

Bonspiel Sermons: Observations on Curling and Life, 1894-1970

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Since the 1890s the bonspiel of the Manitoba Curling Association has been the biggest annual bonspiel in the world. Between 1894 and 1970 this bonspiel featured a curlers' church service incorporating a sermon that explored the "spiritual significance" of curling. These services were held at bonspiels in many other Western Canadian towns and cities as well.

Bonspiel sermons tended to be very much alike. The same observations about curling and life were made time and time again, with the main message being that similar qualities of character were needed for success both in curling and in everyday affairs. However, in the interwar years, Canada's two "decades of discord", the sermons focussed on the importance of social qualities as opposed to individual ones: on obedience, teamwork, harmony, rather than on individual discipline, self-control, decisiveness.

Trends that existed in the subject chosen for the sermons were much less pronounced, however, than the downward trend in the popularity of the curlers' services themselves after 1930. As Western Canada became "secularized" the church services lost their purpose and meaning. By 1970 they had all but disappeared.