

WORLD TITLE AND BACKWARD SKATING RECORD WON IN SAINT JOHN

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Fine Performances Given By William A. Lockhart And Charles T. Gillespie

Former Won World's Title From Field of Nine in Montreal—Gillespie Made World Record of 1.33 for Half Mile—Popular Competition Then

Backward racing a lost art?

There were times—and not so many years ago either—when Saint John boasted a world champion, a Canadian champion, and the holder of a world's record for backward skating, but in recent years nothing but memories of thrilling contests in this branch of the sport remain.

Less than 80 years ago—on February 5, 1897, to be exact, William A. Lockhart, now a member of the insurance firm of Lockhart & Ritchie, journeyed to Montreal and met nine of the fastest backward skaters from all parts of the Dominion, and one who came from Norway seeking honors, and defeated them all easily in a half-mile backward race for the world's title, and lowering the then existing Montreal record from 1.41 2-5 to 1.33 2-5. Gillespie, a Montreal skater, was second.

GILLESPIE TITLE HOLDER.

Just as Lockhart was rounding in to championship form there was passing out of the skating game a Saint John man who, although he never held a world title, established a world's record for the half-mile backward, which has never been bettered, so far as records show. He was Charles T. Gillespie, who is now residing in

Montreal, and who is a brother of Mrs. M. B. Edwards of this city. Lockhart and Gillespie met only once and the skill and experience of the older skater was too much at that time for the younger man and the victory was Gillespie's.

It was in the Victoria Rink in March, 1892, when Gillespie established his world record, skating against time. The grace and ease with which the skater speared around the rink was the subject of general admiration, and he was loudly cheered as his time was recorded at the end of the half-mile.

His time was as follows:
Half mile, 1.33.
One mile, 8.11.
Two miles, 16.22.
Three miles, 24.33.
Four miles, 32.44.
Five miles, 40.55.

His previous best time for the half mile was 1.38 2-5, and for the mile, 8.16 1-3. It was following this feat that Gillespie decided to retire from the game, although he skated a few races afterwards.

LOCKHART'S GOOD WORK.

While "Billie" Lockhart, coming in to his prime as a backward skater, only after Gillespie had put the blades away as an old-timer, was unable to equal at any time the records established by Gillespie, he came within a second of equalling the half-mile mark, going the distance in 1.34.

When it is considered that the record for half-mile forward was, in those days, in the vicinity of 1.20, it can readily be seen that these backward skaters were traveling. It is said of Lockhart that he was able to skate faster backwards than he could forwards. His time at the Montreal meet was 1.32 2-5 for the half mile, was considered exceptionally good on account of the fact that it was skated on a quarter mile oblong track with long side stretches which made traveling a difficult task, much harder than on the Victoria rink surface for instance, where both Gillespie and Lockhart made their best times.

THERE WERE OTHERS.

But Gillespie and Lockhart were not the only two backward skaters of note that Saint John possessed in those early days. Among the first was the game George M. Roberson, now manager of the Saint John office of the Western Union Telegraph Co., Brunswick Power Co., Fred Jones and Harry and Eddie Moore. Jones was said to have been the fastest of the

Made World Record



CHARLES T. GILLESPIE
Saint John skater who traveled half mile backward faster than any other.

manager, a fair start was made at 3.35.

"McCormick gained half a lap in the first four and then dogged Paulsen for 25 laps. McCormick completed his first five miles in 37.30. There was nothing exciting until Paulsen completed his 29th lap, when McCormick let himself out. Paulsen seemed to be either weary or making little effort, and when Paulsen completed his 30th McCormick had gained a quarter lap more.

"Paulsen spurred a little the last two laps, but McCormick increased his lead and slid in nearly one lap, or about a third of a mile ahead. Time 47.45.

"Prominent Norwegians had bet heavily on Paulsen. Two or three thousand dollars changed hands. Sermons against Sunday desecration were preached in the Methodist and Congregational churches, and it was expected the law and order league would interfere but it did not. Paulsen took one-third of the gate receipts. The general impression was that Paulsen had given up from the start, and only skated because he could not avoid it. Paulsen said:

"The result is due to the bad condition of the ice. I proposed to McCormick to skate for the receipts and let the championship contest go for the present, because I had only my thin skates, and his were twice as thick as mine and better adapted to soft ice. But he wouldn't do that. I had to skate on account of the big crowd that had gathered."

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FALLEN CHAMPION'S STORY OF TITLE LOSS IN NORWAY RE-TOLD

HUGH MCCORMICK lost his world championship to Harold Hagen of Norway in February, 1891. A colorful account was given by the Saint John skater on his return. They raced a series of three in Christiania. The races were for a stake of 500 crowns and a gold medal in addition to the championship title.

Hagen won the five-mile, the one-mile and the three-mile, lack of training being responsible for the Saint John flyer's defeat in all three races. The mile and three mile were skated on the final day with about 15,000 people present.

MCCORMICK'S STORY.

On his return home, McCormick was interviewed by a Daily Telegraph reporter and no better sidelight of that trip can be given than that contained in McCormick's own words, as faithfully recorded then. The interview follows:

"A Telegraph reporter found the skater at the residence of the latter's sister in Indiantown where Mrs. McCormick and a number of friends and relatives were proving by the heartiness of their welcome that there is no place like home. McCormick is the picture of health and is in the best of spirits. He was beaten in Norway but he made a good fight and greatly enjoyed his trip. He visited England, Ireland and Scotland prior to his return to this country and was accorded a good reception everywhere.

THE SKATES HAGEN USED.

"This is the kind of a skate they use in Norway," said Hugh, holding up a set of peculiar make. The skate is fastened to a light leather shoe which is tightly laced to the boot. The sole of the shoe is of light steel construction and also forms the body of the skate. Beneath this the blade is fastened. A light, hollow, metal tube is part of this blade, its position being halfway between the sole of the shoe and the edge of the blade. The latter is very much thinner than the steel of a Long Reach skate, but the polished tube prevents it from cutting too deeply into the ice. The skate is about 16 inches in length and is very light and handsome.

HEARTILY WELCOMED.

"I left Halifax on January 17, 1891," said Hugh, in answer to the reporter's question, "and proceeded to Liverpool, from there going to Christiania, arriving on Feb. 2. It was a pretty rough trip going across the Atlantic but the trip up the North Sea was a nice one. When we approached the wharf at Christiania, it was black with people and all the captain did not know what to make of it. Axel Paulsen, Harold Hagen and others were waiting for me and they sure treated me

well while I was there. We had dinner to start with at Martin's Hotel.

THE RACES.

"As I have said before, I reached there on the 2nd and the first race, the 5-mile event, was on February 15. I had only a week and a half to get used to the place. Hagen won, his time being 15.50 and mine was 16.27. I stopped when I saw him cross the line and skated in leisurely, not knowing they were taking my time.

"The one and three mile races came off a week later, there being only about 20 minutes between them. His time in the mile was 2.57 2-5. In the three mile race, his time was 9.15 and mine was 9.45.

(Continued on page 6.)

HUGH J. MCCORMICK POPULAR IN SPORT

(Continued from page 2)

Johnson, John Ring, T. Irvine, W. J. Clancy, Percy W. Robertson, F. W. James, D. Cronin, J. V. Russell, Coll Bros., D. Russell, W. A. Brown, D. Willett, Wm. Conway, Geo. Nixon, Richard Sullivan, Andrew Hunter, J. P. Watson, Thos. Crockett, C. E. Lordly, Chas. Monahan, Jr., Edward Wilson, H. W. Baxter, Jas. Murphy, T. O'Brien, John Rossiter.

WHEN HE WON CROWN.

The Minneapolis press of February 3, 1890, contained the following account of the McCormick-Paulsen race of the previous day, which made McCormick world champion:

"Five thousand people on Half-Moon lake today saw McCormick of New Brunswick, take the title of champion skater of the world from Axel Paulsen, who had held it for eight years. It was the third and final ten mile race. The weather was mild and the ice sloppy, but the rink was in fair shape. It was 3.2 laps to the mile. Henry Hach, of Minneapolis, E. O. Itney, of Minneapolis and Ald. Thompson of Minneapolis, judges.

A false start was made owing to Paulsen's failure to get his coat off. Paulsen didn't start, but McCormick did and flew past the judges' stand. He came back, however, when his manager, McEvoy, waived the start, and after a good deal of loud talk between McEvoy and Jungen, Paulsen's

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