

Ottawa District Badminton Association

THE

GOLDEN

YEARS

It is believed that badminton was first demonstrated in Canada, right here in Ottawa in or around 1892 according to the Canadian Badminton Association. The when, where and how well it was received is not known, but in 1907 the first record, of the organization, of an official badminton club is recorded with the formation of the Montreal Ladies' Tennis and Badminton Club (M.L.T.B.C.).

From this time to the end of the First World War, there was a vigorous growth in the founding of private, multiple sport, athletic clubs and organizations across the country. The industrial revolution had produced a large middle class with time on their hands, while the war may well have created a renewed vigour for the experiences of life. During this period of our history, recreation was for the most part outside the realm of governmental responsibility and the people quickly recognized the benefits of collective endeavours. It was during this period that many of the so called "Winter Clubs" were formed in cities as Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Montreal and Quebec City, as well as clubs such as the Boulevard, the Carlton and the Granite clubs of Toronto. By the mid thirties, every small town in Ontario, if not Canada, with a town hall or church basement, had a small recreational badminton club, playing a couple of evenings a week.

The play was for the most part, recreational in nature, however, in 1908, a Mrs. Hodgson of Montreal donated the Hodgson Cup for interclub competition in Ladies Singles and Doubles between clubs located in eastern Canada. While Montreal won the first year, the Kingston Badminton Club would capture the cup three times and was given permanent possession. They re donated it for competitions which were still taking place in the 40's.

The one exception to this would appear to be in Ottawa, where the sport got off to a rather slow start. Groups were forming, which included teams for tennis, curling, golf, hockey and baseball, but despite the fact the many badminton players were also excellent competitors in these other sports, our sport did not seem to be able to generate any support for affiliation. Even in the military groups, where the sport had its beginnings, it was a hard sell.

The Ottawa Armouries, or what we know of today as the "Cartier Drill Hall", next to the canal at Laurier Ave. West, was the focal point for the sports and recreation of the various military units in the capital. In addition to the drill duties which were performed throughout the winter months, the Drill Hall was also the sight for inter unit basketball, pistol shooting and indoor baseball as well as regular boxing demonstrations and professional boxing. In this environment, in or around 1918 the Garrison B.C. came into existence. The club was lead by Col. A.E. Snell and was made up of roughly half military and half civilian membership, including a significant female component. In the next couple of years, it is believed that a second club, "The Ottawa Badminton Club" came into existence with a civilian membership and Mr. W.M. (Bill) Stewart as president. Several articles in the early twenties, mention efforts to restrict Drill Hall access to military personnel with no mention of badminton in the yearly reports of the various units. The pressure on facility time and the tenuous status of the two clubs may explain the absence of club championships despite the fact that both clubs were producing national level, competitive players. There are no records of club championships at the Garrison club until the 26-27 season and at the Ottawa B.C. until it had its own facility for the 27-28 season.

In 1914 the first British Columbia Badminton Championships were held in Vancouver. This is believed to be the first open badminton tournament held in Canada.

In 1921, the Canadian Badminton Association was founded. The membership was composed of individual clubs from across the country and included "The Badminton Club of Ottawa" represented by Col. A.E. Snell. I would assume this record was referring to the Garrison club, the only one operating in Ottawa that year. The following year, the first Canadian Dominion Badminton Championships took place, at the Craig St. Armouries in Montreal, March 10th and 11th, 1922. Ottawa placed competitors in three of the five finals with Col. A.E. Snell taking the first Canadian Men's Singles Championship crown.

It would appear that the Ottawa and Montreal competitors decided to have a friendly warm up for the nationals. In February of 1922, the two clubs met at the Drill Hall for a friendly match. The Montreal group took the day 13 matches to 7, comprising the three doubles events.

The 1922-23 National championships, held in February of 1923 at the Toronto Garrison Club, was used to settle a number of competitions. First the Hodgson Cup was captured by the host Toronto Garrison B.C. in a 6 - 5 victory over the M.L.T.B.C. It was noted that the Montreal club had held the Cup since 1912 when it had regained possession from the Kingston B.C. In a second competition for the Toronto Badminton Cup, the Toronto Garrison club defeated the Canadian Army Medical Corp. Of Montreal by 12 matches to 8.

In the Nationals, Ottawa's would be in two finals, but the day would belong to MacTaggart Cowan of Vancouver who would be our first triple crown winner. In Mixed doubles, Mrs. W.M. Stewart of Ottawa was paired with Mr. C.A. George of Vancouver to capture the title, while Dr. Douglas and V.L. Eardley-Wilmot of Ottawa would lose in the finals of the Men's Doubles.

In 1923, the Rideau Badminton Club came on the scene. In their first two seasons they would play 3 days a week, on two courts, in the Arts Building at Lansdowne Park and badminton would start to get a foothold in the capital.

The 1925-26 season, would see badminton become a major player in the Ottawa sports scene. The Ottawa Badminton Club would incorporate as the Badminton Club of Ottawa (BCO). In 1927 they would move into a brand new, state of the art, dedicated facility at 66 Slater St. near the south west corner of Slater and Elgin.

In 1924-25 we saw the formation of the Ontario Badminton Association with nine member clubs and Col. A.E. Snell of the Ottawa Garrison B.C. as its President elect. Mr. H.S. Southam, owner of the Ottawa Journal donated to O.B.A. the trophy for the Men's Singles Championship. For the first time, the capital would play host to the national championships, with the Garrison B.C. hosting the event, from February 11-14/25, with the Governor General and Lady Byng taking in the play on the 13th. Badminton had arrived. While Ottawa players took none of the silverware home, they did manage to make it into three of the finals.

At the first Provincial Championships, Ottawa players appeared in three finals, with the Men's Singles title being captured by W.M. (Bill) Stewart and the Men's Doubles crown going to Stewart and Col. A.E. Snell. At the National Championships, held in Ottawa, we only managed to place three players into event finals with no trophies to show for the effort.

While the Rideau B.C. was the last of the major clubs on the scene, records would indicate that it was the first to conduct a club championship. In the 1924-25 season R.B.C. held a Ladies Doubles tournament to end the season and in the following year they would add Men's Doubles and Mixed Doubles to the competition. The Garrison BC and BCO clubs were gaining momentum on the national scene.

In Dec. of 1925, the Ottawa Journal reported that a club was playing in the basement of St. John's Anglican Church and as well, three small recreational clubs were using the concert hall of the new Auditorium, built in 1923 as home to the world champion Ottawa Senators. The Journal made particular note in its description of the hall as a quality dining and dancing facility, with a "particularly beautiful white ceiling", not exactly conducive to promoting our sport. The report was commenting on the high quality of this new sport and that it was estimated that upwards of 500 players were competing at the various sites in the city. It recommended the badminton clubs be formed at both of the Ottawa Amateur Athletic Council facilities but to the best of my knowledge, this was never acted upon. In addition to this, a later report notes, that the Department of S.C.R., with a membership of 100 was forced to closed when

it lost its playing privileges at the Drill Hall. At this point in time the sport was in a rather precarious position. While competitive clubs had emerged in the very large centres, the vast majority of clubs, in every small town across the country, were playing in terribly inadequate conditions, with restrictions on playing time which almost eliminated any ability to carry on junior development and thus the advancement of the sport.

In 1925, the R.B.C. membership had jumped from 25 to 100 and the 1925-26 season saw them move into a slightly better, four court facility in what was called Balmoral Hall, a large multipurpose ball room in the Capital Theatre building at the corner of Queen and Bank streets. They would remain in this facility for six years, but the desire for quality facilities were yet to be satisfied.

The lack of quality facilities would spur the Badminton Club of Ottawa to inaugurate a new dedicated facility on Slater St., complete with California red cedar floors.

From the club at St. John's Church, interest began to grow among the religious community and in 1927, five of these church based groups came together to form the "Church League", which ran for two months in its initial year and would go on to outlive the District through to the end of the "golden years". Also in 1928, The Ottawa Journal Newspaper donated the Journal Cup for interclub competition in Ladies, Men's and Mixed Doubles events between clubs in the Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto area. The cup was highly prized and heavily contested by the best players in the area through to the collapse of the District in the early forties.

In 1930, the Ottawa District Badminton Association came into existence, with nine member clubs, representing 1200 players, including the Church League. The first President was Mr. John B. McRae with Mr. H.S. Southam, Owner of the Ottawa Journal as the Honorary President. When the District formed, the Church League recognized its authority as the official sports governing body and expressed a desire to participate, but it wished to remain as a separate entity. The District recognized their concerns and the Church League was allowed to join the District as a single body. A similar situation in the Toronto area resulted in a power struggle between the two groups which was quite disruptive, even into the modern era.

During the early 30's, the Ottawa area was a dominant factor on the national and provincial scene. During this era, Ottawa hosted two national and three provincial championships. During this same period the achievements of Ottawa players were higher than at any time in its history with numerous national and provincial championships captured by the likes of Mrs. and Col. A.E. Snell, Mrs. and W.M. Stewart and Mr. and Mrs. H.T. Wright in the early years and the tremendous Ruth and Marg Robertson, George (Junior) Goodwin and Bev Mitchell. When they weren't winning they were usually at least in the finals.

The thirties also saw tremendous growth on the local scene. In 1930, the Rideau Badminton Club again was feeling the pressure to improve its conditions. It entered into an agreement with the Rideau Curling Club to form the Rideau Winter Club. In November of 1931 R.B.C. opened its season in a brand new dedicated facility at 237 Laurier St. West, with court floors of imported teak wood and a brand new curling facility incorporating the first artificial curling ice in the city. Both group would function as separate entities with shared financial responsibilities. The facility was opened by the Governor General. The Capital Badminton Club quickly formed and took over the R.B.C. courts at Balmoral Hall. Within the area bounded on the west by Bronson Ave. and on

the south and east by the Rideau River, there were upwards of 25 separate clubs in operation representing military units, government, departments, and church groups and anchored by the Garrison, BCO, RBC and Capital clubs which were all located right down town, along a narrow strip around Laurier Ave West and within a few blocks of each other.

In 34-35 the District initiated a set of Junior Championships, however, due to the facility problem, it came down very much to a contest between BCO, RBC and a varying group of individual schools that would join on an irregular basis.

In 1937, a badminton Club would be formed at the High School of Commerce and would initially be part of the Church League. This would be the first school based club in the District and would later become the anchor for the rebirth of badminton in the 50's.

By the mid to late 30's cracks were beginning to show. The production from the competitive players was starting to wane, the Capital BC would fold and a gradual changing of the guard on the courts from the Badminton Club of Ottawa to the Rideau BC was starting to show up in junior, league and tournament results. The sport was beginning to show signs of weakening. Prior to 1935 both BCO and RBC were able to maintain vary competitive and financially sound operations, the leagues were running full schedules, the Church League was healthy and new clubs were spring up everywhere. But this was the height of the great depression and the winds of war were blowing on the horizon and around the middle of the decade a downturn in the sport began to appear. The stock market might call it a correction. The competition for members had peaked and around 1935 the BCO began to have trouble meeting its annual financial revenue targets. It responded to these small shortfalls by issuing bonds, most of which were purchased by members. The attitude was that the good times would return and all would be well. Other signs that all was not well were that the league had to move to a tournament format and the Junior Championships were becoming irregular.

In 1939 war broke out and the nation began to mobilize for yet another grand adventure. Badminton players were not found wanton and the sport sent many of its greatest players into the services. Unit transfers played havoc with badminton club memberships and tournaments, it seems more so than any other amateur sports. In fact badminton and professional football were the only sports to suspend operations during the war. In 1939, with the outbreak of war, the Garrison BC and all associated unit clubs ceased operation, mainly due to the loss of facilities. This occurred throughout the country with armory based clubs. Despite this, the District was able to run a full schedule of tournaments and league play. The Church League actually ran two separate league divisions as well as 'B' and 'C' level tournaments. From here though, the fall in participation and membership was rapid to say the least.

In the spring of 1941, the Badminton Club of Ottawa would find itself with a hefty mortgage, a growing bond debt and a plummeting membership. It was between a rock and a hard place. At the same time the government was desperate for facilities to accommodate its military and governmental needs. The BCO executive came up with an arrangement that would solve its short term problems. The club would cease to operate and it would rent the facility to the government for the cost of covering its debt management. The Combined War Services Board would take over the facility and turn it over to the YMCA to operate as a military social centre. When the war was over, the club would resume ownership under greatly improved conditions.

Just one month after BCO ceased operation, the Rideau Winter Club announced that the Rideau Badminton Club was in a position where it was not able to maintain its financial responsibilities and that the club would also cease operation. The curling club would be maintained and the badminton courts and lounge would be renovated and rented to the National Registration Board, the government body responsible for overseeing the conscription issue.

In 1942, the Canadian Badminton Association, announced that due to the war, it would not be possible to conduct fare and representative national championships and that it would be suspending operations for the duration of the war. Shortly afterward, most of the provincial bodies followed suit.

Within the space of one calendar year the heart had been ripped out of the sport and the District. While the District managed to operate through the 41-42 season, there were no senior championships, there was a small three team league tournament and while the District Junior Championships were conducted, they were held in Arnprior, with a small turn out and no record of results. The Church League managed to operate through the season but it was also drastically reduced.

The District managed to elect an executive for the 1942-43 season, it was a virtually impossible situation and the body effectively ceased to function. The Church League which had reached its pinnacle in 1940, was reduced to just 4 teams in '41 and did not operate in '42. For the 1942-43 season it would appear that the only clubs functioning were All Saints, Commerce , St. Barnabas, St. Paul's Eastern and the YMCA.

With the end of the war in 1945, the Canadian Badminton Association began operations immediately, the Ontario Badminton Association was re started in 1946, but the infrastructure which had been built up, particularly in the Ottawa area had been dealt a near fatal blow and it would be many years before even the semblance of an organization would be brought together.

With the announcement of peace, the YMCA gave the Badminton Club of Ottawa executive the 6 month notice required for resuming ownership of their club. Unfortunately, the executive determined, either through failed efforts or lack of desire, that it would be impossible to re activate the facility, which was now nearly 25 years old and in an area of sky rocketing land value and taxes. The club was made an offer to purchase by the adjacent Lord Elgin Hotel. A sale was made, the

mortgage and debts cleared and the remaining money distributed among those who had retained their shares. A curious part of the closing of BCO is that the property in fact did not go to the Lord Elgin Hotel, at least right a way. City of Ottawa records show that the facility was sold to Miln, Honeywell, Burpey and Clark Accountants and converted into the Copacabana Bowling Lanes which operated until 1950. The property then was sold to the Lord Elgin, it sat vacant for a year and was resold to the Department of National Defence who in 1953 tore the building down in preparation for building a shiny new skyscraper.

Even with the loss of the BCO facility, the Rideau Badminton Club was not able to become a viable operation. After the war the badminton facility sat dormant for several years. In the 1947-48 season the Ottawa Badminton Club was Incorporated and attempted to operate at the old RBC facility for two seasons, but was unable to generate the number of members required to make the facility viable. In 1949 the Rideau Winter Club, which had come basically under the control of the curling membership decided to sell the facility and move into a new building solely for their sport at 715 Cooper St. where they are still playing. The facility was sold to Maple Leaf Realty, an operation controlled by

Sam Berger of hockey renown. A curious part of the closing of the RBC facility (sound familiar) is that in announcing the sale, it was stated that the intention was to run the badminton facility and convert the curling area to a bowling lane. Unfortunately, according to old sources, rent for the badminton area jumped from \$2,000 to \$11,000 per year making an already tenuous operation impossible and the Ottawa Badminton Club ceased operation at the end of the 48-49 season. The curling area never was converted to a bowling lane. The lounge area was rented out in 1950 as Trunk and Newman Optical and eventually the remainder of the facility was demolished and turned into a parking lot. The lower front level still remained in 1990, the home of a dry cleaning store and a tailor's shop. If you go by the 237 Laurier West location some sunny day, take a close look, for spread across the front, between the windows are four small shields made of cement and depicting the crests for the Rideau Badminton Club and the Rideau Curling Club. The four cement blocks are all that remains of the "Golden Age " of badminton in the Ottawa District. In the 1950's we would see how like the phoenix, badminton would rise from its own ashes and through two small recreational clubs All Saints and High School of Commerce , the sport would be rebuilt.

While records of tournaments during the early years are rare, it is known that the popular competitive format was interclub team challenges for donated, ongoing trophies and also for so called "friendly" visits where clubs would visit each other and involve doubles events where players from both clubs would be mixed and matched. A social would usually follow. Some of the competitive trophies are outlined below

The Hodgson Cup - competition for Women's Singles and Doubles play in the Ottawa/Montreal/Kingston triangle.

The Kingston Cup - interclub competition for Mixed Doubles which required the challengers to travel to the cup holders club.

The Wilson Trophy - donated by Chief Justice Cairine Wilson to the Ottawa Women's Club for interclub competition in Ladies Doubles.

The Journal Cup - this trophy was donated by the Ottawa Journal Newspaper and was a "Club Team" competition format involving all five events. It was fiercely prized and competed for by the top players in each club within the Toronto, Kingston, Montreal and Ottawa boundaries.

The Bryson-Graham Trophy

This trophy was established in 1931 and is the only one mentioned to still be competed for today. It is presented to the Team Championship Title Holder for the District "B" League.

The Finley Cup - This trophy was donated to the Ottawa Valley Badminton Association by the Finlay family of Carleton Place, well known for the Finlay Wood Stove. The competition in the three doubles events, is restricted to valley clubs and has been competed for through to the time of publishing, with the exception of eight or nine years around the second world war. It is the oldest trophy, still active competed for in the region at least.

Summary Highlights of the Early Years

1892 - Badminton first demonstrated in Canada in Ottawa

1907 - Montreal Ladies' Tennis and Badminton Club founded. First record of an organized club.

1908 - The Hodgson Cup is donated for competition in Ladies' Singles and Doubles between clubs in the Montreal/ Ottawa/ Kingston area.

1914 - The first British Columbia Badminton Championship held in Vancouver. First recorded open badminton tournament in Canada.

1918 - The Ottawa Garrison B.C. begins operation at the Armouries (Old Drill Hall) under the leadership of Col. A.E. Snell. First record of a club in Ottawa.

1921 - The Dominion of Canada Badminton Association (CBA) was founded. It was composed of individual member clubs from across the country including the Badminton Club of Ottawa represented by Col. Snell (Presumably Garrison BC).

1921-22 - The first Canadian Badminton Championships were in Montreal March 10-11/22

Event	Winner	Runner Up	Score
MS	Col. A.E. Snell (Ott)	Col. Harris (Q.C.)	17- 14, 15- 10
LS	Mrs. C.A. Boone (Tor)	Ms. J. Hutton (Tor)	9- 11, 11- 2, 11- 2
MD	Prof. PCG Campbell (King)	Col. A.E. Snell (Ott)	15- 10, 15- 9
	Maj. H.P. Lafferty (King)	W.M. Stewart (Ott)	
LD	Mrs. C.A. Boone	Ms. __ Johnson (Mont)	15- 4, 15- 4
	Ms. __ Scott (Tor)	Mrs. __ Stevens (Mont)	
XD	Mrs. PCG Campbell (King)	Mrs. A.E. Snell (Ott)	15- 11, 15- 10
	Prof. PCG Campbell	Col. A.E. Snell	

Note: In MS semi finals Dr. H.T. Douglas (Ott) lost to Col. Harris

The National Trophies for these championship events include:

Men's Singles	- The J.K.L. Ross Trophy
Ladies' Singles	- The Ottawa Challenge Cup
Men's Doubles	- The Quebec Challenge Cup
Ladies' Doubles	- The Montreal Challenge Cup
Mixed Doubles	- The Toronto Challenge Cup

1922 - 23 - The Canadian Badminton Championships were held at Toronto Feb. 9 - 11/23

Event	Winner	Runner Up	Score
MS	MacTaggart Cowan (Van)	Lt.Col. Blackstock (Tor)	15- 6, 15- 4
LS	Ms. Macelle Brunet (Q.C.)	Mrs. C.A. Boone (Tor)	11- 9, 11- 1
MD	MacTaggart Cowan (Van)	Dr. H.T. Douglas (Ott)	15- 2, 15- 3
	C.H. George (Van)	V.L. Eardley-Wilmot (Ott)	
LD	Mrs. C.A. Boone (Tor)	Mrs. __ Malcolm (Mont)	13-15, 15-7, 15- 10
	Mrs. Rugles George (Tor)	Mrs. __ Archibald (Mont)	
XD	Mrs. W.M. Stewart (Ott)	Mrs. __ Buchanan (Tor)	15- 9, 9- 15, 15- 9
	C.H. George	MacTaggart Cowan	

1923 - 24 - Canadian Badminton Championships held at Quebec City Feb. 15 - 17/24

Participation: MS- 25; LS- 38; MD- 25pr; LD- 30pr; XD- 40pr

Ottawa results:

Event	Winner	Runner UP	Score
MS	Dr. H.T. Douglas (Ott)	W.M. Stewart (Ott)	15- 11, 15- 12
LS	Mrs. E.F. Coke (Tor)	Ms. M. Brunet (Q.C.)	11- 3, 13- 10
MD	Col. A.E. Snell (Ott) W.M. Stewart (Ott)	Gen. P. Panet (Mont) S. Dobell (Mont)	15- 4, 15- 7
XD	Mrs. W.M. Stewart (Ott) W.M. Stewart	Mrs. __ Archibald (Tor) T.K. Green (Tor)	15-17, 15-7, 15-11

1924 - 25 - Ontario Badminton Association is founded with Col. A.E. Snell of Ottawa as President.

- Ottawa Garrison BC hosts CBA Dominion Championships
- Ottawa Rideau BC holds first area club championship. Only involved Ladies Doubles.

1926 - 27 - Badminton Club of Ottawa moves into new dedicated facility on Slater St.

1927 - 28 - Church League formed with five clubs in six week competition.

- The Journal Cup is inaugurated for interclub challenge play in all five events.

1929 - 30 - Ottawa District Badminton Association is founded with Mr. John B. McRae as first President. There were 9 member clubs and a reported membership of 1200.

- 9th annual CBA Dominion Championship hosted by the Badminton Club of Ottawa

1931 - 32 - Rideau Badminton Club begins operation in brand new Laurier St. West facility with its imported California Red Cedar floors was opened by Governor General Bessborough.

- CBA President W.M. (Bill) Stewart of Ottawa announced the suspension of the amateur status of Jack Purcell of Toronto and C.W. Aikman of Quebec.

1932 - 33 - Rideau BC hosts Ontario Badminton Championships

1933 - 34 - Ottawa represented in all five finals at the national championships in Montreal, were only able to capture the Men's Doublers title.

1934 - 35 - Inauguration of District Junior Championships.

- Canadian Badminton Association joins International Badminton Federation.

1936 - 37 - Ottawa hosts the OBA Championships at the BC of O and Rideau BC facilities.

1937 - 38 - CBA President W.N. Keenan of Ottawa announced approval to hold an "Open" class tournament permitting both professional and amateur players to compete against each other. This was a serious taboo amongst sports governing bodies of the day.

1938 - 39 - George Goodwin of Ottawa wins first and only CBA "Open" tournament of the era with the finals being played on the stage of Massey Hall.

1939 - 40 - World War Two breaks out.

- Garrison BC and all other military unit clubs end their association with the District.
- Drill Hall facility and several church facilities also lost for use by badminton clubs.

- 1940 - 41-** Badminton Club of Ottawa suspends operation. Facility rented to War Services Board. Turned over to YMCA for military social centre.
- Rideau BC suspends operation. Rideau Winter Club rent facility to Selective Service Commission.
 - Church League operation becomes very marginal.
- 1942 - 43 -** While an executive is elected, the District effectively ceases to function.
- 1945 -** World War 2 comes to an end. The Canadian Badminton Association Resumes operation.
- 1946 -** Ontario Badminton Association resumes operation.
- War Services Board returns control of facility to Badminton Club of Ottawa. Club is unable to restore club and decision made to cease operation and sell facility.
 - Rideau facility returned to Rideau Winter Club. Curling was re established but unable to restore badminton operation.
- 1947 - 49 -** Rideau BC makes two year attempt at restoring badminton to city but is unsuccessful.
- 1950 -** Rideau Winter Club sells Laurier Ave. facility to Maple Leaf Realty and moves to new facility without accommodation for badminton.