

THE VANCOUVER AMAZONS



Miss Phebe Senkler

A WEST END STORY

The Vancouver Amazons A West End Story

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Women's hockey in B.C. it is said, has existed since the 1870s but began to thrive during the first 15 years of the 1900s particularly in B.C.'s West Kootenay region. The team from Rossland was B.C.'s best during these early years (1900 – 1916) with 1911 a highlight year as the Rossland ladies were proclaimed "World Champs". They have since been inducted into the B.C. Sports Hall of Fame.



In 1914, teams were formed in New Westminster and Victoria and to provide opposition and feed the rivalry, the Patrick family, owners of the Vancouver Millionaires and the team's new 10,500-seat Denman Arena, set out in February of 1914 to create a Vancouver City team.



1914 Vancouver Ladies Hockey Team



1914 New Westminster Ladies Hockey Team

Now included in this new three team inter-city league, Vancouver was not the only local women's team as U.B.C., beginning in 1915 and coached by student Sherwood Lett, also competed. Concluding this 1915 season Vancouver defeated New Westminster to win the league championship and the O.B.Allan Cup.

The Patrick family of hockey fame, particularly Millionaires player Frank Patrick, was key with regard to this new Vancouver team as the family had a residence in the city's West End with young Walter Patrick attending the West End's High School, King George. It was also King George High School who in 1917 provided the Vancouver Ladies' junior team, the "Swastikas", with seventeen year old goalie, Amelia Voitkevic and sixteen year old left-winger, Nan Griffith.



Amelia Voitkevic
1917 King George High School Grad.



Nan Griffith Center



F.R. Murphy Coach



Mabel White Defence



Greta Maddison Right Wing



Phebe Senkler Captain



Florence Johnston Rover



Virginia Hampton Goal



Gladys Griffith Left Wing

As the sports pages of the Vancouver papers reported, it was later in February 1918 that “a bunch of school girls” from the West End and attending King George, issued a challenge to the Vancouver Ladies team for the Lower Mainland championship. The West End girls with the Denman Arena on Georgia and Denman at their disposal, skating on Friday nights and on weekends watching the Millionaires, had formed a team in January 1918 calling themselves the Amazons. “How dare they! Was the exclamation which spouted from the lips” of the Vancouver Ladies team secretary upon reading that these “girls” were challenging the Vancouvers “to come and get defeated at hockey by the Amazons Girl’s Club” to quote the Feb. 3, 1918, Vancouver Sun.

After being stunned by the high schoolers audacity, the challenge was accepted by the City champions.

Meanwhile, the young Amazons were “not tickled, no, not A-tall” at the Ladies’ reaction to their challenge. Emulating the rough and tumble style of their role models the Millionaires, the Amazons scored 1-0, 2-1, 0-0 and in the championship match 1-0 victories, winning the challenge and wresting from the senior Ladies the city and lower mainland title. “Amazons Are Now Real Hockey Champs, B’Gosh” stated the March 28, 1918, Vancouver Sun. “That bunch of school girls” who made up the Amazons this season included King George students Nan Griffith, Phebe Senkler, Mabel White and Greta Maddison.

Although still a bit of a novelty, the Amazons, Vancouver Ladies and Swastikas were amazing the fans at Denman Arena with their “speed, daring, ability to handle the stick and shear abandon ... (the fans) fell for the ladies half a minute after they took to the ice.” Prominent in this experience was the “plucky play” of Nan Griffith who despite being cut and crashed into the boards, “refused to quit and no sooner was down she was on her blades again urging her teammates on with eager shouts”.

The following year, March 1919, the highly regarded Alberta champion Calgary Regents travelled to Vancouver in search of competition and to accommodate the Regents, a team of the best of the Amazons/Vancouver squads was formed, six of the eight players being Amazons. The fortified Amazons lost a close contest with Calgary, which was followed by the ladies being entertained at tea at the home of the Senklers, parents of the Amazons’ Senkler sisters. This whole experience was designed to create an awareness of the scope of women’s hockey in Western Canada and its commercial prospects. Spurred on by the Patricks, interest was ignited which together with the Amazons’ connection to this already legendary hockey family, created a definite “buzz” with hockeyists in B.C. and Alberta.



King George High School
Home to many of the Amazon Girls

The Amazons gained traction in early 1921 as did their compatriots the Millionaires, who this year won the Pacific Coast championship and came within one game of winning a second Stanley Cup. The Amazons with nine players and natty new red, black and white uniforms with the letters 'VA' on the front practiced under the watchful eye of Frank Patrick. Six of the players were from Vancouver's West End: Nan Griffith, Phebe and Norah Senkler, Kathleen Carson, Amelia Voitkevic and Greta Maddison. Voitkevic and Maddison were 1917 K.G. grads, Griffith a 1920 grad, while the Senkler sisters also attended King George, Norah playing on the school's basketball team in 1920. According to Wayne Norton's book, "Women on Ice" the distinguished Senkler family who lived in their grand house at 1889 Haro St., helped with contributions toward "...at least a portion of the financial requirements of the Amazons team..."



On February 1, 1921, the Amazons left for the Banff Winter Carnival as the first team to represent the coast at the annual Western Canadian women's hockey championship. Hockey was now becoming the most exciting and featured event at this Carnival. Reaching the Tournament semi-final the Amazons faced defending champion Calgary Regents led by forward Pansy Pue, but lost 4-1 to the team who would win it all again this year. Less than three weeks after returning to Vancouver, the Amazons, or more specifically Frank Patrick, launched a West Coast tournament with the Amazons hosting teams from Seattle and Victoria. The two new teams did not offer much competition as the Amazons with six of the nine players King George girls, outscored them by an aggregate 13-0 over four games thereby claiming the West Coast title.



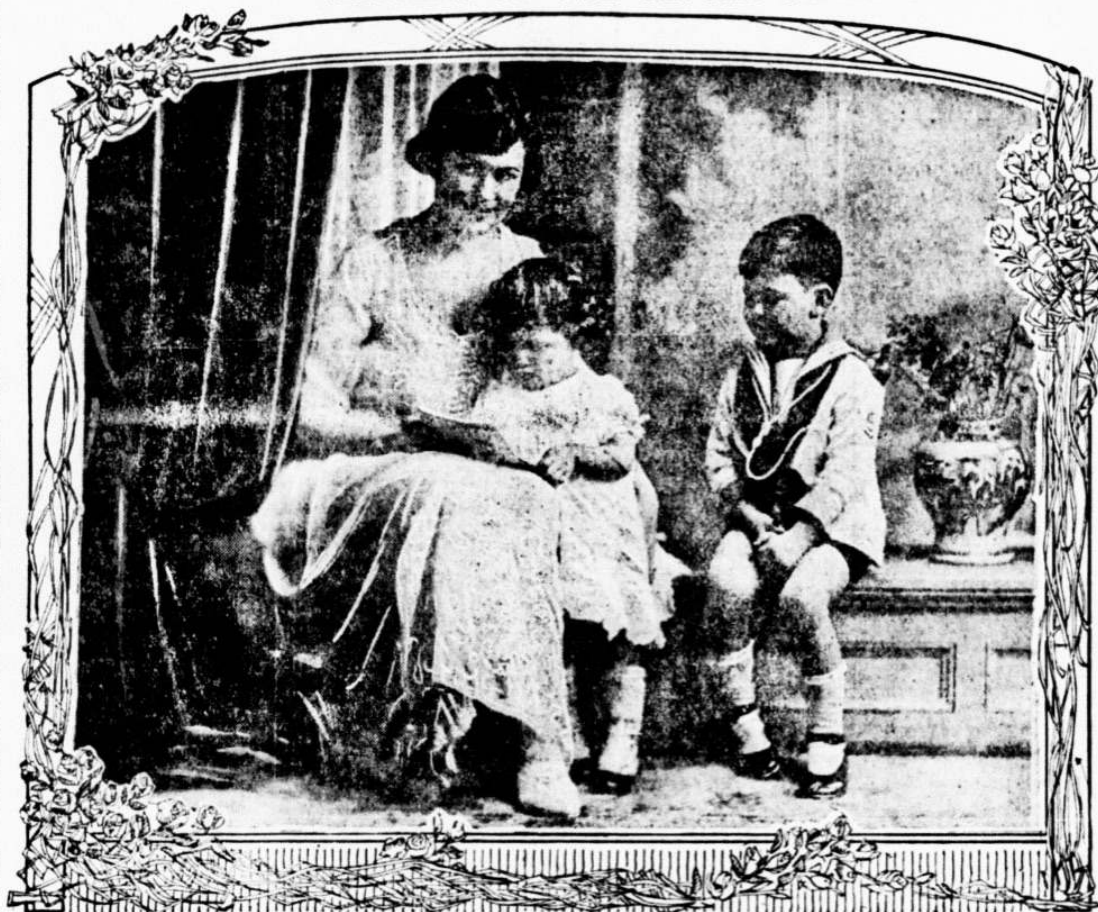
1922 Vancouver Amazons Championship Team

A confident Amazons team returned to Banff for the February 1922 Carnival Tournament although unlike the other teams had not been recently tested as no competition could be found on the coast. But the team was still led by the King George girls; goalie Voitkevic, Griffith, Carson and the Senkler sisters and under the guidance of Guy Patrick, was in search of their first western championship and coveted Alpine Cup. Despite being relaxed and confident the Amazons lost an exhibition game 1-0 to the upstart but potent Calgary Byngs. However for political reasons in Calgary, the Byngs were disqualified and the Amazons would therefore meet the Calgary Regents (who had political clout) for the championship. In a further twist, the Amazons, short two players due to injuries, were allowed to replace one of them from the disqualified Byngs – there being no love lost between the Byngs and the Regents. In that final game on the open-air rink in thirty below weather, the Amazons prevailed, a 2-1-overtime victory over the defending champions on two goals by Kathleen Carson. It was for the fan favorite Amazons a circuitous route to becoming 1922 “Lady Champions of Western Canada”. To quote Wayne Norton, “It had been a year to remember for the Vancouver Amazons despite the curiosities of their games against the Byngs and Regents. Captain Phebe Senkler had presided at Carnival events as queen and had led the team to a championship at Banff – women’s hockey’s most acknowledged prize in Western Canada.” And as it happened the ’22 Amazons proved to be one of only two teams from B.C. to win the championship during the 19 years of this, Canada’s major woman’s hockey tournament. Also interesting was that star and K.G. grad Kathleen Carson was contemplating a career change as she prepared to marry into the most famous hockey family in the country: the Patricks.





**PATRONESS FOR DANCE BY VANCOUVER AMAZONS,
WINNERS OF THE ALPINE CHAMPIONSHIP CUP**



MRS. FRANK PATRICK WITH JOE AND GLORIA.

It is worth noting that the Amazons were pioneers in the sense that they were the first women's team from B.C to travel extensively – that is, the first team from the west coast to undertake the expense and time to travel to compete at Banff, a relatively long distance at the time. It wasn't until 1926 that a team from as far away as Vancouver – in this case the University of Manitoba – attended the Banff Winter Carnival. Among the west coast teams and even Alberta teams, the Amazons set themselves apart not just in their appeal but also in their willingness to travel a significant distance to compete.

According to Norton's "Women on Ice", from the perspective of women's hockey in B.C. there was no greater prize available than the one awarded with victory at Banff and the Amazons in '23 were eager to relive those moments of glory. However heading to Banff there were changes to the Amazons' lineup. The Senkler sisters were now at college in Montreal, Kathleen Carson was now Mrs. Guy Patrick yet still playing, while the team added renowned B.C. all-round athlete, Doris Parkes. At age 16 Doris had moved from North Vancouver settling in the West End living on West Hastings then on to Gilford Street. But this year's team had slipped a little as the Fernie Swastikas (a symbol of good fortune) led by "fast travelling brunette Dahlia Schagel", easily wrested the Alpine Cup from the West Coasters then held off the Calgary Regents to become the new champions of Western Canada.

The always-successful Amazons annual fundraising dances drew Vancouver's social elite together with players and members of the Patrick family. Attending in 1924 was the Baker family (friends of the Senklers) who would shortly after be witness to the legal services of prominent Vancouver barrister John Senkler, father of the sisters, as he would defend the Chinese houseboy accused of murdering the Baker's nursemaid Janet Smith. It remains to this day the most mysterious murder in Vancouver history.

The trip to Banff in '24 was again a disappointment. Even with Voitkevic, Griffith, Phebe Senkler and Kathleen Carson Patrick still on the roster the Amazons lost in overtime to the Calgary Hollies who would ultimately become 1924 Alpine Cup winners and western champions.

The next year it was the same story. Despite an outstanding performance by goalie Voitkevic the "B.C. fair ones" lost to the "far superior" Calgary Hollies, the "local fair ones", who went on to defeat the Patricians and Coleman to again win the Alpine Cup.



Doris Parkes
 Vancouver Amazons
 1931
 Banff Carnival Queen

POPULAR FIGURE AT
 BIG BANFF CARNIVAL



MISS PHOEBE SENKLER

carnival queen and captain of the famous Amazon hockey team of this city which has gone to Banff to defend championship honors won last year. The team will play on Monday.

Vancouver Daily World Jan 1922

The 1926 Amazons now featured three Senkler sisters (who's home on Haro Street would be no more than three short blocks from the Denman Arena) plus returning for her fourth year, the ever-athletic Doris Parkes. Not only a hockey standout, Parkes was a champion speed skater and known both in B.C. and Alberta as an outstanding all-around athlete. Meanwhile at the Tournament, the Amazons opened with a 2-0 victory over a team from Banff but then lost by the same score to the ultimate winners, University of Manitoba.

By 1927 a pattern had emerged as far as the Amazons were concerned. Despite five of the members of the 1922 champion team still on the roster (all five West Enders), the Amazons were just not good enough at the "classic" Banff event, being outclassed mostly by Alberta teams. It had now been close to ten years those West Enders/King George grads had served as the core, the backbone of the Amazons team.

Following the 1927 season it appeared to be the end of the line as the team had all but disbanded. A 7-1 victory over Revelstoke on Feb. 15, 1927 was their last recorded game. However after a three year hiatus the Amazons reorganized led by Doris Parkes, Norah and Phebe Senkler along with six players new to the team. Parkes in particular worked hard to bring the Amazons back to life and back to the Banff Carnival for the 1931 tournament. They defeated Banff 5-0 but then were defeated 3-0 by Edmonton who was en route to the Tournament championship. Parkes performed well playing impressive hockey, doing very well in the speed skating events and acquitting herself well as the 1931 Carnival queen.

By 1932 team captain Parkes was such a familiar sports personality newspapers were referring to the women's team as "Doris Parkes and her pals". She did win the 1932 Carnival speed skating gold but the Amazons with a completely new roster outside of Parkes, which included the West End's Corlett sisters, were once again eliminated by Edmonton who would win its fourth straight Tournament title.

Goaltender for Vancouver Amazons



MISS AMELIA VOITKEVIC, the brilliant goalkeeper of the Vancouver Amazons, who is one of the cleverest female net exponents at the Coast, and who on former years has made many spectacular saves for her team in games for the Alpine Champion Cup at Banff, and who will this year be at her old post again. The Amazons are giving their annual dance on Tuesday at the Alexandra Academy.

“Betty” Hinds

Photo owned by Leslie Clauson

Reported to be the first woman from B.C. to score a hat trick.



The team did not return in '33 however, as the Amazons had called it a day. Women's hockey in general was in decline as men's professional hockey was gaining more of the available resources. In fact the demise of the Amazons signaled the virtual end of women's hockey in southwest B.C. It would be a little over three years later that the Denman Arena would burn to the ground, it having served as the facilitator for a generation of young men and women to pursue and excel in hockey... for West Enders, King George students, the Millionaires and the Vancouver Amazons. Yet the Amazons did quite well over the years, perhaps not quite as much success as the Alberta teams but one has to consider that unlike other parts of the country Vancouver did not have much if any natural ice – the Denman Arena being the only ice surface – and the team had very little competition. But the team's determination produced staying power more than most other teams around plus had energy and optimism to go with their dedicated supporters and players.

Ann Clark wrote in *The Province* in 1934, "It will be remembered how in past years the old Amazon team used to cover themselves in glory at this (Banff) great affair. Ice hockey has long been a favorite with Vancouver girls and have usually been able to more than hold their own with any team they have ever met up with."

Sources

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City of Vancouver Archives

The Vancouver Amazons



1922

Their trip to the Alpine Cup

As reported in the newspapers of the day.

LOCAL LADIES' HOCKEY TEAM WILL PLAY AT CARNIVAL

Among the many parties which will leave Vancouver to visit the Banff Winter Carnival, which is being held from January 28 to February 4, will be the Vancouver Amazons, the ladies' hockey team which last winter won the Pacific coast championship in competition with teams from Seattle and Victoria. This is the second time the natty red, black and white uniform of the Amazons will make its appearance at the Banff winter sports. Last year the team played three games there, one of which was a long, overtime struggle. The Amazons will leave Vancouver on Sunday, arriving at Banff on Monday afternoon and playing their first game on the same evening.

Following the Banff carnival, there is a possibility that the team may visit Calgary and Edmonton for exhibition games. Both of these cities will have competitive teams at the carnival, so that sufficient opportunity will be given for one club to prove itself decisively the best team.

The Amazons, who will be chaperoned by Mrs. Green and managed by Guy Patrick, consist of the following players, most of whom appeared on last year's lineup: Goal, Miss Amelia Voltkevic; defence, Miss Phoebe Senkler (captain), and Miss Nora Senkler; forwards, Miss Betty Hinds, Miss Nan Griffith, Miss Kathleen Carson and Miss "Johnny" Johnson. It will be recalled that Miss Phoebe Senkler was elected Queen of the Carnival for 1921.

The Vancouver Daily World

Thursday January 26, 1922

AMAZONS WILL BE CHALLENGED

(World Special)

BANFF, Alta., Jan. 28.—At least two fast teams of lady hockey players will put the Vancouver Amazons on their mettle in the carnival hockey events here opening today and continuing all next week. The Regents of Calgary are the champions of Alberta for the past two years and the Red Deer team of Red Deer intends to put up a strong challenge.

Word has been received at carnival headquarters here that the Amazons will arrive the first of the week to meet the winners of the Regents and Red Deer game, to be played tomorrow night. The Amazons will probably play two matches.

Miss Phebe Senkler, carnival queen and guest of honor of the week, arrived last night. There is no indication so far as to who the next queen will be, although a few nominations are already in.

The professional ski jumping contest against the world's record will take place on Monday instead of Saturday, as scheduled. Henry Hall of Detroit is present champion, with a record of 229 feet.



The Vancouver Amazons arrive in Banff

Left to right:

Miss Phebe Senkler, Mrs B.E. Green, the chaperone:
Mrs Florence Johnson, Miss Kathleen Carson,
Miss Mayne Leahy, Miss Norah Senkler, Miss Lorraine
Cannon, Miss Amelia Voltkevic, Miss Nannie Griffiths.

The Province 1922

Girls Play Swift Clean Hockey

Amazons Have Chance of Victory

(From a Staff Correspondent.)

BANFF, Jan. 30.—With the arrival here of the Amazons, ladies' hockey team from Vancouver, interest runs strong in the prospects for victory over the Regents of Calgary, who won from Red Deer on Saturday night with a score of 3 to 1. With Red Deer eliminated, Vancouver will be in the finals.

Miss Phebe Senkler, captain of the Vancouver team, was an interested spectator of the game. She looked a little serious when asked for an opinion as to the chances of the Amazons to bring back the honors to the coast city.

"We played the Regents last year and we know them to be a pretty strong combination to tackle. But we certainly intend to put forth our best efforts," said the Vancouver captain. Miss Senkler expressed her pleasure at having the assistance of the team's manager, Mr. Guy Patrick, this year. On the Amazons team in addition to the captain are the Misses Norah Senkler, Betty Huids, Kathlelen Carson, Loraine Cannon, Amelia Volkevich, Florence Johnson and Nan Griffiths.

The game between the Regents and Red Deer was swift and clean with very little penalizing. The crowd was enthusiastic and cheered each side with vigor.

The game made a pretty sight under the brilliant colored lights strung above the open-air rink on the Bow river. The Regents were very smart in green and white, while Red Deer were neat in black and green sash. Sweaters, bloomers and wool stockings

comprised the girls' skating outfit. The Regents were considerably the heavier team, but Red Deer gave them plenty to do. They were nimble and fast, but seemed to miss their opportunities to score on the forward line.

In spite of the aggressiveness of the Calgary team some of the fans expressed the opinion that the Amazons will "trim the bunch." The Vancouver girls made themselves great favorites last year, and if they win it will be a popular victory.

It is possible that the Amazons may play an exhibition match on Wednesday. The championship finals take place on Saturday evening.

Miss Griffiths Nominated

Miss Nan Griffiths, of Vancouver, a member of the Amazon hockey team, was nominated for Queen of the Carnival here today. Other nominations are Miss Ursula McLatchie, of the Regents hockey team, Calgary, and Miss Fern Brewster, of Banff. While Miss Brewster is an exceedingly popular girl, there is a strong feeling that the honors should either go to the coast or to the east. Miss Griffiths has a good chance to win the laurels.

Sharp weather prevails. The thermometer read 30 below this morning.

Dr. and Mrs. J. C. Farish, of Vancouver, are here and the doctor visited the rink this morning to keep in form for the figure skating contests in which he will endeavor to win honors for Vancouver.

Other arrivals include L. A. Howson and Mrs. Howson. Mr. Howson is president of the Revelstoke Ski Club and will be in charge of the tournament on February 7 and 8.



PHOEBE SENKLER INJURES HER KNEE IN HOCKEY GAME

(By a Staff Correspondent.)

BANFF, Alta., Feb. 2.—Miss Phoebe Senkler, Banff's Carnival Queen, was injured last night when she fell on the ice during the hockey game between the Vancouver Amazons and Calgary Byngs. Dr. Farish of Vancouver, who was a spectator, attended Miss Senkler, and says that he does not think her injuries will prove serious, although it was thought at first she had fractured her knee. She may not be able to play Saturday night, and if such is the case the team will be greatly handicapped.

The Vancouver Daily World Feb. 2, 1922

AMAZONS WIN HOCKEY TROPHY

Vancouver Girls Trim Cal-
gary and Take Al-
pine Cup.

The next few pages are about the winning of the
Alpine Cup as reported by "the Province"
newspaper Feb. 6, 1922

AMAZONS WIN.

After playing ten minutes overtime the Vancouver Amazons Saturday defeated the Regents of Calgary by a score of 2 to 1, and won the Alpine Cup and gold medals, as being the champion ladies' hockey team for Western Canada. The game was fast with hard, close checking. At the end of the first period the score was 1 to 0 in favor of the Regents, this goal being scored by a glance off one of the Amazons' skates on a pass by one of her own team mates.

This was the only counter for the Regents throughout the game.

In this period Florence Johnson was penalized for two minutes, after being hit on the head by one of the Regents, to which she retaliated. After going to the penalty box she collapsed and had just reached the dressing-room when Nannie Griffiths was also laid out, leaving the Amazons with only six players. Although shot after shot was rained in, it was impossible for the Regents to penetrate the Amazon's goal, owing to the "eagle eye" of Amella Voltkevic, who played a magnificent game.

GOES BACK INTO GAME.

In the second period Florence Johnson was able to continue in the game and Lorraine Cannon substituted for Nannie Griffiths. Owing to Captain Phebe Senkler being unable to play on account of injuries received in Wednesday night's game against the Byngs, Helen Tees, goalkeeper for the Byngs, substituted on the defense for the last two periods in the place of Mayne Leahy and made two rushes clear through the opponent's defense, both shots going wide.

During this period also Kathleen Carson and Nora Senkler made some wonderful shots from wings, the whole team working well together. At this stage the Regents seemed to get disorganized and run all over the ice. The Amazons taking advantage of this, fed Kathleen Carson the puck, who continued to rain shots on the Regents' goal.

Mayme Leahy again went back on defence in place of Florence Johnson, and in this period Kathleen Carson was penalized for two minutes for tripping.

CALL FORTH CHEERS.

Going on the ice for the third period the Amazons were enthusiastically cheered by the spectators, Lorraine Cannon again substituted for Nora Senkler for several minutes. Shortly after, Kathleen Carson secured the puck, went straight down the ice, broke through the defence and by a neatly-placed shot scored the tying goal amidst great cheering from the spectators. For the rest of this period both teams fought desperately, but were unable to break the tie.

Three minutes after the overtime commenced, Kathleen Carson repeated her spectacular play by again scoring a goal, which proved to be the winner.

Throughout the game the Regents, a much heavier team of older and more experienced players, put up a wonderful fight for the trophy which they have held for the last two years, but the Vancouver defense staved off all their efforts.

Captain Phoebe Senkler directed the game from the fence and every member of the team put all her energy into the game.

The star of the Calgary team was undoubtedly Ursula McLatchie with S. Brewster and Mrs. G. V. Copping working splendidly in combination.

The Vancouver lineup was Amelia Voltkevic, goal; Florence Johnson and Helen Tees, defense; Nannie Griffiths, centre; wings, Kathleen Carson and Norah Senkler; substitutes, Mayme Leahy and Lorraine Cannon. Some of the team will stop off at Revelstoke for the carnival there but will return to Vancouver in the middle of the week, with their well-earned championship cup and medals.

VANCOUVER'S LADIES' HOCKEY TEAM WILL DEFEND TITLE TO ALPINE CUP AT BANFF

As reported in the Province newspaper Feb. 3, 1923



