

## History of Organization

Researched and compiled by Nicole Tremblay

The history of Touchstones Nelson: Museum of Art and History (Nelson and District Museum, Archives, Art Gallery and Historical Society) began in 1955 when the Kootenay Museum Association was formed. The museum had a number of locations over the years, from the former Post Office in the 1950's to an abandoned brothel on Lake Street. In 1971 a new building was constructed as a British Columbia Centennial of Confederation project on property located at 402 Anderson Street. At that time there were no funds available for the construction of an art gallery. The grand opening was in 1974.

After the closure of the David Thompson University Centre and its art gallery in 1984, the museum opened the Mildred Erb Gallery. In 1994 partial operating funds were secured from the provincial government, followed by similar funding from the City of Nelson the following year. This allowed for the hiring of one permanent staff member.

In 2000, the Kootenay Museum Association legally changed its name to the Nelson and District Museum, Archives, Art Gallery and Historical Society (MAAG). Ever since 1994 the Society has been seeking a larger and more centrally located facility. This quest has completed a full circle with a return to its original, ideally located and renovated heritage Post Office building.

## Chronology

### Pre-Museum

1897: First History of Nelson, BC

Written by Charles St. Barbe, a critical commentary by Tom Collins and, later, Dr. Edward Arthur.

1931: Charles W. Busk writes to the Nelson Daily News suggesting the formation of a historical society.

1931- 50: Nelson and District Oldtimers Association formed.

J Fred Hume, first President; R.G. Joy, Historian with regular newspaper column, "From an Oldtimers Notebook"; Ross Fleming continues collecting pioneers' history. Artifacts collected.

1932 – 50: Oldtimers display historical exhibitions in store windows, at Nelson's 1947 Jubilee and at Fall Fairs.

1940- 50: Nelson Art Club

Sponsors traveling and local art exhibits, while looking for permanent display space.

### Beginnings

1955: Kootenay Museum Association

Formed by Nelson Art Club and citizens interested to establish a facility for fine art and history. First Board of Directors' President, Mrs. Mildred Erb.

1955-59:

Temporary Museum space provided in the Post Office at 502 Vernon Street. Mrs. Erb is succeeded by Mr. Burnie Fetterley, President of the Board of Directors and Curator with Alan Ramsden, Secretary and Doreen Irving, Treasurer.

1960 – 1971:

City Hall occupies 502 Vernon Street, Nelson Museum relocates to the former Kansas City House Brothel, 618 Lake Street where major art and artifacts are exhibited.

1960's:

Ladybird Speedboat purchased by the Society for \$1.00=

1961: Society hosts B.C. Museums Association Conference. Mr. Fetterley serves as President of B.C.M.A.

1972: David Scott and Edna Hanic write *Nelson: Queen City of the Kootenays*.

1974: Kootenay Museum Association moves to new fire-proof building constructed as Nelson's "B.C. Centennial of Confederation with Canada Project" Major support is provided by Mayor Louis Maglio and Alderman Henry Coleman. Open regularly in summer, with occasional programs during the winter.

1980-84:

Society's name changed to Kootenay Museum Association and Historical Society. Alan Ramsden becomes President of the Board of Directors. Mr. Fetterley retires.

1984: Year round Operation begins after closure of David Thompson University Centre and Kootenay School of the Art Gallery. Shawn Lamb hired as Project Director.

1984: Temporary Exhibition Gallery opens on the lower floor: Regular exhibitions of art and history are displayed.

1985: Burnie Fetterley granted Freedom of the City 1986: Special exhibition on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Silver King Mine, curated by Helen Lee.

1987:

- Kootenaiiana Archival Fonds from DTUC Library transferred to Nelson Museum by Ron, former DTUC Librarian, and Greg Welwood.
- Regular column in N.D.N. on historical subjects begins and runs for ten years.
- Mural of Nelson First Events researched and painted on exterior of the building by L.X. Forde to honour Nelson's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Museum display room named to honour W.A. Fetterley and the exhibition room named Mildred Erb Gallery.
- Ladybird Room opens in the Museum showcasing the restored speed boat

1988:

- *Sports history of Nelson* exhibition curated by Fran Wallis and Barbara Brown held in conjunction with the Nelson B.C. Winter Games.
- *Nelson: The Beginnings* exhibition curated by Shawn Lamb and Karen Rymal in preparation for John Norris' research of Nelson's history.

1990: *Women of Nelson: 1880-1950* exhibition curated by Brenda Hornby and Yvonne Munro.

1991: *Following the Muse; History of the Arts in Nelson* exhibition: curated by Nicola Harwood and Sandra Hartline.

1992: *Moccasins to Michelins: History of Roads and Road Transportation* exhibition curated by Ron Butler and Alex Forde.. Models by Bert Learmonth.

1992-7: *Turning back the Clock* monthly TV series begins.

1994: West Kootenay Forest History Project adopted resulting in three publications from oral history transcripts: *A Life in the Woods* edited by Peter Chapman (Vol. 1) and Joel Russ (Vol. 2 & 3).

1990-95: M.V. Amabilis II Forest Service Launch acquired.

1994: *Nelson: A History in Pictures*: edited by Shawn Lamb and published by N.D.N.

1994:

- Boatshed constructed from M.V. Amabilis II by Dick Pollard and Brent Littlejohn.
- Partial operating funding secured from B.C. Arts Council
- *Winging It: History of Aviation in and Around Nelson B.C.* exhibition curated by Henry Stevenson with Judy Mulloy.

1995:

- *Historic Nelson: the Early Years* Vol. 1 by John Norris launched and sponsored by both the City of Nelson and Nelson Museum.
- *Loggers, Mill owners and Communities: Forest History* travelling exhibition curated by Charles Jeanes.
- Community Archives Task Force reports on the conservation and condition of local archival heritage held by public institutions and the Museum. Coordinator/Archivist: Annie Lowrey.

1996: Restoration of the Hull of the M.V. Amabilis II Project manager: Dick Pollard with Bruce Bate, Micah Dance and Patrick Hermary.

1997:

- *Celebrating the Century* a Nelson Centennial exhibition curated by Shawn Lamb
- *Centennial Sample: Nelson Photographers: 1890-1950* curated by Fred Rosenberg at the Nelson Centennial Gallery on Baker Street. Deanne Monroe, Director.
- Nelson Centennial Publications: *A Perfect Childhood: 100 Years of Heritage Homes in Nelson, B.C.* by Arthur Joyce; and *100 Days, 100 Years*, by Shawn Lamb, published with the Nelson Daily News.
- *100 Artists for 100 Years* a celebration of local and regional artists at Nelson Centennial Gallery, Baker Street sponsored by the Nelson and District Arts Council and the Nelson Museum. Foundation for the establishment of the Nelson Public Art Gallery Committee.
- Society hosts B.C. Historical Federation Annual Conference in Nelson.
- Partial operating funding from the City of Nelson enables the Kootenay Museum Association and Historical Society to hire Shawn Lamb as its first full-time Director.
- Participation in the planning process for the Nelson and District Parks, Recreation and Cultural Master Plan by PERC (Professional Environmental Recreation Consultants Ltd.)

1998-9:

Restoration of the cabin and deck of the M.V. Amabilis II: Dick Pollard, shipwright, Annie Lowrey, researcher.

1998: Nelson component for Canadian Museum of Rail Travel's Crowsnest Rail Line Centennial Exhibition, Katie Livingston, curator, model of C.P.R. Transfer Warf by Bert Learmonth.

1998 – 2004:

Nelson Public Art Gallery Committee begins to organize a public art gallery exhibition in the Mildred Erb Gallery The organizing committee (Pauline Dupas, Byron Johnstad, Carol

Reynolds, Stephanie Fischer, Deanne Monroe, Gene Leavitt, Brenda Hornby, etc.) exhibits adjudicated artwork of ten artists per year. Staff: Gail Green, Nicole Tremblay, and Amber Bear-Robe.

1998-2001:

Arrangements and Description of the Stanley G. Triggs, Kootenay School of the Arts (to 1984) and the N.D.U. Fonds by archivist Anne Lowrey, assistant Lisa Tremblay.

2000 – 2003: Stewart Enderton, Board of Directors President

2000: Name changed to the Nelson & District Museum, Archives, Art Gallery and Historical Society.

2000 – 2001: Research assistance for the Nelson Millennium Mural by Brian McLachlan.

2001: Restoration of the M. V. Amabilis II pilothouse, Dick Pollard, Shipwright.

1998- 2001:

Needs analysis for a new Museum, Archives and Art Gallery (MAAG) and functional suitability study completed; participation in the planning process for new cultural and recreational facilities. Referendum for Community Complex including new Museum, Archives and Art Gallery defeated.

2002:

- Society develops options for suitable sites for new museum, art gallery and archives, and purchases a small portable for additional workspace.
- *Painting our Past* exhibition curated by Shelly Anderson with Debra Bakowsky, Byron Johnstad and many volunteers.
- *Discovered* exhibition curated by Debra Bakowsky held at Procter's Storytelling Festival, and at downtown location including new Bert Learmonth model of Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray V.C.'s ship.
- Map, glass plate negatives and fine art collection restoration, documentation and storage upgrade project.

2002-2003:

Society contributes to the *Economic Impact Study of Arts, Culture and Heritage in Nelson and defined Regional Area E and F* carried out by Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited and conducted by Nelson and Area Economic Development Corporation.

2003:

- May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003 fire destroys M.V. Amabilis II, boat shed, and other boats including damage to the museum building that is closed for three months. Artifacts removed, cleaned, and building repaired.
- August 17, 2003 reopened with *Forward to the Past* exhibition curated by Byron Johnstad, Nicole Tremblay, Peter Bartl and Jane Merks.
- Virtual Museum of the Kootenays launched to provide outreach to the public after the closure of the W.A. Fetterley Exhibition Room. Developed by Alistair Fraser and Nicole Tremblay, available at <http://kootenaymuseum.ca>
- Successful R.D.C.K. referendum for new leisure facilities. MAAG will move to 502 Vernon Street when City Hall moves to an alternate site. City Council provides \$1 million toward the renovation of the former Post Office building into a new Nelson Museum, Archives and Art Gallery facility. Society commits to leverage the City's seed money.

2004:

- City of Nelson and Society establish MAAG/City joint building Committee.
- City representatives: Councillors Ian Mason, Michelle Mungall; MAAG Reps: Board Director Tim Pearkes, Project Manager Stephanie Fischer; Staff: Peter Hartridge and Kevin Cormack (City), Shawn Lamb (Museum).
- Don Lyon, Board of Directors President.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Nelson & District Heritage Fair held at Chahko Mika Mall for Nelson and Area students' grades 4-7. Judy MacPherson, Coordinator with jurors Eileen D. Pearkes, Linda Hoffmann, Al Lynas, Cathy Speirs, Guest artist Ron Mulvey and volunteers.

2004 -2006:

Museum Artifact Documentation and Storage Upgrade Projects undertaken by Jim Yule, Maureen McEwen with Shirley Reimer, Janet Mulloy, Heidi De Guglielmo, Daniel Trobak, Caitlin O'Connell and Nicole Tremblay.

2004:

- Stephanie Fischer hired as Project Manager for transition process.
- Board Committees established: Permanent Museum Exhibition and Collections Committee; Temporary Exhibition and Programming and Events Committee; MAAG Building Committee; Logo Committee; Fundraising Committee; Finance Committee; Strategic Development Planning Committee; Website Committee; Marketing and Communications Planning Committee; Gift Shop Committee.
- Over 1 million dollars additional building funding raised by the society. Corporate and Private Fundraising Campaign launched, the society currently continues the 'Capital Building fund' campaign.

2004:

- Visual Mark/Logo Competition held, Peter Bartl, chair.
- Public 'Open Houses' held on Baker Street and at the Chahko Mika Mall showcasing the new cultural facility.

2004 -5:

- Planning Process for move to 502 Vernon Street includes the Strategic Development Plan, Business Plan, Governance Manual, Marketing Analysis and Marketing and Communications Plan. Planning is funded and completed. Consultants are: Visionlink Consulting – Fiona Glass, Business Consultant-Fiona Matthews and Marketing Development – Barry Auliffe.
- Architectural planning completed and approved by the Society. Project Architects: Thomas Loh, MAIBC, and Fairbank Architects in a joint venture.

2005:

- MAAG building and construction project started; Unitech Construction Management Ltd. hired to oversee construction.
- Permanent museum Exhibition project started, Peter Galonski and Rick Budd hired to oversee design and fabrication of this project.
- Change of Constitution purposes and bylaws approved.
- City of Nelson increases annual operating fund contribution to the Society
- Society holds very successful 'Empty house/Open House' event at 502 Vernon before interior demolition begins.
- Executive Director, Leah Best, hired July 17, 2005. Shawn Lamb becomes Collections Manager.
- Society launches *The Silver King – from Discovery to Community*, a Community Memories, Virtual Museum of Canada Exhibit. [Link to special exhibit page](#) Web – Project Coordinator Nicole Tremblay

- 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the MAAG Society celebrated on November 5<sup>th</sup> at the Hume Hotel.

2005 – ongoing:

Over \$200,000 of private funds raised towards exhibition galleries, furnishings and the permanent exhibition.

2006:

- New Logo and Name launched at AGM
- Official launch of the Virtual Museum of Canada On-line Exhibit *The Dewdney Trail*. An exhibit that utilized regional collections and assistance from the Creston and District Museum, Trail Historical Society, Rossland Museum, Boundary Museum, Fort Steele Archives, Canadian Museum of Rail Travel, Cranbrook, Salmo Museum, and the Kettle River Museum. Project Manager Nicole Tremblay. [Link to special exhibit page](#)