



**22 GRANITE WAY
(FORMERLY MOSTYN PLACE)**

GRANITE CURLING CLUB

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

May 5, 1986

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Looking like a "little bit of England" in downtown Winnipeg, the picturesque Granite Curling Club is familiar to Winnipeggers in its riverbank site at the northern foot of the Osborne Bridge. The Tudor-framed clubhouse, with its arching rink to the rear, has a street address on Mostyn Place, which parallels the Assiniboine River and intersects Osborne and Balmoral streets. The present building was constructed in 1912, but the Granite Club dates back to its formation in 1880.

Curling, the "roaring Game", had a long history in Scotland, where enthusiasts glided stones over the frozen lochs. Love of the sport followed the large Scots community to eastern Canada, where it was played early in the 1800s.¹ Long, cold prairie winters made curling a natural winter sport in Western Canada, and here again it was the Scottish ex-patriots who introduced the game.

Early curling in Winnipeg was a sport for the hearty. It was first played on the frozen rivers and later on public skating rinks, sometimes by gaslight. While granite rocks were preferable, most players settled for bell-shaped irons, or wooden rocks turned on a lathe and fitted with iron bands and a handle from the local blacksmith. By 1876, actual curling teams had been formed and matches undertaken between such groups as the Scots vs. the Canadian-born, Grits vs. the Tories and Smokers vs. Non-Smokers.² The players were all male.

In 1880, the Granite Curling Club was established, the name reflecting clubs in the east and in the old country, as well as indicating that granite rocks exclusively were used. Play got underway the following year, 1881, on sheets of ice huddled beneath a tent in the centre of town. By 1892, after a couple of moves, the club had grown large enough to build its own indoor rink at the corner of Hargrave and Ellice Streets.³ This was a first class facility for its time, a sure indication of the enthusiasm for curling and a sport and recreation. Coincidentally, curling was also catching on very well in the rural districts of Manitoba. The first provincial Bonspiel, held in 1884, had 62 teams (rinks) competing by 1889. In support of this growing interest, a Manitoba Curling Association was formed as a branch of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club of Scotland, to set standards and encourage competition.⁴ By 1900, the bonspiel attracted a couple of hundred rinks, with a heavy

turnout from rural Manitoba, local Winnipeg clubs and other prairie centres.⁵ This annual Manitoba Bonspiel is now the world's largest curling tournament and routinely produced some of the top curlers in the world.

As the "mother club" of the district the Granite Curling Club continued to grow apace, witnessing the formation of its splinter clubs such as The Thistle and the Assiniboine. Scanning the Granite's executive as listed in rosters for 1885 and 1900, one can observe that its membership was resolutely Scottish or Anglo-Saxon in ethnicity and, by and large, upper crust in background. In 1900 shares in the club were \$5 and members could insure their own set of rocks for 50¢ a year.⁶ While the rink at Hargrave and Ellice was still functional, the Granite Club decided to sell the property for a good profit and rebuild on a grander scale. Land was purchased in 1911, either from private hands at a consideration of \$40,000 or through an indirect purchase and lease-back from the provincial government.⁷ The site constituted 400 feet along Mostyn Place and reached back 250 feet to the banks of the Assiniboine River.

The new location had many features going for it. If needed, water for the rink's ice could be pumped directly from the river and filtered for use because these were the years before the guaranteed clean water provided by the 1919 aqueduct. From the east side of the building was open land to Osborne Street because Mostyn Place terminated in front of the new rink. Another street running parallel just north of here, called Whitehall Avenue, had several big houses on its south side, stables and a garage across from the Granite and the city's big Amphitheatre looming across its north side. A massive wooden structure, the Amphitheatre doubled as the arena for summer horse shows and an exhibition hall, and as an indoor skating rink in the winter. Somewhat later, the property that is now the older Great West Life Building was for decades the Winnipeg Stadium, until the second stadium in St. James was built in the mid-1950s. The area, therefore, formed a disjointed sports complex, with good access to the street-car lines and considerable public profile.

Two very active members of the club were responsible for the design and construction of the new Granite Club in 1912. James Chisholm, a long-time member of the club's executive was the architect and Thomas Kelly, a skip of the Granite and prominent socialite, was the contractor. While

Chisholm's name has endured as the designer of such fine Winnipeg buildings as the young Methodist Church and the Oddfellows' Temple, Kelly subsequently gained his place in Manitoba's history for his leading role in the Legislative Building scandal of 1913.

Gambling on a buoyant economy and continued popularity of the game, the Granite executive pushed their collective resources to the limit to build the finest facilities possible. It was a grandiose scheme: nine sheets of ice in the huge rink and a year-round luxurious clubhouse offering more than just curling to its members. Besides the spectators' viewing areas, the clubhouse featured a large lounge, a billiard room, kitchens and lockers with showers, all quite a departure from the stark facilities of the older curling clubs. There also are plans for a bowling green, which was never built, to make the club a year-round sporting attraction.⁸ In anticipation of projected summer use, the clubhouse was fitted with a wooden veranda opening from the south side of the building onto the river. In fact, the rink's winter facilities proved to be more than enough to boost the membership and pay off on the gamble.

Construction of the Granite Curling Club began in the autumn of 1912, with the building opening one year later in time for the curling season of 1913-14. The total cost climbed from original estimates in the \$70,000 to \$90,000 range to a staggering \$140,000, a very steep sum in 1913 dollars.

The rink portion of the club is 136 feet by 201 feet, according to the building permit.⁹ Nine sheets of ice run the length of the structure with only narrow separations between. Wooden platforms border the ice on all four sides to permit maximum viewing at rink level, especially important during bonspiel. The structure is stud-framed, with a clear span of 136 feet. The trusses arch to a height of one and a half storeys, carried to the ground on steel columns faced like brick buttresses. The walls, made of wood covered in corrugated metal, are far from airtight, but this was quite desirable in the decades before artificial ice was installed. In fact, there was only a layer of sand laid between the ground surface and the rink ice. At all four corners of the rink were square towers of brick and rough cast, crenellated and definitive in resolving the arching lines of the rink proper to the articulated lines of the clubhouse. The two towers at the rear (east) end of the rink has subsequently

been altered and flattened.

The clubhouse portion of the complex resembles a Tudor cottage, the intention being to provide members with a home-like atmosphere. It is three storeys tall, with a deep brown brick facing on the ground floor and half-timbering on rough cast on the upper floors. The roof is broken into two large gables and punctuated with dormered windows to achieve a picturesque appearance. (There were also low shed dormers along the rink roof but these have been removed.) A large chimney rises to the rear.

The front entrance received particular attention from architect Chisholm. He placed a formal gateway between two oversized pillars, joined by an arch of wrought iron inscribed "Granite Curling Club". A gabled porch lit by two carriage lanterns ushers club members into a main hall from which large windows open onto the rink. A cloakroom, snack bar and offices now occupy a good portion of this main floor space, which originally contained offices and the large veranda on the river side. Two stairways give access to the second floor, which contains the main clubroom, now the dining room. The veranda has been removed but, in its place on the south side of the clubhouse, has been added a two-storey kitchen and bar. The main staircase now opens onto the bar on the second floor, with a small service separating it from the dining room. A second windowed viewing area runs the length of the wall joining the clubhouse to the rink, behind the lounge and the dining room.

The dining room, formerly the "members reading room", is the social heart of the Granite Club. Large and spacious, this room was originally furnished with heavy upholstered chairs and chesterfields, grouped casually around the massive brick fireplace. Over the mantle is a bronze plaque inscribed with the early history of the club.¹⁰ On either side of the fireplace are now displayed the numerous silver trophies that the club has won over the hundred years of its existence. The room is lined with rich oak panelling, with a beamed ceiling that ties this old English interior to the building's exterior style. With the shift of function from lounge to dining room, the furniture and fixtures have certainly been changed but the comfortable feel of the room endures.

To the north of this room on the second floor is another staircase and the women's lounge, formerly

the ladies' waiting room. Presumably the home-like atmosphere of the club was enhanced for this generation by prohibiting women from the main clubrooms.

The entire third floor was devoted to a large games room, fitted up with two full-sized English billiard tables, a snooker table and a small pool table. Two of these tables remain, large and expensively fitted. A portion of this third floor space has now been partitioned into a card room, which sees active use.

Lockers, washrooms and a shower room were in the basement, as well as a mysterious "snake room", shown in early photographs (possibly the original card room). These facilities have been altered and modernized on at least two occasions to provide competitive standards. In 1965, a sauna was installed. Storage and a boiler room complete the basement space.

On the northeast corner of the rink is the mechanical room for the ice area. In 1953, the Granite led the way in Winnipeg with the installation of artificial ice. The ground under the rink was dug into header trenches to contain supply and return headers under each of the nine sheets. The Canadian Ice Machine Co. Ltd. fitted up the big brine cooler, condenser and powerful pumps to circulate the cooling brine solution.¹¹ The heavy machinery, controlled and monitored by a complex system of gauges, dials and compressors, delivers a very simple system of refrigeration that is then flooded and sprinkled to maintain the ice surface. Still resting only on sand and styrofoam, the ice surface varies from ½-inch to 3 inches of thickness as the grade varies beneath. Gas and electric heaters suspended from the ceiling raise the air temperature within the rink to just above freezing. The original lighting system has also been improved.

The major alteration to the complex has been the addition to the south side in 1959.¹² The work of Smith, Carter, Searle and Associates, along with Bird Construction, provided the club with a large kitchen and the bar which is so important to any institution's financial situation. The addition does not continue the lines of the clubhouse with much sensitivity, but matches the materials of the older building. The main portion of the clubhouse, especially the exterior and main entrance, is much as it was when it opened in 1913.

The Granite Curling Club, by virtue of its age and continued prominence, has a special place in the sport of curling in the province. It has traditionally been a showcase for the sport, with more ice and more spectator accommodation than any other Manitoba club.¹³ It has had an impressive lineage of winners in a game epitomized by its good sportsmanship and fair play. In 1965, Terry Braunstein won the fourth national championship, the Brier, for the Granite. Don Duguid of the Granite won the world championship "Silver Broom" in 1970 and 1971. The club won the Macdonald Provincial Bonspiel so many times that when the tankard trophy was retired, it was given to the Granite to keep.

The Granite has not been without its hard times. In 1946, the club purchased its ground outright from the Provincial Government but in 1975 a financial squeeze forced them to sell the property to the City of Winnipeg for a cash settlement and a satisfactory lease-back agreement. In the spring of 1950, the club was flooded with the filthy waters of the swollen Assiniboine River.

The Granite Curling Club, now 106 years old, is the province's oldest curling institution and one of the oldest sporting groups in the province. The clubhouse and rink, completed in 1913, reflects the tradition and stability of the Granite, which looks forward to many more successful years in the Winnipeg sporting community.

FOOTNOTES

1. S.F. Wise and Douglas Fisher Canada's Sporting Heroes General Publishing Co. (Don Mills, Ontario) 1974 p. 186. See also Maxwell L. Howell and Reet A. Howell, eds. History of Sport in Canada Stipes Publishing Co. (Champaign, Illinois) 1981 p. 404.
2. Edith Patterson "It Happened Here" Winnipeg Free Press 7 March 1970.
3. "Granite Curling Club - Roster 1950-51".
4. Manitoba Curling Association Diamond Jubilee" Manitoba Calling February 1948 p. 10.
5. "Bonspiel Summary" Manitoba Free Press 22 February 1900 p. 10.
6. "Constitution and By-laws of the Granite Curling Club of Winnipeg, Manitoba" (Winnipeg) 1885 and "Rules and Regulations" of the Granite Curling Club (Winnipeg) 1900.
7. Purchase of the land through the Bank of Hamilton for \$40,000 was announced in the paper. "New Site Bought for Granite Rink" Winnipeg Telegram 17 May 1911 p. 2. Accounts of the agreement in the Granite's own history however indicate that the land was leased from the Province of Manitoba until 1946, at which time it was purchased outright. The full story doubtless lies in the minutes of the Granite Club executive meetings on file in the club office.
8. "Palatial New Home of the Granite Curling Club Now Completed" Manitoba Free Press 20 September 1913 p. 19.
9. City of Winnipeg Building Permit No. 4047 23 October 1912.
10. "Palatial New Home", op. cit. See also "New Granite Curling Rink Now Under Construction" Manitoba Free Press November 1912 p. 23.
11. Permits, op. cit., No. 5478 15 July 1953.
12. Ibid., No. 2132 2 July 1959. See also plans by the same number, City of Winnipeg Planning.
13. Jack Matheson "The Mother Club's spirit indestructible as Granite" Winnipeg Tribune 3 January 1980 p. 16.

APPENDIX A

James Chisholm

This Winnipeg architect was born in Paris, Ontario in 1840, where he took his education. It is not known where he received his professional training, but he came to Winnipeg in 1877 and eventually became identified with local architectural interests. He built up his practice to later include his son, C.C. Chisholm, who eventually took over the senior Chisholm's practice.

While their work was generally confined to the City of Winnipeg, James Chisholm also designed buildings for other cities in Manitoba as well as Regina, Saskatchewan, Edmonton, Alberta, Saskatoon and Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. The firm's Winnipeg buildings include the Sterling Bank Building, the Hochman (formerly Harris) Building on Princess, the Odd Fellows' Temple on Kennedy Street, Zion Methodist Church, the well-known Young Methodist (now United) Church on Broadway, and the original section of the Marlborough Hotel. In addition, Chisholm designed several beautiful houses including the Lemon residence formerly at 420 Edmonton Street, the Horn residence and the A.N. McCutcheon residence, as well as several office buildings.

James Chisholm was also involved in church activities and a member of the Winnipeg School Board.

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Plate 1 – The Granite Curling Club, 22 Mostyn Place, 1970. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)



Plate 2 – The Granite Curling Club, 22 Mostyn Place, 1970. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)

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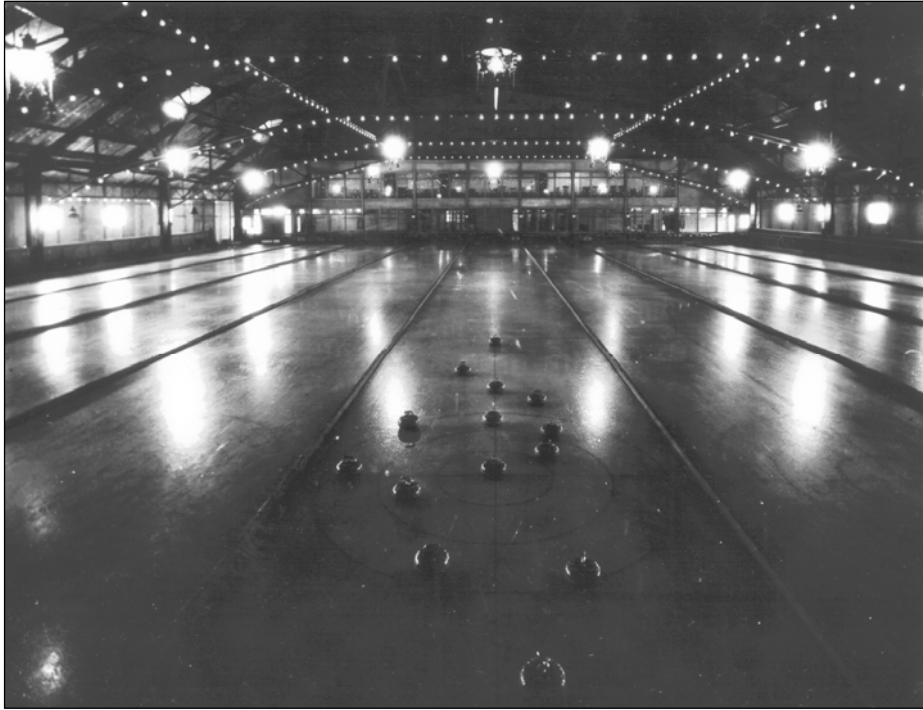


Plate 3 – Interior of the club, 1922. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Foote Collection #1084 [M1910].)



Plate 4 – Taken from the top of the Legislative Building, this shot shows the roof of the Granite on the far left and the massive Winnipeg Amphitheatre on the right, 1926. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Thomas Burns Collection #612.)

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Plate 5 – Winners of the Dingwall Trophy in the Winnipeg Bonspiel, 1914-15. Members of the rink from the Granite Curling Club included C.C. Chisholm (seated, left), son of the club's designer, James Chisholm. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N9445.)