



President's Note

David Hill-Turner, President.

Hello everyone and on behalf of the directors, I hope you are keeping well - and aren't too frustrated by another summer with no idea of what you will be able to do! Judging by the price of building supplies and bedding plants that are being plucked from nurseries as fast as they are put out, I can safely guess what many of us are up to!

While we are unable to meet in person, directors have been using Zoom to discuss and plan. We are working to launch our microgrant program this year. It will fund Nanaimo-related heritage projects. This is a unique program for a historical society when many societies are experiencing declining revenues and membership. The inability to meet in person has also had an effect on our paid-up membership which has declined since the personal meeting restrictions began. If you haven't paid your membership dues for 2021 and are still receiving the British Columbia Historical quarterly, the society paid your subscription so you would not miss its well-written stories as we transitioned our membership year.

The popularity of social media sites featuring Nanaimo is very encouraging. Directors have identified several projects for collecting and increasing awareness of our history but we need a few more hands on deck, as they say. If you have time, ideas and some experience, we encourage you to become more involved in our heritage by joining a committee or volunteering as a director. We have all the ingredients ready but we need members to become more involved in the society's operation and projects.

If you have any suggestions or questions about the society, please contact us at the address below.

Distinguished Service Award



Congratulations to Daphne Paterson on receiving the Distinguished Service Award, the NHS's highest recognition. Daphne has dedicated countless hours over four decades to the Publications Committee and has served on the executive, including as president. Daphne was instrumental in the founding of the Nanaimo Archives Society and also assisted the Nanaimo Yacht Club with establishing its archive. Daphne received her award from Mayor Leonard Krog at a socially distanced presentation on her doorstep!

To see the presentation, please visit

<https://youtu.be/q14Kmovl4Lg>

Daphne Paterson receives 2021
Distinguished Service Award
photo: Douglas Harding

Member opportunities

The Nanaimo Historical Society is a volunteer-run society. As the society reorganizes and prepares for new programs and event, please consider joining us as a volunteer at the board or committee level. It is an opportunity to meet people who share your interest in history and is an opportunity to share skills or develop new ones.

Board of Directors: We welcome the addition of people with adult learning, project planning and communications technology..

Committees: some meet regularly others 1-2 times per year.

Governance Committee - advises the board on policies and procedures

Programme Committee - developing learning programs, organizing refreshments, organizing rideshare

Leynard Microgrant Program - developing our community grant program

Origins: Remembering the Nanaimo Yacht Club

Oral History Project, 1986-1994

Rhonda Bailey, Nanaimo Yacht Club Heritage Committee

Reprinted from the Nanaimo Yacht Club 2021 yearbook, with permission.

The Nanaimo Yacht Club Heritage Committee was founded in 1986. Sam Bailey, while serving on the Bar Committee, had been listening to the stories of past commodores and other old-timers who in those days came to play cribbage in the bar or simply to get together after the meetings. Sam and others became convinced it was essential to record the memories of these long-time members in order to preserve some of the rich history of the Club.

Oral history is a term used to refer to first person recorded reminiscences of past events. At the time, I was working as managing editor for Oolichan Books in Lantzville. We had recently published *Boss Whistle*, Lynne Bowen's award-winning history of coal mining on Vancouver Island based on tape-recorded interviews with former miners. I was also working on a New Horizons oral history project with a group of seniors to preserve the history of the Islands Trust in book form. Due to this experience and my love of history, my husband Sam recruited me for the new NYC Heritage Committee.

When our project began, most members knew little about the club's early history. Even the exact founding date of Nanaimo Yacht Club was in doubt. The primary goal of the committee was to find and interview any remaining original members and the oldest past commodores. I contacted the BC Heritage Trust and obtained a copy of the provincial archives publication, *Voices: A Guide to Oral History*. We planned and carried out the project by carefully following its guidelines for equipment, the interview, and how to preserve and make interviews available for research.

In the early years, active committee members were Kate Hall (Chair), Sam and Rhonda Bailey, and Albert Dunn. Commodore Ted Lewis was very supportive and provided a tape recorder and microphone as well as a transcription machine. The committee was allotted a small budget for the purchase of supplies. We ordered cassette



Heritage Committee: Sam Bailey, Rhonda Bailey, Albert Dunn, Kate Hall. Photo: NYC Archives

tapes and archival quality storage boxes, labels, and files from an archival supply source. I prepared legal release forms for each interviewee and the interviewer to sign.

I set up appointments with interviewees and went to their homes, my list of questions and the tape recorder in hand. These interviews were a pleasure to do, and I did nearly all of them myself; only once did I turn the tape recorder over to Kate Hall. Not only was I meeting friendly people with interesting stories to tell, but I had begun to feel like a detective with a mystery to solve. One interview led to another in what had become a quest to find the origins of Nanaimo Yacht Club.

Many of the people I interviewed gave me collections of photos, correspondence, programs, and other memorabilia as donations to the Club. For example, Roberta Hirst, who had deep family connections to NYC, donated the family's papers and memorabilia related to the Club. Her uncle, Robert Dunsmore, served for 16 years as NYC's first secretary, and her mother, Olive Hirst, was NYC's first female member. Her father, Capt. Robert Hirst, participated in the International Power Boat Association predicted log races that often ended at NYC and were major annual events for the Club and the City to host.

Robert Dunsmore's papers provided our first solid information about the early years of NYC. At home, I began to amass a collection of boxes in the closet and under the bed.



Alec & Mabel Bell & Mayor Frank Ney.

Photo: NYC Archives

Past Commodore Ted Robinson was the NYC secretary at the time. Ted was a little slow to trust me and did not immediately agree to an interview. When he did agree, and I went to record him and his wife Edith at their home on Kennedy Street, I felt I had found the Holy Grail. Ted had the original minute book and boxes of other NYC records stored at his home for safe keeping. We were able to confirm the date of the first meeting as June 19, 1931 and see the record of who attended.

In 1988 the NYC held a Heritage Night and invited old-time members to join us to see displays of memorabilia as we celebrated the club and its history. Past Commodore Albert Dunn was an entertaining MC, and tapes were made of the evening's proceedings. Alec Bell, lone surviving member of the

Club from 1931, attended with his wife Mabel. In 1931, as a fundraiser to build a clubhouse,

the newly formed yacht club held a raffle with a Teal boat (1) as the prize. Alec Bell bought a ticket, won the boat, and immediately joined the Club, which led to many years of happy boating for him and Mabel. Mayor Frank Ney presented Alec and Mabel Bell with a miniature bathtub and bathtub hats.

Bill Hanna, who joined in 1932 and was NYC's longest continuous member, was in attendance, as was Ethel Johnston, wife of founding member Chick Johnston; Bill McGregor, son of the first commodore; and many past commodores. The event not only celebrated and showcased the history of the Club but also raised awareness of the value of the work of the Heritage Committee. As one person I interviewed said, "You can't know where you're going if you don't know where you've been."



Mr. and Mrs. Bill Hanna and Edna Bennett. Bill Hanna was the longest continuous NYC member (1932) at the 1988 Heritage Night event . Photo NYC Archives

We soon had 30 tapes, and it was time to have them transcribed. Roberta Hirst, a medical transcriptionist, did most of the transcriptions, and later Jo Lane did the remainder. The technology of the day was

used to save the transcriptions to large computer floppy disks. They were then printed and proofread. Transcription is time-consuming, and even though we were charged a reasonable rate, many hours of work were required. To help pay for the transcription costs, we applied for support from the BC Heritage Trust in the form of a grant, which was approved. Later, when the oral history project was completed and I sent in our report to the Heritage Trust. The NYC received a BC Heritage Award.

We now had valuable historical artifacts in the form of the interviews and about 10 boxes of donated photographs, minute books, correspondence, financial records, blueprints, etc. The next step was to establish a club archive to house these artifacts and future Club records as they were generated. On March 25, 1993 the Club approved the building of a "heritage storage vault" as part of basement renovations. As members became aware the Club would provide a reliable home for their material, we received more donations. In 1993, I was honoured to be named Yachswoman of the Year for my work on the Oral History Project.

Daphne Paterson, an active member of the Nanaimo Historical Society who had been instru-

mental in the recent founding of the Nanaimo Community Archive, had joined our committee and become a valuable contributor, as had Ann Mitton. We invited Jane Parkinson, the Community Archivist, to come to one of our meetings and do an assessment of our materials. She presented her written Archival Assessment at our March 1994 committee meeting, also attended by the NYC Executive. Her report ended as follows:

“... the Yacht Club is fortunate to have preserved a large body of material from its past. The Nanaimo Archives often receives requests from organizations that have completely lost their own history. With a minimum of expense, but clear sighted and well planned effort, an archives can be established as an enduring legacy for the club.”

Shortly thereafter, the NYC archive came into being when an archival policy was approved at an Executive meeting on November 14, 1994. Since that time, the Heritage Committee, a small, dedicated group of volunteers that has changed over the years and has included several past commodores, has been sorting, listing, and boxing Club records under the following original mandate for the archive:

“The NYC Archives shall be the official repository of the designated records of NYC. The NYC Heritage Committee shall be responsible for recording the history of the Club as well as the establishment and maintenance of an Archive to protect historical documents and artifacts.”

Although made with outdated analog technology over 30 years ago, the oral history interviews with NYC's early members are still accessible. We have the transcriptions, and the current Heritage Committee Chair, PC Sheila Boutcher, has had the cassette tapes converted to MP3 files. The voices of our old-time members are now conserved in digital form.

About the author

Rhonda Bailey had a long and interesting career in the book publishing industry and as a teacher. She holds a Master of Publishing degree from SFU. Bailey developed the publishing courses in the Creative Writing Dept. at VIU and taught them from 1993 to 2010, when she took early retirement and was made an honorary research associate. After her retirement, she travelled extensively and is currently studying Spanish (Zoom). Nonetheless, Nanaimo or Lantzville have always been home to her, and she is deeply rooted here.

About the NHS

Founded in 1953, the Nanaimo Historical Society has been an influential partner in advocating for the awareness, understanding and appreciation of our community's diverse heritage.

Nanaimo Historical Society

President:	David Hill-Turner	Directors at large:	
Vice President:	Sue Creba		Susan Garcia
Treasurer:	Tony Orchard		Darrell Ohs
Secretary:	Gordon Miller		

How to reach us



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[facebook.com/NanaimoHistory/](https://www.facebook.com/NanaimoHistory/)



<https://bit.ly/300ItRR>

Mailing address Box 933, Nanaimo, BC V9R 5N2

We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw people from whom Nanaimo takes its name.

Membership News

Change to membership year: For many years, your membership year was for 12 months from the month you joined the society. As of January 2021, membership will follow the calendar year, January 1- December 31. As we transition to the new term, your subscription to *British Columbia History*, the quarterly magazine of the British Columbia Historical Federation and a membership benefit, will not be affected.