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HAMILTON

AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT
OF FOOTBALL IN HAMILTON, 1860-1960

By
Glen Eker

An Outline History of the Development of Football in Hamilton 1860 - 1960

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by

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B.A., M.A., McMaster University;

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1890 The Hamilton Football Club was the direct ancestor of the Hamilton City Football Club. Playing members of the club had their own annual meet.

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1823

English rugby was first introduced in Canada by British sailors who arrived in 1823. The game then became popular with English soldiers and sailors stationed at various centers across the country.

1865

The first documented account of football played in Canada occurred in Montreal in 1865. The competition was between a team of officers from British Army regiments stationed in Montreal and a team of civilians from McGill University.

1868

Canadian football officially began with the formation of the Montreal Football Club. A crude form of football was first played in Toronto.

1868-1869

Informal English type rugby games begin in Hamilton. Teams were composed of various civic employee groups playing against each other. The rules were vague and undefined. There was no fixed time limit for games.

1869

The Hamilton Football Club which was the direct ancestor of the Hamilton Tiger Cats was formed. Playing members of the club paid fifty cents for annual dues.

1870

The first organized game is mentioned in the Hamilton Spectator. The Hamilton Football Club played an unidentified team. The first game between the Hamilton Football Club and a team representing Toronto was played.

1871

A crude city-wide league begins. There were at least three teams involved: "The Hamilton Bankers" representing the banking profession; "The Team of the World", also known as "The Non-Bankers" and "The Hamiltonians". Most games were played at the Maple Leaf Baseball Club grounds. On Monday October 20 the Hamilton Spectator publishes its first game sports report. The Bankers play three games with the Hamiltonians.

1872

Games are now played at the Hamilton Cricket Club grounds. For over the next eighty years these grounds would be home to Hamilton football teams. These grounds are better known to Hamiltonians as the Hamilton Amateur Athletic Association grounds, located on Charleton Avenue.

1873

The rivalry between Hamilton and Toronto begins on October 20, 1873 in Toronto. The Hamilton Football Club plays the Argonaut Football Club.

1873

The Hamilton Spectator reported that the club members were wearing their new black and yellow uniforms. By the next weekend the club was nicknamed The "The Tigers". The name may have been used by the reporter who covered the return match in Hamilton.

1874

Hamilton and Toronto agree to arrange a regular series of games. The Argonaut Rowing Club officially forms the Argonaut Football Club.

1875

Hamilton and Toronto teams begin to play a regular series of games with teams from Guelph, Stratford, Port Hope, St. Catherines, and London.

1875-1882

At some time between this period the Hamilton football team moved from the cricket grounds to the lacrosse fields for some games. The rental was twenty dollars annually and membership fees were increased to one dollar. The Hamilton Football Club was amateur in these years before the formation of any provincial organization. Players paid their own expenses, bought their own uniforms, and took their own lunches.

1882

The Ontario Rugby Football Union (O.R.F.U.) was formed to regulate the teams and the rules. The Hamilton Club called The Tigers joined the union. Other unions formed at this time were the Canadian

- 1882 Rugby Football Union (C.R.F.U.) and the Quebec Rugby Football Union (Q.R.F.U.).
- 1887 A rugby team was formed at University of Toronto.
- 1891 The Canadian Rugby Football Union was dissolved and replaced by the Canadian Rugby Union (C.R.U.). The Canadian Rugby Union was formed to act as a union that would be the overall governing body of the Ontario Rugby Football Union and the Quebec Rugby Football Union
- 1894-1904 Hamilton won six Dominion Championships.
- 1897 The Canadian Intercolliate Rugby Football Union (C.I.R.F.U.) was formed. There were teams from McGill University, University of Toronto, Osgoode Hall Law School, and Queen's University.
- 1907 The Interprovincial Rugby Football Union (I.R.F.U.) was formed. The Hamilton Tigers switched to this league which came under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Rugby Union. The Big Four of this new league were the Hamilton, Tigers, the Toronto Argonauts, the Ottawa Rough Riders, and the Montreal Winged Wheelers.
- 1908 The Hamilton Tigers win the Senior Championship by defeating University of Toronto 21 to 17. Later they would place a plaque on the Grey Cup to commemorate this win.

1909

The Grey Cup was donated by the Honourable Earl Grey, Governor General of Canada.

1910

On October 8 the Hamilton Cricket Club grounds became the the Hamilton Amateur Athletic Association grounds. Later that year the Tigers would compete in their first Grey Cup game. Hamilton played University of Toronto before 13,000 spectators, 5,000 of them Torontians. University of Toronto defeated the Tigars 16 to 7.

1911

This was the year of the formation and rapid rise of the Hamilton Alerts in the Ontario Rugby Football Union.

1912

Hamilton football teams win the Junior, Intermediate, and Senior Division Championships. The M.L. Glasco Cup is donated to the city. It is emblematic of the senior football champions. The Hamilton Alerts win the senior division championship. They compete for the Grey Cup against the Toronto Argonauts and win 11 to 4. The Alerts are then expelled from the Ontario Rugby Football Union for reasons that are unknown.

1913

The Hamilton Tigers win the Grey Cup defeating the Toronto Parkdale Canoe Club 44 to 2.

1914

The Hamilton Alerts and the Hamilton Tigers amalganated retaining the Tiger name. The Tigers

- 1914 win the Grey Cup defeating the Toronto Argonauts.
- 1915 The Tigers win the Grey Cup defeating the Toronto Argonauts.
- 1916-1919 Football was suspended during the war years.
- 1921 Hamilton Tigers go west to teach western football clubs eastern rules. They sweep the five game series. Teams from the west for the first time challenge for the Grey Cup.
- 1928 The Tigers defeat Regina 30 to 9 to win the Grey Cup.
- 1929 The Tigers defeat Regina 14 to 3 to win the Grey Cup.
- 1932 The Tigers defeat Regina 25 to 6 to win the Grey Cup.
- 1935 At the Hamilton Amateur Athletic Association grounds Hamilton becomes the first eastern club to loose to a western club for the Grey Cup. This was the first Grey Cup win by a western club. Winnipeg defeated Hamilton 18 to 12.
- 1936-1941 The Hamilton Tigers were playing poorly and did not appear in a Grey Cup Championship game.
- 1941-1945 The Interprovincial Rugby Football Union of which the Hamilton Tigers was a member suspended play for the Second World War after the 1941 season. A combined civilian/service team called the Hamilton Fly Wild Cats played in the Ontario Rugby Football Union during the war years. They defeated the Winnipeg R.C.A.F. Bombers 23 to 14 to win the Grey Cup in 1943.

1941-1945

In 1944 the Wild Cats were defeated by the Montreal St. Hyacinthe Navy Team 7 to 6 in the Grey Cup Championship.

1945

The Interprovincial Rugby Football Union began play with the Tigers again members of the league.

1947-1948

The Tigers withdraw from the Interprovincial Rugby Football Union over a gate receipt dispute. The Wild Cats who had continued to play in the Ontario Rugby Football Union after the war took the place of the Tigers in the Interprovincial Rugby Football Union while the Tigers became members of Ontario Rugby Football Union.

1948-1949

Hamilton now had two teams in two leagues. The loyalty of the fans was divided. The Tigers in the Ontario Rugby Football Union won the league championship in both 1948 and 1949. They were still only able to break even financially and if they had not won the championship would have had a financial loss. The Wild Cats in the Interprovincial Rugby Football Union finished last in both 1948 and 1949 and had major financial losses.

1950

The future of the two Hamilton clubs did not appear to be prosperous as even with greatly increased interest, the city could not support two teams to the degree necessary to finance competitive entries.

1950

These economic factors necessitated the merger of the Hamilton Tigers and the Hamilton Flying Wild Cats. The new team became the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

1953

The Hamilton Tiger-Cats win their first Grey Cup by defeating Winnipeg 12 to 6.

1958

The Tiger-Cats played at Civic Stadium which seated 21,622 with only 7,185 seats between goal lines. They felt that they would not be able to continue playing their and have a competitive entry in the league. The Board of Parks Management commissioned an extensive research study into the future of both the Tiger-Cats and Canadian Pro Football. They recommended to city council, the renovation of the south side and north end stands. The new stands would cost approximately \$750,000 to erect, and would be designed for continued expansion.

1959

The Civic Stadium expansion project was completed.

1960

The Hamilton Minor Football Association is established with grants from the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

Payment of Football Players in Hamilton 1860 - 1960

The payment of football players in Hamilton has advanced through four basic stages between the years 1860 and 1960. These stages are as follows:

- (1) In the middle and latter parts of the nineteenth century players were required to play to pay.
- (2) In the first part of the twentieth century players were not required to pay to play.
- (3) In the late 1930's and throughout the 1940's players received a season's compensation which ranged from street car fare for the average player to \$800 dollars for the super-star of the day.
- (4) The forming of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats in 1950 enabled football in Hamilton to be transformed from amateur to professional status. All players now received a regular salary.

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