

# Vancouver Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

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### Raincoast Jews: Integration in British Columbia

#### September Speaker: Lillooet Nordlinger McDonnell

Most Vancouverites are familiar with German immigrant and second mayor (1888-1891) of Vancouver, David Oppenheimer (1834-1897), from the bronze bust at where Beach Avenue meets Stanley Park. Like so many coming from a background of Jewish tradition, he turned his energy to his adopted society, developing business in Victoria and a large amount of infrastructure in Vancouver. Oppenheimer maintained links to his past by going to the synagogue on high holidays, while leading the business community in provincial commercial enterprises in merchandising and mining. He later became a philanthropist, returning his efforts to the community. At his death, he was cited as the “best friend Vancouver ever had.”

Like the Oppenheimers, David and his brother Isaac, many Jews came to British Columbia with and after the 1858 Gold Rush, all the while balancing a respect for their original culture while adopting and adapting to a new society as traders, merchants and wholesalers. Many Jews were successful in spite of the accepted discriminatory code of conduct of the time. For example, Semlin

Franklin became the first Jew elected to political office in Canada when he became a member of BC’s Legislative Assembly and Henry Nathan when he was elected to the Federal Parliament in 1871.

resistance to become head of the school board in the frontier town of Prince George.

**Leon Koerner**, Czechoslovakian refugee during WWII, immigrated in a period when Canada was reluctant to accept Jewish immigrants. After settling in Vancouver his name became associated with the lumber industry, charity and progressive work standards.

**Harry Adaskin**, a premier violinist who was known for popularizing classical music in Canada, founded the UBC School of Music.

**Nathan Nemetz**, achieved great success in the field of law, becoming the first Chief Justice in British

Columbia.

Author, Dr. Lillooet Nördlinger McDonnell is from Ottawa. She is currently Director of ParalleX Ethnographic Research Ltd. and External Research Associate for the Max and Tessie Zelikovitz Centre for Jewish Studies. She also teaches part time at Carlton University in the Department of Religion.

*Bruce M. Watson*



**Clockwise from top left: Cecelia Davies, Hannah Director, Leon Koerner, Nathan Nemetz, Harry Adaskin**

Our next speaker, Lillooet Nordlinger McDonnell, in her book *Raincoast Jews: Integration in British Columbia*, explores the lives and contributions of five leading Jews living in British Columbia between 1860 and 1970:

**Cecelia Davies**, one of Victoria’s early Jews, achieved influence through her charity work.

**Hannah Director** overcame subtle

Next Meeting at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 24, 2015 at Museum of Vancouver

## President's Notes

Since the Trudeau era of 40 years ago (or perhaps I should say the *first* Trudeau era given that we're in election mode), most Canadians have seen themselves as part of a mosaic, distinctly different from the anglocentric Dominion of the country's first century as well as from the American melting pot. "Hyphenated Canadians," such as the Italian-Canadian families who remade the Grandview area, became the norm rather than the exception.

By contrast, our September speaker, Lillooet Nördlinger McDonnell, writes of the efforts made by some Jewish immigrants to British Columbia, notably Leon Koerner and Harry Adaskin, to assimilate as quickly as possible into the mainstream – an understandable strategy, perhaps, given the "genteel antisemitism" of the 1930s and 1940s. "In a meeting between Mackenzie King and the Premier of BC, T.D. Pattullo, Pattullo advised Mackenzie King that although BC had no objections to taking in refugees, Jews were not wanted in the province."

Statements such as this awakened uncomfortable memories from my own childhood in Vancouver in the 1950s. One involved the proverbial "Sunday drive" that took us one day to the top of Taylor Way in West Vancouver, where a real-estate sign extolled the beauty of the British Properties and, in smaller print, listed the kinds of people who were not welcome there, including Jews. My mother could only remark that "some people are bigoted," or words to that effect.

*Raincoast Jews* notes the private clubs in Vancouver which excluded Jews, as well as people of colour, from membership, which prompted another memory. In the early 1960s, the BC Lions had a star halfback named Willie Fleming, who was African-American and a favourite of my football-watching parents. My father was delighted to report one day that Fleming, who had been denied membership at the city's exclusive golf clubs, had been accepted at Quilchena where my father played. That was the kind of crack in the wall that began to let the light in.

**Michael Kluckner, President**  
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## Teddy Lyons' Last Run on No. 124

*Continued from back page*

out something of special interest about a particular building. As everyone looked up, BCER official photographer Harry Bullen would focus and quickly take a photo of the entire car and its happy passengers. Printing several copies of the photo, Bullen would hand them off to his assistant on a bicycle who would catch up to the streetcar at a later point in the ride, and deposit the photos in a box on the car. When the car finally arrived at the end of its ride, the souvenir photos would be "miraculously" produced and made available for sale.

The pictured souvenir photo was taken on Broadway just east of Granville. That's the Dick Building in the background. Named after Vancouver area MLA and businessman, William Dick, the building is still there on the southeast corner of Broadway and Granville. Bullen's studio at the time was on the northeast corner where the Royal Bank is today.

With B.C. Electric quickly replacing streetcars with buses after the war, there were fewer tracks on which the observation cars could operate. Finally it was decided the end of the 1950 summer season would also be the end for the observation cars. Thus it was that Teddy Lyons made his last run on Sunday, September 17th, 1950 — 65 years ago this month.

In the Saturday, September 16th *Province*, the newspaper featured a photo of Teddy kissing "his" No. 124 goodbye. The caption read: "No more tracks so no more cracks from Teddy Lyons conductor for 40 years on BCER's famous observation cars." Two public trips were made that Sunday, one at 10 A.M. and another at 2 P.M. Car 123 with Dick Gardiner had made its last public trip on the previous weekend. That car, decorated with banners, came out one more time at 4 P.M., as directors of the BCER and Vancouver city councillors rode it with Lyons and Gardiner, both onboard on a final trip to the Mount Pleasant carbarns on Main between 13th and 14th. A reception was then held at BCER President Dal Grauer's home where Teddy Lyons and Dick Gardiner were honoured.

Except for a short period during World War II, the cars had run for 39 summers. According to Henry Ewert in his *Story of the B.C. Electric Railway Company*, the two men had together travelled over 600,000 miles in the two cars over the years.

Lyons operated regular streetcars for another few months before retiring in January 1951. He died just four years later in 1955 at the age of 67. Harry Bullen, whose photos are in so many family collections, died in 1963. Although there had been talk about it, neither observation car was ultimately saved.

## September Tour for VHS Members

The Vancouver Historical Society (VHS) is pleased to offer a free members-only walking tour of the Musqueam's traditional territory in Southlands.

This tour will take you through land the Musqueam People have occupied for 4,000 years. Your guide will introduce you to the contemporary landscape of the Musqueam Indian Reservation #2, explain the changes over time, and show you archaeological sites that date back 1,500 – 4,500 years ago. Musqueam was also once home to Chinese Market Gardens and you will hear about the relationship between the Chinese and Musqueam through time. You will also have an opportunity to learn about public art installations created by Musqueam community members.

At the end of the walking tour, you will visit the Museum Gallery space where many of the Musqueam's cultural heritage treasures are held. The current exhibit is *čəsna?əm*, the city before the city, one of three presented cooperatively by the Musqueam, the UBC Museum of Anthropology and the Museum of Vancouver. The exhibit connects visitors with *čəsna?əm* — one of the largest ancient village and burial sites upon which Vancouver was built — sharing its powerful 5,000-year history and continuing significance.

If you would like to participate, please leave a message with your name, email address and/or phone number at the VHS info-line, 604-878-9140, by Thursday, September 24, 2015 to reserve your spot. You can also email the VHS at: [info@vancouver-historical-society.ca](mailto:info@vancouver-historical-society.ca) leaving a phone number and using the subject line: Musqueam Tour.

**Date:** Saturday, September 26  
**Time:** 2 P.M. to 4 P.M.  
**Where:** The tour begins and ends at the Musqueam Cultural Education Resource Centre  
4000 Musqueam Avenue (Southlands),  
Vancouver.  
**Parking:** Ample free parking



MUSQUEAM  
First Nation

## 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, October 22, 2015

### **Vaudeville: The Great White Way**

*Speakers: John Atkin and Tom Carter*

Many people think of Granville Street as “the Great White Way” or entertainment district of Vancouver. In fact, Hastings Street was the original where vaudeville flourished at the many theatres like the Pantages, the Rex and the Columbia. Vancouver was very much on several vaudeville circuits so there was never a shortage of acts to grace the stage. Vaudeville was a form of theatre started in the 1880s that featured several different acts in one show, everything from dancers, comedians, jugglers, singers and more. Silent movies and then the talkies gradually pushed vaudeville off the stage of many theatres. Historian John Atkin and artist Tom Carter explore a bygone era in this fascinating look at a world of dreams, escape, wonders and thrills.

Thursday, November 26, 2015

### **Habitat Forum and the United Nations Conference of 1976**

*Speaker: Lindsay Brown*

At the end of May 1976, Vancouver was abuzz with the opening of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, the largest UN conference at that time. Focusing attention on the city, the conference drew 10,000 people from 150 countries, a big event for small Vancouver. Luminaries in attendance were Margaret Mead, Mother Teresa, Buckminster Fuller, Paolo Soleri, Pierre Trudeau, etc. Habitat Forum, a parallel utopian gathering of non-governmental organizations was organized by community activist Alan Clapp and others. For this, thousands of volunteers and local artists transformed the former military base at Jericho Beach into an extraordinary “happening.” The conference closed on June 11th but a strong if often unacknowledged legacy remained.

# Peek into the Past

with Jim McGraw



B.C. ELECTRIC RY. CO. OBSERVATION CAR "TEDDY" LYONS CONDUCTOR Harry Bullen Photographer. 2608 Granville St. Phone Bay. 8889.

The photo above is one many longtime Vancouverites have in their albums or boxes of family memorabilia. This particular one from 1939 belongs to former VHS Director Barbara Coles. (Barbara is the youngster wearing the hat and dark sweater in the front seat with her twin sister beside her on the aisle. Her mother and another sister are sitting right above the "Next Trip 4 P.M." sign. A visiting aunt from England is sitting in the aisle seat across from them.)

This is one of many souvenir photos taken by photographer Harry Bullen of passengers taking a pleasurable outing on one of British Columbia Electric Railway's (BCER) two open-topped sightseeing or observation cars. (Nos. 123 and 124 were built to plans bought from the Montreal Tramways Company.)

There were two well-known conductor/tour guides: Dick Gardiner and Thadeous "Teddy" Lyons. Besides pointing

out the sights, Gardiner would entertain passengers with his sleight-of-hand magic tricks. Teddy Lyons (seen holding the little girl in his arms) on the other hand was known for his natural showmanship that would include a number of well-worn groaners ("See that seagull? Richest one in Vancouver. Came by here the other day and made a deposit on a new Packard.") Lyons was so popular, BCER even published a Teddy Lyons joke book in 1935. Lyons would also arrange for groups of children to sing and dance at street corners to the delight of passengers. It was homey entertainment and Vancouverites loved it.

Lyons, born in Portage-la-Prairie, Manitoba, arrived in Vancouver as a boy. In his early 20s, he started working for the BCER in 1910. He filled in for someone during the observation car's second summer of operation in 1911 and a star was born.

At one point along the two-hour trip, Teddy would point  
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## Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2015 - 2016 (Elected May 28, 2015)

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Archivist	Alexandra Allen
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Newsletter Mailing	Mary Gavan, John Gadsby
Tour Coordinator	Jo Pleshakov

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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