

Daniel S. Mason
University of Alberta

Change in the City, Change in the Game: Denman Arena, 1911-1936

This paper examines the development and use of the Denman Arena, and its effects on both the city of Vancouver, British Columbia and the game of ice hockey. At the onset of the twentieth century, Vancouver emerged as British Columbia's, if not Western Canada's, dominant metropolis as its population nearly quadrupled in size from 1900 through 1910. The influx of new citizens also brought sporting traditions from elsewhere but ice hockey, which was becoming one of Canada's favorite sports, could not be played regularly because of the West Coast's milder climate. In the meantime, two hockey- playing brothers from Eastern Canada, Lester and Frank Patrick, had relocated to British Columbia. They persuaded their father to finance the construction of Canada's first two artificial ice rinks in order that professional hockey might be introduced in Vancouver and Victoria, B.C. The result was the Denman Arena, a ten thousand-seat marvel built in 1911 that was home to the Vancouver entry into the Pacific Coast Hockey Association (PCHA). The arena had a significant impact on the city. For over two decades, until it burned to the ground in 1936, the arena was a center of activity hosting ice hockey, skating, box lacrosse, boxing, cycling and other social events.

The availability of artificial ice also meant the geographical expansion of hockey and this led to the development of a rival league to the National Hockey Association (NHA), and the migration of talented players from the east. The PCHA, which later became the Western Canada Hockey League, facilitated several key changes in the playing of ice hockey and provided the only significant competition for the NHA until the World Hockey Association was formed in the early 1970s.

Sources for this paper include local newspapers; artifacts, photographs and other material pertaining to the Denman Arena housed in the City of Vancouver Archives; and architectural maps and plans available at Vancouver City Hall.