

THE ENGLISH GAME

Perth Cricket Club

Stashed away on a basement shelf at the Perth Matheson House Museum rests a relic of Perth's sporting past -- the Perth Cricket Club Tournament Trophy. A censer shaped, 16 inch tall, silver plate curiosity, it is adorned with miniature statues of batsman and bowler but the wicket and bats that once topped the piece have been lost. Purchased by the club in 1884, for presentation to the winner of an annual tournament of clubs from Lanark and Renfrew Counties¹, the prize was awarded only twice before being consigned to oblivion.



Perth Cricket Club Trophy 1884
(Courtesy Perth Matheson House Museum)

The trophy was donated to the museum by Margaret McCallum Caldwell-Hart (1869-1945), widow of William Brown Hart (1859-1936). Her husband's grandfather, John Hart Sr. (1808-1881), together with his father, John Semple Hart (1833-1917), founded Hart's Bookstore at Perth in 1850 and were publishers of Hart's Almanac.² As third generation owner William Brown Hart operated the bookstore for a decade from 1917. William B. Hart was also president of the short-lived Perth Carpet Company (1912-1916), and in 1927 became manager of Perth's first Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) outlet. Trophy donor Margaret Caldwell-Hart was a daughter of lumber baron Boyd Caldwell (1818-1888) who married William in 1902. William B. Hart was an active member of the Perth Cricket Club and, in the 1890's, the club's pitch was located on property owned by the Harts.

According to the *Perth Courier*, when the cricket trophy was still on display in the 1950s³ "... a note at the bottom explains that, after 1884, the sport was dropped in Perth, and was never revived".⁴ The newspaper went on to observe that "it seems little wonder that it lasted only a short time ... Perth youth of that age were raised on Canada's

¹ The 'United County of Lanark & Renfrew' had been divided into independent counties in 1861, but many organizations continued to operate on a unified two-county basis.

² See *Hart's Bookstore & Almanac* elsewhere on this website <https://www.perthhs.org/documents/Harts-Bookstore-Almanac.pdf>

³ When the Perth Museum was located on the top floor of the public library in what is now the McMillan Building at 77 Gore Street East.

⁴ *Perth Courier*, April 13, 1950.

two great sports, lacrosse and hockey, and the tea drinking and hand shaking sport was a far cry from either". The *Courier* was correct that other sports would prove more popular, but cricket did not disappear from Perth in 1884 and it was baseball, not lacrosse, that displaced it as a summer sport.

Cricket was perhaps the first organized sport in Perth ...⁵ Lacrosse never enjoyed the popularity of cricket in the 1850s and 1860s or of baseball in the 1880s and 1890s, although it was recognized as a more nascently Canadian sport.⁶

The earliest reference to the game of cricket dates to 1611 in southeast England, and the sport had arrived in North America by 1739 when a match was recorded at New York. The game came to Canada with the British Army and Royal Navy, with matches played at Montreal as early as 1785. The first ever international match was played between Canadian and American sides at Toronto in 1840. By Canadian confederation in 1867, cricket was so popular that Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald (1815-1891) declared it Canada's national sport.



Long played at army garrisons, it may be safe to assume that the soldier-settlers at Perth, the half-pay officers at least, probably pursued the pastime during the settlement's earliest years. However, Reverend William Bell (1780-1857) makes no reference to cricket in his diaries⁷ and the first mention of cricket in the *Bathurst Courier* dates to 1850. On Tuesday evening, August 20, 1850, "... a cricket match was played between married and single men of Perth and vicinity, the former winning four runs and one wicket to go down".⁸

⁵ *Perth: Tradition & Style in Eastern Ontario*, Larry Turner (1992).

⁶ *Lanark Legacy: Nineteenth Century Glimpses of an Ontario County*, Howard Morton Brown (1984).

⁷ Bell's 1817-1857 diaries are the touchstone for Perth's earliest history.

⁸ *Bathurst Courier*, August 23, 1950.

Drafting sides according to marital status, usually described as 'Benedicts vs. Bachelors', proved a common practice over the history of cricket at Perth, although local matches were also frequently contested by 'Beards' vs 'No-Beards' or 'Smokers' vs 'No-Smokers', and on at least one occasion, 'Bankers' vs 'Lawyers'.

Cricket would be played at Perth over the following 75 years but, as an organized sport, engagement with the game was far from continuous. It frequently disappeared completely for several seasons, only re-appearing as part of civic events. For the Queen's Birthday celebrations of May 1862, the advertised entertainment included "a race after a 'poroker' with a greased tail, climbing a greased pole, sack races and a cricket match".⁹

Matches of the 1850s and early 1860s were played on the 'Gamsby Farm', a property south of the Tay River and west of Arthur Street. By 1866 a pitch had been established on "a suitable ground at the head of Gore Street"¹⁰ owed by Judge John G. Malloch¹¹. A few years later cricketers moved to "Captain Leslie's property"¹² on the west side of Gore Street south of Sunset Boulevard. In the 1880s competitions were staged on the Perth Collegiate Institute (PCI) grounds and at the fair grounds of the South Lanark Agricultural Society north of Dufferin Street at Gore Street. In the mid-1890s the club moved its activities to "Mr. Hart's field".



The first formally organized Cricket Club at Perth probably dates to 1866 when about 50 men paid an annual membership fee of \$1.50. Henry D. Shaw¹³ was elected president; John S. Combs¹⁴, vice-president, and Edward G. Malloch¹⁵, secretary-treasurer. Club rules established that regular play would take place on Tuesdays and Saturdays, with 4:00 p.m. set for "pitching the wickets" and that "on days on which attendance is so limited that sides cannot be formed for play, each batsman be entitled to receive not more than 12 consecutive balls ... Balls, bats, wickets &c. have been ordered".¹⁶

The new club's first intramural match was played on Saturday June 30th "between 'Beards' and No Beards".

⁹ Perth *Courier*, May 23, 1862.

¹⁰ Perth *Courier*, June 1, 1866.

¹¹ John Glass Malloch (1806-1873), the second judge appointed to the Bathurst District Court 1842-1873.

¹² Anthony Leslie, former Lieutenant, Glengarry Light Infantry, represented the Commercial Bank of the Midland District, and served as Revenue Inspector and Crown Lands Agent.

¹³ Henry Dowsley Shaw (1833-1886) operated the family dry-goods store, 'Shaw's of Perth'. He was a town councilor 1906-1908 and 1913-1932, Mayor 1907-1908 and Lanark County Warden in 1926.

¹⁴ John Shine Coombs (1821-1889), drug store proprietor.

¹⁵ Edward George Malloch (1842-1915), Lanark County Crown Attorney 1875-1915.

¹⁶ Perth *Courier*, June 1, 1866.

We understand that, in the case of some of the players, considerable difficulty was experienced in determining to which side they properly belonged, on account of it not having been before decided whether a few innocent looking hairs, or an incipient moustache, would entitle the possessor to rank among the 'Beards'.¹⁷

A number of persons, many of them ladies, were present and appeared to take a deep interest in the progress of the game ...¹⁸

The club of 1866 seems to have survived for only a few years as it was necessary that it be “reorganized”¹⁹ in 1870, electing William M. Kellock²⁰, president; William Fraser²¹, vice-president; William Northgraves²², secretary; and William T. Walker²³, treasurer. At that time *new bats, balls, wickets, etc. [were] purchased in Montreal*²⁴ and the club’s first match was played as part of Dominion Day festivities.

Over the next few years, the club continued its on-again-off-again existence as evidenced by ‘reorganization meetings’ called in 1870, 1875 and in 1877 when Henry Slack²⁵, became president; Peter McKinley, vice-president; A. W. Burt²⁶, secretary; and James A. Allan²⁷, treasurer. At least one challenge match was played that season against Lanark Village, once again on the occasion of the May 24th Queen’s Birthday celebration. There were also the usual intramural matches. In 1883 a ‘Bachelor’ vs ‘Benedict’ contest saw the Benedicts emerge victorious, led by Perth’s black barber John S. Jackson (1852-1926)²⁸ who “drove the ‘leather, into all parts of the field in his endeavors to secure runs for his side”.²⁹



Depending upon which neighboring communities managed to field teams in any given year, from about 1880 home-and-home games and an annual tournament were organized involving sides from Perth, Carleton Place, Almonte, Arnprior, Renfrew, Lanark, and Smiths Falls. In 1884, at a tournament played on the PCI field, Smiths Falls became the first side to win the Lanark & Renfrew trophy, now resident at the Matheson House Museum. The following year,

¹⁷ Perth Courier, June 29, 1866.

¹⁸ Perth Courier, July 6, 1866.

¹⁹ Perth Courier, June 10, 1870.

²⁰ William Murdock Kellock (1847-1901), painter.

²¹ William Fraser (1847-1884), piano maker.

²² William Northgraves (1846-1908), watchmaker, proprietor of G. Northgraves & Son.

²³ William Tower Walker (1849-1901), Perth Courier publisher.

²⁴ Perth Courier, June 10, 1870.

²⁵ Henry Lloyd Slack (1842-1895), Lanark County Inspector of Schools, first President of Perth-Upon-Tay Curling Club.

²⁶ A. W. Burt, Perth Collegiate Institute modern languages teacher.

²⁷ James Alexander Allan (1859-1921), lawyer.

²⁸ See *Best Known Men In Town: The Black Presence at Perth 1816-1926* elsewhere on this site <https://www.perthhs.org/documents/the-black-presence-at-perth5.pdf>

²⁹ Perth Courier, July 6, 1883.

The annual cricketing tournament of the various clubs in Eastern Ontario qualified to play on the occasion began on August 4th on the grounds of the South Lanark Agricultural Society at Perth. This annual set-to of the cricketers is for the possession, during each ensuing year, of the tankard presented by the Perth club for competition and was won and held for the first year by the Smith's Fall club.

As only a few of the towns and villages in the district have organized cricket clubs, the competition narrowed down to a few matches, so that this year only three clubs – Almonte, Smiths Falls and Perth – entered the lists. Perth carried the tankard home [although] it is but fair to explain that Smiths Falls had to leave two or three of their best men at home”.³⁰

In the first round, Perth had defeated Almonte by 47 runs and then crushed Smiths Falls 72-21. For reasons lost in the mist of time, no tournaments were organized after 1885. The Lanark & Renfrew Trophy was never again awarded, and the Perth Cricket Club kept their trophy.

A WAYWARD BALL.—The Almonte Gazette certifies to the following incident. Who was the gallant youth from our town?—An amusing incident occurred during the cricket match at Carleton Place last Thursday. The ball was knocked among the crowd, and lodged in the paraphernalia that surrounded a young lady's bustle. A young Perthite saw the predicament, and made a hurried apology while he assisted the blushing maiden to fish out the sphere. It was almost a case of lost ball.

At the club's annual meeting in 1888, 70 members paid their membership fee of \$1.00. Robert J. Drummond³¹ was elected president; James A. Allan, vice-president; George E. Armstrong³², secretary; and Joseph M. Cromwell³³, treasurer. In May the 'All-Comers' defeated the 'Scribes' 51-42 in an intermural match.

An 1888 Dominion Day match pitted Perth against Lanark Village; *"The two clubs made a good stand and one of the Lanark team, Mr. Bond, displayed special qualities as a fielder but the Perth club, being an older club, won the game in one inning"*. The following year Lanark redeemed its honor, defeating Perth 51-49 as part of a home-and-home series.

In 1892 the Perth Cricket Club still boasted more than 50 members. Intermural competition saw the 'Bankers' defeat the 'Lawyers'. In inter-club play that summer, Perth hosted the Ottawa Cricket Club's second eleven, defeating them 41-39, during Ottawa's tour of the valley with stops at Carleton Place, Perth, Arnprior, Valleyfield and Pembroke. At a return match in Ottawa the home team won. When Perth welcomed the Lanark squad that year *"the Citizen's Band furnished fine music on the field [and] the Harmonic Band played a nice program of martial music"*.³⁴ Perth also played a home-and-home series with Carleton Place. Spectator interest may have been waning, however.

³⁰ Perth Courier, August 7, 1885.

³¹ Robert John Drummond (1841-1926), Manager, Perth branch Bank of Montreal c1880-c1900.

³² George E. Armstrong, partner in McMaster & Armstrong Popular Cash Store, 1880s-1890s.

³³ Joseph Miller Oliver Cromwell, Provincial Land Surveyor.

³⁴ Perth Courier, June 24, 1892.

Some good people have been complaining of late that the town is slow, and that there is never anything going on. Let such betake themselves to the cricket grounds and they may possibly while away an afternoon in a very agreeable manner. The ladies are especially requested to come to all the home matches, that by their presence they may stir up the local champions to emulate the valiant performances of the old Perth Cricketers".³⁵

In April 1893 the Ottawa Valley Cricket Association was formed at a meeting held in Carleton Place *"for the purpose of playing an annual series of home-and-home matches against each other and encouraging the noble game of cricket ... competition to be governed by the rules of the Ontario Cricket Association".³⁶*

The meeting was attended by representatives from Ottawa, Carleton Place, Almonte, Arnprior and Lanark, but Perth failed to participate and was not included in the agreed schedule. It was not until the following year, 1894, that the Perth Cricket Club, 're-organized' yet again and joined the association. Led by Thomas A. Code³⁷, president; W. F. Latimer, vice-president; and F. J. Naftel³⁸, secretary-treasurer, the squad practiced on *"Mr. Hart's field, west ward, Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons".³⁹* Their opening intermural match was played between sides captained by Robert O. Scott⁴⁰ and John H. Balderson⁴¹ in June and association matches were played in July and August against Almonte and Ottawa.

In 1895 the Perth Cricket Club elected Judge William S. Senkler⁴², president; George E. Armstrong, vice-president; and Peter McKinley, secretary-treasurer, with Lieutenant Colonel Arthur J. Matheson⁴³ named club patron. The club was active again in 1896 but seems to have failed to take the field for several years thereafter until the summer of 1902.

... though the game is one which creates the most intense interest and enthusiasm in Great Britain and Australia, it has not obtained the interest here nor other parts of Canada it deserves⁴⁴ ... [but] for the first time in many years the boys in attendance at the Perth Collegiate Institute [PCI] are devoting their attention to cricket. They have a good field and are getting into the game with enthusiasm. Several of the boys have had considerable experience, with a good knowledge of both batting and bowling, and it is likely that the Collegiate will have a good team before long.⁴⁵

³⁵ Perth *Courier*, June 17, 1892.

³⁶ Perth *Courier*, April 21, 1893.

³⁷ Thomas Alfred Code (1854-1937), proprietor of the Code Knitting & Woolen Mill, and later President of Perth Felt Company. Code sat as a Town Councillor for 15 years and served as Perth Mayor 1889-1890.

³⁸ Teller, Perth Branch Bank of Montreal.

³⁹ Perth *Courier*, June 15, 1894.

⁴⁰ Robert Owen Scott (1828-1908), stonemason, building contractor, brickyard owner.

⁴¹ John H. Balderson (1861-1955).

⁴² William Stevens Senkler (1838-1920), Lanark County Judge 1873-1914.

⁴³ Arthur James Matheson (1845-1913), lawyer, Perth Mayor 1883-1884, Lieutenant Colonel of Militia, Conservative member of the Ontario Legislature 1898-1913, Provincial Treasurer 1905-1913.

⁴⁴ Perth *Courier*, March 21, 1902.

⁴⁵ Perth *Courier*, May 16, 1902.

On June 28, 1902, the PCI team played their first match against a Cricket Club side, with the club winning by seven runs in two innings. *"This match ... served to demonstrate that there is material for an excellent cricket club in town"*⁴⁶. In July another challenge match between local 'Bachelors' and 'Benedicts' was played, and this led to open cricket practices on the PCI grounds. By August more than 20 players were practicing regularly on the Agricultural Grounds pitch.

On August 30th that year, Perthites William P. McEwan⁴⁷, George Wilson, Arthur Campbell⁴⁸ and W. Mullens played for a Lanark County side when it lost 72-62 to the Ottawa Club.

*McEwen made eight not out, Campbell made double figures and did good bowling, Wilson distinguished himself by making three fine catches in the field, while Mullens, though handicapped by a sore hand, did good work as a wicket keeper. The game has served to increase interest in cricket and show that there is no reason why Perth should not have a first-class Cricket Club"*⁴⁹.

The following year the club executive was composed of T. A. Code, president; Peter McKinley and William Hardy, vice-presidents; and William P. McEwan, secretary; with John G. Haggart⁵⁰ MP named honorary president. Annual membership fees were increased to \$2.00, and arrangements made for the PCI boys' team to practice with senior club. Perth's club secretary William P. McEwan was named to the executive of the Ottawa Valley Cricket League comprised of Smiths Falls, Carleton Place, Almonte, Ottawa and Perth.

The Perth Cricket Club was an active league participant again in 1905, but apparently fell by the wayside from about 1906 as there is little mention of cricket matches played at Perth for the next 15 years. The game was being supplanted by baseball and in 1922 the *Courier* noted that *"An old timer in sport has suggested that a cricket league be formed in Lanark County using the nucleus of the present five teams in the Lanark Baseball League"*⁵¹.

Ottawa Valley Cricket Schedule.

An executive meeting of the O. V. C. L. was held in Carleton Place on Wednesday of last week, and the following schedule drawn up :

May 25—Smith's Falls at Carleton Place.
 May 30—Perth at Carleton Place.
 June 13—Perth at Ottawa.
 June 13—Smith's Falls at Almonte.
 June 23—Carleton Place at Perth.
 June 27—Almonte at Ottawa.
 July 1—Ottawa at Carleton Place.
 July 10—Carleton Place at Smith's Falls.
 July 11—Ottawa at Almonte.
 July 18—Carleton Place at Almonte.
 July 25—Smith's Falls at Perth.
 Aug. 1—Perth at Almonte.
 Aug. 1—Ottawa at Smith's Falls.
 Aug. 8—Carleton Place at Ottawa.
 Aug. 14—Almonte at Perth.
 Aug. 22—Smith's Falls at Ottawa.
 Sept. 5—Almonte at Smith's Falls.
 Sept. 7—Ottawa at Perth.
 Sept. 12—Almonte at Carleton Place.
 Spt. 12—Perth at Smith's Falls.

The united league match will be played on the 20th of June at McGill.

Ottawa Valley Cricket League Schedule 1903

⁴⁶ Perth *Courier*, June 20 1902.

⁴⁷ William Paul McEwen (1858-1918), Clerk of the County Surrogate Court.

⁴⁸ Arthur Hay Campbell (1874-1967), lumber company manager.

⁴⁹ Perth *Courier*, September 5, 1902.

⁵⁰ John Graham Haggart (1836-1913), Perth miller, MP 1872-1813, Postmaster General 1888-1892, Minister of Railways and Canals 1892-1896.

⁵¹ Perth *Courier*, July 21, 1922.

That suggestion gained no traction but, two years later, although the Perth Cricket Club seems to have been defunct, under headline “*Cricket Revived*” the *Courier* reported that,

*Cricket is now a popular pastime before school and during recess among the boy pupils at Perth Public School. This is a reminder that it seems a long time since Perth had a real senior cricket team, and this revival among Perth boys may lead to some comeback of this great old game in Perth.*⁵²

But that hope went unfulfilled. An exhibition match between sides from Perth and Almonte, staged as part of Perth Old Home Week activities in July 1925, may have been the last time the crack of a willow bat was heard on the banks of the Tay.

- **Ron W. Shaw (2024)**

⁵² Perth *Courier*, May 23 1924.