



Youth Hostels and Hostile Locals: Vancouver's "Battle of Jericho," 1970

By John Belshaw

Fifty-three years ago, Vancouver Police laid siege to a temporary youth hostel in Point Grey. They came equipped with riot gear and even heavy artillery. The VPD didn't come alone, either. They were supported by members of the RCMP and soldiers from the Canadian Armed Forces.

What they confronted was a few hundred young Canadian travellers, vagabonds who had mostly hitchhiked their way across the country. Expelled days earlier from the Beatty Street Armoury, they were resisting removal from another army facility. The Liberal government in Ottawa had made the facilities available to travelling youth in the hopes that doing so would solve a 'hostel crisis' and would support young people in their efforts to "See Canada First."



This month's speaker:
Linda Mahood



As University of Guelph history professor Linda Mahood describes it, the "Battle of Jericho" was the culmination of several long-term and immediate trends.

Hitchhiking was the cross-generational trend that enabled people with little money to be modern-day vagabonds. There have always been hitchhikers, but the practice took on a new meaning as automobiles became more popular in the 1920s. During the Depression, poverty and labour transience gave it a new ubiquity. Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert could ham it up in 1934 in *It Happened One Night*, only because the practice of 'thumbing' was so widely recognized by audiences.

The popularity of hitchhiking peaked and troughed over the next twenty

years until, in the 1960s, the 'youth movement' breathed new life into it. Young babyboomers were on the road in large numbers, hitchhiking from place to place, and from hostel to hostel. As the decade wore on, the phenomenon became associated with the rise of 'hippies' and also militant youth movements. Hitchhiking was the means to get around, and hostels were the focal point of the cultural excitement. One kind of movement led to another.

Mahood's interest in these trends stems from some of her own experiences. She was an early participant in the federal government's Katimavik program, a mid-1970s effort to promote national unity by exposing young people to different parts of the country. It came at the

CONTINUED INSIDE

President's Message

The mailbag section on the back page of our newsletters, and just getting going on the front page of our website, is an indication that people are downsizing, sifting through attics and basements, looking for homes for all the accumulated stuff from generations of their families. We have been contacted by a number of people asking if we have a museum or a collection, which of course we don't, but we have agreed to take some material, such as the Ivor Neil clippings in this issue, in the hope that we can find it a permanent home in a public collection or with a private collector.

This is where it gets tough: archives and museums are by necessity being very selective in what they will take, even our own very diverse City of Vancouver Archives, which has a collection of Vancouver Historical Society material going back to our beginnings in 1936. We have donated material to it in 1973 (just after the Archives moved to its Vanier Park location), 2002, 2005, 2015 and 2019.

Many artists are also hearing the ticking clock for their own works. A group called the Canadian Art Preservation Foundation had an inaugural meeting a few months ago; I spoke at it, talking about my strategy for preserving my work, which is mass production (books) and dispersal (sales to individuals). Other artists are not as lucky, and it is unlikely that public spaces such as the Vancouver Art Gallery will collect much from local people. Could an art preservation foundation raise funds for a space that would house works and, if it did, how would they be catalogued or interpreted or displayed?

We-the-VHS are emphatically *not* taking unsolicited material, but invite people to contact us to discuss what they can do with family treasures pertaining to Vancouver's history. I hope we can develop a network of interested people, rather as the BC Entertainment Hall of Fame has, who will retain these memories, interpret them, and enrich our appreciation of Vancouver's history.

Coincidentally, I was reading a review-essay in the September 21st *New York Review of Books* by Ben Tarnoff on the roots and mindset of Silicon Valley which, he notes, is home to four of the ten biggest companies in the world by market capitalization. Describing its success, he suggests that a "complex mix of social solidarity and individualistic competition" has created a culture where "everyone wants to win, [but] at some level they're all playing for the same team."

The key insight is this: "What unites them is a commitment to disruption. Disruption is not merely a business strategy but a worldview that celebrates the creative destruction of existing institutions. It also contains a particular theory of history: that technology makes the past, along with the forms of expertise that arise from studying it, irrelevant."

I think of this as I hear about Chat.GPT, which I would rather call Cheat.GPT, and the impact it's having on schools.

Michael Kluckner
presidentvhs@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

Thursday November 23, 2023

From "Killer" to "Orca": A West Coast Story

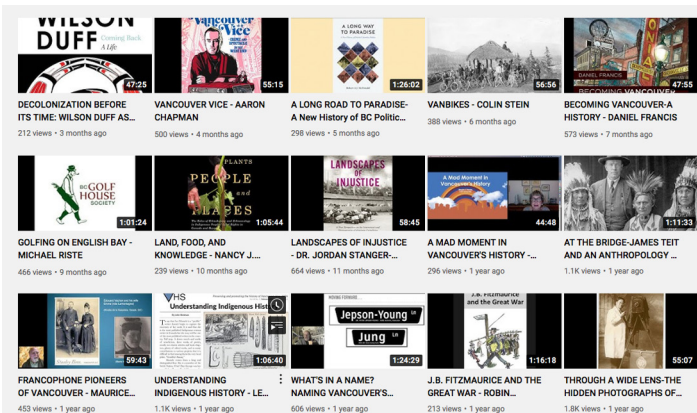
Jason Colby, environmental historian, University of Victoria

Today, there is no more prominent symbol of the West Coast than the killer whale (*Orcinus orca*). Yet just a few decades ago, orcas were reviled and shot. Dr. Colby explores our transformed knowledge of and relationship with this apex marine predator.

There is no December newsletter or lecture!

Watch our past lectures on YouTube

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



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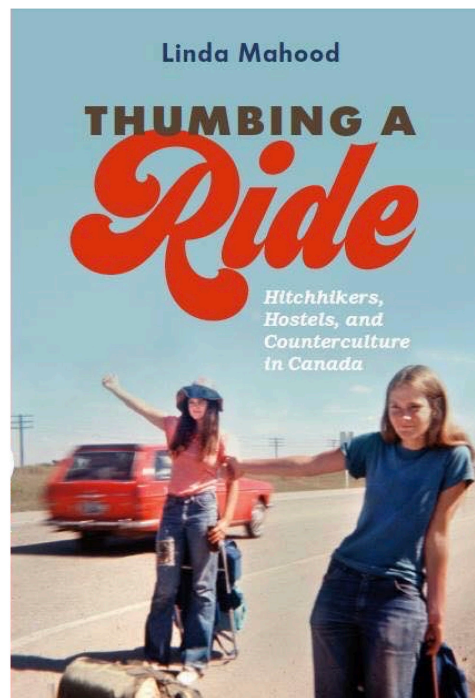
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The Battle of Jericho

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end of a decade or more of efforts to promote youth mobility and travel, but by the time of Katimavik, elite attitudes had shifted. At Katimavik, only three things were banned: sex, drugs ... and hitchhiking.

Why hitchhiking? The 1950s and '60s saw the rise of the 'teenager,' high school, and two months off annually for summer jobs and vacations. It coincided with prosperity measured in automobiles, the 'free love' movement, a new kind of music, and a footloose population of young people. To be a vagabond in the 1970s, then, was to be voluntarily on the move, something very different from the involuntary transience of unemployed hobos and bindlestiffs in the 1930s. Youth mobility and hitchhiking in the '60s and '70s were studied extensively by government agencies and the Canadian Welfare Council. Canadian middle-class values like a work ethic, homeownership, and a sparkling kitchen turned against youth



freedom and increasingly stigmatized hitchhiking. One of the stops along the way to this change in attitudes was Jericho Beach.

As Mahood explains in her book,

Thumbing a Ride: Hitchhiking, Hostelting and Counter Culture in Canada (UBC Press, 2018), many local jurisdictions did not share Ottawa's enthusiasm for youth off in search of Canada or themselves. The military – enlisted and veterans, along with their families on site – were torn between their opposition to the peace-nik hippies and their obligation to follow direction from Ottawa. In 1970, Point Grey residents wanted Jericho cleansed of hostellers but were alarmed that the City of Vancouver's methods might lead to a flare-up of contagious diseases on site. Mayor Tom Campbell's pathological hatred of hippies was in full bloom and contributed to the events that unfolded.

The "Battle of Jericho" on 15 October 1970 attracted a lot of local attention at the time but it was eclipsed in some measure by events in Quebec. Only two days later, Pierre Laporte was murdered by the Front de Liberation de Québec, the grimmest moment in the October Crisis. This was no 'summer of love,' more an 'autumn of anxiety.'

"Spotlight on Vancouver": a call for papers

Guest Editor: John Belshaw, Thompson Rivers University.

The Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine is calling for article proposals for a special issue on the theme "Spotlight on Vancouver," scheduled for publication in the Spring of 2025.

The late historical geographer, Cole Harris, once compared British Columbia's history to the Fraser Canyon. If a century is a kilometre-long piece of string and if you run it along the surface of the prairies, the long ago past disappears from view over the horizon. In the Canyon, the same string dangles off one precipice, crosses to the other and climbs back up: they are both – the metaphorical then and the allegorical now – in close view of one another. The past, in the 'west beyond the west,' is never really out of sight, never truly obscured.

Is this equally true of Vancouver? A settler community built overtop Indigenous communities that continue within

(or within view of) the city, carved from a clearcut, a creature of a railway corporation, home to money-launderers and stock market frauds, a massive sprawl with densely concentrated zones of poverty and preposterous wealth, a place in which 'norms' have always been subverted by gender and race and protest, Vancouver is a metropolis consciously sculpted by central Canadian interests and yet in many ways not very Canadian at all. Its complexity contributes to a historiography that ploughs many different furrows, some of which do not seem to intersect at all.

New approaches to Vancouver's history rise to the challenge of understanding the city and the Lower Mainland. This special issue of the Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine welcomes proposals from any angle, any decade, any part of Greater Vancouver. While the Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine focuses mainly on

historical perspectives, interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged. Proposals from geography, sociology, anthropology, and related fields, as well as those drawing on Indigenous ways of knowing, will also be considered.

Schedule

November 30, 2023: deadline for receipt of article proposals (250–300 words).

January 10, 2024: notification to authors selected for inclusion.

May 15, 2024: deadline for submission of articles ready for peer review (maximum length of 8,000–10,000 words).

Please follow the Review's guidelines available at www.utpjournals.press/journals/uhr/submissions and submit them to John Belshaw, guest editor, jbelshaw@tru.ca; Nicolas Kenny, co-editor, nicolas.kenny@sfu.ca; or Harold Bérubé, co-editor, harold.berube@usherbrooke.ca

MAILBAG

"Mr. Transportation of British Columbia"



A 1930s photo of a PSL coach in front of the Great Northern Railway station, with the station now known as Pacific Central in the background. **UNDATED LEONARD FRANK PHOTO 18621**



We received a package from Suzi Hoadley of Bonney Lake, Washington, about her grandfather Ivor W. Neil, known as "Mr. Transportation" when he was director of B.C. Electric's Pacific Stage Lines bus division, also known as the B.C. Motor Transportation Company.



Born in Wales in 1893, he came to Vancouver in 1912 and started a one-man jitney service between New Westminster and White Rock, with days when "the sheriff was only a jump behind me." He moved to White Rock in 1915 and announced that he would begin a bus service to Vancouver. Due to the war and its depressed aftermath, it took him seven years to get it underway. He persevered and became an essential part of the development of rubber-tired or "free wheeling" transportation, "an important factor in the daily lives of thousands of people" in what "has [since] become a properly regulated and controlled industry," in the words of a press release issued by BC Electric president Dal Grauer at the time of Neil's retirement in 1954.

In 1922, Neil formed the Pacific Stag-

es Transportation Company and began the service into Vancouver. He operated the first bus from Vancouver to Seattle – a 15-passenger Pierce-Arrow coach.

He is the significant figure in the

conversion of the BC Electric's street railways to an "all rubber" system, beginning in 1948 when he became general manager of transportation for the Lower Mainland.

Below: the bus terminal on Dunsmuir between Beatty and Cambie at the time of its opening in 1947. It was built on the northern 5.5 acres of Larwill Park, one of the two significant parks of the early city (Oppenheimer being the other). That site has recently been Temporary Modular Housing, and will soon be an office tower next to the new Vancouver Art Gallery facing Georgia Street. **FROM TALLY HO! MAGAZINE, AUTUMN 1947.**

