



The Vancouver Historical Society Newsletter

Preserving and promoting the history of Vancouver since 1936

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The Vice that Gripped the West End in the 1980s

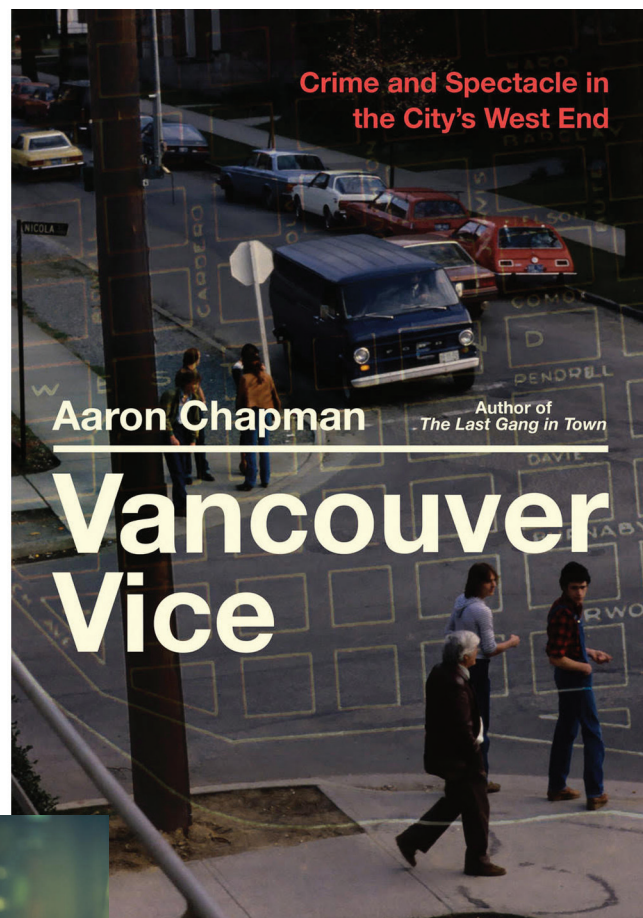
[A Q&A between Michael Kluckner and Aaron Chapman on his upcoming talk]

MK: Vancouver had a long history going back to the 19th century of sex work contained within red-light districts on Shore, Dupont and Alexander streets, a period that ended with moral crusades a century ago. But when the “sexual revolution” comes along in the ‘60s and ‘70s, sex work becomes an even more desperate trade. Any comments on why Vancouver didn’t go the way of, say, Amsterdam, and create a new red-light district? Or were there just too many sex workers (especially “survival sex” ones with, say, substance abuse problems) to be contained by any regulations?

AC: It’s hard to imagine a sanctioned red-light district with the Protestant attitudes of Vancouver that existed for decades. Heck, you couldn’t buy alcohol on Sundays until Expo 86. Much of Vancouver’s wild life has had to keep hidden after dark, out of sight of the police, in its nightclubs and bars, in its parks after sundown. The street prostitution issue that came to a head in the West End might have been solved sooner, quicker, and with a lot less expense in money and life had a red light district been created. But an intrinsic issue to that and to the city has been real estate. It would have been very difficult with the attitudes at the time – in the Vancouver of [Pentecostal minister and city councillor] Bernice Gerard – that a legitimate red light district could have been created. With the prices of Vancouver real estate today, it would be even harder to imagine now. Technology in the end created the red light district for us, moving it off the streets and now online.

MK: I recall wondering why the placid West End became so raunchy. Why there? And is that the period when Vancouver as a contented middle-class city begins to fall apart?

AC: It’s interesting because in the 1930s and 40s some of the most well-known “cathouses” were in the West End. There were certainly well-known places in Strathcona on the east side too. They disappeared behind the scenes after a pushback from the vice and morality squad of the VPD in the 1950s and 60s, but that just tended to push it out of the room-



This month’s speaker:
Aaron Chapman

ing houses and into the new apartment buildings that began popping up in the West End. The boom in construction that I document in the book suddenly provided a lot of apartments in which all manner of behaviour could take place. The West End didn’t have the prying neighbours peeking out from the curtains of Shaughnessy or Kerrisdale and passing judgment. This wasn’t a neighbourhood full of immigrant families such as Commercial Drive. Davie Street and the West End seemed to be more ready for it. And it’s interesting that what was happening in the West End in the late 1970s and early ‘80s was mirrored somewhat by things going on elsewhere in North America. The West End was not Times Square in

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President's Note

The sprunging of Spring and the rizzing of the grass is a reminder that we need to hold an Annual General Meeting soon after our year end, which is April 30th, and present financial statements and annual reports to you, our members, by way of fulfilling our responsibilities to the Societies Act and maintaining our charitable status. Please note the date and time in the Upcoming Events column on this page. There will be a repeat of this information in the May newsletter.

Aaron Chapman's return as a speaker is always a highlight. This will be his fourth time at the lectern. His first, in 2013, focused on his book about the notorious Penthouse Cabaret entitled *Liquor, Lust and The Law*. Subsequently, in 2017 and 2020, he spoke about the Clark Park Gang and the city's nightclub history and "packed the joint," as it were. VHS members who attended the talk on *The Last Gang in Town* still recall it as a standing-room-only mix of folks, cops, and aging tough guys, perhaps spicier than our usual lecture audience.

Chapman came on the local history scene in 2012 with his Penthouse book, then added a chapter to *Vancouver Confidential* in 2014 as one of the "Belshaw Gang" – the group of writers and artists marshalled by historian Dr. John Belshaw, who wrote *Vancouver Noir* in 2011 with Diane Purvey, and has been the VHS's Program Director for the past three years.

Chapman and his fellow author Eve Lazarus, whom we hope to have back soon at the lectern, have cornered the market on the City's colourful, violent, and entertaining past. These are "popular histories" – not a pejorative at all, but books that help us understand The Big Picture while still savouring the details.

Michael Kluckner

Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2021 - 2022

(ELECTED MAY 26, 2021)

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NEWSLETTER TEMPLATE/LAYOUT	Kellan Higgins/MK

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Upcoming Events

We intend to return to the Museum of Vancouver for the April and subsequent lectures. For those not wishing to attend in person, the lectures will be broadcast live on the Vancouver Historical Society's YouTube channel.

April 28th, 2022, 7 pm, Museum of Vancouver and YouTube

Aaron Chapman: Vancouver Vice

A best-selling author and raconteur of the City's underbelly, Chapman will talk about his latest work focusing on the West End in the 1980s.

May 24th, 2022, 7 pm by Zoom

Annual General Meeting

All members will receive by email an invitation to the event, and an annual report and financial statement, a few days before the event. Members wishing to receive a printed copy of this material should write to our postal address below (or use the email address).

Call for Nominations

All nominations for board positions must be received in writing at presidentvhs@gmail.com at least 7 days before the meeting. (This information will be repeated in the May newsletter).

May 26th, 2022, 7 pm, Museum of Vancouver and YouTube

TBA

We have been unable to confirm our May program at press time.

Summer Walking Tours!

There will be 3 walking tours this summer:

- Late June: Art Deco Downtown with Maurice Guibord
- July 31st: John Atkin will present What's Up with John Street? – a wander through the quirky subdivision and development of patterns around John Street, east of Main.
- August: Japantown/Powell Street with Maurice Guibord

Further information to come in the May newsletter.

Welcome New Members

Steve Bai
Eagle Glassheim
Michael Honeyman
Laura Ishiguro

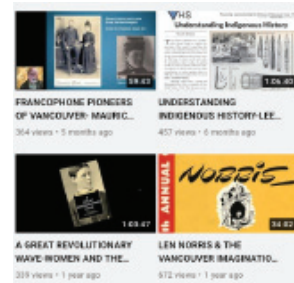
Tamara Myers
Christopher Newman
Arlene Sindelar

Don't miss a lecture! or ...

Watch it again, Sam!

Visit our archive online:
search "Vancouver Historical Society
on YouTube" to find our lectures
going back to 2016

Elwin Xie, videographer



Vancouver Vice: The West End in the '80s

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

NYC, but it's interesting that police and communities were essentially grappling with a lot of the same issues.

MK: Were sex workers in the West End of those days "independent"? What about pimping and organized crime?

AC: If you've moved to Vancouver in the last 25 years, or are too young to remember, the West End today offers no hint of how turbulent it was in those years. I think there's been some broad of reimagining of history in recent years that might have unintentionally aided in that — where some have even suggested that this was a "golden age" of prostitution in Vancouver because sex workers worked independently, free from pimps. While that might have been the case for some, that was certainly not the case for so many — a narrative that also ignores one of the most shocking and secret investigations in the history of the Vancouver police department that has never been told before until now. *Vancouver Vice* depicts a time in the city that we've done

our best to forget. There isn't even a Vice Squad within the VPD anymore. So I think the book captures what was happening for those who lived through those years without knowing what was happening, as well as those who have done their best to forget. And there's a cracker of a Detective story within it, which all begins to unfold when a dead body is found in the trunk of a car at Lost Lagoon. Who that person was, and whom he was connected with makes for one of the more fascinating revelations of Vancouver's criminal underworld.

MK: I recall meeting you when you were writing a story for the *Courier* on the rock concerts in the '60s at the Kerrisdale Arena. You're a musician, a writer, and a voice-over performer for animated films — any thoughts on the flexibility required to be a working artist in 2020s Vancouver?

AC: Those are all just things I wanted to do. I always wanted to be one of those people who did different things. I grew up admiring polymaths who wrote, acted, performed, and presented

on TV — British people from Peter Ustinov and Griff Rhys Jones, to a sort of writing mentor of mine named Gyles Brandreth—so even if I was making a complete living from one of those things, I'd still be doing the others. I'm not sure if it's flexibility that's required, but I'm reminded of the old phrase "You gotta learn to swim in this town," and this is an expensive city to live in. That story you recall about the concerts at the Kerrisdale arena was one of my early efforts in some local history writing—and an opportunity to take some personal time travel. I was around ten or eleven years old in Kerrisdale in those years, and I lived about four or five blocks away from the arena. But I was really too young to go see the concerts myself, so I had memories of hanging around the arena and seeing all these Clash, Devo, and Motorhead fans waiting to go in. These people did not look like they were from Kerrisdale in the early 1980s! Researching that story and talking to so many people who went to the shows was like going back in time, and getting to go in and see for myself what happened. The same could be said of *Vancouver Vice*.

Once upon a time (67 years ago) there was a pleasant little seaside town called Vancouver that was very proud of the progress it was making to become a modern city. According to the "Rails to Rubber" issue of *The Buzzer*, it now boasted "the most modern metropolitan transit system in the nation."

The previous five years had seen the complete dismantling of the interurban and streetcar routes that had stitched the Lower Mainland together for the previous four decades. The North Vancouver ferry service was discontinued in 1958; 12 years earlier, the West Vancouver passenger ferry had stopped running, a victim of the Lions Gate Bridge and the end of gasoline and tire rationing. We have been trying to put together as good a system ever since.

BROCHURE: COLLECTION OF MICHAEL KLUCKNER



Proud symbols of progress in Canada's third city! There's no finer span in this country than the new eight-lane Granville Bridge. Vancouver also boasts the most modern metropolitan transit system in the nation.

as four routes a year were changed from rails to rubber, in line with the directions of a joint City-BCE Planning Committee. Since 1950 Vancouver has had Canada's largest fleet of trolley coaches. (Today's total: 327).

Come April 22, the last route — Hastings East — will convert to buses. In July trolley coaches will take over. Vancouver can then boast the country's most modern transit system—with few equals, for that matter, anywhere on the continent.

Project Rails-to-Rubber is all but done!

This doesn't mean we at the B.C. Electric can—or plan to—sit back and say: "Well, that's that." A transportation system must change, adapt,

grow, improve as the people and the city it serves may require.

In less than a man's lifetime Vancouver has developed beyond all recognition—and the transit system with it.

If the next 65 years are anything like the last, there will be lots to keep us busy—whether it's street cars or helicopters!

THE BUZZER
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Restor(y)ing Indigenous Presence and Collective Memory in Stanley Park

In September 2021, the VHS started a collaboration with Dr. Nicolas Kenny's "HIST 486 – History of Vancouver" class at Simon Fraser University. We presented one essay last month and another here.

By Amanda McRae

As a lifelong resident of the Lower Mainland, taking a day trip to Stanley Park is often one of my favourite past times. It is such a unique place; a beautiful and mysterious forested park in the middle of bustling Vancouver. Although Stanley Park is indeed an aesthetic park and a special place for Vancouver residents and tourists to visit, Stanley Park is important for other reasons that are not obvious to most park users.

Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples have resided on the land known to settlers as Stanley Park. Stanley Park is the unceded, traditional territory of Coast Salish First Nations, including the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples. In Fall 2021, I wrote a research paper and created a digital history project about Restor(y)ing Indigenous presence in Stanley Park for HIST 486: History of Vancouver at Simon Fraser University. I hope to respectfully contribute to the dialogue of reconciliation while honouring and uplifting the histories, stories, and memories of the Coast Salish First Nations communities discussed within this article and my digital history project.

After spending years visiting Stanley Park and being blissfully unaware of the historical significance of the land, I wanted to learn about the true history that underlies the park we know today. Through my research and newfound understanding of the Indigenous history and memory embedded within Stanley Park, I knew it was important to think about the ways we—as Vancouverites and users of the park—can help restore Indigenous presence into the physical landscape of the park and the collective memory of park users. Through my research and digital project, I develop the term restor(y) to acknowledge the necessity to simultaneously restore Indigenous presence physically on the land and rein-



Siwash Rock c. 1890. Photograph by Bailey and Neelands.

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scribe Indigenous presence into society's collective memory. In the context of Stanley Park and my project, restor(y)ing aims to reposition the history of natural spaces, shifting the narrative away from the aesthetic conception of the park to one that respects and validates Indigeneity. I chose the topic of restor(y)ing Indigenous presence in Stanley Park because it is a popular and iconic landscape in Vancouver that has a longstanding Indigenous history that is often obscured by the natural beauty of the park. Stanley Park is a prime example of how fractured histories exist in our collective memory because of the continued denial of Indigenous presence by white settler society. As Vancouver history scholar Jean Barman states in her book *Stanley Park's Secret*: "Indigenous families were erased not only from Stanley Park but from our collective memory" (Barman, 2005: 17). To reconstruct our understanding of Stanley Park's history there must be both restoration and reinscription of Indigenous presence in the landscape and collective memory of Stanley Park. In my digital history project, I focus on the reinscription of Indigenous presence through place names.

I chose to produce a three-part video series on the popular social media platform, TikTok, for my digital history project. I used TikTok as the medium for my message because I felt it had the best

capability to reach the most people—especially youth—and relay this history and information that is not widely known, yet is an essential and undeniable part of Stanley Park's history. Video 1 highlights the goals of the project and defines restor(y)ing for the audience; Video 2 discusses the history of the Coast Salish Village at Whoi Whoi and how Lumberman's Arch obscures that history; Video 3 highlights the displacement of the Indigenous families at Brockton Point and calls for restor(y)ing of the physical landscape at the site. In total, the three videos have garnered nearly 40,000 views since they were published in December 2021. As a conclusion to the video series and my research, I believe that projects of restor(y)ing Stanley Park, in thoughtful collaboration with local Indigenous communities, could be a step towards reconciliation, Indigenous resurgence, and reclaiming Stanley Park for all.

(I [Amanda McRae] am a VHS member and a 4th-year student at Simon Fraser University. I am in the final semester of my undergraduate degree in English, and upon graduation I plan to go into the teaching program. Historical studies about Vancouver and Indigeneity will always play an important part in my career because I hope to instil in my future students a rich and comprehensive understanding of our city and its history.)