

Facilities as a Factor in the Development of Urban Sport: Vancouver, Canada, 1886 to 1914

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By the time the City of Vancouver was incorporated in 1886, modern sports competitions were well-established in urban centres across Canada. Freshly-carved from the forest that bordered the harbour of Burrard Inlet, Vancouver had no official sports facilities, and such sports as were played used the open spaces around a hotel at the end of a rough road terminating at the inlet. But by the turn of the century, outdoor facilities had developed to meet the growing needs of the sports community, and Vancouver teams were receiving visiting athletes from across Canada and from many other countries, in all of the major outdoor spots of the times.

In the early years of the new century, sports facilities were built to accommodate the demands for indoor sports and for commercial sports dependent upon controlled gate receipts. Private clubs were also established, for the elite social class of the city. And with the construction of Canada's first artificial ice rink in 1911, Vancouver teams were able to participate in the important winter sports of the day.

By World War I, sports participants in Vancouver were able to make use of standardized facilities varying in quality from good to excellent, for a wide range of sports, specifically: baseball, basketball, indoor bowling, boxing, curling, cycling, field hockey, figure skating, golf, ice hockey, lacrosse, roller skating, rowing, rugby, soccer, swimming, tennis, thoroughbred racing, track and field athletics, and wrestling.

Significant factors in the development of facilities in early Vancouver include: the role of individual sportsmen-entrepreneurs in the building of private buildings and parks; policies of the locally-elected City Council and Board of Park Commissioners; climate and other physical features of Vancouver, geographically-linked social class divisions; the influence of the Canadian Pacific Railway as the principal landowner in Vancouver, private sports clubs; and property values as a factor in the location of sports facilities.