

State Funded Sport in Canada in the 19th Century

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Since the formation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867, the Canadian state has directly intervened in the sporting and recreational activities of its people. The sport of rifle-shooting was encouraged, developed, and monetarily supported by the state during the period following Confederation. Justified by the need for a system of defense in Canada, the state established pockets of military companies, composed of volunteer citizens, nationwide. Concurrent with the inculcation of a military attitude or extensive advocacy of military culture in Canadian communities, the state popularized the sport of rifle-shooting. The state-funded Dominion Rifle Association was essentially a National Sport Organization that promoted the development of Canadian sharp-shooters through a system of regional-provincial-national contests. A National Team was then selected by the Association and sent to an annual competition in Britain. It was supported by funds that were specifically designated for this elite competition by the federal government. The sport of rifle-shooting was utilized by the state to gain international recognition and to promote investment and immigration. No other National Sport Organization, sporting team, or individual athletes received as much government financial assistance as the Dominion Rifle Association and rifle shooters in Canada during the last quarter of the 19th century. Rifle-shooting provides an important example of substantial government funding of an elite sport during the 19th century.