

The Powerhouse of Canadian Sport: The Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, Inception to 1909

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The Montreal Amateur Athletic Association (M.A.A.A.) celebrated its centennial on June 20, 1981. At present the M.A.A.A. is a 3,000-member, urban sporting and social club located in the heart of downtown Montreal. Currently divorced from the mainstream of organization of Canadian sport, the Association was critical, historically, in the evolution of sport at various levels within the nation. Historians have acknowledged the M.A.A.A.'s sphere of influence:

This organization [the M.A.A.A.] became the most important single body influencing the growth of organized sport in Montreal and Canada.¹

Referring to the union of several sport clubs to make up the Association, Wise and Fisher, in discussing " . . . Montreal's vanguard role in the history of organized sport," stated:

The confluence of all these strong, active sporting groups into one association was undoubtedly the most important single development in the history of Canadian sport.²

Therefore, the M.A.A.A. has achieved a contemporary reputation as Canada's premier athletic association—a kind of New York Athletic Club of the north. Yet the basis for this reputation has never been examined. This paper analyzes the factors responsible for the organization's phenomenal success as a sporting club and as a significant and important institution in Canadian sport. Specifically, it is argued that the M.A.A.A.'s power was derived from sporting success, efficient administration of people and resources, a rich sporting tradition and collective initiative.

The concept of power is multi-faceted; it suggests national might, physical force, divine strength, the production of motion or an element that has great influence or authority.³ It is in the latter sense that the M.A.A.A. is referred to

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as a powerhouse. The Association did have, as this paper demonstrates, great influence in the development of organized Canadian sport. Between 1881 and 1909 it was the pivotal authority in Canadian sport—the lowest common denominator in the administration and conduct of sport. To be important means to have great influence or authority, in short, to have power by definition. Thus, within the scope of this paper, the criterion of importance of the M.A.A.A. will be the extent of power or influence or authority demonstrated by the Association during both the years leading up to its formation and its first 28 years of existence.

I

Power Source: From Gut and Hardwood

Coalescence of three elements—assertive men, an idea system, and a group capable of organization—generates power, be the measure small or great.⁴

Power must have a source. One key ingredient in the success and influence of the M.A.A.A. is related to its roots and is the inference behind Wise's and Fisher's statement "the confluence of all these strong, active sporting groups into one association," previously cited. Early in the nineteenth century sport needed a kind of crutch on which to rely for its existence. That is, social institutions such as bees, taverns and garrisons were the crutches in the early organization of Canadian sport. Berle's contention is that power must have an apparatus:

Power is invariably organized and transmitted through institutions. Top power holders must work through existing institutions, perhaps extending or modifying them, or must at once create new institutions. There is no other way of exercising power . . .⁵

The M.A.A.A., it is suggested, brought order to the randomness of sport's reliance upon other social institutions, or, to cite Berle once again: "The phenomenon that a power vacuum is always filled by a power holder . . . is constant throughout the history of society."⁶

As the century progressed, the urban environment became the sine qua non in the growth and perfusion of Canadian sport. Without question the city of Montreal was the commercial metropolis of nineteenth century Canada. The concomitant " . . . experience, talent and resources that Montreal possessed in business, trade, the professions and government . . ."⁷ led to its prominence in organized sport. Montreal, then, was a fertile environment for sport, but the city itself was not responsible for the organization of sport. Rather sport in various forms developed in different directions or tangents—spokes of a rimless wheel whose hub was Montreal—by capitalizing on urban resources. It was the collection or banding of some of these tangents that brought the M.A.A.A. into existence in 1881. The Association's adoption of

the winged wheel emblem reflected, appropriately, organization and progress. Tradition and sporting success prior to 1881 account, to a certain extent, for the M.A.A.s rapid rise to a position of power within three years after its incorporation in 1881.

The oldest founding club of the M. A. A. A. was the Montreal Snow Shoe Club (M.S.S.C.), established in 1840. Popularly known as the Tuque Bleue (signifying the distinctive blue tuque worn by M.S.S.C. members) after 1869, the members of this club met regularly for long distance “tramps” or outings to a variety of centres in Quebec. The M.S.S.C. also held annual races that featured sprint events, hurdle races, novelty events such as fat men’s races or potato races, races over hurdles, cross country contests over the heights of Mount Royal as well as a variety of social gatherings, entertainments and civic functions organized during its first 41 years.⁸ During this period the sport of snowshoeing expanded tremendously in the Montreal area. Other clubs such as the St. George, Levi, Beaver, Hochelaga and many more were formed and engaged in activities patterned after those of the M.S.S.C.⁹ The essential point is that the members of the M.S.S.C. established a forty year tradition of leadership. The reputation of its members and the club itself was developed through sporting prowess—“the Montreal” was always the premier club in contest results—and through public entertainments, dramas, tableaux and a battery of snowshoeing-specific and patriotic songs.¹⁰ M.S.S.C. members were invited to small towns (for example, Lachine, St. Johns, Sault au Recollet, Cornwall, St. Hyacinthe) and large cities (Ottawa, Quebec) to put on these entertainments with the proceeds going to charity on most occasions.¹¹ In short, by 1881, the Montreal Snow Shoe Club was a very well respected organization in Montreal and vicinity. Patriotism was a hallmark of its members and was purposely translated into imperialist ties with Great Britain even in the club colours of red, white and blue.

During the American Civil War, the M.S.S.C. was instrumental in forming the famed Victoria Rifles military unit,¹² but their direct contributions to the power of the M.A.A.A. are of concern here. In 1842 a few of the M.S.S.C. members and other Montreal citizens undertook to organize the Montreal Olympic Club, a track and field and rowing club.¹³ The Olympic Club lasted only three years but before it disbanded it did stage the Montreal Olympic Games (track and field) that were so dominated by garrison officers in 1844.¹⁴ However, out of this Olympic Club, some members engaged in sporadic lacrosse matches with the Indians. The fruit of these competitions, in turn, was the formation of the Montreal Lacrosse Club (M.L.C.) in 1856.¹⁵ Many of the members of the M.L.C. were Montreal Snow Shoe Club members who sought some form of summer sport.

Comparable to its winter gut and hardwood counterpart, the M.L.C. quickly gained notoriety in Montreal. The club Saratoga, decorated in the M.L.C. scarlet and grey colours, was distinctive and symbolic of lacrosse supremacy to spectators who watched it being unloaded at train stations throughout Ontario, Quebec and the United States. During the late 1860s and the 1870s when lacrosse flourished as a major competitive sport, the M.L.C. was recognized as one of the leading lacrosse clubs in the Dominion. By the 1870s, the M.L.C. had won ten league championships¹⁶ and one of its members, Dr. George W. Beers, was recognized as the father of the modern game of lacrosse.¹⁷ In 1876 Beers selected some members of the M.L.C. to accompany a Caughnawaga (Iroquois Indian) team to Great Britain to play exhibition lacrosse games in that country (one of the games being played before Queen Victoria¹⁸). Because of the success of the 1876 tour, Beers received many requests from Irish, Scottish and English lacrosse clubs for a repeat tour. These clubs had been organized as a direct result of the initial tour. However, it was not until the federal Department of Agriculture decided to sponsor a second trip in 1883 in concert with an immigration scheme that the return trip became a reality. On this occasion two white teams, seven lacrosse players from Toronto and eight from Montreal, played 62 matches abroad, travelled 11,000 miles in the process and distributed over “three millions of immigration material:”

In Scotland, England and Ireland, the captain had engaged about eighty agents, who assisted him in immigration work. As an instance of the work done in this particular, over 120 cases, each weighing 300 pounds, and about 140 other cases of a similar size were consigned to the captain who was personally responsible for the distribution of this large amount of material. An immense correspondence was kept up; 350,000 copies of a special immigration fly-sheet were sent to the Old Country in parcels before the team left.¹⁹

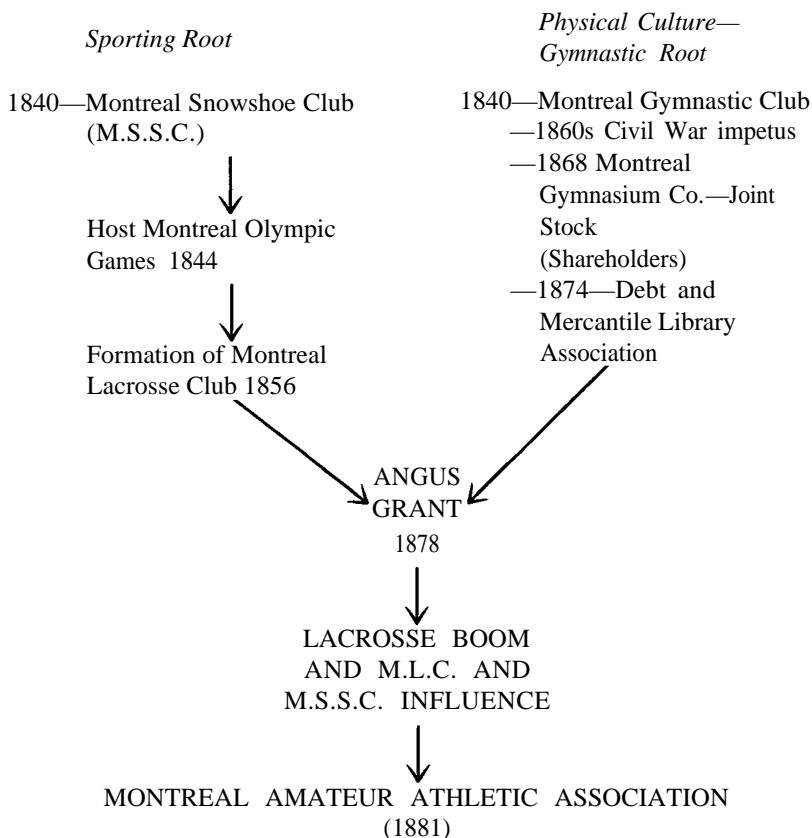
Lacrosse in general and the example set and inspiration given by the Montreal Lacrosse Club in particular brought national and international prominence by the early 1880s. The sport or its emissaries was/were seen as a suitable vehicle for the spread of propaganda: influence had indeed become a trademark of the M.L.C. The importance of tradition and reputation might resolve an apparent paradox in the M.L.C.'s history. Between 1870 and 1885, the M.L.C. won only one league championship, yet this club remained powerful and influential during the 15 year period. Incorporation into the M.A.A.A. brought renewed success and continued influence.

Both the M.S.S.C. and the M.L.C.²⁰ had achieved considerable reputations, had demonstrated permanency and organizational ability and had exerted considerable influence or power on Montreal and, in some respects, Canadian sport by the early 1880s. The other club to form the founding, sporting triumvirate of the M.A.A.A. was the Montreal Bicycle Club (M.B.C.). Its power in 1881 was more potential than actual. Constituted in 1878, the M.B.C. was

small in number of members compared to the M.S.S.C. and the M.L.C. and, due to the expense required to own a bicycle, was probably restricted in membership appeal. The first bicycle ever seen in Montreal was ridden by future M.B.C. member, A. T. Lane, in 1874.²¹ It seems, therefore, that the M.S.S.C. and the M.B.C. must have seen the potential for growth in the sport of bicycling or the cross membership in the three clubs may have invited the inclusion of the M.B.C.²² Nevertheless, this trio of clubs made up one of the founding branches of the M. A. A. The other arm of the Association was attached to physical culture (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

The Origins of the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association



Montreal gymnastic (German and calisthenic varieties) enthusiasts had formed a club in the 1840s, but they were confined to crude quarters for some twenty years. Finally, perhaps inspired by the need for fitness evident in the

American Civil War, the members became desirous of permanent, fully equipped facilities and, therefore, proceeded with an idea to form a “joint stock gymnasium company” in 1867. Members subscribed as shareholders, a venture that was to be the weak point of the club within five years, and a Montreal Gymnasium building was fully constructed by 1868 for some 13,800 dollars.²³ Complete with all forms of gymnastic apparatus, a billiard room and two bowling alleys, the Montreal Gymnasium was run, as its successor, the M.A.A.A., would be, strictly as a business. Unlike the M.A.A.A., it was an unsuccessful enterprise. Within two years, the Gymnasium was in financial difficulty owing to its inability to collect on the shareholder-promised subscriptions and to attract new club members from a public more interested in sport than physical culture by itself. In a last effort toward financial solvency the Montreal Gymnasium worked out an arrangement with the Mercantile Library Association. The latter body amalgamated with the Gymnasium in 1874 in return for suitable accommodation for all of its books, periodicals and reading facilities plus a few other minor concessions. The Mercantile Library assumed the Gymnasium’s outstanding 4,000 dollar liability.²⁴ For the future M.A.A.A., the addition of the Library proved to be the historical precedent for one of the Association’s most attractive features—a reading room completely stocked with the latest newspapers and periodical literature from around the world.

In 1875, several members of the Gymnasium Company, all of whom eventually became M.A.A.A. directors, organized several “pedestrian” or track and field competitions in the hope of attracting paying crowds and prospective Gymnasium members.²⁵ Interest in the Company continued to dwindle and debt continued to increase. In terms of success, renown and growth, the M.S.S.C. and the M.L.C. together were diametrically juxtaposed to the Gymnasium Company during the 1870s. Moreover, the two sporting clubs were desirous of permanent club quarters. Angus Grant, a snowshoer of considerable reputation during the 1850s and 1860s, was the guiding force in the eventual coalescence of all of these clubs.

In 1877, Grant was a director of the Gymnasium Company and president of both the M.S.S.C. and the M.L.C.²⁶ He suggested to the Gymnasium directors that they rent space to the M.S.S.C. and the M.L.C. in order for the two clubs to conduct business affairs. The resultant union of the M.S.S.C. and the M.L.C. was referred to as “the associated clubs” in the Montreal press between 1878 and 1881.²⁷ Thus, readers were expected to be cognizant of the union of the clubs. In fact the press treated the “associated clubs” as though there could be no question to whom the term referred. The annual subscription fee to the “associated clubs” was set at 10 dollars “. . . in the hope of inducing new members to join and putting the use of the Institution within the reach of all.”²⁸

Combined with the intrinsic attraction of the two clubs themselves, their individual reputations and the addition of new activities, the proposition became successful. Gymnastics, boxing, fencing, single sticks, billiards, shooting and bowling were among the battery of activities offered. Late in 1880, Grant worked out arrangements that were beneficial to all parties. The M.S.S.C. and the M.L.C. agreed to buy the Montreal Gymnasium by assuming all liabilities and the mortgage on the building, a sum of 13,000 dollars. On April 28, 1881, the sale was completed and the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association became a reality.²⁹ It is interesting to note that the “associated clubs” were conducting a sporting club between 1878 and 1881 that was successful and did fulfill the needs of its members. The actual incorporation of the M.A.A.A. was merely a legal necessity in order to gain the power to acquire the property of the Montreal Gymnasium Company.³⁰ There was no grand design for an incorporated multi-sport club that would acquire the power necessary to assume a leadership position in Canadian sport. In essence, the gut and hardwood of the lacrosse stick and the snowshoe and the hardwood of the Montreal Gymnasium were the cornerstones of the M.A.A.A.

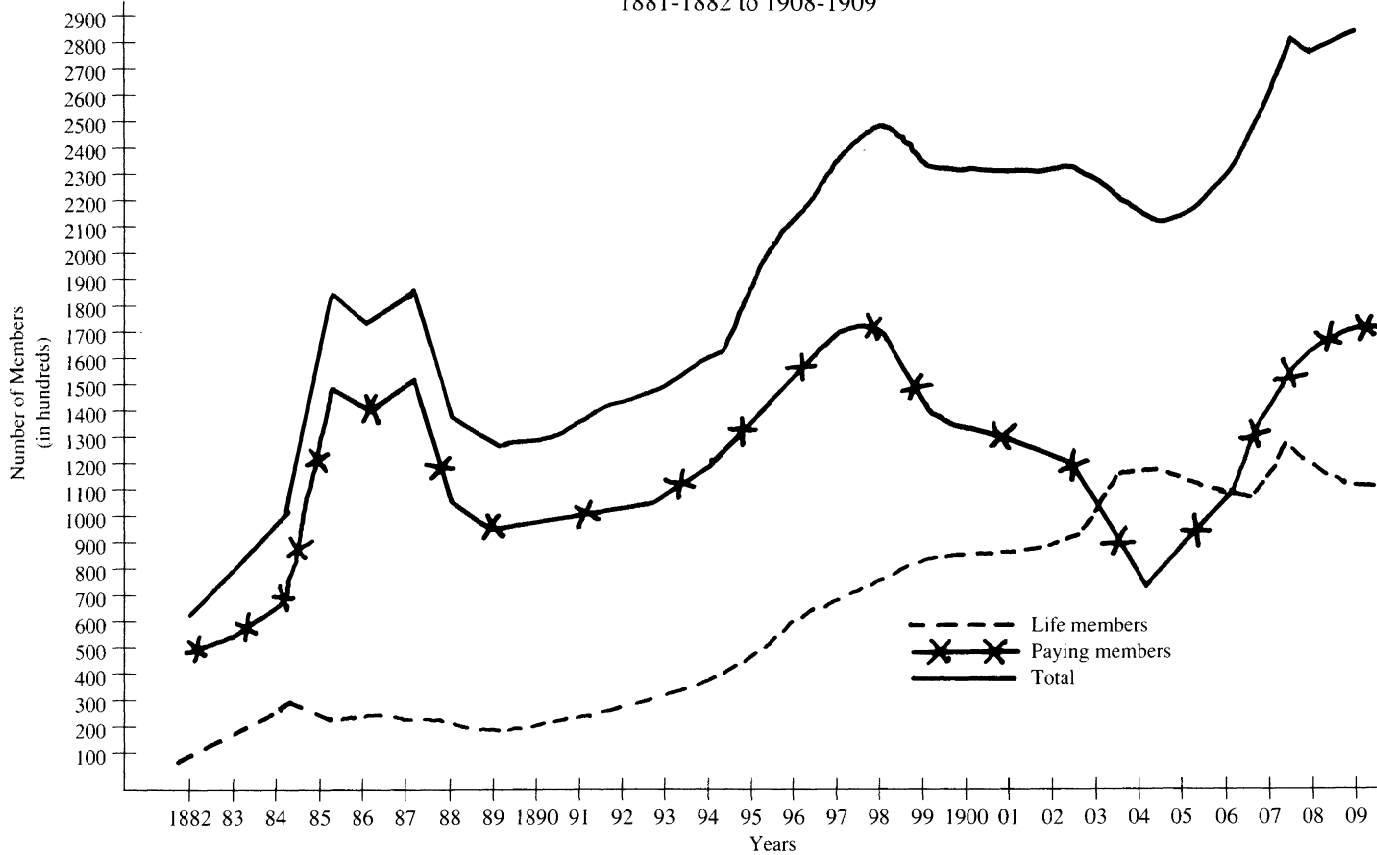
II

Power Resource: Numerical and Financial Prosperity

It is assumed that before any group or individual could exert power over other groups or individuals, there must be a stable basis of strength or success within the group or individual concerned. The resources of power have tremendous impact upon decision-making within the structure of any organization.³¹ Without stability, power would be fleeting or temporary in any institution. Two major indices provide quantitative proof that the Montreal Athletic Association was a successful and resourceful club in its own right: membership changes and revenue acquired. Figure 2 indicates membership fluctuations over the period 1881 to 1909. In number of members alone, the growth of the club is readily apparent. The significant segment in the membership numbers is the “paying” members since life membership was automatically attained after twelve consecutive years in the Association or with the payment of a lump sum amounting to ten years dues (with the concomitant privilege of no further dues’ assessment). The M.A.A.A. depended upon membership subscriptions for its stable source of annual revenue. The fees derived therefrom were the irreducible minimum in the operation of the multi-sport club. By extension, the successful collection of fees represents the collective support of the membership for the M.A.A.A. Consequently all major programmes and policies centered upon the general, especially the paying membership and the target group was highlighted in the purpose of the M.A.A.A. as delineated in its constitution:

... the promotion of physical and mental culture among, and the providing of rational amusements and recreation for its members.³²

Figure 2
 Number of Members in the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association
 1881-1882 to 1908-1909



Source: Annual Reports of the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, 1882-1910 and Minutes of the Meetings of the M.A.A.A. Board of Directors, 1881-1909.

The dramatic, numerical increases in membership during the three periods between 1884 to 1888, 1894 to 1898 and 1905 to 1909 correspond directly and qualitatively to significant events in the evolution of the M.A.A.A. For example, the first period of growth corresponded with a rapid expansion in the number of clubs and activities within the Association (outlined in the next section). These programmes, in turn, attracted more members. Similarly, the M.A.A.A. undertook an extensive advertising system in the press during these years. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s residents of Montreal and vicinity were bombarded with M.A.A.A. ads.³³ Typically these ads carried the insignia of the M.A.A.A., the winged wheel, or the emblem of the particular sporting club mentioned in the advertisement. An indirect, but very important benefit reaped from such advertising was public visibility of the M.A.A.A.—a critical factor in the gradual acquisition of power in Canadian sport. The other two periods of growth corresponded directly with the purchase and furnishing of new athletic grounds in 1888 and with the completion of a new, enlarged clubhouse in 1905.

Figure 2 illustrates that in the face of a constantly increasing turnover rate of life member status, the M.A.A.A. had an average annual paying membership of 1,234.³⁴ The Association, in other words, was a large multi-sport club that attracted members consistently during its first 25 years of existence. As more persons moved into the life membership class, the directors of the M.A.A.A. were forced to recruit new members and retain the interest of those who had been members for a few years. Financial stability was one important product of this necessity for recruitment and retention.

The index for policy changes of any kind within the M.A.A.A. was the difference between income and expenditure. The Association used all sources of revenue—membership subscriptions, facility rentals to other clubs, gate receipts, donations—to clear any outstanding debts as a first priority. Table 1 indicates the funds with which the directors worked between 1881 and 1909. Until the 1890s the Association always showed a stable surplus of revenue. By that time, indeed, as early as 1890, the M.A.A.A. was in great need of new facilities to replace the old Montreal Gymnasium and to accommodate its increasing membership. Yet the directors felt it would have been “financial suicide,” despite consistent revenues, to assume the large debt during the 1890s that a new building would have required.³⁵ In order to underline the financial success of the Association, it should be pointed out that in the face of a rapidly increasing turnover rate to life membership, the M.A.A.A. increased its capital assets, which included all properties, buildings, moveable effects and annual depreciations and appreciations thereon, some five-fold in its first ten years and fifteen-fold by the time of the completion of its new clubhouse in 1905-06.

Table 1

Summary of Revenue, Expenditure and Capital Assets of the
Montreal Amateur Athletic Association for the Years
1881-82 to 1908-09 Inclusive

(Money Amounts Given to Nearest Dollar)

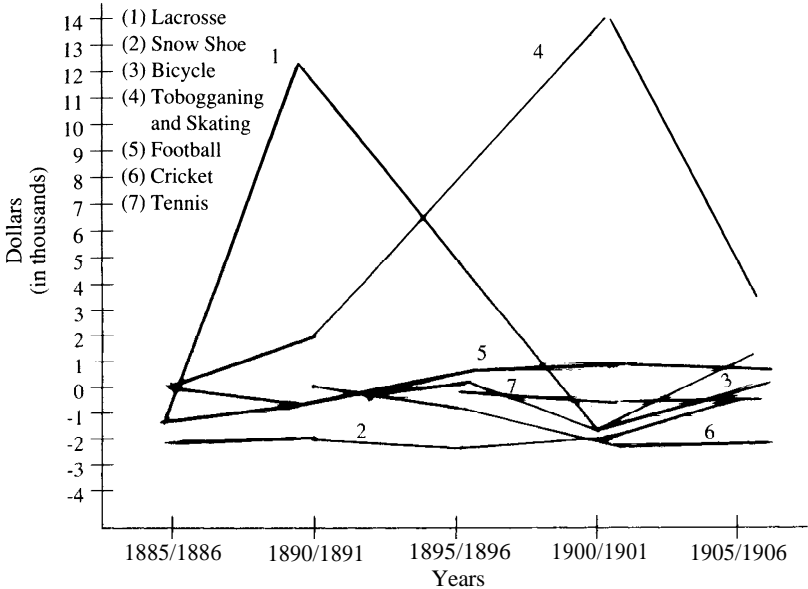
		Total Revenue and Gain	Total Expenditure and Loss	Surplus of Revenue	Capital Assets	Reasons for Major Changes
1.	1881-82	6,352	5,006	1,346	20,244	
2.	1882-83	6,319	6,389	-69	18,907	
3.	1883-84	7,086	5,490	1,596	19,517	
4.	1884-85	12,863	8,667	4,196	23,545	
5.	1885-86	14,333	10,617	3,715	21,890	
6.	1886-87	22,735	10,493	12,241	33,161	Membership and gate increases
7.	1887-88	14,043	10,721	3,322	74,742	New Grounds @ 45,000
8.	1888-89	11,330	9,315	2,015	89,880	
9.	1889-90	18,311	11,812	6,498	104,221	
10.	1890-91	18,387	11,860	6,526	108,450	
11.	1891-92	16,956	12,204	4,751	109,243	
12.	1892-93	18,451	13,605	4,846	109,100	
13.	1893-94	19,035	13,432	5,603	108,582	
14.	1894-95	22,824	15,643	7,180	111,484	
15.	1895-96	20,802	16,248	5,593	112,800	
16.	1896-97	20,998	16,512	4,485	113,710	
17.	1897-98	20,353	15,193	5,880	114,262	
18.	1898-99	18,124	14,533	3,591	116,774	
19.	1899-00	15,846	14,354	1,491	117,317	
20.	1900-01	18,735	16,079	2,655	113,834	
21.	1901-02	17,452	15,770	1,681	114,552	
22.	1902-03	24,281	15,538	8,742	139,439	Subscription increase and property purchase
23.	1903-04	20,375	18,586	1,789	137,684	
24.	1904-05	27,021	19,958	7,062	137,621	
25.	1905-06	47,239	36,220	11,019	325,270	Membership increase and New Club House
26.	1906-07	59,955	41,421	18,534	324,612	
27.	1907-08	58,547	51,993	6,554	321,033	
28.	1908-09	63,970	55,050	8,920	321,147	

Source: Annual Reports of the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, 1881-82 to 1908-09.

Two additional facts that highlight the prosperity in numbers of members and economic advancements include the statistic that the actual membership fee (ten dollars) did not change until 1902, except for a new member initiation fee of ten dollars imposed in July, 1888, to offset the number of life members and decreased gate receipts from lacrosse.³⁶ The 1902 subscription fee increase amounted only to five dollars.³⁷ Secondly, it must be understood that the Association supported amateur sport at a time when professionalism and semi-professionalism were the dominant trends in Canadian sport.³⁸

Figure 3

Five year Financial Summaries of the Difference
Between Surplus and Deficit of Seven
Sport Clubs Within the Montreal Amateur
Athletic Association,
1885-1886 to 1905-1906



Source: Annual Reports of the M.A.A.A., 1881-1882 to 1905-1906.

Even though clubs were amateur within the M.A.A.A., various clubs and activities attracted paying crowds and brought additional revenue above subscription fees to the Association. Since all money was pooled into a central fund, it is informative to analyze the surplus and deficit monetary figures for the seven major activities of the M.A.A.A. Figure 3 provides this information at the end of every five year period from 1885-1886 to 1905-1906. Since only the difference between surplus and deficit is shown, the data from Figure 3 are not self explanatory. For example, snowshoeing, cycling, tennis and cricket clubs always operated at an annual deficit.³⁹ They were not revenue-producing sports. Members could choose to be members of any of these four clubs within the Association without paying full M.A.A.A. dues. Indirectly, then, these sports did bring money to the Association. Football did not attract large paying crowds during this period and it was in conflict with the Association's prestige sport—lacrosse. During the first 15 years of the M.A.A.A.'s existence, lacrosse was a major source of revenue. When the Montreal Lacrosse Club experienced conflict with semi-professionalism at the end of the 1890s and early 1900s the Association worked to create new leagues and even

played within an intramural structure for a few years. Consequently lacrosse declined to a deficit situation by 1900 and then gradually moved back toward surplus status when the M.A.A.A. opted in favour of playing with and against professional lacrosse players. During the period when lacrosse declined in its revenue-producing status, the loss was recovered through the financial prosperity of managing a very large, outdoor, public ice-skating facility. In general, therefore, it was the financial success of lacrosse and ice skating that boosted the Association's ability to operate a multi-sport, non-profit club.

III

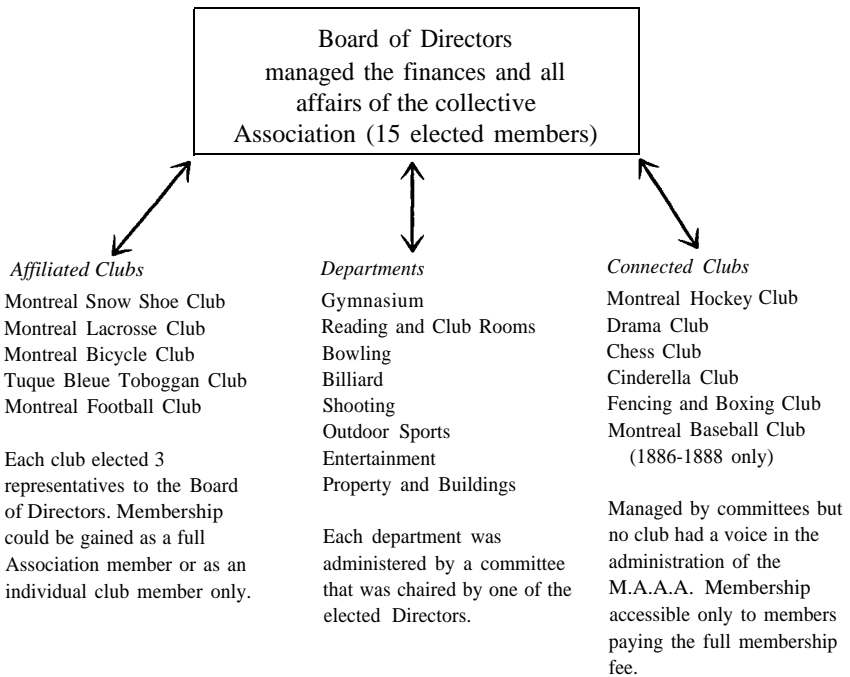
Power: Governance and Perfusion

At the time of its incorporation in 1881, the M.A.A.A. inherited the strengths of tradition and renown from the Montreal Snow Shoe and Montreal Lacrosse Clubs. In Canada, there was no single governing body for either amateur or professional sports in 1881. There were some national sport governing bodies such as the National Lacrosse Association and the Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen, but no central agency of sport governance. League structures in some sports were only beginning to be established. Sport of all kinds, however, was expanding rapidly and problems such as semi-professionalism were infiltrating sports that had once been the preserve of the upper class. The M.A.A.A., on the other hand, represented a collection of the new breed of industrial era sportsman—the middle class. The officers of the M.A.A.A. were white collar, middle class businessmen.⁴⁰ More important to the development of sport than their social class background was their managerial expertise. Unharnessed power is useless in a functional sense. It is the hypothesis of this paper that it was the initiative taken by the businessmen cum directors of the M.A.A.A. that accounts for the Association's power in Canadian sport up to 1909.

Figure 4 depicts the internal governance of the M.A.A.A. during the 1880s. Individual clubs were added in the next two decades but the structure remained the same. Similar in design to the confederation of provinces making up the Dominion of Canada, each club in the Association was responsible to the M.A.A.A. but was autonomous in directing its own affairs via separate committees. The pooled financial resources were allocated by the directors to the committees according to reviewed requests, cost precedents and the perceived worthiness of special projects. It was the conduct of the various clubs in public affairs and competitions that brought increased renown and, therefore, boosted the potential power of the M.A.A.A. For example, the Montreal Bicycle Club's members were constantly visible, during the warmer months, arrayed in their double blue, braided jackets, breeches, ribbed stockings and blue canvas shoes as they toured city and countryside. Distinctive too was the gold winged wheel pin attached to the front of their fore-and-aft (later peaked)

caps and the paramilitary nature of their rides.⁴¹ Literally companies of M.B.C. members rode together with designated officers from lieutenant and captain through the bugler and “whipper-in.” The whipper-in was a term borrowed from the Montreal Snow Shoe Club and signified a skilled rider whose specific task was to serve as a kind of rover to keep the group together. Occasionally, the M.B.C. would stage mounted, precision drill manoeuvres, but the most publicly attractive feature of the M.B.C. was its race meetings on the cinder track at the M.A.A.A. grounds. Events such as weekly handicap races, seasonal championships, the Canadian Wheelmen’s Association championships (national) in 1886 and again in 1894⁴² and even the hosting of the World Bicycle Meet in 1899⁴³ indicate the attraction to and organizational expertise of the Montreal Bicycle Club, and by extension the M.A.A.A. Bicycle fever was rampant in Montreal as illustrated by the devotion of the entire issue of the *Montreal Daily Star*, May 2, 1896, to the bicycle but this enthusiasm was spearheaded by the M.A.A.A.

Figure 4
 The Composition and Administration of the
 Montreal Amateur Athletic Association During the 1880’s



It is difficult to ferret out exact reasons for the dominance, importance and power of the M.A.A.A. in Canadian sport. It seemed as though a great deal of

Canadian sport revolved around the Winged Wheel. That is, internally, the M.A.A.A. built its own pyramidal sport structure with mass recreation for its members at the base (bowling, billiards, tobogganing and ice skating, for example) and with an ascending hierarchy of sport through junior, intermediate and senior elite levels conducted intramurally, municipally, provincially, nationally and internationally. The excellence of its home administration bred opportunities for further excellence. Meticulous attention to detail such as in the early adoption of new equipment and devices to enhance sport brought local, national and international events to the Association. A revolutionary electric timer was purchased for the track in 1886 along with brass distance markings on the inner rim of the track; Sargent's pulley weight apparatus was installed in the gym in the early 1880s; a "Home Trainer" or stationary bicycle was acquired for off-season cycle practice in 1883; gym cleats for tug of war practice were installed in the late 1880s and a rowing machine was set up near the bowling alleys for training purposes.⁴⁴ In addition to hosting popular, local Spring track and field championships, the M.A.A.A. annual Fall Games continuously attracted the best athletes from the Manhattan and New York Athletic clubs⁴⁵ and the Canadian track and field championships were repeatedly held at the M.A.A.A. grounds prior to 1909.

The organizational skill of the officers and directors of the M.A.A.A. had to be a reflection of their business backgrounds and vocational expertise. When M.A.A.A. member Louis Rubenstein won the world figure skating title at St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1890,⁴⁶ skating in all forms mushroomed in popularity, gradually replacing snowshoeing as the premier winter sport at the M.A.A.A. over the next decade.⁴⁷ During this ten year period, the Association frequently sponsored the Amateur Skating Association of Canada championships and in 1897, the M.A.A.A. staged the World Speedskating championships.⁴⁸ The world was accustomed to travelling to Montreal at the beckoning of the M.A.A.A. It was the Montreal Snow Shoe Club and the M.A.A.A. who conceived and became the principal organizers of the internationally famous Montreal Winter Carnivals between 1883 and 1889.⁴⁹ Without question, then, the M.A.A.A. was synonymous with organizational skill in sport at all levels.

The Association was just as equatable with sporting excellence through the success of its own individual athletes and teams. Numerous Canadian titles were won in lacrosse, snowshoe races, cycling, steeplechases, track and field, figure skating, hockey (including seven consecutive Amateur Hockey Association of Canada championships and four Stanley Cup victories between 1886 and 1902), bowling, billiards, football, fencing, speedskating and boxing between 1881 and 1909.⁵⁰ It seemed that the M.A.A.A. achieved sporting success in almost every endeavor. Even Canada's first Olympic gold medallist, Etienne Desmarteau (56 pound hammer throw)⁵¹ was a product of M.A.A.A. training. There can be no question that the Association nurtured such sport

success as evidenced by the purchase of good equipment, maintenance of facilities and the hiring of professional coaches and trainers. It was the aftermath of such success—the renown—that brought the M.A.A.A. into prominence and a position of power. Association victories brought press acclaim across the country and served to propel the M.A.A.A. into the limelight of Canadian sport.

Furthermore, the M.A.A.A. did its best to build and preserve a unique image in an era of pre-professional sport. First of all, the Association supported amateur sport and therefore purity and goodness in the public view of sport at the time. Professionalism in that era was associated with prostitution, fixed outcomes and high profits at public expense.⁵² The M.A.A.A. was directly opposed to such conduct of sport even in its constitution and the title of the Association. The directors of the M.A.A.A. paid travel expenses of its athletes, recruited good athletes to become M.A.A.A. athletes and hired professional coaches, but it kept its image of amateur intact even to the point of suing the *Montreal Post* in 1887 for libel for a published, professional innuendo concerning the Montreal Lacrosse Club. However, to all intents and purposes the M.A.A.A. was a very “professional” organization in the true sense of the word. It conducted its affairs with class, competence and efficiency from money legally acquired through subscriptions and gate receipts.⁵³ At the same time, the M.A.A.A. refused to support any religious or political cause, but it did donate to charitable causes and service organizations such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, Sunday Schools, the poor and the clergy of Montreal.⁵⁴ Intentional or not, the image of the M.A.A.A. was built to be one of goodness, a Canadian version of the British-derived concept of muscular Christianity.

Power, it seems, came to the M.A.A.A., for the most part, through meticulous organization and the prestige achieved through success and reputation. Whether it was in the form of brass spittoons in the billiard room, the “Lobbing Prohibited” sign in the bowling alleys, the one dozen Dandurand fire extinguishers distributed throughout the clubhouse, the thousands of feet of inlaid water pipes at the M.A.A.A. grounds or in the form of public relations achieved by sending out to every athletic club on the continent a copy of the 1888 *Athletic Leaves*,⁵⁵ a journal published to record the incidents in the establishment of the Association and to describe its activities, the M.A.A.A. oozed attention to detail and cultivated its own prestige. In essence, the majority of the M.A.A.A.’s power was derived from organizational leadership initiative and renown. The M.A.A.A. made itself famous and was made famous, notably, by the Notman Photographic studios. The latter firm took hundreds of photographs of M.A.A.A. events and preserved and displayed these events in the luxurious composite photographs displayed around the world.⁵⁶

Finally, power did come to the M.A.A.A. or was sought by the Association through representation. Prominent members of the M.A.A.A. were instrumental in the organization and administration of at least ten sport governing bodies:

- National Lacrosse Association (1867)
- Canadian Wheelman's Association (1882)
- Canadian Amateur Athletic Association (1884)
- Canadian Rugby Union (1884)
- Amateur Hockey Association of Canada (1886)
- Montreal Amateur Baseball League (1887)
- Amateur Skating Association of Canada (1887)
- Canadian Amateur Bowling Association (date unknown)
- Canadian Aquatic Polo Association (1906)⁵⁷

Office was achieved consistently by M.A.A.A. members in these sports governing bodies prior to 1909, thereby lending potential M.A.A.A. voice to the governance of sport. Perhaps the Association's strongest power output was through the Canadian Amateur Athletic Union. Formally constituted in 1884 as the Amateur Athletic Association of Canada, this body became responsible for administration and policing of most amateur sports in Canada. Significant is the fact that it was the M.A.A.A. directors who conceived the idea and organized the first meeting toward its formation.⁵⁸ The Association was continuously represented on the A.A.U. of Canada throughout this period. Moreover, it seemed to be its critical component. This was demonstrated in 1893 when M.A.A.A. representatives elected to the A.A.U. of Canada refused to take office in protest of A.A.U. decision to reinstate a certain athlete. Five weeks later, the A.A.U. relented and the M.A.A.A. representatives assumed their official positions.⁵⁹ Again, in 1906, in an inevitable national dispute over the playing of amateurs with and against professionals, it was the M.A.A.A. who took the lead to break off from the A.A.U. to form an Amateur Athletic Federation of Canada.⁶⁰ The issue was resolved after three years of a national "athletic war" with the formulation of a new A.A.U.

While this paper represents only a superficial treatment of the concept of power in sport per se, it does show that the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association achieved power through sporting success, the managerial and organizational skills of its officers, tradition and initiative. In some ways, the M.A.A.A. was the right institution at the right place at the right time. Yet the Association worked not toward the acquisition of power, but in the best interests of its members. Its power was perfused by example. At no time did the M.A.A.A. actively seek to control Canadian sport. Instead, it brought organization to modern Canadian sport. For this reason is its place in Canadian sport

history justified as “. . . the most important single body influencing the growth of organized sport in Montreal and Canada.” It was the powerhouse of channelled energy and organization in Canadian sport.

Notes

1. Alan Metcalfe, “Organized Sport and Social Stratification in Montreal, 1840-1901,” *Canadian Sport: Sociological Perspectives*, edited by R. S. Gruneau and J. G. Albinson (Don Mills, Ontario: Addison-Wesley (Canada) Limited, 1976), p. 82, brackets mine. In an earlier, unpublished version of this study, Metcalfe cited an 1887 Montreal newspaper which noted that many non-M.A.A.A. sporting clubs were infused with cross membership with the M.A.A.A. These included the Montreal Yacht Club, the Montreal Golf Club, several curling and swimming clubs, the Lachine Rowing Club, the “principle officers” of the St. George Snow Shoe Club and the Britannia Football Club.
2. S. F. Wise and D. Fisher, *Canada's Sporting Heroes: Their Lives and Times* (Don Mills, Ontario: General Publishing Company Limited, 1974), p. 19.
3. Power, it seems, defies definition. As a concept it is more easily characterized than pinpointed. Power as influence or a form of authority is generally accepted as one form of the concept. See Lukes' discussion of the dimensional views of power in Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1978), pp. 11-25 and Emmet's types of power in John R. Champlin, ed., *Power* (New York: Atherton Press, 1971), pp. 78-103. Berle identifies 5 laws of power in Adolf A. Berle, *Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1969), pp. 37-134. These laws of power provided the most useful framework in discussing the concept of power as it pertains to the M.A.A.A.
4. Berle, *Power*, p. 55
5. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
7. Wise and Fisher, *Canada's Sporting Heroes*, p. 14. See the complete chapter on Montreal, pp. 13-36
8. H. W. Becket, *The Montreal Snow Shoe Club Its History and Record with a Synopsis of the Racing Events of Other Clubs Throughout the Dominion from 1840 to the Present Time* (Montreal: Becket Brothers, 1882, 521 pages).
9. *Ibid.*
10. Songs such as “The Snowshoe Races” sung to the tune of “Camptown Races,” “Travel Fast,” “The Rattling Boys from County Down,” “Tramp Over the Mountain,” “Dot Sky Plue Tuyue” and “The Snow Shoe Call” were distinctive to the M.S.S.C. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-358.
11. The details of these trips were given in the Montreal papers and those of the local centres. Many have been kept in scrapbook form in the Minute Books of the Montreal Snow Shoe Club, 1861 to 1883, 3 volumes.
12. Becket, *The Montreal Snow Shoe Club*, pp. 60-122
13. *Montreal Daily Star*, July 7, 1885, p. 4. The formation of the Olympic Club actually preceded the organization of the Montreal Snow Shoe Club. The latter body was not formally constituted until 1843, but club members in subsequent records were able to trace its existence to the original, informal tramps of its members in 1840. The *Star* published the names of the original 244 members of the Olympic Club in the July 7, 1885 edition. At least nine people on that list became prominent members of the Montreal Snow Shoe Club and three of these nine were influential in the formation of the M.A.A.A. in 1881.
14. See, P. L. Lindsay, “A History of Sport in Canada, 1807-1867” (Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Alberta, 1969), Appendix F, pp. 425-427.
15. W. H. Whyte, *Historical Sketch of the M.A.A.A.: Souvenir of the New Club House* (Montreal: published by the M.A.A.A., 1905), p. 2.
16. *Montreal Daily Star*, August 2, 1884, p. 6.
17. See, P. L. Lindsay, “George Beers and the National Game Concept: A Behavioral Approach” in *Proceedings of the Second Canadian Symposium on The History of Sport and Physical Education* (Windsor, Ontario, 1972), pp. 27-44.
18. Montreal Amateur Athletic Association Scrapbook, Vol. 14, n.p.
19. *Athletic Leaves: A Literary Souvenir of the M.A.A.A. Fair*, Montreal: published by the M.A.A.A., 1888, pp. 43-44. The M.L.C. was invited on different occasions to visit and play in such American centres as Chicago, St. Paul, New York, Boston, Portland, Baltimore, Washington, Newport and St. Albans

20. The M.L.C. possessed a playing field semi-circled by a 5,000-seat grandstand and encompassed by a running track. During the 1870s, the M.L.C. perceived itself as the "senior" summer sport club and therefore assigned itself the task of holding annual and semi-annual track and field championships. In some years, these contests were designated as Canadian championships Montreal Amateur Athletic Association Scrapbook, Vol. 14.
21. *Our City and Our Sports. Souvenir of the 12th Annual Meet of the Canadian Wheelman's Association*, Montreal, July, 1894, p. 36.
22. The influence, of course, is that bicycling was a new sport/pastime and that it did not have much tradition or influence compared to the other two founding clubs of the M.A.A.A. While there are no membership lists available for the first three years of the M.B.C.'s existence, the lists following amalgamation do share considerable overlap in membership among the three clubs. *Annual Reports of the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association*, 1882-1884.
23. Minute Book of the Montreal Gymnasium Company, 1868-1882, pp. 29-41.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-176.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 192-199
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242 and Whyte, *Historical Sketch of the M.A.A.A.*, p. 2.
27. Becket also used the term "associated clubs" in *The Montreal Snow Shoe Club. Its History and Record*, p. 392.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 394.
29. Minute Book of the "Montreal Gymnasium Company, pp 251-258.
30. This point is supported by Becket in *The Montreal Snow Shoe Club. Its History and Record*, p. 463.
31. Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, pp. 11-15.
32. Constitution and By-Laws of the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, 1886, p. 1.
33. Even a cursory examination of the advertisement and/or sport section of any English Montreal newspaper during this 28-year period reveals a continual barrage of ads, announcements, fixtures, results, etc. pertaining to the M.A.A.A. For many years, the secretary of the M.A.A.A. kept a scrapbook of all of these ads. This scrapbook is still in existence among the M.A.A.A. papers in the National Archives, Ottawa. Furthermore, the M.A.A.A. budgeted annually for some 20,000 lines of advertising. *Annual Reports of the M.A.A.A.*, 1882 to 1910.
34. This average was computed from the annual membership figures between 1881 and 1905 excluding the years between 1906 and 1909 due to the distortion created by the great increase in members that occurred after the completion of the new clubhouse. The average total membership, paying plus life, was 1872 and the average life membership was 638. The significant feature of these figures is that the averages for both playing and total membership categories were equalled during the M.A.A.A.'s fourth year of operation, 1884-1885, whereas the number of life members does not approach the average number of life members until 1894-1895. Thereafter the annual increase in life members is rapid, but the average number of paying members is still maintained between 1894 and 1906. Thus, the M.A.A.A. consistently attracted new members.
35. *Annual Reports of the M.A.A.A.*, 1890-1891 to 1897-1898. It should be pointed out that in contrast to the New York Athletic Club during this period and to modern sports clubs, the M.A.A.A. was without the income to be derived from food and liquor sales. The M.A.A.A. openly advocated its alcoholic temperance.
36. *Ibid.*, 1888-1889, p. 12. The initiation fee was imposed in 1888 to help pay the mortgage on the new grounds acquired by the M.A.A.A. in that year. In the United States, comparable fees might be illustrated for the New York Athletic Club. N.Y.A.C. members in 1878, ten years after the founding of the N.Y.A.C. paid an initiation fee of 10 dollars and a 25 dollar annual fee. The only membership privileges different from the M.A.A.A. were the right to use boat houses and club boats belonging to the N.Y.A.C. and the privilege of spending money on liquor and meals. (The M.A.A.A. had no dining facilities and sold no liquor at its clubhouses until 1929—a further point to strengthen the case of efficient financial management on the part of the M.A.A.A.). N.Y.A.C. Ninth Annual Fall Games booklet (New York: Daniel D. Comes Printer, 1878), p. 3. See also, B. Considine and F. G. Jarvis, *The First Hundred Years: A Portrait of the N.Y.A.C.* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1969).
37. *Annual Report of the M.A.A.A.*, 1901-1902, p. 11.
38. K. L. Lansley, "The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada and Changing Concepts of Amateurism" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, 1971), pp. 21-22. This is not to say that the M.A.A.A. did not experience problems with the trend toward professionalism. The Association did recruit athletes, especially for lacrosse, and even had a category of "athletic membership" for skilled athletes who wished to or were asked to play for M.A.A.A. teams. See also, D. Morrow, "The Little Men of Iron: The Montreal Hockey Club of 1902," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport*, Vol XII. No 1 (May, 1981). pp. 51-65

39. The Montreal Cricket Club did not join the Association until the late 1880s and the tennis club was organized in the early 1890s.
40. Metcalfe, "Organized Sport and Social Stratification in Montreal," p. 83.
41. The most famous picture of the Montreal Bicycle Club is displayed in B. Schrodt, G. Redmond, R. Baka, *Sport Canadiana* (Edmonton: Executive Sport Publication Ltd., 1980), p. 54. However the date, 1889, given in *Sport Canadiana* is incorrect. It should read 1885 (Notman Archives negative, 26,273 View).
42. *Our City and Our Sports: Souvenir of the 12th Annual Meet of the Canadian Wheelman's Association*, Montreal, July, 1894, 94 pages.
43. Annual Report of the M.A.A.A., 1899-1900, pp. 73-83. The event was held on the new board track of the Queen's Park Athletic Association at Verdun, but it was the M.A.A.A.'s Louis Rubenstein, president of the Canadian Wheelman's Association in that year, who travelled through central and eastern Canada with "Rubenstein's Greatest Canadian Bicycle Band" and, armed with promotional literature, actively campaigned for the World's Bicycle Meet. It was a last hurrah for cycling in Montreal since the cycle craze vanished with the coming of the automobile.
44. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, 1881 to 1891.
45. *Ibid.*, Vols. I and II, 1881 to 1901. These two American clubs overwhelmingly dominated the Games in each year. The M.A.A.A. posted a standing prize for any athlete to break a Canadian or American track record on the Association's track.
46. Wise and Fisher, *Canada's Sporting Heroes*, pp. 213-214.
47. In 1906, the M.A.A.A. boasted 85,000 square feet of outdoor ice at its grounds. The footage was comprised of a huge rectangular public skating rink, an outdoor hockey rink, a quarter-mile speedskating track and a serpentine "lover's lane frappé." Annual Report of the M.A.A.A., 1905-1906, pp. 79-80.
48. *Montreal Star*, February 6-9, 1897.
49. See *ibid.*, February issues 1883 to 1889. The Montreal Winter Carnival took place every year between 1883 and 1889 except for 1886. It was a winter mardi gras, a week long celebration of winter sports and activities in early February that attracted thousands of tourists each year. Conceived by an M.A.A.A. member, R. D. McGibbon, it was a municipal adventure that culminated on the last day in a huge parade comprised of a labyrinth of vehicles, special hacks, private sleighs and individual floats. That evening, the man-made ice palace (or castle) towering 76 feet in height and constructed at a cost of 3200 dollars (*Montreal Daily Star*, December 15, 1883, p. 3) was attacked in mock-battle by hundreds of snowshoers.
50. This information was gleaned from Montreal newspapers, Annual Reports of the M.A.A.A. and Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of Directors of the M.A.A.A. between 1881 and 1909.
51. F. Cosentino and G. Leyshon, *Olympic Gold: Canada's Winners in the Summer Games* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), pp. 11-15.
52. See, F. Cosentino, "A History of the Concept of Professionalism in Canadian Sport," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, 1973), pp. 1-83..
53. When the Irish Lacrosse Club toured Canada in 1886, the M.A.A.A. donated the gross gate receipts of all matches held at the Association grounds to the Irish team to defer its expenses. This sum amounted to 1,054 dollars. Respect came to the Montreal Lacrosse Club even in lean years. When the M.L.C. declined to compete in the championship series in 1889, Montreal citizens, probably in tribute to the Club's 1885 and 1886 "world" lacrosse championships, purchased diamond scarf pins and gold watches for the team members. Annual Report of the M.A.A.A., 1889-1890, p. 17.
54. Any clergyman in Montreal was given a free membership in the M.A.A.A. upon request.
55. Numerous clubs wrote back to the M.A.A.A. requesting more information on the workings of the Association. The directors responded by sending copies of the M.A.A.A. constitution to them. Annual Report of the M.A.A.A., 1889-1890, p. 11 and Minutes of the Meetings of the M.A.A.A. Board of Directors, Vol. 3, p. 79.
56. William Notman founded a photographic studio in Montreal in the late 1850's. Notman achieved international renown, eventually becoming "photographer to the Queen" (of England). Celebrities and dignitaries trooped to Notman's studio. Some 400,000 photographic prints and negatives and some early ambrotypes still survive. See, J. R. Harper and S. Triggs, eds., *Portrait of a Period: A Collection of Notman Photographs* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967). Many M.A.A.A. teams, clubs and individuals were photographed in Notman's studio. Most famous were the composite artworks in which a large background scene was hand-painted. A rough sketch of the people to be included in the photograph was made. Then Notman's photographers would photograph each individual in the position in which he would eventually appear in the picture. The negative of each individual was cut out, sometimes handpainted or tinted by miniature artists, and then glued to the background painting. Some of the Notman snowshoe campsite pictures contained 250 individual photographs and took up to two years to complete. The Montreal Bicycle Club picture referred to earlier (*See supra*, footnote 36) is a Notman composite.

57. Annual Reports of the M.A.A.A., 1881-1882 to 1908-1909, and Minutes of the Meetings of the M.A.A.A. Board of Directors, 1881 to 1909, and M.A.A.A. Scrapbooks, Vols. 14 to 17 inclusive. The latter source contains many of the original constitutions of these sport governing bodies.

58. Lansley, "The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada," pp. 1-26.

59. Minutes of the Meetings of the M.A.A.A. Board of Directors, Vo.. 4, p. 358a.

60. Lansley, "The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada," pp. 66-79 and *Montreal Daily Star*, November 6, 1906, p. 10.

