



## The Vancouver Historical Society Newsletter

Preserving and promoting the history of Vancouver since 1936

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Thursday September 26th, 7 pm, at the Museum of Vancouver and on YouTube

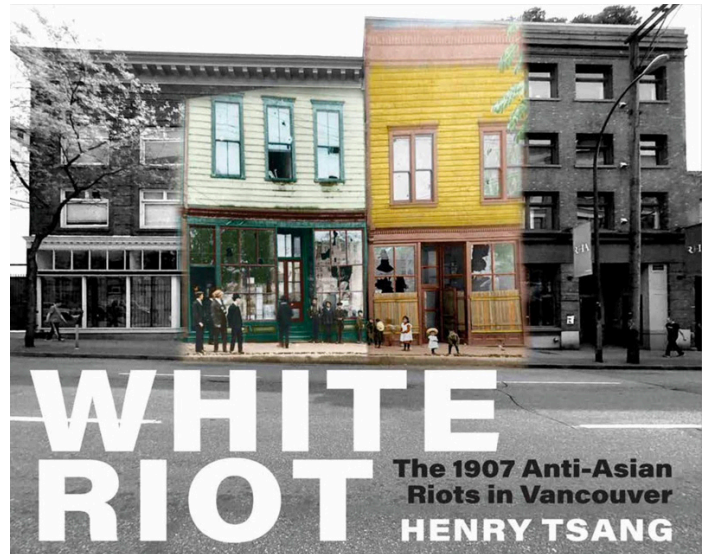
# White Riot: The 1907 Anti-Asian Riots in Vancouver

There is something chillingly familiar about the 1907 race riots up and down the coast of North America. That year, critics of immigration generally, but from Asia in particular, became more vocal especially as the economy slowed. Local white-owned newspapers fed into the anti-immigration narrative, as did whites-only labour organizations, non-Asian businesses and employers, and populist politicians. Riots in Bellingham that targeted arrivals from India fanned the fires of white xenophobia in Vancouver. In September, the Asiatic Exclusion League organized a protest march through Chinatown that quickly degenerated into a riot.

To call this a dark moment in Vancouver's history is to miss the point: it is more of a dark smudge that stretches across decades. The build-up to the assault on Chinatown – and thereafter on the Japanese community on Powell Street – can be traced back to an earlier anti-Chinese riot in February 1887, the application by Ottawa of a 'head tax' to deter further arrivals, and decades of anti-Asian posturing by the early trade unions. After the riots, Ottawa experimented with further deterrents to immigration from Asia, culminating in the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act (aka "Chinese Exclusion Act") and, a generation later, the internment of Japanese Canadians during WWII.

In other words, the 1907 riot was a distinctive event in a longer history of spontaneous violent and systemic, cold-blooded racism.

Henry Tsang takes a novel approach to the 7 September 1907 rioting. His research shows how the parade, demonstration, and in particular the hysterical and incendiary speeches at City Hall, incited a mob to attack the Chinese in nearby Chinatown. He shows the character of the Chinese and Japanese communities that were under siege and the terrorism at the heart of the Asiatic Exclusion League. His book, *WHITE RIOT: The 1907 Anti-Asian Riots in Vancouver*, however, does much more than recount incidents: it unpacks the simple-minded dichotomies of September 1907 – an 'us-vs-them' challenge taken up by the racist mob – as a complex social and political phenomenon.



### Our Last Printed Newsletter

This will be the last printed and mailed newsletter of the Vancouver Historical Society.

All members will continue to receive a newsletter by email, nine times a year (this being the first in an evolving design), that can be downloaded as a pdf file and read on a computer using a program such as Acrobat Reader or Microsoft Edge, or printed on standard letter paper. As with this one, it will be in colour and contain underlined links to sources and websites such as those we have featured in recent emailed newsletters.

The VHS Board decided it is time to make this move, as one of our largest expenses during the year is printing and mailing, and our membership rates do not cover those costs. The idea of doubling the rates for people wanting a printed newsletter did not make sense.

We will be implementing further administrative changes to try to streamline membership functions, moving us more firmly into the 21st century, as it were.

–Michael Kluckner, President

## White Riot (continued)

On September 26, 2024 – just three weeks after the 117<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the riots – Henry Tsang will present his highly visual take on this pivotal time in the city’s history. *White Riot* received acclaim when it was published in 2023, winning the Dr. Edgar Wickberg Book Prize in 2024, and is shortlisted for a BC & Yukon Book Prize as well as the City of Vancouver Book Award.

Henry Tsang is an Associate Professor at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Come out to the Museum of Vancouver and enjoy a rare opportunity to hear him speak on a topic that illuminates the past and also contemporary issues in race, inclusion, and reconciliation. He will have copies of his book for sale by cash or credit card.

—*John Belshaw*

Henry Tsang, photo by Emi Morita



Photograph from c. 1907 shows the Gim Lee Yuen store at 32 Dupont Street and other businesses. Dupont was renamed East Pender Street in 1907. Donated by Linda Wills, Agent for Fort Steele Heritage Museum in 2009. City of Vancouver Archives AM1376-: CVA 1376-506

# Looking back, looking ahead



At our final field trip of the summer, on August 7th at the Chinese Canadian Museum, curator **Catherine Clement** spoke on “The Paper Trail” of government documents surviving from the decades of discrimination against Chinese people in Canada. The photo is by Elwin Xie, an interpreter at the museum, who also spoke on the Chinese experience in Vancouver. VHS director **Denise Jacques** organized the three summer field trips: one in July with historian **John Atkin** conducting a group of about 30 people through part of Mountainview Cemetery, and a June trip to West Vancouver Museum.

A talk by Catherine Clement on YouTube.



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Our longtime membership coordinator **Mary Wallace Poole**, who took on the role in 2016, has retired from the position. She joined the VHS in 2015 after attending an Incorporation Day luncheon featuring a hilarious fashion show by Ivan Sayers of the Society for the Museum of Costume, and soon after took over the tasks of managing our membership. An aging computer, a problem many of us are dealing with, prompted the change. Thanks, Mary!



Here is an upcoming special event of the [Friends of the City of Vancouver Archives](#). Tickets are on [Eventbrite](#).

## Pantages Theatre

VANCOUVER, B. C.

**CONVERSATIONS & CURIOS**

Friends of the  
Vancouver City Archives  
Presents:

**John Atkin  
& Tom Carter**

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The Historical 1907  
Pantages Theatre

**A talk and  
artifact sale**

**Wednesday  
October 17**

Doors 6:00pm  
➔ Talk 7:00pm ➔  
Sale 8-9pm

**TICKETS: \$20.00**  
Available on EventBrite

Each ticket includes  
one drink

Join John Atkin and Tom Carter as they delve into the rich history of the Pantages Theatre, renowned for its significant vaudeville legacy. Attendees will also have the opportunity to acquire unique pieces of history. John and Tom are offering various ornamental plaster fragments salvaged from the historic building before its demolition.

100% of the sale will support the ongoing work of the Friends of the City of Vancouver Archives.

Adapted from: UND673

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In the autumn of 2023, VHS was contacted by a local family with a cache of Great War letters. We were asked how best to preserve the letters and make them accessible. With the help of the UBC iSchool, the correspondence was digitized and a timeline was created. Using the correspondence as a reference point, we traced the unfolding story of two brothers, **Peter and Jack Dueck** who fought for Canada during the Great War. Drawing on attestation files and census records, we examined the interplay between individual stories and the war that shaped Canada as a nation.

We are happy to report that the Dueck letters will be preserved by the Canadian Letters and Images Project. The Project is located in the Department of History at Vancouver Island University and is a superb online archive that relates the Canadian war experience, through letters and images. The intention is to ensure that such personal stories are not forgotten and that individual struggles and sacrifices are remembered.

The Society for the Museum of Costume is hosting a Grand Bazaar, Saturday, September 14, 2024 from 9:00 AM 3:00 PM at Van Dusen Garden.



People familiar with Kerrisdale in recent years will recall the **JB Hoy** produce store on West 41st and its proprietor, **Girlie Hoy**. Her niece, **Elsie Jang**, let us know about this YouTube video on the family and the store.

## Upcoming VHS Events

**October 24, 2024 7 pm at the Italian Cultural Centre**

Only you can present forest fires. (Sorry, Smokey.)

The VHS is pleased to partner with the Italian Cultural Centre on an exhibition and a pair of lectures related to wildfires. **Liz Toohey-Weise** takes a stunning artistic approach in “Fire Season: Collective sense-making on the topic of wildfires”. Forest scientist **Jen Baron** takes a different direction with “Burning History: Uncovering the Role of Fire in British Columbia’s Ecosystems.”

**November 28, 2024 at the Museum of Vancouver**  
**Untold Tales of Old British Columbia**

By Daniel Marshall, the author of the bestselling 2018 *Claiming the Land: British Columbia and the Making of a New El Dorado*, will speak on his new book.



Coast Publishing Company c. 1958, photographer unknown

### Welcome New Members

Antonio Di Giovanni	Norma Anne Stacey
Kathryn Dugas	Scott Watts
Lynn Guy	Susan Webber
Cathy Lightfoot	Ann Wiseman
Mary MacGregor	

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

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

(ELECTED MAY 16, 2024)

**PRESIDENT** Michael Kluckner  
**VICE PRESIDENT** Jan Fialkowski  
**TREASURER** Tom Carter  
**RECORDING SECRETARY** Anne Wyness  
**DIRECTOR (PROGRAMS)** John Belshaw  
**DIRECTOR (COMMUNICATIONS)** Robert Sanzalone  
**DIRECTOR (FIELD TRIPS)** Denise Jacques  
**DIRECTOR (YOUTH OUTREACH)** Jurian ter Horst  
**DIRECTOR (EDUCATION)** Lindsay Gibson

### Appointed Positions

**VIDEOGRAPHY** Elwin Xie  
**NEWSLETTER MAILING** Michael O’Hagan  
**LECTURE SET-UP** Greg Leach  
**NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION** Michael Kluckner

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

