

Men Of Zorra

Didn't Budge In Tug-Of-War...

By ARTHUR WILLIAMS

EMBRO — Late in the 1870s a group of men from Zorra got together to test their brawn as a tug-of-war team. From these men five were chosen, Robert McIntosh, as anchor man, William Munro, Ira Hummason, Robert McLeod and Alex Clark, with James Sutherland as president.

It was not until 1881, however, that they began to attract attention. Many of the teams which they pulled against out-weighted them, but none were able to pull the Zorra team.

As a result of this, a great rivalry sprang up between the Zorra and Dereham team. The Dereham team outweighed the Zorra boys by 20 pounds apiece, yet in four years of competition, the Zorra team always pulled them. As their reputation spread, the Zorra team was challenged by many other teams of equal calibre, including the Lucknow Giants, a Brantford team and several good local teams. None of the opposition ever pulled the Zorra team.

GO SOUTH

About this time two teams in the Northeastern States were meeting with little opposition and were receiving considerable publicity for their skill at the game. James Sutherland decided that his team should meet

these teams and was quite confident that they could pull the Americans.

On August 3, 1888, the team went to Buffalo. Their first opponent was the Buffalo team, a team which from their outward appearance looked like a sure winner as they outclassed the Canadians in both size and weight. The look of humiliation was not easily described when the Zorra boys turned out to be the better team. The defeat of their second opponent, the Rochester team, was even more humiliating as it happened so suddenly that the Rochester team called a foul, but it was not allowed. On the second pull, the victory was even more decisive. For their efforts they were presented with a silver tankard and a purse of money. Following these decisive victories they confined their activities to local events. After all they were just a group of farmers and had a farm to look after. Tug-of-war was just recreation.

In 1890, Mr. Sutherland received a challenge from the Highland Association of Chicago for his team to pull against a Chicago team in August. The challenge was accepted. The place for the pull was to be at Elliott Park, some distance from Chicago. It was to take place on August 23,

1890. Due to a misinterpretation of the starting rule no fair contest took place as the Zorra team was pulled before they took up the strain. As a result of this the supporters of the local team urged them to challenge the Chicago team for a re-match in Oxford County. The challenge was accepted. The first date set was Oct. 1 at Woodstock, in the County Agriculture Exhibition, but the Embro Fair Board felt that since the team was from Zorra, they should pull in Embro. Finally it was decided that they would pull at Embro Oct. 10.

Over 4,000 gathered to cheer their favorites to victory.

The first pull was a routine affair with the Zorra team pulling their opponents in less than a minute. The second pull was a classic event in the annals of tug-of-war. The strain was applied on the rope, both teams now having been pulled by the other and each anxious for a victory. For 25 minutes the rope never moved more than an inch either way.

Then, a dramatic moment came. One of the local pipers, who could stand the suspense no longer, started to play "The Campbells Are Coming."

The highland blood and brawn rose to the occasion and the rope started to move, though it took another 10 minutes before the pull was decided in favor of the Zorra boys.

For a few moments it was hard to decide if the piper or the tug-of-war team was the most popular as the air was rent by cheers. While it was a proud victory it was also a defeat in which the Chicago team could be proud as it is believed to be the longest pull on record. The Hon. Oliver Mowatt, the member for Oxford offered his congratulations.

These two teams met again at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 when once again the Zorras defeated them in the finals to become recognized as the World Champions. A cairn was erected in their honor in 1939 at the North Embro cemetery gates.

Members of the team were Alex Clarke, who was six feet two inches tall and weighed 206 pounds; Robert McLeod, six feet two inches tall, 197 pounds; Ira Hummason six feet two inches, 199 pounds; W. R. Munro, six feet one inch, 188 pounds; Robert McIntosh, six feet two, 215 pounds (anchor man) with Mr. Sutherland as captain.



THEY DIDN'T BUDGE — This was the brawn of Zorra before the turn of the century. Members of the famous tug-of-war team were: Back row, from left: Alex Clarke, Robert McLeod and Ira Hummason. Front row: William R. Munro, E. L. Sutherland, the captain, and Robert Mc-

Intosh, the anchor man. This photograph was loaned to The Beacon-Herald by Clarence Campbell, of Embro, whose father-in-law was Mr. Hummason, of the tug-of-war team.