



# Victoria Historical Society Quarterly

Formerly the VHS Newsletter  
Volume 73, Spring 2025

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## VHS Meetings

4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month  
(September-May) 7:15 pm.  
Presentations begin at 7:30 pm.  
James Bay New Horizons, 234  
Menzies Street, Victoria.

Website:

[www.victoriahistoricalsociety.bc.ca](http://www.victoriahistoricalsociety.bc.ca)

Or visit us on Facebook.

Or find Victoria Historical Society  
BC at youtube.com

## Up-Coming Presentations

April 24, 2025

**A Victoria Hospital Goes to War — Canadian  
General Hospital No. 5**  
Yvonne Van Ruskenveld

When World War I began in 1914, the Canadian Army Medical Corps had just 127 members, including doctors, nursing sisters and non-commissioned personnel. From 1914 through 1918, it expanded dramatically—over half of Canadian doctors served overseas in the CAMC. This talk will focus on the experiences of one group of Canadians who served in an active war zone far from the Western Front. It will describe how Canadian General Hospital No. 5 was “raised” in Victoria in 1915 and followed a trajectory shared by few other Canadian medical facilities in the Great War.

**Yvonne Van Ruskenveld** (below) is a long-time member and current president of the Old Cemeteries Society, leading cemetery walking tours on a wide



range of topics, including women's history, gold rushes, symbolism, and epitaphs, among others. As a member of the World War I historical organization, the Western Front Association -Pacific Coast Branch, she has given many presentations on various aspects of military history (con't p. 2)

## About this Issue

An image is worth its weight in words, to paraphrase an old adage. This issue is full of photos, brightening up the pages, just as spring brightens up the year.

Pages 1-2 Preview of the VHS program for April and May.

Pages 3-5 Member Nancy Hughes has provided the *VHS Quarterly* with a photo essay on the changing face of a well-known corner in Victoria, once again demonstrating the importance of archiving and sharing family images. Her contribution is one more example of the time, energy, expertise and history that VHS members share with each other and the wider community.

Pages 6-9 A supplement to recent articles on the 150- year-long history of the VHS and its “ancestors.” The article looks back at some of the fascinating monthly presentations and interesting *VHS Newsletter* articles members shared and had access over the past two decades.

Pages 10-11 A report on the April 6, 2025 tour of Victoria’s historic Chinatown.

Once again, Thank You to our eagle-eyed copy editors, members Ada Robinson and Frances Aknai.

including military nurses, animals, balloonists and Canadian General Hospital No. 5. She is also a member of the Victoria Historical Society and the Victoria Genealogical Society.

May 22, 2025

## Victoria’s Lesser-Known “Firsts”

May Q. Wong



Photo left: May Q. Wong with a copy of her latest book.

May Q. Wong will be sharing stories from her book *City in Colour: Rediscovered Stories of Victoria’s Multicultural Past* (TouchWood Editions, 2018). May is also the author of *A Cowherd in Paradise: From China to Canada* (Brindle & Glass, 2012). The memoir explores the lives of a family impacted by Canada’s immigration laws against the Chinese. Her father paid the \$500 head tax to enter Canada. The Chinese Exclusion Act forced her parents to live apart for the first 25 years of their over 50-year marriage.

With degrees from McGill University and the University of Victoria, May’s career in the British Columbia Public Service centred on improving the lives of those in need. She received the Canada 125 Medal for her volunteer contributions at the local, provincial, and national levels. In addition to chronicling the lives of “ordinary people,” May was a Mentor for Diaspora Dialogues, has written for *The British Columbia Review*, and has been filmed in 3 documentaries. May creates through knitting, painting, cooking, and sewing. She holds a 2nd degree Black Belt in Kenpo Karate.

This presentation is about some lesser-known pioneers of Victoria.

# Changing Victoria – One Corner – and Six Drug Stores at a Time

by Nancy Hughes

In recent decades Wellburn's Market has been synonymous with the corner Cook Street and Pandora Avenue but it wasn't always at this location. Wellburn's was originally located further down Pandora at 1058 Pandora Avenue.

The corner of Pandora and Cook is 1064 Pandora, and for more than fifty-one years, from 1912 to 1963, that address was continuously home to six different drug stores. The first was in 1912-1921; *Gardiner Drugs* was run by William W. Gardiner. The second, (1921-1927) *Peacey Druggist*, was operated by Albert H. Peacey.

The third and longest-owned was *Clark's Drugs*, owned by my father, William Robert Clark between 1927 and 1942. My dad sold his business in 1942 to the fourth druggist, Mr. E. R. Williams, of *Williams Druggist* (1942 – 1946). The fifth drug store was *Pandora Pharmacy* (1946 – 1954). The sixth drug store (1955-1963) was *Grant's Pharmacy*, owned by Michael P. Grant.

In 1942, my father 'Bill' Clark purchased Mr. Orme's share of McGill & Orme Drug Store and partnered with Max McGill for the next 20 plus years... and that's another piece of Victoria's history.



Left: Breading Dairy at 1062 Pandora next door to Clark's Drugs, c. 1928.

Right: Bill Clark in front of his store, c. 1929

The corner moved into the 1930s. In 1934 Clark's Drug Store took over Breadin's tenancy at 1062 Pandora and enlarged the drug store. Breadin's moved 1004 Pandora Ave.



The photos above were taken in 1939 during the King and Queen's visit to Victoria, British Columbia.

Photos of window displays and the store's interior provide insights about the products and interests of the day.



Above: Clark's Drugs' new store front and window displays. Below: store's interior.



At the end of the day (and the decade), the heart of the drug store wasn't the exterior, the interior or the products for sale. It was the people.



Left: W. R. Clark, unknown soldier, and Maurice Hornsby, c. 1938  
Right: Glen Dennstedt, employee & salesman for Clark's Drugs from 1931-1936, standing next to author's father. W. R. Clark (right)



The corner of Cook and Pandora is currently under construction. Some original building design elements are still visible.

(Photo left, taken April 4, 2025. B. Gundersen-Bryden)

Editor's note: VHS member Nancy Hughes, who submitted this photo essay, is interested in learning about options, including those using AI, for restoring a number of historic family photos related to her maternal great grandfather who was an influential part of Victoria's history from 1886 to 1927. Please contact Nancy directly if you can assist: [nanray38@telus.net](mailto:nanray38@telus.net)

# Always Ready to Learn: VHS Programs and Publications

by Britta Gundersen-Bryden

Over the past year, feature articles in the *VHS Quarterly*, (formerly the *VHS Newsletter*) have looked at the history of the Victoria Historical Society and its predecessors. While the early societies seemed to focus on events such as picnics, suppers, speeches and toasts to dignitaries and the monarch, for the past century the Victoria Historical Society has focussed on bringing its members a variety of perspectives on the history of the region we inhabit.

Below is a summary of just some of the topics VHS has covered in its monthly presentations and publications over the past two decades. The society's website includes archived issues of the *VHS Newsletter* from 2006 to the present. The newsletters include previews and reviews of the monthly presentations. <https://victoriahistoricalsociety.bc.ca/newsletters/>

“Centennial” and “100 Years of ...” were often topics of presentations and newsletter articles. VHS hosted presentations on the centennials of Oak Bay and Saanich as well as Stanley Park. Members learned about the hundredth anniversary of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Bay Street Armoury and the Royal Theatre. VHS member Dierdre Simmons wrote about the Hudson Bay Company and spoke on “St. Margaret’s School – a 100 Year Legacy” (examples of Dierdre’s contributions to VHS appear below). The history of Fairfield and Victoria’s YM/YWCA were also on offer, as were presentations on pioneer John Muir and efforts to preserve Victoria’s heritage.

There have been presentations on people of the past who are still well-known today: Emily Carr, her family and her pets; the Cridge family; the Dunsmuirs, John Muir, James Alexander Tait, Robert Rithet, Dr. John Helmcken and Joseph Clearihue. Other people that have not been as well-known include settlers Charles Bayley of the HBC and the Kerr family.

Women were featured in presentations by Lara Campbell, who spoke about Women’s Suffrage in BC, and Linda Eversole, who spoke about the lives of Victoria’s prostitutes more than a century ago.

There were presentations about museums, including the Royal BC Museum and several local and regional museums. Other institutions were also featured: the Queen Alexandra Solarium for Crippled Children, Christ Church Cathedral, the Victoria Conservatory of Music and Langham Court Theatre.

Presentations about special events drew large audiences: fall fairs and exhibitions, and – with VHS ahead of the pack – the Victoria Cougars’ Stanley Cup championship a century ago. Local figures including David Obee, Daniel Lapp and Jack Knox always had interesting perspectives to share. Presentations and articles that harkened back to holiday celebrations of old are always popular and the recent presentation by Jesse Robertson filled the meeting space to capacity.

Streets, buildings and neighborhoods were often featured in presentations and articles. Nick Russell's article on Ross Bay Villa and other historic homes was the first to feature numerous coloured photos and he shared many such photos during presentations, as well.

Commercial activities were highlighted both in presentations and the newsletter: coal mining and logging on Vancouver Island; brick making, brewing and soda water manufacturing; early bank notes, credit unions, car dealerships and furriers; paddle-wheelers on the Fraser River and ship sinkings along the Pacific Coast; the first bridge in Victoria; the E & N and other railways. The natural world was reflected in presentations and articles about orcas, the observatory, climatic events and the explosion of Ripple Rock.

There have been many presentations and articles related to early British naval officers, ships, fortifications and Victoria's roles in World War I and II. The favourite war-time hero we learned about was undoubtedly Muggins, the WWI canine fund-raiser.

The 2009/2010 presentations provide a good example of the variety on offer: Victoria's Fire Department (Dave Parker); the History of Quadra Island (Jeanette Taylor); the Victoria Royal Theatre (Ken Johnson); San Juan Island and Its History and BC Connections (Mike Vouri); the Macdonalds of Armadale (Sylvia Van Kirk); the Toponymy of Vancouver Island (Michael Leyland); British Columbia a Century Ago (Patricia Roy). VHS presidents like Sylvia, Michael and Patricia not only presented, they also wrote many articles for the newsletter. Some other presidents and past presidents did both: Barry Gough (with talks and articles on Cape Flattery and the entrance to Puget Sound, Fortune's River and Meares Island) and Jack Bryden (with a talk on coal and articles on topics from Emmaline Pankhurst to the Poodle Dog Café). And no one tops Ron Greene, who spoke and wrote on topics as diverse as dairies, bank notes, tokens, the stern wheeler *Alexandra* and the removing of Victoria's telephone lines.

In 2008 Cliff Chandler penned: "Chinese Labour Corps at William Head Quarantine Station 1917 – 1920," pre-dating the Ching Ming event held at William Head prison April 5, 2025. Cliff was one of several members who wrote articles for the *VHS Newsletter*. Others include Mary E. Doody Jones, Helen Edwards, Sherri Robinson, Joyce Mackie and Diana Pedersen. Recent contributors include Amber Woods and VHS Vice-president Jenny Seeman. Past *VHS Newsletter* editor Mike Harrison wrote more articles than any other contributor.

The first mention of Black History Month was written by Arnold Ranneris in 2010. More recently, VHS President John Lutz spoke on Black artist Grafton Tyler Brown. The Jewish community was featured in a presentation in 2015 and in the newsletter in 2023. The Francophone community shared information about the "Little French Hospital."

In 2008 Tzu-I Chung spoke about the Chinese Canadian experience in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Council member Charlayne Thornton-Joe and VHS member John Adams have helped members learn more about Victoria's Chinese community. Robert Fung spoke about efforts to restore Chinatown and John Price told the story of Dr. Victoria Chung, Canada's first Asian Canadian MD.

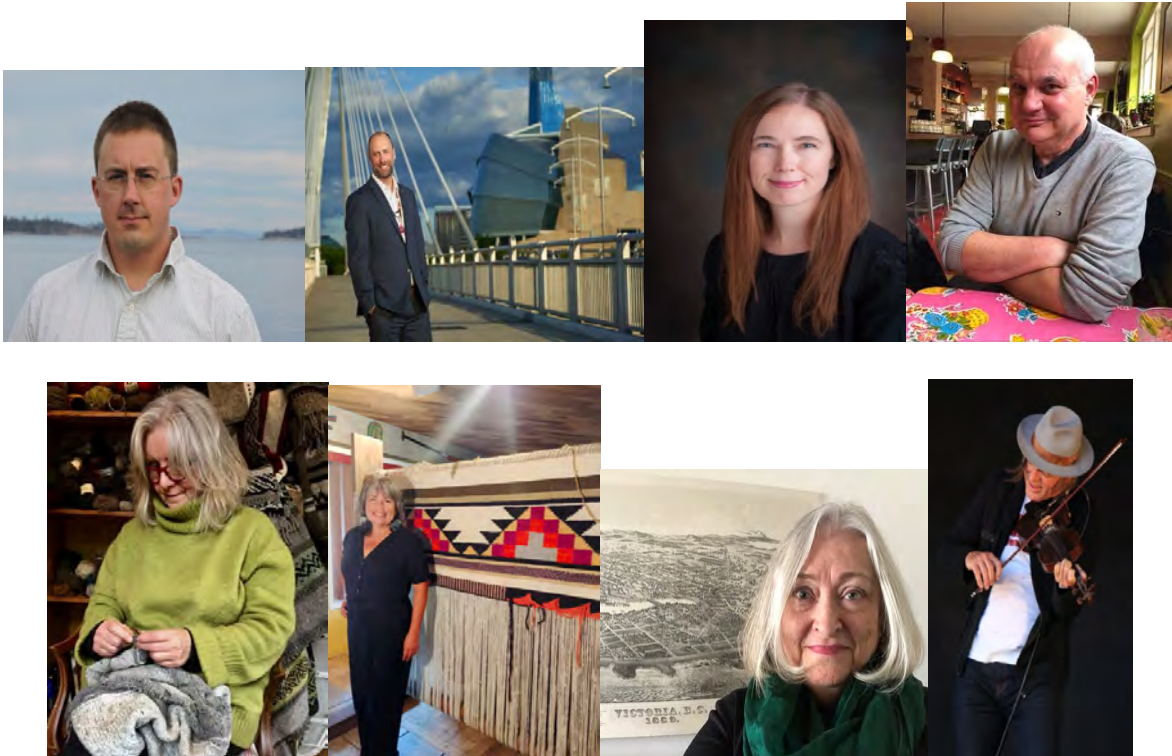
Sylvia Olsen presented on Coast Salish wool working in 2011. A number of presentations since have brought Indigenous voices to the VHS, including Cheryl Bryce, Songhees wisdom keeper

and story teller, Ry Moran, who spoke of the legacy of Canada’s residential schools and WSÁNEĆ Elder J’SINTEN John Elliott. A memorable presentation was Myrna Crossley’s; she not only spoke about Coast Salish weavers but also set up her loom and then removed a finished work destined for public display and preservation.

Members have learned about the South Asian labour movement in Canada and, thanks to Brian Smallwood, Michael Abe, Jordan Stanger-Ross and Djuna Nagasaki, about Japanese immigrants who settled in our region and many of whom were interned during WWII.

Ada Robinson, Ron Greene and Britta Gundersen-Bryden pioneered the Zoom-only “pandemic-era” presentations that got VHS through the the autumn of 2020.

Presenters’ photos began to be featured in the newsletters in 2021; below are just a few of the people who have shared their knowledge and experience with VHS over the past several years.



Top row, left to right: Jason Colby, Ry Moran, Lara Campbell, Jack Knox

Middle row, left to right: Sylvia Olsen, Myrna Crossley, Linda Eversole, Daniel Lapp

Bottom row left: Jean Barman



People have been at the centre of historical societies past and present. An elected Council leads the VHS; over the years, dozens of individuals have given their time, energy and expertise to help the organization thrive. Current Council members are listed on page 12. The VHS connects with its members and the wider public through its presentations and publications, all thanks to a legion of presenters, writers and editors. And, as John Lutz points out below, the society benefits from the efforts of the countless volunteers who contribute to the well-being of the organization. He offers some thoughts on the contributions of one volunteer known to many past and current society members.

“At the Victoria Historical Society, a lot of us do not know each other’s names but we recognize many familiar and friendly faces. We will miss one particular face, Deidre Simmons. Deidre was a long-time member, always willing to pitch in, and for the two years prior to September 2024 she was also the volunteer who ran the book raffle table. Always smiling, always encouraging, always with a twinkle in her eye, Deidre, (photo below) with the help of Caroline Duncan, raised well over a thousand dollars for the VHS scholarship fund which supports UVic students who want to further the study of BC History.



Before she retired, Deidre spent time working at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the BC Archives, Archives of the Diocese of Vancouver, St Margaret’s School, and wrote a book on the Hudson’s Bay Archives. She made our organization better by her volunteering and just by her presence. We will miss this smiling face.” (John Lutz, President, Victoria Historical Society)

Left: Deidre Simmons (1944 – 2025)

And a postscript: In Issue #72 of the *VHS Quarterly*, Winter 2025, there were several errors in identifying people in photos and in spelling names of members past and present. For the record, past president, treasurer and life member Ron Greene’s name is spelled with a final “e”; it is Pam Odgers, not Ogden and Shirley Cuthbertson, not Cuthbert (p.8). Marie Elliott (p.9) is pictured standing next to John Whitaker and the third person from the left in the photo on page 8 may – or may not – be Jane Watt. Apologies to all.

As the annual BC Historical Federation conference rapidly approaches (to be held in Williams Lake, May 1-3), long-time VHS member and past president Russ Fuller provided additional details about the BCHF conference co-hosted by VHS and the Old Cemeteries Society in 2007. Russ chaired the Planning and Hosting Committee for the 2007 BC Historical Federation Conference in Victoria, and emceed the four-day event, which began with an opening reception at the Maritime Museum of British Columbia, followed by three days of presentations, field trips to local historic places including Craigdarroch Castle, a book fair and a banquet. The highlight of the Conference was the formal reception at Government House and presentation of the Lieutenant Governor’s Medal for Historical Writing by the Honourable Iona Campagnolo. Clearly, organizing such events is a significant contribution to the broader community of people interested in the history of British Columbia.

## 2025 Exploration of Chinatown: Urban Field Trips Are Another Way to Learn

The first of the VHS spring tours, **Behind the Scenes of Historic Chinatown**, took place on April 6, 2025. Two dozen VHS members (the group size was limited due to size of some spaces visited) gathered in Chinatown's Fan Tan Alley at 1 pm for a three-hour tour of some Chinatown sites seldom open to the public.

The afternoon was arranged by Charlayne Thornton-Joe, VHS Council member, Manager of Visitor Experience Manager for the Chinatown Museum and former City of Victoria councillor, began the afternoon with forty-minute, personalized tour of the museum; she shared stories of family artifacts, experiences and the family members who volunteer at the museum. Accounts of the Head Tax, family separation and personal heart break were presented but there was also a bit of fun, to go along with lots of learning. Tour participants admired an elaborate chess board and heard about the German origin of "Chinese checkers." Charlayne gave a demonstration of fan tan – the portable, pre-computer game of the past (note: this editor and tour participant would have won the pot if we'd been playing for nickels or dimes on the 6<sup>th</sup>).

All too soon tour participants left Fan Tan Alley – Canada's tiniest street (true, there are other streets only one block long but none as narrow) – and made their way to Herald Street to visit the Hook Sin Tong society's building, built by Charles E. Watkins and listen to the society's president (architect and former Victoria mayor) Alan Lowe talk about the history of the building and the Zhongshan people who settled in Victoria. The building's restoration and preservation work were impressive; its stained-glass dome was awe-inspiring.

Next the tour participants climbed more than fifty steps in the Yen Wo Society Building, to visit the home of the oldest Chinese Temple in Canada. At this point, the temple, established in 1876, was in the middle of the National Trust of Canada's 2025 "Next Great Save" campaign where the winner and runners-up win funds to help with the restoration of significant historic sites across Canada. VHS members were several steps ahead of the local media coverage that helped propel the temple to a second-place finish. Yen Wo Society President Nora Butz hosted the group.

The final stop was the Loy Sing Butcher — the oldest continuously running Chinese business in North America. Participants were offered a taste of barbequed pork and crispy pork. Several participants bought more than a sample to take home.

The following photos below were taken by the *VHS Quarterly* editor who took part in the tour.

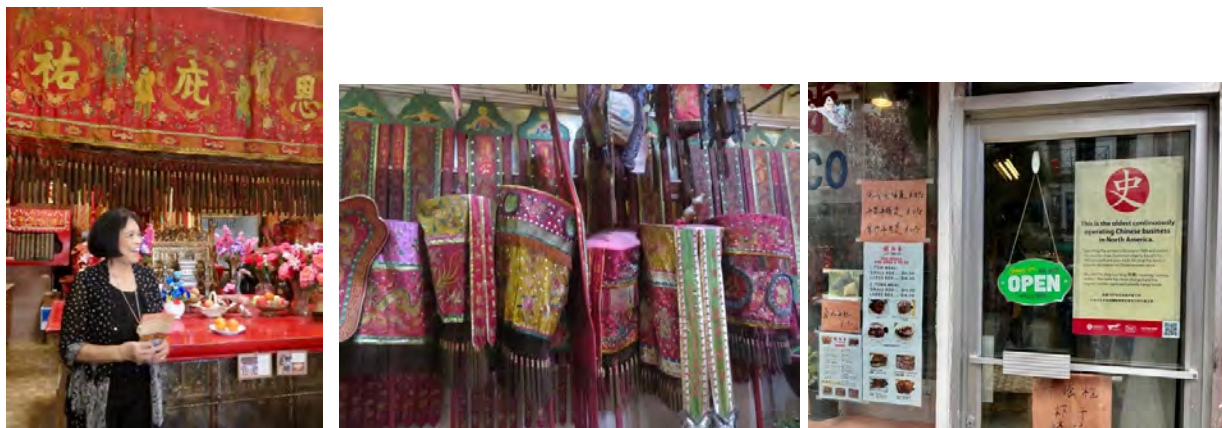


Left: Charlayne Thornton-Joe greeted member Ada Robinson.

Right: VHS members were enthralled by Charlayne's family stories.



Left: Alan Lowe spoke about the origin, history and ongoing work of the Hook Sin Tong society.  
Right: No photo can do the stained-glass window justice.



Left: Nora Butz spoke not of only the temple's past but also of its plans for the future. Centre: a temple full of colour, warmth and living history. Right: the Loy Sing butcher on Fisgard Street.

## Council Members 2024 – 2025

### Executive

President: John Lutz [jlutz@uvic.ca](mailto:jlutz@uvic.ca)

Vice-President: Jenny Seeman

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Treasurer: Dennis Flewelling

[denjanf@shaw.ca](mailto:denjanf@shaw.ca)

Secretary: Kathryn McAllister

Membership, Publicity & Distribution:

Frances Aknai [faknai@shaw.ca](mailto:faknai@shaw.ca)

### Members-at-Large

Jack Bryden (Past-President)

George Copley

Jennifer Iredale

Kent McNeil

Julianna Nielson

Wayne Norton

Charlayne Thornton-Joe

VHS is a non-profit charitable organization and may issue tax receipts for donations.

### *VHS Quarterly* Submissions

Members may submit articles, photos and story ideas related to local, regional or provincial history to the *VHS Quarterly*.

Authors should credit sources and obtain any required permission for use of photographs and images. Authors retain copyright of submitted or published materials.

The editor, Britta Gundersen-Bryden, may be reached at [bgbryden@gmail.com](mailto:bgbryden@gmail.com)

(Please note that email addresses and urls [i.e., web site addresses or links] may not work directly from the pdf version of the *VHS Quarterly*. It may be necessary to key in the email address or url directly or to do a google search first.)

## Notes and News

### Thanks!

The Council of the VHS would like to give a great big shout out and thank you to member Denton Pendergast who not only donated his time to create the new masthead for the *VHS Quarterly*, as mentioned in the last issue, but also a new letterhead and a new logo for our society. Thank you, Denton!

### What Happens in May?

The VHS AGM, of course! The Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday May 22, 2025, followed by the May presentation: **Victoria's Lesser-Known "First"**. (see page 2). Watch for notices from Frances Aknai, Council member responsible for membership, publicity and distribution.

### Can You Help?

The archivist and curator at Shawnigan Lake School, Sarah Teunis-Russ, is doing some research on the original ten students who attended the school: Frank Gooch, Milward V. Harris, V. Jones, Edward Lindsey Musgrave, Jack Robert John Musgrave, Alexander Bruce Robertson, Kenneth Craig, Lewis Gordon Yealmacott Toms, Allan McGregor and Charles F. Phipps. She asks if our members have any information about any of these people that you may be able to share. Some of them stayed on Vancouver Island or moved to Victoria. Frank Gooch in particular is an interesting man as he owned a car company at 809 Yates Street called Atkinson Motor Co. LTD.

If you have anything that may be of interest, please contact Sarah directly at: [steunisruss@shawnigan.ca](mailto:steunisruss@shawnigan.ca)