of recommendation from the professor for whom the essay was written. First and second year course essays should be 1,500-3,000 words; third and fourth year, 1,500 to 5,000 words. By entering the scholarship competition the student gives the editor of *British Columbia History* the right to edit and publish the essay if it is deemed appropriate for the magazine.

Applications with 3 printed copies of the essay should be submitted to: Marie Elliott, Chair BC Historical Federation Scholarship Committee, PO Box 5254, Station B, Victoria, BC V8R 6N4

Anne & Philip Yandle Best Article Award

Deadline: To be eligible, the article must have appeared in the BCHF Journal British Columbia History for that year.

A Certificate of merit and \$250 will be awarded annually to the author of the article, published in *British Columbia History*, that best enhances knowledge of BC's history and provides reading enjoyment. Judging will be based on subject development, writing skill, freshness of material, and appeal to a general readership interested in all aspects of BC history.

BC History Web Site Prize

Deadline: December 31

The British Columbia Historical Federation and David Mattison are jointly sponsoring a yearly cash award of \$250 to recognize Web sites that contribute to the understanding and appreciation of British Columbia's past. The award honours individual initiative in writing and presentation.

Nominations for the BC History Web Site Prize must be made to the British Columbia Historical Federation, Web Site Prize Committee, prior to December 31st each year. Web site creators and authors may nominate their own sites. Prize rules and the online nomination form can be found on the British Columbia Historical Federation Web site: <http://bchistory.ca/awards/website/index.html>

Best Newsletter Award

Deadline: March 1

Newsletters published by member societies are eligible to compete for an annual prize of \$250. They will be judged for presentation and content that is interesting, newsy and informative.

- Only member societies of the BCHF are eligible
- Only one issue of a society's newsletter will be evaluated
- Submit three printed copies of this best issue from the previous calendar year
- BCHF reserves the right not to award a prize in a given year should applications not be of sufficient quality

Submit three printed copies of a single newsletter issue to: BCHF Recognition Committee, PO Box 5254, Station B, Victoria, BC, Canada, V8R 6N4

Certificate of Merit

Deadline: March 1

Group or individual who has made a significant contribution to the study, project, or promotion of British Columbia's history.

Certificate of Recognition

Deadline: March 1

Given to individual members or groups of members of BCHF Member Societies who have given exceptional service to their Organization or Community.

Certificate of Appreciation

Deadline: March 1

Individuals who have undertaken ongoing positions, tasks, or projects for BCHF.

Nominations

Any member of BCHF may nominate candidates for Certificates of Appreciation, Certificates of Merit or Certificates of Recognition. Nominations, supported by a letter explaining why the nominee is deserving of a certificate, should be submitted to the Chair of the Recognition Committee by March 1 of each year.

The Lieutenant-Governor's Medal for Historical Writing

Deadline: December 31

Each year, the British Columbia Historical Federation invites submissions for its Annual Historical Writing Competition to authors of BC history; and the winning author is awarded the Lieutenant-Governor's Medal for Historical Writing.

Eligibility

- To be eligible, a book must be about BC history and be published within the competition year
- Non-fiction books representing any aspect of BC history are eligible.
- Reprints or revisions of books are not

eligible

- Books may be submitted by authors or publishers
- Deadline for submission is December 31 of the year in which the book was published

Submission Requirements

- Those wishing to enter books MUST obtain a copy of the entry rules from the entries chair at writing@bchistory.ca
- Authors/Publishers are required to submit three copies of their book
- Books are to be accompanied by a letter containing the following:
 1. Title of the book submitted
 2. Author's name and contact information
 3. Publisher's name and contact information
 4. Selling price
- Books entered become property of BCHF
- Judges' decisions are final and confidential
- By submitting books for this competition, the authors agree that the BCHF may use their name(s) in press releases and in its publications

William R. Morrison: Email: writing@bchistory.ca

Judging Criteria

Judges are looking for quality presentations and fresh material. Submissions will be evaluated in the following areas:

- Scholarship: quality of research and documentation, comprehensiveness, objectivity and accuracy
- Presentation: organization, clarity, illustrations and graphics
- Accessibility: readability and audience appeal

Publicity

All winners will receive publicity and an invitation to the Award's Banquet at the Federation's annual conference in May following the year of publication.

Lieutenant-Governor's Medal and Other Awards

The BC Lieutenant-Governor's Medal for Historical Writing will be awarded together with \$1000 to the author whose book makes the most significant contribution to the history of British Columbia. The 2nd and 3rd place winners will receive \$500 and \$250 respectively. Certificates of Honourable Mention may be awarded to other books as recommended by the judges.

Johnson Inc. Scholarship

Deadline: September 15

Canadian residents completing high school and who are beginning post-secondary education. 100 scholarships of \$1500 each for Canada. <http://www1.johnson.ca/about-us/scholarships>



Vancouver's Stanley Park celebrates 125 years; the city opened Stanley Park on September 27, 1888.

This image is of the Stanley Park Rock Garden from the 1930s. The first public garden of the city was created from 1911 to 1920 by master gardener John Montgomery from unwanted boulders excavated for the adjacent park pavilion. In 2013, the garden was officially added to the Vancouver Heritage Register as an important landscape resource.

Explore our back issues and read more of the story about the Rock Garden in British Columbia History, Vol 39. No. 4 available through subscriptions@bchistory.ca or online as a PDF through BCHF's partnership with The University of British Columbia Archives: <http://bchistory.library.ubc.ca/?db=bchf>. Photo: City of Vancouver Archives, AM54-S4-2-: CVA 371-2849.