

Curlers' Mecca: Winnipeg at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

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By the first decade of the twentieth century Winnipeg was, as Rev. John Kerr of Scotland put it, a curler's "mecca". It was the headquarters of a major curling association that sponsored the world's largest annual bonspiel. It was also the home of the finest group of shot-makers in the sport. This paper examines how Winnipeg became the world's foremost curling city in the years from approximately 1876 to 1903. It describes the origins and development of the Manitoba Branch of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club (now known as the Manitoba Curling Association). It describes how an elite group of Winnipeg curlers introduced new techniques and styles that helped them become the best shooters in the game. The paper particularly outlines how and why the Winnipeg Bonspiel became the most significant annual event in the curling world. The Bonspiel was first held in 1889, and within fifteen years it became both a major prairie winter festival and an unofficial North American championship event.