

THE STORY OF BOWLING - Article I

You may be a bowler of long standing, or you may have just discovered the fun and satisfaction of the game. Either way you are in good company, because according to historians people have been bowling for at least seven thousand years.

Bowling pins were found in Egyptian tombs dating from 5200 B.C. In Northern Italy the Helvetii played the game during Caesar's time, 50 B.C.

Polynesians in the ancient cultures of the South Sea Islands bowled their version of the game on alleys sixty feet long, the exact measurement of today's alley from foul line to head pin.

As far back as the 11th Century "bowles" was a popular game in England, with stone boulders as nearly round as possible for balls.

In Germany the game enjoyed tremendous popularity after having become identified with the early Christian church, when a parishioner's skill in hitting a pin with a rounded pebble was taken as an indication of his spiritual state.

In England the people's enthusiasm for bowling was so great during the 11th century that Henry III passed a law forbidding bowling as a game "alike dishonourable, useless and unprofitable".

His chief reason for this harshness seems to have been his fear that the archers, upon whom the defence of the realm largely rested, were spending too much time on the bowling greens and alleys when they should have been sharpening their target eyes practicing with the long-bow.

The same fears must have plagued Edward III, for he outlawed bowling in 1366. Englishmen continued to bowl despite decrees.

Richard II in 1388 and Edward IV in 1477 passed Acts to force yeomen to forsake bowling for long-bows. These laws referred to "houses" where the game was played, as well as to gardens.

The only monarch not determined to stamp out the game was Henry V, perhaps because he was a frequenter of London bowling alleys himself.

Henry V was ahead of his time, Our Canadian government has long since recognized the place of the bowling-alley in building the troop's morale. Virtually every armed forces station and camp of reasonable size sports a bowling alley.

When Canada's Fighting men go overseas the Department of National Defence often provides alleys where the young warriors may enjoy our national pastime of bowling.

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So it was that in spite of opposition, by the time of Good Queen Bess alleys as well as bowling greens were to be found throughout England. Bishops were criticized and roundly defended, for working in a game between sermons on Sunday!

Twenty years after the death of Queen Elizabeth, Dutch settlers of New York introduced their nine-pin game to this continent.

The nine-pins were set up in diamond shape first on a bed of clay, and as time passed cinders were used, and eventually a single board about 12 to 19 inches wide was used as an alley.

Bowling became the rage of sporting men and gradually the game fell into the control of gamblers. This proved the sport's undoing, and once again bowling in the form of nine-pins was outlawed.

However, an unknown enthusiast devised a plan for using ten pins, skirting the ban on the game, and by 1840 almost every block on Broadway boasted a bowling alley.

Probably the greatest boon to bowling occurred when reports on the pastime were moved out of the newspapers' crime columns to the sports page!

1875 saw the formation of the United States National Bowling Association, and in 1895 the American Bowling Congress took over a governing body. Today it is the American authority which controls and guides more than twenty million bowling fans.

In Canada the popular American ten-pin game is not universally accepted, although in cities and towns along the International Boundary line ten-pin enthusiasts are to be found.

The only bowling game of Canadian origin is the five-pin game, a sport as Canadian as hockey.

Originated in Toronto in 1910 by T.F. "Tom" Ryan, Toronto sportsman and antique dealer, Canada's First five-pin league swung into action with Ryan acting as secretary-treasurer.

The game caught on rapidly across the nation. Confusion struck when native Westerners and transplanted sons of "down East" arrived at a set of pin values which differed to their Eastern cousins.

Thus, at Regina in the spring of 1953 the National Canadian Bowling Council was launched when representatives of the four western provinces and of Eastern Canada met to organize, among other things, a rule of uniform scoring.

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