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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A HISTORY OF RUGBY FOOTBALL IN EDMONTON

BY

PATRICK LAMB

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS STUDIES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA  
SPRING 1990



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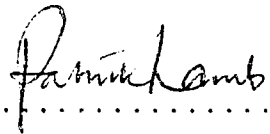
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Date: *February 28 90*

## ABSTRACT

This thesis set out to document the history of rugby football in Edmonton and northern Alberta from 1891-1986. As much relevant material as possible concerning the actual participants, teams, and venues associated with the sport was included. The thesis also examined the reasons for rugby's successes and failures and discussed the significant factors that affected its development.

The main body of the thesis was divided into three chronological sections. The first section, from 1891 to 1914, covered a period when Edmonton was still a relatively small settlement and rugby, like all sports, was in its infancy. Many of Edmonton's pioneers, most of whom came from Britain or eastern Canada, helped to introduce rugby at this time. Rugby also participated in the strong sporting rivalry that developed between Edmonton and Calgary. After several years of conflict between the two games Canadian football replaced rugby as the more popular sport before the First World War.

The second section covered the period from 1920 to 1939. During this time rugby established itself on a regular basis. Once again the sport was dominated by British expatriates living in the city and rugby clubs often developed along ethnic lines. Travel opportunities were greater than before the First World War and local rugby enthusiasts began to recognize Vancouver as an important centre of competition. A common shortage of opposition within easy traveling distance ushered in an era of cooperation between rugby and Canadian football.

The period from 1945 to 1986 was covered in the third section. Rugby was revived after the Second World War by a further wave of British immigrants. Better road and air links made rugby more accessible to other communities in northern Alberta who were able to participate in Edmonton Rugby Union competitions. Previously, rugby had been considered a very British game, however, it soon attracted an increasing number of Canadians and became popular in high schools, colleges, and universities. Women also began to play the sport. During the 1970s and 1980s the different clubs in Edmonton developed a world class rugby facility, the Ellerslie Rugby Park, and rugby became one of the most popular amateur sports in the city.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The staff of the City of Edmonton Archives were extremely helpful in finding relevant material. Their consideration and cooperation allowed the author to complete the thesis while also working at the archives. The actual preparation of this thesis was made possible through the generosity of the staff of Jackson Power and Electric who kindly offered the use of their computer and office equipment.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
GLOSSARY OF TERMS .....	ix
CHAPTER I .....	10
INTRODUCTION .....	10
METHODOLOGY .....	13
LIMITATIONS.....	14
DELIMITATIONS .....	14
DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	14
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	15
JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY .....	18
CHAPTER II 1891-1914.....	19
CHAPTER III 1920-1939.....	40
CHAPTER IV 1945-1986.....	63
CONCLUSION .....	95
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	101
APPENDIX I List of Rugby Clubs in Northern Alberta .....	110
APPENDIX II Alberta Rugby Union Awards .....	113
APPENDIX III Edmonton Rugby Union Awards .....	115
APPENDIX IV List of Edmonton Rugby Union Office Holders.....	118

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

<b>FIGURE</b>		<b>PAGE</b>
<b>I</b>	<b>Graph showing the population of Edmonton 1891-1985</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>II</b>	<b>Graph showing the number of rugby teams in northern Alberta 1953-1986</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>III</b>	<b>Graph showing Edmonton Rugby Union expenditure 1973-1986</b>	<b>100</b>

## LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES

PLATE	PAGE
I      Edmonton Football Club 1892	35
II     Fort Saskatchewan Rugby Football Club 1895	36
III    Edmonton Barbarians Rugby Football Club 1914	37
IV    Scrummage - Edmonton Barbarians v Calgary, South Side Athletic Grounds 1914	38
V     Conversion - Edmonton Barbarians v Calgary, South Side Athletic Grounds 1914	39
VI    The Dr. Brookes Trophy	59
VII   Edmonton All-Stars v Saskatoon 1926	60
VIII   Edmonton Eskimos British Rugby Football Club, winners of the Dr. Brookes Cup 1926	61
IX    Alberta R.F.U. All-Stars, Brockton Oval, Vancouver 1928	62
X     Edmonton Rugby Football Club vs R.C.A.F. Penhold 1954	90
XI    Ellerslie Rugby Park 1975	91
XII   Ellerslie Rugby Park 1982	92
XIII   Edmonton Rockers W.R.F.C. in action	93
XIV   Edmonton Rugby Union, 1986 Labatt's National Classic Champions	94

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### A Definition of Rugby Football <sup>1</sup>

Rugby, also known as **rugger**, is a football game played with an oval ball by two teams of 15 (XV) players each. Each team is divided into 8 **forwards** and 7 **backs**. The forwards are further organized into the following positions: **loose-head prop**, **hooker**, **tight-head prop**, 2 **second-row**, 2 **wing-forwards**, and **number-eight**. The backs are also organized into distinct positions; these are: **scrum-half**, **stand-off** (also known as **out-half**), 2 **centre threequarters**, 2 **wing-threequarters**, and **full-back**.

Rugby's distinctive features are (1) - players may use their hands to catch, throw, or run with the ball in addition to manoeuvring it with their feet as in association football (soccer); and (2) - the **scrum**, or **scrummage**, a method of putting the ball in play from a set formation in which eight forward players on each team form a closely packed group behind two front rows of three men each, the ball being thrown onto the ground between them and each team trying to win possession.

Although the ball may be kicked or carried or passed from player to player by hand or foot, it may not be passed forward. Players running with the ball inevitably make tackling a part of the game. A tackle occurs when a player carrying the ball is sent to the ground and held by one or more opponents.

Scoring in the game is achieved in a number of different ways. A **try** (4 points) is scored by touching the ball down behind the opponents' goal line. After a try has been scored a **conversion** (2 points) can be added by kicking the ball between the opponents' goalposts. The combination of a try and a successful conversion is called a **goal**. A team may also score by kicking a **penalty goal** or a **drop goal** (both worth 3 points).

A **referee** is in control of the game and he is assisted by two **touch-judges**. It is the task of each touch-judge to signal where and when the ball, or a player in possession of the ball crosses the **touchline** (sideline) and leaves the field of play. One method of gaining ground or temporarily stopping play is by kicking the ball **into touch** (out of play). The **25 yard line** (22 metre line) is a mark 25 yards from, and parallel to, each goal line running across the field. It is only in the area between this line and their own goal line that each defending team may kick the ball directly into touch without the ball bouncing in play first.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Encyclopedia Britannica

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The game of rugby union football has had a long, albeit sporadic, existence in the sporting life of Edmonton. During the sport's history it has contributed much to the development of the city and the lives of Edmontonians. The period to be covered in this study begins with the first recorded game in 1891 and continues up to the end of the 1986 season.

In common with other sports there is always some uncertainty regarding the exact dates of origin. In the case of rugby football, the recording of actual matches depended on local newspapers or other forms of preserved written documents. Without the existence of these documents, or without their discovery, it is often a difficult task to identify and locate the true level of activity in a given sport.

In fact, it is unclear exactly when the game of rugby football was first played in Canada. Several sources agree that it was probably introduced by British garrison troops and by the Royal Navy during the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The influence of the Royal Navy on both the Atlantic and the Pacific coast was especially significant, for rugby has enjoyed a continuous popularity in British Columbia and, to a lesser extent, in the Maritime provinces. It is also known that by the 1870s a form of rugby was being played at many of the schools and colleges in eastern Canada. The Montreal Football Club, established in 1868, played against British army regiments.<sup>2</sup> Rugby soon spread to McGill University, Queen's University, Upper Canada College, and Trinity College, Toronto, where the first set of rugby union rules were drawn up in 1877.<sup>3</sup>

The western interior, which was acquired by Canada in 1867, presented a very different picture. At this time the area was still a vast wilderness inhabited mainly by Indians and fur-trappers. The development of rugby football in the west followed that of other parts of the country by at least a decade and was much less dependent on the British military institutions. Instead the growth of rugby in the west owed a great deal more to the

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<sup>1</sup> Sturrock, D. "The History of Rugby Football in Canada." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1971, p 1.

<sup>2</sup> Howell, M. & R. *Sports and Games in Canadian Life 1700 to the Present*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1969, p.79.

<sup>3</sup> Roxborough, H. *One Hundred Not Out*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969, pp 158-159.

influence of a large number of British settlers and those of British descent who arrived on the prairies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In 1891 an Edmonton Football Club was formed and a two game series with a team representing Calgary took place. At this time the population of Edmonton was approximately 700.<sup>4</sup> Two years later the Edmonton club challenged a team from nearby Clover Bar to a game of rugby. As the town grew, rugby enjoyed increased support. Each year inter-city games against Calgary attracted larger crowds. The influx of more and more settlers from Britain and eastern Canada, who were familiar with the game, helped rugby's growth during the 1890s and 1900s; however, it would be wrong to ignore another more unique influence.

The North West Mounted Police (N.W.M.P.) were the chief initiators of many sports on the prairies and they were among the first group to play organized rugby football. With detachments in Calgary, Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan, Lethbridge, Battleford, and Regina the police established an inter-settlement network which proved crucial in the development of sporting contacts. The N.W.M.P., as well as playing games amongst themselves, often provided the initial outside opposition for civilian teams. This was the case in Winnipeg in 1890 and in Lethbridge and Calgary the following year.<sup>5</sup> The background of these policemen is significant for many members of the force had played rugby while at school in Britain or eastern Canada or while serving in the British army.<sup>6</sup> As with the coastal regions these regimental forces played a major role in the development of rugby in the Canadian prairie region.

By 1908, the Canadian version of rugby (now known as Canadian football), which had evolved in eastern Canada during the 1890s, was becoming increasingly popular and for some years there was considerable argument over which code of rules should be adopted. The Canadian game eventually attracted more attention than its British counterpart, although the latter did not disappear completely. Rugby was played sporadically for several years and in 1913 the Edmonton Barbarians Rugby Football Club was formed and the next year it played a series of games, one against a team from Calgary.

The rapid immigration that characterized the first decade of the twentieth century declined after the First World War but Edmonton still had a population of 60,000 by

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<sup>4</sup> *The City of Edmonton Statistics of Population*, 1982.

<sup>5</sup> Lamb, P. "The North West Mounted Police and the Development of Rugby Football in Western Canada 1873-1908." *The Quarterly*, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Vol. 53, No.2, Spring 1988.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

1920.<sup>7</sup> As the city grew so did the popularity of a wide variety of sports, including rugby. During the 1920s a regular league schedule functioned almost every spring and fall. A number of different clubs, some of which lasted longer than others, competed for the Dr. Brookes Cup. The leadership and organization of Edmonton rugby at this time was provided by a number of immigrants from the British Isles. During the same period an Edmonton select side traveled to Vancouver on several occasions to play matches. As a result of these visits the Edmonton clubs followed Vancouver's lead in adopting strategies and rule changes.

In common with other sports rugby declined during the 1930s and was not played on a regular basis again until the early 1950s. The reasons for this sudden demise are unclear although the onset of economic depression during this decade had a negative effect on all sports in Edmonton. Both football and soccer clubs either folded or struggled to survive and hockey, Edmonton's most popular sport, also suffered. The Second World War effectively halted any regular sporting activity until 1945. There was a gradual increase in sporting activity after the war ended but it was not until the late 1940s and early 1950s that team sports were widely organized once again. One major exception to this, amateur baseball, illustrates the growing influence of American sports on the prairies.

The formation of the Edmonton Rugby Football Club, now known as the Pirates, in 1953 marked the beginning of the present day rugby community in Edmonton. The number of participants increased more rapidly as the discovery of oil and gas and the rapid expansion of related industries brought another wave of immigrants from the British Isles to the city. This resulted in a surge of interest in the sport and the formation of a number of the present day clubs. Such club names as the Clansmen, the Druids, and the Leprechauns clearly reflect the influence of a number of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish rugby players in the development of the modern game. In common with the 1920s the relatively small rugby community that established itself during the 1950s and 1960s depended upon the participation of many players from the British Isles.

More recently visiting players and coaches from other countries, notably Australia and New Zealand, have also helped. In the last 15 years the English, Scottish, and Welsh national sides have all toured Alberta and a host of top class club sides from overseas have played in Edmonton. A more significant factor, however, has been the participation of an increasingly large number of Canadian players who have contributed to the enormous growth of rugby in Edmonton and given it a more solid foundation.

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<sup>7</sup> *The City of Edmonton Statistics of Population*, 1982.

During the 1970s increased government funding and volunteer work by the different clubs resulted in the development of a major rugby complex on the southern edge of the city. The Ellerslie Rugby Park is now one of the finest rugby facilities in North America. The burden associated with the various fundraising schemes for this facility had a temporary negative effect on the development of the actual game of rugby. More importantly, the lessons learned from the management of the Ellerslie Rugby Park helped the Edmonton Rugby Union and its constituent clubs to become efficient administrators. This undoubtedly added to the success of rugby in northern Alberta.

The Edmonton Rugby Union, the governing body of rugby in northern Alberta has become one of the largest amateur sports organizations in the province with close to 2,000 active members from 15 different clubs including two women's organizations. All but two major high schools in Edmonton have now instituted a rugby program and there is annual competition for senior and junior championships. Already familiar with rugby, more high school graduates have continued to play the game after graduating adding to the strength of the different clubs. One measure of the tremendous progress rugby has made in the city came in 1986 when the Edmonton representative side won the Labatt's Classic National Championship.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to fully develop this study, a critical examination of primary and secondary sources was undertaken in an attempt to gather as much relevant information as possible. The research concentrated on sources such as books, periodical articles, newspapers, archival material, and theses relating to rugby football in Edmonton and to the history of the city. While newspaper articles comprised almost all of the available material on rugby prior to the Second World War, it was the researcher's intention to include a thorough study of all available local rugby documents for the period from 1953 onwards. These included Edmonton Rugby Union annual reports and Alberta Rugby Union newsletters.

Material from local archives was also studied. A large number of photographs, especially from 1890 to 1930, were located at the Provincial Archives of Alberta. The City of Edmonton Archives also provided photographs as well as valuable biographical information on many early rugby players. After the collection of all literary information, a series of interviews were conducted with members of the Edmonton rugby community who were widely recognized as having played significant roles in building clubs or who served as presidents or executive members of the Edmonton Rugby Union.

## LIMITATIONS

A description of rugby football in Edmonton prior to the First World War is almost entirely dependent on local newspaper articles. During the 1890s and the 1900s newspapers did not provide a systematic and thorough sports coverage. Although reporting improved during the 1920s what material there is is still restricted to match summaries and team lists. In the modern era, from 1953 to the present day, newspaper articles are infrequent and the researcher is more dependent on the evidence of a number of key members of the local rugby community for information. While many of these people are still available, their explanations of certain events may vary. Documentation relating to the last 30 years does exist, however, a great deal of this material is scattered among personal collections not all of which were available to the researcher. It is important to realize that the reader may see only part of the whole picture and that the subsequent conclusions may only have a limited accuracy.

## DELIMITATIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe and interpret the development of rugby football in Edmonton. However, because competition in the Edmonton city league system involves clubs from other parts of Alberta the study included all of the province north of, and including, Red Deer. The time period for the research was from 1891, when the first reports of rugby appeared in *The Edmonton Bulletin*, to 1986 when Edmonton rugby crowned a period of great expansion by winning the Labatt's Classic National Championship.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

Until the 1930s the game we now call Canadian football was known as Canadian rugby thus creating an additional difficulty for researchers trying to identify the two separate codes. For the purpose of this study, the game being examined is referred to as rugby or rugby football while Canadian football is identified by its modern name.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

References to rugby football in Canada are limited and information on the game in present day Alberta is even more difficult to find. M. Howell and R. Howell's *Sports and Games in Canadian Life 1700 to the Present* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1969) is typical in its approach, noting that the game was introduced to Canada by the British army and navy and by British immigrants during the nineteenth century. Similar accounts can be found in *The Oxford Companion to Sports and Games* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975) and in N. Mason's, *Football: The Story of all the World's Football Games* (London: Templesmith, 1974).

H. Roxborough, in *One Hundred Not Out* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1966) is more specific about rugby's origins in Canada but the author is equally brief in his treatment of the sport. A better account was found in G. Redmond's *The Sporting Scots in Nineteenth Century Canada* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982). Here the author notes the importance of various Scots in starting the game all over Canada. A brief chronological account of Canadian rugby's development using significant dates can be found in B. Schrodt, G. Redmond, and R. Baka's, *Sport Canadiana* (Edmonton: Executive Sports Publications Ltd. , 1980).

A collection of theses completed at the University of Alberta also provide a wealth of useful information. These can be divided into two groups, the first of which deal with the history of sport in Canada. P. Lindsay, in "A History of Sport in Canada 1807-1867" (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Alberta, 1969) remarks on the formation of the Montreal Football Club in 1868 and the involvement of garrisoned troops in early football games as well as noting the development of rugby in the eastern schools and colleges. Both A. Cox, in "A History of Sport in Canada 1868-1900" (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1969) and K.C. Jones, in "Sport in Canada 1900-1920" (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Alberta, 1970) wrote short discussions of rugby which included singular references to the game in Edmonton. All of these studies offer only a brief summary of rugby's early history in Canada, the scope of these works being too large to include anything more than fleeting references to Edmonton.

A second group of theses from the University of Alberta are more helpful. The most important of these is D. Sturrock's "A History of Rugby Football in Canada" (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1971). Sturrock's work describes the development of rugby in the different provinces from the game's origins to 1967. Despite this study's obvious relevance, the author's treatment of rugby in Edmonton is brief (he devotes only

25 pages out of a total of over 250 to Edmonton); also the study, which was completed in 1971, does not include coverage of the last 20 years.

The introduction of rugby to the prairie provinces has been generally attributed to the North West Mounted Police who arrived in 1874 and soon played the sport in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge and Regina. P. Routledge, in "The N.W.M.P. and Their Influence on the Sporting Life of the Northwest Territories 1870-1904" (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1978) provides a lengthy description of police involvement in a variety of sports. A more detailed description of their contribution to rugby can be found in P. Lamb's "The North West Mounted Police and the Development of Rugby Football in Western Canada 1873-1908" *The Quarterly* (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) Vol. 53 No. 2, Spring 1988. Two other theses are also important. J. Reid, in "Sports and Games in Alberta Before 1900" (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1969) provides useful background information by noting several early tournaments played in the Edmonton area. C. Blackburn's "The Development of Sports in Alberta 1900-1918" (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1974), includes a section on rugby as well as a discussion of various factors affecting sport during the period of study. Some mention of rugby's contribution to an early Edmonton-Calgary sporting rivalry can be found in W. M. McLennan's *Sport in Early Calgary* (Calgary: Fort Brisebois Publications, 1963).

The major source of information on rugby in Edmonton prior to the Second World War is local newspapers. *The Edmonton Bulletin* and *The Edmonton Journal* both carried match reports and team lists for most games played in the city. After the Second World War their coverage is less frequent, however, a number of Alberta Rugby Union and Edmonton Rugby Union documents are available. Although these are incomplete, they do provide vital information on rugby's development during the last 30 years.

Through a combination of information from the above sources, a narrative history of rugby in Edmonton was constructed. None of these sources gave an adequate insight into the place of sport in society. H. Eckert's "The Development of Organized Recreation and Physical Education in Alberta" (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1953) traces the development of sports and recreational organizations and also discusses the role of provincial and municipal governments. Edmonton's urban history has received a significant amount of attention, notably from Carl Betke, who includes sport as a major part of the urbanization process. In "The Development of Urban Community in Prairie Canada: Edmonton 1898-1921" (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Alberta, 1974) Betke gives an important account of the growth of sport during the first two decades of this century. Two articles by the same author, "Sports Promotion in the Western Canadian City: The Example of Early Edmonton" (*Urban History Review* Vol.12: No.2,

1983) and "The Social Significance of Sport in the City: Edmonton in the 1920s" in A.R. McCormack and I. MacPherson *Cities in the West* (papers of the Western Canadian Urban History Conference 1974) provide further discussion of sport within the context of urban growth and identify sport as a means of displaying civic allegiance, which added to Edmonton's corporate identity.

Several other books and articles are also noteworthy. The best general account of the city's history is J.G. MacGregor's *Edmonton: A History* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1967), although the author includes few sporting references. E.H. Dale's "The Role of Successive Town and City Councils in the Evolution of Edmonton, Alberta 1892-1966" (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Alberta, 1969) is the most extensive study of civic politics. J. Day's "Edmonton Civic Politics 1891-1914" (*Urban History Review* No.3, 1977) and J.C. Weaver's "Edmonton's Perilous Course 1904-1929" (*Urban History Review* No.2, 1977), are also useful. There is little material dealing with Edmonton's more recent past. One exception is P.J. Smith's *Edmonton: The Emerging Metropolitan Pattern* (University of Victoria, 1978) the first chapter of which contains an interesting description of the changes brought about by the local oil and gas discoveries. Although there is no reference to sport, H. Palmer's *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta*. (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1982) is worthy of inclusion if only to provide the reader with a clearer understanding of the 'Anglo-Saxon' domination of early Alberta society.

## JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

To date, no history of rugby football in Edmonton has been attempted. Sturrock's "A History of Rugby in Canada" contains brief sections on Alberta, notably on Edmonton and Calgary, but the author failed to discuss the significance of Edmonton rugby in the 1920s. Also, Sturrock's survey only goes as far as 1967 and does not include the last 20 years, a period when Edmonton rugby experienced enormous growth. Blackburn and Betke also mentioned rugby in their works, but both authors dealt with limited periods of time, all at least 50 years ago.

Furthermore, with the exception of Sturrock, rugby has not been the central focus of any of these studies. While many authors have mentioned the sport, few have attempted to assess its importance and fewer still have expressed an opinion regarding its relative merits. Rugby's progress in Edmonton has been determined by a number of different factors such as immigration from the British Isles, the importance of travel, the changing relationship with Canadian football and the influx of touring sides from all over the world. During the last 20 years, government funding has also helped rugby emerge as a major summer sport in Edmonton.

It also seems clear that rugby's image has changed considerably. The game has widened its playing base enormously and most Edmonton clubs are now overwhelmingly Canadian in character. Women have also become actively involved in the sport. In general, society's attitude towards rugby has become increasingly positive. It is the intention of this study to provide not only a description of rugby's history but to examine the various factors that have shaped its development and allowed it to become one of Edmonton's fastest growing sports.

## CHAPTER II 1891-1914

Although some sort of rugby football was probably played on a casual basis during the 1880s, the first record of an organized club in Edmonton appeared in *The Edmonton Bulletin* on September 19, 1891:

A meeting of the Edmonton Football club was held in Campbell Young's office, on Monday evening last to appoint office-bearers for the ensuing year. The following appointments were made Campbell Young, president and captain, W. Wilkie, secretary-treasurer, a committee of three members viz: Rev. C. Cunningham, C. D. T. Becher and A. E. Pattison. Parties wishing to join the club may do so by handing in their names to the secretary.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of this meeting a game against a club representing Calgary was arranged and the Edmonton team traveled south by rail for its first match which took place on October 17, 1891:

The Edmonton football club returned on Monday night from Calgary in a more or less battered up condition, most of their faces bearing evidence that the game had been a lively one. Our men were defeated by a score of 4 points to one, made up as follows: 2 tries and 1 goal (kicked from a disputed penalty kick) to one try. A return match will be played in Edmonton at an early date, when the home team hope to reverse the situation. The players in the teams were as follows: Edmonton team - Fullback, Hope; halfbacks, Cunningham, Hardisty, Adamson; quarterbacks, W. Edmiston, F. Adamson; forwards, C. Young (captain), Pattison, Bremner, Clark, Fielders, McNamara, Freem, Mackee, Edmiston. Calgary team - Fullback, Smyth; halfbacks, Wallinger, Cuppage, F. Ritchie (captain); quarterbacks, Winterbottom, Moore; forwards, Baugh, Agnew, Graham, West, Broderick, Baetz, Beddingfield, Smart and J. Behie.<sup>2</sup>

The content of these reports is significant for a number of reasons. Not only do they contain the first mention of some of the men who guided rugby in Edmonton during its initial years, they also allude to another important factor that was to provide an early impetus to the development of rugby and other sports in the city, namely, the rivalry between Edmonton and Calgary. The return match took place in Edmonton on the Exhibition Race Track on October 31. This time the Edmonton team was victorious, winning by a score of 5-0.<sup>3</sup> After the game:

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<sup>1</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, September 19, 1891, p 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, October 24, 1891, p 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, October 31, 1891, p 3.

The Edmonton club entertained their visitors at dinner in the Hotel du Canada where both teams did full justice to the good things provided by Mr. Hetu. The usual toasts were duly honored and a number of capital songs were given. A most enjoyable evening was spent, and the visiting team expressed themselves as delighted with their reception in Edmonton. . . Honors are now easy [sic] on football, and the next match ought to be a good one.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the fact that Edmonton had a population of only 700 in 1891,<sup>5</sup> the competition for supremacy between the two towns had already begun. *The Edmonton Bulletin*, under the direction of its owner Frank Oliver, was fiercely defensive of Edmonton's record and took every opportunity to criticize Calgary. On October 24, 1892, a report under the headline of "Sports", appeared in the *Bulletin* :

While the Edmonton teams [cricket and lacrosse] were in Calgary one of the Calgary football players lead some of the Edmonton boys to believe there was a good chance of a Calgary football team visiting Edmonton this Fall; so on the arrival of the teams from Calgary a meeting was held, a club formed and a challenge sent at once to the secretary of the Calgary football club asking them if they could come here and play a match, but the Calgary secretary has not thought it worth his while to answer it. If Calgary teams cannot come here they might at least have the civility to answer the letters.<sup>6</sup>

A game against Calgary failed to materialize and in fact there is no recorded evidence of any games having taken place in 1892.<sup>7</sup> The next game of record was played on May 23, 1893 when the holiday sports, held in honour of Queen Victoria's birthday, opened with a football game between Edmonton and the nearby settlement of Clover Bar. The visiting team won by a goal and four tries to nil:

All tries were got pretty far out which accounts for the scarcity of goals. Each team played a man short. A very large attendance was on the field including a good number of ladies who seemed to thoroughly enjoy the game. Both sides had to call on the assistance of two or three beginners. Edmonton was a little handicapped in this respect yet the beginners proved to be of the right stuff for the game. Although every man played a good game special mention should be made of Griffith at back and Creswell forward. The Clover Bar backs played a very fine passing game. The tries were got by W.S. Edmiston 1, L. Adamson 1, C Bremner 1, J.F. Adamson 2.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *The City of Edmonton Statistics of Population*, 1982.

<sup>6</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, October 24, 1892, p 6.

<sup>7</sup> Although there is no literary evidence of rugby games during 1892, a photograph in the City of Edmonton Archives dated 1892, shows a team in playing attire.

H. Edmiston, C. West and W. Fielders also got behind but no score was allowed. the teams were -

Clover Bar - H. Hope back, A. Adamson, F. Cory, \_ White half-backs, W.S. Edmiston, J.F. Adamson quarters, H. Edmiston capt. T. Mackee, L. Adamson, J.C.C. Bremner, F. Brane, W. Fielders, C. West, J. Williams forwards.

Edmonton - Griffith back, R. Hardisty, Forbes, R. B. Nutt half-backs, T. W. Chalmers, Glover quarters, C. Young capt. Creswell, Hall, G. Wright, A. Pattison, D. Stewart, A. H. Goodwin, W. Patton forwards.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the variations in positions, there is evidence to suggest that this was a game of rugby football, although at this time the differences that distinguished the English game from Canadian version were not at all clear. Clover Bar was inhabited by a group of Scottish and English settlers who played rugby football and cricket.<sup>9</sup> The background of some of the players would also suggest that they had at least some knowledge of rugby football.

W.S. Edmiston and J.F. Adamson, who had played in the first rugby match against Calgary two years earlier, were on the Clover Bar team. Edmiston, who went on to become mayor of Edmonton in 1898, grew up in Glasgow, Scotland.<sup>10</sup> On the Edmonton side was Richard Hardisty, whose father had been chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company in Edmonton. Both Richard and his brother Percy learned to play rugby while attending Murchiston Castle School in Edinburgh, Scotland.<sup>11</sup> Dr. Alexander Goodwin, one of Edmonton's first dentists and an early cycling enthusiast, was born and educated in Fredericton, New Brunswick where rugby was popular. Dr. Goodwin moved to Edmonton in 1891 and in 1910 became mayor of Vegreville.<sup>12</sup> Regardless of any uncertainty over the type of game being played, it is clear that some of Edmonton's leading citizens were involved.

Once again there is no record of any rugby being played in 1894. In the following year the rugby club was reorganized with Dr. James Adamson, one of Edmonton's leading physicians, acting as secretary and treasurer. A challenge was sent to Calgary to play a game in Edmonton on May 25, 1895 as part of the holiday celebrations.<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, May 25, 1893.

<sup>9</sup> Griesbach, W. A. *I Remember*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1946, p 47.

<sup>10</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, July 25, 1903.

<sup>11</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, June 23, 1954.

<sup>12</sup> Blue, J. *A History of the Province of Alberta*. Chicago: Historical Publishing Co., 1924, p 1037.

<sup>13</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, March 18, 1895, p 6.

arrangement of sporting contests on long holiday weekends was a prominent fact. This was the only time that adequate travel arrangements could be made without cutting into valuable working hours. This tradition of hosting rugby games or tournaments on holiday weekends has continued to the present day in Edmonton.

In May 1895, a two-game series between Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan was arranged as a warm-up for the Calgary fixture. Fort Saskatchewan was the home of a division of the North West Mounted Police (N.W.M.P.) who had previously introduced rugby in Battleford, Calgary, Lethbridge, and Regina during the late 1880s and early 1890s.<sup>14</sup> As members of the police force were often required to transfer from one post to another, it seems likely that at least some of the Fort Saskatchewan detachment had played rugby before. This was certainly the case for Inspector T.W. Chalmers. He was a committee member of the Edmonton Rugby Football Club in 1892 and a member of the Edmonton team that played Clover Bar. Chalmers had previously been stationed in Lethbridge where he was also a member of the general committee of the Lethbridge Rugby Football Club in 1891.<sup>15</sup>

The return match between Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan took place on Arbor Day, May 4, 1895. Unfortunately, only three Edmonton players felt it worth their while to make the journey to Fort Saskatchewan, so the two sides were picked by Richard Hardisty and James Adamson. After the game, which Adamson's team won 16-9, the players adjourned to the Mansion House where a team was selected to meet Calgary. As only a few Edmonton players had bothered to turn up, it was decided to call the team the Saskatchewan football team and its colours were fixed as white jerseys with a black cross on the left breast.<sup>16</sup> Negotiations continued and by the middle of the month word came from the south that a Calgary football team would travel north for the Edmonton celebrations. In view of the fact that a number of Calgary teams had been invited, the C.P.R. put on a special excursion fare to Edmonton which provided an added incentive.<sup>17</sup> At this time it took almost a full day to travel from one town to the other.

The game against Calgary took place on the May 24, at 11 o'clock and the Saskatchewan team won by a score of two goals to none. The teams were as follows:

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<sup>14</sup> Lamb, P. "The North West Mounted Police Force and the Development of Rugby Football in Western Canada 1873-1908." *The Quarterly*, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Vol. 53, No. 2, Spring 1988.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, May 6, 1895, p 6.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, May 16, 1895, p 4.

Calgary - Oliver(capt) back, Douglas, D'Easum, and Morgan (substitutes) three-quarters back; Ross and Stuart halfbacks; Newbolts, Elwood, Gloyer, Clarke, Dodd, Baxter(substitute), Viney; forwards one man short.

Saskatchewan - H. Hope, back; A.W. Adamson, F. Cory, R. Hardisty, three-quarters back; W. Jackson, J. F. Adamson, halfbacks; H. Edmiston, Armstead, Forbes, L. Adamson, Blair, J. Williams, R. McDonald, Creswell, F. Braine forwards.<sup>18</sup>

Calgary used several Edmonton players but was still short. As was the usual custom at this time, the opposing team dropped a player so that both teams were at equal strength, accounting for the number of players listed above.

Despite the successful activity of 1895, rugby was not organized the following two years. By 1897, Edmonton still only had a population of 1,638. Rugby, like any other sport, must have depended to a large extent on the availability and participation of all possible players for its success. With such small numbers the organization of the game fell to a group of key individuals such as James Adamson, the perennial secretary/treasurer. Had Adamson, and others like him, not been available, the task of organizing teams and fixtures may not have been accomplished.

In the fall of 1898, a meeting was held to reorganize a rugby football club and to arrange a match against the N.W.M.P. team from Regina, which was, at this time, the dominant rugby club in the Northwest Territories. R.A. Ruttan was elected president, A.E. Snyder hon. president, W.S. Edmiston vice-president, and E. Jukes-Marshall secretary. The management committee was made up of Percy Hardisty, L. Adamson, H. W. Edmiston, A. Pattison, and W. L. Foote.<sup>19</sup> Some of these individuals had been involved five years earlier but this was the first appearance of another of the Hardisty family. Born in Edmonton, Percy Hardisty was an outstanding all-round athlete who participated in curling, badminton, golf and cricket as well as rugby. He had also been a member of the Canadian rowing team at Henley and had played for the Toronto Argonauts before returning home.<sup>20</sup>

Although a game with Regina was arranged for October 14, 1898, there is no record in the *Bulletin* of the outcome. However, there is evidence to suggest that in the same year a

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, May 27, 1895, p 2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, September 15, 1898, p 1

<sup>20</sup> Sabourin, P. "Sport in Alberta." in Hardy, W. G. *The Alberta Golden Jubilee Anthology*. Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1955, p 262.

Fort Saskatchewan team traveled to a tournament in Calgary and defeated Regina to win the Northwest Championship.<sup>21</sup>

This aside, rugby was played sporadically, if at all, from 1895 to 1907. During the first years of the twentieth century Edmonton's population grew rapidly and by 1908 it had reached 18,500.<sup>22</sup> This was largely due to the immigration policy adopted by Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal government. A policy which was first carried out by Clifford Sifton and then by Edmonton's Frank Oliver as Minister's of the Interior. A large number of these newcomers were from the British Isles, and were considered highly desirable: others were from eastern Canada. Both groups had been exposed to various forms of rugby football. In Ontario and Quebec, Canadian football was beginning to distinguish itself from rugby although there were still close similarities. It is hardly surprising that with the arrival of large numbers of eastern Canadians some discussion of which set of rules was most favourable took place. In 1907 it was the supporters of the English game who were first to reorganize a rugby club:

The game will be played under Old Country rules, and as there is a large representation of the four nations in Edmonton, it is expected that a very strong club will be brought together. The colors were fixed at white jerseys and blue pants. A temporary committee was appointed to work up matters consisting of Messrs. T. Dykes, H.H. Wilkinson and J. Griffiths and secretary pro-tem A.S. Reed: A practice will be held on Saturday night at the old baseball grounds on Second street at 7.15 sharp.<sup>23</sup>

This meeting was held at the Windsor Hotel which had become a gathering place for local sporting personalities thanks to its owner, Bob McDonald.<sup>24</sup> McDonald had played rugby for the Fort Saskatchewan team in 1895.

Another important aspect of this growth in population was the development of South Edmonton or Strathcona. The decision of the Canadian Pacific Railway to forge its lines across Canada taking a southern route through Calgary during the 1880s had been a disappointing blow to Edmonton's boosters. Worse was to come, however, when the Calgary and Edmonton Railway, a C.P.R. subsidiary, located its terminus on the south side of the North Saskatchewan river. At the time, crossing the river was economically impossible but this did not stop further animosity from angry Edmontonians. South

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<sup>21</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, September 15, 1898, p 1.

<sup>22</sup> *The City of Edmonton Statistics of Population*, 1982.

<sup>23</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, August 6, 1907, p 7.

<sup>24</sup> MacGregor, J.G. *Edmonton: A History*. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1967.

Edmonton, or Strathcona as it became known, grew at a healthy rate because of the railway terminal and a strong rivalry between the two communities developed. One of the ways in which this rivalry manifested itself was through sporting competition. It was noted that "Football matches and hockey matches between teams of the two towns usually broke up in a free fight."<sup>25</sup> A victory over Strathcona was of only slightly lesser magnitude than a victory over Calgary.

A series of games was played between Edmonton and Strathcona during 1907. On September 21:

Edmonton and Strathcona met in probably the last game of rugby football this season. Strathcona were beaten 10-0 but the score does not indicate the relative strengths of the teams.

The game was fast from start to finish and considering the fact that Strathcona played with three men shy and only allowed Edmonton to get over their line twice may be considered good work. Had Strathcona had their full compliment of men their fate might have been different.<sup>26</sup>

The fact that the Strathcona team were allowed to play three men short against a full Edmonton side in spite of the normal custom of evening up the sides, suggests that the rivalry between the two towns had reached serious proportions.

Soon afterwards another rugby club was re-formed in Calgary. There was some discussion as to which rules would be adopted, as the chairman of the meeting spoke out in favour of the more international game of rugby.<sup>27</sup> One of the decisive factors in view of the scarcity of opposition may have been Edmonton's earlier decision to adopt the English rules. Having formed a club, Calgary began preparing for a fixture with Edmonton or Strathcona. It was Strathcona who was the first to meet Calgary on October 31, 1907. *The Calgary Albertan*, in its preview of the game, reported that the Strathcona team had been playing under the Northern Union rules - the forerunner of rugby league that originated in northern England. In any case, the interpretation of the rules must have depended greatly on the knowledge of both the players and the referee.

A crowd of 500 spectators watched Calgary beat Strathcona 15-0.<sup>28</sup> Further evidence that the game being played was rugby football came from the match report in *The Edmonton Bulletin*:

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<sup>25</sup> *Griffiths*, p 151.

<sup>26</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, September 23, 1907, p 9.

<sup>27</sup> *The Calgary Daily Herald*, October 15, 1907, p 4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, November 1, 1907, p 4.

The spectators could well be divided into four parts, one which was expert in the old English game and knew all about the ways of things, and could talk records and that kind of thing. That portion of the crowd was gratified with the management of affairs. Then there was a second contingent perhaps the largest compartment of the crowd, who had been brought up on the Canadian game who were busy comparing it with the sturdy contests that have been played in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa for the last dozen years and more. The third class was rather considerable too, who were bred upon the American college game, which has but few features in common with the exhibition yesterday. The fourth class included a large number who had never seen a Rugby game and turned out for information. And they looked upon this game and said that it was good.<sup>29</sup>

A week later Calgary came north to play Edmonton. The game was played at the Exhibition Grounds situated in Ross Flats and once again over 500 spectators, a good number of them ladies, were present to watch Mayor Griesbach kick off the match.<sup>30</sup> Edmonton won the game 23-5 and the crowd were obviously delighted at such large margin of victory over their southern rivals:

The contest on Saturday was the English rugby which has been discarded in the Dominion for the more open wing game with which the majority of the spectators were more familiar . . . This however, did not prevent them from enjoying the game and glorying in the overwhelming defeat which the visitors received.<sup>31</sup>

Once again Percy Hardisty was on the Edmonton team which included some other notable athletes. The team was as follows:

Morgan, back; Hardisty, McLean, Wilkinson, Christie, three-quarters; Dykes, Jackson(capt), halves; Todd, Poapst, A.J. McDonald, C. Rea, Griffiths, Hinton, Cowan, Williams, forwards.<sup>32</sup>

McLean was an old Montreal player who was the sprint champion of western Canada. Wilf Poapst had been a star with the Ottawa Roughriders. Tommy Dykes, who like several other members of the Edmonton side had played for Strathcona a week earlier, soon became one of Edmonton rugby's most ardent supporters.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, November 2, 1907, p 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, November 11, 1907, p 7.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*.

A return match in Calgary on November 16 was arranged and an Edmonton team traveled south with some supporters. The *Bulletin* reported that the side had been strengthened considerably and the knowledge that a win would make them undisputed champions of Alberta may have bolstered the team effort. Calgary also strengthened their side by calling on some eastern football stars now residing in the city. The match was much closer than that of a week earlier, but Edmonton was the victor by a score of 10-5, and was thus able to claim the first ever provincial rugby championship of Alberta.

In spite of the home team's defeat, the match was regarded as the finest exhibition of rugby ever played in western Canada and the press reacted enthusiastically:

Rugby football is becoming popular in Calgary, and one had only to look at the large crowd in attendance at Saturday's game to see a rosy future for it. Eight or nine hundred people turned out Saturday afternoon and did not have a slow minute for an hour and a half.<sup>34</sup>

Both Percy Hardisty and Tommy Dykes drew special praise for their play:

The Edmonton full-back [Hardisty] played a star game, saving his team on many occasions and used good head work. . . Probably the hardest worker on the northern team was their little half, Dykes. He appeared to be in every play in some capacity, and invariably got the ball to his three-quarter line, by hook or crook. He understands the game thoroughly and knows how to put the ball in the scrum to the best advantage.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the apparent success of rugby in 1907 voices were beginning to be raised in favour of the Canadian game and considerable debate took place. Less than a week after the game in Calgary the *Bulletin* began to argue in favour of the adoption of the Canadian rules:

One of the Edmonton players while in Calgary gave an interview to a daily paper and stated that the game as played under the English rules was the most popular in Edmonton and that it would be impossible to put a team on the field under any other conditions. The question arises, upon what authority does he base such a statement. The English game was played here this season and appreciated as far as it went, but that was only because the game as it is played in the East was not given a fair trial. The English game is, of course, a good game and it is older, but in Ontario, Quebec, and the eastern states where they play real rugby football they have an improved style that has attracted an attendance of as high as 4,500 people at one game.

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<sup>34</sup> *The Calgary Albertan*, November 18, 1907, p 4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

As a matter of fact, the general public of Edmonton, four-fifths of which is made up of American and Eastern Canadians, have expressed a desire to see the popular game of the east. They admit interest in the English game but it is because they like rugby and it is the only sampling of it they have got. The people who have witnessed one game of eastern rugby have gained a liking for the massiveness of it that the English game does not satisfy.<sup>36</sup>

It is hardly surprising with the influx of so many eastern Canadians into Edmonton at this time, that the game which was so popular in the east should find favour. By December 4, an all-star Edmonton rugby team challenged an all-star Strathcona team to a match, "one half to be played in English rules and one half to be played the Canadian Intercollegiate rules".<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately the game was never played because of bad weather and there was no further rugby played in 1907.<sup>38</sup>

The debate between football and rugby, which continued during 1908, hindered the organization of either sport in Edmonton. Calgary adopted the Canadian Rugby Union rules used in Ontario and Quebec and invited the cooperation of the University of Alberta in forming an Alberta Rugby Union to govern the Canadian game.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile in Edmonton, the *Bulletin* blasted local sportsmen for their indifference and inactivity in forming a team of any kind to defend the city's provincial title.<sup>40</sup> Bad weather during August and September contributed to poorly attended organizational meetings. Eventually a team was formed but this time it chose to follow Calgary's lead and play football. For the first time, this Edmonton team was known as the Eskimos. They were coached by Deacon White, an American sportsman who had recently arrived in the city and who was to exert a huge influence on the subsequent development of sport in Edmonton.<sup>41</sup>

The matter of which set of rules was to be adopted was far from settled. Edmonton still seemed to favour the English game and Calgary the Canadian. In March 1909, rugby enthusiasts from Edmonton and Strathcona held a joint meeting at the Y.M.C.A. headquarters, where they decided to establish a Twin City Rugby League to be governed by the English rules:

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<sup>36</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, November 20, 1907, p 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, December 4, 1907, p 9.

<sup>38</sup> Sturrock, D. "A History of Rugby Football in Canada." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1971, p 86.

<sup>39</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, September 28, 1908 p 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, October 2, 1908, p 9.

<sup>41</sup> Lamb, P. "Deacon White, Edmonton Sportsman." *Alberta History*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Winter 1989.

It was decided after discussion to play under the British rules as the majority of Rugby teams in Canada play this game. . . . The prospects for the organization of a strong provincial league are also very bright. Rugby clubs are already being formed in Calgary, Red Deer, and Wetaskiwin. Edmonton and Strathcona are now in line and other towns will doubtless follow suit. One thing is necessary and that is that all these clubs should play British rules this year. If this is done there will be nothing in the way of organizing a strong provincial Rugby league.<sup>42</sup>

This decision met with general favour and the prospects of a three or four team league seemed good. Diamond Park, situated in the Ross Flats area, had been completed in 1907 and although it was most often the site of baseball games, the rugby fraternity were able to make use of the ground on occasions. Practices continued in preparation for the season opener on Good Friday between Edmonton and Strathcona at the Strathcona Exhibition Grounds. Strathcona won the first game 5-3 and because some of the players were unfamiliar with the rules, it was not a particularly brilliant exhibition of rugby. The teams were as follows:

Edmonton - Back, A. McDonald; three-quarters Lloyd, Fortin, Grant and Oakes; half-backs, Atkinson, Dykes; forwards, W. Poapst (captain), McDonald, W. Tucker, H. Richelt, A.C. McLeod, Cowan, T. Clark.

Strathcona - Back, Campbell; three-quarters, A. McDermid (captain), Reilly, W. Horner, Reid; half-backs, E. Miller, A. McDermid; forwards, J. Horner, Stewart, Schofield, Bisset, H. Clark, B. Clark, J. A. McCormick.<sup>43</sup>

Rugby appeared to be gaining a strong foothold in the city, for on April 10, the junior members of the Y.M.C.A. held their first rugby practice at the Second Street grounds under the guidance of George. R. Jackson, the local director of the Y.M.C.A.<sup>44</sup> As news of Edmonton's decision reached Calgary, the argument over rules flared up once more. On April 13, the *Bulletin* printed an extract from *The Calgary Albertan* which questioned the validity of Edmonton's choice:

That the English game is better is a statement which I do not accept, but admit that it is open to argument. That the Canadian game is merely local is absolutely incorrect . . . . There is no first class league in Canada playing under English rules. The Canadian championships are, of course, played under Canadian rules. Of all the teams in Canada not five per cent play the English game.

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<sup>42</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, March 31, 1909, p 8.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, April 10, 1909, p 8.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*.

I doubt if the game would thrive at all here under English rules. The English game was tried here in 1907, but abandoned for the Canadian game last year. The same was done in Edmonton.<sup>45</sup>

On April 28, a letter from H. Ballantyne, the president of the Calgary Rugby Football League, appeared in the *Bulletin* again disclaiming the widespread popularity of the English game and urging the adoption of a uniform set of rules for an Alberta league.

The next day a letter written by Tommy Dykes, defending Edmonton's decision to play rugby instead of football and outlining some of the advantages, was printed. Dykes questioned previous assertions regarding the overwhelming popularity of the Canadian game but the main thrust of his argument was that English rules would open the door to international competition:

If we play English rules we stand a chance of seeing some of the greatest teams of football players who are crossing Canada on their way to Australia and New Zealand play here. Such teams as the Anglo-Welsh, who played the best men on the Pacific Coast teams, beating them 65 points to 0. We have English rules east and west of us. In a year or so we can get a good football circuit east of us. Right today we can go from Vancouver to San Francisco and play the English rules whereas if we play the Canadian rules we must stay in Alberta for all time just the same as the Canadian player down east has to stay in the two provinces in which he plays.<sup>46</sup>

Dykes seems to have held no animosity towards football and in fact he had played wing for the Eskimos team of 1908; however, he was obviously first and foremost a devoted rugby enthusiast. Born in Yorkshire, England in 1882, where he was educated, Dykes emigrated to Canada in 1905. In 1907 he moved to Edmonton and started the Alberta Granite, Marble and Stone Company.<sup>47</sup> He became involved in local rugby almost immediately and, as one of the chief organizers of the sport, his letter reflected optimism about rugby's future:

Today we have a team in Strathcona which beat the Edmonton team on its merits on Good Friday. We have the assurance of some of the 101st [regiment] that they will put in a team this fall. The St. George's Society have also said they would organize and the idea is being worked on in the Y.M.C.A. This is all without artificial boosting. Two junior teams already have been organized in the Y.M.C.A. and are ready to play the game. We do not expect to play many games before the fall. Our idea is to get our club well organized so that when the season to play comes we can give the spectators the best. We have about thirty five players signed right today. At

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, April 13, 1909, p 9.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, April 29, 1909, p 8.

<sup>47</sup> Blue, *op. cit.*, pp 910-911.

our practices about 20 to 25 players attend. When the fall comes the players themselves are thinking of forming two teams in the city.<sup>48</sup>

Whatever the respective merits of the two games, the *Bulletin* published a timely comment on April 29. Under the headline "Time To Act, Not Talk", the newspaper column warned that a province with the population size of Alberta could not hope to play both games successfully.<sup>49</sup> The next day, an exhibition rugby match was arranged between Edmonton and Strathcona for Saturday 8th May. More importantly, an extra event was planned:

A rather unique challenge will be issued on Saturday after the game with Strathcona. The players of English Rugby in the city will challenge the players of Canadian Rugby to a match, the first half to be English rules and the last half Canadian rules.<sup>50</sup>

There is no report of how these games finished. The following weekend in association with the Strathcona Arbor Day celebrations, another rugby match took place between Edmonton and the home side although both teams appear to have been short of players.<sup>51</sup> No more games were played in the spring, but in September the Edmonton Rugby Football Club began to practice again following English rules. A game against Strathcona was scheduled and there were plans for a trip to Winnipeg or to the coast with a game in Calgary on the way.<sup>52</sup> Despite this apparent activity, none of the games took place and 1909 ended on an uncertain note.

The next year began without any sign of an end to the argument. Clearly though, there were still those who favoured the English rules:

Rugby football under the English rules has become a very popular sport in Winnipeg and is gaining in favor every day. . . Immigration to Canada is increasing each year and it is only natural that men who loved the sport at home should be equally anxious to follow it up in the new land . . . not only Englishmen but Canadians will endeavour to win over the public to one of the fastest, most manly and splendid of British sports.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin* , April 29, 1909, p 8.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, May 4, 1909, p 8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, May 5, 1909, p 8.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, May 15, 1909, p 2.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, September 1, 1909, p 9.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, May 13, 1910, p 9.

In spite of this optimism, Canadian football had become more popular and rugby enthusiasts found themselves without the sufficient base of support necessary for survival. One game was played in 1910 when the Calgary Hillhurst football team was unable to fulfill a fixture in Edmonton against the Eskimos. Instead, Tommy Dykes gathered together a team of rugby players from the 'Old Country' known as the Wanderers. The game against the Eskimos was to be played in quarters alternating between English and Canadian rules.<sup>54</sup>

This was the total extent of rugby activity for a number of years. By 1910, in spite of the fact that Edmonton's population had grown to almost 25,000,<sup>55</sup> it was still impossible to support the two games successfully. Although there was a tremendous influx of young men into the city, the majority, being familiar with the Canadian version of football, chose to play it rather than the English game. In September 1911 the Alberta Rugby Football Union was formed at a meeting in Red Deer and this new organization adopted the Canadian Rugby Union rules, which were used in Ontario and Quebec.<sup>56</sup> One month later the Western Canadian Rugby Union was founded in an effort to provide a Canadian football championship for Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.<sup>57</sup> The Canadian game grew rapidly especially in Calgary, and by 1913 the Big Four League, which consisted of two Calgary teams as well as the Eskimos and the University of Alberta, was drawing large crowds in both cities.<sup>58</sup>

By 1912 the centre of rugby in the province had also shifted from Edmonton to Calgary where an Alberta British Rugby Union, under the presidency of Mr. Alex Hanna, had been formed in March of that year.<sup>59</sup> A Calgary British Rugby League, featuring clubs called the Wanderers, the Welsh and the Pirates, functioned in 1912. In June of the same year an All-Calgary XV played an exhibition game in Red Deer against a local team in what was likely the first game of rugby in that town.<sup>60</sup> Probably spurred on by the renewed interest

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, September 30, 1910, p 9.

<sup>55</sup> *The City of Edmonton Statistics of Population*, 1982.

<sup>56</sup> Blackburn, C. "The Development of Sports in Alberta 1900-1918." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1974, p 379.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> *The Calgary Albertan*, March 5, 1912.

<sup>60</sup> Blackburn, C. "The Development of Sports in Alberta 1900-1918." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1974, p 386.

in rugby in Calgary, the Edmonton Barbarians Rugby Football Club was formed in 1913.<sup>61</sup>

The lack of opposition forced the Barbarians to play inter-squad games during the fall of 1913 and the spring of 1914. On April 18, 1914, a team picked by the club captain J.A. Shaw played against a team selected by S.M. Tate the vice-captain; several of the Eskimos football players turned up to try their hand at the new game.<sup>62</sup> A match against Strathcona was arranged for May 10th but had to be postponed because the Strathcona Rugby Football Club was unable to raise a team.<sup>63</sup> On May 16th the Barbarians played a practice match against J. Munro Hunter's Old Timers, a team made up of past Edmonton players and others with some knowledge of rugby football. The teams were as follows:

Barbarians - Full back: D.J. Leonard; threequarters E. Drummond, A.L. Rowden, Starley, G.V. Roche; halfbacks D.R. Kelly, J.A. Shaw (capt.); forwards S.M. Tate, D.F. Spooner, E.M. Elburne, J.L.C. Young, E.H. Collins, T. H. Chutter, A.C. Shannon, H.H. Pike.

Old Timers - Full back: Douglas Thomson; threequarters McEwan, Percy Hardisty, J. Munro Hunter (capt.), McEwan; halfbacks Winslow, Dykes; forwards Pinder, Bailey, W. Ogilvy, Logan, Ford, A.N. Other, A.N. Other.<sup>64</sup>

A week later, the Barbarians hosted the Calgary Rugby Football Club on the holiday weekend. A large crowd turned out at the South Side Athletic Ground to watch the match which the home team won by a score of 8-3.<sup>65</sup> However, just as it seemed that Edmonton rugby might regain much of its former popularity, the outbreak of the First World War put paid to any further athletic endeavour.

Rugby does not appear to have made a great deal of progress in the 22 years that it had been played in Edmonton prior to the First World War. Despite the fact that Edmonton's population was ten times larger in 1914 than in 1891 the number of rugby players barely doubled during the same period. It is important to put this fact into perspective, for no sport in the city had reached a high degree of organization at this time. The abilities of Edmonton's first true sports promoter, Deacon White, were beginning to pay dividends for hockey, football and semi-professional baseball in the city; but the success of other sports,

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<sup>61</sup> The actual date of foundation is unclear but a photograph from the City of Edmonton Archives shows a team picture from 1913, although no matches were reported until the following year.

<sup>62</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, April 20, 1914, p 9.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, May 8, 1914, p 11.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, May 16, 1914, p 6.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, May 27, 1914, p 11.

such as rugby, still depended on the part time work of a few individuals. Deacon White was also quick to exploit the potential of inter-city rivalries in order to arouse interest in local sport. Rugby had also benefitted from the competition with Calgary and Strathcona. The Calgary contests in particular drew large crowds throughout the period, although the popularity of these games with Edmontonians may have stemmed more from the rivalry itself than from any great interest in rugby. By the early years of the twentieth century, Edmonton was beginning to display a sense of corporate identity and a sporting victory over another town or city, especially Calgary, was one way of enhancing the local reputation.

By 1914, the immigration boom in western Canada had boosted Edmonton's population to over 70,000, the vast majority of whom were of Anglo-Saxon origin.<sup>66</sup> This growth undoubtedly added to the level of sporting activity in the city, but at the same time eastern Canadian and British preferences created a conflict between football and rugby at a time when both games were struggling to get off the ground. The indecision and argument that followed prevented either sport from truly establishing itself. Even so, by 1914, football was the more readily accepted game.

One of the reasons for football's popularity was the availability of competition throughout the prairies. By 1914, football was being played in most of the surrounding centres of population such as Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg. Competition was dependent on a decision to play the same sport as other cities and while there may still have been a good number of keen rugby players in Edmonton there were few teams anywhere else. Nevertheless, the city was now becoming large enough to support several teams within its boundaries. Although immigration dropped off and the First World War stunted sporting developments, there was obvious support for rugby in Edmonton and it emerged as a much more popular sport in the 1920s.

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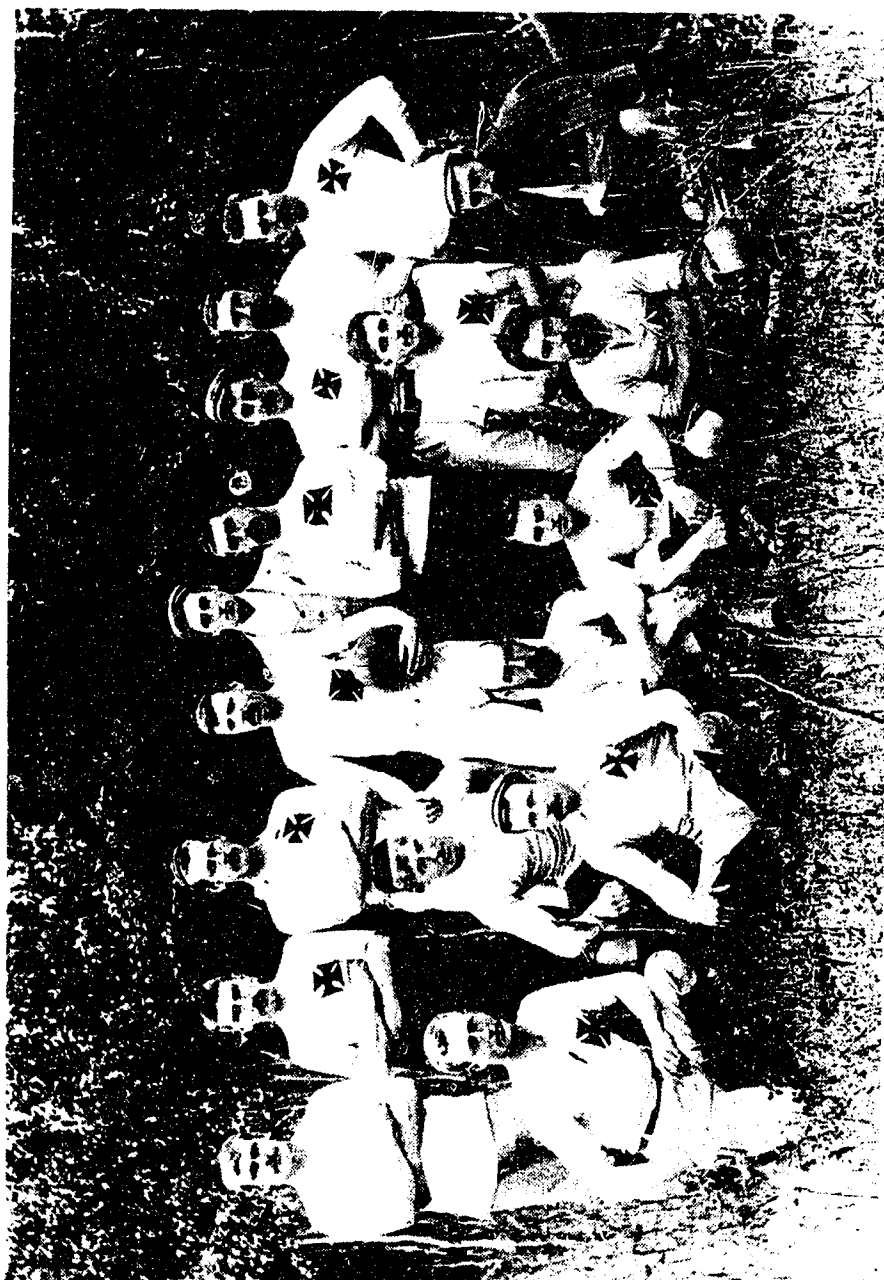
<sup>66</sup> MacGregor, J. G., *op. cit* , p 226.

**PLATE I**  
**EDMONTON FOOTBALL CLUB 1892**  
 City of Edmonton Archives



Back row: A. Pattison, R. MacDonald (N.W.M.P.), C. Young (capt.), H. Edmiston  
 (referee), Rev. C. Cunningham (parson), W. Wilkie (touchjudge).  
 Mid. row McLean, J.F. Adamson, A. Adamson, R.G. Hardisty, T. McKie.  
 Front row E. Raymer, Freaan, B. Edmiston, J.C.C. Bremner, B. Fieldgas.

**PLATE II**  
**FORT SASKATCHEWAN RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB 1895**  
Provincial Archives of Alberta Photograph Collection



**PLATE III**  
**EDMONTON BARBARIANS RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB 1914**  
City of Edmonton Archives



**PLATE IV**  
**SCRUMMAGE - EDMONTON BARBARIANS vs CALGARY**  
**SOUTH SIDE ATHLETIC GROUNDS 1914**  
Provincial Archives of Alberta, E. Brown Collection



**PLATE V**  
**CONVERSION - EDMONTON BARBARIANS vs CALGARY**  
**SOUTH SIDE ATHLETIC GROUNDS 1914**  
Provincial Archives of Alberta, E. Brown Collection



### CHAPTER III 1920-1939

Before the First World War, rugby had been played sporadically, and there were some good years of competition as well as some lean ones. This situation was to change during the 1920s as Edmonton experienced a period of relative stability and consolidation in contrast to the rapid growth of the pre-war period. In 1920, the city's population had fallen to 61,000 and it did not recover to its 1914 level until 1929.<sup>67</sup> In spite of this decline, rugby, in common with other Edmonton sports, was able to firmly establish itself. From 1921 to 1930 a league, featuring at least three teams each season, was in operation. At the same time an improved organizational body allowed Edmonton players to travel to other cities, notably Vancouver, to compete against other teams.

A large number of Edmontonians in 1920 were from the British Isles, even though immigration had slowed dramatically. As in previous years, it was the members of this group that provided leadership for Edmonton rugby. In fact, there were more British involved during the 1920s than had been the case before the war. The reason for this is unclear but perhaps there was no longer the same uncertainty associated with establishing oneself in such a young city, thus allowing more time for recreation.

In 1920, the news that the New-Zealand All Blacks might visit Canada the following year, prompted a local New-Zealander, George Dewe, to make attempts to revive rugby in the city. With the assistance of L.W. Winslow, Dewe organized a meeting in early April. These men did not intend to compete with or endanger Canadian football. They pointed out that:

...instead of hurting the Canadian Rugby league in the fall, it will assist and support the present organization by supplying rugby experience for players and keeping them in good condition for the fall. The English rugby season, it is proposed, will come to an end about the time that the Canadian Rugby season will be starting.<sup>68</sup>

On May 17 at the Y.M.C.A. headquarters, an Edmonton British Rugby Club was formed and plans were made to establish an inter-city league with Calgary. The new club also hoped to host the touring All Blacks. Despite plans to form two teams, rugby activity was limited to a number of inter-squad games in the spring and the season soon ended.

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<sup>67</sup> *The city of Edmonton Statistics of Population*, 1982.

<sup>68</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, April 10, 1920, p 6.

Attempts to renew activity in the spring of 1921 were unsuccessful, but in September the Edmonton British Rugby Club began to hold regular workouts at the Victoria High School grounds. Interest increased and the Irish players in the city issued a challenge to the Edmonton team. There was also the prospect of a game against Calgary.<sup>69</sup> The first game of the season took place on October 8, when two teams picked by Winslow and Coghill played a match at the Hudson's Bay ground in Ross Flats. Coghill's team won 11-0 and the game was marked with some great play from both sides. A number of the participants had recently arrived in the city, adding to the number of local rugby players.<sup>70</sup> Less than two weeks later, the first fixture between two separate city clubs took place when the Edmonton team met and defeated Alberta Government Telephones in a hard fought game. The teams were as follows:

Edmonton Club - Colors red. Full back, Rocke; three quarter backs, Dr Brookes, Winslow (captain), McLennan, Jardine; half backs, Stuart and Coghill; forwards, Bury, Wright, Howatt, Rolfe, Crossett, Backman, Heron and Miller.

Alberta Government Telephones Department - Colors mixed. Full back, Lionel Parker; three quarter backs, S. Parker, Losie, Dagg, Brisette; half backs, Parsons, Phillips and Shears; forwards Jones, Hamilton, Nagle, Mulholland, Guthrie, Wright, Miller, and Brown.<sup>71</sup>

Many of these men played rugby for a succession of different teams during the 1920s and their enthusiasm ensured the success of the game for almost a decade. William Hellier Coghill was born in Dublin, Ireland and he was educated there and in Caithness, Scotland before emigrating to Canada in 1919.<sup>72</sup> Among the Government Telephones team were two Welshmen, Parsons and Phillips who "pleased the spectators very much with their clever tactics, both being brilliant in every department of the game."<sup>73</sup> In addition to the players, J. Wallace Jarman was on hand to act as one of the line judges and a report in the *Journal* noted:

It is interesting to place on record the fact that Jarman is known as an International player of repute. He hails from Bristol, Gloucester, England, and was captain of the British team for five years and played for his county in all for ten years. Being known as a "star" forward in his day, he was chosen as a member of Rev. M.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, September 24, 1921, p 6.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, October 10, 1921, p 6.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, October 17, 1921, p 7.

<sup>72</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, March 3, 1972.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

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Molyneaux's team which toured Australia in the season of 1899, this brilliant team's record during their tour being 18 wins and 3 losses in the 21 games played on Australian soil.<sup>74</sup>

Although Jarman's playing career was over, his expertise was not wasted and he soon became the leading administrator of Edmonton rugby.

A few inter-squad games were played during late October and on November 5, a game between the English and the Welsh took place at Diamond Park.<sup>75</sup> Soon afterwards, an exhibition match between an all-star British rugby team and the Eskimos football team was arranged. The Eskimos, under the tutelage of Deacon White, were undefeated thus far in the season and, in fact, went on to challenge the Toronto Argonauts for the Grey Cup later in the year. However, their opportunities to compete locally were limited and they may have welcomed the chance to play despite the different rules. Some of the Eskimos soon began to play rugby on a regular basis for the different clubs in Edmonton.

The year ended on an enthusiastic note when a meeting was held on November 9, at the Y.M.C.A. headquarters. An Alberta British Rugby Union had been formed sometime during the year and now Major-General Griesbach was elected honorary president and J. Wallace Jarman president.<sup>76</sup> Griesbach had been educated at St. John's College, Winnipeg where he had played rugby as a youth and had remained a keen supporter of the sport in Edmonton.<sup>77</sup> By the end of the year there were three distinct clubs in existence, these being Edmonton, the Welsh, and Alberta Government Telephones. A committee comprised of the three club captains and other representatives was appointed to organize dances and concerts during the winter months.<sup>78</sup>

The Government Telephones club did not survive the winter but in the spring of 1922 the Harlequins Rugby Football Club was formed and there were once again three sides in the city. In April, all the teams were holding regular practices in preparation for the new season. An all-star game between the Reds and the Blues was to have been played on Easter Monday but had to be cancelled because of bad weather. The following week league play began when the Harlequins met the Welsh at Diamond Park. The Welsh, who had

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, November 5, 1921, p 6.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, November 11, 1921, p 8.

<sup>77</sup> W. A. Griesbach *I Remember. op. cit.* p 163.

<sup>78</sup> *The Edmonton Bulletin*, November 11, 1921, p 8.

gone undefeated in 1921, won the match 12-5.<sup>79</sup> The Harlequins, in contrast to the other clubs, were mostly Canadian players and the team included a number of Deacon White's Eskimos.

League action continued throughout April and May with the Welsh again going undefeated. The first half of the season closed when the Welsh defeated a league 'All Star Fifteen' 12-6. Although these games may not have attracted large crowds, they were well-covered by the local press, especially in *The Edmonton Journal*. On the staff of the *Journal* at the time was Ed "Taffy" Brown. Brown was employed mainly as a proof reader but his knowledge of rugby allowed him to cover all the local games. Born in Cardiff, Wales, he was a career soldier who became Lieutenant-Colonel of the Edmonton Fusiliers during the First World War, when he won several medals for bravery.<sup>80</sup>

In September, the second half of a split season began and for the first time there was a trophy at stake. Dr. E.C. Brookes, a local rugby enthusiast who had played for Edmonton in 1921, donated a cup which became emblematic of the British Rugby Championship of Alberta. Games for the Brookes Cup engendered keen competition between the Edmonton clubs until 1930. The establishment of organized league and cup competitions illustrates the increasing popularity of rugby in Edmonton. Another sign of the game's vitality came on September 12, when the Alberta British Rugby Union was able to accept an invitation to play a series of games in Vancouver the following November.<sup>81</sup> Efforts to raise the necessary funds began immediately as:

A committee consisting of A.H. Schurer, George Dewe, R. Hardy and J. McDermott was formed for the purpose of finding the necessary money. This committee has enlisted the aid of the captains of each rugby club to assist them, Messrs. Winslow (Edmonton), Parker (Harlequins), and Jones (Welsh).

It is the hope of the committee that the trip will be a success financially to ensure repayment of the subscription to the various donors, or at all events a large percentage of such subscriptions. The *Edmonton Journal* heads the list with a guarantee of \$25.<sup>82</sup>

Meanwhile, competition for the Brookes Cup continued with the Welsh once again proved to be the strongest team. Efforts were made to involve junior players in the game and on September 23, two high schools arranged a fixture prior to a cup match between

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<sup>79</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, April 20, 1922, p 20.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, April 13, 1922.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, September 12, 1922, p 16.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*.

Edmonton and the Welsh.<sup>83</sup> On October 17, the Harlequins club announced that it was forming a Canadian football team to compete in the Alberta league. This is not surprising considering the background of many of its players. However, it did not desert the rugby circuit and was in fact involved in a close race for the championship with the Welsh.<sup>84</sup> On October 21, the two sides were ready to meet in the Brookes cup final at Diamond Park. A pre-game report noted that:

The game is timed to start at 2:45 sharp, and a bumper crowd is expected to witness this titanic struggle. President J. Wallace Jarman (an ex-English International player) will have charge of the game and will be assisted on the touch lines by George Dewe and A.H. Schurer. The teams, positions and colors will be as follows:

Harlequins (Blue and White) - Full-back, Scotty Brown; Threequarters, Jack Fraser, Haliburton, Curly Dorman, Doc Dunsworth; Half-backs, Russ Burnett, Blossom Seeley; Forwards, McRae (capt), McColl, Darling, Parker, Pugh, Losie, Brunson, Skitch; Reserves, McConnell, Ferguson, Duke.

Welsh (Yellow and Black) - Full-back, Ivor Thomas; Threequarters, I. Jones, J.W. Parsons, Dan John (capt), Fred Cox; Half-backs, J. Parkes, Dai Phillips; Forwards, A. Price, F.C. Howitt, Vic Bradley, Ellis Jones, A.V. Parker, W. Wright, Phil Rees, J.L. Wood, H.L. Williams; Reserves, A. Lloyd, David, A.N. Other.<sup>85</sup>

The Welsh team won the final 26-11 thanks to some great team play and excellent goal kicking by their centre and captain, Dan John.<sup>86</sup>

Despite this loss, it is not surprising that the Harlequins were the heavy favourites before the match as their team contained a number of exceptional athletes. Six of the side, Brown, Haliburton, Fraser, Dorman, Dunsworth, Seeley, and Brunson, were members of Deacon White's great Eskimos Football Club that played in the Grey Cup final later in the year. One of these players, Roy Haliburton, was an accomplished lacrosse player who also played tennis and competed in athletics.<sup>87</sup> Reporting his death in June 1976, the *Journal* called him "one of the best British rugby players in Canada".<sup>88</sup> Another

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, September 22, 1922, p 17.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, October 12, 1922, p 20.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, October 21, 1922, p 20.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, October 23, 1922, p 20.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, June 11, 1976.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

player from this group, Dr. Marcus Dunsworth, was also considered a fine all-round athlete. He had won the western Canadian singles tennis championship in 1921.<sup>89</sup>

With domestic competition over for the year, attention was turned to the journey to Vancouver. Thanks to the generosity of the public (including many former rugby players from before the war) and the local businesses, the Alberta British Rugby Union announced that the trip would go ahead as planned.<sup>90</sup> Practice matches were arranged to help prepare for the tour and on November 1, the team departed on the C.N.R. train to Vancouver. The following squad of 18 players was chosen for the trip:

Backs - Ivor Thomas, Iltyd Jones, Roy L. Haliburton, J.W. Parsons,  
L.W. Winslow, Fred Cox, Dan John, D.J. Phillips.  
Forwards - Mervyn Reigh, Ellis Jones, A. Price, L.R. Ferguson, E. McRae, W.  
Pugh, V. Bradley, F.C. Howitt, W. Wright, J.L. Wood.<sup>91</sup>

The backbone of the team came from the champion Welsh club, many of whom had learned their rugby in Wales. Ivor Thomas, Iltyd Jones and D.J. Phillips had all played for Pontypridd. Dan John and Ellis Jones had played for Swansea while J.W. Parsons had played for Cardiff and the London Irish. Of the other team members, Mervyn Reigh learned his rugby at college in Dublin, L.W. Winslow played in Liverpool, F.C. Howitt in Gloucester, and W. Wright and V. Bradley in Hull.<sup>92</sup>

By the time the team members arrived in Vancouver, they had been dubbed the 'singing footballers' as a Welsh quartette put on a concert in the parlor car during the journey, much to the delight of the other passengers.<sup>93</sup> Despite its experience, the all-star team was beaten 12-0 by a Vancouver representative side at Brockton Point on November 4. A Vancouver report noted that:

Although the Edmonton squad were beaten, they played good football, and it was only the fact that they were up against one of the strongest fifteens ever seen at Brockton Point that was responsible for their defeat.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, February 23, 1980.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, October 26, 1922, p 18.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, October 28, 1922, p 20.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> *The Vancouver Daily World*, November 3, 1922 p 10.

<sup>94</sup> *The Vancouver Sun*, November 5, 1922, p 22.

In their second fixture, played in front of 4,000 spectators, Edmonton fared no better, as they lost 16-0 to the University of British Columbia at Brockton Point.<sup>95</sup> After the game and in honour of their visit, the Edmonton team was entertained at a banquet arranged by the Vancouver Rugby Union. At this time:

President J.L. Gunn of the Vancouver Rugby Union, expressed appreciation at the turnout to honor the visitors and hoped that the next time they met the local boys that the scores would be different, stating that it did not do for one team to be winning all the time. . . Mr. Gunn also stated that the Vancouver Union would donate a cup for competition among the Edmonton Junior teams in order to foster the game there and that he would personally go to Edmonton to present the cup, were it competed for.

Mr. J.W. Jarman, President of the Alberta Union, in his reply, said that his boys were beaten by a better team but that they would always remember the cordial treatment tendered them by the local officials and hoped to see a Vancouver team in Edmonton next year.<sup>96</sup>

The 1923 season opened in April with an exhibition game between the same Alberta team that had visited the coast and a team selected from the rest of the league. The game was played at the University of Alberta campus for the benefit of the student body and in an attempt to attract more players. The Alberta team won the match 11-3.<sup>97</sup> The local league competition was expanded with the inclusion of a fourth club side representing the Canadian National Athletic Association. The 'Railroaders', as the team became known, included some of the Eskimos football team among its ranks. The Railroaders played its first game against the Welsh at the Exhibition grounds on April 28 and put up a good display:

Presenting a formidable appearance in their royal blue and white uniforms, the athletes playing under the banner of the Canadian National Athletic Association made an auspicious entry into the realm of British rugby when they held the Welsh down in their first league game played at the Exhibition grounds Saturday and emerged on the short end of a six point to three score.<sup>98</sup>

The addition of another senior side showed that interest in the sport was increasing. During the same month a junior league was formed and there were soon five teams competing for honors. The Welsh, Harlequins, and Edmonton clubs all organized junior

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<sup>95</sup> *The Vancouver Daily World*, November 7, 1922, p 24.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, April 16, 1923, p 16.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, April 30, 1923, p 19.

squads. They were joined by a South Side Junior Rugby Club and a Ross Flats Community League team. The fact that most rugby games and practices took place in the Ross Flats area no doubt encouraged the local community league to become involved.

As in previous years, league action continued until early June when the Harlequins claimed the title. In the junior division, the Welsh dominated the league and were still undefeated by the end of May.<sup>99</sup> Once again the league champions took on a team from the rest of the league, this time called the Wanderers. The game took place at the South Side Athletic Grounds on June 15, with the Wanderers narrowly defeating the champions 6-5. The teams were as follows:

Harlequins - Full-back, Parker; Threequarters, Pugh, Brown, Brunson, Jardine; Half-backs, Eby, Seeley; Forwards, McRae, Losie, Jardine, Seal, Creighton, Magrath, Heron, Bury, W. and Bury, P.

Wanderers - Full-back, Skitch; Threequarters, Cox, Parsons, Thomson, Matthews; Half-backs, Pratt, Williams; Forwards, James, Ferry, Howitt, Palmer, Noble, Thomas, Backman, Wright.<sup>100</sup>

After the summer break, competition for the Brookes Cup began in September. The same junior sides that had played in the spring began a fresh series of games for a new trophy called the McKay Shield.<sup>101</sup> By the beginning of October the Welsh and the C.N.R. were running neck and neck for first place. Two weeks later these two teams met in the Brookes Cup final:

Staging one of the closest British rugby battles seen in this city since the game was inaugurated here, teams representing the Welsh and Canadian National Athletics fought doggedly for possession of the Brookes Cup at the Exhibition grounds on Saturday, and after hostilities ceased the Welshmen were returned victors by a slim two point margin, the final figure being Welsh one goal, (5 points), C.N.R. one try, (3 points).

Neither side was at its strongest. The C.N.R. were without the services of their captain, L. Thomson, Bat Spence and Skitch, [who were playing football for the Eskimos instead] but had capable subs in Montgomery, Ficht and W. Thomson all with lots of rugby experience. Jack Adams, James, E. Jones, Parkes and Brown were the Welsh absentees. Barnett, an old rugby player, and four of the juniors, Jones, Clarke, Adbey and Walker, filling in the gap and putting up a fine game throughout.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, May 29, 1923, p 16.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, June 16, 1923, p 26.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, September 5, 1923, p 16.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, October 22, 1923, p 15.

In spite of its apparent success, the Welsh team decided to split up and join other clubs in the city for the 1924 season. The Harlequins club also ceased to exist but was replaced by the Eskimos British Rugby Club. A three-team junior circuit which included Edmonton, South Side and Dragons (formerly the Welsh juniors) was organized. This year, and again in 1925, there was no rugby played in the fall and competition for the Brookes Cup and McKay Shield took place during the spring instead. The entry of the Eskimos into the league coincided with its temporary demise as a football club. The Eskimos had dominated all western opposition since 1921 and had challenged for the Grey Cup in 1921 and 1922. But without the leadership of Deacon White the team folded in 1924. For five years, with a few exceptions, the Eskimos played only rugby.

On Good Friday, April 18, 1924, the season opened with two games at Diamond Park. In the main event of the day, Edmonton took on the Eskimos. Later the Dragons and Edmonton met in a McKay shield game.<sup>103</sup> The Eskimos team was not without some experienced players:

Although playing their first game under the name of Eskimos, the players sporting the red and black sweaters have had considerable experience in rugby circles, playing in previous seasons under the Harlequins banner.

Undoubtedly the big noise of the Eksks is Blake Brunson, that all round athlete who made such a favorable impression in Canadian rugby circles last fall. Brunson is without doubt the fastest ball- carrier in the city today, and once he gets the finer points of the game under his curly locks and loses the habit of hanging onto the ball too long he promises to be the super-star in this popular branch of athletics.<sup>104</sup>

The Eskimos won the match 3-0 thanks to some brilliant runs by Brunson.<sup>105</sup> On Easter Monday, the Canadian Nationals made their first appearance of the season beating the Eskimos 6-0.<sup>106</sup> The same week, the Alberta British Rugby Union, under the chairmanship of J. Wallace Jarman, announced that a Vancouver all-star team had accepted an invitation to visit Edmonton for a series of games during the Victoria Day weekend.<sup>107</sup>

Brookes Cup games began towards the end of the month with all three teams evenly matched. By the middle of May, the emphasis switched towards the visit of the Vancouver

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, April 17, 1924, p 20.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, April 17, 1924, p 20.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, April 19, 1924, p 24.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, April 22, 1924, p 20.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, April 24, 1924, p 23.

all-stars. Two trial games were played before the selectors finally decided on a team that they felt would offer real opposition to Vancouver:

After a strenuous series of elimination trial games a worthy representative team has been assembled to carry the Alberta colors. Possessing a much speedier backfield than invaded Vancouver two seasons ago, the locals figure on surprising the visitors by the strides the game has made during the intervening period.

Playing the old British pack of three-two-three [3 front-row, 2 second-row and 3 back-row players] and each member of said pack a star performer the Albertans are going to give Tiny Tom Brown, the 220 pound baby who captains the "Reps" and his cohorts lots to occupy their mind.<sup>108</sup>

A strong Vancouver side arrived on May 23, and the following day the team held a workout at the Exhibition grounds. Observers reported that the Vancouver side displayed:

. . . a peppiness that made the call-birds sit up and take notice, the Vancouver "Reps" went through their paces in great style at the Exhibition grounds on Friday afternoon. Possessing all the qualifications that go to make up a star aggregation, the players indulged in passing bouts, dribbling and kicking that was a treat to witness, the work of Geb Tiernan and Al Buchanan being distinctly noteworthy. Tiny Brown put his forwards through a stiff scrimmaging practice.<sup>109</sup>

A large crowd turned out at the Exhibition grounds to watch the first game on May 24. Although the local side put up a great display, Vancouver put on a fine exhibition of passing in the second half to win by one penalty goal and two tries (nine points) to nil. The teams were as follows:

Alberta - Full-back, Robson; Threequarters, Brunson, Pugh, Brown, Dunsworth; Five-eighths \_\_\_\_\_; Half-backs, Cox, Thomson; Forwards, Jones, Bradley, Pemberton, Mackett, Pugh, Tucker, Thompson, Backman.

Vancouver - Full-back, Russell; Threequarters, Gyles, Grimmer, Buchanan, Urquhart; Five-eighths, Tiernan; Half-backs, Rolston, Underhill; Forwards, Brown, Brock, Donaldson, Hislop, Gourlay, Macfarlane, Rolston, \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>110</sup>

The British Columbia players had obviously adopted a style of play that made use of an extra back at the expense of one of the forwards; instead of 8 forwards, they had only 7 and they played with 2 half-backs as well as a five-eighth. On the following Monday, the

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, May 20, 1924, p 20.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, May 24, 1924, p 20.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, May 26, 1924, p 16.

Vancouver team, once again displaying some great ball-handling, defeated the Alberta team 17-0 to win the interprovincial championship.<sup>111</sup>

Brookes Cup action resumed at the beginning of June and it was clear that the visitors innovative style of play had an immediate effect on the local clubs. All the teams soon rearranged their line-ups to include an extra back. The Eskimos and the C.N.R. continued to battle for top spot in the league and a play-off game was arranged to decide the championship. At the same time, the South Side juniors had established a lead in the race for the McKay Shield. The season came to an end on June 14, when the Eskimos defeated the Canadian Nationals to win the Brookes Cup for the first time.<sup>112</sup>

In common with previous years, the 1925 season opened with some confusion regarding just what clubs would be in operation. At the beginning of April it looked as if neither the Eskimos nor the Canadian Nationals intended to field a team. Some of the regular players attempted to regroup under the banner of the Edmonton Fusiliers. Perhaps Ted Brown, the Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment, was involved, although there is no mention of his name. In any case, such a team never played. During April and early May, the only competition was between Edmonton and the Welsh who had reorganized after a year away from rugby. There were still three junior sides in the city as Ross Flats once again entered a team to compete against Edmonton and the South Side.

The games between the two senior clubs gained an added significance when it was announced that there was to be a game against Calgary on May 25. On May 9, the teams met in what was billed as a trial match to select a side to meet Calgary:

Realizing a five-year ambition the fast traveling Edmontonians turned their Welsh opponents back in no uncertain manner in their scheduled British rugby game at Diamond park on Saturday night, the score at the cessations of hostilities showing the Edmonton team with an even twenty points while the Welshmen were unable to boast nary a one, the winning total being shown as 3 goals (1 dropped) and 2 tries, twenty points, but at that it was strenuous and interesting throughout.<sup>113</sup>

A week later, a representative side composed mainly of Edmonton and Welsh players took on the Eskimos, who had reorganized thanks to the efforts of their manager, Scotty Brown.<sup>114</sup> The match ended in a 3-3 tie. Unfortunately there is no record of the game

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, May 27, 1924, p 16.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, June 16, 1924, p 16.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, May 11, 1925, p 15.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, May 15, 1925, p 26.

against Calgary ever having taken place. Bad weather may have forced a cancellation or perhaps rugby had failed to firmly establish itself in the southern city. Had the game been played in Edmonton, it seems unlikely that the *Journal* or the *Bulletin* would have ignored it.

With the Eskimos back in the running, the Brookes Cup competition continued into June. By the middle of the month the Welsh virtually assured themselves of a third championship with a 16-3 victory over Edmonton. For the first time in the history of the trophy, there does not appear to have been a play-off or final to decide the winner.

Although there was no title at stake, the news that another trip to Vancouver had been organized prompted all three clubs to arrange friendly matches in September and October in order to sharpen their skills for the coast. In addition to these games a number of contests featuring both Canadian football and rugby union rules took place. In one such game it was reported that:

Although they defeated the Edmontonians by 12 points to nothing under Canadian rugby rules, the Junior Esks were at their best when they held their opponents to a scoreless draw under the British rules and came within winning distance on several occasions during the contest that was staged at Diamond Park before a fair gathering of rugby fans.

The Eskimos did not look the smooth working machine they did on previous occasions, fumbles in the backfield and gummed up signals throwing away possession of the ball repeatedly when scoring looked imminent.[sic]

Playing under their opponents rules for the first encounter the Esks devoted most of their efforts to spoiling tactics and made a mighty good job of it, several likely looking moves getting gummed up by the aggressive moves of the younger clan. Both sides came within inches of scoring but strong defensive play held the line intact. Rooters of the Esks got quite a kick when they appeared to have scored, only to see Lineman Grant Pemberton semaphoring play back to the other end of the field for a touchline infringement. T'was a tough break for the youngsters at that.<sup>115</sup>

Practices for the coast trip took place at the Prince of Wales armories and despite the lack of regular opposition the local squad was confident that it would do well. As usual, the team that left for Vancouver on November 5 had considerable experience. Among the backline were, A. Sachse who had learned his rugby at public school in England and had played for the Vancouver Rowing Club (one of Vancouver's top rugby clubs); and W. Coghill, a Dubliner, who had played for various Irish regimental teams overseas. In the

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, September 28, 1925, p 15.

forwards were W. Dalton, who had played for Gloucester, and P. Rees who had played in Wales before coming to Canada.<sup>116</sup>

There were also several players on the squad who had been to Vancouver on the previous trip. However, the Edmonton representative side was beginning to acquire a more Canadian flavor as an increasing number of home grown players were included. In spite of their confidence, the Edmonton players were beaten 20-3 by Vancouver and 19-0 by the University of British Columbia, returning home still without a win in the series.<sup>117</sup>

In 1926, after a close race, the Eskimos defeated the newly formed Garrison Rugby Football Club (which included several former Welsh players) in the cup final. During the season, probably as a result of the recent trip to the coast, the local clubs decided to adopt a new rule:

The new rule, adopted in Vancouver last fall, will speed up the game and make it more interesting from a spectator's viewpoint. The old rule of kicking to touch from any part of the field has been abolished and following the example of New Zealanders, the rule as now in force permits a side to kick to touch as a defensive measure, from their own "25". A player can kick in any other part of the field, but the ball must bounce in play first. Failure to obey this rule results in play being brought back to where the kick occurred.<sup>118</sup>

It was also during the 1926 season that a Saskatoon rugby squad visited Edmonton, hoping to avenge a 19-0 defeat suffered in Saskatoon in 1924.<sup>119</sup> The game was played at Renfrew Park thanks to the cooperation of the Edmonton and District Football (Soccer) Association. The opening kick-off was taken by Connie Smith, the captain of the famous women's basketball team, the Edmonton Grads.<sup>120</sup> The local all-stars put on a great display to beat Saskatoon 30-3:

Giving one of the finest displays of ball-handling and open field running that has been seen in this city the Edmonton All Stars won their interprovincial rugby game against Saskatoon Saturday at Renfrew Park in handsome fashion the scoreboard showing the locals with three goals, five tries (30 points) and the visitors one try (three points). The visitors were unfortunate in losing the services of Irvine, their full-back, after 15 minutes of play and this, together with the injury to Broome, who kept playing with a busted rib, somewhat disorganized their play. Capt. Bill Pugh sent David off to keep the sides evenly numbered.

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<sup>116</sup> *The Vancouver Sun*, November 3, 1925, p 10.

<sup>117</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, November 10, 1925, p 19.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, April 15, 1926, p 20.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, May 26, 1926, p 20.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, May 27, 1926, p 20.

With eight of the fastest players seen yet in a British rugby backfield in this city, the locals were never really extended and would have put up a much bigger score against tougher opposition.<sup>121</sup>

The Garrison club failed to last the winter and for awhile it looked as if the 1927 season would feature only two teams, Edmonton and the Eskimos. On April 16, the Eskimos opened the season against a team picked from the rest of the league called the Harlequins. A week later both the Eskimos and Edmonton were ready to begin league action. At the same time efforts were being made to form a third club:

To absorb some of the surplus players, and to interest other players in town (and judging by the talk on the side-lines at the opening, there are lots of rugby enthusiasts wanting to get into the game). President W.G. Strachan [Alberta British Rugby Union] wishes any players not on the regular lineup of Edmonton or the Eskimos, to get in touch with him at phone 4405. Should a sufficient number be interested in the formation of a new club, a meeting will be called and plans made for same.<sup>122</sup>

A team called the Tigers played its first game on May 5, when it was beaten 14-3 by Edmonton. J.W. Parsons, one of the original Welsh players in the city, helped to organize the Tigers effort. However, like several other clubs before them, the Tigers were unable to maintain the necessary support and the team disbanded after only one season.

In 1928, the Alberta British Rugby Union was again confident that a three team league would operate in the city. The A.B.R.U. was consistently well organized and was thus able to assist in the drive to form a third club each year. W.G. Strachan was once again elected president, with Ted Brown being elected vice-president and Eric Duggan as secretary/treasurer.<sup>123</sup> As usual, both the Edmonton and the Eskimos clubs had strong sides but this year the Welsh players in the city were confident that they too would be in the running for the championship. On May 10, the Welsh were scheduled to make their league debut against Edmonton:

As this will be the first appearance of the boys from the land of the leek, local Welshmen will be out in force to urge their countrymen to victory and judging by the names in the lineup the "Taffies" have a good chance of winning. Capt. Iltyd Jones is busy arranging his cohorts for the fray and a fast game should result.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, May 31, 1926, p 20.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, April 21, 1927, p 17.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, April 14, 1928, p 34.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, May 9, 1928, p 19.

To the disappointment of everyone concerned, only six of the Welshmen turned up. With the help of some Eskimos, the game went ahead but afterwards it was decided that a play-off series between the Eskimos and Edmonton would be held to decide possession of the Brookes Cup. By the end of May, the Eskimos had secured the trophy for the third year in succession.

In spite of the drop in the number of participants during the spring, another interprovincial series in Vancouver was arranged for the Thanksgiving weekend. The following players were chosen to make the trip:

Bill Pugh (captain), Alan Sachse (vice-captain), Chuck Drayton, McLean, Meakin, Les Souness, A. Shirley, Guy Jardine, Jim Turner, "Stub" McLeod, Taylor, Roberts, Koppert, Polley, English, Les Smith, and Jack Innis. Reserves: A Skitch and Ewart.<sup>125</sup>

The local team was hoping that the inclusion of one particular newcomer would bolster their effort:

Added interest is centred on the team year by the inclusion in the lineup of the locals of Norman "Stub" McLeod, who learned his rugby at Brentwood College, Victoria, and last year captained his team. "Stub" has quite a reputation at the coast, his team trimming the famous Meralomas team, champions of the mainland, to take the all-Vancouver championship.<sup>126</sup>

After losing rather easily to the Vancouver representative side, the Edmonton team came very close to recording its first victory at the coast when it took on the University of British Columbia at Brockton Point in front of 1,000 spectators. The report was as follows:

English rugby in Edmonton is improving. This was demonstrated in the final exhibition at Brockton Point Monday afternoon before a thousand spectators, when the Edmonton squad fought a battling Varsity fifteen, yard for yard, before finally admitting defeat 9-5 in a stubbornly contested game.

For forty minutes in the first half the visitors held the fast traveling Collegians scoreless and early in the second period took the lead when Souness scrambled over the line and Sachse converted. The students did not score until midway in this period and not until the last five minutes were they able to take the lead, and they clinched the victory with a try in the last second of play.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, November 6, 1928, p 20.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> *The Vancouver Sun*, November 13, 1928, p 14.

Although the group of players who were given the opportunity to play against coast teams undoubtedly improved, the local organization in Edmonton was faced with the same problem every year. By the end of 1928 there were still only two clubs in the city. This situation changed dramatically the following year when four teams played against each other in perhaps the best year of competition for the Brookes Cup. The reasons for such a sudden increase in the number of players is unclear, but rugby was generally becoming more and more popular across the country. As the *Journal* noted:

Great satisfaction is felt locally at the strides the game is taking in Eastern Canada, it being felt that there is ample room for both carrying codes. Rugby and Canadian rugby have much in common and appeal to all fans. With McGill and Queens, University of New Brunswick and Montreal just playing championship games, Canada bids fair to take her place with the rest of the empire in rugby circles.<sup>128</sup>

An article by Henry Roxborough in *MacLean's Magazine* suggested that Calgary and Edmonton had half a dozen good sides while Manitoba boasted 30 clubs; and Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes, saw rapid growth in the sport.<sup>129</sup> The rise of rugby sparked considerable debate as to the respective merits of the English and Canadian games, although there was never any question of one game completely replacing the other. This revival resulted in the formation of a national governing body when in September 1929, delegates from B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec gathered in Winnipeg to form the Rugby Union of Canada.<sup>130</sup> Not surprisingly, J. Fyfe Smith of Vancouver was elected president.<sup>131</sup>

The Edmonton season opened on April 19, when the newly-formed Westmount Irish took on the Edmonton club. Edmonton eventually won the game 6-3, but the Irish made an impressive debut:

For the Westmount gang, the youngsters put up a good showing and with a little coaching will make the best of them step their prettiest to collect league points. Bob Eby, Art McLennan, Wynnichuk and Sylvester were the most prominent of the threes with Anderson and Reg Moir teaming up well at half back. Guy Jardine, Rolly Lewis and Mackett made things lively for the opposing forwards . . . The lineups were as follows:

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<sup>128</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, November 6, 1928, p 20.

<sup>129</sup> Roxborough, H. "Rugger or Rugby?" *MacLean's Magazine*, Vol 42, November 15, 1929.

<sup>130</sup> Schrodtt, B., Redmond, G., and Baka, R. *Sport Canadiana*.. Edmonton: Executive Sports Publications Ltd. , 1980, p 166.

<sup>131</sup> Roxborough, *op. cit.*

Edmonton - Griffin, J. Smith, Robinson, Sachse, Shirley, Edwards, Ewart, Killick, Polley, A. Killick, Innis, Macdonald, Les Smith, Taylor, Karpluck, Bendle, Pryor, McKinney and Morgan.

Westmount - Sylvester, Richards, Wynnichuk, Art McLennan, McLennan, Bob Eby, Skitch, Moir, Anderson, Turner, Jardine, English, Falkenburg, Lewis, Mackett, Beatty, Richards and R. English.<sup>132</sup>

A week later, the Eskimos defeated the Welsh at Renfrew Park in a game that was described as "one of the finest exhibitions of the carrying code seen in Edmonton for many moons".<sup>133</sup> These fixtures continued through April and May with the Eskimos, Westmount and Edmonton all battling for the top position in the league. Unfortunately, during a one week layoff in the middle of May, the Eskimos disbanded for the season. It was during 1929 that the Eskimos began to play Canadian football again on a regular basis. Despite this absence, the league resumed with Westmount building a small lead at the top of the table. By June 4, the Irish had only suffered one loss, thereby securing first place in the final league standings.

A series of games for the Brookes Cup began in June and once again there was fierce competition between the three clubs. The Welsh, who had started the season badly, soon established a lead in the cup standings but Westmount defeated the leaders on June 29, forcing the scheduling of an extra game to decide the trophy. On July 5, Westmount defeated the Welsh 14-0 to win the Brookes Cup, thus ending the 1929 season.<sup>134</sup>

In the spring of 1930, Edmonton, Westmount and the Eskimos began preparing for the new campaign. In view of the success of the previous year all the teams readied themselves for what was expected to be a banner season. Games began in April at Renfrew Park but there is no evidence of an official league competition. By May 20, however, a match against Calgary had been arranged and a number of practice games were organized to select a team:

The inter-city game will be played at Calgary on Saturday, June 7. In view of the game put up by the southerners at Edmonton last season it will be necessary to send down a real contender to hold the Calgarians.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, April 20, 1929, p 35.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, April 27, 1929, p 8.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, July 6, 1929, p 8.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, May 20, 1930, p 8.

The Edmonton team traveled south on June 6, and on the following day lined up against Calgary at Hillhurst Park. The following report describes the match:

Facing a six-point deficit after 40 minutes of exciting play the Edmonton All-Stars, playing a return inter-city fixture against a Calgary representative team at Hillhurst park, in the southern city on Saturday afternoon, staged a desperate rally and after a hectic finish turned back the Calgarians to the tune of 14 points to 9. The score being made up of two goals (one penalty) and two tries to three tries.

The teams lined up as follows:

Calgary - Davies, Harrison, McKinnon, Mitchell, Brawn, Dale, Douglas, Tatham, Ferguson, Hall, Doody, Wares, Scott, Robertson and Hall.

Edmonton - Dolighan, Drayton, Harold, Richard, Timothy, Sachse, King, Duggan, Jones, Polley, Gilmour, Taylor, Jardine, Karpluk, Thoms and MacLeod.

Following the game both teams were entertained at an enjoyable banquet at the Palliser. A varied musical program was given and the following replied to the different toasts: acting Mayor James Ross, City Solicitor Brockington of Calgary; President W.G. Strachan and Ted Brown for the Edmonton team, as well as the rival captains W. Gill and Alan Sachse.<sup>136</sup>

This was the last match report to appear in the *Journal* before the Second World War and there are no records of further rugby matches during the 1930s. It seems surprising that just as the game was gaining ground nationally it went into decline in Edmonton. Perhaps Ted Brown, who wrote all the rugby reports during the 1920s, was no longer available. A more likely explanation is that the Depression, which had a marked effect on the local economy, temporarily halted any rugby activity. Certainly other sports were affected. Football and soccer organizations struggled to compete from season to season. Hockey, Edmonton's most popular sport, also experienced difficulties and despite a succession of financial guarantees, a professional franchise was unable to survive continuously.

As a sport rugby had made considerable progress during the 1920s. A number of city teams were established, the most notable of these being the Edmonton British Rugby Football Club which had managed to survive throughout the period. Most often these clubs developed along ethnic lines. The membership of the Edmonton Rugby Football Club was predominantly English, especially in its formative years, while other nationalities organized as the Welsh and the Westmount Irish. One club, the Harlequins, consisted mostly of Canadians and in later years the Canadian content in all the clubs increased. On other occasions rugby supporters organized teams in association with their place of

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid, June 9, 1930, p 9.

employment such as the Alberta Government Telephones Department, the Canadian National Association, and the Garrison.

In contrast to the competition that existed between rugby and Canadian football before the First World War, the 1920s saw a high degree of cooperation between the two sports. The local rugby clubs offered extra practice games for the Eskimos, especially during their greatest years of 1921 and 1922. When the popularity of football in the city declined, many of the players joined rugby clubs becoming equally adept at the new game. The Eskimos British Rugby Club made a significant contribution to local competition, winning the Brookes Cup on four occasions. There were many similarities between the two games and there was still little specialization in football, as most players were on the field for the whole game.

Competition with Calgary, which returned towards the end of the 1920s, was not as important as it had been during the 'booster' era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Vancouver was recognized as the leading competition and the Alberta British Rugby Union was able to finance several trips to the coast. The policy of shared gate receipts also enabled Edmonton teams to organize return fixtures with Saskatoon and Calgary. Furthermore, these games must have attracted moderately large crowds in order to cover the visiting teams expenses. Unfortunately, the Depression and the onset of the Second World War meant that for some years there was little time or money available for sport. However, the post-war recovery in Edmonton soon attracted a new influx of immigrants, especially from the British Isles, during the early 1950s. These people quickly generated a new enthusiasm for the game, building on many of the principles that had emerged before the war and creating a solid foundation for the future growth of rugby in Edmonton.

PLATE VI  
THE DR. BROOKES TROPHY  
Personal Collection

# JOURNAL DEPARTMENT OF ST

EDITED BY GEORGE MACINTOSH

## TEAMS READY FOR SATURDAY'S

### FINAL GAME FOR DRAGONS' CUP ON SATURDAY'S CARD

#### South Side and Canadian Na- tionals Will Clash for Soccer Trophy

That game which is expected to be the most important of the season for the South Side and Canadian Nationals will take place on Saturday afternoon at the stadium. The two teams have been playing a series of matches since the beginning of the season, and both are in excellent form. The South Side team, under the guidance of their manager, has been playing some of the best football seen in the city. They have won several matches and are now looking forward to the final game. The Canadian Nationals, on the other hand, have been playing a more defensive game, but they are also in good form and are determined to win the trophy. The match is expected to be a close one, and it will be a real test of the two teams' abilities. The game will be played at the stadium, and it is expected to attract a large crowd of spectators. The trophy is a valuable one, and it will be a great honor for the winning team to win it. The game is scheduled for Saturday afternoon at 2 o'clock.

The South Side team is made up of some of the best players in the city. They have a strong defense and a powerful attack. They have won several matches and are now looking forward to the final game. The Canadian Nationals, on the other hand, have been playing a more defensive game, but they are also in good form and are determined to win the trophy. The match is expected to be a close one, and it will be a real test of the two teams' abilities. The game will be played at the stadium, and it is expected to attract a large crowd of spectators. The trophy is a valuable one, and it will be a great honor for the winning team to win it. The game is scheduled for Saturday afternoon at 2 o'clock.

### CK TAYLOR AND YBSZKO DRAW IN WINNIPEG MATCH

Canadian Champ and Former  
World's Title Holder

### Provincial Rugby Title And Dr. Brookes Trophy At Stake on Saturday



#### Harlequins and Welsh Teams Will Clash at Diamond Park In Final Game of Series—Both Sides Will Be Strongly Represented

The Harlequins and Welsh teams will clash in the final game of the series at Diamond Park on Saturday. Both teams are in excellent form and are determined to win the trophy. The Harlequins have been playing a very strong game, and they are now looking forward to the final game. The Welsh team, on the other hand, has been playing a more defensive game, but they are also in good form and are determined to win the trophy. The match is expected to be a close one, and it will be a real test of the two teams' abilities. The game will be played at Diamond Park, and it is expected to attract a large crowd of spectators. The trophy is a valuable one, and it will be a great honor for the winning team to win it. The game is scheduled for Saturday afternoon at 2 o'clock.

### SWIFTS DEFEAT GRAND TRUNK IN BOWLING MATCH

Packers Won a Brace of  
Games from Grand Trunk  
Railway Travelers

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PLATE VII  
EDMONTON ALL-STARS vs SASKATOON  
Personal Collection

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GINCY GETS A  
VICTORY AFTER

LOCALITE IN READY FOR  
INTERPROVINCIAL RUGBY  
TILT WITH SASKATOON

VETS AND C. W.  
IN CONNAUGHT

A GREAT CHIEF

A GREAT CHIEF

A GREAT CHIEF

**PLATE VII**  
**EDMONTON ESKIMOS BRITISH RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB**  
**WINNERS OF THE DR. BROOKES CUP 1926**  
Provincial Archives of Alberta Photograph Collection



## PLATE IX

## ALBERTA R.F.U. ALL-STARS, BROCKTON OVAL, VANCOUVER 1928

Photograph - D. Sturrock



Back row: W.G. Strachan (Pres.), R. Power, L. Smith, J. Innis, N. McLeod, W.

Roberts, J. Mackin, J. Kinney, W. Keppert, F. English, A. Skach, G.

Jardine, E. Brown.

Front row: L. Souness, C. Drayton, W. Taylor, J. Turner, A. Sachse (capt.), W. Pugh (vice-capt.), R. Eby, A. Shirley.

## CHAPTER IV 1945-1986

In many ways the modern revival of rugby in Edmonton and Alberta owes a great deal to the Leduc Oil Well No. 1 which came in on February 13, 1947.<sup>137</sup> The discovery of oil and the subsequent boom in the oil industry generated a huge amount of related business in the city. A large number of jobs opened up and there was a huge influx of new, young people into Edmonton. In the decade between 1946 and 1956, the city's population almost doubled, rising from 114,976 to 223,549.<sup>138</sup>

Organized team sports were slow to emerge after the Second World War. A high school football league was organized in 1948 for the first time since 1940. In the same year two junior football clubs, the Edmonton Athletic Club and the Maple Leafs, experienced considerable growth. In previous seasons these teams had only been able to attract 20 to 30 players. By 1949 a group of local businessmen succeeded in re-establishing the Eskimos Football Club. In contrast baseball immediately attracted a large number of participants and it soon became the most popular summer sport in Edmonton. A professional franchise, also called the Edmonton Eskimos, was revived by John Ducey and the game also flourished at the amateur level. This was reflected in the local newspapers where sporting articles concentrated on national and international events, especially baseball illustrating the increasing influence of American sport on the Canadian prairies.

As in the 1890s and early 1900s, there were a large number of immigrants from the British Isles and it was some of these men that succeeded in reviving rugby once again. In October 1953, Geoff Linnell, an ex-Royal Marine, Mike Falby, and Noel Dant met at a local military establishment called H.M.C.S. Nonsuch and formed the Edmonton Rugby Football Club.<sup>139</sup> John Stoddart, who had served in the Royal Navy, was the club's first secretary although he did not play the game. Noel Dant had been hired as Edmonton's first town planner in 1949 in order to deal with the surge in construction caused by the growth in population.<sup>140</sup> Towards the end of the year, Sam Wright, a young, Jamaican born, Oxford educated lawyer, joined the club. It was Wright who provided much of the organization up to 1960.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> MacGregor, J.G. *op. cit.*, p 273.

<sup>138</sup> *The City of Edmonton Statistics of Population*, 1982.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Sam Wright, February 1988.

<sup>140</sup> MacGregor, J.G. *op. cit.*, p 280.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Sam Wright, *op. cit.*

By the beginning of 1954 the club had about 20 players. Most of these were British expatriates, although there were a few Canadians involved. One of these Canadians was Cedric Gyles who had played professional football for the Calgary Stampede team that won the Grey Cup in 1948. Gyles had also learned to play rugby during his youth in British Columbia.<sup>142</sup> Not surprisingly, most Canadian observers saw rugby as a peculiarly British sport and it attracted little interest beyond the actual participants. The first game was played at the South Side Athletic Ground on May 17, 1954 between Edmonton and a team from the R.C.A.F. base at Penhold, just south of Red Deer. The visiting team, which won the game 9-5, consisted mostly of N.A.T.O. personnel from Britain.<sup>143</sup> Later in the season, Edmonton was able to continue fixtures with Penhold when some French enthusiasts replaced the British:

In the second half of the season there was a strong French contingent, fit, fast and by turns erratic and devastating. They were unable to understand the referee when it suited them. The hooker was so totally unable to understand that the referee was informing him that it is forbidden outside France to swing the feet before the ball is in; but rather than grind the game to an awkward halt the referee allowed the hooker to continue swinging unTwickenham-like and free. But the same hooker was later able to understand idiomatic English sentences relating to the consumption of beer and spirits.<sup>144</sup>

A Calgary rugby club also existed at this time. On May 24, it played Edmonton at Clarke Stadium, the final score being 3-3.<sup>145</sup> Fixtures between these two clubs and Penhold continued throughout 1954. The only other game that was played involved Edmonton and a team from R.C.A.F. Winnipeg, the final outcome of which was overshadowed by a serious injury to one of the players. A collapsed scrum resulted in an Irishman, Fred Calderwood, breaking his neck and the game being abandoned. Although Calderwood made a remarkable recovery, he was never able to actively play sport again.<sup>146</sup>

A similar schedule existed in 1955, and despite the small number of games, a regular fixture list was printed up and all the matches were taken seriously. The Edmonton Rugby Football Club also received good cooperation from the city authorities. Most of the games

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> *Canadian Rugger*, April 1955, p 11.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p 12.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with Sam Wright, *op. cit.*

<sup>146</sup> *Canadian Rugger*, April 1955, p 13.

were played at the South Side Athletic Ground, which was regarded as the rugby club's home, and the use of this facility was provided free of charge. On other occasions, especially for games against Calgary, Clarke Stadium was available.<sup>147</sup>

In 1956, a second Edmonton club called the Wanderers R.F.C. was formed by Al Faloon.<sup>148</sup> This move proved to be premature and the new club folded after only one season. In spite of this setback, rugby continued to make slow but steady progress. In 1957 the Edmonton team completed an undefeated season - an indication of its increasing strength. The next attempt to form another club was more successful. In 1958, Norm Suvan headed a breakaway group of players, mostly Canadian, who then formed the Edmonton Tigers R.F.C.<sup>149</sup> It was at this time that the remaining members of the original club decided to adopt the name Pirates, a name it has retained to the present day.

The steady growth in Edmonton's population during the early 1950s continued into the next decade. Immigration from the British Isles brought more rugby players to the city and in 1959 a third club, the Edmonton Barbarians R.F.C. was formed with Neil Primrose as its first president. The Barbarians were partly responsible for the reintroduction of rugby in Saskatchewan after a break of 25 years. In September 1960, the team traveled to Regina to play the newly formed Regina Harlequins, where two games were won 13-11 and 13-0. Among the players were Al Faloon of the late Wanderers, Doug Swail of the Tigers, and an Irishman named Jimmy Gordon.<sup>150</sup>

With the increase in rugby activity the need for a parent organization became more apparent and the Edmonton Rugby Association, consisting mainly of Pirates and Tigers club members, was formed.<sup>151</sup> This was the forerunner of the Edmonton Rugby Union which began in 1960 under the aegis of Neil Primrose and that formally elected Doug Swail of the Tigers as president in 1961.

In 1960, a fourth club, the Edmonton Druids R.F.C. was formed by a group of Welshmen. Among this group were Brian Jones and Lynn Davies. Another member, Dave Hull, helped provide the new club with additional players from R.C.A.F. Namao located just north of the city.<sup>152</sup> Thus the Welsh community, who had made a large contribution to Edmonton rugby during the 1920s, were once again represented.

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<sup>147</sup> Interview with Sam Wright, *op. cit.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, September 5, 1960.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Sam Wright, *op. cit.*

<sup>152</sup> Personal scrapbooks of D. Graham.

On the field, the Pirates were the dominant team, enjoying a tremendous run of success from 1959 to 1961. However, with the formation of new clubs, the Pirates intermittently lost play and competition between the different teams became more demanding. It would be deceiving to imagine clear cut lines existing between the different clubs at this time. The entire rugby community consisted of approximately 80 players and all of the games were played on a Saturday afternoon at the South Side Athletic Ground. There was an excellent chance of a good player being able to play two games for different teams on the same afternoon. This incestuous situation, whereby experienced players were selected at the expense of the less knowledgeable, persisted for some time. Although this custom may have been necessary at an early stage, it later began to inhibit rugby's development.

In 1961 the Alberta Rugby Union (A.R.U.) was formed under the leadership of Bruce Bateman, who had directed the post-war growth of rugby in Calgary. There were also four clubs in the southern city by 1960: the Saints, the Hornets, the Rams and the Saracens. The A.R.U. helped coordinate a series of inter-city fixtures between the Edmonton and Calgary clubs. Together, Edmonton and Calgary also began a series of fixtures with some of the Vancouver rugby clubs. These matches were usually played on long weekends in May and September. On the Victoria Day weekend of May 1962, the North Shore All-Blacks, the C.Y.O. and the Meralomas club, all from Vancouver, as well as a Calgary side, congregated in Edmonton. Two days of rugby involving the Edmonton teams as well as their guests was organized at Coronation Park. In reality, A, B, and C sides were selected from all the home clubs and on Sunday Edmonton's A side won a great victory:

Playing two men short for half the game, but crashing into the rucks and broken play with great vigor, Edmonton outhustled, outrushed and outran North Shore to end the rugby-full weekend on a high note. . . . Against All-Blacks [sic], Edmonton's strongest point was its midfield speed. This and six lion-hearted forwards drove the opposition aside in some spectacular scoring plays. . .

Further out Granville Battin, a Druids club man, sliced through brilliantly time and time again, and eventually sent Doug Swail in for the first of two tries . . .

And fullback Leadbetter catching everything, and rushing himself through everyone for a spectacular try. A final one by big second row forward Jim McClachlan, added up to 25 points. All-Blacks landed a penalty late in the game.<sup>153</sup>

In light of the upcoming tour of Britain by the Canadian national side, Peter Clark, a national selector, watched the game and expressed satisfaction with the calibre of play.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, May 22, 1962, p 14.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

There were several other important developments at this time. In the fall of 1961, the University of Alberta Golden Bears Rugby Football Club was formed and a series of games with the University of Calgary Stags R.F.C. for the Little Brown Jug trophy began. Max Howell, a professor in the Department of Physical Education and a former Australian rugby international, provided encouragement and helped coach the Golden Bears. The initiative of the University of Alberta in providing the first graduate program in physical education in the Commonwealth also helped rugby. Many international students, some of whom had previous playing experience came to study in Edmonton during the next two decades.

During the spring of 1962, another club, the Edmonton Leprechauns R.F.C., was formed by a group of Irishmen, Pat Braiden, Sam Hogg and Jimmy Gordon and a Scotsman, David Graham.<sup>155</sup> Graham had arrived in Edmonton in 1960 and had been playing first division soccer in the city. Finding the standard very poor, he was then recruited by his boss to play rugby for the new club.<sup>156</sup>

With these two additions the league schedule was strengthened and a trophy was presented to the winner. This was the Kenann Cup, donated by Ken Holmes who played for the Pirates and later the Calgary Hornets. Unfortunately Ken Holmes died after taking part in a rugby practice in Calgary in 1977.<sup>157</sup> Other trophies were also being contested. The Edmonton and Calgary all-star sides competed twice a year for the Heintzman Cup which was donated by the Heintzman musical firm of Edmonton, in recognition of one of their longest serving employees, Jack Strachan. A Scotsman from Galashiels, Strachan was President of the Alberta British Rugby Union during the 1920s and he had worked as manager of Heintzman's for 32 years before his retirement in 1960.<sup>158</sup> A third trophy represented the prairie championship. This was the Emmanuel College Cup which involved competition between Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, and Regina. The Cup, now in the possession of the Saskatchewan Rugby Union, allegedly dates from the 1890s. Possession of the trophy apparently represented the championship of the Northwest Territories, but there is little evidence to support this theory.

Soon after its formation the Leprechauns emerged as the strongest team in Edmonton. In common with the other clubs, its major emphasis was on the social aspect of the game. The Leprechauns held frequent parties at the Corona Hotel on Jasper Avenue. These social

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<sup>155</sup> Interview with David Graham, February 1988.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Sam Wright, *op. cit.*

<sup>158</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, May 20, 1964.

gatherings were used to show rugby films, entertain visiting sides, and recruit players. The success of these socials was still very much dependent on the participation of all the clubs, for no one group was large enough to host such events independently.

On the field the number of players continued to fluctuate from week to week. Teams were disorganized and matches rarely kicked off on time. This was also the case for the Edmonton representative side. The organization of this team usually fell to anyone who was interested. This resulted in the Edmonton 'All-Stars' being soundly defeated 43-3 by Calgary in September 1963. An article in the Leprechauns' newsletter described the situation:

Anyone who was in Calgary last weekend would have noticed the semi-festive atmosphere, after the Stampeders trounced the Argos 50-0, and in another sport Calgary All-Stars [beat Edmonton All-Stars] 43-3 (I think was the final score, I lost count), and our under 23s were beaten 23-3. The Argos at least had put out what they considered their best side (Heaven help them), whereas the Edmonton Rugby Union appeared to have prayed for rain that day, hoping the games would be cancelled. However, Jim Gordon was doubtful, which shows a remarkable lack of confidence in our Union, and took matters into his own hands. It should be pointed out that Jim holds no office in the Union, or the with his club, the Leprechauns. J.G. called a practice for the Wednesday before the game, at which thirteen of us appeared. Still undaunted, Jim went ahead and contacted as many players as he could. Come Saturday morning, Jim's volunteers rendezvou'd at the Park Hotel, where Jean Van Ecke was acting as dispatcher, loading cars and taking names. At Calgary, I counted ten Leprechaun Club members, (two of whom are non-playing), eight Druids, two Pirates, three U of A Bears, and one Tiger. I suspect that had the people who are considered the better players in Edmonton made the effort and appeared at the trial, less than a quarter of those who played would have been selected, but unfortunately, it is considered no worthwhile honour to represent Edmonton. Make no mistake, the teams that appeared at Calgary were the Edmonton All-Stars as far as everyone, including the Calgary and Vancouver news media, is concerned.<sup>159</sup>

By the spring of 1964, the Barbarians R.F.C. had disbanded and the Golden Bears were having problems fitting into the summer league schedule. The Pirates were also faltering due to some bad results on the field and some poor turnouts at the various socials. Despite these discouraging signs, there were also some positive moves made and the dedication of a number of individuals kept Edmonton rugby moving forward.

The Leprechauns won the Kenann Cup and the Carling Cup, a new trophy presented to the club champions of Alberta. In the provincial final they defeated the Calgary Saracens 6-

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<sup>159</sup> Leprechauns R.F.C. Newsletter, September 27, 1963.

3.<sup>160</sup> Both the Leprechauns and the Druids began to express interest in fielding regular second-string sides, illustrating the fact that these were by far the two strongest clubs in the city. The Edmonton Rugby Union (E.R.U.), with Derek Webster as president, worked hard at encouraging all the clubs and began publishing a regular newsletter in order to keep everyone informed.

In 1965, after some prompting from Sam Wright, the Edmonton Rugby Union was officially registered as a society under the Alberta Societies Act. The E.R.U. now consisted of four member clubs: the Pirates, the Tigers, the Druids, and the Leprechauns. Though not members, the Golden Bears were still active. In the same year a group of local referees, among them Joe Mulloy and Mike Styles, formally organized the Edmonton Rugby Union Referees' Society. The Leprechauns soon began operating a second team while the Druids did so periodically. Some realization that there must be more distinction made between the different clubs came at the beginning of the 1965 season when the E.R.U. recommended that only two players from other clubs could play as guests in league games.<sup>161</sup> This move recognized the need to include newcomers by stopping the custom of playing the best talent available regardless of club affiliation. It also helped strengthen the concept of building a regular team.

The situation did not alter rapidly and the same two clubs continued to be very powerful. The only change came when the Druids replaced the Leprechauns as perennial league champions, winning both the city and provincial first division titles in 1966, 1967, and 1968. By 1967 however, a regular second division schedule was started as the number of players increased. This situation helped to stabilize each team. Public interest in rugby was undoubtedly boosted by the adoption of the 'Australian kicking law'. This change in the rules meant that a player could only kick the ball directly into touch (out of play) from between his own goal line and the 22 metre line. This change, which had also been adopted briefly in 1926, had the effect of forcing players to run with the ball in order to gain ground and as a direct consequence rugby became much more exciting to watch and to play.

Realizing the need to create more clubs to accommodate the influx of players and to further discourage players drifting from one team to another, David Graham approached both Edmonton's junior football teams and encouraged them to establish rugby teams within their existing organizations. Both the Edmonton Huskies and the Edmonton

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<sup>160</sup> Edmonton Rugby Union Newsletter, October 1964.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., April 1965.

Wildcats showed some interest initially but later changed their minds.<sup>162</sup> Remaining convinced that it was time to start another club, Graham founded the Edmonton Clansmen R.F.C. in the fall of 1967. He did this with the help of a number of Leprechaun players, among them Vince Moroney, as well as Shaun Parsons of the Pirates, Gerry Wilson of the Druids, and P.J. Cluney of the Barbarians and Pirates.<sup>163</sup>

Rugby made further advances at the provincial level. In 1967 the A.R.U. hosted the visiting English international team and an Alberta side played England at Mewata Stadium in Calgary in front of 4000 spectators.<sup>164</sup> Although Alberta lost 22-3, the fixture was an important recognition of rugby's growing strength in the province. Nine Edmonton players were selected on the Alberta team; these were D. Culbertson, M. Lyttle, M. Moroney, V. Moroney, I. Thomas (all Leprechauns), D. Brander, R. Cowper, W. Spaul (all Druids), and K. Bacon (Tigers).<sup>165</sup>

The 1968 season opened with a new feature on the Victoria Day long-weekend, appropriately named Edmonton Rugbyfest. This event saw a number of teams from western Canada and others from further afield converge on Edmonton for a weekend of rugby and socializing. Rugbyfest's popularity has continued to the present day. Many of the original visiting teams, who were hosted by the Edmonton clubs, still travel to the tournament every year. For the first time, a British Columbia representative side came to the city and played the Edmonton senior select team. The representative program, which had faltered for many years, was given a needed boost thanks to the interest shown by John Shaw, who was the E.R.U. President at the time. Shaw established a committee to organize selection and then enlisted the help of Max Howell who conducted indoor training over the winter months in the Kinsmen Fieldhouse.<sup>166</sup> The hard work paid off as Edmonton won the Emmanuel College Cup in 1968 and 1969.

The Druids defeated the Calgary Rams 17-3 to win its third straight provincial championship in 1968. The Druids had also introduced indoor training during the off-season and considered it a key to its transformation into Edmonton's strongest rugby club.<sup>167</sup> Thanks to this success, the club had soon increased its membership to 60 players

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<sup>162</sup> Interview with David Graham *op. cit.*

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *The Calgary Herald*, September 25, 1967.

<sup>165</sup> Official Souvenir Program, English Internationals 'v' Alberta, September 23, 1967.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with John Shaw, March 1988.

<sup>167</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, January 26, 1968.

of whom 40 were Canadian.<sup>168</sup> The appeal of a physical contact sport that had a very important social aspect attracted more and more people in a city where 65 per cent of the population was under 35 years old.<sup>169</sup> High school, junior, and university athletes all began to show more interest in the game. In this regard the *Journal* noted the attitude of one particular player:

University of Alberta science student Dave Wray, middle linebacker for the Golden Bears last season, is waiting for his varsity camp to open. While he waits, he plays rugby with a city team, the Pirates.

"If a guy wants to stay in shape and get some action this sport is just right," he said at one of the team's gatherings following a game. "Basically, the running with the ball and the tackling are the same as in football, although you have to adapt your hitting a little because you don't wear pads."

"But it's a good way to stay in shape because the attitude is different. For example, you'd never see two football teams go down to the pub with each other to drink after a game. This way you can enjoy yourself more."<sup>170</sup>

With more Canadians becoming involved in rugby, a third division was formed in 1970. The same year, the Golden Bears won the Kenann Cup for the second year in a row. The increase in the number of games being played meant that the E.R.U. began to experience problems with the use of city facilities. Despite good cooperation with city officials, fields were often unavailable, inadequately marked, or simply over-used. As early as 1968, Gordon King, originally a member of the Leprechauns but now with the Pirates, had begun to contemplate the development of a rugby clubhouse in the city.<sup>171</sup> By 1970, the E.R.U., with Chris Ireland as president, began to study the viability of obtaining permanent grounds. In October 1970, the E.R.U. executive recommended a major fund-raising effort in order to purchase sufficient land for fields and a clubhouse. A fund-raising committee was organized with Gordon King appointed as chairman. Chris Ireland and Don Whidden of the Tigers, and Roger Cowper of the Druids were also members of this committee.<sup>172</sup>

In January 1971, this group presented its report to a special meeting of the Union and it was unanimously adopted. The recommendations divided the task into two phases. The first phase was the immediate acquisition of necessary land, while the second phase

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> MacGregor, J.G. *op. cit.*, p 312.

<sup>170</sup> *The Edmonton Journal*, August 2, 1968.

<sup>171</sup> Interview with Sam Wright, *op. cit.*

<sup>172</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report, 1970.

involved the subsequent development of a clubhouse facility. The major method of fund-raising focused on the idea of 'charter life memberships' to the Edmonton Rugby Union and the future clubhouse. The number of these special memberships was limited to 200 with all the clubs agreeing to sell 30 at a cost of \$100 each. Three other money-raising schemes were agreed upon; a major concert promotion at the Jubilee Auditorium; a car raffle at six of the city's shopping malls, and a giant 'beerfest' at the Kinsmen Fieldhouse. These three activities were expected to generate approximately \$36,000.

This was by far the most ambitious rugby project yet undertaken in Edmonton and it proved to be a highly successful one. The cooperation of all the clubs meant that \$30,000 was raised in 1971 and a 30 acre parcel of land was purchased at Ellerslie, which was then half a mile south of the city limits. Although the original goal of providing playing fields by the 1973 season proved to be unrealistic, the Ellerslie Rugby Park had the first functional, regulation size rugby fields in northern Alberta by 1975.

In developing its new home the E.R.U. was fortunate enough to be able to utilize some of the talents available among its own membership. Norm Suvan, the founder of the Tigers, surveyed the land while Sam Wright did all the legal work connected with the purchase. Gordon King also spent many hours of his own time working on the new grounds.<sup>173</sup> A large percentage of the labour involved was carried out by numerous volunteers thus keeping costs to a minimum. By 1974, \$100,000 had been spent on Ellerslie without any debt being incurred.

Both the Druids and the Leprechauns remained the strongest clubs. The Leprechauns had an unprecedented run of success, winning the Kenann Cup five years in a row from 1971 to 1975. The Golden Bears were also strong but continued to experience difficulties with the Department of Athletics over the team's varsity status.

In 1973 a new inter-city trophy replaced the Heintzman Cup which was unfortunately lost. This was the Bateman Cup, named after Bruce Bateman who had done such sterling work promoting rugby in Calgary and in his capacity as president of the A.R.U. Edmonton won the cup, which involved a two game home and home series, in 1973, but lost heavily in 1974 after winning the first leg.

With the fields at Ellerslie not yet ready for use, the 1974 and 1975 seasons were disrupted by frequent rescheduling of games. This was mainly due to the development of track facilities at the South Side Athletic Ground, which rendered it useless for rugby. In light of this situation, the decision to create independent playing fields now seemed even more astute. In spite of the disruption, there were now more than 400 rugby players in

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<sup>173</sup> Interview with Don Whidden, March 1988.

Edmonton.<sup>174</sup> The third division, which had operated on a limited basis for a number of seasons, now functioned regularly. At the end of the season, a knockout competition was introduced and this helped to sustain the interest of teams lower in the league standings who were no longer in the running for divisional titles. The Golden Bears dropped out of the league in 1974, but with the direction of John O'Hanley and John Anderson some of the players regrouped and formed the Nor'westers Rugby Football Club. The Golden Bears, a team that was open to any university student, continued to participate in intercollegiate fixtures.

The 1974 season also included the visit of Porthcawl R.F.C. from south Wales. The club was hosted by the Druids and they were the first of a long list of international touring sides to visit Edmonton. In the north of the province, rugby was also beginning to gain a foothold. The development of the oil sands near Fort McMurray had attracted a large number of workers to the town from other parts of Canada, the British Isles and further afield. A South African, Rod Walsh, succeeded in starting the Fort McMurray Knights R.F.C. although it was several years before the club began to play regular fixtures.<sup>175</sup>

Perhaps of greater importance at this time was the E.R.U.'s recognition of the need to develop its coaching programs. In 1974, the Union sent three representatives to an international coaching camp run by the Irish Rugby Football Union at Mosney, Ireland. The three who attended were Tony Bauer of the Leprechauns, John O'Hanley of the Nor'westers, and Don Whidden of the Tigers. The benefits of this decision were felt almost immediately as all three individuals put their increased knowledge to good use the following season. Don Whidden took over the management of the senior representative side and Tony Bauer acted as player/coach. Although the senior side lost the Bateman Cup, Tony Bauer and Dave Slater of the Leprechauns, John Parton of the Druids, and John Dippie of the Clansmen were all selected for a national team trial. By 1975 there were six senior high schools playing rugby in Edmonton. In addition, several clubs were beginning to have ideas of forming their own 'colts' or under-19 teams. The E.R.U. responded by creating a new executive position to administer junior rugby. John O'Hanley soon filled this position.

These advances in the coaching and playing spheres, so necessary on their own, gained added significance in connection with the Ellerslie project. Edmonton rugby had a very positive outlook and consequently fundraising efforts were enormously successful. In 1975, \$46,000 was raised, which included a \$9,000 grant from the provincial government.

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<sup>174</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report, 1974.

<sup>175</sup> Correspondence with Fort McMurray Knights R.F.C.

Work on a dressing room facility began late in the year and the interior was completed by volunteer workers from all the clubs. Phase 1 of the clubhouse, a 4,000 square foot changing room area, was opened for use on April 26, 1976. The most influential figure in the growth of the clubhouse was Gordon King who had worked extremely hard as chairman of the Ellerslie Project Board since its inception five years earlier. After serving as president of the E.R.U. for two years, he retired from both positions at the end of 1975.

In 1976, the Leprechauns' run of success came to an end when the Clansmen, led by a New Zealander, John Dippie, won the Kenann Cup for the first time. The Edmonton senior side won the Bateman Cup convincingly and the under-23 squad that had been running for some years, also beat their Calgary counterparts. Tony Bauer and John Parton were selected to the Canadian squad and both players had an opportunity to display their talents when Alberta hosted the world famous Barbarians Rugby Football Club in Edmonton on June 5, 1976. A crowd of 3,000 spectators turned up at Clarke Stadium to watch the Barbarians defeat Alberta 56-4. Although Alberta never gave up, the Barbarian team which included 14 international players from the British Isles, understandably proved to be too strong.<sup>176</sup> One of the chief organizers of the Barbarian's visit was Gareth Jones, a Welshman who had moved to Edmonton after touring with Porthcawl in 1974.<sup>177</sup> He soon began to play an important role in the development of the local referees' society.

The steady increase in the number of players and teams continued. A Red Deer team entered the E.R.U. second division and won the title the same year. The Red Deer Titans R.F.C. was formed in 1972 but had chosen to join the Calgary Rugby Union. Until the 1980 season, when the whole club joined the E.R.U., the Titans continued to enter separate teams in the Calgary first division and the Edmonton second division. Two more high schools introduced rugby in 1976, bringing the total to eight. These were; Archbishop Jordan, Salisbury (both in Sherwood Park), Harry Ainlay, Jasper Place, McNally, Ross Sheppard, and St. Joseph's. Three fields were now ready for use at Ellerslie and the high schools were able to make good use of the rugby park. The Edmonton Rugby Union's future looked very bright indeed.

This positive forecast was further aided by the provincial government which began to pay more attention to the field of sports and recreation. Large financial grants were made available to sports organizations such as the A.R.U. and the E.R.U. in order to build facilities, improve coaching, encourage participation, and assist in organization. In

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<sup>176</sup> Alberta Rugby Union Newsletter, June 1976.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Gareth Jones, March 1988.

addition, the J. Percy Page Centre in St Albert was opened, providing the Alberta Rugby Union and other amateur sports organizations with office space and clerical support. Many of the Edmonton clubs soon began to make use of the facility in order to perform a variety of tasks including the publication of club newsletters.

By the end of 1976, the E.R.U. had raised \$117,000 including a \$50,000 grant from the provincial government. A new venture called 'Rugby 500' which involved a weekly draw for cash, realized \$25,000. The Pirates provided the E.R.U. with an additional \$9,000 each year by working at bingo halls, an activity that was later to involve all the Edmonton clubs. Solid fundraising efforts continued the next year but a \$73,000 debt had accumulated. Consequently, most work that involved major spending was postponed.

A fourth playing field opened for use in the spring of 1977 as Ellerslie managed to keep pace with the increasing physical demands made upon it. The Clansmen again won the first division title after a close race with the Leprechauns. The Golden Bears, who had re-entered the league, won the second division and both teams went on to win provincial championships. The New University of Ulster R.F.C. toured the province and played the Red Deer Titans and the Nor'westers, the latter being the only team in Alberta to defeat the visitors. The Druids became the first Edmonton club to undertake a tour to the British Isles, the highlight of which was a victory over the host club in the prestigious Gosforth seven-a-side tournament.

For several years Edmonton teams had been traveling to a rugby tournament held in early May in Missoula, Montana. One unique feature of the tournament was the existence of a women's rugby club called the Missoula Better Side. The local club encouraged their visitors, the Leprechauns, to start up a women's team back in Edmonton.<sup>178</sup> It did not take long for interest to grow and within a month the Edmonton Rockers Women's Rugby Football Club had been formed. Initially it was the wives of many Pirate players, among them Jo Sammler and Frankie Ford, who formed the nucleus of the club, but it was Val Koshman, the first Rockers' President, and Shirley Lord who did much of the early organization.

Originally there were approximately 25 members and several inter-squad games were arranged. The new team's first official match took place at the Lethbridge tournament on the Labor Day weekend 1977, and fittingly its opponent was the Missoula Better Side. During its first season the club also played a game against a team from Red Deer made up of a group of netball players.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Interview with Shirley Bergland (formerly Shirley Lord), February 1988.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

Several years before the Rockers began to play, a women's rugby game between Edmonton and Calgary had been arranged in conjunction with a men's inter-city fixture. Unfortunately there were several serious injuries in the game and the venture was not a success.<sup>180</sup> With this in mind, many men were concerned that the sport was too rough for women while others failed to take the Rockers seriously. However, the team was able to attract a succession of coaches from the different men's clubs, the first of whom was Greg Ball from the Pirates. A women's club was formed in Saskatoon a short time before the Rockers, providing additional opposition, although at considerable distance. The club maintained its numbers, strengthened its abilities on the field, and soon made a sizeable contribution to the administrative and fund-raising duties of the Union. In later years the Rockers have provided a number of E.R.U. directors, including a president.

While many male rugby players may have had serious reservations about women playing the game, at least some realized the advantages of having them involved. The possibilities for fundraising and further financial assistance from the provincial government were much greater for a sports organization and facility that represented both men and women.

Outside Edmonton rugby was also growing. The Fort McMurray Knights became a full member of the second division in 1978 and only one Edmonton club failed to travel north for a league fixture that season.<sup>181</sup> In Jasper two ex-Leprechauns, Greg Knox and Chris Parre, helped form the Jasper Dregs Rugby Football Club and the club played its first match against Banff R.F.C. the same year.<sup>182</sup> The Jasper club continued to thrive as a social side and in 1983 it joined the E.R.U. third division. In 1979 a team from Peace River was able to play several exhibition games against Edmonton clubs.

There was also a new club in the city. A group of alumni from Ross Sheppard High School formed the Thunderbirds Rugby Football Club which entered the 3rd division in 1978. The Thunderbirds failed to survive the season and disbanded. Some of the members joined the Nor'westers, adding to this club's numbers. At the representative level, Calgary and Edmonton shared the Bateman Cup for the only time in its history. The aggregate score from the two games was 39-39.<sup>183</sup> The Edmonton senior representative program was helped by the return of John Shaw who had moved to Ottawa in 1972. While Shaw organized from the sidelines, the energy and commitment of the captain John

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report 1978.

<sup>182</sup> Correspondence with Greg Van Tighen, Jasper Dregs R.F.C., 1988.

<sup>183</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report 1978.

Mooney and vice-captain John Phelan added a great deal to the success of the team for several seasons.<sup>184</sup> The senior team also benefitted from the visit of Basil Conroy, an Irish trialist at wing-forward, who played for the Pirates.

The battle for first division supremacy between the Clansmen and the Leprechauns continued to dominate competition in the 1970s. The Leprechauns won the title in 1978 while the Clansmen regained it the following year. It is interesting to note that both clubs obviously benefitted from overseas tours; the Leprechauns traveling to Ireland in 1978 and the Clansmen visiting the United Kingdom in 1979. Neither club managed to win the provincial title as the Calgary Canadian Irish Athletic Club proved to be the strongest rugby team in Alberta both years.

By the 1979 season, the Clansmen, Leprechauns, Pirates, and Tigers all fielded four teams, while the Druids had three and the Nor'westers two. In addition, all these clubs, with the exception of the Pirates, had a junior team.<sup>185</sup> A succession of hard working presidents ensured that the E.R.U. was able to keep up with the rapid growth rate. This task required more and more organization and the executive positions in the Union required a lot of work. The position of vice-president was split into two with one person being solely responsible for rugby while the other supervised the development of the Ellerslie Rugby Park. There was also an increasing amount of financial management required of the treasurer. In the Referees' Society Gareth Jones, Don Whidden, and Don Melnyk did their best to recruit new talent and keep pace with growing number of games. In addition matters such as public relations, discipline, and fixtures all needed more attention.

Both Roger Cowper, who was president in 1976 and 1977, and Peter Harcourt who succeeded him in 1978 and 1979, were able to rely on a number of outstanding volunteers to fill these executive positions. Perhaps the most significant of these was Ieuan Evans, a Welshman, who arrived in Edmonton in 1974. Evans soon became involved in Union activities. His knowledge of horticulture and in particular soil conditions, was put to good use in the development of the playing fields and grounds. As well as assisting with the Ellerslie Rugby Park he became involved in fundraising.<sup>186</sup> Largely through his efforts, the E.R.U. was able to run valuable casinos by 1978. The revenue these generated, along with \$15,000 provided from bingos worked by the Pirates, enabled the E.R.U. to pay off the existing mortgage by the beginning of 1979. Also in 1979, a set of bleachers that were

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<sup>184</sup> Interview with John Shaw, March 1988.

<sup>185</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report, 1979.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Dr. Ieuan Evans, March 1988.

being dismantled at Clarke Stadium, were provided on loan from the City of Edmonton. These bleachers were put into place on the west side of the premier pitch.

By 1980 there were 49 teams operating within the Edmonton Rugby Union in contrast with approximately a dozen, ten years before.<sup>187</sup> The large number of participants meant that the costs involved in the maintenance of Ellerslie increased. More money was needed and a lot of players were in favour of the immediate development of an adequate social facility and parking lot. Unfortunately fundraising efforts became more difficult due, in part, to restrictions imposed by the Alberta Attorney General's Department. These were partially overcome thanks to lobbying from Ieuan Evans and several others. More difficult to combat was the unenthusiastic response to fundraising by some club members.

Stuart Cowen was elected president of the E.R.U. in 1980 and under his guidance enough money was raised to hire a professional fundraiser. Bryan Pryde was given the job of raising \$200,000 per annum for the Edmonton based clubs and the Ellerslie project. In spite of considerable opposition, plans were soon underway to build a members' bar and hall adding to the existing changing room complex. However, the Ellerslie Project Board, which was resurrected the same year, began to experience numerous problems relating to the cost of maintaining the existing buildings. Consequently the year was spent paying for repairs and reassessing the future development of the rugby park.

In 1981 Al Hancock, another paid fundraiser, and Bryan Pryde negotiated an important contract with the City of Edmonton. The E.R.U. was to provide volunteer workers to sell beer at Commonwealth Stadium during Edmonton Eskimos football games and Edmonton Drillers soccer games. Despite the negligence of some clubs, who were subsequently fined for their failure to provide enough workers, this venture was a success. Shaun Parsons of the Clansmen took over much of the organization when Bryan Pryde departed during 1981. Under the direction of Roger Cowper and Stan Dillworth the Project Board started a number of other fundraising schemes, notably the 'Rugby 1000' lottery, and over \$100,000 was raised in 1981.<sup>188</sup>

Construction of the new social facility was already underway and the expected completion date for the 10,000 square foot building was December 1981. When the facility was finally finished in 1982 it provided Edmonton rugby with the finest amateur sports facility in the city, if not the premier rugby clubhouse in North America. In addition to changing rooms, showers and a sauna, the Edmonton clubs now had a large bar and banquet facility that could cater for up to 200 people.

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<sup>187</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report 1980.

<sup>188</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report 1981.

The building was completed at a time when rugby was experiencing some serious growing pains. Despite the hard work of volunteers, many players were increasingly reluctant to invest even more time into the sport. Because the expansion of the facility had taken place before the necessary money had been raised, the need for further fundraising became critical at a time when many people were already tired of the responsibility. The cost of the new building put the E.R.U. into debt by \$720,000 and there was a general feeling among executive members that the level of club support would have to improve substantially in order for the Ellerslie Rugby Park to survive.

Although matters were unsettled within the administration of Edmonton rugby, the game continued to make steady progress in other areas. The E.R.U. was strengthened by the decision of the Red Deer Titans R.F.C. to enter all its teams in Edmonton competition in 1980. The first division title was once again won by the Clansmen who also won the provincial title. Fort McMurray, in only its third season of regular competition, won the second division. The Clansmen proved it was the strongest club in Edmonton by also winning the third division which now contained fourteen teams.

John Shaw was still managing the Edmonton senior team and Gareth Jones was now coaching the side. Ted Woods, a visiting coach from Durham, England, also helped out on occasions. An established system for the management selection and coaching of the team was now in place and the level of play improved. After losing narrowly to the Anti-Assassins from London, Edmonton defeated Saskatchewan, and then regained the Bateman cup in Calgary in the final game of the 1980 season. The last match was a hard fought victory in cold, wet conditions.<sup>189</sup> Two players from this team, John Phelan and Peter Blood, both of the Clansmen, were chosen for a Canadian trial. John Phelan was selected and played for Canada against the New Zealand All Blacks in Vancouver.

The junior season started well but unfortunately only the Tigers, Druids, and Red Deer fielded legitimate teams all year. The Pirates junior team from M. E. Lazerte High School struggled through the schedule with difficulty.<sup>190</sup> High school rugby continued to improve and in 1980 it was recognized as an official inter-school sport. Salisbury Composite High School won the senior championship for the third year in a row, defeating Bonnie Doon 9-6 in the final.

The main problem associated with junior rugby did not originate in the high schools, where the sport was very popular, but in the transition from school to club play. Some clubs were fortunate enough to have members who were teachers and who provided a

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<sup>189</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report 1980.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

recognizable contact for the young players. However, there were still communication problems and many athletes were committed to finding lucrative summer employment rather than spending a lot of time with rugby. Nevertheless, the more dedicated school players began to filter through into the different clubs and the representative teams.

During the 1970s, many of Edmonton's satellite communities had experienced even more rapid growth than the metropolitan area.<sup>191</sup> Many of these neighbouring towns such as Leduc, Fort Saskatchewan, Sherwood Park, and St Albert served as residential areas within easy commuting distance of the city. The Leduc Crude Rugby Football Club was formed in 1981 and the club entered the newly formed fourth division. One of the primary organizers in Leduc was Harry Sanders, a former member of the Pirates. St Albert's Paul Kane High School coached by Gareth Jones, entered a rugby team representing 'zone 5' in the Alberta Summer Games in Lethbridge. This group was eager to keep playing and with Jones' help a number of exhibition games with Edmonton fourth division teams were arranged.<sup>192</sup> In October 1981 the St Albert Rugby Football Club was officially formed.

In league action the Leprechauns rebounded from a disastrous 1980 season to win the first division yet again. Red Deer Titans won the second division trophy, adding to the list of successful teams from outside the capital. By 1981 Rugbyfest had established an international reputation as one of the best organized tournaments in the country and although the event required more and more work, it realized a record profit.

Although 1982 will be remembered as the year that Phase 2 of the Ellerslie complex was completed there were several other notable achievements that were overshadowed by the clubhouse development. The Tigers won the first division title becoming the first club other than the Leprechauns and the Clansmen to do so since 1970. In the provincial final the team was again successful, this time defeating the Calgary Hornets. The Tigers' achievements owed a great deal to the coaching expertise of Byron Tucker but this was also a young team consisting of many players who had developed their rugby skills solely in Edmonton, a fact that was highly encouraging to many observers. With Fort McMurray and the Clansmen winning the second and third division provincial titles respectively, the E.R.U. made a clean sweep of the championships.

In the same year another area of the province expanded its rugby activity. The Grande Prairie Centaurs Rugby Football Club was formed as an offshoot of the Peace River Griffins R.F.C. The Centaurs began playing exhibition matches with Edmonton teams the following season. At the time of the Centaurs formation there was some discussion of a

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<sup>191</sup> MacGregor, J. G. *op. cit.*, p 309.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Gareth Jones, *op. cit.*

Peace River Union with clubs from Dawson Creek and Fort St. John joining the Grande Prairie and Peace River teams.<sup>193</sup> Unfortunately the Peace River club was unable to maintain a regular team and soon dropped out of E.R.U. competition; this dashed any hopes of a new union. After the season finished in Alberta, no less than four Edmonton clubs embarked on major overseas tours; the Nor'westers traveled to Ireland, the Leprechauns to England, the Tigers to Wales, England, and Ireland, and the Clansmen to New Zealand and Australia.

Undoubtedly the major achievement of the year was the completion of the new banquet hall and clubroom adjoining the original changing room complex at Ellerslie. The construction was completed under budget and the interior design was undertaken by volunteers, with the assistance of some welcome professional advice. At the end of the season the Ellerslie Rugby Park hosted the Canadian National Championship, an event that brought many compliments from the visiting provincial rugby teams, Canadian Rugby Union officials, and the media. During the year Pat Devaney was hired as Facility Manager and in September 1982 Roger Cowper was appointed as Executive Director of the Ellerslie Rugby Park. In addition to these two new staff the E.R.U. also employed a groundskeeper and a secretary.

The rationale behind these appointments was to introduce more professionalism into the marketing and management of the facility. During the season, revenue from the clubhouse was good but this did not continue throughout the year. The Commonwealth Stadium beer sales contract raised over \$50,000 for the second year in a row but this alone was insufficient revenue to combat a debt of almost \$750,000. It was clear that Ellerslie would have to attract much more year round business from, wedding parties, private functions, and corporate organizations in order to make money. This rather uncertain financial outlook was altered considerably by the successful application for a major Community Recreational and Cultural (C.R.C.) Grant from the City of Edmonton. An audio-visual presentation, originally prepared by Bryan Pryde and Al Hancock, was resubmitted by a committee consisting of David Graham, Don Whidden, Stuart Cowen, and Ted Boyle. Through this grant program the E.R.U. received \$275,000 in 1982 which was immediately applied to debt reduction.<sup>194</sup>

By 1983 the Edmonton Rugby Union's financial status had not improved and the situation quickly worsened as the oil industry went into recession, affecting the whole Alberta economy. There was more bad news to follow. The new suppliers at

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<sup>193</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report 1982.

<sup>194</sup> Interview with Dr Ieuan Evans *op. cit.*



Commonwealth Stadium refused to renegotiate a similar contract for beer sales. The E.R.U. decided not to accept substantially less money and pulled out. The chaos that resulted when several other groups took over this job bears testimony to the efficient manner in which rugby volunteers had performed the task.

The pressure of servicing the debt on Ellerslie detracted from the real task of attracting new business and there was considerable argument over just what steps should be taken to rectify the situation. During 1983 the management of the Rugby Park was divorced from the E.R.U. as an Ellerslie Management Committee was established. This committee consisted of members of the six owner clubs, these being the Clansmen R.F.C., the Druids R.F.C., the Leprechauns R.F.C., The Nor'westers Athletic Association, the Pirates R.F.C., and the Tigers R.F.C. Unfortunately the responsibilities of the Executive Director were never properly clarified by either the E.R.U. or by Roger Cowper and there were accusations of mismanagement from many quarters. In October 1983 John Shaw, who began his second term as E.R.U. President soon after, terminated the contracts of both Roger Cowper and Pat Devaney and began an effort to revitalize the management of the Ellerslie Rugby Park. The E.R.U. had forged ahead with the construction of such a large facility without adequate funding and the next few years were spent struggling with the debt incurred at a time when the interest rates on bank loans were increasing. This preoccupation with finances detracted from the task of improving the standard of rugby being played.

In 1983, for the first year since before the Second World War, the number of rugby players in Edmonton marginally decreased as a considerable number of people left the province in search of employment. The more fortunate clubs had now established strong contacts with one or more of the sixteen high school rugby teams in and around Edmonton. The Clansmen in particular took advantage of the growing rugby tradition in Salisbury Composite High School in Sherwood Park and attracted a regular number of new recruits every year. In 1983 the Clansmen succeeded in winning the E.R.U. first, second, and third division titles, a unique achievement in Edmonton rugby. All three teams went on to win provincial finals, as the first team defeated the Calgary Hornets, the second team defeated Medicine Hat R.F.C. and the third team defeated Banff R.F.C. This was the first and only time that an Edmonton club has achieved both feats.

In women's rugby the Rockers continued to dominate teams from Red Deer and Calgary. In 1983 a breakaway group from the Rockers formed the Coven Women's Rugby Football Club. The founding members were Ruth Hillerud, Terry Nelson, Corinne Skrobot, and Helen Wright. At the end of the season, the Rockers undertook a very successful overseas tour to the United Kingdom, winning six games, losing one, and at

the same time attracting considerable media attention. Even with the addition of another women's club in Edmonton it was still necessary to travel frequently in order to play more games. The Rockers, in particular, placed a lot of emphasis on annual tours to such places as Saskatoon, Montana, California, and New England.

Mike Fleming of the Clansmen took over the management of the Edmonton Senior side. With Dave Brown of the Leprechauns as coach, the team won the first of four straight Bateman Cup titles in 1983. The E.R.U. tried to organize a 'Tri-City Tournament' featuring Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver, but the plans came to nothing as Vancouver could not afford to make the trip to Edmonton. Although the Edmonton junior development program was becoming more and more successful, Mike Fleming pushed for the reinstatement of an 'under-23' representative side in order to help players bridge the gap between junior and senior rugby.<sup>195</sup> An Edmonton junior representative side was selected every year to compete with Calgary in a two-game series for the Winchester Cup. But after this, there was the potential of no representative opportunity being available until one was selected to the Edmonton senior team.

With the recession deepening in 1984, the main concern within the E.R.U. was to consolidate any efforts at fundraising. Another C.R.C. grant application was successful, this time for \$250,000. Once again this money did little more than pay for operating costs and service the debt. Joint fundraising by the clubs was almost at a standstill. Only the Druids, the Pirates, and Clansmen were able to make regular financial contributions that helped keep Ellerslie afloat. The three clubs did this in different ways. The Clansmen's large membership made fundraising easier while the Druids were able to make money through security contracts at Commonwealth Stadium and Northlands Coliseum. The Pirates involvement in working bingos also allowed the club to keep up payments to Ellerslie on a regular basis.

In spite of the difficulties several clubs undertook ambitious projects of their own. The Clansmen successfully renovated a clubhouse at Airways Park and, following on from the success of the previous year, the club again won the top three E.R.U. divisional titles. At the provincial level only the second team was victorious. Part of the Clansmen's success can be attributed to David Graham the founder of the club and its president from 1968 to 1978. Graham, who believed that there must be a place for players of all ages and abilities, and that "a club is only as good as its bottom team",<sup>196</sup> ensured that the Clansmen developed on a solid foundation.

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<sup>195</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report, 1984.

<sup>196</sup> Interview with David Graham, *op. cit.*

In St Albert, the local rugby club was even more successful in building its own facility. By 1984 St Albert R.F.C. had teams in the E.R.U. second, third and fourth divisions. The natural catchment area provided by the city of St Albert meant that the club did not have to compete over high school players allowing it to develop a very strong junior program. In 1982, unhindered by the debt associated with Ellerslie, the club obtained enough land for four pitches on a 25 year lease. An original loan of \$30,000 was obtained through the personal guarantees of nine of the clubs founding members.<sup>197</sup> In 1983, led by club president Gareth Jones, St Albert R.F.C. made a thorough presentation to the provincial government and successfully obtained additional funding to build a clubhouse. Much of the labour associated with the project came from a job creation scheme, further reducing the cost. Original and subsequent loans were paid off promptly through a succession of C.R.C. grants. Through the careful planning of club members the St Albert R.F.C. clubhouse and pitches have now become a first class rugby facility.

Without a positive attitude in 1984, the Edmonton Rugby Union and the Ellerslie Rugby Park might well have fallen apart. Fortunately the President of the Union, John Shaw, and his executive refused to become too pessimistic and instead worked hard at restoring confidence. In particular the work of the Past President, Ieuan Evans and Vice-President of Ellerslie, Gordon King, proved vital.

Ieuan Evans had become involved with bingos several years previously. With the help of Gordon King, who had considerable experience in this field through his own club the Pirates, Evans provided each club in Edmonton with regular bingo dates in four halls. Some clubs were skeptical, but soon realized the necessity for regular fundraising. In 1984 the average income from an evening's bingo work was \$650, almost \$70 per worker. Both Evans and King successfully hustled and pushed for membership to larger bingo halls and the number of bingo 'slots' was expected to double in 1985.<sup>198</sup> Although it was several years before the true benefits of this venture became evident, bingos served to re-establish individual club fundraising on a regular basis and their importance can not be underestimated.

Gordon King had returned to active E.R.U. work after a lengthy break from rugby. Impressed by the new clubhouse, he became Vice-President of Ellerslie and continued to work for the facility even after he resigned from this position. The reason for his resignation was his opposition to a 'house raffle' that was being organized towards the end

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<sup>197</sup> Interview with Gareth Jones, *op. cit.*

<sup>198</sup> Interview with Dr Ieuan Evans, *op. cit.*

of 1984. The raffle gathered enough club support to go ahead but the project soon ran into trouble and ultimately lost \$12,000 on the original investment.

In the Edmonton Rugby Union 1984 can be considered a pivotal year in its development. The determination and business acumen of those involved meant that the Ellerslie Rugby Park survived two or three very rough years but emerged as a capable, efficient, well run organization based on realistic principles. Thanks to the marketing efforts of John Calder, who had succeeded Pat Devaney as Ellerslie's bar and catering manager, the facility was now poised to capitalize on existing catering and entertainment opportunities. The activities of 1985 helped to consolidate Ellerslie's position before the facility began to bring in a profit in 1986.

The interest rates and conditions of the principle loan from the Toronto Dominion Bank were still crippling efforts to make any headway in 1985. This prompted the Ellerslie Rugby Park Board to stop payments to the bank and to try and renegotiate the loan repayment. This was a calculated risk for at one time the Toronto Dominion Bank did consider selling the facility. However, the Union received a further C.R.C. grant for \$250,000 and an increase in bingo revenues allowed all of the Edmonton clubs to meet payments to Ellerslie. In light of these developments the loan was renegotiated on more favourable terms. In 1986 the Ellerslie Rugby Park realized a profit of \$11,400 in contrast to a deficit of over \$8,000 the previous year.

The positive attitude that marked the E.R.U.'s financial and administrative efforts was reflected on the field of play. In 1985, rugby was reintroduced at the University of Alberta through the efforts of three students, Ron Horton, Jim Moore, and Darcy Wilson. The following year the University of Alberta Rugby Football Club, coached by two graduate students, Dwight Zakus and Paddy Lamb, competed in several tournaments. The most notable achievement was a fourth place finish in the University of Victoria Invitational Tournament. Although the University team did not compete in the E.R.U. summer league, it provided an opportunity for young players to stay in touch with the game after finishing high school and offered others the chance to improve their skills by staying active over the winter months.

A considerable number of University of Alberta players were selected to play for the Edmonton U-23 representative team that had been resurrected by Al Hancock in 1984. In 1985 a two game series with the Calgary U-23 representative side for the Frank Wright Cup began. The trophy was donated by Frank Wright, a former President of the Alberta

Rugby Union and a founding member of the Calgary Rams R.F.C. The Edmonton U-23 team also played British Columbia at Ellerslie, losing 17-12.<sup>199</sup>

At the senior level, Byron Tucker took over the coaching duties in 1984 and Edmonton successfully defended its Bateman Cup title. The following year a major nationwide rugby competition, the Labatt's Classic, was organized for city and 'sub-union' representative teams. The John Labatt Brewing Company had for some years been a keen supporter of Canadian rugby and this tournament further established it as the sport's number one sponsor. To qualify for the final of this new tournament the E.R.U. won the Prairie Classic regional tournament held in Saskatoon which also include representative teams from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Calgary.<sup>200</sup> At the final in Victoria, the Edmonton team was beaten 19-22 in overtime by Toronto in the first round. The following day, Edmonton beat Montreal 15-9 to finish in third place.

Three players from this Edmonton team were selected to the Canadian team that toured Australia in the late summer of 1985. These were, Ian Humphries of the Nor'westers, John Phelan of the Clansmen, and David Tucker of the Tigers. In addition, John Phelan was also named as captain.

In his capacity as President of the Pirates R.F.C., Gordon King had helped the club to rebuild after several disastrous seasons. In 1985 the Pirates won the Kenann Cup with a team that was a blend of experience and youth. The club's success can also be attributed to a number of overseas coaches, most notably from Trinity College, Dublin. This practice of inviting international players and coaches to Edmonton became widespread in the 1980s. Although in most cases the added expertise did help many local players develop their game, there was considerable debate as to the benefits of including talented players who would in most cases only remain in Edmonton for the summer. Many people in the rugby community felt that the clubs should spend more time promoting rugby in the high schools and throughout the city. After an unsuccessful season in the 1st division, the Fort McMurray Knights returned to the second division and won the league title. In the third division, the Leduc Crude was the top club. Unfortunately all three teams were defeated in the provincial finals at Ellerslie.

The Alberta Women's Rugby Union was able to introduce a provincial representative team in 1983 and an Alberta team, composed of players from the Rockers, the Coven, and the Calgary Renegades, dominated the inaugural Western Canadian Women's Rugby

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<sup>199</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report, 1985.

<sup>200</sup> Due to the relative strength of Manitoba and Saskatchewan rugby, full provincial teams from these two provinces were permitted to enter the competition.

Championships. Progress at the club level remained slow however, as all teams struggled to attract top female athletes many of whom still considered the game too rough. The Coven capitalized on strong university contacts to add to its strength at this time but the women's game has had very limited success in adding to the overall number of participants. In 1986 one of the original members of the Rockers became the first female President of the Edmonton Rugby Union. Laura Jackson, who had previously held the position of E.R.U. Treasurer, was coopted to the position after Bruce Caldwell of the Pirates resigned to take up an appointment in northern China.<sup>201</sup> Ms. Jackson thus became the first female president of a predominantly male rugby union in Canada, if not in the world.

By the end of 1986, the E.R.U. had made substantial inroads into the Ellerslie debt. A further C.R.C. grant for \$145,000 reduced the amount owing to approximately \$250,000. With all the Edmonton clubs contributing a regular amount from bingo profits, there was at least a visible end to the debt repayment. As the burden of Ellerslie was gradually lifted the Edmonton rugby clubs became more and more successful on the field.

The E.R.U. first division was eventually won by the Leprechauns, but only after an extremely competitive season. For the first time a play-off format was introduced in all the divisions bringing more teams into contention at the end of the regular league schedule. The Edson Axeman Rugby Football Club which was founded in 1985, began competing in the E.R.U. third division in 1986, reaching the play-offs in its first year. The Alberta Rugby Union introduced a two-tier championship that involved all the Calgary and Edmonton first division teams. This competition further emphasized the importance of a team's final position in league play as only the top four Edmonton and top three Calgary teams qualified for the top tier of the Alberta Cup.

Undoubtedly the highlight of the year was the achievement of the Edmonton senior team which won the Labatt's Classic National Interbranch Championship. In July, Edmonton, hosting the Prairie Classic Tournament, defeated Saskatchewan and then Calgary to advance to the 'Final Four' in September. As champions of the prairie region, Edmonton also won the right to host this prestigious event. The other three regional qualifiers were Newfoundland, Toronto, and the Vancouver Island 'Crimson Tide'. In the first round, Edmonton defeated Newfoundland 17-9 in a hard fought game, while the Crimson Tide defeated Toronto. On September 28, the Edmonton team, captained by John Phelan and coached by Des Kissane, defeated the Crimson Tide 17-12 to win the Labatt's Classic. Fittingly the team included players from all of the Edmonton clubs as well

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<sup>201</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report, 1986.

as Edson, St Albert, Fort McMurray, and Red Deer, illustrating the overall strength of the Edmonton Rugby Union.

Unlike the developments in Edmonton rugby prior to 1945, the post war revival established the sport on a permanent basis with its survival no longer dependent upon the participation of a few key players every year. Initially the experience of players and administrators from overseas guided the development of the Edmonton Rugby Union, but increasingly the knowledge of Canadian players, many of whom learned to play rugby while at high school in Edmonton, has been responsible for the progress made. The Ellerslie Rugby Park remains one of the finest rugby facilities in North America. The first phase of Ellerslie was planned and completed only when there was a reasonable assurance that the clubs would be able to raise enough money to cover the expenditure. However, the Edmonton Rugby Union was guilty of exceeding its abilities in connection with the second phase. The failure to realize the magnitude of the operation of such a facility detracted from the game of rugby for several years, exhausting players as well as administrators who were all expected to carry the extra burden of fundraising.

Yet it would be wrong to ignore several very positive aspects of the Ellerslie development. The builders of later rugby facilities in St Albert, Calgary and further afield in Canada all benefitted from the lessons provided in Edmonton. Also, as John Shaw stated in his final presidential report, the experience to be gained through volunteer involvement in rugby was second to none:

In the last four years the various members of the Edmonton Rugby Union and the Union itself have raised at least \$2,000,000 through bingos, casinos, security, lotteries, federal, provincial and municipal grants, and corporate and other donations. That is a phenomenal effort for what is still a relatively small organization. Think about the level of expertise that that implies. What other organization could give you that breadth of experience? I personally have learned an incredible amount and I am now using that knowledge to enhance the organizations in which my children participate.

The training and experience in entrepreneurial management and administrative skills now available through an executive position in rugby is immensely valuable. You cannot buy its like anywhere, and it will stand you in good stead for the rest of your life. So I would suggest, especially to the younger individuals, before you turn down an opportunity to serve, think about how much you would lose, then think about how much you would gain by accepting.<sup>202</sup>

Originally considered a game played exclusively by foreigners, the sport of rugby in Edmonton has retained much of its original social character while attracting more and more

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<sup>202</sup> E.R.U. Annual Report, 1985.

Canadian players. It has emerged as one of the most popular amateur sports in the city, whose level of 'professional' administration and facilities are the envy of many larger sporting organizations.

**PLATE X**  
**EDMONTON RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB VS R.C.A.F. PENHOLD 1954**  
 Ellerslie Rugby Park Collection

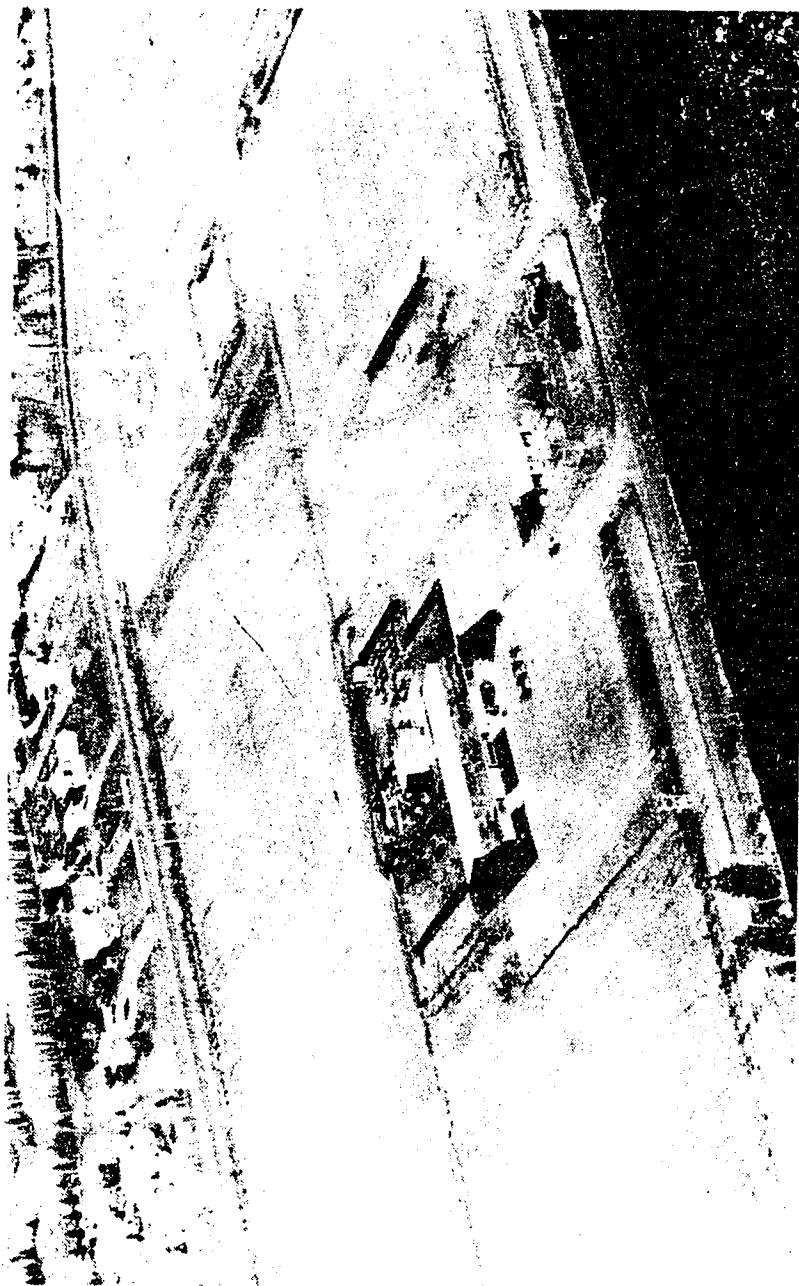


Back row	D. James, F. Calderwood (vice-capt.), N. Dant, E. Ward, S. Wilson, S. Wright, J. Mitchell.
Mid. row	E. Menorkson, M. Heston, P. Alderson, P. Duncan, P. Balden.
Front row	D. Robb, M. Falby, J. Gordon

**PLATE XI**  
**ELLERSLIE RUGBY PARK 1975**  
Ellerslie Rugby Park Collection



**PLATE XII**  
**ELLERSLIE RUGBY PARK 1982**  
Ellerslie Rugby Park Collection



**PLATE XIII**  
**EDMONTON ROCKERS W.R.F.C. IN ACTION**  
Personal Collection

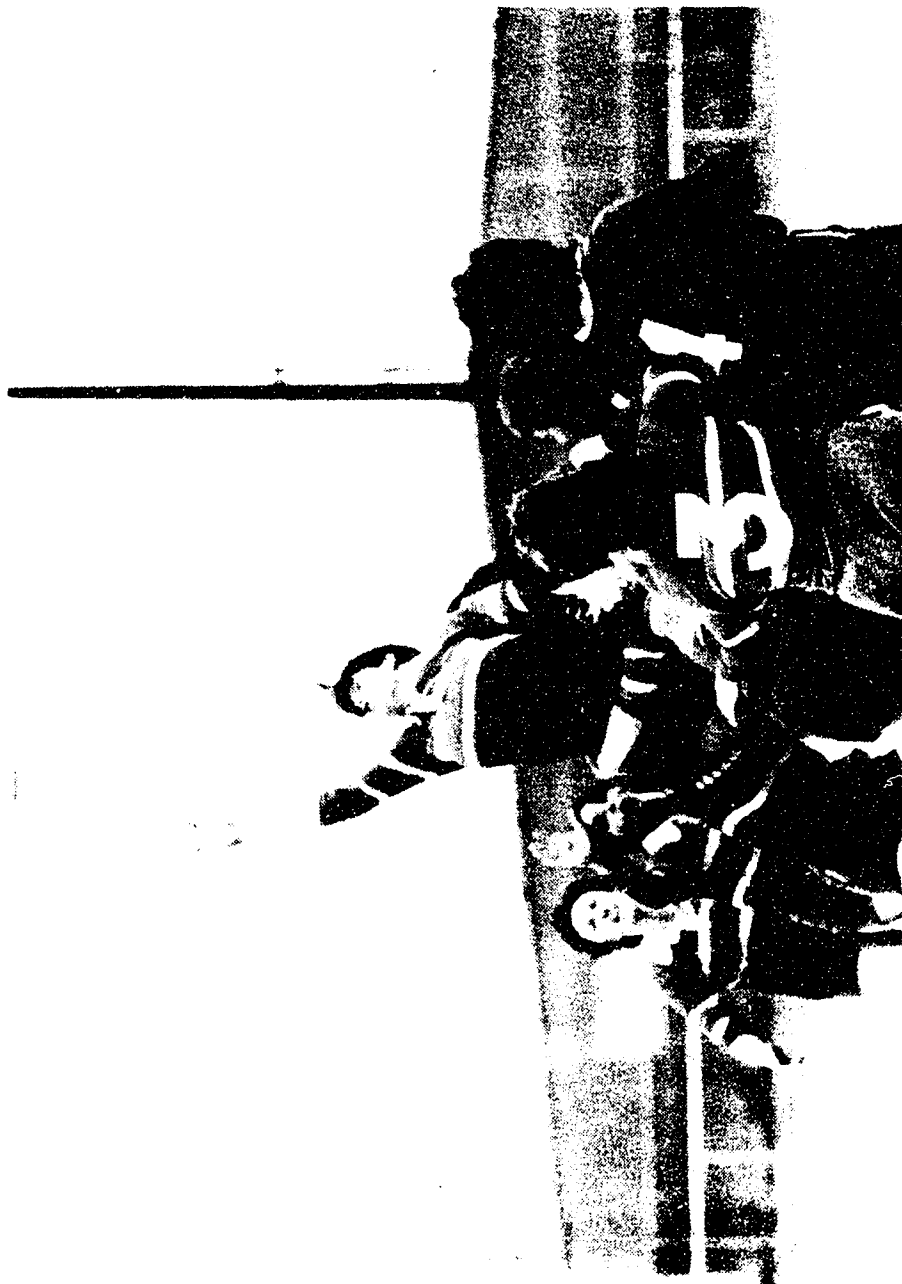


PLATE XIV  
EDMONTON RUGBY UNION LABATT'S NATIONAL CLASSIC  
CHAMPIONS 1986  
D. Graham Collection



## CONCLUSION

In the conclusion of his thesis, "A History of Rugby Football in Canada", Sturrock mentions several factors that have influenced the development of rugby in Canada throughout its history.<sup>1</sup> In many cases the factors that affected the growth of rugby in Edmonton vary little from this national development except in detail. However, there were also several influences peculiar to Edmonton that contributed to rugby's success in northern Alberta.

In common with other areas of the country Edmonton rugby was greatly influenced by the arrival of different groups of British immigrants who were responsible for the further development of the sport. During rugby's earliest period, from 1891 to 1914, when Edmonton was still a relatively small settlement, it was some of the town's pioneers and leading businessmen who introduced the sport. Many of these men had played rugby while growing up in the British Isles or while at school or university in eastern Canada.

After the First World War a second group of British immigrants were once again responsible for the re-organization and administration of rugby in Edmonton. On this occasion rugby's popularity in the British Isles and worldwide had been established and the game was no longer restricted to those who had attended public school or university. The men who played rugby in Edmonton during the 1920s were from a more diverse background than their predecessors. In particular, a group of Welshmen, many of whom came from the same area of Wales, made a major contribution to rugby's success between the wars. Many of these players helped form rugby clubs in association with their place of employment. Like other ethnic groups, the Welsh combined to form their own club during the 1920s. Originally considered an English or British game, rugby thus developed along ethnic lines in Edmonton with the English, the Irish, the Scottish, and the Welsh all forming different clubs.

This trend continued during the revival of Edmonton rugby after the Second World War. The discovery of oil and the subsequent boom in the Edmonton economy brought a further wave of immigrants from the British Isles. It was some of these newcomers that helped organize many of the clubs in existence at the present time. They also laid the foundations for the growth of rugby during the last two decades. A more recent influx of rugby players and coaches from Australia and New Zealand reinforced the importance of overseas experience in the development of rugby football in Edmonton.

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<sup>1</sup> Sturrock, D. "A History of Rugby Football in Canada." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1971, pp 335-339.

A more unique influence that contributed to rugby's success was the sporting rivalry that existed between Edmonton and Calgary, and also between Edmonton and Strathcona. This rivalry was especially significant before the First World War when inter-city rugby matches attracted spectator support unrivalled even today. While there is no doubt that rugby was popular it was the appeal of being able to boast supremacy over a rival town or city that attracted some of the larger crowds. During the 1920s this rivalry became more important in association with Canadian football and hockey, although it was not as intense as it had previously been. Instead an annual city rugby league was the central focus of competition. However, during the 1950s the rivalry with Calgary began again and inter-city club competition has now become a regular feature.

It is significant that the date of the first game of rugby played by an Edmonton team coincided with the establishment of rail links between Edmonton and Calgary. As Sturrock also mentions, travel was an important factor in rugby's development throughout Canada.<sup>2</sup> From 1891 to 1914 the decision to play rugby or football in Edmonton often depended on the existence of a rugby team in Calgary. Regular competition involved several journeys to other towns or settlements. During the 1920s Edmonton rugby players began to recognize Vancouver as an important centre of rugby football and several trips were made to the west coast. Had the opportunity to play in Calgary existed, there surely would have been more frequent fixtures there, for the geographical constraints placed on many sporting teams determined their development. After the Second World War the development of faster road and air links allowed cities and towns throughout northern Alberta to form rugby clubs that could compete regularly within the Edmonton Rugby Union league structure.

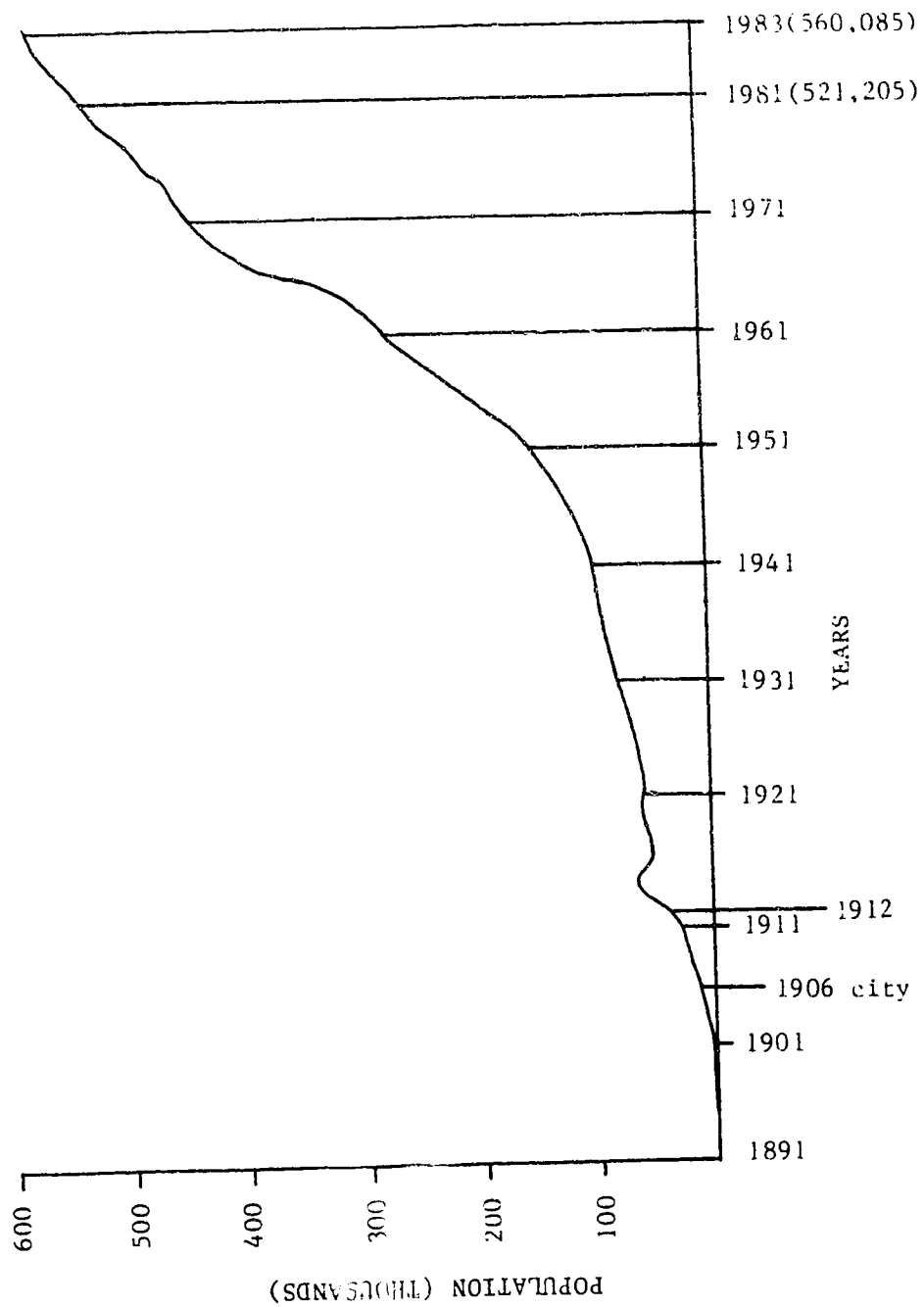
The lack of neighbouring competition had an important bearing on the relationship between rugby and Canadian football in Edmonton. Initially there was a great deal of argument concerning one game's supremacy over the other. This stemmed mostly from the fact that there were only enough active players to support one sport before 1914. After the First World War, when the city's population increased and then stabilized, the two sports coexisted and, in fact, aided one another's development. Many of the characteristics that distinguish Canadian football from rugby had not yet appeared. Thus many football players also played rugby and vice-versa. As Canadian football teams also had a limited number of opponents at this time, the extra activity was welcomed by both sports. Since the Second World War the two sports have maintained separate and distinct existences. The fact that Canadian football offers no amateur competition beyond the university age group meant that many ex-football players were attracted to rugby.

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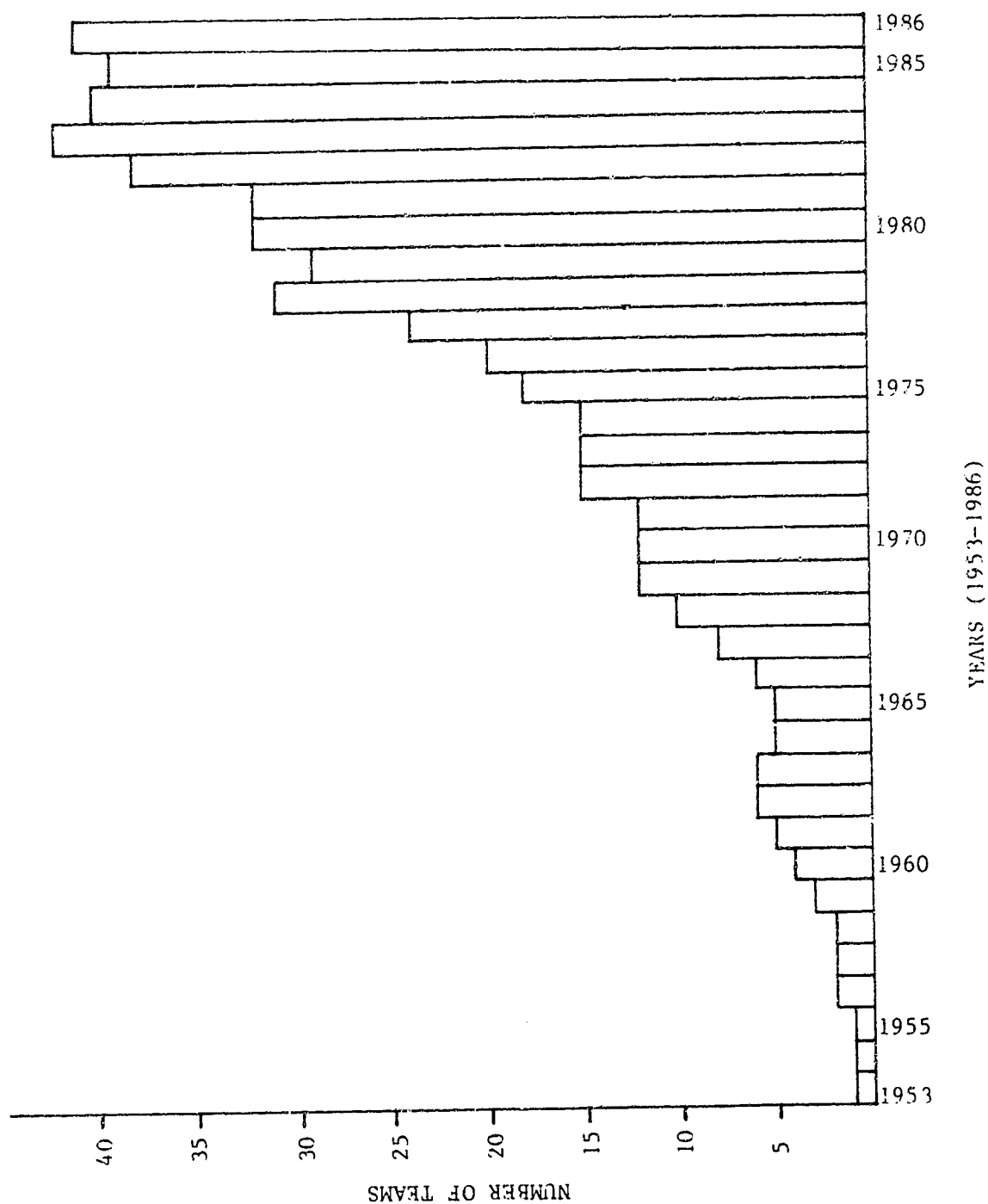
<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p 337.

The names of the present rugby clubs in Edmonton still reflect the British and Irish influence that was the key to rugby's revival after the Second World War. The decisive difference has been the involvement of more and more Canadian players during the last 30 years. Thus rugby was allowed to expand successfully through high school, university, and junior club programs without relying on immigration. The dramatic increase in the number of players was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the responsibilities of the Edmonton Rugby Union. Many hard working volunteers have contributed to the success of the E.R.U.'s executive functions. Initially many of these volunteers were British and Irish expatriates, while more recently they have been Canadians. The completion of the Ellerslie Rugby Park, although it was a burden for some time, forced the E.R.U. to expand its administrative abilities until it became a professionally run amateur sports organization. Rugby clubs all over northern Alberta benefitted from the example provided and rugby has emerged as one of the most popular participant sports in Edmonton and Alberta.

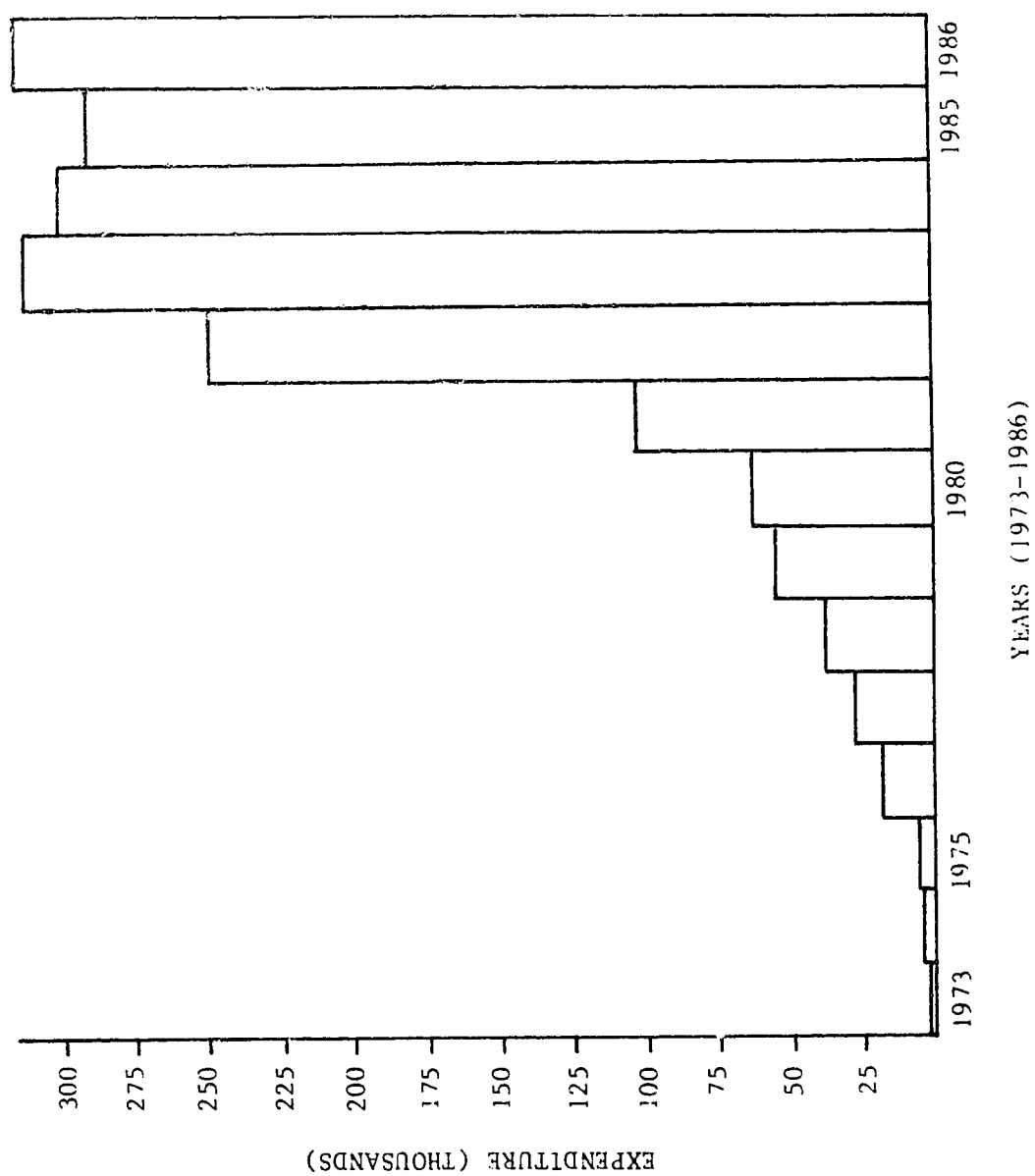
**FIGURE I**  
**GRAPH SHOWING THE POPULATION OF EDMONTON 1891-1983**



**FIGURE II**  
**GRAPH SHOWING THE NUMBER OF RUGBY TEAMS IN NORTHERN**  
**ALBERTA**  
**1953-1986**



**FIGURE III**  
**GRAPH SHOWING EDMONTON RUGBY UNION EXPENDITURE**  
**1973-1986**



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# **APPENDIX I** **LIST OF RUGBY CLUBS IN NORTHERN ALBERTA**

Edmonton Rugby Football Club	1892-1909
Fort Saskatchewan Rugby Football Club	1895-1898
Strathcona Rugby Football Club	1907-1909
Edmonton Barbarians Rugby Football Club	1912-1914
Edmonton British Rugby Football Club	1920-1930
Alberta Government Telephones Department	1921
Edmonton Welsh Rugby Football Club	1921-1930*
Harlequins Rugby Football Club	1922-1923
Canadian National Athletic Association	1923-1925
Edmonton Eskimos British Rugby Football Club	1924-1929
Garrison Rugby Football Club	1926
Tigers Rugby Football Club	1927
Westmount Irish Rugby Football Club	1929-1930
Edmonton Rugby Football Club (Pirates)	1953 to date
Edmonton Wanderers Rugby Football Club	1956-1957
Edmonton Tigers Rugby Football Club	1958 to date

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\* The Edmonton Welsh did not compete in 1924.

Edmonton Barbarians Rugby Football Club	1959-1963
Edmonton Druids Rugby Football Club	1960 to date
University of Alberta Golden Bears R.F.C.	1961-1981**
Edmonton Leprechauns Rugby Football Club	1962 to date
Edmonton Clansmen Rugby Football Club	1967 to date
Red Deer Titans Rugby Football Club	1972 to date
Nor'westers Athletic Association	1974 to date
Fort McMurray Knights Rugby Football Club	1974 to date
Edmonton Rockers Women's Rugby Football Club	1977 to date
Jasper Dregs Rugby Football Club	1978 to date
Thunderbirds Rugby Football Club	1978
Peace River Griffins Rugby Football Club	1979-1982
Leduc Crude Rugby Football Club	1981 to date
St. Albert Rugby Football Club	1981 to date
Grande Prairie Centaurs Rugby Football Club	1982 to date
Edmonton Coven Women's Rugby Football Club	1983 to date
Edson Axemen Rugby Football Club	1985 to date

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\*\* The University of Alberta Golden Bears did not compete in Edmonton Rugby Union competition from 1974 to 1976.

University of Alberta Rugby Football Club

1985 to date\*\*\*

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\*\*\* The University of Alberta R.F.C. compete only in intercollegiate rugby and not within Edmonton Rugby Union competition.

## APPENDIX II

### ALBERTA RUGBY UNION AWARDS

#### BATEMAN CUP

Calgary vs Edmonton senior  
representative sides, 2 game  
total point competition.

Date of donation: 1973

Donor: Bruce Bateman

YEAR	WINNER
------	--------

1973	Edmonton
1974	Calgary
1975	Calgary
1976	Edmonton
1977	Calgary
1978	Tied
1979	Calgary
1980	Edmonton
1981	Edmonton
1982	Calgary
1983	Edmonton
1984	Edmonton
1985	Edmonton
1986	Edmonton

#### WINCHESTER CUP

Calgary vs Edmonton under 19  
representative sides, 2 game  
total points competition.

Date of donation: Original cup  
missing - replaced 1984

YEAR	WINNER
------	--------

1983	Edmonton
1984	Calgary
1985	Calgary
1986	Edmonton

#### FRANK WRIGHT CUP

Calgary vs Edmonton under 23  
representative sides, 2 games  
total points competition.

Donor: Frank Wright

YEAR	WINNER
------	--------

1985	Calgary
1986	Edmonton

**A.W.R.U. CHAMPIONSHIP****Alberta Womens' 1st Division****Date of donation: 1981****Donor: A.W.R.U.**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>WINNER</b>
1981	Rockers W.R.F.C.
1982	Rockers W.R.F.C.
1983	Rockers W.R.F.C.
1984	Rockers W.R.F.C.
1985	Rockers W.R.F.C.
1986	Rockers W.R.F.C.

### APPENDIX III EDMONTON RUGBY UNION AWARDS

**KENANN CUP**

Edmonton 1st division  
championship Date of donation: 1980  
Date of donation: 1962  
Donor: Ken and Nancy Holmes

**DUNHILL SHIELD**

Edmonton's best overall club.  
Donor: Peter Harcourt

YEAR	WINNER	WINNER	YEAR
1962	Tigers	1979	Leprechauns
1963	Tigers	1980	Clansmen
1964	Leprechauns	1981	Clansmen
1965	Leprechauns	1982	Clansmen
1966	Druids	1983	Clansmen
1967	Druids	1984	Clansmen
1968	Druids	1985	Clansmen
1969	Golden Bears	1986	Clansmen
1970	Golden Bears		
1971	Leprechauns		
1972	Leprechauns		
1973	Leprechauns		
1974	Leprechauns		
1975	Leprechauns		
1976	Clansmen		
1977	Clansmen		
1978	Leprechauns		
1979	Clansmen		
1980	Clansmen		
1981	Leprechauns		
1982	Tigers		
1983	Clansmen		
1984	Clansmen		
1985	Pirates		
1986	Leprechauns		

**J.W. SHAW CUP**

Edmonton 2nd division.

Date of donation: 1968

Donor: John Shaw

YEAR	WINNER
1968	Druids
1969	Druids
1970	Golden Bears
1971	Druids
1972	Leprechauns
1973	Druids
1974	Druids
1975	Druids
1976	Red Deer Titans
1977	Golden Bears
1978	Golden Bears
1979	Leprechauns
1980	Fort McMurray
1981	Red Deer Titans
1982	Fort McMurray
1983	Clansmen
1984	Clansmen
1985	Fort McMurray
1986	Fort McMurray

**VISSER SHIELD**

Edmonton 3rd division.

Date of donation: 1977

Donor: Frank Visser

YEAR	WINNER
1977	Druids
1978	Clansmen
1979	Leprechauns
1980	Clansmen
1981	Leprechauns
1982	Clansmen
1983	Clansmen
1984	Clansmen
1985	Leduc Crude
1986	Clansmen

**JACK EVANS CUP**

Edmonton 4th division.

Date of donation: 1983

Donor: Jack Evans

YEAR	WINNER
1983	Leprechauns
1984	Druids
1985	Nor'westers
1986	Nor'westers

**NOR'WESTER SHIELD**

Edmonton under 19  
championship.

Date of donation: 1980

Donor: N.W.A.A.

YEAR	WINNER
1980	Tigers
1981	Red Deer/Clansmen
1982	Red Deer Titans
1983	Leprechauns
1984	St. Albert
1985	St. Albert
1986	St. Albert

**E.R.U MVP**

Edmonton's most valuable  
player.

Date of donation: 1981

Donor: Labatts

YEAR	WINNER
1981	D. Holland/D. Tucker
1982	D. Tucker
1983	J. Goldgrave
1984	J. Phelan
1985	J. Phelan
1985	R. Walsh

**McGEE CUP**

Edmonton's most  
sportsmanlike club.

Date of donation: 1973

Donor: Mr. and Mrs. McGee

YEAR	WINNER
1974	Druids
1975	Nor'westers
1976	Golden Bears
1977	Golden Bears
1978	
1979	
1980	
1981	Druids
1982	St. Albert
1983	Jasper
1984	Tigers
1985	Druids
1986	Tigers

**ADMINISTRATOR OF THE  
YEAR**

Edmonton's most valuable  
administrator

Date of donation: 1983

Donor: Labatts

YEAR	WINNER
1983	S. Cowen
1984	J. Reinbold
1985	B. Giffen
1986	A. Hancock

# **APPENDIX IV** **EDMONTON RUGBY UNION OFFICE HOLDERS**

1961	President	D. Swail
1961	President	D. Ferris
1962	President	R.F. Miller
1963 & 1964	President	D. Webster
1965	President	B. Jones
1966	President	J. Evans
1966	President	N. Dant
1967	President	B. Jones
1968 & 1969	President	J.W. Shaw
1970 & 1971	President	C.J. Ireland
1972 & 1973	President	D. M. Whidden
1974	President	G.W.R. King
	Treasurer/	
	Acting Secretary	P. Chaloner
	Fixtures Secretary	J. Parton
1975	Public Relations Officer	F. Hunt
	President	G.W.R. King
	Vice-President	R.H.C. Cowper
	Treasurer	G. Davies
	Fixtures Secretary	J. Parton
	Public Relations Officer	J.A. Stothart
1976	Social Convenor	B. Switzer
	President	R.H.C. Cowper
	Vice-President/	
	Secretary	J. Normandeau
	Treasurer	S. Cowen
	Fixtures Secretary	R. Axelson
	Public Relations Officer	T. Burns
	Social Convenor	D. Whidden

1977	President	R.H.C. Cowper
	Vice-President/	
	Secretary	P. Harcourt
	Treasurer	B. McMillan
	Fixtures Secretary	D. Gardiner - replaced by N. Forsyth
	Public Relations Officer	T. Burns
1978 & 1979	Social Convenor	D. Whidden
	President	P. Harcourt
	Vice-President/Rugby	A. Johnston
	Vice-President/Ellerslie	I. Evans
	Secretary/Treasurer	F. Visser(1978)
	<u>Director</u>	
	Public Relations	T. Burns(1978) B. Game(1979)
	Fixtures	S.Dillworth
	Representative Rugby	J. Shaw
	Ellerslie	R. McGinn
	Junior Development	J. Wells
	Fund Raising	D. Sinclair(1978) S. Cowen(1979)
1980 &1981	Past President (Casinos)	R. Cowper
	President	S. Cowen
	Vice-President/Rugby	R. Marsh
	Vice-President/Ellerslie	R. Cowper
	Secretary/Treasurer	D. Walker
	Past President	P. Harcourt
	<u>Directors</u>	
	Public Relations	T. Boyle
	Junior Development	J. O'Hanley
	Fixtures	R. Axelson(1980)

		A.Hancock(1981)
	Representative Rugby	J. Shaw
	Discipline	J. Mooney
	Rugbyfest	J. Morris
1982 & 1983	President	I Evans
	Vice-President/Rugby	J. O'Hanley(1982)
		J. Shaw(1983)
	Vice-President/Ellerslie	T. Boyle
	Secretary/Treasurer	D. Walker
	Past President	S. Cowen
	<u>Directors</u>	
	Public Relations	J. Osrunn(1982)
		D. Graham(1982)
	Junior Rugby	J. Morris(1982)
		M. Downs(1983)
	Senior Representative Rugby	J. Shaw(1982)
	Fixtures	A. Hancock
		J. Bishop(1983)
	Discipline	B. McAlpine
	Stadium Beer Sales	S. Parsons
1984 & 1985	President	J. W. Shaw
	Vice-President/Rugby	M. Downs(1984)
		J. Whyte(1985)
	Secretary/Treasurer	R. Marsh(1984)
		L. Jackson(1985)
	Past President	I. Evans
	<u>Directors</u>	
	Public Relations	D. Graham
	Fixtures	A. Hancock
	Senior Representative Rugby	R. Allen
	Junior Rugby	R. Reed(1984)
		P. Pomerleau(1985)
	Discipline	J. Whyte(1984) D. McQuaid(1985)

1986	President	B. Caldwell - replaced by L. Jackson
	Vice-President/Rugby	W. Gittins
	Vice-President/Ellerslie	I. Evans
	Treasurer	L. Jackson
	Secretary	J. Seddon
	<u>Directors</u>	
	Public Relations	D. Graham
	Senior Representative Rugby	B. Tucker
	Junior Rugby	P. Pomerleau
	Under-23s	A. Hancock
	Fixtures	S. Dillworth
	Discipline	M. Downs