

HERITAGE

Vancouver

Newsletter

Vancouver's

trolleybuses



One of the more distinctive characteristics of Vancouver's urban fabric is the electric trolleybus system that criss-crosses the City. While such systems once operated in many North American cities, the Vancouver system along with Edmonton are now the only two remaining in Canada with another five operating in the United States.

The BC Electric Railway Company (BCER) inaugurated trolleybus service on the Fraser-Cambie line, on August 16, 1948. The original fleet was designed by the Brill company of Philadelphia and manufactured by Canadian Car and Foundry. Lines were added rapidly as trolley coaches replaced streetcars and by the end of 1949, 168 trolleybuses were in operation in Vancouver. The *Rails to Rubber* programme was accelerated by the 1948 decision that the new Granville Bridge would accommodate rubber-tired vehicles only. The conversion programme was complete in June 1955 when the Hastings East trolley coach line opened, replacing Vancouver's last streetcar line, which had ceased operation in April.

The system expanded over time and peaked at 352 vehicles in the mid-1950's. As the 1960's drew to a close, the #10 Tenth route was converted to diesel operation and plans were developed to abandon the remaining trolley routes. The first oil crisis in the early 1970's, and increasing environmental



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UPCOMING EVENTS



Robin Ward

Gastown

Wednesday, April 19, 2000 8 PM

Gastown—Is there room for development?

Vancouver's first historic district has been stagnant for years and there are calls for new rules to allow the area to reinvent itself. What could this mean to the Gastown we know? Join members of the Planning Department, the Gastown Historic Area Planning Committee and the Gastown Business Improvement Society for a moderated panel discussion to discuss the impact of current initiatives.

Walking Tour: Sunday April 23rd. Heritage Vancouver presents a walking tour with heritage consultant and author Don Luxton. Call 254 9411 for info and reservations.

SEATTLE LECTURES

April 12 *Researching Your Old House*
Jodee Fenton, coordinator for the Fine and Performing Arts at the Seattle Public Library, and local history expert Greg Lange follows the history of a local property and explains the sources of information available to the would-be house detective. 7 - 9 PM, Rainier Valley Cultural Centre 3515 S. Alaska Street, Columbia City. US\$10.

April 15 *CFA Voysey and Arts & Crafts Gardens*
British architectural historian, lecturer, and author Wendy Hitchmough will present two lectures. In *CFA Voysey & the Morality of Architecture*, Hitchmough looks at the architect/client relationship in the design of a particular house in 1906 England. In *Arts & Crafts Garden*, she describes the emergence of a distinctive style using the wonderful example of William Morris's Red House in Kent. She shows the architectural innovations in garden structures by Lutyens, Lorimer, Voysey, and Barnsleys. 1- 4 PM, Main Auditorium, Seattle Art Museum, 1st Ave. and University St., US\$20.

April 19 *Old and New Materials for Your Old House*
Local dealers in salvaged and refurbished plumbing, lighting, and woodwork will join dealers of newly manufactured and reproduction materials. They will describe their businesses and discuss commonly asked questions about quality, appropriateness to the job, prices and value. 7 - 9 PM, Rainier Valley Cultural Centre 3515 S. Alaska Street, Columbia City. US\$10. www.historicseattle.org. 1-206-622-6952

Vancouver Modern



PHOTO: R. MOFFAT

Beach Towers

Modernist utopia on English Bay

by *Robert Moffat*

Beach Towers
1600 block Beach Avenue, Vancouver
Charles Van Norman 1962-65, 1968

Rising out of a landscaped podium, Beach Towers capitalizes on a magnificent site offering unobstructed views from False Creek to Stanley Park and beyond. Architect Van Norman based his design on Le Corbusier's utopian urban-planning theories, setting the three cylindrical-shaped towers (a fourth was added later) in splendid isolation amid lush green space.

Exteriors are a blend of architectural purism and mass-glamour appeal. Rough corduroy-patterned concrete, in the style of the avant-garde American architect Paul Rudolf, was mixed with smooth buff-coloured travertine walls, sheets of plate glass, and the luxe touch of gold-anodized window trim. Sculptural fountains by artist Lionel Thomas enliven the view terraces, and

residents can enjoy a private health spa complete with an indoor swimming pool, whirlpools, and saunas. "*The ultimate in luxury living in a holiday resort atmosphere*", burbled the original promotional brochure, and some thirty-five years later the complex still has an engaging early-60s Miami Beach feel.

The Beach Towers are also notable as Vancouver's first apartment towers with sizable balconies. Vancouver's existing building requirements effectively curtailed balconies by including them in the maximum allowable floor space; believing people living on such a spectacular site deserved to enjoy it fully, Van Norman successfully lobbied City Hall to have the regulations changed. His groundbreaking design helped the project win a Canadian Housing Design Council Centennial Award in 1967.

**General Meeting
third Wednesday
of each month**

Vancouver Museum
Ray Whittick Lounge
(business meeting 7:30,
speaker's program 8:00)
There's plenty of free
parking—please join us!

Non members are
welcome by a suggested
donation of \$2.00

FLASH

Nancy Byrtus former HV speaker's program chair is a co-author of a study on tax treatment of heritage buildings that has been very influential in the east. The report, recommending special status for heritage buildings in Toronto, made it through the GTA's finance committee recently.

Mark Your Calendar

Saturday April 1, 2000

Ice House Discovery Room Opening, Gulf of Georgia Cannery Hands-on activities for children and families! Explore dynamic multimedia exhibits: surround sound theatre, guided tours, and machine demonstrations.

The Ice House was built in 1943 to store big ice blocks brought from a plant downtown. The ice was crushed and then mixed with the fish to keep it fresh until it was processed or sold to the market. When you come to the ice House, you will be able to investigate the contents of a rather unique refrigerator, learn more about the ice house operations, participate in a race against rot, become an ice house worker, and more! The Cannery opens for the season April 1st, Thursday through Monday, 10:00 AM to 5 PM.

Saturday April 29

Heritage Puppet Workshop

Watch a puppet performance by a professional puppeteer and learn how puppets were made long ago. Then, get a chance to make your very own puppet. 1:00 - 4:00 PM. Suitable for ages 8 - 12. Fee: \$30. West Vancouver Museum and Archives, 680 17th St., West Vancouver.

SYMPOSIUM 2000

The Conservation of Heritage Interiors

May 17 to 20, 2000

Ottawa ON \$400

Symposium 2000 will emphasize the kinds of professional collaboration required to plan and execute successful conservation projects in historic interior spaces. This international symposium, organized in collaboration with the Association for Preservation Technology (APT) and the Heritage Conservation Program of Public Works and Government Services Canada, will offer a chance to share information about current examination and treatment practices, problems and solutions in project management, and the innovative use of materials that will benefit those who are responsible for the preservation and rehabilitation of heritage interiors.

For more info:

christine_bradley@pch.gc.ca.

Until June 10

Picturing the Past

This photography-based exhibition chronicles the many architectural, social and economic changes that West Vancouver communities have undergone over the past one hundred years, since Model T Fords rambled down dirt streets and women with parasols strolled across wooden sidewalks. West Vancouver Museum and Archives, 680 17th St., West Vancouver. Tuesday - Saturday 12:00 - 4:30 PM.



San Francisco Expo

15 YEARS OF FANTASY

The Deco Phenomenon at the World's Fairs

Maurice Guibord

Thursday, April 20, 2000, 7 PM

This illustrated talk will focus on the golden age of Art Deco as seen at universal expositions, from its debut at the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris through to the 1939 New York World's Fair and San Francisco Golden Gate Exposition. Included will be the exhibitions in Antwerp 1930, Paris 1931, Chicago 1933-34, Brussels 1935, Dallas 1936, Paris 1937, Glasgow 1938, and Liège 1939.

Maurice Guibord

Maurice Guibord has been fascinated with the world's fair phenomenon since marveling at the architectural wonders of expo67 in Montreal and has been collecting world's fair information and memorabilia since 1986. Maurice has been professionally employed in the museum field as curator and programmer in Calgary and greater Vancouver for the past fifteen years. His interest in world's fairs has remained a hobby throughout, but collectors and institutions are now starting to seek him out for his knowledge and access to pertinent collectibles for retro exhibitions.

Lectures at the

Vancouver Museum

1100 Chestnut Street

Admission for Deco Society and Heritage

Vancouver Members: \$6 - Non-Members \$8

For Sale
Digital answering machine. No tapes, accessible remotely. HV is now on a voice mail system and no longer needs it. Was \$90, asking \$45.
Phone Susanna at 734-2933

from trolleybuses cover

awareness, brought a new perspective and some minor extensions of the system were opened. In 1975, BC Hydro purchased 25 new trolleybuses, albeit with reconditioned electrical components, and was able to retire the first of the Brills, then 30 years old.

1982-83 brought a wholesale replacement of the fleet as 245 new trolleys arrived from Flyer Industries in Winnipeg. Teething troubles with the Flyers meant that some of the Brills soldiered on until mid-1984. Trolley route extensions were undertaken in 1986 to connect existing routes to SkyTrain stations, and again in 1988 when the 3.0 km extension to UBC began service. More ambitious



Photo I. Fisher

Trolley drivers Angus McIntyre and Derek Cheung help BC Transit Chair George Chen and former City Councillor Alan Herbert unveil a plaque commemorating 50 years of trolleybuses in Vancouver. August, 16, 1998, Cambie and 29th Ave.

expansion plans failed to materialize.

The last decade has seen the system remain stable, although periodic rumours that the system would be replaced with unproven fuel cell buses were cause for concern. With the Flyers nearing the end of their useful life, a decision on replacement vehicles is expected in the near future. Trans-Link's current plans suggest that quiet, zero emission trolleybuses will be serving Vancouver's streets for at least the next 25-30 years.

Ian Fisher is Heritage Vancouver's membership secretary. A planner by education, he's currently working on rapid transit and downtown transportation studies for the City of Vancouver.

Goodbye

Dear Members,

Well, time has flown by, and it has now been about two years since I took over as president of Heritage Vancouver from Jo Scott-B, who held on a few extra months while I finished my master's thesis. It has been the tradition for presidents of Heritage Vancouver to serve for approximately two years, so it is time for me to step aside and make way for a new president.

I have found my time as president of Heritage Vancouver and the opportunities it has afforded me to be challenging and stimulating. I would like to extend a warm thanks to all the board members and members at large who made my time with HV a rewarding experience.

The person we have selected to take over is Janet Leduc and we are all very excited that she has agreed to join us. A respected member of the heritage community, she will be a terrific asset to Heritage Vancouver. Stay tuned for some ambitious events and activities! However, she will not be starting until October.

In the interim, past-president John Atkin has agreed to take over the reins. He is currently working with Jo Scott-B to develop our spring speakers program, which includes walking tours this year. The fact that he has past experience being president will make the transition a smooth one.

I look forward with interest to the new projects Heritage Vancouver will accomplish in the future.

Susanna Houwen
President, Heritage Vancouver

Well... Hello again.

As Susanna takes some well deserved time off, I have the privilege of becoming the interim president of the society until the AGM in October. I first served as Heritage Vancouver's founding vice president and later as its president. The idea behind the creation of Heritage Vancouver was to broaden the debate around heritage issues and bring a different tone to the discussions. Our goal was to stop yelling and engage the enemy in meaningful dialogue.

With its strong public programs, which provide a forum for discussion and debate, and with our members sitting on Chinatown and Gastown historic area committees and the Heritage Commission, Heritage Vancouver has certainly fulfilled its original mandate.

My job for the next six months is to see that we continue on course and get ready for the October AGM which will see a new president and board ready to take Heritage Vancouver into its tenth year of success.

Over the next couple of months our Walks and Talks program will offer some exciting evenings along with some unique walks. We have a couple exciting events lined up for the summer months and an incredible presentation for the AGM. So let's see everyone out at meetings and our other events and support your society.

Cheers

John Atkin
interim - president, Heritage Vancouver

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<http://home.istar.ca/~glenchan/hvsintro.shtml>

Join Heritage Vancouver

Annual membership runs from October 1st to September 30th. Members receive a monthly newsletter, free admission to monthly speakers' programs and reduced rates for tours and other activities.

Charitable donation #1073758-52. Membership fees are not tax deductible.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

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- Individual: \$25
- Supporting (no newsletter) \$5
- Family: \$30
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