



Ottawa's Rideau Canal, claimed as the longest skating rink in the world. Some 5½ miles of skating surface is

maintained by the National Capital Commission, which also provides a skate patrol and "warm-up" huts.

Canada an international sports arena

Olympics fever is spreading across Canada! And little wonder – the 1976 Summer Olympics, being held in Montreal and Kingston, are only a short time away. The games, which will attract top-calibre athletes from around the world, have inspired Canadians to even greater participation in sports and recreational activities. More Canadians are jogging, cycling, skiing and, in general, enjoying the fun of fitness. It may well be that no other nation has so wide a variety of participant activities with such a significant number of devotees.

While the Olympics are certainly spurring them on, Canadians have always been sports-minded.

Lacrosse popular

Even before the arrival of Jacques Cartier, the native Indians of the vast country which was to become Canada were playing lacrosse. The game became so popular with the early settlers that, in 1867, lacrosse was declared Canada's official sport.

Also a traditional form of Canadian recreation – and one that today is enjoying an international revival – was cycling. In Canada in the 1870s, especially in the larger centres, a great many people were riding penny-farthing machines in well-organized clubs across the country. Canada's first cycling club was in Montreal, site of the 1976 Summer Olympic Games.

Water sports

Canoeing and rowing – both as ways of life and as sports – have long been part of the Canadian heritage. Often the only mode of transportation over the country's numerous and turbulent inland waterways, the canoe also featured prominently in competitions between teams of *voyageurs* and Indians.

At the turn of the century, regattas attracted as many as 40,000 spectators at boating events held throughout the country. The regatta in St. John's, Newfoundland, is today considered to be the oldest continuously competed sporting event in North America.

With water playing such a vital role

in the country's history, it is hardly surprising that the local craftsmen became expert boat-builders – especially in the Maritime Provinces. This area has had a thriving boat-building industry since the early 1800s. It was here, in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, that the famous schooner the *Bluenose* was built. It defeated every international rival in racing competitions during the first part of this century.

It was a simple task then, when leisure time gradually became more abundant, for these craftsmen to turn their years of experience in commercial boat-building to the construction of boats for sport and recreational use.

Many of the sports and recreational activities Canadians enjoy today were, in the country's early years, necessary ways of life. For instance, horseback riding, canoeing, hunting, fishing and camping were, for the most part, typical work activities for the early settlers. They did not have the leisure time we enjoy today.

Skating

Unquestionably, Canada's most popular game – at least from the spectator point of view – is ice hockey. This was an organized sport in Canada as early as 1867. The enthusiasm for the game had progressed to such an extent that, in 1893, the Governor General, Lord Stanley, offered the Stanley Cup – since then an annual and highly coveted award – for senior competition.

Pleasure skating is an extremely popular Canadian pastime. Most Canadian children learn to skate before they start school. Artificial ice is available year round in almost all parts of the country and thousands of rinks are flooded by municipal authorities across the land.

A good example of skating's popularity is the Rideau Canal in Ottawa, Canada's capital. In winter this scenic waterway is transformed into a 5½-mile long skating rink. On a good day as many as 10,000 people of all age groups and nationalities put on their blades. Others skate to and from work, while still others use the side area of the canal as a cross-country ski trail!

While many of the sports and recreational activities participated in by Canadians are the natural outgrowth of tradition and heritage, there are many