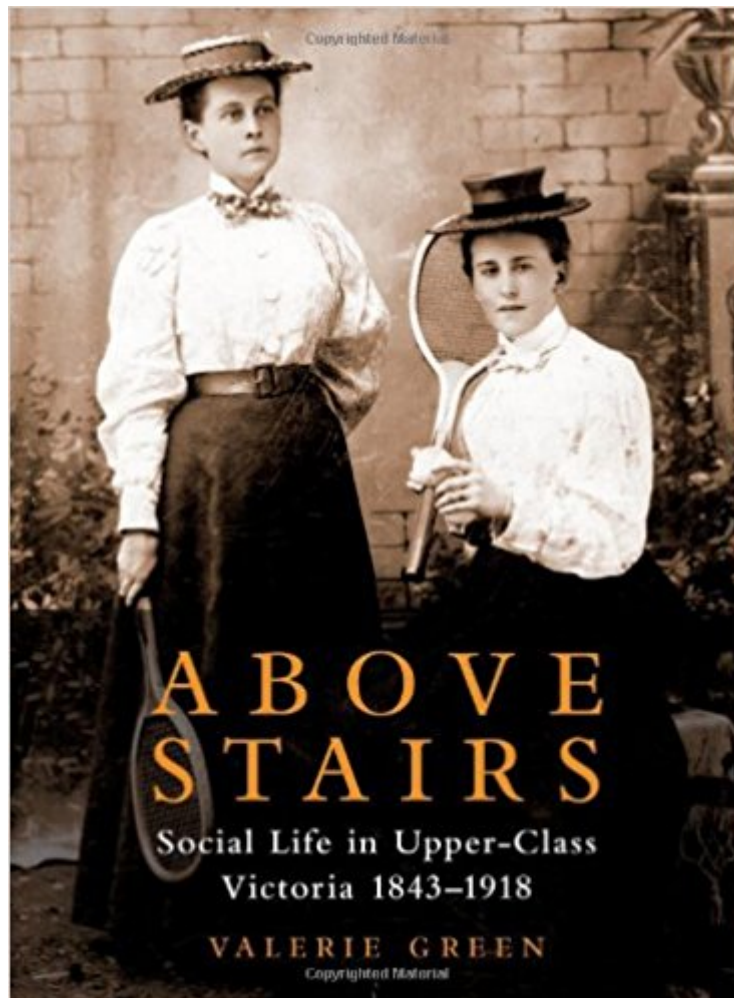




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Above Stairs: Social Life In Upper-Class Victoria 1843-1918



Synopsis

When Fort Victoria was first established in the mid-nineteenth century, eight pioneer families of Europe's upper class formed the social elite of the modest colony. The self-named aristocracy of this new land, these families shaped a world suited to their proper tastes on the upper floors of the fort, and eventually, in beautiful homes that imitated the height of fashion in Europe. However, between their tea parties and balls, these particular families greatly influenced the progress of the city of Victoria and the province of British Columbia. In *Above Stairs*, get to know the the Douglasses, the Pembertons, the Skinners, the Creases, the O'Reillys, the Trutches, the Rithets and the Barnards. These families made laws, surveyed land, founded businesses and set a standard of social acceptability for all those living in Victoria at the time. Like a kitchen hand sneaking up the servants steps to spy on the rich, discover the glamorous, complicated lives of Victorias social elite in *Above Stairs*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Valerie Green's love of both history and journalism shine forth in *ABOVE STAIRS: Social Life in Upper-Class Victoria 1843-1918*. She has taken on a mammoth challenge, that of broadly surveying the history of Victoria specifically, and Vancouver Island across to the greater Vancouver region of British Columbia in general, with a focus on showcasing the lifestyle of eight carefully selected founding families of Victoria. The task is a complex one that she rises to valiantly as she depicts interaction between the rough, untamed wilderness with all its attendant challenges, and the steely temperaments of the men and women who arrive to transform it into a citadel of English culture. In pursuing her topic, Green has constructed a sort of virtual museum, showcasing each family

individually in Part One, then cutting across family lines in Part Two with topical descriptions of more intimate life details. The book is illustrated throughout with photographs from historical archives, though unfortunately the page size required many of the original images to be reduced so much that little detail is discernible. Although I visited Victoria once several decades ago, I knew almost nothing about the place, but I've long been fascinated by its mystical beauty and English influence. This book gave me more understanding of the region and how it came to be. Green's "museum model" allows her to focus on one family at a time, giving a broad-brush overview of their lifestyle and surveying their contributions to the development of Victoria and the region. Her carefully selected tidbits of information were enough to arouse a hunger to learn more, which I could easily do via her immaculate documentation in end notes and bibliography.

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