

6th Annual
Canadian Baseball History Conference
Royal St. George's College, Toronto
Presentation Schedule

Saturday, November 4th

- 8:00–9:00 Registration and coffee
- 9:00–9:15 Welcome and announcements
- 9:15–9:45 Stephen Dame: **Their Voices Rang With That Aryan Twang: Softball, Swastikas and the Riot at Christie Pits**

Toronto's worst incident of civil unrest happened in one of its most storied ball parks. More than six hours of brawls, bloodbaths and beatings were unleashed at the corner of Bloor and Christie streets because of tensions built during fifteen years of postwar animus and released during nine innings of junior softball. It was a race riot, it was a lawless free for all, it was a surge which menaced the innocent. It was also the oppressed launching a counterstrike against their oppressors. The riot at Christie Pits Park permanently scarred the city of Toronto and its perennial branding as tolerant, orderly and just.

- 9:45–10:15 David Siegel: **The Toronto Maple Leafs – The Barrow Years 1900-1902**

Ed Barrow is renowned as the Hall of Fame general manager who turned a hapless Yankees franchise into a dynasty. Earlier in his career he passed through Toronto where he worked similar magic on a smaller stage as he learned his craft. This presentation will feature baseball, real estate wheeling and dealing, and an illicit love affair. There's certain to be something for everyone.

- 10:15–10:45 Break

- 10:45–11:15 David Simmons: **"So You Think You Know Baseball"**

Harry Simmons was a baseball historian, writer and executive who lived in Montreal from 1953 to 1995. He was an expert on the rules of baseball who served on the Major League Rules Committee. He was the author of the very popular and influential "So You Think You Know Baseball" series which ran weekly in the *Saturday Evening Post* from 1949 to 1961. The series was also printed in many

editions in book form starting in 1962, and later ran in *Baseball Digest*. In this presentation, his son David Simmons will examine how the series was developed and discuss the many changes to the rules of baseball which resulted from the articles.

11:15 – 11:45 **Bill Humber: ... and the Cheese Sailed for Europe**

Bad poetry, a mammoth 7,300 pound block of cheese, and a population briefly surpassing nearby rival Woodstock, coalesced as Ingersoll, Ontario entered its sweet spot in history. This euphoric wave was crowned with their successful run to the Canadian baseball championship in 1868. Alas the latter lasted only ten days, the poetry didn't improve, the cheese sailed for Europe and many of Ingersoll's baseball heroes met larcenous or tragic ends. Shakespearean in its denouement nevertheless Ingersoll, just down the road from baseball's still controversial unfolding in Beachville, played a central role in the Canadian game's early independent history.

12:00–1:30 Lunch

1:30–2:00 **Benno Rosinke: Canadian League Alumni**

The Canadian League of 1911 through 1915 punched above its weight during its short life. Although considered a Class D or Class C league, it produced 53 major leaguers, an average of 10 a year. Several of these men were high profile major leaguers (World Series winners, 20 game winners, .300 hitters or All-stars). The league also produced members of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, the Football Hall of Fame and the Hockey Hall of Fame, not to mention one of baseball's top scouts, who opened up the Major Leagues to Cuban players.

2:00–2:30 **Paul Allen: Negro League Players' Impact on the Intercountry Baseball League**

Through research and interviews with former Intercountry Baseball League (IBL) players, this presentation will briefly trace the history of the IBL, one of the oldest continuously played baseball leagues in North America. Attention will be focused on the "glory years" of 1948-1959, a period that saw the arrival of the first legendary Negro League players. In addition to stories about these iconic Negro League stars, the paper will present statistics that highlight the extraordinary performances of Wilmer Fields, Shanty Clifford, Jimmy Wilkes, Jeep Jessup, Ed Steele, and notable Canadian players Earl "Flat" Chase, Manny McIntyre, Freddie Thomas, and several other outstanding IBL players.

2:30–3:00 Break and book signing

3:00–3:30

David McDonald: **Marshall McLuhan and the Death of Baseball**

In the 1960s groundbreaking Canadian communications guru Marshall McLuhan, the medium-is-the-message messenger, predicted that baseball, a product of a fading, individualistic, one-thing-at-a-time mechanical culture, would not survive in the emerging electronic age. “Baseball is doomed,” McLuhan said. “It is a dying sport.” Surpassing it in popularity, he thought (not incorrectly), would be TV-friendly, physically combative, collective sports like football, basketball and hockey. This from a theorist who, three decades before their arrival, saw the Internet and the smartphone bringing about the Global Village we now inhabit. How did he get the demise of baseball, a favourite game from his own childhood, so wrong?

3:30–4:00 Wayne Patterson: **Cradle of Canadians in Major League Baseball**

According to Baseball-Reference.com there have been 260 Major Leaguers born in Canada. Of this list, 135 (roughly half) were born in Ontario. A closer look, however, suggests that the richest source of Canadian Major Leaguers is actually New Brunswick. With a population of 775,610, New Brunswick has produced 17 major leaguers --- more than two per 100,000 population. Although Ontario has produced 135 Major Leaguers, British Columbia 40 and Quebec 32, these represent less than half the rate of New Brunswick on a per 100,000 basis. This presentation will document the impact of the 17 New Brunswick Major Leaguers, providing sketches of nine. One was a teammate of many of the Chicago Black Sox; another was blocked from the majors because the Dodgers had to keep Sandy Koufax in Brooklyn because of the Bonus Baby rule; a third also won the Stanley Cup.

4:00–4:15 Brad Spencer: **Home Plate: Labatt Memorial Park**

Home Plate is a documentary short film about the oldest operating baseball grounds in the world, Labatt Memorial Park, in London Ontario, and the London Majors, who have been lucky enough to call this park home for the last 98 years. The film celebrates one of the Forest City's greatest treasures that has been bringing the community together for 146 years.

Sunday, November 5th

8:00–9:00 Registration and coffee

9:00–9:30 Martin Lacoste: **The Odd Couple: Two Very Different Border League Hall-of-Famers**

The second iteration of the Border League was a Class C league with six teams from Ontario, Quebec and New York that operated from 1946-1951. The most successful franchise was the Ottawa Nationals/Senators, but of the many high-caliber players on the team, only a handful of them would ever reach the major leagues. Two of these stand out however, as both are Hall-of-Famers, despite only playing a combined total of 21 games between them in the AL/NL. Yet their stories could not be more dissimilar, each fascinating in its own right; find out more about their journeys in this presentation.

9:30–10:00 Andrew North: **Beachville Revisited**

It was a game apparently played in a farmer's field behind a blacksmith's shop, and not described until nearly 50 years afterward, that put Canada on the baseball map. Referred to today as the Beachville game, it has been celebrated by both the Canadian postal service and the Royal Canadian Mint, yet it remains a subject of debate among historians. This presentation addresses the controversy surrounding the game's report, provides some recent additional evidence in support of its legitimacy, and attempts to argue why it matters.

10:00–10:30 Break

10:30–11:00 Bill Park: **Not Quite Showtime**

Minor league baseball was dying in Toronto throughout the 1960s. The Toronto Maple Leafs had consistently winning teams and copped three championships, but attendance dwindled nonetheless. Bill Park was the batboy for the 1964 and 1965 teams, and saw AAA professional baseball from the inside. Sparky Anderson and Dick Williams were first time managers with those teams and had very different approaches. One club was composed of veterans, the other mostly of rookies. Both teams had winning seasons, and one made the playoffs and then won it all. The presentation is a study in contrasts describing life in the clubhouse, in the dugout, on the road, as well as the elephants in the room.

11:00 – 11:30 Robyn Jensen: **When Racial Spikes were Sharp, Competition for Prize Money Intense and Tempers Short: An Analysis of Western Canada Semi-pro Baseball in the Fifties and the 1952 Rosetown Riot in Particular.**

In July 1952, during day one of the annual Rosetown baseball tournament, an incident occurred between two teams: the North Battleford Beavers (an integrated group of Caucasian Canadians and African-American players) and the Florida Cubans (African-Spanish players from Cuba). A scuffle started and escalated to a player being hit over the head with a bat, blowing up to a full-out chase scene only seen in the movies, ending with a player barricaded in a farmhouse, holding a knife and fearing for his life. The Rosetown Riot event reveals racism and Saskatchewan baseball's wild and unleashed competitive behaviours in the early 1950s.

11:30–1:00 Lunch

1:00–1:30 Dennis Thiessen: **The Telegraph, World Series, and Canadian Baseball Fans, 1910-1930**

In the early decades of the 20th century, baseball was the most popular sport in Canada. By the 1920s, the World Series was the greatest national event, one that was “watched” each year by thousands of Canadian baseball fans outside a newspaper building or in an indoor setting (e.g. theatre or hall) far removed from the two cities in which the teams competed. Canadian fans witnessed a remote and live re-creation of each game on a mechanical or an electric scoreboard. A telegraph operator at the site of the game regularly sent succinct reports of the current action on the field to another operator in a Canadian city or town who in turn passed the update to a broadcaster. With the aid of a megaphone, the broadcaster described the play to awaiting fans while one or more technicians scurried to represent the announced action on the scoreboard. In this presentation, I will introduce examples of mechanical or electronic scoreboards that were used in different parts of Canada. I will also discuss how these telegraph-informed scoreboards enriched fans’ knowledge of baseball and set the stage for subsequent developments in the broadcast of baseball games through radio and eventually television.

1:30–2:00 Doug Fox: **Chick Hafey Visits Port McNicoll**

Imagine a Major League Baseball team - with their modern state-of-the art training, rehab, and sport science facilities in Arizona and Florida - sending their best player

(in mid-season, no less) to a tiny town a ten hour drive away for rest and recovery while the team battled for a post-season berth. That's exactly what happened in July of 1932, when Cincinnati Reds manager Dan Howley sent slugger Chick Hafey - the defending National League batting champ - to stay at the home of Howley's friend Jim Shaw in Port McNicoll, Ontario, to heal from a severe bout of influenza. Whatever happened in the two weeks Hafey stayed with the Shaws was unknown, but it served as a tonic for him - over the next two seasons, Hafey appeared in more games than at any other point in his career. This is a story about much more than baseball. It's about health, player-management relations in the Golden Age of baseball, Great Lakes shipping, and most importantly - friendship.

2:00 – 2:30 Break

2:30 – 3:00 Jim Hostetler and Bob Axon: **The Story of Canadian Baseball Bats**

When I first heard of the Young Canadian club of Woodstock (formed in 1860 and champions for much of the next decade) questions arose. What did they use for bats? Where were these bats made? We will probably never be able to answer these questions fully. However, existing handle companies, sometimes called turning companies, could easily supply bats. Such companies existed in southeastern Ontario, Canada West and Quebec. They succeeded despite severe competition from American companies. New companies were also formed, a trend which continues today.

3:00 – 3:30 David Matchett: **From a Canadian Researcher's Notebook**

Baseball researcher David Matchett will deliver a lightning round of short presentations related to the history of baseball in Canada, including Canadian baseball's link to a Ben Affleck thriller, Cassburn, Ontario's Bob Steele's vagabond summer of 1918, the first Quebecois batter in the major leagues, Vladimir Guerrero Jr.'s unbreakable record that nobody noticed, and others. Inspired by ESPN's *Pardon the Interruption* and an annual article in the *SABR Baseball Research Journal* by Al Kermisch, David will be on the clock to power through this material in the allotted time.

3:30 Closing remarks