

TITLE PASSES FROM ONE KENNEBECASIS MAN TO ANOTHER

PEOPLE HURT IN CRUSH AT "VIC" TO SEE HUGH AND BREEN IN BATTLE

Young Man Too Much for Champion, and North American Laurels Change Owners—Protest Over One Race, But Referee Bell's Decision for Breen.

FRED C. BREEN, who won the championship of America from Hugh J. McCormick in 1923, resides at the present time at Rothery. "It is passing strange," said Progress at that time, "that the one man destined to prove himself the superior of Hugh McCormick on the ice should have been born and bred in the same county, near the same river—the Kennebecas—and within an hour's sail or a half hour's skate of the Kennebecas. It can be remembered that several other skaters of more than local reputation have hailed from that section of Kings county which lies between Saint John and the Kennebecas river. Among them was the long distance skater, Norway Deane, who did good work in the Victoria in his day. Then there was Lamb, who could hold his own among the boys, to say nothing of the famous "Pitt," who was always in the race for fun or wind.

The first of the series of races for \$100 a side each race and the championship of America between Hugh J. McCormick and Fred C. Breen, came off in the Victoria rink on the night of March 15, 1925, in the presence of nearly 4,000 people. Breen was the winner in the fastest time ever made in the rink and he fully justified all that his friends had claimed, as to his merit as a wonder on skates. Breen, beyond question, could have skated two miles several seconds faster than he did as everyone who watched him must have realized. The races had been the sole topic of conversation about the streets and in nearly all social gatherings for a week or more, and it was not surprising that such an unusual crowd should seek admission to the Victoria rink. The doors were thrown open at 7 o'clock, but at 8:30 o'clock the crowd began to gather, and when the doors were opened there was a grand rush. The directors had made excellent provisions for preserving order, etc., but the crowd was so great between 7 and 8 o'clock that many persons were slightly injured at the entrance and a few ladies fainted. Such a rush was never seen before at any place in this city. All classes were represented, from judges on the bench down to the ordinary laborer, and a better behaved crowd, under all the circumstances, could not be found anywhere.

BETTING BRISK.

For over a week the betting had been quite heavy for a local event and there is no doubt that fully \$3,000 changed hands in the Victoria. Besides the stakes, Breen got 60 per cent. of the receipts. The loser got nothing. A few minutes after 8 o'clock a one mile amateur race was called, and Lasky, Breen and Irvine appeared for the start. On the ninth lap Breen was leading and Irvine was second. Both fell but Breen was up before Irvine had overtaken him and he maintained his lead until the finish, winning in 8:38 1/2, with Irvine second.

THE MAIN RACE.

The big event of the evening was called on. After the course had been measured, H. R. McLellan, representing Breen, and George Smith, representing McCormick, were chosen for choice of side and Mr. McLellan won. Breen appeared on the ice some minutes before McCormick and was given a grand reception. On McCormick's appearance there was a perfect storm of applause from all sides of the rink which Hugh gracefully acknowledged. Some little time was taken up in arranging all preliminaries and about 9 o'clock the men went to their respective sides for the word from Referee C. W. Bell. The word "Go" was given in a clear voice and the men were off at about an even start. For about two laps the race appeared to be slightly in McCormick's favor, but on the fourth lap it was clearly noticeable that Breen was gaining on his opponent and the half mile (seven laps) was skated in 1:28, with Breen in the lead. In the twelfth lap, Breen had one-quarter of a lap advantage and was skating well within himself, while McCormick was showing unmistakable signs of fatigue.

PASSES MCCORMICK.

The mile was finished by Breen in 2:03 3/4, and by McCormick in 2:05 with the former steadily increasing his lead. In the fourth lap of the second mile, McCormick's speed was decreasing and Breen came up on his heels amid wild cheers and great cheering. The latter was still, to all appearance, quite fresh and making no effort to maintain his position. On the twelfth lap McCormick put on speed, and Breen responded with a magnificent spurt, passing Hugh amid rousing cheers from his friends. He soon decreased his speed, however, satisfied with the advantage he had gained in his brief spurt. He finished his two miles amid great excitement in 4:14 3/4. McCormick's time being 4:21. McCormick's best previous record was 4:28.

The crowd rushed on the ice and for over an hour there was considerable dispute as to who was entitled to the race. Breen was seen to skate between two poles that marked the course, toward the centre, and immediately Mr. McLellan rushed up and started him again around the rink. Breen, it was understood, thought he had completed the two miles, while Mr. McLellan thought he had another lap to go. McCormick's friends, seeing this, cheered him on and he increased his speed but he did not gain enough to make up his lost ground.

DECLARES FOR BREEN.

Mr. Bell declared the race in favor of Breen but afterwards received a protest from McCormick, claiming that Breen had left the track before the two miles were finished and therefore should not be awarded the race. A conference was held at which the scores and judges were present. G. Stevens, scorer for Breen, said that just after his man had entered on his 14th lap in the second mile, he skated between the poles and out again a short distance beyond. B. Stevens, scorer for McCormick, said that when Breen skated between the poles he had scored 26 laps and that just as McCormick was about completing his 27th lap the people commenced to run out on the ice and he was surprised at this as he knew that the race could not be finished.

Mr. Bell heard these statements and also the statement of Mr. McLellan.

that he had made a mistake, being under the impression that Breen had another lap to go, whereas as a matter of fact, he had completed his two miles and had obeyed the proper signal to stop. Mr. Bell decided that the race belonged to Breen by a half lap and three poles and so awarded it. The race all through was a most exciting one and every spectator left the rink well satisfied with the fine exhibition of speed skating. The time, 4:14 3/4, was very fast, said to be the fastest two mile professional race skated up to that time in America. Joe Donoghue had a record of 6:07, but it was on a four lap track. Breen then was 23 years old. He was in the hands of Arthur McHugh as trainer. McCormick at the time of this race was about 40 years old. In account of this race concludes with the statement that "The number of McCormick's friends in the rink might be accounted for by his honesty and straightforward dealing with everybody. He was never known to do a mean act in connection with athletic sports and his name is above reproach. He had hundreds of friends in the rink who, while believing that his day as an athlete had passed, had hoped that he might win, in consequence of his high and honorable record throughout the many years he had been in aquatic and skating races."

THEIR SECOND RACE.

The second race in the Breen-McCormick series was contested on the night of March 18. The series was for \$100 a side each race and the championship of America. It resulted in another victory for Breen. There were at least 1,500 people present, and the great exhibition of speed skating for the first half mile delighted everybody and created considerable enthusiasm, especially as the race up to this point was being skated for about all both men were worth. Breen, however, had the advantage by two seconds and both decreased their speed in the second half with the result that the time for the mile did not come up to the expectations of many. A few bets had been made that the race would be skated in three minutes or less, and there is no doubt it would have been had it been necessary, but Breen had the race in hand before the half mile was reached and it is presumed it was not deemed advisable to "let him out" too much. The crowd of spectators were undoubtedly well pleased with what they saw.

THERE'RE AWAY.

B. C. B. Boyd acted as referee and starter and George M. Robertson, timers. On the toss for choice of sides McCormick won and chose the south end. On the skaters making their appearance they were loudly applauded. After a few preliminary spins the men were sent off on their one mile contest for supremacy. McCormick got slightly the better of the start, and the men struck a terrific pace, leaving little doubt in the minds of close spectators that it was for "blood," and was to be won or lost in the first half mile. For nearly three laps McCormick had a slight advantage and both were apparently bending all their energies. Then McCormick commenced to weaken and Breen recovered his lost ground very rapidly, and by the time seven laps (half a mile) were finished McCormick was two seconds behind, the time being: Breen 1:26; McCormick, 1:28. The second half was somewhat slow, but not too slow or one-sided to cause the spectators to lose interest in it. Both skated a good pace, but Breen did not come within several seconds of what it was believed he was capable, for the good reason that there was no necessity. The mile was completed by Breen in 3:04 and by McCormick in 3:07.

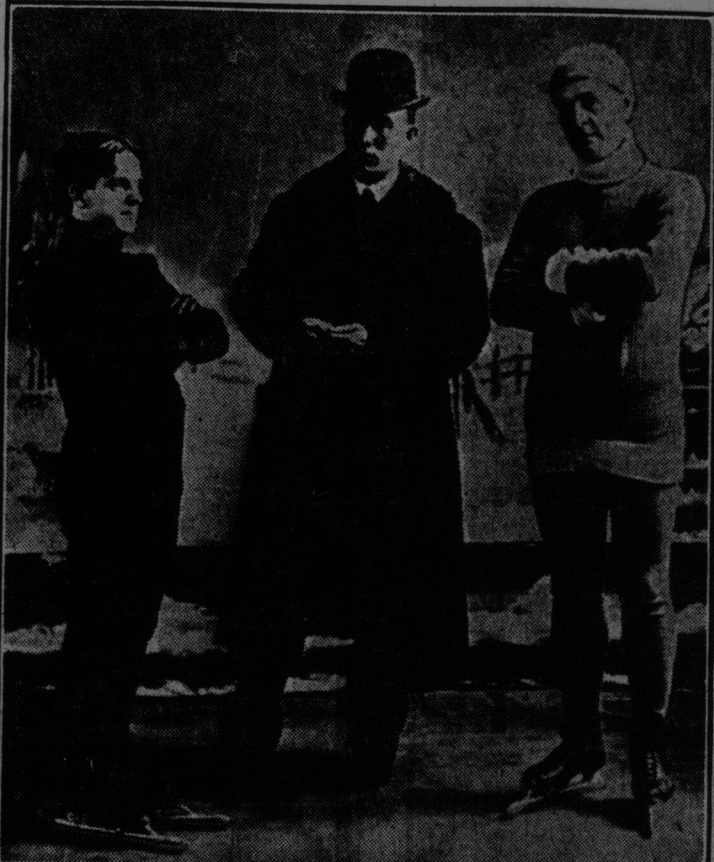
The time for the best half mile in a covered rink then was 1:26, made by McCormick in 1888 in his one mile race with Frank Dowd. This time, Breen equalled that night. The time for a mile in a covered rink was held by McCormick, 2:58. It was made five years before in a five mile race against Dowd. Donoghue had a record of 2:12 3/4 for a mile straightaway with the wind and Hagen of Norway had a mile record of 2:49 on a two-lap track.

In an article in Progress of that week it is commented on that it was fitting that, when McCormick relinquished his title it should go to one almost a next-door neighbor, another man of the Kennebecas. It continues: "So Breen comes from a skating country where boys learn to glide over the ice almost as soon as they can walk, and where the tests of endurance and speed are as frequent as they are severe in winter time. It is not an unusual thing to find hundreds of skaters on the river when the ice is good. Then there is fun. The speediest does not always come in ahead, for his slow neighbor who has the strength, muscle and wind, who can face the north blast without any sensible diminution of speed, proves his superiority in the race."

ALL IN THE SPORT.

"When Sunday is fine and the ice is good every pair of skates in the country is out. Men and women go to the river for fun and exercise and they get plenty of both. The prowess of the skaters is talked about, and the day is more than complete if a race can be arranged and carried out. This is not always possible, for there are always 'fast' ones who hesitate to

Trio Well Known To Sport Followers



Picture shows: Left to right, Fred Logan, speedy Saint John skater; Joe Page of Montreal and Bart Duffy, very fast man on skates some years ago. The picture was taken in Montreal in 1908.

show what they can do for fear of finding their superiors. "No wonder then that Breen and McCormick can skate. And yet strange to relate, Breen tells Progress that he can only remember one occasion meeting McCormick on the river, and that was when they both skated homeward in a storm from Rothery. The home of the victorious skater is on Kennebecas Island, which lies off Moss Glen. His father is a farmer—but for the last two or three years Breen has not followed that occupation, but instead has worked in the city at the Wiggins Orphan Asylum. He is in his 23rd year, and when not in training weighs between 160 and 170 pounds. At present he is under 160, and as hard and muscular as he needs to be to get around the Victoria rink 28 times in six minutes and 14 seconds. His trainer, Arthur Mc-

Hugh, thinks he has something of a wonder to develop, and those who have seen Breen in his private trials are more inclined to his view even than those who saw him beat McCormick.

LIGHT TRAINING.

"His training has not been hard—nothing like Fitzsimmons' work when he trained for his fight—but just two ordinary skates of between 20 and 40 minutes duration each day, morning and afternoon, and a thorough rubbing with alcohol and liniment after each. Good, wholesome, strong food and plenty of rest complete his programme every 24 hours. "Breen is apparently modest. He does not seem inclined to talk about his victory. It was not won too easily he confesses, but he is confident that he is able to do better. He and

BART DUFFY COULD MAKE THEM HUSTLE

His Half Mile in 1.21 3/4 on Victoria Was Record For Long Time

In 1908 Fred Logan and Bart Duffy, both speedy Saint John skaters, were under the management of Joe Page, of Montreal, who needs no introduction to Saint John sport followers. The date indicates how long a time Joe has been interested in sport matters in this city, an interest he maintains to this day, and with much resulting for the good of this community. Elsewhere extended reference is made to Fred Logan and his speedy skating sons. Now for a few words about Bart Duffy.

HALF MILE RECORD.

He is a Brookville boy, and became one of Saint John's leading amateur champion speed skaters. During the early part of 1900, was going so fast that he was able to show the way to the best in the senior class. He made good in different parts of the Maritime provinces in skating meets and was successful in winning the Maritime championship in 1901, 1902 and 1903. In addition to this he held the half mile record of 1:21 3/4 until last season when it was beaten on the Victoria rink track by Charlie Gorman. Like the 220 and 440 yards records held by Fred Logan for many years, this went by the board when Gorman took a lay at them. Bart Duffy's brother Edward was also a very fast skater and won many races. These brothers, like the members of the Breen family, acquired their skating ability on the Kennebecas.

McCormick are as friendly as two skating rivals could well be.

MCCORMICK'S PLUCK.

"McHugh remarked admiringly of McCormick that he skated just the same when Breen passed him as he did throughout. He was all pluck and there was not an atom of let up about him. He spurred as long as he could and skated the race to the very end. Comparing Laidlaw's race with that of McCormick, Breen said the latter was by far the hardest man to beat. Laidlaw tried to win in the first half mile and when he found he could not, he was done.

"Breen laughed when asked about Norway and Hagen, and said that depended upon what his backers said."

els River near their home at Brookville. Duffy was said to have skated the 440 yards in 33 seconds in an exhibition race in Wolfville, and as the track had not been officially surveyed prior to the race this time was not accepted by the skating authorities.

BILLY MERRITT AT FIFTY STILL RACES

Former Saint John Speedster Now Bostonian; Sees Canadian Sports Boom There

Billy Merritt, a household word in Saint John 15 to 25 years ago, when there was a whole flock of skaters hereabouts, has just rounded out his active skating career in Worcester, Mass., where he celebrated his fiftieth birthday by taking part in Boston speed events. At the present time no report of the outcome of these sports are at

hand, but Billy promised to send an account of the meet to a friend here. In fact, a representative of this paper, who saw him at his work in the Boston Arena over a week ago.

Billy was delighted to see the home boys when they called in upon him before the Bruins-Canadians hockey match, and immediately launched into a series of reminiscences of the old days in good old Saint John and Canada in general. He inquired about scores of people and wanted to be remembered to all the folks.

Merritt, who is in charge of the skate-repairing and grinding department of the Arena in Boston, is turning into coin his life-time knowledge of the fine points of the skating game. He keeps himself in pretty good condition so that he can don his tubes and take a crack at some of the sprouting

ing champions, which he enjoys immensely.

It is a great tid-bit to Billy that our Yankee cousins have at last awakened to the tangle and snap of Canadian winter sports. He says that Boston has gone literally crazy over international pro. hockey, and speed skating is breeding a swarm of youthful sliders out of which some excellent talent is flying to the top.

If Australia could be placed in the Atlantic Ocean it would fill up all the space between America and the British Isles.

Each summer for seven years a negro preachers' institute has been held at Pettit Academy, in the sandhill country of western South Carolina.

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