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# **HISTORICAL NEWS**

Major J.W. Matthews



Vancouver City Archives

## **VANCOUVER CENTENNIAL ISSUE**

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# BRITISH COLUMBIA HISTORICAL NEWS

Volume 19 No. 3  
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## Cover Story

Our cover portrays a relaxed Major J.S. Matthews with his beloved chinchilla cat Jack. It was taken on March 18, 1950, the day of Jack's 20th birthday. The Major (1878-1970) was 72 at this time.

Vancouver owes a great debt to this redoubtable man who, with stubborn energy and despite little encouragement, overcame the obstacles he encountered in his drive to save the physical evidences of Vancouver's past. In so doing he laid the foundations of Vancouver's excellent public archives.

His memory and the gratitude his accomplishment evokes remains ever fresh in the minds of those who, in any way, are involved with the Vancouver City Archives.

## Editorial

How does one write a first ever editorial? I suppose by recalling editorials enjoyed in the past and emulating them. I have liked best those in which the editor spoke directly to the reader, communicating his hopes and fears for the work he has sent on its way. After flailing around like a peculiarly ill-adapted sheep in a snowstorm, I realised that my ambition was way ahead of my experience and that my task was not to outshine Braudel in bringing a timeless opus to fruition, but to assemble a few articles relevant to Vancouver at this time. Now my efforts are in your hands. Braudel rests unchallenged and I humbly express the hope that what has been assembled will be of interest.

Finally, I have learned to appreciate all editors who undertook to motivate others; theirs is a formidable task.

To those who responded my grateful thanks; to you, the reader, forgive the errors and omissions. I did my best.

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### NEXT ISSUE

**Deadline for the next issue of the B.C. Historical News is June 1, 1986. Please submit articles and reports to:**  
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**Esther Birney**

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W. Kaye Lamb

## What Manner of Man was Captain Vancouver?

Very few of the half million words comprising Captain Vancouver's published journal are devoted to anything of a personal nature, but in spite of this it tells us a good deal about the man himself. To begin with, both the journal and his letters show a literary competence that is remarkable in a man who went to sea at the age of fourteen and had no opportunity for any formal education thereafter. The journal is much more than the "plain unvarnished relation" that Vancouver warned his readers to expect; it is a highly competent narrative, as detailed and conscientious as the survey it chronicles.

Now and then quirks and fancies appear briefly. In his tastes for scenery Vancouver was a man of his time; he preferred his landscapes trim and tidy. Thus when he climbed to the top of Protection Island he was delighted to find a landscape "almost as enchantingly beautiful as the most elegantly finished pleasure grounds of Europe." But the rugged scenery along the Northwest Coast, which now attracts tourists by the tens of thousands, had no appeal. As his great survey was ending he informed the Admiralty that his journal for the season was "mostly a repetition of describing the dreary and inhospitable countries, similar to what has already been noticed in my journal of our excursion during the summer of last year."

It is more difficult to judge whether Vancouver subscribed to the concept of the "noble savage" that was current in his day. Prudence dictated that he should try and establish good relations with native chiefs, but in some instances, notably in the case of Pomurrey in Tahiti, Kamekameha in Hawaii, and Maquinna at Nootka, warm personal friendships developed. One of Vancouver's biographers comments upon his "uncanny ability for sifting out the various ranks and relative importance of the native chiefs, and treating each with the deference due to his rank and position." Nootka was the only place on the British Columbia coast where Vancouver tarried for any length of time, and he was fortunate there to be able to build upon the good relations that Quadra, his Spanish counterpart, had established with Chief Maquinna and the Indians. Mozino, the Spanish botanist who was at Nootka in 1792, commented in his

journal: "The English commandant was no less humane toward the Indians than the Spanish had been. Both left an example of goodness among them. 'Cococoa [like] Quadra,' they say, 'Cococoa Vancouver,' when they want to praise the good treatment of any of the captains who command the other ships."

Away from Nootka, Vancouver was much less inclined to trust the Indians, and with good reason. He was much disturbed by the fact that almost everywhere they had secured guns from trading ships, and they offered a constant threat to the ships' boats (the largest of which was no more than twenty-four feet in length) which did most of the detailed examination of the innumerable inlets along the coast. Indeed, Vancouver was convinced that his survey was being carried out just in time — even one year later he thought the dangers might have become too great. Even as it was, he was often worried about the safety of boats. It so happened that those that carried out the last survey were much overdue in returning to the ships, and as the days slipped by Vancouver's anxiety for their safety became acute. He feared that he "had at length hazarded our little boats, with the small force they were able to take for their defence, once too often."

This would tend to contradict the charges that Vancouver was brutal, tyrannical, bad tempered and given to violent language. There is some evidence to support the charges, but it is only fair to remember two circumstances. First, his health was failing; his irritability can be ascribed to the myxoedema from which he was suffering to an ever increasing degree, and which would cause his death only two and a half years after he returned to England. Secondly, he was experiencing for the first time what has been well described as the loneliness of command: he was far from any superior authority to whom he could appeal for support in case of need. Discipline was of crucial importance. True, floggings in the *Discovery* were relatively severe and frequent, but it is also true that the crew included a hard core of offenders who were punished time after time. And punishments in the tender *Chatham*, commanded by Peter Puget, were equally severe.

There is no doubt that Vancouver indulged in the baiting of midshipmen, which was then common in the Navy. Possibly it was regarded as a way to toughen up the youngsters. We are told that none of the dozen middies in the *Discovery* would dine with Vancouver except one who was the son of the agent in London who looked after his affairs in his absence. One common punishment was to send a midshipman to the masthead and neglect to order him down for a lengthy period. Restrictions on shore leave, and on visiting between the ships, even after a long spell at sea, were naturally resented. But there is another side to this coin. Not all the midshipmen were models of good behaviour. Those in the *Discovery* included Thomas Pitt, who in the course of the voyage

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succeeded to the title of Baron Camelford, a likeable but undisciplined youth who irritated Vancouver almost beyond endurance. In the end Vancouver seized an opportunity in Hawaii to discharge him and send him back to England. Later young Pitt was to make much of this, but it is seldom noticed that Puget suffered from a like affliction in the *Chatham* in the person of midshipman Augustus Boyd Grant, a most unsavoury youth. Puget was happy to send him packing, along with Thomas Pitt.

The most critical comments about Vancouver were made by another midshipman, Thomas Manby. Writing to a personal friend from Monterey in January 1793, he charged that the Captain had "grown Haughty, Proud, Mean and Insolent" which had "kept himself and Officers in a continual state of wrangling during the whole of the Voyage." This was certainly an exaggeration and was probably prompted by an unfortunate incident when Manby was temporarily in command of the launch that accompanied Vancouver in the cutter when he explored Jervis Inlet. Darkness fell and this prevented Manby from seeing that Vancouver had changed course. Left without compass or food, Manby and his crew had a quite desperate experience finding their way back to *Discovery* at Birch Bay. Vancouver, probably torn by anxiety about the fate of the launch, returned in a fury. "His salutation," Manby recorded, "I can never forget, and his language I shall never forgive, unless he withdraws his words by a satisfactory apology." But Vancouver did not hold a grudge; he appointed Manby Master of the *Chatham* only two months after the Jervis Inlet mishap, and he made him 3rd Lieutenant of the *Discovery* before the voyage ended.

Neither Manby nor any of the other midshipmen had any cause for complaint about Vancouver's concern for their future after the expedition returned to England. They had all served more than sufficient time to entitle them to sit for the examinations for lieutenant (Manby's appointment during the voyage ranked only as acting rank), and Vancouver took pains to see that they were promoted without delay. It is interesting to learn that his recommendations carried so much weight that they were promoted without being questioned, as Robert Barrie related to his mother: "When we appear'd before the great men to pass out examinations, they tould us they thought it would be presumption in them to ask any questions so they pass'd us bye wishing us all a speedy promotion."

Of the several personal and unofficial journals of the expedition, the most valuable is that of Archibald Menzies, who had served in the Navy as a surgeon but sailed with Vancouver as botanist and naturalist. Strictly speaking, he was thus not accountable to Vancouver, but in the course of the voyage the *Discovery's* surgeon became incapacitated, and Vancouver insisted that Menzies take over. Vancouver was indifferent to the claims of botany, and in particular to those of the midget greenhouse that had been built on the quarter deck to enable

Menzies to bring back rare plants for the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. Bad luck and bad weather cost Menzies many specimens, but the most exasperating loss came when the *Discovery* was within six weeks of the end of her very long voyage. Without warning Menzies, Vancouver removed the seaman who was supposed to guard the greenhouse, it was left uncovered, a heavy downpour of rain happened along, and most of the delicate specimens in it were ruined. Understandably upset, Menzies complained to Vancouver, who promptly accused him of having treated him with "great contempt and disrespect" and placed him under arrest. The matter was settled amicably after Vancouver and Menzies reached London, and in spite of this and other lesser incidents, Menzies recognized Vancouver's remarkable qualities as a marine surveyor. In his old age, recalling the voyage, he paid a tribute to Vancouver that ended with the words: "He was a great captain."

Contrary to appearances, there was a softer side to Vancouver's nature. Though he saw them seldom, he was much attached to his family. He named Mary Point and Sarah Point, on opposite sides of the channel between Cortes Island and the Malaspina Peninsula after his sisters, and the Lynn Canal, Berners Bay and Point Couverden recall King's Lynn, where he was born, his mother's maiden name and the ancestral home of the Vancouver family in Holland. He had a special affection for his brother John, who was to complete the text of his journal for publication after Vancouver's death. One personal letter to John survives. It was written at Nootka in September 1794, just after Vancouver had completed his great coastal survey. Its closing salutation reads: "I am My Dearest Van Unalterably your ever affectionate & Sincere friend and Brother". Crew members had been strictly forbidden to give any indication in their letters as to where the *Discovery* had been, and Vancouver held strictly to the rule himself, even in this personal letter to his brother. "You must therefore," he wrote, "be content in being informed of my welfare so far..."

Just a week before the *Discovery* reached Shannon, her cutter was accidentally "stove intirely to pieces" when being hoisted on board. Vancouver's reaction was noteworthy: "The cutter was the boat I had constantly used; in her I had travelled many miles; in her I had repeatedly escaped from danger; she had always brought me safely home; and, although she was but an inanimate conveniency...yet I felt myself under such an obligation to her services, that when she was dashed to pieces before my eyes, an involuntary emotion suddenly seized my breast, and I was compelled to turn away to hide a weakness...I should have thought improper to have publicly manifested."

Sentiment was a not unimportant element in Vancouver's makeup.  
*Kaye Lamb is former Provincial Librarian & Archivist (Victoria), and former Dominion Archivist & National Librarian.*

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Leonard G. McCann

## “The Landing of Captain Vancouver”



An innocuous-sounding title for a commission to an already established artist from whom, having been given appropriate historical data, one could expect a depiction that would fully satisfy all requirements. Indeed! But then — does the painting of “The Landing of Captain Vancouver” by Marion Powers Kirkpatrick really meet all the requirements of its commission?

This rather large mural was recently reintroduced to its Vancouver public on the occasion of the opening of the Vancouver Maritime Museum’s exhibition on the C.P.R.’s British Columbia Coast

Steamship Service, entitled *The Princess and her Families* on January 21, 1986. (Prior to that time it had made an initial brief appearance in the Vancouver Museum’s *Lost Vancouver* show but without any of the following information.)

The puzzlements with the painting start right with its inception; who commissioned it? But let’s go even further back and start with the artist, Marion Powers. There the questions are even thicker. We do not know, at this time, when she was born. We do know that it was in London, England, of American parents. She apparently studied at the prestigious Slade School and also under a teacher, Garrido, in Paris. This took

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place sometime in the 1890s. Her first public appearance that we can trace was a notable one; she exhibited at the Salon at Paris in 1904 and her entry, *Tresors*, was bought by the French Government for installation in the Luxembourg Palace. In 1905 she exhibited at the Walker Gallery in Liverpool and, in 1906, had two paintings accepted and hung at the Royal Academy exhibition of that year. In the same year, she moved to Maine and from thereon maintained a residence in that state. In 1907 she exhibited in Philadelphia, winning the Lippincott Prize. (The only other woman painter ever to do so has been Mary Cassatt.) In 1908 she married Walter Arber Brown Kirkpatrick of London, himself a painter. They set up separate professional identities. From thereon, Marion Powers Kirkpatrick gained a reputation for portrait painting and, especially, for illustrations in periodicals — besides winning awards in various exhibitions around the continent. In 1915, she was awarded her first commission as a mural painter, that of depicting *The Landing of Captain Vancouver* for installation in the new Hotel Vancouver, Vancouver, B.C. (This was the second Hotel Vancouver — the one demolished in 1949.) In 1919, she exhibited in the Doll & Richards Gallery in Boston. But, after 1939, her name no longer appeared in any art directory — nor can any other information presently be located.

When the painting was first exhibited at the artist's studio in Fenway Court, Boston, on June 24, 1915, the local critics gave it very high praise for concept, colour execution and vigorous brush work. Emphatic comment was made that it was based on correct historical information forwarded to the artist.

There is no extant clue as to who supplied the information — or what it consisted of. However, the interpretation as provided to the critics would indicate that some rather unusual information was supplied to the artist. A synthesis of three critics' columns turn up the following intriguing statements:

1. Captain Vancouver has landed from the *Discovery* at Nootka Sound to inform Captain Quadra, the Spanish Commander of the Island, that he must give back the Island that the Spaniards took from the British — or they would go to war!
2. The Spaniards are delighted to hand back the Island and a friendly handshake is about to seal the deal. A love feast with fruits of the soil is being prepared for the celebration of the occasion.
3. The surrender party is on the left in appropriate military attire. On the right is a group of soldiers, buccaneers and Indians — which includes Alaskan Indians watching from the background and an Indian woman, nude to the waist in the mid-ground. The blonde baby can certainly be Spanish in origin.
4. The name of the island is later changed to that of Vancouver and this surrender site is now where the city of Vancouver stands.

From George Vancouver's "A Voyage of Discovery...." the following paragraph possibly served as the basis for the main historical information provided to Mrs. Kirkpatrick.

*"Agreeably to his engagement, Senor Quadra with several of his officers came on board the Discovery, on Wednesday the 29th, where they breakfasted, and were saluted with thirteen guns on their arrival and departure: the day was afterwards spent in ceremonious offices of civility, with much harmony and festivity. As many officers as could be spared from the vessels with myself dined with Senor Quadra, and were gratified with a repast we had lately been little accustomed to, or had the most distant idea of meeting with at this place. A dinner of five courses, consisting of a superfluity of the best provisions, was served with great elegance; a royal salute was fired on drinking health to the sovereigns of England and Spain, and a salute of seventeen guns to the success of the service in which the Discovery and Chatham were engaged."*

However, how bananas, grapes, melons and other fruits translate into a 'superfluity of the best provisions' at Nootka in August in 1792, along with barrel tops and clay jugs passing as "...served with great elegance", let alone the somewhat distracting qualities of the servitors, is an interpretation that only the artist could best answer. Maybe the critics did have a sort of feeling that something was slightly awry in the 'historical information' that was forwarded to the artist.

To return to the commissioning and the painting's placement(s). As stated, we do not know how or who commissioned it. It could have come from Francis Rattenbury, the architect of the first wing of the new Hotel Vancouver (a bit unlikely, though); more likely it was from Francis S. Swales, the ultimate architect of the whole structure who, in a major article in *The Architect* for August 1916 (vol. XII, no. 2), commented on it in the following terms:

*"A beautifully composed and richly coloured decorative picture in the central lunette over the back bar, painted by Marion Powers Kirkpatrick of Boston, is comparable with the work of Frank Brangwyn and gives the necessary glowing note of colour that prevents what might otherwise be a sombre effect."*

However, some of the publicity released in Boston on the painting's completion in 1915 indicates that its destination was the Hotel Vancouver's Main Room (?) at some eight feet above the floor. There are photos showing it in both the back-of-the-bar site and in the Minstrel Gallery of the Main Dining Room in the '30s. So, where was it really destined for? The advent of prohibition in 1917 presumably closed down the operations of the bar so the painting (which by local newspaper accounts cost \$6,000) would certainly have merited a move elsewhere — though it must have

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been a rather awkward item to slide around as its measurements are approximately 16' by 8' and it weighs in at around 200 lbs.

Its final C.P.R. years were passed in an area where probably hundreds of thousands of Vancouverites and others gazed on it without registering much more than its existence. That was in the lobby of Pier B.C., the C.P.R.'s base for the fleet of the B.C. Coast Steamship Service after 1938 — and prior to that, the home of the trans-Pacific White Empresses. The painting was installed, and again we do not know when, over the double doors in the lobby that lead to the walkway along the roof over the sheds of the Pier. There it hung until 1980 when, a few days before the building was demolished, it was presented to the Vancouver Maritime Museum by the demolition contractors and by the Pier B.C. Corporation.

I am most indebted to Miss Evelyn McMann for joyously aiding and abetting in the tracking down of the elusive Marion Powers Kirkpatrick who, however, still firmly remains in some partial shadows. But her chef-d'oeuvre is very much a part of Vancouver City's visual record. With luck, its travails and travels have now ceased and it will become a better-known object of the city's artistic patrimony. But there are still some unanswered questions!

*Leonard G. McCann is Curator of the Vancouver Maritime Museum.*



## Don't Forget!

**Subscribe now if you're not receiving the News regularly.**

## Writing Competition



The British Columbia Historical Federation invites submission of books or articles for the fourth annual competition for writers of British Columbia History.

Any book with historical content published in 1985 is eligible. Whether the work was prepared as a thesis or a community project, for an industry or an organization, or just for the pleasure of sharing a pioneer's reminiscences, it is considered history as long as names, dates and locations are included. Stories told in the vernacular are acceptable when indicated as quotations of a story teller. Writers are advised that judges are looking for fresh presentation of historical information with relevant maps and/or pictures. A Table of Contents and an adequate Index are a must for the book to be of value as a historical reference. A Bibliography is also desirable. Proof reading should be thorough to eliminate typographical and spelling errors.

Book contest deadline is January 31, 1987.

There will also be a prize for the writer of the best historical article published in the **British Columbia Historical News** quarterly magazine. Written length should be no more than 2,500 words, substantiated with footnotes if possible, and accompanied by photographs if available. Deadlines for the quarterly issues are September 1, December 1, March 1, and June 1.

Submit your book or article with your name, address, and telephone number to:

British Columbia Historical Federation  
c/o Mrs. Naomi Miller  
Box 105

Wasa, B.C. V0B 2K0

Please include the selling price of the book and an address from where it may be purchased.

Winners will be invited to the British Columbia Historical Federation Convention in Mission in May, 1987.

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Compiled by Esther Birney

## Our Town

Vancouver was then only a little town, but it was growing hard. Almost every day you saw more of her forest being pushed back, half-cleared, waiting to be drained and built upon — mile upon mile of charred stumps and boggy skunk-cabbage swamp, root-holes filled with brown stagnant water, reflecting blue sky by day, rasping with frogs' croaks by night; fireweed rank of growth, springing from dour soil to burst into loose-hung, lush pink blossoms, dangling from red stalks, their clusters of loveliness trying to hide the hideous transition from wild to tamed land. I took my classes into the woods and along Vancouver's waterfront to sketch. We sat on beaches over which great docks and stations are now built, we clambered up and down wooded banks solid now with Vancouver's commercial buildings. Stanley Park at that time was just seven miles of virgin forest, three quarters surrounded by sea.

From: *Growing Pains* by Emily Carr

Fourteen-year-old Chin had arrived in Canada registered as a student to avoid the head tax. Soon he was sweating in his uncle's laundry and attending night classes. The class seethed with rebellion. Why learn English when no white Canadian would speak to a Chinaman? The more you learned the better you understood their insults. You didn't need English working in laundries or canneries. The young rowdies attended classes only to keep their immigration records clean.

From: "Mr. Chin and Mr. Goh" — An unpublished short story by Paul Yee, author of *Lilian Hoo* (1986)

Vancouver, the Liverpool of the Pacific, is one of the municipal wonders of the 20th century. Every man and woman of intelligence has nothing but words of praise for Vancouver and her surroundings. The visitor, the commercial traveller, the soldier general, the foreign diplomat, the poet who bursts into spontaneous song as he views the wonderful possibilities of our glorious city — all are in unison...people in search of homes dropped anchor and pitched their tents for all time in the city of Vancouver.

A feature contributing very materially to the brilliant effects witnessed on the streets is the large number of effective "electric" signs seen on the business houses. These beautiful signs not only work at night while the owners of business establishments are asleep and are a source of profit to the proprietors, but are also a source of delight and comfort to the throngs of pedestrians on the City's thoroughfares.

Sign in the window of E.W. Maclean [real estate broker]:

"\$100 will buy 50 foot lot in North Vancouver. Terms are easy, 1/4 cash — balance in 6-12-18 months.

From: *Greater Vancouver Illustrated* —  
Published by Dominion Illustrating Co.  
Vancouver (c. 1910)

"There is a second way that lies between Vancouver and New Westminster. It is called the river road. The river is the Fraser River ... On the high north side of the road there is still some forest or large bush, and there is the agreeable illusion ... that the road will keep its intricate quality of appearing to be far removed from a city. But over a ridge that descends to the road the city of Vancouver is crawling on. Bulldozers are levelling the small trees and laying bare a pale and stony soil. The landscape is being despoiled as it must be on behalf of ... all the amenities of living, learning, playing, and dying."

From the *Swamp Angel* by Ethel Wilson

"Rachel wrote to her cousin Elise... "It is so lovely, Elise, that I feel I've wasted my life in not living here before... You will hardly believe it but Stephen drove us, carriage and all, into a hollow tree where we sat in the carriage and had our pictures taken...."

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“If you arrive in Vancouver on a fine day and go up into a high place...you will come under the immediate spell of the mountains...and of the dark coniferous forests. You will see high headlands sloping westwards into the Pacific Ocean, and islands beyond. And then you will turn again and look across the blue inlet at the mountains which in their turn look down upon the grace and strength of the Lion’s Gate Bridge, upon the powerful flow of the Narrows, upon English Bay, upon the harbour, and upon the large city of Vancouver.”

“In the days of tents and shacks by the water edge, and of Gassy Jack Deighton’s saloon, the settlement had been called Gastown. Then with a rush of self-consciousness it became Granville. And then came the perfect name of meaning and destiny — Vancouver.”

From *The Innocent Traveller* by Ethel Wilson

### **FIRE! FIRE!**

June 13, 1886: “The roar of the fire and the flames and the smoke going over us was like the pictures of the bottomless pit that our first Presbyterian Minister used to cheer us with when we were children.”

Oct. 13, 1886: “The first loan obtained by the city was for the sum of \$6,900 for the purchase of a fire engine, hose reel and other equipment.”

“I have never felt so distinctly the sense of approaching a country back to front. Vancouver is the natural terminus of the long east-west migration that starts from Europe and crosses the Atlantic Ocean and the North American continent...when [the Europeans] reached this shore with the stagnant waters shaded by pines and maples, the long westward march was over. There was nothing more for them to do but sit down and admire the sunset...The tall wet trees in Stanley Park are shaking themselves in the wind, like dogs after a swim, and their woody smell clashes with the reek of mud and seaweed rising from the beach. Nowhere else have I encountered this strange marriage of sea and forest.

The Royal Yacht Club and its next door neighbor, the Burrard Yacht Club are a brilliant shopwindow of dainty yachts, of every possible design and rig, all streaming with lights. But as you draw nearer the docks the lights grow sparser and the boats more workmanlike, until at last the black, tormented shapes of the old trawlers, still rotting away here after they have fished their last, loom up in a sinister half-

light...the horror of these boats reminds one of the wretched fate of the men, the fishermen who spent their lives in them.

From: *Gemini* by Michel Fournier — translated by Anne Carter, Methuen 1981

In May of 1887 the Canadian Pacific Railway had come to town and, with it, the world...Vancouver was the Terminal City of the greatest transportation system the world had yet seen...the first easy round-the-world tours were made possible, and the “jet set” of contemporary society passed through the C.P.R. station...So did Rudyard Kipling who thought “a great sleepiness lies on Vancouver as compared with an American town”. But he liked it, and commented on the “Absence of bustle”, the unused spittoons, the free baths in the hotels, the good streets and the many Englishmen “who speak the English tongue correctly.” The young city was “not a very gorgeous place as yet, but (he added) you can be shot directly from the window of the train into the liner that will take you in fourteen days from Vancouver to Yokohama.” Kipling bought property in Fairview, some real estate, a town lot he described as “some four hundred well-developed pines and a few thousand tons of granite scattered in blocks at the roots of the pines, and a sprinkling of earth.”

From: *Vancouver Observed — The First Ten Years*; by Gordon Elliot — Vancouver Historical Society — Newsletter, Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 5 — Jan. 1977

Our souls have their own geographical loyalties, quite distinct from such tastes as we ourselves may have cultivated...

Give me...the Desert or the Mediterranean or, better still for a long stay, our exquisitely temperate southern England. But this is not what my soul says. It is when we cross latitude 55 and reach the North that my soul, quite without any prompting from me, cries out in delight. I remember such a cry when we had been travelling as far south as Tahiti and had seen all that is lushest on this earth...and then had flown north, to find ourselves in British Columbia. And at the sight of the cold peaks there, the slopes of pine and fir, the streams that looked as if they came from springs of creme de menthe . . . the infinitely hopeful green of the valleys, the pale hollow of the sky, it was not I, who have no particular taste or fancy for these things, but the soul within me that sent up a shout of delight. As

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if at last I had brought it home. But why, when I have never lived in such places nor choose to make holiday in them, my soul should behave like this is a mystery to me.

From "Seeing the North", *Delight* by J.B. Priestley (New York, 1971), p. 141.

*This excerpt from an editorial in the Mainland Guardian, was a response to a speech by John Robson claiming that he and David Oppenheimer were the fathers of Vancouver.*

Surely the large audience that listened to Mr. Robson, when making that statement about the joint paternity of Vancouver must have cheered to the echo. They must have felt proud of a man who, while being paid by the people to carry on their business, could be able to spare the time and thought to evoke a great city from the wilderness, in conjunction with the civic chief of Vancouver. Some people may object that the local Government went beyond their proper field of duty when they gave six thousand acres of public land to a railway company to induce them to extend their line, even when the extension gave aid and comfort to Messrs. Robson and Oppenheimer in the work they had entered upon the creation of the city of Vancouver.

*Mainland Guardian*, October 3, 1888, page 2.

#### WE KNOW WHAT WE DON'T LIKE!

It is evident that the pictures, lent to us here in Vancouver, some by that coterie of Canadian artists known as the "Group of Seven", and some by the National Gallery of Canada are stirring up a great controversy. People are writing letters to us about them and some of these letters are very scornful and indignant. Rev. J. Williams Ogden, for instance, who is a doctor of divinity says that most of these pictures should be taken out and burnt — which is pretty strong language for a divine, it seems to us. Dr. Ogden says these pictures are freaks, grotesque in color and in drawing. He thinks they should never have been admitted to a representative exhibition of Canadian art in Vancouver at all. In fact Dr. Ogden is so worked up by these provocative pictures that he almost suggests that the people responsible for bringing them here should be taken out and burnt as well.

*Daily Province*, August 15, 1928, page 6.

#### CITY LOTS — "Come buy of me!"

The oddly cautionary verse which appears below was published in the *New Westminister Mainland Guardian*. We are indebted to Angela McClarty, one of Professor Gresko's history students at Douglas College, for it and for the following remarks which we have taken from her study of the contents of the *Guardian* for Aug. 14, 1886.

"Realizing the value of mass-communication through the newspaper, the businessmen of New Westminister, Vancouver and even Victoria advertised in the *Mainland Guardian*. Some of the major advertisers were real estate men...of the ads listing land for sale, most of the land was located in downtown New Westminister along Columbia Street. However, despite the availability of these city lots (at good prices, even!) the public preferred to avoid the downtown core. The overall sentiment of the public regarding the purchase of city lots was captured in a poetic advertisement entitled..."

#### CITY LOTS

TOM FOLLY and MRS. PRUDENCE

Tom to the lady —  
My dear old lady will you buy  
A charming city lot?  
She answered with a heaving sigh  
My darling, I will not.  
Boss Tweed, my lord, and Bailie Ross  
Shall never tax my cot:  
'Tis safer to play pitch and toss  
Than trust this precious lot.  
I will not buy, I will not build  
Because I cannot trust  
The Councillors who are all skilled  
In making gold of dust.  
The sawdust trick has sealed my purse  
I'll keep my cash secure;  
A city lot is like a curse —  
It makes a rich man poor.  
Boss Tweed, the Bailie, and my lord  
Shall not be my trustees,  
The lots which they have power to tax  
Are not worth two baubees.

By W. Norman Bole, *Mainland Guardian*,  
August 14, 1886.

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**Morag Maclachlan**

## **Vancouver from the Lower Valley —A Personal View**

A few years ago I was shopping in downtown Vancouver one Friday evening and overheard two saleswomen discussing the Canada Day celebrations planned for the following Monday.

"I was born in Canada," declared one.

"So was I," said the other. "I was born right here in B.C. — in Salmon Arm."

"Then I'm more Canadian than you," triumphed the first. "I was born in Vancouver!"

Salmon Arm said nothing. I did not find this very funny, but neither did it make me unduly resentful. I thought of the typical hinterland response — the Canada-wide "hate Toronto" syndrome; the distrust in the Okanagan, the Kootenays, the Cariboo and other diverse regions of the economic dominance of Vancouver. I thought of past bitterness, still traceable, in Victoria and New Westminster, both established before the upstart city that mushroomed with the coming of the railroad.

But I grew up in Chilliwack, which, in my youth was the business centre for a flourishing dairy industry. Although my family lived in the town, I knew that the farmers in the surrounding municipality had always had access to markets. The grandparents of the Kipps, the Chadseys, the Reeces that I went to school with had come from Upper Canada with an understanding of the conditions of frontier farming. In the Chilliwack Valley they found areas which required little clearing and provided crops of "prairie hay" that brought instant cash returns. The demand for hay, vegetables, butter and tobacco in the gold fields, and the availability of a labour force of Indians experienced because of the agricultural operations of the Hudson's Bay Company, meant that these pioneers, far from enduring a long period of subsistence agriculture, were engaged in agricultural industry immediately. They were on an industrial frontier with markets, first in the gold fields, then in mining, logging and construction camps, and, with the growth of Vancouver, they had access to a large metropolitan market.

During the 1920s, the decade of my childhood, farmers in the lower Fraser Valley were organizing a valley wide co-operative based on earlier joint ventures. The Lower Mainland Milk and Cream Shippers' Association was formed to enable dairy farmers in Langley, Pitt Meadows and on the deltas of the Fraser to negotiate with retail dealers in Vancouver whom they believed took advantage of them. They joined with members of the Chilliwack Creamery to form the Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association. Through this co-operative, valley farmers built a milk plant at Sardis, a condensary at Abbotsford, and established a retail outlet in Vancouver. In this way they controlled the surplus milk by directing it into manufactured products and thus maintained stable prices in the most lucrative market, Vancouver, where the demand for fresh milk increased with the rapid population growth. Nowhere in North America were dairy farmers, as far from a large urban centre as the Chilliwack producers were from theirs, able to gain a share of that market.

Although the dairy farmers' co-operative, the Fraser Valley Milk Producers' Association, fought bitterly with independents, it was a successful venture which allowed producers to farm independently while marketing co-operatively. Through the FVMPA dairy farmers had a powerful mechanism for political lobbying, for controlling their market and for fighting opposition. The political and economic alienation which led to the growth of farm politics elsewhere in Canada, did not exist in the valley.

The co-operative movements among Prairie farmers were highly successful but farmers went into politics because of their grievances against freight and tariff policies developed in central Canada. Ontario farmers elected a farmers' party in 1919 because the rapid industrialization in Ontario created problems. The growth of Toronto and other manufacturing centres obliterated small farm centres and gobbled up agricultural land, creating despair over the disappearance of a way of life that farmers idealized as wholesome and good. The proliferation of farm literature stressing these values and picturing city life as evil and debilitating had no equal in the lower Fraser Valley. Valley farmers could distinguish between those in the city who opposed their interest and the customers on whom they depended. No one from Chilliwack, where everyone depended on dairying, could be resentful of Vancouver, even when a Vancouverite exhibited smugness.

As a child, I frequently visited the city with my family, travelling the long road over the newly drained Sumas Prairie, through the Green Timbers, which shut out the summer sun, and along Kingsway to the appropriate turnoff. But we rarely felt like country cousins. One of my uncles lived at 57th and Oak and his children had more bush to play in than we did, and my aunt was more "bushed" than my mother. From their place a trip downtown seemed

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interminable as we rattled on the street car through miles of wilderness until we came to Shaughnessy Hospital. Another uncle had an acreage and twenty-five cows at 54th near Elliot. When we stayed at the "ranch" we played in the hay and waited our turn for meals while four hired men ate heartily. We came to the city to experience country living. Now I realize that Vancouver had expanded into the wilderness, much of its growth was controlled by the real estate policies of the CPR. There was no cause for the bitter nostalgia over a disappearing way of life so evident in the farm literature of Ontario.

So the saleslady's suggestion that those born in Vancouver are more Canadian than the rest of us left me contemplative but unperturbed. I can never be an old timer in Vancouver but that is nothing new. My family arrived in Chilliwack in 1924 and I went to school with children whose grandparents had come with the gold rush. Down at the end of Wellington Avenue on the Indian Reserve were children whose people had been on the land much longer. My family members were newcomers in Chilliwack all their lives, and though I love Vancouver and have lived and worked here for more than fifteen years, I cheerfully accept the fact that I am a newcomer. That is, after all, one of the most common ways of being Canadian. *Morag Maclachlan, M.A., M.Ed., is a former instructor, History Department, Vancouver Community College, Langara Campus.*

**Helen Akrigg**

## Early Squamish Indian Settlement in the Vancouver Area

Although the Musqueam Indians (who had their permanent villages around the north arm of the Fraser River), like the Squamish Indians, also utilized the resources of the Burrard Inlet on a seasonal basis, the Squamish were the dominant group and the following discussion is restricted to them.

The Squamish Indians, a group of the Coast Salish Indians who speak the Squamish language, had their permanent villages on both sides of the Squamish and Cheakamus Rivers, and in the Howe Sound area. Salmon was the mainstay of their diet, and this area

provided excellent salmon fishing — in fact, the meaning of the Squamish Indian word from which Cheakamus is derived is 'salmon weir place'.

It appears that in pre-contact times the Squamish Indians utilized the Burrard Inlet primarily on a seasonal basis for resource exploitation — clams in February, herring spawn in March, eulachon run in April and so on. Another good source of food were the large herds of elk which lived around False Creek, Jericho and Point Grey. The Squamish would travel down Howe Sound in their larger, deeper saltwater canoes which were about 20 feet long; they had smaller, flat-bottom canoes for river use. A favourite camping spot was Horseshoe Bay (*cha-high*, meaning unknown).

For certain periods in pre-contact times there had been permanent villages around Burrard Inlet, but smallpox epidemics in the late 1700s and raids by the feared Lekwiltok Indians had decreased the Indian population and they had withdrawn to the greater safety of the Squamish valley. However, with the coming of the first white settlers to Burrard Inlet, more and more Squamish Indians moved permanently to Burrard Inlet.

The main Squamish Indian village sites in the Vancouver area are:

*sen akw* (meaning possibly 'inside at the head') is on False Creek and is now known as Kitsilano I.R. #6. The Indian houses extended from the Maritime Museum to the new Pennyfarthing development in South False Creek.

*schilhus* ('high bank') is at the end of Pipeline Road in Stanley Park, where the waterline crosses from Capilano. August Jack's grandfather, *xats'lanexw* (anglicized as Kitsilano), settled here around 1860.

*xwayxway* ('place of *sxwayxwi* mask') was a very important village at a place we know as Lumberman's Arch.

*temtemixwtn* ('place of lots of land') is at Belcarra. Village was abandoned in the 1830s-1840s.

*xwmech'stn* (likely a Squamish pronunciation of a Musqueam term derived from word referring to fish 'finning' or 'rolling' on the water surface). Located at original mouth of the Capilano River, east of Lions Gate Bridge. The word Capilano is the anglicization of the name of a famous Squamish Indian, *ku-yap-LAN-ough*.

*slha an* ('against the edge of the bay') is at mouth of Mosquito Creek. This Mission I.R. #1 is only a recent village, coming into existence after the Roman Catholic Church established a mission about 100 years ago.

I should like to acknowledge the great help of Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy, of the B.C. Indian Language Project in Victoria, in giving me the detailed information in this article. Many thanks.

*Helen Akrigg is past president of the B.C. Historical Federation, and with her husband, Philip Akrigg, is the author of British Columbia Place Names.*

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**Robert A.J. McDonald**

## **“Aristocratic” Granville Street**

Time has obscured from historical memory the unique origins of north Granville Street, one of Vancouver's most important thoroughfares. Laid out by L.A. Hamilton, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company's first land commissioner in Vancouver, the street acquired a distinctive personality in the late 1880s through the CPR's enthusiastic pursuit of real estate profits in the coast city. The company's practice of developing townsite lands was not unique to Vancouver — urban land sales across the west offered the CPR an important source of income. But Vancouver provided an unusual opportunity to maximize real estate returns, for here the provincial government in 1884 had granted the company a magnificent land bonus of 6,458 acres — “some ten square miles”.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the CPR, through an agreement with a separate company, received only one-half the net proceeds from land sales in Prairie towns, in Vancouver, where the railroad administered land directly, profits accrued entirely to the corporation. Vancouver furnished the CPR's “most spectacular” and most “profitable” venture in townsite promotion. So rapid was Vancouver's growth that by 1889 the proceeds from property sales exceeded land-generated revenue “in all other company towns combined.”<sup>2</sup> Granville Street centred the 480-acre block between Burrard Inlet and False Creek that provided the bulk of these early returns.

The company spared no expense of money and energy to pull commercial development westward towards its townsite and away from Gastown, the former business centre that remained, along with newly opened lands to the east, the city's residential and commercial core. To encourage construction, the CPR adopted a policy of offering generous discounts of 20 to 30 percent “on condition of building”.<sup>3</sup> Upon Vancouver's incorporation in April 1886, the corporation quickly assumed governmental functions in the westside area. It spent \$235,000 in nine months clearing, grading, and constructing streets. Aided by interlocking corporate directorships, the rail company “influenced” the Bank of Montreal to

accept a bank site on Granville Street.<sup>4</sup> CPR officials in Montreal and Vancouver, as well as company friends in Britain, were encouraged to invest along Granville, and by 1889 eastern executives Sir Donald Smith and William Van Horne had completed the city's two largest privately owned structures. At the height of land on Granville the CPR erected a \$200,000 hotel, for many years Vancouver's “principal building”.<sup>5</sup> Next door it placed an expensive opera house, costing, at \$100,000, double the community's finest brick and masonry commercial block of the period. The opera house was “far ahead of the actual requirements of the town” and like the hotel served primarily to advertise the company's site.<sup>6</sup> Both by their presence expressed the unlimited faith that CPR vice-president (to 1888, then president) William Van Horne held in Vancouver's future.

A nasty sectional fight between the CPR and eastside businessmen over where to locate the city's post office revealed the corporation's determination to promote Granville Street. Company documents show that the federal government's decision to locate the public facility on Granville did not ensue from a careful assessment of the relative merits of competing locations. Rather, it resulted from the rail company's behind-the-scenes lobbying. In the spring of 1886 “CPR” member of Parliament<sup>7</sup> A.W. Ross convinced the federal government to locate a temporary office on railroad land, west of existing settlement. To quote the Manitoba M.P., “I made the arrangements to move the P.O. up on the company's property after the fire, and had to use all my influence at Ottawa to keep it there against the wishes of the citizens.”<sup>8</sup> A storm of controversy accompanied the post office decision, prompting petitions from both eastside critics and westside supporters.<sup>9</sup> Opponents presented a solid case; they argued that the new Hastings Street site was relatively inaccessible to most residents. But the logic of numbers in Vancouver proved insufficient to counter corporate pressure in Ottawa. As discussion turned to a permanent site, the CPR gained a tactical advantage by offering seven choice lots at Granville and Pender. It did so for a nominal fee, foregoing large real estate profits.<sup>10</sup> Once more both sides organized massive petitions and large public meetings, generating in the city an intensely fractious political climate.<sup>11</sup> Considering a permanent post office on Granville to be “of very great importance to the CPR,”<sup>12</sup> Van Horne spared no effort to win a favourable hearing. To silence local opponents he instructed Vancouver CPR superintendent Harry Abbott to intervene directly, and uncharacteristically, in civic politics. At one point Abbott organized westside forces to capture a potentially hostile public meeting and have those present pass the company's “own resolutions.”<sup>13</sup> But ultimately Van Horne's intervention with federal officials, rather than west coast pressure, swayed Ottawa's judgement in the CPR's favour.<sup>14</sup> In May 1890 the Postmaster-General

announced that a large and expensive structure would be built on Granville Street, in the heart of the company's townsite. For "patriotic" reasons, Board of Trade president R.H. Alexander reluctantly accepted the government's decision. So did Mayor David Oppenheimer, the leading eastside promoter. But not everyone met defeat so graciously. According to Dr. Stevenson, the post office decision could have no other object than "to please the CPR." "Clearly," he continued, "the Dominion government was 'corrupt'."<sup>15</sup>

However, it was not the quest for profit which alone determined the rail company's land policy, for an additional set of assumptions served to give Granville Street and the surrounding area a distinctive social character. Primarily responsible for this social bias was William Van Horne, who saw Granville as a high status commercial centre surrounded by an elite residential neighbourhood. To achieve this goal company officials carefully monitored architectural plans to ensure that buildings in the CPR block appeared stylish and sophisticated. Subsidized land prices for charitable and social institutions provided an opening for company influence, which Van Horne exercised personally with such organizations as the Vancouver Club, the Young Men's Christian Association, and Whetham College. When Vancouver Club members objected to the dormer windows that his Montreal-based architect had proposed, Van Horne reluctantly conceded the requested changes; although in his opinion the alternative was "a very commonplace objectionable looking building."<sup>16</sup> Particularly distressed by the building plans for a new YMCA, for which the company had given a 50 percent land subsidy, Van Horne urged the CPR's land commissioner, J.M. Browning, to insist on a "better looking front"; the first design had a "cheap and nasty look resulting from over-ornamentation", giving it the appearance of a "pretentious building in a small country town."<sup>17</sup> Van Horne also closely examined design details of the company's opera house, which he was anxious to make "as perfect as possible."<sup>18</sup>

Granville Street received more than architectural attention. After land had been sold and buildings constructed, Browning maintained company control by managing most of the street's major rental properties. Careful to let space only to a good class of tenant who carried first class stock, Browning prevented any two north Granville stores from selling similar merchandise.<sup>19</sup> Capitalists with links to the upper levels of the class system in Britain and Canada were encouraged to invest on Granville. Indicating the policy's success, a December 1888 survey of major privately-held Granville Street buildings listed as owners two knights of the realm, two English lords, and two professors.<sup>20</sup> As one disgruntled investor complained after being thwarted in her attempt to buy Granville Street land:

*You may have heard that I have dared to think of creating a block on aristocratic Granville Street, but*

*having failed to prove a very long Pedigree and being only a Canadian without a title, they put up the price of (the) lots....<sup>21</sup>*

When the CPR announced in 1894 that it would close its Vancouver land office, fire its local land commissioner, and shut the opera house as the result of a severely depressed real estate market and the diminishing amount of downtown land that remained for the company to sell, a distinctive phase in the history of Granville Street came to an end. Market forces and city planners, rather than an eastern railroad corporation, would guide Granville's future.

*Robert McDonald is an Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, University of British Columbia.*

#### Notes

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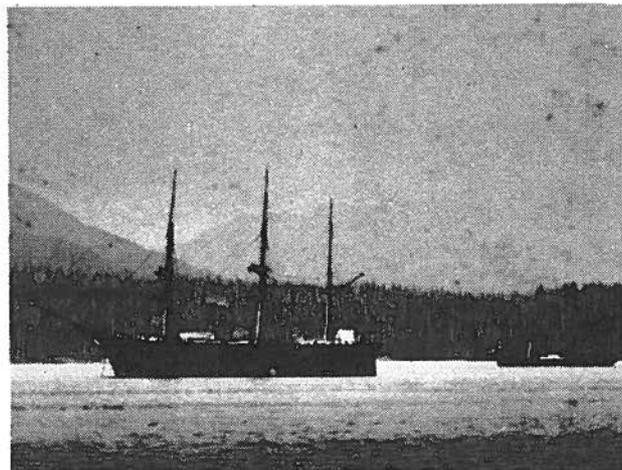
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## David Wynne Griffiths

# The Ship That Saved Vancouver



Maritime Museum, Vancouver

*The Robert Kerr in Vancouver Harbour*

On the morning of June 13, 1886, just to the west of the infant city of Vancouver, a number of small fires were set in order to burn off some brush. This was a regular occurrence in and around a community that had just been wrested from the coastal rain forest and had been officially incorporated only two months before. As the fires caught, a freak squall from the east fanned the flames toward and amongst the collection of summer-dry wooden buildings. In short order, Vancouver was afire — in the words of one eyewitness, “The city didn’t burn, it exploded!”

Pursued by a raging wall of flame, terrified Vancouverites had but one route of escape — the waters of Burrard Inlet. As the frantic throng began to arrive on the shore, the flames were already blackening and scorching the pilings and docks along the waterfront. Boats, barges, canoes, indeed, anything that would float was being used to escape the advancing inferno. At the city wharf desperate townspeople were pulling the very dock itself to pieces and throwing themselves into the water; others milled hopelessly about on the beach.

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Aboard the ship *Robert Kerr*, at anchor in the harbour, the watchman, Captain Dyer, feverishly lowered a boat and pulled toward shore. Within an hour more than 200 survivors crowded the decks of the *Robert Kerr*, staring forlornly toward the smouldering ruins of their homes and businesses — there was simply nothing left to burn.

With typical pioneer spirit and literally before the smoke had cleared, Vancouverites began the task of reconstruction. A new and vibrant city emerged from the charred waste and the *Robert Kerr* secured a place in the hearts of the survivors of the 'Great Fire' as 'the ship that saved Vancouver'.

Built as the *Buffalo* at Quebec in 1866 by N. Rosa and Sons, for Robert Kerr and Sons of Liverpool, she took the name of the company's principal before she slipped down the ways. The *Robert Kerr* was originally registered as a barque, measuring 191 feet in length and weighing 1120 tons. During the 1860s the *Robert Kerr* traded between Britain and India where the Kerr family had business interests. In 1876 the vessel was sold to Kerr's brother-in-law David Fernie. Fernie refitted her as a schooner in 1879. The vessel's final British owner was H.K. Waddell, also of Liverpool, who once more re-fitted and re-registered her as a ship in 1881. Under the command of Captain Edward Edwards the *Robert Kerr* entered the northwest trade between Britain and the Americas. It was under Edwards that the *Robert Kerr* commenced her seventh and final voyage around the Horn from Liverpool on the morning of October 2, 1884.

The journey proved to be one fraught with misfortune for commander, ship and crew. Battered by storms and becalmed in the equatorial heat, the ship finally anchored at Panama on February 28, 1885, after a five month voyage.

The crew fought amongst themselves and with their officers. The ship's log, now held by the Vancouver City Archives, testifies to the persistent strife and violence of that last voyage:

*'November 12, 1884 — at 4 am whilst talking to Eleazer Riley for muttering whenever he got an order William Anderson A.B. called out to Riley to hit me on the head with something. I reported it to the Captain.'*

*'February 19, 1885 — William Anderson threatened to hit me on the head with a capstan bar. I reported it to the Captain.'*

*'May 20, 1885 — Seraphim Fortes came aft and reported that William Anderson had stuck a cotton hook in his cheek.'*

Crew member Anderson certainly seems to have been a most unsavoury character; however, it appears that the writer of the log, first mate John Richardson, had his subtle revenge. A later entry describes him as making a gift of a jar of pickles to Anderson who shortly afterwards was confined to sick bay suffering from some mysterious stomach complaint!

Thankfully not all of the *Robert Kerr's* crew were rogues as is evidenced by able seaman Seraphim 'Joe' Fortes, who, upon arriving in Vancouver, became the legendary 'lifeguard of English Bay', until his death in the early 1920s.

For the *Kerr* the shores of English Bay were still a thousand miles of sorrow and hardship away. On August 10, 1885, first mate Richardson made the following log entry:

*At 9.15 am. the Captain died...Everything that could be done has been done according to his wishes...The Captain was conscious to the last and speaking 5 or 6 minutes before he died, he asked me for a drink of water. To the best of my belief his complaint was dropsy and inflammation of the kidneys.'*

The destiny of the *Robert Kerr* might never have become entwined with that of the young city of Vancouver had it not been for one further mishap on an already luckless voyage. While sailing through the San Juan Islands the vessel ran aground, sustaining enough damage to have to be towed to Vancouver for inspection and repairs. On September 7, 1885, *Robert Kerr* dropped anchor in Burrard Inlet, 11 months out of Liverpool.

The underwriters for the *Kerr's* owners decided against repairing the vessel and early in 1886 Captain William Soule, superintendent of loading at the Hastings Mill, purchased her and set her to anchor with Captain Dyer aboard as watchman.

On April 6, 1886, flying her signals and ringing her bell the *Robert Kerr* took a prominent part in the celebrations of Vancouver's official incorporation — two months later the vessel would witness the city die and see a new one rise in its place.

During the fire Captain Soule lost his residence ashore and while another one was being built, he and his family took up residence aboard the *Robert Kerr*. Mrs. Soule seems to have carried on a fairly normal Victorian lifestyle; she was seen rowing to the shops and markets and often held afternoon teas for her friends in the captain's cabin. When the Soule family moved into their new residence at Dunlevy and Powell they decided to hold a raffle for the ship. Eighty tickets at \$100 apiece were sold but the draw was never held as the Canadian Pacific Railroad apparently made Soule a better offer and purchased the vessel to use as a coaling tender for their growing fleet of steamers.

In 1888 a stripped and re-fitted *Robert Kerr* entered the service of the CPR. For twenty years her coal-blackened form was towed unceremoniously by a succession of straining tugs from the coal ports of Vancouver Island to Burrard Inlet in order to service the great trans-Pacific liners of the day such as the *Empress of India*, *Empress of Japan*, *Abysinnia*, *Parthia* and *Batavia*. During this period many a coastal seaman or towboatman learned his trade aboard the *Robert Kerr*. In countless turn of the century photographs

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the sad drudge that she had become can be seen forlorn at anchor or alongside some wharf amidst the thriving city that had once owed her so much.

On March 4, 1911 came the final indignity. The *Robert Kerr*, under tow by the steam tug *Coulti* and loaded with 1800 tons of coal, strayed off course and piled heavily onto a reef at the north end of Thetis Island between Ladysmith and Nanaimo. The fully laden vessel quickly filled and sank stern-first to a sloping sandy bottom, her bow splintered on the reef.

Veteran diver James Moore inspected the hulk some days later and declared it a total loss. The Vancouver Dredge and Salvage Company (a forerunner of Rivotw Straits) bought the wreck for salvage but after an unsuccessful attempt at retrieving the bulk of the cargo abandoned it to the elements and the curious. For many years the *Robert Kerr's* bow clung precariously above water, and in company with the nearby skeleton of the freighter *Miami*, it served as a stark reminder to passing mariners.

Though much of the ship's upper structure was removed during the original salvage operations or has been broken up by storms since, a great deal remains to testify to her sturdy construction. Her holds are filled with sand and coal, the bow is smashed and spread across the shallow, sun-lit reef-top. Beneath the massive, coppered keel lingcod and rockfish hide while snowy white plumose anenomes soften the angular decking knees that mark the way along the starboard side toward the stern. A heavy capstan lies on the sand; the massive iron masts seem still suspended and point off into the emerald gloom. The portside hull amidships forms a cave-like corridor against a wall of rock at which point one can swim beneath the heavy timbers of the hull itself and emerge 40 feet away on the starboard side.

The *Robert Kerr* now lies in 20 to 60 feet of water mid-way between Miami Islet and Ragged Island off Pilkey Point, Thetis Island. During periods of good visibility in late winter and early spring one can see portions of the wreck from the surface. It is at this time of year that divers may also be treated to breathtaking displays by numbers of northern sea lions. These massive creatures haul out on nearby Miami Islet during their northerly migration and are very curious about divers. A diver absorbed with the wreck or a photographer intent on a subject may look up to find six pairs of sea lion eyes observing with mildest interest while others glide and somersault with consummate grace about the bones of the old *Robert Kerr*.

On an April morning in 1886 the *Robert Kerr*, draped in flags and streamers, heralded the birth of a new city. Now, regaled in the living decorations of the undersea world the ship that saved Vancouver lies in silence with her memories.

*David W. Griffiths is President of the Underwater Archeology Society of B.C.*

## B.C. Studies

The Fourth Biannual B.C. Studies Conference will be hosted by the University of Victoria, November 7 - 8, 1986. The primary purpose is to bring together those with a common interest in the study of British Columbia. This year the Conference will highlight British Columbia's political economy, its past, present and future.

For further information please contact Dr. Peter Baskerville, Department of History, University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C. V9W 2Y2. Phone 721-7381.

## Expo '86 to be Featured on Four Stamps

Designs depicting the communications and transportation theme of EXPO '86, to be held in Vancouver May 2 to Oct. 13, will be featured on four stamps being issued to mark the world exposition.

One of the stamps will feature the Canada Pavilion, the flagship of EXPO '86, inside which visitors from around the world will witness the giant strides Canadians have made in transportation, communications, the arts and entertainment.

The Canada Pavilion will be featured on a 34-cent stamp to be issued March 7 along with a 39-cent stamp, the rate for first-class mail to the United States, depicting the communications aspect of the exposition's theme "World in Motion — World in Touch."

Two more stamps will be issued April 28 featuring the Expo Centre and the transportation aspect of the EXPO '86 theme. Additional details on these stamps will be available at a later date.

British American Bank Note Inc., of Ottawa, will print 15 million of each of the four stamps designed by Debbie Adams.

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**Esther Birney**

## **Elek Imredy — Vancouver Sculptor**

Here's one artist who has not had to gain recognition outside Vancouver before being acclaimed a master within his own territory.

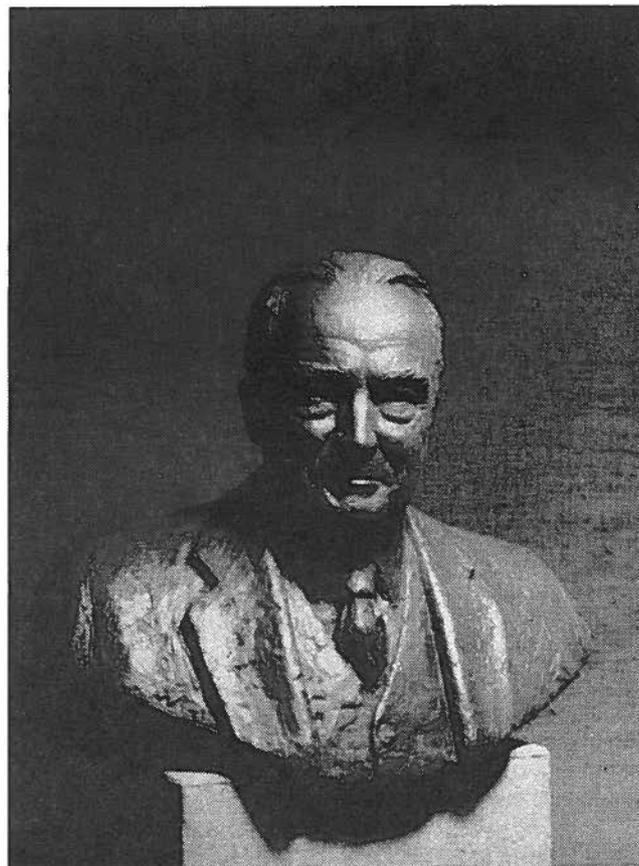
Elek Imredy came here from Hungary in 1957; he was forty-five and had been a professional sculptor all his working life.

Practically from the day of his arrival Imredy has been fulfilling commissions for private individuals, for institutions and for different levels of government. He is equally at home in bronze, concrete, wood or fibreglass. If it can be cut, chiselled or moulded Imredy will create with it. And his subjects will be equally varied: thoughtful madonnas, portrait busts and statues, animals (a life-size moose and cougar at the Vancouver Parks Board), abstractions given form, as in the twelve foot bronze Lady of Justice for the New Westminster Court House (where Imredy's statue of Judge Begbie can also be seen), and in designs for medals and coats of arms.

In 1972 his lovely *Girl in a Wetsuit* was placed offshore in Stanley Park and became an instant landmark and tourist attraction. The portrait in bronze of Major Matthews in the entrance to the Vancouver Public Archives smiles benignly at all who come to use the documents stored there. Although the Major was said to be somewhat stubborn where his archives were concerned, Elek Imredy has created a portrait that radiates the intelligence and strength of purpose that is claimed for Matthews by all who knew him.

On Parliament Hill, in Ottawa, Imredy's seated figure of Louis Saint Laurent is one of that city's most admired statues. In Guelph a bronze torso, in Saskatoon nine pieces in bronze and wood, in Winnipeg a polyester statue, in Edmonton a 17-foot figure of Christ and in many places in B.C. and elsewhere in Canada Imredy's work has touched the hearts and minds of people.

Trends and fashions in sculpture may come and go but Imredy in his Kitsilano studio fulfills his own inner vision when he works on his figures. And because he has great skill and integrity everything he produces reflects these qualities. He also has the unique ability of conveying in his portrait busts and statues the best attributes of his sitters.



**Major J.S. Matthews**

One of his latest pieces is a bronze reproduction of Vancouver's coat of arms; it was commissioned by the Women's Canadian Club and donated to the city by the club. Look for it when the council's proceedings are televised; it is on the wall behind the mayor's chair. Hungary's loss of a fine sculptor has enriched the cultural life of this city and for this we are indeed grateful.

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Irene Howard

## Mildred Fahrni — The Making of a Pacifist

February 4, 1986: the monthly meeting of the Vancouver Fellowship of Reconciliation is having a workshop on non-violence in the living room of Mildred Fahrni in West Point Grey. <sup>1</sup> They talk about controlling anger and taking a non-violent yet assertive approach to problems; about respecting and loving one's opponents; about developing courage to withstand opposition in pursuit of justice. (One young man wonders aloud how courageous he would be withstanding a bulldozer in the Stein Valley, a wilderness area which environmentalists are trying to save from incursions by the logging industry.) They invoke Gandhi and his "experiments in truth." Mildred Fahrni chairs the meeting. She has just come back from a conference at Nanoose Bay where five hundred people gathered to protest further American testing of military equipment in the area. She also has news of a travelling peace choir and an update on the Vancouver Peace Festival planned for Expo '86. Now eighty-six years old, this tall, slender woman speaks fluently with quiet authority and great conviction, and as she speaks the activities of the peace movement, always struggling for recognition, become legitimate and credible in this room. Fifty years in the Fellowship of Reconciliation and one of its Vancouver founders, Mildred Fahrni has been an active pacifist for most of her life. In a city sponsoring a week-long Peace Festival as part of its Centennial celebration, it is timely to inquire into her life and ask where she learned her commitment to principle, and her utopian vision of peace and brotherhood, in the face of daily witness to war.

Born in 1900 in the little town of Rapid City, Manitoba, near Margaret Laurence's Neepawa, Mildred Osterhout grew up in that Protestant ambience which the novelist translated into the Manawaka of her stories. Like the Manawaka characters and like Margaret Laurence herself, Mildred early learned the ethic of Christian duty and of discipline and self-denial. Her father was Abram Berson Osterhout, from an Ontario farm family of Dutch and United Empire Loyalist descent. He spent twenty-three years as a Methodist minister in that part of southwestern Manitoba, moving every four years with his family, according to Church practice, to a

new town, a new pastorate, but always enduring the same rigorous winter sleigh journeys in below zero weather to the rural communities in his charge. The snow enters into Mildred's profoundest memories: carrying it into the house to melt for washing water; playing in it, falling down to make the imprint of an "angel"; walking behind her father in the deep snow and hearing the scrunch of his footsteps as he made a path for his children. And then, miraculously, the song of the meadowlark with the coming of spring. Her mother was Winnipeg-born Harriet Smyth, of English parents, a hard-working minister's wife and an intellectually capable woman who took her husband's place in the pulpit when needed. Mildred remembers her father and mother as hospitable people who opened their home to travellers or to theological students on practicum. For the Osterhouts this was more than prairie neighbourliness; it was the Christian way. So also was the acceptance and respect which they accorded a visiting black minister who preached in their white and not very broad-minded community. Mildred had a great regard for her father and mother, strict fundamentalists, yet kindly folk, imbuing, she recalls, the letter of Methodist doctrine with the warming spirit.

In 1914, the Osterhout family escaped the rigours of the prairie winter by moving to British Columbia, first to Victoria and then to Burnaby. Harriet Osterhout died in 1921, leaving Mildred to be her father's housekeeper and companion, and, in later years, his nurse.

Mildred delayed marriage to remain in the family home. After her father died in 1940, she married Walter Fahrni of Vancouver.

Her liberation from the fundamentalist religion of her father had, however, begun much earlier when she was a student at the University of British Columbia, housed then in the Fairview Shacks. In a science course she was moved to question the literal interpretation of Genesis, and recalls counting her ribs to confirm that woman was not, after all, made from one of Adam's ribs. In economics and political science with Dr. Theodore (Teddy) Boggs, she was first introduced to Marxism. The idea of the class struggle was vividly presented during field trips to meetings of the Industrial Workers of the World in Vancouver's East End where Dr. Boggs encouraged his students to engage in polemics with the workers at the meeting.

A further loosening of the parental bond came in Bible seminars with Dr. H.B. Sharman, the first chairman of the Student Christian Movement. He had written a "synoptic gospel", reconstructing the history of Jesus by arranging it in comparative passages to show that the Bible was a human document with different gospel versions of the same event, and not the absolute word of God. For Mildred, as for most of his students, this kind of Bible study yielded profound

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new insights. She was one of many in whom the charismatic Dr. Sharman inspired a resolve to lead the dedicated life and a passion for the pursuit of the Good.

After graduating in 1924 from the University of British Columbia with a Master of Arts in Philosophy and English, she taught for some years at Queen Elizabeth Elementary School in Point Grey, where she and her father now lived. But nature field trips and canaries and rabbits in the classroom did not provide scope for her social concerns. She wanted to know more about teaching exceptional children. In 1931, arranging a sabbatical from teaching and from her father, she accepted a scholarship to study at Bryn Mawr in the department of Social Economy and Social Research. Case work with families took her into the slums of Philadelphia. Later that year an invitation to work as a volunteer for six months at a settlement house took her to London's East End. Here at Kingsley Hall she did group work among the unemployed dock workers and their families.

Here also she met Gandhi. It happened that he was in London attending the Round Table Conference on India. He had accepted an invitation to stay at Kingsley Hall, putting down his thin bedroll in one of the little cubicles which served as bedrooms for the settlement staff. Throughout his four-month stay, Mildred was among staff members who participated in his daily routine. Meditation from four until five in the morning was a little too rigorous for her to engage in often (it was cold sitting on the gymnasium floor). But between five and six, bundled up in sweaters and scarf and mittens, she took her turn walking beside him (he bare-legged and scantily clad in dhoti) for ten or fifteen minutes at a time and talking with him. By the end of his stay she was his disciple for life. William Shirer, who covered the 1931 Round Table Conference for the *Chicago Tribune*, in his *Gandhi: A Memoir* (New York: Pocket Books, 1982) expresses similar feelings:

I count the days with Ghandi the most fruitful of my life. No other experience was as inspiring and as meaningful and as lasting. No other so shook me out of the rut of banal existence and opened my ordinary mind and spirit, rooted in the materialist, capitalist West as they were, to some conception of the meaning of life on this perplexing earth. No other so sustained me through the upheavals and vicissitudes that I lived through in the years after I left India.

In 1931 she enrolled at the London School of Economics where she attended lectures given by Harold Laski and Sidney and Beatrice Webb. She returned to Vancouver full of new ideas and ready to change the world.

The depth and urgency of the economic crisis drew forth the same ardent resolve in other compassionate spirits of the time. She herself began by reading a new book by George Bernard Shaw, *The Intelligent*

*Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*. It was on the reading list of her study group, which became the Vancouver branch of the League for Social Reconstruction<sup>2</sup> and then the Reconstruction Party, one of the founding groups of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). In the evangelistic milieu of the new CCF, formed in 1932, she was to find her metier, and when it met in Regina in 1933 to draw up its socialist Manifesto, she was there. For the rest of the decade she threw herself into political work, believing, with her CCF colleagues, that their party was about to bring in the new social order. She ran several times for election to the Legislature, though without success. She was, however, elected to a two-year term on the Vancouver School Board (1936-1937). As a member of the CCF provincial executive, she helped formulate party policy; as head of the CCF Education Committee, she conducted study groups and organized summer camps where Marxian economics and philosophy were among the staple subjects. In all this, she took as her exemplar the CCF national leader, J.S. Woodsworth, the one-time Methodist minister whose socialism grew out of his profound conviction that to serve man by eradicating injustice and suffering was to serve Christ.

But her socialist idealism was severely undermined in September 1939 when the CCF leadership, committed to peace and brotherhood in more theoretic times, now felt compelled to support Canada's participation in the war against fascism. Alone among the CCF Members of Parliament, J.S. Woodsworth stood in the House of Commons to declare his pacifist opposition to Canada's support of the war. Mildred had just returned from her 1938 visit to India where she had renewed her friendship with Gandhi, six years after those early morning walks with him in London. Arriving in central India by train, perched among suitcases and trunks on the baggage car, she had made the four-mile journey by tonga (two-wheeled cart) across the desert to his village. There in Sevagram the chief secretary had brought her to Gandhi, saying, "Bapu (Father), here is Mildred." The world-renowned Hindu was sitting cross-legged on the floor of his mud hut dictating letters, a skinny, little bald man in spectacles and loin cloth. He rose, put his hand palm-to-palm in the Indian fashion and greeted her by name. The warmth of his greeting supported her when she took her anti-war stand with J.S. Woodsworth and other pacifists. Disillusioned with the CCF, she became less active in it, though remaining a member. She embarked instead on her own mission for peace, always remembering the words Gandhi spoke one evening after prayer: "Though the whole world should turn to war, I will walk my lonely path of non-violence."

The director of Kingsley Hall in London had been Muriel Lester, International Secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, first organized in Britain in 1914. On her return from London in 1932, Mildred

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has organized and helped sustain a branch of the FOR in Vancouver. In 1940 she accepted the position of National Secretary of the FOR, and for several years directed its activities from her office in Toronto and went on speaking tours to major Canadian cities. Hitler stormed through Europe, blitzed Britain and France; Churchill urged blood, sweat and tears. But Mildred made her quiet way to Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, Vancouver with her message of peace and reconciliation. She was sometimes received scornfully, but, as she explains, with a national membership of fewer than five hundred, the FOR was not large enough to attract downright hostility.

Since then she had devoted her energies to working with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WIL), the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Voice of Women, and other peace organizations. She again renewed her commitment to the philosophy of Gandhi when she attended the World Pacifist Conference in 1948 and, twenty years later, the War Resisters' Triennial Conference, both in India. In accordance with one of the principles of the WIL that peace and economic development go hand in hand, she worked for fifteen summers as a director of the village development program of the American Society of Friends in Mexico City. In the spirit of international friendship, she has, over the years, made her house on West Eighth Avenue in Vancouver a hostel for visitors from all over the world.

Before he died, J.S. Woodsworth asked Mildred to be the speaker at his private memorial service for family and friends. "He felt," explained his daughter Grace MacInnis, "that Mildred was the one who most shared his profound commitment to pacificism." Peacemakers have never enjoyed the same credibility as warmakers, nor have the efforts of peace organizations generally been recorded. But when the documents have been gathered and the history of the Canadian peace movement and of organizations like the WIL and the FOR written, the personal evangelism of Mildred Fahrni, nourished in Methodism, matured in socialism and sustained by the philosophy of Gandhi, will be part of the story.

*Irene Howard is the author of Vancouver's Svenskar and Bowen Island 1872-1972.*

#### Notes

1. The Fellowship of Reconciliation is an international organization with a strong membership in the United States where it has flourished for over seventy years. The Vancouver FOR is now the only Canadian branch.
2. The League for Social Reconstruction was founded in Montreal and Toronto in the spring of 1932 by leading academics and professional people, including F.R. Scott, Frank H. Underhill, Harry Cassidy, J. King Gordon and Leonard Marsh. Their book *Social Planning for Canada* (1955) strongly influenced CCF policy.

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This essay is based largely on interviews with Mildred Fahrni in 1984.

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**Doug McCallum**

## **Frank Hart, His Opera House, and Other Frontier Ventures**

The furniture business, the funeral business, and show business seem to have little in common besides wood in general and chairs in particular, but in early Vancouver they were united in the forceful, frontier figure of Frank William Hart. He it was who first developed each of those branches of enterprise in a city that was born with great expectations, but little else in the way of civic attributes. It may be difficult to imagine to what extent the city of the later 1880s was really a frontier boom town. Even the promising arrival of the first transcontinental train on May 23, 1887, initially emphasized that Vancouver was literally and figuratively at the end of the road.

Frank Hart was a quintessential frontiersman, in the sense of feeling most comfortable in such an environment. But unlike Gassy Jack, or even the earlier fur traders, he did not merely adapt to the realities of that environment; he sought to adapt it to his own imperatives, to alter and build on it, to reconstruct and civilize it. He brought with him the values of a more settled society, along with a yearning for something better, for the chance to make what he could of himself and his surroundings, that was social and personal as well as material, idealistic as well as opportunistic. In these respects he was more like the gold seekers of the 1860s who first brought the white man's civilization to the mainland of British Columbia.<sup>1</sup>

Even in the youngest community there were deaths, and a Vancouver that saw itself from its inception as a city-in-the-making desired more dignified arrangements than a pine box and an unmarked grave. By the same token it was already beyond homemade furniture and the lowest forms of entertainment. Such concerns began to yield to at least some degree of expertise. Admittedly Frank Hart's qualifications amounted to only a nodding acquaintance with each of these fields of endeavour,



**Frank and Amelia Hart**

Vancouver City Archives

but under the circumstances almost any amount of natural ability and experience was bound to be viewed as better than what was otherwise available, and there were few of the restrictions or inhibitions of sophisticated societies. From just such conditions derive the freedom and opportunity we usually associate with the frontier. Frank Hart was always willing to try anything once and usually did. Outgoing and optimistic, confident and freewheeling, even a bit reckless, he was, to use an expression of the time, "the right man in the right place", at least for the first stages of settlement.

Born in 1856 in Galesburg, Illinois, at a youthful age Frank followed Horace Greeley's injunction, "Go west, young man." He first worked as a stable hand, then as an Indian scout and bronco buster. After serving in the United States Volunteer Army, he ran his own livery stable for a time before working for a man in the furniture and undertaking business. "I noticed how things were done, and that was how I got into the same line of business here in the early days."

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That was a typical frontier apprenticeship: learning by watching and doing, then improvising on one's own. It sufficed — if one had the right combination of quickness, versatility, manual dexterity, and luck. Frank did.<sup>2</sup>

Lured by the excitement surrounding the near completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, in February 1885 he arrived in British Columbia. With only a twenty dollar gold piece as capital, he could not afford the inflated prices of Port Moody, which was then the intended rail terminus, so he rented a cabin at Granville, alias Gastown, and began making furniture to sell. Demand was great enough that after only a few weeks the shack was too small, and he built a store and factory on the waterfront at the eastern edge of the townsite, followed by a still larger building. When word came that Granville, not Port Moody, was to be the site of the terminus, Frank Hart found himself in the right place after all. Business boomed, and he was among the gleeful band that petitioned for the incorporation of Vancouver. Liberal and progressive, he was an active supporter of Malcolm MacLean, the first mayor. In every sense Hart was one of the city's true pioneers.<sup>3</sup>

In the great fire of June 13, 1886, he sustained one of the biggest financial losses: more than \$13,000 worth of goods and property. Down but not out, he borrowed and rebuilt. Since everyone was now in need of furnishings, by August the Pioneer Furniture Factory and the Pioneer Furniture Store were once again thriving operations, employing more than a dozen people.<sup>4</sup>

The new factory stood at the foot of Cambie Street on the north shore of False Creek. It was a three storey building with machinery on the ground floor, upholstery rooms on the second, and finishing rooms and offices on the third. It was by no means a sweat shop; Frank Hart was an energetic yet easygoing man and was popular with his employees, who presented him, as an 1886 Christmas gift, with a handsome, silver-monogrammed, Meerschäum pipe. The newspapers proudly hailed him: "Mr. Hart is the pioneer manufacturer and deserves his success." His business was the city's first secondary industry.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to selling his own products, Hart carried on an extensive import trade. His two warerooms on Cordova Street were jammed with crockery and cutlery, bedding and window blinds, carpets and curtains, lamps and linoleum, and just about everything else a fast-growing town might desire in the way of furnishings for home or office. The Pioneer Furniture store even supplied the fixtures for the first street lighting and was the agent for the new, patent, High Arm Singer Sewing Machine. Throughout the population growth and building boom of the late 1880s, Frank Hart provided the majority of Vancouver's furnishings. His staff gradually grew to more than one hundred. With a firm grip on the import, manufacturing, wholesale and retail areas, he had truly got in on the ground floor.<sup>6</sup>

He got into the funeral business the same way, initially just supplying coffins as a sideline of his furniture factory. By the spring of 1886 he had sufficiently absorbed the mysteries of the profession from an associate in New Westminster to become Vancouver's first undertaker. At the time the city had no official cemetery, and Hart had to lobby city council first to establish a site, then to prepare the ground. There were no customers, however, until November, when Simon Hirschberg, a hotel owner, committed suicide. Frank dryly informed Mayor MacLean, "I could not get anyone, but finally got a volunteer."<sup>7</sup>

His new undertaking remained a branch of the furniture business. Wearing the customary suits of solemn black and matching silk hat, Frank Hart himself drove the hearse, drawn by a team of dark, plumed horses, to Mountain View Cemetery on the slopes of Mount Pleasant. Beside him rode the Assistant Funeral Director, Frank's bookkeeper, followed in a carriage by several factory hands who also switched hats when required to serve as pallbearers.

To make a grim business even grimmer, the route to the cemetery was a steep corduroy road, built over swampy land. When it rained heavily, as it sometimes does in Vancouver, parts of the road were under water and the timbers of which it was made tended to drift apart. On one memorable occasion — the Masonic funeral for Alderman Humphries — everyone except the deceased had to get out and walk across the swamp. Even then one of the horses slipped between two of the timbers, the wheels of the hearse did likewise, and the vehicle became mired in mud. It made a great story for Frank to tell afterwards, but at the time he feared that the struggling, kicking horse would wreck the \$1,500 hearse.

By 1889 business was brisk, and Hart purchased a second hearse. With the store and factory running full tilt, the funerals were sometimes conducted in a terrific rush, especially if there were two going on simultaneously. On one of those days Frank and his assistant were each driving so furiously down different streets that they almost collided at the intersection. "He couldn't stop, and I wouldn't," was how Hart summed it up. "Nothing ever fazed Frank Hart," was how people summed *him* up.<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps for that reason, and because of his gregariousness and gargantuan energy, Frank escaped the stereotype of the undertaker. Popular and respected, he involved himself in numerous social and cultural enterprises. Even before the city's incorporation he was manager of the Coal Harbour Bachelor's Quadrille Club and was conspicuously successful at persuading single girls from all over the inlet to attend the club's dances. He served as the first secretary of the International Order of Oddfellows, Granville's earliest fraternal organization, and in 1886 became the first Canadian Commander of the Knights of Pythias for the Mainland of B.C. He also

helped organize Vancouver's first City Band. Because of the nature of his businesses, Frank was often called on to organize decorations and receptions for special occasions, including the Dominion Day Celebrations, which were always major events for early B.C. Communities. When the first train arrived, the triumphal arch honouring the achievement was built courtesy of the Pioneer Furniture Factory, though Hart could not resist a personal plug: large letters at the top proclaimed, "Frank Hart's Welcome to the CPR," until Mayor MacLean convinced him to paint out his name. Some rough edges notwithstanding, Hart was an important social leader, and his very brashness was vital to the process of hacking a community out of the woods.<sup>9</sup>

All these activities seem to have contributed to Hart's venture into show business, and even his funeral directing involved staging events of a sort. But ironically the theatrical enterprise also began as an offshoot of the furniture factory—ironically because Hart's Opera House, Vancouver's first theatre, came to overshadow all his other activities and became the one for which his name has been remembered.

To start with, the building was a roller skating rink that a man named Kelly had built at Port Moody during that town's short fling with future greatness. Sometime during the summer of 1886 Kelly, or a new owner, dismantled the structure and reassembled it in Vancouver, on a lot on the east side of Carrall Street near Dupont, now Pender. The rear portion jutted out over what were then the flats of False Creek. Jack Levy, a dealer in cigars and tobacco products, leased the place for its original purpose, but its commodious floor space soon encouraged local groups to rent it for dances and occasionally for performances.<sup>10</sup>

On September 30, a grand concert and ball took place as a benefit for the City Band, expressly to raise funds for better instruments. The program involved the best of Vancouver's amateur talent, of which the highlight was Mrs. Eadlands, "a pianist of superior merit." By request, she played "Emmett's Cuckoo Song," described as "a pot pourri of brilliant passages and gleeful melodies." In fact the concert itself was pretty much a pot pourri. Like those that followed, and those in most of British Columbia's frontier communities, it was assembled from whatever diverse musical, acrobatic, terpsichorean and elocutionary abilities happened to be available. Vancouver rarely showed its Victorian British side more clearly than in amateur productions. The content may have been generally of the "lowest common denominator," but it was always *respectably* so. The Queen herself would have approved."

American influences, on the other hand, inevitably dominated the offerings of touring professionals, especially since most came from Seattle by way of Victoria, rather than by the long rail link with eastern Canada. On November 15, the actress Georgie Woodthorpe, appeared with her dramatic company

"for one night only" at the building known simply as "the Skating Rink." The play, "Among the Pines", was a melodrama with built-in appeal for Vancouverites. Set in a western frontier town, its heroine was "a rough diamond," a young tomboy with an unpolished exterior but plenty of inner potential that proved a popular dramatic type with socially aspiring audiences of the later 19th Century. The show also appealed to a not so positive force simmering beneath the surface of Vancouverites. One actor played the role of "Hop Sing," a stereotyped Chinese immigrant, with exaggerated makeup, gestures and pidgin English that were "greeted with much laughter and applause"<sup>12</sup>

On the whole, though, this was a progressive step for Vancouver. According to the *Daily News Advertiser*, the Woodthorpe outfit was the first theatrical company the city had seen. The only previous record of professional entertainment consists of musicians and comedians in local saloons, and none of the increasing number of respectable women would set foot in such places. There had simply been nowhere to present a touring production.

And where did Jack Levy get the seats for these performances? He rented them from the Pioneer Furniture Factory, and that is where Frank Hart comes in. After a few months and a couple more shows, Levy began to tire of the risks involved while Hart began to worry about getting his rental fees. Yet Hart also felt that Vancouverites needed — and wanted — a regular theatre. So he bought the skating rink, sometime during the winter of 1886-1887, built a stage at the rear of it, and began booking shows. In June, the Pike Opera Company brought productions of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mikado" and other operettas that were the largest and most elaborate to date, for which Hart expanded the stage facilities and renovated the auditorium. This was the building that people remembered at Hart's Opera House, though the name did not become current till 1888.<sup>13</sup>

Even after the renovations the opera house was a primitive single-story, board-and-batten structure, about fifty feet wide and one hundred and thirty feet long, without even a "boom town facade" to conceal its unpainted wooden walls and canvas roof. Inside, the walls were lined with white cloth, presumably part of the remodelling, but there were no other decorations. Audiences sat on wooden chairs in the first few rows (reserved seats) or on plain benches behind (the cheap seats). The theatre held 500-600 people. The stage was a three foot high platform, and both it and the auditorium were lit by coal oil lamps and heated by wood stoves. The place must have been a terrible fire trap.<sup>14</sup> "It was more like a barn than an opera house!" said a member of the Salvation Army, which nonetheless held its earliest meetings there. A newspaper reviewer termed it "Hart's So-Called Opera House."<sup>15</sup>

Running even a so-called opera house was not an

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easy task. Hart shouldered the risks in booking companies. He had to pay them advance money and handle the advertising and ticket sales. He did charge rent on the theatre: \$33.00 per night for an amateur group and perhaps twice that for professionals. Certainly ticket prices were in that ratio: a touring show cost \$1.00 for reserved seats, 50¢ for general admission; amateur shows charged half as much. With never more than a dozen rentals per month Hart could not have made much profit.

What Hart presented was a continuation of the same sort of fare his brief predecessor had shown. There were plays like "Davy Crockett", "The Count of Monte Cristo" and "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," hoary melodramas that have nonetheless continued to be used ever since in movie and television productions. There were also light farces (rather like T.V. sitcoms), minstrel and other variety shows, and early musical comedies. It was a purely popular theatre (no Shakespeare, Ibsen, et cetera), but it deserves to be taken seriously, in general because it was the precursor of the mass entertainment of today,<sup>16</sup> and in the context of Vancouver because at least it was theatre. One has to start somewhere. Recognizing that sentiment, Vancouverites supplemented the peripatetic professionals with local performances, some of which were ad hoc, mixed-bag concerts for the utilitarian purpose of fund raising, like the one already mentioned. Gradually specialized organizations began to give performances for their own sake. The city's first dramatic association presented its initial play at Hart's. It was there the city's first orchestra played, and its new operatic society produced a pastoral dramatic cantata, "The Haymakers". Hart's Opera House, like its owner, sowed a lot of early seeds.

Probably the worst week in Hart's show business career was the one commencing January 5, 1889. For that evening many tickets had been sold, but when the company arrived by steamer, immigration officials saw symptoms of smallpox in one of the actors and quarantined the whole ship. The show did not go on, nor did it several days later when Shelly the Mesmerist, to whom Frank had sent a cash advance, turned up dead drunk in Victoria.<sup>17</sup> No doubt to recoup his losses, Frank decided to build some extra bleacher seating after he learned that "Lena the Madcap" starring Katie Putnam, was sold out. The carpenter had hammered just a single nail into each of the bleacher supports, when Frank, in a rush as usual, had to put him on another job. He forgot to get someone to finish the supports, and that night, just before the curtain went up, the bleachers went down with a crash. Only one man seemed seriously hurt and was carried to his hotel room. Despite the mishap, the actors were cool professionals who gave an enjoyable performance. But for once Hart was anything but cool. He feared a lawsuit.

"My goodness," he exclaimed to Katie Putnam, "what will I do?"

"Alright," replied the unflappable actress, "I'll tell you what to do. After the show, you go to the hotel room with a bunch of fruit in one hand and a twenty dollar gold piece in the other hand. I'll bet you nothing will come of it."

So he did that, and Katie Putnam went along. The man was recovering, she gave him a kiss, and won the wager.<sup>18</sup>

In common with his circumstances and character, Frank Hart's management approach could best be described as rough and ready. When a company that performed the famous frontier melodrama "Davy Crockett", was about to cancel because of an ailing cast member, Frank wired them to come ahead, and he would find an actor. What he found was a terribly British member of his quadrille club, and as soon as the man opened his mouth in this very American play the audience recognized the deception and booed loudly. For the next show the theatre was half empty. But Vancouver audiences were starved for entertainment and consequently forgiving, and the opera house was normally full. At those times Frank's main worry was the boys who liked to climb up outside, raise the edge of the canvas roof, and enjoy a free show. One day Police Chief Stewart's son Hector was thus occupied when a push from behind sent him hurtling into the theatre, where his unexpected entrance was halted by the spectators he landed on.<sup>19</sup> Frank Hart had solved another problem. As usual, he was bold, quick-witted, decisive, but perhaps, like his opera house, just a bit crude.

Yet both had served their purpose. By 1889 they had brought Vancouver a vast increase in both the quantity and quality of theatrical activity. But that in turn brought competition. On April 25 the Imperial Opera House, built by William Crickmay, a civil engineer, opened on Cambie Street with the prestigious Mendelssohn Quintet. It was a sign of civic changes. Though the Imperial was essentially a bigger, better barn, it was some improvement, and so was its location. Hart's was now in the worst part of town, surrounded by brothels, opium dens, and gambling joints.<sup>20</sup> The city had begun to move westward and also to move on in many ways, leaving the Vancouver of Hart's Opera House behind. The curtain came down for the last time on June 4, 1889. The Imperial filled the gap until it too was displaced when in 1891 the CPR built the first sophisticated opera house, heralding another era.

Shortly before his own era ended, at least in Vancouver, Frank Hart, a widower, married Amelia Campbell. She was a talented oil painter and prolific poet. She also wrote the words and music of what may have been Vancouver's first published song. "Heart of Gold" is a conventional enough Victorian love song, but the obviously intended pun of the title and its themes of commitment and loyalty indicate that it specifically celebrated the Hart marriage. It ends:

Sweetheart, thru life's joy and pain,  
Thru its sunshine and its rain,

Walk beside me, dear, and see  
The heart of gold I keep for thee.

Amelia Hart kept that promise as Frank Hart's lifelong companion.<sup>21</sup>

The rain fell with the depression of the early 1890s. Hart hung on too long in several speculative ventures, after the more sophisticated shareholders had cut their losses, while his furniture business succumbed to increasing competition, as his opera house had done.<sup>22</sup> He was not well-equipped for a complex world of international high finance or a city of the specialized professional as he was for the informal, localized economy and amateur versatility of the frontier boom town, where demands were more easily satisfied, if less easily supplied. Though crucial to the development of a pioneering community, his qualities of boldness, impetuosity and willful tenacity now seemed sadly out of place.

So in 1894 Frank and Amelia Hart sold out, packed up and set off — not into the sunset, but to a new and booming frontier, the gold and copper mining town of Rossland, British Columbia. There Frank settled down for a couple of years in his old standbys of furniture and undertaking, and he had another theatrical venture with a second Hart's Opera House. But in 1897 the Klondike Gold Rush proved irresistible. At Dyea, Alaska, he virtually built the town in 90 days of whirlwind activity. Mercifully it didn't fall down. He cornered the lumber trade as well, and altogether made \$250,000, lost it in speculations, then made it back in Dawson City. At one point Frank fell gravely ill in a isolated part of the Yukon; like a melodramatic plot twist, Hector Stewart (whom Frank had pushed through the opera house roof years before) happened to be in the area and saved his life by carrying him to the nearest hospital.<sup>23</sup>

In 1908 the Harts moved to Prince Rupert, "the latest frontier," as the writer of Frank's obituary expressed it. There they stayed. Frank set up one more time in the furniture and funeral business and later became a housing contractor, real estate agent and merchandise broker. Again he took an active role in civic and social organizations, but not in show business. In 1934 at the age of 78, he was still working away, though with rapidly failing eyesight.<sup>24</sup> One day in 1935, Frank Hart, frontier undertaker, finally bowed to necessity and "volunteered." Amelia Hart followed in 1949.

*Doug McCallum is the author of Vancouver's  
Orpheum — The Life of a Theatre.*

- 1 see Doug McCallum, "Barkerville Theatre in Context," Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1981, for an extensive discussion of the nature, and impulses behind, frontier society and culture.
- 2 Frank Hart, Personal Interview, 13 November 1933, TS, J.S. Matthews Collection, Vancouver City Archives, Add MSS 54, Vol. 13, Hart, Frank. All interviews and correspondence, and written reminiscences by Frank Hart mentioned in subsequent references are in this file in typescript form.

- 3 Hart, Personal Interviews, 13 November 1933, 1 February 1934.
- 4 *B.C. Directory*, 1892, Vancouver Biographies, and *Vancouver Daily News*, 25 December 1886.
- 5 *News*, 25 December 1886.
- 6 Hart's business cards and letterhead, J.S. Matthews Collection, list many of the products he carried; so do his regular newspaper ads in the *News* and the *News-Advertiser*, 1886-1889.
- 7 The suicide of Simon Hirschberg was reported in *News*, 5 November 1886. For Hart's references to it, see Personal Interview, 13 November 1933.
- 8 Hart, Letter to J.S. Matthews, City Archivist, 27 August 1934; Richard Geddes Large, *Prince Rupert: A Gateway to Alaska and the Pacific* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, rev. ed., 1973), pp. 13-15.
- 9 Hart, *Reminiscences*, TS, 1934.
- 10 Hart, Interview, 3 January 1934. Jack Levy, Business Cards, Matthews Collection. Re. roller rink as "a popular resort for dancers," see *News*, 30 September 1886.
- 11 *News*, 30 September and 1 October 1886. Except where otherwise noted, all names, dates, places and other facts and figures concerning performances are taken from Doug McCallum, "A Vancouver Entertainment Calendar," unpublished record of performances in Vancouver, 1886-1905.
- 12 *News*, 16 November 1886.
- 13 Hart, Interview, 3 January 1934. *News-Advertiser*, 26 and 27 June 1887.
- 14 Description of the theatre based on: Amelia Hart, Personal Interview, 19 November 1940, Mrs. H.E. Greatrex, Personal Interview, 30 August 1943, and J.S. Matthews, Memo on Hart's Opera House, n.d. All these sources are in the J.S. Matthews Collection, Add MSS 54, vol 13, filed by subject under Theatres, Hart's Opera House. All the accounts are consistent, except on the nature of the cloth lining the walls. It seems to have been some form of cotton.
- 15 Greatrex, source cited above. *Vancouver World*, 7 October 1888.
- 16 For the best comprehensive introduction to the popular theatre of this period, see Robert C. Toll, *On With the Show: The First Century of Show Business in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).
- 17 *News-Advertiser*, 4, 5, 7, 8 January, 1889.
- 18 *News-Advertiser*, 9 and 10 January, 1889; Frank Hart, Interview, 3 January, 1934; Amelia Hart, Interview, 19 November 1940.
- 19 Amelia Hart, Interview.
- 20 Goad's Fire Insurance Atlas, 1889, City Archives Map Collection, shows half a dozen brothels and several opium factories within a two block radius of Hart's Opera House; *News-Advertiser*, 24 June 1888, describes a police raid on a Chinese gambling establishment at the corner of Carrall and Dupont; *World*, 17 January 1889, discusses the problem of young hoodlums who hung around outside the theatre and deterred respectable people from attending. There were also complaints of a rowdy element in the "gallery" section of the Opera House: "Cat calling, rude laughter and execrable noises are hardly in keeping with the metropolitan character of

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Vancouver — they do very well in frontier towns, when the annual barn-storming minstrel show or circus makes its appearance," *World*, 7 October, 1888.

- 21 Amelia Hart, "Heart of Gold" (Vancouver: n.p., n.d.); Frank Hart, Letter to Secretary of the Pioneer Association, 26 August 1934.
- 22 Frank Hart, *Reminiscences*, 1934.
- 23 *First History of Rossland, B.C.: With Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Citizens, Firms, and Corporations* (Rossland: Stunden and Perine, n.d.), pp. 6-7; Irene Howard, *Vancouver's Svenskar: A History of the Swedish Community in Vancouver* (Vancouver: Vancouver Historical Society, Occasional Paper Number One, 1973), pp. 33-44; Frank Hart, Interview, 13 November 1933; Amelia Hart, Interview.
- 24 Large, *Prince Rupert*, pp. 13-15; obituary notices for Frank Hart, 8 May 1935, unidentified newspapers, J.S. Matthews Clipping File, City Archives; Frank Hart, Letter to J.S. Matthews, 8 August 1934; *Vancouver Province*: 11, 17 March 1949.

## Contest

**Daphne Arber of Victoria wins our book prize, *Barns of Western Canada: An Illustrated Century*, by Bob Heinstock (Braemer Books, Victoria, \$26.95), by supplying the answer Puget's Sound Agricultural Company to the question, "What was the name of the Hudson Bay Company's agricultural subsidiary?"**

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# British Columbia Historical Federation Annual Conference University of British Columbia Conference Centre, Gage Towers May 8 - 11, 1986

**Conference Information Available  
from your Member Society's Secretary**

# News and Notes

## History and the Japanese Canadian Citizen

The Greater Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens Association (J.C.C.A.) in 1981 organized a History Preservation Committee that interviewed older members of the Japanese Community and recorded their life stories. Assistance through 1983 and 1985 Federal summer work grants and many volunteers provided the resources needed to amass 134 tapes of 91 interviews and a two volume catalogue for easy reference. In October 1985 the J.C.C.A. proudly donated the tapes to UBC Special Collections. They are accessible to the public under call number: SPAV79072S6N.23=1-134.

Other 1985 History Committee activities included:

1. Investigation of historical leads such as Mr. Den Boer's "Letters"; these turned out to be the records of the Pitt Meadows Japanese Farmer's Association which had been left in the attic of a building owned by the Free Reform Church of North America. The congregation donated the records to UBC Special Collections recently.
2. Lobbying to preserve historic sites such as Kishi Boatworks, last boat shop in Steveston capable of handling wooden fishing boats. The committee twice appeared before Richmond Municipal Council and emphasizes the boatwork's importance as an example of the Japanese Canadian contribution to the West Coast fishing industry. The structure was saved temporarily but lobbying to secure a permanent site for it must continue.
3. Support of other historical organizations such as the Cumberland Museum which needs funds to preserve 786 glass plate photo negatives dating back to 1900 and which depict mainly Japanese Canadian pioneers living in the Comox Valley of Vancouver Island. News of the museum's fund-raising effort was spread through the J.C.C.A. monthly Bulletin which has a 5,000 household circulation. At last report the museum was half way along to its \$2,000 goal.

An activity worth mentioning, which at the moment is only a dream for the History Committee, is the building of a Powell Street museum that would record Vancouver's once large Japanese town. Photographs and memoirs of this community are scarce.

The J.C.C.A. History Preservation Committee is interested in communicating with organizations and people about Japanese Canadian history.

Dan T. Tokawa, Chairman  
History Preservation Committee  
J.C.C.A.

Box 2108 Main P.O.  
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 3T5

## Fort Langley National Historic Park

Fort Langley National Historic Park, in co-operation with Western Cablevision Ltd., has recently completed a comprehensive history of Fort Langley on video tape. *Five Decades of Change* was written and researched by park staffer Steve Turnbull, with narration by Interpretive Officer Bryan Jackson. The two programs totalling 52 minutes, provide an excellent overview of the fort's history from its inception to its eventual decline. *Five Decades of Change* is being made available through Western Cablevision Ltd., in 1/2" VHS for \$35.00, and 3/4" VHS for \$60.00 (rates subject to change).

For further information contact Western Cablevision, 10445 - 138th Street, Surrey, B.C. Phone: 588-0441.

## Sooke Story on Screen

A three-year labour of love by Sooke Museum curator Elida Peers has resulted in the *All Sooke Days Story*, a film showing the evolution of logging skills into the annual sports event. The documentary will be shown free daily at the Sooke Museum, starting May 1.

Produced at a cost of \$90,000, it contains vintage footage of early All-Sooke Days in the 1940s and 1950s as well as interviews with older residents. The 1984 All-Sooke Days are the centrepiece of the film.

# Bookshelf

## Vancouver in Print

*VANCOUVER SHORT STORIES*, Carole Gerson. UBC Press, 1985.

Old and new stories about Vancouver.

*WORKING LIVES: VANCOUVER 1886-1986*, Elaine Bernard et al. New Star Books, 1985.

An illustrative history of the lives and contributions of ordinary Vancouverites during the past 100 years.

*VANCOUVER'S FIRST CENTURY: A CITY ALBUM 1860-1985*, Anne Kloppenborg, Alice Niwinski, Eve Johnson, ed. Douglas & McIntyre, 1985.

An illustrated history of Vancouver.

*LITERARY LANDMARKS OF VANCOUVER*, Alan Twigg. Harbour Publishing Co., 1986.

One hundred literary landmarks, celebrating 100 writers whose lives have touched Vancouver.

*GERRY McGEER: A BIOGRAPHY*, David Williams. Douglas & McIntyre, 1986. A definitive biography of Vancouver's best-known mayor.

*THE WEST COASTER*, Douglas M. Gibson. MacMillan, 1986.

A historical novel of early Vancouver.

*LILIAN HOO*, Paul Yee. Lorimer Publishers, 1986.

A historical children's novel about the Chinese community.

*THE VANCOUVER ANTHOLOGY*, Garry Geddes. Douglas & McIntyre.

A collection of memoirs, non-fiction and poetry.

*SAMUEL MACLURE, ARCHITECT*, Janet Bingham. Ganges, B.C.: Horsdal & Schubart, 1985. \$9.95.

*GUIDE TO VANCOUVER'S CHINESE RESTAURANTS*, Ginger Chang. Surrey, B.C.: Hancock House, 1985. \$7.95.

*CHEF VANCOUVER*. Vancouver: Port City Publishers, 1985. \$14.95.

*TRAIL TO POINT GREY: A KERRISDALE CHRONICLE*, Joyce Diggins. Vancouver: Kerrisdale Historical Society, 1986. \$16.00 hardback; \$10.00 paper.

*VANCOUVER, THE WAY IT WAS*, Michael Kluckner. North Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1984. \$39.95.

*VANCOUVER IS A GARDEN*, Donna McClement. Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1985. \$29.95.

*VANCOUVER THEN AND NOW*, Roland Morgan. North Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1983. \$8.95.

*1986 KID'S GUIDE TO VANCOUVER*, Rae Schidlo. Vancouver: Gordon Soules, 1985. \$7.95.

*GREAT SCOTT! A COLLECTION OF THE BEST COLUMNS OF JACK SCOTT*, Jack Scott. Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1985. \$9.95.

*THE STANLEY PARK EXPLORER*, Richard M. Steele. Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1985. \$8.95.

*VANCOUVER, A CENTENNIAL SOUVENIR*, 4th ed. North Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1985. \$14.95 hard; \$7.95 paper.

*VANCOUVER ART AND ARTISTS, 1931-1983*, Vancouver Art Gallery. Vancouver: The Gallery, 1983.

*VANCOUVER FICTION*, David Watmough, ed. Winlaw, B.C.: Polestar Press, nd. \$12.95.

*THE VANCOUVER GUIDE*, Terri Wershler. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985. \$9.95.

*POINT GREY HANDBOOK: Vancouver, 1985*. Published by West Point Grey Community Association. 1985. \$3.95

*THE VANCOUVER BOOK*, Chuck Davis, ed. Published: J.J. Douglas, North Vancouver, 1976.

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Patricia Roy is the Book Review Editor. Copies of books for review should be sent to her at 602-139 Clarence St., Victoria V8V 2J1

**Vancouver Short Stories**, ed. Carole Gerson. U.B.C. Press, 1985. \$9.50

*Vancouver Short Stories* is a collection of twenty-one entries, all but two of which have appeared in other volumes or magazines. Bertrand Sinclair's contribution, a reminiscence of the rum-running days of prohibition and the dangers of the smuggling game, has not appeared elsewhere, and Cynthia Flood's "The Animals in Their Elements", an able story about the confusions and embarrassments of aging, is original to this collection. Other pieces are reprints from such sources as *The Tamarack Review*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Canadian Fiction*, even *The Alumni Chronicle*. The unifying characteristic of the short stories in the book is certainly not thematic, since they range in subject matter from the overlap of Chinese cultural heritage with Canadian ("The Jade Peony") to the girl-I-left-behind-me in Tatlow Park ("Love in the Park"), to the neat realism of Emily Carr's "Sophie", which describes the tragic circumstances of semi-urbanized native Indians. But in all the stories there are local references which serve to bind them together into a group, and they are all by authors who have at least visited Vancouver. There are the inevitable Pauline Johnson excerpts from *Legends of Vancouver*, included I imagine for the sake of Expo strangers who will no doubt be buying the book to take away with them, most Vancouverites having encountered Johnson before, and there is a rather cryptic Malcolm Lowry piece in which gin seems to equal salvation. Alice Munro is represented with a delightful commentary, first printed in *McCall's*, on cults; Audrey Thomas is in the book too, accurately outlining in "Aquarius" the warped balance of power in a failing relationship. Interestingly enough, there are four out of the twenty-one authors who were actually born in Vancouver: William McConnell, lawyer and editor, who gives a clear shot of a Kitsilano park, Wayson Choy, who writes of the mystical China-born grandmother, Joy Kogawa, on the shameful and frightening Japanese internment, and Frances Duncan, whose "Was That Malcolm Lowry" is, if over-long, a very descriptive chronicle of summer cabin life on the Dollarton beaches. The other writers were imported, but of course the city's history is of imports, so that's fair enough.

Ms. Gerson has provided brief biographies for each writer, with the exception of the first one, Francis Owen, whose origins must remain a mystery. The stories are arranged chronologically, so that they move from the mix of history and legend in Owen's account of the great fire through layers of settlement and the war and on to contemporary urban life. Australian immigrants caught up in the dope-culture, a European painter garretted on Main Street,

mistreatment and abandonment, cultural imbalance, rape of the land, problems of integration: all are somewhere in this fiction; all are part of Vancouver's or any other city's development. But what makes the collection unique and truly local is the setting. The mountains and the rain are here, the dirty streets, the bridges, the beaches, the East End, the University: locale is essential and integral to most of the stories, and is unmistakably Vancouver, and Canadian.

It is a relief to know that realistic stories with local references are re-entering the literary vogue, and that Canadian artists now feel that they are allowed to be a Canadian without fear of sacrificing the world market.

Ms. Gerson's introduction is orderly and well-written, perhaps with a textbook trade in mind; one particular thesis in it, "...[a city's] identity is created by and reflected in its art and literature," catches the eye. If we've made it into literature, in other words, we are no longer imaginary. Fiction is just another way of recording, and if the facts of history, which have molded these writers and formed their subject are what make Vancouver worth reading about, then fiction derived from history makes that history available and immediate.

The nicest thing about a book of short stories is that one need not read it all. Most of these stories you will enjoy; the rest you may cheerfully abandon.

Brenda McGillveray

**Samuel Maclure, Architect.** Janet Bingham; Horsdal & Schubert, 1985, \$9.95.

If you have spent the bulk of your adult life in an apartment that looks like the inside of a refrigerator, you will be thankful for Janet Bingham's latest contribution to architectural preservation. In *Samuel Maclure, Architect*, Ms. Bingham presents a valuable study of the work of a brilliant British Columbian. In a very readable fashion, the author identifies his architectural styles, social and philosophical influences and illuminates the special Maclure adaptations. The inventories of his commissions, along with the Bingham's commentary and collected reminiscences lend this book an appeal for architects and laymen alike.

The author sets the stage for Maclure's life and work by opening for view the pages of the family album. We meet his venturesome parents, siblings and other members of the pioneer Maclure family. Basically self-taught, except for one year in art school in Philadelphia, Maclure formed his first architectural partnership in 1890. Until his death in 1929, he specialized in domestic architecture.

Samuel Maclure developed a strong design vocabulary of historical styles, but interpreted his mandate freely to produce distinctive and innovative residences. He selected with taste the historical or geographic style that suited the particular site and client. Bingham tells us that some of the houses, with their harmonious blend of stylistic borrowings and functional planning, have been "lovingly restored" and others have been declared heritage buildings. Still others have been renovated beyond recognition and many are demolished. Some have even been demolished since the inventories were prepared. Fortunately, seven remain in New Westminster and thirty-seven still stand in the City of Vancouver.

As I read this book, I found that something special happened. While reading through the inventories, I found myself mentally walking down streets trying to remember if I had seen a particular building. Then, one Saturday while driving to the dry cleaners, I veered off my pre-planned route in search of those magnificent Maclures. If anything, I have become more aware of my chosen city and its special treasures.

Samuel Maclure's beautiful houses, their design and workmanship, the likes of which we'll probably not see built again in our lifetimes, should be treasured as part of British Columbia's heritage. Thank you Janet Bingham for taking us part of the way.

Susan Pookay  
B.A. M.E. Des.(Architecture)

### BRITISH COLUMBIA PLACE NAMES

The updated and enlarged edition of *1001 Place Names of British Columbia*, by Helen and Philip Akrigg, is now available from:

Sono Nis Press  
1745 Blanshard Street  
Victoria, B.C.  
V8W 2J8  
Price \$14.95  
No postage charges on prepaid orders.

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## Back Issues of the News

Back issues of the *News* can be ordered at \$3.50 each plus postage from the Editor.

## New Books: Entries in the 1985 B.C. Historical Writing Competition

These books are available at local bookstores or by mail from the address following the title.

*OLD SILVERTON 1891-1930*, John Norris. 256 pages. \$12.95 soft cover, \$17.95 hard cover. Order from: Silverton Historical Society, Box 10, Silverton, B.C. V0G 2B0.

A very well written, nicely illustrated history of a Kootenay mining community.

\*\*\*First Prize — Winner of the Lieutenant-Governor's Medal

*HAMILTON MACK LAING: HUNTER-NATURALIST*, Richard Mackie. 234 pages. \$19.95 hard cover. Order from: Sono Nis Press, 1745 Blanshard Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2J8.

An appealing biography of a man who helped catalogue Canada's birds and wildlife. He lived in the Comox Valley from 1922-1982. Illustrations.

\*\*Certificate of Merit for excellent writing.

*A TRIBUTE TO THE PAST: QUESNEL 1808-1928*. Branch #77, O.A.P.A. 431 pages. Hard Cover \$35.00 plus \$3.50 postage. Order from: Old Age Pensioners Organization, Branch #77, Box 4658, Quesnel, B.C. V2J 3J8.

A beautifully bound, carefully edited history of Quesnel and District.

\*\*Certificate of Merit for Best Anthology.

*MEN WITH WOODEN FEET*, J.S. Kendrick. 168 pages. Hard cover, \$16.95. Order from: New Canadian Publications Ltd., Box 4010 Station A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 1H8.

An interesting history of the Spanish influence on the west coast of B.C.

*ROYAL JUBILEE HOSPITAL SCHOOL OF NURSING 1891-1982*, Anne Pearson. 203 pages. Hard Cover \$20.00 plus \$3.00 postage. Order from: Mrs. Vivienne McConnell, 2406 Central Ave. Victoria, B.C. V8S 2S6, OR Munro's Book Store, 1108 Government Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1Y2.

The history of an institution which has now closed, it holds appeal for anyone who ever knew any of its graduates.

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