

Napanee & District Curling Club

~ Established 1957 ~



**ARCHIVE STUDY -
CURLING IN
ONTARIO**



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Ontario's first curling club was established in Kingston in 1820. It is said that the sport came to Kingston with the Scottish stonemasons who were working on the Rideau Canal. Within 5 years, the sport had spread to the town of York (Toronto). The first curling club was formed in Toronto in 1837.

By the 1850's, several curling matches had taken place between Canada East and Canada West (Quebec and Ontario). The building of the Grand Trunk Railway made travel for competition easier and the number of such inter-provincial matches increased. However there was another impediment which proved more difficult to resolve: Quebec used one kind of "rock" and Ontario another. The Quebec teams played each other and the Ontario teams played each other on the same ice, and the scores of the winner from each province were compared to decide who had won the tournament. So, we had "two solitudes" even back then.

To my knowledge, no one has done a socio-economic study of 19th century curlers. However, conventional wisdom is that most players came from the small, entrepreneurial and professional class - occupations like merchant, lawyer, and physician - rather than the farmers who formed the vast majority in Ontario in the 19th century. In other words, they were mostly town folk. As economic prosperity brought more leisure time for these people, curling clubs in Ontario increased mightily in number, but not until 1874 did they get together to form a policy-making organization to make the sport more homogeneous. This new organization is the Royal Ontario Curling Club, which still exists today.

Winter travel in the countryside was always a problem, but it is also possible that fanners, who had to spend so much of their time battling the elements, were not attracted to a sport which took place out of doors on frozen ponds and lakes. For the professional classes, who spent their working days inside in fuggy, smoky offices, the crisp outdoor weather must sometimes have been a welcome change. Moreover there was a fashion for what were perceived as distinctly Canadian activities such as snow-shoeing and tobogganing. By the end of the 19th century, curling had been around in Canada long enough that the Scottish origins took a back place to an Ontario identification with curling as a sport for hardy Canucks.

The 1880's and 1890's featured some really cold winters. At the same time, increased leisure time for workers brought greater pressure on the outdoor areas for public skating. Ontario curling clubs began to fund-raise for indoor rinks and by 1900 most of the larger towns had indoor curling facilities.

The Dominion Curling Association was founded in 1935.

*Jennifer Bunting,
Lennox and Addington County Museum
& Archives, 2006*