

In Praise of Researchers

Janet Turner, Archivist

The ultimate purpose of all the Archives' activities – acquiring and preserving records, arranging and describing them – is to provide the raw material for a range of research projects so broad that we cannot possibly anticipate them. And as important as it is to advertise our holdings, it is also inspiring to learn what stories they help, and have helped, to tell.

Numerous publications in our library attest to the wealth of materials for writing historical works. *Where Mountains Meet the Sea*, and *The Native Voice: the Story of How Maisie Hurley and Canada's First Aboriginal Newspaper Changed a Nation*, just two of the most recent titles, are excellent examples of traditional products of archival research.

We've also been fortunate to assist with some unusual projects recently. The Canadian Explorations Heritage Society (also called the Canadian EH Society) is planning a period re-creation of Don and Phyllis Munday's 1926 expedition to Mt. Waddington. In their own words, "the adventures we re-create are authentic, complete with period specific gear and clothing as well as the technology of the day". Their goal in coming to the Archives was to search the BC Mountaineering Club records, for

supply and equipment lists, and photographic evidence of the clothing the Mundays would have used.

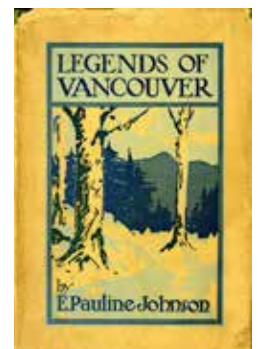
From old-school to the digital age, Polygon Gallery has commissioned an app-based, site-specific audio/video drama set in a North Vancouver shipyard in 1943.



Bitter Air follows twelve characters that ghost over fourteen different locations on the site of the former shipyard. As the characters move around the shipyards, so too does the user of the app. Building plans, photographs, and stories from the Archives will provide the visual layers of this self-guided walking tour into the past.

A planned scholarly annotated edition of Pauline Johnson's *Legends of Vancouver* brought a researcher who wanted to trace the origins of Johnson's retelling of local Squamish stories to their source: Joe Capilano, his people, and the lands in which the stories are set. An online guided walking tour of Indigenous sites based on legends contained in Johnson's book, including images from the Archives, has also been created (www.legendsofvancouver.net).

These projects, along with an in-depth study of the Marine and Shipbuilders' Union – Local 506, and others, all made use of the Archives' holdings in the first two months of 2018. Through these researchers, our Archives do indeed, speak.



*"It depends on those who pass
Whether I speak or am silent"*

Verse by Paul Valéry

on the wall of a library & archives in Paris



A Century Ago: District Fire Brigades

by Sharon Proctor

A century ago the District of North Vancouver was a series of isolated communities, each with its own little business centre. Buildings were mostly made of wood and were quite flammable. And summer often meant brush fires. Three communities had a volunteer fire brigade a century ago. They were Capilano, North Lonsdale, and Lynn Valley. Each brigade consisted of four or more men, plus a Fire Chief who reported to the District Council. Fortunately fire hydrants were scattered about, and each brigade had a good water source – Capilano River (Capilano), Mosquito Creek (North Lonsdale), and Lynn Creek (Lynn Valley).



North Lonsdale's fire hall and hose-drying tower, circa 1915. NVMA 4609

North Lonsdale's "fire hall" was a wooden shack, with double doors and a ramp in front. Beside it was a tower for drying hoses. Both sat on land occupied today by a private home (120 East St. James). Inside the shack was a two-wheeled, rotary cylinder, called a "hose-reel," with a fire hose wrapped around the cylinder. The Fire Chief lived nearby. When a fire was reported, he would ring a loud bell. The volunteers would run to the hall, grab the hose-reel, pull it by hand to the fire, and hook the hose to a nearby hydrant. Once the fire was out, the men would return to the fire hall and hang the wet hose from the top of the tower.

The Lynn Valley fire hall sat on the northwest corner of Centre Road (now Mountain Highway) and Ross Road. A fire would be phoned-in to either the post office in the Fromme Block or Stan Nursey's Hardware Store. Then someone would dash to the fire hall and turn a crank to set off a siren. The brigade volunteers would rush in, grab the hose-reel, and pull it to the fire-scene. As with North Lonsdale, the wet hose was hung to dry on a high tower beside the hall.

Unfortunately there's little information on the Capilano brigade. We know its fire hall sat at the Capilano street-car terminus (School Street and Bowser Avenue), now

under the Upper Levels Highway. And we know it used a hand-pulled hose reel, like that of the other two brigades.

Overseeing the three fire brigades was the District Council's "Fire & Light Committee," which ensured each had both adequate equipment and a fire hall in good repair.



Volunteer fire fighters in front of the Lynn Valley fire hall, 1920. NVMA 474

Sources: Walter Draycott, "Early Days in Lynn Valley"; District Council Minutes; Roy Pallant, "DNV Socio-Historical Service Infrastructure, Early History of the Fire Department; photo notes, North Vancouver Archives; North Shore Press.



Top: Old hand-pulled hose reel on display outside of City Fire Station No. 1 (East 13th & St. Georges), 2017. Sharon Proctor photo
Bottom: Typical brush fire that threatened District communities in the early years, 1913. This one started at the top of St. Georges, in North Lonsdale. NVMA 106

Young Poet in North Vancouver

by Sharon Proctor



Five-year-old Patsy Lou, with her grandmother Annie Wilkes, 1939-1940. At this age she was writing plays, using such words as "very coyly" in her stage directions. Photo courtesy of Chris Lowther.

Pat Lowther was a highly gifted Canadian poet. Unfortunately she died tragically in 1975 at age 40, at the start of what would have been a remarkable poetic career.

She was born Patricia Louise Tinmouth on July 29, 1935, the first child of Arthur and Virginia Tinmouth. Arthur was working at Burrard Dry Dock, and he and Virginia lived on East 10th Street. In 1936 Arthur became "Watershed Sanitary Inspector for the Lynn

Creek Watershed." So the family moved into the "caretaker's house" in Upper Lynn Creek (now Lynn Headwaters Park). It was here that creek-waters were diverted to water tanks and to Rice Lake, both providing drinking water to the City of North Vancouver.



Seven-year-old Patsy Lou, circa 1942. Lacking playmates, she created an imaginary adult-friend named "Bonnie," who wore a long skirt that swept the floor and walked without feet. Bonnie came from a place "where it never got dark." Photo courtesy of Chris Lowther

According to Virginia, "Patsy Lou" was a quiet, deep-thinking, curious, and intelligent child. There were no neighbours here, and thus she had no playmates. She learned to read with her mother's help. First was words on *Campbell's* soup cans at age two, then words in children's books. She wrote a poem at age three, could read the *Vancouver Sun* by age four, was writing plays by age five, and by age six she'd read all of L. Frank Baum's "Oz" books.

She loved living in Upper Lynn Creek. Years later, she would write (slightly edited)... "When I was a child, my father worked with water, adjusting flow and level, going out from his bed into three-in-the-morning storms to keep the screens clear. And once he took me to Rice Lake where no one is allowed – the water was flat as pavement papered with fallen leaves and flat wooden walkways..."

In 1941 she had to start school. So Arthur returned to Burrard Dry Dock and moved the family back to the City (164 East 4th). Patsy Lou entered Ridgeway Elementary School. Around 1942 the Tinmouths moved up the hill (233 East 12th); by 1949 they'd moved again (309 East 10th). Meanwhile, Patsy Lou wrote poems in both elementary and high school. One she wrote at age 10 won a prize in the *Vancouver Sun's* "Uncle Ben's Sun Ray Club." At North Vancouver High School, "Pat" was assistant editor of the school's *Nova High News*, and wrote poems for the school yearbook, *Columbae*. She quit high-school after two years.

LET ME NOT DIE

**Let me not die in darkness and in peace,
Let not the breath go quietly from me.**

**Let me die in a raging, tearing storm
Between a wind-blown sky and a wind-blown sea.**

**Let me walk out upon a hill,
Let me touch stars and wind and rain
Let all the springs and autumns flow through me
Let me know joy and sharp, exulting pain.**

**And when my heart is cold and still
If I must lie beneath the quiet earth,
Let it be when the trees are stark and brown,
Let it be close beside the moaning surf.**

Poem by 15-year-old Pat Tinmouth, printed in North Vancouver High School's 1950-51 yearbook *Columbae*. NVMA fonds 43 (North Vancouver High School)

Today the League of Canadian Poets awards its annual "Pat Lowther Memorial Award" for a poetry collection written by a Canadian woman.

Continued on back page...



North Vancouver's Museum & Archives exists to engage, strengthen and inspire our community and its visitors by exploring history, connecting people and sharing ideas.

Our website:
nvma.ca

Walter Draycott's Great War Chronicle
GreatWarChronicle.ca

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BOOKS FEATURING PAT LOWTHER POEMS

- This Difficult Flowring*, 1968
- Milk Stone*, 1974
- A Stone Diary*, 1977
- Final Instructions*, 1980
- Time Capsule: New and Selected Poems*, 1997
- The Collected Works of Pat Lowther*, 2010



Our sincere thanks to Pat's daughter Chris Lowther for providing the author with family scrapbook photos, notes, and other input for this article.

Other sources: City Directories; Provincial Government records (re: Lynn Creek Watershed); City Council Minutes; North Vancouver High School yearbooks (NVMA collection); author Toby Brooks' notes re: 1989 interview with Pat's mother Virginia (SFU Archives); Vancouver Sun, 1939; Wikipedia.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR **2** EVENTS IN APRIL!

THURSDAY APRIL 12, 2018 (5:00 TO 7:00 PM) BUSINESS AFTER 5 - "THROWBACK THURSDAY" AT THE ARCHIVES

A networking cocktail reception hosted in association with the North Vancouver Chamber of Commerce. Connect with friends new and old, and tour the Archives where the stories and images of people, places and businesses past and present are preserved. Register in advance. Tickets are available online at business.nvchamber.ca/events.

FRIDAY APRIL 27, 2018 (EVENING) 5TH ANNUAL NIGHT FOR THE MUSEUM FUNDRAISER

Celebrate with us at the fabulous new Polygon Gallery on the waterfront, where we'll welcome over 200 guests for an evening of delicious food and drink, music, and live and silent auctions. Proceeds will support the ongoing work and outreach of the NVMA. Tickets will go on sale in early March. Watch your inbox or nvma.ca for a link to online ticket sales.



LOOKING FOR A FUN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY?

If you're interested in volunteering at an event, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Just give us a call or e-mail.

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