



## Field Trips for the Summer Months

By Denise Jacques

### 1 West Vancouver Art Museum

**Wednesday, June 19th**  
**680 17th Street, West Vancouver**

As the museum is small, we will have two shifts of first 12 and then 13 visitors each. The first shift is at 9:15, and the second is at 10:15 AM.

If the weather permits, we should meet the Museum's curator, Hilary Letwin, in the garden. This setting will provide a unique opportunity to discuss the creation of the house. The museum, founded in 1994, is located within the historic Gertrude Lawson house. Gertrude Lawson, a local teacher, acquired the land at 17th Street and Esquimalt Avenue in 1929. Her house, completed in 1939, reflects architectural influences from her travels to Scotland. Remarkably, she was among the first women in British Columbia to hold a mortgage in her own name.

We will visit the current exhibition, "Arthur Erickson: A Refuge." It features photographs taken by Selwyn Pullan, capturing architect Erickson in his home and garden on West 14th Avenue in Point Grey where he lived from 1957 to 1992. He once described it as a "kind of decompression chamber" where he found solace. The garden, which he planted and allowed to evolve naturally became a site for contemplation. The exhibit humanizes Erickson, emphasizing his connection to nature and art. It also highlights the impact of his architectural designs with his long-time partner Geoffrey Massey, including Simon Fraser University and Robson Square.



Two images by Michael Kluckner: above, the Gertrude Lawson House, now the West Vancouver Art Museum, in 1992; and, left, the Arthur Erickson House in Point Grey à la japonaise, in 2010.

One of the Museum's goals is to celebrate innovative West Coast Modernism as experienced in the West Vancouver region. "As BC Binning proved with the 'first modern home in Western Canada' on Mathers Avenue in 1941, West Vancouver was suddenly an accessible and affordable place for architects and creative people to design daring homes, nestled in the dramatic landscape between mountain and the sea."

The Erickson Foundation has been

instrumental in fundraising efforts to renovate the Erickson House and maintain its important garden. Clinton Cuddington, a Board member, may join us for a walk-through of the exhibition.

After Hilary Letwin completes her lecture, we will adjourn to the garden for a brief talk with West Vancouver Archivist Reto Tschan.

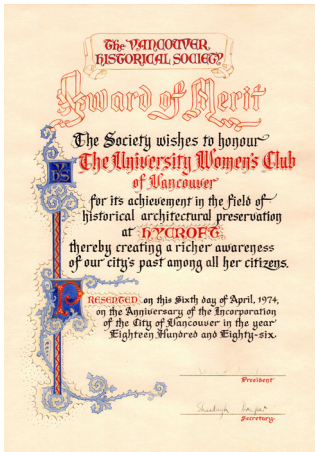
[This Eventbrite ticket](#) will get you a reservation.

**CONTINUED INSIDE**

# President's Message

A couple of very quick notes: we apologize for the delay in delivering the print version of the May newsletter: technical issues delayed its printing. And, you'll notice various underlinings in this (electronic) newsletter; they are hyperlinks, for example the YouTube channel on this page, and the Eventbrite link to tour #1 on page 1.

**Correction from Renée Alexander:** I was shown a copy of your most recent Newsletter and in particular the article about Hycroft, the University Women's Club of Vancouver. You have included a photograph of the Award of Merit to the Women's Club in the article crediting Robert and Irene Alexander for the artwork and calligraphy. My father Robert Samuel Alexander was not a calligrapher and did not work on this award, the work was done entirely by my mother Irene Alexander who was a professional calligrapher. On only a few Freedom Scrolls for the City of Vancouver (I believe only two or three) did my father do the gilding and designing/illustrating of the ornate borders as well as the coat of arms. For this award he definitely did not work on any part of it as he died of cancer in April of 1974 when this award was presented. My father was a career artist, born and raised in Vancouver. He graduated with honours from the Vancouver School of Art and attended the Arts Student League in New York.



# Upcoming Events

Our lectures take place on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7 pm, usually at the Museum of Vancouver, except for June-August and December, and are livestreamed, then are recorded and archived on [our YouTube channel](#).

September 26th, 2024

## White Riot 1907

Speaker: Henry Tsang

The notorious 1907 riot led by members of the Asiatic Exclusion League that sacked Chinatown and tried to invade the Powell Street Japanese area.

October 24th, 2024

## A History of Fire

A program at the Italian Cultural Centre on the uses and impact of fire on Indigenous and contemporary communities.

November 28th, 2024

## Untold Tales of Old British Columbia

Speaker: Daniel Marshall

The bestselling author of the 2018 *Claiming the Land. British Columbia and the Making of a New El Dorado* will speak on his new book.

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## Summer Time is SANDAL Time



No. 54—White veal calf. Sizes 2 1/2 to 8. A to D.....\$2.60

Even before summer is really here well - dressed women will be purchasing their sandals, for no type of footwear is more flattering to the feet. Woods' sandals are selected not only for their beauty but also for their fine fitting qualities, which means almost everything when you consider that a shoe, to look beautiful, must first fit perfectly. As to price, Woods sell quality shoes for less.

FROM THE WOODS LTD. 1935 CATALOGUE, 305 HASTINGS ST. WEST  
SENT TO THE VHS BY MRS. N. RAPIER,

## Watch the Incorporation Day Talk & Other Lectures

Search for "Vancouver Historical Society on YouTube" for our channel or use this [hyperlink](#) in the e-version of the newsletter.



## Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2024 - 2025

(ELECTED MAY 16, 2024)

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**LECTURE SET-UP** Greg Leach

## CONTACT

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# Summer Tours

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

## 2 Walking Tour of Mountain View Cemetery with John Atkin

**Saturday, July 20th, at 10:00 am.**

**Where:** 5455 Fraser St or 33rd and Fraser, just inside the cemetery on the north-west corner.

John Atkin, civic historian and author, will lead the one-and-a-half-hour tour. We will explore the cemetery's historical significance, the art and design of the many monuments, and the cultural diversity within the City of Vancouver's only burial ground. Mountain View is Vancouver's only cemetery. Since its opening in 1886, it has become the "resting place" for nearly 150,000 people. Indigenous burial places such as Deadman's Island in Coal Harbour have long since been repurposed.

The tour is free. Members will receive an Eventbrite invitation closer to the date.

## 3 Tour of the Chinese Canadian Museum

**Wednesday, 7 August, 1:30 pm**

**Where: 51 E Pender St.**

Catherine Clement, curator of the Chinese Canadian Museum's inaugural exhibition, will guide us through the exhibit. We will meet at the reception area.

Before her most recent show, Catherine was best known for her 10-year search to uncover the hidden works of Yucho Chow, Vancouver's first and most prolific Chinese photographer.

The Chinese Canadian Museum is located in the Wing Sang Building, which dates back to 1889 and is the oldest structure in Chinatown. The museum honours Chinese Canadian history, contributions, and heritage. It officially opened its doors in July 2023.

The event is free for VHS members. Members will receive an Eventbrite invitation well before the tour.



A drawing of the northern part of Mountain View Cemetery, indicating the diversity of sites and areas within it. **FROM THE BOOK VANCOUVER REMEMBERED, 2006, PAGE 223**



Merchant Yip Sang and family members in front of the Wing Sang Company Building, 51 East Pender Street, ca. 1911. **PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN CVA 689-54**

# Shearman's Giant Telescope Made in Vancouver Will Be the Largest in World

By A. N. ST. JOHN MILDWAY.

WHEN in the year 1921 the Vancouver harbor commissioners offered Mr. T. S. H.

Shearman a small, but convenient site for the assembling and other operations requisite for the manufacture of the great Frye reflecting telescope, now practically ready for erection at Seattle, they appended the condition, both in the interest of their own adjacent properties and of Mr. Shearman himself, that the general public should be rigorously excluded.

Thus no full description of the great reflector, laid down and completed in Vancouver, and of the labor and vicissitudes which have been encountered in the three and one-half years since its inception in 1911 has hitherto been made public.

Fortunately for the interests of astronomical research the objects of mental study through the telescope are, as the name of that instrument implies, millions of miles away. The mere fact that our Earth is the only snow-bedecked body in the map of the universe which no human eye has ever seen in its entirety is worth recalling, if only to correct the common idea that the one and only object of the celestial telescope is to bring the stars nearer. It can not be too often repeated that the grand object of the makers of astronomical instruments is to make the stars clearer to our vision, not solely and entirely by reducing the

giving an area of about 520 feet. The eighteenth century archbishop who not unnaturally hesitated for a moment when invited by Herschell to creep through his four-foot telescope tube, then lying in the Windsor Great Park, would find no sort of difficulty in carrying a full-sized cruiser, held aloft, through Mr. Shearman's.

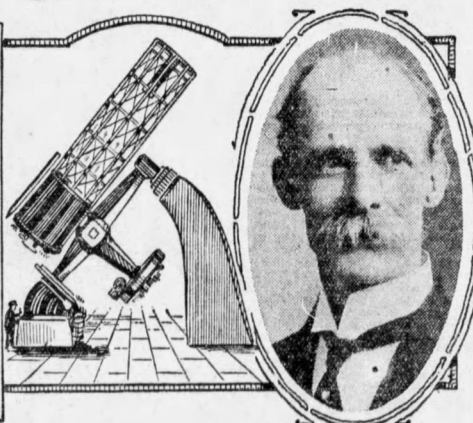
George III, by the way, who deserved so well of astronomy that the planet Neptune narrowly escaped being called "Georgium Sidus" on its discovery about that time, is reported to have given the prelate a lead and the world an epigram on that interesting occasion: "Follow me, your grace," said the portly monarch, cramming himself into the tunnel, "I will show you the way to heaven!"

The blowing of fine glass, or the rolling of plates of prodigious size, with all their attendant risks of flaw or fracture in the course of the various processes, are of course mere child's play to the task of annealing a concave mirror as big round as Hearst's Oak.

Mr. Sherman, after long years of study and experiment, especially in the field of astronomical optics, has demonstrated the possibility. He is to be congratulated on the patience and industry which has enabled him to carry this notable achievement to a triumphant conclusion.



CHARLES H. FRYE.



T. S. H. SHEARMAN.

unnaturally, in those hard times, was perforce abandoned.

Secondly, always with the same end in view, Shearman sank a considerable sum in preliminary experiments, with a view to the establishment, in conjunction with Mr. Mahon of Vancouver, of large glass works at North Vancouver. Sir Richard McBride's refusal of the assistance from government which had been expected put an end to the scheme. It was Mr. Mahon's relative, the Earl of Ross, who built the great Ross' telescope of 1842, which was till the year 1917 the premier telescope in the world.

Thirdly, during a month's holiday on leave at Honolulu, described by Mr. Shearman as the most romantic and interesting experience of his life, he was approached by Hon. Wallace R. Farrington, now governor, then newspaper director of Honolulu, and Mr. L. A. Thurston, a keen amateur of science, in connection with a proposed observatory for Honolulu. The undertaking was far advanced, and Mr. Shearman's commission for the manufacture of the large telescope was practically decided on, when the outbreak of the war of 1914 caused the whole thing to be temporarily laid aside. There is good hope that Mr. Shearman's present second visit to the Hawaiian Islands, from which he will return in January, will result in the maturing of this scheme. Here will be the ideal location for a great instrument, consecrated to science.

It was on a prior visit to Seattle, with the object of reviving the negotiations in 1920, that the University

Artist Gary Sim, who is the creator of the BC Artists Database – about which he spoke to the VHS in 2017 – came upon this story of Thomas S.H. Shearman, an Englishman born in 1859 who became a pioneering astronomer in Vancouver more than a century ago. In this year of eclipses and solar storms, it's appropriate to look back.

An observatory was built at Brockton Point about 1895 by Dr. W.F. King, who established the 141st parallel of West Latitude at Brockton Point in 1900. Five years later, a meteorological station was established with Shearman, the Dominion Astronomer, in charge. Astronomical events of that decade included a failed attempt, due to clouds (a Vancouver problem), of the transit of Halley's comet across the sun on May 19, 1910, a plan to install a time ball that would descend at noon every day, and another plan to erect an observatory on Grouse Mountain.

On July 1, 1913 it was announced that Shearman's residence at 2273 West 6th would be the new Vancouver observatory, with a plan to fire off the daily time signal from there! However, he moved his office to the Post Office building on Hastings later that year.

The first suggestion of "the world's largest telescope," to be built by Shearman at Point Grey, came in an article on March 3, 1914 in the *News Advertiser*. However, a holiday in Hawaii in late 1914 led Shearman to believe it was a better spot for a 10-foot telescope. Plans stalled during the war, and a November 9, 1919 story indicated that "although Vancouver will lose its 10-foot telescope through the apathy of certain of her citizens," a smaller one was to be erected near the corner of Hastings and Burrard. In the early 1920s, news stories of the "largest telescope in world" and Shearman's plans for it at Hastings Park, in Seattle, and elsewhere, popped up occasionally in the newspapers.

The story above, from *The Province* on November 29, 1924, tells of the manufacture of the telescope for its Seattle site. By the following year, Shearman was again in the news



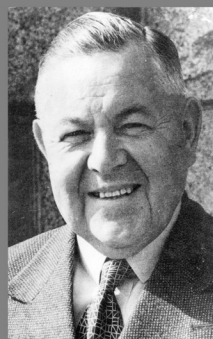
with plans for a Grouse Mountain Observatory. The December 5, 1926 story whose headline is above noted that the city's position on the globe "shifts one yard annually." "For the past two months a temporary wireless and astronomical station at Brockton Point, Vancouver, formed a link in world research ... The station has just been dismantled."

Shearman appears a final time in the *Sun* on December 8, 1928, by then at Santa Clara University where he was "supervising erection of the great 60-inch reflector for the Father Ricard Memorial University."

A later addition to the star-gazing scene is, of course, the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre, popularly known as the Planetarium, which opened in 1968 and shares the Museum of Vancouver building on Kitsilano Point.

To read these stories in full, search in the [BC Historical Newspapers site](#).

-MICHAEL KLUCKNER



## "Not Your Average Joe"

Join us at 12:00 pm on 24 June 2024 at the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club for a light lunch (soup and sandwich - \$35) and a talk by Tim Smith, biographer, on the life of **Joseph William Hobbs** Naval Aviator, 'Marine Building' Developer, Whisky Baron, and Cattle Rancher Register with Jody Doll @ 604.848.9055 or King Wan @ 778.887.0038

J.W. Hobbs 1891-1963  
City of Vancouver Archives CVA 371-64