

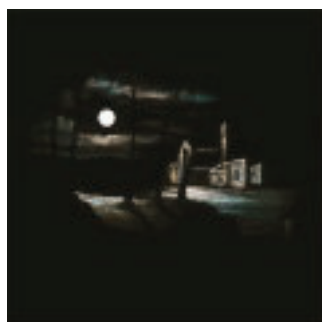
MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA – 18TH CONVENTION

Mary Ann Auckland

Around 50 people gathered in the beautiful city of Victoria on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, for the 18th Convention of the Magic Lantern Society of the US and Canada. Proceedings began in earnest bright and early (9:00am!) at the Metro Theatre, a community theatre with the Evans triennial lantern centre stage, on the morning of Friday 20 April. After introductions from **Ron Easterday**, the President, and **Lesley Evans**, chief organiser (along with **David Evans**), **John Adams** gave us a fascinating overview of the history of Vancouver Island, from the visit of Captain Cook in 1778 and Captain George Vancouver's 'discovery' in 1792, through the arrival of traders and miners, the Pig War of 1859 (disputing the US border), to the rather underhand tussle to keep Victoria as British Columbia's capital.

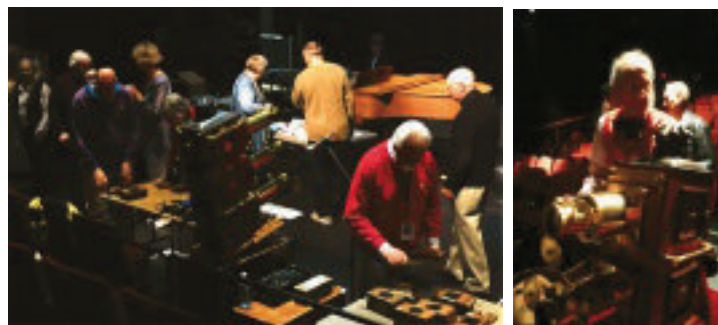


Bob Winquist then introduced us to some of the wonderful hand-coloured photographic lantern slides of Edward S. Curtis (1868–1952), the older brother of Asahel Curtis whose iconic images of the Pacific Northwest feature prominently in the excellent Convention publication *Once Upon a Lantern Slide in the Northwest*. The brothers worked together at one stage but fell out when Edward published Asahel's photographs of the Yukon under his own name. Bob took us around the US and Canada with Edward's own images, including to the Dakotas, New Mexico and Vancouver Island, as well as showing images of prominent native Americans for which he is particularly well known.



Melrose Abbey by day and night

Next **Bob and Sue Hall's** 'Sex for Boys' – a set of educational slides for young men – proved highly entertaining and a talking point for the rest of the event. Suffice to say that self-control was top priority and a brisk rub with a rough towel for four minutes helps. **Suzanne Wray** followed with *Charles Chase and the Electric Cyclorama* – one diagram showed an array of ten magic lanterns on a platform. George and I talked about Erasmus Ommanney's search, with magic lantern on board, for Sir John Franklin to mark the recent discovery of both Franklin's ships – *HMS Erebus* and *HMS Terror*. Then **David Donaldson** from Australia presented a charming film about Reg Perry who revisited, as a senior citizen, the building where he remembered seeing Salvation Army lantern slides being produced when he was a boy. **Gart Westerhout** followed, entertaining us from the piano in great style with illustrated song slides taken from old French postcards.



After dinner the American Magic-Lantern Theater Company – **Terry and Debbie Borton** with **Nancy Stewart** providing the music – put on their Scottish Spring Show. This featured the wonderful Joseph Boggs Beale set of Sir Walter Scott's *The Lady of the Lake* as well as many other gems including the comic story of Sally O'Casey, armed with parasol, and the goat. Even Ally Sloper put in an appearance as the theatre manager.



The Lady of the Lake

Saturday began with **Dick Moore** taking us with Stanley to 'Darkest Africa' (see p.1). **Mitsue Ikeda-Tanaka** showed a film of a workshop with participants making magic lantern slides. Following this several willing volunteers from the audience helped back-project a simple story using lanterns made from sake boxes and homemade slides like those in the film. Our adventures in Africa continued with **Mary Borgo Ton's** presentation on Samuel Crowther, the first African Anglican bishop, and his son Dandeson, who included comic slipping slides in their lantern shows. Although the humour of the visual pun was lost on the original audience, the slide of the boar's head swapping with the butcher's was far from 'boring' in this context. **Ron Easterday** and **Brian Rogers** (with appropriate additional 'ears') then presented rarely-seen Ensign Ltd slides of Mickey Mouse stories.

Janelle Blankenship presented some of her excellent research on Max Skladanowsky (1863–1939) the German magic lantern showman and film pioneer. Another rare treat came next – **David and Lesley Evans'** exquisite dissolving views. These included beautiful day and night scenes, a mysterious lake, Melrose Abbey and a busy bazaar. A tribute to Dick Balzer and Mervyn Heard was followed by **Margaret Bergh** dipping into the Marnan Collection of ragtime-era sheet music and illustrated song slides, some familiar from our own 2017 MLS Birmingham Convention. After an exceptional dinner with mystifying magic show from **Rick Swaney** (how did he produce so many wine bottles and levitate that table?) it was back to the theatre for a very Canadian show from **Professor Lindsay Lambert**, promoting a few dearly-held causes well illustrated with slides.

The Convention drew to a close with a business session and auction, the latter run with great panache by **Tom Rall**. Many congratulations to Lesley and David Evans for organising a thoroughly engaging and enjoyable event.



Professor Lindsay Lambert