

# Vancouver Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

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### Finishing Chuck Davis' Last Book March Speaker: Publisher Howard White

Much loved author and broadcaster Chuck Davis had always called the manuscript the “capstone” of his career. Chuck had been working on *The History of Metropolitan Vancouver* for several years and often had to put it aside to take on other work to pay the bills. By 2010, Chuck was up to the year 1994 when he learned

ing met with Chuck and promised the book would be published. Chuck’s wish had been to have the book published in time for Vancouver’s quasicentennial or 125th birthday. That was just months away and the book was far from complete. Most of the material was on Chuck’s computer but the last 17 years’ worth was still

The book was released in December 2011, barely a year after Howard had met with Chuck and almost a year after Chuck’s passing. The book has since been at the top of several “best seller” lists and has been one of the biggest successes in the category of local history.

Author and founder of Harbour Publishing, Howard White, will talk about



**Chuck Davis and George Vancouver at City Hall a number of years ago.**

Photo: Alan Twigg, BC Bookworld

he would probably not be able to finish the sprawling work because of his recently diagnosed terminal cancer. Chuck’s longtime publisher and friend Howard White of Harbour Publish-

ing met with Chuck and promised the book would be published. Chuck’s wish had been to have the book published in time for Vancouver’s quasicentennial or 125th birthday. That was just months away and the book was far from complete. Most of the material was on Chuck’s computer but the last 17 years’ worth was still unwritten. There were also no photos. The phone calls and emails started. Chuck had built up tremendous “social capital” as his friend Allen Garr recounted. Allen took a lead role in writing and assembling a group of

other writers and historians to finish the manuscript. Everyone contributed because it was “for Chuck.” Howard and his associates concentrated on finding photo sources, overall design, fact-checking, and all of the other myriad details that go into publishing a book — especially one that would be a gargantuan 592 pages!



**Author and publisher Howard White**

Photo: Harbour Publishing

Chuck the man, the importance of his chronicling the stories of Vancouver, his story-telling abilities and the legacy of good will that Chuck engendered over many years. The many ups and downs involved in bringing this landmark book to print are also an interesting part of the story and Howard will share it all.

*Bruce M. Watson*

Next Meeting: 7:30 pm, Thursday, March 22, 2012 at Museum of Vancouver

## Preznotes

About a year ago this time the excitement was building for Vancouver's 125th birthday. I enjoy the marking of a milestone, and there is no denying that April 6th, 1886 was of particular significance. In fact, our Society honours this each year with our annual Incorporation Luncheon.

Celebrated milestones are a fun way to bring history to the attention of the general public, and I believe there is a growing appetite for city history. I believe citizens are becoming more involved in their surroundings — their blocks, neighbourhoods, and the development of their urban landscape — and this translates into a desire to learn how the present came to be, in hope of planning how best to move toward the future.

It's a pleasant development, and beneficial to our mandate. In one manner or another, I've been hearing this sort of sentiment: "I joined the Society because I felt it was my civic duty to learn more about the city I live in. If I want Vancouver to be my home, I want to know where it came from, what it's all about."

Viewing the past as a tool for the future, for engaging oneself as a citizen! An exciting perspective, to say the least! And though bursts of activity surrounding specific milestones quickly recede into the background, there seems a growing realization that each year is equally important.

After all, it was 125 years ago from this summer that CPR surveyor Lauchlan Hamilton landed on the south shore of False Creek in his wooden rowboat. There, pitching his tent and plotting roads he looked through the bushes back to the brand-new city of Vancouver, against the backdrop of the north shore mountains, and determined the new subdivision he was working on, would be called Fairview. Happy 125th birthday, Fairview.

*Scott Anderson, President*  
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## Luncheon Speaker Announced

This year's Vancouver Historical Society Incorporation Day Luncheon will feature a film presentation by CBC archivist Colin Preston. Although CBC television only went on the air in late 1953, Colin has collected a great number of films from earlier years. At the Luncheon, Colin will be showcasing five decades of film covering everything from Pier D to the PNE. Colin calls these films "Vancouver's Visual Orphans." He'll explain who shot them and how they came to be in the CBC archives. This year, the VHS Incorporation Day Luncheon will be held on Sunday, April 15th, 2012 at 12 noon at the University Golf Club, 5185 University Boulevard. The Luncheon is an annual event, commemorating the incorporation of the City of Vancouver, which took place on April 6, 1886. The food and service are always great and the Luncheon is a good opportunity for members and friends to meet with others who share their interest in history. Door prizes are always part of the event. Tickets for the Luncheon will be \$30.00 each and you will be able to buy them at the March monthly meeting, or by mail. Mail orders should be sent to Elizabeth Hawkins, 3626 West 1st Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V6R 1H2. We're looking forward to seeing you there!

*Elizabeth Hawkins*

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## Purdy's Chocolates Plant Tour

The Vancouver Historical Society will be visiting Purdy's Chocolates Factory at 2777 Kingsway at 9:00 AM on Friday, March 23rd, 2012 for an exciting inside look at premium chocolates being made. Founded in 1907 by Richard Carmon Purdy, who started selling chocolates from a cart on Robson Street in downtown Vancouver, the company is now the largest premium chocolate retailer in Western Canada and second-largest in Canada. The company has a long tradition of being a Canadian, family owned & operated business. The Society is honoured to have Charles Flavelle (who purchased Purdy's along with partner Eric Wilson in 1963, and whose daughter Karen is the current owner & CEO) lead the tour and share the rich history of this Vancouver institution. This rare tour will be approximately one hour long, with a time for Q&A afterwards. Please wear comfortable flat, closed-toe shoes. Purses and jewellery are not allowed in the plant, so please keep this in mind. This tour is for VHS Members only, at no cost. As space is limited to a maximum of 30 participants, please call or email the VHS Info-Line before 5:00pm on Monday, March 19, 2012, to reserve your spot.

*Scott Anderson*

# Historical Federation Conference

This year's British Columbia Historical Federation Conference will be held May 3rd to 5th in Campbell River. Two workshops on May 3rd between 9:00am and 4:00pm are part of the conference. Register today.

## WORKSHOP 1: PHOTO COLLECTIONS SHARE THE TREASURE

An overview of the history of photographs and photographers, conservation concerns and methods, photo interpretation and how to manage your collection. Family history consultant Brenda L. Smith will present: Photographs and Photographers: The Evolution Of Image Technology, Conserve The Treasure: What Photographs Need From Us, Windows To The Past: Interpret The Photo's Story, and Format The Future: Manage Your Photographic Resource.

## WORKSHOP 2: TAKING YOUR STORY TO PRINT and PANEL

The day includes a four-hour presentation focused on the practicalities of moving from research to publication. In the afternoon workshop participants will be joined by community members for a panel to consider the variety of choices and experiences in the publishing process. Campbell River author and publisher Jocelyn Reekie of Peregrin Publishing will present: getting a manuscript ready, editing and design options, and choosing from the range of publishing choices available.

### PANEL—TAKING YOUR STORY TO PRINT

Community members are invited to join workshop participants for a panel. Moderator Jean Wilson, formerly of UBC Press will lead discussion of the variety of choices and experiences that authors and publishers can encounter in taking their stories to print.

Cost for each full-day program:

- \$40 for members of BCHF member organizations
- \$50 for non-members
- \$5 Panel Presentation only

Lunch and refreshments are included in the registration fee. Register using the main conference registration form and payment method.

See the BC History website at [www.bchistory.ca](http://www.bchistory.ca) and look for 2012 Conference or call 604-466-2636.

## Upcoming Speakers & Events

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

Thursday, April 26, 2012 - 7:30pm

### **A Vancouver Romance: John and Ruth Morton**

*Speaker: Rev. Bruce A. Woods*

Most Vancouverites know the name John Morton (1834-1912) as being one of the Three Greenhorns who settled in 1862 on the claim now called Vancouver's West End. After the CPR acquired much of their property, Morton moved to Mission. What most don't know is the lifelong romance between John and his wife Ruth, now memorialized by the Ruth Morton Baptist Church, which author Bruce A. Woods calls Vancouver's and John Morton's Taj Mahal.

Thursday, May 24, 2012 - 7:30pm

### **Vanishing Vancouver: The Last 25 Years**

*Speaker: Michael Kluckner*

In 1990, Michael Kluckner's *Vanishing Vancouver* documented disappearing buildings in the city, illustrated with his own artwork, vintage photos and colour postcards. His just-published book focuses not only on historic houses but on the apartments, gardens, shops and theatres that are threatened by the changing city, analyzing why some have survived while others have not.



## Welcome New and Returning VHS Members

Ann Howe	Jessica & Nelson Ng
Margot Magee	Jason Vanderhill
Will Woods	

# March Escape in Vancouver



Photo: W.J. Moore, City of Vancouver Archives Port N100

The date is Thursday, March 1st, 1923. A huge crowd has gathered in front of *The Sun* newspaper building at 137 West Pender Street. (This was on the north side of Pender and across the street from what would later be called The Sun Tower. *The Sun* would move into what had been known as the World Tower and the Bekins Building following a fire in their own building in 1937. The tower would then be called the Sun Tower and its large rooftop neon sign with the lightning bolts became a landmark.) The crowds were there to see a major event. Look closely at the photo and focus on the second floor window on the far left. The crowd's attention is riveted on the upside down body hanging from the window. To publicize his appearance at

the Orpheum Theatre, famed magician and “escapologist” Harry Houdini had himself tied in a straitjacket and then suspended upside down from one of the newspaper’s office windows. Two Vancouver detectives bound Houdini in the straitjacket to make sure there was no cheating. Houdini knew how to get the crowds out and he did not disappoint. After some theatrics to build tension, Houdini “miraculously” escaped his bonds. Remember, this was major entertainment in a time when radio was still in its infancy, television wasn’t even yet imagined and movies were still silent. A little over three years after this photo was taken, Houdini would be dead following an incident at Montreal’s Princess Theatre. In his dressing room following a performance, Houdini was visited by several students. One asked if it was true Houdini could withstand any punch to his abdomen. When he absentmindedly answered in the affirmative, one of the students struck him several times before Houdini could prepare for the blows. Apparently Houdini had already been suffering from appendicitis and had refused medical treatment. The blows ruptured his appendix. Although in serious pain, Houdini travelled to his next engagement in Detroit and did a show before finally being hospitalized. He died of peritonitis on October 31st — Halloween — 1926. A tradition was begun by the Society of American Magicians at Houdini’s funeral. A magician’s wand was broken to signify Houdini’s passing. The Society, the world’s oldest fraternal magicians’ organization, holds a “breaking of the wand” ceremony annually at Houdini’s grave site in Queens, New York. Since 1926, the ceremony is held whenever any member magician passes away. Other magicians’ societies have adopted the practice. The late Rick Honey, a longtime afternoon radio host on Vancouver’s CKNW and an accomplished magician, was honoured with the “breaking of the wand” ceremony at his funeral in 2001.

*Jim McGraw*

## Vancouver Historical Society Leadership: 2011 - 2012 (Elected May 26, 2011)

### EXECUTIVE

President	Scott Anderson
Vice President (Programs)	Bruce Watson
Treasurer	Kristen Wong
Recording Secretary	Jean Wilson
Director (Memberships)	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director	Kellan Higgins
Director	Jean Mann
Director	Robert McDonald
Director (Newsletter Editor)	Jim McGraw

### APPOINTED POSITIONS

Webmaster	Quasar Data Management
Archivist	Elizabeth Hawkins
Info Line	Barbara Coles

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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