

The Hockey Hall of Fame and Museum. Exhibit Place, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6K 3C3. Contact Ian “Scotty” Morrison, (416) 595-1345.

Located in the centre of the grounds of Exhibition Place, in Toronto, Ontario, the Hockey Hall of Fame and Museum has become the most popular of Canada’s sports heritage institutions. Given the central position that hockey occupies in the Canadian sports scene this should be no surprise, particularly with the Hall of Fame also acting as the repository for the legendary Stanley Cup.

The Hockey Hall of Fame is operated directly by the National Hockey League. In 1946 the NHL started a hall of fame and was persuaded by a group of Kingston, Ontario citizens that it should be located where the game was purported to have been born. In 1961, NHL President Clarence Campbell was persuaded to move hockey’s shrine to Toronto, where it would team up with the Canada’s Sports Hall of Fame at the Canadian National Exhibition. The Kingston as the birthplace of hockey theory was finally put to rest with the publication of *Canada’s Sporting Heroes* in 1974.

At this time the Hockey Hall of Fame occupies 6500 square feet of space in one wing of a single story building. It has a staff of seven and received 160,000 visitors in 1990, most of whom came during the Canadian National Exhibition in late August. It is free to the public during this time although a very respectable 50,000 visitors were willing to pay the admission charge during the rest of the year.

There is a lot to see. Hockey Hall of Fame President Scotty Morrison, a former NHL Referee-in-Chief, estimates that there are over 4500 artifacts in the collection. That includes all of the NHL Trophies, which were out on tour the day of my visit. The exhibits ranged from a puck carried by Canadian astronaut Marc Garneau in the space shuttle to the first Zamboni used in the Boston Gardens dating back to 1954.

The Zamboni display is instructive as it shows the evolution of this important piece of technology. However, it could benefit by the inclusion of one of the old manual machines that are in Toronto’s Maple Leaf Gardens. An exhibit showing the evolution of the goaltenders mask is located nearby but it is less successful because the designer’s over exuberant use of plexiglass and lighting coil distracts the visitor from the masks themselves.

Although there is an attempt to record and present hockey’s history through a section where the game is organized into six eras, the overall impression is somewhat confused in presentation. This is because the Hockey Hall of Fame has endeavoured to embark on a series of tours, which have been very successful in reaching a broader audience. However, the home base suffers as a consequence. The exhibits are housed in a system developed for a major show in Quebec City in 1987. Overall they give a very temporary look. The pictures of the honourees have been removed and re-organized into a much smaller corner of the hall. One could easily miss them while browsing through a broad range of Wayne Gretzky’s memorabilia who has not yet been elected to the Hall of Fame.

While there is no denying Gretzky’s impact and personal appeal to most visitors, it does seem odd that there is no mention of the man who had the most

to do with the original creation of the modern game, James George Creighton. One hopes that the Selection Committee will correct this glaring oversight soon.

The Hockey Hall of Fame is very much in transition. Suffering for years from a lack of adequate space, plans are well under way for its move to a new home in downtown Toronto. The \$17 million project will result in a facility eight times larger in size. The core will be the historic Bank of Montreal building which will place hockey's shrine right back at its roots. Perhaps on opening day hockey pioneer Creighton will finally be accorded the place of honour he deserves.

Olympic Hall of Fame

Tom West