

Toward a National Championship: Charlottetown Junior Hockey Development 1930-34

By
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Canada

Abstract

Toward a National Championship: Charlottetown Junior Hockey Development 1930-34.

By Timothy Harris

Abstract: Searching during the 1930s for an identity that would label it a Maritime center, Charlottetown looked to sports, and in particular a national championship in hockey. However, 1930 marked the onset of the Great Depression during which the management of a competitive team at senior level became increasingly difficult. Economic difficulties were magnified by a common Maritime practice of importing players from other areas of Canada, in contravention with the ideals of important governing bodies in amateur sport. Consequently Maritime senior hockey began a precipitous decline. By this time however, another hockey brand was establishing itself. Junior hockey in Prince Edward Island began in late 1930, coinciding with the opening of the Charlottetown Forum. Over a four-year period, the junior program would overcome the harsh effects of the Depression, work its way out of the senior hockey shadow, and firmly position itself as the hockey face of Charlottetown.

August, 2012

Dedication

To Gordon Stewart, Team Captain of the 1934 Charlottetown Junior Abbies, and the late Charlie Ballem, athlete, teacher, and writer, both of whom made a difference in Prince Edward Island sport.

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Introduction

Awestruck, a group of teenage hockey players entered Maple Leaf Gardens (MLG) in Toronto, 27 March 1934. They were arriving for a practice session in preparation for their two-game, total-point series against the highly ranked and nationally renowned Toronto Saint Michaels Majors, already predicted to be Memorial Cup Champions.¹ The Majors would indeed win this year's (1934) championship, and then go on to appear in several Memorial Cup finals over the next 20 years, along the way producing more than a dozen famous hockey personalities.² The Majors represented a Roman Catholic boys' college in downtown Toronto. They played out of the newly built (1931) Maple Leaf Gardens, home to the National Hockey League's famous Toronto Maple Leafs. Playing in the vaunted Ontario Hockey Association (OHL), two of the Majors' 1934 team were destined for the NHL in 1935, and another two had been members of the 1933 Memorial Cup Champion team from Newmarket, Ontario.³ The prediction of a National Junior Championship was no idle boast. They were a formidable, young, and talented hockey squad: "the strongest junior team ever" wrote Pat Power in *The Guardian*.⁴ Their opposition for the Eastern Canadian Championship, whose winner would advance to the Canadian Championship, the Memorial Cup, held no such attributes. The Charlottetown Junior Abegweits (Abbies) were, by comparison, a hastily assembled group, playing out

¹ Toronto Saint Michaels is often referred to as Toronto St. Mikes, or Toronto St. Michaels. A two game total point series champion is determined by the team scoring the highest number of goals after playing two games. Bill Fittell, "Memorial And The Man: The Story Behind The Canadian Junior Cup", *The Hockey Research Journal*, 10 (Fall 2006): 10. The Memorial Cup has been, since 1919, a trophy awarded to the Junior Hockey National Champions of Canada.

² The list would include Father David Bauer, who developed the idea of the Canadian Olympic representatives in hockey as a select team, NHL stars Peter and Frank Mahovlich, Dave Keon, Tim Horton, Red Kelly, Ted Lindsay, and others.

³ Fittell, "Memorial And The Man".

⁴ Pat Powers, "Along the Sport Trail", *The Guardian*, March 27, 1934.

of the Charlottetown Forum in a city industrial league. In contrast to the Majors, most of the Abbies would play little or no competitive hockey again. Nevertheless a curious throng of 4000, easily double what the visitors' home arena, the Charlottetown Forum, could hold even at full capacity, attended the games handily won by St. Michaels by 12-2 and 7-2 scores.⁵

Barely a week earlier, the young Charlottetown squad had been greeted by a hometown crowd of 500 on returning from Halifax, where they had unexpectedly shut out the Halifax Junior Canadians 4-0 in game 2 of the Maritime Championship. This had been followed by an even larger celebration when they dispatched the Montreal Mount Royal Cranes in two games played in Charlottetown, including an 8-1 rout in the second. This was the real feat. Charlottetown had won Maritime titles before, and although they were certainly appreciated by fans, winning beyond the Maritimes was something altogether different. Islanders could sense that the Abbies were on the cusp of attaining greatness, in the form of a highly coveted National Championship in hockey. As it was, *The Guardian* described the Montreal series victory as "a smashing triumph". There followed a rousing send off and the young men were hustled off to Toronto in a private rail car.⁶ It had been a remarkable accomplishment, and in such little time. The Abbies had played their first playoff game on 10 March 1934, and on 24 March they were on their way to one of the greatest hockey centers in the world. Indeed they had not even played in an organized league until January of 1934, instead taking part in several exhibition contests.

⁵ "Junior Abbies Bow to St. Mikes 12-2", *The Guardian*, March 28, 1934.

⁶ Pat Powers, "Along the Sport Trail", *The Guardian*, March 26, 1934.

PEI was trying hard to attain national honours, at the level of senior hockey. However the 1930-1936 senior hockey era was one of exceptional controversy throughout the Maritimes. Driven by costly player imports, Maritime teams – notably Halifax, Moncton, and Charlottetown – were in constant conflict with the Central Canadian authority, the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA). Their own beleaguered organization, the Maritime Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) attempted with limited success to mediate and to keep the peace. Various senior leagues came and went. League names and teams changed on a yearly basis. At issue between the Maritimes and CAHA were imported players. The CAHA felt the practice of importing players contravened the hockey regulation of senior leagues being non-professional in status. Maritime teams felt that they required imported players to be competitive not only against other Maritime teams, but in Canada as well. The end came in 1936 after a CAHA ruling which devastated the import-laden Halifax, Charlottetown, and Moncton teams, put an end to the league of the day, and ended up tainting Canada's selection for the Winter Olympics in Germany. Through the years before 1936, however, another gradual process was taking place. Fans were becoming disillusioned with the senior game. In PEI, where often the senior league consisted of only the Charlottetown Senior Abegweits and the Summerside Crystals, the repetitive games had too often been marred by episodes of violence, contributing to the demise of senior hockey in PEI.

Now suddenly in 1934, emerging from this scene was a team of young, unsullied, enthusiastic, and local young men. They were a mixture of religions, schools, and communities from across PEI, who came together under the guidance of their coach and

mentor Lou Campbell, many years later crowned PEI Athlete of the Century.⁷ They were a team who defied the odds, overcame the obstacles, and provided an example not only for PEI fans, but also for many future teams in many sports who would follow.

When the Abbies won the Maritime Championship in 1934, a groundswell of support quickly developed.⁸ By this time it was well known that the Maritime title did not signal the end of a hockey season, as it had the last time it was won by a local team. Although the Memorial Cup had been in existence since 1919, PEI had no junior representatives to vie for it until 1931. Even then, although the Charlottetown-based Silver Foxes had won the Maritime Championship they had not proceeded any further.⁹ But in 1934 the MAHA was fully affiliated with the CAHA, and furthermore the Charlottetown junior team was backed by the locally-based Abegweit Amateur Athletic Association (AAAA). Things could be different and PEI fans suspected as much. Now a national championship became a real possibility.

PEI had recent experiences with national championships. Maritime senior hockey, in the form of the Big 4 League in 1934, was at the peak of its popularity. The Charlottetown Senior Abbies were among the strongest three teams in the Maritime circuit, along with Moncton and Halifax. The Moncton Hawks had won the Allan Cup in 1933 and 1934. The Halifax Wolverines won it in 1935 completing three years of success for the Maritimes. Charlottetown had not enjoyed the same triumph but had been witness

⁷ John MacNeil "Charlottetown Man Named PEI's Athlete of Century", *The Journal Pioneer*, December 01, 1973.

⁸ "Cranes Title Hopes Blasted By Abbies", *The Guardian*, March 23, 1934.

⁹ If the junior playoff system was compared to Senior in the late 1920's, where senior teams did not participate in the Allan Cup play-downs until after 1927, the same could be said of Junior. Until 1931-32, Maritime Juniors did not participate in the Memorial Cup Playdowns. An MAHA-CAHA affiliation must have occurred in 1931.

to the others. In 1932 however, Moncton had been accused of raiding the Winnipeg Elmwoods for five players while attaining a star junior, Duke MacDonald, from the Winnipeg Junior Elmwoods who had been Memorial Cup Champions.¹⁰ Closer to home, the Antigonish Bulldogs had been the first Maritime junior team to enter Memorial Cup play. By 1934 then, anyone who followed hockey on PEI was probably well aware of the esteem a national championship could bring. Support for the Junior Abbies in terms of home game attendance and media coverage increased significantly.

The national context was also significant. The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAU) had been created in 1909, the result of a merger and absorption of several previous similar national sporting organizations. Staunchly supporting amateurism in the face of growing professionalization, the AAU played an integral role in hockey at the national level in Canada.¹¹ Capitalizing on Canada's new identity forged by the battles of World War I, the AAU tried to bolster Canada's international image by relating war-time accomplishments to sports. This would mean a new focus on elite athletics, in order to compete effectively at international level. The AAU began promoting high performance athletics as a way of fostering Canada's national identity, placing an emphasis on national championships as an appropriate qualifying procedure for international competition.¹² Canadian hockey, however, already had two national championships in place in addition to the Stanley Cup for the professional champions. Prior to 1914 there was no governing body for hockey in Canada. By 1909 various affiliated amateur associations had

¹⁰ Jim Roper, ed., *From Pond to Pro: A History of Hockey in the Moncton Region from 1894 to 1996* (Moncton: Moncton Hockey History Committee and Moncton Museum Inc., 1997), 80.

¹¹ Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

¹² Colin Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 131.

consolidated and reformed the AAU into the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada.

(AAUC)¹³ Gruneau and Whitson argued that in response to lobbying efforts, particularly from western Canada, for the AAUC to create a nationally affiliated association to promote and regulate amateur hockey in Canada, the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA) was formed in 1914.¹⁴ Now the AAUC shared its ideals with a governing hockey association for the nation, upholding the principles of amateurism.

The most obvious advantage of winning the Allan Cup in these years was that the team would represent Canada at either the Winter Olympics or the World Championships. Consequently a team from medium size, even small size cities and towns across Canada could potentially become World or Olympic Champion through senior hockey. This became the reason a small city such as Charlottetown PEI would bolster its senior team. Kidd and MacFarlane described a similar build up of senior teams in 1954 after the World Championship; "Communities began strengthening their senior "A" teams as if preparing for the religious wars".¹⁵ The pursuit of a national hockey championship was therefore linked to bringing a range of accolades to any municipality in Canada. Such excitement could easily be transferred to the pursuit of a Memorial Cup.¹⁶ It would not mean an Olympic or World Championship, but there was a connection. The entire purpose, it seemed, of junior hockey was to produce good senior players.¹⁷ Therefore, a strong junior team presented the hope that a competitive senior

¹³ Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada: Sport Identity, and Cultural Politics* (Toronto: Garamond, 1993), 77.

¹⁴ Gruneau and Whitson, *Hockey Night in Canada*, 77.

¹⁵ Bruce Kidd and John MacFarlane, *The Death of Hockey* (Toronto: New Press, 1972).

¹⁶ Junior hockey's age restriction, of 20 years, had been in place since the Memorial Cup's inception.

¹⁷ At the time, it did not mean an Olympic or World Championship, but this would change in 1977 when the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) added junior hockey to its list of championships. The World

team could compete for an opportunity to play in, and win, World or Olympic Championships.

Despite the best efforts of the AAU and CAHA in providing national championships, they were not always popular with everyone. Championships were often held in Central Canada and travelling to them was a costly business.¹⁸ Both geography and expense had to be taken into consideration. The long journeys undertaken by Western athletes, in general, in an era when commercial flight was not yet a practical option, often left them little time to prepare for their events. The track athlete Percy Williams of Vancouver, who won double Olympic Gold in the 1928 Olympics, found he had to compete almost immediately after arriving in Quebec or Ontario for national championships.¹⁹ For others the challenges were primarily financial. In 1924 two track and field competitors from PEI, full of Olympic promise, were forced to leave the AAAA's Track and Field Program, for employment reasons, thereby limiting their training and they failed to qualify.²⁰ A third athlete did leave for Toronto, trained with the Olympic team and did qualify.²¹ Certainly by 1930, where the advent of the Depression only added to the hardship, resentment on the part of Western and Eastern Canada was evident in sports rivalry. Lappage wrote, "The historical resentment of the West and the Maritime Provinces toward central Canada in most aspects of Canadian life – which was

Junior Hockey Tournament would become tremendously popular in Canada. Attendance records have been broken numerous times from different Canadian cities who have hosted the tournament.

¹⁸ Ronald S. Lappage, "Sport Between the Wars", in Don Morrow et al., eds., *A Concise History of Sport in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 88.

¹⁹ Ibid., 89.

²⁰ Charlie Ballem, *More Than Just a Game: 100 Years of Organized Sport in Prince Edward Island, 1850-1950* (Charlottetown: The Acorn Press, 2004), 159-160.

²¹ Ibid. Phil MacDonald was the athlete who qualified, while Barney Francis and Bill Halpenny did not qualify.

strengthened in the West during the Depression by the collapse of world wheat prices and the resulting unemployment – was also evident on the sports scene and provides one of the dominant themes of the period.”²²

This was certainly the case in the Maritimes. Politically it was enough to spawn the Maritime Rights movement in the 1920s.²³ As Maritime teams and individuals began competing at the national championships, the sense of regional identity and overcoming of the obstacles translated to sporting venues. In Halifax at the Canadian Track and Field Championships of 1923, Halifax fans cheered on the efforts of PEI’s Barney Francis in his victory over a Quebec competitor in the one mile event. According to a newspaper account, “Francis had too much speed and stamina for the Quebec and Ontario runners in the mile.... Francis was a favorite with the crowd.... the Islander won by two yards amid the wildest enthusiasm from the crowd”.²⁴ It was a dynamic period in Maritime sport, and a national championship came to be seen as much more than a sports triumph.

It was in this context that, in 1930 PEI, junior hockey had only just begun its emergence from the shadows of senior hockey. By 1934 however, a junior team had been assembled that was ready for the national stage. The Charlottetown Junior Abbies of 1934 were the culmination of a well organized city and athletic club, a team whose players had endured several years of financial hardship, but were now able to pursue national championships for years to come.

While the existing literature on Prince Edward Island sport in this era is limited, there are studies that explore regional themes that can be applied in a PEI context. Ronald S.

²² Lappage, “Sport Between the Wars”, 88.

²³ David Frank, “The 1920s: Class and Region, Resistance and Accommodation” in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 233-71.

²⁴ *The Halifax Herald* (no reference provided), in Ballem *More Than Just A Game*, 158.

Lappage has examined sports in the context of regional discrimination in “Sports as an Expression of Western and Maritime Discontent in Canada Between the Wars”.²⁵ This essay deals with the period from 1920 to 1940 and addresses sports as a form of regional resistance to domination from central Canada. Not only did central Canadians control the administration through the AAU, but they also had the best facilities and competition necessary for athletic advancement. Like the young man from PEI in 1924 who had to leave for Olympic training offered in Toronto, some saw this as an unavoidable reality. However, many Maritime supporters reacted with resentment.

A more general approach is adopted in Lappage’s “Sport Between the Wars”, and is applied more specifically to the selection of Canada’s Olympic hockey team in 1936.²⁶ A detailed critique of that selection process taken up in Marc Savoie’s 1994 thesis “Broken Time Broken Hearts: The Maritimes and the Selection of Canada’s 1936 Olympic Hockey Team.”²⁷ Here Savoie makes an excellent case for the existence of overt discrimination against the Maritimes by the CAHA President, E.A. Gilroy, in 1934. Gilroy issued a retroactive (to 1 January 1934) ruling in November 1934, after the hockey season had begun. The ruling concerned the place of residency for club players on senior teams. The Residency Rule stipulated a player must be living in a community in which he played, by 15 May, prior to the hockey season.²⁸ Hockey seasons in this era typically began in early November. Thus, in November 1934, teams would have had their finalized lineup ready for league play on the eve of the hockey season. However, when the new

²⁵ Ronald S Lappage, “Sports as an Expression of Western and Maritime Discontent in Canada Between The Wars”, *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education*, 8:1 (May 1977), 50-71.

²⁶ Lappage, “Sport Between the Wars”.

²⁷ Marc Savoie, “Broken Time, Broken Hearts: The Maritimes and the Selection of Canada’s 1936 Olympic Hockey Team” (M.A. thesis; University of New Brunswick, 1997).

²⁸ Ibid. 5.

ruling was issued, any player who had arrived after 01 January 1934 would be ineligible for the oncoming hockey season. For the competitive senior teams in the Maritimes many of their players had played somewhere the year before but had arrived in their new residence by 15 May. The ruling directly affected teams in the Maritime Big 4 Hockey League, forcing the league to fold, and led to the decimation of the remaining teams. The effects of the ruling extended into the next season as well. Even though the Halifax Wolverines won the Allan Cup in 1935, the surrounding controversy was enough to cause that club's demise in late 1935. Most importantly, the Wolverines' chance for Olympic glory in 1936 disappeared with the team. Savoie contends it was a deliberate act on the part of the CAHA to deny a Maritime team such an accomplishment. Further evidence was provided when the CAHA suspended four Halifax players chosen to bolster the eventual representative, the Port Arthur Bearcats. They were accused of asking for "broken time payments".²⁹ Savoie points out that the payments had been Gilroy's idea in the first place, thereby deviously setting up the four players for a fall. There had been other events in senior hockey that led to its decline in popularity, but in the Maritimes this event was probably the single most important factor.

Savoie's argument is countered by Greg Gillespie's account of the episode from a different point of view.³⁰ Gillespie makes a credible argument in defense of CAHA President EA Gilroy's actions in the selection of Canada's Olympic Hockey team of

²⁹ A broken time payment referred to cash given to a player to replace the wages he had forfeited in order to play hockey in such an event, or in any hockey game that took him from work.

³⁰ Greg Gillespie, "Big Liners and Beer Gardens: The Port Arthur Bearcats, Shamateurism, and the Selection Controversy Surrounding Canada's 1936 Olympic Hockey Team," in Andrew C. Holman, ed., *Canada's Game: Hockey and Identity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 15-17.

1936. Gillespie also points out the Port Arthur Bearcats were ill-prepared and overconfident in their quest for Olympic Gold. The key assumption taken from Gillespie's paper is there is more to the 1936 Olympic affair than regional discrimination.

Colin Howell expanded on Maritime regionalism in Canadian sports as part of the discourse in the development of modern Canada. Howell demonstrated the reasons for the rise of Maritime identity in the 1930's, among them the region's close relationship with New England and the lack of national team franchises.³¹ More generally, Ian McKay has challenged Maritime stereotype of "a stereotype of a region slumbering in its contented conservatism",³² while David Frank has linked the origins and experiences of the Maritime Rights movement with regional identity through sports. In rugby, Frank portrays the Glace Bay Caledonia Amateur Athletic Club's 1929 capture of the McTier Cup. A skilled and physically strong team, the Caledonia club played with "the team spirit of the coal miners". Frank described the miners as "regional heroes" after their 1929 victory in Montreal.³³ Surely the Charlottetown Junior Abbies would face the same kind of challenge and reclaim similar praise in 1934.

David Di Felice claims that Quebec's strong cultural following of hockey and the Montreal Canadiens especially was spurred by the suspension the NHL handed to Montreal star Maurice "Rocket" Richard in 1955.³⁴ Montreal fans rioted upon hearing of Richard's fate, feeling the penalty was unjust and a direct insult to French Canadians. Thereafter Montreal's pursuits were more than just those of a hockey team. They

³¹ Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*, 132-134.

³² *Ibid.*, 193.

³³ *Ibid.*, 269.

³⁴ David Di Felice, "The Formation of Class, Ethnic, and National Identities: The Case of the Richard Riot of 1955", in Colin D. Howell, ed., *Putting It On Ice, Volume I: Hockey and Cultural Identities* (Halifax: Gorsebrook Research Institute, 2002), 84.

represented Quebec's determination to prove it was as worthy as any other region, particularly to the perceived hierarchy of the NHL and President Clarence Campbell. Since PEI teams began competing for national honours in the 1930's, there had been a comparable underlying desire to prove the Province as a serious competitor despite its small size. This is still evident today. Summerside Sports Columnist Joe MacIntyre wrote in a tribute to the 1997 Royal Bank Cup Champion Summerside-based Western Capitals, "For the 2,700 fans at Cahill Stadium that night, it seemed unbelievable that little Summerside was now Canadian champions."³⁵

Charlie Ballem wrote a brief account of junior hockey's beginnings in Charlottetown in *Abegweit Dynasty*.³⁶ This was followed by more detail in *More Than Just a Game: 100 years of Organized Sport in PEI 1850-1950*.³⁷ In both works Ballem provides a comprehensive review of most sports found on PEI. The focus therefore, is on the general history of various PEI teams, athletes, and organizations. With the exception of the AAAA however, no one specific team or organization receives deeper coverage than their major accomplishments. There being no other specific histories written for PEI sports, Ballem relied heavily on newspaper reports of the day. In order to delve further into the junior hockey history for this thesis, newspaper articles back to and including 1930 were extensively consulted as well.

The construction of the Charlottetown Forum played an integral role in the rapid development of junior hockey in Charlottetown. The Forum served a similar community

³⁵ Joe MacIntyre, "Looking Back on Caps run to 1997 Canadian Championship", *The Journal Pioneer*, May 4, 2012, 4.

³⁶ Charlie Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty, 1899-1954* (Charlottetown: PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation, 1986).

³⁷ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 209-212.

purpose as that described by Cindy Kiley.³⁸ Kiley explained the role of the community rink built in Musquodoboit Harbour, NS, in 1973. But even in 1930, Charlottetown was considerably larger than Musquodoboit Harbour and its new arena shared similarities with another new building in a much larger venue: Toronto's MLG. Russell Field detailed MLG construction in "Profits, Playoffs, and the Building of Maple Leaf Gardens, 1931".³⁹ Howard Shubert went a step further by demonstrating how large city arenas followed a pattern of design with spectatorship in mind.⁴⁰ Through technology and marketing, arena construction has evolved from standard spectator safety and basic convenience to an ultimate entertainment experience. Field wrote a more specific account on spectatorship in an essay on hockey spectators in New York and Toronto during the inter-war years.⁴¹

Within these contexts and given the obstacles that were presented, the story of Charlottetown junior hockey development becomes all the more remarkable. Charlottetown had a senior team playing the highly commercialized brand of hockey. Charlottetown was affected by the Depression in major ways. Charlottetown witnessed the ruination of its senior team from the CAHA ruling of 1934. This is a story that shows the resilience of the Maritimes. It could have been some other issue, not sport related and it could have taken place in some other city. It happened to be Charlottetown.

³⁸ Cindy Kiley, "Of Rinks and Community: Constructing Identities in Post War Musquodoboit Harbour", in Howell, ed., *Putting It On Ice, Volume I: Hockey and Cultural Identities*, 65.

³⁹ Russell Field, "Profits, Playoffs, and the Building of Maple Leaf Gardens, 1931", in Howell, ed., *Putting It On Ice, Volume I: Hockey and Cultural Identities* 47-56.

⁴⁰ Howard Shubert, "The Changing Experience of Hockey Spectatorship: Architecture, Design, Technology, and Economics", in Howell, ed., *Putting It On Ice, Volume I: Hockey and Cultural Identities*, 60.

⁴¹ Russell Field, "'There's more people here tonight than at a first night of the Metropolitan': Professional Hockey Spectatorship in the 1920's and 1930's in New York and Toronto", in Holman, ed., *Canada's Game*, 127-150.

To assume this study is about the accomplishments of the 1934 Charlottetown Junior Abbies would miss the point. The Junior Abbies were merely the end product that represented a number of other elements; elements that contributed to the development of junior hockey as a program or an option for the city of Charlottetown. In this sense the paper provides a social history – the community’s ability to adapt in the face of uncertainty and instability. By the end of this journey, in 1934, Charlottetown discovered a valid method of establishing their city, province, and region in the Canadian sport consciousness.

Not only is this study a social narrative but quite obviously a Maritime sport history. This responds to challenges on two fronts; the Maritime’s regional historiography relative to the nation, and the use of sport in the writing of that history.

The relationship between the history of the Maritime Provinces and that of the rest of the country has been dynamic and contested. E.R. Forbes wrote: “The emphasis in Canadian historical writing, at least until the 1950’s tended to enrich the Maritime historiography in the pre-Confederation period while diverting attention away from it thereafter”.⁴² Twenty years later Colin Howell summarized: “A generation of Maritime scholars...has consistently challenged the notion that Maritime history is peripheral and unimportant, or that ours is the history of losers or victims”.⁴³ Howell was addressing first, the idea of Maritime history being meaningless, and second, when it was written it represented only a consistent lament about regional injustices. Howell was responding to

⁴² Ernest R Forbes “In Search of a Post-Confederation Maritime Historiography, 1900-1967” in E.R. Forbes, ed., *Challenging the Regional Stereotype Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1989), 48.

⁴³ Colin D Howell “Two Outs; Or, Yogi Berra, Sport and Maritime Historiography,” *Acadiensis* XXIX 1 (Autumn 1999): 106.

the arguments of nationally-known historians Jack Granatstein, Lovell Clark, and Michael Bliss, Howell wrote these individuals “have each argued that the emphasis on social and regional history has weakened the fabric of the nation and contributed to what Bliss called the sundering of Canadian History”.⁴⁴ Granatstein further dismissed such accounts as “victimization and blame seeking”.⁴⁵ Countering with a comparison to the Maritime Rights movement Howell added “the story was not that of victimization at all, but of people using the resources at their disposal to make a difference in their lives and in their region”.⁴⁶ It was rather, a gift in the contribution to the nation’s history as Howell recalled an address from Ian McKay: “Notions of Maritime dependency, underdevelopment and victimization belie the existence of a more subtle, complex, communitarian critique of the liberal order which has been our gift to the nation”.⁴⁷

The story of the early beginnings of Charlottetown junior hockey is therefore a small part of that contribution as well as a sport history.

The importance of sport history was emphasized in the same essay by Colin Howell as he stated: “historians of the region have tended to discount the significance of those social and cultural practices whose history does not on first glance contribute to an understudy of regional economic development”.⁴⁸ Sports and recreation are two elements among others Howell mentions that are often lacking as a common method of conveying regional history. Such inclusions “connect in subtle and complex ways to that critical

⁴⁴ Howell, “Two Outs”, 107.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ian McKay “The Eclipse of Region in the Contemporary Writing of Canadian Social History” quoted in Howell “Two Outs” 108.

⁴⁸ Howell “Two Outs”, 109.

social vision that McKay sees as our contribution to the making of the Canadian liberal order,” Howell stated.⁴⁹

Andrew Holman went somewhat further in placing hockey specifically in the writing of sport history. Commenting on the excellence of Gruneau and Whitson's 1993 *Hockey Night In Canada: Sport Identities, and Cultural Politics*, Holman wrote “To understand hockey in a scholarly way is to see it as a series of historical struggles that emanate from the central position in Canadian culture as a national icon, as work and entertainment, as pastime, as enterprise, as privilege, and as a class, race, and gender-based locus of identity”. Scholars must recognize the game’s ability to tell stories about Canada that reflect the country’s experiences, strengths, and weaknesses”.⁵⁰ Holman continued: “Hockey needs to be read, and to read it scholars need to understand the sport as a text that contains many narrative possibilities”.⁵¹

One such possibility is the story of the birth of junior hockey in Charlottetown PEI. Its trials, its challenges, and its achievements, are thus a contribution to Maritime and Canadian history.

Chapter 1, “Prelude to Junior”, will examine the organization and planning capabilities of Charlottetown, including the involvement of the AAAA, the construction of the Charlottetown Forum, and the hockey-related events that preceded the arrival of organized junior hockey in 1930. These events formed the prelude to the success of the Junior Abbies of 1934.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Andrew C. Holman, ed., *Canada's Game: Hockey and Identity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 6.

⁵¹ Holman, *Canada's Game*, 6.

Chapter 2 “Emerging from Senior” will discuss the emergence of junior hockey from Senior. Junior hockey had undergone a rapid transformation from a localized city league to an individual club team that represented the entire city and province: a team that was prepared to contend for national honours. This chapter will examine the roles of those who were instrumental in the team’s growth, and the performance of various parties at crucial stages in development.

Chapter 3 “Overcoming the Obstacles,” will explain the economic hardships faced by the junior players and community leaders in their attempts to establish junior hockey and what they had to accomplish, as Charlottetown struggled through the Depression era.

Throughout the era, Maritime Senior hockey continued to prosper. Still, it was a contentious period marked by bickering between national and local organizations. This was primarily the result of illegal player transactions – real or perceived – conducted on the part of some Maritime teams who were battling hard for a National Championship. As the controversies persisted, however, junior hockey emerged from the shadows of the hitherto more popular senior brand. Ultimately, the young and untroubled Abbies hockey team demonstrated what could be accomplished in the sport by PEI and, by association, all of the Maritimes.

Chapter 1: Someone To Play For and Somewhere To Play

The Charlottetown Abbies as a junior club did not exist until 1933. This was the year in which they won the Maritime Championship and began their quest for the Memorial Cup. For a team in the early 1930s, especially at the junior level, to achieve such a result in only its first year was a huge accomplishment. It would not have come without the coordinated ability of the city, the Abegweit Amateur Athletic Association (AAAA), and the planning and organizing of various hockey officials. Developments over the preceding years had fostered the community's ability to do so. Three dominant events were crucial to the later success of the Abbies. They were: the formation of the AAAA, its subsequent role in the sporting life of Charlottetown, and the city's construction of the Charlottetown Forum.

The AAAA was formed in 1899 the result of a merger among three private sporting clubs.¹ Other clubs such as the Hillsborough and Victoria were still in existence in 1899, but over the next decade the AAAA would emerge as the most dominant organization. This was largely due to its multi-sport participation. The AAAA's first president reflected a trend that would repeat itself many times in the ensuing years. L.B. Lou McMillan, a former athlete for various Abegweit teams, was that first president. Charlie Ballem described it as the retention of athletes in key administrative positions.² By 1914 the AAAA was recognized regionally and nationally as a sporting organization. In 1909 McMillan and AAAA associate, Dr. Harry Johnston, had been elected to the Maritime Provinces Amateur Athletic Association (MPAAU and a branch of the nationally-based AAUC) as Secretary and President respectively. In 1913 Johnston had been elected

¹ The Charlottetown Amateur Athletic Association, the Anchor Club, and the Crescent Club.

² Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 103.

President of the AAUC.³ In 1914 the AAAA was awarded the Canadian Track and Field Championships. Unfortunately this event was canceled at the outbreak of World War I. (WWI), but as an athletic organization the AAAA had become one of the most popular in Canada. In 1933, the AAAA, realizing the benefit of managing its own junior team, stepped into this role at an ideal time, since there had been no organized junior hockey the preceding year. The support of the AAAA was crucial to the 1933-34 campaign.

Not that championship teams were new to PEI or to Charlottetown. The Charlottetown Senior Abbies had been Maritime Champions in successive years from 1921 to 1923.⁴ As this was prior to the MAHA's affiliation with the CAHA, the Abbies did not compete for the National Championship Allan Cup. The Senior Abbies did, however, play a meaningful exhibition contest against the reigning Allan Cup Champions and Olympic representatives, the Toronto Granites, in 1924. Although the result was a 4-1 loss to the Abbies it more than demonstrated their ability to play close to the best in Canada. But with no further advances possible beyond the Maritimes, PEI was left with a void. By 1934 matters had changed. The MAHA had become affiliated with the CAHA in 1927, which allowed Maritime Senior teams to compete for the Allan Cup. In 1931 the MAHA affiliated Maritime junior hockey with the CAHA, such that Maritime junior teams were then entitled to compete for the Memorial Cup. The void had been filled and not only for PEI.

The city of Charlottetown also contributed to the eventual success of the Junior Abbies. The Charlottetown Forum opened in December 1930.⁵ City planners must have

³ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 131.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 147-154.

⁵ "Great Pageant For Opening of New Forum", *The Guardian*, December 10, 1930.

marked the opening with some trepidation, since the economy was one year into the Great Depression and its effects were beginning felt by PEI's crucially important export trades. The project had been initiated long before the stock market crash of 1929. Nevertheless, the arena's construction elevated Charlottetown to a status in sport comparable to Moncton, Halifax, and Saint John, all cities with much larger populations. Having a brand new facility in which to play games and hold practices was a major factor in the ensuing success of the Junior Abbies.

Thus, Charlottetown now had both a private organization (the AAAA) to operate its sports and recreation requirements, and, in the Forum, a modern arena to provide essential facilities. Furthermore, as its sports and hockey scene grew so did the city itself in a more general sporting sense. Charlie Ballem wrote, "As the cradle of organized sport in Canada, Montreal had a significant impact on the development of sport in eastern Canada during the 19th century. Halifax, Saint John, Moncton, and Charlottetown, in turn had a similar influence on smaller communities throughout the Maritime provinces."⁶ Even before its relations with junior hockey began, Charlottetown had embarked on a comparable path and taking its place among, among other major sporting centers of the Maritimes.

Athletic clubs in urban centres, even as early as in the late nineteenth century, could have many positive implications for any given city or town. The formation of an athletic club would serve a number of purposes. It would provide athletic leadership to a city or municipality which otherwise was unprepared or incapable of doing so. It would provide organization, allowing athletes to assemble, strive for common goals, and improve skills,

⁶ Ibid., 30.

fitness, and well-being. A club would promote outreach activities to other areas, helping the growth of the sport. It would also serve to represent the area in certain events, fostering and enhancing civic identity. The Montreal Amateur Athletic Association (MAAA), formed in 1881, directly influenced the creation of the Halifax Wanderers in 1882. Charlottetown did not act quite so fast, but by 1887 local newspapers on PEI urged the municipalities of Summerside and Charlottetown to emulate the Halifax model. In an editorial in March 1887, the *Daily Patriot* said of Charlottetown's consideration in forming an organization: "The idea is a good one if an association could be formed like the Wanderers of Halifax".⁷ In fact there were clubs in existence, but they were not of a scale or scope to offer community leadership. They were organized on a more limited basis and often restricted to a single sport, as in the case of the Prince County Cricket Club, formed in Summerside in 1869.⁸ Some, like the Hillsborough Club, formed in 1890, were involved in more than one sport. Leadership for sporting activities generally was lacking in Charlottetown. This would change with the formation of the Abegweit Amateur Athletic Club (AAAA) in 1899. The AAAA would go on to make a major impact on organized sport in PEI, sponsoring teams and individuals in multiple sports and at different levels. Others, such as the Hillsborough and the Victoria, provided high-caliber competition for the AAAA. The creation and formation of sporting clubs was really about the growth of communities, in the Maritimes as elsewhere.

As the AAAA formed and grew so did senior hockey in PEI and the rest of the Maritimes. Hockey had quickly become the most popular sport in PEI. From the first game in 1890 to an "organized sport that encompassed the entire province" took only six

⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁸ Ibid., 26.

years.⁹ This was largely due to its appeal to mass spectatorship and the small size but closeness of the many PEI communities. The sport thrived in an atmosphere of inter-community competition and social interaction.¹⁰ Hockey was an antidote for the long and harsh PEI winter months and the accompanying diminished social activity. Although the AAAA became involved in multiple sports, rugby, track and field, and hockey were the most significant. Of these, hockey was the most important of all since it brought the most publicity, often involved off-Island dealings, and generated the most gate revenue. Senior Hockey, easily the most popular level of hockey in the early twentieth century, developed rapidly. Organized senior hockey began with the formation of Athletic and Social clubs in Charlottetown. The formation of these clubs gave the athletes the option of regular play and advertised matches, which in turn attracted spectators, and healthy competition. Clubs and their sponsored activities offered a new separation between work and leisure, a common trend in Canada in the years between Confederation and the World War I. Colin Howell has distinguished between sports as rural or urban in nature.¹¹ Rural activities included those such as hunting, fishing, swimming, and horse-racing. These were closely related to working life, and their opportunities for engagement were tied to “agricultural production.”¹² Urban sports, however, were predominantly team sports such as hockey, basketball and rugby. A clear distinction was made between work time and leisure time, and games were scheduled for the hours when the players were not expected to be at work. By 1891 the Hillsborough and Victoria Clubs (both in Charlottetown) were in full operation, conforming to this new model. Both clubs had

⁹ Ibid., 89.

¹⁰ Ibid., 89.

¹¹ Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*, 9.

¹² Ibid., 10.

hockey teams meant to play competitively against others, but more than the game of hockey was offered. Typically after matches, in these days played on open-air rinks constructed by the club, teams would meet in a local hotel where feasting and toasting were the order of the evening. After an 1895 game in Charlottetown between the recently-founded Summerside Stars and the host Victoria Club a reception followed at the Davies Hotel where “70 gentlemen were seated around the Board with speeches, toasts, and song led by Chairman J.B. Dawson. John Lefurgey, President of the Summerside Club and Alfred Saunders, team captain, responded”.¹³ Thus an additional leisure aspect was offered in addition to the sport, and the model spread to other areas of PEI.

The Summerside club had originated from a visit by the Hillsborough club in 1891, intended to showcase the sport and encourage its expansion. Likewise, in 1893, the Charlottetown Victorias visited Souris. Souris, in turn, formed two teams and travelled south to Georgetown for play. Then, in 1896, within Charlottetown a number of developments came together to set the stage for a more sophisticated senior-level organization. First the Abegweits began play¹⁴ and then so did Saint Dunstan’s College (SDC).¹⁵ These clubs already had a rivalry based in rugby, so the excitement of the game was ratcheted up considerably. SDC actually declined an Abegweit invitation and played Prince of Wales College (PWC) in its first game, further intensifying rivalries, as PWC

¹³ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 88.

¹⁴ The AAAA was not yet a multi-functional athletic club. Indeed its first hockey team was composed of some of its rugby team’s players.

¹⁵ SDC, a Roman Catholic college, later became SDU. SDU merged with Prince of Wales College (PWC) in 1969 to form the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI).

was a Protestant institution. SDC would do its part for the game's infrastructure by constructing a rink on its campus in 1897.¹⁶

By 1897 organized hockey was being labeled as "senior". The Summerside Crystals were well established by this time and joined the Abegweits and Victorias for the first Island Senior Championship in that year. For the next 18 years senior play was fairly consistent on PEI. This period did not see any new teams vying for the Senior Championship, but clubs did form in many communities across PEI and played informally against each other. The early 1900s also marked the advent of women's hockey in PEI. Souris, Charlottetown (Micmacs), and Summerside (Alphas) were some of the first teams, although there was no organized league. However Summerside visited Charlottetown in February 1905 for a match that was reported in *The Guardian*: "Every detail was described, from yelling, injuries, and lifting the puck, to a commentary on uniforms in which the skirts were said to be an awkward dress but useful for stopping the puck."¹⁷

The Charlottetown Athletic (later Amateur Athletic) Association (CAAA), formed in 1891, fulfilled two needs for the city of Charlottetown. First the CAAA commissioned a study which hypothesized that physical activity was crucial to overall health and well-being. This was not exactly a new finding. Ballem wrote, "The Victorian concern for physical development as an essential complement to mental and moral development and the widespread belief in fitness as an antidote to the physical ills of the industrial age were both reflected in the report".¹⁸ Colin Howell, in discussing respectability and the

¹⁶ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 89.

¹⁷ Ibid., 95.

¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

sports that emerged after Confederation, has noted that, “For the most part, these sports were organized and promoted by middle-class urbanites with the intention of providing a healthful recreation, counteracting the sedentary character of modern city life, and promoting manly character and patriotic sentiment.”¹⁹ Howell added that “team sports reflected the virtues of respectability more than individual sports and the qualities of respectability were perceived essential for leadership in the new industrial age”²⁰ The CAAA was thus setting the stage for adopting such principles, as in other areas of Canada. Indeed, those involved in Charlottetown proved eager to uphold the benefits of a strenuous life. In a *Daily Patriot* article of March 21 1887, heralding the upcoming association meeting for the formation of an athletic club, the reporter ended by stating “There are scores of young men in our city, confined all day at the desk or counter, who would surely take an interest in the associations and be enabled to gain that exercise and pleasure which in moderation is indispensable, and which tends to keep a healthy mind in a sound body”.²¹ At the same time, there was no mistaking which sections of society were expected to enjoy the ultimate benefits of the new athletic club. Like the small Black population, women would form their own club teams without the benefit of organized associations. The next act of the CAAA was much more practical, and yielded “a landmark event that could not be overemphasized for its contribution to sport development on PEI”.²² An outdoor athletic complex was constructed on behalf of the CAAA, opening in 1897. Now Charlottetown had one central facility for track and field, baseball, rugby, cycling and other summer sports. The benefits were immediate:

¹⁹ Howell, *Blood, Sweat and Cheers*, 30-31.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

²¹ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 6.

Charlottetown and the AAAA would now dominate Maritime track and field meets for the next three decades, often at the expense of the Halifax Wanderers Club and athletes from Moncton, NB. The building of the athletic grounds was the crowning achievement of the CAAA. The city of Charlottetown was still not ready to assume overall control from the sports organizations, but the newly formed Abegweit Club would.

The Abegweits merged with the Crescents and Anchor Clubs, to become the ACAC²³. Within a few years they became known as the Abegweit Amateur Athletic Association (AAAA). Before its inception as an official club, the AAAA was involved in rugby,²⁴ which along with hockey and track and field dominated the club's programs well into the twentieth century. In Charlottetown by the turn of the century, the AAAA had assumed almost entire responsibility for sports leadership.²⁵ In the first decade of the century and up to World War I (WWI) this leadership would grow and expand to include more individual sports. The club's exploits on the playing fields began to attract the attention of others in the Maritimes, and soon AAAA officials were being nominated for leadership roles in Maritime governing organizations. An example was the Maritime Provinces Amateur Athletic Association (MPAAA). Unlike a local athletic club, this was a governing body responsible for amateur sport regulation for multiple sports across the entire Maritime Provinces. Two AAAA officials were elected to the MPAAA in 1909: Dr. H D Johnson as president and Lou MacMillan as Secretary. This was a big change for the MPAAA, as Halifax had always dominated at the executive level. Perhaps their election came about after AAAA President Dr Ira Yeo, in 1909, declared the AAAA to

²³ Abegweit Crescent and Anchor Club.

²⁴ The Abegweit Rugby Club, in existence since 1884, was the forerunner of the AAAA.

²⁵ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 52.

be the “strongest in Canada”. Yeo claimed he was speaking strictly about athletics, and not wealth or stature, but he may have been unknowingly prophetic. Johnson would later become President of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAUC) the national regulatory body just prior to WWI.²⁶ Johnson and MacMillan were typical of the officials leading the AAAA. Both were former multi-sport athletes who, in keeping with the club’s internal “cycle of success,” coached and organized younger teams then ultimately assumed overall direction. The AAAA had expanded substantially in its 15-year history. Its schedule of social gatherings, banquets, and reunions served to unite the city in a way yet unseen. But one night in 1912 everything nearly came undone permanently when fire destroyed the grandstand and clubhouse of the AAAA grounds.²⁷ The AAAA promptly appealed to the public through a series of “Publicity Letters” in *The Guardian*²⁸. The appeal and campaign to raise funds was a grand success. In 1913 a new grandstand was raised, while the association’s expenses had been paid for and a further \$1000 was paid toward the purchase of the grounds²⁹ One Publicity Letter stated that this “was the first time the AAAA had approached the public for assistance”.³⁰ It would not be the last.

The war years saw the end of the initial growth of sport in PEI. The renewed Abegweit Grounds were abandoned as the club’s ranks of athletes and officials were significantly reduced by service involvement, and the general sporting activity which the

²⁶ It was owing to Johnson’s influence and stature as President that the Canadian Track and Field Championships were scheduled for Charlottetown in 1914. Undoubtedly this would have been a monumental event for Charlottetown, but was cancelled due to the outbreak of war.

²⁷ Renamed AAAA Grounds after the formation of the AAAA and the dissolution of the CAAA, which had had the grounds constructed.

²⁸ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 64.

²⁹ Ibid. The need to purchase the grounds was stipulated in Publicity Letter No. 3, as otherwise the property would have passed to farming interests. The \$1000 was not enough as a mortgage was obtained for the outstanding \$1400.

³⁰ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 69.

AAAA had been so instrumental in building reverted to a largely recreational character. After the war however, it did not take long to renew sporting activity. The AAAA was reinvigorated, and while the 1920s would see its most glorious days, contentiousness and terminal decline would soon follow.

The AAAA forged ahead in the 1920s, appearing to pick up where it had left off in 1914. But a change in philosophy came about, which – in accordance with the evolutionary model of sport growth – was hardly noticeable at first. By the time it was manifested and realized, it was too late. There were diverse societal factors at work after the war. The promotion of sport would provide a refreshing change from the dreariness and tragedy of the war years. Entertainment became a staple as much as the active participation and the community itself became more involved. Mass participation was the new order. Sports took on the central purpose of attracting crowds of spectators. There had always been crowds, but now their appeal became a specific purpose, not a by-product. Even so, active participation was not forgotten. The other side of mass participation was the entry into sports of previously absent members. Community institutions, schools and churches took on an expanded role of encouraging their members into activity. Consequently the AAAA found itself no longer the sole leadership authority for sports programs, especially at the lower levels. The AAAA gradually “shifted its emphasis to maintaining a highly competitive program at the Provincial, regional and national levels.”³¹ This was especially so for hockey and track and field.

The Abegweit senior hockey team was revived in 1919 at an annual association meeting. In Dec 8 1920, the team was granted entry into the New Brunswick Eastern

³¹ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 68.

Hockey League (NBEHL). It narrowly missed out on the championship in its first year, arriving weary after a harrowing crossing of the Northumberland Strait en route to Moncton.³² In 1922 the Abegweits won the NBPEI Hockey Association Championship and returned to a rousing reception in Charlottetown attended by about “five thousand citizens, the Lieutenant Governor, the Premier, the Mayor, and the United States (US) Consul General.”³³ Clearly, this was no low-key affair, even though it was not yet the Maritime Championship. Windsor won the Nova Scotia title a month later, and the Abegweits then prevailed 5-3 in Charlottetown to capture the Maritime title.³⁴

The hockey exploits of the team now commonly referred to as the “Abbies” demonstrated the overall path on which the AAAA wished to embark. Attracted by the success of the Abbies in 1922, Summerside entered the NBEHL in the following year. The rivalry between Summerside and Charlottetown was well founded by this time as the Abbies and Crystals had played each other often in the years prior to WWI. But now the context was Maritime competition rather than simply intra-provincial rivalry. The pressure was on the AAAA to do more, as there would be out of province, better, and more unfamiliar teams to play. Increased support from the organization would become necessary. It promptly raised the stakes by hiring Frank Brown of Moncton to coach the

³² Ibid., 77. Even though the ferry service between PEI and NB had acquired “ice-breakers” by this time, the journey across would often result in the ferry getting stuck in the ice. After a certain length of time, usually when it became apparent that a weather pattern change was needed, the players would hop onto the treacherous ice floes and make their way ashore by foot. In this instance they became stuck just short of the NB side and used ropes as safety lines following a zigzag course following the ship’s mate, who led with a pole. As they neared the shore, they viewed the train pulling away from the station. But so did the ship’s crew back on the ice, and they promptly sounded the ship’s whistle to alert the departing train. The train halted, the Abegweits boarded, and they made their way to Moncton “travel-weary”.

³³ Ibid., *Abegweit Dynasty*, 78. From *The Guardian*, February 27, 1922.

³⁴ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 150.

Abbies.³⁵ This was the first instance of going outside the confines of the membership in order to gain advantage, but it fit with the higher level Maritime competition. A later and much broader trend would involve the pursuit of players to complement the AAAA hockey teams. Brown was a shrewd coach, as shown when – recognizing the abnormally mild winter then prevailing on PEI – he moved his hockey team indoors to the local Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) gymnasium for conditioning and training. After the Abbies won their second Maritime Championship in 1923, they were selected for exhibition contests against the Toronto Granites,³⁶ several Halifax-based teams, and New England teams that included the US National Collegiate Champions, Boston College. These games took place in 1924, during a whirlwind tour that saw the Abbies return home just in time for the NB/PEI playoffs. They were defeated in the second round by Sussex NB in shocking fashion to the Island faithful. Their 1924 loss was only the beginning, however, as more setbacks were on the way. The newly formed Maritime Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA), an offshoot of the MPAAA but responsible solely for hockey jurisdiction the Maritimes, sought to capitalize on the Abbies’ popularity, and placed them in a new division with Summerside. This would mean more games against each other, and presumably more profits and publicity.³⁷ Furthermore, after the New England exhibitions, Abbies Roy Prowse and John MacEachran were being

³⁵ Brown would also mentor the Abegweit Sisters, a women’s team the AAAA sponsored in the 1920’s. Along with Brown, the AAAA also hired member and former outstanding track and field athlete Bill Halpenny to do the same for its current teams.

³⁶ The Toronto Granites were to represent Canada at the 1924 Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix, France.

³⁷ Competitive leagues at all levels have done this for many years in Canada, with only a few exceptions. The league takes advantage of a rivalry, seeing increased profits and of course gaining the publicity a rivalry offers regularly. The downside is that fans get accustomed to watching repeat games, and so eventually interest drops off and so does the rivalry. The rivalry may deteriorate further if it happens that one team is strong and the other weak, leading to one-sided games.

courted by the professional Boston Bruins. They left to join the Bruins in camp the following autumn. Combined with the retirement of some, and the defection of still others to other teams, the Abbies were noticeably short of talent the next season. Just as quickly as the team had ascended to the heights of its popularity, it seemed the descent had begun.

The events of 1924 were not lost on the astute followers of hockey in PEI. They had no desire to be exploited for their love of the game. They had seen what regional play and more could do to their home team, through depletion their ranks by professional contracts and offers from other teams in regional competition. The Senior Abbies would remain close to home for the next several years until the desire for national recognition would call. The creation of the MAHA as the overall governing body for the Maritimes was for one major reason. Its intended purpose was to align Maritime senior hockey with the national regulatory body, the CAHA. Being part of this association allowed senior teams to compete for the Allan Cup. No longer would competition end with a Maritime championship, as the Canadian championship was now attainable, and possibly even a World or Olympic Championship. Yet, in reality, the formation of the MAHA did nothing to soothe the conflict that had developed in the 1920's between the AAU and its Maritime Branch. Eligibility of hockey and baseball players, especially those who had professional experience and sought reinstatement to theoretically amateur clubs such as the AAAA, was the main source of the disagreement.³⁸ The AAUC had strict views on

³⁸ Teams such as the Senior Abegweits were amateur in name. However, given the number of imports that did play with the Abbies, publicized concerns about their costs (difficulty of obtaining jobs, accommodations were mentioned but never payments) one can assume money that was changing hands. In a "simon pure" notion of amateurism, money in any form provided to a player would contravene the definition. The CAHA's definition of amateurism was called into question by many in the 1930's.

professionalism that conflicted with the reality regional associations may have had to face. The AAUC did not condone any form of professional status including partial payments no matter how fair they may have been. During the 1920's, but especially in the 1930's, the struggle of playing with work commitments came to light for athletes. Colin Howell wrote "athletes often found it hard to resist under-the-table payments or reimbursement for time away from work".³⁹ The Maritime Branch, at this time led by Abegweit officials Lou McMillan and Sammy Doyle, was accused of lenient enforcement of the reinstatement policy by the AAUC. Apparently players such as Boston prospect John MacEachran, who returned to Charlottetown after a stint in the minor professional ranks, were all too easily reinstated on not only the Abbies, but other Maritime senior teams. The dispute went to such lengths that the Maritime Branch was suspended in 1927 but was reinstated two months later when the AAUC relented. The issue subsided for some time but did not disappear. Eligibility issues would continue to dog Maritime senior hockey for years to come and eventually trigger its collapse. For the time being though, the strain on the AAAA leaders, after their experience in Maritime competition and the bureaucracy of the MPAAA and AAUC feud, was beginning to show. The organization now turned inward to concentrate on its Provincial activities.

The AAAA decision to stay within PEI⁴⁰ had a threefold effect. First it improved and established the intermediate level of hockey in PEI. Intermediate teams were founded in several smaller and rural communities. Each being a true representation of its community, intermediate teams provided a boost to the already-popular game, to civic pride, and to

³⁹ Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*, 64-65.

⁴⁰ This meant the organization would focus on intra-PEI competition. It did not mean the Abbies would not challenge for the Maritime title should they win on PEI; only that for regular competition they would stay close to home.

Island interaction. In 1927 the MAHA established a Maritime Championship for intermediates, won by the Charlottetown Victorias over the Halifax Wanderers. Again, there was a similarity between developments taking place in PEI and those in Halifax. Women's hockey also began to flourish in the 1920s, long after the first recorded PEI contest in 1904. In 1925-26 a four-team league was in place, with teams from the AAAA, Summerside (Crystal Sisters), another Charlottetown team, the Red Macs, and Montague. Furthermore, the AAAA now added women to its organizational ranks where they would take part in expanding the membership and fund-raising activities in the future. Thirdly, the AAAA launched senior hockey back to the forefront of sport in PEI. Although the rivalry between the Abbies and Summerside Crystals was not new, it intensified even more. In 1929-30 crowds by the thousands flocked to view the final games. During this series some 600 Summerside fans boarded a special train to Charlottetown for one of the games there. Not to be outdone by sheer numbers, this was the moment of fame for one Lowell Hancock of Summerside. Hancock, a devout hockey follower had shunned the train in favor of his cross-country skis. He left Summerside at 8:15 AM and arrived in Charlottetown just in time for the game at 8 PM that evening. There he was introduced to the crowd and rewarded with a standing ovation. There is no mention of how he returned to Summerside.⁴¹

The AAAA had reached organizational maturity in the 1920s and this along with the national trend to do the same also resulted in its move to regional competition. Charlie Ballem suggests the AAAA actually began its decline in 1924, after the three successive

⁴¹ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 198.

Maritime Senior Hockey titles,⁴² and the eventual result would be the organization's shift towards junior rather than senior hockey. In a sense the evolution was gradual, in that the AAAA did not fully move to support junior hockey until 1933, but external pressures and internal tensions had prevailed long before that time. Although costs for travel, coaching, scheduling, equipment, and facilities grew in the 1920's, the AAAA remained a private organization, conducting its own fund raising and administration. It was self sufficient despite the strain, but members of its executive were beginning to experience a toll nevertheless.

By 1924, the Senior Abbies had lost the Maritime title for the first time in four years, and the organization was beset by player defections, retirements, and eligibility problems related to hockey. Executives Lou McMillan and Sammy Doyle were also President and Secretary respectively of the Maritime Provinces Branch of the AAU (MPBAAU). The AAU thought the MPBAAU operated a lenient policy on professionalism and the two parties feuded often. In fact both Doyle and McMillan were suspended from the MPBAAU for two months in 1927. After this Ballem said, "residual bitterness undoubtedly persisted to resurface during the Big 4 League's days in the mid 1930's".⁴³

The late 1920s also saw financial problems. The organization was several hundred dollars in debt in November 1929 and unable to support a Track and Field team in Maritime competition that year. Then, internal divisions came about. Even with the opening of The Forum in 1930, and two seasons of local league play, the AAAA was split over the issues of finance and competitiveness. Ballem wrote "the philosophical

⁴² Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 85.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 87.

implications of the issue for the association were momentous”.⁴⁴ It was clear that to be competitive in hockey off-Island would require imports. This was not only costly but violated the code of amateurism. On one side were the Executive, including McMillan and Doyle, on the other an ambitious hockey committee eager to plunge into the competitive scene with everything it could muster. A decision was made, under mysterious circumstances Ballem suggested, rumoured to be based on financial necessity.⁴⁵ Whatever the case, a separate entity now ran the senior club under the Abegweit name, and its leaders began importing players and coaches. From 1930 to 1934, senior hockey reached a fever pitch in Charlottetown as player after player was imported. Local players became fewer and fewer with the arrival of each import. Ballem noted that in 1932, four of the nine-player team were imports, by 1934 there was but one local player on the Senior Abbies, Ivan “Hickey” Nicholson.⁴⁶ Players themselves did not complain publicly about such matters, it was over-looked by the media, and the fans were caught up in the pursuits of the team.

The AAAA, on the other hand, chose now to focus its attention on a junior club team. The Junior Abbies would carry the respected Abegweit name forward from 1933. At last the city had a representative junior hockey team, composed entirely of local players. The dream of many to have such a team exist in senior ironically came true with junior. It was well into the season when the new team was created, but this would not present a problem. Three years earlier the city of Charlottetown had provided more stability for hockey teams by building the Charlottetown Forum. Complete with its artificial ice

⁴⁴ Ibid., 95.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 98.

plant, electric lighting, and benched seating, the Forum opened in December 1930. This was a milestone event “rivalled only by the construction of the CAAA Grounds in 1897”.⁴⁷ Its opening was the beginning of a new era. The province, the city, and the sporting community began to realize the benefits immediately. Its completion at the onset of the Depression makes this accomplishment all the more significant. But then, given the city had recently left one decade of depression, the new building was never viewed as something to regret, but rather to cherish. Perhaps it was as Edward MacDonald wrote “The stock market collapse of 1929 was only a distant echo in a province that had few high-rolling investors”.⁴⁸ While there may not have been investors, some may have argued that the city had no business building a new state-of-the-art arena. “To a certain degree that may have been the case,” Peter E. Rider contended, “but the period 1921-1945 is also marked by significant additions to the city sky line and its geographical expanse”.⁴⁹ Rider further added that new factors were now considered to the influences shaping the city. These included separation of home and workplace and the expanding tourism industry.⁵⁰ This separation experience would include outside entertainment like that of attending hockey games. Howard Shubert explained that many of the generation of hockey arenas constructed between 1920 and 1931 not only addressed safety and convenience factors, but were designed to transform the hockey audience into a glamorous sect with real class.⁵¹ Indeed, both the new arenas in New York and Detroit

⁴⁷ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 198.

⁴⁸ Edward MacDonald, *If You're Stronghearted: Prince Edward Island in the 20th Century* (Charlottetown: Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation, 2000), 155.

⁴⁹ Peter E Rider, *Charlottetown: A History* (Charlottetown and Gatineau: PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation and Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, 2009), 198. Other buildings were the Harris Memorial Art and Library, the Provincial Sanatorium, and the Prince Of Wales College.

⁵⁰ Rider, *Charlottetown*, 198.

⁵¹ Shubert, “The Changing Experience of Hockey Spectatorship,” 60.

were designed by theatre architects. Physically the Forum looked similar to the other new buildings. Designed by local architect Edward Blanchard, it had a grand and rounded façade with a tower on each front corner.⁵² This was the front view where the public were expected to enter. The sides looked typically like any other urban arena of the day, and while the back wall matched the front in shape, it bordered into the very backyards of Euston Street to the rear. Enjoying one of only three artificial ice surfaces in the Maritimes, the Forum gave considerable advantage to the hockey programs. The Junior Abbies now had another pillar of support. Once again, a well planned endeavour enabled them to play with Canada's best and largest.

The community would be the first to benefit particularly as spectators. Before the Forum opened, many of the natural ice rinks scattered throughout the city offered little or no protection from the elements. Even those fortunate to have a roof and walls were still often safety hazards. In short, they were not properly built for spectators. The Forum joined the group of new arenas springing up across Canada that did heed spectator concerns.⁵³ In addition to addressing safety issues, such new facilities also appealed to spectator comfort. Bleacher seating, while not as luxurious as other types, was better than standing in the cold. Canteens and public washrooms were added. Going to a hockey game became a new experience for the spectator. Whether the city had intended for it to happen this way is difficult to say, but in effect they added a new component to ice sports in making them more attractive to attend as entertainment.⁵⁴

⁵² Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 198.

⁵³ Shubert, "The Changing Experience of Hockey Spectatorship," 60.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

The Forum was far from anything like the cavernous Maple Leaf Gardens or New York's Madison Square Gardens. At the community level it served more as a gathering place as explained by Cindy Kiley in reference to the community rink in Musquodobit Harbour, Nova Scotia.⁵⁵ Kiley suggested such a local center acted as a "social institution that many argued would create a space for organized recreation for children".⁵⁶ The Forum would serve the Charlottetown community in the same regard.

Community and school events such as carnivals, public skating, the Ice Sport competitions, and later boxing, wrestling, and musical concerts were added to the Forum's agenda; suddenly the city had a new source of revenue. At the first annual meeting of the Forum, chaired by Dr. Ira J. Yeo, Forum President, Yeo reported a very successful year financially and prospects for the future looked bright.⁵⁷ The total cost of land and the building, Yeo reported to 150 shareholders, came in at approximately \$98,000. Shareholder profit was listed at 6% on the capital.⁵⁸ In the AAAA's annual meeting in late 1932 junior hockey supporter and club executive J.F. Sterns presented the financial report. "The club had the largest operating surplus in years due to the large receipts received from hockey and from the carnivals. Although other members of the organization quickly offered opinions on where the surplus should be directed, overall the AAAA must have been satisfied with the initial positive results of the Forum operations."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Kiley, "Of Rinks and Community". The proper name of this facility is the Eastern Shore Community Center

⁵⁶ Kiley, "Of Rinks and Community", 66

⁵⁷ The Forum was an incorporated business. This was the first meeting of shareholders and Board of Directors. "First Annual Meeting of The Forum", *The Guardian*, June 12, 1931.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Abegweit Club Holds Annual Meeting", *The Guardian*, November 16, 1932.

The Ice Sport competitions were enormous events where speed skating, relay racing, fun races, and the inevitable hockey contests pitted school against school. West Kent and Queen's Square often competed against each other, and shortly both schools would challenge Summerside. Attendance was equal to that of Senior Abbies games. One of the first such events to be held at the Forum occurred 26 February 1931. A crowd of 3000 attended.⁶⁰ More importantly, the participants now had a safe and central facility in which to compete. Schools began to conduct these events regularly several times a season much like some hockey leagues. Indeed, the novelty of the new Forum was an attraction in itself. Thousands attended the inaugural ceremonies and *The Guardian*, on 6 December, ran two full pages to preview the opening. A further special review was issued on 10 December, the day after the official opening. Lieutenant Governor Charles Dalton attended along with Charlottetown Mayor Prowse and PEI Premier Lea. The new Forum was said to be a "credit to the garden province".⁶¹ A capacity crowd of 3200 attended the first hockey game, 13 December 1930, between the Senior Abbies and Moncton Victorias.⁶² Not to be excluded were local enthusiasts in what was possibly one of the first recreational hockey games in the new arena.⁶³ According to a notice in *The Guardian* of 21 January 1931, "Bunnie Campbell's shako drinkers hereby challenge Ed Acorn's 'pie eaters' to a friendly game of hockey at the Forum - Acceptance to be made through these columns, Chester Reid Manager".⁶⁴ Such advertisements appeared quite frequently in the newspapers over the course of a hockey season.

⁶⁰ "3000 Attend WKS Sports", *The Guardian*, February 26, 1931.

⁶¹ "New Forum A Credit To Garden Province", *The Guardian*, December 10, 1930.

⁶² Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 199.

⁶³ This was likely a "pick-up" game, an informal session among friends or associates. There would have been few other means of contacting a group of persons for such a purpose.

⁶⁴ Notice in *The Guardian*, January 22, 1931.

By far the greatest beneficiaries of the Forum were the Senior Abbies. Their attendance soared, greatly exceeding those of all other users except the Ice Sports. For their first game, ticket prices were set at \$1 for boxes, 60 cents for reserved seating, and 75 cents for gallery seating and 50 cents for the East Door section. The Senior Abbies would average 2500 fans per game. Shortly after the Forum's opening, teams from Truro, Summerside, Moncton, and Quebec visited for contests against the Senior Abbies.⁶⁵ An exhibition NHL game featuring the Ottawa Senators and Montreal Maroons was played in early April. The new revenues only ratcheted the player import movement considerably upward. While the Forum may have been built for convenience and community service purposes, there was no mistaking a third role; competitiveness. Russell Field explained that Maple Leaf Gardens was not only built with spectators in mind, specifically this would mean many more spectators to boost profits, but to owner Conn Smythe, a more competitive team which was fast becoming the necessity in the NHL.⁶⁶

Hockey players have always sought to offer their services to the highest bidder, wrote Mark Rosenstraub in *Artificial Ice*.⁶⁷ It was not much different in the early 1930s. For the Senior Abbies, their bid would certainly include the services of a new indoor modern arena, in addition to anything else they were offering. With better recruits, a better facility, and better attendance, the Abbies quickly became a major player in Maritime Senior Hockey. However, what was good for the Senior Abbies was not always good for

⁶⁵ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 94.

⁶⁶ Field, "Profits, Playoffs, and the Building of Maple Leaf Gardens, 1931", 47-48.

⁶⁷ Mark Rosenstraub, "Playing with the Big Boys: Smaller Markets, Competitive Balance, and the Hope for a Championship Team, in Richard Gruneau and David Whitson, eds., *Artificial Ice: Hockey Culture, and Commerce* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2006), 144.

the Junior Abbies. The Junior Abbies did not enjoy the attendance of their senior counterparts, although Guardian columnist Thomas Corrigan often implored the public to give more support.⁶⁸ This referred to attendance. Crowds were often low at the junior hockey contests. Although local sponsorship was in place, it was The Depression and more monetary support from patrons would be helpful. Given Corrigan's promotion of junior hockey as a development program, another real concern may have been for the future. Corrigan was attempting to establish fan interest early in the hope supporters too, would join him in advocating for much more local content on the future senior teams. Junior hockey never attained the instant popularity the Forum gave to senior. The most desirable ice times too were reserved for senior hockey. But on many occasions later in the first year and subsequent years, the juniors played immediately after a senior contest. Not only did this help defray costs, but also it was hoped their game would gain more popularity through more exposure. And at least the Junior Abbies had a venue for their game. Summerside would not have artificial ice until 1952, and no other PEI community was even close to attaining such an asset. It began to pay off when the Junior Abbies were formed in 1933. Goalie Don Baker of Margate, forward Jimmy Cousins of Kensington, and Clarence "Windy" Steele of Summerside, all opted to play for the Abbies.⁶⁹ None lived closer than an hour's travel from Charlottetown.

The Forum gave junior hockey an organizing venue as well. In its earliest days (1931) the only junior league on PEI was the city league in Charlottetown. Local business and private clubs sponsored the teams. With the opening of the Forum however, they had a

⁶⁸ Thomas E. Corrigan, "Looking 'em Over", *The Guardian*, December 15, 1930. This was among the first of many such pleas for public support Corrigan would make.

⁶⁹ John McNeill, "The Realm of Sport", *The Journal Pioneer*, January 14, 1970.

central location as well as a secure and stable practice facility. This would become important when they began to compete out of province. In the meantime, several Junior Abbies had competed in the Ice Sports. Not only were their skating skills sharpened, but these events included a full out hockey game between the competing schools. The contests between Queen's Square and West Kent were spirited affairs. Playing in the Forum before thousands gave them an early opportunity to showcase their talents. By the time these players were on the Abbies' roster, they were experienced in playing under pressure. This would serve them well when they played in Bathurst, Halifax, Moncton, or Toronto.

Playing in a new arena offered a standard size ice surface, painted lines defining zones, uniform boards surrounding the ice surface, and of course a much higher quality ice surface. There were also new strategic demands imposed by these characteristics of the venue. The Junior Abbies drew heavily on this advantage as all of their players had already three years' experience in such an environment. When they met others who did not regularly play in a similar setting, and that was anywhere else on PEI, the Abbies definitely held the upper hand. Consequently, although they often played against older and stronger players, they won most of these games.

In 1933, then, the Junior Abbies had solid organizational support. Now the AAAA was behind one junior team, rather than four small businesses each supporting one team financially as had been done in previous years. The Junior Abbies also had a first class playing arena to call home. City planners continued to study other municipalities in search of potential improvements to the Forum. In Halifax they had seen the Halifax

Forum, in Moncton, the Moncton Stadium.⁷⁰ Saint John was in the process of building a new facility and so was Toronto. The Maple Leaf Gardens construction was well underway at the same time as the Forum, opening in 1931. It was of course much larger, but as Peter Rider has stated, “The two arenas shared the same profound impact upon sport and entertainment in its own locale”.⁷¹

By 1930 with the effect of the Depression yet to be fully realized a sense of optimism had to have prevailed in Charlottetown. The AAAA by this time had more than 30 years experience in organizing athletics and the new arena offered a host of opportunities. Charlottetown for example, was opening up to the concept of Maritime competitions on a regular basis. In turn this would not only strengthen its relationship with other communities but contribute to the Maritimes as a whole. The time was ripe for a new brand consistent with the new sense of openness and strength of the region. Thus this closer examination of Charlottetown’s community experience with junior hockey reveals the critical elements of that process.

As for the support of the Junior Abbies, they would gather more and more with the momentum of their 1934 run to the Memorial Cup. However it could not be held in the same regard as that explained by David Di Felice. Di Felice demonstrated how large a following can become in his essay about the French Canadian support of Montreal Canadians in the Maurice “Rocket” Richard era.⁷² Although Island pride was enhanced through the young Abbies squad, it was far from the magnitude of Quebec’s for Montreal. But it was nevertheless important to PEI and those throughout the Maritime

⁷⁰ Halifax Forum Community Association History, <http://www.halifaxforum.ca/history> (accessed 7 March 2012); Roper, ed., *From Pond to Pro*.

⁷¹ Rider, *Charlottetown*, 203.

⁷² Di Felice “The Formation of Class, Ethnic, and National Identities”, 83-93.

region who also added their support. Perhaps it was the first instance of a prophetic statement from 1931.

Early in Charlottetown's first junior hockey season, an article appeared in *The Guardian* describing the new league in detail. A bold prediction was made at the end: "it is a certainty that an abundance of hockey material will be developed in the course of a year or two which will assure us a place in the sun in Maritime hockey and allow us to climb there with home grown talent".⁷³ The article does not include the reporter's name but it resonates with Thomas Corrigan's tone of pride in his community, the AAAA, and the Junior Abbies. They would represent the Maritimes and show the country what could be done.

⁷³ "New Junior Hockey League", *The Guardian*, January 22, 1931.

Chapter 2

Emerging from Senior: Key People At Crucial Stages

The emergence of PEI junior hockey from the shadows of senior was first hinted at by Charlie Ballem.¹ In direct terms, however, junior was not the first level to develop from the situation created by the effective professionalization of senior hockey. That distinction goes to intermediate hockey.² Organized junior hockey began in Charlottetown and with the centrality of organizational support, media coverage, and community infrastructure; it was little wonder junior appeared to rise more vigorously than intermediate.

No exact moment can be placed on when junior hockey began its rise or senior began its decline. If the two levels could be represented on a graphical plane, the junior curve would be plotted beneath the senior. Their intersection point, however, would come in the fall of 1934 after which senior collapsed rapidly under its own weight. Similar developments occurred elsewhere in the Maritimes. Both Moncton and Halifax had begun organized city junior leagues in the very early part of the decade. Moncton was almost identical to Charlottetown, starting in the same year, and when both were on the verge of opening new and modern arenas.³ Both Moncton and Halifax also had dominant junior teams emerge from city leagues who had also played in the shadow of their more popular senior teams. In effect, the 1934 Junior Abbies not only emerged triumphant in

¹ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 209.

² Intermediate teams were often termed “second” teams in the newspapers, especially those belonging to an athletic club such as the Intermediate Abbies. At least three such teams existed on PEI as early as 1915, and by 1927 a fully organized Island-wide league was in place. The majority of the Intermediate teams however, were found in the smaller communities of PEI. Here they were proudly regarded as the community team regardless of classification. They were well distributed across the Island, team locations extending from Alberton in the West to Souris in the East. However their rural nature distinctly separated them from their Senior and Junior counterparts.

³ Roper, ed., *From Pond to Pro*, 377.

PEI but the Maritimes as well. This feat was enabled by having key people in place and through completion of three crucial stages.

There were three individuals instrumental to the Abbies' success of 1934. Of these individuals, only one was active in 1934 for the Abbies. The other two played their parts in the preceding years. If the Abbies' achievement was considered over time, the result would have stemmed from three periods, or stages. 1930-31 would be the first stage, 1931-33 the second stage, and 1933-34, the third. Each of the individuals meanwhile, took a leading a role in a particular stage.

The first, Thomas E. Corrigan, was a newspaper journalist with *The Guardian*.⁴ Corrigan was the public voice of hockey in Charlottetown and in many instances, PEI as a whole. This was a task he performed unselfishly and enthusiastically. Corrigan was most active in the initial stages of junior hockey in Charlottetown. Corrigan would appeal, implore, and congratulate when the time was essential to get junior started. Corrigan's primary role took place in the first stage, 1930-31, when the time was ripe for a formalized approach to developing junior hockey. Secondly, J.F. Sterns of Charlottetown served on the AAAA executive, had been President in 1929, and was a Vice-President with the MAHA in 1932.⁵ In this capacity he also acted as PEI's representative for all matters pertaining to hockey, regardless of level. A close examination of Sterns' particular comments and specific administrative efforts would reveal he had a special fondness for junior hockey. Sterns' role was most influential between 1931-33, a period that called for adaptation to continue the growth of junior hockey in Charlottetown. Finally, Lou Campbell had been a multi-sport athlete and later

⁴ "The Late Mr Thomas Ernest Corrigan", *The Guardian*, March 7, 1933.

⁵ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 121.

executive member with the AAAA.⁶ In 1934 he was a teacher at West Kent School and coached hockey teams for the Ice Sport competitions. It was Campbell's technical ability and skill at assembling the team, many of whom he knew from the school system, that would lead the Abbies on their journey. Campbell played his role during the third and final stage of this period, as coach of the 1934 Junior Abbies.

With Corrigan's participation, the first crucial stage of junior hockey development began in 1930. To what was essentially a new brand of hockey, a new level, or even a new product, Corrigan's reporting in *The Guardian* added a new form of sports journalism. It was consistent with the new beginnings of Charlottetown junior hockey.⁷ Corrigan's role was essential for this early stage of junior. He would provide the public voice for a league that, in its formative stages, was always in danger of being overshadowed by senior hockey. Corrigan became junior hockey's link to the outside world.

Prior to 1930, *The Guardian's* organizational layout was cluttered and confusing. Sports articles were difficult to locate. They were often short and lacked prominent headlines. There was no designated sports section and articles appeared wherever there happened to be space. A sports review section was included with some frequency, but never at set intervals. Consequently the reports would appear well after the match had been played, and typically they would include only the result and a scoring summary, with little or no subjective commentary.

⁶ PEI Sports Hall of Fame, "Lou Campbell", <http://www.peisportshalloffame.ca/personalities/personality.cfm?ID=7> (accessed 10 March 2012).

⁷ There were other journalists, including Neil Matheson at *The Patriot*, and Pat Powers, who appeared later in 1933 at *The Guardian*. However, *The Guardian's* articles in 1930-32 were more detailed and plentiful.

At the outset of the 1930s, this unsatisfactory situation changed abruptly. In January 1930, although the Sport Review would continue to appear intermittently for the time being, sports articles were more consistently in the same area, usually on the third or fourth page, and day-to-day results began to be published. In February the Sport Review itself began daily publication.⁸ Regular daily information articles and subjective commentary appeared consistently through to the end of the year. Finally, just after the opening of The Forum in late 1930, the first sports column appeared: “Looking ’em Over”, by Thomas E. (TEC) Corrigan.⁹ Thenceforth, his column was carried several times weekly. Certainly by 1931 Corrigan was a fixture as *The Guardian*’s sports columnist. His continuing style was consistent with the reports that had been published since the beginning of 1930. In effect, Corrigan therefore, brought two new elements to *The Guardian*’s sports pages. These were daily information reports and subjective commentary. Both became key factors in the dissemination of information in PEI’s earliest period of organized junior hockey.

By virtue of Corrigan’s daily reporting, interested fans would no longer have to wait for game results and scores. Following the local team’s progress could not be easier, and the same went for tracking the progress of the league. A report could easily indicate when the next game was scheduled, against whom, or supply other information at relatively short notice. For many people, fans or participants alike, who did not yet have access to radio; the local newspaper would be the only means of widespread communication. This feature became extremely valuable when Corrigan took the initiative in junior organization.

⁸ “Sport Review”, *The Guardian*, February 7, 1930.

⁹ Thomas Corrigan “Looking ’em Over”, *The Guardian*, December 16, 1930.

Also regularly published from 1930 were commentaries – sports reports that were opinion pieces rather than aiming primarily at imparting information. In February 1930, such a column pointed out the value of school Ice Sports.¹⁰ Many of these articles sought to enlist public support for an idea or cause, and to speak in some sense for the public. A week after the first such commentary on the Ice Sport competitions was published; another appeared in favour of senior hockey. It claimed that Senior Abbies coach Roy Prowse was “preparing to give the Southern New Brunswick (NB) champions a dandy game February 21st”, adding convenient information as well as speaking for the coach.¹¹ Indeed, most of Corrigan’s columns, after he began his own signed version, addressed senior-related issues. He would join popular Maritime sports columnists of this era such as Jimmie Smith at *The Halifax Herald* and W.J. Foley of *The Halifax Chronicle*.¹² Yet Corrigan did not confine his opinions to senior hockey. He was quick to address any matter he felt needed comment, especially junior hockey. In his columns Corrigan would inform, implore, congratulate and on rare occasions, criticize. His columns detailing the organization of junior were of utmost importance to its beginning.¹³ Not only did he disseminate important information, but his reporting also acted as a motivator for all participants to keep moving ahead. Fiercely protective of local hockey interests in an era dominated by senior hockey, Corrigan could be scathing towards others. After the *Truro News* mistakenly stated, for example, that the hometown Bearcats would host the Charlottetown Abegweits in the Halifax Forum, Corrigan went to the attack. Calling them

¹⁰ “West Kent Ice Sports”, *The Guardian*, February 11, 1930.

¹¹ *The Guardian*, February 14, 1930. Many of the articles appearing in *The Guardian* were unsigned and untitled, a practice that continues to this day.

¹² Savoie, “Broken Time Broken Hearts”, 8, 21.

¹³ “Hockey Forum Suggested”, *The Guardian*, March 29, 1930; and “Junior Hockey League”, in “Looking ‘em Over”, *The Guardian*, December 16, 1930.

“ignorant”, he chastised them for not knowing “We have an up to date Forum” although it had been open a scant nine days.¹⁴

Another situation to which Corrigan turned his attention in 1930 was that of the Summerside Crystal Sisters. Although women’s hockey started almost as quickly as men’s in PEI, in 1893, it never experienced the same kind of organization. After 1905 it remained dormant through the war years and into the 1920’s. Then a revival occurred. Three teams were organized, in Charlottetown, Summerside, Montague and each played exhibition games against Nova Scotia and New Brunswick teams. In 1925-26 a four-team provincial league was formed on PEI, among them the Summerside Crystal Sisters. This league lasted for several years but was disbanded in favour of inter-provincial exhibition contests.¹⁵ In 1930 Summerside had won the Maritime Championship. The team then looked to Quebec for an Eastern Canadian playoff. The Montreal Hockey Committee, an organization that managed the affairs of the women’s team the Montreal Electras, rebuffed the Summerside Crystal Sisters at every attempt the Crystals made in attempting to play a bona fide Eastern Canadian Championship at the Montreal Forum. The Crystals even offered to cover their own expenses. The issue might have ended there, but for the *Montreal Dispatch* proclaiming the Electras as Quebec and Maritime Ladies Hockey Champions.¹⁶ Always zealous in defending hockey’s lesser-known competitors, Corrigan was outraged. He harshly criticized the Montreal officials for defending their position by claiming that the Montreal Forum was unavailable. Corrigan claimed to know otherwise

¹⁴ Thomas Corrigan. “Looking ‘em Over”, *The Guardian*, December 18, 1930.

¹⁵ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 181.

¹⁶ Thomas Corrigan, “Crystals Not Montreal are Maritime Champions”, *The Guardian*, April 9, 1930.

and at the end of the article and in the name of Maritime hockey he protested.¹⁷ His advocacy, the most spirited stance he had taken in his two years he served as *Guardian* Sports Editor, was an early example of how passionate he could be for a cause in which he believed. Junior hockey was another such cause.

After Corrigan had lauded junior hockey's formation, he was aware that more ongoing support was necessary.¹⁸ One day after the initial meeting he expanded on the junior program's potential as well as making his first appeal for public support. This may have been premature, as games had not even begun,¹⁹ but Corrigan would continue to keep the junior league in the public eye. He continued to support senior hockey, but was aware that the seniors attracted enough attention without his help. Sometimes the interests of the two could be combined, as on 13 January 1931 when Corrigan encouraged fans to attend the first junior game of the year and added: "By the way, scores from the Summerside/Abbies game will be announced, if you are not at that game, go to the junior game".²⁰ But he knew that, while the seniors could not be faulted for their popularity, it would normally be more helpful to the juniors to address them independently of senior.

For the first time, on 14 January 1931, Corrigan revealed the rationale for his staunch support of junior. He was actually referring to intermediate hockey when he stated, "If hockey was to remain amateur we must develop our intermediate players". The same logic applied to junior. He further claimed that other provinces had increased their standard of play by importing players from "Upper Canada, but PEI does not want to do

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Thomas Corrigan, "Looking 'em Over", *The Guardian*, December 15, 1930.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Thomas Corrigan, "Juniors Strut Stuff", *The Guardian*, January 13, 1931.

that, we want to produce our own players”.²¹ Perhaps they did. After the 1930-31 season as the AAAA was about to release its senior team responsibilities to a committee, they were concerned about their local content and its community connections. “Great Abegweit teams of the past were made up of Islanders, not players from away”, wrote Charlie Ballem.²² Yet Corrigan demonstrated here a major inconsistency. He would continue to deride other teams for importing, Maritimers or not. But he never objected to the Senior Abbies doing the same. In fact he positively gushed as import after import arrived in the city.²³ Such an inconsistent stance can only be explained by Corrigan as a realist. Junior hockey was still about developing talent; he was committed to help keeping it that way. Opportunity was still important to local players. He may have hoped in time this would expand to senior as a viable alternative to importing players.

In 1931-32 Corrigan continued with his support. The city junior league had added another team in the Southport Mohawks. However, spectator support had not increased over the league’s first year. On 30 November 1931 Corrigan explained that fans were remaining after the senior game to watch the juniors play, but only for the first period. Then they would depart.²⁴ The junior league executive had tied their games in with the senior schedule in hopes of boosting attendance, but always with the juniors playing after the seniors. On 19 December, Corrigan was stern as he ever dared be with the fans. “Attendance at the junior game was very, very slim. If the junior league ceased to

²¹ Thomas Corrigan, “Looking ’em Over”, *The Guardian*, January 14, 1930.

²² Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 201.

²³ Corrigan chastised the Montreal AAA club in “Looking ’em Over”, January 08, 1931, suggesting the club should “clear its house” after its Allan Cup victory the previous season. On October 1931 he called Moncton the “former Winnipeg Elmwoods”, a reference to the number of imports Moncton obtained from the Winnipeg area.

²⁴ Thomas Corrigan, “Looking ’em Over”, *The Guardian*, November 30, 1931.

function somebody would have the audacity to ask why” he admonished.²⁵ On 23 December he railed again at the public; “Fans give the juniors a break! And plenty of cheers with a large attendance tonight”.²⁶ But in the next day’s report of a twin game bill, he stated only “Attendance was poor”.²⁷ He had tried hard to endear junior hockey to the community with the same passion he had exhibited with the Crystal Sisters. As 1931 began, Corrigan’s vociferous support began to wane, but he had already served junior hockey well and his influence was felt in one more important area.

Corrigan, while at *The Guardian*, had also a national vision, potentially linking PEI with the competition the rest of Canada offered, and the possibility of a Memorial Cup. Before the junior circuit had even been organized, Corrigan wrote that it should be modeled on the Ontario Hockey Association (OHA).²⁸ This was a stretch, as the OHA consisted of much larger urban center-based teams such as Toronto, London, Sault Ste Marie, and Sudbury, but the OHA teams frequently vied for the Memorial Cup and Corrigan wasted no time implanting the dream into the local minds. It would come closer to reality much earlier than anyone could have predicted. Corrigan wrote two more articles before the end of the first season, this time linking junior hockey with professional prospects. On 16 December he called the OHA the “greatest nursery of hockey players” because 113 of the 154 registered players in the NHL had played in the OHA.²⁹ He next pointed out that Calgary, Alberta, currently had eight graduates from its junior team playing in the NHL, and expressed his hope Charlottetown would one day do

²⁵ Thomas Corrigan, “Looking ’em Over”, *The Guardian*, December 19, 1931.

²⁶ Thomas Corrigan, “Looking ’em Over”, *The Guardian*, December 23, 1931.

²⁷ Thomas Corrigan, “Looking ’em Over” *The Guardian*, December 24, 1931.

²⁸ Thomas Corrigan, “Looking ’em Over” *The Guardian*, December 15, 1930.

²⁹ Thomas Corrigan, “Looking ’em Over” *The Guardian*, December 16, 1930.

something similar.³⁰ In 1932 he was somewhat quieter overall but he did mention the Montreal AAA Royals, since they had won the Quebec-Maritime title against an Antigonish NS squad.³¹ However, the Royals had two stars slated to play for the Senior Abbies next season, 1932-33. It was this year his articles on national affairs became fewer and fewer. This was the season there was no official junior hockey in Charlottetown.

Corrigan had done his part for junior hockey in Charlottetown and PEI. He may have been conflicted between his ideas of amateurism with the exploits of the Senior Abbies, but there could be no denying the sincerity of his concern for junior. Other than senior, no other program received the coverage Corrigan gave to the juniors. His work was essential in this early stage. Even though there was no junior league in 1932-33, the public was well aware of its possibilities, as were its participants. It was time to regroup and begin the next stage. In 1933 Corrigan's articles and his active support began to dwindle. He died tragically on 7 March 1933.³² Within a year of his death, the Junior Abbies would begin fulfilling his dream of national prominence.

The second noteworthy individual, J.F. "Jack" Sterns, played a quiet but key role in junior progression. Neither *Abegweit Dynasty* nor *More Than Just A Game* records any instance of Sterns being an athlete. He was however, an administrator, serving as President of the AAAA in 1928-29.³³ Even in this role there is no mention in the secondary sources of details regarding his stewardship, despite the onset of a period of

³⁰ Thomas Corrigan, "Looking 'em Over" *The Guardian* January 31, 1931.

³¹ Thomas Corrigan, "Maritime Juniors Lose to Montreal", *The Guardian*, March 18, 1932.

³² "The Late Mr Thomas Ernest Corrigan", *The Guardian*, March 07, 1933.

³³ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 121.

declining role for the organization. Nevertheless he remains a key figure in the development of junior hockey for the years from 1931 to 1933.

By 1931 Sterns was the provincial representative for PEI with the MAHA, in addition to his Vice Presidency. This would mean he was to act as a liaison between the affiliated hockey programs on PEI and their governing organizations, the MAHA and CAHA. His area of jurisdiction therefore would include junior, intermediate, and senior hockey. Again there are no indications of how he attained this position, but he must have been elected, as was indicated in 1934.³⁴ However, in examining his contributions in the 1931-34 period, other indications become clearer on just why he might have opted for this role. They link to his concern for junior hockey.

In 1923-24, the MAHA had taken on its new role as regulatory body for Maritime hockey. This was consistent with a larger movement toward independence from national governing organizations such as the AAU and its Maritime arm, the MPAAU. Charlie Ballem explained this transition: "Commencing in the late 1920's and extending into the decade of the 1930's, the formation of separate governing bodies for the major sports reflected the trend toward autonomy in the governance of sport".³⁵ In turn this had implications for the AAAA. "As the number of autonomous sport governing bodies increased," noted Ballem, "the role of the Abegweit Association declined".³⁶ While none of this suggests that Sterns was disillusioned with the AAAA, his one year term as President of this organization and his multi-year participation with the MAHA would

³⁴ "Wry Elected President, JF Sterns First VP, Halifax Canadians Protest Junior Abbie Player", *The Guardian*, March 20, 1934.

³⁵ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 206-207.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

suggest he was more inclined to the MAHA role and principles.³⁷ At the time, such principles would include amateurism, as had been espoused by previous MPAAU members of the AAAA Lou MacMillan and Sam Doyle. What is clear also is that Sterns was not a member of the AAAA hockey committee that ultimately ended up purchasing the rights to the Abegweit name for its hockey club, and subsequently began a spending spree on import players. His future actions and comments would further substantiate his commitment to the junior brand of hockey. Sterns would also act as an advocate for Maritime interests as they pertained to national regulations.

Sterns' direct involvement began part-way through junior hockey's second season. Sterns gave notice of an effort to promote junior hockey from a Maritime perspective appeared in *The Guardian*, 13 November 1931.³⁸ The next portion included the age regulations for the various levels as issued by the CAHA, implying that Sterns was simply doing his part in dispersing them to PEI.³⁹ However, more was at stake, in that the effect was to stimulate interest in those who aspired to play competitive hockey even before junior. As the age levels indicated levels other than junior, it was as if a minor system was envisioned so as to generate players for not only the senior ranks, but also for junior.⁴⁰

Previously, little had been said or done about this level of hockey, aside from school activities. It was the beginning of its life in PEI. The next day it was reported that a

³⁷ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 121. It was common for Presidents of the AAAA to serve multiple terms. From 1909 to 1926 Dr. Ira J. Yeo had served four terms and S.F. "Sammy" Doyle served twice in this period.

³⁸ "To All Hockey Clubs on The Island", *The Guardian*, November 13 1931.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. The article includes levels for all ages below 20 years. Thus it does not include Intermediate or Senior, neither of whom were subject to age restrictions.

Midget level league had been formed.⁴¹ The next season, a news columnist's report of a Midget game between Euston Street Wildcats and Stewart Street Ramblers (two of the league's three teams) indicated that each team listing contained the full allotment of 11 players.⁴² This was a healthy turnout compared to some city junior games. When Queen's Hotel defeated the Southport Mohawks in a league game in 1932, they did so missing six players. The Mohawks played with one to spare. Since teams consisted of 11 persons this meant five played the entire game for Queen's. Southport fared little better.⁴³ Sterns' actions would stimulate interest in lower-tier hockey, which would pay off in the Abbies selection of available players in 1934. Some had indeed had played Midget in 1932.

As a last appeal Sterns applied some bait. "Wherever possible hockey clubs should create junior teams. In small country towns now playing intermediate, the clubs would be well advised to confine their efforts to junior operations."⁴⁴ Sterns finished by predicting that with enough participating clubs an Island Junior Championship would be forthcoming to rank with Maritime, Quebec, and even the Dominion Championships.⁴⁵ Thus, he shrewdly tied in local participants with the prospect of a national championship. As for the intermediate teams that he urged to convert to junior, Sterns might have said it more politely but there was a rationale. The CAHA had provided money for the Dominion Championships but none was earmarked for intermediate hockey. Most of the intermediate play on PEI was found among rural clubs made up largely of available local players, such as the Victoria Unions who had five brothers and two of their cousins in

⁴¹ "Midget Hockey Organized In Charlottetown", *The Guardian*, November 14, 1931. Midget hockey, although its more skilled members often played Junior, a practice still evident in Canada today, covered the ages 15-16 years inclusive.

⁴² Thomas Corrigan, "Looking 'em Over", *The Guardian*, February 16 1933

⁴³ "Queen's Hotel 3 Mohawks 2", *The Guardian*, February 08, 1932

⁴⁴ "To All Hockey Clubs on the Island", *The Guardian*, November 13, 1931.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

their lineup.⁴⁶ Other intermediate teams belonged to a private club similar to the AAAA's intermediate team. In any case there was no harmful intent in Sterns' first attempt in stimulating the growth of junior hockey. On 27 January 1932, *The Guardian* reported that Charlottetown's lead had spread to Kensington.⁴⁷ By December 1933 there were reports surfacing of leagues in rural Milton and Bedeque.⁴⁸ At the same time it was reported that Summerside had formed a club team and sought exhibition contests against the Junior Abbies.⁴⁹ Sterns never appealed publicly in such a fashion again. It would appear he did not have to, because his plea had succeeded.

On 20 January 1933, CAHA President Frank Greenleaf offered the Maritimes a deal. "Trade the junior championship play-downs for senior," proposed Greenleaf.⁵⁰ The Maritimes and Quebec were two separate regions under CAHA policies. When the championship teams of each region's leagues played each other it was termed a play-down. In senior the play-down winner would advance to play the Ontario region champion as they proceeded toward the Allan Cup. Junior had a similar format. The Maritime region winner also played Quebec, the winner advancing to meet Ontario toward the Memorial Cup. In both cases the series rotated back and forth, in Quebec one year, somewhere in the Maritimes the next – usually awarded by the MAHA to a municipality with stable ice conditions. In senior this was scheduled for the Maritimes in 1933, and in junior, for Quebec. It was an important issue for Maritime fans and hockey officials, as it was in many areas. Teams wanting to get off to a good start on the road to a

⁴⁶ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 207.

⁴⁷ "Junior Hockey", *The Guardian*, January 27, 1932.

⁴⁸ "New League Is Formed", *The Guardian*, December 02, 1933.

⁴⁹ "Summerside Hockey Club Annual Meeting", *The Guardian*, January 20, 1933.

⁵⁰ "Suggestion Meets With Opposition CAHA Would Trade Juniors For Seniors", *The Guardian*, January 20, 1933.

national championship preferred to begin with home advantage. Greenleaf proposed to keep the senior series in Quebec for this year as it had been in 1932, and in turn allow the junior play-down to remain in the Maritimes where it had been that year. Greenleaf claimed it was a question of economics. But Maritimers were distrustful of the CAHA motives and would have nothing to do with the deal, as pointed out by Marc Savoie in great detail.⁵¹ MAHA Vice President Harry Taylor sent his recommendation to President (MAHA) James Wry to pass on to the CAHA. The answer was an emphatic “no”.⁵² It was clear that the chief concern of the Maritimes in this issue was the fate of their senior clubs, and the fate of junior appears to have been forgotten. Not so, by J.F. Sterns.

Sterns responded to Greenleaf on 23 January, and the next day an article in *The Guardian* reported that Sterns supported the existing arrangement of keeping the first senior playoff round in the Maritimes. While he was responsible for Maritime interests, a little further scrutiny would suggest that Sterns had PEI in mind. He knew the Maritime Junior Champion would travel to Quebec this year, and Quebec would come to the Maritimes next season. He also knew that PEI had no junior league in place this year and even if they could muster a team in time, the powerful Moncton squad would very likely prevail. Let them travel to Quebec this year, and take a chance on next year was likely what was running through Sterns’ mind. He would also have known that several junior players in Charlottetown were playing intermediate this year, and were gaining valuable experience. By this time the AAAA had focused its efforts on development teams. With

⁵¹ Savoie, “Broken Time, Broken Hearts”, 7-17. This example was the second time the CAHA had attempted direct intervention in Maritime pursuit of an Allan Cup. The first was a CAHA ruling against the Truro Bearcats, 1931 Maritime Champions, which resulted in the disqualification of three players.

⁵² “Suggestion Meets With Opposition CAHA Would Trade Juniors For Seniors”, *The Guardian*, January 20, 1933. Taylor was listed as the VP MAHA in this article, although future reports would name Sterns as VP. Greenleaf had asked for “clubs” to vote on the issue, or at least this was the way it was reported in *The Guardian*. Which method was used to conduct a vote, and which clubs voted, is not known.

his inside knowledge of the AAAA workings, Sterns no doubt knew that the junior team would take priority the next year. With some luck they would survive the Maritimes and get off to that crucial good start by hosting the Quebec champion. Of course Sterns was going to support the status quo: it was in the interest of PEI junior. After the 1932-33 season Sterns faded from the public view of hockey. There is little mention of his MAHA involvement or with the AAAA. It had been a comprehensive journey. Sterns had seen junior grow rapidly in two years that also included a Maritime Championship in its very first season. Although it had stagnated in its third year, Sterns had done what was needed to ensure its survival in the future.

The third and final stage in the emergence of junior occurred at the beginning of the 1933-34 hockey season. The AAAA's organizational transfer of its senior franchise had been completed. In the 1932-33 season the intermediate team, with several junior-age players in its lineup, carried the Abegweit name. The Intermediate Abbies had won the PEI Championship and lost to the Halifax Wolverines in the first round of the Maritime Playoffs.⁵³ This year, the AAAA junior team would take on the recognized and respected Abegweit name. Although the AAAA would sponsor an intermediate team as well, it was the junior team that was expected to carry on the tradition of athletic excellence the AAAA had always tried to maintain. The intermediate teams could not proceed beyond the Maritime Play-downs, but the juniors could qualify for the Memorial Cup series. Should the juniors advance, it was a far less expensive way of showing the Abegweit name nationally than senior and 1933-34 presented an excellent opportunity. Charlottetown would split hosting games with any Maritime opponent and should they

⁵³ "Wolverines Hold Abbies To Draw", *The Guardian*, March 10, 1933.

win that series, they had the right to host the entire series against Quebec. There was a degree of confidence in this year's version of the Junior Abbies for being capable of delivering on the opportunity. On 30 December 1933 an article in *The Patriot* summed it up: "After winning a Maritime title last year, junior hockey fell into discord and although several attempts were made at reorganization, efforts came to naught. This however, is another year and rumours of a strong junior team are in the air".⁵⁴ All that was required now was leadership.

Louis Henry Davies "Lou" Campbell was already a sporting legend in PEI, long before he chose to coach the 1933-34 Junior Abbies. Born in rural Victoria PEI, he had grown up in Charlottetown, had attended West Kent School, and was involved in the AAAA by his early teens. He had participated in multiple sports for at least ten years with the AAAA. Campbell had completed his education at Prince of Wales College (PWC) and had been a teacher at West Kent remaining for some forty years. When his playing days were over he turned to coaching, and it was his combination of experiences that enabled him to be such a leader and mentor at a crucial stage in junior hockey. Campbell was a key figure, therefore, because of his experiences as an athlete, teacher, and coach.⁵⁵

As a star athlete from a young age, Campbell did not just participate, or even master the game, but rather he became known for his ability to change the game entirely. His versatility in baseball, where he starred as a multi-position player, underpinned the AAAA's sudden rise in the sport. Whereas the sport had taken twenty years to develop in

⁵⁴ "Yearly Wrap Up: Junior Hockey", *The Patriot*, December 30, 1933.

⁵⁵ PEI Sports Hall of Fame "Lou Campbell"

<http://www.peisportshalloffame.ca/personalities/personality.cfm?ID=7> (accessed 10 March 2012).

Charlottetown, Campbell provided the individual charisma a growing sport requires and local fans flocked to the games after one season of his involvement.⁵⁶ He would do the same with Rugby. In 1911, the withdrawal of the Victoria Club left only two teams thereby threatening the survival of the city league. When Lou Campbell signed on with the Abegweits he added such speed as a halfback it was described as a new style of the game. Its popularity in Charlottetown was instantly restored.⁵⁷ Campbell also played hockey. As early as 1912 and as late as 1922 he played on the Senior Abbies teams.⁵⁸ His year with the 1922 team was the year of their first of three consecutive Maritime Championships, for which the team was later inducted into the PEI Sports Hall of Fame.⁵⁹ Campbell's prowess on the playing fields accomplished more than individual fame. He had demonstrated that a single athlete could change the dynamics of the game as he had demonstrated in baseball and rugby. His experiences as an athlete allowed him to develop a loyalty to his team and sponsoring organization. In 1920 upon re-organization of the Abbies Rugby team, Campbell and several others left a team they had formed of their own in the interim in order to return to the Abbies.⁶⁰ Campbell had also travelled a great deal as an athlete. He had learned of sportsmanship and respect for others as well as that garnered by the Abegweit name in Maritime sport circles.

As a veteran of the much-respected Abbies of the early 1920s and having much experience in his years as an athlete, and willing now to share it with the athletes under his tutelage, Lou Campbell was an ideal candidate for a fledging junior program. Also,

⁵⁶ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 201.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 30, 79.

⁵⁹ PEI Sports Hall of Fame "Lou Campbell"

<http://www.peisportshalloffame.ca/personalities/personality.cfm?ID=7> (accessed 10 March 2012).

⁶⁰ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 148.

he knew many of his young players through his role as a teacher at West Kent. Here he helped shape the lives of many young men, and not only the athletes. For example, Gordon Bennett became an esteemed educator himself at PWC before moving on to Provincial politics. He held several offices as a Minister of the department. In his final official capacity he was appointed Lieutenant Governor of PEI.⁶¹ Walter Cox became Mayor of Charlottetown from 1965-69.⁶² But sport remained Campbell's passion even as a teacher. Campbell was the driving force behind the Ice Sports competitions held between schools. Queen's Square School (QSS) and West Kent School (WKS) had the greatest rivalry. Campbell inaugurated the hockey games held as a crowning activity of these competitions. He also coached the West Kent team. Not one to seek personal accolades, he performed his duties in a quiet and dignified manner. His humble demeanour was passed on to his students and athletes. In 1934, young Gordon Stewart, a former student and player for Campbell at WKS, was already being referred to as "Captain Stewart".⁶³ Charlie Ballem summarized of the Abbies' 1934 achievement: "led by Captain Gordon Stewart, the Abbies made a valiant run in the 1934 season for the Memorial Cup".⁶⁴ Stewart was very much like Campbell, his name appearing in multiple sports and playing on teams with members years his senior. Campbell also had strong community credentials. It was his encouragement of student participation in the Ice Sports that boosted their popularity as much as any other actor. Former AAAA President Sammy Doyle had said in 1929 there was a drastic need for increased public participation

⁶¹ John MacNeill, "The Realm Of Sport: Lou Campbell is Popular Choice", *The Journal Pioneer*, January 4, 1974, 4.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Pat Powers, "Warm Welcome Extended Maritime Junior Champions", *The Guardian*, March 20, 1974.

⁶⁴ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 209.

in the community sporting life. He appealed to the YMCA, parents and schools.⁶⁵

Campbell did his part within the school system. His experiences as an athlete and a teacher would contribute to his next successful endeavour, that of coach.

Typically of Campbell, his offer to coach the Junior Abbies in 1933 was made much earlier and without public knowledge, in 1932. Pat Powers, who became a columnist for *The Guardian* after Corrigan's death, only mentioned it in March 1933, a full year afterwards.⁶⁶ Powers wrote, "The idea of having a junior team to compete for Maritime honours after two years inactivity was prevalent last spring when Lou Campbell and Chuck Jennett saw the wealth of junior material and developed and planned for the 1933-34 campaign".⁶⁷ Campbell then set about constructing his team. Although differences were not expressed overtly, at least in the Charlottetown sports pages, the Queen's Square and West Kent schools differed by religion. QSS was Catholic and WKS Protestant. Their spirited hockey contests were entertaining and in an era where post-secondary schools (PWC and SDU) were built on church rivalry, there could be no doubt that a QSS and WKS hockey match reflected some as well. However, Campbell bridged the gap and oriented his young team toward a common goal, as noted when he was later inducted into the PEI Sports Hall of Fame.⁶⁸

With his combination of athletic excellence, his dealings with students all of his adult life, and his loyalty and respect for the name he was carrying as an organization,

⁶⁵ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 90.

⁶⁶ Pat Powers, "Timely Tips On Sport", *The Guardian*, March 19, 1933.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Chuck Jennett (from Truro, NS) had been one of the first import players, recruited by the Senior Abbies in 1931. Obviously future imports reduced his playing time and with a family to support he made one last attempt to play with the Saint John Beavers in 1933. Although he did not stay with Saint John, and returned to Charlottetown, he never did coach the Junior Abbies. Harry Richardson acted in his place. Jennett retired from hockey and operated a service station in Charlottetown.

⁶⁸ PEI Sports Hall of Fame, "Lou Campbell"

<http://www.peisportshalloffame.ca/personalities/personality.cfm?ID=7> (accessed 10 March 2012).

Campbell represented a continuation of the cycle of success for the AAAA.⁶⁹ Players of the senior AAAA team, when not involved in competition, provided tutelage to schools and minor organizations. If the young players continued the game later in life, the AAAA was likely to be a choice for which they were well prepared. Campbell took control at a crucial time. Many of the players were at a time of decision: continue on in local senior ranks, try the professional route, or finish and move on to something else. For junior hockey collectively it was a time to keep up with Moncton and Halifax. As the columnist John MacNeill wrote in 1974, "The question is still asked to this day, why Charlottetown produced such outstanding hockey players and so many of them over a score of years that overshadowed every Maritime center. When all the arguing was over, there were two words in answer to Charlottetown's advantage in hockey players, Lou Campbell".⁷⁰

Junior hockey had not suddenly appeared, any more than senior collapsed in an instant. Both processes took some time although the overall time period was no more than five years. During that time key supporters had stayed with the junior league; their efforts saw the program through to where it was solidly founded. The rapid decline of senior began in late 1934, immediately after the CAHA's new residency ruling. The Maritime Big 4 Hockey League, consisting of Charlottetown, Saint John, Moncton, and Halifax, were astounded by the ruling, as each knew their player lineups would be devastated. Rather than immediately comply with the ruling, they attempted to salvage their season by forming a new league, the Maritime Mercantile Hockey League. (MMHL) Although the MMHL would operate independently of the CAHA's jurisdiction,

⁶⁹ Ballem, *Abegweit Dynasty*, 7.

⁷⁰ John MacNeill, "The Realm Of Sport: Lou Campbell is Popular Choice", *The Journal Pioneer*, January 4, 1974, 4.

its champion would thereby be ineligible for Allan Cup and Olympic championship. Marc Savoie wrote that the MMHL hoped the profits would compensate for that disappointment.⁷¹ The Halifax Wolverines had decided not to enter the MMHL which left the league with 3 teams, Charlottetown, Moncton, and Saint John. A mere five days after an announcement the league would operate with just three teams, a complete reversal occurred. Moncton, Halifax, and Charlottetown dropped their ineligible players and opted to play under the CAHA banner.⁷² Saint John opted to remain in the MMHL and was joined by the Halifax Consols and another Saint John team. It is not entirely clear when the MMHL folded, but by 07 January 1935 the new Maritime Senior Hockey League (MSHL) began with only three teams. It was a brief season; each team played only four games in total, two against each of the other teams. Of the three, Charlottetown was hit the hardest, losing seven players to ineligibility.⁷³ Three days after the formation of the MSHL, Abegweit star, Pete Kelly, imported from Montreal in 1932, had enough of the situation it appears and signed with the St. Louis Eagles of the NHL.⁷⁴ Moncton folded on 18 January 1935 leaving only Halifax and the tattered Charlottetown Abbies. Halifax had been minimally affected, losing only one player.⁷⁵ The two teams held a quick championship series won by Halifax who would go on to indeed win the Allan Cup. However, the controversy over senior hockey was not yet over.

The Halifax Wolverines had gone on to defeat Port Arthur Bearcats in the Allan Cup of 1935, thereby assuring their participation in the 1936 Winter Olympics in Germany.

⁷¹ Savoie, "Broken Time, Broken Hearts", 16.

⁷² "Big Three Replaces Big Four in Maritime Hockey", *The Patriot*, January 07, 1935.

⁷³ Neil A. Matheson, "Sport Flashes", *The Patriot*, January 7, 1935.

⁷⁴ "Pete Kelly Signs With Eagles", *The Patriot*, January 10, 1935.

⁷⁵ "Abegweits Blank Wolverines 2-0", *The Patriot*, January 10, 1935.

However, this never materialized as the Halifax team folded in late 1935 and the CAHA had to scramble to find adequate representation. They awarded the honour to the finalist Port Arthur Bearcats, bolstered they allowed, by four Halifax Wolverines who were still available. The reasons for the Halifax demise, Marc Savoie contended, lay in overt discriminatory practices on the part of the CAHA toward the Maritimes.⁷⁶ Greg Gillespie meanwhile, argued it was a matter of miscommunication and misunderstanding between CAHA President Gilroy and the Wolverines' management.⁷⁷ The vociferous Halifax media of course, sided with the Wolverines. Both authors make credible arguments, but Gillespie's second point places the issue of community senior hockey into the wider Maritime and Canadian context. Gillespie argues the Port Arthur team, bolstered by Montreal and Halifax players, the latter group disqualified, exhibited less than exemplary behavior, displaying an arrogance and ambivalence toward its opponents and team goals. The Bearcats were more interested, Gillespie claims, in their ocean voyage comforts and beer gardens of Germany than Olympic Gold for Canada.⁷⁸ What this demonstrates is that regardless of the location of the senior hockey team, problems were rampant. In Halifax, players began to depart for other teams and places the season after winning the Allan Cup and despite knowing about their participation they disregarded their Olympic chances. Port Arthur did the same after being handed a second chance. In other words, the prospect of playing hockey for money in Halifax's case, or for human comfort reasons as in Port Arthur's, took precedence over the dedication to community and country. To make matters worse, Port Arthur was denied the gold medal at the Olympics thanks to

⁷⁶ Savoie, "Broken Time, Broken Hearts", 8.

⁷⁷ Gillespie, "Big Liners and Beer Gardens", 15.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

another controversial rule of the International Olympic Committee. (IOC) In any event, it was no wonder interest in senior hockey collapsed as rapidly as it did. This was a case of a hockey brand painfully settling into a new order of amateurism across Canada. Charlottetown's senior experience simply marked another notch in the transition.

Competitive senior hockey on PEI began to decline in 1935. In January, as the MMHL began to materialize, fans were becoming frustrated as well. A 6-2 Abbies win over Moncton on 17 January, which in any other season would have been a huge accomplishment given Moncton were two-time Allan Cup champs, was only described in *The Patriot* as played in front of many empty seats at the Charlottetown Forum.⁷⁹ A previous 2-0 victory over Halifax was played before a "meager crowd".⁸⁰ The following season, in November of 1935, the Senior Abegweits disbanded.⁸¹ For the first time in the organization's history the AAAA would have no senior hockey team wearing the Abegweit logo. By this time junior had completed its beginning and critical era. In 1934-35 there were two junior teams in Charlottetown in addition to one in Summerside. Each team played exhibition games against each other, intermediate, and city league teams before a playoff was held to determine the first Island wide junior hockey Champion. The Abbies would be the first champions and after a close series bowed out to Moncton in the first round of the Maritime Playoffs.

Junior hockey in PEI was established at last, standing firmly on its own as it was in leagues across Canada. It would grow to surpass senior, intermediate, and some professional hockey as the most popular brand in the nation.

⁷⁹ Neil A. Matheson, "Sport Flashes", *The Patriot*, January 18, 1935.

⁸⁰ Neil A. Matheson, "Sport Flashes", *The Patriot*, January 17, 1935.

⁸¹ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 205.

Chapter 3 Overcoming The Obstacles

In the institutional and personal contexts established in the previous two chapters, this chapter will give detailed attention to the specifics of the process by which junior hockey emerged in PEI during the early 1930s. As if sustaining its growth through interest and participation was not difficult enough, junior hockey had to contend with economic hardship imposed by the Great Depression throughout its early life. Although it may be argued that the Maritimes were merely transitioning from one depressed economic period, the 1920s, to another in the 1930s, Maritimers still had to face harsh realities. As E.R. Forbes has stated, “The financial problems of the three provinces were real enough”.¹ The Maritimes, as a whole in the early years of the Depression suffered from poor Federal funding in relief, unemployment for which individual provinces imposed strict work requirements for those seeking it, and serious health problems among its citizens. It was not an easy time for Provincial or Municipal Governments trying to navigate their way through this troubled decade. In PEI, the impact of the Depression worsened over time. Peter Rider has shown the winter of 1933-34 to have been particularly arduous because of volunteer charity exhaustion and a despondent Charlottetown City Council struggling to provide relief.²

Ronald Lappage described the difficulties of operating a professional team in Canada’s urban centers in these times. Citing Sydney, Halifax, and Moncton in his list of struggling Maritime franchises, Lappage stated “top heavy payrolls, travelling expenses,

¹ E.R. Forbes, “The 1930s Depression and Retrenchment”, in Forbes and Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, 272-305.

² Rider, *Charlottetown*, 251-253.

and cost of facilities, accompanied by the devastating effects of The Depression, caused many minor teams to fold”.³ By 1930 minor professional teams in the Maritimes had been replaced by senior clubs, but their fate was similar. Maritime senior hockey’s tribulations of the early 1930’s were due in large part to personal financial strain on the part of players. Colin Howell explained the dilemma: “During the economic crisis, athletes often found it hard to resist under-the-table- payments or reimbursements for time away from work. Equally attractive were the jobs that were sometimes offered in return for playing for a company team”.⁴ PEI was not immune to such pressures, and sporting activities like the AAAA were also affected on the administrative and financial side. The enthusiasm of fans and athletes however, seemed to counteract in some respects the effects of the Depression. Charlie Ballem described PEI’s reaction through sporting life as a “remarkable resilience to the oppressive atmosphere of the Depression by providing a range of social contacts and competitive experiences to a broad sector of the Island’s population”.⁵ The variety of sports offered also helped to offset lessen the harsh conditions. Supporters turned to those sports that for the most part confined them to PEI. These would be found in harness racing, golf, softball, or baseball. They did not require large expenditure outlays for items such as travel and import players. It was also a time to foster new brands of the traditional sports, a reason why it was an ideal period for the formation of junior hockey.

³ Lappage, “Sport Between the Wars”, 95. Lappage omitted Charlottetown from this list. The professional leagues existed in the Maritimes much earlier (prior to WWI) than The Depression years.

⁴ Howell, *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers*, 64-65.

⁵ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 171.

By contrast, another PEI team of 1934 perhaps bore the most devastating effect of the economy, which ruined its chance at a Canadian Championship. This time the Summerside Crystal Sisters had journeyed to Montreal, to engage the Montreal Maroon Sisters in an Eastern Canadian Play-down. Summerside had won the Maritime Championship that year. Unlike the Play-downs of their male hockey partners, the series was slated for one game only. When two periods of extra time failed to resolve a 2-2 tie, it was determined another game must be played to declare a winner. Unfortunately the Crystal Sisters had run out of money and made the decision to return home. When the town of Summerside sent financial assistance the team decided to remain for the second game, but by then it was too late. The series had been rescheduled with another team and the Crystals returned home disappointed. In a year that junior hockey celebrated with the Abbie's exploits, it was a sad by-line. As Ballem noted, "The reality was that women's hockey, as with other sports, was poorly financed during the period, a situation that was compounded by the lingering Depression".⁶

Junior hockey in Charlottetown was not free of financial difficulty by any means. In fact this was the background obstacle to its development over the four-year period. Players and supporters had to work hard to combat the financial pressures and ensure survival. For each year of operations, in the 1930-34 period, a different strategy was used. Each year also presented a new and different challenge. The challenges were not limited to a select few individuals or organizations. Indeed one of the advantages junior hockey in Charlottetown enjoyed was that the separate interests worked together for a common

⁶ Ibid., 183.

goal. Such interests would include the league executive committee, officials of the MAHA such as J.F. Sterns, the AAAA and Coach Lou Campbell, journalists such as Thomas Corrigan, and the junior players. Collectively they are sometimes referred to as junior hockey supporters. It was their total effort that demonstrates one reason why PEI was so resilient in the face of the times.

The first challenge junior hockey faced was to become organized. However there was reason for optimism. The Charlottetown Forum had opened in December 1930, and the harsh economic effects had yet to materialize in PEI. In June 1931 even though the first hockey season had been completed, the *Guardian's* reporting of a Provincial Track and Field Meet captured the necessary spirit: "Depression may be the word of the hour in other parts of the world, but from an athletic point of view, the Island doesn't know such a word".⁷ To get junior hockey organized, however, in conjunction with the Forum's opening, organizers called on the business community. Thomas Corrigan reported on the initial meeting where this had been decided: "A committee composed of Messrs. George Buntain, T.B. Rogers, and J.B. Murley were appointed to ways and means of securing financial backing for the teams. It was decided to approach different service organizations with a view to having them sponsor the teams".⁸ The committee found three local organizations willing to lend support. Additionally, individuals were found to coach and manage each team. Levin Furs would sponsor the Silver Foxes. Coached by Fred Moore, Sugar Gordon and managed by Charles Stewart, Levin's was a

⁷ "Provincial Meet Great Success", *The Guardian*, June 19, 1931, cited in Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 178.

⁸ "The Junior Hockey League", *The Guardian*, December 16, 1930.

Charlottetown retail outlet of Levin Fur of Toronto. The local manager was Roy Holman, a City Councilor whose name became synonymous with supporting local junior hockey. Queen's Hotel agreed to support a second team, with Charlie Thompson and Jimmie Leightizer as coaches. The hotel manager was H.C. Brown. Brown too supported junior hockey not only financially, but also by frequently offering the hotel as a banquet host. The third team was the Gyroscopes (Gyros). The Gyro Club was a private social organization in Charlottetown. Founded in 1927, it was meant to "perpetuate friendships established in the early stages of adulthood".⁹ The Gyros were coached by Rogers and Buntain. An executive committee was struck consisting of at least one of each team's coaches or manager. The league was in good hands. It had been a productive experience, and some expert solicitation on the part of the ways and means committee.

Corrigan's report on December 16 1930, concluded by appealing for fan support. "If they don't like it, don't come again, but do come once, you'll get big value for your money. (25 cents admission)".¹⁰ A double schedule of games – that is, each team playing the others twice – was compiled. Corrigan would make several pleas for more support from the public. The Levin Furs were declared the winner on March 24, 1931, and arrangements were made with the Moncton Junior Athletics for a championship series. Since Moncton had won a series against a Nova Scotia team, it was considered a Maritime Championship.¹¹ This series might have attracted the support the league and Corrigan worked hard at trying to attain during the regular season, but for the obvious

⁹ Rider, *Charlottetown*, 263.

¹⁰ Thomas Corrigan, "The Junior Hockey League", *The Guardian*, January 22, 1931.

¹¹ Roper, ed., *From Pond to Pro*, 175.

strength of the Levin's team. It was agreed to stage a two game series, the first to be played in Moncton, the second in Charlottetown. The winner would be the team to have scored the most goals in the two game total. Levin's journeyed to Moncton and soundly thrashed the Athletics 6-0. A second game was not to be. Moncton, already down by six goals, decided the effort the return trip to PEI and winning by more than six required, was not worth the trouble. They defaulted game 2 to PEI and the Levin's were the first Maritime Junior Champions. Prospective supporters had no opportunity to see a game at home, but 300 did turn out to welcome the returning heroes.¹²

This represented remarkable success, given that the league had only completed its first year. Much of the credit belonged to the businesses that had stepped in to support the new venture, as Corrigan made clear in *The Guardian*: "To the sponsors of the different lineups and respective coaches only the highest praise is forthcoming." He then predicted even greater things for next season.¹³ More publicity came at the year-end banquet, hosted by Queen's Hotel Manager Harry Brown. It was attended by Lieutenant Governor Charles Dalton, Premier Walter Lea, Mayor Prowse and Forum President and AAAA official Dr. Ira Yeo. The outlook for the future could not have looked brighter. Premier Lea stressed in his speech the valuable advertising the Levin's team had brought to the city and Province.¹⁴ Apparently it was not worth any financial support, as none was ever pledged but all levels of government shied away from such involvement in this period. Another missed opportunity for even more publicity arose from a telegram that arrived

¹² Thomas Corrigan, "Looking 'em Over", *The Guardian*, April 06, 1931.

¹³ Thomas Corrigan, "Looking 'em Over", *The Guardian*, March 24, 1931.

¹⁴ "Maritime Juniors Are Royally Banqueted", *The Guardian*, April 23, 1931.

from Abe Levine, Chairman of Levin Furs Incorporated head office in Toronto. Levine offered the best of luck in the Memorial Cup Play-downs.¹⁵ The Memorial Cup had been competed for since 1919, but this year in PEI, nothing was ever mentioned and no reasons ever given for why Levin's had not pursued it. Despite this void, it certainly had been a rewarding year. The junior organizing committee had asked and the businesses had answered. The players, especially the Levin Silver Foxes had supplied the product. They all had good reason to look ahead at the 1931-32 season.

For all that, the Depression had not disappeared. If anything, its effects were being seen more clearly. Edward MacDonald has noted that Island farmers for example, did not initially feel economic constraints until the fall of 1930 when they discovered their off-Island markets had disappeared.¹⁶ Thereafter the common effects of an economic depression obtained a solid foothold in PEI".¹⁷ Junior hockey would feel the effects, and its second season would bring new challenges. The program now needed to sustain its momentum and gain a suitable portion of the market share to counter the problem of low attendance. To do this would probably mean wresting fans away from the Senior Abbies. The alternative was to share and this was attempted by the league rather than compete against them directly. The league could also appeal to another sector of the community, and did so in combination with a local charity.

The 1931-32 junior leagues did not start play until November 1931. At a meeting on November 14, it was announced the same three businesses would support their teams

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ MacDonald, *If you're Stronghearted*, 156

¹⁷ Ibid., 156-157.

again this season. The most exciting news, however, was the addition of another team, the Southport Mohawks, Southport being a small community across the harbor from Charlottetown. No sponsor was named as supporting Southport.¹⁸ The first financial news of the year was offered at this meeting by Dr. Ira Yeo. Regarding last year he reported it was the first time in the city history a rink supported junior hockey. They had done so by not charging money for the ice times.¹⁹ This was a new reality for junior hockey, and it was not entirely positive news. Ice time costs had not previously been a major consideration, but the Forum was newly built, it had to be financed and the city's finances were suffering from the Depression. The junior organization could not expect the Forum to allow it free ice time for much longer. Admission revenues, low so far, represented an obvious method to generate greater revenue, and much more of the market share of the attendees would have to be secured.

First, the organizers of junior sought to associate themselves with the Senior Abbies. For this year they would schedule their games after the seniors and again receive the advantage of the Forum's generosity. The Forum would at least minimize its own costs by having the juniors play on the same nights as the seniors. The Forum also deserves to be on the list of those credited for junior hockey development. It is doubtful whether the league could have survived without free ice time. The next move concerned coaches. Earlier, three senior players had been named as coaches for the league with no particular team attached. Tommy Oliver, Jack Kane, and Harold Gross were three senior imports

¹⁸ Thomas Corrigan, "Looking 'em Over", *The Guardian*, November 14, 1931.

¹⁹ "Midget Hockey League Organized", *The Guardian*, November 14, 1931.

and star players.²⁰ Attracting Senior Abbies to coach helped in a number of ways. First, such prominent import players could be seen as truly committing to the community in some manner other than playing hockey. This was especially important if they were receiving financial assistance. Secondly, the juniors would benefit from the technical lessons the seniors would teach to them. This would enhance future junior teams. Thirdly, the junior league would take advantage of the publicity the Senior Abbies would bring. It was time to start identifying with the Abbies name.

On 19 November 1931, another new linkage was formed. The junior games were advertised together with those of the Senior Abbies in a box format. Association would begin before fans even got to the game.²¹ Perhaps if the fans were going to the senior game anyway, it would not be too much inconvenience to remain behind after and take in the junior game. It was a good idea but it did not work. Attendance did not increase visibly although fans continued to flock to the senior contests by the thousands. And those who did remain behind did so only briefly. Corrigan wrote bitterly, "Most fans stay after the seniors for the 1st period, then leave after that".²² Later, after a double feature on the 23 December, he described the pair of games as "hair raising but attendance was poor, which was unfortunate as the hockey dished out was good".²³

By the end of the year the junior league realized something else would need to be done. Harry Brown, executive committee member and Queen's Hotel Proprietor, would lead the new mission slated for early in 1932. The juniors would combine with the

²⁰ Thomas Corrigan, "Looking 'em Over", *The Guardian*, November 11, 1931.

²¹ Advertisement, *The Guardian*, November 19, 1931.

²² Thomas Corrigan, "Looking 'em Over", *The Guardian*, November 30, 1931.

²³ Thomas Corrigan, "Looking 'em Over", *The Guardian*, December 24, 1931.

Charlottetown Chapter of the Red Cross in hosting a junior hockey promotion night. It would be a carnival-type affair with races and fun events in addition to the hockey games involving all four teams.²⁴ The Red Cross would be enlisted to sell tickets to the event and thus reap the proceeds. The junior league wanted no money, but did hope the publicity would stimulate interest in their product. Brown entertained 20 young ladies to a tea at the Queen's Hotel to explain their duties in selling the tickets and the event went ahead as planned.²⁵ As it was scheduled for 2 February there was not much time to sell tickets. It was not announced as an enormous success but neither was the attendance condemned. On 3 February *The Guardian* tersely stated in its headline that the meet was well attended.²⁶

The remainder of the junior hockey season in 1932 suffered from a shortage of new marketing strategies. Even Corrigan made no further pleas for public support and he abandoned his usual emotional style of reporting. Levin Silver Foxes would go on to win another league championship. They travelled to Moncton for the Maritime Play-downs, where they lost 5-2 to Antigonish Bulldogs from Nova Scotia (NS). This year, the Bulldogs did go on to the Memorial Cup Playoffs, where they lost to Montreal in the first round. In the 1932-33 season, when for reasons explained below there was no league, PEI of course had no representation at the Maritime Play-downs. The Moncton Juniors had a more comprehensive team than they had in other years and had a very successful year.²⁷

²⁴ "Juniors Will Play For Red Cross", *The Guardian*, January 28, 1932.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Junior Ice Meet Well Attended", *The Guardian*, February 3, 1932.

²⁷ Roper, ed., *From Pond to Pro*, 177.

For PEI however, it was a lesson learned that the organizers would utilize a year later: now that the Memorial Cup was in the picture, a re-organization would be in order.

Despite the lack of fan support for the second straight year and despite the gloom that surrounded the latter part of the 1931-32 season, it would be unfair to suggest that the junior league had failed. Valuable lessons had been learned, not least the need for perseverance in adversity and the reality that junior hockey needed support from other communities now, while Charlottetown could concentrate on its own team. But a new challenge loomed towards the end of the 1932-33 season. Economically, it became unfeasible to replicate the structure of 1930-32. In the 1932-33 season in what should have been its third year, junior hockey all but vanished. In its first two years the league had operated on the generosity of the local businesses: Levin Furs, Queen's Hotel, Gyro Club, and The Forum. This was not the case in 1932. It was obvious the local businesses, as much as they appreciated the junior struggle, had no desire to undergo a third year in a weak market. Junior organizers would not want a repeat of 1932-33. Something larger needed to be considered.

Whatever plan of action was devised would have to be executed without junior hockey's most vocal proponent, as Thomas Corrigan's involvement slackened prior to his death in March 1933. The new sports beat reporter at *The Guardian* was Pat Powers. It would take some time for Powers to match Corrigan's level of advocacy. He would do so, but only after latest version of junior hockey was well on its way to triumph. It cannot be said that a plan was ever made. Rather, four different actions took place over an 18-month period from 1932 to late 1933. These were the ways junior hockey surmounted the

final obstacle. The approach was to form one comprehensive team, what hockey followers might call an “all star team”.²⁸ In this way, one representative junior team stood a better chance of gaining the support of the entire community. Economically, a single high-quality team was more likely to mobilize support than four house league teams, even if some were better than others. It also made sense to bolster one community team to compete more strongly when they played off-Island. In all, it seemed the best possible way to proceed given the economic conditions were not getting any better.

The all-star team concept for junior hockey in Charlottetown had first presented itself in 1931. It was the beginning of junior hockey’s second season and the Levin Silver Fox’s Maritime title was still resonating; but just who brought up the notion was not clear. There was no ambiguity in the executive committee’s answer, however: “It was also reported that the league executive would oppose any all-star junior team idea for exhibition games, because it is wrong in principle and contrary to the idea of developing junior hockey”.²⁹ The idea of junior hockey, according to Corrigan and others on numerous occasions, was to foster local talent for future local senior teams. How the all-star proposal could be detrimental to that concept is unclear.³⁰ However, it is possible that the opponents were concerned about junior participation and saw no reason to exclude anyone willing to enroll. In 1933, the AAAA made the first move.

²⁸ An all-star team is the name commonly given in hockey to a team composed of a league’s best players. It is comprehensive in that regard. In Charlottetown, players from the different former Junior teams were selected in 1933 for the Junior Abbies. Therefore they could be referred to as an all- star team.

²⁹ Thomas Corrigan, “Looking ‘em Over”, *The Guardian*, December 16, 1931.

³⁰ The latest incidence of this idea had come a month earlier where an article read, “By encouraging Junior hockey it was noted, it was hoped to eventually secure a first class team without having to import players”. See “Queen’s Hotel Hockey Team Banquetted”, *The Guardian*, November 17, 1931.

After relinquishing the AAAA's control of the Senior Abbies in 1932, the organization was in a better position to support junior developments. The AAAA executives could not help but notice recent developments within the Montreal AAA. To begin with, the Montreal organization had recently offloaded its senior hockey team much like the AAAA, to a separate committee, and turned its attention to junior.³¹ The Montreal Junior Royals won five Quebec Championships in a row and boasted future stars Pete Kelly and Frank Currie.³² The Royals had defeated Moncton in the Eastern Canadian Play-downs in March 1933 and two months later Kelly was on his way to Charlottetown.³³ In October it was reported Currie would be playing for the Charlottetown Senior Abbies as well.³⁴ The meaning would have been noticed by the AAAA executives. If a club in Montreal supported junior teams with players of this caliber, Charlottetown and the AAAA could as well. It was a reliable method of generating future senior hockey players from local ranks.³⁵ As an emphasis new Senior Abbies coach Stan Jackson arrived in November 1933, and promptly added his preferences for junior development saying "it was the only way in which to develop home-brew talent to take the place of the seniors in future years".³⁶

Whereas the transfer of senior hockey operations to an independent committee had not been conducted quietly, the lending of their support to the junior team certainly had been. Not until December 1933 was there even a hint of what was happening. The first move

³¹ "M.A.A. Team Is In New Hands", *The Guardian*, October 15, 1931.

³² "Maritime Juniors Lose To Montreal", *The Guardian*, March 15, 1933.

³³ "Annual Trek of Hockeyists in Full Swing", *The Guardian*, May 16, 1933.

³⁴ "Will Play for Abbies", *The Guardian*, October 2, 1933.

³⁵ Guardian reporter Thomas E Corrigan often wrote, as did J.F. Sterns, that the reason for Junior hockey was to provide future Senior players, thus avoiding the costly practice of imports.

³⁶ "New Abbie Coach Arrives in City", *The Guardian*, November 3, 1933.

had been made. The Charlottetown Junior Abbies had been created. Now, however, they required some competition. Once again a city league was proposed. In early December 1933, seven team representatives attended a meeting, with an eighth to be added. The City Hockey League (CHL) was created. All teams were sponsored by local businesses except the Navy team. It was never termed as any type of league, but given that the teams were local businesses or independent entities, and in the absence of a formal junior league, it was likely an industrial-type league. Moncton had a similar league and it was considered "Industrial".³⁷ The league's membership would consist of older, stronger and mature hockey players whose desire for competitive play in intermediate or senior was forestalled by work commitments. In March 1934, as the Abbies returned home to a welcoming throng of 500, some of the CHL executives were listed as being in attendance, including J.P. Simmonds, Byron Brown of Queen's Hotel, and Roy Holman were named.³⁸ Simmonds and Holman had been part of the organizing executive with the original junior league in 1930. Harry Richardson also acted as an organizer, petitioning The Forum for possible game nights back in December at the league's formation. Richardson, after Chuck Jennett's departure, became Assistant Coach of the Junior Abbies. The plan was perhaps more obvious than it appeared. This group of junior organizers saw the team formed by the AAAA and Lou Campbell, and then created a league for it. Campbell would have been heavily involved in this process. After witnessing the state of junior hockey in Charlottetown and on PEI for that matter over the past three years, Campbell realized what lay ahead. Levin Furs had won the city

³⁷ Roper, ed., *From Pond to Pro*, 155.

³⁸ Pat Powers, "Timely Tips On Sport", *The Guardian*, March 26, 1934.

title and the Maritime Championship in its first year of operation. **That** was a tremendous achievement. The Levin Silver Foxes were defeated in their second **attempt** at the Maritime title and the next year there had been no team representing **PEI**. To compete against the teams that were now coming out of Moncton and Halifax, Campbell knew Charlottetown would have to step up its junior program. A more **comprehensive** team would be needed and they were a year behind at this point.

As the 1933 season began, Campbell made his move. He knew his team would require more than a city-based junior league. Travelling off-Island for **exhibitions** was not financially feasible, as times were difficult enough staying at home. **He** placed the Abbies in the new CHL in December 1933. A week later a story about a CHL game described a 4-3 Abbies win over a “rugged navy team”.³⁹ Entering them in the **City** League had been a shrewd move, one that Marty Barry – a former professional player **and** popular coach of the Halifax St Mary’s Juniors of 1948⁴⁰ – would promptly replicate **in** Halifax. For Campbell, it was essential, enabling him and the CHL organizers to **combine** their efforts in meeting one challenge: becoming strong enough to compete in the Maritimes. The Abbies were well prepared for the upcoming trials.

With the Abegweit logo on their jerseys and Lou Campbell **behind** the bench, the newly formed Junior Abbies finished their play in the CHL in strong **fashion**. They won every game they played including two exhibition wins over a hastily-formed Summerside

³⁹ “Old Spain and Juniors Win Games”, *The Guardian*, December 14, 1933.

⁴⁰ Marty Barry, Nova Scotia Sports Hall of Fame Induction Program, 2002.

intermediate/senior squad.⁴¹ Their only loss had come at the hands of a strong Montague Primroses Intermediates team, 4-3 in Montague.⁴² The community began to take notice of the Abbies. Neil Matheson wrote after the Abbies' 4-3 win over the Navy, that the juniors "have the promise of a great team this year and should go a long way to a Maritime title"⁴³ On 14 December 1933, a *Guardian* article predicted great results for the Junior Abbies: "The juniors give promise of having a great team this winter, displaying 2 fast-skating lines, a defence averaging about 180 pounds, and a goalie superb in the pinches. With practice sessions under their belt they should go a long way toward a Maritime title".⁴⁴

In the Abbies' lineup were the team captain Gordon Stewart, Pud Whitlock and Harry Currie. They had played together since their days at West Kent School. All three had skated for Levin Furs, and Stewart and Whitlock had moved to the Intermediate Abbies for the 1932-33 season. Rowan "Bunky" Fitzgerald had also played at WKS and with the Levin Foxes. Irvin McKie and Harold Guadet had attended Queen's Square School. Defenceman Lowell Simpson had played for Levin's, while 16-year-old goalie Don Baker, forwards Jimmy Cousins, Clarence Steele and Bob Tic Williams joined the Abbies this season. Baker hailed from Margate PEI, Cousins from Kensington, and Steele from Summerside. As well as reflecting Campbell's ability to transcend religious rivalries

⁴¹ "Juniors Show Class in 5-2 Victory", *The Patriot*, February 15, 1933. The Summerside team was bolstered by former Senior stars Jackie Schurman, Clifford Montgomery and Saunders. The Abbies won 3-1 in Summerside and 5-2 in Charlottetown.

⁴² "Junior Abbies Defeated by Montague 4-3," *The Guardian*, February 16, 1934.

⁴³ Neil A. Matheson, "Sport Flashes", *The Patriot*, December 14, 1933.

⁴⁴ "Old Spain and Juniors Win Games", *The Guardian*, December 14, 1933.

between WKS and QSS, the Abbies had become PEI's all-star team with these additions.⁴⁵

An Island Championship was scheduled for 2 March and 6 March 1934 between the Abbies and a Cape Traverse team which had played a few games in a recently formed junior league in the Bedeque area.⁴⁶ The league was one of two that had formed hastily in 1933. Oddly, however, the series was never played and the Junior Abbies prepared to meet their first Maritime opposition. It is possible – even probable – that the Cape Traverse team defaulted, and in any event it was extremely unlikely, given the Abbies performance against older and stronger teams, that Cape Traverse was equal to the caliber of the Abbies.

The Abbies were declared Island Champion at the beginning of March and prepared to face the New Brunswick (NB) Champions. The format was set for the PEI Champions against NB in one series, while the Nova Scotia (NS) Champions would meet the series winner. NS would therefore have the “bye” to the Maritime final.⁴⁷ This had come about because of a sporting gesture on the Abbies' part. PEI had the right to this year's bye based on rotation. However, when NS complained its team could not finish their Provincial Play-downs in time for the Maritime finals to begin, PEI relinquished the bye to them. At this time too, Pat Powers of *The Guardian* stepped up his coverage. More articles appeared about the Abbies and the playoff results in the other provinces,

⁴⁵ “Welcome Extended Abegweits”, *The Guardian*, April 3, 1934. Player information was amassed from many newspaper articles over a four-year period, and the resulting data entered in a personal log.

⁴⁶ “New League is Formed”, *The Guardian*, December 2, 1933.

⁴⁷ A “bye” refers to any series or round of competition in which a certain team is not required to play. It is awarded usually on the basis of finishing order of other preliminary games, or it may, as in this case, be awarded on a rotational basis.

including Quebec and Ontario. However, controversy intervened in the NB series.

Moncton and Bathurst had met for the NB Championship. Moncton won handily in two straight games, outscoring Bathurst 10-3. Bathurst, however, protested to the MAHA after their loss in the first game, on the basis of the Moncton team having included an ineligible player. Bathurst claimed that Joseph Roland Guadet was 21 years old, a year over the age limit of 20 years.⁴⁸ After Moncton had won the series Bathurst launched another protest, this time alleging there were two further ineligible players on Moncton's roster.⁴⁹ On 8 March CAHA President Frank Greenleaf upheld the Bathurst claim. Moncton was disqualified, meaning Bathurst would re-play the NB final against the runner up Moncton Acadiens.⁵⁰ Bathurst won this series and now faced the Junior Abbies.

In front of a large home crowd in a game delayed by one day by the late arrival of the Bathurst team's train, the Abbies won 2-1 on a last minute goal by Irvin McKie. In the meantime Halifax captured the NS title with a series win over Sydney. Back in Bathurst the Abbies tied 1-1 giving them the series championship 3-2 on goal aggregate. Now the news of junior began to dominate *The Guardian's* sport section. For the upcoming Halifax series, Powers predicted a huge crowd because of the sheer number of night telephone calls he had received asking for the result of Game 2 in Bathurst.⁵¹ Improbably, the significance here was the Junior Abbies had surpassed the Senior Abbies in terms of

⁴⁸ "Claims RI Star Over Age Limit", *The Guardian*, March 3, 1934.

⁴⁹ "Ask That RI Be Barred", *The Guardian*, March 07, 1934.

⁵⁰ "Moncton Disqualified By CAHA", *The Guardian*, March 8, 1934.

⁵¹ Pat Powers, "Timely Tips On Sport", *The Guardian*, March 14, 1934.

media coverage. The seniors had been eliminated from their playoffs on 12 March 1934, losing to the Halifax Wolverines. The Junior Abbies had ascended another rung.

The Abbies hosted the Halifax Junior Canadians in Game 1 in Charlottetown. Down 2-0 at one point, the Abbies rallied behind Pud Whitlock's four goals to win 6-5. The sports headline on March 16 was printed in large bold-faced font.⁵² Things were quiet for a few days but erupted on 19 March when it was announced the Abbies had won the Maritime title. They had done so in convincing fashion, a 4-0 win over Halifax in the Halifax Forum. They returned home to a welcoming crowd of 500 and hurriedly prepared for Quebec.

The series against Quebec would be played entirely in Charlottetown. J.F. Sterns had proved prescient in not dealing this advantage away a year earlier when he might have. The media coverage increased even more. Details were provided about the Montreal Mount Royal Cranes, who had upset the heavily favoured Montreal AAA Royals. Game 1 ended in a 4-4 tie. The description given the next day rivaled anything ever reported on a senior game.⁵³ The Abbies captured the Maritime-Quebec Championship on 22 March 1934. Again they trounced the opposition in Game 2, winning 8-1. Powers wrote, "Not for a long while has a crowd of local hockey followers been sent into such a frenzy of excitement as the homesters carried the play to the visitors from the opening gong".⁵⁴

It was on to Toronto for the young Abbies. But there was another reminder to come of the economic constraints. The Junior Abbies were in dire need of equipment. Powers

⁵² Pat Powers, "Abbies Win 1st Game Maritime Final", *The Guardian*, March 16, 1934.

⁵³ Pat Powers, "Junior Abbies and Cranes in 4-4 Draw", *The Guardian*, March 21, 1934.

⁵⁴ Pat Powers, "A Smashing Triumph", *The Guardian*, March 23, 1934.

revealed that they had played the entire season in worn and tattered uniforms. Hockey equipment would be a luxury item in these times; many players would have played their last four years in such condition. Supporters lost no time coming to their aid. A collection drive was underway the next morning after several businessmen pledged assistance. They happened to be the same businessmen who had given support over the years.⁵⁵

The Abbies departed Charlottetown 24 March 1934 aboard a private rail car. They were accompanied by Pat Adair, the trainer of the Senior Abbies, and *The Guardian's* Pat Powers. Powers would chronicle their experiences in a specially created column titled "Along the Sport Trail". They arrived in Toronto on 26 March. Game 1 was scheduled for the next day at Maple Leaf Gardens (MLG). The Abbies were treated well. Over the next few days they were given a tour of Toronto, held a practice in MLG, and took a trip to Niagara Falls. The visiting Moncton Senior Hawks, Allan Cup-bound, were in the midst of their series against the Hamilton Tigers and invited the Abbies to the game as special guests. It was a heady experience for the teenaged hockey team from PEI. St. Mike's, meanwhile, were a highly skilled team: "The strongest junior team assembled in Canada for 20 years," according to Ballem.⁵⁶ St. Mike's thrashed the Abbies 12-2 in Game 1 and 7-2 in the second. They would go on to win the Memorial Cup, winning most of their games by wide margins. Thus, PEI was neither the first nor the last of St. Mike's victims.

It had been a rapid ascent to prominence for the Junior Abbies. From the time they were an unnamed team entered in the City Hockey League, to the parade through the

⁵⁵ Pat Powers, "Timely Tips On Sport", *The Guardian*, March 23, 1934.

⁵⁶ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 210.

streets of Charlottetown after arriving home from Toronto, only four months had passed. They had accomplished more than was necessary. Their essential challenge, given the economic times and the junior league's short history, had been to find a way of keeping junior hockey alive in PEI, and in this they had succeeded. The efforts of those who had enabled them to scale such heights had begun much earlier. An idea for reducing the costs of operating a senior team had transformed into national recognition in a way the import-laden seniors had never accomplished.

In the economic context by 1935 other Maritime cities and towns were turning to junior hockey as a primary alternative to expensive senior clubs. Antigonish in 1932 and Moncton in 1933 had won Maritime Junior titles but had not advanced past the Quebec champions in the Memorial Cup Play-downs. Still, the communities had seen the viability of such a venture. Charlottetown's resounding victory over the Quebec representative in 1934 only heightened the emphasis in the value of developing junior hockey programs. This would serve additionally as a cost saving measure in dealing with the harsh economic environment. Charlottetown's early developments then, are among the first demonstrations of the Maritime ability to adapt in uncertain times.

At the end of the Junior Abbies' journey, the supporters stood by unobtrusively, content to plan the reception and let the young juniors bask in the glory. By overcoming the economic obstacles as they arose, junior supporters and players together had done their duty for PEI. Their ultimate contribution – cultural, social, and economic – was explained by Pat Powers. Apparently hockey supporters in Summerside, Souris, and Montague were in favour of one Island team in the Maritime Big 4 league. Charlottetown

was too small, they argued, to be competing with the much more heavily populated cities of Saint John, Halifax, and Moncton. Instead, multiple communities could and should support an Island-based team. Fan excursions to and from games could be used as a source of revenue for the team. Powers did not dispute the possibility. He only added, “Big 4 games were a great pleasure and took their minds off Old Man Depression”.⁵⁷ Surely the Junior Abbies, sustained by years of support from a dedicated group of enthusiasts, had applied the finishing touch.

⁵⁷ Pat Powers, “Sport Briefs”, *The Guardian*, March 29, 1934.

Conclusion

Three key points emerge from this study. The first is that the city of Charlottetown was a well-organized, dynamic, and forward-thinking municipality perfectly capable of conducting its business. It could do so as well as any of its Maritime urban counterparts, whether Halifax, Moncton, or Saint John. All of these centers were in the throes of the Depression, but Charlottetown's ability to keep up without the advantage of natural resources or a wide taxation base is commendable. Charlottetown demonstrated in sporting venues that much could be accomplished so long as the spirit is there.

The second is the considerable effort put forth by junior hockey supporters, at all levels of involvement. Collectively they had a vision of what was needed, then took risks if necessary, to see the vision through to completion. They were adaptable. A number of times in the early days of junior hockey, a regrouping and modification of plans were necessary. At times the changes were small, while at other times the decisions were large, such as transferring sponsorship of the AAAA from senior to junior. These supporters, not a large group by any means, completed their tasks in the early stages of the Depression and in competition with a much larger following for senior hockey.

Thirdly, a transformation occurred in the level of support. In its earliest stages, junior hockey was localized. At a time of need, a few select business people stepped in to help. Attendance at games was low but their support kept junior hockey afloat for two years. In the intervening stage a reputable mentor and the Province's premier athletic organization combined to give junior hockey a final push towards the last stage. Fan support was still low but the organization had grown. In the last stage, as the Junior Abbies begin off-Island play, the city and the Province joined the groundswell of support. And as the

Abbies moved on to play Quebec and subsequently Ontario teams, the entire Maritime region provided moral support.

The 1930-34 period for junior hockey was much like a relay race. The 1934 Abbies were the anchor. They were the last leg of the run, the winner who broke the finishing tape to the crescendo of cheering crowds. But the other runners were no less important. The starter had to give them the initial boost. Here Charlottetown junior hockey had the first business managers and Thomas Corrigan. The second and third runners had to sustain the momentum. Here Charlottetown was fortunate enough to have J.F. Sterns and the AAAA, a much larger backing. Then of course, the 1934 Abbies and Coach Lou Campbell brought the relay baton home. However it should be emphasized that any one stage was not more important than the others. Indeed it was not Lou Campbell's style to bask in his personal success. And several Abbies skaters had played their first junior games in the same early three-team league in 1931.

But how did a fledgling junior hockey program from Charlottetown lead the Maritime region into the Canadian spotlight? And how was it able to do so in a Depression and in the face of regional stereotyping and bias? The program's leaders had controlled what they could. First they had to organize themselves, with a finely-tuned athletic organization and the advantage of a modern sporting facility. Then they had to emerge from behind the curtain of senior hockey. Certain individuals would take key roles over the four-year development period. Despite their efforts, junior did not initially get a great deal of public attention. Changing this would mean more revenue, but would require increasing attendance, minimizing costs, and continuing to improve the product. All of these goals were accomplished.

The 1930-34 period, when it was complete, acted as a staging ground for similar future pursuits. PEI would never stop chasing a national championship. In junior hockey a Charlottetown-based team would reach the Memorial Cup Quarter Finals in 1939, losing in three games to Perth Blue Wings of Ontario.¹ In 1969-70, the Charlottetown Junior Islanders reached the Memorial Cup Quarter Finals losing to the Quebec Remparts and future NHL icon Guy Lafleur.² It was a heated affair, won by the Remparts in six games.³ Since 1934, PEI had not come together in support of a junior hockey team. The dynamics between the Maritimes and Upper Canada had materialized largely as in 1934, although 1970 was much more emotional. Even though the Summerside Western Capitals Juniors won the Canadian Championship in 1997, the pride and emotions felt in 1934 and again in 1970 were not the same.⁴ Summerside has played in a Maritime Junior League since 1991. The Maritime-based teams in the QMJHL play mostly against each other in an Atlantic Division.⁵ They play their other scheduled games against teams from Quebec and, by times, from Maine and Newfoundland. But all the regular playing of other Maritime centers, on while it may be economically necessary for the survival of junior hockey, takes something away from the inter-Maritime and regional rivalry with Ontario or Quebec. The games have become routine. Junior hockey in this day has switched states with the Maritime senior circuit in the early 1930's. Junior hockey now completely

¹ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 212.

² John MacNeill, "The Realm of Sport", *The Journal Pioneer*, April 09, 1970, 4.

³ Charles Reid, "Honouring the Junior Islanders", *The Guardian*, February 23, 2008.

⁴ PEI Sports Hall of Fame, "1996-97 Summerside Western Capitals"

<http://www.peisportshalloffame.ca/personalities/players.cfm?ID=1> (accessed 15 March 2012).

⁵ Since the late 1990's an Atlantic Division has been in place. At one time there were as many as eight teams in the Division. However, Lewiston, ME, and St. John's, NL, have ceased operations.

dominates most other levels of hockey in Canada. Like the professional ranks it has become a massive entertainment spectacle.⁶

PEI's premier junior team is now the PEI Rocket who play in the QMJHL and are a transferred franchise from Montreal. Halifax (2000) and Moncton (1996) have hosted the Memorial Cup, playing out of huge facilities that dwarf the Halifax Forum or Moncton Stadium as they were in 1934.⁷ Finally, Saint John became the first Maritime team to win the Memorial Cup, in 2011. The junior game therefore has undergone a massive change, in the Maritimes and elsewhere in Canada and the US.

This study found that the Maritimes need not be economically or culturally dependent on Central Canada, the US or any other area. Through sports, the Maritimes have demonstrated on many occasions they can contend on a national scale. An example of this need not be found in the purposeful development of a wealthy sporting club, like those importing players specifically for a national championship. The example could be found in a small city in a small province. A junior hockey team was created to represent the city after trials of an open house league concept proved unsustainable for more than two years. The resources required to develop such a program were drawn from within the city; teachers, local business people, community organizations, and sporting club officials. The effects of the Depression did not make things easier. If anything it compounded the problem of developing local hockey.

Most of all the junior hockey program in four years, became a focus of pride, and demonstrated a community did not need a high profile sport club laden with imports and

⁶ David Cruise and Alison Griffiths, *Net Worth: Exploding The Myths of Pro Hockey* (Toronto, London and New York: Penguin Group, 1991) 345-346.

⁷ Hockey Hall of Fame, "Non NHL Trophies Memorial Cup History"
http://www.hhof.com/htmlSilverware/silver_splashmemorialcup.shtml (accessed 17 March 2012).

requiring vast resources to be successful. If only Thomas E Corrigan, *Guardian* journalist, had lived to see it all transpire. It was a superb demonstration of what a little known Maritime city could do. All of the cultural, social, and economic factors came into play in developing the junior program in Charlottetown as rapidly as it did. In the end, a Canadian Championship was not nearly as important as the bonds formed in the community.

The 1933-34 Charlottetown Junior Abbies were a team that presented an encouraging image of the Maritimes. From the nation's smallest province, they were a group who overcame the effects of the Depression and cast off any negative stereotypes of the region. If the question "Is there an example of a feel good story emanating from the Maritimes in the early years of the Depression" were posed, the Abbies would satisfy the answer.

Obstacles facing the team included the Depression, regional discrimination, and feverishly popular senior hockey circuit. In a city such as Charlottetown, that junior hockey's birth and early development occurred at this time, and considering what it has grown into today, is a remarkable story. This study originated as a profile of the 1934 Abbies but became focused on the question, "how was this team able to rise to such a positive Maritime representation"? Consequently the time period became four years instead of one season, and more evidence supported a longer-term analysis of the development of junior hockey, leading to a highly successful product by 1934.

The study was limited by three particular factors. One, the time period was limited to four years. The second, only the evidence from PEI was heard. For example, no Toronto opinion was given and nothing beyond congratulatory remarks from Halifax or Moncton

were known. Thirdly, strong anecdotal evidence was available from a player of the era, but for his own reasons did not participate in the study.

In this regard if this or a similar study were initiated an earlier and more concentrated effort would be made to obtain this lost story, as this testimony would be an invaluable first-hand account. Consideration might also be given to the PEI junior hockey period 1969-72, another developmental period characterized by the successful Charlottetown Junior Islanders. One version of this team, the 1970-71 squad, was elected to the PEI Sports Hall of Fame.

The central focus of this study was on developmental factors that pertain to Charlottetown as a community. Close examination in this manner and through such a public realm as sport helps in the understanding in and the maintenance of a region's or country's composition. This community case study provides a practical example of how a relatively small municipality can make a difference. The analysis of Charlottetown reveals a strength through its people, its diversity, its ingenuity, and its character. It is therefore a useful method in promoting awareness of these qualities which may be applicable to other communities of the Maritime region as well. However this study is no generalization of Maritime abilities. The time period was limited to four years, outside of which lay many other developmental factors. Furthermore the evidence for the most part is derived from Maritime sources, with a theoretical reliance on national perspectives. Otherwise this study might be configured differently.

There is room for more study. The 1969-72 period was one of a new liberal dynamism in Eastern Canada and regional tensions were expressed much more openly than in 1934. The Maritimes for two seasons, created a bona-fide major junior hockey league among

three urban centers including Charlottetown. In 1971, another CAHA ruling relegated the Maritime circuit to the lower Tier II Junior A level. The Junior Islander officials were furious over the decision, believing they were among the best in Canada.

In a contemporary sense, the infiltration of Quebec into the Maritimes since 1994 would also contribute to the research. The popular QMJHL Atlantic Division not only usurped a former regional professional (American hockey League) division, but also it has far surpassed its lower-tier brother, the Maritime Junior Hockey League, now known as the MHL (Maritime Hockey League) in terms of performance and support. With the element of commercialism introduced in this brand of hockey, the research opportunities are vast. This study attempted to contribute to the Maritime historiography through the utilization of sport history specifically related to junior hockey experience. This is a relatively new approach to the presentation of Maritime history. But this story of PEI's earliest junior hockey days offers more than the nature of its subject material toward the regional history of the Maritimes. It was success story and it was an example of community adaptation.

Although the Junior Abbies did not win the Memorial Cup in 1934, their experiences had to be considered a success for Maritime sport. The Abbies' season coincided with the Moncton Senior Hawks' second and consecutive Allan Cup triumph. While it was ironic that junior hockey would replace Senior in the public sphere scarcely a year later, the Hawks' national triumph only served to bolster Maritime junior hockey's credibility in Central Canada. An actual Memorial Cup victory however, was not necessary to declare the Abbies' feat a success. It was the ingredients and elements of the past that ultimately led to the formation of a strong team, which laid foundations for future success.

When Colin Howell argued against the dismissal of social and regional history by nationalist historians because of its perceived destructive nature, he substantiated his point by writing “that real and perceived grievances are embedded in the histories experience of marginalized peoples or of regions such as Atlantic Canada. [This characterization] ignores the fact that most scholars have dwelt not upon victimization at all, but on the ways in which people in the region have found room to maneuver and make choices they hope will improve their lives within the existing structures of power and authority that confront them”.⁸ This is a case of a community, Charlottetown PEI, adapting in just such a fashion. While many saw senior hockey in PEI deteriorate before them, others – a consortium of business-people, athletic leaders, and players – saw the opportunity to influence their own destiny. They could not have known they were writing a chapter in the Maritime history, not because of their victories, but because of their efforts. It was a perfect example of Maritime adaptation.

Historically, junior hockey has not figured prominently in the presentation of sport history from the Maritimes. Yet the historical reality is that junior hockey has risen to the point where it is one of the most popular brands of hockey in Canada, the United States, and internationally. In the Maritimes for example, fans enjoyed a scant three seasons (1991-1994) of the comprehensive Maritime Junior "A" Hockey League (MJAHL) before the arrival of the first Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL) franchise in Halifax. That arrival was followed by a rapid expansion over a ten-year period where by 2004, there were eight teams in the Atlantic region including a franchise in Lewiston, Maine. The Maritimes went on to host two Memorial Cup tournaments and one World

⁸ Howell “Two Outs”, 107

Junior Championship where the record attendance at these events provided a boost for successful future bids to host the women's International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) Women's Championships and partial IIHF Men's Championship.⁹ By 2012 a separate Maritime Division had been established containing six teams, as do the other two divisions of the QMJHL.¹⁰ The MJAHL has kept pace despite the enormous pressure of competing with the more visible QMJHL. In 1991 the MJAHL's original complement was eight teams. The attrition of some and addition of others leaves the league at 11 teams in 2012. Some teams are experiencing financial difficulty yet the league continues adapt and make changes for its survival. MJAHL (Now known as the Maritime Hockey League – MHL) cities have hosted numerous national championships, and both Summerside, in 1997, and Halifax, 2001, have captured the national title. In getting to this point however, both the Maritime Division and the MHL have been subject to strong commercial forces, which have shaped the game as it known today.

According to Julie Stevens, these forces were at work as early as 1914.¹¹ Stevens contends there were four institutions that played a primary role influencing the direction of hockey in Canada over the past 100 years. These were CAHA, community and civic boosters, Hockey Canada, and the National Hockey League (NHL).¹² Each organization espoused certain ideals reflecting its vision of the game. The CAHA for example, favoured amateurism, while the NHL emphasized commercialism and profit. Junior

⁹ Halifax NS in 2000 and Moncton NB in 2006 hosted Memorial Cups. Halifax hosted the IIHF Women's Championship in 2004 and part of the IIHF Men's Championship in 2008 as part of a joint venture with Quebec City.

¹⁰ By 2012, the franchises in St. John's Newfoundland and Lewiston Maine had been dissolved.

¹¹ Julie Stevens "The Development of the Canadian Hockey System: A Process of Institutional Divergence and Convergence" in Colin D. Howell, ed., *Putting it on Ice Volume II: Internationalizing Canada's Game* (Halifax: Gorsebrook Research Institute, 2002), 51-62.

¹² Community and civic boosters lack an official organizational title, but such groups were common in Cities and towns across Canada. One such group existed in Charlottetown in 1930-34.

hockey as practiced in the Maritimes would initially fit within the ideals of the CAHA and the informally organized community boosters. But three of these institutions were subject to the powerful influence of the NHL. Naturally Canadian junior hockey has long been under its control as well. This is mainly due to junior hockey being the main supplier of the NHL's primary asset – players. The NHL has enjoyed the position of buyer of junior talent and in doing so has not only always determined the demand, but convinced the suppliers their product is easily replaceable; thus a surplus exists. David Cruise and Alison Griffith exposed this practice in great detail. Nevertheless junior hockey in Canada is where it is while commercializing, profiting, and exploiting every bit as much as the NHL. Cruise and Griffith wrote “junior hockey is amateur in name only”.¹³ Of the draft system, a method of selecting entry-level players to respective league teams and a practice used by both junior hockey organizations and the NHL, Cruise and Griffith commented “Anyone who thinks that minor hockey in Canada is about fun, character-building and recreation need only attend the annual OHL draft... fifteen and sixteen-year olds who are having their future careers launched or ended”.¹⁴

Thus, the study of junior hockey as an element of Maritime history should be carried out cautiously and critically, recognizing that, although junior hockey has played an important role in Maritime sport, it forms only one part of a wider narrative. As much value the Charlottetown junior hockey era of 1930-34 contributes to the region, the more general sporting experience, as Colin Howell has stated, has focused “largely on the

¹³ David Cruise and Alison Griffith *Net Worth: Exploding The Myths of Pro Hockey* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1992), 346.

¹⁴ Cruise and Griffith, *Net Worth*, 344.

male-oriented workaday world”.¹⁵ Indeed the attention given junior hockey in this era and ensuing years may come at the expense of studying other social groups. It would not be exaggerating to say the play of the West End Rangers or the trials of the Crystal Sisters were as crucial to the richness of PEI sport history as junior hockey.

Commendably, both Charlie Ballem and Jim Hornby have heightened historiographical awareness of these groups. Hornby profiled a once vibrant Black community in Charlottetown known as The Bog, whose hockey team, the West End Rangers, took part in contests with Nova Scotia teams of the Colored Hockey League.¹⁶

As junior hockey continues to grow and popularize in Canada, it becomes increasingly important not to shape a one-sided image of this institution. Gruneau and Whitson, paraphrasing Robert Pitter, wrote “Black and First Nations players still face racist behaviours and attitudes – from opponents, fans, and even sometimes their own coaches and teammates – on their way up through minor and junior hockey.”¹⁷ Such practices cannot be tolerated if junior hockey is to develop in a healthy way, and a more comprehensive historiography may take a significant role in their removal.

Yet junior hockey remains highly significant in that historiography. It is sometimes difficult to imagine Maritime junior hockey in major centers originating in three or four team intra-city leagues. Charlottetown frowned on creating an all-star team. At its best in this early period in Charlottetown, junior hockey consisted of a nine-player team with one spare goalie, and all of the members were in desperate need of equipment. Yet it speaks

¹⁵ Howell, “Two Outs”, 108.

¹⁶ Jim Hornby, *Black Islanders: Prince Edward Island's Historical Black Community* (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, 1991) For a description of the Colored Hockey League see Garth Vaughn “The Colored Hockey Championship of the Maritimes” in Colin D. Howell, ed., *Putting It On Ice, Volume I: Hockey and Cultural Identities* (Halifax: Gorsebrook Research Institute, 2002), 25-33.

¹⁷ Gruneau and Whitson, *Artificial Ice*, 18. See also Robert Pitter, “Racialization and Hockey In Canada: From Personal Troubles to a Canadian Challenge”, 123-137.

to the calibre of athletic people in PEI: supporters, team officials, and players alike.

Summing up the 1930-34 period of junior hockey on PEI Charlie Ballem said it well:

“junior men’s hockey, in particular, restored hockey to a level of public confidence and support, flashing as they did their youthful exuberance for the game. Unfortunately it would be the same young men, who would in the ensuing years, fight another kind of battle, that of the Second World War in Europe”.¹⁸ Indeed they would, and once again their community would support them.

¹⁸ Ballem, *More Than Just a Game*, 212.

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