

My Canada: When lacrosse was king in Bradford

LUANNE CAMPBELL EDWARDS

Special to the Bradford Times

At this time in June, 110 years ago, there was only one topic being discussed in every household in Bradford: the Bradford players on the Canadian Lacrosse Association's All-Star team, then playing across Canada on their way to Vancouver, as part of an around-the-world trip promoting the national game. At that time in Canada's history, that game was lacrosse – not hockey.

This event has always been part of my life. My great-uncle, Dr. Lewis Campbell, was on the 1907 team, and our family room walls were covered with pictures of the All-Stars – as well as the Bradford Lacrosse Team, of which my grandfather, William L. Campbell, was also a member.

Souvenirs from the 1907 trip decorated the room. My father, Lewis B. Campbell, prized the souvenir boomerangs his uncle brought back from the Australian leg of the tour. While cleaning out my parents' home recently, my sister Suzanne and I found a scrapbook, put together by Campbell's sister, Elizabeth,

of all the Star newspaper clippings, and Campbell's diary of the all-star team's travels.

John C. Miller, director of the Orillia lacrosse team and president of the CLA, selected the all-star players from across Ontario. Three were from Bradford – Fred Coombs, Vic Graham and Campbell, who was 41 at the time but obviously able to more than keep up with much younger competitors.

The players left from Orillia on June 4 after a huge banquet – the menu from the banquet, another prized souvenir, records 15 courses served – and played in Port Arthur, Winnipeg, Regina, Moose Jaw, Calgary, New Westminster, Vancouver and Victoria.

Descriptions of the games are very exciting; home team players are often described as being "in the pink" and comfortable on their home fields yet the Canadian team lost only one game during the entire tour. Many friends and family of the players travelled across Canada to watch the games.

The all-stars sailed from Victoria on June 21, and arrived in Honolulu on June 29. They travelled to the Fiji Islands, then arrived in Bris-

bane, Australia, on July 14 – cheekily referred to in the Australian press as the "all-Canadian tourists."

After Brisbane, the Canadians played 16 matches over a three-month period, in Sydney, Melbourne, Bendigo, Ballarat, Adelaide, Perth and Kalgoorlie. The competitions included four test matches against Australia – two at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, witnessed by large crowds of spectators, and two at the Adelaide Oval. Canada won the test series three matches to one.

The players were treated well. There were innumerable social functions, river excursions, receptions, balls and drag rides (cow herding). They also met with hero worship. Campbell wrote in his diary, "People here have a great fad for autographs, and of course we are continually writing our autographs." The second game in Melbourne attracted a crowd of 20,000 people; at that time, a Lacrosse game in Toronto that attracted 10,000 would set a record.

One interesting side trip was to an artificial ice rink in Melbourne, for a game of hockey against a local team. "It was a



Dr. Lewis H. Campbell, in his Canadian lacrosse team uniform for the 1907 world tour.

funny game as they have little or no rules, no offside. We won by 12-1," Campbell wrote – but there was a downside. Vic Graham broke his forearm, after having previously broken his ankle. There were many small injuries over the course of the trip, and Campbell's presence was appreciated.

Campbell toured several hospitals in Australia, and even helped with some cases. After the tour, one apparently wealthy patient sent him a large silver double inkwell, with a large kangaroo on it and a lovely message of thanks, in appreciation.

On September 3, the team left for the Ceylon Islands (now



SUBMITTED

Souvenir match ticket with Campbell's name pencilled in to ensure he could get into the Brisbane Exhibition Ground, where the Canadian lacrosse team's 1907 Australian tour kicked off.

Sri Lanka), then Suez in Egypt, Naples in Italy, and overland to England, finally returning to Canada on Oct. 23.

The team had travelled 29,000 to 30,000 miles over the five months – with 60 days spent on the water. On their return, the three Bradford players were town heroes for the rest of their lives. Campbell continued to boost all types of sport in Bradford, until his death in 1935.

For Canada's sesquicentennial year, the Bradford Times is asking readers – both long-time residents and newcomers to the country – to share some of their favourite places, events and memories of this country we call home. Stories, photos and comments can be sent to mking@postmedia.com, subject "My Canada," or mailed to "My Canada," Bradford Times, 74 John St. W., Box 1570, Bradford, ON, L3Z 2B8.