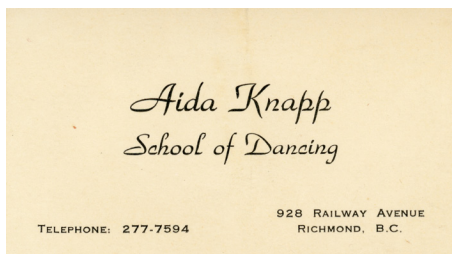


ArchivesNews

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Aida Trueman, photo taken in Paris in 1934.
City of Richmond Archives, photograph # 2003 28 13.



Aida Knapp, School of Dancing business card.
City of Richmond Archives, 2003 28



Aida Knapp with a group of young dance students in her studio, 1968.
City of Richmond Archives, photograph # 2003 28 22.

From the Richmond Archives Blog— Aida Knapp: A Life in Dance

Aida Knapp was a dance teacher in Richmond who taught many hundreds of students ballet, tap, jazz, modern and ballroom dance for 40 years in her studio on Railway Avenue and in various halls and auditoriums in Brighouse, Steveston, Ladner and Marpole.

Born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1911, she was an only child to parents Frank and Amy Trueman. The family moved to China in 1917 when her father, a textiles engineer, was sent there by his company. Aida was introduced to dancing while attending an American boarding school at Kuling in the Lushan District. Her first ballet lessons were in the Russian method of dance taught by an Australian instructor, Madame Kelly. Aida loved dancing and took as many lessons as she could, determined to be a professional dancer someday.

Aida and her family left China after she completed her high school education, around 1928. They settled first in Vancouver, where she resumed her dance lessons with the Duncan Barbay School of Dance, and then on Lulu Island. She financed her lessons by working in various theatres and clubs in Vancouver where she got her first break into show business when a travelling road company from England played a theatre where she was working. They needed some girls to dance in their production and Aida eagerly accepted the offer to go on the road with the company.

Aida's job was to travel ahead of the company, training new sets of dancers in each town, thereby reducing the need to travel with a large group of dancers and lessening expenses. The cost cutting measures were ineffective however as the company went bankrupt, stranding Aida in Ottawa.

Undaunted by this, Aida got on a train to Rhode Island where she stayed with her aunts and worked as a dancer in a chinese restaurant, making enough money to take more dance classes. She moved to New York where she attended auditions for dance companies and theatre productions, eventually landing a job in Atlanta Georgia at a luxurious hotel and theatre.

It was in Georgia that Aida was asked to join an act called "The Twelve Aristocrats", a very successful dance troupe known for their versatility and the variety of their dance styles. The Twelve Aristocrats played all over the United States and Europe in the years leading up to World War II and took part in the filming of a musical movie called "Calling All Stars" while in England.

As World War II grew nearer, the Twelve Aristocrats split up, some settling in London and others in New York. Aida returned to Lulu Island where her parents still lived. She was hired as the choreographer for the Palomar Theatre where she helped several girls get their start, including a young Yvonne de Carlo who went on to become a star in film and television.

It was during this time that Aida met her future husband, Elwood (Al) Knapp, who was working as a horse trainer at Brighouse Racetrack. In late 1939 they were



Aida and Al Knapp outside their home on Railway Avenue in 1992.
City of Richmond Archives, photograph # 2003 28 20.



Aida Knapp outside her dance studio, 1965.
City of Richmond Archives, photograph # 2003 28 19.



Aida Knapp with a student inside her dance studio, 1956.
City of Richmond Archives, photograph # 2003 28 18.

married. Al built a house at 928 Railway Avenue where they lived and raised two sons, Wesley and Frank. Aida decided to start a small dance school to help make ends meet, moving the furniture out of their kitchen every day to make room for a small dance floor. As her school grew the space became too small and she rented space in halls in Brighthouse and Steveston to hold her classes.

In 1950 Al built Aida a dance studio behind the family home. The dance school became a full-time job for Aida with as many as 200 students attending lessons six days a week. During her career Mrs. Knapp continued with her own education, attending dance workshops and conventions where she took additional training as well as giving instruction to other teachers.

Every June Aida would put on a dance recital where her students would perform the routines that they learned during the year. Costumes were made by the student's mothers, and the events were eagerly attended by parents, grandparents, friends and neighbours. Proceeds from the recitals always went to benefit a variety of community activities, such as in 1948 when the funds were given to the Fraser River Flood Relief program in Richmond.

Her students performed at many venues in Richmond and around Greater Vancouver, such as the Kitsilano Showboat, the PNE, the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, as well as in senior's centres, for various community service organizations, etc.

While some of her students went on to pursue dance in professional and semi-professional ways, most ended their dance instruction as teens, but with a great appreciation for the art of dance and with love and fond memories of the woman who taught them.

Aida taught dance until 1984 when she was in her 70s. The dedication and love that she demonstrated for the art of dance and for her students have made her a Richmond legend, remembered sentimentally by the generations of young dancers that she instructed. She passed away in 1998 at the age of 87 having left a legacy of contribution to her community that lives on long after her passing.



The Twelve Aristocrats in a scene from the movie, "Calling All Stars", London 1936. Aida Trueman on the far left.
City of Richmond Archives, photograph # 2003 28 14.

Archives Database and Web Search Upgrade

Thanks to funding from a 2015 one-time Council expenditure, we will soon launch our new Archives database, which will be available on the City of Richmond's website October 1, 2016. This upgrade will allow the Archives to provide a new level of efficient, 24-hour online service which will benefit the public, Council and City staff by increasing access to Richmond's past and present.

The new site will double the number of photographs available online and will have the capacity to easily add new content as material is acquired, processed and digitized. The new site will improve the user's experience by having an advanced map search, popular topics for all records search, a user-friendly interface, simplified navigation, high-resolution photographs and handy search tips.

Newly featured on the site are clickable maps which will allow users to focus their search to a particular location. Over 1,000 maps will be available online which show Richmond's development from a small fishing and farming community to a large modern city.

The new site will also feature over 5,000 newly digitized photographs from Ted Clark's vast photographic collection of streetcars, trolley coaches, Interurban trams and trains. This Interurban Tram collection has its own convenient search page, as does the BC Packers collection.

"The new online database will make it easier for users to engage with, and access the holdings of the City of Richmond Archives," says Jennifer Yuhasz, City of Richmond Archivist. "We are a vibrant organization with an active volunteer corps and dedicated Friends of the Richmond Archives, who, along with the City of Richmond, made this project possible. It is fitting that we will now have a dynamic website which better reflects the work that we do here at the City of Richmond Archives, collecting and preserving the rich 137-year history of the City of Richmond."



Aida Knapp's two sons, Frank (L) and Wes (R) pose with Sharon Michaud in this photo from 1958.

City of Richmond Archives, photograph # 2003 28 16.



Pupils of Aida Knapp – Sharon Michaud, Margaret Parker, Anita Carruthers, 1969.

City of Richmond Archives, photograph # 2003 28 17.



Students in a jazz class in Aida's studio, [ca. 1970].

City of Richmond Archives, photograph # 2003 28 26.



Group Prom Last Central Park Line Run, New Westminster Barns, July 16 1954.

City of Richmond Archives, photograph # 1999 4 2 621.



Archives Tea 2016

The annual Archives Tea, hosted by the Friends of the Richmond Archives, will take place this year on Friday, October 14 at 2:00 pm (doors will open at 1:30 pm). The Tea will be held again this year at the Minoru Place Activity Centre (formerly known as the Minoru Seniors Centre) across the plaza from the Richmond Library and Cultural Centre.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of our annual event. Guests are welcome, so please bring along friends who would enjoy taking part in this pleasant affair.

The Friends would once again like to thank the Minoru Seniors Society for its generosity and ongoing support in allowing the use of their Main Hall for the Tea.

We look forward to an afternoon of good food, excellent company and captivating conversation. Books from the Archives' publication program will be available for purchase as will the DVD of Ted Clark's 1949 film of the BC Electric Railway Lulu Island Line.



A.O.S. Party [aviation group] on December 19, 1953 at 1584 West 66th Ave., Vancouver. Eric Rathborne in centre wearing white jacket.

City of Richmond Archives, photograph # 1997 5 106.



Contractor Caitlin Lindsay, August 15, 2016.

Records Legacy Project

Thanks to funding from the City of Richmond, the Archives has recently hired a contractor for the second phase of the Bylaw Conservation Treatment Project. The first phase of the Bylaw Conservation Treatment Project was completed as part of Richmond's 125th birthday in 2004. This second phase of the Bylaw Conservation Treatment Project is also timely, with 2015 marking the 25th anniversary of Richmond's re-incorporation as a City from a Township, and 2017 marking Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation.

As part of this project, Fraser/Spafford Ricci Art & Archival Conservation Inc. were contracted to train Archives staff and contractor on a conservation treatment plan for the bylaws. Contractor Caitlin Lindsay has been hired to disbind and re-house all original bylaws from 1925 to approximately 1997. Caitlin is currently enrolled in the Dual Program (Master of Archival Studies/Master of Library and Information Studies) at the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at UBC. She graduated from McGill University in 2014 with a Bachelor of Arts in History. Currently Lindsay is a Digitization Assistant contractor with the Library Digital Initiatives at UBC. Caitlin has worked and volunteered at many heritage organizations over the last few years including the Langley Centennial Museum, the Vancouver Police Museum and the Jewish Museum and Archives of BC.

The City has a statutory requirement, under section 148 (a) of the Community Charter, to ensure "that accurate minutes of the meetings of the council and council committees are prepared and that the minutes, bylaws and other records of the business of the council and council committees are maintained and kept safe." This project will ensure bylaws are kept safe, accessible and preserved for future generations.

CITY OF RICHMOND
Archives

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Monday–Thursday, 9:00–4:30
Appointment recommended