

What a difference a few years make! Conditions have changed greatly at the Peel Street curling rock gardens. The season starts in this day and age early in November and is carried on to April on artificial ice.

Away back the season opened around the middle of December and the ice disappeared in February. Many games were played in water in past seasons, and sometimes the finals for the club championship were played on odd patches of ice sticking up out of the sand. There may be a few "runs" in the ice today, but before artificial ice, the different sheets were covered in "cracks" as the frost heaved the ice in all directions.

Sometimes snow blew through the cracks in the wooden walls and piled in small drifts on the ice.

Today there is very little condensation. In the old days larger pieces of hoar frost dropped from the roof girders to the ice, stopping the curling stones on their way to the rings. This was especially noticeable when the draw game was popular. There was no mechanized rubber and foot cleaners and plenty of dirt was carried onto the ice.

The lights in days of yore were actually dim bulbs compared with the good lighting of today. Chalk was used to mark scores on blackboards instead of the bright numbering system in use today.

In former days the hacks were 12 inch pieces of wood, about two inches thick and footholds were chiseled in the ice. Many times, bullet rocks hit the wooden hack and catapulted onto the walks at the ends of the rink. Today, the hacks are of rubber and make for a snug toehold.

Wooden walks ran across both ends of the rink and these walks also ran from north to south between ices two and three and four and five. Spectators crowded these walks as they followed the game from end to end

The only players allowed to stand on the ice between the hog line and the back of the rings were the skips and vice-skips. Seconds and leads were not allowed on or near the circles.

### Private Stones

The curling stones in the old days were all privately owned with four or five pairs available to rent. The stones were different shapes and sizes, some overweight and some underweight. The stones were kept in rows or lockers at both ends of the rink, while some players left their rocks in boxes along the walks at the north end of the rink.

All stones were locked up and curlers bought their brooms for a \$1 or more, and many took them home at the end of the season to be used as house brooms.

Curling regalia was chiefly sweaters under the suit coat and the majority of the players wore tams. Some wore rubbers others overshoes and many also tried the felt soles.

In the old rink, two or three huge banners at the end of the rink and one hanging down in the middle of the rink recorded the welcome to the first group of curlers from Scotland to visit Canada and Lindsay, another a welcome sign to the victorious J. D. Flavelle rink returning from the largest bonspiel in the world, the one held at Winnipeg, and another to one of the old time Ontario Tankard Championship rinks.

Instead of the modern club rooms of today, the rooms several years ago were cramped, badly lighted and somewhat dingy. The main room con-

tained a long table, a number of wooden chairs and some of them were broken, and an old pot-belly stove in which coal was used.

The hot water heater was close by as well as the cold water pipe from which curlers drank, and the old tin drinking cup was attached.

One of the most popular gathering spots was the room at the end of No. 5 ice which was known as the "Chamber of Horrors." For here the arm-chair curlers watched the curling games from behind the glass. A small box stove radiated tons of heat from the sticks of wood, and the tobacco chewers expectorated into it and the fire blasted with returning flames. Tall stories were told in there and many games replayed by the experts.

A third small waiting room was located at the west end of the rink, but was generally cold and not too popular.

### **Clubrooms today**

Today, the clubrooms are flanked along the ice at the south end of the rink by large plate glass windows, but years ago the windows consisted of an un-numbered quantity of small window panes. It was a hard job keeping them clean, and on cold nights spectators had to breathe warm air on to the frosted panes of glass in order to make a small peek hole through which they peeped with one eye.

For all this apparent trying time, curlers had barrels of fun and there were few complaints — and they could really curl.

These were the days when Lindsay rinks used to win Ontario Tankards and banners, district cups and coveted silver trophies, at inter-club games with Orillia, Beaverton, Oshawa, Fenelon Falls, Bobcaygeon and Peterboro and further afield.

These were the days of roarin' stones and roaring skips, wonderful days of brotherhood. Today, the atmosphere is entirely different and at times greatly diversified, but much of the glamour and excitement has vanished — for the better?