

# Vancouver Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

ISSN 0042 - 2487

May 2013

Vol. 52 No. 8

### The Hidden History of the Chinese Canadian Food Industry

May Speaker: Henry Yu

The first recorded Chinese who came to British Columbia arrived in 1788 as ships' carpenters. Being caught up in the then geopolitical Spanish/English rivalry, they returned home after a couple of years. For nearly seven decades, a few trickled in on ships as sailors with the Mar-time and land-based fur trade. From 1858, however, the numbers of Chinese immigrants surged into the area for the Fraser River and subsequent gold rushes. It was during this latter time that, wherever they put down temporary roots, the Chinese immigrants to "Gold Mountain" carried with them a familiar, centuries-old tradition of coaxing food from friendly and/or difficult terrain. In doing so, these resilient survivors not only created their own food supply, but presented an alternative and welcome change to the bland and non-nutritious diets



**Lim Gong in front of his fruit and vegetable store at 151 2nd Street in North Vancouver in 1910**

*Photo: City of Vancouver Archives CVA Bu P670*

of the non-Chinese gold seekers. By the time the city of Vancouver was to emerge as a new city, new immigrant and second generation Chinese, facing the exclusionary mindset of the time, came to rely in part on their traditional historical entrepreneurial strengths in the food industry to sustain and allow them to flourish and prosper. And they did, providing locally-grown food to the city. Their farms were located scattered throughout the city. China Creek, for example, acquired its name from the Chinese farm near the stream's outlet into False Creek.

Discover through our next speaker, Dr. Henry Yu, the little-known history of Chinese farms in the Vancouver area, as told by the farming families themselves in the informative film "Covered Roots: The History of Van-

couver's Chinese Farms" by Alejandro Yoshizawa and Wendy Phung. Meet some of the families interviewed in the film who grew up on the now disappearing farms, including VHS member and Chinese Canadian Historical Society of BC President, Ken Yip.

Born and raised in B.C., UBC historian Dr. Yu will talk about the hidden history of the Chinese Canadian food industry, and how they were part of the vertically integrated produce distribution industry



**Henry Yu**

*Photo: www.asiapacificmemo.ca*

that included corner grocery stores in every neighbourhood and cooks everywhere from neighbourhood restaurants to Shaughnessy houses to the B.C. Ferries. Central to his research and community engagement, Dr. Yu has been resurrecting the stories of Pacific Canada revealing the history of the country as an engagement between trans-Pacific migrants, trans-Atlantic migrants and First Nations and aboriginal peoples.

Annual General Meeting: 7:00 p.m., Thursday, May 23, 2013 at Museum of Vancouver

## President's Notes

This marks my final President's Notes. It has been a great pleasure to serve the Society these past three years.

I've met some interesting personalities. I've worked with a lot of dedicated individuals. I've laughed or puzzled over some curious situations alongside brilliant minds. It's been a great deal of fun.

There is a small group of dedicated volunteers that keep our Society on the rails, chugging forward. Our executive — Elizabeth Hawkins, Kellen Higgins, Bob McDonald, Jim McGraw, Michael Kluckner, Eve Lazarus, Florence Sung, and Bruce Watson — work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure our ongoing activities are interesting, informative, and fun. Our volunteers — Alexandra Allen, Katie Adkins, Amber Anderson, Margaret Dinwoodie, John and Sidney Madden, Anne Mathisen, Len McCann, and Alan Sung — keep everything running smoothly.

I thank Bruce Watson in particular, for his dedication and energy. As my immediate predecessor, I have relied heavily on his opinions and advice. Bruce wears several hats, and delivers nothing short of excellence, whether it be as chair of the Program Committee, in answering our phone and email info-lines, researching and writing the popular *Story of Vancouver* history primer on our website, or any of the other tasks he generously takes on.

I've also enjoyed meeting and working with everyone in our sister organizations — deserving special mention are Kellie Haines and the staff at the Museum of Vancouver; Les Mobbs, Heather Gordon, and the staff at the City of Vancouver Archives; Simon Robinson, Patricia Owen and the staff at the Vancouver Maritime Museum; Janet Morley at Vancouver Heritage Fairs; and Jessica Quan at the Vancouver Heritage Foundation. The historical community in Vancouver is small but close-knit, and our collective strength grows through collaboration.

Thank you to our many donors, without whom our task would be more difficult. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

Finally, thank you to the membership of the Vancouver Historical Society for your patience and kindness during my time as your President. It's been an honour to serve.

*Scott Anderson, President*  
*sanderson@vancouver-historical-society.ca*

## Annual General Meeting This Month

The Vancouver Historical Society's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is being held just prior to this month's talk on Thursday, May 23rd. The AGM will start at 7:00 p.m. with the regular monthly talk starting at its usual time of 7:30 p.m. All members are asked to attend as annual reports will be tabled, the election of the Executive will take place and the membership will be asked to vote on a change.

As the expense required to operate the Society has increased over time, including room rental and insurance costs, the Executive has decided to put forward the following motion to restructure and increase the dues payable by each class of membership.

This motion will be voted on at the May 23, 2013 Annual General Meeting of the Vancouver Historical Society:

“Be it resolved, effective June 1, 2013, the dues for membership in the Vancouver Historical Society shall be as follows: Individual Senior/Student membership \$30.00, Individual membership \$35.00, Couples/Families membership \$40.00, Institutional membership \$45.00.”

---

## Election of Executive for the Coming Year

In its role as Nominating Committee, the current VHS Executive is pleased to submit the following full slate of nominees for the 2013-2014 Executive to be elected at our May 23, 2013 Annual General Meeting.

President	Robert McDonald
Vice President	Bruce M. Watson
Treasurer	Scott Anderson
Recording Secretary	Kellen Higgins
Director	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director	Michael Kluckner
Director	Eve Lazarus
Director	Jim McGraw
Director	Florence Sung

All terms of office are for one year beginning June 1, 2013. Additional nominations will be accepted at the AGM provided that the nominee is a current VHS member and is present.

---

## Welcome New VHS Members

Heather McMahon & Jesse Kendall  
Cherry Davies Charlene Sayo

# Incorporation Day Luncheon

Photos by Kellan Higgins



Len McCann relates the story of the steamship "Robert Kerr" and her role in Vancouver's Great Fire of 1886. The "Robert Kerr's" bell from the Maritime Museum collection is on the table.

Actor Jackson Davies talks about his days on "The Beachcombers" CBC TV series filmed on the Sunshine Coast. The long-running show was on the air from October 1972 to December 1990.



CBC Archivist Colin Preston (in the foreground) was this year's VHS Award of Merit winner. Colin has been instrumental in showcasing the CBC's collection of historical films to Vancouverites.

## The VHS Needs a Volunteer for an Hour a Week

The Vancouver Historical Society needs a volunteer to monitor our phone and email info-line. The responsibility is primarily sorting and referring requests to relevant individuals. Training and ongoing support will be provided, as well as back-up to cover absences. The time involved varies, but rarely more than an hour a week, depending on how involved you wish to get. You do not need to be an expert in Vancouver history, but you will definitely learn some interesting facts! If you are interested, or have any questions, please contact Scott at [sanderson@vancouver-historical-society.ca](mailto:sanderson@vancouver-historical-society.ca).

## Upcoming Speakers

*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 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month except June, July, August, December).*

Thursday, Sept. 26, 2013

### **Deadlines: Obits of Memorable British Columbians**

*Speaker: Tom Hawthorn*

A good newspaper obituary is more about life than death. Obits about British Columbia's departed reflect lives of an interesting cast of characters — athletes, authors, warriors, scholars, innovators, trailblazers, writers, boxers, cowboy singers, politicians, and murderers. Their nicknames — Baby Face, Mean Gene, Alberta Slim, Professor Midas, Cougar Lady — hint at lives rich in anecdote.

Thursday, Oct. 24, 2013

### **Liquor, Lust and the Law**

*Speaker: Aaron Chapman*

From the time the Italian immigrant Filipone brothers opened the Vancouver Penthouse Nightclub in 1947, the after hours watering hole on Seymour Street became a friendly escape for everyone from world famous entertainers to some of the city's most notorious. Discover its colourful history involving vice squads, politicians, judges, and the underworld. It's a unique look at some of Vancouver's history after dark.

Thursday, Nov. 28, 2013

### **The History of Theatre in Vancouver**

*Speaker: Jerry Wasserman*

From the earliest theatres and opera houses mainly for vaudeville to an explosion of Vancouver and BC-based original theatre of the 1970s and 80s, to today, Vancouver's theatre history is explored by our speaker, an actor and author of several books on Canadian theatre and a professor of English and Theatre in the Department of Theatre and Film at the University of British Columbia.

# “New” Granville Street Bridge 60 Years Ago



Photo: Lew Parry Film Productions, City of Vancouver Archives CVA 228-240

Construction of the third (and current) Granville Street Bridge is well underway in this May 21, 1953 photo taken 60 years ago. Unlike the second bridge seen in the distance, this new bridge would be high enough to clear most boat traffic. The older one had to swing open to allow higher vessels to clear it. You can see the bridgetender's loft at the top of the movable span on the old bridge. In a

little over eight months, the new bridge would open on February 4, 1954. The first member of the public to drive over the new bridge would be the same woman who had been first to drive across the old bridge when it opened in 1909. She drove a brand-new Cadillac on both occasions. The old bridge was soon demolished. It had in turn replaced the first Granville Street bridge opened in January 1889.

## Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2012 - 2013 (Elected May 24, 2012)

### EXECUTIVE

President/Treasurer	Scott Anderson
Vice President	Robert McDonald
Recording Secretary	Kellan Higgins
Director (Membership)	Elizabeth Hawkins
Director	Michael Kluckner
Director	Eve Lazarus
Director (Newsletter Editor)	Jim McGraw
Director	Florence Sung
Director (Programs)	Bruce M. Watson

### APPOINTED POSITIONS

Webmaster	Quasar Data Management
Archivist	Alexandra Allen
Info Line	Bruce Watson
Newsletter Mailing	Margaret Dinwoodie

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Vancouver Historical Society Information Line: 604-878-9140  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3071 Vancouver, BC V6B 3X6  
Website: [www.vancouver-historical-society.ca](http://www.vancouver-historical-society.ca)  
Newsletter Editor: [jmcgraw@vancouver-historical-society.ca](mailto:jmcgraw@vancouver-historical-society.ca)