

THE DAWSON CREEK ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION.

The Dawson Creek Athletic Association came into being in the late fall of 1931 when the presently existing City of Dawson Creek was less than a year old and boasted a population of possibly three to four hundred people.

A meeting was called in the Reasbeck Hotel located on the property where the Dawson Creek Hotel now stands. At this meeting Russell Craig, now N. A. R. station agent at Berwyn Alberta, presented his views and ideas of forming an Athletic Association to bring all sports under one head so that a progressive plan of sports development might be undertaken. The idea met with a favorable reception and a Committee was set up to draft by-laws, rules and etc.

At another meeting held very shortly after this committee presented their recommendations which were, that there be an Executive of six, comprising a President, Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer and three Directors, these officers to be elected at an Annual General Meeting of the organization. That all sports clubs then formed be invited to join this central organization. That all affiliated Clubs be allowed two delegates to ~~mark~~ Executive meetings of the association. That all persons participating in any sport under the sponsorship of the Association be a member of the Association and that that membership fee be one dollar per year. That the aim of the Association be the furtherance of sport and sportsmanship in Dawson Creek and community.

The foregoing recommendations were adopted by the meeting. The name, The Dawson Creek Athletic Association was ~~chosen~~ chosen and the election of the first slate of officers was proceeded with. Bill Reasbeck was chosen to be the first President, and office he held in the Association for many years. Earl Barkwell was elected the Secretary-Treasurer. Since all minutes of the Association were lost in the explosion and fire of February 1943 no reference can be made as to who the other officers of this first Executive were.

At the time of the organizing of the Association Dawson Creek townsite comprised that area from Railroad (Alaska) Avenue to 4th Avenue and from 8th Street to 12th Street. All that area from 4th Avenue to the creek and from 8th street to 13th street was owned by the Northern Alberta Railways. The newly formed Association immediately negotiated a lease on this property and made plans to develop a sports area. The first project was to build a one sheet curling rink and open air skating rink. Wes Harper in those days was a general merchant but had also gotten into the lumber business by taking wooden money on some of his accounts. The Association had no money so Wes offered sufficient lumber for the project on a pay as you can basis. The building was proceeded with, the site being that property now occupied by the present Post Office building. Labor was donated but even at that the DCAA owed Harper's General Store the staggering sum of \$1100.00 for lumber and hardware. by the time the project was completed.

The following summer a Golf Club was organized and a nine hole course was brought in to being. No one tee-off was where the Notre Dame school now stands and the balance of the holes zig-zagged here and there over the property under lease. We had a water hazard, a dog's leg, the knob and generally a very interesting course. Meanwhile other sports facilities were being provided on the grounds consisting of baseball diamond, basketball court, tennis courts and last but not least the Stampede grounds and race track. This latter project was located where the curling rink and Elementary school are now situated. Even in the "old town" Dawson Creek had staged a stampede and sports and with the move to the "new town" in late '30 and early '31 the then existing Stampede Committee has already partially completed a race track and corrals in this area but with the costs involved in building the new grounds this committee were financially embarrassed. They made application to affiliate with the DCAA and were accepted, encumbrances and all. To show the spirit in those days, six of the ~~business~~ businessmen in Dawson Creek has given their personal note to the bank to guarantee the repayment of this overdraft. The DCAA were successful in their first two day Stampede and Sports held in July of 1932 and were able to pay off this assumed indebtedness. Incidentally, if memory serves me correctly, the tennis Club ~~was~~ was the only organization affiliating with the DCAA who had any liquid assets to bring with them.

The Association continued to grow slowly during the next few years. The Depression was late hitting Dawson Creek, not till 1933 and 1934, but it did hit, and hit hard. The big event of each year was the two day Stampede and Sports, sponsored now by the Association. In order to assure the payment of prizes at this event a canvass was made of the business men. No money was collected but a guarantee taken that in the event the Association lost money the guarantee could be called upon in full or pro-rata on the loss sustained. It is with some pride that the Association can report that this guarantee was never called upon. Good prizes were paid too for racing, riding, baseball

and other events. This annual event was carried on until the commencement of World War 2 and in later years became quite a large affair, dancing on each evening required three halls, the Northland "Theatre" for the main dance, the Anglican Hall for the overflow and the upstairs at the Northland for the 'moochigan!

In 1935 the Association was incorporated under the Societies Act of British Columbia and a deal made to purchase from the Railway Company the 97 acres of land then under lease. The price \$40.00 per acre. In order to finance this project it was decided to survey and sell lots. Therefore the area between 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue ~~xxxx~~ and from 8th Street to 13th Street was sub-divided but only the lots west of 10th street were offered for sale. The word "offered" is used lightly as it required quite a selling job to convince anyone that he needed a lot, even if the prices asked ~~xxxx~~ ranged from only \$75.00 to \$100.00 per lot and they could be purchased at \$5.00 per month. Again it was the residents of Dawson Creek who came through and purchased a lot just to help the cause along. So the DCAA became owners of land.

As a matter of interest, the affiliated Clubs played under DCAA colors, Red & White, and these colors became repeated throughout the whole of the Peace River country. The Clubs wearing them, baseball, Hockey and Basketball were known as keen competitors and good sports.

With the advent of the building of the Alaska Highway, commencing in 1942, Dawson Creek began suffering from growing pains. The existing town-site was bursting at the seams and since the natural way for the town to grow at that time was to the south it was decided in June of that year to open for sale those lots between 10th Street and 8th street that had been surveyed several years earlier. This time there was no need for any sales promotion, people stood in line for hours for the doors to open. Sales were restricted to not more than two lots to any one buyer. It is surprising what means were devised to get around this restriction but in general it was fairly well carried out. The price of lots this time was from 100.00 to \$125.00 with 10% discount for cash.

The Association was not very active during the war years but a certain amount of money came in through the sale of lots and such money was invested in Victory Bonds. At the end of the war your Association held \$16,000.00 of those bonds. A very large part of the sports grounds were occupied by American Army and construction company buildings and some of those buildings still stand on the site on which they were erected at that time, the Elk's Hall for one, though it is now less than half the original size. Most of the buildings were sold and moved so as the land cleared more lots were surveyed and sold. Block 25, where the Curling Rink, Elementary School and Junior High School now stand, was not subdivided but was deeded to the Village for Park purposes. This area was about 23 acres in extent.

After the close of hostilities the DCAA purchased from the War Assets Corporation all that land formerly occupied by the American Army Post. This included almost three quarters of land, the present Golf Course lying south of the Alaska Highway and all of that portion of Section 21 lying north of the Highway with the exception of several small easements. The area north of the highway is that now known as Crescent Park, The P.G.E. Yards, the land under lease to Imperial Oil and the larger part of the north east quarter still intact. Also purchased was one of the large Army warehouses, 50' by 200' which was moved onto Block 25 and made into a three sheet curling rink. Another three sheets of curling ice was later added to this building. About this time another building known as the Chicken Dinner Dine and Dance Building was purchased on property adjoining the golf course to the west, and was used as a golf club house for some time in it's original location before being moved to it's present location, where, added to, still provides facilities for the Golf Club. During this time brush had been cleared, the land plowed and seeded to form the golf course we still use.

A first class base-ball diamond was also developed on Block 25 complete with an eight foot enclosing fence and some bleachers. Tennis courts had been built but through lack of interest in this sport were not kept up and later were done away with.

While the DCAA did not take an active part in the construction of the swimming pool they did donate the land and contributed \$2000.00 in cash to the project.

The DCAA were instrumental in setting up the Arena Committee who

undertook the very great task of raising the money and building the arena and brought it to the point of operation. Upon completion it was turned over to the Village to own and to operate. Very great credit is due those men and women who struggled so long and so hard to bring this great project to a successful conclusion. Also to the many clubs and individuals that contributed so much in the way of time, money and effort. At the time this building was turned over to the Village it was estimated that the cash outlay was between eighty and one hundred thousand dollars not counting the many hours of volunteer labor that had gone into it. The DCAA had contributed \$8000.00 in cash to the fund and were responsible for an additional \$6000.00 derived from the sale of park land for the Elementary School site.

With the continued growth of Dawson Creek the existing curling rink became inadequate and not suitable to add to or ~~xxxxx~~ satisfactory for the installation of artificial ice. Several meetings were called and discussions took place as to what method could be used to fill the need of the community. At one of these meetings it was recorded that artificial ice should not be installed in any curling rink until such time as it could also be installed in the arena. The outcome was that a Ways and Means Committee was set up to attempt to raise on the assets of the Association sufficient monies to build an eight sheet curling rink, install a cement floor in the arena and equip both the arena and curling rink with artificial ice. The recommendation of this committee was that debentures under the name of the Dawson Creek Athletic Association be sold bearing interest at 5%. That an objective of \$150,000.00 be set and that a time limit be set. Failure to come reasonably close to the objective by the deadline would mean that the project would not go through. As it turned out about 125,000.00 of debentures were guaranteed by the deadline so it was decided to proceed.

As you will recall, only one game of hockey had been played on the newly installed artificial ice in the arena when that building was practically destroyed by fire. Fortunately the ice plant was saved and the cement floor and piping was repairable at not too great a cost. Unfortunately the insurance carried was not sufficient to replace the building to it's former standard. The DCAA undertook the operation of the arena for the balance of that season, the fire occurred between Christmas and New Years, and operated as an open air rink. This operation could not come near breaking even financially due to the cost of making temporary accommodations, snow removal and other factors but the DCAA did provide at least some facilities for skating and hockey for the community for that season.

The present curling rink is on City owned property. For this reason it is considered in the best interests of all to lease it back to the Association for an a reasonably long term. This will not affect the operation as presently carried on, the curling club will continue to operate under the sponsorship of the DCAA.

Several years ago the Exhibition Association had the opportunity to purchase a quarter of land close to town and suitable for their ~~purpose~~ purpose. The price was \$10,000.00. The Exhibition Association had \$4000.00 on hand but no immediate prospects of raising the balance of money required to close the deal. They approached the DCAA for a loan of \$6000.00. The DCAA felt that the land was a reasonable buy and would be of benefit to Dawson Creek and community so the loan was made. This land was later taken over by the Village and the Exhibition Association refunded the purchase price. With the building of the new curling rink it made it necessary to find a new location for the Baseball Park. A verbal agreement was made with the Exhibition Association to establish the new ball park on the southerly portion of the newly aquired land. The DCAA has furnished about \$3200.00 to bring this baseball park to it present form. Many things are still needed to make it complete but your Association do not feel that they would be acting in your best interest to put more money into this project without some more permanent arrangement regarding the land than that that presently exists.

~~Returning~~ Returning once more to the history of the Association we would like to name the men that have held the office of President during the twenty eight years of the DCAA. W. A. Reasbeck, 1931-1944. W. O. Harper, 1944-1947. G. A. (Suds) Sutherland 1947-49. Ralph Thomsen, 1949-1951, Alan B. Elliott, 1951-52. Fred Williams, 1952-1953. Wm. Schilds 1953-1954. Earl R. Johnson, 1954-1957. M. A. Lundeen 1957-1958. Doug Reynar 1958-1959. Ron Witherspoon, present holder of office.
1960 Jack Underhill 1961 Jack Amato - 1962 Bob Esau

In the December City Elections you will be asked to vote yes or no on a by-law to lease the following City owned property to the Dawson Creek Athletic Association for a period of twenty years;

The Arena.
The Curling Rink
The Baseball Park.

The foregoing is a very brief history of the Dawson Creek Athletic Association and is presented so that you may judge and decide. Your yes vote is a confidence vote in your DCAA.