Of Rocks, Brooms and Belonging

As the cool temperatures of Autumn arrive and we turn our attention from our favourite summer sports to our favourite winter ones, we can't forget about Canada's second favourite game played on ice: curling. This December the Lindsay Curling Club will celebrate an important birthday: 150 years since their inception as a club. I had the chance to talk to club members, Richard Glanzmann, Dave Nigh and Kelly James, who filled me in on the club's history and important milestone.

As you walk into the Lindsay Curling Club today, you are greeted by the same enthusiasm for the sport that has been present since the very beginning. Sitting upstairs in the club area, surrounded by the numerous trophies and plaques won through the years, there is a lasting sense of pride and accomplishment. Each piece quietly tells a story of competition, camaraderie, and dedication to the game. "There is a sense of community here," said Nigh, Club Manager and Lifetime Member, "It was quite difficult to join the club at one time, but curling has evolved to be a winter sport that is accessible to all."

On winter days in the late nineteenth century, long before organized arenas and carefully prepared sheets of ice, the people of Lindsay gathered along the frozen Scugog River. There, with simple stones and handmade brooms, they played a sport brought to Canada by Scottish settlers: curling. These friendly games among neighbours became a cherished winter tradition, bringing together folks from all walks of life in a shared spirit of competition and fellowship. As the game's popularity in Lindsay grew, so too did the desire to formally organize it.

That opportunity came in December 1876, when ten local men met to establish what would become the Lindsay Curling Club, one of the community's oldest sporting organizations. The founding members were John Watson (Club President), George H. Bertram, Duncan McIntyre, James McLennan, John Matthie, William Needler, Samuel McMurtry, Henry Gladman, Rev. James Hastie, and John Dundas Flavelle. Their efforts transformed an informal pastime on the frozen river into a lasting institution that would serve generations of curlers and become an enduring part of Lindsay's sporting and social life.

After its first season, the new club found a home by purchasing property on Russell Street, approximately where the bowling arena is today. Members built a small curling rink where they could continue their winter pastime in a more organized setting.



Courtesy of the Kawartha Lakes Museum and Archives, 'The Lindsay Curling Club, these players completed for the 1912 Ontario Tankard and finished as runner-up. Players are: Back R-L: Frank J. Carew, M. H, Sissons, Walter E. Reesor, R. J. Menzies. Front R-L: L. V. O'Connor, J. D. Flavelle (skip), R. Butler, George A. Little (skip),' 1974.834.2 1

However, the building quickly became a multi-purpose facility. When the ice was not being used for curling, the doors were opened to the public for skating.

As Lindsay grew, so did the popularity of curling. By 1893, the club required a larger and more permanent facility. The Lindsay Curling Club moved to a new location at 18 Peel Street, where they are still located today! There were originally four sheets of smooth, pristine ice.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the sport had firmly established itself as a beloved winter pastime in the community. In 1901, The Evening Post described curling as "Lindsay's sport of sports.

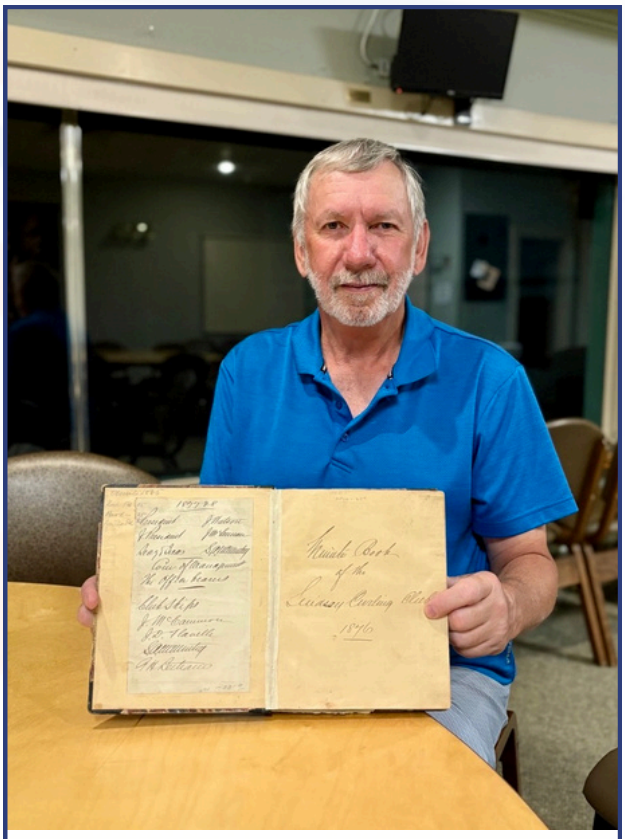
Other games are played, but the enthusiasm therefor lacks lasting qualities; for the noble game of curling both old and young have an affection that amounts almost to reverence." Such enthusiasm meant the rink was soon pushed beyond its capacity.

Recognizing the growing demand with 124 members, in 1901 the club's directorship arranged to enlarge the facility by adding two additional sheets of ice. The contract for the expansion was awarded to local carpenters Bell and McKibbin of Lindsay.

In the decades that followed, Lindsay developed a reputation as a competitive curling town. Local teams travelled widely and returned home with an impressive collection of trophies.

Among their proudest achievements was winning the Governor-General's Cup three years in a row (1885, 1886, 1887). This accomplishment placed the Lindsay Curling Club among the most respected clubs in Ontario. Curlers from Lindsay also travelled to major tournaments such as the famous Winnipeg Bonspiel, to compete against some of the best teams in North America.

The club became known for hosting large and lively bonspiels. One of the most memorable occurred in 1913, when Lindsay welcomed 100 teams from across Ontario for a week-long tournament.



David Nigh, General Manager, holds the original Lindsay Curling Club Minute Book from 1876.

To accommodate the crowds, organizers used ten sheets of ice, including those in the nearby skating rink. For many residents, the event was as much a social celebration as it was a sporting competition!

For many years the club reflected the customs of the time, with membership limited to men. That changed in 1947, when women were officially welcomed into the Lindsay Curling Club.

Their enthusiasm quickly reshaped the organization, and within a year nearly 50 women had joined. They formed their own leagues and became an important part of the club's social and fundraising activities. In the fall of 1952, A Ladies Opening Tea drew 300 women curlers!

The years that followed brought steady improvements. In the early 1950s, members raised funds for a new clubhouse and the installation of artificial ice, ensuring more reliable playing conditions throughout the winter. Further renovations in the 1970s expanded the lounge and locker rooms, strengthening the club's role as a social centre for the community.

The building continues to be proudly cared for. "When you have a building of this age, the building has quirks, and maintaining the infrastructure means that we have to keep it upgraded," said Nigh. "The bar and lounge area is being renovated, and we hope to renovate the kitchen in the near future as well. We are committed to keep up with the maintenance and upkeep is very important for the board." The club also became fully accessible just prior to Covid, "we added a lift to access all three levels of the club, as well as accessible washrooms on the upper lounge." Nigh knows all too well the love of the sport, as he started curling before he was a teenager. "Both parents were curlers, I started at about 12 years old, curling in Unionville and when I moved in 1990 to teach in Mariposa, I saw an advertisement in the paper for curling registration and registered that fall. I joined the club right away. I have been the manager since the 2011-2012 season. The people are so nice."

This sentiment is echoed by Board Member Richard Glanzmann. "I heard the folks were friendly and nice. It's a great way to meet people. It's not overly competitive, but fun." Richard also has many years as an avid curler. "I have been curling since I started in high school in grade 12. I chose curling because it was off the beaten path, it was unique." When Richard moved to Janetville with his wife, who is also a curler, in 2020, "I was told to check out the Lindsay Club and the Curl and Dine, it is unique to this club. Curl and Dine is a late afternoon league that runs on Fridays. In this particular league you play 6 ends of curling, instead of 8, and the scoring structure is a little different, but you play for just over an hour, and then you have dinner. It's a great way to stay social!"

We joked about my curling skills, as I gave it a go myself several years ago. After a good laugh, Dave and Richard shared that they enjoy helping beginners and those who are new to the Lindsay curling community develop their skills. The club offers an adult Learn to Curl program, along with a dedicated youth program. They noted that one of the club's greatest challenges is inspiring more young people to take up the sport and become involved.

Today, 150 years after those first games on the Scugog River, the Lindsay Curling Club continues to thrive. With over 400 members, modern ice facilities, and leagues for curlers of all ages and abilities, it remains a place where sport and community meet, just as it did when the town's earliest curlers first stepped onto the ice in the winter of 1876. "There is something special about the relationships built within this club, we take care of each other," said Nigh.



In 1954, Thomas Morrow of Woodville was awards the contract to construct the new ice covering for the Lindsay Curling Club.

Kelly James is the newest President of the Lindsay Curling Club. “The members of the Lindsay Curling Club are very excited about our 150th Anniversary season,” she reflected on the milestone. “We have been planning events for the past year with the goal of making this season memorable for everyone as we celebrate both our history and our membership.”

“We are taking this as an opportunity to remind Lindsay and the surrounding communities that we are here, and curling is a great way to stay active, meet new friends, and enjoy the winter months,” she continued. “Most importantly, the club is proud to use this anniversary season as a chance to give back to the community we have been part of for 150 years!”

Join the Lindsay Curling Club to celebrate their 150 years! Whether you're a long-time curler, new to the sport, or simply looking to be part of a great community, they would love to have you join the festivities. Come out to enjoy the fun, connect with friends, and see everything the club has to offer. For event details, schedules, and more information, visit the Lindsay Curling Club website.https://www.lindsaycurling.com/