Postview

The Newsletter of the Vancouver Postcard Club

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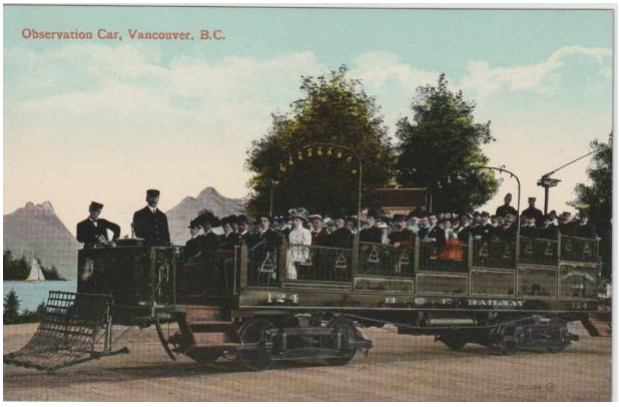
Sightseeing in early Vancouver

Today's hop-on hop-off buses follow a long tradition of guided sightseeing tours in Vancouver. In the early days, many tourists hopped aboard one of the tally-hos operated by Vancouver's livery companies – an elegant "four-in-hand" that could accommodate 20-30 people. Today's postcard collectors often come across "tally-ho" postcards published between 1900 and 1910, many of which were first sold to tourists at the major landmarks, such as the Hollow Tree in Stanley Park.

"Tally-Ho on Granville St., Vancouver, B.C." Pub. by "B", 124, 1906.

Horse-drawn tally-hos were progressively replaced by motorized carriages from around 1909. That was the year that BC Electric's two observation cars, built in New Westminster, were delivered - Car No. 124 to Vancouver and Car No. 123 to Victoria (123 was transferred to Vancouver around 10 years later). As shown in Harry Bullen's 9 ¼" x 3 ¾" photo at the top of this page, from August 1943, BC Electric's observation cars were hugely popular right through until the 1950's, when the reduced amount of streetcar track no longer made for a worthwhile sightseeing experience.

The sightseeing tour lasted around 2 hours and cost 50 cents! Passengers were informed and entertained by "Teddy" Lyons, one of the conductors, shown hamming it up at the bottom right of Bullen's photo. Note "Harry Bullen Photographer" store in the background, one of many well-chosen stops along the way. Passengers were invited to buy his photos at the end of the tour.



"Observation Car, Vancouver, B.C." Valentine & Sons, c.1912"

The postcard shown above is an early example of photo manipulation - it seems that a local photographer let the imagination run wild. With Burrard Inlet, a sailing yacht, and Teddy Lyons and the driver silhouetted against the north shore mountains, it might appear that B.C. Electric observation car No. 124, filled with sightseers, is circling Stanley Park. It would certainly have been a popular destination. But streetcar tracks were never installed in or around Stanley Park!

Vancouver Postcard Club News

Club President's Message

Rein writes: We have held two monthly meetings since the last issue of *Postview*.

At the June 1 meeting we elected the Vancouver Postcard Club Executive for 2025/26 and the following were elected unopposed – I thank them all for their continued support the Club –

President: Rein Stamm
Vice President: James Gibson
Secretary: Vacant
Treasurer/Membership: Arthur Davies
Newsletter Editor: Philip Francis
Archivist: Ron Souch
Website Manager: Samir Budhdeo

After the elections, I made a presentation on **Thomson Stationery Company** which had a presence here in Vancouver from 1896 to 1916. From 1903 through 1910 the company's offerings included postcards, with around 260 cards being published for its Vancouver operation. Photographers such as Timms, Thompson (with a p), Trueman and others captured Vancouver's first decade of the 20th century.

The presentation focused on dating some of the different Thomson backs. The majority of Thomson postcards used one of two backs, either:

1. "Souvenir Postal Card from Vancouver B.C.", in a lined box - 1903-06. Or
2. "Souvenir Postal Card" in a Gothic/Old Germanic font - 1907-10. All of these are collotypes.

During these same years Thomson was trying out suppliers of half-tone cards. From 1905, there are 2 (known) Thomson cards with a "Private Post Card" back, possibly from an Ontario printer. The same year Thomson produced a series of 13 (known) cards with the ornate Thomson logo back. 1909 saw the arrival of 12 (known) "Glace" postcards printed in Cincinnati. The dates presented are estimates based on 45 Thomson postcards with postmarks and/or marginalia.

In this issue of *Postview*

A reminder that the next meeting of the Club is at 1:00 p.m. on **Sunday 10th August** at the Roundhouse Community Centre in Yaletown (corner of Pacific Ave. & Davie St.) One city block from the Yaletown Skytrain station. **We meet in Room C, on the main floor – guests and new members are warmly welcomed.**

At the meeting on **August 10,** Tim Woodland will present his collection of Fraser Mills material. For 115 years, from 1890 to 2005, Fraser Mills was Coquitlam's largest employer.

Further ahead, mark your calendars for **Sunday 7, September** when Philip Francis will present a type of postcard that has been overlooked for far too long – the post-WWII "chrome" postcard. For the Vancouver Postcard Club this will be our first-time-ever presentation on BC chrome postcards!

Upcoming Shows

Date: Saturday, September 13 & November 22, 2025
Hours: 9:30 AM - 3:30PM
The Vancouver Coins, Stamps & Collectables Show
Nikkei Cultural Centre, 6688 Southoaks Crescent, Burnaby, B.C.
Dealers buying and selling Modern and Ancient Coins, stamps, postcards, paper money, ephemera, and other collectibles. Free Appraisals.
Admission: $3.00

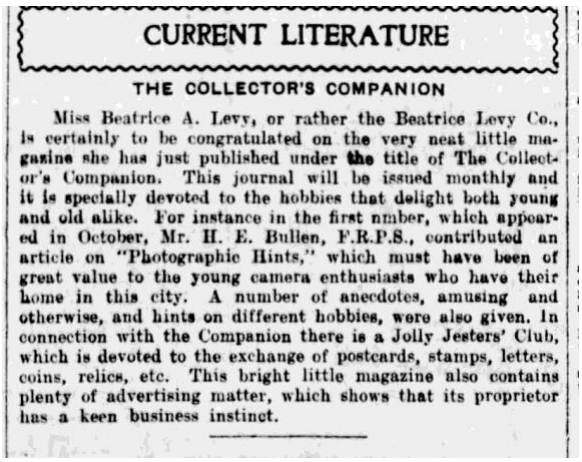
Date: Sunday, September 21, 2025
Hours: 10:00AM - 3:00 PM
Antique and Collectables Show
Vancouver Flea Market, 703 Terminal Avenue, Vancouver B.C. (Entrance at east end of building)
Admission: $5.00

Postcard Exchange 1909 and 2025

by Rein Stamm

Here is one of "ours" from 116 years ago: Wm. H. Brett -- clearly an active postcard collector. [The ***1909 Henderson's City of Vancouver and N. Vancouver Directory*** lists Mr. Brett as a clerk at the Hastings Saw Mill.]

The above postcard to a fellow collector in Brooklyn, New York lists four postcard clubs that Mr. Brett belongs to. The **Jolly Jesters** is a local Vancouver club. Some information about this club can be gleaned from an article in the October 14, 1908 issue of ***Vancouver Daily World*** newspaper (see below).



CURRENT LITERATURE

THE COLLECTOR'S COMPANION

Miss Beatrice A. Levy, or rather the Beatrice Levy Co., is certainly to be congratulated on the very neat little magazine she has just published under the title of The Collector's Companion. This journal will be issued monthly and it is specially devoted to the hobbies that delight both young and old alike. For instance in the first nmber, which appeared in October, Mr. H. E. Bullen, F.R.P.S., contributed an article on "Photographic Hints," which must have been of great value to the young camera enthusiasts who have their home in this city. A number of anecdotes, amusing and otherwise, and hints on different hobbies, were also given. In connection with the Companion there is a Jolly Jesters' Club, which is devoted to the exchange of postcards, stamps, letters, coins, relics, etc. This bright little magazine also contains plenty of advertising matter, which shows that its proprietor has a keen business instinct.

The second club Mr. Brett mentions is the **Post Card Union** (PCU), based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; it is reported to have had 10,000 members. A PCU cinderella stamp is attached to this postcard's upper left-hand corner. Postcards such as this - with either the cinderella stamp or with a PCU ink stamp – turn up with some regularity on eBay. According to PCU promotional material, the Union's purpose was "… to promote the interchange of Post Cards among collectors, thereby making it possible for members to exchange and secure cards from all parts of the world…"

The third club, the **Swastika Tribe**, based in Battle Creek, Michigan, had similar objectives.

The last club listed, the **Ideal** (likely the **Ideal Post Card Club** of Chicago), does not appear to be a postcard exchange club. A search of Google and the newspaper.com archives shows an **Ideal Post Card Club** that ran the same single advertisement (see below) in magazines and in numerous newspapers during the 1910-1911 time-period.

150 Gold Back Post Cards FREE

Send 10c. today for postage, etc., on our special samples and big Holiday Bargain Offer. IDEAL POST CARD CLUB, Dept. 189, Chicago

These 4 clubs are just a few of the hundreds of local, national, and international postcard exchange clubs that were common prior to WW1.

Today's collectors are still able to exchange postcards as Mr. Brett did. For example, Facebook has the **Postcard Exchange** group with 1,600 members.

Another modern exchange group can be found at **Postcrossing.com** It currently has over 80,000 members and reports, since its 2005 inception, over 80,000,000 postcards have been exchanged.

Other similar sites are **Postcardhub.com** and **Postcardexchange.net** and there are still more to explore.

Neil Whaley – Vancouver Postcard Collector
in conversation with Philip Francis

Neil Whaley with a display of Vancouver collectibles.

For some, “collecting” might be viewed as a solitary pursuit, reflecting a single-minded interest (or, as some would say, obsession!). Our collections - of postcards or old photographs, old empty bottles, coins, stamps or postal history – are often hidden away in boxes, filing cabinets or albums, rarely seeing the light of day.

Neil Whaley doesn’t fit this stereotype. As one of Vancouver’s most respected and knowledgeable collectors, Neil enjoys being surrounded by items of historical interest – organized, well-presented, each item telling a unique story to be shared with others. “Collecting gives me more opportunity to meet with other like-minded folk than I would have had if I wasn’t collecting” says Neil. Yes, researching, documenting and organizing are necessarily somewhat solitary activities. “But participating in the collectors’ community allows me to share my research and collections with a wider audience – it gives it all a communal purpose.”

Neil has been a serious collector for over 30 years although, for as long as he can remember, he has always been interested in history and politics. At home, as a child growing up in Alberta, Neil remembers being surrounded by newspapers and periodicals. After graduating from the South Alberta Institute of Technology, he became a journalist. He moved to Vancouver in 1982 and found work in the production departments of local publishers and started writing for independent magazines. It would lead to a career in journalism and publishing for over 40 years.

Neil’s experience in the publishing industry, an appreciation for graphic design, an interest in local research, and progressive views on social issues have all influenced Neil’s interests in collecting. If there is a common theme – in fact where Neil’s professional and personal interests intersect – it is in “story-telling”. Neil now collects items that “tell a story” about Vancouver – its development, social history, culture and counterculture, or that, in Neil’s words, “offer a glimpse of Vancouver the way it no longer is.” This is not nostalgia, says Neil, but a historical interest supported by research and good presentation.

These days, old postcards, photographs and ephemera provide Neil with the most fertile source for story-telling but there have been many other interests along the way. Perhaps “filling a hole from childhood”, Neil started collecting vintage glass Christmas ornaments – figures of people or animals made in Germany in the 1920 – 1930 era. As the ornaments became harder to find locally, a chance visit to the Vancouver Flea Market in 2005 sparked a whole new interest.

“I was walking past a table of pottery and china” says Neil “when I caught sight of a small piece of souvenir pottery with an image of English Bay on it. The dealer wanted $6. We settled on $5 and a 20-year interest in Vancouver collectibles was born.” To start with, images of Vancouver on small items of pottery – made in Germany, UK and Japan 1900-1930 – with many of the images transferred to pottery from B&W postcards, then coloured in the artists’ imagination. This type of souvenirware was produced for the local tourist or new settler market and sent home to friends and family, see photo on next page.

It wasn’t long before Neil started collecting the postcards themselves, or any paper ephemera, that met his criteria for story-telling, with graphic appeal, pleasing typeface or an image that grabbed the attention. “It’s important for a collection to have some boundaries” says Neil – and for Neil the boundaries are geographical – Burrard Inlet to the north, Fraser River

to the south, English Bay to the west and Boundary Road to the east. For storage and presentation of his postcards, Neil prefers archival-quality polypropylene pages that can be easily viewed in 3", 3-ring binders.

A favourite piece of Vancouver souvenirware, a decorative plate with an image of the pre-1913 Court House at today's Victory Square.

Although Neil is now focusing on postcards and paper ephemera, he continues to be interested in "three dimensional" collectibles – products that were made in Vancouver in the late 19th and early-20th centuries – e.g. grocery items (tin cans and labels), pharmaceutical products and liquor bottles. Again, a consistent theme is that they are eye-catching, lend themselves to story-telling about Vancouver, and present well. As seen in Neil's displays, each item is thoughtfully selected and placed – every item is there for a reason – a tidy display reflecting the tidy mind of a curator.

Are there some favourite postcards? Neil has a soft spot for historical images of social protest or extreme politics – "communism on the left and the KKK on the right". For example, he has now collected a group of 11 real photo postcards, shown opposite, of the May 1938 "sitdowners" occupation of the Vancouver Post Office (now the Sinclair Centre) by the unemployed. Similar occupations were held in the Hotel Georgia and Vancouver Art Gallery. At 5 a.m. on June 19, 1938, about a month after the start of the occupation, around 1,000 sitdowners and their supporters were forcibly ejected from the Post Office in a combined operation by the RCMP and VPD. It would become known as Vancouver's "Bloody Sunday", leaving 40 men hospitalized, including 5 police constables. The ejection led to widespread rioting and property damage. The postcards served the dual purpose of publicizing the protest and also, from their sale across Canada, as a fundraiser for the protestors. (Neil is still looking for the other three postcards in this series.)

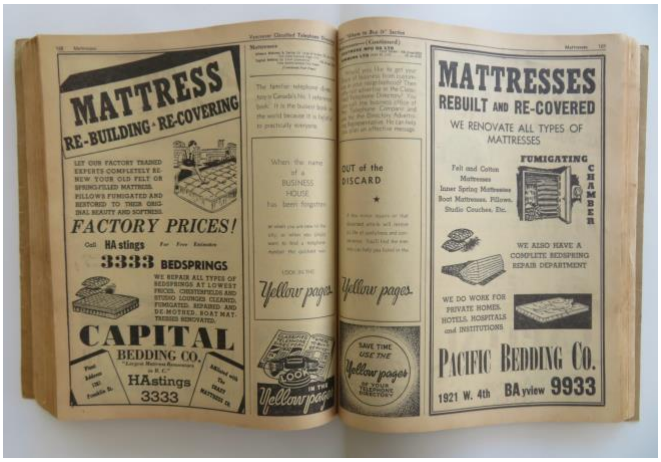
"It's easy to forget that there were historically high levels of unemployment in Vancouver in the 1930's and the existence of an active white supremacist movement at that time", says Neil. Postcards tell the story of that political and economic era in ways that would otherwise have been lost. "It's the front of the postcard that captures or tells the story. But always check the back to see if a personal message adds anything to it. They often do."

Recently retired, Neil is looking forward to having more time for his collecting interests – more time for researching the Vancouver history that provides the backstory of a specific postcard or that the postcard illustrates in a unique way. "Life is richer with my collecting interests" says Neil; "I love having the time to research and develop the stories and it gives me great enjoyment sharing them in a collecting community that understands and appreciates them."

The Vancouver Postcard Club is one such community and we look forward to reading more of Neil's postcard stories and research in future issues of *Postview*.

Some of the 11 real photo postcards that illustrate the occupation of the Vancouver Post Office in 1938.

Another item from Neil's collection – the Yellow Pages!



Vancouver as it no longer is. The Yellow Pages advertising section of BC Tel's 1947 Vancouver phone book has small ads in many categories and large ads for mattress refurbishing.

A Postcard Diary
by Tom W. Parkin

Tom writes: As thanks to those who helped during my search at the May 4 sale, I offer this sample of historical fiction—illustrated with vintage postcards from my collection. The setting is a now-vanished place in the Selkirk Mountains: Glacier House, once a stop for railway travellers from around the world.

Eric's imaginary correspondence makes me wish I had been there.

I continue to seek postcards depicting a 1923 journey by steamship and steam train between Victoria and Calgary. If you have anything for offer, please write via my website: https://tomwparkin.com/contact

Miss Valencia Waters
2200 Redwood Road
Pasadena, California.
U.S.A.

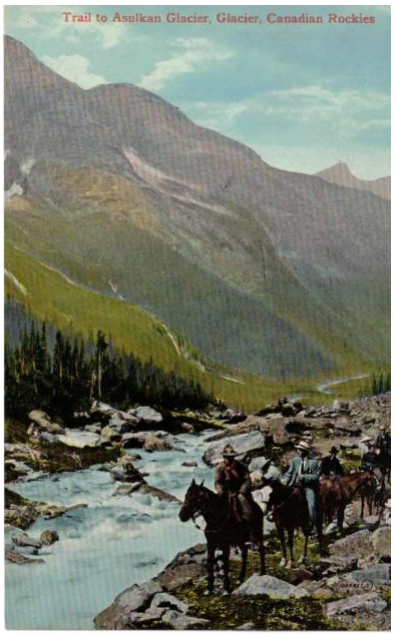
Glacier House, B.C.
23 July 1923
My Valencia,

I arrived today at the famed Glacier House on the C.P.R.'s Imperial Limited, and it's every bit as grand as I imagined. I will remain four days before continuing to Banff. The mountains gleam with snow and ice, and most guests are bent on adventure. Whether I shall brave an ascent with a Swiss guide remains to be seen! The boldest alpinists can be watched

from a telescope in the tower (see over). A curio tent stands on the lawn, kept by Mrs. Baker, whose husband manages the ponies and sells his own postcards of the district. I've decided to send you a little postal diary—it may tempt you to join me on a future visit. I've not forgotten our understanding.

Ever yours,

Eric



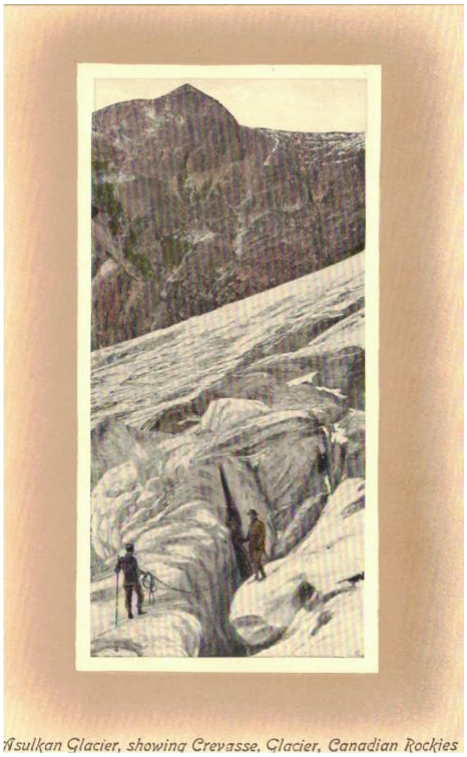
Glacier House, B.C.
24 July 1923

My dear Valencia,

I rode this morning into the Asulkan Valley on horseback. The trail climbs through fir and spruce, their boughs hung with a lichen like Spanish moss. Water was always near—whispering cataracts in the distance, a splashy lilt close by, and sometimes the base rumble of stones tumbling against their companions. At higher elevations the air turned cool and clean—the kind that steals one's breath and lends it back sweeter. We reached a point from which several glaciers could be seen, deep ice-blue beneath a high white sun. It was there I found myself imagining you, with the wind lifting your hair and sunlight on your shoulders. You belong here as much as I.

Ever yours,

Eric



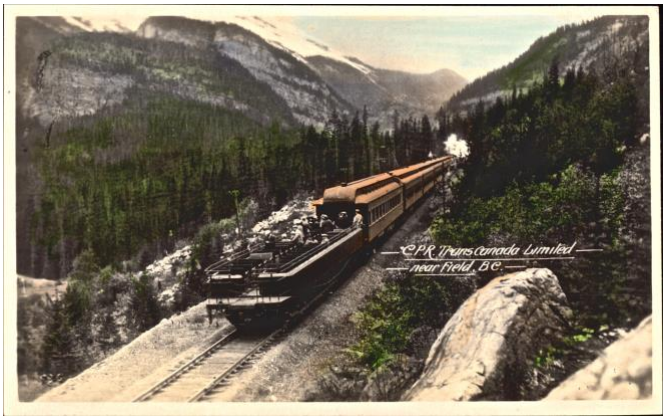
Glacier House, B.C.
25 July 1923

Valencia dear,

Today I walked on the Illecillewaet Glacier—not just viewing it from below, but crossing its crevassed surface, roped to a Swiss guide. I was booted, roped, and instructed with accented authority. We moved slowly, testing each step, crossing narrow ice bridges under which water ran in hidden tunnels. The air was still, but the glacier groaned now and then—remembering its weight and age. I dared look up only occasionally. Above us, Mount Sir Donald rose over 10,000 feet. It has justly been compared to the great pyramid of Cheops. The man himself, Sir Donald, was a financier of the early Canadian Pacific. I've decided not to post these tinted photo cards—but to present them to you as mementos when I return.

Yours, always,

Eric



Eastward, aboard the Imperial Limited
27 July 1923

Val, my valentine,

I couldn't write yesterday—I was quite worn out. A group of us set off by tally-ho for the Nakimu Caves, a long ride up another valley. Our horses climbed slowly across bare avalanche slopes—quiet now, though alive in winter. We took lunch at a rustic teahouse built by the caves' discoverer. Later he led us down by lantern into strange limestone grottos. The Witches 'Ballroom held deep cracks where wild water danced unseen. The Bridal Chamber was draped in delicate white calcite—I thought of you there. In another recess, a mound of ice glistened. Our voices echoed as though answered from some prehistoric time. Now I sit in the observation car at the end of my train. The air smells of balsam. My straw boater flew off in a tunnel.

Until we meet,

Eric

Marpole in 1912

By Neil Whaley

Eburne is an earlier name for a Vancouver neighborhood which straddled the Fraser River and covered today's Marpole and a portion of Richmond's Sea Island. Both of these real photo postcards are from 1912.

The message on the first postcard says, "...This is a pile of stumps where they are clearing land with engine. You'll find Aleck standing near the bottom near the middle…" I have never been able to spot anyone. (*Ed. There's a small X in ink on the large upright log at bottom centre of the pile. Is that Aleck's white-bearded face peeping out to the left of the log?*) The card is dated 5 days after the sinking of the Titanic and the writer adds (upside down at the top), "What do you think of the Titanic?"

The message on the other card says, "Charlie on Townsend Rd, principal street in Eburne, not much builded on yet. Lot as shown behind the horse worth about $1000 (33' x 120'). They have just blasted the stumps on it. Wooden sidewalks everywhere." Townsend Road is today's West 70th Avenue between Granville Street and Heather.

Both have the same handwriting and one is signed Axel. An interesting aspect is that both are addressed to people named Buntzan or Buntzen in Kløverbakken, Odder in Denmark. Danish-born Johannes Buntzen was the first general manager of the British Columbia Electric Railway in Vancouver and when he retired in 1905, he returned to his hometown of Copenhagen Denmark. Kløverbakken is Danish for Clover Field and it is a green space outside of the town of Odder, which is not particularly close to Copenhagen.

Postview

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