

ATHLETICISM AND ITS TRANSFER TO CANADA

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Abstract:

This thesis examines the origins of athleticism in England and its transfer to Canada.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the focus of the English public schools changed dramatically. At the start of the century an English upper-class student's leisure time was largely employed in roaming the country-side, trespassing on neighboring estates and poaching. Teachers' responsibilities ended at the classroom door. Seventy-five years later an English public school student's life was focussed on games and team sports including cricket and the various types of football. Teachers now ran all aspects of school life which was designed to instill the manly, Christian, virtues which would enable graduates to take their proper place as leaders in the British Empire. And team sports were a vehicle to achieve that end. Team sports such as cricket and rugby, and the various institutions that promoted them, occupied a central place in upper-class English life and became infused with what Professor Mangan refers to as the 'games ethic': the ideology of athleticism.

When the British administrators, soldiers, and immigrants came to Canada they brought with them their love of games and this 'games ethic' that was modified by Canadian experience. In England the 'ethic' was firmly entrenched and supported by a unique class and social structure. Because that structure did not exist in Canada, the attempts of early British Canadians to instill the 'ethic' in the new country were problematic and played out in the conflict between amateurs and professionals. Although

an emerging working-class culture and an increasingly commercialized society challenged and eventually made the distinction between amateur and professional athletes irrelevant, belief in the 'games ethic' and in the instrumental value of team sports survived and continues to influence Canadian sport policy today.

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The reader of these pages should not look for detailed documentation of every word. In treating of the general problems of culture one is constantly obliged to undertake predatory incursions into provinces not sufficiently explored by the raider himself. To fill in all the gaps in my knowledge before-hand was out of the question for me. I had to write now, or not at all. And I wanted to write.

Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 1938

Introduction

This thesis is divided into two sections. The first section describes the cultural and social transformation that occurred in the English public schools during the course of the nineteenth century and that led to, and was in turn justified by, the ideology of athleticism. Characterizing an ideology as a philosophy with ambition is an apt description of athleticism. So successful were its proselytizers and so pervasive their influence that later critics would describe athleticism as the 'public school cult', manifestations of which were the tendency for schools to select prefects and hire teachers on the basis of their athletic ability; for teachers to organize and participate in students' games; and for administrators to enlarge the portion of the curriculum devoted to athletics. The hugely influential E. Norman Gardiner (1864-1930), a champion of athleticism, was expressing what had become conventional wisdom when he stressed the importance of games (as opposed to the

gymnastics and athletics popular in continental Europe) in preparing boys 'to play the game' in the battle of life.

Physical training is a valuable part of education and necessary in artificial conditions of life. But physical training is not sport, nor can it ever take the place of sport. There is no joy in it. It may develop the body and impart habits of discipline, but it cannot impart the higher qualities – courage, endurance, self-control, courtesy – qualities which are developed by our own games and by such manly sports as boxing and wrestling when conducted in the true spirit of manly rivalry for the pure joy of the contest; it cannot train boys 'to play the game' in the battle of life.¹

The pre-eminent scholar of athleticism, J. A. Mangan, summarizes its tenets as follows:

Physical exercise was taken, considerably and compulsorily, in the sincere belief of many, however romantic, misplaced or myopic, that it was a highly effective means of inculcating valuable instrumental and impressive educational goals: physical and moral courage, loyalty and co-operation, the capacity to act fairly and take defeat well, the ability to both command and obey.²

Central to athleticism was belief in the effectiveness of games as a structure to develop not only physical proficiency but also the much more important character traits: loyalty, courage, and a willingness to subordinate personal preferences for the common good. As a result of the perceived capacity of games to demonstrate moral worth as well as physical proficiency, physical ability by itself became a measure of moral

¹ E. Norman Gardiner, Athletics of the Ancient World (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930) p. 98. Gardiner was the son of a rector, attended Marlborough on scholarship, and obtained second class standing in the classics at Oxford in 1890. On his retirement in 1925, after more than 25 years as a master at Epsom College, he returned to Oxford, obtained a D.Litt., and continued his research and prolific writing. Gardiner played rugby for Devonshire from 1887 to 1900.

² J. A. Mangan, Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School (London & New York: Falmer Press, 1986) p.9.

worth. Boys who were good at games were 'better' than those who were not. Participation and success in games conferred social status.

The second section describes the diffusion of British sports and games to Canada by administrators, soldiers, and settlers who brought a belief in their instrumental value. The prominent positions they held in Canadian society, their emphasis on sport and the influence of the clubs and associations they established ensured that adherence to athleticism survived the flood of non-British immigrants who arrived in Canada after 1890. Although questioned by many and threatened over the years by professional leagues, commercial interests, and even governments anxious to exploit sport to promote national unity or even Canada's interests abroad, the ideology of athleticism remains a potent force in Canadian athletics.

This examination of the development of the ideology of athleticism in Britain and its diffusion to Canada should be of interest to students of Canadian history as well as those hoping to understand Canadian sport policy. The role of sport in defining self-image, masculinity, and national character receives continuing examination. A Canadian example is Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities and Cultural Politics by Richard Gruneau and David Whitson.³ One can hope that this essay will encourage others to reflect upon the contribution of the leisure activities characterized as sport to the development of Canadian notions of masculinity (and femininity) and expressions of nationality. The last few years have seen

³ Richard Gruneau and David Whitson Hockey Night in Canada: Sport, Identities and Cultural Politics (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1993).

an explosion of interest in all aspects of sports' studies by academics in many disciplines - history, sociology, anthropology, and psychology – as sports are now seen as a contested site in the development of both the individual and society. This has led to the questioning and refuting of many long-cherished myths either by a re-examination of the historical record or by current research. A good example of the former was the belief that Greek sport most nearly approached the amateur ideal in the fourth century B.C. and started to deteriorate when the ideal was compromised with excessive competition and professionalism. This myth was central to athleticism as it was consistent with the emphasis on the study of the classics prevalent at the English public schools. David Young has shown that the ancient Olympic games were never amateur.⁴ Recent studies have questioned the cherished American belief that athletics provide a vehicle for social mobility; that hard work and ability, and not position or connections, were the keys to success in the American meritocracy.⁵ Some educators now question whether high-school sports facilitate social integration. Feminists argue that professional, highly publicized games such as football, basketball, and hockey perpetuate the misogynist glorification of the male body, as well as legitimate aggression and violence, to the detriment of women.⁶ And yet in spite of evidence that team sports fall far short of the ideal promoted by E. Norman Gardiner, Canadian parents continue to invest much time and money to

⁴ David C. Young, The Olympic Myth of Greek Amateur Athletics (Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1984).

⁵ Steven A. Riess, "Professional Sports as an Avenue of Social Mobility in America: Some Myths and Realities" in Essays on Sport History and Sport Mythology (Arlington, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 1990) pp.83-117.

⁶ Varda Burstyn, The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics and the Culture of Sport (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

ensure their children are involved in sport. A recent study (1993) indicated that in Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, and Port Moody, British Columbia, almost one-half of children between the ages of 5 – 18 participated in community sports.⁷ Dyck reports the results of a survey in which parents indicated that the top five reasons for enrolling their children in community sports were:⁸

- To build self-esteem
- To develop skills
- To make new friends
- To have fun
- To increase fitness

Canadian sport administrators and government policy-makers have expectations of sport which would not appear strange to a Victorian schoolmaster and which far exceed the modest hopes of parents. After describing the difficulties faced by churches, schools, and parents in instilling values and ethics that have led to an erosion in the "moral development of Canadian youth", a 1992 Task Force on Federal Sport Policy concluded "...that sport is beginning to address this societal gap by accepting a leadership role in instilling values and ethics in Canadian youth."⁹ As athleticism still has its adherents in the corridors of power in Canada it is important to understand its origins. What follows is an attempt to do so.

⁷ Noel Dyck, "Parents, Kids and Coaches: Constructing Sport and Childhood in Canada" Games, Sports and Cultures (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2000) p.140.

⁸ Noel Dyck, p.141.

⁹ Minister's Task Force on Federal Sport Policy, Sport: The Way Ahead: An Overview of the Task Force (Ottawa: Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport and Minister of Supply and Services, 1992) p. 22.

Before embarking upon the primary discussion, some more general background observations may offer a helpful frame of reference. The place of sports and athletics in contemporary western societies is secure. From competitive professional sports to workouts with a personal trainer; from gym class to diets to plastic surgery; from bowling to badminton; whether as a participant or as a spectator, physical activities (or conversations about them) occupy much of our attention. And although from time to time the excesses of professional athletes both on and off the fields of play raise questions about the psychological and societal benefits of competitive sports, the intrinsic worth of physical activity is unquestioned. Societal pressure to be physically active is unrelenting. Jobs, bank loans, business opportunities, are all more readily available to those who appear physically fit. But this obsessive interest is of recent origin.

As Dennis Brailsford has shown¹⁰, in western Europe before the renaissance, pleasurable physical activity was considered a sin as all human attention was expected to be directed to heavenly salvation. Physical training could be justified only when soldiers were needed for service to the church. While during the Elizabethan era physical activity was encouraged because of Renaissance ideals of human perfection, the Puritans, because of their unrelenting focus on man's earthly purpose, turned back the clock and demanded faith and hard work, and condemned games as sinful pleasures of the flesh. The rationalists, in their turn, while acknowledging man's humanity, emphasized intellectual activity and largely ignored the body. Brailsford identifies the foundation of interest in

physical activity which swept much of continental Europe at the end of the eighteenth century as romantic nationalism. Germans, Scandinavians, and many others attempted to forge a link to their imagined past greatness by devoting countless hours to physical exercises of all sorts, including calisthenics, hiking, and the military exercises of the parade ground. The British, however, were largely isolated from this romantic exercise although echoes of its appeal to emotion and myth can be found in the ideology of athleticism born in the Victorian and Edwardian public schools. In Germany, in particular, sports clubs were often established by organizations hoping for a particular benefit: by corporations to encourage labour stability; by political parties seeking supporters; and by the military to develop physical skills.¹¹ Sport was purposeful and designed to achieve economic or political ends. The genesis of organized sport was different in Britain.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Britain was transformed. The combination of the industrial revolution and the French Revolution weakened the hold of the landed gentry, the church, and the aristocracy on British society. Thus the power of the middle and lower classes increased even more than the increase in their numbers might have permitted. It is estimated that the population of Europe was 193 million in 1800 and it had grown to over 420 million by 1900. During the same period the population of England and Wales increased from 9 million to 23 million and by 1900 almost 17 million lived in cities. As the population increasingly concentrated in the rapidly expanding cities, freedom from

¹⁰ Dennis Brailsford, Sport and Society (London: Routledge, 1969).

the restrictions of rural life and urban independence encouraged the growth during the nineteenth century of many new organizations (clubs, fraternities, labour unions) which helped to provide a desired sense of community. Sports teams and clubs did the same. Team sports in particular provided an important sense of belonging.

Improved economic conditions, rising wages, more free time, better transportation; all facilitated sporting activity, whether for players or spectators. Wealth and the railways allowed teams to compete on a regular basis, which necessitated agreement on rules and regulations. While remaining largely a male preserve, the games themselves were transformed.¹² Since the 1830s there has been an explosive development of sports, and despite revolutions and two world wars the interest in competitive sports continues to increase. But why did the interest first emerge in England? What were the specific characteristics in the structure and development of English society which account for the growth of the leisure activities that are characterized as organized sport?

Because leisure activities were transformed during the same period that the process of industrialization transformed the economy of Britain it is easy to conclude, as many have done, that the transformation in the structure and organization of the leisure activities called 'sports' was caused by the industrial revolution. The causal link is consistent with the evaluation of 'work' as something of greater value than 'sports', but

¹¹ Richard D. Mandell, "Modern Criticism of Sport" Essays on Sport History and Sport Mythology p. 124.

¹² William J. Baker, Sports in the Western World (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982) pp. 114-17.

adoption of this analysis prejudices the question and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to understand the origins of the explosive interest in many sporting activities during the nineteenth century. There is evidence to suggest that something more was involved. How else can one account for the development and consolidation and almost universal acceptance of the ideology of athleticism which, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, had become the a dominant influence in English public schools?

Norbert Elias¹³ has argued that the violent and disorganized games and leisure activities of the working-class (in particular the precursors of the various forms of football) were gradually becoming less violent during the nineteenth century as the power of the modern state and the scope of its legislative authority increased. To Elias, this 'civilizing process' characterized many manifestations of pre-modern conduct as unacceptable. Surprisingly rapidly, refined athletic activities became social signifiers beyond the reach of the lower classes. This 'civilizing process' argument has recently been criticized by Varda Burstyn, who sees the growth in male games as part of more comprehensive ideological struggle between men and women. She suggests that as the changes spurred by the industrial revolution diminished the role and effective power of men in the home as men spent ever less time at home, men turned to games to create a male sanctuary. Thus, the expansion and formation of many new boy's boarding schools during the century is seen as an attempt to preserve male hegemony and the games themselves as an exercise in defining male identities. Behind the growth of male sports was nostalgia

¹³ Norbert Elias, The Civilizing Process (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982)

for the good old days, a means of preserving and legitimating the ethos of masculinity.¹⁴

Although the sociological origins of interest in competitive sports may not be clearly understood, and although many educators now question whether competitive sports should be encouraged at all in the public schools, early in the twentieth century their value was largely unquestioned.¹⁵ Many believed that sports were particularly successful in moulding character; i.e. in "developing physical and moral courage, loyalty and co-operation; the capacity to act fairly and take defeat well, the ability to both command and obey."¹⁶ It did not matter too much if the traditional academic responsibilities were neglected. As T. L. Papillon explained:

Many a lad who leaves an English public school disgracefully ignorant of the rudiments of useful knowledge, who can speak no language but his own, and writes that imperfectly, to whom the noble literature of his country and the stirring history of his forefathers are almost a sealed book, and who has devoted a great part of his time and nearly all his thoughts to athletic sports, yet brings away with him something beyond all price, a manly straightforward character, a scorn of lying and meanness, habits of obedience and command, and fearless courage.¹⁷

¹⁴ Burstyn, Varda. The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

¹⁵ When hiring new teachers public school administrators in British Columbia are not permitted (in 2001) to ask applicants if they are able to contribute to extra-curricular sports programs.

¹⁶ Mangan, Athleticism, p. 9.

¹⁷ T. L. Papillon (1841-1926), quoted in Mangan, Athleticism, p. 9.

But the games needed to be taught and played correctly to achieve the desired result. Cyril Norwood, who had been Headmaster of both Harrow and Marlborough, described the correct approach:

They are these, that the game is to be played for the game's sake, and that it matters not a button whether it is won or lost, so long as both sides play their best: that no unfair advantage of any sort can ever be taken, and that within those rules no mercy is to be expected, or accepted, or shown by either side: that the lesson to be learned by each individual is the subordination of self in order that he may render his best service as the member of a team in which he relies upon all the rest, and all the rest rely upon him: that finally, never on any account must he show the white feather.¹⁸

During the Victorian age, team games acquired a moral significance as training for life as hard work, commitment, and determination were prerequisites for success in sports as well as life. Team sports, in particular, were believed to teach an additional and even more important lesson; that loyalty and a willingness to sacrifice individual glory for group success were essential for victory. And it was not overlooked that these were useful attributes for efficient employees in the new industries. But above all the manly sports, rugby in particular, were believed to instill the illusive 'character', often a synonym for 'manliness'; an ideal which encompassed the virtues of determination and loyalty and also included self-discipline, the willingness to control one's selfish desires for the common good, with the ability to conquer fear and pain. But how did team sports come to be saddled with such weighty expectations?

¹⁸ Cyril Norwood, The English Tradition of Education (London: John Murray, 1929) pp. 108-9.

Development of the Sports Ethic in Britain

At the start of the nineteenth century the sporting activities of the British upper classes had been largely restricted to the field sports; riding, fox-hunting, and fishing. For very different reasons, the opportunities of the lower classes were even more limited. Forced to migrate to the growing cities by the enclosures and lack of economic opportunities in the villages, the new factory workers found it impossible to continue with their traditional outdoor sports and games. In addition, the evangelical movement, because of its suspicion of all forms of recreation if not clearly morally constructive and uplifting, together with concern for the strict observance of the Sabbath, further weakened the customs of traditional recreation.¹⁹ The problem was compounded by the restrictive labour discipline imposed by the new industrialists; twelve hour days, with only Sundays off, were not uncommon. Thus, during the first half of the century the leisure activities of the urbanized workers were largely the various pub games; bowls, quoits, and billiards, and a new activity, pedestrianism (walking races), which thrived in the crowded cities.²⁰

But even at the public schools favored by the upper classes opportunities for games were limited, notwithstanding the well-known quote attributed

¹⁹ Recreations popular with the common people that were criticized and restricted included anything that encouraged crowds to gather, such as the various types of football, boxing, and the blood sports: bull-baiting and bull-running, cock-fighting and throwing-at-cocks, badger-baiting, and dog-fighting.

²⁰ Robert Malcolmson, Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) Chapter 6: The Undermining of Popular Recreations"

to Lord Wellington: "The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton." It is unlikely that Wellington ever made the statement, since it was attributed to him only in 1855, three years after his death.²¹ When the twelve-year-old Wellington arrived at Eton in 1771 for an unremarkable three-year stay, sports and games and playing fields were an unimportant part of school life. Classroom time was almost exclusively taken up with the study of the classics, while during the rest of the time the students were largely unsupervised and occupied themselves rambling over the countryside, fishing, duck-hunting, and bird-watching. And over the next fifty years the amusements of public school boys changed hardly at all. A particularly vivid description of life at Rugby School in the 1830s is found in Tom Brown's School Days, published in 1857. A work of fiction by Thomas Hughes, himself an Old Rugbeian (1834-42), it was intended to provide guidance to his eight-year-old son but is chiefly known because it contains one of the earliest descriptions of a rugby game. Of greater interest is the insight it provides into the organization of the school, the house structure and the dominant role played by the prefects, the increasing importance of the chapel in the life of the school, and the almost complete lack of interest shown by the headmaster, the legendary Dr. Arnold, in games of all sorts. The most frequent entertainment of Tom and his friends was 'toozling'; chasing and killing birds in the hedgerows.

pp. 89-117. Races were popular and a source of gambling. In 1770, the winner of a race in Nottingham walked fifty miles in twelve hours.

²¹ Christopher Hibbert, Wellington: A Personal History (London: Harper Collins, 1998) p.5.

The remark is likely evidence of the public school supporters claiming credit for the Duke's successes; and its origin lies in the remarks made by Dr. Keate, the headmaster of Eton, at a dinner with officers in Paris shortly after the battle of Waterloo when he congratulated them on their discipline which they had learned at Eton and to which he attributed the great victory.

Such activities remained the chief occupations of upper-class school boys until well into the nineteenth century. But change, when it came, was both quick and comprehensive.

The speed of the change was influenced by two factors that encouraged schools to imitate the prominent public schools and establish games programs of their own: the status and prominence of the great public schools; and the fact that proficiency in competitive sports had become an indicator of social position. The games were demonstrations of social exclusiveness.

A revealing look into the public schools was provided by the work of the Clarendon Commission, 1861-1864. Established in response to a number of articles that appeared in *Cornhill Magazine*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, and the *Edinburgh Review* in 1860 and 1861, which accused the masters of Eton of greed²² and misappropriating school funds, the Commission was to "inquire into the revenues and management of certain colleges and schools, and the studies pursued and the instruction given therein." The schools examined were Eton, Westminster, Winchester, Charterhouse, St. Paul's, Merchant Tailors', Harrow, Rugby, and Shrewsbury: schools which had 2,708 pupils in 1861.

Although its broad mandate was to examine all aspects of the nine schools, the Commission's report and the subsequent Public School Acts enacted between 1864 and 1873 reformed the governance and finances

of the schools but did not change the curriculum. And by singling out these schools for special treatment the Commission enhanced their claim for elite status and encouraged other schools to imitate them.²³ Thus the separate and perceived superior status conferred by the Commission and confirmed by the legislation meant that the influence of the nine schools went largely unchallenged for many years, and that when changes were introduced at these 'great' public schools (such as sports' programs) they were quickly adopted by other schools. In addition, the Commission made explicit its approval of school sports:

The cricket and football fields...are not merely places of amusement; they help to form some of the most valuable social qualities and manly virtues, and they hold, like the classroom and the boarding house, a distinct and important place in public school education.²⁴

One of the criticisms leveled at the schools in the Commission hearings was that the classics, Greek and Latin, were taught too exclusively and that science, history, and modern languages were neglected. Although some of the reluctance on the part of the public schools to modernize the curriculum may be attributed to a conservative reaction to the horrors of the French Revolution and the further uprisings of 1848 that threatened the hereditary power of the British aristocracy, or to the aristocracy's unwillingness to be judged by their skills rather than by who they were, many of the public schools were legally obliged to teach the classics by the terms of their incorporating documents. As a result, at some schools

²² That financial mismanagement and corruption were not uncommon is not surprising. Until the 20th century school boarding houses were often owned by housemasters and run for profit. Shroobree p. 148.

²³ Shroobree, p. 217.

²⁴ Quoted in James Walvin, The People's Game: The Social History of British Football p.38.

over 80% of class time was devoted to their study.²⁵ This adherence to the study of the classics is less surprising if one understands that it did provide a restricting qualification for membership in the ruling elite. As Shrosbree points out, proficiency in Greek and Latin was an ideal qualification because it could only be acquired by those with the financial resources to spend years studying at public schools. "The classics fulfilled the same sociological function in Victorian England as calligraphy in ancient China – a device to regulate entry into a governing elite."²⁶ By the end of the nineteenth century proficiency in the games played at public schools, cricket and rugby, together with the correct, gentleman's attitude, had also become social signifiers and a point of entry into the governing elite. Clearly, it was becoming increasingly difficult for a school to thrive, or even survive, without an extensive games' program.

It is impossible to examine the rise of athleticism in Britain during the nineteenth century without relying largely on the writings of J. A. Mangan and in particular Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School, in which he traces the growth and consolidation of the ideology of athleticism in 'the independent, non-local, predominantly boarding school for the upper and middle classes'. Mangan examines in detail six public schools, one from each of six categories: Great Public Schools (Harrow), Denominational Schools (Stonyhurst), Proprietary Schools (Marlborough), Elevated Grammar Schools (Uppingham), Woodward Schools (Lancing), and Private Venture Schools (Loretto). Mangan discovered that, as late as 1851, a Marlborough school boy's diary noted 197 leisure entries of

²⁵ Shrosbree, p.33.

²⁶ Shrosbree, p. 59.

which only 27 referred to games. In contrast, 70 entries related to countryside excursions.²⁷ But by the end of the century sports had supplanted the study of the classics as the most important activity at almost all the schools. Dramatic evidence of the new prominence of sports in school life is provided by the increase in the acreage owned or leased by various schools for major games from 1845 to 1900.

Approximate acreage owned or leased in 1845 and 1900²⁸

| | 1845 | 1900 |
|-------------|------|------|
| Harrow | 8 | 146 |
| Marlborough | 2 | 68 |
| Uppingham | 2 | 49 |
| Lancing | 0 | 14.5 |
| Stonyhurst | 2 | 30 |
| Loretto | 0 | 22 |

The story of how sport came to play a central role in British society is not entirely clear. The generally accepted explanation is presented in this excerpt from the Encyclopedia Britannica:

The coming of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-eighteenth century and the later introduction of sports as a regular extra-curricular activity in public schools by Thomas Arnold (c.1830) provided a spur which led to the great development of sport during the Victorian age of England.

Dr. Thomas Arnold, who was headmaster of Rugby from 1828 to 1842, would have been amazed to be given the credit for introducing sports as a regular extra-curricular activity.²⁹ When Dr. Arnold came to Rugby the school was ruled by the boys, with the strong ruling the weak. Indeed, the

²⁷ J. A. Mangan, pp.19-20.

²⁸ J. A. Mangan, p.71.

²⁹ Jenny Macrory, Running With the Ball, (London: Collins Willow, 1991) p. 53.

autocratic rule of the prefects precipitated a student revolt in 1797 (which was quelled by the army and reading of the Riot Act) and in 1822 when the fags defied both prefects and masters, which led to the expulsion or withdrawal of many students.³⁰ Rugby was not unique. Byron was a school-boy mutineer at Harrow in 1808. Winchester experienced six uprisings between 1770 and 1818; the last being put down by the militia with fixed bayonets.³¹ With Arnold's arrival at Rugby the system was changed in subtle but significant ways. While traditionally the prefects had been chosen by the boys on the basis of popularity, Arnold affected the appointment of prefects directly responsible to him who were capable of providing some degree of moral leadership and who acknowledged that authority conferred responsibility. The prefect system became a means of social control. The changes were effective in curbing the excesses of the senior boys, but Arnold made no attempt to interfere with the organization of games or to bring them under the control of the masters or to make them an official part of the school curriculum.³² But, if not Dr. Arnold, what were the factors which led almost all the public schools to institute comprehensive sports' programs?

While Arnold's emphasis remained on the moral development of his students, on 'godliness' and 'good learning', it was apparent to many educators that games, with appropriate organization and guidance, could be an activity that promoted discipline and the Christian virtues, as well as providing an ideal alternative to running wild in the countryside. When G.E.L. Cotton left Rugby to become Headmaster of Malborough in 1852

³⁰ Jenny Macrory, p. 55.

³¹ Walvin p. 32.

he made a conscious decision to introduce organized sports to control the students.³³ In a 'Circular to Parents' written within a year of his arrival, he outlined his plan to introduce organized games so that the boys would no longer spend their leisure time "...wandering about the country – some in bird nesting, or in damaging the property of neighbours, or other undesirable occupations."³⁴ Cotton's plan was successful, in part, because he departed from the Rugby School model and introduced a policy of staff involvement in all school games.

The condition of Harrow was even more precarious when C. J. Vaughan became Headmaster in 1845 at the age of 28. Enrollment had dropped to 69, the boys were out of control, and the school faced the hostility of the local community. In a clear case of 'emulation for acceptance and survival', Vaughan introduced the prefectorial system employed at Rugby, leaving the boys in control of games, and within two years enrollment had climbed to 283.³⁵

The pattern was repeated at Uppingham when Edward Thring became Headmaster in 1853. He introduced team sports and used his own money to purchase and build extensive sports facilities.³⁶ But Thring was less concerned with using games as a vehicle for social control than with emphasizing his belief in the dual nature of the 'Graeco-Renaissance' ideal of the whole man; i.e., intellect and body in harmony. In his case,

³² Jenny Macrory, p.56.

³³ Jenny Macrory, p.136.

³⁴ Quoted in J. A. Mangan, p.228.

³⁵ J. A. Mangan, pp.31-34

³⁶ J. A. Mangan, p.47.

educational theory, not expedience, was the spur to action. The motive was different, but the practical effect was the same.

A different ideology inspired H. H. Almond when he bought Loretto in 1862 and immediately introduced gymnastics and team sports which, he believed, promoted unselfishness. Almond stressed the importance of physical health for its own sake; a physiological argument, and emphasized diet and exercise, and even proper clothing, as necessary for healthy living. The influence of Darwin and Herbert Spencer is clear as Almond dedicated his school to raising the 'finest' men.

Games in which success depends on the united efforts of many, and which also foster courage and endurance, are the very life blood of the public school system. And all the more self-indulgent games or pursuits contain within themselves an element of danger to school patriotism and might, if they permanently injured the patriotic games, cause public schools to fail in their main object, which we take to be the production of a grand breed of men for the service of the British nation.³⁷

By the late 1850's the advantages of a full games program were readily apparent and quickly copied by other schools. But preserving public order was not by itself sufficient justification for the considerable expenditures and reorganization of school life required to introduce such a program. To the evangelicals and the Puritans, sports and games could be justified only if they were morally constructive and uplifting. A coherent set of arguments was required and it was quickly provided. In his sermons, G. E. L. Cotton articulated the concept of the 'whole man' who served God by the development of physical abilities, "...no less surely than when he knelt

³⁷ H. H. Almond, from an editorial in the "Lorettonian" (17 June 1882). Quoted in J. A. Mangan, Athleticism, p.56.

in prayer.”³⁸ In a sermon entitled ‘The Image of God’ in 1856, E. C. Lowe of the Woodard school argued that physical education was important to ensure a manly presence, and, in turn, was important because external appearance was a “...sure index of the man within.”³⁹ Introduction of games as a form of social control had become legitimated by educational rationales. And the value of games was recognized outside the public schools. The churches actively promoted association football (soccer) after the formation of the Football Association in 1863 in an attempt to “civilize naturally energetic and aggressive youth.”⁴⁰ In 1885, of 112 football clubs in Liverpool, 85 had religious affiliation. The state schools established following the passing the Public School Acts between 1864 and 1873 also adopted association football.

The publication of Charles Darwin’s On The Origin of Species in 1857 provided a new and sinister justification for the emphasis on sports in the public schools. Simplified to ‘the survival of the fittest’, Darwin’s theory provided an explanation for the conflict evident in all spheres of life and was easily adapted to explain the sociological and economic disparities so

³⁸ J. A. Mangan, Athleticism, p.27.

³⁹ J. A. Mangan, Athleticism, p.39. When an ethos, an ethic, is tied to a particular way of doing something, a change in behaviour necessarily brings the ethic into question. Such was the case when Almond at Loretto attempted to introduce a more expansive ‘passing’ game of rugby in the 1870s instead of the controlled forward ‘dribbling’ game. As rugby in Scotland was considered of value because it created robust men with manly attributes, willing to sacrifice themselves loyally for the good of the team, passing the ball to avoid being tackled was considered cowardly. The contrast with the Welsh attitude was revealing. Because rugby in Wales was one of the factors which defined national identity, creative innovation and the exciting ‘passing’ game were accepted with enthusiasm. W. John Morgan & Geoffrey Nicholson, Report on Rugby pp. 49-55.

⁴⁰ Daryl Adair, “Competing or Complementary Forces? The ‘Civilizing’ Process and the Commitment to Winning in Nineteenth Century English Rugby and Association Football” Canadian Journal of History of Sport 24:2, December 1993. p. 54.

evident in Victorian society. And this analysis was compatible with Adam Smith's explanation in the Wealth of Nations of the process that led to the creation of wealth. Smith argued that personal economic decisions based on unfettered self-interest created wealth and benefited society and that economic disparities were inevitable, necessary, and beneficial. But it was Herbert Spencer, in particular, by blurring the differences between biological evolution and social development, who popularized this analysis of society and its comforting justification of inequality. With Victorian confidence in the inevitable march of civilization, Spencer applied Darwin's biological analysis of evolution to social relations. Thus, those who succeeded in life's struggle and became rich, or better still, became members of the aristocracy, were worthy of respect. Success was evidence of moral worth. Conversely, failure was confirmation of moral inadequacy. And, with the same logic, athletic proficiency, or even physical appearance, was also evidence of moral worth.

The moral component of athleticism changed significantly during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Muscular Christianity, with its emphasis on commitment, loyalty, and integrity, evolved to include the more secular, manly virtues: strength and hardiness. With the change came a greater importance placed on victory. And by the end of the century, athleticism had incorporated an arrogant belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority. There is no shortage of material illustrating the racist component of athleticism.

In The Games Ethic and Imperialism (1988)⁴¹ J. A. Mangan quotes from two sources which demonstrate this prejudice. The first is from Frederick William Farrar's paper "Aptitudes of Races" presented to the Ethnological Society in 1867. It worth remembering that Farrar was a master at Harrow. He writes about the Negro:

With keen senses, and singularly powerful physique, yet mainly owing to his salient animality, and with the crimes of cruelty, laziness, and superstition which...mark his native condition, he is not untameable like the Indian, but so mentally apathetic as to bow his shoulder to the yoke of race after race of Asiatics and Europeans. Ever since civilization has existed, he has been coterminous to, and even in contact with it from an unknown period. Yet this natural imitiveness has given him no proficiency even in the mechanical arts.⁴²

The second is from Sir Francis Younghusband who was commander of the British expedition to Tibet in 1903:

No European can mix with non-Christian races without feeling his moral superiority over them. He feels from the first contact with them, that whatever may be their relative positions from an intellectual point of view, he is stronger morally than they are. And facts show that this feeling is a true one. It is not because we are any cleverer than the natives of India, because we have more brains or bigger heads than they have, that we rule India; but because we are stronger morally than they are. Our superiority over them is not due to mere sharpness of intellect, but to the higher moral nature to which we have attained in the development of the human race.⁴³

A notable feature of Victorian Britain was the explosion of writing, particularly sermons, poetry and songs, many of which were published in school magazines, devoted to the glorification of sports and games.

⁴¹ J. A. Mangan, The Games Ethic and Imperialism (London: Frank Cass, 1998)

⁴² Quoted in J. A. Mangan, The Games, pp.113-14.

Mangan concludes that the "verbal symbols of ideological commitment" transmitted messages of "loyalty, masculinity, chauvinism, and decency."⁴⁴ The literary flowering not only justified and reflected the ideology of athleticism, it helped to create it.

Athleticism was seen as the answer to many different problems. The schoolboys' obsessive interest in games even provided protection against foreign evils. As one headmaster explained:

Did you ever think what a priceless boon is the innocence of school games as a subject of conversation? You are perhaps bored by the incessant talk about matches and runs, and place kicks, and scrummages; you think games occupy a disproportionate share of the boy's mind. You may be thankful this is so. What do French boys talk about?⁴⁵

One consequence of the romantic link forged between the games field and the battlefield was the enthusiastic response of public school boys and graduates to the outbreak of war in 1914. In a sermon on July 5, 1914, E. W. Hornung, an Old Uppinghamian, emphasized games as a metaphor for war.

For here now 'we see through a glass darkly', so darkly that try as we will, we cannot see the score; so darkly that we can hardly see to play the game; but not so darkly that we are going to appeal against the light – nor so darkly that we cannot be sportsmen and glory in the difficulties we have to overcome. Who wants an easy victory? Who wants a life full of pitches to leg? Do you think the Great Scorer is going to give you four runs every time for those? I believe with all my heart and soul that in this splendidly difficult Game of Life it is just the cheap and easy triumph which will be written in water on the score sheet. And the way we played for our side, in the bad light, on the difficult pitch: the way we backed up

⁴³ Sir Francis Younghusband, The Heart of a Continent Quoted by Mangan, The Games Ethic. p.115.

⁴⁴ J. A. Mangan, Athleticism, p.182.

⁴⁵ J. M. Wilson, (Headmaster of Clifton) "Morality in Public Schools and its Relation to Religion" (1882) Quoted in J. A. Mangan, Athleticism, p.190.

and ran the other man's runs;...surely, surely it is these things above all that will count, when the innings is over, in the Pavilion of Heaven.⁴⁶

Moral lessons were taught through the language of games, which were an axiom for life as well as war.

But the pervasive influence of athleticism did not go unchallenged. Even within the public school system, and particularly at Malborough, there were those who questioned its excesses and the antagonism towards intellectuals which it fostered. Another, and ultimately more successful, challenge was posed by the increased competition faced by public school graduates for the jobs which had traditionally been reserved for the sons of the gentry: medicine, law, and the military. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century the success of graduates from the recently established state schools, who had received at least some training in science and mathematics, demonstrated the need for the public schools to temper their emphasis on games and the study of the classics and, instead, teach the skills needed for success in a competitive industrial society. It was the prospering middle class, in particular, whose desire to increase their sons' chances for success had led to the establishing of so many public schools, who first became aware of the need for change. A more immediate threat to athleticism arose when those same entrepreneurs employed their competitive business practices in support of their local soccer and rugby teams. Athleticism discouraged too sharp a focus on victory as games should be played for their own sake and to instill values and ethics. Too much attention to victory would inevitably lead to professionalism and corruption: the excesses which had led, so the

⁴⁶ Quoted in J. A. Mangan, Athleticism, p.194.

Victorians erroneously believed, to the degradation of athletics in ancient Greece. Thus the strong resistance to creating any formal league structure to lead to a championship which, it was believed, would increase competitive pressures and lead to excesses. The new industrialists, however, believed that victory in games was an appropriate goal and saw nothing wrong with using their considerable skills and resources to increase the chances of success of their local teams by acquiring skilled athletes by paying expenses and providing them with jobs or broken-time payments (payment of wages for time spent away from work training or competing). These practices led to bitter disputes involving soccer and rugby. In a compromise agreement in 1885 the Football Association (soccer) decided to permit both amateur and professional teams to compete under the umbrella of the Association. The professional teams quickly swamped the amateur teams both on the playing field and at the box office. The failure of the amateur soccer teams influenced the Rugby Football Union when the same issue arose in the rugby game 10 years later. This time no compromise was possible and the northern clubs split from the RFU and formed their own professional Rugby Football League.⁴⁷ The resolution of the disputes in soccer and, in particular, rugby had the contradictory effect of entrenching athleticism by consolidating the authority and influence of the largely public school graduates who remained in control of the RFU. In addition, it made clearly evident the social cohesiveness of athleticism's supporters. It was no longer possible to disguise the class struggle inherent in the continuing conflict between

⁴⁷ Tony Collins, Rugby's Great Split: Class, Culture and the Origins of Rugby League Football. Sport in the Global Society. Ed. J. A. Mangan. (London: Frank Cass, 1998). Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard, Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players: A Sociological Study of the Development of Rugby Football. (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1979).

amateurism and professionalism. And with the departure of the professional rugby clubs, those which remained were centered in the south and around London and were controlled by public school graduates in the traditional occupations of the gentry who remained fervent in their adherence to athleticism. With the challenge posed by professionalism deflected, the ideology of athleticism continued to motivate the very people whose social positions or jobs – government service and the military – ensured that their views would influence the development of sport in Canada.

The Sports Ethic in Canada to 1909

In a seminal essay entitled "They Taught the World to Play", Sir Charles Tennyson⁴⁸ showed that 'a most important achievement' of Victorian England was the diffusion throughout the Empire and beyond of ball games - football, cricket, lawn tennis, and golf. He identified the central role in the process played by graduates of the 'public' schools and examined the evolution of the games themselves but ignored a most interesting aspect of the enterprise, the diffusion of the upper-class ideology of athleticism that came with the games. Some games were accepted more enthusiastically in certain countries than in others even after allowances are made for geography and climate. This raises the question: why did Canada take up cricket and rugby while other countries preferred soccer: a matter of some significance as players of rugby and cricket were more likely to believe in the ideology of athleticism than were soccer players?

It has been suggested by Harold Perkin that the initial popularity of the 'gentlemanly' sports of cricket and rugby in Canada as well as Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa reflected the class origins of the administrators and military personnel sent to govern those particular colonies.⁴⁹ These graduates of the English public schools naturally

⁴⁸ Sir Charles Tennyson, "They Taught the World to Play" Victorian Studies 2 (1958/59): 211-222.

⁴⁹ Harold Perkin, "Teaching the Nations How to Play: Sport and Society in the British Empire and Commonwealth" The International Journal of the History of Sport 6:2 (September, 1989): 145-55.

introduced the games with which they were most familiar: cricket and rugby. Although initially popular at some public schools, Eton in particular, soccer had become tainted in the minds of many public school graduates when professionalism was permitted in 1885. Rugby, however, remained true to the amateur ideal. In 1893, when the Rugby Football Union was faced with the question of whether or not to permit broken-time payments, it refused to compromise, which led twenty-one clubs to leave the RFU and form the professional Northern Union. (The name was changed to the Rugby Football League in 1922.) Perkin argues that as the merchants and engineers who extended British commercial influence to those parts of the world not under Britain's direct administrative control were less likely to have attended a public school they were more familiar with association football (soccer). As well, soccer was easier to learn and did not require special facilities. Thus, soccer became the most popular sport in countries that were subject to British commercial influence but not part of the British Empire. In Canada, however, the public school graduates sent to administer and protect the Empire preferred cricket and rugby and, in those areas with a British administrative presence or a military garrison, they were successful in organizing teams. Significantly, the first overseas tour by an English cricket XI was in 1859 to Canada, when games were played in Montreal and Toronto.

In addition to administrators and military officers, many of whom were public school graduates, a disproportionately large number of the British immigrants to Canada during the nineteenth century were also graduates of the public schools. The lure of adventure and the opportunities

available in Canada, effectively advertised by the Canadian government and commercial interests, certainly encouraged British immigration to Canada. But possibly of greater importance during the latter part of the Victorian age was the changing position of the landed classes in Britain which provided an impetus for immigration. The expansion of elite public schools in Britain had been driven by the ambition and resources of the growing middle class who wanted the type of education previously enjoyed only by the aristocracy. It is estimated that the number of students attending public or grammar schools increased from about "...9,000 in the early 1840's to approximately 30,000 in the 1870's."⁵⁰ And yet the opportunities for the increased numbers of graduates trained in the classics and obsessed with games were continuing to dwindle. While the younger sons of the landed gentry had traditionally chosen medicine, the military, the church, or the law, an increased emphasis on ability instead of position and connections meant that many of them could not find jobs appropriate to their social position. While entry into the church remained an option, it was less attractive in a secular age and paid very poorly. The increased competition faced even by those who were able to pass competitive examinations and become doctors or lawyers meant that many remained without gainful employment. Even the option of a career in the civil service was restricted when competitive examinations were introduced in the 1850's. As well, comfortable careers in the military became less certain when the practice of purchasing commissions was abolished in 1871 following the demonstrated incompetence of Lord Cardigan and other British officers during the

⁵⁰ Patrick A. Dunae, Gentlemen Emigrants: From the British Public Schools to the Canadian Frontier (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1981) p. 53.

Crimean War and the successes of the professional officers in Prussia's armies.⁵¹ Immigration to Canada became a socially acceptable alternative and appealed to many public school graduates who helped to invigorate the already established British sporting tradition.

The British army garrisons, in particular, with idle soldiers and ample resources, were inevitably centres of sporting activity and it would be difficult to exaggerate their importance in the development of sport in central Canada following the conquest in 1763, and continuing until almost all the troops were withdrawn in 1871 following the ratification of the Treaty of Washington by the United States Senate. A small number of naval and engineering personnel remained at Halifax and Esquimalt until 1906, although Canada did not take over the dockyards until the Royal Canadian Navy was formed in 1910.⁵² Although the impact of the military garrisons in central Canada was of much greater significance for the future of sport in Canada for the reasons set out below, the naval bases had considerable local influence on the development of sport on both coasts.⁵³ It was surely no coincidence that rugby attracted an enthusiastic following in both the Maritimes and in British Columbia.⁵⁴ The numbers permanently stationed at the bases may have been small but

⁵¹ Dunae, p. 51.

⁵² J. Mackay Hitsman, Safeguarding Canada 1763-1871 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968) p. 226.

⁵³ Derek A. Swain, "The Impact of the Royal Navy on the Development of Sport in British Columbia" Fourth Canadian Symposium on the History of Sport and Physical Education held at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver (June, 1979): 2-18.
Ralph M. Davies, "A History of Rugby in Nova Scotia" Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1979.

⁵⁴ The influence of naval personnel in the development of many sports in Victoria is evident from the history of the James Bay Athletic Association. Lewis G. Madley, J.B.A.A. The First 100 Years (Victoria: James Bay Athletic Association, 1986).

whenever ships were in port there was non-stop activity, perhaps to make up the quiet times when the ships were at sea. The naval bands provided music for the dances that were often held aboard the ships, as well as for the many sporting events. Horse racing was a particular favourite. Over 2,000 people turned out in 1859 to watch the races in Victoria that were part of the festivities celebrating Queen Victoria's birthday. Cricket was the most popular team sport, having been introduced on the west coast as early as 1849, while the first report of a football game (most likely rugby) in Victoria appeared in the British Colonist in 1868:

The game of foot-ball between the Town and Fleet Clubs ...resulted in an easy victory for the latter, who scored six to their opponents' two.⁵⁵

But the garrisons of British army troops stationed in central Canada had the greatest impact on the development of sport in Canada. The number of troops fluctuated widely depending upon the political situation in North America and British initiatives elsewhere in the world. Thus, while in 1803 1220 troops were stationed in the Maritimes, with approximately 2000 in Upper and Lower Canada, with the outbreak of war in 1812 the total troop strength increased to better than 30,000.⁵⁶ From that peak the number decreased following the outbreak of the Crimean War in the 1850's. At the start of the American Civil War in 1861 the number was 7,407 but quickly increased to 18,582, almost all of whom were based in Montreal, Quebec, London, Toronto, Kingston, and Hamilton. It was during this period from the early 1800's until the troops were finally withdrawn

⁵⁵ The British Colonist, March 30, 1868.

⁵⁶ All statistics relating to troop totals and deployment are from J. Mackay Hitsman, Safeguarding Canada 1763-1871 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968).

in 1871 that the British military had its greatest impact on the development of sport in Canada. The contingent in the west coast colonies was insignificant. When disbanded in 1863 it consisted of 131 Royal Engineers, of whom 130 received land grants when Britain permitted them to settle in the colony.⁵⁷

Although the direct participation of the troops in various sports was necessarily localized and concentrated in central Canada and ended when they were withdrawn, the impact of their activities continued. The military's influence was ensured by three factors: when the troops were disbanded significant numbers chose to accept land grants and settle in Canada; the police and militia units formed to assist and eventually replace the British troops (many of whom had served in the British army before coming to Canada⁵⁸) adopted their traditions; and the prominent social position of the British officers gave their activities a social cachet irresistible to prominent and socially ambitious Canadians. Furthermore, as the influence of the elite extended geographically with the expansion of the railways and economic development, its opinions and attitudes acquired the status of conventional wisdom in sporting circles.

Although the troops organized and were active participants in many sports, including riding, fox hunting, horse racing, and tandem rides, their main focus was cricket, which has been described as "...the major sport in

⁵⁷ Hitsman, 182 & 232.

⁵⁸ In her monologue on Sgt.-Major J. H. G. Bray, Ruth M. Daw notes that when he went west in 1873 as part of a contingent of 53 members of the NWMP he traveled with seven recruits from the same division of the British army. Ruth M. Daw, "Stg.-Major J. H. G. Bray, The Forgotten Horseman" Hugh A. Dempsey ed., Men in Scarlet (Calgary: McClelland & Stewart, 1974) pp.152-162.

Canada prior to Confederation."⁵⁹ That officers' sporting interests were those of the English landed gentry and public school graduates is understandable as, before 1871, promotion within the prestigious cavalry and infantry regiments was normally acquired by purchase.⁶⁰ Thus, British officers in North America were usually wealthy, conservative, and reasonably well educated.

The influence of disbanded British troops who chose to remain in Canada, the utilization of sport as an element in the search for continuity and commitment to British traditions, and the interdependence between sporting activities and social status are all well illustrated by the history of the Woodstock Cricket Club.⁶¹ (Woodstock became Blanchford Township, Oxford County, Ontario.) Established in the 1830's by retired British officers on half-pay whose status entitled them to sizeable land grants, Woodstock was an attempt by the Family Compact to counter the growing power of political reformers. The half-pay officers quickly formed a cricket club and built a spectator stand and club house, demonstrating the social position of the players and spectators by erecting of a high fence and by requiring both players and spectators to dress in expensive apparel beyond the reach of all but the landed gentry who alone had the economic means and the leisure time to indulge in two-day matches with elaborate lunches, dinners and dances. Largely successful, the club

⁵⁹ Peter Lindsay, "The Impact of the Military Garrisons on the Development of Sport in British North America" Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education 1:1 (May, 1970): 33.

⁶⁰ Hitsman, viii.

⁶¹ This discussion of the Woodstock Cricket Club is based on the article by Nancy B. Bouchier, "Aristocrats and their Noble Sport: Woodstock Officers and Cricket during the Rebellion Era" Canadian Journal of the History of Sport 20:1 (1989): 16-31.

fulfilled its purpose of providing a venue for cricket, which local newspapers viewed as "...a glorious and manly sport calculated to improve character, physique, and morality, and to draw Canadian colonists closer to the mother country."⁶² But the success of the club was short lived. When the power of the landed gentry was curtailed in 1849 with the move to responsible government and the election of local councils, interest in cricket quickly waned. The arrival of the Great Western Railway in 1853 initiated a new economic era and the popularization of baseball even though the elite did not abandon their commitment to British sporting traditions.

The diffusion of sport and athleticism to the western prairies was profoundly influenced by a uniquely Canadian institution, the North West Mounted Police. When the North West Mounted Police was formed in 1873 to establish law and order in the territory turned over to Canada only three years earlier, few settlers had made the trek out west.⁶³ When settlers began to arrive following the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railroad in the 1880s, they found an already established police presence. The first contingent of 150 police recruits had marched west in 1874 and had quickly established a string of forts at the more important fur trading posts such as Fort Macleod, Fort Calgary, Fort Walsh, and Fort Edmonton. Even though the force remained small (never exceeding 1000 men before 1905), it was able to maintain law and order in a vast territory; reconcile demands for public order and individual liberty; and gain the respect of the Indians, all while remaining consistently popular. The force played the

⁶² Bouchier, 21.

role of a benevolent dictator with unrivalled powers (police officers were also magistrates) but seemed not to have abused its powers.⁶⁴ So pervasive was the influence of the NWMP that it has been cited as the explanation for many of the differences between Canadian and American society. That the force also had an impact on the development of sport and attitudes towards sport in western Canada is not surprising.

A key factor in the success of the NWMP was the character of its personnel. R. C. Macleod describes a typical officer as being "...Canadian born, drawn from the governing elite of eastern Canada...and certainly with military experience and training."⁶⁵ Although over eighty per cent of the officers were Canadian this did not translate into a belief in the idea of a classless frontier society. To the contrary, the officers considered themselves to be an elite force and influenced all facets of frontier life because they were, and were expected to be, social leaders.⁶⁶ Indeed, the "Police worked zealously to ensure that the young western communities were patterned socially and politically after eastern Canada."⁶⁷ Their leisure activities reflected this class bias. Sports equipment supplied to the force included cricket, tennis, and fencing paraphernalia as well as the

⁶³ Paul H. Fudge, "The North West Mounted Police and Their Influence on Sport in Western Canada, 1873-1905" Journal of the West 22:1 (1983): 30-36.

⁶⁴ R. C. Macleod, The NWMP and Law Enforcement 1873-1905 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) p. x.

⁶⁵ R. C. Macleod, p.74.

⁶⁶ R. C. Macleod, p.79. Their influence persisted following retirement from the force as many stayed in the west and took up ranching. By 1880 ex-policemen comprised the principal element within the ranch community. D. H. Breen, "The Mounted Police and the Ranching Frontier" Hugh A. Dempsey ed., Men in Scarlet (Calgary: McClelland & Stewart, 1974) pp. 115-137.

⁶⁷ S. W. Horrall, "The March West" Hugh A. Dempsey ed., Men in Scarlet (Calgary: McClelland & Stewart, 1974) p. 25.

more usual footballs, baseballs, and boxing gloves.⁶⁸ Although largely Canadian-born, the interests and perspectives of the officers were very similar to those of graduates from the English public schools. Soon after their arrival the police introduced many different sports. Cricket was particularly popular with many settlements which formed teams to take on the police. So too was rugby. In 1890 cricket and rugby teams traveled from Regina to Winnipeg for a week of games. The following year Moosomin and Winnipeg sent rugby teams to compete in a tournament organized by the police at their training centre in Regina.⁶⁹ But the police did not restrict themselves to cricket and rugby. In 1895 a police team from Fort Saskatchewan traveled to Calgary to take part in the first hockey tournament in the west. By the time Alberta and Saskatchewan became provinces in 1905, sport was flourishing on the prairies.

Whatever the primary reason, it is clear that the games of cricket and rugby and the doctrine of athleticism so dear to public school graduates made the journey to Canada. Indeed, athleticism remained so entrenched in the upper-class ethos (at least in Toronto) that in a 1929 speech to the Empire Club of Canada on "The Imperial Significance of Games", Reverend J. R. P. Slater was able to praise, without embarrassment, the 'correct' attitude to sporting contests:

In the first place, we would rather lose a game than win it unfairly. In the second place, we would rather have respect to the spirit of the law than to its letter, in playing the game. In the third place, we would exact from ourselves and all associated with us a spirit of absolute obedience to the authorities set over us for the moment, never for a moment questioning the umpire. In the fourth place we would, so to speak, play the ball were it lies – an entirely admirable attitude

⁶⁸ Macleod, p.87.

⁶⁹ Fudge, 31-32.

to have in respect to all life's difficulties. In the fifth place we would desire to be among that company who, having started either in a race or a game, go on if we can till we drop dead. In the sixth place we would hope that the spirit would be developed amongst us which is not so very greatly concerned for itself, so long as the side on which we are is successful.⁷⁰

Key to an appreciation of this fervour and of the importance of sport to a 'gentleman' is an understanding that sport was a symbolic elitist activity and a site for the display of social status; an opportunity to show that one was a gentleman. And the difficulty of defining who was a gentleman was no hindrance. You had to be one to know one. It was only when the common people began to take up sport that there was any challenge to the pre-eminent position of the social elite. The response of the elite was to define the distinction between the amateur 'gentleman' sportsman and the professional. But whereas in England the status of a 'gentleman' was supported by a social class that accepted without question the doctrine of athleticism, this was not the case in Canada where the doctrine lacked the social system necessary for its survival.

In the first serious attempt to place the sports and games played in Canada in their social context, Nancy Howell and Maxwell L. Howell describe the leisure activities of the early Canadians before lake steamers and the railways made regional and national competitions possible.⁷¹ In the early days, just as the new, challenging country rewarded those able to overcome extreme physical hardships, so early sport competitions such as paddling, portaging, and snowshoeing were also tests of masculinity. In

⁷⁰ Quoted by J. A. Mangan, The Games Ethic and Imperialism (London: Frank Cass, 1988) 52-53.

⁷¹ Nancy Howell & Maxwell L. Howell, Sports and Games in Canadian Life: 1700 to the present (Toronto: Macmillan, 1969).

the expanding urban centres of Montreal and Toronto following the influx of conservative United Empire Loyalists committed to maintaining British traditions, it gradually became unacceptable to define masculinity by frontier standards. Competing concepts of masculinity - frontier and urban - were reflected in the sports clubs (and competitions) established in Canada during the nineteenth century. The consolidation of a political oligarchy together with institutional power under the control of men who were primarily Anglican and conservative and anxious to maintain their ties to Britain legitimated sporting activities structured to maintain British sporting traditions. Thus certain games and various activities were valued because they demonstrated a commitment to British traditions and culture. In particular, the sports enjoyed by the military garrisons were extensions of British culture, and therefore encouraged. Morris Mott has described how and why the British Protestants who settled in the new province of Manitoba (by 1886 two-thirds of the 108,640 residents were British Protestants) reproduced what they believed were the best features of British civilization, one of which was 'manly' sports.⁷² To Mott, the British Protestants constituted an 'aggressive and confident' majority, that was anxious to demonstrate its commitment to maintain British sporting practices and traditions. Playing and organizing games in accordance with the rules, whether promulgated by the Rugby Football Union in London or the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, was but one way to demonstrate that commitment.

⁷² Morris Mott, "The British Protestant Pioneers and the Establishment of Manly Sports in Manitoba, 1870-1886" Journal of Sport History 7:3 (Winter, 1980): 25-36.

Nancy B. Bouchier takes it one step further and argues that middle-class men purposefully utilized sport in an attempt to establish their cultural hegemony.⁷³ And what mattered was the social context of the enterprise not what game was played. As the popularity of British games – rugby and cricket – gradually diminished other sports were redefined and employed as instruments of bourgeois hegemony. Dr. Bouchier demonstrates that in the Ontario towns of Ingersoll and Woodstock from 1871 to 1891 middle-class men were successful in redefining lacrosse as a sport for ‘gentlemen’ and a site to promote their social preferences. The success was temporary. As the popularity of lacrosse increased in the 1890s and winning games became ever more important concerns were expressed about ungentlemanly play and professionalism. Lacrosse, as had happened to baseball, gradually became incorporated into working-class culture.

At the same time, middle-class sportsmen discouraged the rougher working-class sports such as boxing, wrestling, and activities such as barn-raising that often led to drinking and fighting. However, the urban gentry adopted certain of the ‘frontier’ sports, including lacrosse and snowshoeing, which led to the exclusion of natives from some competitions, often because of their superior ability. Racist sentiments are clearly revealed by a 1868 statement of a Montreal Snowshoe club

⁷³ Nancy B. Bouchier, “Idealized Middle-Class Sport for a Young Nation: Lacrosse in Nineteenth-Century Ontario Towns, 1871-1891” Journal of Canadian Studies 29:2 (Summer 1994): 89-110.

member: "sachems (Indians) seem to have an hereditary power of running that even their natural laziness and love of fire water cannot destroy."⁷⁴

In Canada, sport became a site of conflict largely because during the nineteenth century sporting competitions were social events of some significance where the social aspects were more important than the outcome of the competition. As the century progressed more and more labourers became involved in athletics, and often were the victors, particularly in those sports related to their work. Not surprisingly, Indians were supreme in snowshoe races, as were boatmen in rowing competitions. This superiority would not have been of concern if determining the best athlete had been the aim of the competition. But as the social interaction was of paramount importance restrictions were created that excluded certain racial groups as well as those involved in certain occupations.

Prior to confederation sporting activity in the urban centres of Montreal and Toronto reflected the social structure of colonial society and demonstrated the gulf that existed between the social elite, including military personnel and imperial administrators who tried to maintain their ties to Britain, and the general working class. Athletes were distinguished by social status, not by some arbitrary distinction between amateur and professional. That distinction arose later. Thus, so long as the social differentiation was visible, competition for prizes and competitions

⁷⁴ Montreal Snowshoe Club 1868 Minute Book, p, 93. Quoted by Don Morrow, "The Knights of the Snowshoe: A Study of the Evolution of Sport in Nineteenth Century Montreal" Journal of Sport History 15:1 (Spring, 1998): 23.

including labourers and Indians were common. Typical were the 1862 annual races of the Montreal Snow Shoe Club:

Indian Race of four miles – open to all, for a purse of \$20.

Hurdle Race – over four hurdles, 3'4" high, open to all, for a prize belt

One Mile Race – open to all, prize a silver medal

Race of 150 Yards – in heat, open to all, prize a silver medal

Garrison Race of half a mile – open to non-commissioned officers and privates – prizes, 1st \$5, 2nd \$4, 3rd \$2

Club Race of two miles – open to members only, prize a silver cup

Half-Mile Dash – open to all, prize a silver medal⁷⁵

The social hierarchy was reflected in the prizes, with monetary prizes being awarded for victory only in the Indian Race and the Garrison Race. The most prestigious event, the Club Race, was open to members only. The One Mile Race, while 'open to all', was intended to include only 'whites' from other clubs. But sometimes such conventions were ignored. At the Montreal Maple Leaf Snow-Shoe Club's competition in 1873 two Indians entered the two mile open race over the objections of the white competitors and Club officers.⁷⁶ One of the Indians, Peter Thomas, won the race even though a white competitor cheated by starting early and the crowd tried to block the Indians. Police cleared the track. Interestingly, it seems that the white competitors and the crowd objected to including Indians in the race because of substantial bets on the outcome, while the Club officers were offended because of the breach of social convention.

Clearly, informally enforced distinctions failed to protect the sensibilities of the social elite, particularly when 'gentlemen' did not emerge the

⁷⁵ Don Morrow, "The Knights of the Snowshoe: A Study of the Evolution of Sport in Nineteenth Century Montreal" Journal of Sport History 15:1 (Spring, 1998): 13-14.

victors. Social exclusivity needed to be explicit. The Montreal Pedestrian Club, incorporated in 1873, took no chances. The class and racial strictures of urban sporting activities are clearly illustrated by the definitions in the incorporating documents that restricted membership to amateurs, with 'amateurs' defined as:

One who has never competed in any open competition or for public money, or for admission money, or with professionals for a prize, public money or admission money, nor has ever at any period of his life taught or assisted in the pursuit of Athletic exercises as a means of livelihood or is a labourer or an Indian.⁷⁷

By framing the restriction negatively (i.e. by prescribing what disqualified one from being an amateur), the definition encouraged constant arguments as to whether a particular provision had been breached. In addition, singling out 'labourers' and 'Indians' was an attempt to maintain social exclusivity with a particularly Canadian racial bias. So long as the participants had been members of the social elite it had not been necessary to establish criteria for participation. But when outsiders began to invade the playing fields, 'gentlemen' took action by excluding 'professionals' and in doing so created a class-based amateur code: a code that excluded growing segments of the population but which retained the support of educators and administrators and those anxious to retain their cultural ties to Britain in spite of the massive changes taking place in Canadian society.

⁷⁶ Montreal Gazette, March 3, 1873.

⁷⁷ Quoted by Don Morrow, "A Case-Study in Amateur Conflict: The Athletic War in Canada, 1906-08" British Journal of Sports History Vol.3:2, September 1986, p. 174.

But in the early days the distinction between an amateur and a professional was a matter of prime importance only in Montreal and Toronto. For most Canadians in rural and frontier regions, sports and games were only a diversion and an opportunity for social contact. In the years following confederation in 1867 western Canadian society changed rapidly with the construction of the railroads, the influx of settlers of various ethnic backgrounds, and the growth of industry. For the many settlers who remained isolated with little time for sport, their leisure time was often spent in celebration of the harvest or in visiting neighbours, singing, parlour games, or in various activities centred on the church. In the larger centres in western Canada the activities were much the same. W. L. Morton describes social life in Winnipeg during the 1890s:

Picnics, socials and concerts were the staple. The only distinctive sports were canoeing and rowing, which flourished under the care of the Winnipeg Canoe Club, organized in 1883. The old Red River sport of horse racing was more highly organized, of course, and the races were a social event of the summer season. In February, 1894, the legislature was unable on one occasion to obtain a quorum because honourable members were at the bonspiel. Another ice sport, hockey, came into its own in the nineties, and at once rose to a primacy it was thereafter to maintain.⁷⁸

But in the urban areas of Montreal and Toronto societal changes were posing challenges to the class-based amateur code. In 1880's the increased involvement of outsiders and the widening player base in lacrosse and rowing brought attention to the need to distinguish between amateurs and professionals and led the National Lacrosse Association (formed in 1867) to add the word 'amateur' to its name (which excluded Indian teams), and to the incorporation of the Canadian Association of

Amateur Oarsmen. The desire for a national organization to control amateur sport, develop standardized rules, and organize national championships led (in 1884 at the instigation of the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association (MAAA) and some Toronto area clubs) to formation of the Amateur Athletic Association of Canada (AAAC).⁷⁹ The AAAC's definition of an amateur was a less overtly offensive attempt to guarantee social exclusivity than that of the Montreal Pedestrian Club in 1873. While it omitted any reference to particular groups, social exclusivity was guaranteed by its final sentence:

An amateur is one who has never competed for a money prize or staked bet, or with or against any professional for any prize, or who has never taught, pursued or assisted in the practice of athletic exercises as a means of obtaining a livelihood. This rule does not interfere with the right of any club to refuse an entry to its own sports.⁸⁰

As the end of the nineteenth century approached the amateur code faced another challenge to which it finally succumbed over half a century later: the development of commercialized, professional sport. Although the abandonment of the amateur code was not formalized until the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada was dissolved in 1970, from the turn of the century economic forces and an increasingly commercial society slowly undermined support for the amateur ideal. In addition, and in spite of the new railroads linking Canada from east to west, it remained cheaper and faster for athletes to compete with rivals in the United States; for a

⁷⁸ W. L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (University of Toronto Press, 1957) 265.

⁷⁹ Its name was changed to the Canadian Amateur Athletic Union in 1898. Its functions were taken over by the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAUC) on its incorporation in 1909 – the first truly national organization in Canadian amateur sport. The AAUC was not dissolved until 1970.

⁸⁰ Quoted by Morrow, p. 175.

Winnipeg team to travel to St. Paul rather than Montreal. The consequences for the development of Canadian sport were profound: influencing not just the choice of what game was played, baseball as opposed to cricket, football as opposed to rugby, but also the conflict between amateurism and professionalism. The United States example of commercialized, professional sport appealed to many Canadians not fully committed to maintaining British traditions. The constantly improving methods of transportation, which made it possible for athletes to travel more easily and less expensively and encouraged the rapid expansion of most sports, led to increasingly intense rivalries in many sports, particularly baseball, lacrosse, and hockey. Increased competition with greater emphasis on victory led to a desire for improved performance. Ambitious civic leaders were spurred to import athletes to improve their teams. And successful teams were profitable. The economic dilemma faced by clubs anxious to comply with the amateur code is illustrated by the history of the Montreal Lacrosse Club, formed in 1856, which had been one of the founding members of the MAAA and, from 1885 to 1893, had generated more than half of the Association's revenues. Lacrosse's contribution to revenues fell precipitously from a surplus of over \$12,000 in 1893 to a deficit in 1900, and only started to rise when in 1906 the MAAA changed its rules to permit its lacrosse teams to play with and against professional players.⁸¹

These commercial pressures raised the question whether amateur athletes would be able to compete with or against professionals in team

⁸¹ Don Morrow, "The Powerhouse of Canadian Sport: The Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, Inception to 1909" Journal of Sport History 8:3 (Winter, 1981): 30-31.

sports while still retaining their amateur status. A power struggle between the Canadian Amateur Athletic Union (CAAU) of Toronto and the Amateur Athletic Federation of Canada (AAF of C) of Montreal ensued, lasting from 1906-1908.⁸² The CAAU, which in 1907 claimed to represent 479 clubs emerged victorious. Within a year that number had increased to 900 clubs representing athletes from coast to coast. The crisis had been precipitated by a request from the National Amateur Lacrosse Union to the CAAU to allow amateurs (in lacrosse only) to compete with and against professionals without losing their amateur status. In 1905 the CAAU approved the exception for lacrosse but at their Annual General Meeting in October 1906 annulled the exception and reverted to a strict interpretation of the amateur rule. In the meantime (in April 1906) the MAAA directors had followed the CAAU lead and resolved to allow amateurs and professionals to compete, a move that was ratified by the MAAA membership in a 250 to 12 vote. The battle lines were firmly drawn, with the CAAU now having changed its mind and adhering to a strict application of the amateur code, while the MAAA permitted amateurs to compete with or against professionals without losing their amateur status. The MAAA withdrew from the CAAU and formed the AAF of C in February 1907 to compete directly with the CAAU for national control of amateur sport. While the organizational expertise and energy of the CAAU, together with the predisposition of the many middle-class Canadians with British connections for the amateur ideal, may have allowed the CAAU to prevail over the AAF of C and assume control of amateur sport, the CAAU's victory was assured by the actions of the AAF

⁸² This summary of the 'Athletic War' is based on the account of Don Morrow, "A Case Study in Amateur Conflict: The Athletic War in Canada, 1906-1908" British Journal of

of C in response to a dispute over the selection of the Canadian team for the 1908 Olympic Games in London.

At a meeting in late 1907 the two organizations had agreed to form a joint committee to resolve, without a right of further appeal, any disputes over the selection of athletes for the Games. But ten days before the start of the marathon, Leslie Boyd, the president of the MAAA, lodged a protest on behalf of the AAF of C against Tom Longboat, the acclaimed Indian distance runner who was a gold medal contender for Canada in the marathon, on the grounds that he was a professional athlete.⁸³ As matters progressed it appeared that Boyd had been strongly influenced by the AAU of the United States which also lodged a protest against Longboat. The British Olympic Committee settled the matter, rejected the protests and declared Longboat eligible to compete, but the damage had been done. In the event, Longboat did not even finish the race. The AAF of C never recovered from the controversy as it was perceived as having broken the agreement to resolve disputes internally and as having sided with the United States against the interests of Canadian athletes. In contrast, the CAAU was perceived as being Longboat's greatest defender.

Sport History 3:2 (September, 1986): 173-190.

⁸³ Tom Longboat (1887-1949), an Onandaga, won the Boston marathon, in April 1907, in record time. In November, 1907 the president of the AAU of the United States declared that Longboat was a professional, as "He has always been in the hands of a manager...he is taken from town to town...with bands and carriages and silk hats....He ran all kinds of races at county fairs for money." To protect Longboat's amateur status, his Toronto managers quickly installed him as proprietor of a cigar store. S. F. Wise and Douglas Fisher, Canada's Sporting Heroes, (Don Mills: Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, 1974) pp. 244-46.

The dispute had broad implications for the development of sport in Canada. Its resolution, and the preeminent position achieved by the CAAU, demonstrated the transfer of economic and political power from Montreal to Toronto, contributed to the extension of the power of the Toronto sport community to the whole of Canada, and, most significantly, re-established and enshrined the amateur code. In addition, the increasing interest in the Olympic movement and the formation of the Canadian Olympic Committee in 1913 entrenched the power of supporters of the amateur code.⁸⁴ With power to select participants and teams for Olympic competition the Canadian Olympic Committee's definition of an amateur could only be ignored by athletes at their peril.

⁸⁴ The Canadian Olympic Committee was a sub-committee of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada which had been formed in November, 1909 as a successor organization to the CAAU.

Conclusion

The British administrators, soldiers, and immigrants who came to Canada during the nineteenth century brought with them their love of games and the upper-class ideology of athleticism: a belief in the instrumental value of team sports as a means of inculcating important character traits – loyalty, physical and moral courage, together with a willingness to sacrifice personal goals for the common good. They had a profound influence on the development of sport in Canada that was far greater than their numbers warranted. This was the case whether or not they lived in the urban centres. Government administrators in centres across the country, British soldiers in central Canada, naval personnel on both coasts who often hosted Royal Navy ships, and the North West Mounted Police in western Canada, all demonstrated a commitment to maintaining British sporting traditions and introduced the games with which they were familiar. And their games, attitudes and beliefs were often adopted by Canadians whose traditions were not British because of the prominent role played in Canadian society by those with ties to Britain. They were, and were expected to be, social leaders. Their influence was crucial. While the political and business elites in Montreal and Toronto established the clubs and associations that set the rules for sporting competitions and national championships, their success in extending the scope of those organizations across Canada, together with the amateur code, was dependant on the acceptance or at least the acquiescence of Canadians in rural Canada. Many Canadians in those smaller centres were anxious to

maintain their ties to Britain and were willing to recognize the authority of national sport organizations with ostensible ties to the mother country.

The influence of the 'games ethic' persists to this day. Alan Metcalfe, the author of Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914 who is considered by many to be Canada's most accomplished sports historian, expressed his continued belief in amateurism in 1995:

The true and lasting meaning of amateurism has been encapsulated in the idea of playing within 'the spirit and letter of the law.' The belief that no matter where or at what level sport is played, it should be performed in a manner that recognizes that victory is not the only thing. The way the game is played is important, and it is sometimes better to lose than to win. It has been a powerful ideology that has maintained its strength throughout the history of the AAUC (Amateur Athletic Union of Canada) and beyond. Often masked by rhetoric and used to forward other goals, the idea has remained the true hope for sport.⁸⁵

Contemporary confirmation of the continued to commitment to the ideology of athleticism appears in the position papers prepared for the National Summit on Sport held in Ottawa in April 2001, which was intended to lead to the adoption of a new Canadian Sport Policy.⁸⁶ Although they do not expect the new Canadian Sport Policy to be finalized until 2002, it will undoubtedly incorporate the views expressed in

⁸⁵ Alan Metcalfe, "The Meaning of Amateurism: A Case Study of Canadian Sport, 1884-1970" Canadian Journal of History of Sport 26:2 December 1995, p. 46.

⁸⁶ The National Summit on Sport was the culmination of six regional conferences and numerous meetings held across Canada during the previous year, and was attended by the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for sport together with approximately 600 major stakeholders of the Canadian sport system: athletes, coaches and administrators.

the working document discussed at the Summit: "Toward a Canadian Sport Policy":

Sport provides something at all levels of our society – individuals, communities, the nation. It is pervasive in Canadian life. Sport is considered an essential tool for nation building and can lead to the promotion of national identity, and enhancing our sense of community and citizenship. Through sport, individuals learn to volunteer and to accept a sense of responsibility for civil society.

Sport is an important contributor to individual physical, social and character development. It can be a major influence for marginalized or under-represented groups and individuals at risk, and help them develop self-esteem and overcome personal and social difficulty.⁸⁷

Such expectations of sport would not have surprised a Victorian schoolmaster at one of the elite English public schools. Clearly, athleticism is a poorly understood, but nonetheless powerful, manifestation of the British presence that continues to influence Canadian society.

⁸⁷ "Toward a Canadian Sport Policy" Background paper prepared for the National Summit on Sport (Ottawa: Government of Canada – Canadian Heritage, April 2001) p. 5.

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