



“The People of the Post”: Back in the Day in Gay Vancouver



This month's speaker:
Lindsay Gibson

The Orillia apartment building at Robson and Seymour as it was in 1968 when it hosted Twiggy's Discotheque. An early generation knew it for Sid Beech's Vancouver Tamale Parlour on Robson. In the '70s, the side door (by then unmarked) opened onto Faces nightclub, a hangout of the gay community. The building was demolished in 1985.

PHOTOGRAPH BY WALTER E. FROST, AM1506-S1-; CVA 447-353

by Kevin Dale McKeown

Born in South Vancouver in 1950, I spent my years from age 10 to 16 in a variety of small upcoast communities due to my father's work for BC Tel. By the time I was nine I was aware that I was not exactly as other boys were, but didn't have the vocabulary to express myself. I sort of came out in Port Hardy at age 15 when I confided to a small group of other misfits that I thought I might be bisexual. I suspect that was a common exploratory halfway house for boys my age in those days.

By the age of 18, with high school disappearing in the rear-view mirror, I knew exactly what I was, but still wasn't sure what to do about it. Then my favour-

ite aunt unwittingly pointed me towards the rest of my life. Aunt Gladys lived in Kitsilano and I was visiting her one afternoon when she handed me a copy of a newspaper. "You might find this interesting" she said. "The hippies are selling it on the street corners." It was, as I'm sure you've guessed, an early issue of the *Georgia Straight*. The doors of perception burst wide open!

I had discovered the power of the press back in Port Hardy when a friend who had been writing the "Teen Talk" column for the local paper took off for college and suggested that I take over her column. "You always have an opinion about everything" she explained. "That's

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Incorporation Day Social Event! UBC Golf Club, April 2nd, 2-4 pm

Members are invited to a wine and snacks party,
our first social gathering since 2019.

There will be no formal program, although we
hope to present our Award of Merit.

Register in advance at
vanhistoricalsociety@gmail.com
No drop-ins, please!

Due to the generosity of our past members, there
will be no charge for this event, although we will
have the donation jar in a prominent place!

Become a transcriber of City Council minutes!

Transcribimus is a group of volunteers who have been transcribing the original Vancouver City Council minutes from 1886 onward, in order to have the results searchable online.

<https://transcribimus.ca>.

They've also donated their transcripts to the Archives for inclusion into the permanent record. They've completed and indexed all the minutes 1886 through 1897 and are currently working to the end of 1900. The minutes remain handwritten until the middle of 1911, and that is the current goal.

Members meet by Zoom twice a month to exchange techniques and historical finds. No special skill is required beyond the ability to read cursive handwriting and type in what you see. We welcome new transcribers to help us uncover Vancouver history.

—Margaret Sutherland (604) 833-8847

New MoV video on James Inglis Reid Ltd.

The story of James Inglis Reid Ltd., which opened in 1908, is a story of community, family and perseverance. The business closed in 1986 to make way for the Pacific Centre mall, but its story lives on at Museum of Vancouver with one of its large glass windows forming part of the business display in the 1950's gallery and in a new video accessible from the MoV's website.

Reid's granddaughter Anne Wyness spoke to the VHS in 2021, but unfortunately we weren't able to record and post video on our YouTube channel due to copyright concerns, so please watch this newly released video at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1nSs94IVSo>

The Larder of the Wise, her book, traces the detailed history of this family business as Vancouver grew, as well as its achievements, adaptations and more.

Upcoming Events

Our lectures take place at the Museum of Vancouver. For those not wishing to attend in person, the lectures will be broadcast live on the Vancouver Historical Society's YouTube channel, subject to technical difficulties.

April 27, 2023

Tom Carter

Collecting and Painting Vancouver's History

Artist (and VHS Treasurer) Tom Carter creates stunning large-scale paintings of Vancouver set mainly in the 1940s and '50s, and is an avid collector and authority on the city's entertainment history. He will speak on some of his wonderful "finds" as well as his search for authenticity as he crafts his paintings, many of which are bird's-eye views of the city a lifetime ago.

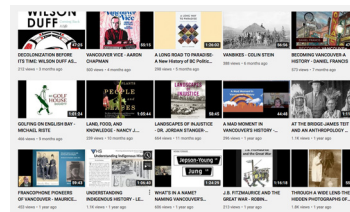
May 25, 2023

TBA

Spring-Summer Field Trip, date TBA

An Event With the City of Vancouver Archives

We are working on an event to take place at the Archives, together with the Friends of the Archives.



Don't miss a lecture!

Visit our archive online: search "Vancouver Historical Society on YouTube" to find our lectures going back to 2016

Elwin Xie, videographer

Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board:

2022 - 2023

(ELECTED MAY 24, 2022)

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NEWSLETTER TEMPLATE/LAYOUT	Kellan Higgins/MK

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a good start”.

So it came to pass, thanks to Aunt Gladys, that I noticed an ad in the back pages of the *Straight* by a night club looking for male go-go-dancers. Well, I thought, if they want male dancers, it must be a gay club. And so I discovered Faces, a private bottle club at the corner of Robson and Seymour, and a month or so before my 20th birthday I found myself in the Gastown offices of the *Georgia Straight* telling Dan McLeod and his cast of characters that they needed a gay column, and I was ready to go.

“Are you gay?” Dan asked? I figured that should be obvious from the purple puff-sleeved pirate shirt I was wearing, and answered in the affirmative. “Do you know the gay scene?” I lied through my teeth and said I did. In truth, I’d been to one club, Faces, and was about to venture down to Champaign Charlie’s to see my first drag show.

“Okay. Have your first column in by next Monday morning.”

And so it began.

The gay scene in 1970 was largely concentrated along Seymour and Richards Streets, from Davie to Robson. There were, in 1970, more than twice as many pubs, clubs, and tubs serving the growing gay scene that there are today. Many of them were bottle clubs like Faces, where you bought a membership for a dollar, paid a similarly nominal entry fee, and handed your bottle to the bartender who’d mark your name on it and put it on the shelf with all the others. You’d buy rather expensive mixer, pour a shot from your bottle, and the party was on.

Everyone has their decade, and everyone has a different measure for their decade, and for some of us the 1970s was the longest decade. It began in clouds of incense and innocence in 1967 at San Francisco’s Human Be-In, which inspired Vancouver’s first Easter Be-In later that year and segued to Haight Ashbury’s Summer of Love and Vancouver’s Kitsilano flower power. It came to a crashing finale in July of 1982 when the acronym AIDS was coined.



Kevin Dale McKeown in 1972 at an Oktoberfest party at the Taurus Baths, and (below) a 1974 membership card for Faces nightclub.



In Vancouver’s ‘70s the club scene was booming. Faces, Champagne Charlie’s and the August Club were quickly joined by the B&B (Betwixt and Between), BJ’s, The Corral, the Music Room, and

too many others to list here. When the bars and clubs closed and sent their revelers home for the night, many of us joined others of the demimonde at 24-hour dives like the Granville Street White Lunch or the Chick & Bull (today’s Two Parrots) to compare notes about the assorted scandals of the preceding evening.

It was my job, at \$20 a week to write it all down for my *Georgia Straight* column, “*QQ Writes ... Page 69*”.

The drag shows, the Gay Liberation Front meetings, the boycotts, the late nights at the after-hours booze cans and assorted steam rooms, and the early mornings at the White Lunch.

On March 23 I will share stories of the legendary Castle Pub Kiss-In, the insider tips club owners would get about upcoming police visits, the rivalries between the several political action groups, the police raid at the August, the protests that prompted the opening up of men-only clubs to lesbians, the pimping and drug-dealing that were inevitable parts of any nightlife scene, and the community’s coming together in the face of a devastating plague.

The People of the Post is an odd-seeming name for a memoir about that crowd in those days, but it was bestowed upon us by an habitue of the Granville Street White Lunch one late night/early morning, and it made a lot of sense. You’ll have to attend the talk on March 23 to find out why.

Happy 90th Birthday, City of Vancouver Archives!

The City Archives will be celebrating its 90th anniversary this year, on June 12. That’s the day Council appointed Major Matthews City Archivist in 1933.

They’re keeping things a bit low key, not making as big a splash as they did for the 75th, in part to keep the demands on staff time manageable. The main thing will be a social media campaign – 90 social media posts, one each day starting in mid-March and counting down to June 12th.

Where would we be, in a city that seems determined not to have a memory, if it wasn’t for the Archives and its helpful

90 Days
90 Posts
90th Anniversary

Follow the City of Vancouver Archives on
Facebook, Instagram and Twitter Mar 15-Jun 12

   #VanArchives90th



staff? The accessibility of archival material, especially many of the photographs that we use in this newsletter, is an asset to anyone trying to write about or publicize the city’s history – and it doesn’t have the paywall that discourages many authors.

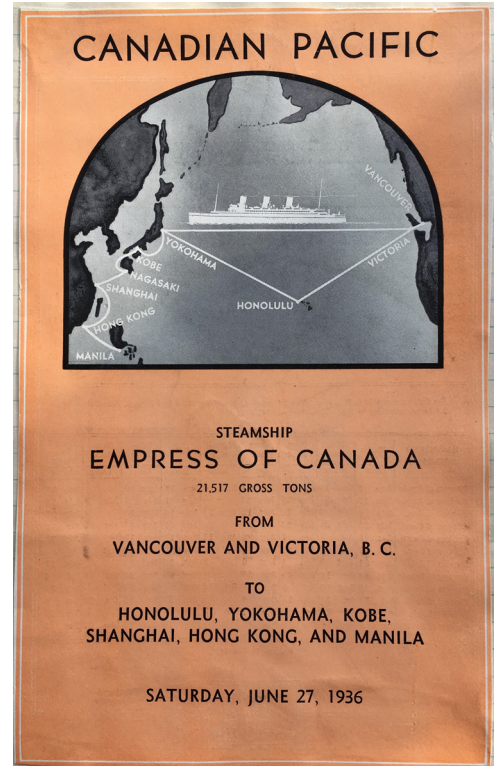
MAILBAG



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The Trip of a Lifetime, 1936

In the mail, unsolicited, came a large ring-bound scrapbook from Robert and Susan Beer of Kitchener, Ontario, detailing the trip made by "Miss Helen Burnet" of Vancouver to the Far East on a tour conducted by the Rev. Dr. W.J. Sipprell of Victoria, on the CPR's *Empress of Canada*. Not surprisingly, it's something from another era. The first several pages are "bon voyage" cards from friends, followed by photos of her companions, all but one of whom was a woman; then follows a page of travel gifts she received, and a list of the 56 "friends to see us off." Menus and postcards follow, intermixed with photos of the ship's orchestra, her fellow passengers and the sites they saw, and planned events, plus a copy of the *Pacific Empress* ("a newspaper printed and published daily aboard Canadian Pacific Steamships"). She cut and pasted other tourist material, and printed out lengthy explanations. Five years later, Canada was at war with Japan.



On the right, the menu cover for Dominion Day. The feast included Okanagan Fruit Cocktail, Roast Alberta Turkey, Carrots Francaise, Laurier Creme Victoria, and Dominion Pastries.

