

# COUNTRY BOY, JEERED IN FIRST RACE, BECAME WORLD CHAMPION

## HUGH J. McCORMICK ONE OF MOST POPULAR MEN IN SPORT HERE

**Kennebecasis River Lad Had Wonderful Career on Ice—Citizens Gave Him Great Testimonial When He Brought Crown Home**

REFERENCE to the old time skaters who made the name of Saint John known the world over in ice sports, as it was in shipping, through its famous clipper, and in rowing through the fame of the noted Paris crew, could not better be begun than with something about Hugh J. McCormick. There probably has never been a more popular Saint John athlete than he. His ascent to the pinnacle of champion skater of the world made no difference in his amiable relations with the great number, rich and otherwise, who were glad to be among his friends.

He was always the same—pleasant and friendly, of outstanding honesty in professional sport, one whose word was his bond and one who could be depended on to do and give the best that was in him when the contest demanded it.

**BORE HONORS MODESTLY.** He bore the honors that came to him with the same modesty of demeanor that marked his course through the earlier years when he was developing in speed and stamina for the mightier opponents he was to meet and defeat. When the top of the hill had been reached, and he had to give way to more youthful contenders, he carried on in defeat as in victory. His place at the Willows on the Kennebecasis was always the scene of warm welcome for all. So to in the latter days of his life when he was the popular proprietor of the Three Mile House. There he passed away a few years ago, respected and honored and mourned.

**McCORMICK'S DEBUT.** On April 5, 1883, a series of races was held in the Victoria rink here. Among the contestants who appeared on the ice in the principal race at the call of the starter was a tall, slender young man who, not being attired like the rest of the skaters, was greeted with jeers and cries of "Country."

He wore a pair of long, wooden-top skates such as had never been seen in the rink here before and many were the prophecies of his early doom. But the countryman with the long skates turned the laugh on the crowd by winning easily. His name was Hugh J. McCormick, later to be hailed the champion skater of the world.

An old record of this event states that a curious thing in connection with that first race of his was that the prize was money and the claim of the other contestants, who were well known sports in the city, to the title of amateur had never been questioned.

**HE FORGES AHEAD.** In the following winter, McCormick, feeling that he was as good a skater

as any, began to practice in rinks and subsequently disturbed the equilibrium of the skating world by appearing in New York, smashing records right and left. He paid two visits to New York and was obliged on both occasions to give exhibitions, no skater having sufficient hardihood to meet him. Afterwards he defeated Alex Paulsen, the acknowledged champion, and the leading Canadian skaters, including Laidlaw, Black, Whelpley and Dowd.

Paulsen still being dissatisfied, McCormick met him again in Minneapolis and put him to rout. Before McCormick left there the great Norwegian speeder acknowledged to him that he was no match for the New Brunswicker and that, in his opinion, there was not a man living who could approach McCormick on the ice.

**HAD NOTABLE RECORD.** McCormick was a native of this province, as is well known. His home was a few miles from Saint John, on the Kennebecasis River. From the time when he could first strap on a pair of skates he had always been fond of skating and he had excellent opportunities right at his door on the sweeping stretches of the river. From his winning of that race in the Victoria rink up to his wrestling of the championship from Paulsen he had skated in some 60 races, in addition to exhibitions and had been beaten five times—three times by Frank Dowd at Montreal, one by Carvell at Pictou and once by Paulsen at Minneapolis.

The two latter contests were lost by the merest accident. At Pictou he was well ahead of Carvell, but tripped and fell and at Minneapolis he had the race well in hand but was tripped by a chair. The races lost to Dowd were skated in a small, oblong rink where Dowd was thoroughly at home and to which McCormick was not accustomed. But, leaving accidents out of the question a record of 35 victories out of 60 starts was one of which McCormick might well have felt proud.

The best record skaters in the United States at the time were the Donaghu brothers, of whom Joe was

### "BEV" AND "AL" IN SKATING DAYS



The Stevens brothers were prominent in the skating game in other days in Saint John and took part in many competitions.

the fleetest. Hugh had a few trials with Joe Donaghu in Minneapolis and said that he felt no reason whatever to be afraid of him. The Donaghu's still retained their amateur status but it was considered probable then that the next winter Joe would enter the professional ranks if he did he said he would challenge McCormick's title of champion.

**McCORMICK'S RECORDS.** The records allowed to McCormick by the N. Y. Clipper, the recognized sporting authority of the day, were as follows: One mile, 2:48; in the Victoria rink, Saint John, April 5, 1883; two miles, 6:45; same place and date; three miles, 10:40; four miles, 14:18; six miles, 21:22; nine miles, 32:17; 10 miles, 36:58; 11 miles, 39:48; 12 miles, 43 min.; 13 miles, 46:57; 14 miles, 50:45; all in Crystal rink, Montreal. These were all the best of the day with the exception of an amateur record of 2:12 5-8 for the mile, made by Tim Donaghu, Jr., on a straightaway course with a strong wind at his back. The five mile record 17:17 was held by Dowd until that winter when Joe Donaghu made it in 16:34 2-5. The last McCormick said he would try to beat in Saint John before that season closed, was in a race with Laidlaw at

the Victoria rink. Hugh made five miles in 16:53, but for some reason the record was not allowed.

**ALWAYS HONEST.** McCormick was always a professional, but an honest one. That is one most commendable feature of his record as a sportsman, that he has skated an absolutely honest race at all times. If professionals of that time states the Daily Telegraph of that date, who were ruling the sport of dishonest practices were to pattern more after Hugh McCormick, there would be less of that public distrust which was believed to exist, of all sports into which professionalism entered. There was never any suspicion against McCormick of selling a race. He was the world champion of whom Saint John could well boast.

**CHALLENGE NO MORE.** A reporter who called on Hugh on March 12, 1890, was received with that courtesy for which the champion was famous. During the course of an interesting conversation McCormick said that he would issue no further challenges. As he had fairly earned the title of champion of the world it was the place of anyone wishing to dispute it to challenge him. Hugh exhibited

## BROTHERS WERE LEADERS ON ICE

"Bev." and "Al." Stevens Prominent in Eighties and Nineties.

Former Was N. B. and Maritime Speed Champion; Latter Fancy Skater

The Stevens brothers, "Bev." and "Al." were among the best known of the skaters in the 80's and 90's, the former being interested in the speed game and the latter in fancy skating. Both were amateur skaters and they have many medals to testify to their prowess on the steel blades.

Beginning when very young, Bev soon gave evidence that he was possessed of more than average speed on skates and he rapidly forged to the front rank until he had won both the championship of New Brunswick and the North American continent, giving exhibitions in many of the Canadian and American cities. He was one of the leading contenders for the first skating championship of the world, making Louis Rubenstein, who held the title for some years, extend himself on every occasion they met, to hold his title. On skating to place Al was probably the best that ever was seen in action in this country, but his lack of weight was against him when it came to the figures requiring spinning and pivoting, the specialty of Rubenstein.

with pleasure some handsome presents he had received on his last tour, including a very good representation of his own well-known features drawn a noted artist in Minneapolis. In 1890 Hugh was just 50 years of age and consequently in the prime of his manhood. While he is justly proud of his laurels, no man ever wore them more becomingly.

**GIVEN TESTIMONIAL.** In the Palace rink on the evening of March 12, 1890, a wonderful reception was tendered to Hugh McCormick on his return to Saint John after winning the world's championship in the skating meet at Minneapolis. His friends and admirers presented to him a gold watch, the presentation being made by A. O. Skinner. An address signed by the following citizens was also presented: Mayor Lockhart, J. A. Harding, Thos. Gorman, D. C. Clinch, W. H. Hathe-

way, A. C. Smith, A. O. Skinner, W. H. Thorne, John Kelly, Phillip Granman, Thos. Kyffin, Dr. Sangster, Arthur Martin, William Tierney, Edward Hancy, P. Keane, J. Gallagher, Thos. Kyffin, Jr., A. H. Phillips, Terrence J. Ferrie, D. Doherty, Geo. McFarlane, F. Giggey, T. Boak, Frank J. Sweeney, Wm. Howard, P. McGoldrick, J. Patton, Geo. Nixon, H. L. Sturdee, Geo. W. Jones, S. S. deForest, A. C. Fairweather, Peter Clinch, Hon. G. E. King, Geo. McArthur, Geo. Murphy, John McManus, M. McCullough, Hugh Campbell, M. A. Harding, B. Gallagher, W. J. Higgins, W. J. Pluman, C. Kyff, M. Morris, J. E. Gilliland, James Crawford, M. McLeod, Jas. Montgomery, T. McMas-

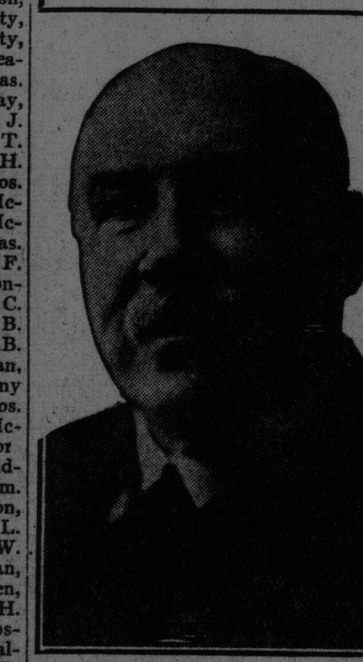
ters, Geo. W. Hoben, R. J. Walsh, John O'Gorman, Florence McCarthy, A. O. Crookshank, M. Hannratty, Thos. Burke, B. McIntyre, Wm. Peacock, Jos. P. Doherty, Wm. Hunter, Jas. J. Power, P. Doherty, C. H. Ramsay, H. L. Fitzpatrick, E. Bourke, Wm. J. Crowe, M. Conner, Jas. Bond, A. T. Moore, Jacob Kemp, J. Driscoll, H. Stevens, A. Belyes, J. E. Loyd, Thos. Willet, F. Irvine, T. Perrell, Jas. McHugh, Thos. Kichham, James McHugh, Thos. Mullin, Geo. Morrison, J. C. Robertson, C. J. Tonnev, W. B. Rankine, M. Morrisey, Wm. Boop, B. Callaghan, T. Daly, John MacGowan, Jas. Quinn, Jas. Dalton, Anthony Perle, P. Marry, Alonso Price, Thos. Durick, Richard Kirvan, John McGrath, Frank B. Corbett, T. J. Morgan, James Morgan, John McGoldrick, L. B. Ross, Thos. McGuire, Wm. Doherty, Frank H. Foster, J. Clawson, H. B. Schofield, M. Hogan, E. L. Whittaker, Thos. McLone, A. W. Peters, Geo. Gorman, Thos. P. Regan, J. V. Troop, E. Lantulum, R. O'Brien, Robert Wisely, J. McKay, R. H. Arnold, J. A. Morrison, J. L. McCoskey, Robert Bourke, M. & H. Gallagher, M. Crowley, F. A. Jones, D. J. Purdy, Chas. Harrison, H. H. McLean, Arch. Chapley, J. O'Regan, R. Hillard, H. L. Cole, Jas. Stratton, A. O. deForest, P. J. Cronin, Manchester Robertson Allison, Dr. G. A. Hetherington, E. Colwell, P. B. Ellis, Charles Bell, H. J. Thorne, Wm. Knowlton, J. D. Hazen, Geo. MacDonald, Dr. Thos. Walker, Dr. Magee, Robert W. May, E. & R. McLeod, James Murray, Hon. R. J. Ritchie, H. J. Doherty, Jas. Boyle, Oscar Collins, D. J. Doherty, Edward McBratney, J. Murphy, E. Smith, W. Chamberlain, C. Menahan, Sr., Thos. Bell, W. C. McCormick, Isaac G. Stevens, Wm. Daye, F. E. Hannington, John Walsh, Josh Ward, Arch. Cowan, M. A. Finn, W. J. Irving, Robert O'Shaughnessy, James Berry, Norman Gregory, John J. Robertson, Frank L. Tufts, J. F. McCourt, Geo. Smith, John T. Tull, D. Russell Jack, Wm. Sharkey, W. E. Raymond, Charles O'Brien, Felix Sheahan, Peter Thompson, Felix Harratty, John Lahey, Jos. Farren, D. Fleming, Denis O'Brien, Arthur McHugh, John Lowery, G. D. McCarthy, W. S. Barker, Peter Mahony, John Bailey, H. W. Baxter, Alexander Watson, John Keefe, P. L. Bourke, Wm. Clarke, W. B. Ganong, J. M.

(Continued on page 5)

## JOHN O'REGAN SENT McCORMICK INTO HIS FIRST RACE IN RINK

Knew Hugh's Ability and Urged Him to Compete in Victoria Contests—They'd Often Skated Together 30 Miles on the Kennebecasis.

### Brought 'Hughy' Out



JOHN O'REGAN Saint John business man who urged McCormick into his first race in Victoria rink.

How did Hugh McCormick get into the skating game in which he captured world honors? Here's the story. The man who induced him to test his speed and stamina against those in competition in those days of the long ago was John O'Regan, prominent business man of Saint John and president and manager of the Brayley Drug Co., Mill street.

### RECALLS FIRST START.

Mr. O'Regan recalled the incident for the skating edition of this paper, when asked about McCormick's early days. They were friends in their young manhood and Hugh dropped in to Mr. O'Regan's place of business, then in Charlotte street, on a day when there happened to be a series of races in his contests and letting the other man win, but that was not his style and he always remembered that there were men in the old home town who were backing him financially.

replied that he was. "Why don't you take the skates along and give the others a go?" was the next question.

McCormick demurred. He had never skated in a race in a rink, and in his modest opinion of himself, felt that he would have no show against the speeders of the time. Mr. O'Regan thought differently and he finally persuaded the young man from the Kennebecasis to consent. Mr. O'Regan got in touch with members of the committee handling the meet and McCormick was entered.

### SOCKS OVER TROUSERS.

McCormick had his Long Reach skates with him, but he had no skating costume. When he appeared on the ice, he was in marked contrast to the others. He had rolled his woolen socks up over his pantlegs and when the crowd saw him there were jibes at him and laughter at him, for it was thought that he had been sent in as a burlesque. He showed them their error very soon for he made a clean-up, and defeated all his opponents readily. After that he went in for racing seriously.

### OFTEN SKATED TOGETHER.

Mr. O'Regan recalled some of McCormick's victories, reference to which is made elsewhere. He had come to know of Hugh's prowess on the blades by personal experience, for they had skated together on many an occasion on the Kennebecasis River. They would often, on a moonlight night, he said, in company with Hugh's brother Charlie, and others start off for an objective on a 30-mile skating trip. They would travel leisurely on the way out, but coming home the speed was put in to the strokes of all. But while Charlie was fast on the blades, and Mr. O'Regan himself and the others were good skaters in those times; none could keep up with Hughy when he let himself out.

### WAS OARSMAN TOO.

Mr. O'Regan spoke of McCormick as also having been a successful oarsman. He had had the pleasure of providing a shell for him and he won several races, but once he had got into the skating competitions the oars were laid aside so far as racing was concerned. Mr. O'Regan paid a tribute to McCormick for his honesty in all sporting matters. "He told me," he said in conclusion, "that he could have made a lot of money by holding back in his contests and letting the other man win, but that was not his style and he always remembered that there were men in the old home town who were backing him financially."

GREATER THAN EVER BEFORE

## THE SKATING MEET AT SAINT JOHN IN

### 1922 Was a Bumper

### 1923 Was a Record

## BUT--

# This Year--Bigger and Better

## NOW

This Month, Tues. 26, Wed. 27, Thurs. 28

Comes the Greatest Skating Event Ever Held on This Side of the Atlantic

## The World's Amateur Skating Races at Lily Lake

**SEE:**  
See the men jostle for advantage as they travel at meteorlike speed over an ice surface, second to none the world over.

**SEE:**  
See the great Finn, CLAS THUNBERG, holder of many world's titles.  
CHARLEY GORMAN, the greatest Canadian to wear the steel blades, also a world's record holder.  
JOE MOORE, the great speed king from the U. S., another holder of records.  
AND MANY MORE battle for the premier skating title of the whole world.  
Miss this meet and you miss a sight not again to be witnessed for many years.

OUT OF TOWN PEOPLE: PLAN NOW AND COME TO SAINT JOHN.  
CITY FOLKS: All Get BEHIND THE MEET. EVERYBODY HAVE A TAG.

## JANUARY, 26, 27, 28

THREE BIG DAYS JAN 26 27 28

**1922**  
Comment  
Jan. 18 and 19 at Lily Lake  
More than 10,000 people attended the races each day.  
Chas. Jewtraw establishes a new Canadian record for 220 yards.  
Joe Moore is the new Canadian Champion for the two days' events.

**1923**  
Comment  
Feb. 14, 15, 16  
Each day saw 20,000 people witness the races. The biggest crowd that ever attended a sporting event.  
Feb. 14, Chas. Jewtraw clipped 1-5 of a second from the world's record for 220 yards.  
Feb. 16, Jewtraw equals the 440 yard world's record.