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## CONSTRUCTING A STAGE FOR PLAY: SPORT, RECREATION, AND LEISURE IN LONDON, ONTARIO, 1867-1914

Robert S. Kossuth

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CONSTRUCTING A STAGE FOR PLAY: SPORT, RECREATION, AND LEISURE IN  
LONDON, ONTARIO, 1867-1914

by

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the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

The central question raised in this study is how were sport, leisure, and recreation practices established in London, Ontario between 1867 and 1914. Specifically, how and why did this aspect of people's lives become increasingly constructed and regulated. Substantively, this investigation is concerned with the process through which forms of sport, recreation, and leisure were shaped within the public, private, and commercial spheres.

This historical study examines the place of sport, recreation, and leisure in one Canadian city. It is necessary that the local experience be understood prior to considering studies of larger geographical regions. In order to assess this specific local experience, case studies of sport, recreation, and leisure practices and the spaces and facilities where they took place were employed.

Parks and local government buildings were amongst the earliest sites for organized public recreation. Swimming, and the provisions of publicly accessible swimming facilities, became an issue of protracted debate primarily over financial concerns, public morality and, later, public safety. Commercial recreation including billiards, bowling, skating, the theatre, and steam boats, afforded local entrepreneurs and investors the opportunity to make a profit and influence how Londoners played. These practices were regulated primarily through local legislation and were later influenced by the developing recreation bureaucracy. Finally, London's elite citizens found their sport, recreation, and leisure refuge in private clubs such as the early London Tecumseh's Baseball Club, the Forest

City Cycling Club and, later, the London Lawn Bowling Club. These organizations became institutionalized through actions that included membership restrictions and structured sets of rules both within the clubs and related leagues and associations. These clubs sought to distance themselves from the broader community, and when this space could not be maintained, the associated practice was abandoned in favour of alternative activities which reinforced this exclusivity.

Ultimately, this investigation is concerned with the construction, regulation and organization of leisure, recreation, and sport in everyday life. To these ends, it is necessary to consider how and why this aspect of people's lives became increasingly constructed and regulated. As a result, the emergence of a leisure and recreation bureaucracy served to shape the growth of public, commercial, and private recreation organizations. Therefore, the manner in which sport, recreation, and leisure practices altered their form and function within London must be viewed as having been influenced by the increasing need to regulate and organize all aspects of people's lives.

**KEYWORDS: London, Ontario; Leisure, Sport, and Recreation History; Institutionalization; Bureaucratization**

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Preamble

The history of sport, recreation, and leisure in Canada has been concerned with a wide range of topics that have included, for example, the exploits of individuals, teams, and clubs and the role played by the institutions and organizations that supported and organized these activities. The examination of the impact of the federal and provincial governments on sport, recreation, and leisure activities has also received a modicum of attention; however this scholarship has focussed primarily on the role of government in the regulation of sport and recreation practices in Canada. The majority of this scholarship has been concerned with federal government policies implemented during the twentieth century,<sup>1</sup> although more recently, attention has been paid to the regulation of recreation in Canada during the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> In addition, less emphasis has been placed upon examinations of the regulation of sport, recreation, and leisure in urban communities, with the notable exceptions of Toronto and Montreal.<sup>3</sup> In terms of this focus, it is critical to consider the influence of local government in providing and regulating these practices. Arguably, a need exists to examine how sport, recreation, and leisure existed in small and medium size Canadian urban centres.

Studies of sport, recreation, and leisure history in Canada have suggested that these cultural practices became increasingly organized during the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A variety of explanatory devices have been employed to explain how and why this change occurred. The purpose of this investigation of London, Ontario, from 1867 to 1914, is to determine why public recreation, and to some degree commercial leisure, became bureaucratized but did not, to any great degree, exemplify the process of institutionalization as was the case with local private sporting clubs. To this end, this investigation examines the regulation and organization of leisure, recreation, and sport in everyday life in London, Ontario from Canadian Confederation (1867) to the outset of the First World War (1914). The primary concern of this study is to examine how and why this aspect of people's lives became increasingly constructed and regulated. Specifically, what role did local government play in the formation of the leisure bureaucracy that emerge out of the relatively disjointed regulation of leisure and recreation that existed prior to Confederation? As well, those influences that shaped the developing leisure bureaucracy in London including public, commercial, and private recreation organizations must be considered. While it is important to examine the relationships and interactions between stakeholders present in the provision of sport, recreation, and leisure opportunities, it is also necessary to account for the connections between these cultural practices and related social structures that existed within the city. In particular, the moral and ideological positions of individuals and groups who were economically, socially, and politically advantaged must be understood in order to illuminate the process by which

certain ways of organizing and practising these cultural forms were accepted and adopted while others were regulated, marginalised, or ultimately suppressed.

A variety of questions concerned with the place of sport, recreation and leisure in the lives of Londoners form the basis of this investigation. At the broadest level, this study illuminates how the cultural practices of sport, recreation, and leisure became more or less institutionalized and bureaucratized in London between 1867 and 1914. More specifically, the role of local and provincial government legislation and the influences of prominent citizens and citizen groups on the availability of, and access to, sport, recreation, and leisure organizations and facilities are considered. Moreover, these individual, group, and governmental influences profoundly affected the processes of bureaucratization and institutionalization of sport, recreation, and leisure practices in London. The organization and regulation of these cultural practices by elements within the local government suggest that these practices were not simply a form of largess provided by a benevolent leadership, but represented a critical re/action toward the problems associated with urban life. Although public administrative bodies represented the primary force in this process, it is also necessary to seriously consider commercial and private recreation and leisure organizations. These latter organizations' influences were also critically important in terms of the processes of bureaucratization and institutionalization of sport, recreation, and leisure practices in the city.

## Definition of Terms

It is necessary to clarify the meanings of the three related terms: recreation, leisure, and sport in so far as they are employed in this study.

**Recreation** is defined as non work-time social practices and is inclusive of a wide range of activities ranging from highly organized social groups and clubs to impromptu gatherings of individuals to take part in some form of play or entertainment.<sup>4</sup> This definition represents a sociological interpretation that may not fully capture the historical roots of the word based within the concept of 're-creating' the individual through play activity, yet for the purposes of this study this definition will serve to encompass the range of activities outlined above.

Similar to recreation, the word **leisure** is often employed as a general term denoting a range of non work-time activities. The slight difference between the two terms is found in the utilitarian focus of recreation activities versus the perceived greater degree of freedom inherent within leisure activities. However, for the purposes of this study, leisure will be employed interchangeably with recreation in most instances. Leisure activities, thus, were limited to that time free from work and included a broad range of activities, not necessarily physical in their nature, that took place outside the workplace or were removed from domestic labour processes.<sup>5</sup> Finally, **sport**, which is located within the broader spheres of recreation and leisure, is inclusive of organized social activities involving a variety of forms of physical activity that are necessarily competitive in order to determine a winner.<sup>6</sup> Although the variety of social practices that form

the basis of this investigation fall into one or more of these constructs or categories, it is important to recognize that these all represented a range of specific cultural practices that were imbued with distinct economic, political, and social meanings. In terms of this study, sport, recreation, and leisure activities must be examined with respect to the role they played in the lives of the people of London. Therefore, understanding the changing nature of, and meanings attached to, the activities examined in this investigation provides a way of comprehending how sport, recreation, and leisure were constructed realities that both reproduced broader social relationships while simultaneously becoming established and meaningful cultural practices in the lives of Londoners in the decades leading to the First World War.

Why (and through what processes) did leisure, recreation, and sports activities in London become bureaucratized and institutionalized by the early twentieth century? For the purposes of this study, **bureaucratization** can be defined as the development, systematization, and persistence of complex organizations with specific spheres of power-based control over the functioning of a government or other publicly controlled organizations.<sup>7</sup> A bureaucracy employs a variety of economic, political/legal, and ideological strategies to influence and control the actions of groups and individuals. In terms of this investigation, it should be recognized that bureaucratic structures were a primary force that impacted upon the development of recreation and leisure practices in London. This is pertinent because the bureaucratic influence served to regulate



and define these practices along with the less overt process of institutionalization. The process of **Institutionalization**, with reference to the above activities over the period from 1867 to 1914, is critical in terms of understanding the way in which specific groups and individuals were able to define what constituted legitimate and accepted forms of sport, leisure, and recreation. An explanation of the theoretical basis for how this process operated will be examined in greater detail in the 'Framework of Analysis' section of this chapter.

The examination of the impact of bureaucracy and the process of institutionalization upon sport, recreation, and leisure in London requires a focus upon specific practices that were representative of the entirety of this area of life for the period under investigation. Specifically, these activities are conceptualized so as to form three general categories of public, private, and commercial recreation practices. These categories differentiate between recreation, leisure, and sport organizations and activities in terms of their place in the broader social, political, and economic processes of city life. The **public** sphere of sport, recreation, and leisure organizations and activities are those that were primarily under the control of the city government. **Commercial** activities included those entrepreneurial ventures that were sponsored and administered by private citizens for the primary purpose of financial gain. Finally, the third category comprises **private** organizations which sponsored and administered activities for self-selected groups of citizens for the purpose of

mutual enjoyment and not necessarily for financial gain. The practical implication of this interpretative structure is represented within the specific case studies that are presented and examined within this study. In turn, these examples illuminate the role played by public, private, and commercial cultural formations in the process that led to the bureaucratization and institutionalization of leisure, recreation, and sport in the city.

The choice of London, Ontario as the location for this study serves an important purpose beyond the exploration of the city's local history. London, as a medium-sized Canadian city during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries serves as a location to examine the social forces that shaped sport, recreation, and leisure therein. This study also provides a starting point to understand how the process of institutionalization and bureaucratization operated at the local level. London, as the major regional urban centre in southwestern Ontario, held a unique place in the province. Yet, as with other Ontario towns and cities, London was a maturing entity that was influenced by regional and national social, economic, and political forces that shaped its growth. The focus of this investigation is those local influences that shaped organizations and practices that existed in the city proper. However, because of the intimate ties with surrounding communities such as London East, Petersville/London West,<sup>8</sup> and Westminster Township it is necessary to include these outlying communities, each of which were eventually amalgamated with London between 1867 and 1914.

The time period considered, from 1867 to 1914, represented points of change both locally and nationally. From a national perspective this period encompasses Confederation to the start of the First World War. Coincidentally, 1867 represents the year that London City Councillors first seriously discussed the need to provide public recreation space for citizens. In turn, 1914 (the early 1920s in the case of swimming) marks a point in time by which there was a clearly formed public recreation bureaucracy that operated in conjunction with the existing commercial and private recreation and sport organizations.<sup>9</sup> Finally, it must be understood that this study is not focussed upon the exploration of issues related to gender and gender relations. With the examination centring upon questions concerned with the establishment of early forms of organized sport, recreation, and leisure in London, the men of the middle classes dominate the narrative and analysis herein.

### **Framework of Analysis**

Any attempt to examine life as it existed in the past requires more than a presentation of the surviving evidence available to the historian. This caveat is particularly pertinent when one endeavours to account for the lived experiences of individuals and groups that constituted a particular society. It is not sufficient to limit a study by considering only the experiences of specific groups. One must pay attention to the whole of a society, both men and women, the economically advantaged and disadvantaged, and those with and without a political voice. As

well, it is necessary to recognize that human life, as it existed in the past, was not just a natural phenomenon born out of biological instincts, but was, and remains, a complex social construction. By accepting and accounting for these social realities, the historian is able to form a deeper and clearer analysis of the relationships, conflicts, and social structures that existed in a society and which shaped the lives of those who lived in that society. Therefore, the consideration of an analytical framework, or simply a theoretical position to attempt to explain the social forces that shaped past lives, is necessary in order to guide and inform the historian's investigation of the past. What follows is an analytical framework that attempts to complement and inform the narrative descriptive analysis which forms the focus of this study. As such, it is critical that the story of how sport, recreation, and leisure in London, between 1867 and 1914, came to be structured and organized not be overwhelmed by theoretical considerations, but be assistive and supportive to the narrative.

The first element of the analytical framework that informs this study is the process of hegemony as conceived by Antonio Gramsci and later adopted and refined by Raymond Williams.<sup>10</sup> At a rudimentary level, this approach attempts to outline how dominant fundamental groups – those that enjoy economic, political, and cultural influence – are able to maintain their positions of privilege through the formation of social structures that function to subordinate other groups while maintaining enough cultural commonality to ensure that subordinate groups accept the prevailing social conditions. How this process operates and thus its

applicability to this study will be discussed in greater detail in the "Review of Literature" section of this chapter.

The primary analytical tool employed in this study is the concept of the process of institutionalization outlined by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their work *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. The authors argue that the work of Karl Marx provides the basis for their understanding of the sociology of knowledge. The key concept that drives this position is based on the understanding "that man's consciousness is determined by his social being."<sup>11</sup> Flowing from this fundamental premise, Berger and Luckmann suggest that social order is a human product – an ongoing human production<sup>12</sup> – and that "Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern which can be reproduced with an economy of effort . . . and is apprehended by its performer as that pattern."<sup>13</sup> This process, referred to as habituation, occurs when meanings become routines that constitute a group's general knowledge, which act to narrow future choices that are made within that group.<sup>14</sup> Over time, and with the continued production and reproduction of the social structures that organize life, institutions are formed. The limitation of choice that exists within social institutions that comprise a society is clearly linked to Raymond Williams' interpretation of hegemony which asserts that the dominant group seeks to limit the opposition of subjugated groups by defining the limits for alternative and opposing actions.<sup>15</sup> By tracing the process by which public, private, and commercial recreation practices and organizations in London

became both bureaucratized and institutionalized, it is possible to shed further light on the social, political, and economic relations that existed in the city and how these operated to institutionalize sport, recreation, and leisure practices in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The reason the process of institutionalization, based within the concept of hegemony, has been selected to inform this is that it provides for the analysis of changes in the evolution of sport, recreation, and leisure practices in London. This analytical construct is useful in terms of accounting for social change not as linear and predetermined, but as the result of complex interactions between groups and individuals within a society. As a result, this analytical construct suggests that access to the power and influence to define appropriate social practices was not equally available to all members of that society. Thus, changes in sport, recreation, and leisure practices and the manner in which these activities were organized and controlled can be interpreted by this analytical approach. It must also be recognized that choices and decisions involving the provision of, and control over, these practices in London during the period under study were framed within the broader social, political, and economic climate of the city. Individuals and groups involved in these decisions were drawn from a variety of backgrounds and their interest in recreation, leisure, and sport activities represented one aspect of many everyday concerns.

Understanding the **process** that led to the emergence of institutionalized sport, and bureaucratized recreation and leisure practices in London provides a

measure that assists in determining how certain forms of these activities were supported and accepted while others were marginalised or ultimately rejected. At a fundamental level, institutionalization is a theoretical construct that accounts for the process through which specific social practices are accepted and ultimately ingrained within a group's social and ideological fabric. Once these cultural practices no longer represent only one of the multiple possibilities, they become the only acceptable option.<sup>16</sup> Thus, this line of analysis focuses on the reasons certain ways of organizing and participating in recreation practices were legitimized and formalized while alternatives were relegated to the margins of society or disappeared completely. In the end, the question to be asked, assuming that institutionalization was taking place in London at the time, is how did certain activities move from being one of a variety of ways of organizing and taking part in recreation practices in the city to becoming the accepted way of doing so?

Several critical questions must be addressed when considering the usefulness of employing the analytical concept of institutionalization in this study. The first is simply why employ institutionalization to analyse the history of sport, recreation, and leisure practices? One response to this question is that the process of institutionalization represents a useful concept that attempts to explain how cultural practices are formed and reformed over time. In particular, for this examination of a single community, institutionalization assists in the accounting for unique local influences. Also, the process of institutionalization

provides insight into how human actions and practices are narrowed and shaped in order to value certain ways of organizing life over other possibilities. A second concern arising from the use of this particular analytical concept is what does it mean for a cultural practice to be more or less institutionalized? A concise response to this query is that institutionalization is a process that has existed historically and is never truly completed. As a result, it is possible to view a variety of cultural practices over specific periods of time in order to determine how these cultural practices were constructed and the extent to which they were institutionalized. A final question that must be answered which relates to the use of social theory as a tool for analysis is who (individuals and groups) influenced how sport, recreation, and leisure activities were organized in London? In order to determine how these social practices were institutionalized it is necessary to examine which groups in London shaped the way people interpreted and reproduced these social constructs. In doing so, it is useful to consider the hegemonic process as a concept that has been used to explain how groups with access to power in political, economic, and social forms have been able to capture the consent of the rest of society and consequently determine how these practices should be organized. How this consent arose, it can be argued, is congruent with the process of institutionalization which similarly suggests that a narrowing of human actions occurs when a higher value is placed upon specific actions. As described previously, Raymond Williams, in his conceptualization of the hegemonic process, argues that those who enjoyed economic, political, and



cultural influence were able to maintain their privileged position through the formation of social structures that functioned to subordinate other groups while simultaneously maintaining enough cultural commonality to have these subordinate groups accept prevailing social conditions. However, it is not the primary purpose of this study to explore the manner in which the hegemonic process operated in London; yet, in terms of understanding the process of institutionalization it is important that it be understood that relations of power existed which privileged certain groups over others. This position of dominance influenced the process of institutionalization through reinforcing the actions and practices that reproduced the moral, political, and economic values of these dominant individuals and groups.

Explaining how and why behaviour came to be institutionalized assists in expanding the understanding of how sport, recreation, and leisure developed in London during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To this end, considering the theoretical constructs of the processes of institutionalization and hegemony provides an explanatory position that accounts for how the ideals, values, and beliefs of those groups that represent the dominant group(s) in a society are, for the most part, accepted and adopted by subordinate groups. From this perspective, the concept of institutionalization serves to provide an embedded analytical framework that will assist in examining and evaluating the process of the organization and formalization of sport, recreation, and leisure practices in London.

## **Review of Literature**

The literature that serves to provide the basis for this study is drawn from two primary areas: that which is concerned with the cultural concepts of the processes of institutionalization and hegemony, and those authors who have examined sport, recreation, and leisure from historical perspectives. The works examined in these two broad categories are by no means mutually exclusive. In particular, many of the historians discussed below draw upon the same or similar cultural theories. This review begins with an examination of literature concerned with hegemony and institutionalization and will be followed by a survey of historical literature pertinent to this study of sport, recreation and leisure in London, Ontario.

## **Social and Cultural Relations: Hegemony and Institutionalization**

The attempt to make sense of the social, political, and economic relations that shape and are shaped by groups and individuals within a society lies at the heart of critical neo-Marxist scholarship. This social theoretical approach represents a broad area of scholarship that has provided direction for much of the critical historical scholarship of the latter twentieth century. Clearly it is necessary to demonstrate a general understanding of Marx's position. From this base it is then possible to move in myriad directions. As discussed previously, for the purposes of this study, one approach taken in order to attempt to make sense of problems concerning social and cultural relations draws upon the

writings of Antonio Gramsci, and specifically his neo-Marxist construct of the process of hegemony. Likewise, the work of Raymond Williams, who also advanced the use of the process of hegemony as it applies to history, must be examined. As well, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's explanation of how social practices and relationships are constructed to organize everyday life through the process of institutionalization, must be examined in terms of its congruence with hegemony and its applicability to this study. Therefore, to make some sense of these more recent ideas, it is first necessary to examine their roots located within Marx's explanation of the nature of society and the importance of economic relations in shaping social relations.

Marx's ideas concerning society and social relations were based primarily upon his observations of the world around him. The result was that "Marx viewed history as a record of oppression and domination in which members of the upper classes were able to exploit those in the lower classes."<sup>17</sup> Capitalism, argued Marx, was a stage in historical development which would ultimately, following revolution, give way to socialism and later communism. With respect to historical examination, Marx raised specific questions about the unequal distribution of wealth within society which led to his social analysis that provided a basis for a variety of enquiries into the nature of the social forces that organize societies. These questions included, "how the social order has come to be what it is, what the structures of power are that maintain it, and what the relationship is between wealth and power."<sup>18</sup> Through attempts to answer these questions, Marx

proposed a theoretical construction of how society operated, and central to this theory was the manner in which the means of production were organized and how this provided insight into the nature of all social relationships. In order to understand these social relationships, Marx hypothesized the existence of a substructure – the economic base of a society – which he argued determined the superstructure – those ideas, values, institutions and laws that organized society. From this model of society, Marx argued that “our ideological orientation to the world [is] a function of the material, or productive, base of society.”<sup>19</sup> This conceptualization of how society functioned served as the basis for future examination of these ideas by Marx and like-minded social theorists. The result of Marx’s approach to understanding the world was the Marxist tradition of social analysis, arguably one of the most influential sources of critical scholarship employed in the study of history in the twentieth century.

A variety of related ideas emanated from the Marxist tradition, one of which was the process of hegemony. This social, theoretical construct found its roots in the ideas and writings of Antonio Gramsci. According to T.J. Jackson Lears, cultural hegemony as conceived by Gramsci does not attempt to revise radically classical Marxism. What it does, he suggests, is extend Marxist theory by placing a greater emphasis on the political functions of cultural symbols in capitalist societies. Cultural hegemony demonstrates how ideas reinforce or undermine existing social structures while allowing subordinate groups to maintain a degree of cultural autonomy in the face of the power wielded by

dominant groups.<sup>20</sup> Also, Gramsci's concept of hegemony, according to Robert Bocock, represented a break from the focus upon economic factors and "mechanistic Marxism in which change is seen as unproblematically brought about by the laws of history working independently of political movements and human will."<sup>21</sup> To this end, Gramsci and those who have expanded upon his ideas have attempted to rework the ideas of economic determinism and the capitalist control of the masses, which is central to classical Marxism, through the recognition of the agency of subordinate groups despite their relative subjugation.

Building upon the work of Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams argued that the process of hegemony goes beyond 'culture' as a "whole social process in which men define and shape their whole lives; and that of ideology, in any of its Marxist senses, in which a system of meanings and values is the expression or projection of a particular class interest."<sup>22</sup> Williams asserts that the notion that people "define and shape their whole lives is true only in abstraction."<sup>23</sup> In reality, he suggests that there are inequalities in people's access to those elements of life that are valued; these are evident in the obvious inequalities that exist between the social classes. Williams, in accord with Gramsci's contribution to understanding these social inequities and the resulting struggles, agrees that the ideas of dominance and subordination and how they interact within the social processes that exist within everyday life represent the key to understanding the operation of relations of power.<sup>24</sup>

Hegemony, according to Gramsci, is "the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' manifested in the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production."<sup>25</sup> Lears argues that in order to understand hegemony it is necessary to understand the notion of domination, and how domination by ruling groups over the subordinate or ruled groups is most often achieved not through force but through active consent to the existing social order.<sup>26</sup> Without the consent of the subjugated groups, the dominant groups would be unable to maintain their privileged position over extended periods of time. To clarify this point, Gramsci presents a distinction between 'rule' and 'hegemony,' with rule being expressed in direct political forms by direct or effective coercion, while hegemony is "the more normal situation [where there is] a complex interlocking of political, social, and cultural forces which are its necessary elements."<sup>27</sup> Given this distinction, the existence of a hegemonic order can be determined by the spontaneous or unintended recognition by subordinate groups that existing social, political, and economic relations represent the natural order, although in reality these relations are representative of, and ultimately advantageous to, the dominant group or groups.

A final, critical idea embedded within Gramsci's conception of hegemony is that of 'spontaneous philosophy.' This concept, in terms of the hegemonic process, indicates the movement beyond a system of beliefs that reflect specific

class interests. Spontaneous philosophy operates universally and internally, contained within the language of words, the expression of religion, superstitions, and opinions on the ways of seeing things and of acting, all of which encompass a people's folklore.<sup>28</sup> Spontaneous philosophy, according to Lears, is generated when "a given group or class, as it develops in the economic sphere, finds some values more congenial than others and more in tune with its own everyday experiences. Selectively refashioning the available spontaneous philosophy, a group may develop its own particular view of the world – an ideology that cements it into what Gramsci called an 'historical bloc' possessing both cultural and economic solidarity."<sup>29</sup> For the leaders of the historical bloc to achieve cultural hegemony they must develop a world view that appeals to a wide range of groups within society. Also they must plausibly argue that their interests are those of society at large, and they must selectively accommodate the desires of subordinate groups in order to maintain the existing hegemonic order.<sup>30</sup> The key to achieving cultural hegemony, therefore, is the maintenance of common social formations, both ideological and economic, that can be used to link various groups in order to legitimate the rule of the dominant group or groups.

The process of institutionalization, as conceptualized in this study, draws from two sources, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* and Don Morrow's sport specific application of their work in the "The Institutionalization of Sport: A Case Study of Canadian Lacrosse, 1884-1914." The analytical concept of the process of institutionalization attempts

to provide insight into the underlying dialectic of how people are socially produced by the world in which they live while simultaneously reproducing that same world. Berger and Luckmann suggest that "Man's self-production is always, and of necessity, a social enterprise . . . [where] Men together produce a human environment, with the totality of its socio-cultural and psychological formations."<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the argument is forwarded that "social order is a human product, or more precisely an ongoing human production."<sup>32</sup> Berger and Luckmann provide a way to examine the nature of how social order and behaviour are constructed, while Morrow draws upon their work to establish that the concept can be seen in operation within a specific cultural practice, in his case the sport of lacrosse.

When examining how Berger and Luckmann have conceptualized institutionalization several caveats must be acknowledged. First, one must understand that all human practices are continually engaged in institutionalization, and that certain practices may become institutions while others may not. Thus, it must be understood that the process of institutionalization does not presuppose that all practices will become institutions or that existing institutions will never revert back to a non-institutional state.<sup>33</sup> A second element of the institutionalization process that must be understood is that the process is not linear, or time-bound, like, for example, modernization.<sup>34</sup> This means that it is possible to discern the degree to which a particular cultural practice is institutionalized at a certain point in time through the recognition of the characteristic stages involved in the process. These constructed stages



represent identifiable points within the institutionalization process. However, these elements are not always discrete, sequential, or readily apparent in lived experience, but are most often active in concert with other stages at the same point in time. What then are the characteristic activities which define the process of institutionalization?

The two originating activities of the institutionalization process are **habitualization** and **reciprocal typification**. Berger and Luckmann suggest habitualization is the result of commonly repeated actions that “become cast into a pattern that can be reproduced with an economy of effort.”<sup>35</sup> This economy of effort is evident within habitualization through a reduced need to make decisions, resulting in the conservation of energy that allows individuals and groups to more effectively confront crisis situations.<sup>36</sup> In addition, the process of “Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, the first elements of an institution are formed when individuals recognize each other’s repeated actions and incorporate them into their own sets of activities.<sup>38</sup> Simply, when habitualized practices are reciprocally typified they become familiar, recognized, and accepted patterns of behaviour within a society.

According to Berger and Luckmann, “Institutionalization further implies historicity and control.”<sup>39</sup> A **shared history** is built up through reciprocal typifications of actions over time, and the processes of habitualization and reciprocal typification are extended to become a shared history representing

predictable and common behaviours among members of the social group. Also, a degree of **inherent control** serves to delimit what is considered admissible conduct. This constructed and entrenched form of control operates "by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel [human action] in one direction against many other directions that would theoretically be possible."<sup>40</sup>

Accordingly, "the origins of any institutional order lie in the typification of one's own and others' performances."<sup>41</sup> This implies that actions are not only understood by all, but are also relevant to them and the **roles** individuals assume in the institutional order. Thus, over time social practices become increasingly institutionalized, and the process is reinforced and perpetuated through the control inherent, and roles people assume, within those practices.

Social practices become **crystalized** when the processes of habituation and reciprocal typification, through time and over generations, become established and accepted entities. At the point of crystalization "the institutions are now experienced as possessing a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact."<sup>42</sup> A person unfamiliar with an institution is simply told, "This is how things are done."<sup>43</sup>

Crystallization occurs when the core of patterned human behaviour is set in one direction, and a way of behaving becomes accepted as the way of behaving.

When patterns of human behaviour have been crystalized, two related processes serve to entrench the institutional process. These include

**legitimation** which serves to both explain and justify the institution's existence,

and an institutional **language** which allows legitimated ideas to be perpetuated and reinforced. Berger and Luckmann contend that "Legitimation produces new meanings that serve to integrate the meanings already attached to disparate institutional processes. The function of legitimation is to make objectively available and subjectively plausible the "first order" objectivations that have been institutionalized."<sup>44</sup> For this reason, legitimation is this process of explaining and justifying. Legitimation not only tells the individual why they should perform one action and not another, it also tells them why things are what they are. At the core of institutional persistence, "Language provides the fundamental superimposition of logic on the objectivated social world. The edifice of legitimation is built upon language and uses language as its principle instrumentality."<sup>45</sup> In concert with language, the available stock of knowledge will constrain the ability of a person to explain the functioning of her/his social world. This can be viewed as **transmitted recipe knowledge** which supplies the institutionally appropriate rules of conduct.<sup>46</sup> As a result, the language associated with any social practice is both a means to legitimate behaviour and knowledge as well as the method to transmit that legitimacy to future generations.

By way of illustration, Don Morrow identifies the characteristics outlined above in his examination of the development of lacrosse in nineteenth century Canada. The period during which habitualization and reciprocal typification occurred is identified as the middle 1800s when social, intra-club games were

played and when rules were generally unsettled and required negotiated agreement prior to most competitions. It was only with time, in this case by the 1860s, that rules for the sport became widely understood, accepted, and formalized. Morrow identifies that a shared history had developed among European men who played lacrosse that was drawn from adopting and adapting the game as it had been played by Native peoples.<sup>47</sup> Part of this adoption and adaptation was the result of individual actors who initiated and undertook a variety of roles within the organization of the sport during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The influence of an inherent control feature appeared about the time when the rules of 1860 were first published.<sup>48</sup> The publishing of these rules for lacrosse privileged one way of playing, and although they were not 'official' they became widely accepted and established. Morrow asserts that lacrosse's point of crystalization occurred in 1867 at a meeting in Kingston, Ontario, when the rules of 1860 were adopted by the members of the National Lacrosse Association and the rules were legitimized by restricting championship play only to those teams who were members of the association.<sup>49</sup> Finally, Morrow suggests that lacrosse during the 1880s became established and legitimized through the roles of players, managers, and spectators; the sanctions associated with amateurism; and the language of rules, club constitutions, leagues, and associations.<sup>50</sup> Ultimately, as was the case with lacrosse, once a cultural practice becomes an institution it is seldom questioned, and a way of doing simply becomes **the** way of doing.

The processes of institutionalization and hegemony represent social, theoretical concepts that attempt to provide a way of framing this study. The hegemonic process proposed by Gramsci and advanced by Williams encapsulates the manner in which industrialized societies operate. This includes the ability to reproduce the leadership position of the dominant group in the face of resistance from subordinates. To argue that this concept of the process by which social relations are organized fully accounts for every aspect of group and individual decision making in a particular place and time is not realistic. Hegemony must also be considered in concert with the process of institutionalization when examining the manner in which sport, recreation, and leisure practices existed in London, Ontario between 1867 and 1914. Also, it is important that these theoretical concepts support and do not drown-out the narrative. These concepts must be viewed as supplementary to the narrative which provides the necessary evidence to support the argument that the cultural practices of sport, recreation, and leisure represented socially constructed elements of Londoner's lives. What these instruments of social explanation do allow are clear and useful general concepts to frame an understanding of why social, political, and economic organizations operated in the manner they did in a particular time and place such as the City of London, Ontario during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The emphasis of this study then is on the construction of ways of experiencing sport, recreation, and leisure.

## Leisure and Recreation

Historical investigations of the place of leisure and recreation in everyday life cannot be divorced from the examination of the processes that shape and influence social relations in daily life. The historical examination of how leisure and recreation existed in urban communities in the United States, Britain, and Canada during the nineteenth century provides an important resource for the investigation of leisure and recreation practices as they existed in London, Ontario from Confederation to the outset of the First World War. Specifically, the work of Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c. 1780 c. 1880*, Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight hours for what we will: Workers and leisure in an industrial city, 1870 - 1920*, and Lynne Marks' *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario*, provide this study with valuable direction with respect to the examination of leisure and recreation within the broader social processes of urban-industrial life at this time. As well, from the perspective of public leisure in Canada, the work of Elsie McFarland provides a good historical account of the development of public leisure and recreation in Canada during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Hugh Cunningham's examination of the expansion of leisure in Britain during the period of the Industrial Revolution focuses on dispelling the myth that leisure was not an important part of people's lives at this time. Specifically, Cunningham argues that key divisions in Victorian society were those within

rather than between classes.<sup>51</sup> As a result, struggles over the definition of appropriate and inappropriate leisure practices were not only fought between the 'respectable' and the 'rough,' but also within these divisions. The former was represented by the middle- and working-class reformers who sought to enforce rational leisure, while the latter consisted of both members of the aristocracy and the poor for whom leisure included blood sports such as fox hunting, prize fighting, and the cock fighting pit.<sup>52</sup> Cunningham suggests further that the word 'leisure' is in essence an abstract term that is always described by the observer to relate common experiences that are necessarily highly ambiguous depending upon the time, place, and people involved.<sup>53</sup> The Industrial Revolution in England, therefore, affected patterns and forms of leisure as much as it did the nature of the work in which people were engaged. In the hundred years from 1780 to 1880, leisure moved from a highly undeveloped and disparate activity, to a contested and meaningful experience, a period that was "crucial in setting the terms to the meaning and experience of leisure in advanced capitalist society."<sup>54</sup> Leisure, according to Cunningham, was bound up in the ideological needs of mid-Victorians to come to grips with the rigid capitalist work structure and the need to ensure that leisure opportunities were provided by government and private enterprise. Was leisure an expression of class or a means of social control? Cunningham suggests it was both; it represented one of the small victories for workers within capitalism, an anxiety to the reformers of all classes, and a tolerable entity to the middle- and upper-class men who comprised the

government and who appreciated the safety of later forms over the unregulated nature of earlier forms of leisure.<sup>55</sup>

The concept of leisure, as a contested terrain both within and between classes, forms the focus of Roy Rosenzweig's examination of the city of Worcester, Massachusetts between 1870 and 1920. Rosenzweig argues that the use of a single city to study working class leisure and recreation can provide the building block for more general theorizing about the nature of working class life through the testing of analytical categories such as class, ethnicity, and religion, and social processes including class conflict and cultural change.<sup>56</sup> In Worcester, according to Rosenzweig, industrial workers were able to protect successfully their leisure time and space from outside encroachment despite the constraints – primarily time and pay – associated with their work. Workers were able to enjoy a modicum of agency in this area of their lives despite the changing nature of recreation and leisure, specifically the rise of the leisure market and the impact of increasing commercialism.<sup>57</sup>

Rosenzweig's examination of working-class leisure, in a broader sense, attempts to account for the constantly shifting class and ethnic diversity of the population, and the conflicts within and between these groups, including Irish, French Canadian, Swedish, Polish, and Finnish workers, the growing middle class, and the city's industrial elites. Many of these conflicts, according to Rosenzweig, were the result of the perceived lack of structure in these groups' leisure activities, for example the frequenting of saloons and exuberant



celebration of holidays. Because of this lack of structure some middle- and upper-middle-class groups and individuals deemed it necessary to organize a variety of reforming campaigns to reshape and restrict working class leisure activities, of which temperance organizations and the playground movement were two notable examples. By the early 1900s, the cultural patterns and class relations in Worcester began to change. These shifts included altered attitudes of the middle class toward leisure pursuits, the emergence of an ethnic middle class, the arrival of new immigrants, the gradual increase in working class incomes, and the decrease in the hours of the work week, all of which altered the realm of leisure. These changes were most clearly evidenced by the rise of commercial leisure and recreation as the arbiter of safe and rational leisure practices.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the place and meanings of leisure in this city were clearly based within the relations between the various groups that composed the society. In this case, it was the conflict that arose over the place of leisure during the nineteenth century that provided the lens to examine not only the contested terrain of leisure but also wider social, political, ethnic, and economic relations in the city.

Lynne Marks, in *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario*, examines the place of religion, class, ethnicity, and gender through social relations based within leisure, sport, and recreation participation in three late nineteenth century southern Ontario communities.<sup>59</sup> For this investigation Marks outlined three critical concerns. First,

Marks suggests that leisure in the nineteenth century cannot be studied without accounting for religion. Second, any examination of leisure at that time need not only consider class, race, gender, and age differences, but also the intersections between these constructed divisions. Third, that this type of study requires the employment of gender history, being the study of men and women's lives as they existed together, not separately.<sup>60</sup> Marks' work focuses upon the role of religion and associated ideas concerning moral reform and its impact upon the provision and regulation of leisure activities. In this respect, the church represented one of the few areas in public life where women could take an active role in nineteenth century life. Similarly, church members, primarily from the Protestant denominations, took an interest in the moral regulation of leisure activities. In this respect, middle class women involved in these churches represented a powerful social force in the community. Marks contends that in order to recognize the extent to which Protestant culture in small-town Ontario was or was not hegemonic requires an understanding of their way of life. Thus, it is necessary to examine people's relations to church and organized religion, how these relations embodied what was or was not considered respectable, how meanings were assigned to cultural practices in everyday life, and whether the leisure options available to people either reinforced or eroded their connections to the churches and their religious teachings.<sup>61</sup> Although it is clear that the church exerted a powerful influence in the provision of leisure in small-town Ontario, whether this same influence existed in larger urban centres is not as clear. One of the

difficulties in determining this is that it is necessary to take into account the powerful organizing structures of local governments in these larger centres in terms of the provision and regulation of leisure activities. Despite this, the complex cultural approach employed by Marks provides a useful guide for the examination of leisure in a local context.

Any examination of the place of public recreation in Canada must consider the pioneering work of Elsie McFarland. In her 1970 monograph, *The Development of Public Recreation in Canada*, McFarland chronicles the growth of public recreation programs and facilities in terms of federal, provincial, and local government legislation. With respect to recreation in late nineteenth century Canada, McFarland points to the importance of developing municipal parks systems as a response to the growing recognition of the advantages of open spaces for public recreation and health. The process of municipal park development in the late nineteenth century was common in many Canadian communities and laid the groundwork upon which these communities were able to form comprehensive recreation services during the early twentieth century.<sup>62</sup> Through her thorough examination of the development of public recreation in Canada from the first parks to the formation of the earliest publicly funded recreation programs such as supervised playgrounds, McFarland provides critical insight into the unique approach of Canadian cities and governments to the provision of recreation opportunities. Although in many cases sport, recreation, and leisure existed outside the control of public institutions, it is

important to consider the interconnections between the provision of space for people to play and how sport and recreation opportunities existed during this period. An area which McFarland did not fully examine was the process by which local parkland was accumulated within cities. Specifically, in the case of London, there are clear connections between the purchase of land for public improvement projects such as a waterworks system and the utilization of that property for recreation purposes. This, once again, exposes the limitations of broader national examinations of leisure, recreation, and sport; yet it is important to recognize that these larger examinations, particularly in the area of organized sport in Canada, provide a critical resource for framing studies concerned with local urban leisure and recreation.

### **Historical Study of Organized Sport in Canada**

The study of sport history in Canada has, over the past thirty years, become a viable academic field operating within the broader field of Physical Education (more recently, Kinesiology). As well, academic investigation of sport has increasingly become acceptable within traditional history departments through the growing interest of historians from other areas of study. The work of scholars in the field of Canadian sport history has provided much of the groundwork from which the study of broader leisure and recreation history has grown, although it by no means represents the exclusive origin for this area of study. However, it is important to recognize the importance of organized sport in

the larger landscape of leisure and recreation practice and that many of the questions concerning organized sport can also be asked of leisure and recreation practices.

One of the first critical comprehensive examinations of sport in Canada is Alan Metcalfe's monograph *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914*. In this study, Metcalfe outlines what he believes to be the dominant influences that shaped Canadian sport during the nineteenth century, including: the changing demography, ethnic composition, and geographical distribution of the population; the rise of the industrial economy; and the relationship of Canada and Canadians to Britain and the United States. The final critical influence that shaped sport in Canada according to Metcalfe was the role played by dominant urban middle-class Anglophones.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the role of human agency and in this case the actions of these men of the middle-class must be closely examined in order to understand how organized sport as a cultural form was produced and reproduced. Although Metcalfe is clear that his findings apply only to sport, it can be argued that these same influences are evident and applicable to other forms of organized recreation and leisure that existed at the time.

Don Morrow and Mary Keyes' *A Concise History of Sport in Canada* approaches the history of Canadian sport from a variety of perspectives. The authors and their collaborators provide a number of case studies of sport in Canada. These range from an examination of the growth of early sport in

Montreal during the nineteenth century, and the investigation of Canadian sports including lacrosse, football, and hockey, to brief, yet insightful, examinations of issues including women's sports, the modern Olympic games, and government involvement in sport. Morrow clearly states that the book is not meant to be exhaustive or encyclopaedic, nor is it concerned with activities outside of organized sport. Although organized sport is the focus, Morrow does suggest that "patterns of leisure and recreational activity . . . await further study."<sup>64</sup> According to Morrow, the natural connection between the study of organized sport and broader activities encompassing recreation and leisure, thus, represents a next step in the process initiated by this group of Canadian sport historians.

Bruce Kidd, in his book *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, is concerned primarily with the inter-war years of the 1920s and 1930s. However, he does briefly examine the critical social influences of the late nineteenth century and the impact these had upon organized sport in this latter era. Kidd's examination of sport in Canada prior to the First World War suggests several important points of departure for this study. First, Kidd maintains that a combination of various levels of government and reform minded social groups – primarily drawn from the middle class – represented the driving force that shaped the practice of, and meanings underlying, sport. This was achieved primarily through both the formal and informal regulation of leisure and recreation organizations and activities. This influence was achieved through, for example, establishing public holidays,

supporting temperance and Sabbatarianism, and by the force of criminal legislation.<sup>65</sup> A second critical observation provided by Kidd involved the role played by the municipal governments in Canada during the late nineteenth century in terms of the provision of sport and recreation opportunities.

Specifically, Kidd argues that local governments were less than democratic in how recreational facilities were provided. Most facilities and sites were limited to the middle-class residents or were left to the discretion of entrepreneurs to organize and regulate sport and recreation activities as they saw fit.<sup>66</sup> Although not stated explicitly, it is evident that Kidd recognizes that sport and recreation were subject to the same middle-class hegemonic forces as other cultural practices that comprised everyday life for people in late nineteenth century Canada.

Finally, Colin Howell's examination of baseball in the Maritime provinces of Canada during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century represents a regional study of a single sport that relies heavily on local investigations. Sport, in this case baseball, is presented as having clear connections to broader issues of social and economic change during this period. Howell is not simply concerned with sport-specific developments within the organization and play of baseball. At the heart of this study is the need to determine how the sport was implicated within larger issues including: respectable behaviour; masculinity and femininity; regionalism and nationalism; and class, ethnicity, and race.<sup>67</sup> These concerns, Howell argues, cannot be

removed from the constantly shifting patterns of production, consumption, and commercialization that transformed capitalism and sport during the late nineteenth century.<sup>68</sup> From this perspective, Howell asserts that "In the nineteenth century baseball provided a terrain upon which social control and domination was fought, where reformers attempted to inculcate appropriate notions of manliness and respectability in the youth of the bourgeoisie . . ." <sup>69</sup> Thus, his investigation provides some parallels to this study in terms of being able to recognize that change occurs locally even though it is ultimately evident within broader social, economic, and political forces. Similarly, as with the observations of Metcalfe, Morrow *et al.*, and Kidd, the critical role of middle-class men as the organizers, promoters, controllers, and beneficiaries of rational sport and recreation is clearly identified.

### **Government and State Regulation**

The role of the state in the regulation of leisure, recreation, and sport in Canada has been examined, through a variety of studies, in the national, regional, and local contexts. From a national perspective, the works of Kevin Wamsley concerned with game/hunting legislation and rifle shooting and their role in state formation in nineteenth century Canada provide a useful examination of federal government involvement in sport.<sup>70</sup> According to Wamsley, legislation was passed to regulate hunting and promote rifle-shooting that was advantageous to the new colonial elites who emerged out of the political



unrest of the late 1830s to become the dominant fundamental group in the Canadian colonies by the late 1850s.<sup>71</sup> This new group of achievement-based leaders sought to promote opportunities for personal investment and profit, while employing the state "to mobilize citizens in 'useful' cultural and social activities before Confederation."<sup>72</sup> The use of legislation to control public non-work activities continued into the post-Confederation era. With the formation of the Canadian state the practical business of collecting revenues through licenses and fines continued, but these recreation and leisure activities also served to ensure "the reproduction of particular ways of seeing, valuing, and participating in social relations."<sup>73</sup> Similarly, through the promotion of rifle-shooting, and particularly through the success in competitions abroad, international victories were constructed within nationalist tones in order "to support ideologies and interpretations of the order of Canadian society."<sup>74</sup> Thus, whether in the case of rifle-shooting where the stated goal was focussed upon national defence and military preparedness or for less tangible nationalistic ends, or in the case of game regulation to impart a selected order to hunting, the constructed social relations that served to legitimize and reinforce the laws and practices that regulated leisure activities ultimately served the political and ideological ends of the dominant group. Therefore, how people in Canadian society experienced this type of organization and regulation depended upon where they stood in terms of their social, political, and economic position in society.

Studies concerned with the regulation of leisure and recreation at the regional and local level provide critical insight into the controversies and conflicts that have arisen over the definitions of legitimate and acceptable versus illegal and deviant practices. In their examination of recreational swimming in Hamilton Harbour between 1870 and 1946, Ken Cruikshank and Nancy Bouchier investigate the organizational and regulatory roles played by three branches of local government – Hamilton City Council, the Board of Parks Management, and the Hamilton Harbour Commission.<sup>75</sup> The practical difficulties that these people faced to providing safe, clean, and accessible swimming facilities provide critical insight into the reasons for the political debate that saw “city leaders agreed on the moral and physical value of swimming [but] . . . disagree[ing] over questions of access and quality of water.”<sup>76</sup> Legislation and government policy were required to serve the industrial and economic aspirations of the city’s elite and often necessitated the sacrifice of idealistic initiatives such as the provision of swimming facilities. The role of local government in instituting policies concerned with public recreation and leisure must be recognized as a critical element for understanding the place of these activities in people’s lives.

Gene Homel’s investigation of Toronto’s Sunday tobogganing controversy of 1912 exhibits a slightly different set of circumstances with respect to the role of city government in the regulation of recreation. Specifically, this controversy originated with the passage of the Lord’s Day Act in 1906, a piece of federal legislation, to curtail Sunday activities that were nonessential or not charitable.<sup>77</sup>

It was not until 1912 that the Sabbatarian moral reformers and their political allies in Toronto set their sights on the practice of Sunday tobogganing which led to the passage of a bylaw that closed toboggan slides in public parks on the Sabbath.<sup>78</sup> The result of this legislation was that tensions were heightened between representatives of the city's working class and business owners, who saw a value in Sunday recreation, and the moral reformers who sought to regulate these same activities. Although this legislation was enforced up to the Second World War, it was actively, and often successfully, resisted by those who deemed it to be unjust and impractical. Also, this example provides evidence that supporters and detractors of this type of local legislation were not necessarily drawn-up on class lines, but that conflict between peers was common. This local examination of conflict surrounding leisure and recreation provides a clear example that legislation, whether it was federal, provincial, or local was a powerful force in shaping this aspect of life. Yet, if legislation was not formulated in such a way as to make practical sense to those people who it was supposed to regulate, the laws could often be ineffective in the practical regulation of these activities. Consequently, the process by which imposed legislation became accepted regulation must be examined in order to understand how sport, leisure, and recreation activities existed and operated in the local context.

## Sport and the City

Why is the city an important entity in terms of understanding the place of leisure, recreation, and sport in people's lives? As suggested above, much of the critical debate concerning the place of these cultural practices operated at the local or urban level. Within the field of sport history the examination of sport in one city has served to provide further understanding of larger social, political, and economic issues that were both influenced by, and an influence on, sport within the city. One of the earliest of these investigations was undertaken by Melvin Adelman. In *A Sporting Time: New York and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70*, Adelman undertakes to reconcile the relationship between urban change and alterations in sporting practices. He sought to exhibit that 'modern' sport first appeared prior to the American Civil War and not following it as popularly believed.<sup>79</sup> Adelman concludes that in New York, by 1870, sport had become increasingly organized and was seen as a counter balance to urban social ills through the promotion of health, morality, and positive character values.<sup>80</sup> The value in Adelman's study, in terms of informing this project, is found in his examination of the various social groups within the city. Specifically, Adelman is concerned with New Yorkers' involvement in sport and the role sport played in their lives; often this practice defined their place socially, economically, and politically, through the associations and relationships that were forged through sport. A second study of sport and leisure in an American city, Stephen Hardy's *How Boston Played: Sport, Recreation, and Community 1865-1915*,

provides a unique perspective in terms of how these activities emerged within the urban landscape. Specifically, Hardy explains the growth of sport and recreation in Boston as a response to three related factors present in the city at the time. These factors included the changing physical structures of the city that accompanied industrialization and urbanization, the development of social organizations, including specialized agencies that controlled recreation, and the emergence of a new ideology and attitude of Bostonians toward sport and recreation activities.<sup>81</sup> Within the context of the city, in terms of these two works, the authors have been able to draw successful conclusions related to the meanings and place of sport in people's lives, a process which would be much more difficult to accomplish for larger geographic regions unless the communities in the specific localities have first been adequately studied.

In terms of studies concerned with sport in cities in Canada, two cities have garnered the majority of attention by sport historians – Montreal and Toronto. Large scale studies of sport and recreation in these two cities have been undertaken by Alan Metcalfe and Tony Joyce respectively, with Metcalfe's investigation of working class physical recreation in Montreal representing one of the earliest by a Canadian sport historian to focus on one city. There were several important reasons why Metcalfe chose the city of Montreal. These include that it contained both French and English populations, that it was the first city to industrialize in Canada, and the first sport clubs in Canada were founded in the city.<sup>82</sup> According to Metcalfe, in Montreal, "Marginal living conditions forced

the working man to seek recreation outside the home and into a variety of private, public, and commercial facilities."<sup>83</sup> As a result, this investigation of the city and the availability of recreation opportunities required that the focus be placed on the urban industrial environment which characterized the growing city. It can be argued that these same conditions existed in other Canadian urban environments, which similarly require examination to determine the existence of broad similarities and differences throughout the country.

In his study of sport in Toronto, Tony Joyce examines the sports of baseball and horse racing, and the recreational pursuits of swimming and skating to illustrate the growing commercialization of these social practices in the city during the nineteenth century.<sup>84</sup> In addition, Joyce argues that amateur sports clubs such as the Argonaut Rowing Club, Granite Curling Club, and Toronto Bicycle Club conformed to prevailing business culture and practices in their executive structures and financial dealings.<sup>85</sup> Finally, by focussing upon the many spectator sports that appeared in the later 1800s, including lacrosse and pedestrian races, Joyce exhibits how sport had become intertwined with the increasingly capitalist nature of everyday life. Specifically, the link between sport and capitalism is examined to exhibit how private sport clubs were organized to reproduce the prevailing business model of the time in order to impose a rational system of organization upon those practices.<sup>86</sup> The depth of the coverage and analysis of these events and case studies is, in part, a result of Joyce's decision to focus on one community for this study. Thus, this compelling account of sport

as it operated and existed in that city provides ample evidence of the usefulness of a locally focussed approach to the examination of these cultural practices.

### **Historical Approaches to Leisure, Recreation, and Sport in London, Ontario**

Finally, several works that examine the general, sporting, and recreational history of the City of London require brief mention for the critical background information they provide for this study. Frederick Armstrong's *The Forest City: An Illustrated History of London Canada* provides the most complete social, economic, and political history of the city. This chronological narrative provides an account of the rapid growth from a village prior to 1826, to a city by 1855, and includes biographical entries of influential citizens and families along with local political and economic developments. For the period from the 1860s to the First World War, Armstrong catalogues important achievements such as the introduction of the city's water system in 1878,<sup>87</sup> the 1871 decision by City Council to plant 15,000 trees in order to improve the city,<sup>88</sup> the annexation of land from surrounding communities between 1885 and 1897,<sup>89</sup> and the expansion of parks in London which grew to cover 546 acres in the city by 1911.<sup>90</sup> Although this source represents a general historical account and, as such, does not provide a comprehensive examination of any specific aspect of life in London, it does provide a good general guide to the city's historical record.

The two primary historical accounts of the sport and recreation history of London are Havi Echenberg's study "Sport as a Social Response to

Urbanization: a Case Study - London Ontario 1850-1900," and Pat Morden's *Putting Down Roots: A History of London's Parks and River*. Echenberg focuses on the influence of industrialization and urbanization and the corresponding increases in organized sport in the city. Specifically, Echenberg is concerned with class involvement in sport. To measure this, Echenberg employs a structured, occupation-based, classification system that related people's occupations to their class status for the years 1862, 1880, 1890, and 1900.<sup>91</sup> Echenberg found that over this period sport became increasingly available to a broader range of Londoners, particularly as new sports took root and established sports were popularized. Most useful to this study is the data Echenberg provides pertaining to the sport clubs that existed in London over this period. Also, this work is able to provide a measure of insight into which groups and individuals organized, defined, and controlled these sports clubs.

The history of London's Parks and Rivers and the recreation activities that took place therein forms the basis of Pat Morden's book. Morden chronicles the development of London's early parks system and its connections to the public lands that adjoined the Thames River. Most important, in terms of any investigation of recreation and leisure services in the city, Morden identifies two key players in the development of public parks in the city. These were councillor James Egan who in the 1860s and 1870s championed the creation of public parks in the city through forming the first committee on public parks in 1873, and brewery owner John Carling who supported Egan in securing land for the city's



first park, Victoria Park, in 1874.<sup>92</sup> By the first decade of the twentieth century a second champion of public recreation in London emerged. E.V. Buchanan, who became head of the city's parks department in 1914, represented the career bureaucrat who would lead and shape public park and recreation policy in London after World War One. Unlike Egan, Buchanan's achievements did not result from the unstructured route of political and personal patronage, but through the rational administration of a public agency with the largely autonomous power to carry out its duties outside the political arena.<sup>93</sup> The approaches taken by these two men in the provision and administration of public recreation spaces for the citizens of London provides a set of philosophical bookends that highlight the changes that took place over the period under investigation in this study.

### **Methodology and Procedure**

The bureaucratization and institutionalization of public, commercial, and private recreation practices in London between 1867 and 1914 can be argued to be both a product of the broader social, economic, and political influences that existed in the city at the time, as well as an active agent in the formation of those same influences. For example, the decision to provide public parks for the use of city residents was, in part, a reaction to the expressed need for such facilities. However, once the first parks were created, they became an integral part of shaping how people comprehended and spent their leisure time and set the

precedent that affected future demands for sport, recreation, and leisure opportunities. In turn, the control, regulation, and provision of recreation opportunities and practices represented a contested arena, as groups and individuals representing both similar and disparate class, ethnic, and gender groups struggled to define what constituted acceptable and rational recreation practices for the whole city. These tensions were universal and existed both between and within class, ethnic, and gender groups. In order to examine this process, based within the analytical framework of institutionalization proposed by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, and the interpretation of this concept proposed by Don Morrow, there are certain methodological and procedural considerations that must be examined and implemented.

The primary method for obtaining evidence to determine how the process of institutionalization and the resulting bureaucratization operated in London during the period under investigation includes the use of specific case studies of particular organizations and issues concerned with the administration and control of sport, recreation, and leisure practices within the city. The case studies that form the historical structure necessary for this investigation are presented in sequence by chapter, each of which critically analyses varying aspects of the process of institutionalization in terms of public, private, or commercial activities and how these practices were both an indicator of, and a catalyst for, change in how recreation operated in London. The processes of hegemony and institutionalization, as outlined in the analytical framework section of this

proposal, serve to guide and inform the questions that arise out of the critical analysis of how each activity operated and existed within the larger arena of sport, recreation, and leisure in the city.

The initial case study focusses upon the city's early parks system, specifically Victoria, Queen's, and Springbank Parks. This examination centres on early local and provincial legislation concerned with the provision of public land for recreation with particular emphasis on laws and by-laws that precipitated and regulated the formation of the city's first parks. This chapter provides critical insight into the direction of the public organization of recreation in London and the early formation of a recreation bureaucracy. The provision of public swimming and bathing facilities, and in particular the public rhetoric surrounding the need for such facilities is examined in the second case study. This examination provides a focus on the moral and ideological conflicts that underscored decisions concerning recreation practices. The third case study provides an examination of commercial leisure and recreation, specifically billiard rooms, bowling alleys, skating rinks, theatres, and Thames River steamboat companies. These studies serve to discern how broader leisure and recreation interests were intertwined within the dominant economic and entrepreneurial forces of the times. The final case, forming the fifth chapter, investigates three privately operated sport organizations. The first is the Tecumseh Baseball Club, a privately controlled organization that operated from the late 1860s through the 1870s. The other two private sports clubs, the Forest

City Bicycle Club and the London Lawn Bowling Club, provide insight into the organization of socially exclusive sporting organizations. The examination of these specific public, commercial, and private forms of sport, recreation, and leisure will serve as representative examples to provide some understanding of how these types of cultural practices were organized to be congruent with the ideology of the dominant fundamental group, or were at a minimum, constrained to operate in a specific manner in order to ensure their survival as legitimate cultural practices.

The repositories of primary source evidence related to the above case studies include the collections held in the J.J. Talman Regional Room Collection in the D.B. Weldon Library at The University of Western Ontario. The Talman collection contains a variety of primary source documents concerned with the historical record of the City of London which was critical to completing this study. The holdings therein include, for example, city and county council minutes, city and county directories, by-laws, personal papers of prominent citizens, business records of local companies, papers associated with private clubs and social organizations such as the YMCA, and a variety of photographic and map records. Also critical to this investigation were the local London newspapers, *The Daily Free Press* and *The London Advertiser*. These two newspapers provided critical information concerning the particular debates and events that were involved in the various case studies outlined above.

### Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this investigation of sport, leisure, and recreation in London is to provide some understanding of how this aspect of the people's lives was constructed and regulated. At a cursory level, the aim is to answer the questions of how and why did **one** way of organizing and governing these cultural practices become **the** way of doing so. To determine this process it is necessary to consider the concepts of institutionalization, bureaucratization, and hegemony. At a broader level, this study is concerned with both the place of sport, recreation, and leisure in the lives of Londoners, and how these activities produced and reproduced the ideological position of the city's dominant group – the middle- and upper-class men who wielded economic and political influence during the period under investigation. Ultimately, the purpose is to provide some understanding of how and why sport, recreation, and leisure practices, although diverse in their forms, came to be participated in within certain formal and informal guidelines that determined which practices were accepted and deemed worthwhile and which were not.

## ENDNOTES

1. See, for example, Elsie McFarlane, *The Development of Public Recreation in Canada* (Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1970); Jean Harvey and Roger Proulx, "Sport and the State in Canada," in J. Harvey and H. Cantelon eds., *Not Just a Game: Essays in Canadian Sport Sociology* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 93-119; and Gerald Redmond, *Sport and Politics in Canada* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1986).
2. Kevin Wamsley, "Good Clean Sport and a Deer Apiece: Game Legislation and State Formation in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Canada," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport* Vol. 25, No. 2 (December 1994): 1-20.
3. See, for example, Tony Joyce, "Sport and the Cash Nexus in Nineteenth Century Toronto," *Sport History Review* (Vol. 30, No. 2, November 1999): 140-167; and Alan Metcalfe, "The Evolution of Organized Physical Recreation in Montreal, 1840 - 1895," *Histoire Social/Social History* Vol. 1, No. 2 (May 1978): 144-166.
4. For a discussion of less organized rural folk sport and more organized forms of recreation in nineteenth century Canada, see Nancy Bouchier, "For the Love of the Game and the Honour of the Town: Organized Sport, Local Culture, and Middle Class Hegemony in Two Ontario Towns," (PhD diss., The University of Western Ontario, 1990), 3-4.
5. Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c. 1780 - 1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 13. Cunningham suggests that historians define leisure differently from sociologists in that they are not concerned whether all or only some of the time off work was leisure, but recognize that over time the idea of leisure has changed. In terms of this investigation, the changing nature of leisure in London between 1867 and 1914 will be examined with respect to the changing organization and bureaucratization of recreation and leisure practices.
6. Sport, according to Bernard Suits, "Tricky Triad: Games, Play and Sport," in eds. William J. Morgan and Klaus V. Meier, *Philosophic Inquiry in Sports*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1995), 7, can be described as competitive events involving a variety of physical human skills, where the superior participant is judged to have exhibited those skills in a superior way. Essentially these are competitive athletic events.
7. Jay J. Coakley, *Sport in Society Issues and Controversies*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Irwin McGraw-Hill, 1998), 81; and R.E. Allen, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). Coakley's description of bureaucratization is drawn from Allen Guttmann's characteristics of

dominant forms of sport, where individuals within the dominant sports organization oversee and sanction all aspects of competition. The dictionary definition of bureaucracy focuses on a State system of administration and governance as constructed by the officials who comprise the government.

8. See Gregory K. R. Stott, "The Maintenance of Suburban Autonomy: The Story of the Village of Peterville-London West, Ontario 1874-1897." (Master's Thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1999), 1, for a brief history of this community.

9. By 1912, London had an autonomous parks department responsible for a variety of parks and recreation projects.

10. Raymond Williams, "Hegemony," in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 108-141; and "Marxism and Literature," in *Culture and Society 1980-1950* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1961), 258 - 275. The theory of the process of hegemony is based within the much broader field of Marxist analysis, yet rejects the economic determinism of traditional Marxist approaches. See Anthony Giddens, *Sociology: A Brief but Critical Introduction* (London: MacMillan, 1982), 42-46, for a brief description of Marxist thought.

11. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 5. A useful conceptualization from the perspective of sport, based on Burger and Luckmann's ideas related to institutionalization, is found in Don Morrow, "The Institutionalization of Sport: A Case Study of Canadian Lacrosse, 1884-1914," *The International Journal of Sport* Vol. 9, No. 2 (August 1992): 236-251.

12. Ibid., 49.

13. Ibid., 50.

14. Ibid., 50-51.

15. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 114.

16. Morrow, "The Institutionalization of Sport," 236. The characteristics of the process of institutionalization are examined in greater detail in the "Social and Cultural Relations" section of the review of literature.

17. James Farganis, ed., *Readings in Social Theory: The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 44.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid, brackets mine.

20. T.J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," in *The American Historical Review* Vol. 90, No. 3 (June, 1985): 568.
21. Robert Boccock, *Hegemony* (London: Tavistock, 1986), 11.
22. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 108.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 110-111.
25. Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony," 568.
26. Ibid., 568-569.
27. Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 108, brackets mine.
28. Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony," 570.
29. Ibid., 571.
30. Ibid.
31. Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 48, brackets mine.
32. Ibid., 49.
33. Ibid., 26.
34. Morrow, "The Institutionalization of Sport," 241. Modernization theory has been utilized by some sport historians to explain the development of present day sporting practices, see for example Alan Guttman's *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978). This approach attributes the development of 'modern' sporting practices to the technological and social changes associated with the development of an urban and industrial society. However, modernization theory has been criticized on a number of grounds. The most contentious issue raised is that modernization theory assumes that the past is forced on a linear continuum and divided into dichotomous categories of social and human attributes that are labeled as being either 'traditional' or 'modern'. Modernization must be recognized as being ultimately deterministic and overly simplistic in how it attempts to interpret the complex social, cultural and economic processes which interact within human societies.
35. Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 50



36. Ibid., 50-51.
37. Ibid., 51.
38. Ibid., 54.
39. Ibid., 52.
40. Ibid, brackets mine.
41. Ibid., 67.
42. Ibid., 55.
43. Ibid., 56.
44. Ibid., 85.
45. Ibid., 61.
46. Ibid., 61-62.
47. Morrow, "The Institutionalization of Sport: A Case Study of Canadian Lacrosse, 1884-1914," 243.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., 244.
50. Ibid., 247.
51. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, 11.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., 13.
54. Ibid., 14.
55. Ibid., 185-187.
56. Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight hours for what we will: Workers and leisure in an industrial city, 1870 - 1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4.
57. Ibid., 4-5.
58. Ibid., 223-226.

59. Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 16. The three Ontario communities studied by Marks are Thorold, Campbellford, and Ingersoll.
60. *Ibid.*, 215-217.
61. *Ibid.*, 208.
62. McFarland, *The Development of Public Recreation in Canada*, 7.
63. Alan Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807 - 1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 10-11.
64. Don Morrow and Mary Keyes, *A Concise History of Sport in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989), vi.
65. Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 19.
66. *Ibid.*, 20.
67. Colin Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), ix-x.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*, 4.
70. Kevin Wamsley, "Cultural signification and national ideologies: rifle-shooting in late nineteenth century Canada," *Social History* (Vol. 20, No. 1 January 1995): 63-72; and "Good Clean Sport and a Deer Apiece," 1-20. For a comprehensive examination of government involvement in nineteenth century Canadian sport and leisure see Kevin Wamsley, "Legislation and Leisure in Nineteenth Century Canada" (PhD diss., The University of Alberta, 1992).
71. Wamsley, "Cultural signification and national ideologies," 64.
72. Wamsley, "Good Clean Sport and a Deer Apiece," 7.
73. *Ibid.*, 14.
74. Wamsley, "Cultural signification and national ideologies," 70.

75. Ken Cruikshank and Nancy Bouchier, "Dirty Spaces: Environment, the State, and Recreational Swimming in Hamilton Harbour, 1870-1946," *Sport History Review* Vol. 29, No. 1 (May 1998): 59-76.
76. Ibid., 70, brackets mine.
77. Gene Homel, "Sliders and Backsliders: Toronto's Sunday Tobogganing Controversy of 1912" in *Urban History Review/Revue d'Histoire Urbaine* Vol. 10, No. 2 (October 1981): 25.
78. Ibid., 28.
79. Melvin Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 1-2. Adelman approaches his study from the conceptual perspective of modernization which suggests that sport evolved from unorganized folk or pre-modern roots prior to industrialization to become organized and developed sporting practices by the later decades of the twentieth century. Although this approach provides a clear method for describing changes in sport practices over this period, it has been largely discounted by sport historians including, for example, Colin D. Howell, Douglas Booth, Susan Brownell, and Gerd von der Lippe (see *Sport History Review*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (May 2001)) due to problems of oversimplification related to why these changes took place, and the tendency to undervalue the cultural importance of earlier forms of physical activity.
80. Ibid., 265-270.
81. Stephen Hardy, *How Boston Played: Sport, Recreation, and Community 1865-1915* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1982), 16-19.
82. Alan Metcalfe, "Working Class Recreation in Montreal, 1860-1895," *Working papers in the sociological study of sports and leisure*, Queens University Vol. 1, No. 2 (1978): 2.
83. Ibid., 8.
84. Joyce, "Sport and the Cash Nexus in Nineteenth Century Toronto," 140-148.
85. Ibid., 148-153.
86. Ibid., 154-163.
87. Frederick H. Armstrong, *The Forest City: An Illustrated History of London Canada* (Northridge, California: Windsor Press, 1986), 106.
88. Ibid., 111.

89. Ibid., 128-129.

90. Ibid., 142.

91. Havi Encheberg, "Sport as a Social Response to Urbanization: A Case Study, London Ontario, 1850-1900" (Master's Thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1979), 92-98 and 115.

92. Pat Morden, *Putting Down Roots: A History of London's Parks and River* (St. Catharines: Stonehouse Publishers, 1988), 8.

93. Ibid., 39.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FORMATION OF A MUNICIPAL PARKS SYSTEM IN LONDON: SPACES, PLACES, AND FACILITIES FOR PUBLIC RECREATION AND LEISURE, 1867-1914

Colonel Mahlon Burwell, the surveyor who prepared London's town site (upon his death in 1846), bequeathed a piece of land south of Stanley Street, between Wharnccliffe and Wortley Roads, to the town as a recreation ground. This site was later named St. James' Park, a function it would never fully realize.<sup>1</sup> By 1856, the land donated by Burwell had not been improved and remained vacant. To remedy this situation, London City Council entered into a six-year lease agreement with Mr. Thomas Francis, the former City Inspector, with the stipulation that he improve the property by planting trees thereon.<sup>2</sup> In 1861, as Mr. Francis' lease ran out, council learned that he had not met the conditions of the lease and had grown only potatoes on the land without planting any trees; shortly thereafter the lease was terminated. London City Council re-leased the land to a Mr. Coleman. When attempting to take possession of the property, Mr. Colman was forced to physically remove the former tenant, Mr. Francis.<sup>3</sup> It is not clear how long Mr. Coleman remained the leaseholder of the property, but it is well documented that the city held onto the land until 1878 at which time the park was sold for building lots with a portion of the profits being set aside to finance improvements at the city's newest park, Victoria Park.<sup>4</sup> Thus, London's first piece of property designated to be a public recreation area ultimately never served its intended purpose.

#### Introduction

The brief account above of the history of St. James' Park provides some indication of the low priority attached to the provision of recreation land by London City Council prior to the early 1870s. There was no discernible movement to improve land already owned by the city or purchase new property to be used as a public park in London through the 1850s and 1860s. This situation existed, in part, because of the lack of a perceived need among city politicians for such

extravagances in the face of more pressing concerns of building and managing a growing city. Yet, as the population of London multiplied, and with the expansion of the mercantile and industrial base during the latter 1860s, citizens began to lobby for publically accessible land within the city to be available for use by residents.<sup>5</sup> This call to set aside parkland represented the earliest pressure placed on the municipal government of London to consider furnishing recreation space. Moreover, this movement represented a recognition that one of the city's responsibilities was to provide accessible space for recreation to its citizens, and that this aspect of their lives was no longer simply an affair of the private citizen. This pressure exerted by groups and individuals within London soon became part of the larger project of building a city of the first order. To this end, by the early 1870s the need to provide publically accessible park land in London became an issue that the city's leaders could no longer ignore or neglect.

The provision of public land for parks represents one of the critical foundations upon which the broader examination of nineteenth century Canadian leisure, recreation, and sport history is based. Although other areas of investigation, including the influence of private sports bodies<sup>6</sup> and the vibrant tavern culture of the day,<sup>7</sup> are equally important, in terms of the provision of publically owned and managed spaces and facilities, parks provide a uniquely useful mechanism for understanding the role local governments played in the growth of sport, leisure, and recreation. To examine how a formal sport, leisure, and recreation bureaucracy developed in Canadian urban centres, it is necessary to examine the impact of

provincial and local recreation legislation on the provision of public recreation spaces and places in developing urban communities such as London. In addition, it is important to recognize that the city government not only delivered and regulated this aspect of daily life, but also acted, indirectly, through fostering urban and industrial growth, to marshal greater interest in the variety of issues involved with leisure and recreation in London.

This chapter illustrates how a recreation bureaucracy situated within London's governing framework emerged. Specifically, this investigation focuses upon contested ideas surrounding what a public park ought to be. The actors involved in this process included public park proponents, municipal leaders, along with groups and individuals who promoted a variety of agendas that sought to define overtly and covertly this emerging element of London's cultural landscape. Ultimately, it was a relatively small group of prominent Londoners who, through their political, economic, and social influence, assumed the leadership roles in determining where, how, and for whom the city's parks were constructed.

The examination of the relationships between the various levels of legislation and the development of municipal recreation bureaucracies provides some insight into the manner in which each town or city was influenced in part by broader guidelines that were framed by provincial legislators, as well as by unique local circumstances, as was the case in London. In addition, a variety of emerging concepts concerned with the social importance of providing public recreation space (such as the parks movement in North America) must also be examined to

comprehend their influence upon the formation of recreation-related cultural practices at both the local, regional, and national levels.

It can be argued that a local recreation bureaucracy, acting as an instrument of the prevailing legislation and the popular social reform and improvement movements, existed in order to meet the needs of the city's elite citizens. In turn, these same individuals were more often than not concerned with the financial implications involved in providing public recreation places and spaces. However, this conclusion is likely overly simplistic and does not account for those citizens who were genuinely guided by the belief that a city and its inhabitants could be socially improved through public recreation initiatives. Thus, the continued need to balance financial costs with the purported social benefits quickly led to conflict within the group of elite men who governed London. This conflict underscored much of the debate that surrounded the early organization of public recreation in London. The extent to which these initiatives served to reproduce the ideals and values held by individuals who comprised the city's leadership must be weighed in terms of this conflict. In the end, this discord was predicated upon two practical matters: how much land should be purchased, and what forms of recreation practices should be allowed on this public land.

The actions taken by London's municipal leadership between the late 1860s and the beginning of the First World War in terms of providing space and facilities for public recreation and leisure, provides an example of the impact of an evolving bureaucratic structure upon the process of institutionalization. Specifically, how did



the implementation of bureaucratic regulations assist in the establishment of these social practices particularly as means to overcome differences that arose over their place in everyday life? The call for publicly accessible parkland in the late 1860s and early 1870s represented evidence of a growing popular awareness that was focused upon addressing the need for this type of recreation space. This influence was manifested in the repeated requests for action to be taken to meet the perceived need for publically accessible recreation space, a pattern of actions that over time became easily recognized, understood, and repeated.<sup>8</sup> This praxis emerged through the growing acceptance among many Londoners that the provision of land and space for recreation represented a right of citizenship rather than a privilege. A second, more practical concern, revolved around the need to maintain civic pride in order to distinguish London from other towns and cities. Attracting the right sort of man,<sup>9</sup> representing the right social class, also required that their leisure and recreation needs be met. These actions, over time, demonstrated to like-minded individuals the presence of a shared understanding of the types of recreation activities that should be available in a progressive city. The embrace, reproduction, and entrenchment of this shared understanding which promoted the need for amenities such as accessible public parks began to influence decisions made by local politicians and fostered the development of a parks bureaucracy. Of course, a broader review of this set of circumstances would show that these attitudes and related actions were not unique to the City of London at this time. Over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

attitudes toward the provision of public land were narrowed and established in so much as the parks came to be viewed as essential rather than optional elements of London's physical constitution. This conception of the role of public land as a functioning element of the city represented the general acceptance of the earlier attempts to promote and develop an institutional leisure and recreation culture based within the broader social movement that had its roots in European and later North American urban growth.

To determine the extent to which public recreation in Ontario and London was shaped by external influences, it is necessary to examine the international and national events that preceded provincial and local developments. These broader changes were clearly important factors in formalizing the popular belief among middle-class reformers and like-minded elite citizens that a need existed to provide public spaces for leisure and recreation as a remedy to the growing environmental and social ills resulting from urbanization and industrialization. To this end, it is necessary to explore the early British and later Canadian legislation, along with the pertinent ideas arising from the parks movement in the United States in order to determine the impact of these acts and concepts upon political decisions and local by-laws passed by the London City Council during the 1860s and 1870s. These broader influences, it must be recognized, served to frame the ongoing debate surrounding public recreation as a part of the functioning municipal body. Finally, with specific reference to the provision of public parks, differences in the conception of how parks were to be used, either as sites to promote cultural improvement

through respectable leisure practices, most often the goal of elite and middle-class reformers, versus the provision of space for 'baser' sports and physical recreation activities, often promoted by businessmen and members of the working classes – require a measure of attention.

The examination of the role of public parks and buildings in the bureaucratization and institutionalization of recreation, leisure, and sport in London will focus upon the formation and subsequent management of London's first parks. Investigation of the conflict that surrounded the creation of the city's first park, Victoria Park (See Map 1, page 65), will serve to illuminate the primary motives of the city's elite citizenry – the provision of a rational recreation space suitable to their needs. The formation and use of Queen's Park (now the Western Fair Grounds), London's second park, illustrates the struggle among groups and individuals concerned with the parks movement in London over the question of the appropriate use of public park land. The city's third park at Springbank (See Map 2, page 66) provides insight into the increased interest in converting public land into recreation space and the inherent advantages of this space being administered by an independent body, in this case the Board of Water Commissioners. Finally, consideration of the later influence of the playground movement<sup>10</sup> also provides a means to examine the agency of groups other than established political bodies in the administration of public recreation. However, prior to the examination of these primarily local issues, a brief investigation of the broader international and national precursors to the parks and recreation movement in London must be considered.



Map of London, Ontario - 1878.

Map by Miles and Co., *New Topographical Atlas of the Province of Ontario*.  
Courtesy J.J. Talman Regional Collection, D.B. Weldon Library, The University  
of Western Ontario.

- A - Victoria Park
- B - Queen's Park
- C - Blackfriars Bridge



Map of London City Waterworks - 1886.

Courtesy J.J. Talman Regional Collection, D.B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.

### **Pre-Confederation: British Legislation and the American Parks Movement**

The initial attention accorded to the issue of public space for recreation and leisure in British North America centred around the issue of providing parks. Although there is evidence in Canada that as early as 1826 there was a need expressed for a "Public Walk" in Toronto,<sup>11</sup> the earliest legal documentation acknowledging the need for public parks is found in early nineteenth century British legislation. According to Hazel Conway, in *People's Parks: The Design and Development of Parks in Britain*, municipal parks existed as early as the seventeenth century. However, it was not until the early nineteenth century, during the period of rapid population increases in urban centres resulting from industrialization, that official recognition of the need for urban parks was first expressed. In 1833, the Select Committee on Public Walks presented a report to the British Parliament suggesting that parks would improve the health of those living in cities and provide accessible space for 'rational' recreation.<sup>12</sup> Following this, a succession of legislative acts were passed in Britain that sought to maintain existing public lands such as commons, and ensure that new parks were created in towns and cities. The first piece of legislation passed to meet these ends was the Enclosure Act of 1836 which exempted common fields from enclosure if they lay within a specified distance from a town or city. For example, any 'common' within 10 miles of London, England could not be enclosed.<sup>13</sup> A second piece of legislation, The 1848 Public Health Act, stated that "Local Boards of Health are empowered to provide, maintain and improve land for

municipal parks and to support and contribute toward such land provided by any person whomsoever.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, prior to a midpoint of the nineteenth century, legislators in Britain had already begun to address the need to provide open, public lands for people in order to address their health and recreation needs. In concert with Britain, the United States and the colonies in British North America were beginning to address similar issues.

It is necessary to examine briefly public park development in the United States because some of the ideas developed by American urban architects directly impacted upon how London, Ontario’s earliest parks were conceptualized. In the United States, according to David Schuyler, public parks were viewed as important in so much as they fit into the larger concern for improved urban design.<sup>15</sup> Parks represented a way to confront the problems created by industrialization and urbanization that had become apparent by the middle of the nineteenth century. Schuyler argues that “during the 1840s and 1850s proponents of the new urban landscape applied the lessons of cemetery design and crusaded to create large public spaces within the city.”<sup>16</sup> The example of this movement forwarded by Schuyler is that of New York City’s Central Park. This space, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, served to “shut out the urban environment . . . and to provide the elements of a rural setting that, he felt, met the psychological and social needs of residents of the city.”<sup>17</sup> Further, landscape reformers such as Olmsted promoted parks as mechanisms for maintaining social order, thereby suggesting “that the physical spaces humans

occupy influence their patterns of behavior."<sup>18</sup> In addition, Schuyler suggests that Olmsted viewed parks as spaces for quiet contemplation, restraint, and decorum, activities clearly in line with those promoted by middle-class social reformers. It is not surprising that the legislation in Britain, which focussed on securing space for public parks, combined with moral-reforming ideas promoted in the United States through rational urban park design, influenced the parks movement in Canada, particularly in London, Ontario. Clearly, these approaches represent the two primary social and cultural influences promoting the idea that in order to provide morally and physically healthy urban environments for citizens, there needed to be some provision of free and accessible parkland. These early influences formed part of the basis for the emerging forces that sought to secure recreation spaces in Canadian urban centres such as London. This evidence of like-minded individuals working to create public parks represents the emergence of common patterns of behaviour that led to the formation of recognized and reproducible mechanisms for ensuring the protection and dedication of publically accessible space for recreation and leisure purposes.

### **1867-1883: Organization of Public Recreation and the First Public Parks**

The first land set aside in the British North American colonies specifically for the purpose of public recreation and leisure occurred in 1763 when the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia granted 240 acres of land to the citizens of Halifax.<sup>19</sup> Part of this land grant exists today and is still referred to as the Halifax



'Common.' In Ontario, a committee on Public Walks and Gardens was established by Toronto City Council in 1851. This committee was charged with the retention and development of garrison land that had been leased to the city by the military authorities for the purposes of pleasure and recreation. An 1860 by-law entrusted care of all the city's public walks, gardens, and parks to this committee and stipulated that the garrison lands could not be used for 'games' without the council's permission.<sup>20</sup> This early example of the regulation and use of public land exhibited the tight control that municipal leaders believed was required, particularly in terms of the appropriateness of the types of recreation activities that took place therein.

As in the case of Toronto, individuals in London began to request that land be set aside for public recreation about the time of Confederation. This initial interest in providing municipal land for public recreation occurred a full fifteen years before the passing of the first provincial legislation that addressed the provision of public parks in Ontario.<sup>21</sup> This relatively late entry by the province into the issue of providing public parks is a clear indication that this area of public life had been considered primarily the purview of local governments in Ontario up to that time. In May 1867, London Alderman James Egan first moved to secure funds to provide for a public park in the city.<sup>22</sup> The following year, on 4 May 1868, Aldermen Egan and John Christie successfully tabled a motion to form a special Park Committee that would provide a report to council on the practicality of securing grounds for a public park.<sup>23</sup> Securing

suitable land for a permanent park proved to be a more difficult task than Alderman Egan had anticipated and, as a temporary measure in June of 1868, Middlesex County Council granted the City of London use of the grounds of the County Court House as a park to be used daily between five a.m. and eight-thirty p.m., under the condition that ornamental trees had to be planted on the grounds.<sup>24</sup> It is unclear how long this agreement lasted, but it is evident that this arrangement was not deemed sufficient to meet the recreation needs of Londoners. According to local historian Pat Morden, one reason this land may not have been well used and ultimately accepted by Londoners as a park resulted from the knowledge that several public executions had been held on the grounds in 1838-39 following the rebellion that began in Upper Canada in December 1837.<sup>25</sup> Thus, at least in part because of the questionable suitability of the Court House grounds, the need for a permanent public park in London remained an unresolved political issue. In the early 1870s, two men rose to champion the cause for a permanent public park, the aforementioned Alderman James Egan, and local businessman and politician John Carling.

By the late 1860s and into the early 1870s in London a variety of actions taking place in Canadian and American urban centres began to influence both citizens and members of the city's political leadership toward a recognition of the need for designated land for public recreation. Londoners exhibited a growing awareness of the need for public land in the form of a park. To this end, London politicians debated the issues of the expense of securing land and how any

lands secured should be administered. By the middle of the 1870s, a degree of unanimity had been achieved amongst London's political leaders that creating a public park was a necessary component toward building a vibrant and desirable city.

### **Victoria Park: An Eden for London's Elite**

In September 1870, Alderman James Egan presented London City Council with a plan to purchase a parcel of land on Richmond Street for \$3200. This proposal was forwarded to the finance committee for review. The Committee responded to Alderman Egan's request, stating that they agreed that the city needed to buy parkland but the \$3200 for the proposed parcel of land was "more than the property was worth."<sup>26</sup> This unsuccessful attempt did not thwart James Egan's efforts to secure land for a park. In 1871, after losing his bid to become mayor, Egan settled in as the chair of the newly formed Standing Committee on Public Parks. Shortly thereafter, he made a second attempt to secure the \$3200 to purchase land for a park, but again his proposal was rejected by council.<sup>27</sup> No further action was taken in the matter of securing land for a city park until 1873 when Alderman Egan travelled to Ottawa to request the title to a portion of the old garrison grounds for use as a public park. He had hoped to obtain forty acres north of Central Avenue, including Carling's Creek and Lake Horn. Instead Egan was offered only thirteen acres, the land that would form Victoria Park.<sup>28</sup> London City Council accepted the offer and paid \$48,000 for the land which had an

assessed value of \$100,000.<sup>29</sup> When the suggestion was forwarded that the newly acquired land should be used for building lots and not a park, local businessman and politician John Carling spoke in favour of using the land for the park. Carling implored:

It is not merely the city of today that they should look to but the city it was likely to become 40 or 50 years hence . . . Let us go to work and provide an expansive pleasure ground, a breathing place for the citizens, where they and their children may assemble and breath purer air.<sup>30</sup>

As a result, through the persistent efforts of James Egan and the support exhibited by John Carling, London managed to acquire part of the former garrison land to constitute the city's first public park. With the land secured, the debate surrounding the park turned to related two questions, who should the park serve and how should it be used?

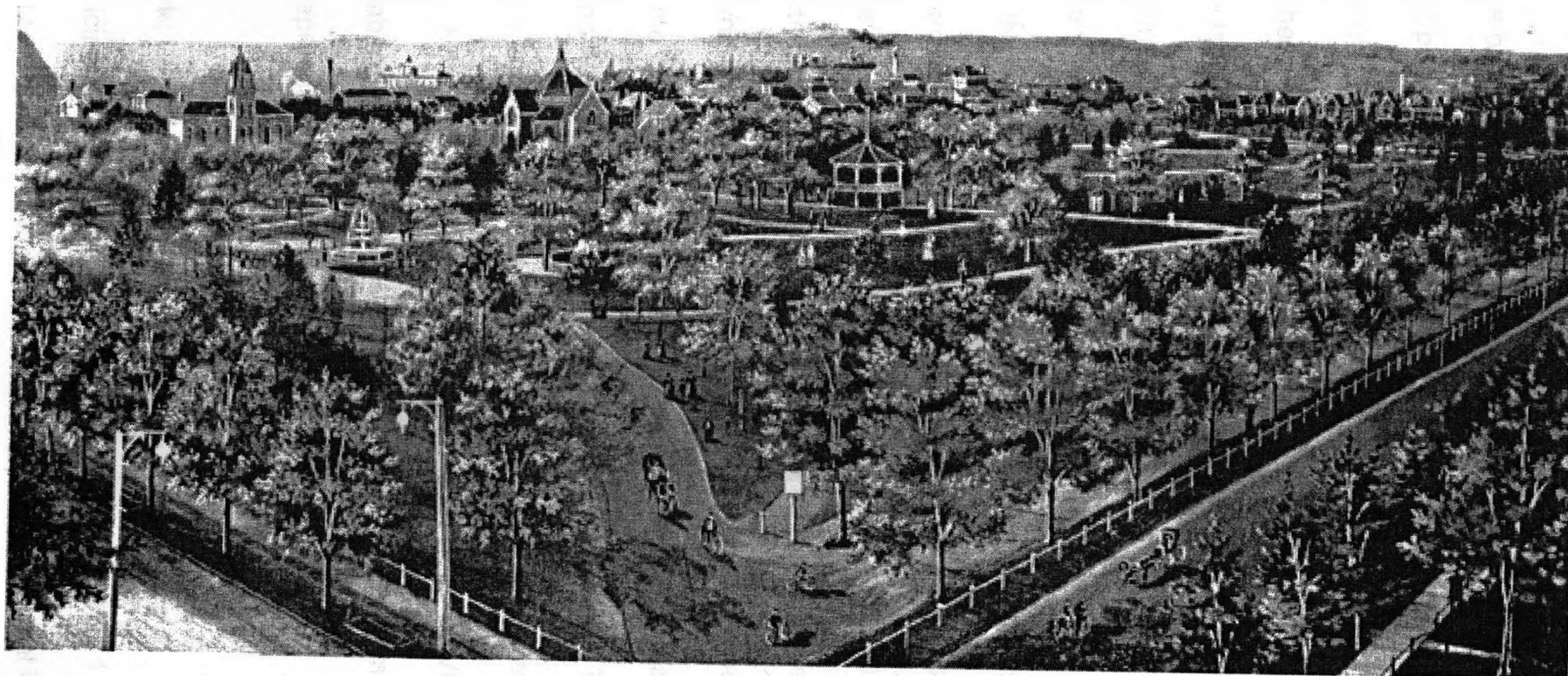
Victoria Park was officially dedicated by Governor-General Lord Dufferin on 27 August 1874.<sup>31</sup> Following this dedication, mayor Benjamin Cronyn expressed his hope that upon the Governor-General's next visit to London the grounds would be suitably laid out.<sup>32</sup> What the mayor meant by 'suitably laid out' is not known; however, over the next four years arriving at an answer to this question would result in disagreement between a variety of groups and individuals who harboured differing ideas as how best to use the new public grounds. In 1875, James Egan, the Alderman responsible for originally securing the land, moved to give "the City of London the power to dispose of by sale or otherwise, any portion or the whole of Victoria park."<sup>33</sup> Why Egan took this

position which seemed to contradict his earlier actions to secure a park for the city is not clear.<sup>34</sup> However, following a brief debate his motion was soundly defeated by council who viewed the parkland as a 'gift' that obligated them to keep the land for its initially intended use as a park.<sup>35</sup>

Debate over the best plan for the development of Victoria Park surrounded two arguments. On one hand, there were those who viewed the park as a good site for sports competition and physical recreation. For example, in 1874 part of the park was used for football, while in 1876 it served as a cricket pitch.<sup>36</sup> Yet, opposition to the use of the land for physical recreation activities became evident when in September of 1876 an application made by the London Tecumseh Baseball Club president J.L.Engelhart to use part of the park for his team was rejected.<sup>37</sup> The Parks Committee's dismissal of Englehart's request to use the park set off "a controversy, much coloured by ward politics [that] developed and dragged on for months. Englehart was so discouraged that he withdrew his application."<sup>38</sup> The controversy over the use of Victoria Park took a turn in April 1877 when the application by the London Cricket Club to use part of the park was accepted by council.<sup>39</sup> Ironically, at this same meeting of London City Council at which the Cricket Club received permission to use Victoria Park, a request was received from the recently displaced Tecumseh Baseball Club to be allowed to use street scrapings to level their new grounds at Kensington. One of the reasons why the Tecumseh Baseball Club may have been refused use of the park land could have been related to it being a professional club. City

Council may have been more apt to support the amateur cricketers than the professional baseball team.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the debate over the new park focussed on how the land ought to be used and who should be allowed to utilize the grounds. The Cricket Club which had been favourably treated by the council in 1877, lost its privilege the following year.

In 1878 a decision concerning the use of Victoria Park was reached after much vacillating. London City Council voted to employ William Miller, the designer of the United States Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876 and at that time the head gardener at Fairmont Park in the same city, to lay out Victoria Park.<sup>41</sup> Miller's plan to create an ornamental landscaped park was accepted, but not universally. Aldermen Egan and Pritchard voiced their opposition to the plan objecting that the project was too expensive, and after losing the vote on the issue both resigned from the Park Committee in protest.<sup>42</sup> It is likely that those elite Londoners whose mansions were built in close proximity to the park were probably involved in influencing the decision to construct an ornamental park. Thus, after four years of debate and conflict the fate of Victoria Park had finally been decided. London could boast an ornamental landscaped park to serve its citizens as a site of rational and moderate recreation well into the twentieth century (See Illustration 1, page 76).



Victoria Park c. 1900.

Archie Bremner, *City of London, Ontario, Canada*. London: The London Printing and Lithograph Co., 1900.

With the battle over the form and function of Victoria Park finally settled, the attention of park advocates in London turned toward two new park sites, Salter's Grove (renamed Queen's Park in May 1879)<sup>43</sup> and Springbank.<sup>44</sup> By 1878 both of these sites were in the process of being turned into parks. The Salter's Grove land had been purchased by the city in 1878 for \$11,000,<sup>45</sup> while Springbank, formed from the land surrounding the recently constructed waterworks' dam and pump house, was in its infancy. As was the case with Victoria Park, the manner in which these two park sites were formed resulted in additional controversy, primarily over the financial concerns that surrounded the projects. In the case of Salter's Grove, this concern was dealt with through community action that supported the development of the park site. In the case of Springbank, where the issue of creating a park was little more than an afterthought, the conflict surrounded the decision of where to locate the waterworks and how the project should be financed, dominated. Thus, in the case of Salter's Grove, arguments over its location and use depended more upon meeting the needs of Londoners who were not served by Victoria Park, while the suitability of the artesian well water and delivery system in the case of Springbank represented the issues of primary concern.

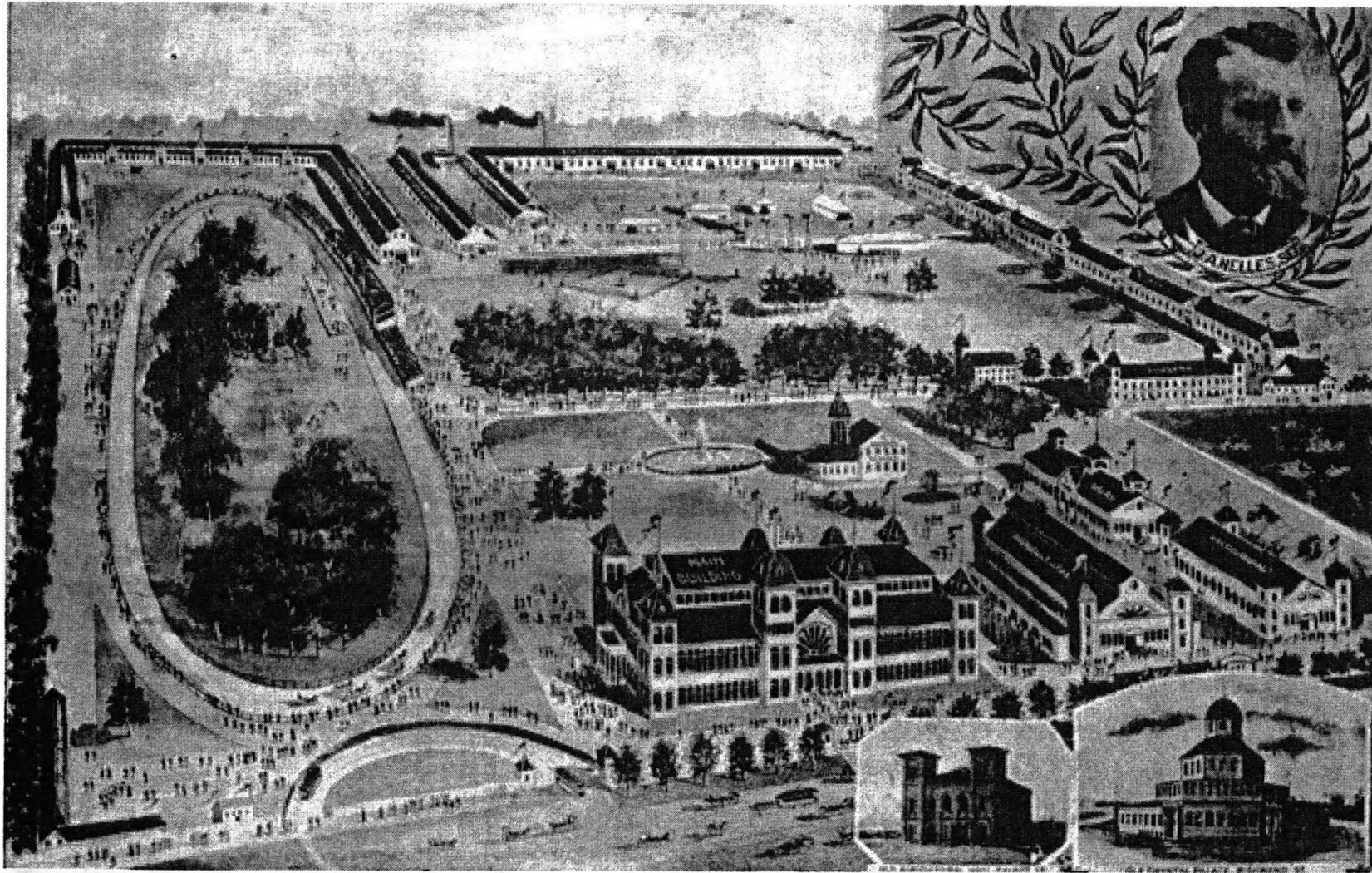
### **Queen's Park: London's Playground**

A municipal by-law establishing Queen's Park (See Map 1, page 62) was passed on 5 May 1879. This enactment completed the proposal initiated a year



previous by former Mayor Benjamin Cronyn (1874 and 1875) and a group of ninety supporters.<sup>46</sup> This project had its roots in a city-wide vote held on 3 July 1878 when the city's electorate voted not to sell either the existing Exhibition Grounds or Salter's Grove.<sup>47</sup> Moving from this show of support, former Mayor Benjamin Cronyn enlisted a group of influential and concerned citizens to raise funds to improve Salter's Grove and create a second public park in London. According to the subscription book listing the donations, \$945 was raised "for the purposes of fencing in and laying out Salter's Grove as a Public Park for the City of London."<sup>48</sup> In a move to avoid the problems that accompanied the creation and development of Victoria Park, a city by-law was drafted and passed that formally established Queen's Park and set out the conditions under which it would be managed. The first clause of the by-law clearly set out the purpose of the grounds to exist as "a public Park for the recreation and amusement of the citizens of London."<sup>49</sup> The city also appointed three prominent citizens, Benjamin Cronyn, Andrew McCormick, and William H. Birrell, as trustees responsible for the administration of the park along with the Mayor, the Park Committee Chairman, and the City Engineer. Finally, a stipulation was included that limit the number of days for which admission could be charged to the park to twelve, with the proceeds going to the operation of the park. This clause was most likely included to limit the use of the park for fairs and exhibitions in the years prior to the relocation of the Western Fair Association to the site in 1887.<sup>50</sup> The park was officially dedicated on the Queen's birthday (24 May 1879) by Mayor Robert

Lewis and the park's trustees from the bandstand before a crowd estimated to have numbered about 6,000 people. The opening ceremonies were followed by an athletics meet held on the new 200-yard track and then a lacrosse match between the London Lacrosse Club and a Native team.<sup>51</sup> It could be argued that this new park was conceived and managed in such a way as to meet the needs of those Londoners interested in physical recreation who had lost the use of Victoria Park after 1878; however, no direct evidence in terms of discussion at city council meetings exists to substantiate that this was the case. Illustration 2 on page 80 provides a view of Queen's Park dating from the turn-of-the-twentieth century. In this illustration, circa 1900, the dominance of the Western Fair building is evident; however, the illustrator also depicts the space as still being used for physical recreation activities such as racing and baseball. Therefore, Queen's Park was developed to serve a function quite different from Victoria Park, and was the product of a citizen-led initiative which sought to provide publicly accessible land for physical recreation purposes. However, although this project began as a popular movement, the implementation of bureaucratic regulations and legislation in the form of the 1879 municipal legislation provides evidence that the men who comprised London City Council did not want to cede their leadership position over the form and function of public recreation grounds in the city.



Queen's Park and Western Fair Grounds c. 1900.

Archie Bremner, *City of London, Ontario, Canada*. London: The London Printing and Lithograph Co., 1900.

### **Springbank Park: Recreation at the Waterworks**

The third park to be formed during the late 1870s, Springbank Park (See Map 2, page 64), served a recreational purpose that was substantially different from either Victoria or Queen's Parks. The park, unofficially formed in 1879 from the land purchased by the city surrounding the newly built waterworks dam and pump-house several miles down the Thames River from London,<sup>52</sup> quickly became a popular day excursion destination. Day excursionists were ferried to the park by commercial steamboats during the summer months as the only alternatives were poorly maintained paths that provided access to the site.<sup>53</sup> Unlike the newly-created Queen's Park which was operated under the authority of its trustees and representatives of City Council, the management of the recreation area at the waterworks site fell entirely under the control of the Board of Water Commissioners. The Board existed autonomously of London City Council as an administrative body charged to oversee the operation of the city's waterworks system. Thus, although Springbank Park did serve Londoners, its *raison d'être*, function, and administration were unique when compared to Victoria and Queen's Parks.

In order to understand how a park came to exist at Springbank, it is first necessary to examine the origins of the waterworks and the ongoing debate that surrounded the project from its beginning in the early 1850s until the completion of construction in 1878-79. Although the waterworks project was not directly concerned with the issue of providing public park land, the social and political

issues surrounding the project do provide insight into the increasing regulation, bureaucratization, and institutionalization of life in London. At a pragmatic level, there were two critical reasons London residents sought to construct a waterworks system: the ever present threat of fire and the continuing concern over water-borne disease.

The concern over fire protection in London arose out of the inability to secure a supply of water sufficient to effectively combat the numerous blazes that threatened the community. In 1843 large water-tanks were placed at street corners; however, this defence proved inadequate in 1844 when a fire burnt down several buildings on both sides of Dundas Street between Talbot and Rideout streets. The inadequacy of the water tank scheme was again evident on 13 April 1845 when a much larger blaze destroyed some 300 buildings representing about one fifth of the town.<sup>54</sup> In the aftermath of this fire, the town purchased new fire fighting equipment, passed a by-law requiring the use of brick for buildings, and opened the town's first fire hall.<sup>55</sup> These attempts to control the threat of fire were only partially successful, and it was not until the construction of the waterworks system that a degree of safety from fire was achieved.

Drinking water in London had traditionally been drawn from private- and city-owned wells that were susceptible to water-borne diseases such as typhoid fever. In 1847, for instance, a typhoid epidemic resulted in a number of deaths including that of Dr. Hiram Davis Lee, the President of the Board of Police.<sup>56</sup> The

constant concern over the safety of the city's drinking water prompted many Londoners to seriously consider the need to construct a waterworks system that could provide clean and safe water for domestic consumption. Consequently, as a result of the continued threats of fire and water-borne disease, the leadership of London was forced to examine the practicality of constructing a system to provide water to the city.

The first individual to take steps toward constructing a waterworks system was Elijah Leonard,<sup>57</sup> one of London's preeminent industrialists and politicians. Leonard formed the London and Westminster Water-Works Company in November of 1854.<sup>58</sup> This first effort to construct a waterworks system failed primarily because of the inability to locate a suitable supply of water. A second attempt to locate artesian wells in the city that could supply a sufficient quantity of water was made in 1866. However, this attempt also failed after it was found that most of the wells were impregnated with sulphur.<sup>59</sup> Finally, by the early 1870s, London's City Council became more involved in the process of developing a waterworks scheme and sent committees to examine the waterworks in Brantford, Ontario, in September of 1871, and Jackson, Michigan, in November of the same year.<sup>60</sup> Two years later, in 1873, the Provincial legislature assented to "An act for the Construction of Water-Works for the City of London."<sup>61</sup> Although these actions represented a genuine interest among the city's leaders to solve the water supply problem, they represented only the initial steps in the process of planning and building a waterworks system.

The largest obstacle facing the city leaders was the question of how to finance the waterworks system. One possibility outlined in the Waterworks Act provided the option of allowing a private company to build the system.<sup>62</sup> Two such offers by private consortiums for consideration by the city voters to build and run a waterworks system for the municipality were tabled, in 1875 and 1876 respectively. After review, both of these proposals were turned down and the decision was made to build a city-owned and -operated system.<sup>63</sup> The city-run waterworks project was finally accepted by Londoners primarily because an important change was made to the Waterworks Act. The critical alteration concerned the removal of a clause in the original document requiring all home owners and renters to pay for the water whether they used the services or not.<sup>64</sup> With this alteration to the Act, and despite the continued concerns over the cost of building a waterworks system, on 14 December 1877 the citizens of London voted to pass a by-law that approved the raising of the funds needed to construct the waterworks.<sup>65</sup> The passing of this by-law satisfied the clause of the 1873 Waterworks Act which specified that no construction could begin until the city's electorate accepted the council's proposal.<sup>66</sup> The legislation also set out a management structure under the leadership of an elected Board of Water Commissioners.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the first Board of Water Commissioners, which included chairman John Carling, Mayor Robert Lewis, and J.M. Minhinnick, were accorded control over the entire operation of the waterworks including the land secured at the dam and pump-house site.<sup>68</sup> Shortly after the completion of the

dam and pump-house on the south side of the river, and the reservoir atop Hungerford Hill in 1878, the property was used as a day holiday destination by Londoners for boating, picnics, and other recreational activities.

Prior to the construction of the waterworks at Springbank, most Londoners spent their summer holidays in the city attending military parades and sporting activities, or left the city on excursion trains to one of several nearby towns. For example, on the holiday to celebrate Queen Victoria's birthday in 1869, it was reported that some four thousand people from London visited the Lake Erie community of Port Stanley.<sup>69</sup> For the same holiday in 1877, trains left London for the Lake Erie community starting at 10 a.m. at a cost of 30 cents for a return trip.<sup>70</sup> During the 1860s and 1870s, military reviews remained a staple of both the Queen's birthday and Dominion Day celebrations. The military review on Dominion Day in 1867 attracted a crowd of six thousand; however, two years later, a writer for the *London Free Press* lamented the loss of the regular British troops when describing the less imposing display of the Volunteer Muster.<sup>71</sup> The above examples provide some indication of the types of activities Londoners engaged in over the years before the existence of Springbank. Similarly, these examples suggest that many Londoners were interested in taking part in a variety of outdoor recreational activities both within and outside the city prior to 1879. Therefore, it was not surprising that when the land at the waterworks was opened to the public, and its suitability for recreation became apparent, the Board of Water Commissioners in concert with commercial entrepreneurs,



including the steamboat operators, were quick to take advantage of the situation. The novelty of an excursion down the Thames River by steamboat quickly captured the interest of Londoners who began to flock to the Springbank waterworks site starting in the summer of 1879.

Beginning on the Queen's birthday on 24 May 1879, the new steamer *Enterprise* made several trips down river carrying excursionists to the waterworks.<sup>72</sup> On Dominion Day of that year it was reported that four thousand people had visited Springbank by steamer to enjoy the natural amenities of the river and dancing at the Springbank Pavilion. A similar number of people, again about four thousand, patronized Springbank the following Dominion Day, while it was also noted in the *London Free Press* that fewer people had left the city by train to visit Port Stanley than in past years.<sup>73</sup> The rapid growth in the popularity of Springbank as a day excursion destination played a role in not only providing a space near the city to use for recreation, but it also helped to further justify the utility of the waterworks project beyond simply the provision of water to the city. The use of the land was not limited to the summer holidays; Springbank also served as a popular weekend retreat. In one instance, on 8 July 1880, a "Grand Regatta" was staged promoting Champion rower Ned Hanlan as the featured performer.<sup>74</sup> Although he did not actually race, this event attracted more than three thousand spectators who were ferried to Springbank to watch professional and amateur rowers and canoeists compete.<sup>75</sup> The great success of the "Grand Regatta" represented a highpoint of the popularity enjoyed by Springbank in the

summers of 1879 and 1880. The following year, on 24 May 1881, the steamer *Victoria* capsized and sank resulting in the deaths of more than one hundred and eighty people. This disaster abruptly ended Londoners' brief affair with the park.<sup>76</sup> By Dominion Day in 1881, a month after the accident, it was reported that seven hundred people made the trip to Port Stanley, while no mention was made of anyone patronizing Springbank Park.<sup>77</sup> Thus, from its opening in 1879 up to the 1881 "Victoria" disaster, Springbank enjoyed great popularity. The disaster did not result in the end of Springbank as a recreation site, but it would be several years before people would once again be attracted back to the riverside park in considerable numbers.

The period spanning the early 1870s to the early 1880s represented the infancy of park development in London. The city, over roughly a period of five years, went from having almost no public land set aside for recreation to operating three parks serving a variety of Londoners' recreation needs. Despite this growth in the interest in providing public land for recreation, there existed only a semblance of a coherent park scheme in terms of the formation, operation and management of public parks in London. The difficulties facing the organization and administration of these parks at this time lay primarily in how the land was made available. Specifically, there were problems that arose from conflict between both members of City Council and among citizens over the parks appropriate uses. Finally, the formation of Springbank Park which did not fall under the direct control of the city council or its Park Committee provides

evidence that a coherent approach to park development and administration did not exist. A further hindrance to the provision of an organized park system in London occurred in 1882 when, as part of a general reorganization of the committees of City Council, the Board of Works and the Parks and Exhibition Committees were combined to form the No. 2 Committee.<sup>78</sup> This reorganization resulted in the subjugation of park concerns to the much larger public work's portfolio and budget.<sup>79</sup> As a result, during this early period of park development in the city, the process of institutionalization was evident only in its most elementary form. Although a degree of common understanding had developed concerning the need for accessible public space, the issues of the form parks should take and control over their use remained contested terrain. The primary forces involved in park regulation and administration at this time were those bureaucratic controls which took the form of local legislation that represented City Council's will. Thus, although London could boast several well-established parks by 1883, little coherence existed in the administration of these sites as a park system beyond that provided by city council, the appointed boards of trustees, and the Board of Water Commissioners. This situation did not change following the passage of the Province of Ontario's 1883 Parks Act. This legislation, which was specifically designed to address the types of park concerns that existed in London and other Ontario municipalities, was not embraced by the city until after the turn of the twentieth century.

### **Legislating and Organizing Public Recreation: 1883 - 1914**

In 1883 the Province of Ontario passed "An Act to provide for the establishment and maintenance of Public Parks in Cities and Towns."<sup>80</sup> The focus of this legislation was to provide towns and cities with an instrument to form a Board of Parks Management to administer public lands. The most important and controversial aspect of the Act was the provision that afforded the Board the power to purchase or lease land for park purposes.<sup>81</sup> According to the 1883 legislation, in London a Parks Board could have secured up to 1000 acres of park land; yet, in 1883, Victoria and Queen's Parks combined for only 54 acres.<sup>82</sup> Further, an important provision of this legislation stated that "the Board shall not interfere with the water-works or any municipal corporation or of any company."<sup>83</sup> This clause of the act had critical implications in the case of London where the vast majority of the city-owned park land, located at Springbank, fell under the control of the Board of Water Commissioners. This provision, along with the clause that would have assigned a Parks Board the power to decide how to spend public money when purchasing or leasing park land, most likely resulted in London not immediately adopting the province's Public Parks Act.<sup>84</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that any member of city council or private citizen or group sought to implement the provisions of the Public Parks Act in London after 1883. Victoria Park continued to be administered by the parks subcommittee of the recently created No.2 Committee (a combination of the former Board of Works, and the Exhibitions and Parks Committees), while

Queen's Park remained under the control of its board of trustees. Similarly, Springbank Park remained under the governance of the Board of Water Commissioners. No additional action was taken to organize parks in London until 1893 when a by-law was passed by the city "To provide for Assessing Lawns, and Regulating the use of Parks, Squares and Gardens."<sup>85</sup> This by-law served to reaffirm that the No. 2 Committee of city council was responsible for Victoria Park and all other public parks and open spaces within the city. However, the by-law did not apply to the waterworks property which remained under the control of the Board of Water Commissioners. Two further provisions of this by-law outlined the employment of a Park Ranger or caretaker to be responsible for any construction and maintenance in Victoria Park, and a provision for part of Queen's Park to be used as an exhibition ground with the permission of City Council. Thus, a decade later, city leaders exhibited no interest in adopting the 1883 legislation which allowed for the creation of a Board of Parks Management. On the contrary, they remained content to maintain the status quo that had existed prior to 1883 with the administration of the city's parks continuing under the direct or indirect control of the city council. Clearly, London City Council did not want to cede control to a largely autonomous Board of Parks Management. Therefore, to maintain command over the purse strings, city councillors remained unwilling to follow the suggestions set out in the provincial legislation and risk the expense of being forced to purchase new land for parks purposes.

The largely ad hoc system of park management in London continued in the years after 1883. Disputes continued to arise over how the city's parks should be managed. One such example occurred in 1885 when Alderman W. Scarrow argued that "it is contrary to the public interest that the Exhibition Grounds now used for the purposes of recreation and amusement, should be fenced in and monopolized by a few individuals, resolved that the motion of this Council granted such a monopoly [be] rescinded [sic]."<sup>86</sup> A year later, in 1886, it was decided that part of the Queen's Park grounds would be permanently set aside for use by the Western Fair Association for exhibition purposes.<sup>87</sup> At the 18 April Meeting of London City Council, the London Athletics Association petitioned council for \$10,000 to build facilities at Queen's Park. At the same meeting, a deputation from the Athletics Association also expressed concern about sharing the grounds with the Western Fair Association, a situation they argued had not worked well at the old Fair Grounds.<sup>88</sup> Shortly thereafter, a by-law was passed that allocated \$60,000 for both fair and park purposes, a clear indication that Queen's Park would continue to serve as a site for sports and athletics.<sup>89</sup> To achieve this balance, a compromise was reached whereby the western part of Queen's Park was set aside for the Western Fair buildings and the eastern part for a half mile race track.<sup>90</sup>

By the late 1880s in London, how the city's parks were being managed had changed very little. This remained an ad hoc situation in which a park's existence and form relied primarily on the whims of the aldermen who comprised

City Council from year to year. Victoria Park remained an ornamental landscaped park that served to enhance the stately homes of the city's wealthiest residents, some of whom were the same individuals who in 1878 sought and won the right to have the park redesigned to that purpose. In turn, Queen's Park, located in the industrial east end of the city, was put to more practical use as a fair grounds and athletic park. Finally, Springbank Park remained on the periphery physically, socially, and politically, still shunned by most Londoners because of the "Victoria" steamer tragedy and largely ignored by the Board of Water Commissioners for the same reason. Therefore, by the 1890s, park administration in London relied primarily on municipal legislation for regulation and operation. Parks did not exist as institutions unto themselves, although they did constitute an increasingly legitimate part of the city's landscape that over time had become a recognizable element within London's political establishment.

### **London's Public Buildings: Early Centres for Recreation**

The examination of space provided for leisure and recreation activities by municipal governments has traditionally focussed on parkland.<sup>91</sup> In the later part of the nineteenth century in London, city parks were not the only forms of public property over which disputes arose regarding rights and regulations of use. The City Hall in London also served as a popular venue for a variety of leisure and recreation activities ranging from sporting events to public lectures. The reason

London City Hall was used for these types of activities is readily apparent since there were few buildings in the city that could adequately accommodate large groups of people.<sup>92</sup> Periodically, beginning in the 1870s, London City Council received requests from citizens for the use of the hall. Some of these petitions were approved while others were rejected. Most often those requests that were approved came from respectable organizations such as the London Teachers Association in April 1878 for a free lecture,<sup>93</sup> or a meeting the following month of the O.Y.B.(Orange Youth Brotherhood) Lodge.<sup>94</sup> In an 1891 example William Gammage of the Chrysanthemum Association petitioned City Council for the rent-free use of the hall. His application, like the earlier examples, was also accepted.<sup>95</sup> However, those requests that were not deemed to be appropriate were summarily refused. For example, in April of 1880, J. MacDonald's request to use the City Hall for a 28-hour walking match was refused.<sup>96</sup> A similar request in 1883 by the London Athletic Club to hold a 48-hour pedestrian contest was also not granted on a seven to five vote by council.<sup>97</sup> In March of 1884 the use of the hall for a 'sparring exhibition' was denounced by Alderman Stringer, who argued it contravened the city by-law that prohibited any exhibition of an immoral character from taking place within the city limits. In December 1884 a motion to ban all future use of City Hall for sparring exhibitions was adopted primarily because it was argued those types of events were closely connected to criminal elements.<sup>98</sup> This action followed the passing of an 1881 federal Act to Prevent Prize Fighting, an indication that the action taken by London City Council



followed a broader pattern of regulation against that form of behaviour.<sup>99</sup> Thus, city councillors maintained strict control over the types of activities that took place in the hall, ensuring that the moral codes of the city were not contravened.

The acceptable and appropriate use of City Hall remained a concern, but with an increasing number of requests to use city buildings, a more practical consideration moved to the forefront – the cost to the city. In 1892, there were five requests to use City Hall. The following year twenty requests were received for use of the Hall, the old East London City Hall, and the Horticultural Building.<sup>100</sup> Two years later, in 1895, there were at least twenty-six requests to use city-owned buildings for a variety of private functions. Concern over this high level of use led to the passing of a by-law in 1895 that set a rental fee of \$10 for City Hall and \$5 for the East End Hall for a maximum period of three days or evenings.<sup>101</sup> In 1900, city council adopted a further set of conditions of regulating the rental of city buildings, including the payment of a \$10 deposit to cover any damage done to the building.<sup>102</sup> As a result, it was no longer simply a matter that the activity was deemed by council to be appropriate in order to gain use of a public building in London. By the turn of the century, the primary consideration had become the financial cost of leasing these buildings, although the morality of the activity remained a consideration. Thus, as was the case with public parks, the issue of the use of public buildings hinged primarily on financial concerns, and in turn the city implemented a clear bureaucratic mechanism to mediate those transactions. In terms of recreation and leisure in London, the use of public

halls represented an additional public space where these types of activities could be both produced and reproduced. Specifically, the installation of a process by which rental of this public space fell under a legal framework dictated by city council provides evidence of the consistent, bureaucratic regulation of the use of public spaces and buildings for leisure and recreation purposes.

### **Adopting the Public Parks Act: A Decision of Necessity**

Although use of city buildings as sites for recreation and leisure activities had become an increasingly important consideration, prior to the start of the twentieth century, issues involving the administration and regulation of parks remained London City Council's primary concern. Beginning in the early 1890s there were two critical events that influenced decisions concerning the administration of London's parks. These events were the rebirth of Springbank Park as a leisure destination and the advent of the playground movement in London. These changes were related to the growing recognition of the demand for improved recreation space and facilities and eventually culminated in the formation of a Board of Parks Management in 1912. According to Pat Morden, "as early as 1904, a group calling itself the Civic Improvement Society of London began asking the owners of vacant land to allow children to play on it."<sup>103</sup> This movement was both a product of the continuing public interest in providing places for rational recreation and the more recent offshoot concerned with providing playgrounds for children in order to remove them from the dangers of

unsupervised leisure activities in and around the city. A second, earlier influence that led to the adoption of the Public Parks Act was centred upon the continued improvements that were being made to Springbank Park by the Board of Water Commissioners beginning in the early 1890s. Although there was no evidence of persistent discontent with the city's two parks at this time, the steps taken by the Board to transform Springbank Park at the turn of the century began to capture the attention of Londoners. In particular, the improvements at Springbank caused the city's politicians to consider the advantages of a park run by an independent body free from the strictures of city politics.

### **The Rebirth of Springbank Park: Revival of Recreation Down the River**

Springbank Park was seldom frequented by Londoners during the 1880s. It is likely that some individuals continued to make their way down the Thames River by wagon, boat, foot, or, on horseback during this period, but such activity would have been the exception rather than the rule.<sup>104</sup> The popular day holiday recreation site during this period remained the lake-side community of Port Stanley. For example, in an 1885 summary of the Dominion Day activities, the *London Free Press* pointed out that "as usual, the attractions of the lakeside overbalanced all else in the opinion of the general public."<sup>105</sup> The fortunes of Springbank did not change until 1888 when the first serious attempt to revive steamboat service to the site was undertaken. An advertisement in the *London Free Press* announced that the steamer *City of London* would be making regular

trips to the park, and touted Springbank as "Ontario's Great Summer Resort" with refreshment rooms under the management of Mr. J. Cruickshank of the American House.<sup>106</sup> It was in response to the growing success of this commercial venture, which by 1890 was once again hosting boat and canoe races and dancing as part of the Queen's Birthday celebrations,<sup>107</sup> that the Board of Water Commissioners undertook a number of projects to improve the grounds at Springbank Park. The improvements that were undertaken during the early 1890s included the planting of shade trees along roads and driveways, the removal of brush and stumps, and the building of benches and swings.<sup>108</sup> The next major change to influence the popularity of Springbank was the construction of an electric street railline to the park in 1896.<sup>109</sup> This new arrival was critical to the future popularity of the park. The London Street Railway Company, as a part of its agreement with the Board of Water Commissioners to run the street railline to Springbank, reserved the right to stage band concerts, fireworks displays, and other attractions provided they obtained written permission from the Commission and did not charge the public any admission.<sup>110</sup> The improvements to Springbank were not limited to these activities that supported this particular commercial venture that brought people to the area. The Board of Water Commissioners undertook these improvements and enlisted the services of the railway company as a long term project that sought to create an accessible and functional public park at the site.

The majority of the improvements to Springbank Park undertaken by the Board of Water Commissioners in the years prior to, and following, the turn of the twentieth century focussed on upgrading facilities and the grounds for park visitors. These improvements to the park included: the planting of trees, shrubs, and flowers; maintenance and alterations to the park's pavilion building; and the levelling of a section of the grounds to create a picnic area.<sup>111</sup> In 1906, the Board of Water Commissioners hired a permanent gardener for Springbank Park who "was engaged to look after the plants and flower beds . . . on the advice of the committee appointed by the City Horticultural Society."<sup>112</sup> The following year, in 1907, additional recreational facilities were constructed, including tennis and bowling lawns.<sup>113</sup> The expanding array of facilities and amenities available to visitors demonstrated the Water Commissioners' commitment to providing Londoners with a quality recreation site that promoted the dual utility of the waterworks as both a source of clean water and respectable leisure. The Commission also exhibited a willingness to work with other organizations such as the London Horticultural Society in order to foster improved relations with the citizens of London. Therefore, the projects undertaken to improve the grounds at the park under the administration of the Board of Water Commissioners provided clear evidence of the advantages enjoyed by that independent body in providing a quality recreation site for Londoners. This situation contrasted the continuing lack of direction evident in the administration of the city's other parks where local politicians remained unwilling to cede their control over the potential expenses

involved in improving and expanding these public lands. These circumstances left the practical management of the city's parks to the bureaucratic controls set out in the local by-laws. As a result, through the implementation of a relatively clear plan for administration and improvement of Springbank by the Board of Water Commissioners the level of organization associated with park management in London was greatly improved, exhibiting to Londoners the potential benefits of an independent parks board.

### **Public Playgrounds: A Safe Place for the Children**

A second critical influence upon the increasing interest in the need for a rationally-administered public park system in London was the developing North American playground movement.<sup>114</sup> In London this movement grew out of the broader international and national social reform initiative that sought to provide children with a physically and morally safe environment for recreation particularly during time away from school. Elsie McFarland identifies the role played by the National Council of Women, its local councils and member organizations in organizing and administering the playground movement in Canada.<sup>115</sup> By chance, it was at the eighth annual meeting of the National Council of Women, held in London in 1901, that the issue of playgrounds came to the fore. It was at this meeting that the following resolution was passed:

Whereas the agitation for vacation schools and playgrounds where children may find organized recreation having become so widespread that it is now known as the playgrounds movement, and whereas the establishment of such vacation schools and playgrounds is acknowledged by educators and philanthropists to be desired in every community, and whereas the necessity for such schools and playgrounds to improve the condition of children in the cities of Canada is obvious, therefore, be it resolved that this National Council of Women of Canada declare themselves in favour of the establishment of vacation schools and playgrounds, and pledge themselves to do all in their power to promote their organization.<sup>116</sup>

Also included in the resolution was a call for all local councils to petition school boards to allow playgrounds to be used, under proper supervision, for recreation during the summer months. Under the supervision of Miss Mabel Peters of Saint John, New Brunswick, a programme was established by the National Council to promote vacation schools and playgrounds throughout the country. Cities in which action was taken to establish these facilities for children included Montreal, Halifax, Saint John, Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Vancouver, London, Port Arthur, Peterborough, Brantford, and Sault Ste. Marie.<sup>117</sup>

In London, the push to create playground space for the city's children came from a variety of directions. According to Pat Morden, the Civic Improvement Society of London represented the first public group to call for public land for children to play.<sup>118</sup> This group, along with the London Council of Women, actively sought out sites for playgrounds in the city.<sup>119</sup> A speech by London Mayor Adam Beck to London City Council in August 1904 provided some

indication that the above groups had been able to exert a degree of influence upon local politicians. The Mayor, in his address, called for the city to secure land for park purposes, in particular, grounds suitable for children's playgrounds. Beck argued that the city's schools did not provide sufficient land for playground purposes because much of the land surrounding schools had been sold off in the past leaving no room for playgrounds. Finally, the Mayor pointed to the successes of public playgrounds for children in cities such as Buffalo, New York, and London, England, arguing that "Truant officers, I believe, where play grounds exist, have little to do, for the play ground instructors keep an eye on the children who ought to be at school."<sup>120</sup> Despite this strong statement in support of playgrounds by the mayor, it was not until 1908 that a Playground Association was formed in London to supervise playground, skating, and swimming programmes.<sup>121</sup> The following year Adam Beck played a role in the acquisition of the land that formed Thames Park, the first new park to be created in the city since Queen's Park was dedicated in 1879.<sup>122</sup> Thames Park became one of the first public playgrounds for children in Canada.<sup>123</sup> With the formation of another park in London, the need for the city to provide improved administration of parks became increasingly apparent. Consequently, London City Council slowly began to recognize the advantages of placing recreation lands under the control of dedicated administrators, which eventually led to action being taken in 1912 to adopt the Public Parks Act of 1883.



### **A London Parks Board: Forming a Professionally Managed Parks System**

London City Council, recognizing that the Board of Water Commissioners was already operating and maintaining a park system that was greater in size than that managed by the council, finally turned the administration of all the city's parks over to the Commission in 1912. City Council proceeded by drafting a special Act of Provincial Parliament that entrusted "The Water Commissioners . . . [with] the whole management and control of all public parks in the City of London, and Springbank Park . . ." with all the powers of the Board of Park Management as set out in the 1883 Public Parks Act.<sup>124</sup> This Act gave the Commission the power to assess and levy the rate payers of the city for funds to maintain, improve, and expand the park system. The underlying reasons for this decision in all likelihood resulted from both the recognition of the Board of Water Commissioners' expertise and the need to divest the councillors of the increasing responsibility involved in managing the city's parks and playgrounds. As a result, all the parks in London, including Springbank Park, were finally brought under the control of this sole administrative body.<sup>125</sup>

One of the first projects undertaken by the new Parks Board was to develop a comprehensive ten-year plan for the city's park system in order to meet the future public recreation needs of the city. This plan was developed in 1913 by a Mr. Dilger, an expert in the area from Detroit.<sup>126</sup> This action, taken independently of London City Council, provided a clear indication that the city's parks were fully removed from the direct control of city council. Similarly, under

the new Parks Board, the conflict over how park land was to be used was minimized as these decisions now fell under the portfolio of new professional managers such as E.V. Buchanan, the Parks Board's first General Manager.<sup>127</sup> In 1914, the Board of Water Commissioners officially became the Public Utilities Commission of London which continued to provide for the management of parks in the city. This situation was in stark contrast to the early organization and management of parks in the city, a set of circumstances which were routinely hampered by ward politics, and personal and political conflict and ambition.

Over the period beginning with the tabling of the Parks Board Act by the Provincial government in 1883 to the City of London's adoption of that legislation in 1912, the organization and management of recreation and leisure in the city's parks, with the exception of Springbank, remained relatively static and relied primarily upon the bureaucratic controls provided by local legislation. Yet, there was over this period a developing acceptance among many Londoners that parks and public recreation spaces represented an important part of their daily lives. How these places and spaces were used also suggests that some understanding had developed as to what constituted appropriate activities for this public land. For example, the ornamentally-landscaped Victoria Park remained a site for rational recreation over this period, a role no doubt promoted by its proximity to the mansions of the elite citizens of the city. Similarly, Queen's Park retained its position as the site for physical recreation activities such as athletics and lacrosse, while also serving as the site for the Western Fair

Association's grounds beginning in 1887. Finally, Springbank's revived popularity beginning in the 1890s, fostered by the Board of Water Commissioners, continued to serve as a site for entertainment attracting visitors who sought a specific recreation experience. The formation of the Park Board in 1912 provided the opportunity to define formally and delimit the recreation and leisure role of London's public park land. In actuality, the appropriate and acceptable use of the land was already well known to Londoners by this time, yet the rationalization of park management did serve to formalize the place of public recreation and leisure within London's social and political processes.

### **Summary**

The foundation of public interest in the idea of providing public places for sport, recreation, and leisure can be traced to precipitant events in Britain and ones that were later evident in North American cities such as New York and Toronto where the parks movement first emerged. The initial attempt to create a public park in London can be credited to two individuals, James Egan and John Carling. However, their plans could not have been realized without wider popular support for the endeavour, particularly from their peers. When the land for London's first park, Victoria Park, was secured, the issue turned to the purpose for which the land should be used. The decision to turn Victoria Park into a landscaped ornamental park was influenced by middle- and upper-class Londoners who sought to foster and maintain moral and rational recreation in

London. These attitudes were evidenced through the actions of the City Councilors who, between 1876 and 1878, voted to reserve the park for rational forms of recreation while opposing the use of the land for sports such as baseball and cricket. However, this action did not receive unanimous support, and the decision to create an ornamental landscaped garden to compliment the nearby properties of some of the city's wealthiest and influential residents did result in a degree of intra-class conflict. Clearly, Victoria Park's proximity to many elite Londoners' homes led to a high degree of personal interest among these influential individuals as to how Victoria Park should be used. London's second park, Queen's Park, did not serve the same purpose as its downtown predecessor. Londoners viewed Queen's Park in a different light. It represented a site for sport and physical recreation, and was later deemed appropriate to serve as an exhibition and athletic grounds. Finally, Springbank Park existed on the periphery of the city's recreational consciousness prior to the turn of the twentieth century. It fell into and out of favour depending upon ease and safety of access and the quality of the facilities found therein. By the 1880s, these three parks had come to be known and accepted as places where a variety of recreation activities were offered. Yet, the management of parks in London only remained a concern of London City Council in so much as they represented a potential financial burden.

The provision of public land for leisure and recreation beginning in the late 1860s resulted not only in the setting aside of space for recreation, but also

legitimated the concept of dedicating public land for specific recreative purposes. Conflicts arising over the acquisition and use of these new public lands were deferred to the local governors who served to represent primarily the interests of the city's established elites. In the case of Victoria Park, the land was initially used for a wide variety of sport and recreation activities, yet shortly thereafter became an ornamental park to complement the adjoining grand houses of a number of the city's elite citizens. As a result, when Victoria, Queen's, and Springbank Parks were established by the 1880s, their primary functions were constituted through a series of social and political resolutions well before their existence was formalized through the creation of bureaucratic structures to manage and administer the parks. Ultimately, these parks were legitimized in the public's consciousness well before they became formally established within London's municipal bureaucracy. Yet, in time, the administration of public land and facilities became a bureaucratic concern that functioned in concert with local legislation to regulate leisure and recreation therein. However, the involvement of London City Council in public recreation matters was not limited to parks and public buildings. A second area of concern associated with the provision of public recreation was the issue of providing public swimming and bathing facilities.

## ENDNOTES

1. Pat Morden, *Putting Down Roots: A History of London's Parks and River* (St. Catharines: Stonehouse, 1988), 7-8. For more information on the role played by Mahlon Burwell in the settlement of the London area see Frederick Armstrong, *The Forest City: An Illustrated History of London Canada* (Windsor: Windsor Publications, 1986), 45.
2. *History of the County Middlesex, Canada* (Toronto and London: Goodspeed, Publishers, 1889), 237.
3. *London Free Press*, 22 April 1861.
4. Proceedings of London City Council, 11 March and 23 September 1878, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario. It was originally proposed in March 1878 that \$1500 from the sale of St. James' Park be returned to the Park Committee, but when a final decision was reached by council in September the figure had been reduced to \$500.
5. Proceedings of London City Council, 20 May 1867; and *History of the County Middlesex, Canada*, 209. The first call to secure land for a public park was made by City Alderman James Egan in 1867. London's population and commercial and industrial base had grown rapidly since the middle of the century. According to Frederick Armstrong, *The Forest City: An Illustrated History of London Canada*, 68-105, in 1851-52 the population of London was 7,035. In 1854, the year prior to London becoming a city, the population had grown to 10,060. Although the population dipped slightly during the early 1860s due to an economic recession, by the later part of the decade the city's economy recovered partly due to the profits made during the American civil war. Thus, between 1860 and 1880 the city's population increased from 11,200 to 19,941, evidence of the continued urban growth.
6. Alan Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 20. The Montreal Curling Club, the first organized sport club in Canada, was formed in 1807.
7. See Kevin Wamsley and Robert Kossuth, "Fighting It Out in Nineteenth-Century Upper Canada/Canada West: Masculinities and Physical Challenges in the Tavern," *Journal of Sport History* (Vol. 27, No. 3, Fall 2000): 405-430, for an examination of tavern culture in London, Ontario during the mid-nineteenth century.
8. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 50.

9. In terms of the decisions being made in London with respect to the provision of public park land, it must be remembered that this was a male dominated sphere of activity. The power wielded by men who represented the industrial and professional elites of the city was, in part, rooted in their near exclusive access to political positions within and outside London.

10. Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999), 108-109. Rader cites the example of Chicago, which in 1903 embarked on a massive park and recreation facility building program. Many other North American cities followed this example of providing supervised playgrounds for their city's youth.

11. J. R. Wright, *Urban Parks in Ontario Part 1: Origins to 1860* (Ottawa: Province of Ontario, Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, 1983), 60.

12. Hazel Conway, *People Parks: The Design and Development of Victorian Parks in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4.

13. *Ibid.*, 224. Common fields were exempted from enclosure if they lay within 10 miles of London, 3 miles of a town of 100,000, 2.5 miles of a town of 70,000, 2 miles of a town of 30,000, 1.5 miles of towns of 15,000, and 1 mile of a town of 5,000. In 1845 the General Enclosure Act was passed which extended the limits of the previous Act.

14. *Ibid.*, 225

15. David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 5-7. According to Schuyler the critical concerns in these cities were the failing environment and social disorders. Solutions to these concerns were proposed by early park designers who believed that properly constructed parks could influence patterns of human behaviour to influence reform while also raising the level of 'civilization' in America beyond that which existed at that time.

16. *Ibid.*, 4.

17. *Ibid.*, 5

18. *Ibid.*, 6.

19. Elsie McFarland, *The Development of Public Recreation in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1970), 7.

20. *Ibid.*, 8.

21. This legislation, passed in 1883, was titled *An Act to provide for the establishment and maintenance of Public Parks in Cities and Towns*, Statutes of the Province of Ontario (C. 20, 46 Vic.), 357-367.
22. Proceedings of London City Council, 20 and 27 May 1867. James Egan was an Alderman for the 7<sup>th</sup> Ward in north London from 1867 to 1877, with the exceptions of 1874 and 1876. According to the *City of London Directory, 1863-4* (London: Thomas Evans Printer, 1863), James Egan's occupation was listed as "artist," living on Talbot St., between Market and Litchfield. The *London City Directory, 1866-67* (London: Sutherland Publishers Co., 1866) listed Egan as the proprietor of a photographic gallery and stock depot business (the listing was accompanied by half page advertisement). Egan, it can be argued, was a relatively successful business man but he was not a member of the city's elite citizenry which included, for example, men from the Glass, Carling, McBeth, McCormick, Leonard, Minhinnick, and Labatts families who represented a consistent presence within London City Council.
23. Proceedings of London City Council, 4 May 1868.
24. Proceeding of London City Council, 29 June 1868; and *History of Middlesex County*, 238.
25. Morden, *Putting Down Roots*, 8.
26. Proceedings of London City Council, 19 September, and 10 and 31 October 1870.
27. Proceedings of London City Council, 16 January and 24 April 1871.
28. Morden, *Putting Down Roots*, 8.
29. Proceedings of London City Council, 5 April 1875.
30. *London Free Press*, 19 December, 1873.
31. Armstrong, *The Forest City*, 112.
32. *London Free Press*, 28 August 1874.
33. Proceedings of London City Council, 22 March 1875.



34. Toni Lynn Nahdee, "Victoria Park and the Urban Parks Movement," (Unpublished mss., The University of Western Ontario, 1990), 16-17, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario. Nahdee suggests that Egan may have been a land speculator; he likely owned land in the northern 7<sup>th</sup> Ward which he represented in council, an area at that time considered to be a land speculator's paradise.
35. Proceedings of London City Council, 5 April 1875. The argument was forwarded that the price of \$48,000 paid for the land that was worth \$100,000 represented a gift from the federal government.
36. Proceedings of London City Council, 26 October 1874 and 26 April 1876. In Mr. I. McKnight's 1874 request to use Victoria Park for a football match between the London and Hamilton clubs, no mention was made of the type of football game to be played.
37. Proceedings of London City Council, 25 September 1876. The request to use Victoria Park was passed to the Park Committee which turned down the Tecumseh's request at the 9 October meeting of council.
38. Morden, *Putting Down Roots*, 45.
39. Proceedings of London City Council, 16 April 1877.
40. Ibid.
41. Proceedings of London City Council, 11 March 1878.
42. Proceedings of London City Council, 15 April 1878. The division of council over whether or not to accept Miller's plan for Victoria Park was put to a final vote which passed by a ten to eight count. The vote was split amongst the ward representatives, except for wards three and four, the latter of which was the location of Victoria Park. The cost of the material, planning and labour for the park was reported at the 10 June meeting of council. The total expenditures included \$125 for Miller's plans, \$303.70 for trees and planting, and \$22 for a mower. The cost up to that point was \$1476.60, which was partially covered by \$500 granted to the Park Committee from the sale of St. James' Park. Although no specific reason is provided for why Miller's ornamental plan for Victoria Park was accepted, the available evidence suggests that the councilors whose wards were in close proximity to the park wanted to ensure that the park provided the nearby and mostly wealthy residents with a suitable public garden not an athletics ground.
43. Salter's Grove Park was the initial name given to the newly acquired land, which subsequently was renamed Queen's Park in 1879.

44. Salter's Grove was located in London East, and Springbank down the Thames River near the village of Byron in Westminster Township.

45. *History of Middlesex County, Canada*, 237.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *London Free Press*, 4 July 1878. The vote to determine which piece of land should be sold was held following several months of debate. A special committee had been appointed to determine a suitable site to which the Exhibition Grounds could be removed. At the 6 May meeting of council there were three separate motions calling for the sale of one or both of the existing Exhibition Grounds and Salter's Grove. At the 3 June council meeting a by-law was initiated to place the question of the sale of these two sites before the city's electorate. The result of the vote was nearly a two to one preference in favour of retaining both sites.

48. *Salter's Grove Subscription Book*, 1879, Records of the London Public Utilities Commission, The J.J. Talman Regional Collection, The University of Western Ontario. The following appears above the list of the benefactors who donated funds, "We the undersigned hereby agree to pay to Benjamin Cronyn - W.H. Birrell and Andrew McCormick who have been appointed the Public Park Committee, the sums written herein after our respective names for the purpose of fencing and laying out Salter's Grove as a Public Park for the City of London. London 24 April 1879." Listed in the subscription book were 26 individuals and companies who donated \$25 each, 29 that gave \$10, and one that provided \$5. Some of the city leaders that donated \$25 included: John Birrell and Co.; Carling and Co., family-owned brewery, John Carling City Alderman 1856-57; John Labatt, brewery owner and Town Alderman 1850-51; T.M. McCormick, City Alderman 1870-71; C.F. Hyman and Co., tannery; W.R. Meredith, appointed City Solicitor in 1876; Benjamin Cronyn, Mayor 1874-75, Robert Lewis, Mayor 1878-79, and A.M., McCormick, Mayor 1873 and Alderman 1867-71.

49. *By-law For Establishing a Public Park, to be Called Queen's Park*, By-Laws of the Corporation of the City of London, 1879, 217-218, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.

50. *History of the County of Middlesex, Canada*, 204-206. The Western Fair Association was formed in 1868 when the City Horticultural Society and the East Middlesex Agricultural Society decided to combine their respective fairs.

51. *London Free Press*, Thursday 27 May 1879. No information was provided to identify which nearby community the Native team represented.

52. As the crow flies, the distance between the dam at Springbank and the forks of the Thames River is slightly more than three miles.

53. Morden, *Putting Down Roots*, 13. The role of the river steamers in popularizing Springbank Park will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Four.
54. Armstrong, *The Forest City*, 73-74
55. *Ibid.*, 74
56. *Ibid.*, 71.
57. *History of the County of Middlesex, Canada*, 885. Elijah Leonard settled in London in 1838 at which time he opened a forge and foundry. This business grew quickly to become one of the largest machinery producers in British North America. Leonard was Mayor of London in 1857 and served as a representative on the Legislative Council of Ontario from 1862 to 1867.
58. *History of the County of Middlesex, Canada*, 274.
59. *Ibid.*
60. Proceedings of London City Council, 11 September and 27 November 1871. The Brantford Waterworks were deemed to be suitable for fire purposes but not for domestic uses. The Jackson committee reported back that the water system was suitable to serve as a guide for London. One reason for the increase in interest in the question of building a waterworks system in the fall of 1871 was the news of the Great Chicago Fire of October 1871.
61. *An Act for the construction of Water-Works for the City of London*, Statutes of the Province of Ontario (C. 102, 36 Vic.), 558-572.
62. *Ibid.*, 572.
63. *History of the County of Middlesex, Canada*, 274-275. The company proposal of 1875 was supported by several prominent citizens including lawyer George Gibbons and local businessman and railway promoter Allan MacNab. The second proposal presented in 1876 was supported by similarly prominent Londoners including George S. Birrell, Charles Murray, Isaac Waterman, Ellis W. Hyman, John McClary, John Elliot, Thomas Muir, and George Moorhead.
64. E.V. Buchanan, *The History of London's Waterworks* (London Public Utilities Commission, 1986), 9, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario. The reason why many ratepayers balked at the universal payment for a water clause in the 1873 Act was that many Londoners already had good wells and did not want to have to pay city water rates if they did not require the water.

65. Proceedings of London City Council, 26 December 1877.
66. *An Act for the construction of Water-Works for the City of London*, 569.
67. *Ibid.*, 558 and 570-571. The clause stated that "The commissioners and their successors shall be a body corporate, . . . and shall be composed of three members, of whom the mayor of the City of London for the time being shall be *ex officio* one, and said commissioners shall have all the powers necessary to enable them to build the water-works hereinafter mentioned, and to carry out all and every other power conferred upon them by this Act."
68. *History of the County of Middlesex, Canada*, 275.
69. *London Free Press*, 26 May 1869.
70. *London Free Press*, 24 May 1877.
71. *London Free Press*, 27 May 1867.
72. *London Free Press*, 27 May 1879.
73. *London Free Press*, 2 July 1880.
74. *London Advertiser*, 9 July 1880. It must be remembered that Ned Hanlan was at the height of his rowing career competing internationally for world and national championships. The regatta in London would have been well below his standard, and he was likely in attendance because he was paid an appearance fee in order to generate public interest in the event. The article that chronicled the day's activities focussed heavily on Hanlan's rowing demonstrations, his playing to the crowd, and the assistance he provided refereeing the amateur and professional races.
75. *Ibid.*
76. See Chapter 4, 1813-183, for a detailed examination of the "Victoria" disaster.
77. *London Free Press*, 2 July 1881.
78. Proceedings of London City Council, 19 January 1882. This reorganization resulted in the amalgamation of the existing committees of the council into three comprehensive committees. The result was that each committee was charged with a variety of responsibilities that were not always complementary. For example, the new No. 1 committee comprised the former Finance and Assessment, Railway, Salaries, Jail and Printing Committees.

79. Proceedings of London City Council, 19 January 1882.
80. *An Act to provide for the establishment and maintenance of Public Parks in Cities and Towns*, 357-367.
81. *Ibid.*, 361. The acquisition of land for cities was limited to 1000 acres and towns to 500 acres.
82. Robert Duff, "London Parks and Recreation 1871-1973: A History of the Recreation Department" (Unpublished mss., Public Utilities Commission of London, June 1973), 88, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario. These figures are for 1913; however, it is unlikely that the acreage of either park changed during the interim.
83. *An Act to provide for the establishment and maintenance of Public Parks in Cities and Towns*, 361.
84. McFarland, *The Development of Public Recreation in Canada*, 12-13. According to McFarland, the Act originated in Toronto, the first city to adopt it in order to provide for a city wide parks plan similar to that in Chicago. The first towns and cities to adopt the Public Parks Act were Port Arthur in 1888, Ottawa in 1893, Kitchener in 1894, Hamilton in 1900, and Brantford in 1901.
85. *To provide for Assessing Lawns, and Regulating the use of Parks, Squares and Gardens*, By-laws of the City of London, No. 764, 9 January 1993, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.
86. Proceedings of London City Council, 18 May 1885. The grounds Alderman Scarrow referred to were the old Exhibition grounds located on Richmond Street just north of Victoria Park on the former garrison lands. According to Inge V. Sanmiya, *A Celebration of Excellence: The History of the Western Fair Association, 1867-2000* (The Aylmer Express Ltd., 2000), 26, the old Exhibition grounds were purchased by the Canadian Pacific Railway when the Western Fair moved to Queen's Park in 1887.
87. Duff, *London Parks and Recreation 1871-1973*, 3; and Proceedings of London City Council, 18 April 1887.
88. Proceedings of London City Council, 18 April 1887. There was concern expressed by members of council that money set aside for the Western Fair could not be used to build athletic facilities at Queen's Park.
89. Sanmiya, *The History of the Western Fair Association*, 27; and Proceedings of London City Council, 2 May 1887.

90. *History of the County of Middlesex, Canada*, 237.
91. See, for example, Elsie McFarland's *The Development of Public Recreation in Canada*.
92. According to Armstrong, *The Forest City*, 68-69, London City Hall was built in 1855 at a cost of roughly £7500 or \$37,500. The Hall was located on Richmond Street between Dundas and King Streets.
93. Proceedings of London City Council, 22 April 1878.
94. Proceedings of London City Council, 20 May 1878. According to the *London City Directory, 1877-78*, (Polk and Co, 1877). The O.Y.B. Lodge was a member of the larger group of Loyal Orange Associations operating in London.
95. Proceedings of London City Council, 16 November 1881.
96. Proceedings of London City Council, 5 and 12 April 1880.
97. Proceedings of London City Council, 12 June 1883.
98. Proceedings of London City Council, 3 March and 1 December 1884.
99. Kevin Wamsley, "Legislation and Leisure in Nineteenth Century Canada," (PhD diss., The University of Alberta, 1992), 219.
100. The Town of London East was annexed by London in 1885, and following amalgamation the town hall, located on Governor's Street (now Dundas Street) two blocks west of Queen's Park, became the property of the City of London (See Map 1, page 62). The horticultural building, located on the grounds at Queen's Park, was built after the Western Fair was removed to that location in 1887.
101. Proceedings of London City Council, 1 April 1895.
102. Proceedings of London City Council, 16 April 1900.
103. Morden, *Putting Down Roots*, 49.
104. *London Free Press*, 26 May 1885. The article noted that there were busses running to Woodland Cemetery and Springbank, yet most holiday travelers, almost 1400, took the train to Port Stanley.
105. *London Free Press*, 2 July 1885. This article estimated that the crowd at Port Stanley on that Dominion Day exceeded 8000.

106. *London Free Press* on 29 June 1888. This commercial hotel was located on the bank of the Thames River opposite the park and waterworks.

107. *London Free Press* on 26 May 1890.

108. *Annual Reports of the Board of Water Commissioners*, 1893, in the Records of the London Public Utilities Commission, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.

109. See Chapter 4, 188-189, for an explanation of the impact of the construction of the electric street railway between London and Springbank Park.

110. Gerald Alfred Onn, "The History of the London Street Railway Company, 1873-1951," (M.A. thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1958), 316.

111. *Annual Reports of the Board of Water Commissioners*, 1898, 1901, 1902, 1903, and 1904.

112. *Annual Reports of the Board of Water Commissioners*, 1906.

113. *Annual Reports of the Board of Water Commissioners*, 1907; and Morden, *Putting Down Roots*, 15.

114. Rader, *American Sports*, 108-109.

115. McFarland, *The Development of Public Recreation in Canada*, 19. According to McFarland, The National Council of Women was formed in 1893 in part due to the encouragement of Lady Aberdeen who had been elected the president of the World Council of Women the previous year in Washington, D.C.

116. *Ibid.* Referred from The National Council of Women of Canada, *Report of the Eighth Annual Meeting and Conference*, 1901 (Ottawa: Taylor and Clark, 1901). 152.

117. *Ibid.*, 21-34.

118. Morden, *Putting Down Roots*, 49.

119. Mrs. James McNiven, "London Local Council of Women," *The Local Council of Women, London, 1893-1914* (London: A. Talbot and Co., 1937), 11. This brief history of the local council of women lists "providing of Recreation Parks and Children's Playgrounds. . ." among the primary accomplishments of the organization.

120. Proceedings of London City Council, 15 August 1904. According to Armstrong, *The Forest City*, 138, Sir Adam Beck, through his political service at

both municipal and provincial level, became one of London's most celebrated citizens. Beck is best known for his role in the formation of the Hydro Electric Commission of Ontario beginning in 1905. During his lifetime, Beck is credited with becoming involved in a number of social causes (including the establishment of the Queen Alexandra Sanitorium in 1904) and became the president of the London Health Association in 1909. Beck's involvement in these charitable causes provides some insight into his motivation for supporting the playgrounds movement while Mayor of London in 1904.

121. *Ibid.*, 34.

122. Duff, *London Parks and Recreation 1871-1973*, 6. In 1909, as a member of the Board of Water Commissioners, Adam Beck secured land on the south side of the river at Ridout Street to augment the city's water supply. This parcel of land became Thames Park.

123. Morden, *Putting Down Roots*. 49.

124. *The City of London Act, 1912*, Statutes of the Province of Ontario (2 George V, Chap. 107), 896, brackets mine.

125. Duff, *London Parks and Recreation 1871-1973*, 7.

126. *Ibid.*, 10.

127. *Ibid.*, 11.



## CHAPTER III

### SWIMMING, BATHING, AND SPAS IN LONDON: MORALS, MONEY, AND MUNICIPAL POLITICS, 1868-1922

On 22 June 1867 19-year-old George Johnston of London drowned in the North Branch of the Thames River. His demise, according to the *London Free Press*, resulted from his efforts to evade the local police who, Johnston had been informed, would take his clothes if they were found on the city side of the river. While attempting to walk across the river, as he was not able to swim, Johnston was swept away in the current and drowned.<sup>1</sup> The details of this tragic accident provide insight into three critical issues that surrounded the recreational activity of swimming, and the more practical act of bathing in Victorian London, Ontario: public morality, public safety, and the growing expression of a need for accessible public sites and facilities.

#### Introduction

In the City of London, between 1868 and the early 1920s, debate over the provision of public swimming and bathing facilities occupied a small but controversial space in the broader concern surrounding the growing awareness of the need for accessible recreational space and facilities within the city. Similar to other Canadian cities, in London there existed a developing awareness of the need for public space for recreation that increasingly arose as a topic of political debate. In many cases, civic leaders and local politicians were among the first to recognize and defend publicly the need for recreational spaces and places. For example, as early as 1859, Toronto's chairman of the Committee on Public Walks and Gardens defended the benefits of public recreation areas. The chairman argued that walks and gardens promoted health and morality for the

wealthy and provided healthful exercise and respite from the crowded streets for the mechanics and working classes.<sup>2</sup> In London, interest in the creation of a public park came to light as early as 1867 when Alderman James Egan petitioned London City Council to secure land for a park.<sup>3</sup> The year after this initial call to create a public park in London, a similar motion was brought before City Council to build a public swimming and bathing facility for the benefit of all citizens.<sup>4</sup> In both the cases of parks and swimming facilities the bureaucratization of public services, over the period under consideration, served to increasingly construct how Londoners could experience these activities. By the first decade of the twentieth century, parks and swimming represented concerns that had become part of the public domain. Yet, in the case of swimming, from earliest proposals for providing a public facility in London, until the construction of the city's first permanent public pool in 1922,<sup>5</sup> attempts to meet this recreational need for the most part proved woefully inadequate.

A number of barriers present in London worked against efforts to provide public swimming facilities, these included, but were not limited to, concerns over morality and, as in the case of public parks, the financial costs involved. As well, the emergence of a generally supportive attitude toward public recreation spaces in London during the late 1860s and 1870s did not necessarily apply to swimming and bathing in public. Similarly, while Londoners' understanding of the role of public recreation had become increasingly developed to the point of being viewed as a required element of turn-of-the twentieth century city life, legislation,

public policy, and political will continued to act against the acceptance of public swimming and bathing as a legitimate concern of city administrators. The issue eventually had to be dealt with in a meaningful manner, but this occurred only after concerns over physical and moral safety of the city's children became pressing issues during the early 1900s.

The issue of providing swimming and bathing facilities in London from the late 1860s through the second decade of the twentieth century provides a case study through which broader questions involving public recreation and leisure in London can be examined. A focus on the provision of swimming and bathing facilities in London provides an avenue through which the process of public involvement in the lobbying for and exclusion from swimming and bathing opportunities can be investigated. In a manner similar to the development of public parks in London, the process of insitutionalization as it related to building and regulating swimming spaces and places must be viewed as operating only at the elementary stages. As was the case with the local government's control over parks, legal and bureaucratic measures prevailed in determining swimming public policy. Yet, over this period, there was a change in Londoners' attitudes toward swimming and bathing that saw regulation move from the imposition of reactive legislation to the implementation of public programs based within the ethic of social responsibility, particularly in the case of children. As well, the influence of commercial ventures that promoted and sold bathing and swimming opportunities and their relationship to local government bureaucracies<sup>6</sup> must also

be considered in the analysis of how public attitudes toward swimming and bathing changed in the decades prior to and following the turn of the twentieth century. Finally, in terms of the provision of swimming facilities in London, one must consider questions of public morality, public safety, and the role of City Council as the fiscal conscience of the community. However, prior to an examination of these questions as they relate to the issues of swimming and bathing, it is necessary to define what constituted these activities and provide a brief examination of issues pertinent to understanding the place of these specific forms of leisure and recreation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada.

### **Swimming or Bathing? A Distinction for Recreation, Leisure, and Sport**

For the purposes of this investigation, references to swimming and bathing within the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century London, Ontario, will refer to the variety of physical activities that took place within bodies of water ranging from small indoor 'plunge' tanks to larger bodies of water such as rivers and lakes.<sup>7</sup> References to single person baths which were most often located within spas and barber shops will not form the focus of this examination.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in order to maintain continuity, the terms 'swimming' and 'bathing' will be used interchangeably to refer to the range of aquatic activities that were primarily recreational in nature even though they may have been undertaken, in part, as a

means to such ends as gaining relief during summer heat waves or promoting cleanliness and health.

### **Swimming and Bathing Facilities: Provision and Access**

The question of whether to provide publicly controlled swimming facilities in London involved a complex set of issues that did not necessarily create a clear division between proponents and opponents based solely on their social class status. Although the recorded evidence of conflict surrounding the issues concerned with swimming are predominantly middle- and upper-class accounts, the debate in London between 1868 and 1922 elicited commentary from individuals representing elements of the upper, middle, and working classes. The issue of providing facilities for swimming often transcended traditional class alliances. This situation was clearly exhibited by the differences in opinion among those individuals who had the greatest impact upon the political, commercial, and industrial interests within the city – men of the middle and upper classes.<sup>9</sup>

A degree of consensus existed among Londoners that building a public swimming facility would be an asset to the city. However, popular support for this type of project seldom elicited enough influence to alter the political will of city leaders who tended to lean toward fiscal prudence particularly when considering projects that would provide minimal financial return to the city. Under these circumstances, members of the city's working class and their middle and upper-

class sympathizers recognized the need to convince these leaders of the need for and utility of a public swimming facility. Thus, within the broader social context of a growing urban and industrial centre, the question of providing a public swimming facility ultimately fell to the discretion of fiscally conservative politicians who were seldom swayed by the moral, safety, or health-centred arguments presented by citizens who represented the range of social classes in London.

The historical examination of the provision of sport and recreation facilities in urban centres within Ontario and Canada has garnered scant scholarly attention. Alan Metcalfe's "The Urban Response to the Demand for Sporting Facilities: A Study of Ten Ontario Towns/Cities 1919-1939" represents one of the few studies that focusses specifically on the role of facilities in the growth of organized sport in Canada. Metcalfe's investigation of how the availability of sport facilities provides "insight into the priorities attached to different aspects of urban life"<sup>10</sup> is important in terms of the consideration of barriers that many groups and individuals faced in their attempts to access sport and recreation opportunities. This approach, wherein questions concerned with social relations and conflicts surrounding the facilities provide the focus, has been instrumental in framing this examination of swimming facilities in London.

A second study which examines issues surrounding access to recreational sites, specifically swimming facilities, is Ken Cruikshank and Nancy Bouchier's "Dirty Spaces: Environment, the State, and Recreational Swimming in Hamilton

Harbour 1870-1946.”<sup>11</sup> In the section titled ‘Recreational Swimming,’ the authors outline how swimming, when practised in a manner conducive to middle-class norms and values, came to be viewed “as an appropriate response to the problems associated with city life.”<sup>12</sup> The espoused benefits of swimming included promoting physical fitness in order to counter the sedentary nature of middle-class occupations. As well, it was believed that access to clean swimming and bathing areas could address the health concerns of factory workers who generally lacked both fresh air and a clean environment.<sup>13</sup> Cruikshank and Bouchier also consider the unregulated side of swimming which created “a particular set of concerns for social observers about the physical and moral health of the participants.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, as in London, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the need for defined spaces where people could safely and appropriately enjoy the benefits of swimming represented an issue that often received popular support but did not always garner the blessing of the city’s political leaders. To this end, the variety of concerns that surrounded the provision of a swimming facility in London, including safety, morality, and fiscal considerations, did not receive equal assessment. In particular, the physical safety of Londoners rarely entered the debate during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

### **Swimming Safety: A Concern of the Few**

In 1921, E.V. Buchanan, the General Manager of the London Public Utilities Commission and the head of the Playground Department, reported on the formation of bathing camps and the hiring of swimming instructors for children.<sup>15</sup> This represented one of the first instances of any official recognition of the importance of promoting safety for swimmers, an issue that had received only periodic consideration in the popular press in earlier decades. Sadly, drowning deaths in the Thames River in and around the City of London were common occurrences reported in the local press during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The most famous and serious incident of drowning in the river occurred on 24 May, 1881 when more than 180 people died as a result of the capsizing of the steamship "Victoria." Investigations into the causes of this tragedy suggested that many of the deaths resulted from drowning, and a large number of these victims were girls and young women who were both poor swimmers and weighed down by heavy Victorian dresses.<sup>17</sup> The dangers of participating in recreational activities such as boating and swimming on lakes and rivers did not escape the notice of late nineteenth century Canadians. Yet, despite the continued loss of life to drowning, both from bathing and boating accidents, no evidence exists of any concentrated effort on the part of London's local leadership to address the issue seriously. Minimal public pressure existed to force the city leaders to take action. As a result, few steps were taken to



provide safe swimming alternatives to the often unpredictable Thames River or provide instructional programs promoting swimming safety.

In Canada and London, evidence exists of attention being paid to the issue of water safety within the popular press and in books written by 'experts'. In these publications, the authors clearly sought to warn readers of the dangers involved with swimming and to educate people on how to prevent drowning. In his 1889 monograph *Swimming and Life Saving*, Capt. W.D. Andrews of Toronto penned a comprehensive manual with the aim of promoting safe swimming and life saving.<sup>18</sup> In his manual, Andrews included a chapter titled "A Chat With The Ladies" in which he suggested the use of short arm and knee length swim suits with a skirt that could be removed when in the water to provide greater freedom and safety while swimming.<sup>19</sup> Other topics related to water-safety included lessons on how to choose a safe place to swim, how to swim through weeds, and an extensive section on how to save a drowning swimmer. Newspapers in London, on occasion, published periodic reminders about the need to take precautions when swimming. Among the earliest of these public service articles was a 23 May 1870 *London Free Press* article, republished from the *London Telegraph* (England), that encouraged men not only to learn how to swim, but to do so safely.<sup>20</sup> An 1882 *London Advertiser* article presented a slightly stronger message that emphasized the dangers of taking large groups of children swimming, particularly by women, and the need to master the means for resuscitating partially drowned people.<sup>21</sup> Safety, although an important concern

to some individuals, rarely formed the focus of the debate surrounding the provision of public swimming facilities in London during the late nineteenth century. The more controversial issues that surrounded the debate on swimming and bathing, found in local newspapers and City Council minutes, included public morality and the financial costs involved with building and operating a swimming facility. However, that a debate over this recreational activity existed at all testifies to the developing concern over the provision of public recreation facilities. Specifically, that within London there was an evolving awareness of swimming and bathing as a social concern, and the opinions expressed by labourers, businessmen, and politicians over how the issue should be approached, indicate that swimming and bathing had become, by the latter decades of the nineteenth century, a question of both political and social consequence.

### **Covered Bodies: Swimming and Public Morality**

Concern expressed over issues related to public morality in terms of swimming and bathing arose in a variety of spheres of public life in London during the late nineteenth century. This concern existed as a part of the broader system of social reform and regulation through by-laws that were passed to control deviant and immoral behaviours. Local by-laws legislated against a wide range of activities, including: the sale of liquor to children or apprentices; the posting of indecent placards; uttering profane language; possessing or selling

indecent and lewd books; performing indecent, immoral, or lewd plays or exhibitions; the keeping of houses of ill-fame or disorderly houses; permitting a house to be frequented by notorious persons; gambling and gaming of any description; indecent exposure anywhere within the city; begging for alms or vagrancy; and bathing or washing in the Thames River or any other public water in the city between six a.m. and eight p.m.<sup>22</sup> These regulations which functioned to define appropriate social behaviour highlighted swimming and bathing as an issue of social and moral concern. The extent to which groups and individuals challenged these regulations provides critical insight into the ongoing conflict over the need to provide public swimming and bathing facilities in London during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Despite the existence of by-laws in London to govern swimming, complaints against, and incidents of, people bathing illegally in the Thames River continued to attract media attention during the 1870s and 1880s. A report in the *London Advertiser* on 1 July 1878 provided notice that complaints had been made to the city's police about persons bathing in the river and suggested that a need existed for discrete places and specified hours in order to regulate swimming in the river.<sup>23</sup> In June 1880, a young man named John Mason was caught swimming in the river on a Sunday afternoon; he was arrested and subsequently discharged with a warning after spending the night in jail.<sup>24</sup> One year later, in September 1881, "Two boys, Hugh McRoberts and Sam Crockett, were . . . arrested by Constable[s] Brooks and Tierman for exposing their

persons in the river."<sup>25</sup> The following day it was reported that Squire Peters had sentenced the boys to pay a \$1.50 fine within the week or spend twenty-one days in jail.<sup>26</sup> A similar incident was reported in a 12 August 1882 letter to the editor of the *London Advertiser*. In the letter the author lamented the case of three men, Simmons, McNorgan, and Pritchard, who had been charged with indecent exposure when bathing the previous Sunday. The author made note that the incident had created strong feelings of resentment among the mechanics and labourers of the city. The author's sympathies were clearly expressed in the accompanying account of the incident in which he asserted:

It is alleged by the bathers that the place selected was not an exposed one, and that to deprive hard working, respectable citizens of the privilege of a bath in the river under circumstances similar to those under which the complaint of Sunday was entered is a positive hardship.<sup>27</sup>

The above examples of individuals attempting to bathe in the Thames River, and the subsequent sanctions imposed upon them by local authorities, illustrates that an influential moral reforming element within London remained unwilling to tolerate the nuisance of public swimming and bathing, as was the case with other controversial social practices.

The moral regulation of swimming in London became formally instituted after the passing of the first by-law against bathing in the Thames River in 1850. This ordinance stated "That no person or persons shall bathe or swim in the river Thames or any part or branch thereof, or any stream of water within or in front of the limits of said town, between the hours of six O'clock A.M. and seven O'clock

P.M. at any time of the year."<sup>28</sup> In 1880 the revised by-law dealing with bathing stated "No Person shall bathe or wash his person in the River Thames within or opposite the limits of the City, or any other public water within the City, between the hours of six o'clock in the forenoon and eight o'clock in the afternoon."<sup>29</sup> A subsequent 1893 revision of the by-laws concerning public morals maintained the exact wording as the 1880 document in terms of swimming and bathing regulations.<sup>30</sup> The wording of these by-laws suggests that bathing in public continued to represent an area of concern for the city's legislators throughout the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The Town of London West, which remained a separate municipality until being annexed by the City of London in 1892,<sup>31</sup> passed a similar by-law in 1876 regulating immorality and indecency in public places. The section of this by-law concerned with bathing stated:

That any person who shall be found guilty of bathing or swimming in any public place whereby the public exposure of their persons may be obnoxious to public morals or outrage decency shall for each offence forfeit and pay a sum of not less than one dollar nor more than five dollars with cost of prosecution.<sup>32</sup>

These pieces of municipal legislation and the above cited incidents of bathers being arrested, provide evidence that people continued to use the river as a place for swimming and bathing, and that public concern persisted amongst some citizens of London about the morality of this activity. This situation suggests that some individuals viewed swimming and bathing as a legitimate activity, while others were clearly opposed, particularly in public spaces such as the Thames River. To this end, the local governments were quick to take action

to limit the possibility of citizens being exposed to naked bathers. These laws against swimming in the river clearly illustrate that the focus of regulation at this time was entirely based upon moral grounds, whereas the physical safety of swimmers and the need for people to cleanse themselves had little bearing upon the decision to regulate the activity.

The wording of the by-laws and the reactions expressed within the above accounts of arrests for public bathing clearly reveals the gulf that separated Londoners over the issue of public morality with respect to swimming and bathing. On the one hand, there were Londoners calling for more stringent regulations and increased police action, while others argued that the laws discriminated against the city's poorer citizens who had to risk criminal prosecution for the simple pleasure of bathing in the river. The debate surrounding this issue provides clear evidence that swimming and bathing had become an issue of legitimate public concern. Through these intermittent attempts to influence London City Council to act, either by altering the laws that regulated swimming in the river, or by providing funding to build a public swimming facility to curtail unsupervised and illegal swimming in the river, groups within the city were attempting to define the nature of local government involvement in this area of public recreation. Thus, although ideas about the appropriate provision and regulation of public swimming and bathing in London were not institutionalized by the late nineteenth century, the process of restricting the scope of the conflict to the issues of morality, and to a lesser

degree safety, had already begun to narrow the debate. Therefore, the moral concerns associated with public bathing persisted; yet, the practical problem of the expense for providing a swimming facility for use by the public remained a dominant concern of the city's leadership.

### **A Swimming Facility for Londoners: A Public or Private Concern?**

The initial attempts to create a public swimming facility in London were focussed almost exclusively on the Thames River. In 1867, several weeks after the drowning of George Johnston,<sup>33</sup> London's City Engineer, William Robinson, was "instructed to make a survey of the River Thames adjoining the city and to report on one or two localities where citizens may bathe with safety."<sup>34</sup> Apart from ordering this survey, London City Council took no further action and as a result nothing concrete came of Robinson's investigation. The bathing issue next appeared in March of 1868 when a petition was presented to London City Council. The statement read "David Glass Esq., and others praying that the By-Law prohibiting Bathing be amended."<sup>35</sup> At the same meeting Alderman S.H. Graydon provided notice that he would be presenting a motion at the next meeting of City Council to request that public baths be erected for the benefit of the citizens of London. What remains unclear is whether the group led by David Glass was petitioning for stronger measures against bathing in the river – prompting Alderman Graydon to propose the building of public baths – or, were these people seeking more lenient legislation, and the public baths proposal was

a measure to circumvent the proposed change to the by-law. Although it is difficult to determine precisely what the specific reasons were for the call to build a swimming facility in London at this time; what is known is that the first facility built in the city would ultimately not be a public one.

Sometime in or about 1868, an entrepreneurial Scotsman named Charles Dunnett,<sup>36</sup> recently arrived in London, opened a commercial spa at the forks of the Thames River at the site where a large sulphur spring had been discovered several years earlier.<sup>37</sup> In 1869, Dunnett presented a request to the Finance Committee of London City Council for the remission of taxes on his Sulphur Springs Property.<sup>38</sup> Although he did not receive a tax remission in 1869,<sup>39</sup> a similar request made in 1870 received a more favourable response. In their report to council, the Finance Committee stated:

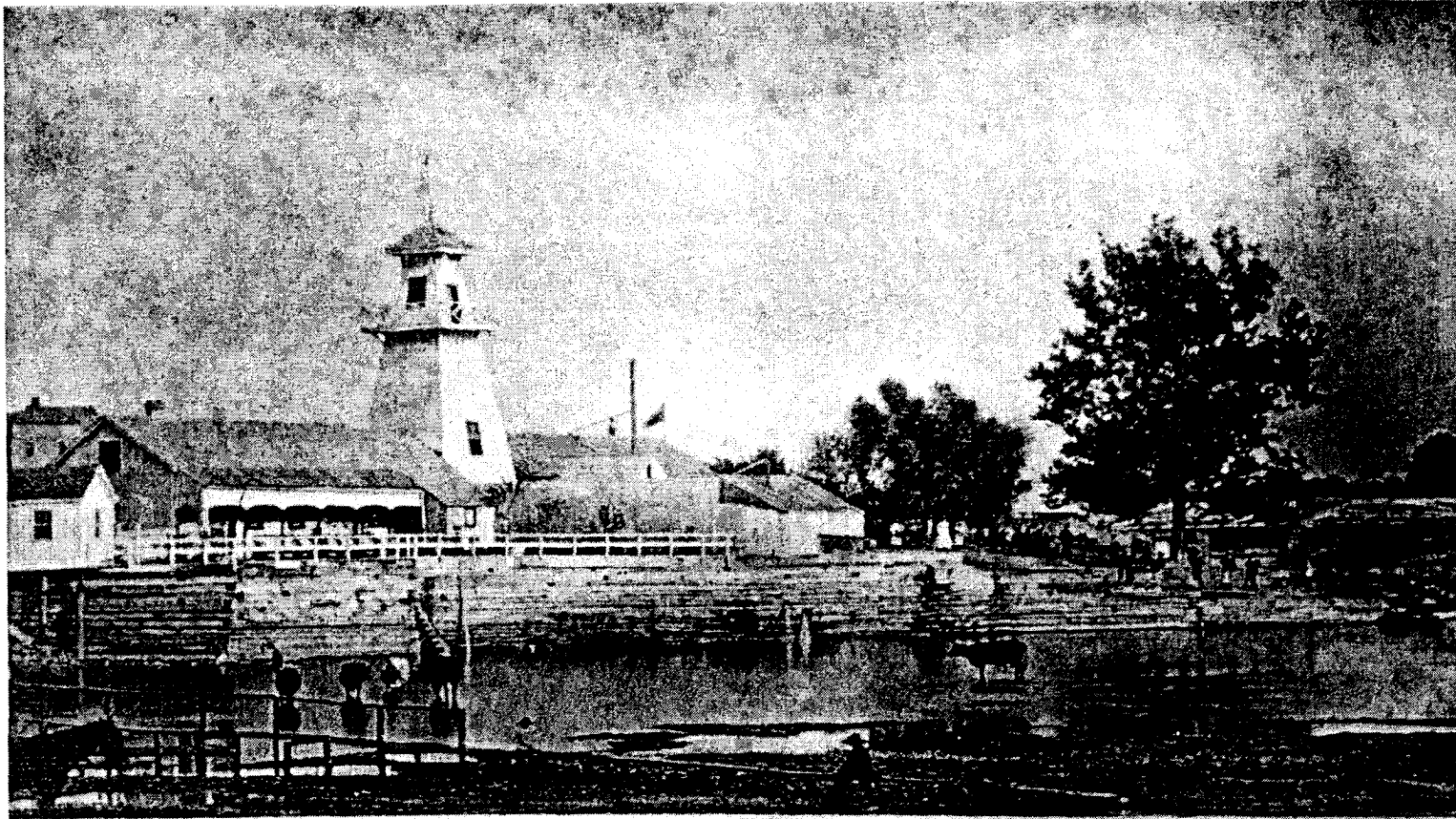
In the matter of the petition of Charles Dunnett Esquire, your committee recommended that in consideration of permanent improvements and large expenditure of moneys [sic] by him on Sulphur Springs and Baths. His taxes be remitted for the present year and we further recommend the same for the favourable consideration of our successors.<sup>40</sup>

The improvements undertaken by Dunnett on the Sulphur Springs property were evident in the increased assessed value of the land. The year prior to Dunnett purchasing the property in 1868, the property had been valued at \$1300; in 1869 the value had risen to \$2400, and \$2500 by 1870.<sup>41</sup> The improvements made to the Ontario White Sulphur Springs Baths by Charles Dunnett in all likelihood provided a way for London City Councillors to avoid the issue of having to fund a public swimming and bathing facility. In this case, just as the question of



providing a public swimming facility had begun to emerge, City Councilors could argue that the assistance provided to Dunnett in the form of tax relief represented action that sought to meet the public's demand for a swimming facility. However, the Ontario White Sulphur Springs Baths was not built to serve all Londoners (See Photograph of spa, page 135).

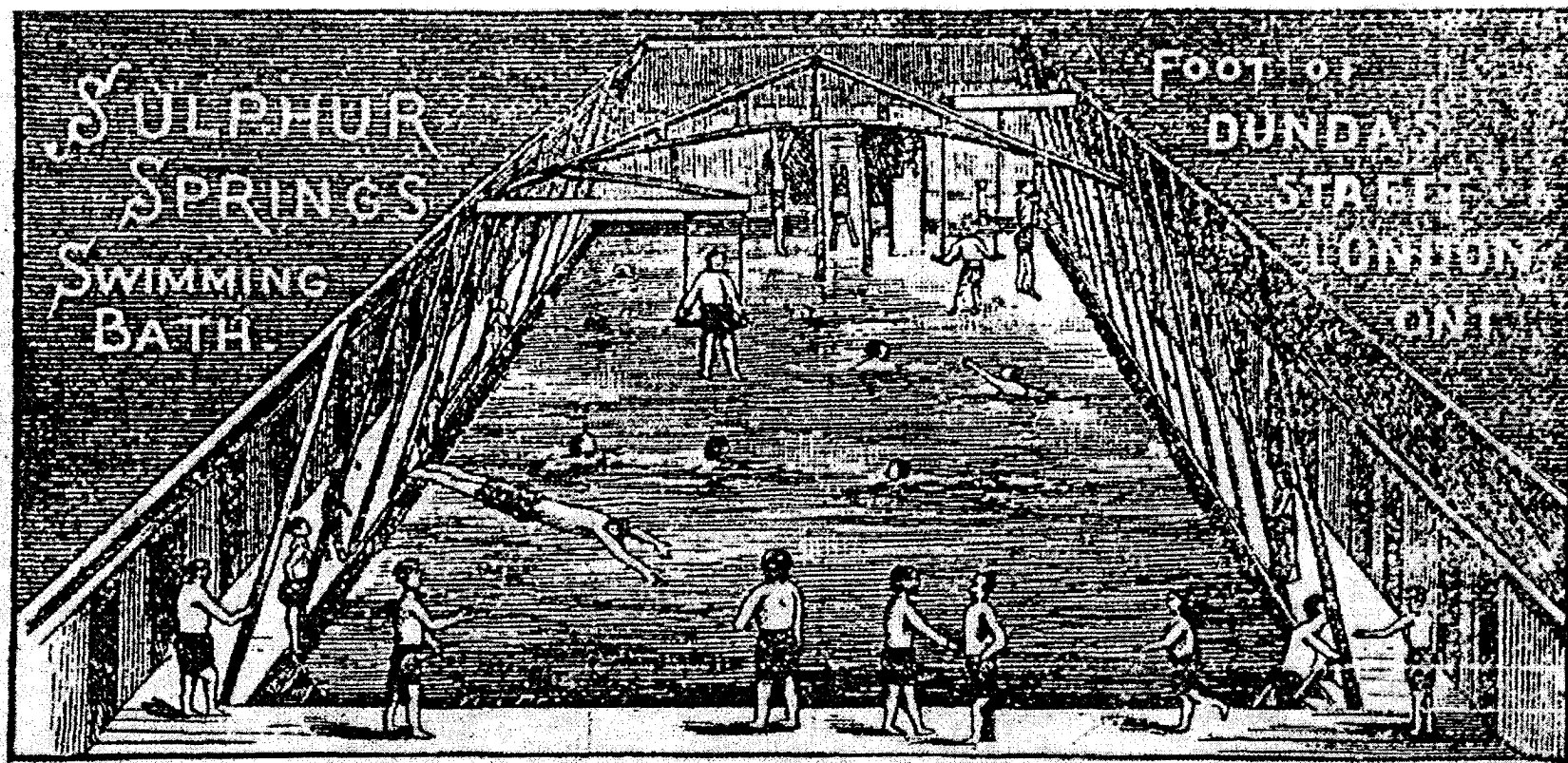
At the grand reopening of Dunnett's spa in May 1870, an event which received extensive coverage in the local press, the commercial focus of the facility was readily apparent. An article in the *London Free Press* listed the widely touted improvements to the facility, including: the thorough purification of the baths and swimming bath;<sup>42</sup> (See Illustration 3, page 136) the establishment of an ornamental garden; and most important, the hiring of an experienced physician to prescribe treatments to the customers.<sup>43</sup> The owner of the White Sulphur Springs Baths did not rely solely upon local patrons to support his enterprise, but rather undertook efforts to attract wealthy clients from throughout Canada and the United States.<sup>44</sup> In order to promote the spa, Charles Dunnett boasted not only of the beneficial qualities of the water, including "reinvigorating the debilitated, enriching the blood and generally restoring the constitution of the enfeebled . . . ," but also of being well equipped with a heated indoor swimming tank and personal bathing facilities for both men and women.<sup>45</sup> Thus, through Dunnett's promotion of the facility within and outside the city he sought to attract the right kind of client, while at the same time the majority of people living in London likely would not have been able to afford the services provided by the



Ontario White Sulphur Spas and Mineral Baths, London, Canada.

Ontario White Sulphur Spas Spa, London - c. 1875.

Courtesy J.J. Talman Regional Collection, D.B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.



The above is an illustration of the White Sulphur Springs Swimming Ponds, with all necessary accessories for athletic exercises. **Open to-day, Saturday, and every day and night for the season.** The water is heated to an agreeable temperature affording the public a healthful and delightful exercise. Hot and Cold Sulphur Baths in the regular way at the main bath house, Sulphur Springs, foot of Dundas street, London. **HODGINS & SKUSE. E241**

Illustration by Hodgins & Skuse for the *London Free Press*, 24 May 1890.

Sulphur Springs Baths, at least not on a regular basis. As a result, although members of the public could gain access, the Sulphur Springs Baths did not represent a universally-accessible public recreation facility. However, the construction of Dunnett's facility and the tacit support provided by City Council in the form of tax relief suggests that in this appropriate circumstance swimming and bathing represented a legitimate form of leisure activity.

### **Floating Bath or Excavated Pond? Early Attempts to Build a Public Facility**

It was not until 1880 that public pressures finally prompted London City Councilors to consider funding the construction of a public swimming facility.<sup>46</sup> At the 21 June meeting of council, the Fire, Water and Gas Committee recommended that a bathing place be erected in the city as soon as possible. A tentative budget for the project accompanied the committee's report, outlining the expenses as follows: "Excavation - \$200, Fencing - \$65, Dressing Boxes - \$50, Caretakers Room -\$75, [and] Contingencies - \$60."<sup>47</sup> However, this report did not receive council's approval and the issue of the public swimming facility was referred back to the committee for further consideration. The following month, at the 5 July meeting of council, a new proposal was presented by the Fire, Water and Gas Committee. In lieu of the previously proposed excavated bathing facility, a plan for a floating bath on the Thames River near Blackfriars Bridge (See Map 1, page 62) was forwarded with the guarantee that the project would not exceed \$600 in costs.<sup>48</sup> On 19 July 1880, the Fire, Water and Gas Committee presented

a revised proposal to council that received sufficient support; as a result they “accepted the tender of G.I. Dodd for the erection of a floating bath for the sum of \$550.”<sup>49</sup> Shortly thereafter, a floating bath facility was constructed on the North branch of the Thames River, becoming the first public funded and accessible swimming facility in London.

The decision to build the floating bath at the site on the North branch of the Thames River at Blackfriars Bridge, provides some insight into the physical considerations that surrounded the use of the river for swimming. Locating the swimming bath at the Blackfriars Bridge site likely was approved for two important reasons. First, by this time, Londoners were cognizant of the poor water quality in the river's South branch which had been, over previous decades, severely fouled by the city's sewage and the refuse from the oil refineries located in East London.<sup>50</sup> Second, the bridge site removed the bathing facility from the more densely populated forks area of the Thames River to a less conspicuous point where there was no riverside development.<sup>51</sup> These environmental and moralistic concerns limited the sites available for a proposed river-based swimming facility, and following the rejection of an excavated swimming facility, the options were greatly narrowed. Therefore, the decision to proceed with the floating bath at the Blackfriar's Bridge location is evidence that although public pressure had finally persuaded the city's leadership to act, the nature of the actions remained severely constrained based on fiscal, environmental, and social considerations. The ultimate control of London City Council over the

bathing facility did not end with site and planning concerns. Their influence also appeared in the rules and moral guidelines under which the facility operated.

The regulations under which the floating bath operated reflected the need to ensure the proper and rational use of the facility. The bath's hours of operation were 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Saturday, and 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. on Sunday. The use of the bath by women was restricted to Tuesday and Friday afternoons from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. A final condition for the operation of the facility required the employment of a married caretaker whose wife was to attend to the bath during the times set aside for female bathers. The salary for the caretaker was set at one dollar per diem and fifty cents an afternoon for his wife while women bathed.<sup>52</sup> As a result of these regulations, the use of the floating bath for the remainder of the season clearly advantaged male Londoners who had the free time available to make use of the floating bath. However, no records exist of how often the facility was used, and who used it, during the brief period in the late summer and early fall of 1880 that the bath operated.

The decision to continue providing a public swimming facility in London for the summer of 1881 was addressed at the 27 May meeting of London City Council. At this meeting the Fire, Water and Gas Committee recommended that "The Tender of G.I. Dodd be accepted for the reerection [sic] of the bath house for the sum of \$987.00."<sup>53</sup> However, this recommendation did not receive a positive reaction from the aldermen in attendance. In response, Aldermen Boyd and Hiscox proposed an amendment to send the proposal back to the committee.

An additional amendment moved by Aldermen Wilson and Pritchard sought to instruct the committee to determine the feasibility of converting the skating rink at the Exhibition Grounds into a bath, and securing a lot in the southeastern part of the city for bathing purposes. Both of these amendments were carried.<sup>54</sup> A month later, at the 25 July meeting of council, no agreement was reached as to where to locate a bath house.<sup>55</sup> As a result, no publicly-run bathing facility operated in London in 1881. It is not clear why the floating bath proposal did not pass City Council. One possibility may have been the high maintenance and operation costs which rose from \$550 to \$987 in one year. The failure of this project resulted in a shift in the focus of future proposals for public swimming facilities away from the river to various inland locations for an excavated swimming pool.

In response to the City Councillors' failure to reach a decision concerning the location of a bathing facility, Mr. A. Massie,<sup>56</sup> a local recreation entrepreneur, contacted council in February of 1882. In this communication Mr. Massie offered the city the following:

to furnish a private swimming pond for the city, forty feet by thirty feet, varying in depth from three feet to eight feet, on the Sulphur Springs Park grounds, with attendants for both ladies and gentlemen, at \$500 per annum, four days a week for three to five years, at the option of the council; further the pond will be under the supervision of the Engineer and Board of Health.<sup>57</sup>

Mr. Massie's offer did not generate any immediate action on the part of the City Council, but was referred to the Board of Health for consideration. At the 29 May meeting of council the Board of Health recommended a slightly revised proposal

that included expanding the hours of operation for the facility to the entire week and six a.m. to nine a.m. on Sunday, maintaining the temperature of the water so as to be suitable for bathing purposes, and ensuring that the operation remained under the direct control of council.<sup>58</sup> Once again, despite these changes, this proposal was not passed by London City Council.

The move toward constructing an excavated pool after the initial attempt to operate a floating bath in London may have been, in part, a reaction to the variable quality of the water and variable temperature of the river. Also, the expense involved in maintaining a floating bath in the river from year to year most likely remained a primary concern of the City Council. Finally, because the city already could boast a top quality bathing pool at the Sulphur Springs Baths, it is likely the supporters of a city-owned excavated pool would have had difficulty arguing for a public-funded duplication of that facility. Whether all or some of the above reasons played a role in the lack of political will exhibited by London City Councillors to construct a public swimming facility is difficult to ascertain. Despite council's disinterest a growing acceptance persisted among Londoners of the idea that providing a public facility for swimming and bathing represented a positive social goal. Thus, swimming and bathing had become generally accepted at an ideological level, but in practical terms the city's leadership continued to force the city's poorer residents to risk legal prosecution, dangerous conditions, and possible health concerns when swimming in the Thames River.



### **Continued Resistance: Opposition to Providing Public Bathing in London**

Following the failed attempts by London City Council to secure a public swimming facility in the early 1880s, no concerted public pressure arose to renew such efforts until 1887. From this point, and through the decade of the 1890s, concerns over public morality, class inequity, and the health of Londoners were emphasized in attempts to increase pressure upon successive City Councils to take action. Yet despite this continuing pressure, city leaders remained unwilling to seriously consider the issue. The reluctance of the city politicians to spend public money to purchase or build a public swimming facility directly opposed the growing popular interest that sought to meet this need. Increasingly, the call for a publicly accessible swimming facility was approached from the perspective that such a facility represented a legitimate requirement for the city and not merely an expensive novelty. Ultimately, the divisions created by this issue were most evident within the ranks of the city's elite citizens, a situation which persisted through the late 1880s and 1890s.

On 23 May 1887, a petition requesting the erection of swimming baths in the city was signed by Robert Reid and 1248 London citizens and presented to London City Council. Council referred the petition to the No. 3 Committee, the expanded committee formed in 1882 that assumed the duties of the former Fire, Water and Gas Committee.<sup>59</sup> A second request concerning the provision of public bathing from a Mr. Richard Vick, presented to council on 4 July 1887,

similarly found its way to the No. 3 Committee.<sup>60</sup> Eventually, at the 18 July meeting of council the No. 3 Committee issued a response, "That all the questions of swimming baths be referred to Council with all information relating thereto."<sup>61</sup> The issue was finally aired before the full London City Council on 1 August at which time a proposal from Mrs. Charles Dunnett, the widow of the former owner of the Sulphur Springs Baths, was heard. Mrs. Dunnett offered the city use of her facility for the season for \$400, or its outright purchase for \$7000.<sup>62</sup> The proposal did not receive the support of council, and Alderman Greer moved that it was too late in the season to expend so much money for such a purpose. Thus, once again, the lack of political will among the leaders of London resulted in the denial of the citizens' request for a public swimming facility.

The issue of providing public bathing facilities in London reappeared once again in 1891 when brothers Frank E. and C.W. Leonard, two of the city's most prominent citizens, offered to donate \$7000 to build a public bathing house as a memorial to their late father.<sup>63</sup> Initially, the offer received a modest amount of support from members of the London City Council,<sup>64</sup> yet it did not take long for opposition to the project to be voiced. In a letter to the editor of the *London Advertiser* printed on 10 August, a 'Citizen' wrote that "If it is necessary or desirable for the city to provide free public baths for the people I wish to present the points in favour of utilizing the property known as the White Sulphur Springs."<sup>65</sup> The author noted that even with the Leonard Brothers' donation, the

cost of building, supplying water to, and operating a public bathing facility would be higher than the cost for citizens to use the already existing Sulphur Springs Baths. This author's comments failed to consider whether or not working-class residents could afford to use the Sulphur Springs Baths. Instead, the argument focussed upon the main concern of middle- and upper-class tax payers – the expenses involved. A second letter opposing the Leonard Baths project, written by former Mayor John Campbell,<sup>66</sup> appeared in the *London Advertiser* nine days later. Campbell outlined arguments similar to those presented in the 10 August letter, while adding, in reference to the Sulphur Springs Baths:

But is there really any urgent necessity for the city to invest in a public bath, when we have now one of the best in Canada, established many years ago by the late Mr. Charles Dunnett, at great expense, and renewed and improved this season by his widow at a cost of thousands of dollars?<sup>67</sup>

Campbell concluded his letter with the following warning, "Let Council be careful or they will have an elephant on their hands worse than 100 Jumbos."<sup>68</sup> Three months later London City Council reached a final decision based primarily on a report by the Water Works Engineer. This report found the city's supply of water to be insufficient to meet the needs of the proposed Leonard Baths.<sup>69</sup> The report's findings provided the councilors with an acceptable reason for turning down the Leonard Brothers' philanthropic donation, an action which on the surface seemed financially prudent but one which also openly opposed the attempt by two of the city's wealthiest industrialists to intrude upon the council's authority. The final irony of this decision was that four years earlier, the Sulphur

Springs Baths had been offered for sale to the city for \$7000, the same amount offered by the Leonard brothers.<sup>70</sup>

The development of Londoners' attitudes toward the provision of public swimming facilities is best considered not only through the controversy between supporters and detractors as presented above, but also within the larger question of the value given to providing recreation opportunities. In the case of recreation in London, there existed a generally accepted understanding, or inherent control feature, that recreation space was an important consideration; yet it could not be considered above the expense of placing a further burden on city tax payers. Thus, in the continuing debate over providing a public swimming facility, most Londoners accepted that financial considerations were the primary concern, and even the staunchest supporters of public recreation recognized the need to argue that recreation provided a greater utility than that suggested by opposing factions. In the case of London, supporters of public recreation and swimming began to shift their focus to arguing the value of these activities as a means to promote the positive moral development of the city's youth.

### **Back to the River: Swimming Camps for Children**

From the mid 1890s through the years immediately following World War One, the focus of public swimming in London returned to the Thames River. During this period, the question of building a swimming facility may not have been considered seriously for the same reason that the Leonard brothers' baths

proposal was turned down in 1891 – the inadequate supply of water. An examination of Water Commission reports over the period from the late 1890s through the very early 1900s indicates that the city's water supply had become increasingly taxed, particularly during the dry summer months.<sup>71</sup> This likely stifled any new initiatives for building a public excavated pool in the city. The only excavated swimming facility to be built in the city before the turn of the century was a small pool in the new YMCA building constructed in 1897.<sup>72</sup> The next serious effort to build a swimming facility was spearheaded by Alderman Armstrong who managed to gather enough support from the 1906 council to pass a by-law for a vote in the municipal elections "to ascertain the will of the people as to the erection of public swimming baths."<sup>73</sup> Again, despite the positive outcome of the vote and a statement in the Mayor's 1907 inaugural address that called for the swimming baths to be built as soon as possible,<sup>74</sup> no concrete action was taken. Finally, in 1910, an offer by the London Mineral Bath Company (formerly the White Sulphur Springs Spa) to sell its property for public bath purposes was referred to the council of 1911 which subsequently took no action to pursue the matter.<sup>75</sup> Once again, even with support from within City Council, the provision of a permanent public swimming facility was no closer to being realized.

The first focussed attempts to provide public swimming in London after the turn of the century coincided with the inception of the playground movement in the city beginning in 1908.<sup>76</sup> The result of these efforts included the construction

of playgrounds and the development of summer recreation programmes. These initiatives eventually included the provision of swimming camps for children. In the summer of 1912, London City Council set aside \$500 for the establishment of swimming pools on the Thames River.<sup>77</sup> The following summer a supervisor of swimming baths was hired at a salary of \$15 per week, and the City Engineer received instructions to build a partly covered changing shed for boys and a fully covered shed for the girls at the Southland bathing camp.<sup>78</sup> This investment by the city to support financially bathing camps for children during the summer months represented the first tangible actions for providing swimming facilities for the citizens of London since the floating bath in 1880. Thus, by 1914 the provision of swimming facilities remained limited to supporting children's bathing camps on the Thames River at minimal cost to the city; yet this limited interest in providing publically accessible facilities did represent a clear change in public policy.

The appeal to build swimming facilities in London did not disappear with the onset of the First World War. In 1915, the London Trades and Labour Council petitioned City Council to construct a new swimming bath, arguing that it was an "urgent necessity . . ." in their view.<sup>79</sup> This call likely had some merit based on the findings of a report submitted later that year by Chief of Police W.T.T. Williams. In his report on the state of river bathing sites in London, Williams stated that "the so called swimming pools are dangerous, especially to children . . .," and he recommended bathing should be restricted to several

dedicated sites on the river under the supervision of someone who could teach the children to swim and be banned in the rest of the river.<sup>80</sup> As in the past, neither of these calls for action was heeded. It was not until 1917 that any serious developments took place. The advance of \$760 by the Public Utilities Commission of London (formerly the Board of Water Commissioners) for improvements to two bathing locations on the river resulted in the construction of new dressing sheds, bathing suits, and paid supervisors.<sup>81</sup> Also, the Public Utilities Commission of London<sup>82</sup> constructed a concrete wading pool at Chelsea Green Park.<sup>83</sup> This renewed willingness to invest in both river-based sites and the new wading pool must be attributed to the newly-formed London Public Utility Commission whose increased influence over the provision of a diverse range of public recreation initiatives eventually resulted in the addressing of the issue of providing and improving public swimming facilities.<sup>84</sup> As was the case with the first playgrounds in London, the Public Utility Commission's investment in swimming and bathing related equipment and facilities coincided with the crystalized understanding that access to public recreation and leisure opportunities represented a legitimate undertaking particularly when presented in terms of providing physically and morally safe activities for children.

The first publicly-owned excavated swimming pool in London was built after the end of the First World War. The impetus behind the project lay with the newly formed Playgrounds Department, and specifically its manager E.V. Buchanan, who also served as the General Manger of the London Parks

Department, both of which operated within the Public Utilities Commission.<sup>85</sup> The Playgrounds Department, formed in 1920, had as part of its mandate the duty to provide recreation programs for the city's young people during the summer months. In the summer of 1921 the Playgrounds Department ran bathing camps at two sites on the Thames River.<sup>86</sup> That same summer the first swimming meet was held in the Sulphur Springs Baths pool, the earliest competition of its kind to be held in London.<sup>87</sup> In 1922, following the success of the swimming camps the previous summer, and with the rental fees paid to the bathing camps and the Sulphur Springs Baths totalling \$630.90,<sup>88</sup> the Parks Department recognized the opportunity to build its own public facility. To this end, Buchanan managed to secure the financing to build an excavated outdoor swimming pool in Thames Park just southeast of the forks of the Thames River.<sup>89</sup> The decision to build a public swimming pool in Thames Park did not raise any opposition from City Councilors or any other private or public groups. This acceptance indicated that the idea of a permanent, publicly-owned and operated swimming facility for Londoners no longer faced the same obstacles that confronted earlier proposals. The legitimization of public swimming since the inception of organized youth centred programmes had overcome concerns over the expense involved. Further to this, concerns surrounding the morality of swimming in public had been addressed through the ability to strictly supervise the facility and the activities that took place therein. Finally, the issue of public safety, particularly for the children, had been addressed, and the need to consider the physical and moral



safety of the public had, by this time, come to be viewed as worth the financial costs.

### **Summary**

From 1868 to the years immediately following the First World War a broad range of obstacles faced those groups and individuals who worked to convince city leaders that a demand existed for a public swimming facility in London. Swimming and bathing emerged as an issue of public concern in London at roughly the same time as the issue of providing public park space. However, the legitimation and later bureaucratization of public swimming facilities represented a process that was dominated by concerns over funding and morality. Questions of public safety (as evidenced through numerous incidents of drowning in the Thames River) failed to sway the city's governors to reconsider local legislation that upheld the strong moral stand against bathing and swimming in public. Despite the resistance to consider this activity a social-good, swimming came to be recognized as a legitimate concern and cautionary steps were taken to meet the growing demands for access through the provision of both temporary public facilities and support for private bathing enterprises. Over the latter decades of the nineteenth century little political will existed to find a long term solution for funding a permanent public facility. It was not until the issue of the moral and physical safety of children arose in the early decades of the twentieth century that the city governors began to pay serious attention to the issue. Therefore, the

formation of a bureaucratic structure to support public swimming arose from the legitimization of the practice based within the support derived from both an altered public sentiment toward funding the activity, and the expanding awareness of the related issues of public and moral safety. As was the case with the establishment of public parks, swimming facilities in London emerged as part of the movement toward the bureaucratic administration of public affairs after the turn of the twentieth century. This bureaucratic control over the activity remained wedded to local legislation and legislators, while continuing to be tempered by the persistence of existing moral reform movements. However, municipal bodies were not the sole arbiters of the process of the incorporation and acceptance of recreation and leisure activities. Commercial and entrepreneurial organizations were similarly involved in shaping how Londoners experienced sport, recreation, and leisure in their everyday lives.

## ENDNOTES

1. *London Free Press*, 24 June 1867.
2. McFarland, *The Development of Public Recreation in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1970), 14.
3. Proceedings of London City Council, 27 May 1867. The city's first park, Victoria Park, was officially opened in 1874.
4. Proceedings of London City Council, 30 March 1868.
5. "Playground Department General Manager Report," *44<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Public Utilities Commission* (London, Ontario, 1922), 74, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.
6. Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 20. Kidd suggests that municipal governments often provided friendly entrepreneurs with the power to control access to recreation areas, while also supporting private commercial initiatives ahead of publically accessible sport and recreation opportunities.
7. A 'plunge' tank is a small swimming pool usually located inside a building. The use of a 'plunge' tank in London to assist in teaching children to swim is referred to in the "Playground Department General Manager Report," *43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report of the Public Utilities Commission* (London, Ontario, 1921). The tank, located at Lord Roberts School was used to teach twenty-five children between the ages of seven and eleven to swim.
8. *London City Directory, 1877-1878* (London: R.L. Polk and Co., 1877); and *Foster's London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1900* (Toronto: J.G. Foster and Co., 1900). Listed under the heading 'Baths' were the White Sulphur Springs Spa and various barber shops that offered bathing facilities.
9. Frederick H. Armstrong, *The Forest City: An Illustrated History of London Canada* (Windsor: Windsor Publications, 1986), 130. According to Armstrong, London City Council, during the late nineteenth century, was almost exclusively made up of leading business men who were usually connected with the Board of Trade and active in one of the two provincial and national political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives.
10. Alan Metcalfe, "The Urban Response to the Demand for Sporting Facilities: A Study of Ten Ontario Towns/Cities 1919-1939," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* (Vol. XII, No.2, October 1983): 31.

11. Ken Cruikshank and Nancy B. Bouchier, "Dirty Spaces: Environment, the State, and Recreational Swimming in Hamilton Harbour 1870-1946," *Sport History Review*, (Vol. 29, 1998): 59-76.
12. *Ibid.*, 65.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, 66.
15. "Playground Department General Manager's Report," *43<sup>rd</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Reports of the Public Utilities Commission* (London, Ontario, 1921 and 1923). In 1921 twenty-five children between the ages of seven and eleven were taught to swim in a swimming tank located at Lord Roberts School. An expert teacher of swimming was brought to the city in 1923 who taught hundreds of children to swim.
16. Examples of reported incidents of drowning in the Thames River in or near the City of London include: *London Free Press*, 24 June 1867, nineteen-year-old George Johnston in the north branch; *London Free Press*, 1 July 1878, James Graham near the Cove Bridge; *London Advertiser*, 26 August 1882, an unidentified man listed as the sixth drowning in the Thames River that year; *London Advertiser*, 17 June 1886, the ten-year-old son of Mr. Curtis near Clark's Bridge; *London Free Press*, 9 July 1891, the ten-year-old son on Mr. Williams of Carling St. west at the Blackfriar's Dam; *London Free Press*, 11 August 1891, Ellis Hayden in the Thames; and *London Free Press*, 13 June 1892, thirteen-year-old Charles Kellard near the Cove Bridge.
17. Proceedings of London City Council, 24 May 1881; and Ken McTaggart, "Boating History," *Focus on the Thames: Natural and Cultural Heritage of the River, London, Ontario*, Anita Canvey ed. (London: The McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London and the Upper Thames Conservation Authority, November 1996), 25.
18. Capt. W.D. Andrews, *Swimming and Lifesaving* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1889). Captain Andrews' professional affiliations and qualifications are listed as follows: "The Dominion of Canada Life-Saving Service; Gold Life Saving Medalist of the First Class; Medalist of the Royal Humane Society, etc., etc."
19. *Ibid.*, 12-13.
20. *London Free Press*, 23 May 1870.
21. *London Advertiser*, 22 July 1882.

22. *Charter and By-Laws of The City of London, Including By-Laws of the Board of Police Commissioners, and Important Agreements entered into by the Corporation of the City of London* (London: The Free Press Printing Office, 1880), 21-23, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario. The earliest record of this type of regulatory by-law in London was passed on 30 May 1850 under the title *Rules and Regulations for the general government of the town*, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.
23. *London Advertiser*, 1 July 1878.
24. *London Advertiser*, 28 June 1880.
25. *London Free Press*, 6 September 1881, brackets mine.
26. *London Free Press*, 7 September 1881. It was also noted in the article that the temperature on the day of the arrest had been well in excess of 90 degrees Fahrenheit, exhibiting that the reporter may have had some sympathy for the boys' situation.
27. *London Advertiser*, 12 August 1882.
28. *Rules and Regulations for the general government of the town*, Town of London, By Law No. 3 Part 32, 30 May 1850. J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.
29. *Charter and By-Laws of The City of London*, 1880, 23.
30. *By-Laws of the City of London, Revised and Consolidated By Direction of the Municipal Council, 1892* (London, H.C. Allison's Printing Company, 1893), 9-11, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.
31. The Town of London West was amalgamated into the City of London in 1892.
32. Town of London West, *By-law No. 21*, 4 December 1876, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.
33. See the opening paragraph of this chapter for the account of George Johnston's drowning.
34. Proceedings of London City Council, 24 June 1867.

35. Proceedings of London City Council, 30 March 1868.
36. *Assessment Rolls, The City of London, Ward 1, 1868*, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario. 1868 was the first year Charles Dunnett appeared on the city's assessment rolls.
37. J.T.H. Connor, "Preservatives of Health: Mineral Water Spas of Nineteenth Century Ontario," *Ontario History* (Vol. LXXV, No. 2, June 1983): 136. The Sulphur Spring was discovered in 1865 during a period when many wells were being drilled in the search for oil in and around the London area. This drilling had been prompted by the discovery of oil in the region surrounding present-day Petrolia, Ontario.
38. Proceedings of London City Council, 31 May 1869.
39. Proceedings of London City Council, 9 August 1869.
40. Proceedings of London City Council, 19 September and 10 October 1870.
41. *Assessment Rolls, The City of London, Ward 1, 1867, 1868, 1869, 1870*.
42. *London Free Press*, 24 May 1890. This illustration of the Sulphur Spring's swimming bath by Hodgins and Skuse provides an active view of how the facility was used by customers. This artistic interpretation projected to the people of London the benefits of swimming facilities in general and may have played some role in reaffirming the call for a public swimming facility.
43. Connor, "Preservatives of Health," 136; and *London Free Press*, 24 May 1870, 3. Accompanying the newspaper article was an illustration of the Sulphur Springs' swimming bath, depicting a number of people swimming in, diving and sliding into, and swinging over the pool.
44. Orlo Miller, *This Was London: The First Two Centuries* (Westport, Ontario: Butternut Press, 1988), 128; and Pat Morden, *Putting Down Roots*, 11. One of the first Americans to visit Dunnett's spa was industrialist millionaire tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt in 1869. Vanderbilt made the trip to London extolling the benefits of the water, and while in London also took the opportunity to marry his eighteen-year-old fiancée.
45. *Guide to the City of London, Ontario, Canada* (London: London Printing & Litho co., 1892), 41-47.

46. See *London Advertiser*, 4 August 1879, "A Place for Swimming"; 22 May 1880, 'Swimming Baths'; and 12 June 1880, 'Swimming Baths'. The arguments presented in these three articles were consistently in favour of constructing a city run swimming facility for London.
47. Proceedings of London City Council, 21 June 1880.
48. Proceedings of London City Council, 5 July 1880.
49. Proceedings of London City Council, 19 July 1880.
50. *London Advertiser*, 12 June 1880. The issue of the preference of the North Branch as the location of the floating bath was clearly addressed in an editorial article that supported the project and offered advice on how it should be constructed and run. The author signed the letter to the editor, 'Swimmer.'
51. See Map 2, page 64. T.H. Tracy, City Engineer, *Plan of the London Water Works*, 1886, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario. On this map it is shown that the riverside land just south of Blackfriar's Bridge on the city side had no buildings or residences nearby.
52. Proceedings of London City Council, 19 July 1880.
53. Proceedings of London City Council, 27 May 1881, brackets mine.
54. Ibid. There were several more proposals concerning the possible location of a bathing facility, but none of the aldermen argued for the acceptance of the Fire, Water and Gas Committee's recommendation.
55. Proceedings of London City Council, 25 July 1881.
56. According to the *City of London and County of Middlesex Directory for 1883* (London: Publishing Co., 1883), a Mr. Massie was the proprietor of a boathouse located at the foot of Dundas street adjacent to the White Sulphur Springs Spa.
57. Proceedings of London City Council, 20 February 1882.
58. Proceedings of London City Council, 29 May 1882.
59. Proceedings of London City Council, 23 May 1887. The No. 3 Committee, formed in 1882, assumed the mandates of the former Fire, Water, and Gas Committee, the Hospital and Relief Committee, and the Market and License Committee.
60. Proceedings of London City Council, 4 July 1887.

61. Proceedings of London City Council, 18 July 1887.

62. Proceedings of London City Council, 1 August 1887.

63. The Leonard brothers and their late father were among the elite of London's industrial entrepreneurs. The family operated the largest steam engine factory in the city. The father, Elijah Leonard, served on the town and City Council from 1854 to 1856 and as Mayor in 1857. The son, Frank E. Leonard, served on London City Council in 1892.

64. *London Advertiser*, 1 August 1891.

65. *London Advertiser*, 10 August 1891.

66. John Campbell served as Mayor of London in 1872, 1880 and 1881.

67. *London Advertiser*, 19 August 1891.

68. Ibid. Campbell's concern about there being a possibility of council having an elephant on their hands worse than the death of 100 Jumbos refers to the star attraction of the Barnum and Bailey Circus, Jumbo the elephant, who was struck by a Grand Trunk Locomotive on 15 September 1885 near St. Thomas.

69. Proceedings of London City Council, 16 November 1891. The findings of this report are not surprising considering the continued difficulty faced by the Board of Water Commissioners to keep up to the demand for water supplied by the Waterworks at Springbank. This problem was particularly acute during the summer months when water rationing often had to be implemented. For example, several years later in 1896 the Annual Report of the Water Commissioners stated "There can be no doubt that the consumption of water in the city is excessive, and great waste is going on." The suggestion in this report was to implement a metered watered system.

70. Proceedings of London City Council, 1 August 1887.

71. *Annual Reports of the Water Commission of the City of London, Ontario, Canada, 1895 to 1911*. For 10 of the 17 years between 1895 and 1911 repeated references were made of the shortage of water to supply to the city during the summer months. Steps taken to improve the water supply included a refurbishment of the pumping dam at Springbank in 1900 to improve efficiency, and the increase in number of supply wells and the addition of electric water pumps in 1911.



72. E.J. Perry, "History of the Young Men's Christian Association," (Unpublished mss., 1932); and *Minutes of the YMCA Board of Trustees* (London, Ontario, 18 June 1895 and 15 March 1897), J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario. The plans for the new YMCA building included an excavated plunge bath 14 feet by 40 feet with a depth of five to eight feet. The membership fee for the YMCA for 1897 was \$14 a year, a sum that would have excluded most working class men from membership.

73. Proceedings of London City Council, 5 November 1906.

74. Proceedings of London City Council, 14 January, 1907.

75. Proceedings of London City Council, 5 December 1910.

76. See Chapter 2, 95-97.

77. Proceedings of London City Council, 2 July 1912.

78. Proceedings of London City Council, 5 May and 7 July 1913.

79. Proceedings of London City Council, 15 March 1915.

80. Proceedings of London City Council, 3 August 1915.

81. Proceedings of London City Council, 7 August 1917.

82. The Board of Water Commissioners officially became the Public Utilities Commission of London in 1914.

83. *Annual Report of the Public Utilities Commission of London, Ontario, Canada, 1917*. A photograph of about twenty children playing in the wading pool was included in the report, the caption below the photograph reads "Concrete Wading Pool Chelsea Green." Chelsea Green Park had been formed by the board from land given to the city by the Chelsea Green Land Company in 1915.

84. Between 1914, the year the London Public Utilities Commission was formed, and 1917 there were a number of recreation initiatives introduced to London including: the creation of a bathing camp for soldiers in 1915, the formation of a small zoo the same year, and the building of a concrete wading pool for children in 1917.

85. E.V. Buchanan was the General Manager of the London Parks Department which was formed in 1912 and later placed under the authority of the London Public Utilities Commission following its creation in 1914.

86. "Playground Department General Managers Report, 1921," *43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report of the Public Utilities Commission* (London, Ontario, 1921), 80. Both the summer swimming camps were run privately and were paid rental fees by the Playground Department.

87. *Ibid.*, 81.

88. *Ibid.*, 83-84.

89. "Playground Department General Managers Report, 1922," *44<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Public Utilities Commission* (London, Ontario, 1922), 68.

## CHAPTER IV

### AMUSEMENT HALLS AND RIVER STEAMERS: ENTREPRENEURIAL AND COMMERCIAL RECREATION IN LONDON, 1867-1914

Amongst the wide variety of commercial and entrepreneurial ventures undertaken in London, Ontario during the late nineteenth century, there were those enterprises that sought to offer the citizens of the city some respite from their daily vocations. One such commercial leisure venture captured the interest of Londoners in 1878. A short reference to "The New Steamer" appeared in the 24 June 1878 *London Free Press*. The author of the article described this commercial venture, stating "The new pleasure steamer, intended to ply between the city and the water-works property will very shortly be placed on the docks at the foot of Carling Street, where it will be built under the direction of Mr. Thos. Wastie. It will be a flat-bottom, 65 feet long, 21 feet wide, having a dancing saloon 45x20, and supplied with a 25 horse power engine. When full of passengers it will not draw more than a foot and a half of water. . . . It will be double deck, 35 ton burden, and carry 300 adults or about 700 children, and will be ready in about a month's time."<sup>1</sup> The appearance of this novel form of leisure in the form of a river steamer, particularly of the scale and comfort described above, provides evidence that an ever-increasing variety of leisure opportunities were becoming available to Londoners in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

#### Introduction

Commercial and entrepreneurial amusement and recreation facilities and activities in late nineteenth and early twentieth century London existed in a broad variety of forms. These recreation facilities included: hotels, public houses, saloons, and taverns; commercial amusement halls that provided activities such as billiards, bowling, and ice or roller skating; dance halls; baseball stadiums; spas and bath houses; theatres and opera houses; and river steamboats. All of

these commercial recreation facilities served as venues where people could participate in sport, leisure, and recreation activities. Although these facilities offered a range of services to the public, the primary focus of these business ventures was to secure a profit for the owner, owners, or shareholders. The existence and rapid growth of commercial leisure, recreation, and sporting facilities in London through the last three decades of the nineteenth century can be comprehended when examined in the larger context of the expansion of the broad spectrum of entrepreneurial ventures in industries such as trade and manufacturing during this period.<sup>2</sup>

The entry of businessmen, and to a limited degree, businesswomen,<sup>3</sup> into the domain of providing leisure and recreation opportunities demonstrated the increasing acceptance and legitimacy of these forms of activity in London at this time. Entrepreneurs who were involved in leisure and recreation during the late nineteenth century enjoyed a wide degree of freedom in the operation of their businesses. Local governments provided minimal regulation of these businesses when compared to that of public recreation activities and facilities, and any such regulation that was enacted was primarily focussed upon protecting the moral integrity of Londoners. Although a measure of freedom existed, bureaucratic measures did, over time, serve to define the parameters within which these businesses could operate with a clear focus on the maintenance of public decorum. Through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, businesses that provided recreation and leisure opportunities captured the interest of

Londoners both because of the services that were made available to citizens and for the opportunities that were afforded entrepreneurs and investors. Therefore, not only were a wide variety of entrepreneurs willing to invest in the construction and operation of commercial recreation facilities, but patrons were equally interested in taking advantage of the leisure and recreation opportunities.

Lynne Marks' *Revivals and Roller Rinks* examines the place of leisure entrepreneurs in nineteenth century small town Ontario. Marks concludes that entrepreneurs filled a void by providing recreation activities that municipal governments were not willing or able to offer.<sup>4</sup> Marks' examination outlines two forms of commercial recreation ownership that were dominant in nineteenth century Ontario communities. This distinction offers useful categories for the purposes of this study. The first form of commercial recreation included facilities whose owners were local businessmen with a primary goal of making a profit. An example of a Londoner who represented this type of owner was Charles Dunnett, the original proprietor of the White Sulphur Springs Baths. A second form of leisure facility ownership described by Marks was "a joint stock company [composed] of respectable churchgoing middle-class male citizens."<sup>5</sup> In London, the Thames River Navigation Company (TRNC) serves as an example of this type of company, and will form part of the analysis in this chapter. Although making a profit represented an important goal for this latter group of individuals, a certain degree of social responsibility to provide rational recreation opportunities also influenced investors' decisions to become involved in

providing local commercial recreation. Thus, ownership of commercial recreation facilities attracted a variety of individuals and groups whose goals were primarily focussed on receiving a return on their investment, although in certain situations involvement was also driven by altruistic goals.

Individual entrepreneurs and investors in London, from the 1870s to the First World War, established a variety of commercial recreation facilities ranging from the ubiquitous taverns and public houses, to venues that specialized in activities such as swimming, steamer travel, bowling, skating, and theatrical productions. The entrepreneurs, investors, and supporters of these emerging enterprises were primarily men who represented the elite of London society.<sup>6</sup> This specialization of commercial recreation and leisure facilities can be examined in terms of the process of institutionalization whereby an increasing number of these types of leisure and recreation activities came to be perceived as both acceptable and potentially profitable. Two important caveats must be taken into account when examining the process of forming leisure institutions as it related to these practices during the time period under consideration. First, these activities were never truly institutions prior to 1867 or after 1914, but were evolving entities that over time were transformed into recognizable forms of recreation possessing common roles, language and common bases of knowledge. Second, as was the case of public recreation, bureaucratic regulation in the form of criminal and licensing legislation served as the primary form of control over these activities. Therefore, although these commercial

recreation enterprises existed in a variety of forms, they generally operated in a manner that led to their acceptance and recognition as part of the broader business community, with the mandate of servicing the public's demand for recreation and leisure opportunities.

For the purposes of this investigation, two forms of commercial recreation facilities are examined. The first encompassed a group of specialized entertainment and recreation buildings within London that supported one or several closely related leisure and recreation activities. Such facilities included billiard halls, skating rinks, and theatre houses. The second form of commercial recreation examined is the river steamboat industry that operated in London during the final two decades of the nineteenth century. The examination of these facilities serves to focus this investigation upon a variety of commercial recreation activities participated in by individuals from a broad social spectrum. In addition, such categories included recreation facilities that were owned by both individual entrepreneurs and local companies. The river steamboat industry in this study also provides insight into one specialized recreation industry that existed not only to provide transportation to a specific recreation site, but was also, in and of itself, a site for recreation activities. Facilities that will not serve as a focus for this investigation are taverns, hotels, and public houses as these facilities represented sites that provided a broad range of services and recreation opportunities, but did not represent the types of facilities that existed primarily to provide one or several closely related forms of recreation.<sup>7</sup> However,

in advance of a focussed investigation of the above-mentioned commercial recreation facilities and the river steamers' industry, it is first necessary to provide a brief examination of these businesses, primarily taverns and inns, that served as sites for recreation prior to the widespread appearance of specialized leisure, recreation and sport facilities in London during the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

### **Early Commercial Leisure and Recreation in Canada and London**

The earliest commercial facilities that promoted leisure and recreation activities in British North American towns and cities were a variety of public houses, primarily inns and taverns. According to Edwin Guillet in his examination *Pioneer Inns and Taverns*, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries little practical difference existed between an inn and a tavern.<sup>8</sup> Inns and taverns in Upper Canada sold food and drink to local residents and as well, provided lodgings and board for travellers. A typical rural tavern of the day, as described by Edward Talbot who travelled in the area that now surrounds London during the 1820s, was a small log house consisting of three rooms, "a kitchen, a bed chamber, and a bar room."<sup>9</sup> These rustic accommodations served a variety of purposes including cooking, dining, drinking, and sleeping. Despite the limited physical size and amenities, some of these taverns expanded their services for the purpose of attracting customers by providing recreation activities such as "circuses, shows, and other entertainment."<sup>10</sup> The reason why some



proprietors expanded their services beyond the traditional room, board, and drink to include recreational activities is not immediately apparent. Possibly, public houses within growing urban centres such as London chose to enlarge the types of services provided in order to compete and attract customers to remain viable. Thus, the expansion of services offered by urban inns and taverns represented the establishment of a recognizable industry providing recreation opportunities to city dwellers. The success of these early establishments served as the impetus for entrepreneurs to invest in opening a wide range of businesses, not necessarily related to the provision of alcohol, that offered recreation and leisure services to the broad spectrum of London society.

By 1857, a large number of hotels, inns, saloons, and taverns in London provided a variety of services to the city's inhabitants. According to records cited by Guillet, there were thirty hotels, thirty-five inns, twenty saloons, three public houses, and one tavern operating in the city that year.<sup>11</sup> London, in accord with other growing communities in Canada West (Ontario) at that time, relied upon hotels, inns, and taverns as sites for providing and organizing recreation activities.<sup>12</sup> However, according to Frederick Armstrong, the growth of the city's population from 11,200 in 1860 to 19,941 in 1880 resulted in an "unending need for new services."<sup>13</sup> One aspect of this expanding need for services certainly included the growth in the number and variety of recreation and leisure activities and facilities. Consequently, with commercial leisure and recreation becoming increasingly specialized over time as a result of developing concepts of what

constituted acceptable and profitable forms, these activities and the manner in which they were organized and participated in, were increasingly defined according to their appropriateness. Baser or alternative forms of leisure and recreation such as gambling, indecent exhibitions, and prostitution were strictly legislated against at least as early as 1880. Less obnoxious practices such as drinking in taverns, circus exhibitions, bowling in alleys, playing billiards in halls, and attending theatre productions were regulated through licenses.<sup>14</sup> Thus, established and emerging activities alike were increasingly regulated through local government legislation. Accordingly, both politicians and citizens in London accepted that in order for appropriate recreation and leisure facilities to exist to meet the specific interests of the populace, someone would have to pay to invest in the construction of those facilities. Therefore, as London's population expanded and its economy became more robust, people became increasingly willing and able to pay to participate in recreation and leisure activities. In turn, entrepreneurs invested in building and operating these facilities and services.

### **Licensing Leisure: The Early Regulation of Houses of Entertainment**

In London, during the second half of the nineteenth century, there were a multitude of hotels, inns, and saloons open to the public which supported a variety of recreation activities. However, in the early decades of this period, there existed few specialized recreation and entertainment facilities that focussed primarily on one or several closely related forms of leisure and recreation. An

early example of one such specialized recreation facility in London was Ellis W. Hyman's music hall, opened in 1866, located at the corner of Richmond and York Streets.<sup>15</sup> This hall, built on the site of an old racquets court, represented the first building used exclusively for theatre and music productions in London.<sup>16</sup> Spettigue Hall, a second venue built specifically for theatre and music concerts opened five years later and was located at the southwest corner of Dundas and Clarence streets.<sup>17</sup> These facilities served as venues for a variety of entertainment activities including concerts, plays, and travelling entertainers and attractions. These venues were much better equipped to accommodate these types of theatrical activities than the buildings that had been employed for the same purpose previously, including, for example, O'Brien's barn which was said to have held the first garrison theatricals produced in 1838.<sup>18</sup> Thus, as in the case of theatre in London during the nineteenth century, there was discernable change in how leisure activities were organized and experienced. Specifically this was evident in the development of increasingly specialized forms of commercial recreation and leisure activities.

The growth in demand by Londoners for specialized recreation and leisure venues resulted, at least in part, from the increased municipal regulation of London's taverns, inns, and public houses. In the early 1850s, a series of by-laws were passed by the Township of London to govern the operation of public houses. In 1850, by-law no. 8 was passed "To provide for the Licensing, and keeping of Houses of Entertainment, in the Township of London."<sup>19</sup> Primarily, this

legislation focussed upon the sale of food and drink, stipulating that the same had to be consumed on the premises. Further, the license ordered that anyone who ran a house of entertainment had to:

at all times keep such house in a quiet, proper and orderly manner, suffering no species of gambling, drunkenness, tippling, profane swearing, or any improper conduct whatsoever to be practised, in or about such houses, outhouses, or premises thereunto belonging; nor shall any such house be kept open on Sabbath day, for the sale or disposal of any meat, drink, or anything whatsoever (unless to strangers travelling) and to such only as far as necessity requires; And be it further enacted, that any person wishing to obtain a License, for any house as above described, shall be required to obtain certificates of character, and of the necessary accommodation, signed by at least six resident landholders, nearest to where such house is required to be opened; which certificate shall be countersigned by the Councillor representing the Ward in which such house is situate, and upon presenting such certificate to the Township Clerk, and paying the said Clerk, for township purposes the sum of two pounds currency.<sup>20</sup>

This by-law above, depending upon the degree of enforcement, served to regulate activities taking place in public houses and the conditions under which they could operate. The strict rules surrounding licensing limited the services that could be provided. A revised by-law passed by the Township of London in February of 1853 served to further regulate the operation of taverns, inns, and houses of entertainment.<sup>21</sup> The focus upon the sale of liquor and patron conduct evident within these by-laws indicates that little attention was paid to the recreation and leisure activities supported by these establishments. Similarly, no legislation existed to regulate activities within publicly accessible halls other than inns, taverns, and other establishments where providing alcohol represented the

primary service. Thus, it can be argued that the regulation and licensing of houses of public entertainment in London and the surrounding region prior to 1855 focussed almost exclusively upon governing the sale of alcohol in taverns and inns. To avoid these increasingly strict regulations and a bond of forty pounds required by 1855 for establishments to be licensed to serve alcohol,<sup>22</sup> some entrepreneurs turned their energies toward providing recreation and leisure activities in unlicensed buildings. However, the provision of specialty recreation and leisure facilities was not, by the early 1850s, a widespread phenomenon. This situation is evidenced by the lack of attention paid by local governors to buildings that were used for recreation purposes but were not at that time required to be licensed as houses of entertainment.

“By-Law No. 1,” the first comprehensive piece of legislation passed by the City of London to regulate the licensing of houses of public entertainment, was passed in 1855. This by-law provided a broader scope of application than previous legislation, covering the licensing of inns, taverns, saloons, temperance houses, store keepers, cabs, canters, livery stables, billiard tables, auctioneers, hawkers, petty chapman, bowling alleys, and exhibitions.<sup>23</sup> The regulation of leisure and entertainment activities such as billiard tables and bowling alleys through this legislation exhibited a shift toward a recognition of the growth of alternate forms of and venues for public recreation. Under this by-law, each billiard table license cost the proprietor ten pounds a year, while a bowling alley cost five pounds to license for the same period.<sup>24</sup> Thus, over the course of the

second half of the nineteenth century these and other recreation activities became economically viable services in and of themselves unattached to taverns and hotels, and were potentially able to provide an entrepreneur with an income sufficient to make the licensing fee worthwhile. As a result, by the 1850s, interest in a wide range of commercial recreation activities had begun to emerge in London. This by-law served to provide the city with a means to indicate its acceptance and control over these emerging leisure and recreation businesses, the result of which was the expansion of the scope of licensing and regulation of these specialized facilities by the new City Council.

### **Commercial Amusements: Billiards, Bowling, Skating, and Theatres**

The extent to which places of amusement operated in London can, in part, be gleaned from an examination of the city's annual business directories. Of particular interest in terms of the growth of recreation and leisure in the city were those establishments that advertised a specific form of activity such as billiard rooms, bowling alleys, skating rinks, and theatres. The establishment of these types of specialized amusement facilities reflected the increasing interest in alternative venues for recreation and leisure opportunities that held an alternative appeal from that available in existing facilities such as hotels, taverns, inns, and saloons. Over the period beginning in the late 1860s through the turn of the twentieth century, the growth of these forms of commercial leisure and recreation indicated that ideas of what constituted acceptable and appropriate

activities had expanded to include a broad range of leisure and recreation practices and facilities.

Two of London's earliest amusement facilities were the city's bowling alleys and billiard rooms. The first record of the existence of a commercial bowling alley in the city can be traced to 1856 when a "Ball Alley" license was issued to James M. Martin and John Liberty.<sup>25</sup> Although public billiard rooms in Upper Canada had required a license since 1810,<sup>26</sup> as discussed above, the first local legislation passed to regulate the activity was outlined within the 1855 "By-law No. 1" which required that individual tables be licensed and that "No minor, apprentice or Servant [be] allowed to frequent Bowling Alleys or Billiard Rooms."<sup>27</sup> Available evidence supports that specialized billiard facilities were operating in London as early as 1866. The City Directory for 1866-67 contains a listing for the Albion Billiard Room located on Richmond Street.<sup>28</sup> Billiard tables were most often located in taverns and hotels; yet the widespread interest in the game made it possible for some entrepreneurs to forgo acquiring a liquor license to operate a drinking establishment and focus solely upon providing billiard tables for use by their customers.

Several London entrepreneurs advertised themselves as offering billiards and bagatelle tables in the late 1860s.<sup>29</sup> These included Edward Bostwick on Richmond Street, Mynon Rowley also on Richmond Street, along with James Smith's previously mentioned Albion Rooms.<sup>30</sup> Available evidence suggests that during the 1870s there were typically from one to three billiard rooms that were

not a part of a tavern or hotel operating in London.<sup>31</sup> It was also during the 1870s that bowling alleys began to assume a larger presence as a viable form of commercial recreation in London. One such business, an alley owned by Frederick Thompson located at the corner of New Arcade Street and Market Square, was listed in the 1877-78 London city directory. A second bowling alley, opened by G.J. Todd in 1881, was located on Carling Street.<sup>32</sup> Through the 1880s and 1890s the number of billiard rooms listed in the city directories ranged from four in 1883,<sup>33</sup> to one in 1890,<sup>34</sup> and two in 1897-98.<sup>35</sup> Following the turn of the century, billiard halls were listed less frequently in the city directories. The reason for the omission of billiard halls over this period is not known. Possibly this oversight was due to changes in the directory publisher's format which failed to differentiate billiard halls from taverns and saloons with billiard tables. However, in the 1907 City Directory six stand-alone billiard and pool halls were advertised along with two bowling alleys. These two activities, although traditionally located in separate premises, could also be found in the same building, particularly after the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>36</sup> An example of one such combined facility was the Ideal Bowling Alley and Billiard Parlour which began to operate in London as early as 1907.<sup>37</sup> The consistent presence of billiard rooms and bowling alleys in London during the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century demonstrates the growing acceptance of these types of amusement facilities in the city.



The growing acceptance and regulation of billiard and bowling establishments may have been viewed as necessary in order to mitigate and manage deviant activity associated with the unregulated and unlicensed practice of these pastimes in the city. For instance, according to the London by-laws of 1880, playing ball games in the streets, including nine or ten pin bowling, was strictly prohibited.<sup>38</sup> However, regulation and acceptance did not guarantee success for all these enterprises. Evidence suggests that many halls and alleys operated only briefly, and it was more often the exception than the rule for an individual entrepreneur to remain in business for an extended period of time. For example, one of the most successful billiard hall and/or bowling alley entrepreneurs in London was J.T. Gleeson who operated facilities almost continuously from 1886 to 1907.<sup>39</sup> Despite the often high rate of turnover, a degree of stability existed for these recreation facilities by the turn of the twentieth century. As a result, Londoners came to recognize and understand the role of these businesses as legitimate providers of commercial recreation. In terms of the institutionalization of commercial recreation, by the very early twentieth century billiard halls and to an extent bowling alleys were accepted as legitimate elements of London's expanding leisure industry, in part through City Council's continued licensing regulations.

A second variety of commercial recreation facility that served to provide the citizens of London with recreation opportunities was the ice and, later, roller skating rinks. The 1868 construction of the city's first covered skating rink likely

resulted from the ice-skating 'mania' that swept across the Canadian and Atlantic provinces beginning in the early 1860s.<sup>40</sup> This skating 'mania' was particularly evident in Montreal where the Victoria Skating Rink, the most famous of the early covered rinks, was built in 1863.<sup>41</sup> According to Peter Lindsay, "Probably the greatest encouragement to skating was provided in the form of prepared ice surfaces . . . [built by] enterprising gentlemen [who] began to realize that skating held potential commercial profit, provided that conditions for skaters could be improved."<sup>42</sup> At the end of the 1860s, the formation of the London Covered Skating Rink Company under the presidency of the Honourable John Carling represented the establishment of the city's first permanent-covered site for ice-skating.<sup>43</sup> Ice-skating during the 1870s took place on sections of the Thames River<sup>44</sup> and in the various outdoor and covered facilities. In 1881, a second rink corporation, the London Skating Rink Company, was formed. By 1887, this company boasted a capital reserve of \$10,000.<sup>45</sup> The same year, according to the London directory, there were two roller-skating rinks operating in London – the Princess and Star Rinks.<sup>46</sup> Four years later, in 1891, there were three skating rinks and one roller rink operating in London.<sup>47</sup> At the turn of the century the new Jubilee Rink was built.<sup>48</sup> The next new rink to be constructed was the Richmond Skating Rink in 1907, bringing the number listed in the London directory operating in the city to five.<sup>49</sup> On Labour Day of the same year, the Princess Roller Rink held its "Grand Reopening" accompanied by music from the London Concert Band.<sup>50</sup> Finally, in 1911, two new skating rinks, the East End Rink and

the Victoria Rink, were built.<sup>51</sup> Thus, by 1914 the number of skating rinks, both roller and ice, in London had risen to seven. This relatively slow increase in the number of rinks likely reflects the steadily increasing interest in pleasure skating and the arrival of the team sport of ice-hockey. With the population of London continuing to expand over this period, it is not surprising that there was an ongoing demand for more of this type of recreation facility.<sup>52</sup>

Little social or legal resistance toward ice- and roller-skating existed in London since the activities generally were considered to be morally acceptable pastimes. The manner in which promoters advertised these facilities in the local newspapers attests to the acceptance of both roller- and ice-skating as legitimate leisure activities. Often the rink managers organized band concerts or other forms of entertainment to enhance the skating experience and attract patrons.<sup>53</sup> As a result of this approbation, the steady growth of, and investment in, the skating rink industry by both local entrepreneurs and corporations beginning in the 1860s through the turn of the twentieth century, suggests that the facilities and activities had become ensconced within the fabric of the city's leisure and recreation landscape.

A third form of primarily commercial recreation activity which required the provision of separate, specialized facilities was theatre and concert productions in London. Although theatre and concert attendance represented a form of spectator or passive leisure participation, it is quite possible that the same middle- and upper-class individuals who enjoyed skating to band music also

attended theatre productions and concerts. Initially, beginning in the late 1830s, the local British garrison officers used any available and suitable building such as the previously mentioned O'Brien's Barn to present their theatrical productions.<sup>54</sup> Later, as early as 1846, theatrical performances also took place in the old Town Hall under the management of Detroit native John McFarlane.<sup>55</sup> In 1855, following the opening of London's new City Hall,<sup>56</sup> the old Town Hall was moved across the road from its Market Square location and renamed Brunton's Varieties after its new owner W.Y. Brunton, manager of London's first professional theatre.<sup>57</sup> The next addition to the growing artistic and cultural leisure industry in London was the conversion of an old racquets court on the corner of Richmond and York Streets by E.W. Hyman into the city's first music hall.<sup>58</sup> The utilization of the old town and new city halls and Hyman's music hall at this early point in London's history indicates that there was an ongoing interest among Londoners in the production of both amateur and professional theatre.<sup>59</sup> These activities remained limited to infrequent plays presented by garrison officers and soldiers and the periodic pieces presented by travelling professionals. Theatre and music production in London, as a result, remained primarily a local amateur avocation. For example, the London Dramatic Club, founded in 1861, continued the amateur legacy of theatre in the city through the 1860s.<sup>60</sup> However, by the early 1870s, theatrical productions in London had begun to develop as an increasingly professional and commercial venture. This change was ushered in when the London Music Hall became the Holman Opera

House in 1873 after being leased to George Holman, the patriarch of the theatre family who dominated live artistic productions in London for the next decade and a half.<sup>61</sup> In 1881, the Holman's Opera House was torn down and replaced by the Grand Opera House located in the Masonic Building on King Street.<sup>62</sup> During the 1880s and 1890s, the new Grand Opera House represented the primary site for performance art in the city, providing for numerous and increasingly popular professional theatre productions.

The Grand Opera House, constructed at a cost of \$85,000, was officially opened on 8 September 1881 and quickly assumed the leadership role for theatre in London. By this time theatre patrons began to exhibit less interest in amateur theatrical productions, and the expanded presence of professional theatre in the city served to crystalize their awareness of what theatre ought to be. Part of this process of legitimizing professional theatres as the preferred form of the craft lay with the role of the facility manager. The new opera house's manager was "C.J. Whitney a Detroit-based businessman and lumber baron who [had] constructed his first theatre in Detroit in 1875 for \$135,000."<sup>63</sup> Along with managing his own independent chain of opera houses in Michigan and Ohio, Whitney had previously managed the Holman Opera House in London during the late 1870s booking acts while the theatre family took their productions on the road.<sup>64</sup> In 1881, Whitney signed a lease to become the sole operator and manager of the new Grand Opera House built on the corner of King and Richmond Streets as part of the massive new Masonic Temple.<sup>65</sup> On 23 February

1900 the original Grand Opera House burned down. The following year, a larger Grand Opera House was built by C.J. Whitney and his partner Ambrose J. Small, opening on 9 September 1901.<sup>66</sup> Following Whitney's death in 1903,<sup>67</sup> Small maintained control of the Grand Opera House until just before his death in 1919.<sup>68</sup> In order to ensure that the theatre business remained suitably profitable, Whitney, and later Small, through their control over theatres throughout the region, ensured a constant supply of productions to fill seats in their houses. Therefore, from the 1880s on, theatre in London became increasingly limited to the venues controlled by a small circle of theatre managers. This delimitation in the administration of theatre in London began with the Holman family's productions in the 1870s, and by the 1880s theatre had become part of a wider professional circuit controlled primarily by the aforementioned C.J. Whitney and Ambrose J. Small.

Although the London Opera House dominated theatre in London from the early 1880s, several smaller theatres also managed to attract sufficient patronage to remain viable businesses. These theatres survived by producing a variety of novelty acts and by not competing directly with the more elaborate productions presented at the Grand Opera House. Generally, these smaller theatres were able to attract customers through the staging of vaudevillian shows. This alternative theatre became widely available in 1895 when the London Mechanic's Institute merged with the London Public Library. As a result, the old Dundas Street building which had housed the Mechanic's Institute was

converted into the London Music Hall.<sup>69</sup> This music hall's name had been changed to the London Opera House in 1901.<sup>70</sup> When Charles W. Bennett arrived in London in 1905 he took over the Dundas Street theatre, renaming it the London Vaudeville Theatre.<sup>71</sup> Bennett managed this theatre until his retirement from the industry in 1909.<sup>72</sup> Other, comparable theatres operating in 1907 included the Victoria Theatre and Bennett's new Unique Theatre, both of which were listed in that year's city directory.<sup>73</sup> Two new theatres were opened in London in 1910: the Star Theatre and the Empire Theatre. As well, Bennett's original theatre was again renamed the Majestic Theatre.<sup>74</sup> In 1911, the Princess Theatre was the last new venue to open prior the First World War.<sup>75</sup> The number of theatre houses operating by this time indicates that London possessed a vibrant theatre entertainment industry that was able to cater to groups from all levels of society. However, one question that must be considered is why was there a rapid increase in the number of theatres in London in the brief period from 1907 and 1911?

The most plausible reason was the growing popularity of moving pictures or films which emerged during the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>76</sup> According to Roy Rozenweig, the appearance of movie theatres first occurred in North American cities as was the case in Worcester, Massachusetts beginning in 1904.<sup>77</sup> In London, the establishment of Bennett's Unique Theatre in 1907 heralded the arrival of movies as part of its vaudeville program. In an advertisement article promoting the program for the new season at Bennett's

Theatre, a variety of vaudeville acts were listed. The final act listed in the new show proclaimed "The Benettograph presents a humorous film. 'Cohen's Fire Sale'."<sup>78</sup> Thus, by 1907, films represented at least an element of these smaller theatre's offerings, evidence that moving pictures were becoming an increasingly popular form of entertainment within the city. A further influence of the increasingly popular film industry was that the theatre experience became more affordable and available to Londoners with limited financial means.<sup>79</sup> To this end, movie theatres as the offspring of the vaudeville tradition, represented an important influence in further popularizing theatrical entertainment as both a viable commercial venture and an acceptable leisure pursuit.

In London, traditional forms of live theatre and music staged in the late nineteenth century remained confined primarily to the Grand Opera House and the few smaller venues that operated during that period. It was not until the very early 1900s that a number of new theatres were established focussing primarily upon vaudevillian acts, and later, moving pictures. As commercial ventures, theatres were accepted for providing leisure entertainment to a wide range of London society. Yet, these theatres fell under the control of a small group of men who managed to monopolize this segment of London's leisure life. The process of the institutionalization of theatre in London can be traced back to the early productions staged by garrison officers in the early nineteenth century. Later, professional actors and theatre managers assumed the leadership role in local theatres from these amateurs. Each form of theatre, whether vaudeville, opera,



or later, film, provided Londoners from a broad range of society the opportunity to participate. One result was that theatre in London came to be limited to several related forms of professional productions, essentially those that were financially viable. To that end, theatre goers recognized precisely what type of entertainment would be presented within each venue,<sup>80</sup> a familiarity that both owners and patrons came to count on after the turn of the twentieth century.

Billiard halls and bowling alleys, skating rinks, and theatre halls represented entertainment and recreation facilities that housed activities under the control of entrepreneurs and companies consisting primarily of local investors. The examination of London's directories, local ordinances, and newspaper advertisements and articles provide insight into the process through which these recreation and leisure activities became increasingly shaped into regularized practices. Initially, these activities were centred in facilities that served a variety of purposes, including local taverns, the river, and in the case of local garrison theatre, a barn. However, the activities that had been housed in these facilities became increasingly organized and specialized by the latter decades of the nineteenth century. For example, theatre became largely a professional form of entertainment produced within specialized facilities such as Holman's, and Whitney and Small's Opera Houses. Similarly, the tavern was no longer the exclusive preserve of billiards and bowling. As well, skating moved from often rustic and unregulated settings of ponds and the river, into specialized facilities under professional management built specifically for the customer's

comfort. The billiard hall, bowling alley, and covered rink came to be accepted by many Londoners as sites for leisure and recreation as well as viable business opportunities.

By the turn of the twentieth century, these leisure and recreation enterprises had been transformed in order to appeal increasingly to middle-class patrons many of whom no longer wished to spend their leisure time in taverns or out-of-doors. Amenities such as the musical accompaniment provided by most skating rinks beginning in the 1880s, exhibited the type of experience that many patrons expected when it came to that particular form of commercial recreation. As well, the Grand Opera House under the management of C.J. Whitney and, later, Ambrose Small, provided theatrical productions that suited the tastes of their generally wealthy audience, while the vaudeville theatres offered a line-up of acts and movies that catered primarily to the less affluent members of London's working classes. Consequently, by the turn of the century, entrepreneurs had identified and met the demand for leisure experiences well beyond that which existed in the first half of the nineteenth century. The expectations in terms of leisure and recreation opportunities were also clearly defined and accepted by this time, placing the onus of the owners, operators, and managers to deliver what their patrons sought. Although individual agency did exist, it had become constrained through a negotiated process that was defined by those who assumed these same roles. Similarly, the language used in advertisements for these activities was widely understood, whether presented in

the city directories or newspapers. This familiarity further reinforced the place of these leisure and recreation activities. As a result, these activities came to be naturalized, and entrepreneurs and shareholders were able to capitalize upon this widespread assent. In turn, the owners and managers of these businesses were generally accorded a relatively free reign over the operation of their investments, not unlike more traditional forms of commercial activity, with the exception of theatres which operated as part of a regional monopoly under Whitney and Small.

London's municipal government remained involved in regulating these enterprises, particularly when issues involving public morality arose. This focus remained a concern of local politicians and social reformers, a sentiment that was expressed through the city's by-laws. For example, the 1880 by-laws concerned with public morals stated that:

No person shall, within the City, exhibit or perform any indecent, immoral, or lewd play, or give any indecent exhibition; and the Mayor, Police Magistrate or any Alderman, the Chief of Police, or any policeman or peace officer, may prevent the exhibition or performance of any such play, or the giving of any such exhibition.<sup>81</sup>

With the increased acceptance of commercial leisure and recreation under the management of generally respectable citizens who invested in the provision of leisure and recreation activities, any opposition to these types of activities based on their link to tavern culture decreased markedly by the beginning of the twentieth century. The variety of avenues available to Londoners for recreation and leisure similarly increased over this period. However, the provision of

commercial recreation was not limited to facilities located in buildings within the city. One example of a popular form of commercial recreation venture that tied the city to an outlying recreation site – in this case Springbank Park – were the steamers that plied the Thames River during the late 1870s, and parts of the 1880s and 1890s.

### **Commercial River Steamboats: Competition, Disaster, and Decline**

A popular method of travelling to recreation activities in the area surrounding London were the aforementioned commercial river steamboats. These vessels plied the Thames River to and from forks in the city and Springbank Park beginning in the late 1870s and periodically to the close of the 1890s. Commercial passenger steamboats operated within the British North American colonies since the first half of the 1800s, and became a widely available method of transportation by mid-century immediately prior to the rapid growth of railway lines beginning in the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>82</sup> Thus, by the late 1870s, the expertise required to build and run a steamboat was readily available throughout Canada. However, the decision by investors and entrepreneurs in London to launch the first river steamboats in 1878 and 1879 occurred only after the necessary conditions had emerged to make steamer service a viable and potentially profitable business venture. The first of these conditions was an increasing interest among the growing ranks of London's middle-class residents to use their leisure time and money to take part in recreation activities outside

the city proper. One of the earliest day outing destinations that could be readily reached by Londoners was Springbank Park. As discussed previously, this venue was formed on city-owned property acquired for waterworks purposes at a site several miles down the Thames River. This land had been purchased by the city in order to build a dam and pump house to move water to the city, and to secure the artesian springs located at the site.<sup>83</sup> The construction of the waterworks' dam proved to be critical in facilitating steamer service on the Thames between London and Springbank. The dam raised the level of the river above the dam site, serving to maintain a greater river depth for longer periods during the summer months. Therefore, the interest surrounding the formation of the Springbank recreation area, and the improved navigability resulting from the dam combined to create the necessary local conditions for the birth of the commercial passenger-carrying steamboat industry in London in 1878.<sup>84</sup>

Although conditions remained suitable for entrepreneurs to invest in building and operating steamboats on the Thames River between London and Springbank Park after 1878, the industry was soon beset by problems originating both from within and outside the trade. These difficulties resulted from the actions of rival steamboat companies and entrepreneurs, the changing recreation interests of Londoners, the increasing involvement of city government, natural disasters, and competition from alternative modes of transportation. The combined influences of these factors had a profound impact on the viability of the steamer industry from its rapid growth between 1878 and 1881, to the

eventual abandonment of passenger steamboat service by the turn of the twentieth century. The following case study examines how this commercial recreation industry quickly became an accepted form of leisure in London, how the steamer industry persisted despite a series of setbacks, and finally, why the business of carrying passengers by steamboat eventually collapsed despite the continued interest in Springbank Park as a recreation destination. In terms of the process of institutionalization, when the first steamers arrived in London they were already a widely accepted form of transportation. It is reasonable to assume that many individuals would have already experienced steamboat travel on larger bodies of water such as Lakes Erie and Ontario. Two, the introduction of this technology to London likely would have been viewed as a natural progression to provide ready access to Springbank. To this end, an examination of this early commercial industry provides an excellent example of one specific leisure and recreation activity, a case study that provides insight into the issues, challenges, and concerns that influenced the viability of this early leisure-oriented business venture.

The first commercial passenger-carrying steamboat to operate a regular service between the 'Forks' of the Thames River in London and the new municipal waterworks (Springbank Park) was the *Forest City* launched in 1878 by the Thames River Navigation Company (TRNC).<sup>85</sup> The launch of this steamer closely followed the construction of the waterworks dam, which raised water levels in the river and afforded larger boats (such as the *Forest City*) improved

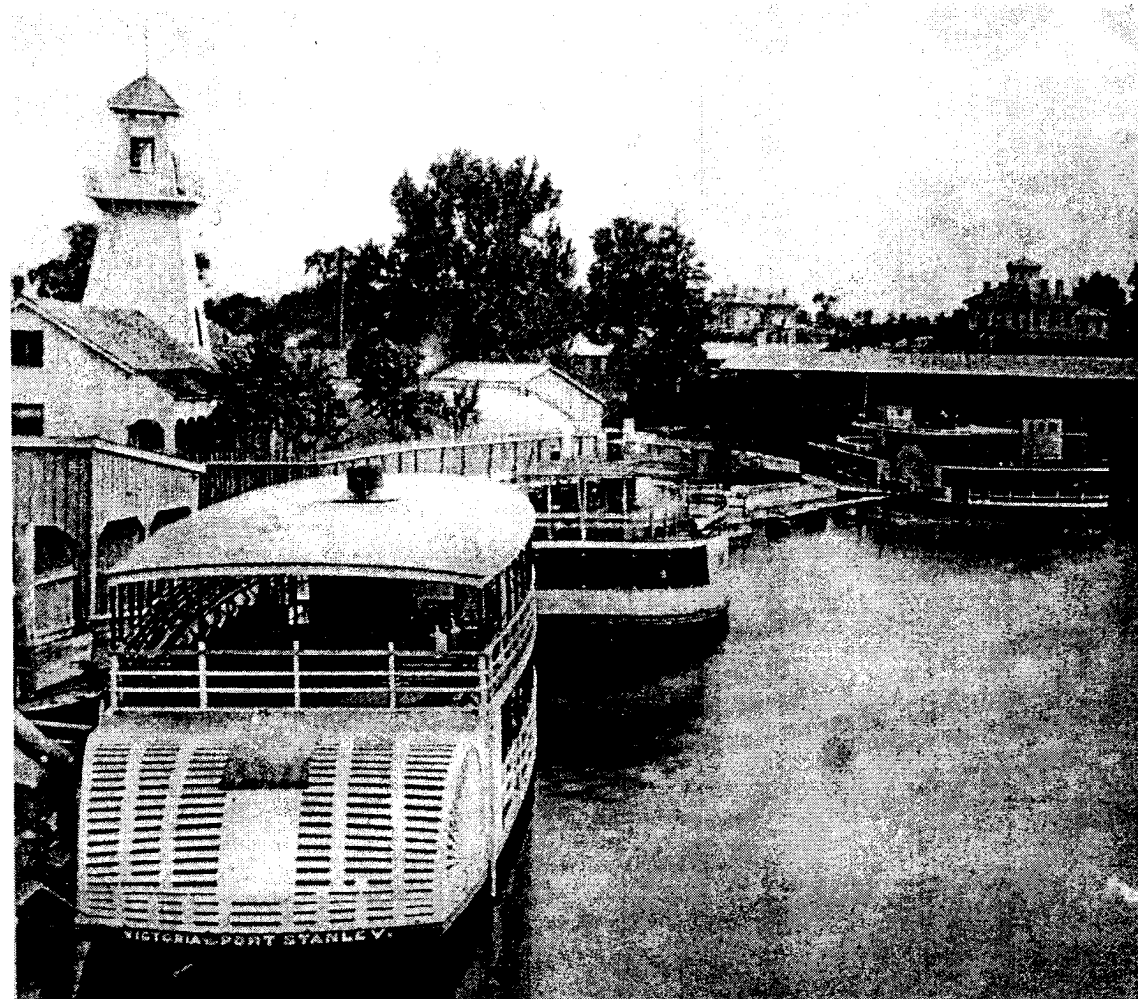
navigability on that stretch of the Thames.<sup>86</sup> The *Forest City*, a double-decked, side paddle-wheeler, boasted several amenities such as two stained glass windows at the stern and a smoking lounge for the passengers. Despite the attempt to provide passengers with a degree of luxury, the steamer's service was often less than reliable. The vessel suffered from frequent mechanical difficulties and breakdowns, as well as an erratic schedule that exhibited that the owners were often less concerned with regular departures than with making sure there were enough passengers to make the trip profitable. Although little action could be taken to reduce delays due to required repairs, public pressure resulted in action being taken by London City Council to force the TRNC to adhere to its printed schedule.<sup>87</sup> Despite these early difficulties, the TRNC recognized the potential of its enterprise and showed no signs of abandoning the business venture following the close of the first season.

Undaunted by, or possibly unaware of, the problems encountered by the TRNC during its first season, Joseph Andrews, a local entrepreneur, launched the steamer *Enterprise* in August 1879 after receiving permission from City Council to dock his steamer at the 'Forks' of the Thames.<sup>88</sup> Mr. Andrews' venture lasted only a few months, and, at the end of the season, the *Enterprise* was destroyed by fire. The following spring the wreck of the *Enterprise* was salvaged and rebuilt into a two decked rear paddle wheeler and renamed the *Victoria* by its new owners, the London and Waterworks Line (LWL).<sup>89</sup> During the 1880 season, the LWL's retrofitted steamer proved to be a worthy competitor to the TRNC's

*Forest City*, creating an intense rivalry which at times resulted in the reckless operation of the steamers. During the first two seasons of steamboat operation Londoners were quick to accept that steamer travel on the Thames River represented an acceptable, and needed form of transport and leisure.<sup>90</sup> The photograph (page 190), from about 1880, of the steamers docked at the forks displays the prominent place these vessels had assumed on the river. Yet, at the same time there was a growing rivalry between the two steamer lines that served to reinforce that commercial steamers needed to be profitable to remain viable.

By 1880 the commercial steamboat service on the Thames River had proven its ability to provide Londoners with a generally positive leisure experience. However, as was the experience elsewhere in British North America,<sup>91</sup> there were incidents of the dangerous operation of steamboats on the Thames River that were well documented between 1879 and 1881. These indiscretions ranged from racing to occasional intentional ramming between representatives of the rival steamboat lines. One ramming incident in 1880 led to a fight between two steamer captains on the docks at the forks.<sup>92</sup> Not only were the actions of the steamer operators becoming more reckless, but the conflicts were exacerbated by the increasingly crowded river following the launch of the *Princess Louise* by the TRNC in 1880.<sup>93</sup> Escalating competition between the TRNC and the LWL for passengers and profits resulted in rules and common sense often being abandoned. The critical incident which exposed the depth of the recklessness and the lack of regulation in operating the steamers occurred





Steamers at the Forks of the Thames River, London - c. 1880.

Courtesy J.J. Talman Regional Collection, D.B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.

on 24 May, 1881. On the holiday honouring Queen Victoria, her namesake, the steamer *Victoria*, capsized and sank resulting in the deaths of more than one hundred and eighty people.<sup>94</sup> Most of the victims of the accident were women and children.<sup>95</sup> The vessel's demise and the high loss of life resulted from the *Victoria* having been heavily overloaded with holiday patrons returning from Springbank Park. The two TRNC steamers, the Princess Louise and the Forest City had been unable to reach Springbank Park to assist with returning patrons to the city at the end of the day. Their absence led to the overloading of the *Victoria*. Finally, when the steamboat capsized due to the shifting weight of the passengers, the upper-deck fell onto the lower-deck causing many of the victims to be crushed to death.<sup>96</sup> Had the *Victoria* not been overloaded with several hundred more passengers than its recommended capacity of four hundred, the accident may have been averted.<sup>97</sup> The vessel's principle owner George Parish and Captain Rankin were initially blamed for the accident; yet the two were later acquitted of all charges following the coroner's inquest into the accident.<sup>98</sup> When the coroner's jury decided not to pursue legal action against Parish or Rankin, there was a "vigorous protest against the verdict of the jury."<sup>99</sup> The victim's families and friends were unable to gain the satisfaction of a conviction from the legal proceedings that investigated the disaster. However, the broader impact of the disaster upon the steamboat industry was almost fatal in terms of customer confidence,<sup>100</sup> and, in many respects, the industry never fully rebuilt or recovered after the disaster.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, the *Victoria* disaster represented a juncture of

irreversible transformation in terms of the viability of commercial steamboats in London. In this particular instance people were forced to question the manner in which steamboats operated. Londoners were no longer willing to accept blindly the reliability, safety, and ultimately the legitimacy of the steamboat industry. Although this did not result in the end of steamer service on the Thames River in London, the incident and its aftermath foreshadowed a future for the industry that would be plagued by ongoing difficulties, setbacks, and its eventual demise at the turn of the twentieth century.

The reaction of the public to the *Victoria* disaster represented the most immediate, but not the sole reason for the decline in the number and viability of steamboats operating on the Thames River during the 1880s and 1890s. There were several factors and events external to the actions of the steamboat companies that had also had a detrimental effect on the industry over this period. These adverse influences upon steamer viability in London included: natural disasters; the arrival of more efficient and less expensive modes of transport such as street rail service to Springbank Park; continued interest in alternative recreational sites such as Port Stanley on Lake Erie, a destination which could easily be reached by train; and problems associated with the waterworks' dam which threatened both the navigability of the river and the desirability of Springbank Park as a recreation destination. The combination of these continuing challenges resulted in the steamboat industry's inability to reestablish itself fully following the 1881 *Victoria* disaster and, ultimately, its demise.

In the summer of 1883, two years after the capsizing of the *Victoria*, the first concerted effort was undertaken to revive the steamboat industry in London. In June of 1883 the TRNC petitioned London City Council for the "free use of the hotel at Springbank Park for the term of three years, and a subsidy of \$200 to repair said hotel."<sup>102</sup> Understandably, opposition to this plan arose out of the lingering doubts surrounding the safety of steamer travel on the Thames River. In response to these questions, Mr. Reid, the spokesman for the TRNC, attempted to allay any concerns. Reid, in an effort to portray the sober nature of the TRNC's proposal, stated that it was the company's intention "to run the Springbank Hotel on strictly temperance principles, and [that] the entire enterprise was for the general benefit of the citizens and residents of the vicinity."<sup>103</sup> Despite these assurances, resistance to the company's plan persisted. Alderman William Skinner moved that the petition should not be granted out of respect to those whose family and friends were lost in the *Victoria* accident. In addition, he argued that he could get 10,000 signatures in opposition to the resumption of steamboat service.<sup>104</sup> In the end, City Councilors, with the exception of Alderman Skinner, voted to grant the TRNC provisional use of the hotel for one year without charge. Thus, the TRNC was able to secure the park building to house and provide comfort to passengers upon their arrival at Springbank.<sup>105</sup> However, this positive turn of events was followed only a month later by a second disaster. This time, the catastrophe took the form of a severe flash flood on 11 July 1883 which resulted in eighteen deaths, wide spread

property damage, and fear of an outbreak of cholera from the sewage disturbed from the city's numerous privies.<sup>106</sup> As well, the steamer *Princess Louise* was washed down the river when it broke away from its moorings at the forks and was destroyed below the waterworks' dam. Also, the *Princess Louise's* sistership, the *Forest City*, was badly damaged in the flood and was deemed too expensive to repair. This rapid reversal of fortune resulted in the subsequent dissolution of the TRNC.<sup>107</sup> Not only did the damage caused by the flood end the TRNC's attempt to revive passenger steamer service to Springbank, but it also highlighted several problems caused by the waterworks dam. The dam was blamed by many Londoners, and particularly citizens of London West, for exacerbating the flooding by backing up the water and causing more damage than would otherwise have occurred.<sup>108</sup> As a result, the dam became a convenient scapegoat for those seeking to assign blame for the flood's destructive power.<sup>109</sup> Thus, the dam, which had facilitated the formation of steamer service through the creation of Springbank Park and by raising the level of the river, became the villain of the 1883 flood. Further, the dam was criticized for worsening sewage, oil, and chemical pollution in the river by blocking its flow down the river, thereby severely reducing the desirability of Springbank Park as a recreation site.

The extent of the problems surrounding the waterworks dam became increasingly evident by January 1887. The dam's role in the back-up of sewage and flooding due to ice jams resulted in the initiation of legal action against the City of London by the Town of London West.<sup>110</sup> In April of the same year, an

attempt was made by the city to reach an agreement with London West to solve the problem. One of the proposed solutions was to lower the height of the waterworks' dam to allow a greater quantity of water, ice, and sewage to move past the structure.<sup>111</sup> This proposal provided grounds for settling the lawsuit brought by London West against London and the Board of Water Commissioners. However, this solution presented an obstacle to the resumption of steamer service to Springbank Park due to the reduction of the river level that resulted from the lowering of the dam's splash boards.<sup>112</sup> The lowering of the water level behind the dam also had an unexpected positive side effect – the enhanced desirability of Springbank Park as a recreation destination because of the reduced collection of pollution at the site. Recognising an opportunity, Captain David Foster set about preparing to resume steamer service to the park for the spring of 1888 despite the uncertainty surrounding the river's water level.

In December 1887, Captain Foster petitioned London City Council in an attempt to secure an agreement to ensure that the depth of the river would be maintained at the minimum two and a half feet required to run his boats.<sup>113</sup> London City Council responded by offering to do everything in its power to maintain the requisite water depth, but refused to sign any agreement with Captain Foster that could put the city in a position of liability should an unforeseen accident occur.<sup>114</sup> As well, with the lawsuit brought by London West over the condition of the river and the height of the dam, any agreement with Captain Foster over water levels remained very unlikely. However, the inability to

negotiate a satisfactory solution with respect to river water levels did not deter Foster from launching two steamboats – the *City of London* and the *Thames* – in the spring of 1888. These new steamers, designed by Captain Foster, employed a special chain-driven bucket arrangement that was suitable for navigating the Thames' shallow waters.<sup>115</sup> Following negotiations in January of 1888 with the Board of Water Commissioners, a recommendation was presented to council that Foster should be given the use of the dock and building at Springbank Park.<sup>116</sup> A stipulation of this agreement proposed by Aldermen Winnett and Skinner required that the No. 2 Committee, responsible for public works and parks, and the Board of Water Commissioners draw up rules and regulations for the operation of the steamers.<sup>117</sup> Under the above conditions, Captain Foster successfully secured a contract in July of the same year to service Springbank Park with his vessels.<sup>118</sup> This agreement not only resulted in the resumption of steamboat service to Springbank for the first time in five years, but also served to provide a degree of legitimacy for his operation through the formal sanction provided by City Council. Although Foster's new steamboat venture had to operate under a much tighter degree of bureaucratic scrutiny and regulation than previous companies, he managed to revive steamboat service which was an indication of the continued viability of commercial recreational steamers and Springbank Park.

Captain Foster launched his first steamboat, the *City of London*, on 24 May 1888 offering a return trip to Springbank Park for fifteen cents.<sup>119</sup> His boats

were the only steamships servicing the park and the enterprise faced only two principal sources of competition. The first included several alternate recreation sites, of which the most popular was the beach front community of Port Stanley on Lake Erie which could be readily accessed by the London and Port Stanley Railway.<sup>120</sup> The second source of competition for Captain Foster's steamers appeared in the form of a street rail-line from the city to Springbank Park built in 1887 by the London Street Railway Company.<sup>121</sup> Despite the presence of these competing interests and the lingering memory of the *Victoria* disaster, Captain Foster managed to keep his boats running through efforts that included the provision of entertainment during cruises,<sup>122</sup> running a special Sunday service to Woodlawn Cemetery beginning in 1889,<sup>123</sup> and working to improve facilities for his customers at Springbank Park. To this end, Captain Foster was not only successful in continuing steamer service to Springbank Park, but he also enjoyed the privilege of managing the on-site hotel frequented by his steamer passengers and other visitors while at the park. However, in 1892 the Board of Water Commissioners decided not to renew Captain Foster's lease for the Springbank Park hotel.<sup>124</sup> Coincidentally, in the same year, the London Board of Water Commissioners undertook a series of improvements to the facilities and grounds at Springbank Park. These improvements included laying paths, planting trees, and the refurbishing of the old hotel formerly run by Captain Foster into a resort and dance hall.<sup>125</sup> Captain Foster continued to provide steamer service to the park, but like the TRNC before him, he recognized the



necessity of having control over the leisure amenities at the point of destination in order to attract passengers to his boats and maintain the viability of his business. As a result, he began to develop a separate private resort area just upriver from Springbank Park called Wonderland.<sup>126</sup> Yet, in the end, the increased interest in Springbank Park that accompanied the Board of Water Commissioners redevelopment, and the development of Wonderland was not enough to save Captain Foster's steamers. The final blow to the viability of steamboat service on the Thames River occurred in 1896 when the street rail-line to Springbank Park was electrified.<sup>127</sup> That same year, on the 24 May holiday celebrating Queen Victoria's birthday, it was reported in the *London Free Press* that ten to twelve thousand people had been carried by streetcar to the park, a substantial increase in both accessibility and the speed of service. Thus, with the arrival of electric streetcar service to Springbank the slower and more expensive steamboats were no longer a practical or profitable mode of transportation. Foster continued to run his boats for three more seasons but in the end could not compete. On 25 August 1899 the last remaining steamer, the *Thames*, was scuttled, bringing a demonstrable end to more than twenty years of intermittent commercial passenger steamboat service on the Thames River.<sup>128</sup>

A number of critical factors must be taken into account when examining the conditions that influenced the viability of the commercial passenger steamboat industry in London between 1878 and 1899. Initially, the introduction of commercial steamer service coincided with the creation of a recreation

destination – Springbank Park – and the improved navigability of the Thames River as a result of the raised river levels caused by the waterworks dam. The steamboat companies and entrepreneurs went to great efforts to run profitable businesses which was evidenced through the competition between boats from rival companies and efforts to provide entertainment on the river, and comfortable and inviting amenities at Springbank Park. The *Victoria* disaster in 1881 represented the watershed event that altered the nature of the passenger steamer industry; yet it did not result in the complete destruction of the service. Following the disaster, steamboat service on the Thames River faced a variety of obstacles including the flood of 1883 and the lowering of the waterworks dam in 1888. Despite these concerns, a new entrepreneur, Captain David Foster, managed to operate a viable steamboat company by adapting his vessels to cope with the latter problem of water depth and securing access to the on-site hotel. However, despite his efforts, Foster could not overcome the competition presented by the arrival of more efficient and accessible transportation in the form of electric street railway service. Thus, the fortunes of the steamboat operators were continually at the mercy of forces that were, for the most part, out of their control, a situation which ultimately made the steamboat business a risky and generally unprofitable venture. Thus, the steamer industry in London initially enjoyed a rapid acceptance beginning in 1878, in part because steamboats represented an established form of transport and because they satisfied the growing interest in Springbank as a recreation destination. Yet, the operators

could not overcome the ongoing setbacks beginning with the *Victoria* disaster in 1881. To this end, the legacy of the passenger steamboat business must be viewed in terms of the influence it had upon popularizing Springbank Park. Although the steamboat industry in London never fully blossomed into a leisure and recreation institution, it did play an important role in establishing an important site for leisure and recreation for Londoners – Springbank Park.

### **Summary**

Commercial leisure and recreation in London, as in other growing urban centres in Canada, emerged out of the established business environment found in local hotels, inns, and taverns. These businesses supported a broad range of recreation activities, although individually there was likely little consistency in the recreation services offered. This situation contrasted with the variety of new businesses that emerged in the latter decades of nineteenth century which offered specialized facilities to support one or several related leisure activities. The relocation of recreation and leisure activities to these specialized businesses served to reduce opposition based upon traditional concerns of connections to the vice of drinking, while also unburdening the owner from the need to secure a liquor license. Thus, whether services were provided by an individual entrepreneur or a larger company of stockholders, commercial leisure and recreation facilities expanded in step with broader industrial and commercial growth in London in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The expansion of both the variety of, and accessibility to, leisure and recreation activities that were provided to the public in London served to exhibit the general acceptance among citizens that offering these services represented an appropriate avenue for developing business ventures. Yet, as with businesses in other industries, some commercial enterprises prospered while others failed. These failures were often due to difficulties that were out of the entrepreneurs' or company managers' control. Initially, local government intervention was minimal, limited primarily to the collection of licensing fees and ensuring the maintenance of moral order. Therefore, commercial recreation and leisure developed in London as part of both the broader sport, recreation, and leisure landscape, as well as within the business and commercial sector of the city. As a result, over the period spanning the last three decades of the nineteenth and the first decade and a half of the twentieth century, groups of influential investors and mostly respectable entrepreneurs were free to provide these services to the citizens of London in the form of sport and recreation activities.

Commercial and public recreation and leisure activities represented a critical element of the broader expansion of these types of practices in London. As with the case with public recreation in the form of parks and swimming facilities, these commercial ventures were regulated primarily through local legislation. Yet, there was less direct public input in terms of the form that commercial recreation activities assumed, although Londoners, through their

patronage, did play an important role in the ultimate success or failure of these ventures. Thus, commercial and public recreation activities represented two crucial aspects within this area of life in the city. However, a third domain – private sport and recreation organizations – must be examined in order to understand the whole process that led to the construction of sport, recreation, and leisure practices in late nineteenth and early twentieth century London.

## ENDNOTES

1. *London Free Press*, 24 June 1878, 4.
2. According to Armstrong, *The Forest City: An Illustrated History of London Canada* (Windsor: Windsor Publications, 1986), 119-122, industrial and commercial growth in London during from the 1860s through the 1880s resulted in London's early businesses such as the Carling brother's brewery (worth between \$250,000 and \$300,000) and Hyman's tannery (worth between \$200,000 and \$250,000) maturing and expanding their influence. Other industries that were established and expanded during this period were tobacco and cigar and cigar box manufacturing, oil refining (Imperial Oil, 1880), and financial service companies (the Huron and Erie Loan and Savings Company, 1864, which later became Canada Trust Company).
3. An example of a female leisure entrepreneur in London was the widow of the White Sulphur Springs Baths founder Charles Dunnett. His widow, Mary Dunnett, maintained ownership of the baths following her husband's death in 1877. According to a letter sent by former London Mayor John Campbell to the *London Advertiser*, printed in the 19 August 1891 edition, Mary Dunnett had remained actively involved in the operation of the business and had invested thousands of dollars in improvements to the facility as late as that date.
4. Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 127. An example, in London, of an entrepreneur filling a recreation demand that had not been met by the local government was Charles Dunnett's White Sulphur Springs Baths.
5. *Ibid.*, brackets mine. According to Marks, the stockholders in the community rinks were concerned with making a profit, but were also involved in order to provide a socially and morally safe alternative to rougher activities in the barroom or on the street corner, particularly for young women.
6. An example of a commercial leisure enterprise that demonstrates the types of investors involved was the Thames River Navigation Company. Although no reliable record exists listing all the shareholders, an indication of the support for the company can be found in the coverage of the launching of the steamer the *Forest City* in the *London Advertiser*, 4 September 1878. Present at the ceremony were the company's two active managers Thomas Wastie, then the city's fire chief, and Alex Calder. Other individuals present at the launching were former Aldermen John Carling, Samuel McBride, Hewitt Fysh, T. Partridge, Colonel Macbeth, and then current Aldermen John B. Smyth, A. B. Powell, and James Egan. Some of these individuals could have attended the launching

merely to be seen and may not have been shareholders in the company; yet their interest in the venture through their attendance indicates that the new industry did at least attract the interest of the city's elite citizens.

7. Peter Delottinville, "Joe Beef of Montreal: Working-Class Culture and the Tavern, 1869-1889," *Labour/Le Travailleur* (Vol. 8/9, Autumn/Spring, 1981/82):9-40. This examination of a nineteenth century working-class tavern in Montreal provides insight into the multiple services provided by urban taverns ranging from providing food and drink, serving as a hostel for men looking for work, a sight for labour organization, and even as a medical clinic for men who fell ill. Clearly, recreation represented one of the many functions performed by this type of facility.

8. Edwin Guillet, *Pioneer Inns and Taverns, Vol. 1, Ontario, with Detailed Reference to Metropolitan Toronto and Yonge Street to Penetanguishene* (Toronto: Published by Author, 1954), 17. Guillet suggests that in England an inn provided lodging and board while a tavern sold only food and drink. However, this distinction did not seem to transfer to British North America.

9. *Ibid.*, 21.

10. *Ibid.*, 41.

11. Edwin Guillet, *Pioneer Inns and Taverns, Vol. 3, Quebec to Detroit, with a detailed coverage of the Province of Ontario* (Toronto: Ontario Publishing, 1958), 210-214.

12. A wide range of informal recreation activities took place in urban hotels, inns and taverns, including, for example, human and animal fighting, gambling, and drinking. However, these same facilities also served to promote the earliest forms of organized sport in Canada and London. For example, according to Alan Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 20, the first sporting club in Canada, the Montreal Curling Club, was founded by a group of Scottish Merchants at Gillies Tavern on 22 January 1807. Similarly, in London, one of the first sporting clubs, the Tecumseh Baseball Club, held its organizational meetings at the Tecumseh Hotel.

13. Armstrong, *The Forest City*, 105. Although Armstrong focusses upon new services that improved transportation such as improved streets and bridges, it is reasonable to suppose that the expansion and specialization of services also occurred in the area of commercial leisure and recreation.

14. *Charter and By-Laws of The City of London, Including By-Laws of the Board of Police Commissioners, and Important Agreements entered into by the*

*Corporation of the City of London* (London: The Free Press Printing Office, 1880), 21-23 and 86-87.

15. Archibald Bremner, *City of London, Ontario, Canada: the pioneer period and the London of Today* (London: London Printing and Lithograph Co., 1900), 32.

16. Richard Plant, "Chronology: Theatre in Ontario to 1914," in Anne Saddlemeyer ed., *Early Stages: Theatre in Ontario 1800-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 317; and Armstrong, *The Forest City*, 114. Hyman's Music Hall contained a second story theatre and boasted a seating capacity of 580 persons.

17. *Ibid.*, 319.

18. Herman Gooden and Michael Baker, *Curtain Rising: The History of Theatre in London* (London Regional Art and Historical Museums, 1993), 2. This building, located at the corner of Rideout and Dundas Streets, was owned by city merchant, distiller, and hotel-keeper Dennis O'Brien.

19. *To provide for the Licensing, and keeping Houses of Entertainment, in the Township of London*, Township of London, By-Law No. 8, 16 April 1850, The D.B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.

20. *Ibid.*, 9.

21. *To provide for the Licensing and regulation of Taverns, Inns, Temperance Houses, and other Houses of Public Entertainment, and for declaring certain duties of the Inspectors of Houses of Public Entertainment*, Township of London, By-Law No. 59, February 1853, The D.B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.

22. City of London By-Law No. 1, 1855, J.J. Talman Regional Collection, The D.B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.

23. *Ibid.* A 'petty chapman' was a peddler, 'cabs' and 'canters' represented forms of hired horse-drawn transportation, and a 'hawker' was a travelling salesman.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *History of the County Middlesex, Canada* (Toronto and London: Goodspeed, Publishers, 1889), 392.

26. Peter L. Lindsay, "A History of Sport in Canada, 1807-1867," (PhD diss., The University of Alberta, 1969), 265; *Statutes of Upper Canada 1810*, 50, George III, c.6. This early legislation was passed in order to control gambling associated with billiards.



27. City of London By-Law No. 1, 1855, brackets mine.
28. *Directory for the City of London, 1866-67* (London: Sutherland and Co., 1867).
29. Bagatelle is a game similar to billiards except the balls were sunk into numbered holes or pockets and there are pins on the table that served as obstructions.
30. *Directory for the City of London, 1866-67*. These establishments included the Young Canadian Restaurant and Billiard Room, and Duke's Saloon and Bagatelle Table.
31. *London City Directory for 1872-73* (London: Cherrier and Kirwin, 1872). A billiard hall was run by Henry Hifner on Richmond Street between York and King Streets. *London City and County of Middlesex Directory, 1875* (London: McAlpine and Everett Co., 1875). The Huffman Bros. on Richmond between York and King Streets, Rowley and Son on Richmond Street, and James Smith also on Richmond Street ran billiard halls in 1875. *London City Directory for 1877-78* (Detroit: Polk, Murphy and Co., 1877), three billiard halls were operated by James Smith in the Albion building, H.L. Kiffner on Richmond Street, and Rowley and Son also on Richmond Street.
32. *London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1881-82* (London: London Publishing Co., 1881).
33. *City of London and Middlesex County Directory for 1883*. Billiard rooms were owned by James Belcher on Dundas Road, E.H. Gustin on the corner of Wellington and York Streets, and Henry L. Kifner and Albert Smith both on Richmond Street.
34. *London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1890* (London: R.L. Polk and Co., 1890). The sole billiard hall listed was Edmund Palmer's on Richmond Street.
35. *Foster's London and Middlesex County Directory, 1897-98* (Toronto: J.G. Foster and Co., 1897), two billiard facilities were operated by J.T. Gleeson on Talbot Street and Henry McKenna on Dundas Street.

36. *Foster's London and Middlesex County Directory, 1907* (Toronto: J.G. Foster and Co., 1907). The billiard and pool halls operating in London included: G.A. Andrews on Richmond Street, George Chellick also on Richmond Street, T.J. Gleeson on Dundas Road, Graham and Martel on King Street, Galpin and Barr on Dundas Road, and Wheatcraft and Patrick also on Dundas Street. The two bowling alleys were owned by Angus and Co., on Richmond Street, and Graham and Martel on King Street.
37. *London Free Press*, 29 June 1907. This bowling and billiards establishment was located at 193 King Street.
38. *Charter and By-Laws of the City of London, 1880*, 58 and 86.
39. A survey of the London city directories from 1867 through 1914 indicates that J.T. Gleeson operated either a billiard hall, bowling alley, or a facility combining the two between 1886 and 1907.
40. Peter L. Lindsay, "A History of Sport in Canada, 1807-1867," 50.
41. Don Morrow, "Montreal: The Cradle of Organized Sport," 10.
42. Lindsay, "A History of Sport in Canada, 1807-1867," 51, brackets mine.
43. *The City of London and County of Middlesex Directory for 1868-69* (London: C.E. Anderson and Co., 1868). Although ice-skating could take place on the Thames River or on outdoor rinks such as the already existing Victoria and Blackfriars Rinks, the building of a covered rink provided greater comfort for the skaters and allowed owners to charge patrons for entry while controlling access to the facility.
44. *Proceedings of London City Council*, 23 December 1878. Arthur Brown's petition to use part of the Thames River for a skating rink was granted by City Council.
45. *The London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1887* (London: R.L. Polk and Co., 1887). The president of the London Skating Rink Company was W.R. Thompson.
46. *Ibid.* It is unclear precisely when the Princess and Star Roller-Rinks were built. A fourth rink, the Westminster Rink, also received mention in the directory, but it is not known whether it was an ice or roller rink.
47. *The London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1891*. The rinks listed in this directory included: the Central Rink, 573 Central Street West; the London Skating and Curling Rink, the south side of Simcoe and Clarence Streets; the

Westminster Skating Rink, 12 Wortley Road; and the Princess Roller Rink, Queens Avenue.

48. *Foster's London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1902* (Toronto: J.G. Foster and Co., 1902). The Jubilee Rink was located at 385 Lyle Street.

49. *Foster's London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1907*. The Richmond Skating Rink was located at 658 Richmond Street.

50. *London Free Press*, 2 September 1907.

51. *Vernon's City of London Street, Alphabetical, Business and Miscellaneous Directory, 1910-11* (Hamilton: Henry Vernon, 1910). The East End Rink was located at York and Rectory Streets, and the Victoria Rink at Adelaide and Piccadilly Streets.

52. Armstrong, *The Forest City*, 125, 129, and 163. The population of London in 1880 was 19,941; by 1897, in part due to annexation of London West, it had increased to 38, 575; and by 1912 the population had risen to 49,102.

53. Examples of advertisements for skating rinks in London include: *London Free Press*, 31 October 1884, a concert held at the roller rink and a comedy company present at the Queen's Avenue Skating Rink; *London Free Press*, 12 January 1885, a carnival-fancy dress at the Westminster Skating Rink; and *London Free Press*, 3 September 1908, a band in attendance at the Jubilee Roller Rink.

54. Gooden and Baker, *Curtain Rising*, 2.

55. Bremner, *City of London, Ontario, Canada*, 30.

56. Gooden and Baker, *Curtain Rising*, 14. The new City Hall, on the west side of Richmond between Dundas and King Streets, boasted a 540-seat auditorium that was used to stage some of London's larger theatrical shows.

57. *Ibid.*, 14-15. Brunton and his actress wife produced, acted in, and hosted many plays at his theatre also known as Covent Garden Theatre from 1855 through 1858. In August 1858 the theatre was purchased by Mr. E.T. Sherlock who produced several plays in that season. It seems that Sherlock's tenure in the theatre was short lived.

58. *Ibid.*, 19. The 18 August 1865 *London Free Press* announced that Ellis W. Hyman proposed moving the old racquet court ball club to a lot on the northwest corner of Richmond and York Streets just across from the Tecumseh Hotel. One reason given for this proposal was that the City Hall was not deemed to be well suited for musical and theatrical productions. The London Music Hall was opened on 8 May 1866 and was able to accommodate 580 patrons.

59. *Ibid.*, 10-11. Theatre productions in London were dominated by the amateur garrison officers through the 1840s, 50s and into the 1860s. By the 1860s, the amateur performances of the garrison officers which were mostly farces, began to receive a great deal of criticism and led to the call for plays by professional nonmilitary troops.

60. *The City of London and County of Middlesex Directory for 1868-69*. This amateur organization held its meetings at Clarence House, a local tavern and hotel.

61. Gooden and Baker, *Curtain Rising*, 19-20. The Holmans were a theatrical family who moved permanently from Toronto to London in 1873 to take-up residence in the hall.

62. *Ibid.*, 25-26.

63. *Ibid.*, 29, brackets mine. Whitney included the Grand Opera House as part of this stable of houses in Michigan, Ohio and Ontario and controlled most of the theatre productions in the region during the 1880s and 1890s.

64. Mary M. Brown, "Entertainers of the Road," Anne Saddlemeyer ed., *Early Stages: Theatre in Ontario 1800-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 131.

65. Gooden and Baker, *Curtain Rising*, 29.

66. Orlo Miller, "Old Opera Houses of Western Ontario," April 1962, London Room, London Public Library, 5. *London Free Press*, 5 September 1901. The price for a box seat for the first production at the New Grand Opera House was \$1.50. Orchestra, balcony and the first two rows were \$1; 75c the next three rows; the remainder of the seats was 50c; and the gallery was 25c.

67. Brown, "Entertainers of the Road," 131-133. When Whitney died "his estate claimed various percentages of the profits from three Toronto houses, . . . the Grande Opera Houses in Hamilton, London, and Kingston, the Russel Theatre in Ottawa . . . as well as theatres in Michigan and Ohio."

68. Ibid. Small, like Whitney, also maintained control over a number of theatres and opera houses throughout southwestern Ontario, and was able to parlay this control into a profitable business. According to Gooden and Baker, Small disappeared in 1919 just after he sold his vast theatre holdings for the sum of two million dollars. Foul play was suspected in his disappearance although his body was never found. This episode has become one of the most sensational mysteries surrounding the theatre in Canada.

69. Gooden and Baker, *Curtain Rising*, 32.

70. *London Free Press*, 14 September 1901. The advertisement for the upcoming production at the London Opera House boasted "High Class Vaudeville between acts." As well, the prices of 10c, 20c, and 30c were more reasonable than the lowest price of 25c for a gallery seat offered at the Grand Opera House.

71. Gerald Lenton-Young, "Variety Theatre," in Anne Saddlemeyer ed., *Early Stages: Theatre in Ontario 1800-1914*, 207. According to Lenton-Young, Bennett formed a corporation from his base in London and built a vaudeville circuit in London, Hamilton, Ottawa, and Montreal.

72. Gooden and Baker, *Curtain Rising*, 36.

73. *Foster's London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1907; Vernon's City of London Street, Alphabetical, Business and Miscellaneous Directory, 1907-1908* (Hamilton: Henry Vernon, 1907). The Victoria Theatre was located at 203 Dundas Street while Bennett's Unique Theatre at 222 Dundas Street. There is no listing for the Victoria Theatre in Vernon's 1907-1908 directory.

74. *Vernon's City of London Street, Alphabetical, Business and Miscellaneous Directory, 1910-1911* (Hamilton: Henry Vernon and Son, 1907). The Empire Theatre was located at 631 Dundas Street, while the Star Theatre was situated at 388 Richmond Street.

75. *Vernon's City of London Street, Alphabetical, Business and Miscellaneous Directory, 1912* (Hamilton: Henry Vernon and Son, 1912). The Princess Theatre was located at 154 Dundas Street.

76. Alice Gibb, "Places to Play: The Downtown's Diversions," in Michael Baker ed., *Downtown London: Layers of Time* (London: The City of London and London Regional Art and Historical Museums, 1998), 154. According to Gibb, the Princess Theatre was among the earliest movie theatres in London.

77. Roy Rosenweig, *Eight hours for what we will: Workers and leisure in an industrial city, 1870-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 192.

Rosenweig argues that the theatres established in Worcester were initially part of the vaudeville programs and over time these came to overshadow the live vaudeville entertainment.

78. *London Free Press*, 3 September 1907. Lenton-Young, "Variety Theatre," 203. Shortly after the turn of the century films were used to signal the end of a vaudeville show and to spare the live performers from bottom billing.

79. *Ibid.*, 210. According to Lenton-Young, "Movies competed for the 5- and 10-cent patrons of vaudeville, . . ."

80. *Ibid.*, 203. For example, it is suggested that "the enjoyment of vaudeville stemmed from the "pride in the recognition of wheezy jokes, the satisfaction of beating the comedian to the tag-line and joining in the familiar choruses."

81. *Charter and By-Laws of The City of London*, 1880, 21-22.

82. Ian Jobling, "Sport in Nineteenth Century Canada: The Effects of Technological Changes on its Development," (PhD diss., The University of Alberta, 1970), 15-17 & 32. According to Jobling, in 1818 John Molson of Montreal operated the St. Lawrence Steamboat Company, the first commercial steamboat company in British North America. By 1851, there were 468 river steamboats operating in the Canadas and more than one thousand by 1866. It was not until the late 1850s that rail transport became widely accessible.

83. See Chapter 2, 78-85 for a more detailed explanation of the formation of Springbank Park. The power generated by the dam allowed the spring water to be pumped up Hungerford Hill to a storage reservoir which supplied London on a gravity feed system. The functioning plan of the waterworks system is illustrated in Map 2, page 64.

84. Ian F. Jobling, "Sport in Nineteenth Century Canada: The Effects of Technological Changes on its Development," 14-21. Jobling provides a brief examination of the use of passenger steamboats for recreation purposes, including the growing popularity of daylong leisure excursions by the middle of the nineteenth century. From this examination it is clear that the use of steamboats for recreation travel in Canada was not a new phenomenon by the late 1870s.

85. Ken McTaggart, "Boating History," *Focus on the Thames: Natural and Cultural Heritage of the River London, Ontario*, Anita Caveney ed., (London: McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London and the Upper Thames Conservation Authority, November 1996), 23; *London Advertiser*, 4 September 1878; Proceedings of London City Council, 2 September 1878. The managers of the Thames River Navigation Company were, Thomas Wastie the builder and sailing

master, and Alex Calder, two prominent members of London society. London City Council received and accepted an invitation to attending the naming ceremony of the new steamer.

86. *London Advertiser*, 9 September 1878. Less than a week after its maiden voyage the *Forest City* was forced to cancel an evening excursion because a splash-guard at the waterworks dam had been removed lowering the level of the river. This exhibited the steamers' dependence on the dam to maintain the necessary water depth for their operation.

87. McTaggart, "Boating History," 23.

88. Public History Students at The University of Western Ontario, "Rediscovering London's River: An Historical Documentation of the Thames," Project Coordinator Janet Trimble, April 1996, 25; and Proceedings of London City Council, 4 August 1879.

89. McTaggart, "Boating History," 23.

90. Evidence of Londoners' acceptance of steamer travel on the Thames River can be exhibited in several instances. First, an article in the *London Advertiser*, 2 July 1879 stated that "Thousands of people went down the river in the pleasure steamer, and all seemed to enjoy the cruise." A starker example of the extent to which the steamers were patronized at this time was evident through the number of people, estimated to be between six- and eight-hundred, who boarded the steamer *Victoria* for the ill-fated return trip from Springbank on 24 May 1881.

91. Jobling, "Sport in nineteenth century Canada: The Effects of Technological Changes on its Development," 22. Racing between steamboats was not an unusual practice in nineteenth century Canada. According to Jobling, the habit of racing produced mixed feelings among passengers, some of whom disapproved while others found it to be exciting.

92. Ibid; *The London Advertiser*, 20 June 1880. The *Victoria* hit a boat owned by the TRNC causing \$30 damage.

93. Public History Students at The University of Western Ontario, "Rediscovering London's River," 25-26.

94. Ibid. The exact number of people who lost their lives in the *Victoria* disaster remains unknown. The various sources provided a range from 181 to 215.

95. Proceedings of London City Council, 24 May 1881; McTaggart, "Boating History," 25.

96. McTaggart, "Boating History," 25.
97. Public History Students, "Rediscovering London's River," 27.
98. *Ibid.*, 28.
99. *London Free Press*, 7 July 1881.
100. *London Free Press*, 18 July 1881. Referring to an article printed in the *Chatham Planet* concerned with the steamer industry, it was stated that the "Victoria disaster has cast general suspicion on boating operations, and as a consequence the excursions there are meagrely attended."
101. *London Free Press*, 18 August 1881. Attempts to regain confidence in the river steamboats following the Victoria Disaster included the TRNC refitting the *Princess Louise* at a cost of \$250 which included the provision of a life boat on board.
102. Proceedings of London City Council, 12 June 1883.
103. *Ibid.*, brackets mine.
104. According to the list of interments of victims of the *Victoria* disaster in London cemeteries in the *History of the County Middlesex*, 279-280, a Lillie Skinner aged 16 was listed as buried in Woodland Cemetery. Although not confirmed, it is highly likely that this girl was related to Alderman Skinner, which may explain his strong opposition to the TRNC proposal.
105. The pavilion building or hotel at Springbank was used for a variety of recreational purposes.
106. Public History Students, "Rediscovering London's River," 50-51.
107. McTaggart, "Boating History," 25.
108. Christopher Hives, "Flooding and Flood Control, Local Attitudes, in London, Ontario, 1790 - 1952," (Masters thesis, Department of History, The University of Western Ontario, 1981), 65. Hives notes that there were ongoing problems associated with dams on the Thames River due to the upriver collection of pollution and ice flows.
109. Public History Students, "Rediscovering London's River," 52.
110. Proceedings of London City Council, 31 January 1887.
111. Proceedings of London City Council, 25 April 1887.



112. The height of the dam was regulated by the number of splash boards inserted above the dam structure. These boards were used to regulate the amount of water stored behind the dam.

113. Proceedings of London City Council, 19 December 1887.

114. Ibid.

115. McTaggart, "Boating History," 25.

116. Proceedings of London City Council, 23 January 1888.

117. Proceedings of London City Council, 14 May 1888.

118. Proceedings of London City Council, 16 July 1888. Part of the agreement stipulated that children under five years would be provided free passage on the steamers.

119. Public History Students, "Rediscovering London's River," 28.

120. Pat Morden, *Putting Down Roots*, 13.

121. Proceedings of London City Council, 14 March 1887. According to John Mombourquette, "Fighting Fires, Catching Crooks: The Origins of Municipal Services," in Michael Baker ed., *Downtown London: Layers of Time*, 131. According to Mombourquette, prior to the electrification of the street railway in London in 1895, the cars were horse-drawn.

122. McTaggart, "Boating History," 25.

123. Proceedings of London City Council, 5 August 1889; 7 and 21 July 1890. Although there were complaints that Captain Foster had contravened his agreement with the city and the water commissioners by operating his boats on Sunday, the following year City Council confirmed his right under the agreement with the city to run his boats to Woodlawn Cemetery (See Map 2, page 64) between two and five-thirty p.m. on Sunday.

124. *London Free Press*, 1 June 1892; Minutes of City Council 6 June 1892. The reason given by the newspaper for Captain Foster's eviction from the Springbank hotel concerned his attempt to sublet the premises, something the Board of Water Commissioners, who owned the hotel, opposed. Mr. O. Elwood, the secretary of the Board of Water Commissioners, petitioned City Council to revoke his license. Whether this action was strictly legal or merely an excuse to remove Captain Foster from the property is not known.

125. Morden, *Putting Down Roots*, 15.

126. Gerald Alfred Onn, *The London Free Press*, 16 August 1969, 8M. According to Onn, Wonderland consisted of 18 acres of land near the old Griffiths' Mill upon which buildings for entertainment and cottages were constructed.

127. Gerald Alfred Onn, "The History of the London Street Railway Company, 1873-1951," (Master's thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1958), 63; and *London Free Press*, 26 May 1896.

128. *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER V

### BASEBALL, BICYCLING, AND BOWLING IN THE FOREST CITY: THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF LONDON'S PRIVATE SPORT CLUBS, 1867-1914

Sport clubs in London during the late nineteenth century served not only to provide formally organized recreation opportunities, but were also responsible for promoting and reinforcing a specific set of social values. An example of the role played by sport organizations in shaping and reinforcing social relationships can be found in the 1868 by-laws of the London Tecumseh Base Ball Club. The new club's third by-law outlined the rules of membership stating, "Any member of the Club who shall behave in an ungentlemanly manner or render himself obnoxious to the Club, or shall violate the following rules, may be expelled, suspended, fined or reprimanded." Acts that resulted in violations of this by-law included the use of profane or improper language during meetings or games, wearing another member's apparel without permission of the owner, disputing the decision of the Umpire, "For audibly expressing his opinion on a doubtful play before the decision of the Umpire is given . . .," refusing to obey the Captain, leaving a meeting or game without permission, failing to attend the regular meeting of the club, and needlessly destroying or damaging property of the club.<sup>1</sup> The intonation of these strictures provides clear evidence that beginning with the earliest sport clubs in the city, regulating the conduct of members represented an issue of primary concern. However, these rules did not exist only to govern members' actions within the clubs, but also served as a means to set these clubs apart from other, less organized, forms of physical activity and recreation.

#### Introduction

Sporting clubs served to create a sense of cohesion among like-minded individuals from similar social and economic backgrounds. Simultaneously these sporting clubs sought to limit participation in organized sport primarily to these same individuals. Similarly, the argument has been made that sport, leisure, and

recreation activities in Canadian urban centres in this same period were organized so as to promote specific social, political, and economic values that were shared by the elite, predominantly male members who constituted these social sporting clubs.<sup>2</sup> Critical examination of the place of the social sporting club in North American society has been approached from a variety of social theoretical approaches including, for example, modernization, feminism, and a variety of neo-Marxist perspectives.<sup>3</sup> Although these represent valid approaches, it is the process of institutionalization that is most applicable to this study. Specifically, institutionalization seems to apply more readily to an examination of private sport clubs than to other forms of recreation and leisure. It has been argued previously that public and commercial recreation were influenced to a great extent by local government, bureaucracy, and legislation, all of which were less consequential in the emergence and operation of private sport clubs. Thus, limited interference from public administrators along with the homogeneity of the individuals who comprised these bodies – almost exclusively middle and upper class men – provided a fertile environment for the clubs to become institutionalized bodies. For these reasons, the theoretical construct of institutionalization will be taken into consideration in order to attempt to explain how these types of sporting bodies served to promote and perpetuate social relationships between specific groups within London.

Evidence of the processes of institutionalization among sporting clubs in the city of London, Ontario, during the late nineteenth and the turn of the

twentieth century can be viewed through three sporting activities – baseball, cycling, and lawn bowling. Although the choice of these sports in lieu of others that appeared at this time may seem arbitrary, each provides a useful representation of one activity that became an organized sport at specific times during the second half of the nineteenth century. In London, as in other Canadian cities at this time, the social clubs that fostered these sports were representatives of the social, political, and economic influences that shaped not only sport, leisure, and recreation practices, but also how individuals experienced daily life. To this end, through focussing upon the three dominant clubs associated with each of the above sports, an examination of the **process** through which these clubs came to be institutions is possible. Specifically, this process is characterized by the reification of the dominant clubs as the sole arbiters of how sport should be organized and standardized. Thus, the argument can be made that these sports clubs operated as institutions within a broader system of bureaucratized leisure and recreation within London and that they served to provide a rational and acceptable forum for athletic participation for the city's middle- and upper-class citizens.

By the turn of the twentieth century, social sport clubs in London had become institutional organizations that were accepted as natural and legitimate venues for sport. The clubs that dominated the sports of baseball, cycling, and lawn bowling over this period served to shape not only the growth of those particular sports, but also the manner in which sport manifested itself throughout

the city. The process through which sport, recreation, and leisure organizations came to be institutionalized in London suggests that these activities were shaped, moulded, and eventually standardized through actions undertaken by Londoners who sought to create a rational and predictable method of organizing these activities. Institutionalization of sport organizations, at a most rudimentary level, can be viewed as the process through which groups and individuals constructed sport to reproduce accepted social, political, and economic relations. Initially, reciprocal typification and habitualization of actions served to define accepted patterns of participation in sport. Over time, one favoured and eventually entrenched way of organizing and participating in sport emerged to dominate over other possible alternatives. By establishing this accepted reality of what a sport club ought to be, based within common knowledge, language, and roles, these clubs came to be accepted as both the legitimate organizers of sport in the city and bodies through which groups and individuals could define their relationship to one another. Therefore, the process of organizing sporting activities in London served not only to construct organizations that made sense to the membership, but also functioned to legitimize certain ways of playing and participating that reproduced and reinforced the social rank of the upper- and middle-class citizens who normally held positions of authority in these same organizations.

The decision to focus upon the sports of baseball, cycling, and lawn bowling is predicated upon the leadership role these organizations assumed for

these sports in London at various points during the late nineteenth century. As well, the examination of these organizations also provides a valuable representation of the range of sporting activities that existed not only in London, but also in urban areas throughout Canada and more specifically the Province of Ontario. Finally, the process through which these early clubs were organized and their subsequent promotion of organized baseball, cycling, and lawn bowling in London provides an opportunity to examine how the actions taken by the organizers led to the establishment of three dominant and influential sporting clubs in London beginning in the late 1860s through the turn of the twentieth century.

Each of the three sports considered in this study initially existed within one principal club that represented the interests of the participants. These founding clubs became the primary organizers of their respective sports and were recognized and accepted as the legitimate representatives of the sports in the city. When new clubs were organized, whether they supported or challenged the dominance of these existing principal clubs, none strayed far from the template laid down by the dominant organizations in terms of how they organized themselves and manner in which operated. As a result, these newer clubs were rapidly incorporated into the larger provincial or national organizing unions which the principal clubs had been involved in forming. Although participation in these activities and membership in associated clubs often did become more accessible to individuals from a broader range of social groups over time, the manner in

which the clubs were organized and operated served to restrict, or at least delay, the shift away from the clubs' traditional membership base. Thus, sporting clubs in London reproduced and perpetuated a process of mutual recognition and understanding that served to distinguish their interests from those of public and commercial organizations involved in sport, recreation, and leisure activities in the city. This, in turn, served to legitimate these sport organizations as the accepted and rightful organizers of their respective sports. One of the first, and among the most influential of these early sport clubs in terms of constructing the template for organizing sport in London was the Tecumseh Base Ball Club.

### **The London Tecumseh Base Ball Club**

Early evidence of baseball participation in London can be traced back to the mid 1850s. In 1856, members of the London Base Ball Club were reported to have practised and played on the military reserve grounds in the city.<sup>4</sup> This early baseball club provides an important link to later organized sport and baseball clubs in the city in so much as the organization exhibited an early example of a rationally organized and structured club controlled by an executive that consisted of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and a three-member playing committee. Although the club appears to have been well-organized, no record of a formal club constitution has survived. However, a direct link between this early club and the first formally constituted baseball club to be formed in London, the 1868 Tecumseh Base Ball Club, does exist.<sup>5</sup> The Tecumseh Club, named for the



local Tecumseh Hotel where it was formed, came into being following the amalgamation of the aforementioned London Base Ball Club and the Forest City Base Ball Club.<sup>6</sup>

The constitution of the Tecumseh Base Ball Club set out the roles, rules, and goals of the club. This represents the earliest recorded evidence of such a document for a sport club in London. The constitution outlined the organization and operation of the club, including the requirements for membership, the responsibilities of the administrators, and the goals of the club in terms of baseball participation. The first article of the constitution presented the club's first elected executive. These administrators included: John Brown, President; E. Moore, Vice-president; R.M. Meredith, Secretary; D. Morden, Treasurer; and J. Jury, Captain of the first nine.<sup>7</sup> The second article served essentially as the club's mission statement, proposing that "The object of this Club shall be to improve, foster and perpetuate the game of Base Ball and to advance the interests of its members."<sup>8</sup> This straightforward statement clearly presents the two primary objectives of the club. However, whether the members' 'interests' were strictly related to baseball or also included considerations of the standing of the club and its members in London society can only remain a point of speculation. The third article of the constitution outlined the procedure through which prospective Londoners could gain membership to the club. To become a member, potential recruits had to be nominated in writing and subsequently voted upon by the Board of Directors. Through this process, an individual could

be denied membership if he received three or more negative votes, a safeguard that served to ensure the election to membership of only socially acceptable individuals.<sup>9</sup> The payment of fees, and the repercussions of not doing so, were covered in articles four, five, and six of the constitution. Finally, articles eight and nine provided guidance for the election and the responsibilities of the club's executive. The nine articles that formed this constitution provided the framework for the operation of the club's administrative structure, while the actual regulations that covered how members participated in baseball were dealt with subsequently in a set of by-laws.

The Tecumseh Club's position concerning member conduct and the rules under which baseball games would take place received attention in several by-laws passed following the adoption of the constitution. The third of these by-laws (see paragraph one of this chapter) outlined the expectations for member conduct, declaring that "Any member of the Club who shall behave in an ungentlemanly manner or render himself obnoxious to the Club, or shall violate the following rules, may be expelled, suspended, fined or reprimanded."<sup>10</sup> As described above, the types of conduct for which a member could be sanctioned ranged from the use of improper language, to disagreeing with the umpire, or not meeting member obligations, such as attending club meetings.<sup>11</sup> Thus, as set out in the constitution and by-laws of the Tecumseh Base Ball Club, there existed a clear attention to detail on how the club should be organized and operated. Not only did this document indicate that by 1868 organized sports in London had

already, at least in this single example, become highly organized, but that this sport club had been formed to attract a certain kind of gentleman athlete possessing prescribed values and exhibiting acceptable behaviours. The achievement of this degree of organization in terms of the formalized structures and rules of the club indicates the existence of a common and reciprocal understanding among the members of how their club ought to operate.

What conditions in London existed at the time of the organization of the Tecumseh Base Ball Club to foster this high degree of organization by the late 1860s? One possible answer to this question is that most urban sport clubs in Ontario had adopted the increasingly ubiquitous 'business model' to organize their affairs.<sup>12</sup> This form of organization not only lent a degree of legitimacy to the enterprise but, also, because the model would likely have been familiar to many of the middle class and elite club members, it would also have been clearly understood by those individuals involved in the project. The widespread prevalence of the application of the business organization model to sport clubs in Toronto is examined extensively in Tony Joyce's investigation, "Sport and the Cash Nexus in Nineteenth Century Toronto." According to Joyce, between 1868 and 1886 there were seventeen sport clubs incorporated in Toronto, a phenomenon that followed the increased influence of businessmen in the operation of these clubs.<sup>13</sup> Thus, by Confederation and through the remainder of the nineteenth century, members of sport clubs in urban centres in Ontario began to exhibit a high degree of like-mindedness in terms of how sporting

organizations were structured and operated. Therefore, the organizing actions taken by the Tecumseh Base Ball Club in 1868 can be examined within these broader circumstances, a clear indication that sport and sport clubs in London existed within a developing provincial and national sporting landscape. As a result, an understanding of what constituted a legitimate sport club was becoming generally accepted in London even by this relatively early stage of organizing sport in Canada.

Despite the implementation of a clear plan for the future of the Tecumseh Base Ball Club of London in the form of the constitution and by-laws passed in 1868, the club did not remain unaffected by the changing nature of baseball in the city and throughout the Dominion. On 24 July 1871, the Tecumseh Club amalgamated with the Star Base Ball Club to become the London Athletics Base Ball Club.<sup>14</sup> Baseball's organization and participation in London during the early 1870s remained primarily the preserve of the city's professionals and businessmen. These circumstances are outlined in Havi Echenberg's examination of sport club leadership in London between 1862 and 1900. Echenberg argues that sport clubs did not exhibit a shift toward the inclusion of leaders from the larger population of men from the skilled and semiskilled trades until the decade prior to the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the organization of baseball during the 1860s and 1870s, like that of other sports, focussed upon those values that were congruent with the middle- and upper-class leaders of the organizations. One focus of these leaders of local sport

clubs included the desire to field a competitive team that could compete and win against teams from rival towns and cities in Ontario, Canada, and the United States. Increasingly, participation in baseball began to focus upon the drive of the city fathers to promote London within Canada and the United States. To achieve this end, in 1875 a reconstituted London Tecumseh Base Ball Club was formed, but this reincarnation represented a quasi-professional venture under the presidency of local oil promoter and businessman J.L. Englehart.<sup>16</sup> By the start of the 1876 season, Englehart had signed several professional players in order to construct a team that could compete against London's perennial rival the Guelph Maple Leafs.<sup>17</sup>

The relationship between the new, professional, Tecumseh Base Ball Club and the City of London and its citizens provides critical insight into the uncertain relationship that existed between early professional sports ventures and the community's respectable citizens. Difficulties existed between the club and elements from within the city from the start. For example, in late 1876 the Tecumseh Club petitioned London's Park Committee for use of part of Victoria Park for its games, a request that was not granted due to conflicting ideas over how the land ought to be used.<sup>18</sup> As a result, team owner J.L. Englehart was forced to secure a piece of land across the north branch of the Thames River in Kensington (London West) in order to build an athletic facility to house his team. The new baseball park, known simply as Tecumseh Park, was completed by the beginning of May 1877. The construction of this new venue for sport represented

a break both geographically and ideologically from promoters' and athletes' previous reliance upon the generosity of the local government to support their activities.<sup>19</sup> This new sporting reality, one that existed largely outside the influence of local political interests, served to promote interest among Londoners in the professional team and their new facility. This positive relationship between the team and the citizens of London was exhibited at "The drawing of seats in the Grand Stand of the Tecumseh Ball Ground [which] took place at the Tecumseh Hotel . . . in the presence of a large number of interested persons."<sup>20</sup> The professional version of the Tecumseh Club managed to excel during the 1877 season. The highlight of the year was a victory in the International Association Championship, an early professional league composed of Canadian and American teams.<sup>21</sup> As a result of this success and the quality of their new field, the team garnered support and appreciation for the distinction their achievements brought to the city.<sup>22</sup> Yet, the appreciation of Londoners for their baseball team was not universal, and resistance to this professional project persisted and expanded as the 1878 season approached.

The relationship between the professional London Tecumseh Base Ball Club and the respectable citizens of London began to sour during the 1878 season following accusations of gambling and game-fixing that were levied against several of the Tecumseh players. According to L. N. Bronson, the Tecumseh's problems first arose in early July when star pitcher Fred Goldsmith came under suspicion for being involved with gamblers after suspiciously losing

a game to the Syracuse team.<sup>23</sup> Despite the accusations, no conclusive proof surfaced to confirm whether or not Goldsmith had purposely lost the game, or if he was involved with gamblers. Yet, the damage to the team's reputation had been done. Over the remainder of the season the club faced declining revenues and mounting debts primarily due to a sharp drop-off in patronage at games. This growing lack of interest in the professional team stemmed from the resistance of London's respectable citizens who formed an important part of the team's fan base. Although the professional team did bring the city a degree of visibility in central Canada and parts of the United States, most Londoners were reluctant to embrace the spoils of a winning team at the expense of the moral and social disturbances that characterized the professional game. Thus, the dramatic shift away from the principles under which the baseball club had been organized a decade earlier likely played a role in the loss of support experienced by the professional Tecumseh team. As a result, at the end of the 1878 season, the Tecumseh club disbanded and the professional players quickly dispersed to join new clubs primarily in the United States. Professional baseball did not return to London until the 1888-89 season, but the new team and subsequent incarnations were never able to attain the interest and support enjoyed by the 1876-78 Tecumseh club.<sup>24</sup> However, despite the problems resulting from the professional experiment, amateur baseball continued to thrive in London through the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup>

Baseball during the late nineteenth century remained a popular and acceptable form of recreation in London so long as the players and administrators adhered to the codified and accepted values upon which the sport had been organized and legitimized. Thus, when the leadership roles within the sport's clubs shifted from the city's respectable citizenry to promoters such as J.L. Englehart, and later, members of London's skilled and semiskilled labourers, the sport no longer held a position of privilege or general interest within the city's elite sporting community. In a relatively short period of time, roughly a decade, a crystalized reality of what baseball ought to be and represent had taken root in London. In terms of the institutionalization of sport in the city, the negative experience of professional baseball served to further solidify ideas of what should constitute proper and acceptable sporting practices. Therefore, the demise of professional baseball at the end of the 1870s reaffirmed that sport activities which strayed from the accepted values under which traditional social sporting clubs were founded, including the Tecumseh Base Ball Club, would not be tolerated. This reaffirmation of what constituted legitimate sport coincided with the arrival of a new form of recreation in the form of the high wheel bicycle. This new leisure activity quickly captured the interest of young middle- and upper-class men of London. Within a few years, bicycling was organized into a sporting institution under the leadership of the Forest City Bicycle club.



## The Forest City Bicycle Club

The Forest City Bicycle Club, founded on 18 September 1882,<sup>26</sup> represented one of the first cycling clubs to be organized in Canada.<sup>27</sup> Initially, this club's members were young men in their 20s and 30s drawn primarily from London's elite merchant and manufacturing classes. Later, in the early 1890s, a small number of women also became members, a change similar to that which took place in clubs throughout Canada.<sup>28</sup> The club also played a role in the organization of the Canadian Wheelman's Association, cycling's national organizing body.<sup>29</sup> Over the course of the 1880s, the Forest City Bicycle Club set about establishing and legitimizing cycling in London through the organization of a variety of competitive and social/recreational events, all of which focussed upon the incorporation and reinforcement of their own ideas and values concerning how this new activity ought to be experienced. This focus on constructing and preserving social exclusivity within and through cycling served to enhance the attractiveness of the recreational activity for London's elite citizens. Thus, these folk were drawn to the sport during the 1880s and early 1890s because of the activity's exclusivity which was, in large part, based upon the expense of the bicycle.

Cycling, in the early 1880s, represented a socially exclusive pastime for the simple reason that owning a bicycle represented an extensive financial investment. According to Glen Norcliffe, in the 1880s most highwheel bicycle riders were either business or professional men in their 20s and 30s, or the

young scions of the nation's leading families.<sup>30</sup> Accessibility at this time remained limited as the vast majority of bicycles were imported and thus expensive.<sup>31</sup> A catalogue produced by London's first bicycle importer, William Payne, presented and priced several lines of bicycles and tricycles for the 1883 model year. The most expensive of these was the British Challenge high wheel bicycle which cost \$110 for the 56-inch wheel model. Even the more modestly priced Royal Challenge model was listed at \$78 for the 54-inch wheel version.<sup>32</sup> At the above prices, only the wealthiest Londoners would have been able to afford to purchase a bicycle strictly for recreational use. To provide some perspective, according to L.N. Bronson, the average wage for a worker at London's Morehead Furniture factory in the late 1870s ranged from \$9 to \$15 a week. As well, a male teacher working in a rural school in Middlesex County could earn a maximum of \$445 a year. Thus, to purchase a bicycle for \$80, \$100, or more would have been exceedingly difficult for these individuals.<sup>33</sup> For those men who could afford to purchase one of these new machines, their primary concern became where to enjoy the activity without being considered a public nuisance on the city streets.

The decision to form a bicycle club in London likely emerged as a means to provide legitimacy to this new and increasingly controversial activity at a time when bicycles were forced to share sidewalks and streets with horse-drawn vehicles and pedestrians. According to Christopher Armstrong and H.V. Nelles, in Toronto, bicycle clubs were formed "to absorb the energies of enthusiasts and reduce speeding in the streets."<sup>34</sup> In late July of 1881 an editorial in the *London*

*Advertiser* outlined the concern about cycling and cyclists in London:

The number of young men who are fond of exercising on the altitudinous wheel are becoming more numerous in this city. Some of them forget that the sidewalk is not a proper place for exercising their skill, and in one or two cases children and elderly persons have had narrow escapes. The Chief of Police is determined to confine all bicycle riding to the road, and with this object in view has summoned a well-known hotel-keeper on a charge of breach of by-law.<sup>35</sup>

This declaration from the local constabulary that sought to control the manner in which the young men of London operated their bicycles almost certainly played a role in the formation of the Forest City Cycling Club the following year. By exhibiting to the local authorities and citizens that cycling in the city could be managed and regulated within a rationally organized club, the members were able to erect a veil of legitimacy around the activity. Thus, part of the aim of forming the club was to suggest that cycling represented more than just a reckless hobby enjoyed by London's wealthy young men.

In order to placate local police and government officials, Forest City Bicycle Club members needed to present the bicycle as a vehicle capable of promoting positive social benefits. To this end, and in order to advance interest in the activity amongst members of the city's social elite, two forms of cycling were actively promoted by the Forest Club during the 1880s and 1890s. The first form of cycling included amateur and professional races held on long courses usually between two towns or cities, and short course meets or tournaments held at local athletic parks including, for example, Tecumseh and the Queen's Parks in London. The second form of cycling, which generally included greater

numbers of riders, were 'tours' or 'excursions' between London and adjacent communities. These social rides ranged from short evening and day trips, to longer weekend tours of the outlying region. From these two types of cycling events, the Forest City Bicycle Club and later rival clubs were able to promote and present a clear purpose to their avocation.

The earliest races held by the Forest City Bicycle Club were inter-club events held on city and county roads. One example of this type of road race was the club's championship road course race for the Irving Medal. This race began in the town of Lucan and finished at the cannons in Victoria Park in London, a distance of roughly 18 miles. The winner of the 1890 Irving medal race was Mr. W.G. Owens who completed the course in one hour and forty minutes.<sup>36</sup>

Although the long-course races did generate local interest, short-track meets were more popular spectator events that provided a greater financial return for the club.<sup>37</sup> The Forest City Bicycle Club's commitment to short-track cycling led to an announcement in June of 1891 that "plans for a quarter-mile track [had been] prepared. The location of the new track [had] not been decided upon."<sup>38</sup>

The rules governing who could participate in the short-track races were normally established by the event organizers under the direction of the sponsoring club.<sup>39</sup> Most club-sponsored races were open only to club members while others were open to professional riders.<sup>40</sup> This clear demarcation between club members and 'others' remained a constant throughout the period during which club-sponsored events were staged. Prior to 1896, the distinction between an amateur and a

professional, according to Keith Lansley, fell under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheelmen's Association, an organization which Forest City Bicycle Club members helped to form in 1882. Cyclists were placed into three classes or divisions, where Class A cyclists were strictly amateurs, Class B included cyclists who were employed by cycle firms, and Class C cyclists were considered true professionals for whom prizes won racing represented at least part of their livelihood.<sup>41</sup> Thus, bicycle club members who were all Class A cyclists competed against other amateurs, while the rest were separated into the two professional classes. Also, on occasion, races were sponsored by bicycle retailers who restricted cyclists to using specific bicycle models in order to secure prizes while still adhering to the above class structure for their cycling meets.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the variety of cycling races held in London during the 1880s and 1890s were primarily participated in and organized by bicycle club members although some accommodations were made for professionals. To this end, an important underlying concern for bicycle clubs was the need to maintain their position as leaders of cycling in the city. By the middle of the 1890s the previously established roles and rules of cycling in London were beginning to disintegrate, and by the turn of the twentieth century it was becoming increasingly difficult for the clubs to exercise influence over the sport in the city.

A second form of cycling which remained exclusively the preserve of bicycle clubs such as the Forest City Bicycle Club were the 'tours' or 'excursions' between London and its surrounding communities. Clubs were able to maintain a

degree of control over this form of cycling in the later decades of the nineteenth century through limiting participation exclusively to club members and respectable guest cyclists from recognized Canadian bicycle clubs. One example of this type of tour was the Forest City Bicycle Club's annual weekend excursion to Goderich, one of the highlights of the cycling season for club members.<sup>43</sup> The Goderich excursion began on a Saturday afternoon, leaving London (Victoria Park) at two thirty, stopping overnight in the town of Exeter on the route to the Lake Huron community. The trip ended in Goderich on Sunday and the cyclists then made their way back to London by train. Unlike racing, which provided opportunities for nonmembers and professionals to participate in the events, despite exhibiting a degree of social regulation, cycling tours remained the preserve of members, and served to foster and reinforce the social exclusivity of the bicycle club.

As with the business model structure of early baseball clubs in London, the relatively rigid organization of the Forest City Bicycle Club can be viewed through both the structure of the club's executive and the composition of the touring parties. Similar to other sport organizations, the Forest City Club's executive organized itself along traditional lines of authority that included a president, vice-president, financial secretary, and corresponding secretary.<sup>44</sup> This represented a relatively typical executive organization for a sporting club of the day, structured to provide rational order for the operation of the club. Similarly, in order to provide the necessary mechanism to ensure the rational

conduct of the cyclists while on official club tours or representing the club at a meet, members of the Forest City Bicycle Club were assigned ranks based on the military model. These included an elected club captain, a first lieutenant, and a second lieutenant, while the remaining touring party members were assigned the rank of private.<sup>45</sup> This convention for club organization was adopted from American cycling clubs.<sup>46</sup> These two methods of regimented structure and organization provided a clear chain of command within the Forest City Bicycle Club, both on and off the road. Therefore, the legitimacy of the club rested, in part, upon the authority invested in its leaders through the implementation of an understandable and accepted standard of organization for all club members.

The Forest City Bicycle Club represented the sole organized cycling club in London from 1882 through the very early 1890s. Despite this monopoly, the popularity of cycling among the general population of Londoners increased rapidly during the 1890s.<sup>47</sup> The first club that represented a challenge to the Forest City Bicycle Club was the London Bicycle Club which competed against the former club in races as early as 1891.<sup>48</sup> Shortly thereafter, additional bicycle clubs formed and began to attract members.<sup>49</sup> Attempts by these early clubs to maintain their exclusive position as the rightful organizers of cycling in London by restricting membership and the use of distinctive club uniforms were only partly successful.<sup>50</sup> As early as 1885, reports suggested that bicycle manufacturers were "contemplating a large reduction in the price of machines to retailers as trade [had been] falling off perceptibly and the large profits accruing

the past few years [could] be easily cut and yet make handsome dividends for stockholders."<sup>51</sup> By 1890, according to Mark Cossarin, bicycles were being mass-produced and had become affordable and attainable for many more people than during the 1880s.<sup>52</sup> As the availability of bicycles grew among the number of dealers in London, cycling became increasingly accessible to a wider range of London's population.

Although by the late 1890s the bicycle had become an increasingly available form of recreation and transportation in London, a vestige of the elite roots of the sport persisted. The following excerpt from the 1897 minutes of London City Council describes the acceptance of a petition by local bicycle enthusiasts to secure financial and political support for hosting the Canadian Wheelmen's Association national cycling meet. As recorded in the minutes of the City Council meeting, the petition stated:

John Mills and 400 other ratepayers, for [a] grant to assist in procuring for London the meet of the Canadian Wheelmen's Association. A deputation present in the interest of the petitioners is, upon motion heard. Dr. Geo. Davis and Mr. Benjamin Nash thereupon address the council. Ald. Stevely, seconded Ald. Carrothers, moves that the prayer of the petition be granted, the Rule of Order suspended, and the sum of \$300 be placed to the joint credit of His Worship the Mayor and the Chairman of Committee No. 1, to be expended in connection with the proposed bicycle meet as they may be advised and deem expedient, and that Ald. Hunt, Stevely, and Carrothers be appointed a committee from this council to act with the committee of the bicycle clubs. Carried on the following division: Yeas—Aldermen Rumball, Taylor, Douglass, Olmsted, Carrothers, Stevely, Hunt, Turner, Bennet, Nutkins, Parnell, McCallum and Gerry. Nays—Aldermen Johnston, O'Meara, Winnett and Dreaney. Total—Yeas, 13; Nays, 4. Ald. Hunt, seconded by Ald. Cooper, thereupon moves that the Municipal



Council of the Corporation of the City of London hereby extends to the Canadian Wheelmen's Association a cordial invitation to hold the Annual Meet for 1897 in this city, and the Council assures the Association that in the event of London being selected for the purpose everything in the power of the Council to do, will be done, to make the visit of the Wheelmen to the Forest City a memorable and enjoyable one. Carried.<sup>53</sup>

This example of the municipal council supporting an initiative proposed by private cycling clubs and their supporters provides insight into the continued acceptance and recognition that organized cycling should be managed by the city's private cycling clubs. As a result, even though by the turn of the twentieth century many Londoners who had no association with private cycling clubs were participating in the activity, local government representatives persisted in recognizing the authority of these clubs and their members.

By the mid 1890s, in response to the increased number of cyclists in London, city council began to take a greater interest in the regulation of cycling in the city. The city could no longer rely on the Forest City Bicycle Club and the city's other private cycling clubs to enforce proper cycling etiquette and safety. In June of 1894 the No. 2 Committee of city council responsible for works, parks, and exhibitions made the following recommendation:

Your Committee Begs to submit the letter of A.O. Graydon, City Engineer, re bicycles, and recommends the adoption of the suggestions contained therein, and that the speed of bicycles in Victoria Park be limited not to exceed the rate of five miles per hour, and that the necessary By-Law be prepared to enforce the same.<sup>54</sup>

The contents of the city engineer's report included suggestions to limit the right of way for bicycles, and the use of bells and lanterns for night riding.<sup>55</sup> A related proposal by the same committee also suggested "That persons keeping bicycles for hire be charged an annual licence fee. . . ."<sup>56</sup> Again in 1896, Chief Williams, London's chief of police, sought to regulate the speed of bicycles. This action led to the passing of by-law No. 760 which resulted in the implementation of further regulations upon cycling in the city.<sup>57</sup> However, this by-law, as with those passed prior to 1896, did not fully satisfy those individuals who sought to control the use of bicycles on the city's streets. In December 1901 a recommendation to City Council sought to "regulate persons using bicycles in city streets. . . ."<sup>58</sup> The continued efforts on the part of the City of London to regulate the use of bicycles suggests that as more individuals became involved in cycling there arose a greater potential for more intense conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians or carriages. This also provided a clear indication that private bicycle clubs were no longer able to serve as agents for the regulation of bicycles in the city.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Forest City Bicycle Club, along with London's newer bicycle clubs, no longer determined how individual Londoners took part in cycling. The final year that the Forest City Bicycle Club appeared in the listings of the London City Directory was 1900,<sup>59</sup> although the YMCA Bicycle Club continued to be listed until 1906.<sup>60</sup> According to Glen Norcliffe, by 1900 mass production had reduced the price of a 'lower-grade' bicycle by two-thirds in just five years. This rapid change, Norcliffe argues,

"destroyed the exclusivity of bicycling as new forms of manufacturing made cheaper bicycles available to a mass market."<sup>61</sup> Despite the noticeable decline in the influence of the Forest City Bicycle Club during the late 1890s, cycling clubs in London continued to garner a degree of respect when it came to organized cycling events. The successful petition for financial and political support from city council to host the 1897 meet of the Canadian Wheelmen's Association provides definite evidence of influence in this sphere. However, the Forest City Bicycle Club, which during the 1880s had legitimated both the sport and their dominant role in its organization and practice, could no longer, by the turn of the twentieth century, boast a leadership position in London. This situation was due primarily to the increased popularity of the activity among the general public, leading to the city's subsequent assumption of the role of regulating the activity. Through the 1880s and early 1890s, the club had managed to regulate and even to a degree delimit participation in organized cycling events held on both public roads and private sports grounds. Yet, by the end of the century, the Forest City Club's exclusive grip on organized cycling in London had eroded. This occurred both because of the formation of rival clubs as the bicycle became increasingly accessible to the city's elite citizens, and because bicycles were being utilised to a greater extent by the general public for transportation, vocation, and recreation purposes.<sup>62</sup> This loss of influence over cycling in London became clearly evident through the increased involvement of local government in regulating cycling through the late 1890s and early 1900s. Therefore, cycling in London was

transformed from a closed avocation accessible only to the wealthy to a widely recognizable and accepted activity that garnered legitimacy not only from government sanction but also from the broad utility of the bicycle in everyday life. In contrast to the declining influence of the private cycling clubs, the newly popular sport of lawn bowling managed to maintain the exclusivity of its membership and control over the sport through the turn of the twentieth century.

### **The London Lawn Bowling Club**

London's first lawn bowling club was formed in 1892 in conjunction with the London Rowing and Canoe Club which had been incorporated through an Act of Provincial Parliament the previous year.<sup>63</sup> As the sole representative of lawn bowling in London, the bowling arm of the club established itself as the governor and organizer of the sport in the city. Lawn bowling had become a pastime of note in Canada during the previous decade. In 1889, the year of the formation of the Ontario Bowling Association, there were only a handful of clubs in the province.<sup>64</sup> But, by 1903 there were more than 100 clubs in Ontario, with three in London alone. The Thistle and Asylum Lawn Bowling Clubs represented two additions to the lawn bowling fraternity in the city, and the combined membership of London's three clubs exceeded 250 people.<sup>65</sup> Despite the growth of lawn bowling in the city by the turn of the twentieth century, the London Bowling Club maintained its leadership role within the sport not only in London, but also in southwestern Ontario. The club's position as the region's lawn

bowling leader arose from the key role members played in forming the Western Ontario Bowling Association in 1896.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, by the turn of the twentieth century, lawn bowling in London had become an identifiable form of recreation within the city, one that remained popular among many of the city's elite citizens well into the twentieth century.

A need for the London and Thistle Lawn Bowling Clubs to attract wealthy and influential members arose out of the clubs' requirement to build and maintain bowling lawns and facilities. The elite nature of the London Rowing and Canoe Club, the parent institution of the London Lawn Bowling Club, received attention in the *London Free Press*, which noted, "The Club has on its list of shareholders many of the most influential men in the city."<sup>67</sup> As with cycling in the early 1880s, the costs involved determined to a large degree the elite nature of the club membership, limiting participation in the sport to those individuals from the city's wealthier families.<sup>68</sup> In the case of the London Rowing and Canoe Club, all the founding members were shareholders who were required to invest in the construction and maintenance of the clubhouse, boathouse, and recreation facilities.<sup>69</sup> Prior to the London Lawn Bowling Club's official formation in 1892, members of the rowing club were already considering the need to build facilities to support additional recreation activities, including lawn bowling. A notice in the 18 July 1891 *London Free Press* stated:

A meeting of the London Rowing and Canoe Club was held yesterday, when Major Beatie, Captain Cartwright and Mr. Walt Smith were appointed an amusement committee, and given instructions by the executive to have a tennis and bowling lawn constructed on the club house grounds at once.<sup>70</sup>

Therefore, the executive of the London Rowing and Canoe Club, by expanding into these new activities, likely sought to attract a greater number of influential members who were not necessarily interested in rowing or canoeing. By expanding beyond the club's primary mission as a boating organization with the introduction of lawn bowling, the club managed to retain and attract more of the right type of new members.<sup>71</sup>

Arguably, one of the most influential steps taken by the leadership of the London Rowing and Canoe Club toward the promotion of lawn bowling in the city and surrounding communities was the leadership role taken in the establishment of the Western Ontario Bowling Association (WOBA). The decision to create the WOBA originated in 1895 from discussion between members of the London club and members from clubs located in centres that included Chatham, Mitchell, Paris, St. Thomas, Seaforth, Toronto (Victorias, Granites, and the Royal Canadian Yacht Club), and Woodstock.<sup>72</sup> The first meeting of the WOBA took place on 25 May 1896, and Lt. Col. John MacBeth of the London Bowling Club became the organization's first president.<sup>73</sup> Later, on 7 September 1896, the first annual meeting of the WOBA took place in London at which time a constitution and by-laws were adopted. The constitution and by-laws of the WOBA clearly set out the conditions under which a club could become a member of the

association. The fourth section of the WOBA constitution outlined club eligibility. According to the document, "Any Bowling Club shall be eligible to be received into the Association which has a membership of not fewer than eight persons, and which has a staff of office-bearers, including President, Vice-president, and Secretary-Treasurer."<sup>74</sup> These stipulations, which had been employed previously by sports clubs such as the Montreal Curling Club,<sup>75</sup> allowed the WOBA to enforce strictly the way in which member clubs were organized. This in turn required that clubs adopt the accepted standardized administrative structure in order to enjoy the benefits of inclusion within the association. Further, article seven of the constitution required that any prospective club seeking membership in the WOBA had to receive the support of two-thirds of the member clubs present at the next annual general meeting following receipt of the application.<sup>76</sup> This additional check upon the entry of new clubs provides further evidence of the WOBA's mandate to maintain an exclusive membership. The remainder of the constitution served to outline regulations for payment of fees, the annual meeting, election and duties of officers, determining club representatives to the association, the annual tournament, player's eligibility, and playing rules.<sup>77</sup> By 1903, the WOBA boasted a membership of thirty-five clubs representing more than 1200 members.<sup>78</sup> The success of the WOBA can, in part, be attributed to the organizers within the London Rowing and Lawn Bowling Club who sought to create a regional bowling association that promoted participation in the sport in a regulated, recognized, and a respectable manner based upon the rules and

sanctions transmitted to member and potential member clubs. Therefore, through the regulatory design of the WOBA, London lawn bowlers were able to assume roles that allowed the club to wield broad influence over how the sporting institution developed, not only in the city, but throughout southwestern Ontario.

By 1903, the London Rowing and Lawn Bowling Club had been joined by the Thistle and Asylum Clubs. These new clubs similarly attracted a membership of elite Londoners who could afford to make the necessary investment in order to build and maintain private lawn bowling facilities. These private lawn bowling clubs remained the exclusive preserve of the sport in London until 1907 at which time bowling and tennis lawns were constructed at Springbank Park as part of the Water Commissioners' plans to attract visitors.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, in terms of meeting the recreational desires of London's elite citizens, the introduction of lawn bowling clubs served to meet a growing demand for activities that could be regulated in terms of membership and access. To this end, the formation of the London Bowling Club served to reinforce the institutional exclusivity of the sport of lawn bowling. By combining several recreational activities that could be confined to a specific private space, and by defining membership according to an individual's social and economic capital, lawn bowling served as a means for London's elite citizens to consolidate and perpetuate their privileged status. In terms of the institutionalization of sport in London, lawn bowling represented the enduring legacy of earlier sporting organizations which sought to preserve an exclusive membership while also maintaining the sport's identity as a legitimate



and acceptable social pursuit. As a result, lawn bowling served not only a measure to define an individual's place within society, but also served as a vehicle to cement ties between like individuals both within London and throughout the Province of Ontario.

### **Summary**

The process of the institutionalization of sport organizations in London can be understood in terms of the manner and purposes to which the primary clubs associated with the sports of baseball, cycling, and lawn bowling were formed. As well, the privileged position these bodies held in London's social hierarchy at various points during the late nineteenth century and very early twentieth century provides additional insight into this process. The sport of baseball, and the London Tecumseh Base Ball Club during the late 1860s and 1870s represented an early attempt to organize private and later, professional sport. Baseball initially attracted individuals from the city's middle and upper classes but, over time, interest in the sport moved into the broader sphere of London society. Yet, when the problems and moral concerns that accompanied supporting a professional baseball team came to light, many of the elite citizens of the city withdrew their support, and organized baseball in London became a pastime participated in primarily by the young working men of the city. The sport of cycling, during the 1880s, remained the exclusive preserve of London's wealthy young men primarily due to the expense of owning a bicycle. However,

by the early 1890s, with the formation of new bicycle clubs and the increased accessibility to cycling by Londoners from the lower social and economic strata, the exclusivity of, and thus the interest in, the Forest City Bicycle Club waned. Finally, the formation of the London Lawn Bowling Club in 1892 as part of the newly established London Rowing and Canoe Club, ushered in a new opportunity for a socially exclusive sporting club where membership depended upon both one's social acceptability to the larger club membership and the ability to provide financial support through the purchase of shares in the organization.

As a variety of forms of sport and physical recreation were organized and established in London, private clubs emerged as increasingly important centres that fostered these activities. As early as the 1860s, baseball clubs were established and organized. These were quickly followed by a variety of regional, provincial, and national sport-based associations. Although it was not the primary purpose of these clubs to exclude the "wrong" kind of member, formal constitutions were constructed so as to ensure that entry remained limited only to a select group of individuals. For their administration, these organizations adopted business principles that were well known to the predominantly middle- and upper-class membership. These actions ensured a well-organized body that was supported through private membership funds, relieving the concern of sustained ability that faced many commercial sport, leisure, and recreation enterprises. Private sport remained situated within, and tied to, specific class interests that served to define what sport was, and the manner in which

individuals should participate. In contrast to commercial sport, where profit was measured in sales and receipts, private sport's value was measured in terms of the social prestige that membership provided to the individual member. Similarly, public and commercial recreation were largely regulated by local legislation and bureaucratic bodies, a concern not shared by private clubs. The distinction afforded by clubs, and the ability to interact with like-individuals, provided the *raison d'être* for the existence of these bodies. More broadly, these institutions served to reinforce class boundaries in an era when the class differentiation, particularly within the middle-classes, had become increasingly blurred. Although the meaning and value that were attributed to specific sporting practices changed over time, depending upon whether the activity provided the necessary social and political capital members sought, the perceived value of belonging to an exclusive private sporting clubs persisted. Thus, for example, when cycling in London no longer provided an exclusive recreation experience after the 1880s, men and women of privilege abandoned it and shifted their focus toward alternate pursuits. Ultimately, these sporting institutions relied upon their ability to provide the city's elite citizens with a means to exhibit and reinforce their social status within the community.

## ENDNOTES

1. *Tecumseh Base Ball Club of London Minute Book*, 22 June 1868 - 1 May 1872, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.
2. Colin D. Howell, *Northern Sandlots: A Social History of Maritime Baseball* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 14. Howell, in his examination of baseball in the Maritimes, suggests that middle-class reformers viewed organized sport as a social training ground for young men that could be used to introduce and reinforce respectable social values. Of course, these social values were predicated upon the broader political and economic order that dominated late nineteenth century social relations.
3. An example of a modernization perspective is Melvin Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986). Examples of two neo-Marxist approaches that examine the sport club in the Canadian cities of Toronto and Montreal include: Tony Joyce, "Sport and the Cash Nexus in Nineteenth Century Toronto," *Sport History Review* (Vol. 30, No. 2, November 1999): 140-167; and Alan Metcalfe, "The Evolution of Organized Physical Recreation in Montreal, 1840 - 1895," *Histoire Social/Social History* (Vol. 1, No. 2, May 1978): 144 - 166.
4. *Directory for the City of London, 1856-57* (London: George Railton, 1856), J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D. B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario. The military reserve grounds were located on and in the vicinity of what is today Victoria Park.
5. *Tecumseh Base Ball Club of London Minute Book*, 22 June 1868 - 1 May 1872.
6. Frederick H. Armstrong, *The Forest City: An Illustrated History of London Canada* (Windsor: Windsor Publications, 1986), 117.
7. *Tecumseh Base Ball Club of London Minute Book*, 22 June 1868 - 1 May 1872.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid. No specific instance could be found of any person being denied membership through this voting process, but the inclusion of this clause indicates that such action could have been taken.
10. Ibid.

11. For a full description of the actions regulated by the by-law see the prescript at the beginning of this chapter.
12. The term 'business model' suggests a method of organization that relied on the common place structure of businesses that operated at that time. This included an executive body usually consisting of a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Often, members were considered to be shareholders in a club, and later many of these clubs were formally incorporated. It could be argued that these sport clubs were responsible for producing recreation opportunities for members in a manner similar to commercial leisure and recreation businesses.
13. Joyce, "Sport and the Cash Nexus in Nineteenth Century Toronto," 148-151.
14. *Tecumseh Base Ball Club of London Minute Book*, 24 July 1871.
15. Havi Enchenberg, "Sport as a Social Response to Urbanization: A Case Study – London, Ontario, 1850-1900 (Master's thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1979), 83-85.
16. L.N. Bronson, *London Free Press*, 17 June 1972. According to Bronson, the drive to move the city's primary representative team from an amateur side to a professional one lay in the need to compete against and defeat teams like the Guelph Maple Leafs side owned by brewer George Sleeman.
17. L.N. Bronson, "Old Time Baseball" (Unpublished paper delivered to London-Middlesex Historical Society, 15 February, 1972), 25-32, J. J. Talman Regional Collection, The D.B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.
18. Proceedings of London City Council, 25 September and 9 October, 1876. For a more detailed examination of the event surrounding the Tecumseh's move to Kensington, London West, see Chapter 2, 71-72.
19. L.N. Bronson, *London Free Press*, 14 July 1962. Although the new baseball park was built in Kensington/Petersville and did not fall under the jurisdiction of the London City Council, owner "Jake" Englehart retained the London prefix to the Tecumseh's name in order to further his goal of promoting the entire metropolitan area, including his refinery interests in London East.
20. *London Advertiser*, 3 May 1877.
21. According to L.N. Bronson, "Old Time Baseball," 37-39; the London Tecumseh Baseball Club won the Canadian Association Championship in 1876 and the International Association Championship in 1877.

22. *London Advertiser*, 4 May 1877. It was reported that the Tecumseh's first regular game of the year attracted a crowd of more than one thousand, and the quality of the new grounds was lauded for being "the most complete in every respect of any of the kind in Canada, and but a few American cities have such a convenient playing field." L.N. Bronson in his 1972 paper "Old Time Baseball," 41, stated that "Attendance was high at most games during the season, often running into the thousands, . . ."

23. *Ibid.*, 39. See *London Free Press*, 10 July 1878 and *London Advertiser*, 11 July 1878.

24. *Ibid.*, 46-48.

25. Echenberg, "Sport as a Social Response to Urbanization," 69-70. In London in 1880 there were no active baseball clubs, yet by 1890 there were 14 clubs with 139 members and in 1900 there were 23 clubs with 147 total members.

26. *London Free Press*, 19 September 1882. The individuals present at the meeting that resulted in the formation of the Forest City Bicycle Club included: R. Burns, elected president; C.M. Wallace, elected 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant; W.M. Begg, elected 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant; C.E. Keenlyside, elected secretary-treasurer; George Burns, jr., C.H. Wallace; George Cameron; J.W. Simpson; W. Chisholm; R. Millar, J. Lamb; S. Williams; J. Dignam; and William Payne, a local bicycle importer. Payne was London's first bicycle importer, his business first appeared in the *City of London Directory* in 1881-82.

27. Don Morrow, "Montreal: The Cradle of Organized Sport," in Don Morrow and Mary Keyes, *A Concise History of Sport in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989), 15. The first bicycle club formed in Canada was the Montreal Bicycle Club in 1878.

28. Glen Norcliffe, *The Ride to Modernity: The Bicycle in Canada, 1869-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 191. Norcliffe suggests that women first became active in Canadian cycling in 1890 and 1891. *London Free Press*, 19 August 1890. This account of the Forest City Bicycle Club's annual tour between London and Goderich made mention of Mr. and Mrs. Lamb on their tandem bicycle leading the party through the 150-mile trip. The reporter noted that "the lady's perseverance and strength surpris[ed] the male 'cyclers.'"

29. *London Free Press*, 25 September 1882. The Forest City Bicycle Club formed just prior to the staging of a large "bicycling tournament" held in St. Thomas on Friday 22 September, 1882. Following the tournament, members from the participating clubs met to form the Canadian Wheelman's Association. The election of the first executive of the Canadian Wheelman's Association included men who were members of clubs from Toronto, Aylmer, Hamilton,

London, Brantford, Simcoe, and Montreal. C.E. Keenlyside of London served as a member of the Committee of Management in the club's first year.

30. Norcliffe, *The Ride to Modernity*, 182. The average cost for a highwheel bicycle was about \$100 Canadian or roughly four months wages for the average factory hand. The highwheel bicycle was popular through the 1880s and early 1890s, by the mid 1890s the equal sized wheel safety bicycle had become the popular style.

31. Mark A. Cossarin, "Joyride: Manifestations of the 1890s Bicycle Craze in Toronto," (Master's thesis, The University of Western Ontario, May 1993), 111.

32. *The Challenge*, Catalogue prepared by William Payne, Bicycle Importer, P. O. Box 304, London Ontario, circa 1883, Microfiche Collection, The D.B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario.

33. L.N. Bronson, "Old Time Baseball," 53.

34. Christopher Armstrong and H.V. Nelles, *The Revenge of the Methodist Bicycle Company: Sunday Streetcars and Municipal Reform in Toronto, 1888-1897* (Toronto: Peter Martin, 1977), 170.

35. *London Advertiser*, 26 July, 1881.

36. *London Free Press*, 7 July and 1 August 1890.

37. Cossarin, "Joyride: Manifestations of the 1890s Bicycle Craze in Toronto," 87-88. According to Cossarin, short track cycling in Toronto was more popular with spectators because they could watch the entire event unfold, while the clubs were able to profit from charging admission to the races.

38. *London Free Press*, 24 June 1891, brackets mine.

39. Cossarin, "Joyride: Manifestations of the 1890s Bicycle Craze in Toronto," 88-92. Cossarin suggests that most track racing was organized by local clubs for their members. Rarely were events organized for professional riders, and often these professionals were organized by groups other than the cycling clubs.

40. London Bicycle Club advertisement for 'Race Meet' held in London 17 August 1896, in the Rick Wolfe Bicycling Collection, displayed at the London Regional Art and Historical Museum, summer 2000. This meet consisted of "3 Championships, 6 Amateur and 3 Professional Events."

41. Keith L. Lansley, "The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada and Changing Concepts of Amateurism," (PhD diss., The University of Alberta, 1971), 48. In

1896 the Canadian Wheelmens' Association bowed to the pressure of the Amateur Athletic Association of Canada and collapsed the two professional classes into one group.

42. *London Free Press*, 27 June 1891. In this race, sponsored by bicycle retailer William Payne, Mr. F. White of the Forest City Bicycle Club did not receive a prize because he was not riding a "Singer" bicycle. As a result, the club took it upon themselves to remedy this and presented him with its own prize.

43. *London Free Press*, 15, 18 and 19 August 1890.

44. *The London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1891* (London: Might's Directory Co., 1891). The Forest City Cycling Club listing in the directory included the address, 115 Carling St., and the executive members: jeweller Alfred Morphy, president; A.E. Pavey & Co. salesman James Lamb; vice president; merchant/tailor R.M. Burns, financial secretary; and W.E. Mathews, corresponding secretary.

45. *London Free Press*, 19 August 1890.

46. According to Norcliffe, *The Ride to Modernity*, 193, this military organization of bicycling clubs evolved in American bicycle clubs. Many members were experienced with this type of organization based on their experiences in the American Civil War.

47. *The London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1880-81* (London: R.L. Polk & Co., 1880). Over the decade of the 1880s there was only one bicycle importer in London, William Payne located at 217 Wortley Road in London South. *Foster's London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1900* (Toronto: J.G. Foster and Co., 1900). In 1890, local sporting goods merchant William Gurd located at 185 Dundas Street began to sell bicycles.

48. *London Free Press*, 15 September 1891.

49. *London Free Press*, 15 June 1892. The newspaper article discusses the YMCA Bicycle Club and its activities in London. *The London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1894* (London: Might Directory Co., 1894). The 1894 directory lists a new bicycle club, the Meteor Bicycle Club. In the same directory there were five bicycle dealers listed, three more than in 1890.

50. Don Morrow, "Montreal: The Cradle of Organized Sport," 15-16. According to Morrow, the Montreal Bicycle Club used uniforms to distinguish themselves in a manner similar to the Montreal Snow Shoe Club. For the same reasons, the Forest City Cycling Club members wore a uniform as a method of distinguishing members from 'other' cyclists.



51. *London Free Press*, 14 July 1885, brackets mine.
52. Cossarin, "Joyride: Manifestations of the 1890s Bicycle Craze in Toronto," 4-5 and 111. According to Cossarin, most of the bicycles available in Canada prior to 1890 were imported until T. Fane & Co. introduced the "Comet" which competed successfully with the imports and promoted new Canadian manufacturers to enter the industry.
53. Proceedings of London City Council, 5 April 1897, brackets mine.
54. Proceedings of London City Council, 18 June 1894.
55. Proceedings of London City Council, 2 April and 7 May 1894.
56. Proceedings of London City Council, 18 June 1894.
57. Proceedings of London City Council, 1 June 1896.
58. Proceedings of London City Council, 2 December 1901.
59. *Foster's London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1900* (Toronto: J.G. Foster & Co., 1900).
60. *Foster's London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1906* (Toronto: J.G. Foster and Co., 1906).
61. Norcliffe, *The Ride to Modernity*, 119.
62. Archibald Bremner, *City of London, Ontario, Canada: the pioneer period and the London of Today* (London: London Printing and Lithograph Co., 1900), 68. According to Bremer's chronicle of life in London, he suggests that "The use of the wheel . . . has ceased to be solely a means of recreation, and it now plays an important part of locomotion for business purposes." Thus, by the turn of the twentieth century, cycling had expanded from its elite recreation roots.
63. *London Advertiser*, 4 July 1891. The London Rowing and Canoe Club received its Charter of incorporation from the Ontario government. *Foster's London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1898-99* (Toronto: J.G. Foster and Co., 1898). The listing in the 1898-99 directory referred to the "The London Rowing and Bowling Club." The club was located on the forks of the Thames River across from Dundas St., on the present day location of the Provost Naval Reserve Base.
64. *The Canadian Lawn Bowler's Hand Book, 1903*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, The Ontario Lawn Bowlers Association, 56, in Special Collections, The D.B. Weldon Library, The University of Western Ontario. There were four clubs that formed the Ontario

Lawn Bowlers Association, the Toronto Granite Club, the Toronto Victoria Club, the Hamilton Club, and a club from Belleville.

65. *Ibid.*, 215-216.

66. *Ibid.*, 105. The Western Ontario Bowling Association was formed on 25 May, 1896, in London.

67. *London Free Press*, 15 August 1891. By the end of the summer of 1891, the London Rowing and Canoe Club boasted 138 shareholding members. The new club included a clubhouse that housed boats and included dressing rooms, lockers, and baths. As well, a footbridge had been constructed over the river from the Sulphur Springs Baths grounds to allow club members ease of access. The club by this time had secured \$3000 in capital. The first Board of Directors included John McBeth, President; M.J. Kent, first Vice-president; and D. Sutherland, second Vice-president.

68. *Ibid.*, 215-218. A sample of the membership list of the London Lawn Bowling Club included Lieut-Col. John McBeth (Partner in McBeth and MacPherson, Barristers), W.J. Blackburn (member of the family that owned the Free Press Co.), J.H. Carling (Assistant Manager, Carling Brewing and Malting Co.), J. Carling, jr. (student and son of Sir John Carling), and T.H. Carling (Managing Director of Carling Brewing and Malting Co.). The executive of the Asylum Club included: Dr. G.A. MacCallum, President (Superintendent of the Asylum); Dr. C.A. Sippi, First Vice-president (Bursar of the Asylum); Dr. R.W. Bell, Second Vice-president (First Physician of the Asylum); and Dr. P. McNaughton, Secretary (Second Physician of the Asylum). C. O'Grady (Manager of the Canadian Bank of Commerce) was the first president of the newly formed Thistle Club.

69. *London Free Press*, 6 July 1891. The founding members or stockholders were responsible for drawing-up the club's constitution and rules. Any future members would have to be elected by the existing members.

70. *London Free Press*, 18 July and 15 August 1891. By August of 1891 the bowling and tennis lawns were already open for use by club members.

71. *The Canadian Lawn Bowler's Hand Book*, 1903, 213. The handbook noted that the 245 members of the London Bowling Club in 1902 included "the most influential citizens of the principal city of Western Ontario." The ability of lawn bowling to attract this type of member likely played a role in the London Rowing and Canoe Club's decision to build lawn bowling facilities a decade earlier.

72. *The Canadian Lawn Bowler's Hand Book*, 1903, 105-107.

73. Ibid., 105. The first vice-president of the WOBA was N.H Stevens from Chatham. The second vice-president was Wm. Elliot of Mitchell, and Edmund Weld of London was the secretary treasurer.

74. Ibid., 100.

75. Robert Wayne Simpson, "The Influences of the Montreal Curling Club on the Development of Curling in the Canadas 1807-1857," (Master's Thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1980), 157. According to Simpson, the rise of sporting clubs such as the Montreal Curling Club was important due to "the business experience, wealth and organizational skills within the membership of these clubs."

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid., 100-102.

78. Ibid., 105.

79. *Annual Reports of the Board of Water Commissioners*, London Ontario, 1907. It is possible that the decision to build a bowling and tennis green at Springbank Park was a means to attract members of the city's existing clubs down the river.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The investigation of the development of sport, recreation, and leisure in London, Ontario from Confederation to the outset of the First World War serves to examine how and why this aspect of Londoners' lives was shaped and constructed. Specifically, the study seeks to illuminate the way in which a leisure bureaucracy emerged from the ad-hoc local government regulation of leisure and recreation that existed prior to Confederation. An analysis of the critical influences that shaped the developing leisure bureaucracy in London included the consideration of public, commercial, and private recreation organizations. To this end, it was necessary to examine the relationships and interactions between stakeholders invested in the provision of sport, recreation, and leisure opportunities, and account for the connections between these cultural practices and elements of the broader social structures that existed within the city. In particular, the moral and ideological positions of individuals and groups who were economically, socially, and politically influential serve to illuminate the process by which certain ways of organizing and practising these cultural forms were accepted and adopted while others were regulated against, marginalised, or in rare cases actively suppressed.

A brief reflection upon the analytical framework employed in this study is necessary in order to assess its overall usefulness in providing a coherent approach to the questions of how, why, and to what extent sport recreation and

leisure became structured within London. The two elements that serve to inform this framework are the processes of hegemony and institutionalization.

Hegemony, although it is not actively interrogated throughout the study, does provide a useful view of how relations of power operated in London over this period. The concept of institutionalization serves a more practical purpose through a more direct application in order to analyse the process of change as it related to the rationalization and formalization of ideals, ideas, and ways of experiencing leisure, recreation, and sport. As well, bureaucratization must be taken into account when considering the process of institutionalization since it is important to determine whether control over social behaviour was an inherent feature ingrained within individuals' actions, or something that was imposed directly through the legislative power available to political bodies such as London City Council. It is contended that when social actions and behaviour were institutionalized, it was, in most cases, not necessary for a bureaucratic and legislative response to develop. Hegemony also engages the question of inherent versus imposed control, and is perceived as being connected to institutionalization and bureaucratization. Therefore, these processes provide this study with useful conceptions that assist in evaluating and considering the manner in which recreation practices were shaped in order to reproduce prevailing ideologies that supported the need to organize and rationalize the experiences of daily life. A primary outcome of this was the continued advancement of the interests of those groups and individuals who enjoyed

access to social, political, and economic capital. This unparalleled access was evident in the cases of the development of the city's parks, establishment of commercial leisure ventures such as the river steamboats, and the formation of private sport clubs. In terms of this examination, the above theoretical considerations were used in concert with descriptive analysis to form an account of these processes of change in London.

The historical examination of the construction of sport, recreation, and leisure practices within one local community must recognize the inherent advantages and disadvantages located therein. Through focussing on sport, recreation, and leisure practices in London, a rich resource can be drawn upon in terms of understanding how social practices were formed, shaped, and altered to meet the needs of specific groups and individuals. The influence of individual must be considered in terms of their roles and relationships within and between groups and individuals in the community. Thus, the ability to draw broad conclusions based on the examination of one community remains tied to understanding local historical issues. By drawing together a variety of local experiences that have been documented, examined, and analysed it is possible to construct accurate and applicable regional and national histories. Any understanding of the role of sport, recreation, and leisure in London remains tied to these local experiences until they are drawn together and compared with similar examinations in outlying regions, the province, and ultimately the nation.

The process through which sport, recreation and leisure came to be formulated in London, Ontario can be traced to the period prior to Canadian Confederation to the First World War and beyond. This process of growth and change must be recognized as a nonlinear movement through which a variety of fluid and relatively unorganized and unregulated activities came to be largely constructed entities that functioned and were experienced in broadly accepted and understood ways. In terms of the construction of sport, recreation and leisure practices it is crucial to recognize the role of local government and its bureaucratic arms as the driving force behind this process of change, particularly in the areas of public and commercial recreation. Moreover, the city's governors were largely responsible for many of the broader changes that affected how people lived their lives. Changing patterns of work, or how land was used, in turn, influenced the ways in which and where people could play. Thus, not only did city leaders respond to the need for sport, recreation, and leisure, but their decisions in other areas of governance indirectly led to the nature of those needs. Ultimately, this process of process of provision and regulation served to further construct how Londoners believed they were able to participate in recreation activities.

In London, from the early 1870s to the start of the First World War, the institutionalization and bureaucratization of public recreation and leisure spaces and places can be attributed to the manner in which Londoners came to accept the role of these entities in their everyday lives. How Londoners experienced

their city's parks is evident, in part, through records of municipal government, the primary regulator of the park system. Thus, the creation and management of parks reproduced extant relations of power in London. Initially, finances represented the overriding concern of the city's governors in terms of the provision of parks. Although financial concerns remained at the forefront of any discussion to purchase or improve land for parks, the increased bureaucratic influence, primarily in the form of local by-laws in the 1880s and 1890s, increasingly became the manner in which park policy was established and enforced. Local and eventually provincial legislation along with the emergence of municipal bureaucratic bodies served as the primary tools for dealing with problems associated with the provision and use of parkland and the conflicting views held by a wide variety of groups and individuals on these issues. This early bureaucratization materialized out of London City Council's inability to manage the city's parks effectively, and eventually led to the transfer of parks management responsibility to the Board of Water Commissioners in 1912. Thus, the management of London's parks was removed from the direct control of city politicians. The process that led to this decision suggests that public recreation space and facilities, like other increasingly complex municipal responsibilities, had to be managed within a bureaucratic structure that was practically removed from the direct control of City Council. Specifically, the degree to which the regulation of these practices was subsumed within this bureaucratic structure is evident through the shift in responsibility to professional managers such as E.V.



Buchanan in lieu of interested generalists as in the case of Alderman James Egan. This shift of control from City Council to the Board of Water Commissioners represented a practical decision, one that exemplified that public recreation and leisure had come to be an established element of city life, particularly in terms of accessing public funds. The experience of the success of Springbank Park under the provincially mandated Board of Water Commissioners beginning in the early 1890s exhibited to Londoners that there existed a need for the professional management of London's parks. As a result, public recreation that took place in parks, children's playgrounds, and elsewhere in the city became the responsibility of the Water Commissioners and later Public Utilities Commission's Parks Board, a separate and largely autonomous organization.

The provision of, and access to, parkland in London remained, in many respects, a contested domain. However, parks did not elicit the level of moral concern exhibited over the provision of swimming and bathing facilities in the city. Even when persuasive arguments were made with regard to regulating public morality, improving the health of city residents, and ensuring the safety of swimmers and bathers, little, or more often no action was taken. Morality, and to a lesser extent, safety and environmental issues were important elements of this debate, but seldom outweighed concerns over the financial costs of building and maintaining a bathing facility. The existence of private swimming facilities such as the White Sulphur Springs Baths and the YMCA pool were likely considered

(by those who could afford their services) as sufficient to meet Londoners' needs despite the city's poorer residents' limited access to these facilities. Although the problem of an inadequate water supply remained a valid concern in terms of building an in-ground or excavated facility, the decision not to act upon the option of purchasing the Sulphur Springs Baths in 1887 or 1910 exhibited the strength of the resolve of the city leaders to avoid spending a large sum of taxpayers' money on a swimming facility.

It was not until the period during and just after the First World War that the attitudes, particularly within the upper echelons of London society, concerning the need for swimming and other recreation activities began to change. Specifically, the formation of a public recreation bureaucracy in the form of the Public Utilities Commission, the London Parks Board, and its Playgrounds Department played a critical role in this process.<sup>1</sup> The rationalization of park management in London after 1912 and the establishment of a public recreation bureaucracy with control over funds to fulfill a relatively clear mandate led to a dissipation of opposition based on fiscal concerns. As well, with respect to swimming, questions of morality became less of an issue with the formalization of the activity under these municipal bodies. The transition of the perception of swimming as deviant and controversial activity to one that came to be viewed as a positive growth experience for the city's youth, must be understood as part of a broader shift in attitudes toward public recreation. Swimming and bathing became increasingly accepted because of the legitimization of the use of public

spaces such as parks and city hall for recreation. Also, the successful operation of commercial and private swimming facilities such as the Sulphur Springs and YMCA pools played a legitimizing role that harmonized Londoners attitudes toward swimming. This development of a relatively consistent attitude provides a clear indication that a common understanding had been constructed and incorporated at least within those bodies that supported activities such as swimming and bathing. Although there was a clear change in attitude over this period, it remains, as was the case with public parks, that the regulation of public swimming continued to rely on bureaucratic controls based within local legislation. The resistance toward constructing a public swimming facility was initially based upon financial considerations until that time when public recreation bureaucracies, acting on the impetus provided by the Playground Movement, E.V. Buchanan, and the demand for rational recreation for children, moved past these concerns. The case of George Johnson's 1867 drowning is representative of the earlier attitude, where moral concerns heavily outweighed any consideration of public safety. In contrast, Chief of Police Williams' 1915 report to London City Council highlighted the dangers of bathing in the river indicating that the activity had come to be viewed as an issue of critical importance, particularly in terms of protecting the city's youth.

In contrast to the manner in which public leisure and recreation sites such as public parks and swimming facilities existed in London, commercial recreation and leisure enterprises emerged out of the extant culture of taverns, saloons,

and hotels. How commercial recreation activities moved from existing as secondary services provided in these facilities, to become accepted entities in their own right and viable elements of London's business community can be examined through the cases of billiards, bowling, theatre, and later skating and leisure steamboats. Initially, the opportunity for Londoners to participate in these activities was varied, intermittent, or nonexistent. However, over time, these activities came to be an accepted part of daily life. Commercial leisure and recreation activities that operated as stand-alone enterprises became increasingly established and accepted forms of social and economic activity. As in the case of public parks and swimming facilities, these practices operated within a leisure bureaucracy that acted to regulate the activities. Once established, these commercial ventures prompted people to set aside part of their incomes in order to be able to participate in these leisure and recreation activities. As a result of this process, entrepreneurs opened halls specifically for billiard play, and built ice rinks in lieu of skating on the river. As these changes took place, commercial recreation and leisure practices, and the facilities in which they took place, came to define what practices were acceptable both in their form and function.

Commercial leisure and recreation activities and the facilities in which they took place also served as vehicles to promote the positive social role of leisure and recreation. Ultimately, recreation and leisure services were sold to Londoners through the use of commonly understood language that had been

naturalized through its appropriation from other areas of commercial life. For example, in listing billiard halls, bowling alleys, and theatre houses in the city directory, along with traditional services such as grocers and doctors, served as one way to provide these businesses with a degree of legitimacy. However, while certain forms of recreation and leisure became well established, others, such as river steamers, were unable to persist. The case provides an example of a commercial recreation industry that was unable to gain a secure foothold in the city and thus was not a consistently viable leisure enterprise. Yet, many of the early commercial recreation and leisure institutions such as live and film theatres, billiard halls, bowling alleys, and ice rinks continued to endure. These latter forms of commercial recreation were adopted as viable elements within the broader business landscape of the city and they represented both a production and a reproduction of the dominant business ethic that promoted the provision of goods and services for public consumption as a means to foster economic growth. One aspect of this broader program of economic development that related to sport, recreation, and leisure, was the need to meet the desires of men from the elite social and professional ranks of the city. To meet this demand and to reinforce the status of individuals who represented the upper echelons of London society, a system of private sport and recreation clubs emerged to assume a prominent role in formalizing and institutionalizing sport and recreation practices.

The London Tecumseh Base Ball Club, the Forest City Bicycle Club, and the London Lawn Bowling Club represent examples of sports clubs that operated primarily as private enterprises during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century and provide insight into the relationships between private, commercial, and public interests in the institutionalization and bureaucratization of sport, recreation and leisure in London. The role played by these sporting institutions in this process represented a twofold influence. First, these clubs were established as bodies that ensured associations with like-minded individuals, and over time interactions between these individuals resulted in the forging of ideas and attitudes of how the clubs should be run. The roles and administrative structures implemented to operate these clubs provided the means to ensure that new members were representative of, and amenable to, the values and ideals upon which the organizations had been founded. A second, broader influence of these private sport clubs lay in their ability to define what constituted appropriate and legitimate sport. Because these clubs came to be viewed as the legitimate organizers of their respective sports in the city, alternative or rival clubs were easily incorporated or, as was the case with professional baseball, rejected. As well, in the cases of baseball and cycling in London, when the dominant club's acceptability was brought into question or the sport's exclusivity declined, London's elite citizens quickly abandoned that form of sport or recreation for one that provided greater social acceptability and exclusivity. Examples of this social realignment occurred following the cooption of baseball in the late 1870s by

professional managers and players, and later, working men, as well as after the Forest City Bicycle Club's loss of control over cycling in the late 1890s due to the increased availability of bicycles to the general population. Finally, as demonstrated in the case of lawn bowling in the 1890s, a new sport form inevitably appeared that could adopt and retrench the institutional structure of earlier sport clubs and reproduce the former's order to provide a socially exclusive preserve for the city's elite citizens.

For several important reasons, the process of institutionalization was readily apparent in the manner in which these private sports clubs were produced. To begin, the clubs were formed with the specific purpose of meeting the recreational demands of their memberships. In terms of institutionalization, this fostered the construction of readily accepted ways of organizing and regulating individual conduct. This control, over time, became self-reinforcing and legitimating. Also, through the examples of the Tecumseh Baseball Club, the Forest City Bicycle Club, and the London Lawn Bowling Club it is possible to observe how rules were constructed to regulate how individuals participated in the activities as well as who could take part. As with the case in Morrow's analysis of lacrosse in Canada, the unchallenged acceptance of these rules represented a requirement of membership as did the acceptance of the links to regional, provincial, and national governing bodies which provided structure and shape to the organizations in a specific direction. This control over individual member behaviour and the organization of the clubs, demonstrates the existence

of crystalized institutions that existed as legitimated entities acting to produce and reproduce the values of their elite memberships.

The extent to which sport, recreation, and leisure were organized, formalized, and understood in London can be clearly viewed through an examination of the differences between the situation that existed in the city in 1867, and the corresponding state of affairs during and just following the First World War. At the time of Canadian Confederation, London had recently entered its second decade as a city. Interest in public recreation had only just begun to enter the social and political consciousness of men such as James Egan and John Carling, who along with their peers were charged with governance of the city. Commercial recreation remained limited primarily to taverns, saloons, and hotels and supported a variety of leisure activities, many of which were rough in their nature. Similarly, the first private sport clubs were just beginning to organize, and were, for the most part, established within the same hotels and taverns as the aforementioned baser commercial activities (for example, the Tecumseh Baseball Club at the Tecumseh Hotel). Half-a-century later, sport, recreation and leisure had become an integral part of London's social, political, and economic landscape.

A fully functional public recreation bureaucracy with a mandate to manage and expand public lands and facilities operated in the city. This function was no longer tied to the whim of the City's Councilors, but relied on the Board of Parks Management – a body created by provincial legislation which enjoyed access to



stable funding on an ongoing basis. The first general manager of the Parks Board, E.V. Buchanan, an engineer who later became a vice-president of the Engineering Institute of Canada,<sup>2</sup> exemplified the formalized bureaucratization of public recreation as a social institution in London. Commercial recreation and leisure by the First World War represented a developed element of the city's broader service industry that was regulated through local legislation and licensing. Billiard halls, bowling alleys, live and film theatres, and skating rinks represented a sample of these businesses that operated within this bureaucratic structure. Londoners, by this time, had acquired a taste for these and other practices and supported, through their patronage, those businesses that provided the leisure experiences they sought. Similarly, private sporting clubs by the turn of the century, such as the London Rowing and Lawn Bowling Club, represented important social institutions. Constructing physical facilities to serve their membership represented a tangible service. For example, the Rowing and Lawn Bowling Club built a private pedestrian bridge over the Thames River in 1891 to link the club with the city proper.<sup>3</sup> This footbridge, serving as a link between the city-proper and the club's grounds, provides a fitting metaphor for the place of the private sport club in the city, that being an entity that was connected to the rest of society, yet remaining an exclusive destination not open to all. Thus, sport, recreation, and leisure were intertwined within the social, political, and economic organization of the city. These practices were shaped in order to fit often disparate groups' and individuals' understanding of what sport,

recreation, and leisure ought to be. By the early decades of the twentieth century, these practices represented products of the ongoing process whereby they produced and reproduced a certain way of experiencing leisure, recreation, and sport that often became **the** way of doing so.

In London, by the second decade of the twentieth century, sport, leisure, and recreation had become broadly accepted elements of everyday life. These social practices served to create social identities and reproduce social relations. The process of institutionalization drew upon commonly understood meanings of what an activity represented. Over time, the activity was shaped in order to correspond with broader fundamentals underlying social relations, specifically the manner in which people understood each other's roles in society. Individual agency, such as that effected by city politicians, local entrepreneurs, sport club organizers, and disaffected workers did influence this process. However, the ability of any individual or group to impact upon changes in a specific sport, leisure, or recreation practice remained tied to their concepts of what was possible and what could not be done. Ultimately, the ability to conceptualize alternate possibilities was constrained not by the creativity of the individual or groups, but by the limits within which people from all levels of society lived their lives.

The examination of the social forces that shaped the growth of sport, recreation and leisure practices in London, Ontario is the primary focus of this study. However, the methodology and framework of analysis employed to

achieve these ends, requires that brief consideration be given to the role they played in this study. The processes of institutionalization and hegemony, as well as bureaucratization, were used along with descriptive analysis to inform much of this study. Without the distinctive analysis arrived at through considering these concepts, understanding the factors responsible for the changes that took place in London over this period would not have been as comprehensive. The need to rely on descriptive analysis for this study is, in part, due to the nature of the topic. A local historical study must deal with inherently unique circumstances. Any attempt to draw broad conclusions based strictly upon theoretical conceptualizations would result in the loss of the recognition of the agency of local groups and individuals who represent the actors in this story. Therefore, theoretical considerations represent useful tools for understanding larger social forces that influenced local conditions, but ultimately the voices from the past must be considered when attempting to explain the circumstances of the past.

**ENDNOTES**

1. Metcalfe, "The Urban Response to the Demand for Sporting Facilities," 44. In his examination of the demand for sporting facilities in ten Ontario towns, Metcalfe concludes that "The creation of a bureaucracy to run the public systems provided a degree of stability and rationality." The existence of this bureaucracy, Metcalfe asserts, was in of itself important in terms of access to financial resources, but this relative stability did not find its way to smaller communities which could not afford this type of bureaucracy. Therefore, London, as a larger community was able to support a public recreation bureaucracy.
2. E.V. Buchanan, *The History of London's Waterworks*. (London: Public Utilities Commission, 1968), 3.
3. *London Free Press*, 15 August 1891.

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