

2025 Canadian Baseball History Conference

Presentation Schedule

Saturday, November 1st

8:00 - 9:00 Registration and breakfast

9:00 - 9:15 Welcome and announcements

9:15 - 9:45 Dennis Thiessen: **“What Constitutes an Amateur Baseballist?” A Challenge for the Canadian Association of Amateur Base Ball Players in 1880**

This presentation will examine the unwritten but commonly understood amateur code that informed how amateur baseball players in Ontario played the game through most of the 1870s. After a conceptual comparison of the amateur athlete and professional athlete under discussion and debate in the wider amateur sports community, the presentation will address two of the core features of amateur baseball in Ontario in the 1870s. It will then provide an overview of amateur baseball in Ontario in the 1877-to-1881 period and delve into the challenge to the amateur code that erupted at the end of 1880 season, when the three leading teams in the Canadian Association of Amateur Base Ball Players accused each other of using paid players (e.g., through letters submitted to the *Toronto Globe* and *Toronto Daily Mail*). Their dispute threw into stark relief some of the core practices of amateurism and, in so doing, added further clarity about what constitutes an amateur baseballist in Ontario in 1880. The presentation will conclude with an analysis of how characteristics of the amateur baseballist of 1880 differed from various definitions of the amateur athlete espoused by those within the wider amateur sport community in Canada during the last three decades of the 19th century. Amateur baseball in Ontario clearly had its own ideas about how best to define the amateur baseballist.

9:45 - 10:15 Arthur Lierman and Robert K. Barney: **“The Canadian Baseball Gardens”: The Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in St. Marys, Ontario**

On 1 April 1991, Arthur Lierman graduated from the University of Toronto with a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture. A “baseball junkie” throughout his

pre-university days and an avid follower of the fortunes of the Toronto Blue Jays, Lierman's U. of T. thesis focused on creating a plan for a veritable Baseball Paradise Gardens, a parklike grounds setting complete with bucolic walkways and tree-lined promenades, formal gardens and interpretive landscapes, an exaggerated viewing mound, baseball diamonds, even a building to house a prospective Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. His plan was originally presented in 2D drawings, including cross-sections and elevations. Lierman later constructed a 3D model to exhibit his hypothetical idea at the 1991 MLB All-Star Game's FanFest event held in Toronto. He envisioned his "Paradise Gardens" plan being established in Beachville, Ontario, the site of Canadian baseball history's first authenticated event. The historic journey from that humble beginning to Lierman's accomplished landscape design model for the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum precinct in St. Marys stands as an important narrative in St. Marys' finally being awarded the distinction of "re-creating" Canada's National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, a distinction that for some 30 years since has been etched into the DNA of Canadian baseball's historic legacy.

10:15 - 10:30 Break

Toronto Session

10:30 - 11:00 Bill Park: **Diamond Park: The Maple Leafs' Forgotten Ballpark**

The Toronto Maple Leafs played their home games at four different ballparks during their existence between 1895 and 1967. Three of the four sites are relatively well known, and each has a Heritage Toronto plaque near its former location. The presentation will focus on Diamond Park, home to the Maple Leafs from 1901 to 1907, which has been largely forgotten - until now.

11:00 - 11:30 David Siegel: **J.J. McCaffery and the Toronto Maple Leafs: Canada's First Baseball Entrepreneur**

The team that would become the Toronto Maple Leafs played its first game in 1895, and was for 73 years one of the mainstays of the league. However, the team's first few years were marked by instability and turbulence. In 1905, a group of investors led by Toronto hotelier James Johnson McCaffery purchased the team, put it on a sound financial footing, and improved its on-field performance. Over his 18-year tenure, McCaffery took the Leafs from a tenuous year-to-year existence to one of

the most stable entries in the league. He also emerged as a leader among his fellow owners.

11:30 - 12:00 Mackenzie Longpre: From Leafs to Jays: Rico Carty, Phil Roof, and a Trip Through Toronto's Baseball History

Two men link Toronto's baseball present with its glorious past – Phil Roof and Rico Carty are the only people to have played for both the International League Toronto Maple Leafs and the American League Toronto Blue Jays. Both of these men carried a distinguished legacy of Toronto baseball through their careers, using the city as both Minor League springboard and Major League terminus. This presentation will examine each player's career, with particular emphasis on their stops in Toronto, how they wound their way from and back to the city, and both Roof's and Carty's unique Canadian connections.

12:00 - 1:30 Lunch

1:30 - 2:00 Benno Rosinke: The 1899 Canadian Baseball League: A league that could have, would have and should have, but didn't.

Amid the optimism for the future and the growing popularity of baseball, the 1899 Canadian Baseball League was formed. The league had ambitious plans, but did not last out that season. Despite this seemingly massive failure, two significant bright spots emerged. This paper will look at the reasons for the failure, and discuss these two silver linings.

2:00 - 2:30 Christian Trudeau: Brooklyn vs Canada: International Junior Competitions in the 1940s and 1950s

In 1946 and 1947, Brooklyn pitted its best juniors against a team of the best juniors in the “world”, which for the occasion included representatives from Montreal and Toronto. Cities held different contests to determine their representatives, with Montreal organizing a French vs English game. In 1948 the Brooklyn team went on a tour that included stops in Toronto, Montreal and Halifax against local all-star teams. The format moved to a home-and-away series between Brooklyn and Montreal in 1949 and 1950, with each city winning one. By the mid-1950s, a “Brooklyn Dodger Rookies” team of local all-star juniors was formed every summer. In 1957 and 1958 their tour brought them back to Montreal.

2:30 - 3:00 **Justin Mckinney: Digging for ‘Spud’: Tracking Missing Canadians in Major League Record Books**

59 Canadians appeared in the major leagues in the 19th century, with all but four having known death dates. This presentation will explore the lives and careers of the four missing Canadians in Major League history: Jon Morrison, George Walker, Ralph "Spud" Johnson, and Bill Magee, whose final resting places remain unknown. The reasons for their disappearance from the public record are varied, including alcohol, debauchery, poverty, divorce, family trauma, and even rumours of government espionage.

3:00 - 3:30 **Break**

Collectors’ Session

3:30 - 4:00 **Maxwell Kates: Canadian Baseball Antiques Roadshow**

What is my Canadian baseball memorabilia actually worth? Using as case studies a commemorative plaque from Bill Stoneman's second no-hitter, and a 1946 Toronto Maple Leafs program signed by Jackie Robinson, this presentation will analyze the factors used to assess the value of baseball memorabilia, and why your memorabilia might not be worth what you think.

4:00 - 4:30 **Mike Dove: Building Connections & Collections: O-Pee-Chee’s Cultural Impact on Baseball in Canada**

The name O-Pee-Chee (OPC) resonates with Canadians to this day. Beginning as a candy and gum manufacturer in 1911, the company eventually expanded its business into producing sports and non-sports cards. For over thirty-five years, from the late 1950s to the mid 1990s, O-Pee-Chee either distributed or printed baseball cards for the Canadian market. Through these cards, generations became connected to the wider world of professional baseball, which supported the growth of Canadians’ interest in the sport of baseball as it entered a new era and the hobby of baseball card collecting.

4:30 - 5:00 Matt Simpson: Collecting the Northern Hall: Vintage Canadian Content in the Hobby That Defined Our Childhoods

My last presentation explored the Pre-war era of baseball cards, and the Canadian Baseball Hall of Famers, Canadian teams and Canadian card issuers that contributed to the evolution of the hobby that defined our childhoods. We explored the evolution of baseball cards, the Burdick system of classification, and the distribution of Pre-war baseball cards. This paper will examine Canadian content in the Vintage era, from 1952 - 1979. Collectors often debate definitions of baseball card eras, but 1952 was the year Topps released its inaugural set that set the standard for 'modern' baseball cards. As with my last presentation, no good article about baseball cards is complete without a good Top 10 list, so I will propose a list of the Top 10 'Holy Grail' Canadian-connected vintage cards.

Sunday, November 2nd

8:00 - 9:00 Registration and breakfast

9:00 - 9:15 Bob Barney: Update on National Heritage Designation for Labatt Park

9:15 - 9:45 Max Weder: They Weren't Just Hockey Players: The Bentleys and Baseball on the Canadian Prairies in the 1940s and '50s

Jack, Roy, Scoop, Reg, Doug and Max Bentley were six brothers from Delisle, Saskatchewan, a small town forty-five kilometres southwest of Saskatoon. All were fine hockey players, as only Jack didn't have a career as a professional. The most famous are Max and Doug Bentley, members of the Hockey Hall of Fame. But the Bentley brothers were also fine baseball players. Together with Roy's nephew Bev, they were formidable players on the prairies in the 1940s and '50s, playing in the Western Canada League and in numerous tournaments. This presentation will chronicle and highlight their baseball playing days against teams such as the Indian Head Rockets and the Ligon All-Stars.

9:45 - 10:15 Allen Tait: **The Hamilton Franchise in the PONY League: A Cardinal in the Coal Mine?**

The Class D Pennsylvania-Ontario-New York (PONY) League operated from 1939-1956. During this era, the number of operating minor league teams dropped from a 1949 high of 448 to 129 by 1963. The Hamilton franchise, the primary “O” in the league, was a case study in this decline. Hamilton, despite winning the 1955 pennant, disbanded operations in May 1956. This presentation will provide an overview of the Hamilton Cardinals’ history. The overview will also note prominent PONY League alumni, including two original Montreal Expos, and the Canadian teams that briefly operated in the revamped New York-Penn League (1957 – 2020).

10:15 - 10:45 Bill Sproule: **The *Edmund Fitzgerald* and Baseball**

The Great Lakes freighter *Edmund Fitzgerald* sank during a Lake Superior storm on November 10, 1975, and although there have been many ships that have sunk on the Great Lakes, the *Fitzgerald* is probably the most famous. This presentation will explore the history of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, its sinking, Canadian Gordon Lightfoot’s memorable song, and its fascinating connection to baseball.

10:45 - 11:00 Break

11:00 - 11:30 Jim Shearon: **Who was better, Marchildon or Fowler?**

Phil Marchildon and Dick Fowler were Ontario-born pitchers who became famous with the Toronto Maple Leafs, and later were room-mates for seven years with the Philadelphia Athletics between 1941 and 1949. Marchildon pitched nine years in the major leagues, Fowler ten. Marchildon had a career record of 68 wins and 75 losses; Fowler won 66 and lost 79. Marchildon won 17 games in 1942 and 19 in 1947, while Fowler won 15 games in 1947 and again in 1948. He also pitched a no hitter. So who was better? The author argues that while Marchildon has received more recognition, Dick Fowler was one of the most underrated pitchers in Canadian baseball history.

11:30 - 12:00 Paul Cano: **A Ballpark Tour of the Intercounty Baseball League**

So, what do you do when you want to do a ballpark tour, but don’t want to cross the border? For those in Southern Ontario, it’s pretty simple: visit the ballparks of

the Intercounty Baseball League (IBL). This presentation describes the ballparks of the nine current IBL teams, featuring their history, layout, and game experience such as promotions, mascots and the neighbourhood. The context is a road trip over the summer of 2025. The paper may stoke some rivalries, and perhaps evoke some memories.

12:00 - 12:30 Chip Martin: Brother Matthias Boutilier: The Canadian Who Shaped Babe Ruth

A Canadian was largely responsible for the success of a young man named George Ruth who became a legend in baseball. Brother Matthias Boutilier, a native of Cape Breton Island, was a teacher and baseball coach at St. Mary's Industrial Training School in Baltimore, Maryland. It was there he met a troubled boy taken to the school by his parents. Matthias saw something special in the young lad and spent extra time with him on the school diamond, showing him skills he needed to excel at the game, including an uppercut swing that would make his prodigy a home run king. Ruth himself described the hulking religious brother as a second father figure who taught him not just baseball, but about life. Another brother and coach at St. Mary's received all the credit for discovering and developing Babe Ruth, but Matthias never complained. He and Ruth knew the truth.

12:30 Closing remarks