

# A History of the Vancouver Meraloma Club: 1923-1973.

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The purpose of this study was to examine the historical developments of the Vancouver Meraloma Club (referred to as “the Club”) from its informal inception in the summer of 1923 to the fiftieth anniversary celebration in the summer of 1973, as it existed in the social milieu of Vancouver, British Columbia. In particular, the following questions were addressed in the study: what were the rationales for the formation of the Club and were they maintained; what was the relationship between the various social milieus of the Club and the sport and social activities provided; and in what manner did the provision of teams and leagues memberships, coaching, club administration, fund raising and equipment, and a varied number of social activities contribute to the Club’s longevity?

The Meraloma Club has existed in Vancouver for over sixty years. It originated and continues to function in the Kitsilano district of that city. In 1923 a group of twelve young men started to identify themselves in an informal group known as the “Mermaids”. In September, 1924, the Mermaids became a formal club by electing officers, applying for league memberships, setting regular meeting dates, and seeking new members, and in 1925, they adopted a change in name to the Meraloma Club.

There had been many clubs in the Kitsilano district, but few were able to exist for any length of time. The Greater Vancouver Sunday School Athletic Association was the stabilizing influence for much of the sport played in Vancouver. In this league, St. Mark’s Anglican Church of Kitsilano was predominant. It appeared that Reverend Sovereign of St. Mark’s used sport to attract and maintain his influence on the youth of the area. Most of the Mermaids came from this excellent church organization.

The need for a non-sectarian and non-district designated club coincided with the formation and expansion of the Meraloma Club. The timing of these events gave the Club a sound athletic and administrative base for future success. As the Club expanded its sport base, many championships were won. The media attention, the excellent coaches, and the organizational base of the Club drew out new members. Many Meraloma coaches and executive members have achieved recognition for their skills by being selected to regional, provincial, and national teams and sport organizations.

The Club was well-known for Canadian rugby (football) and for English rugby. Meraloma football teams date back to 1925 and have won many championships for the Club. In the 1930s the senior Canadian football team played in five Grey Cup quarter or semi-finals; and in the period from 1968 to 1980, the junior football team won the Junior Big Four championship, and several provincial titles. English rugby was first played in 1926-1927, and in the first year of competition, the team won the provincial championship. Playing in the senior league in 1927-1928, the team again won the provincial title in its first year of play at that level. From then until now, football and rugby have been the sustaining sports of the Club.

The Mermaids originally sponsored swimming and basketball. These sports reflected the Sunday school background of many of the original members. As a team, the Meraloma swim club was moderately successful. However, many individuals on the team were victorious at the provincial and national levels. Swimming disappeared as the Club

expanded into field sports. Basketball was played intermittently until the post-World War II period, and both the men's and women's teams won many championships. Outstanding among these was the women's senior "A" team of 1928-1929, which won the Western Canadian championship, and the 1946-1947 men's senior "A" team, which won the Dominion championship. The Meraloma name has also appeared on teams playing in various other sports, namely: baseball, softball, ice hockey, field hockey, volleyball, boxing, tennis, roller hockey, youth rugby, and juvenile football. The Club, in good and bad economic times, was able to provide or arrange for the equipment and playing space needed for this multitude of sporting activities.

The Club's social activities also became widely acclaimed and were successful from a fund-raising and an entertainment point-of-view. The women's auxiliary was active and initiated many social functions for the Club. Among the social activities held were: dances, balls, theatrical entertainment, teas, card evenings, family Christmas parties, annual picnics, golf tournaments, anniversary reunion dinners, annual award dinners, and numerous sport section tournaments and parties. These activities, as did the sport activities, followed the pattern of socially acceptable events for each period and greatly enhanced the Club's prominence in its varied historical milieux.

The Meraloma Club continued to develop athletic and executive talent following the methods, principles, and ideals first adopted by the Club as it progressed toward institutionalization. This talent contributed to the initiation, development, maintenance, and success of amateur and professional sport in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Canada, as well as to the Club's longevity itself.