

Olympic Athletes

Lawrence (Larry) O'Connor



Photo courtesy of the Northumberland County Archives

Having an Olympic athlete for a coach is probably a good plan, especially when that athlete lives in the same town as you! For young Larry O'Connor, that town was Cobourg and his coach was Olympic hurdler, Arthur Ravensdale, who had participated in the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Larry was born to Laurence and May O'Connor in Toronto in 1916. Unhappily, May passed away when Larry was just 11 months old. When his father married Ella Brady of Lindsay, Larry gained two sisters, Constance and Frances.

When Larry was thirteen his father was appointed to the bench as County Court Judge and the family moved to Cobourg. The boy exhibited natural athletic ability and his interest in track and field, particularly the hurdles event, made working with Ravensdale a natural fit.

While still in high school, **Larry was chosen for further training at the Ontario Athletic Commission Camp** on Lake Couchiching where he distinguished himself by being the first boy to swim to an island one mile away. Judge O'Connor marked the accomplishment by donating a plaque to the camp.

Larry next attended the University of Toronto where he studied Political Science and Economics and joined the **Blues Intercollegiate Track and Field Championship team.**

Larry and his teammate Jimmy Worrall, Canada's Olympic flag bearer that year, travelled aboard the S.S. Duchess of Bedford for their 6-day journey to compete in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Germany. Interestingly enough, the park-like Olympic Village constructed by the German Military would later be used as an officers' training camp. At the games, Larry finished with his best time ever in the 110 metre hurdles: a remarkable 14.8 seconds. The result was good for 6th place but only **a fraction of a second behind the American Gold medalist!**