The Vancouver Historical Society Newsletter

Preserving and promoting the history of Vancouver since 1936

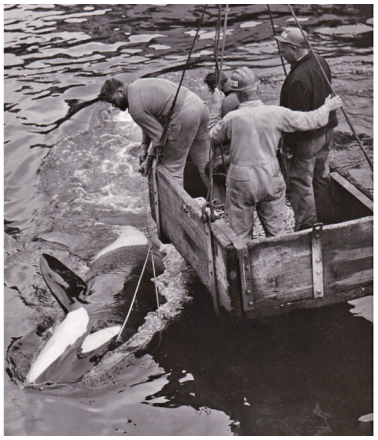
Vol. 63 No. 3 | **November 2023** | ISSN 0823-0161

From 'Killer' to 'Orca': a West-Coast Story

By John Belshaw

In October, VHS presenter Linda Mahood described conflict at the Jericho Hostel in 1970. Only six years earlier the site had a very different kind of resident.

Moby Doll was the first "killer whale" held in captivity for more than two days. His ordeal (the orca's sex was only determined post-mortem) lasted from the spring of 1964 to autumn the same year and mostly took played out at the Burrard Drydocks and Jericho. South of the border, another orca – this one named Namu – was held at the Seattle Marine Aquarium, owned by Ted Griffin, and was shortly thereafter joined by a young female, who became the first of many killer whales named "Shamu" displayed at Sea World in San Diego. In 1965, Griffin became the first person to swim and perform with a captive killer whale. The show proved wildly popular, and Griffin began capturing and selling other killer whales. Soon Sea World-styled commercial entertainment aquaria featuring performing killer whales began appearing in coastal cities around North America and as far inland as Niagara Falls and Sandusky, Ohio.



The capture and "taming" of Moby Doll in 1964, with one of the Jericho air base hangars in the background of the right-hand image. **PHOTOS COURTESY OF JASON COLBY**

This month's speaker:
Jason Colby

Prior to this period, killer whales had a branding problem: they were almost everywhere regarded as dangerous monsters. Not surprisingly, Indigenous peoples held the sea mammals in much higher regard than did settler fishers or cannery operators. Most of the orcas captured in the 1960s and 1970s displayed bullet holes, a powerful sign of how they were despised by fishing and boating people. How did a creature with such a negative reputation come to be regarded as a symbol of Pacific Northwest coastal life, hockey teams, and even family values?

Drawing on interviews, official records, private archives, and his own family history, University of Victoria Professor Jason Colby tells the exhilarating and often heartbreaking story of how people came to love the ocean's greatest predator. Historically reviled as dangerous pests, killer whales were dying by the hundreds, even thousands, by the 1950s--the victims of fishermen, whalers, and even the US military. In the Pacific Northwest, fishermen blazed away at them, scientists harpooned them, and the Canadian government mounted a machine gun to eradicate them.

Jason Colby was born in Victoria and grew up along the Pacific Coast, mostly in the Seattle area. During his high school and undergraduate years, he worked as a commercial fisherman in Alaska and on fish farms in Puget Sound. He earned a PhD from Cornell University in 2005 and began teaching marine environmental history at the University of Victoria in 2007, specializing in the history of human-marine animal interactions, particularly on the Pacific Coast.

Orca: How We Came to Know and Love the Ocean's Greatest Predator (Oxford University Press, 2018) is Colby's historical exploration of the path from sea monster to regional icon. He shows how the 1970s witnessed a transformation of the public view of Orcinus orca. Killer whales were embraced as charismatic and friendly, and gradu-

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NEXT LECTURE: Thursday, November 23, 2023, 7 pm, at the MoV Space Centre Auditorium and on YouTube

BC History Works

to be built at bchistoryworks.ca

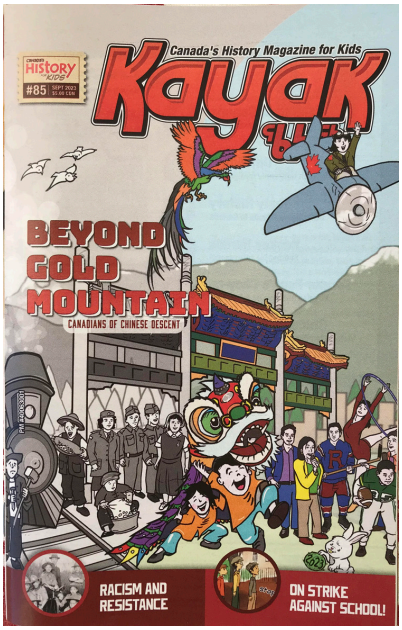
This is a project headed by Greg Dickson, who was Mark Forsythe's colleague on the CBC radio's BC Almanac program, and co-authored with Mark books on the Cariboo Gold Rush and the First World War. Greg spoke in October at the BC Social Studies Teachers Conference in Vancouver.

BC History Works aims to create a free, open source go-to place for students, researchers and everyone interested in the full scope of BC history. It needs to be inclusive and as diverse in outlook as our province is. It needs to publish well-sourced, commissioned history pieces and timelines from provincially-based subject experts, writers and journalists who are well-compensated for their contributions. BC History Works could be a registered non-profit with an advisory board of historians, cultural and sector representatives, educators and established writers.

Over the next few years, BC History Works will need to connect with corporations, foundations, governments and individual donors to establish sustainable annual funding. That funding will build a high-profile multi-purpose website and pay its contributors. Once the website is in place and the project is established, it will take several years to create enough content for a hard launch.

Has anyone done this elsewhere? The website History Link (historylink.org) in Washington State pioneered the approach back in 1997 and now has over 8,000 stories online, over 4,000 daily visits (one-third of the traffic comes from students and teachers) and is constantly producing new content and updating existing stories as new research comes to light. They call themselves a "public information utility" and operate with corporate, foundation, municipal, county and state funding of more than $500,000 annually.

If you're interested in more information or in becoming involved, contact Greg at gregdicksonwriter@shaw.ca.



Vancouver's Debbie Jiang was the guest co-editor of September's *Kayak* magazine, "Canada's History Magazine for Kids," on the centenary of the Chinese Immigration Act, which was in fact an exclusion act prohibiting most Chinese immigration to Canada until 1947. It contains stories and comics of events including the Chinese student strike in Victoria in 1922, hockey and war heroes, and the invention of ginger beef in Calgary. The cover is by David Wong, whose *Beyond Gold Mountain* graphic novel is a classic.

Upcoming Events

There is no December newsletter or lecture!

Thursday January 25, 2024

Speaker To Be Announced

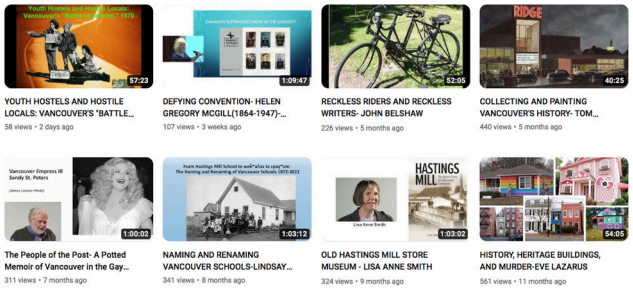
The board will be meeting in mid-November to determine our 2024 program. In December, we will be contacting members with our usual emailed Christmas greetings and some updates on what's to come.

Welcome New Member

Paul Laflamme

Watch our past lectures on YouTube

Search for "Vancouver Historical Society on YouTube" for our channel.



Videographer: Elwin Xie

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Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2023 - 2024

(ELECTED MAY 23, 2023)

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From ‘Killer’ to ‘Orca’: a West-Coast Story

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ally the “wolves of the sea” caricature melted away. Captivity also gave scientists access to live orcas for the first time, and our understanding of the black and white monster changed from mindless killing machine to a more nuanced one that includes appreciation of their family and clan relationships. Along the way, emotional attachment to “domesticated” whales in aquaria led to critiques of their treatment, capture, display and commercial exploitation. Regional commitments to resource extraction butted up against a new environmentalist attitude and compassion for sea mammals in particular. (Greenpeace, it is often forgotten, began as an anti-whaling movement in Vancouver.) Colby is currently researching for two new book projects. The first is entitled Devilfish: The History and Future of Gray Whales and People. The second, with Dr. Loren McClenachan, is entitled Once and Future Kings: The Environmental History and Historical Ecology of Chinook Salmon.

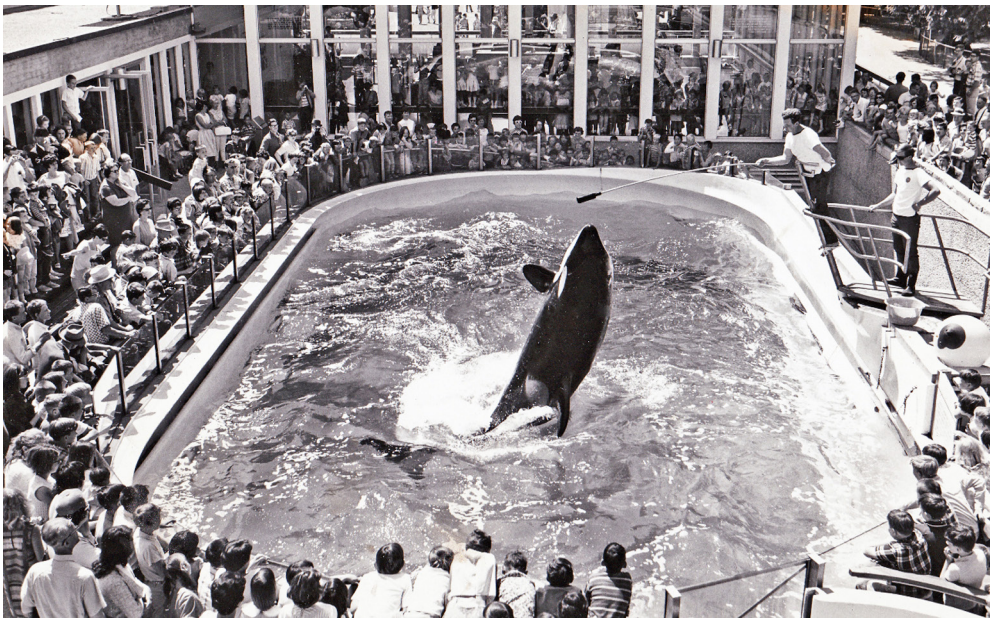

PHOTO COURTESY OF JASON COLBY

Join us on November 23rd at 7 pm at the Museum of Vancouver, when Jason will take us for a dip into the story of how our species changed its mind about another.

Letters from The Front

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By 1924, over 30,000 former soldiers had been settled on former Crown lands in the prairie provinces. However, the initiative was not entirely successful; most of the land had never been farmed and required years of work to make it profitable. Additionally, many settlers had never planted and found the work and isolation difficult.

Peter and Jack applied for land near the Peace River in October 1919. As they do not appear in later census material their homesteading efforts were likely unsuccessful. Peter‘s diminishing health may have been the cause.

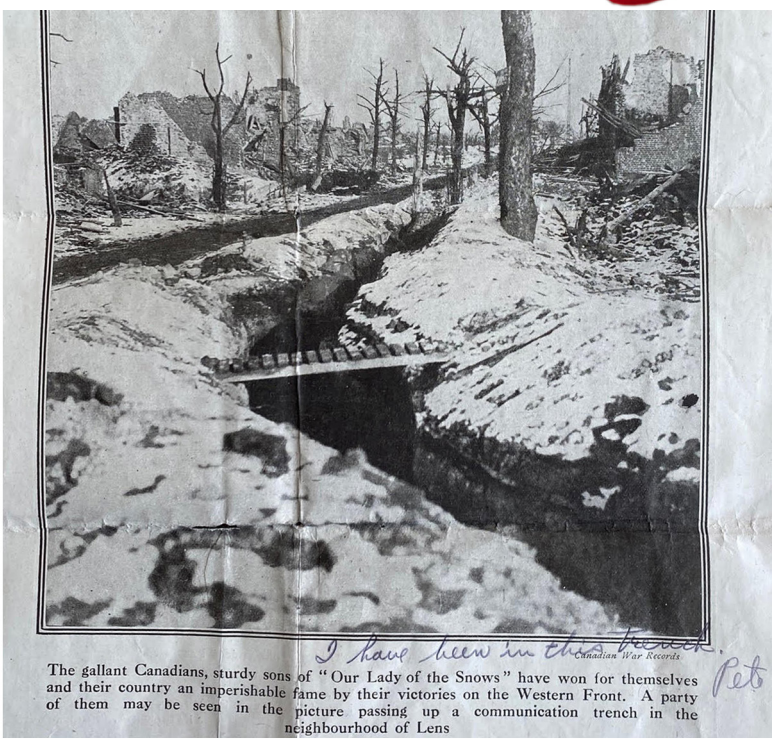
We are still hopeful that more information can be researched. However, the interplay between public policy and private lives provides a compelling narrative of individuals caught in the interplay of history. We have just begun unraveling the story.

The Canadian National Vimy Memorial in Vimy, France, a short drive south of Lens where the trench photo on the back page was taken. Torontonian Walter Allward’s extraordinary monument stands on the Vimy Ridge, looking north toward Lille and Belgium onto land occupied by the German Army. The taking of the ridge by Canadian troops in April, 1917 was one of the decisive actions of the war. The memorial has no flags, guns, helmets or swords, only depictions of loss and grief. The names of the more than 3,000 Canadians who died in the combat are incised on the walls. It is deeply moving.

– Michael Klucker

Letters from The Front

"I have been in this trench." Handwritten words by Peter Dueck on a magazine clipping that reads: "The gallant Canadians, sturdy sons of 'Our Lady of the Snows,' have won for themselves and their country an imperishable fame by their victories on the Western Front. A party of them may be seen passing up a communication trench in the neighbourhood of Lens."



By Denise Jacques

My favourite television program is Finding Your Roots. I am moved by how often the male and female guests are reduced to tears on discovering some aspect of family history. VHS had a parallel experience when we were contacted by a local family with a cache of Great War letters. We were asked for advice on preserving the letters and making them accessible.

Fellow director Tom Carter proposed that UBC iSchool digitize the material and create a basic timeline. This is happening to the satisfaction of the family involved.

Through the wonders of the electronic world, we have tried to trace the unfolding story of two brothers, Peter and Jack Dueck who fought for Canada during the Great War. While we drew on personal information from attestation files and census records, we also examined the interplay between the two brothers' individual stories and Canadian wartime policy.

To pick up the story, in 1916 Prime Minister Robert Borden in his New Year's message pledged to create an army of 500,000 Canadian soldiers out of a population of eight million. Meanwhile in Edmonton, Colonel Peter Edwin Bowen attempted to raise a new regiment – the 202nd or the "Sportsman Battalion" as a unit of the Canadian Expeditionary Army. The sporting title was designed to offset flagging enlistment among the middle class, who were increasingly intimidated by growing causality lists. The unit began recruiting in Alberta on 4 February 1916, and Peter Dueck, a young Mennonite born in Manitoba, joined on 8 April 1916. Bowen himself signed his papers. The location was "Camrose."

Already, this is a story. The Mennonites were firmly passivists: the family spoke Low Deutsch. Mother had been born in Mariupol. Why would Peter Dueck – followed by his brother Jack in 1918 – join up for a fight in the mud of France? We still seek the answer to that question.

Our prime clue in unravelling what happened next is contained in Peter's extensive medical records. They are helpful in deciphering the history of the war and the realities of the trenches. We know from his medical files that Peter would suffer from several complaints. Other than shrapnel from an exploding shell lodged near the femur – that may not have entirely been identified until March 1919 – Peter was diagnosed with 'disordered action of the heart' (DAH), 'nervous debility' or 'valvular disease of the heart' (VDH). Separating heart disease from shell shock induced by shell fire or in intense combat was hard. Records reveal that Peter died in Point Grey, Vancouver, from war wounds in April 1921, though it is unclear what finally killed him. Peter's later regiment, the 50th Battalion, received battle honours for the Somme, Vimy, Passchendaele, and Amiens (among others); some of these names are listed in Dueck's records. Whether the shrapnel or heart disease ultimately caused death, Peter had been through hell.

Meanwhile Jack Dueck the older brother had a much better war. Jack joined as a sapper, building roads and clearing mines. He entered the war in 1918 and judging from the lack of wounds he did not experience the same frontline action.

When the war finally ended both brothers availed themselves of public policy initiatives. In Canada's 1917 Soldier Settlement Act and its 1919 revision made land grants and loans available to soldiers. A person in active service during the First World War was eligible for a free homestead under the Act. This legislation allowed the overseeing Board to buy Crown lands, settle returned soldiers and create valuable farmland. Recipients of property were expected to work it for a term before they could buy it outright; the Settlement Board also provided loans for equipment, livestock, and buildings.

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