

The 'Club': Its Evolution And Impact On Sport In Nineteenth Century Canada

R. WAYNE SIMPSON

University of Alberta

To date, authors of the history of sport have referred to the club as a pivotal institution around which sport has evolved and developed but few have attempted to understand its earliest beginnings and how it lodged itself between class, moral behavior, elitism, and the pursuit of sport. What this paper will attempt to show is how the club, initially apart from sport, grew out of the taverns and coffee houses of 17th and 18th century England and how, as time passed, they became increasingly important to the professional classes as a symbol of exclusivity and prestige, as a vehicle for moral improvement, and as an elite establishment for the pursuit of many activities (lectures, balls, libraries, art exhibitions), of which sport was included.

The analysis of the paper will attempt to show how the Victorian 'Pall Mall' Club of England was successfully transplanted in nineteenth century Canada and how, as a result of its strong British tradition, it influenced the structure and development of sport. The analysis will attempt to place the club in the context of nineteenth century colonial Canada and will draw upon specific examples within Montreal and Toronto to substantiate and corroborate the author's claims.