

The Olympic Hall of Fame and Museum, Canada Olympic Park, Calgary, Alberta, T2M 4N3. Tom West, curator. (403) 286-2632

Anyone driving from the outskirts of Calgary along the Trans Canada Highway West towards Banff and the Canadian Rockies, cannot fail to notice the impressive facilities of Canada Olympic Park-dominated by the silhouette of the 90m Ski Jump Tower against the skyline-which were, of course, built for the XV Olympic Winter Games in 1988. This very successful celebration involved nearly 1500 athletes representing 57 countries at 46 events in the ten Olympic winter sports, and left this practical legacy of unsurpassed facilities to be enjoyed by present and future generations. Not only by athletes and potential Olympians but also by tourists, for whom various kinds of tours of the Park are available. Among these tourist attractions is the Olympic Hall of Fame and Museum, presently the largest Olympic Museum in the world. It is housed in a handsome and modern building, a three-storey structure which is all glass on its north face, outside of which fly the flags of many nations and Canada's provinces. The Canada Olympic Park brochure briefly mentions the opportunity to "take a trip back through time in the Olympic Hall of Fame, where you will see a fascinating tribute to previous Olympic Winter Games," and certainly such a tribute is there. But really this impressive museum offers far more to discerning and interested visitors.

The Olympic Hall of Fame was opened on February 12, 1988, by the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The motivation for such a museum reflected both the desire of the Organizing Committee of the XV Olympic Winter Games, (OCO '88) and the inspiration of President Samaranch to have an Olympic Museum in every host city; and its existence was greatly facilitated by a \$2.5 million gift from private citizen benefactors, Harold and William Siebens of Calgary. It is managed by the Calgary Olympic Development Association (CODA) with the assistance of the Canadian Olympic Association (COA), and several other related sponsors.

Before its inauguration, the Olympic Hall of Fame was off to a good start by the appointment of Tom West as Curator in August, 1987. Before this he had been



Entrance to the Olympic Hall of Fame, Calgary, Alberta. Courtesy of the Olympic Hall of Fame.

Curator of Canada's Sports Hall of Fame in Toronto for 12 years. West was also the founding President of the Canadian Association for Sports Heritage (with the delightful acronym of CASH), and is a recipient of the prestigious W. R. "Bill" Schroeder Award of the International Association of Sports Museums and Halls of Fame for Distinguished Service. His experience represents one of the Olympic Hall of Fame's strongest assets.

Dedicated to preserving the artifacts and memorabilia of the 1988 Winter Olympics, the Hall of Fame also pays tribute to Canada's many participants in the fourteen previous Winter Olympic Games. It also actively seeks to promote a greater awareness of the history of the Olympic Games, and of the achievements and ideals of the Olympic Movement as a whole.

The Museum itself encompasses over 10,000 square feet within its three exhibit floors, including a theatre which provides continuous video productions for visitors' enjoyment. This theatre is on the main floor, which also features a unique Timeline exhibit displaying the names and photographs of every medal winner at the Winter Olympics since their inception in 1924. Another attractive display shows all the lapel pins manufactured by the official licensee for the 1988 Games. There is fun to be had here, too, as visitors can also experience the thrill of using a ski jump simulator, or sit in a bobsleigh, used in the Winter Olympic Games. The empty space on the wall behind is noticeable, and a criticism could be made at present that the Museum appears perhaps too spacious in one or two areas. However, there are definite plans to add to its collection in the future in sensible fashion, and it is better to take time to obtain really worthwhile items than clutter up space with less meaningful exhibits just for the sake of it.

The second floor is mainly devoted to the 1988 Winter Olympic Games, with many attractive related exhibits, such as the medals and torches of those XVth Games, costumes from the opening and closing ceremonies, and uniforms of the participating nations. There is also a Guest Book of the athlete participants (the first since the Berlin Games of 1936), and two touch screen video kiosks which offer background information on the Winter Olympics as well as the complete results for 1988. Sport historian Dr. Jean Leiper of the University of Calgary (now retired) was largely responsible for the impressive accuracy and content of this interesting and popular feature.

On the third floor is a pictorial tribute to every Canadian medal winner and some Olympian artifacts. A very interesting and unusual feature is the large "quotes wall" of famous sayings concerning the Olympics and Sports, which had this reviewer reaching for pen-and-paper to make note of some of them. Visitors may also walk out on to an outdoors balcony to enjoy the view of Canada Olympic Park.

The Museum has a small library containing all the publications of the Calgary Organizing Committee, some general reference books on sports, files on Canadian Olympians, a complete set of videos from the Host Broadcaster in Calgary, and a photograph collection. Access to these materials for research purposes is arranged through prior appointment only.

For anyone researching the Winter Olympic Games in depth-and the 1988 Games in particular-a visit to the Calgary Olympic Hall of Fame and Museum is a must. For sport historians or just plain sports fans, it is highly recommended. But *any* tourist should find something of interest in this attractive and well-run facility. The high percentage of repeat visitors, returning again with friends in tow, is but one significant indication that this is not a dry and static experience, but one which gives enjoyment and value for money.

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Gerald Redmond