



“Diaper Hill” and other heritage gems of the Rupert-Renfrew neighbourhood

Heritage activist and community historian Laura Saimoto will give a lecture and lead a discussion on the Rupert-Renfrew neighbourhood of East Vancouver, a new district boundary that merges part of the Renfrew-Collingwood and Hastings-Sunrise areas. It is a deep dive into the rich layers of an area which reveal a rich history woven by the culture of waves of immigrants who built over the now “Lost Streams of Still Creek.”

From its densely forested beginnings, laced with creeks and marshes, to a working-class suburb called Hastings Townsite, home to the first intentional 600 unit subsidized federal housing projects in Vancouver built for returning veterans, the area tells the largely unknown story of how Vancouver grew as a city.

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The Renfrew Heights subdivision, southwest of the Grandview Highway/Boundary Road intersection, under construction in November, 1948 to provide housing for newly returned servicemen, some of whom had been squatting with their families in the abandoned Hotel Vancouver at Georgia and Granville during the extreme housing shortage that accompanied and followed World War II. It was the first federally subsidized housing project here, and was soon followed by the 1,137 homes in Fraserview, ironically dubbed “the workingman’s Shaughnessy Heights” for its curving streets. History, at least of Vancouver’s housing crises, does repeat itself. **PHOTOGRAPH BY DON COLTMAN, AM1545-53-: CVA 586-12100**



This month’s speaker:
Laura Saimoto



PHOTO: LAURA SAIMOTO

Come join us this month at the beautiful Italian Cultural Centre at 3075 Slocan Street, just east of Nanaimo on the Grandview Highway.

There’s free parking for those in cars; by transit, take the #7 Nanaimo bus from the west side/downtown, or the SkyTrain Millennium Line to the Renfrew Station, either just a 5-minute walk from the Centre.

President's Note

We hope you'll make an evening of it on February 22nd as we visit the Italian Cultural Centre, a beautiful space in East Van. It opened in 1977, three years after a meeting between Premier Dave Barrett, who represented the Vancouver-Hastings riding and the consul general of Italy. Mayor Art Phillips supported the project and helped make available an eight-acre site once apparently used as a city dump.

Come early and explore the centre which includes a restaurant, museum and library. A number of us are intending to gather at about 5 pm for a light dinner before the commencement of the lecture at our usual 7 pm start time. A huge thanks to Vice-President Jan Fialkowski for organizing this event.

Michael Kluckner, president
presidentvhs@gmail.com

Happy Year of the Dragon! February 10th, 2024



Dragon Dance, February 9, 1986. Note Mayor Mike Harcourt on the right watching with the crowd. PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN, VANCOUVER CENTENNIAL COMMISSION FONDS, CVA AM1576-S6-12-F20-: 2011-010.2478

Watch our past lectures on YouTube

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



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440 views · 5 months ago

Upcoming Events

Our lectures always take place on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7 pm and are livestreamed on our YouTube channel.

Thursday March 28, 2024

"Little Otho: The Gleam O'Hope Princess"

Tamara Myers and Megan Davies

The heart-warming story behind the founding of the Vancouver Crippled Children's Hospital.

Sunday, April 7, 2024

Incorporation Day Event at the Vancouver Club

More details to come in the March newsletter: an afternoon gathering in a unique location with the cooperation of the Vancouver Club membership.

Thursday April 25, 2024

You Got Trouble! Policing the Vancouver Waterfront in the Early Twentieth Century

Madison Heslop

Using police records, maps, and newspapers of the era, this talk pictures the life in Vancouver's urban waterfront at the start of the 20th century, and the people and institutions who shaped it.

Thursday May 23, 2024

The Queer Frontier: The untold story of Canada's queer Wild West

Glenn Tkach

Glenn created the Really Gay History Tour in 2018. He has continued his research on the erased history of queer people in the nation's development.

Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2023 - 2024

(ELECTED MAY 23, 2023)

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VHS and SFU History students collaborate on Digital StoryMap

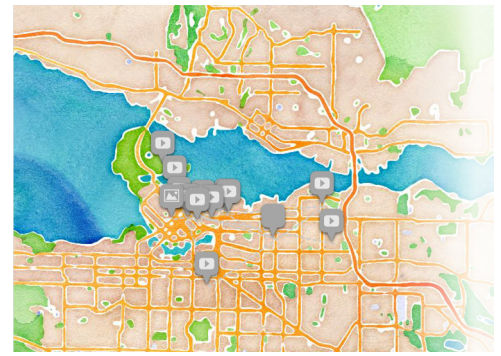
It was a genuine pleasure once again to participate in a collaboration between the Simon Fraser University History Department and the Vancouver Historical Society. For the second time in three years, SFU's History of Vancouver course teamed up with VHS members to work on a project that developed our understanding of the city while also helping students hone their research and presentation skills. The digital map of Vancouver's history the students developed tells interesting and unexpected stories and gives viewers a sense of the passion the students brought to their work.

The History of Vancouver course covers a range of themes, from Indigenous history and the impacts of settler colonialism to the way class, gender, and racial dynamics have and continue to shape urban society, from the city's unique environmental history to the development of a distinct identity embodied in features like modern architecture and global events. Throughout the semester, we consider the myriad ways in which that history shapes our current experience of the city and its region and reflect upon the troubling layers of injustice and inequality that force us to question Vancouver's image of a highly liveable city in an idyllic setting.

Our class met at SFU's downtown campus. Each week after presentations and discussion we ventured out (rain or shine) to explore the city's streets in ways that connect to our course material. In that spirit, students were asked to con-

tribute to a sort of virtual walking tour by each telling a unique story connected to a particular spot on the Vancouver landscape. Students first produced a research paper on a topic of their choice. Then, they drew on that work to create a short video and accompanying text in a way that both told a unique story and allowed them to share the insights developed in their research with a broader audience. Each contribution was uploaded to a StoryMap, which offers a dynamic and diverse set of stories, taking viewers on a tour over distances beyond what could be covered on foot.

The collaboration with the Vancouver Historical Society was invaluable in making this project come together. VHS board member Dr Lindsay Gibson generously shared with students a thought-provoking and insightful presentation on how to articulate and research a historical question, drawing on his own work on school names in Vancouver. We were also treated to a wonderful downtown walking tour with VHS president Michael Kluckner who took us through several nooks and crannies to reflect on fascinating spatial and topographical realities underpinning the city's early development, still visible in the streets today. Both of these activities piqued the students' curiosity, inspiring them in their own research and writing. And of all of this was made possible by VHS board member Jurian ter Horst's diligent coordinating efforts, for which we are most grateful!



The [online map](#) for the students' SFU 486 presentations: this is a hyperlink that will work in the emailed newsletter using Acrobat Reader and other programs.

Our digital map covers a broad range of topics, from the Indigenous presence in Stanley Park to the legend of the Lady in Red at the Hotel Vancouver. We hear about the displacement of the Japanese community and about recent efforts to retell the story of Vancouver's Chinese community. We learn about protests and riots (from the anti-Asian riots to the Stanley Cup riots, from the Take Back the Night marches to the Lesbian community's boycott of Joe's Café) and even about local sports lore, including the Asahi Tigers and Vancouver Canucks. Together, these stories offer a unique take not just on Vancouver's past, but also on the ways in which history shapes our present understandings of the city. We hope you'll enjoy taking the tour!

Nicolas Kenny
Department of History
Simon Fraser University

Don't miss the exhibition of Walter Frost's photographs at the City of Vancouver Archives, opening on the 15th of February and curated by VHS member Floris van Weelderren. This year marks the 40th anniversary of East Van photographer Walter Frost's donation of 13,369 black and white photographic negatives to the Archives. The exhibition focuses on ships exploring traditional Inuit territories in the Arctic, illustrating Vancouver's pivotal role in establishing Canadian presence there in the fur trade, sovereignty, and resource extraction.

HAL | VAS

A LENS ON VANCOUVER'S PAST

Walter Frost's
Arctic Explorers 1920 - 1976

15 February - 30 April 2024

City of Vancouver Archives

www.hal-vas.com

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From Hastings Townsite to Rupert-Renfrew: a community history

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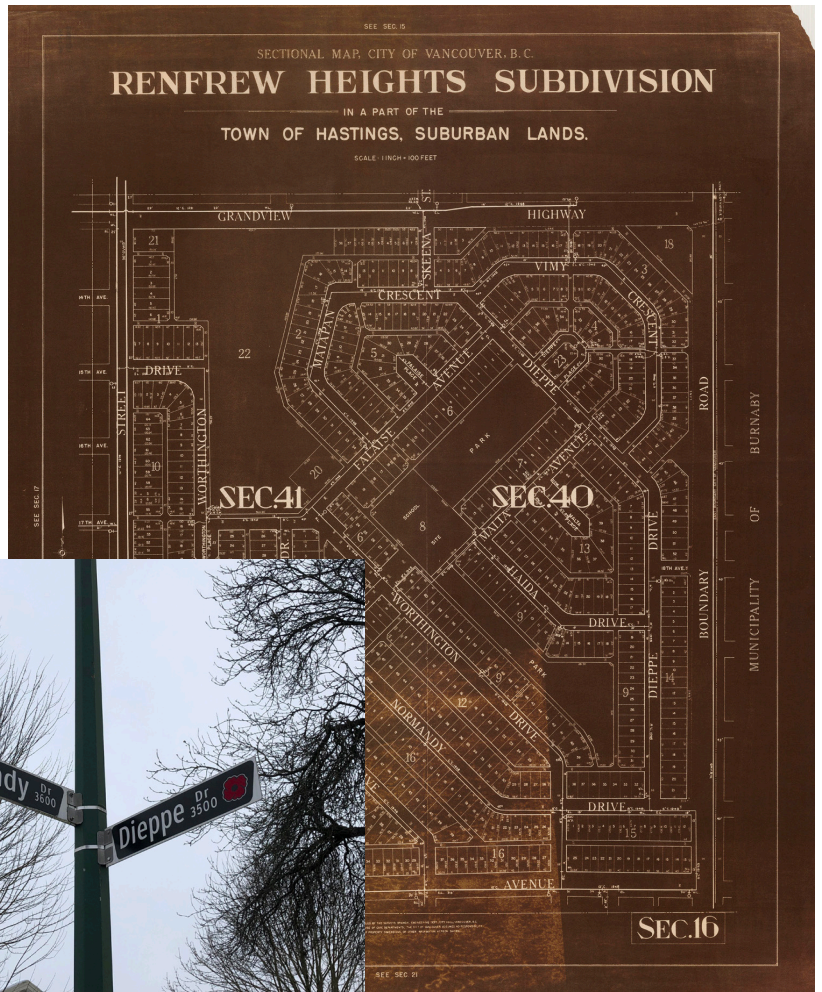
In 1863, seven years after the Indigenous territory on the mainland was declared to be a British colony, a Government Town Reserve was blocked out along the south shore of Burrard Inlet east of a line that became Nanaimo Street – the eastern boundary of the City of Vancouver when it was incorporated in 1886. The Douglas Road connected the colonial capital of New Westminster with Burrard Inlet in 1865, intended to provide a route to Burrard Inlet's sawmills: Pioneer Mills and Moody's Mill on the north shore, and Stamp's Mill on the south shore near what soon became known as Gastown. At the terminus of the Douglas Road, a little community called New Brighton sprang up – today's New Brighton Park.

That Government Town Reserve, usually called Hastings Townsite, included the site of the Pacific National Exhibition, established as East Park in 1889. Its residents voted in a referendum on December 12, 1910, to amalgamate with the City of Vancouver.

One of the interesting properties was "Fighting Joe" Martin's "Hastings Manor" bordered by 5th Avenue, Charles, Clinton (now Penticton St.) and Boundary; the antics of Martin, briefly the BC premier in 1900, paved the way for the stable era of party politics that began a few years later with Richard McBride and the Conservative Party.

The Rupert-Renfrew Neighbourhood, the subject of this month's lecture, is bounded by Graveley Avenue to the north, Boundary Road on the east, East 23rd Avenue on the south, and John Hendry Park a.k.a Trout Lake Park on the west. For most of the first half of the 20th century it was a semi-rural area, gradually becoming a diverse, suburban, largely working-class place after World War II. The history of the Italian community, whose Vancouver roots were in Strathcona, form an interesting part of the neighbourhood's evolution.

At the corner of Normandy and Dieppe – street names established in 1948 in a new subdivision intended to house World War II veterans and families. **MAP FROM CVA; PHOTO BY LAURA SAIMOTO.**



Rural East Vancouver, c. 1930 – the greenhouses of Brown Brothers Nursery at Grandview Highway and Rupert Street, an area now home to a number of big-box retailers. Joseph Brown's retail florist shop was at 48 East Hastings Street. The photograph looks from the hillside that became Renfrew Heights, known as Diaper Hill, a federal government response through the Central Mortgage & Housing Corporation to provide housing for returned servicemen in the 1940s. **PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN, AM431-: CVA 25-22**