



Perth Curling Club

History of the club and curling in Perth



Image from the Perth Museum.

1800s

Curling with fieldstones

In the 1800s, Scottish settlers brought the fun and camaraderie of curling to the Perth area.

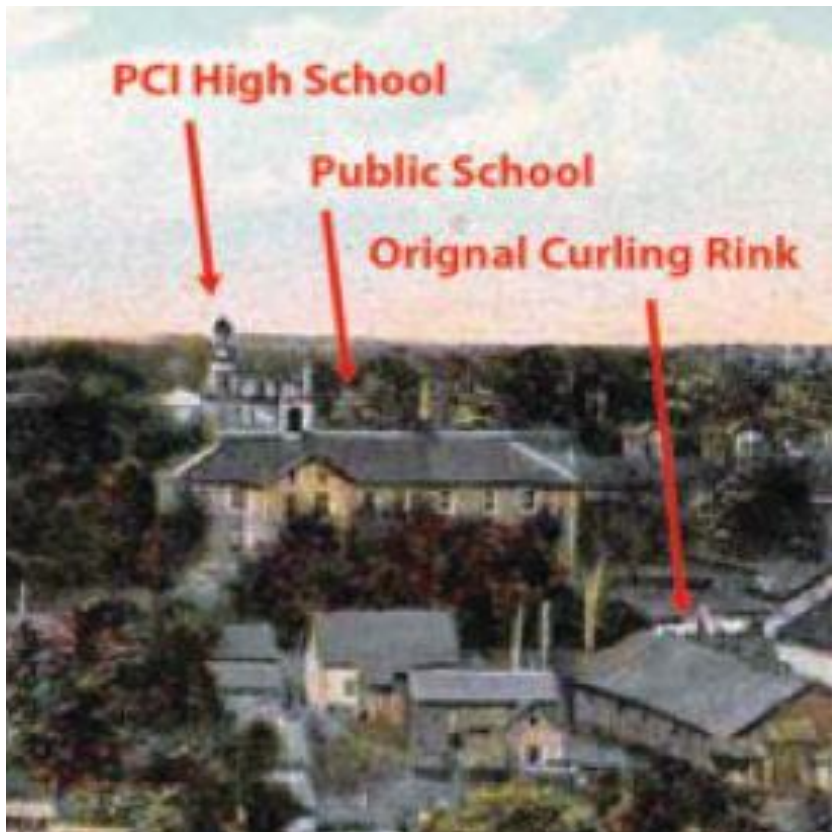
Initially, curlers used shaped fieldstones and timbers. Three fieldstones, likely made between 1820 and 1850, are in the Perth Museum collection. They were donated to the museum in 1925 after being found in a ploughed field in Beckwith Township.



1840s

Perth's first recorded curler

Perth's first recorded curler was Andrew Dickson (1797-1868) who was also the Lanark County sheriff from 1842 to 1852. In a historical profile published in the *Almonte Gazette* in 1915, Andrew Dickson's granddaughters, who contributed information at the time, said their grandfather curled on the frozen Tay River (or perhaps the Tay Canal) using iron curling stones that are currently on display in the PCC.



Close-up image from a Perth postcard showing the original curling rink on Herriott Street.

1875

The Perth-upon-Tay Curling Club was formed

The Perth-upon-Tay Curling Club was formed in 1875 with a membership fee of \$5, in addition to an annual \$3 fee. A year later, a curling rink with two sheets of ice was constructed privately for \$400 at 16 Herriott Street. The land was owned by Roderick Matheson, owner of Matheson house, which is now the Perth Museum. Members paid an extra \$1 for 10 years to pay-off the construction cost.



Image of the [Kincardine curling club](#), also formed in 1875, illustrates what curling might have looked like in the rink at 16 Herriott Street.

1875-1885

Playing in a rink with natural light

For the first decade, games were limited to daylight hours until gas lamps were installed followed by electric lighting in 1900.



The [image of curling at Rideau Hall](#) in the 1870s illustrates what curling might have looked like in the early years in Perth.

Membership in the early years

In the early years, the game wasn't immediately popular or understandable. According to an article in the Perth Courier, spectators in 1876 "ridiculed the idea of a lot of men rushing in all directions with brooms in their hands." The membership fee, time and travel expenses meant only wealthier men could consider joining the club. About 30 to 40 members were active. Many were prominent Perth citizens with recognizable surnames, including Drummond, Code, Grant and Wilson.

PERTH-UPON-TAY LADIES' RINK.



Mrs. C. L. Benedict. Mrs. F. W. Hall.
Miss Jessie Henderson, Skip Mrs. Ray Williams.
Miss Isabel Hart, Secretary, Mrs. C. G. Sewell, President.

1903

Perth women form their own club

In 1903, a request from female curlers to use the rink was initially denied. The women then petitioned the club and were permitted to use the rink five times per week. They operated a separate club, the Perth-upon-Tay Ladies' Rink, collecting their own fees and organizing an executive.

The photo on the left, showing the founding members of the Perth-upon-Tay Ladies' Rink appeared in the Perth Courier in 1904. It stands out as the first curling and sports photograph to appear in the paper. It was likely taken after the women won a game against the men, reported in the Courier on February 26, 1904.



The above image of women curling in Montréal around 1900 illustrates the early years of women's curling.

1900-1920s

Early years of women's curling

The Perth women initially played teams from Kingston and Montréal, the first clubs in Canada to establish women's curling. In the 1920's, the club regularly played against Lanark and Smiths Falls. The Perth-upon-Tay Ladies' Club disbanded in 1928 and reformed in 1936, remaining active until the men's and women's clubs amalgamated in 1986.

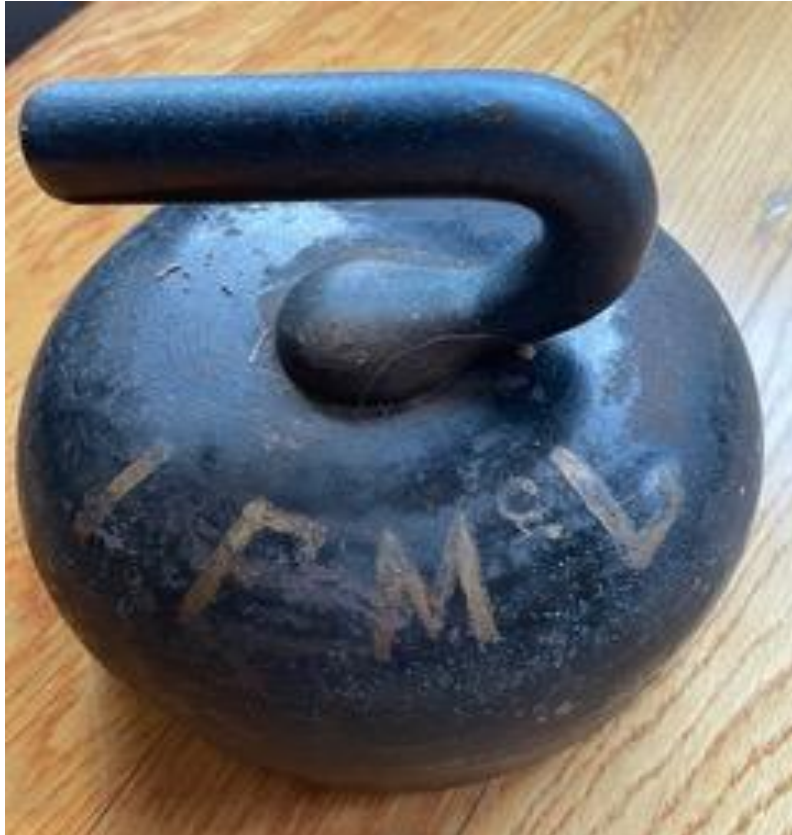


Image courtesy of Fran Laidlaw.

1875-1950s

Curling in iron country

Rather than the granite stones used today, players from Québec City to Perth used cast iron. Iron was preferred over granite since it performed better in the colder conditions of the Ottawa and St. Lawrence River Valleys. Iron stones were used until the 1950s.

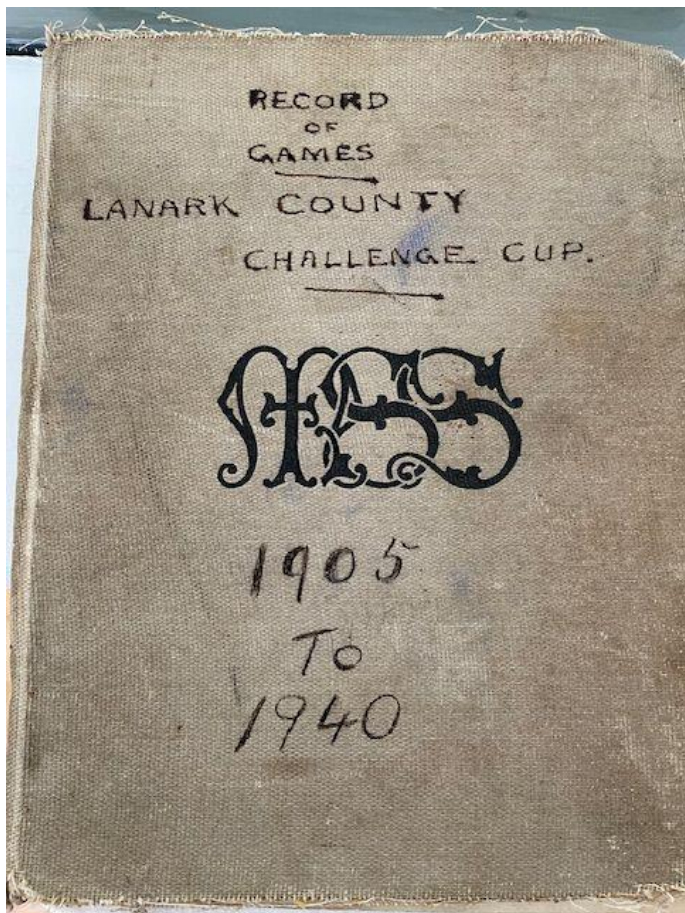
The iron curling stone pictured, belonged to a member of the Perth Ladies' Curling Club: Isabel Frances McLaren whose initials are painted on the stone. She was active in the club in the 1910s and 1920s. The stone was likely used by Perth's first curler, Andrew Dickson.

Competitions with other clubs

The first game with another club was played against Arnprior in 1876. In the early years, Perth also had regular matches with neighbouring Lanark and Smiths Falls. Around the turn of the century, rail travel made it possible for teams from Pembroke, Kingston, Smiths Falls, Carleton Place, Renfrew, Rideau (Ottawa) and Arnprior to participate in the Central Canadian Curling Association, which had an annual bonspiel at the various clubs.



Club photo showing members who competed in the Central Canada Curling bonspiel in 1911. Written on the photo are members' names and occupations. From left to right are Hiram Silverstone (Clothing), W. Publow (Customs), J.V. Watson (Customs), W.P. McEwan (Justice of the Peace), George Wilson (Tailor), C.J. Sewell (Banker), John Noonan (Butcher), James Glossop (Shoes).



1905-1954 Lanark County Challenge Cup

In 1905, the Lanark County Challenge Cup was launched, involving teams from Perth, Lanark, Pakenham, Carleton Place, Lanark and Smiths Falls. The teams initially traveled by rail and played 16 ends five to seven times per season until the 1950s.

An old record book contains a few notes with references to the 1917 fire in the Lanark woolen mill, playing 16-end games, enjoying wonderful meals and the transition from train to car travel.



Left to right: Manse Robinson, Leo Doan, Jack Weir and Bill Perk. The team represented the Perth Curling Club in the finals of the Québec Challenge Cup in 1959. Image from the Perth Museum.

Major competitions

For several years, in the late 1940s and 1950s, Perth curlers travelled to Montréal on a special CPR coach to play for the Edinburgh Trophy.

Perth was also represented in the coveted and historical [Québec Challenge Cup](#), with its first competition in 1874. The cup was won by Perth curlers in 1944. They were finalists in 1959.



Perth curlers were winners of the Prescott Bonspiel's Ber-Nel Trophy in 1958. From left to right: Hugh Wilson, Jack Weir, Bob Leisman and Manse Robinson. Image and information from Perth Remembered.

Club-based and local competition

Various club-based and local bonspiels came and went over the years. For example, an annual match between the Scots and Irish of Perth was played for a few years around the turn of the century.

Over a century of competition between Perth and Smiths Falls continues. The first competition between the two clubs was in 1916 to mark the opening of the new curling rink in Smiths Falls. The annual Waffle Shield match was played until 1953. The Stewart Cup continues today.



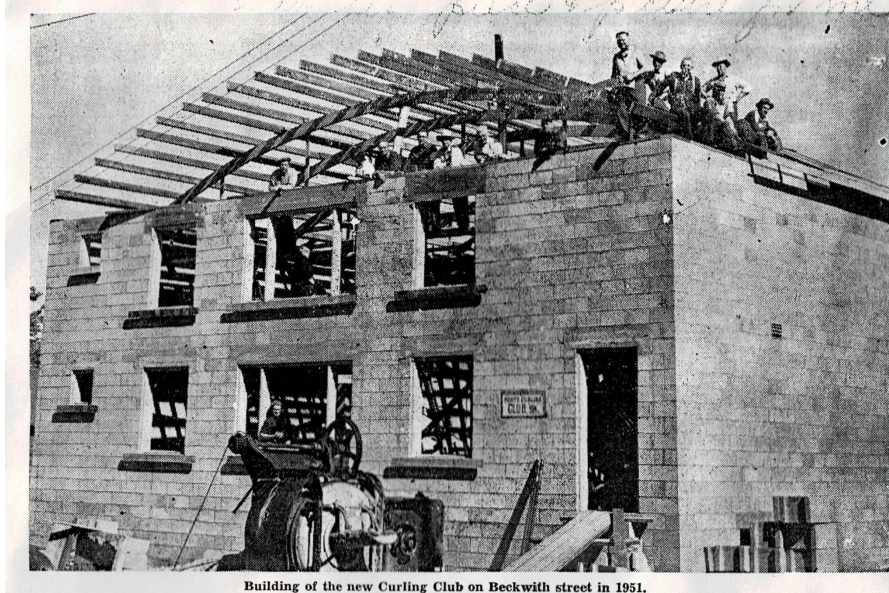
Perth curlers, sponsored by Brockville, were finalists in the Lady Tweedsmuir competition in 1965.

From left to right: Jean Thompson, skip; Sally Church, third; Marg Stevenson, second; Helene Dulmage, lead; Helen O’Gorman, lead; Florence Foley, second; Mary Cross, third; Gwen Robinson, skip. Image and information from Perth Remembered.

Women’s and mixed competitions

A major competition for women in the Ottawa Valley and Québec, [The Tweedsmuir Cup](#), began in 1938 and continues today.

In 1961, the International Silver Company of Perth sponsored a mixed bonspiel, awarding full sets of silver to the first and second place teams. Heritage Silver continued the sponsorship until 1985, although prizes (silver spoons) became more modest. The winning team was awarded the Doug Cavers tray.



Building of the new Curling Club on Beckwith street in 1951.

Construction of the current rink in 1951. Image from the Perth Courier.

1951-1953 Construction of the current club

In 1951, construction began on the current building at a cost of \$40 thousand. However, the cost would have been twice that amount if not for the donations of material, equipment and labour from club members. In addition to the annual membership fee of \$25, an additional annual fee of \$30 was required to cover the construction of the new building. The club became a non-profit corporation and was renamed the Perth Curling Club.



A scene from *The Curlers* filmed inside the Perth Curling Club over 70 years ago.

1955 **Filming of *The Curlers***

Soon after the new building opened, a crew from the National Film Board (NFB) visited Perth to film [The Curlers](#). The 27-minute film, released in 1955, tells the story of two neighbours settling a dispute with a game of curling. Club members appeared in a few scenes that were shot inside the building. Other scenes show Perth streets and the club exterior.



1966

A large addition is built

In 1966, a two-storey addition for locker rooms, a kitchen and bar was completed. At the time, the club had more than 300 members. Over the years, and as recently as 2024, numerous equipment upgrades, refreshes, maintenance and building sustainability projects have been undertaken.

The building and rink have had numerous upgrades but the exterior looks similar to the original.



Frank DiCola, on the left wearing a white sweater, and his two teammates scored a perfect game.

1970s Celebrating an eight-ender

Peter Stranberg, grandson of Frank DiCola shared some great history with us. “My grandparents, Frank and Rose DiCola, were members of the curling club for many years. I’ve attached a cool photo of him with an eight-ender and the Perth sign!”

In addition to scoring a perfect game, Frank DiCola was president of the club in 1976 and president of the Ottawa Valley Curling Association in 1981.



CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS at the Perth **Curling Club** got underway last Saturday with a bonspiel and banquet. Among the dignitaries who attended the celebration were, left to right, Al Dunsmore, president of the Canadian branch of the Royal

Caledonian Club; Bill Whitman, president of Ottawa Valley Curling Association; Bill Meyer, president of Ontario Curling Association, and Dave Leese, president of the Perth **Curling Club**.

1975 Celebrating 100 years

During the club's centenary celebrations in 1975 the Old Boys reunion bonspiel was organized. Other celebrations that year included a banquet.

A comprehensive history of the club was completed to celebrate its centenary.



Throwing a few irons to celebrate 100 years

During the club's centenary celebrations in 1975, members played a two-end game with iron stones to recognize their history in Perth and throughout the Ottawa Valley.

The irons belonged to Hal Burns, the founder of Burns Jewellers, who carried them to the rink for each game. Before throwing the stones on indoor artificial ice, they had to be acclimated for a couple of days.



2025 Celebrating 150 years

The club now averages 275 members and prides itself on being friendly and welcoming to all. There are both competitive and recreational leagues, men's, women's and mixed leagues, a popular learn to curl session and leagues for children and teens.

Compiled by Christine P. Johnson from the following research and previously completed histories:

- General internet searches for photos and curling history completed in 2024
- Select searches of the Perth Courier available through the [Paper of Record](#) completed in 2024, including featured articles of the club's history in 1929, 1953 and 1975
- Research and writing by Wendy Roberts completed in 2024 for the Lanark Archives
- A summary of the club's minutes related to building expenditures completed by Bill Ferrier in 2020
- A summary of Lanark County Challenge Cup games with notes completed by Doug Niblock in 2008
- Club history completed by Bert Ferrier in 1975.