



## The Vancouver Historical Society Newsletter

Preserving and promoting the history of Vancouver since 1936

Vol. 64 No. 3

November 2024

ISSN 0-823-0161

Thursday November 28th, 7 pm, at the Museum of Vancouver and on YouTube

# Telling the Untold Tales of Old British Columbia

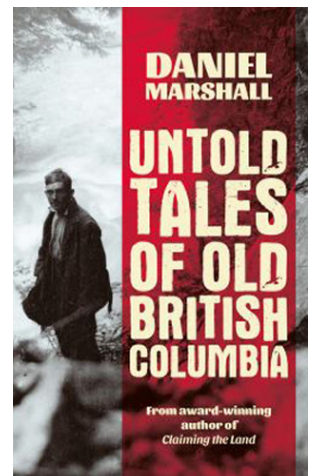
By Lindsay Gibson

It is extremely rare for a book about British Columbia history to be a national best seller, but that is exactly what has happened with historian Daniel Marshall's latest book *Untold Tales of Old British Columbia* (Ronsdale Press, 2024).

As of October 25, Marshall's book has been on the BC Bestseller List for 25 straight weeks, it broke into the top ten of the Toronto Star's bestsellers in Canadian non-fiction in the early summer, and in August it became the first BC history book in almost a quarter century to make it to number one on the BC Bestseller List.

For anyone who has read Marshall's numerous articles or two award-winning books about BC history, the success of his current book will not come as an enormous surprise. A fifth-generation British Columbian whose Cornish ancestors came to what is now British Columbia in 1858 as part of the Fraser River gold rush, Marshall has been researching, writing, and teaching about BC's rich history for over forty years in a variety of roles, including public historian, professor, curator, documentarian, and researcher.

His 1999 book *Those Who Fell from the Sky: A History of the Cowichan Peoples*, received a BC2000 Millennium Award, and *Claiming the Land: British Columbia and the Making of a New El Dorado* (Ronsdale Press, 2018) won the Canadian Historical Association's Clio Prize for British Columbia and the Basil Stuart-Stubbs Prize for Outstanding Book on British Columbia. In addition to these publications, Marshall has also hosted and served as a historical consultant for the award-winning documentary, *Canyon War: The Untold Story*,



(Above) A view of Victoria in the 1860s taken by George Fowler Hastings, showing two of the recurring themes in Daniel Marshall's new book: the developing colonial city with, in the foreground, homes of Indigenous people, in this case the Songhees Nation on traditional Lək̓ʷəŋən territory.

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(Below) Daniel Marshall. Photo credit: Fairburn Photographic

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# Untold Tales...

which aired on PBS, Knowledge Network, and Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN). He also regularly researches Indigenous-settler relations and works with First Nations and the provincial and federal government on land and resource issues through his company, Pacific Reach Consulting Ltd.

*Untold Tales of Old British Columbia* is not a typical historical monograph, which might explain why its been so popular with the general public. Rather than provide a cohesive historical narrative about BC's history, Marshall's book is a compilation of 39 columns he wrote for the online magazine, *The Orca*. Marshall has described the eclectic stories in the book as a "cabinet of curiosities" that focus on significant events and developments in BC history (e.g., treaty-making, the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush, joining Confederation in 1871), but also entertaining and informative human-interest stories about curious artifacts, confounding tales, and extraordinary women. The timeline of the vignettes for "Old British Columbia range from pre-colonial times through the fur trade, Fraser Canyon and Cariboo gold rushes, Confederation and the building of the CPR to the Great War and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic.

Marshall is a master storyteller and the colloquial writing style he utilizes throughout the book makes it feel like you are sitting around a campfire listening to him tell you his favourite stories about how the place we know as British Columbia came to be.

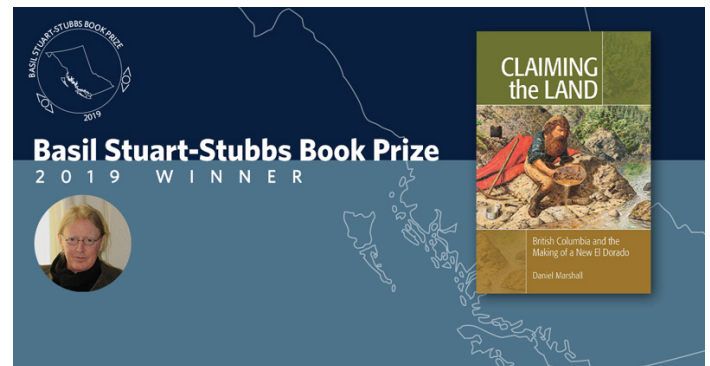
Although the stories included are clearly meant to entertain, Marshall also weaves several throughline arguments throughout the book. He maintains that British Columbia's colonial history was shaped more by the movement of people, trade goods, and ideas along the north-south axis of the Pacific slope (what is now Alaska, British Columbia, Wash-

ington, Oregon, and California) than east-west influences from central and eastern Canada.

Rather than trying to understand BC history by transposing Canadian or American narratives onto it, Marshall believes that BC history can be better understood from a trans-boundary perspective. The 49<sup>th</sup> parallel was merely an abstraction that did not define or control the Indigenous people or gold rush communities who regularly moved back and forth across the border. Prior to the 1858 gold rush, British Columbia featured a sizeable Indigenous population that far outnumbered settlers until the arrival of "the third largest mass of gold seekers in human history" turned BC into a multicultural place.

I am unsure whether the stories that Daniel Marshall includes in his book are actually untold or are just unknown to the majority of people in British Columbia? What is clear however, is that these stories have resonated with a public that is clamouring for a deeper understanding of "Old British Columbia" and how it continues to shape the present and future of the province.

Please join us on Thursday November 28, 2024 to hear Daniel Marshall share some of the "Untold Tales of Old British Columbia."



Marshall's previous book, *Claiming the Land*, won the 2019 prize for best academic book published in BC.

## Our new Administrative Assistant

Carlin Sandor, here with her baby daughter Ava, has been engaged on a part-time contract to help the board manage the increasingly complex tech world of membership software and communication.

Her experience includes roles with the federal government and in the private sector, including in event-management in the hospitality industry.

She lives in the Grandview neighbourhood of Vancouver. Welcome to her!







# November 11th at the Armoury

By Denise Jacques

On November 11, 2024, the Seaforth Highlander Armoury will host a solemn remembrance ceremony to honour the sacrifices made by Canadian servicemen and women throughout history. This annual event, held on Remembrance Day, will feature the laying of wreaths, a moment of silence, and the playing of “The Last Post”. Community members, veterans, and active military personnel are encouraged to attend this stirring tribute. The Seaforth Highlanders, one of Canada’s oldest infantry regiments, will play a prominent role in the event.

The Seaforths have been hosting this service for several years. Initially, the regiment decided to hold the ceremony within the armoury to accommodate more elderly veterans. As public attendance has soured, the regiment plans on hosting up to one thousand people on November 11.

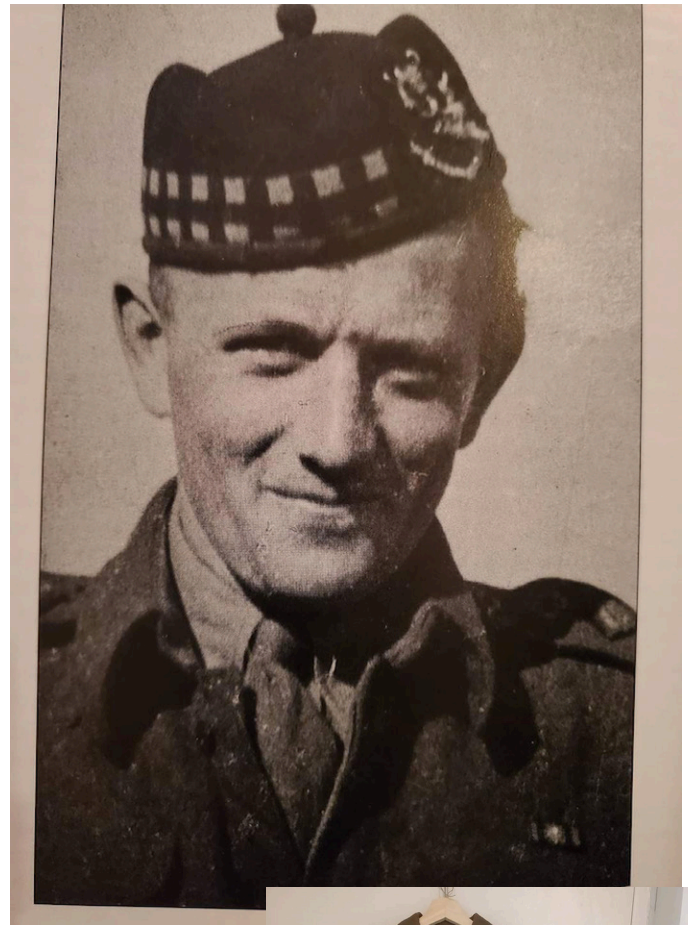
Last year I wrote two articles in anticipation of Remembrance Day. This year I visited the archives at the Seaforth Armoury to see what the Regimental Museum and Archives holds. In other words, I was snooping to see what stories this particular archive could tell.

Among the records included were photographs, personal letters, diaries, and official documents from the regiment’s formation in 1886 to the current day. These materials narrate experiences during both World Wars, peacekeeping missions, and other military operations. As curator and archivist James Calhoun observed, and contrary to public perception, today’s veteran may be thirty years old.

In addition to the archives, the museum features several exhibits that may also focus on significant battles, notable figures in the regiment’s history, and the contributions of Indigenous soldiers. There are references within exhibits to such diverse and unexpected Seaforths, as Marxist Councilman Harry Rankin, architect Arthur Erickson, and artist E.J. Hughes. The archives have matured from simply preserving the regiment’s story to also safeguarding military history in Vancouver in general.

As a material historian, I gravitate to things and their inherent stories. I was impressed that the Regimental Museum has over 400 uniforms. The archivist explained that he was in the process of acquiring the World War Two uniform of a notable Seaforth Basil Robinson. Mr. Robinson (as I can not think of him by any other name) was a senior Ottawa mandarin, and known to my husband’s family for decades.

In the social turbulence of recent years lives devoted to a greater good are commonly undervalued, misunderstood or suspect. Tracing Basil Robinson’s history is to consider



Basil Robinson, Seaforth Highlander, and one of the uniforms in the Seaforth Armoury’s collection.



another era when individualism and career had less appeal than duty, self-sacrifice, and patriotism. In any arena Mr. Robinson was a star: Rhodes scholar, magnificent athlete, Seaforth, decorated intelligence officer and very senior public servant. Very simply, he gave a lifetime of service. Now the Seaforths have the tunic and the kilt, they hope to locate Mr. Robinson’s service metals for their collection.



# Charles Henry Rawson 1870-1948

In 2021 the VHS received a package of drawings and watercolours by Charles Henry Rawson from his descendant James Wilson of Santa Barbara, California. It included a list of his landscape sketches, although many of the originals had been removed, presumably by relatives. We attempted to place the balance of them with public collections here but were unsuccessful; they have since found homes with private collectors.

Gary Sim's invaluable [British Columbia Artists Database](#) notes that Rawson advertised himself in the Henderson's Directory as early as 1907 as an artist. He exhibited at the Vancouver Exhibition in 1930 and 1932, representing the Vancouver Sketch Club, and in the B.C. Artists annual exhibitions, from the inaugural 1932 exhibition to 1943. He was one of the "rejectees" from the 14th Annual B.C. Artists exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery who had their rejected work hung in protest at the Galloway-Dorbil Gallery on Granville Street.

He was employed as a Customs House Clerk. He was born in Stayner, Ontario. He married Florence May Ellis in Vancouver on March 25, 1905; she was born in Wales.

Rawson joined the Canadian Army at the beginning of World War One, taking his oath of attestation on September 26, 1914 at the age of "44 years 4 months." His "trade or calling" was listed as carpenter. He belonged to the "active militia" referred to as "6th F. Co. C.E." and stated that he had previously served with the North West Mounted Police and the "6th C.M.R."

His ranks were Lance Corporal and Private. He went overseas in February 1915 with the 3rd Field Company, Divisional Engineers. He received a "G.S.W." (gun shot wound) to the stomach at Festubert on May 18, while "going to put up barbed wire entanglements was hit by piece of shell in right side of abdomen, causing wound 5 cm deep (X-ray photograph). There was pain and vomiting (probably from shock) for six days."

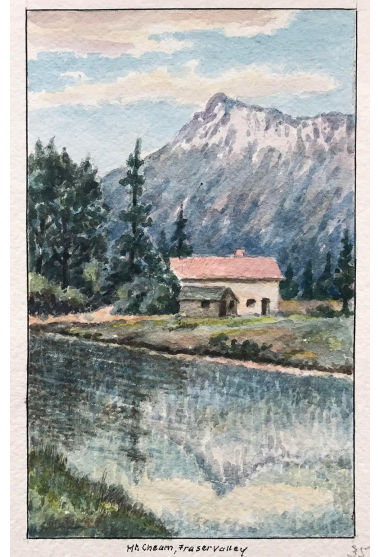
He was evacuated by the No. 5 London Field Ambulance to Casualty Clearing Station, Chocarres (Chocques). After several more hospital transfers, he was deemed "no

longer physically fit for war service" and was sent home. He left for Canada on December 31, 1915, arrived at a discharge depot in Quebec in early January 1916, and by January 19 he was in Esquimalt. He was left with some shrapnel in his body that was reviewed by a military medical board in 1916. For his "minor" inability to work he was granted a pension of \$75 for 6 months.

He died in Vancouver in 1948 at the age of 77, according to B.C. Vital Statistics on-line. At the time of his death he had lived in B.C. for 48 years. He retired in 1935 after working as "artist + draughtsman 26 yrs, Customs 19 years." He was married to (Florence) May Ellis at the time of his death, and the couple was living at 7895 French Street.



**RAWSON CHARLES H.,  
COMMERCIAL ARTIST  
PUBLISHER OF POCKET MAPS  
Rm. 8, 619 HASTINGS W. PHONE 6435  
Res. James Cor. Westminster Road**



Rawson's watercolour sketch of Mount Cheam in the eastern Fraser Valley.





Three Stanley Park watercolour sketches by Charles Henry Rawson. The one above, of Prospect Point, is dated 1924.



There will be no December newsletter or lecture. The January newsletter with details of 2025 programs will be published soon after the New Year.

### Welcome New Members

Glenn Tkach    Kris Papa    Grant Lovelock  
Rosemary Malaher    Rob Cameron

Renew your membership online at  
[www.vancouver-historical-society.ca](http://www.vancouver-historical-society.ca)

### Watch videos of our past lectures on our YouTube Channel



### Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2024 - 2025

(ELECTED MAY 16, 2024)

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