

# The Influences of the Montreal Curling Club on the Development of Curling in the Canadas, 1807-1857

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The objective of this thesis was to examine the influences which the Montreal Curling Club had on the development of curling in Lower and Upper Canada between 1807 and 1857. Information pertinent to the study was obtained from the Minutes of the Montreal Curling Club as well as letters, documents, and manuscripts contained with the Club's Archives and the McGill University Archives. Published works, unpublished materials, and newspaper accounts supplemented and complemented the primary evidence. A chronological format of presentation was employed highlighting the important influences and developments of curling up until 1857. A sociological analysis of the Montreal Curling Club members, with regards to occupation, ethnicity, and geographical location, was undertaken for the years 1807 and 1853.

The exact date of the first curling game played in Canada remains unknown but the Montreal Curling Club, formed in 1807, represented the first formally constituted sporting and curling club in North America. The original members were wealthy Scottish merchants and fur traders of the Northwest Company. They possessed superior organizational skills, energy, affluence, and leisure time and thus were a strong organizational force in establishing early Canadian sporting clubs. After the downfall of the Northwest Company in 1821, the members were principally the commercial and professional elite of Montreal.

The Montreal Curling Club was the first to initiate and perpetuate the use of the curling *iron*; the first to add regularity to play by constructing a covered "artificial" rink; the co-competitor with Quebec in the first inter-city curling match in North America at Three Rivers in 1837; the first member, outside of Scotland, of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club in 1841; the inaugurator, in Canada, of the points competition and the awarding of prize medals for match play; the principal organizer and perpetuator of the Canadian Branch of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club in 1852; the chief contributor of the formation of six other curling clubs; plus, it was the primary architect of the game's rules in the early Canadas. Many of its members are instrumental in the founding of other fraternal and civic organizations in Montreal. Thus, few sporting clubs contributed as much to a game and city, as did the Montreal Curling Club between 1807 and 1857.