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Article abstract

Edmonton's rapid growth in the early 1900s was accompanied by an equally rapid growth in both professional and amateur sports. This paper explores the objectives of the city's sports promoter. In the main, Edmonton's boosters implemented recreation and entertainment plans similar to ones established elsewhere by agencies such as the Young Men's Christian Association, the American National Baseball Commission and international sports news services. These programmes, neither distinctive nor unusually exploitative, were put in place by local entrepreneurs with a minimum amount of contention.

# Sports Promotion in the Western Canadian City: The Example of Early Edmonton

Carl Betke

*Résumé/Abstract*

*La croissance de la ville d'Edmonton au début des années 1900 est allée de pair avec l'implantation, tant pour les participants que pour les spectateurs, d'activités sportives organisées sur une grande échelle et en partie sous forme commerciale. Cette évolution amène à considérer les objectifs des commanditaires. Il s'avère à l'examen que les promoteurs locaux ont appliqué à la récréation et aux divertissements des formules qui avaient déjà été solidement implantées dans l'ensemble de l'Amérique du Nord par des organisations telles que la Young Men's Christian Association, l'American National Baseball Commission et les services internationaux de nouvelles sportives. Un modèle urbain d'organisation des sports fut adopté sans controverse à Edmonton, et les entrepreneurs locaux y apportèrent une contribution marquée ni par l'originalité ni par la rapacité commerciale.*

*Edmonton's rapid growth in the early 1900s was accompanied by an equally rapid growth in both professional and amateur sports. This paper explores the objectives of the city's sports promoter. In the main, Edmonton's boosters implemented recreation and entertainment plans similar to ones established elsewhere by agencies such as the Young Men's Christian Association, the American National Baseball Commission and international sports news services. These programmes, neither distinctive nor unusually exploitative, were put in place by local entrepreneurs with a minimum amount of contention.*

Mass organization of competitive sport activities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is closely identified with cities; sport organization in places of small and dispersed population, however, may not have differed much from the large centres except in scale. Yet, in certain ways, scale itself was a significant differentiating factor. Someone intent on encouraging all able citizens to participate in athletics required a substantial and relatively complex organization in a city. Marshalling a large audience in a city required sophisticated forms of broad advertising coverage and large accommodations for spectators. To some extent, population size determines differences in organizational form for collective purposes. But, why should anyone in a city care whether sporting associations remained limited or encompassed the whole city? What were the objectives of the promoters? The example of early twentieth century Edmonton before World War I demonstrates that not only scale but also the cultural and political imperatives of the era were important determinants in the urban responses to the temptations of sport entertainment.

## I

Edmonton, with a population of about 4,000 in 1900 and over 70,000 in 1914, outgrew its village status in the first decade of the twentieth century, long after the maturation of numerous British and North American cities. Recently some urban and sport historians have assessed the accompanying transformations in sport organizations. In general they suggest that sometime between the 1870s and 1890s, a

range of competitive sports were adapted to provide an entertainment service for audiences on a commercial — that is to say, on a remunerated and specialized — basis.<sup>1</sup> These analyses disagree over the degree to which the new forms were created to promote profit or to respond to an urban social need. The perennial question is asked by several historians: whose interests were served by the market-determined economy? One might push this inquiry further and ask: was professional sport entertainment purposefully devised as a conspiracy by prominent citizens to re-establish or maintain social control in new forms or was this an unintended by-product? As one recent observer points out, few in the quarrel deny that the effect, whether conceived in hostility or benevolence, whether devoted to one man's greed or the good of the whole, was to promote a mass focus of attention, marked by a common emotional commitment.<sup>2</sup>

The most dramatic social alteration was the change from participatory to spectator sport, although the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) did adopt competitive sports as a means of socializing urban young men in an urban Christian community.<sup>3</sup> The need for large audiences for sport entertainment inevitably made cities the natural starting point for the development of entrepreneurial sports. Relatively easy and cheap transportation from outlying areas as well as within cities helped to create the spectator phenomenon. Technological and design innovations allowed late nineteenth century builders to construct large arenas and stadiums to house vast crowds. Electric lighting opened up the possibility of outdoor evening spectacles and performances within covered arenas, in several ways markedly improving the usability of leisure time for sport presentations to large attendances.<sup>4</sup> A new form of vicarious access

became widespread in cheap newspapers, in which accounts of sporting contests maintained and encouraged regular attention to an ongoing fantasy world. Daily newspapers themselves were an aspect of "mass production," at once expanding yet standardizing the experience of millions. An intimate connection existed between the general acceptance of newspaper communication and the mass marketing of consumer sport.<sup>5</sup>

People were, of course, indulging in something during the last half of the nineteenth century which had not been available before in such intensity to so many. Whether this expansion of opportunity was fundamentally a liberation or a regimentation is a root point — certain conditions became pervasive. One scholar has summarized them, arguing that they bespeak the characteristics of modern society described by Max Weber and Talcott Parsons. Modern sports came to contribute, Allen Guttmann suggests, a secular experience, detached from traditional religious values. Whether or not sport lost its mystic meaning is debatable; but Guttmann is emphasizing that modern sports constituted an adjustment in play to the altered conditions of modern society. In theory, sports stressed equal competitive opportunity while simultaneously encouraging role specializations. The cooperation evident in team play or in organization of basic contests was extended to complex bureaucratic organizations to maintain long-term, comparable schedules of competition among several or a multitude of individual competitors or teams, and to rationalize and standardize the rules of infinite repetitions of the game. The single contest no longer defined the scope of play: a season's habitual patronage of sports events extended the duration of the pleasure, which was enhanced with the aid of quantitative record keeping. Records prolonged fan attention indefinitely by establishing standards of excellence to be challenged even after the record setter had long passed from the competitive scene.<sup>6</sup> Such long term rationalization created a stability that permitted the packaging of consumer sports in a modern commercial form.

Those who have begun to analyze the phenomenon in Canada appear to recognize a minor time lag: what developed in the late nineteenth century in Great Britain and the United States became well established in Canadian centres only on the eve of World War I. S.F. Wise and Alan Metcalfe have demonstrated that sports organization in voluntary associations continued throughout the nineteenth century to be a preoccupation of middling and well-to-do Canadians for themselves, although what Wise labels the incredible "itch for order" already prevailed. Morris Mott identifies a surge in the organization of "manly" team sports in Winnipeg with the spectacular growth of the city just before World War I. Although his periodization may seem arbitrary, R.S. Grueneau suggests that massive sports consumption in Canada became pervasive by 1910, reflecting the accomplishment of a social reorganization (in the interests, in his view, of a manipulative elite) by the device of the marketplace; corporate forms were thereafter rapidly imposed.<sup>7</sup>

With its late development, Edmonton would not be expected to exhibit radically innovative sporting designs before World War I. And in fact, the individuals responsible for promoting consumer sports in Edmonton did not choose an independent course, but recreated in Edmonton the approach to sports already in place elsewhere in North America. Before World War I, a wide variety of sports were introduced in Edmonton under the traditional aegis of voluntary clubs, which encouraged individual participation and considered the needs of spectators only peripheral interest. The promoters of sports on a commercial basis — sports in which paid professional athletes represented the city, engendering costs for travel and salaries and generating a paying audience — also made use of established patterns, albeit on a reduced scale. Edmonton's early promoters were not world-class sports' tycoons.

The positions in Edmonton of the principal organizers of football, hockey, and especially of baseball, the only sport to be presented professionally on a regular basis in Edmonton before World War I, illustrate clearly the limited capital and experience necessary to launch a sporting enterprise in Edmonton. William J. Magrath was an affluent Edmontonian, engaged in the real estate and construction businesses during the boom years, and founded several related industries. Briefly active in municipal politics, running unsuccessfully for the mayoralty in 1912, he was prominent in other voluntary associations such as the Exhibition Association. Joseph A. Clarke, a lawyer, was consumed by politics and served many terms as both alderman and mayor. Before the war he began to establish a reputation as spokesman for the urban disadvantaged. Joseph Driscoll, a district court clerk and later a sporting goods store proprietor, was also an alderman in 1913 and 1914 and at other times served on the Separate School Board and the Exhibition Association. Frank Gray was secretary-treasurer of a local railway supply company. W.F. "Deacon" White came to the city from the United States as a minor league baseball player, then settled briefly into a tobacconist's shop before eventually devoting his considerable energy to sports promotion.<sup>8</sup> Collectively, these men exhibited as much interest in the affairs of the city as they did in their private businesses. To which aspect was their sporting entrepreneurship more logically related? Or were all three — success of their particular private enterprises, success of the corporate civic project, and the promotion of sports — all inextricably linked?

## II

John A. McDougall and Rev. H.A. Gray certainly seemed to think they were. McDougall was the local merchant prince and sometime mayor who, along with Anglican clergyman Gray, had since 1899 promoted organized recreation for Edmonton young men, first in the form of a Young Men's Institute and, after 1904, in the form of a branch of the Young Men's Christian Association. The Y.M.C.A. expressed more impressive ideals than the simple provision of mass



**FIGURE 1.** Interior of the new Stock Pavilion, (later Edmonton Gardens), built at the Exhibition Grounds in 1913.

SOURCE: Provincial Archives of Alberta

recreation, but the Y.M.C.A. emphasis had undergone a telling metamorphosis since its inception in 1841. Both in Britain and in America, the mid-nineteenth century Y.M.C.A. had striven through education and association to inculcate Christian morality, both private and collective, in wide cross-section of young men, although its appeal was primarily limited to relatively comfortable classes. In the latter part of the century, however, the Y.M.C.A. developed new activities which resulted in massive growth: sports, or what some of its critics derided as "muscular Christianity."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the Y.M.C.A., with its international stature and established professional approach, was made to order to succeed the local Edmonton Young Men's Institute. The "Y's" activities overwhelmed instructional classes and a debating society with organized hockey, tennis, lacrosse and cricket.

Early plans for the Edmonton Y.M.C.A. began, significantly, with a "mass meeting" and continued under the direction of committees representing the new city's business and professional leadership. By 1907 a costly building was ready for use, and the first salaried staff member other than an executive secretary, the director of physical activities was engaged. During its promotion, the Y.M.C.A. was endorsed by a Presbyterian evangelist as an association designed to "meet all classes and conditions of men"; Gray added that "it would at once attract and hold the enthusiasm" of young townsmen of various interest for whom "it was necessary to have recreations suitable to the tastes of each." The first Y.M.C.A. professional on the scene argued in the spirit of the era that play activities could be harnessed to develop good habits in crowds of boys. Subsequent boards of the Y.M.C.A. chapter reflected in their memberships the close interest of civic business, professional and government leadership in this social project.<sup>10</sup>

The general directive of the Edmonton Y.M.C.A. constitution, that members should "seek out young men resident or strangers in Edmonton and endeavour to bring them under moral influences by every means possible, surround them with clean associates and by personal effort try to win them to the highest type of manhood," was not to be accomplished by sport programmes alone. The physical director was, however, the only branch director to have an assistant by World War I. Hundreds of boys under 18 years of age, separated into "school boys" and "employed boys" were offered gymnasium classes and swimming lessons at Y.M.C.A. facilities. A number of team sports were organized within Y.M.C.A.-sponsored "Greater Edmonton Boys' League."<sup>11</sup> Athletic activities were a large part of the adult programme as well. Popular pressure on the Y.M.C.A. pool increased with rapid immigration into Edmonton to such an extent that the original pool built in 1908 had to be nearly doubled in size in 1910. The Y.M.C.A. promoted intra-city league basketball competition at junior, intermediate and senior levels in its gymnasium, leading to Calgary-Edmonton inter-city challenge matches, and generating substantial audience interest

for the numerous teams created. The Y.M.C.A. organized bowling and volleyball leagues and sponsored a tennis club and a harriers' club; for the latter the Y.M.C.A. staged annual provincial meets beginning in 1912. Y.M.C.A. representative teams participated in city league play in other team sports such as soccer, rugby, baseball and cricket.<sup>12</sup>

The long list of sports, and the multitude of individuals and teams encouraged to play them, established the Y.M.C.A. as the premier urban promoter of sports participation in Edmonton prior to the Great War. There were other examples of the same phenomenon — school leagues and church leagues — but the Y.M.C.A. had brought a well-developed, specialized urban service bent on fostering harmony.

The Y.M.C.A., an international organization, locked the commercial aspects of the entertainment businesses. Although it was not yet extensive, commercially-operated mass participatory entertainment had come to Edmonton by 1913, especially in the forms of bowling and billiards. The Olympic Bowling Lanes depended on maximum general use for its profits. Its popularity was enhanced by the publicity emanating from the bowling league. The results of the half-a-dozen six-man teams were regularly reported. A provincial bowling tournament in the spring, an annual event after 1910, matching several Edmonton teams against others created immense enthusiasm among a band of spectators and much newspaper coverage. It was the beginning for what would turn out to be a very popular activity.<sup>13</sup> Before the War there were at least three pool and billiard parlors in the city. One advertised on the sports pages of the *Edmonton Journal* while the other two by sponsoring pool and snooker tournaments drew regular newspaper publicity. One touring world champion English billiardist drew large audiences, and consequently publicity, as he regularly beat local champions, despite giving them a huge handicap.<sup>14</sup> These comfortable sports which were available to people of average athletic ability, soon became regular forms of diversion for significant sectors of the population.

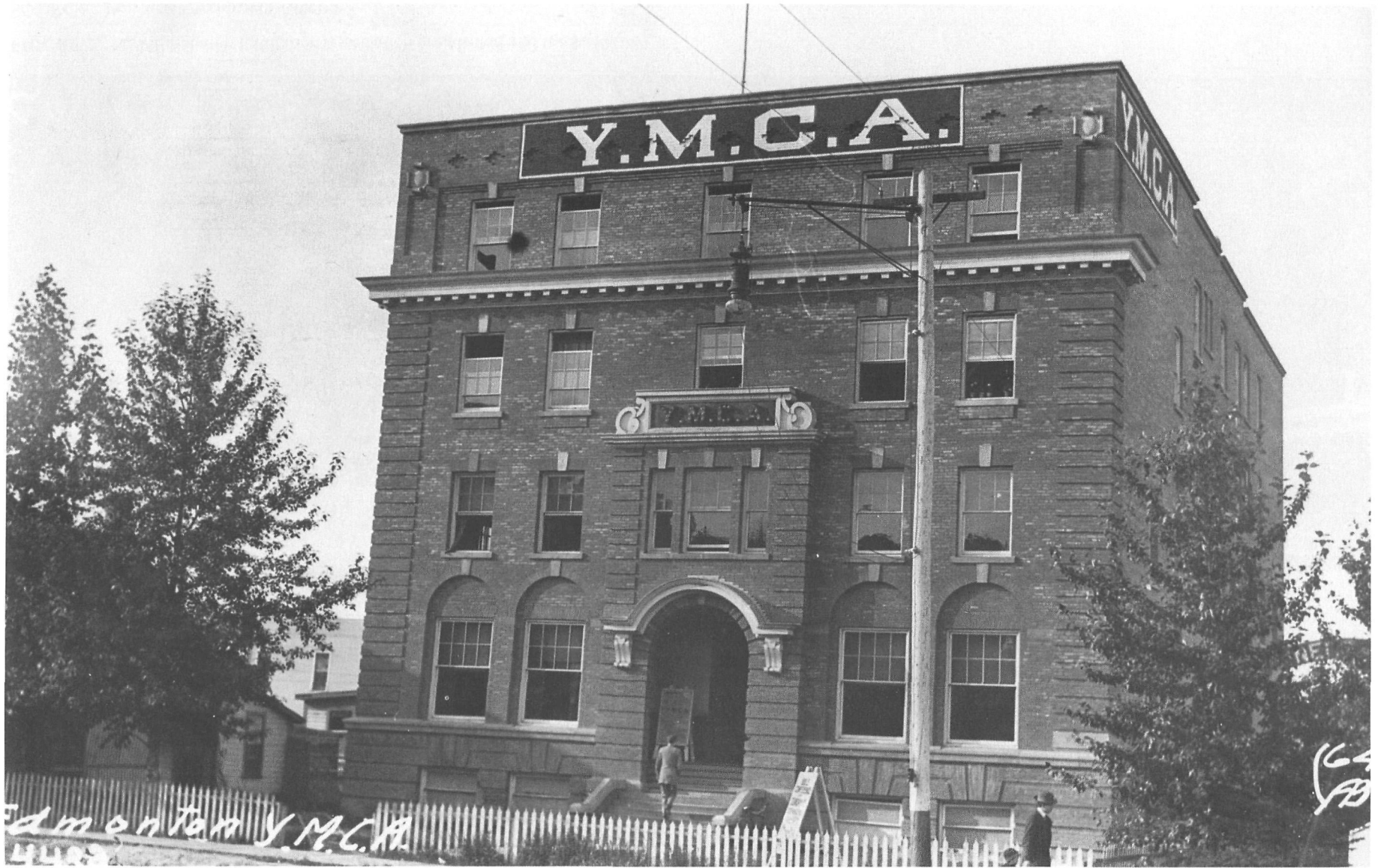
### III

Most consumer sports presented patrons with spectacles rather than opportunities for active competition. In the nineteenth century, local Edmonton residents participated in the popular sport of horse racing. But the twentieth century entrant lists were made up of horses and riders from all across North America. Formal races after 1900 were usually conducted in connection with fairs, increasingly those of the Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association. They were, however, by no means mere presentations of local talent. At the 1906 summer fair, 104 stalls accommodated 200 horses, many from distant North American locations. The same year a "Driving Club" began to plan for improved racetracks and a horse-racing "circuit" which initially involved only Calgary and Regina but was extended to diverse centres from Winnipeg to Cranbrook, B.C., by 1908.<sup>15</sup> Before World War



**FIGURE 2.** New Edmonton Exhibition Association grandstand and track, 1910.

SOURCE: Provincial Archives of Alberta



**FIGURE 3.** Edmonton Y.M.C.A. building a few years after 1907 construction.

SOURCE: Provincial Archives of Alberta

I, the spring and summer Exhibition Association race meets employed not only horses from as far away as Toronto, but also pari-mutuel betting machines which improved the profitability of the operation. An Edmonton Jockey Club was formed in 1913 to make racing opportunities more frequent: it looked for land on which a new racetrack might permit the staging of more meets. Jumping and show competitions could be accommodated in the indoor setting of the new Edmonton Livestock Pavilion for the first Edmonton Spring Horse Show in 1913. For that event, officials tried to lure the former Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, to display his champion "hunters and jumpers."<sup>16</sup>

Productions on that scale combined the efforts of the Exhibition Association, a civic institution closely allied with the municipal government; assorted voluntary organizations; and the national and international promoters of horse sports. The most imposing local requirement here was for facilities: outdoor racetracks and the indoor Edmonton Stock Pavilion. The Pavilion was the pride and joy of local boosters on the eve of the War. It represented a transition in the city, a transition local boosters had tried but failed to express more grandiosely in plans for a spectacular new civic centre. The Pavilion replaced the old "Thistle Rink," which had been located in the centre of town. Although architecturally it was acknowledged by one observer to be "nothing more than a big barn," the Thistle Rink represented "the delightful social life of the little city of a few years back, when, as the saying is, 'everybody knew everybody else.'" <sup>17</sup> The 1913 annual report of the Exhibition Association described the new Stock Pavilion in grander terms. It was "the largest of its kind in Canada," and the arena floor was "larger than that of Madison Square Garden in New York." Six thousand spectators could watch "circuses, pageants, athletic contests, hockey matches, skating, theatricals, to say nothing of the horse shows, live stock exhibitions and motor shows," claimed one enraptured reporter, and "ten thousand people seated as comfortably as in a modern theatre" would view tennis championship matches. The quality of the lighting was distinguished not only by its technical characteristics, but also by their modern aura and by the use of the same type of equipment at the prestigious "Chelsea Horticultural exhibition and at the Festival in England." In general, the suitability of the facilities was assured not so much by meeting local requirements as by the design assistance provided by two Edmonton sports promoters (one of them Deacon White) who "[had] been connected with sport in the east and west for the past seventeen years" and were understood to possess "up-to-date ideas."<sup>18</sup> By whom or what, then, was this new civic monument insistently promoted: by local sportsmen and the local Exhibition Association, or by the countless urban precedents in Great Britain and North America?

In its day, the Thistle Rink had provided Edmonton with the advantages of a covered arena, reducing the disruptive impact of the weather on, for example, hockey schedules.

The new Pavilion was a civic aid to sport entertainment production, and was clearly expected to boost attendance over the Thistle capacity. It was disappointing to promoters that the Pavilion did not immediately get capacity crowds for the senior inter-city league hockey games which began play on Christmas day, 1913, in the Pavilion.<sup>19</sup> Good crowds of up to 2,000 had been a feature of senior hockey games, even in the old Thistle and south side rinks. They had justified establishing league play among teams from nine Alberta centres organized by the Alberta Amateur Hockey Association in 1907, and soliciting the services of "eastern" professional players in 1908 and 1909. These mercenaries were then paid to launch unsuccessful challenges at professional teams from central Canada each year for the Stanley Cup.<sup>20</sup> When the two senior Edmonton teams (Thistles and Dominions) reverted thereafter to amateur status, suspicion abounded that the teams then harboured secretly paid specialists. Even without admitting such a practice, it would have been hard to deny that hockey was certainly commercially organized. Some thirty Edmonton teams, twice the previous season's total, played within the organization of the Alberta Amateur Hockey Association in inter-city, district, senior and intermediate leagues during the winter of 1913-14. One city league was expressly mercantile, with eight business-sponsored teams. At the inter-city level, the two Edmonton teams were matched in league games with two Calgary teams, cleverly maintaining spectator interest with multiple rivalries, one within each city, and some four others involving Edmonton versus Calgary teams. The newly renamed north side Eskimos, another Deacon White team, received a lot of public attention and support when they managed in the spring of 1913 to progress to the national Allan Cup semi-final series in Winnipeg. The south side Dominions achieved the same distinction early in 1914.<sup>21</sup>

The contrast between the public responses to soccer (often called association football) and to football (the Canadian version, then still called a variation of rugby or rugby football) pointed to the difference of promotion of the audiences as a byproduct of massive participation, from promotion of a spectacle for its own sake. The level of player involvement was higher for soccer, while the system of challenge matches prevailed until 1906, in 1907 a city league with four teams was created. Four years later, organized play had expanded to include seven senior, eight intermediate and a host of junior teams. And by 1913 a school league operated. The adult leagues reflected Edmonton's ethnicity with teams like the "Callies," St. George's, Sons of England, Sons of Scotland and Edmonton Welsh mixing with Y.M.C.A. and University of Alberta representatives, players from the 19th Alberta Dragoons and employees of the Canadian Pacific Railway and Edmonton street railway system. These ethnic and business loyalties no doubt drew the attendance of the large crowd at Diamond Park to see the Callies defeat the Sons of Scotland in a June match-up of league leaders. Although divided in allegiance, players and onlookers nevertheless adopted a common bond, realizing the sporting spectacle could not be



presented without one another. The degree of external organization was extensive for soccer. Not only did the Edmonton soccer clubs participate in the Alberta Football Association, but the only stumbling block to affiliation with the Dominion association seemed to be the association's unwillingness to allow games between Canadian amateur teams and touring old country professionals, something Edmonton soccer men would not give up. While there were inter-city challenge matches, at another level there was also a structured route during which the Edmonton High School won the Rutherford Trophy for northern Alberta supremacy and the senior Caledonian team met Lloydminster in the semi-final match for the provincial championship Bennett Shield.<sup>22</sup> All those momentous events sparked spectator enthusiasm among relatives and friends of the players.

In contrast to the multiple-level soccer action, only two Edmonton football teams participated in the Alberta Big Four League organized in 1911 (and later renamed the Alberta Rugby Union). At first a Y.M.C.A. team, then in its place a University team, joined the "Eskimos" of the Edmonton Rugby Football club, which was managed by that professional Edmonton sportsman, Deacon White, presided over by Alderman Joseph Driscoll and J.A. Clarke was included on its executive committee. While these teams played few games, they were heavily promoted, drawing crowds of hundreds and thousands.<sup>23</sup> Both approaches to sport spectacle depended on civic provision of a simple but costly facility: land for playing fields. The parks system of Edmonton fostered competitive sports performance with an audience as much as it added to the beauty of the city.

No other sport in pre-War Edmonton received as much promotional effort as baseball. In one sense key individuals were responsible; in another sense they were pilots riding the crest of a North American tidal wave. Even as a small town prior to 1906, Edmonton drew more than a thousand spectators to baseball tournaments for challenge games. Enticed by such evidence of interest, Edmonton promoters formed a professional company of shareholders in 1906 who prepared a permanent baseball diamond with bleachers for paying customers. Once the facilities were finished the company planned to hire salaried players to perform against other Canadian prairie teams. But the local operators did not devise all of this by themselves; they fitted their Western Canada League into the organization of the American coordinating board for professional baseball leagues. Moribund for 1908, the Edmonton Baseball Club was revived in 1909 under the presidency of Frank Gray and the management of a veteran player, one Dinny Maguire, whose experience had been acquired in Ontario, Manitoba, North Dakota, Iowa and New York state. Most of the team was gathered from American and some from Ontario locations.<sup>24</sup>

Deacon White, a former American who had arrived in Edmonton in 1907 with the city's first professional players, soon became the team's manager. Initially the League

included eight prairie teams. They dwindled to four in 1912 and the League appeared headed for extinction in the off-season, but Frank Gray, by this time owner of the Edmonton "Gray Birds," became president of the League and mustered the participation of six teams in Alberta and Saskatchewan, which included Calgary and Edmonton. The Edmonton team was one of the worst in the League and interest dwindled. Gray gave up the franchise at the end of the season. Manager Deacon White and friends, however, kept the franchise alive: W.J. Magrath became president and Joe Clarke secretary-treasurer of a new joint-stock Edmonton Recreation Company.

Despite its apparently precarious position in early Edmonton, professional baseball displayed two significant urban characteristics. In the first place, it proved the eagerness of many Edmontonians to identify with a professional team playing more than sixty home games a season. Gray might not have been discouraged by the end of the year if his team performed more competitively. The season opened with an overflow crowd of 2,500 and continued for a time with occasional games each drawing close to 2,000 spectators. It was only at the end of a dismal season that attendance dropped to lows of 400 persons and less. The team, with new ownership and management was given a fresh start in 1914 and Edmontonians responded 5,000 strong on opening day. Baseball performance was becoming a consumer commodity: hence, perceived quality of the entertainment product was beginning to condition spectator loyalty.

In the second place, the team and league were participants in a vast American professional sport empire. The Gray Birds played in a "Class D" league in a system governed by an American "National Commission" which set the requirements of population base and salary for each of its leagues. Promotional news releases before the 1913 season, reported recruits pouring in from Chicago, Kentucky, Detroit, St. Paul, Ft. Wayne, Kansas and Spokane. Early in 1914 White sought the aid of two California pitchers. Publicity for baseball in Edmonton came not only from city amateur leagues, which prospered at the senior, intermediate and junior levels, but also from the long reports on the games of the premier American and National Leagues which dominated the Edmonton newspaper sports pages.<sup>25</sup> The linkage of the two themes, a willingness among citizens to cheer for a successful local team and the outside source of its organization and players is suggestive of the urban experience. Specialists were allowed to represent the city. It mattered not that those specialists knew nothing of the community they were representing; what mattered was that they be successful and that the whole city be allowed to identify with that success. The bond was the medium of exchange: money for services provided, just as so many other collective transactions had bound the citizens to one another. And to cope with this desire, Edmontonians accepted an external, international model.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the opportunity for newspaper readers to immerse themselves in the fantasy of far-away games. One could read regularly, occasionally on the front pages of newspapers, about Scottish and English league soccer, English and Australian cricket, eastern Canadian professional hockey and lacrosse, round by round details of American and Australian boxing matches, professional bowling in the United States, American and eastern Canadian college football, English and other horse racing, American golfing, Davis Cup tennis. In between accounts of American professional baseball trades and salary disputes, Toronto hockey club scandals, English marksmanship championships, American prison baseball and Russian bids on Kentucky stallions titillated the local imagination: sometimes this all filled five sports pages, completely overshadowing — or providing the real urban framework for — local events.<sup>26</sup> Professionalism was pervasive in Edmonton sports for the spectators (including readers), even though active manifestations were still limited. Above all, Edmonton sports contests were promoted as audience entertainment far more effectively in the newspapers than by individual Edmonton sports entrepreneurs.

#### IV

For Edmonton's sport boosters, the encouragement of mass participation along Y.M.C.A. lines, on the one hand, or of spectatorship on the other hand, appeared to have such widespread community support that it did not warrant debate. Edmontonians perceived these developments as the normal course of action for a city of its size. Y.M.C.A. objectives were more cogently designed to benefit society! Sport entertainment was introduced entirely without defense. Although very much a part of Edmonton's culture, these phenomena did not constitute a unique Edmonton contribution. They were examples of what could be done in North American cities; that is, of what the city could do and almost automatically did. They were already, by the time of Edmonton's leap from village to entrepot, part of the definition of urban culture.

To the extent, that sport entertainment was commercially organized, major financial beneficiaries were not to be found in pre-war Edmonton. Most promoters could not and did not expect to keep tangible benefits: civic pride, social status, and, perhaps, an oblique boost to one's political career were the only realistic rewards. Even if one thinks of Edmonton's early sport entertainment as a distant outpost of some huge entrepreneurial sport empire, it was coercive or exploitive only in the most subtle sense of the term. Edmontonians did not have to be cajoled into acceptance: a significant proportion of the population wanted sport entertainment.

The ultimate question of its social significance to city dwellers remains. Was it an aspect of the corporate creativity which the city symbolized? Was it an example of new experiences, enlarged opportunities which only a collective

organization could offer, as Allen Guttman contends? Is that how one justifies, as James A. Michener does, the building of an enormous civic stadium at appalling cost to taxpayers, despite the certain knowledge that so vast a project breeds corruption and waste? Michener argues that such monuments, and the experiences they permit, are the types of thing which favourably distinguish the urban way of life.<sup>27</sup> Or has it an essential controlling role in what sociologists call social maintenance and integration in the new urban form of organization? That may be good or bad. To follow Mumford or Huizinga, we would conclude that modern sport organization integrates man with the new "mechanical world" in a soul-destroying, collectivizing way. To follow René Maheu, on the other hand, we would understand the sport entertainment experience as a serious and valuable communal emotional purge, through sympathetic identification with a sportsman or team, with an effect for the many like that to be obtained from sophisticated theatric or visual artistry by the privileged few.<sup>28</sup> These perceptions depend upon the degree of one's resistance to the urban discipline. To early Edmonton sport promoters, there was little question of the value of city life.

#### NOTES

1. The scope of such studies can be sampled by reading two review articles: Allen Guttman, "Who's on First? or, Books on the History of American Sports," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (September, 1979): 348-354; and Keith A.P. Sandiford, "The Victorians at Play: Problems in Historiographical Methodology," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Winter, 1981): 271-288. For examples of recent work, see John R. Betts, *America's Sporting Heritage: 1850-1950* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1974); Harry Jebsen, Jr., "The Public Acceptance of Sports in Dallas, 1880-1930," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Winter, 1979): 5-19; Tony Mason, *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980); Eugene Weber, "Gymnastics and Sport in Fin-de-Siecle France: Opium of the Classes?" in *Sport and International Relations*, ed. Benjamin Lowe, David B. Kanin and Andrew Strenk (Champaign, Ill.: Sipes, 1978), 68-94.
2. See excerpts by Paul Hoch, "Money and Sports: A History of the Marriage," and Clifford Makins, "The Moneybags of British Sport," in *The Business of Sports*, ed. William P. Lineberry, (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1973), 12-24 and 124-132; Steven A. Riess, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1980); Mason, *Association Football*; Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); Chris Waters, "'All Sorts and Any Quantity of Outlandish Recreations': History, Sociology, and the Study of Leisure in England, 1820-1870," *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers 1981*, 8-33; Gunther Luschen, "The Interdependence of Sport and Culture," and Phillip K. Shinnick, "Sport and Cultural Hegemony," in *Sport and International Relations*, ed. Lowe, Kanin and Strenk 21-34 and 95-107; John W. Loy, Barry D. McPherson and Gerald Kenyon, *Sport and Social Systems* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978), 287-290.
3. H.E. Meller, *Leisure and the Changing City, 1870-1914* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976); Stephen Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis* (London: Croom Helm, 1976); Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978).

4. Peter R. Shergold, "The Growth of American Spectator Sport: A Technological Perspective," and Ian Tyrrell, "The Emergence of Modern American Baseball c. 1850-80," in *Sport in History*, ed. Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979), 21-42 and 205-226. See also Betts, *America's Sporting Heritage*, and Sandiford, "The Victorians at Play."
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8. John Blue, *Alberta: Past and Present*, Vol. 3 (Chicago: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1924), 132-133; *Edmonton Journal* (hereafter *EJ*), special 10th anniversary edition, 1913, 21 November, 1914, 28 July, 1941; *Edmonton Bulletin* (hereafter *EB*), 28 July, 1941, 2 January, 1942; *RCMP Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (October, 1941): 233-234; *Henderson's Edmonton Directory*, entries for these men in the 1911 and 1914 editions; Helen M. Eckert, "The Development of Organized Recreation and Physical Education in Alberta" (unpublished M.Ed. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1953), 82.
9. Typescript manuscript written from Y.M.C.A. minutes, "The History of the Edmonton Young Men's Christian Association," 1-8; Edmonton Y.M.C.A. Papers, Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton; Meller, *Leisure*, sections 6 and 7; Kevin G. Jones, "Sport in Canada — 1900 to 1920," (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1970), 475-490; Boyer, *Urban Masses*; Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations*.
10. Carl Betke, "The Original City of Edmonton: A Derivative Prairie Urban Community," in *Town and City*, ed. Alan F.J. Artibise (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1981) 337; *EB*, 14 January, 1904; and see, for example, the list of Y.M.C.A. executive members and directors in *Henderson's Edmonton Directory*, 1914.
11. Draft constitution and bylaws, Edmonton Y.M.C.A., as submitted to a Board meeting of 21 March, 1907; Y.M.C.A. minutes (mainly Board of Directors) for 1913 in Minute Book #5, 161-186; "The History of the Edmonton Young Men's Christian Association," 15-16; all in the Edmonton Y.M.C.A. Papers. See also *EJ*, 19 August, 26, 27 September, 22 November, 1913. For North American background, see David Macleod, "A Live Vaccine: the Y.M.C.A. and Male Adolescence in the United States and Canada 1870-1920," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, Vol. 12, No. 24 (November – December, 1979): 368-384.
12. Eckert, "The Development of Organized Recreation," 82-86; *EB*, 11, 25 March, 19 September, 3 December, 1913; *EJ*, 21 April, 3, 7, 24 May, 2 June, 23, 24, 28 July, 26, 27 September, 22 November, 1913; Jones, "Sport in Canada," 202, 232, 479-483.
13. *EB*, 3, 25 March, 1913; *EJ*, 22 November, 1913.
14. *EJ*, 25-27 September, 1913; *EB*, 27 September, 1913.
15. *EB*, 26 June – 6 July, 24-27 August, 1, 4, 25 September, 2, 19 October, 1906; Jones, "Sport in Canada," 387-391.
16. *EJ*, 13, 22-26 May, 12-21 August, 29 September, 1913, 3 March, 1914.
17. *Ibid.*, 1 November, 1913.
18. *Ibid.*, 12, 14 August, 21, 24 November, 1913. This building, only recently dismantled, was later known as the Edmonton Gardens.
19. *Ibid.*, 26 December, 1913, 2 January, 1914.
20. Betke, "The Original City," 340; Jones, "Sport in Canada," 266-270.
21. *EB*, 2 January, 11 February, 3, 10, 11, 18 March, 3, 20 December, 1913; *EJ*, 26-29 December, 1913; 2-14 March, 1914; Jones, "Sport in Canada," 274.
22. Eckert, "The Development of Organized Recreation," 72-73; *EJ*, 21 April, 3, 7, 24 May, 2 June, 23, 24, 28 July, 26, 27 September, 1913; *EB*, 25 March, 19 September, 1913; Jones, "Sport in Canada," 110-113.
23. *EJ*, 25 July, 26-29 September, 1913; Eckert, "The Development of Organized Recreation," 81-82.
24. Betke, "The Original City," 340-342; Jones, "Sport in Canada," 44-45; *EB*, 22 April, 10, 19, 22 May, 1909.
25. Eckert, "The Development of Organized Recreation," 82-83; *EB*, 10 February, 5 April, 17, 19 September, 2 October, 1913; *EJ*, 21, 22 April, 3, 6, 7, 19, 24 May, 11 June, 2, 22-28 July, 2, 25 September, 27 December, 1913; 3, 30 March, 1914; Jones, "Sport in Canada," 51-53.
26. *EB*, 2 January, 10 February, 10 March, 7 April, 27 September, 1913; *EJ*, 19, 24 May, 22-26 July, 25-27 September, 22 November, 27 December, 1913.
27. Guttman, *From Ritual to Record*, 159; James A. Michener, *Sports in America*. (New York: Random House, 1976), 338-345.
28. Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1934), 303-307; Maheu, "Sport and Culture," 13-15; and see the discussion of Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, *Man and Mass in America*, *American Living and Thinking*, and *In the Shadow of Tomorrow*, by Leveritt T. Smith, Jr., *The American Dream and the National Game* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Press, 1975).