HEADLOCKS AT THE LAKEHEAD: WRESTLING IN FORT WILLIAM AND PORT ARTHUR, 1913-1933

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This thesis has been prepared

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Introduction

Imagine a sold-out arena teeming with spectators. The curtain rises amidst a shower of red, white, and green fireworks. Emerging from the bevy of pyrotechnics, Mubar Hassan, "The Insanian Iranian," strides menacingly toward the ring. A song which is a hybrid of traditional sitar folk music, heavy metal, and the theme from a horror film blares from the stadium speakers but is nearly drowned out by ten thousand fans chanting catcalls at the enormous muscle-bound Iranian grappler. Already in the ring is Oklahoma-born Lee Stevens. Nearly a foot shorter than the giant Persian, Stevens bounces off the ring ropes and eyes his opponent with a look that suggests fear intermingled with repulsion. Hassan climbs onto the ring apron and steps over the top rope, accentuating his enormous size in the process. Just as he does so, Stevens rushes him and begins slamming forearms into the giant foreigner's chest and face as the bell rings to signal the beginning of their match. The blows have no effect. Hassan grabs the Oklahoma boy by the neck and tosses him over the top rope and on to the announcer's table at ringside. The audience responds with a chorus of boos and catcalls. Stevens, badly rattled but not defeated, tries to launch another attack but once again finds the Iranian impervious to damage. For five minutes, the relentless assault continues. Hassan strangles his opponent, throws him over the top rope, gouges his eyes, and picks him completely up over his head, only to let him flop unceremoniously on to the ring canvas eight feet below. The audience is incensed at the tactics of the giant. Some throw cups filled with beer into the ring while others threaten to jump over the barricade at ringside and enter the fray. The "Insanian Iranian" responds by screaming insults in Persian at his opponent and the crowd around him. Just as it appears that the audience is going to riot,

Lincoln Brody, the "Marine Machine," decked in khaki pants, undershirt, and dog tags, emerges from backstage. The crowd, nearly half of whom are wearing t-shirts with his likeness or brandishing signs with his name, goes wild with cheers as he marches purposefully toward the ring. Hassan sees Brody and begins to shout anti-American slurs in his direction. With all of Hassan's attention directed at the "Marine Machine," Oklahoma's Lee Stevens is able to recover his senses. He shakes his head clear of cobwebs, trips the giant Persian from behind, and rolls him into a pin. The referee counts three and the audience explodes in laughter and applause. Stevens runs quickly from the ring as Hassan explodes into a tantrum, tearing apart the turnbuckles, smashing television monitors at ringside, and swearing revenge on the American patriot, Lincoln Brody.

Though a fictionalized account, most people in contemporary society are well acquainted with scenes like the one described above. Such histrionics are the dramatic stock and trade of the twenty-first century world of professional wrestling, a televised spectacle witnessed by millions of people every week and by tens of thousands of fans at live venues across the continent. Professional wrestling is a billion dollar business, whose story lines and carefully-scripted displays of athleticism, violence, and acting are presented to the public by World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), which has a virtual monopoly on the wrestling industry in North America. In strict contrast to the world of professional wrestling is the sport of amateur wrestling. Amateur wrestling, largely confined to high schools and colleges, captures little of the spectatorship or media attention granted to its professional counterpart. With its emphasis on finesse and technique instead of violence and drama, amateur wrestling bears little physical resemblance to the wrestling presented by the WWE. Although they both bear the name

of wrestling, there are few other connections between the two branches of the sport. Such was not always the case.

In contrast to the antics presented to the public today, professional wrestling during the 1910s and 1920s was considered a legitimate sport and was covered by the sporting pages of newspapers with the same degree of respect accorded other athletic endeavours such as boxing, hockey, and baseball. Professional wrestlers of the period used a combination of classical wrestling techniques and submission holds in their matches, to the complete exclusion of the stomps, foreign objects, and high-flying acrobatics that characterize the present incarnation of their craft. In the Northern Ontario communities of Fort William and Port Arthur, collectively known as the Lakehead, wrestling emerged as one of the most popular spectator sports in the region by 1913 and remained so for the next thirteen years. Far from being under the dominion of a single, multi-national corporate entity, professional wrestling was a business that was locally controlled and functioned on the basis of strong local talent. The growth of professional wrestling at the Lakehead directly bolstered the sport of amateur wrestling, and the two branches of athletics enjoyed a strong and mutually beneficial relationship during this period. Wrestling's rise to popularity, however, occurred at a time when class antagonism, ethnic tension, and inter-city rivalries threatened the social fabric of the region. Many of the divisions that were present in Fort William and Port Arthur were also mirrored in the sport of wrestling. Wrestling therefore existed not merely as an isolated spectator and participatory sport but as an activity that reflected, was influenced by, and at times took advantage of, the social tensions that were present in the communities during the early twentieth century.

Wrestling's emergence as one of the most popular sporting pastimes at the Lakehead occurred during a period when sport, as a social phenomenon, was becoming increasingly important throughout Canadian society. Reflecting society's interest in sports, newspapers began dedicating substantial portions of their space to the coverage of sporting events after the turn of the twentieth century. Many newspapers, including the Daily Times-Journal of Fort William and the Daily News-Chronicle of Port Arthur, developed sports pages shortly after 1900 to keep the public informed of the latest happenings in local, national, and international sporting events. By the 1920s, sport, in all its myriad forms, was emerging as the dominant leisure pursuit in Canadian society.[1]

Despite the important role that sport has played in Canadian history, serious academic study of the subject is a relatively recent phenomenon, dating back only to the late 1960s. As noted by Morris Mott in Sports in Canada: Historical Readings, this was owing to a general view among historians that political, economic, and military topics were of greater importance to study than the seemingly frivolous subject of a people's pastimes.[2] As early as the nineteenth century, however, some recognized that the study of recreational activities such as sport could provide considerable insight into the nature of a society. Joseph Strutt writing in 1801 noted:

> In order to form a just estimation of the character of any particular people it is absolutely necessary to investigate the Sports and Pastimes most generally prevalent among them. War, policy and other contingent circumstances, effectually place men at different times, in different points of view; but when we follow them into their retirements, where no disguise is necessary, we are most likely to see them in their true state, and may best judge

[1] Colin D. Howell, Blood, Sweat and Cheers: Sport and the Making of Modern Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 65.
[2] Morris Mott, ed., Sports in Canada: Historical Readings (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Limited, 1989), 1.

them of their natural disposition.[3]

Though Strutt's words long failed to move historians, by the 1960s academics were beginning to examine the subject of sport and society more closely. One of the earliest studies of Canadian sport was Henry Roxborough's One Hundred- Not Out: The Story of Nineteenth Century Canadian Sport. Roxborough's study provided a general overview of how sport was practiced in Canada, highlighting the struggle between amateur and professional sports that was developing during the nineteenth century as well as the desire of the middle class elite to curtail unsavoury working class sporting activities. Since his work covered such a broad timeframe and range of subjects, however, it represents more a survey of Canadian sport during the nineteenth century as opposed to an in-depth analysis of sport as a social phenomenon.[4] Maxwell L. Howell and Nancy Howell's Sport and Games in Canadian Life: 1700 to the Present was another early attempt to document the history of Canadian sport. Howell and Howell's work on the subject was a rather ambitious undertaking, given its professed goal of covering nearly three hundred years of Canadian sporting activities. Their study, even more than Roxborough's, represented a survey of the numerous sporting activities engaged in by Canadians during various periods of time as opposed to an examination of the social importance of sport.[5] Roxborough, and Howell and Howell nevertheless provided a foundation for future study in Canada by highlighting the nature, if not specifically the significance, of sport throughout the nation's history.

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[3] Joseph Strutt, The Sports and Pasties of the People of England; Including the Rural and Domestic Recreations, Mau Games, Mummeries, Shows, Processions, Pageants and Pompous Spectacles, from the Earliest Period to the Present Time (London: William Reeves, 1801), 17-18.

[4] Henry Roxborough, One Hundred- Not Out: The Story of Nineteenth Century Canadian Sport (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1966).

[5] Maxwell L. Howell and Nancy Howell, Sport and Games in Canadian Life, 1700 to the Present (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1969).

Since the groundbreaking work of the 1960s, various scholars have added to the body of literature on Canadian sport history by examining sport as a social phenomenon. Allan Metcalfe has written several works focusing specifically on the tensions between amateur and professional sports in Canada, and how the justification for the exclusion of individuals and groups from participation in amateur sport changed according to the perceived pressure being placed on the middle class by working-class interests.[6] Historian Frank Cosentino has also focused on how the middle class powers that controlled amateur sport in Canada sought, over time, to exclude certain elements of society from participation. What has made Cosentino's work particularly unique, however, is his focus on race, as opposed to class, as a vehicle for discrimination and exclusion at the turn of the twentieth century.[7]

Bruce Kidd has contributed significantly to the study of sport during the inter-war years, a period that is often neglected by sports historians. In The Struggle for Canadian Sport, Kidd explores how the power relationships that existed in Canadian sport at the end of the Great War had been displaced by 1939. During this period, he argues, the bourgeois-controlled world of amateur sport was challenged by various sectors in society that had competing conceptions of the role of sport. By the end of the Depression, amateur athletics had been superseded in national importance by commercialized, for-

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[6] See Allan Metcalfe's Canada Learns to Play: The Emergence of Organized Sport, 1807-1914 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987); and "The Meaning of Amateurism: A Case Study of Canadian Sport, 1884-1970," Canadian Journal of History of Sport 36 (1995): 33-48. Barbara Schrodt has also written on the subject of the middle class and their desire to enforce their own conception of morality on the whole of Canadian society. This social phenomenon is examined specifically with regard to the Lord's Day Act in "Sabbatarianism and Sport in Canadian Society," Journal of Sport History 4 (1977): 122-133.

[7] An early work by Frank Cosentino addressing this issue is "A History of the Concept of Professionalism in Canadian Sport," Proceedings from the Third Canadian Symposium on the History of Sport and Physical Education, August 18-21, 1974 (Halifax: Dalhousie University, 1974). A more in-depth study of racial exclusion in sport is provided by Cosentino in Afros, Aboriginals and Amateur Sport in Pre World War One Canada (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Society, 2000).

profit sport. Of particular interest in Kidd's study is his examination of worker's associations, which also emerged during the inter-war period to challenge the middle-class dominance of sport.[8]

The most atypical perspective on the role of sport in society in recent years is offered by Varda Burstyn in The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics and the Culture of Sport. Instead of examining sport as an agent for class conflict and control, she instead focuses on sport as a gender construction. Burstyn argues that the beneficial aspects that sport may offer to individuals and society are more than offset by its negative attributes, which in Western culture includes aggression, dominance, and anti-social behaviour.[9] The practice of sport, according to Burstyn, "generates, rewards and affirms, an elitist, masculinist account of power and social order," that reinforces male dominance in society according to a set of destructive values.[10] Burstyn traces the origin of contemporary sporting values to the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s when young middle-class males, being raised almost exclusively by women during their early years, sought to reaffirm their masculinity through sport.[11]

Since the 1960s, the study of Canadian sport has advanced significantly, with historians examining the subject from a variety of theoretical perspectives. The vast majority of academic studies on sport have focused on movements at the national, as opposed to the regional, level. With respect to Northwestern Ontario, few studies of sport have emerged. To date, the only regional examination of the subject is Joe

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[8] Bruce Kidd, The Struggle for Canadian Sport (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). For further study of workers sports organizations during the inter-war period, see also Andre Gounot, "Sport or Political Organization? Structures and Characteristics of the Red Sport International, 1927-1937," Journal of Sport History 28 (2001): 23-40.

[9] Varda Burstyn, The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics and the Culture of Sport (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

[10] Ibid., 4.

[11] Ibid., 53-54.

Greave's "Sport and Recreation" in A Vast and Magnificent Land.[12] Numerous communities have published popular histories that include sections devoted to local athletic achievements. Few, however, have ventured beyond providing purely narrative accounts of the subject.[13] Within Thunder Bay, the most prominent survey of local sports history is Ron Lappage's "Competitive Spirit in Early Sports." Though still largely descriptive in content, Lappage's work emphasizes how the intense rivalry between Fort William and Port Arthur, which was an important aspect of life at the Lakehead for most of its history, was reflected in sport. A second notable theme in Lappage's study is how interest in various sports, far from being constant, changed considerably over the course of time.[14] In addition to Lappage's work, efforts have also been made to document the history of the local sporting pastimes of curling and hockey.[15] Other sports, including wrestling, have not received a comparable level of attention from regional or local historians.

Though wrestling has not been the focus of regional or local study, the last decade has seen a rapid increase in the number of books published on the subject of wrestling,

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[12] Joe Greaves, "Sport and Recreation," Matt Bray and Ernie Epp, eds., A Vast and Magnificent Land (Sudbury and Thunder Bay: Laurentian and Lakehead Univerities, 1984), 183-199.

[13] See, for example, Jean Boultbee, Pic, Pulp and People: A History of the Marathon District (Marathon: Township of Marathon, 1980); Edgar J. Lavoie, ...And the Geraldton Way: A History of Geraldton and District up to 1947 (Geraldton: Corporation of the Township of Geraldton, 1987); and Sioux Lookout District Historical Society, Tracks Beside the Water: Sioux Lookout (Sioux Lookout: Sioux Lookout District Historical Society, 1982).

[14] Ron Lappage, "Competitive Spirit in Sports," Thorold Tronrud and Ernie Epp, eds., Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Inc., 1995), 160-79. Preceding Lappage's work was Joe Greaves, "Aspects of Early Sport in Thunder Bay," Thunder Bay Historical Museum Papers and Records 8 (1980): 2-7. Though Greaves' work is still a valuable source, Lappage's examination of sport in Thunder Bay provides greater detail and covers a greater range of time and sports-related subjects than does his predecessor's.

[15] For institutional histories of curling at the Lakhead, see the Fort William Curling Club's A History of the Fort William Curling Club 1891-1949 and the Fort William Curling and Athletic Club, 1949-1986 (Thunder Bay: Fort William Curling and Athletic Club, 1986); and the Port Arthur Curling Club's A Century of Curling (Thunder Bay: Port Arthur Curling Club, 1987). John Fell's "A Study of Junior and Senior Hockey at the Lakehead, 1948-1975" (Honours Bachelor of Arts diss., Lakehead University, 1980), critically examines why local hockey teams were unable to win a national championship for nearly thirty years.

particularly of the modern professional variety. The majority of books on the subject have been either examinations of the WWE organization, or autobiographies of still-active or retired professional wrestlers.[16] Despite recent trends toward documenting the contemporary professional wrestling scene, a small body of popular literature nevertheless exists on the subject of wrestling prior to the 1930s. One of the earliest works devoted to the history of wrestling was contained in the Badminton Library of Sports and Pastimes, which detailed Britain's traditional grappling styles of the nineteenth century.[17] John C. Meyers' Wrestling From Antiquity to Date, published in 1931, examines the sport of wrestling up until the time of publication, with most of the emphasis being placed on wrestling in the United States since the 1890s.[18] Five years later, Meyers' work was superseded by Nat Fleischer's From Milo to Londos: The Story of Wrestling Through the Ages. Fleischer provided far more detail on the history of American wrestling and, in particular, its most prominent exponents dating back to the Civil War period.[19] Professional wrestling's first *expose* piece was Marcus Griffin's Fall Guys: The Barnums of Bounce, which documented the inner workings of the wrestling business, the "fixing" of wrestling matches in the United States, and the transition of the sport to a more theatrical style of performance during the mid-to late-1920s.[20] The most globally-inclusive treatise on wrestling to date is Graeme Kent's Pictorial History of

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[16] See, for example, Mick Foley, Mankind: Have A Nice Day! A Tale of Blood and Sweatsocks (New York: Regan Books, 1999); Tom Billington and Alison Coleman, Pure Dynamite: The Price You Pay for Wrestling Stardom (Etobicoke, ON: Winding Stair Press, 2001); Marsha Erb, Stu Hart: Lord of the Ring (Toronto: ECW Press, 2002); and Gene Lebell, The Godfather of Grappling (Santa Monica, CA: Gene LeBell Enterprises, 2003).

[17] Walter Armstrong, "Wrestling," in Duke of Beaufort, ed., The Badminton Library of Sports and Pastimes (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1889), 175-237.

[18] John C. Meyers, Wrestling from Antiquity to Date (St. Louis, MO: By the Author, 1931).

[19] Nathaniel Fleischer, From Milo to Londos: The Story of Wrestling Through the Ages (New York: The Ring Inc., 1936). Also worthy of mention from this period is Hjalmir Lundin, On the Mat and Off: Memoirs of a Wrestler (New York: Albert Bonnier Publishing House, 1937).

[20] Marcus Griffin, Fall Guys: The Barnums of Bounce (Chicago: The Reilly and Lee Company, 1937).

Wrestling. In addition to dealing with the history of the sport in America, Kent documents wrestling practices in Africa, Asia, and Europe.[21] General surveys of wrestling are supplemented by several autobiographical and biographical pieces examining the careers of wrestlers from the pre-Depression era.[22] Although all of the works heretofore outlined constitute required reading for those interested in a general examination of wrestling prior to the 1930s, their principal weakness, from an academic perspective, is the absence of citations, making it difficult to confirm the accuracy of the information they contain. More recently, Mark Hewitt has reversed the trend in Catch Wrestling: A Wild and Wooly Look at the Early Days of Professional Wrestling in America by providing a popular history of late nineteenth and early twentieth century wrestling that gives careful attention to primary research and citation of sources.[23]

Wrestling, like other sporting pastimes, does not occur in a cultural vacuum. While popular histories have constituted the majority of the writing on wrestling, a small number of individuals have attempted to place wrestling within a larger social framework. John Rickard's "The Spectacle of Excess: The Emergence of Modern Professional Wrestling in the United States and Australia," examines the social impetus for wrestling's evolution into a more theatrical form of entertainment during the 1920s and 1930s, arguing that society came to demand more "intelligible moments," in which

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[21] Graeme Kent, A Pictorial History of Wrestling (London: Spring Books, 1968).

[22] See Edward Van Every, Muldoon: The Solid Man of Sport (New York: Frederick A. Stoakes, 1929); Mike Chapman, Frank Gotch: World's Greatest Wrestler (Buffalo, New York: William S. Hein and Co., 1990); Hazel Ecklund-Odegard, Wyoming's Wrestling Rancher: Life and History of Clarence Ecklund, Champion Wrestler (Buffalo, Wyoming: By the Author, 1993); and George Hackenschmidt, The Way to Live, reprint ed., (Michigan: William F. Hinbern, 1998). Although his career as a professional wrestler began in the mid-1930s, Lou Thesz' autobiography Hooker: An Authentic Wrestler's Adventures Inside the Bizarre World of Professional Wrestling (Virginia: By the Author, 1995), due to its heavy emphasis on the subject of competitive wrestling and the history of wrestling during the 1910s and 1920s, is also worthy of inclusion in this category.

[23] Mark Hewitt, Catch Wrestling: A Wild and Wooly Look at the Early Days of Professional Wrestling in America (Boulder, CO: Paladin Press, 2005).

pain, suffering and triumph were more readily apparent in matches.[24] Matthew Lindaman's "Wrestling's Hold on the Western World Before the Great War,' explores American wrestling and particularly the heavyweight championship contests between Iowa's Frank Gotch and Russia's George Hackenschmidt within the context of early twentieth century society's obsession with manliness and nationalism.[25] Within Canada the most prominent work on wrestling history has been done by Glynn A. Leyshon. Leyshon's Of Mats and Men: The Story of Canadian Amateur and Olympic Wrestling from 1600 to 1984, surveys Canadian wrestling history from pre-colonial days to the early 1980s. Leyshon's main focus is on the development of amateur wrestling in Canada, but attention is also devoted to early professional wrestling. The social functions of wrestling are also assessed, particularly with respect to its role in pre-industrial societies. Little attempt, however, is made to integrate discussions of wrestling's social significance into the main body of his work. Of Mats and Men nevertheless remains essential reading for the history of wrestling in Canada, and more than twenty years after its publication, is the only major academic work on the subject.[26]

Despite the fact that wrestling, in both its professional and amateur variants, has been the subject of few academic studies, it would be misleading to think that this is reflective of its relative importance to early twentieth century Canadian society. In actuality, wrestling was one of the most popular sports of the era, with few other athletic

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[24]John Rickard, "The Spectacle of Excess: The Emergence of Modern Professional Wrestling in the United States and Australia," Journal of Popular Culture 33 (1999): 129-137.
[25] Matthew Lindaman, "Wrestling's Hold on the Western World Before the Great War," Historian 62 (2000): 779-797.
[26] Glynn A. Leyshon, Of Mats and Men: The Story of Canadian Amateur and Olympic Wrestling from 1600 to 1984 (London, ON: Sports Dynamics, 1984).

pursuits matching the volume of coverage it received in newspapers across the country.[27] Other historians, most notably, Matthew Lindaman, have also noted wrestling's popularity among sports fans across the continent, while simultaneously acknowledging that the phenomenon, as a social movement, has been grossly understudied.[28] "Headlocks at the Lakehead: Wrestling in Fort William and Port Arthur, 1913-1933," represents an effort to fill the current academic vacuum by examining the sport of wrestling within the context of the complex social and cultural environment that was early twentieth century Thunder Bay.

Informing the general direction of this thesis is Michel Beaulieu's seminal work on early film at the Lakehead, "Reel History: Film Production at the Lakehead, 1911-1931." Beaulieu alerted the world to the tremendous amount of work that needs to be done on early film production in Canada which, during its formative years, was not a monolithic institution but an industry that was regional in nature.[29] Mirroring Beaulieu's findings on film, wrestling during the same period was organized and promoted on a local, as opposed to international, level. Much like film, the study of wrestling in Canada prior to the 1930s is by necessity, as much a study of the communities and regions that supported wrestling, as it is of the sport itself. Since the Lakehead was among the most important transshipment centres in Canada, and a point through which all trade and traffic

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[27] Janice Waters, in "Sporting Trends in Major Canadian Cities, 1927-1936," Proceedings, Fifth Canadian Symposium on the History of Sport and Physical Education, 1982 (Toronto: School of Physical and Health Education, 1982), 217, notes that boxing and wrestling, when considered collectively, ranked only behind hockey and baseball in terms of the volume of coverage that they received in the sports pages of newspapers across the country. Waters noted that the ratio of coverage of professional to amateur wrestling was approximately four to one. Though the time frame of Water's study does not correspond precisely with the era under examination in this thesis, it nevertheless gives a good indication of how popular the sport was with Canadians during the first decades of the twentieth century.

[28] Lindaman, "Wrestling's Hold," 797.

[29] Michel Beaulieu, "Reel History: Film Production at the Lakehead, 1911-1931" (Masters thesis., Lakehead University, 2003).

between eastern and western Canada had to pass, it serves as an ideal focal point for such a study. Wrestlers, far from having to "go out of their way" to entertain an engagement, would instead have found it practically impossible to bypass the Lakehead if traveling across the country. Many a grappler therefore stopped in Fort William and Port Arthur to test his skills against the local champions or made the city his central base of operations. Additionally, the rich cultural diversity of the two cities, coupled with a strong propensity for labour organization during the 1910s and 1920s, encourages a detailed examination of the subject within the context of ethnicity and class.[30]

In addition to the existing body of secondary sources related to sport, wrestling, and life at the Lakehead, the local daily newspapers of the twin cities are indispensable to the study of wrestling in the region. Both the Fort William Daily Times-Journal and, to a lesser extent, the Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle, covered wrestling extensively. To gain insight into the significant individuals and events associated with wrestling in the region, the sports pages of every issue of the Fort William Daily Times-Journal published between January 1907 and August 1933 have been scrutinized. The Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle, whose coverage of wrestling events within both Fort William and Port Arthur itself, generally provided less detail than the Daily Times-Journal, has been used to confirm and expand on the findings in the Fort William paper. The Finnish-language

[30] Jean F. Morrison's two studies, "Community and Conflict: A Study of the Working Class and Its Relationship at the Canadian Lakehead, 1903-1913," (Master's thesis, Lakehead University, 1974); and "The Organization of Labour at the Lakehead," Thorold Tronrud and Ernie Epp, eds., Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Inc., 1995); as well as Donald Avery's "Dangerous Foreigners:" European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932 (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1979); and Ian Radforth's Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario, 1900-1980 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) are particularly informative with regard to the relationship between ethnicity and labour movements in the region.

Vapaus and Canadan Uutiset newspapers were also utilized to obtain insights into a defined ethnic community in the region.

Although newspapers have proven essential in studying wrestling at the Lakehead, they are not without their limitations. The longitudinal research intrinsic to this thesis revealed that newspapers were often either vague or inaccurate when conveying the details of events that did not occur in the immediate past. Further, names that were not of Anglo-Saxon origin were frequently misspelled in the English language press, occasionally making it difficult to discern an individual's identity. It is also possible, owing to space limitations and to the lack of cultural integration between immigrant communities and the British establishment who published the English language papers, that not all wrestling events were covered. Consideration must also be given, as sport historians Don Morrow and Janice Waters indicate, to the fact that newspapers were not intended to be historical documents but were designed for commercial consumption. As a result, coverage of wrestling, or any other event deemed newsworthy, may have been influenced by the editor's belief in the marketability of a story to his audience, as opposed to its longstanding importance as a historic event.[31] Recognizing the limitations outlined above, every effort has been made to confirm the accuracy of information by using both newspapers and by accessing other available primary sources of information.[32]

Keeping in mind Matthew Lindaman's call for greater scholarship on the sport of wrestling, "Headlocks at the Lakehead" examines the subject in six parts. The opening

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[31] Don Morrow and Janice Waters, "Method in Sport History: A Content Analysis Approach," Canadian Journal of History of Sport 12 (1992): 31-32.

[32] The other primary sources used for this dissertation include city directories, voters lists, written interviews, photographs, oral testimony, municipal taxation and property records and ledgers.

chapter, "Ups and Downs: The Early Development of the Lakehead," traces the growth of the Lakehead from a declining frontier outpost of the fur trade to a bustling urban centre. Far from being a region that experienced a steady growth, Port Arthur and Fort William both encountered intermittent periods of prosperity and economic lull. This pattern of development also appeared in sport, as many athletic pursuits underwent phases of popularity followed by decline. One such sport was wrestling which, prior to 1913, had already experienced several cycles of growth and dormancy.

Chapter two, "The Revival of Wrestling at the Lakehead," explores how wrestling, after a local absence of nearly twenty years, re-emerged in 1913 to become one of the most popular spectator and participant sports in the region. Central to its rise in popularity were two factors: the development of the YMCA in Fort William and the arrival in the city of wrestler George Walker. Together, they helped foster the growth of the sport at the professional and amateur levels. It is also clear however, that the conflict between professionalism, as represented by Walker, and amateurism, as represented by the YMCA, led to a rocky relationship between the two branches of sport. It was nevertheless the interplay between the two branches of sport that helped to establish wrestling in the region.

Chapter three, "The Fighting Finns," examines the local contribution of Finnish immigrants to the sport of wrestling. Finns, more than any other single ethnic community at the Lakehead, took an active role in wrestling. Owing largely to their propensity for organization and the existence of values that embraced sport, Finns came to dominate wrestling locally at both the professional and amateur levels after 1921. Despite their success, Finnish participation in wrestling occurred in an environment rife with social

conflict in which forces from outside their ethnic community and from within it, threatened their continued existence.

The fourth chapter, "The Spectacle of Wrestling," examines the techniques used to promote the business of wrestling in Port Arthur and Fort William. Though, as demonstrated in previous chapters, amateur and professional wrestling enjoyed a close and mutually beneficial relationship in the region, there were distinct differences between the two branches of sport. Professional wrestling's profit-driven character necessitated the adoption of various techniques to ensure its success as a business venture at the Lakehead. Frequently, promoters took advantage of the values, vices, and tensions that were present in the communities to facilitate ticket sales prior to a wrestling card.

Chapter five, "Staging and Sustaining Professional Wrestling" continues with the examination that was begun in chapter four, investigating the strategies used by promoters and wrestlers to ensure that fans, once in their seats, enjoyed a satisfactory evening of entertainment. Attention is given to how wrestling cards were designed as ensemble programs that catered not only to individuals with an interest in wrestling but also to audiences members with more diverse artistic and athletic tastes. Additionally, the tactics used to ensure the long term success of wrestling as a business enterprise in the twin cities are assessed.

Chapter six, "Requiem and Re-Birth," examines the transition of professional wrestling into a more theatrical form of entertainment following its local demise in 1926. The reasons for wrestling's decline, both locally and abroad, are examined. The chapter concludes by assessing how the re-introduction of professional wrestling to Port Arthur and Fort William in 1933, though providing more spectacular entertainment, represented

a clear break from the past, in which the local character of the "sport" and, more particularly, the intimate connection previously enjoyed between professional and amateur wrestling were lost forever.

The history of wrestling at the Lakehead is a story not merely of the battles fought in the ring but also of the various individuals, cultures, and classes of society who struggled to make the sport one of the most popular and meaningful forms of athletic expression in early twentieth century society. "Headlocks at the Lakehead" is their long-neglected tale.

Chapter I

Ups and Downs: The Early Development of the Lakehead

In 1913, wrestling emerged as one of the premiere spectator attractions in the Thunder Bay region. In the thirteen years that followed, local sporting enthusiasts witnessed some of the world's premiere grapplers engage in one-on-one unarmed combat before teeming crowds of excited spectators. Although wrestling's popularity at the Lakehead was considerable, it could not have occurred without a number of pre-established conditions already in place. To better understand wrestling's popularity at the Lakehead between 1913 and 1933 it is first necessary to have a historical appreciation of the region's early development as both a population and a sporting centre prior to 1913.

By 1913, the twin cities of Fort William and Port Arthur were the most heavily populated centres of Northwestern Ontario, with approximately 40,000 people living in the two communities.[1] The level of urban development experienced at the Lakehead did not occur by chance, but was the product of specific economic advancements that occurred in the region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most significant were the development of mining, roads and railways during the 1870s and 1880s and the establishment of inland grain terminals for the eastward movement of prairie wheat. The nature of the economic development in the Thunder Bay region was not continuous but instead went through various periods of growth and recession. Mirroring the economic trends in the region, sport within the communities of Port Arthur and Fort William did not develop in a linear, continuous fashion. While many sports remained consistently popular at the Lakehead prior to 1913, others, much like the

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[1] James Stafford, "A Century of Growth at the Lakehead," Thorold Tronrud and Ernie Epp, eds., Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Inc., 1995), 43-44.

communities themselves, experienced alternating periods of advancement and obscurity. One such sport was wrestling.

In 1867, as John A. Macdonald's government embarked on its first steps toward building the newly-confederated Dominion of Canada, Fort William, once the gateway to the northwestern interior of the fur trade, had faded into relative obscurity. Following the merger of the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies in 1821, the Fort ceased to be the central transshipment point for the fur trade, and instead became the base for a regional trade .[2] By 1867, few more than sixty people permanently occupied the facility.[3] Further north of the Kaministiquia River, a mail depot had been established in 1860. In June of 1867, Simon J. Dawson and a group of 400 surveyors and labourers arrived at the depot to begin surveying a road that would link the Red River settlement of Fort Garry to Lake Superior. Following Dawson's departure in November, there stood only a single log house, owned by the Department of Public Works, and approximately six miles of road.[4] Though most of the major centres of southern Ontario had been established by 1867, such was clearly not the case at the Lakehead.

Significant outside interest was once more taken in the region when the Montreal Mining Company, which held mineral exploration rights throughout the area, discovered silver deposits on Silver Islet in 1868. This would ultimately prove to be one of the most profitable silver finds in history, yielding $3,250,000 in ore over the next fifteen years.

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[2] Jean Morrison, Superior Rendevous-Place: Fort William in the Canadian Fur Trade (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2001), 122.

[3] Joseph Mauro, in Thunder Bay: A City's Story (Thunder Bay: Published by Author, 1990), 13, notes that following the departure of the Wolseley Expedition of 1870, the number of individuals residing at Fort William was sixty-three.

[4] Joseph M. Mauro, Thunder Bay: A History (Thunder Bay: Lehto Printers, 1981), 38; and K.C.A. Dawson, Original People and Euro-Canadians In Northwestern Ontario: The Road West, The Hinge of a Developing State (Thunder Bay: Lakehead University Centre for Northern Studies, 2004), 53.

Numerous other mining operations commenced production in the vicinity of Thunder Bay following the Silver Islet find.[5]

In 1870, unrest in the Red River Settlement led Macdonald's Conservative government to deploy troops to the recently-ceded Canadian territory. The decision was made for the force, numbering 1,400, to reach the Red River Settlement by following Dawson's route. Expedition leader Colonel Garnet Wolseley, upon arriving at the fledgling community that was emerging at the mail depot north of the Kaministiquia River, proclaimed it Prince Arthur's Landing in honour of Queen Victoria's son.[6] Wolseley's expedition proved to be both a military enterprise and a project of civil engineering. Considerable effort was expended by both the military personnel and their Native guides to improve the route between Lake Superior and Fort Garry, which had been started by Dawson three years earlier. With the suppression of resistance in the Red River Settlement and the subsequent establishment of the new province of Manitoba, Wolseley and the majority of his military entourage returned to Central Canada. Their efforts at road construction, however, ensured that the newly-named Prince Arthur's Landing would be the point that linked the major population centres in "old" Ontario to the West.[7]

The Lakehead's position as a hub of transportation between "old" Canada and the "new" West received a greater boost when, in 1875, Thunder Bay was chosen as the Lake

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[5] Dianne Newell's "Silver Mining in the Thunder Bay District, 1865-1885," Papers and Records 13 (1985): 28-45, provides the most extensive examination of the Silver Islet mining operations yet written, as well as more general analysis of the early silver mining operations at the Lakehead region in the years before the completion of the transcontinental railway line. See also Thorold Tronrud, Guardians of Progress: Boosters and Boosterism in Thunder Bay, 1870-1914 (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, 1993), 11; and Mauro, Thunder Bay: A History, 39.

[6] Dawson, Original People, 56-57; and Mauro, Thunder Bay: A City's Story, 14.

[7] For a thorough discussion of the difficulties associated with the construction of the land route between Prince Arthur's landing and the Red River Settlement, see Dawson, Original People, 53-74.

Superior terminus for the transcontinental railway. On June 1st of that year, the first sod was turned for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) on what was then Water Street, in the town plot west of Fort William. Upon initiating Canada's most ambitious project of civil engineering and nation building, Judge Van Norman proclaimed, "It has been deemed by our wise men best to begin this tremendous undertaking right here in the heart of the continent... to draw closer the bonds of commercial friendship and alliance, and also at the same time weld into one homogeneous whole the disjointed fragments of almost alien peoples."[8] Van Norman, with a level of gusto that would be echoed by community boosters in the ensuing decades, further proclaimed that Prince Arthur's Landing and Fort William would soon come to rival the great American cities of Buffalo and Chicago in importance.[9]

The government's decision to begin railroad construction at the Lakehead did not, as Judge Van Norman predicted, initiate the growth of cities that would rival the might of Buffalo or Chicago. It was nevertheless to have a profound effect on the two communities. Prince Arthur's Landing, in particular, experienced significant growth during the years of railway construction. A municipal census, taken in the fall of 1884, showed a total population in the community of 6,097.[10] Only three years earlier, the combined population of both the Landing and the Fort William town plot (then the Township of Neebing) was a mere 1,965.[11] Owing to the Landing's newfound prosperity, community officials decided that a name change was in order. After considerable debate, tax paying citizens decided on Port Arthur; a name, in their view,

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[8] The Toronto Globe, 10 June 1875.
[9] Ibid. For a detailed examination of boosterism at Thunder Bay between 1870 and 1914, see Tronrud's Guardians.
[10] F. Brent Scollie, "The Population of Thunder Bay, 1884-1901," Papers and Records 7 (1979): 22.
[11] Stafford, "A Century," 42.

that more accurately reflected the growing community's position as a major urban centre.[12]

Though the newly-christened Port Arthur was experiencing rapid growth during the late 1870s and early 1880s, it was not necessarily the type of growth that fostered a strong and stable community. Of the 6,097 persons reported in the 1884 municipal census, only 1,613 were female.[13] Owing to the seasonal nature of both railway and road construction, much of the population of the city was of a transient nature. It was not uncommon for Port Arthur's population to double during the summer months.[14] The transient, working-class and largely male labour force produced a social environment that would have worried many members of the middle class elite whose goal it was to promote the town as a destination for permanent settlement and industry. In 1887, there were forty-one licensed liquor establishments in Port Arthur and many more unlicensed ones. Arrests for drunk and disorderly conduct became the most common criminal offenses during the 1880s.[15] In addition, many brothels emerged on the outskirts of town in response to the the desires of the predominantly male citizenry.[16] Clearly, Port Arthur was, from its inception, a working class community.

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[12] Dissatisfaction over the name Prince Arthur's Landing appeared as early as 1875 and continued until Port Arthur was finally chosen as the community's official title. Other names considered to replace Prince Arthur's Landing were Silver Gate City, Algoma, Rockport, and Port Royal. See Frederick Brent Scollie, "Falling into Line: How Prince Arthur's Landing Became Port Arthur," Papers and Records 13 (1985): 8-19; and Mauro, Thunder Bay: A City's Story, 14.

[13] Scollie, "The Population," 22.

[14] Tronrud, Guardians, 12.

[15] David Trembley, "Dimensions of Crime at the Lakehead," Papers and Records 10 (1982): 28. For a more detailed examination of crime at the Lakehead, see David Trembley, "The Dimensions of Crime and Punishment at the Lakehead 1873-1903" (Master's thesis, Lakehead University, 1983).

[16] Tronrud, Guardians, 12.

Fort William's growth lagged significantly behind that of Port Arthur during the 1870s and 1880s and did not reach 1,000 persons until 1889.[17] In 1884, the year before the CPR transcontinental line was completed, the settlement received a significant boost when CPR General Manager W.C. Van Horne decided to locate its Lake Superior terminus in Fort William. The decision angered the residents of Port Arthur who felt that the CPR and their neighbour to the south, for various reasons, were plotting against them. The CPR's decision inadvertently added considerable fuel to a rivalry between the two communities that was to last, arguably, to the present day.[18] Though growth remained slow during the early years of Fort William's development, the CPR's presence in the community helped to ensure that it did not suffer the same population fluctuations as its neighbour to the north.

In 1885, with the completion of the CPR, Port Arthur's population dropped significantly. Within a decade, it had shrunk to less than half the numbers reported in the 1884 census. Many houses were left empty, businesses closed, and property was sold at extremely low prices to pay the taxes. By 1894, the town was so near bankruptcy, that it began printing its own credit notes and paying workers with them.[19] Fort William, on the other hand, had grown steadily in those years, reaching 2,088 by 1894.[20] Despite some measure of prosperity, Fort William still carried the trappings of a wild frontier town. Lucy Maud Montgomery, the celebrated Canadian author, noted in an 1891 visit, "[Fort

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[17] Scollie, "The Population," 23.
[18] For a discussion of the issues surrounding the CPR's decision to locate its Lake Superior terminus at Fort William, see Bruce Muirhead, "The Evolution of the Lakehead's Commercial and Transportation Intrastructure," Tronrud and Epp, eds., Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity, 78-80. A short examination of primary documentation related to the subject is also provided by Elisabeth Arthur in "William C. Van Horne, The CPR and the Kaministiquia," Papers and Records 13 (1985): 20-27.
[19] Tronrud, Guardians, 12-13.
[20] Scollie, "The Population," 23.

William] is all as yet pretty rough; the streets are full of charred unsightly stumps among which promenade numerous pigs!"[21]

The twin towns' march from a quaint backwater of Northern Ontario to a prominent centre of Canadian commerce and industry was aided by the Prairie wheat boom that followed the settlement of the West. The Lakehead's first grain terminal was constructed in 1883, with a modest storage capacity of 350,000 bushels. In the ensuing years, demand from the east (most particularly, Great Britain) led to ever increasing supply from the Prairie regions. Owing to the low value, relative to volume, of wheat, the most cost-effective method of shipping grain to the east was by water. Situated at the western-most Canadian point on the Great Lakes, Port Arthur and Fort William were ideally placed to facilitate this end.[22]

As the Lake Superior terminus for the CPR, Fort William was a large beneficiary of the wheat boom. In 1885, CPR elevator "A" was completed, with a holding capacity of one million bushels. Soon insufficient to meet demand, terminals B through E were built over the next decade and a half, with a collective storage capacity of well over six million bushels.[23] As the nineteenth century drew to a close, Fort William's population surpassed that of Port Arthur by 1,500 persons.[24]

Until 1902, Port Arthur garnered little benefit from either of the two industries that were driving development to the south. A new period of growth for the struggling community began in that year, however, with the completion of the Canadian Northern Railroad's (CNR) Lake Superior terminus. Directly thereafter, elevator construction and

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[21] Lucy Maud Montgomery, quoted in Stafford, "A Century," 42.
[22] Muirhead, "The Evolution," 89.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Scollie, in "The Population," 23, reports the respective populations of Port Arthur and Fort William as 2,799 and 4,298 in 1900.

grain shipment commenced in Port Arthur.[25] In its first year of operation, over six million bushels of grain, previously routed from Manitoba to Duluth, was shipped east through Port Arthur.[26] In the ensuing years, elevator construction, grain storage, and shipping combined to bring Port Arthur out from under the shadow of its rival on the Bay.

Between 1902 and 1913, both Fort William and Port Arthur experienced tremendous population growth, owing largely to their development as grain shipping termini and railway centres. By 1907, this rapid development allowed both communities to be incorporated as cities. The same period was also characterized by a moderate level of economic diversification, as a variety of industries began operating in the now-twin cities. Notable among the fledgling industries were a flour mill, several saw mills, a ship-building company and a number of small-scale manufacturing plants producing everything from wagon wheels to broom sticks.[27] Despite these advancements, industrial development at the Lakehead remained much slower than the growth taking place in communities of comparable size in Central Canada. Many of the new businesses failed within their first few years, despite being granted generous bonuses by the local municipalities.[28] Much of the growth between 1902 and 1913, a period in which the combined populations of Fort William and Port Arthur rose to over 42,000, could be attributed to its ongoing significance as a trans-shipment point, not its importance as an industrial manufacturing centre.[29]

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[25] Muirhead, "The Evolution," 90.
[26] Mauro, Thunder Bay, 180; and Muirhead, "The Evolution," 81.
[27] Tronrud, Guardians, 14.
[28] Thorold J. Tronrud, "Building the Industrial City," Tronrud and Epp, eds., Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity, 104-107.
[29] Stafford, "A Century," 43.

The period that saw the Lakehead develop from a declining fur trading outpost to a major urban centre also saw sport emerge as a significant cultural activity in the lives of its citizenry. As mirrored in the general growth and development of the communities, Port Arthur preceded Fort William in the organization of sports and the construction of sporting facilities. Much like the patterns of economic development and growth in the region, several sports retained consistently popular at the Lakehead while others rose in prominence, only to fade thereafter.

The earliest recorded sporting activities in the communities of Fort William and Port Arthur were conducted in an outdoor setting, owing to the absence of facilities specifically constructed for sporting purposes. Winter months were marked by ice sports such as curling, hockey, and skating while summer was devoted to cricket, baseball, lacrosse, and soccer.[30] The first sport to gain favour at the Lakehead, for which considerable primary documentation still exists, was curling.

Curling matches were held on Red River Road (then Arthur Street) in Prince Arthur's Landing as early as 1874, and in 1879, a canvas-covered skating rink was constructed between Court and Algoma on Wilson Street. The rink catered to all three of the popular winter sports, with hockey and curling being conducted at the rink's centre and skating on the periphery.[31] The year 1879 also saw the arrival of the first curling stones in Thunder Bay, imported into the region by D. F. Burke of Prince Arthur's Landing. In 1887, construction began on Port Arthur's first curling rink. Located on Egan Street, it was completed by January of 1888 and featured four inches of natural

[30] Greaves, "Aspects of Early Sport," 2; and Lappage, "Competitive Spirit," 160.
[31] Lappage, "Competitive Spirit," 160-161. Joe Greaves, in "Aspects of Early Sport," 6, gives the construction date of the Wilson Street rink as 1887.

ice.[32] Records of curling on the Kaministiquia River in Fort William date from a few years after the earliest games held on Red River Road.[33] The Fort William Curling Club was officially established in 1891, and property was leased from the McKellar family for the purpose of constructing a rink.[34] Following the depression that swept Port Arthur in the 1890s many of its curlers re-located to Fort William.[35] Until the turn of the twentieth century, curling remained the most popular winter sport in both Lakehead towns.[36] Thereafter, it was supplanted by hockey as the dominant sporting pastime in the region.

Hockey's popularity as a competitive sport increased significantly after 1890. Early in the decade, games were held on an impromptu basis, usually having been organized following the issue of a challenge in the local newspapers. By 1898, a league had been established, in which teams from both Port Arthur and Fort William competed for the Dalton Cup, emblematic of the inter-city championships. Competition for such prizes enhanced interest in the sport while adding fuel to the rivalry that existed between the two communities. In 1904 and 1905 both Port Arthur and Fort William, now in the throes of progress due to the wheat boom, constructed indoor arenas specifically for the purpose of staging hockey games.[37]

Records of summer sports date from a slightly later date than those available on winter sports. Consistently popular prior to 1900 was cricket. Clubs from both Port Arthur and Fort William played games against one another and occasionally a team ventured to Duluth. During this period, baseball was also quite popular among the local

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[32] A Century of Curling,12.
[33] Ibid.
[34] A History of the Fort William Curling Club, 1-3.
[35] A Century of Curling, 12.
[36] Lappage, "Competitive Spirit," 162.
[37] Ibid., 161-162; and Diane Imrey, "A Century of Sports, Northwestern Ontario 1900-2000," undated insert from the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal, Lakehead University Library, Northern Studies Resource Centre, NSRC File S764.673.

sporting fraternity. The first baseball club in the region was formed in 1889, and over the next two decades, it came to surpass cricket in popularity, becoming a fixture of important summer holiday celebrations and community events.[38]

Soccer, like baseball, remained fashionable among residents of the Lakehead for much of its early history. Photographic evidence of organized soccer dates from as early as 1890, although the game was likely played in the region much earlier.[39] By 1908, a dozen soccer teams were operating in the twin cities, and boasted nearly 500 participants. The bulk of soccer activity seems to have been confined to Fort William, however, with Port Arthur fielding only a single team at this time.[40] In 1912, Fort William's CPR team won 'The People's Shield,' in Winnipeg and returned with a trophy that, prior to the inception of the Connaught Cup, was symbolic of the Canadian national championship prize in the sport. The next year they once again made it to the championship finals, only to be defeated by the Winnipeg Wanderers team.[41]

Along with cricket, baseball, and soccer, lacrosse was a popular summer sport in the region, though only for a short time, from the mid-1890s to 1907. At its height, games between the Port Arthur Algonquins and Port Arthur Kaministiquias routinely attracted upwards of 1,200 spectators. After 1907, however, interest in the sport abruptly declined and organizing teams became difficult. By 1913, little local support was being accorded to Canada's national game.[42]

Involvement, either as a participant or a spectator, was also to be found in a number of other sports. After 1900, road racing gained popularity in both Port Arthur

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[38] Greaves, "Sport and Recreation," 187; and Lappage, "Competitive Spirit," 162.
[39] Greaves, "Aspects of Early Sport," 5.
[40] Lappage, "Competitive Spirit," 163.
[41] Imery, "A Century of Sports," 7.
[42] Lappage, "Competitive Spirit," 162-163.

and Fort William, culminating in the establishment of the 10 Mile Road Race in 1910, an event held intermittently to this day. Though the early numbers of participants was very low, attendance was massive with upwards of 20,000 people crowding the streets to witness the event. As elsewhere in North America, bicycling became a craze in the mid-1890s and cyclists were soon speeding along the roadways of both towns. Owing to the availability of forests and waterways, wilderness-based recreation, both organized and unorganized, was common among residents of the two communities. These activities included swimming, hiking, canoeing, and sailing. Downhill skiing too proved to be quite popular at various times, although participation seems to have been irregular owing to the difficulty in constructing adequate slopes during the 1890s and early 1900s.[43]

Another sport that enjoyed sporadic popularity with the early residents of Port Arthur and Fort William was wrestling. Records of wrestling at the Lakehead, both as a participatory and a spectator sport, date back to the days of the fur trade, when the fort on the Kaministiquia River was, for a short time each summer, the central meeting place for the North West Company's Montreal agents and wintering partners.[44] This gathering, known as the *Rendezvous*, would see the population of Fort William increase from seventy-five permanent employees to over one thousand, as fur trade officials, clerks, voyageurs, and Native trading partners all converged on the post.[45] Though considerable time would be devoted to official duties, the *Rendezvous* was also a time of celebration, with singing, dancing, drinking and gambling being part of the festivities.[46] Wrestling matches, held amongst the large number of voyageurs who descended upon the Fort,

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[43]Ibid., 162, 164-65.
[44] Morrison, Superior Rendevous-Place, 27.
[45] David Achtenberg, "A Day During the Rendezvous," North West Courant: Quarterly Journal of the Volunteers of Old Fort William 2 (1989): 4.
[46] Achtenberg, "A Day," 7; and Morrison, Superior Rendezvous-Place, 4.

were often staged to determine who was *boule de tout fort (*bully of the fort); ostensibly, the toughest man in the Company. Combatants would wrestle in their britches, with their hair tied back by a handkerchief. The prize for the man who bested all challengers was a feather in his hat.[47] The rules of these contests, if any existed, must have been minimal. Descriptions of the matches underscore their brutality. The Montreal Gazette, in reporting on one event, commented:

> They attack each other with the ferociousness of bull-dogs and seem in earnest to disfigure each other's faces, and to glut out their eyes with the sight of blood. Their whole aim is bent on tearing out each other's eyes, in doing which they make the forefinger of the right hand fast in their antagonist's hair, and with the thumb... gouge out the daylights.[48]

Though the staging of such contests was clearly a brutal undertaking, they likely served an important social function for participant and spectator alike by helping to establish rank within the fur trading sub-culture, settling feuds between individuals and groups, and bringing pride to those brigades who could claim a champion *boule.*

Like curling, wrestling was among the earliest sports practiced at the Lakehead after the establishment of Prince Arthur's Landing in 1870. Unlike the "roaring game," however, its appeal to local residents appears to have been as a spectator, as opposed to participatory, sport. Accordingly, wrestling appeared periodically in Fort William and Port Arthur during the late nineteenth century, as local practitioners of the art emerged, willing to test their skills against outside challenges. One of Thunder Bay's earliest wrestling stars was James Conmee, the local businessman and politician.

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[47] Leyshon, Of Mats and Men, 23.

[48] Montreal Gazette, 29 September 1870, quoted in Leyshon, Of Mats and Man, 23. The description of this form of combat bears a striking resemblance to the accounts of "rough-and-tumble" matches held in the frontier regions of the southern United States during the same period. See Elliot J. Gorn, "Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch: The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," American Historical Review 90 (1985): 18-43.

Conmee was born in Sydenham Township, Grey County, Ontario, in 1848, and immigrated to the region in 1872. His political career began in 1879, when he successfully ran for councilor, representing the Prince Arthur's Landing South Ward. In 1884, he became mayor of Port Arthur, and a year later, was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (MLA). He would remain an MLA for the riding of Algoma West (later Port Arthur and Rainy River) for the next twenty years, before winning a seat as a Liberal in the 1904 federal election. Conmee held his seat as Member of Parliament for Thunder Bay and Rainy River until he retired in 1911. In addition to becoming one of the most important political figures in the early history of Northern Ontario, he was also a successful entrepreneur, owning local interests in the railway and telephone industries.[49]

Conmee's choice of wrestling as his form of athletic expression was a logical one, given his physical attributes. At only 5 foot 8, Conmee weighed nearly 300 pounds and possessed remarkable natural strength. During the building of the railway, he is reputed to have lifted the end of a rail and tossed it on to a car while four men lifted the other end. His actions inspired the railway workers to double their efforts, as later on that day, the beams were being hoisted with two men holding each end.[50] During his time as wrestler, Conmee competed against athletes of various nationalities who passed through town looking for bouts. Few details exist concerning the circumstances surrounding these early contests, although at least one of these matches was staged against Conrad Gehl, a

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[49] Frederick Brent Scollie, Thunder Bay Mayors and Councillors, 1873-1945 (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Inc., 2000), 68-69.

[50] Laurel Conmee Whalen, "Incidents in the Life of James Conmee 1848-1913," speech presented to the Thunder Bay Historical Society, 25 February 1936, James Conmee File, Thunder Bay Historical Museum, Thunder Bay. For further biographical information on James Conmee, see also "James Conmee was a Giant Developing Port Arthur," Daily News-Chronicle, 27 July 1957.

local resident of Bavarian birth, who opened the region's first brewery in 1876.[51] Although the years of these matches are likewise unknown, Conmee's date of birth and his heavy involvement with politics by the 1880s would likely place them in the 1870s.

Wrestling once again appeared at the Lakehead in the summer of 1894 when the following challenge was published in the Fort William Daily Journal:

> Challenge!
>
> Sporting Editor, Journal:
>
> I hereby challenge Mr. Geo. Garrett, of your town, to wrestle me a mixed match. Match to take place in your town one week from signing articles. Hoping to hear from your champion I am,
>
> Yours truly,
> E.W. JOHNSTON[52]

George Garrett, the man to whom the challenge was directed, was a local barber and proprietor of the CPR Barber Shop at the Windsor Hotel on Simpson Street.[53] Like his predecessor, James Conmee, Garrett was a man of great physical prowess, reputed to be second in the Dominion only to Montreal's Louis Cyr in terms of strength.[54] Garrett was

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[51] Conmee's daughter relates an amusing anecdote concerning Gehl and her father in "Incidents in the Life of James Conmee." Following their match, Gehl was not convinced that Conmee was the superior wrestler, so he went to his house at noon the next day for a rematch. Not wanting to be troubled at that time, James sent his younger and smaller brother, John, out to meet Gehl instead. Gehl was again bested. Not realizing, owing to a similar appearance, that he had wrestled another man, Gehl stated after their match, "Well, Jim, I'm satisfied now that you are the best man."

[52] Fort William Daily Journal, 6 July 1894. Eleven years earlier, E.W. Johnston, then residing in Hamilton, was involved with R.N. Harrison of Toronto in a scheme to "fix" pole-vaulting competitions and wrestling matches. The deception was uncovered when a letter concerning the matter surfaced. Fixing in many professional sports, including wrestling, was common during the period. See Henry Roxborough, One Hundred, 201.

[53] Henderson's Directory, 1894.

[54] Daily Journal, 30 July 1894. Louis Cyr, born Cyprien-Noe Cyr in St. Cyprien, Quebec in 1863, was generally regarded as the strongest man in the world during the 1880s and 1890s. He is credited with a "back lift" of 4337 pounds, which, at the time, was considered to be the greatest weight ever lifted by a human. Though a strongman by trade, Cyr occasionally engaged in wrestling matches. See Ben Weider, The Strongest Man in History: Louis Cyr, "Amazing Canadian" (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1976); and David R. Norwood, "The Sport Hero Concept and Louis Cyr" (Master's thesis, University of Windsor, 1982) for an examination of Louis Cyr's life and his significance as a sporting figure in Canadian history.

quick to accept Johnston's challenge, inviting him to "come forward like a man and take his medicine" in a collar-and-elbow style match.[55]

The Garret-Johnston match, staged on 23 July 1894 at the Fort William Skating Rink, was the first in a series of wrestling bouts that aroused considerable public interest. The match was staged under collar-and-elbow rules, best two out of three falls.[56] The Fort William barber quickly proved that he was too much for his challenger, winning the first fall in only two minutes. The second fall was also won by Garrett after Johnston withdrew from the contest.[57] Garrett's next opponent was F.H. Joslin, billed as the catch-as-catch-can wrestling champion of Manitoba.[58] Once more wrestling under collar-and-elbow rules, the match took place at the curling rink in Fort William on 25 July, with $100 being put up by each man as a side bet.[59] Owing to the easy manner in which Garrett had disposed of his opponent two nights earlier, many fans expected a similar one-sided match against Joslin. Attendance for the bout was therefore lower than during

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[55] Daily Journal, 10 July 1894.

[56] Under collar and elbow rules, three of four points of an opponent's body, consisting of the shoulders and the hips, were required to touch the mat in order to constitute a fall. Matches began with both individuals taking hold of their opponent's neck and elbow, after which point they would attempt to trip or throw one another to the ground. This style was particularly popular in the northeastern United States among settlers of Irish descent, but was generally falling out of favour by the 1890s. For further accounts of collar and elbow wrestling in nineteenth century America, see Charles Morrow Wilson, The Magnificent Scufflers: Revealing the Great Day When America Wrestled the World (Brattleboro, VT: Stephen Greene Press, 1959); Kent, A Pictorial History of Wrestling, 131, 133-138; and Mark S. Hewitt, "John McMahon," Journal of Manly Arts and Sciences 2 (2002), http://ejmas.com/jmanly/jmanlyframe.htm (accessed September 26, 2006).

[57] Daily Journal, 24 July 1894.

[58] Catch-as-catch-can wrestling, or catch wrestling, had originated in the Lancashire region of England. In the 1870s, it was one of several styles of wrestling being practiced in North America. By the 1890s, however, catch-as-catch-can was becoming the dominant form of wrestling on the continent, surpassing other systems such as collar-and-elbow, Cumberland-Westmoreland, and Greco-Roman in popularity. Catch-as-catch-can allowed holds to be taken on any part of the body, and matches were won either when an opponent's shoulders were pinned to the mat, or he signaled defeat due to the application of a submission hold. Catch-as-catch-can wrestling was the precursor to the modern Olympic sport of freestyle wrestling.

[59] Daily Journal, 25 July 1894.

the previous engagement. Prediction of an easy victory proved correct, as Garrett toppled the Manitoba wrestler in three straight falls.[60]

On 30 July, a catch-as-catch-can wrestling elimination tournament was staged featuring all three wrestlers. In the first round, Johnston and Joslin were to meet in a one fall encounter, the winner to face Garrett in a best two-out-of-three falls match. Catch-as-catch-can was, during this time, emerging as the dominant style of wrestling in North America. It was also the style preferred by Joslin. Accordingly, interest in a potential bout between Garrett and Joslin under catch-as-catch-can rules was substantial enough to attract an audience of approximately three hundred people to the Fort William Skating Rink. Owing to his superior expertise at the catch-as-catch-can style, Joslin defeated Johnston and earned the right to face Garrett. Despite a fifteen to twenty pound advantage in weight, Joslin was once again defeated by the more agile barber from Fort William in two straight falls.[61]

Interest in wrestling at the Lakehead peaked with the staging of the elimination tournament on 30 July. On 1 August, Garrett, possibly feeling a measure of guilt over parting his rivals from their side-bet money, staged a benefit in their honour at the Fort William Skating Rink. He gave a demonstration of popular wrestling holds as well as a strongman exhibition in which he supported five large men, weighing approximately 1000 pounds, on his chest. After the exhibition, the Fort William Daily Journal remarked:

> It is certain that no man in this part of Canada can compete successfully with Mr. Garrett and it is doubtful that any man in the Dominion can equal him in the combined qualities of strength and action. He is certainly entitled to rank high among the modern Sampsons and under careful training would

[60] Daily Journal, 26 July 1894.
[61] Daily Journal, 31 July 1894.

be a worthy competitor of the most renowned among them.[62]

With potential to be a wrestler of more than local acclaim, Garrett closed his barber shop on Simpson Street, and relocated to the city of Montreal. True to the booster spirit of the city, the Fort William Journal noted of his moving:

> We shall be sorry to lose George from the town not only because of the fact that he is a good barber, but because also of the fact that George is one of the strongest men in Canada and probably the champion wrestler of the Continent of America. With champion curlers, champion wrestlers and giants in town, Fort William gets a certain amount of advertising which does it no harm at least.[63]

With George Garrett's departure, wrestling at the Lakehead once more went into a period of dormancy. Lacking a local wrestler who could represent the region against outside challengers, wrestling disappeared as a sporting pastime. Nevertheless, by this point, many features indicative of the wrestling that was to occur in Fort William and Port Arthur between 1913 and 1933 were already present.

Clearly, by 1894, the wrestling occurring in Thunder Bay was quite different from that staged during the fur trading era of Fort William. The free-for-all fighting of the *voyageurs*, which featured virtually no rules, had been replaced by orderly combat, with clearly defined codes of conduct. Such a development was reflective of the general move within Western industrial society toward the organizing and codifying of sport. In previous periods, athletic contests were informal and often occurred spontaneously as an extension of work. Industrial society, however, with its emphasis on the separation of labour and leisure, saw the planning and scheduling of athletic events to coincide with the

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[62] Daily Journal, 2 August 1894.
[63] Daily Journal, 16 August 1894.

free time of the working (and ticket buying) populace.[64] Wrestling in the quickly-industrializing town of Fort William during the 1890s was reflective of this trend. Each of the contests staged during the summer of 1894 was held at a pre-arranged location, scheduled at a specific time, advertised in advance, and conducted according to defined rules of participation.

Also present by 1894 was the custom of using the newspaper to issue challenges. Prior to the organization of sporting leagues and seasonal competition schedules, sports contests were commonly arranged after a challenge had been issued in the local press. Often, as voiced by George Garrett in his reply to E.W. Johnston, these challenges could be of a vociferous nature, serving the dual purpose of making known the desire of the athlete to meet his opponent, and adding some excitement to the event.[65] At the Lakehead, the custom of newspaper challenges remained a staple of wrestling throughout the period between 1913 and 1933. Often accompanying these public announcements was the issuing of a wager. Wagering on sporting contests was commonplace in late nineteenth century Canada, and the Lakehead was no different.[66] Betting on wrestling matches in the region remained prevalent into the 1920s.

The wrestling seen during the summer of 1894 consisted of a series of matches involving the same individuals. Though wrestling matches were sometimes staged as isolated events, it was common for the same men to wrestle more than one match under different conditions. The scheduling of 'return bouts,' established by 1894, became a staple of Lakehead wrestling in later years.

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[64] Kidd, The Struggle,13-14. For a detailed examination of the relationship between modernization and sport, see Allen Guttman, From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
[65]Roxborough, One-Hundred, 225.
[66] Ibid., 223.

Finally, in the persons of both James Conmee and George Garrett, there was the establishment of a local champion with legitimate ties to the communities of Port Arthur or Fort William. Frequently, local champions either faced one another or were pitted against an opponent from outside of the communities (albeit not always with the favourable outcomes experienced by their predecessors). In the absence of such individuals, wrestlers with strong ties to a local ethnic group (particularly the Finns) were brought in to compete instead. The use of local talent helped to create a strong base for wrestling within the twin cities.

Fort William and Port Arthur had, by 1913, grown from tiny, isolated villages on the banks of Lake Superior, to major centres of shipping and trade. The growth experienced by the two cities was not of a linear nature but was marked instead by phases of lull and boom. Despite intermittent periods of setback, however, by the year prior to the Great War, the combined population of the two centres was more than triple that of any other city in Northern Ontario.[67] Their considerable size allowed for a wide array of sporting pursuits to be undertaken by the populace. Just as the twin cities experienced cyclical periods of growth, so too did many of the sports practiced in the communities, including wrestling. By 1913, wrestling, then dormant for nearly twenty years, was ready for another boom.

[67] Scollie, "The Population," 26.

Chapter II

The Revival of Wrestling at the Lakehead

By 1913, the sport of wrestling had been in a period of hibernation at the Lakehead for nearly two decades. Although it was being practiced by members of the Finnish community, public exhibitions of the sport had, since the 1890s, been virtually non-existent.[1] Despite its local absence, wrestling remained near the forefront of the public's sporting consciousness. Wrestling was one of several sports covered extensively by the local newspapers of both cities prior to its 1913 revival. Its significance during this period was reflected in the fact that the headline of the Fort William Daily Times-Journal sports page gave it equal billing on the marquee with five other physical pursuits: pugilism, athletics, bowling, hockey, and curling.[2] Residents of the twin cities were given regular updates of the major contests occurring across North America and were treated to editorial style arguments on such varied topics as the schemes used to promote wrestling in Chicago and the merits of the Japanese art of jiu-jitsu relative to the catch-as-catch-can system of wrestling.[3]

With local interest in the sport being maintained through regular newspaper reports, wrestling was well positioned in early 1913 to make a comeback in the twin cities. The reemergence of the sport, as both a popular spectator event and an athletic pursuit, was initiated by two separate but related circumstances: the construction of local Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) facilities and the arrival in Fort William of

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[1] The Daily Times-Journal stated on 23 June 1913, that no wrestling matches had been staged in the cities for almost five years. An examination of local newspapers between 1907 and 1909 reveals evidence of only a single match being staged in Port Arthur or Fort William. The match allegedly was staged as part of a YMCA Gymnastic Exhibition and Concert in January of 1908. Neither the participants nor the results of the match were reported by the local press.

[2] See the sports pages of the Daily Times-Journal during the winter of 1910 and 1911.

[3] For examples of editorial articles devoted to these topics, see the Daily Times-Journal for the dates 6 December 1906; 15 May 1907, 16 February 1911; and 12 April 1911.

professional wrestling champion, George Walker. Together, they helped provide a firm foundation for local wrestling of both the professional and amateur variety among residents at the Lakehead. Due to the conflicting values of the two branches of the sport, the relationship between amateur and professional wrestling was, at times, strained. Nevertheless, they remained closely associated and mutually dependent upon one another for their ongoing success within the region.

In 1911, four years after the founding of the YMCA organization in Fort William, construction was begun on a large, multi-use facility in downtown Fort William. The four-story brick structure, located in the centre of the city on Archibald Street, was to become significant not only on account of its size, but also in the impact it would have on local athletics over the next half century. It was also a physical representation of a philosophical and religious movement that, by 1911, had spread to virtually every major city in North America.

The Young Men's Christian Association was founded in London, England, in 1844 by clerical worker, George Williams. By 1844, the Industrial Revolution had transformed London into a commercial and manufacturing metropolis. Williams, along with several other young, like-minded middle class men, recognized that the rapidly developing urban centre lacked institutions that could act as a spiritual bulwark against the immoral temptations of city life. Recreational pursuits of a spiritual nature were needed to dissuade people from more earthly pursuits such as gambling, drinking, and prostitution. In response, Williams and his cohort founded the YMCA, which began by holding regular Bible studies after work.[4] The YMCA differed from prior institutions in

[4] Mayer N. Zald, Organizational Change: The Political Economy of the YMCA (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 25-26.

that it did not seek to promote church attendance, but instead aimed to provide morally acceptable activities to young, middle class males that could take the place of worship services.[5] The YMCA movement quickly gained widespread popularity. In 1851, the organization appeared in North America, with chapters being established in Boston and Montreal.

During its formative years, athletics were not included in the programs offered by YMCAs. In 1856, a YMCA representative from Brooklyn put forward a proposal at the organization's annual convention to construct a gymnasium for the stated purpose of developing "vital and practical godliness" among members. The resolution was rejected.[6] Within ten years, however, views on the subject of physical fitness and its relationship to spirituality were began to change within the YMCA organization. In 1866, the New York association amended its mission statement to include an emphasis on physical development. Three years later, construction was completed on a gymnasium to help fulfill this mandate.[7]

The shift in the attitude of the YMCA toward physical fitness was reflective of intellectual developments that were occurring within middle-class, Christian society during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Inspired by the teachings of such men as Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, the author of the highly popular Tom Brown's School Days, Christian social reformers began to reject previously-held notions that the physical, bodily world was separate from the spiritual realm.[8] Instead, they began to

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[5] Ibid., 27.
[6] Owen E. Pence, The YMCA and Social Need: A Study of Institutional Adaptation (New York: Association Press, 1939), 17.
[7] Ibid., 74.
[8] Stephen A. Riess, "Sport and the Redefinition of Middle Class Masculinity," International Journal of the History of Sport 8 (1991): 10. An examination of the early life, influences on, and ideas of Charles

envision a proper Christian life as one that united the physical, intellectual and spiritual realms in service to God. Christ himself began to be portrayed by reformers not as a meek servant of God but as a strong and physically vigorous leader. This doctrine, popularly termed 'muscular Christianity,' gained a tremendous following during the latter nineteenth century and provided a spiritual basis for the YMCA's athletic undertakings.[9]

The value of physical activity was also rationalized in non-religious terms during the late 1800s among the middle class, both by social Darwinists and by intellectuals who recognized the shortcomings of the new industrial society. Social Darwinists, applying the model of "survival of the fittest" to human existence, began to associate physical fitness with national power. A correlation was perceived between Germany's rise to Continental primacy during the late-1800s and its national emphasis on gymnastic training and physical fitness. Healthier people, many theorists believed, would ensure a nation's political strength.[10] Unfortunately, the achievement of this goal was being undermined by the sedentary lifestyle that characterized middle-class life during the Industrial Revolution. Fears were rising that middle class males were becoming increasingly weak, sickly and effeminized by a lack of physical activity. Physical pursuits and sport were needed to develop the body while simultaneously teaching such 'manly' virtues as courage, discipline and hard work.[11]

Kingsley is to be found in Ann Bloomfield's "Muscular Christian or Mystic? Charles Kingsley Reappraised," International Journal of the History of Sport 11, 1 (1994): 172-191.

[9] Howell, Blood, Sweat and Cheers, 32-34; Benjamin G. Rader, American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1983), 101, 105.

[10] Bloomfield, "Charles Kingsley," 180-181; Morris Mott, "The Anglo-Protestant Pioneers and the Establishment of Manly Sports in Manitoba, 1870-1886," Barbara Schrodt, ed., Proceedings, Fourth Canadian Symposium on the History of Sport and Physical Education, 1979 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1979), 12; Rader, American Sports, 123;

[11] Rader, American Sports, 25; and Riess, "Sport and the Redefinition," 8. See also Burstyn, Rites of Man.

Many popular texts from this era commented on the apparent degeneration of the population. Physical educator James Smart, in his 1863 manual on gymnastic and dumbbell exercises, warned, "To those who have seen the wan cheeks, stooping shoulders, and sunken chests of the school children of to-day, no argument, proving the necessity of physical culture, need be made... 'A sound mind in a sound body' are the words for the hour."[12] The longstanding popularity of such notions were evidenced, when thirty years later, similar views appeared in the pages of the Fort William Daily Journal:

> Athletic games, pure and simple, are what is required to build up the system from physical decay. It is a well-known fact that the present generation is growing weaker. Modern athletics and out-door sports make the body a serviceable contributor of the mind and the whole man, and supplementary, the church, the school and the home, in the development of youth. Since God has given us bodies... it is the duty of everyone to look after the physical as well as mental system and prove the Latin adage- mens sane, in corpore sano.[13]

With the spiritual and social merit of sport and physical activity gaining widespread recognition within middle-class society, the YMCA began increasingly to focus on the development of gymnasiums and athletic facilities.[14] By the 1890s, athletics were the organization's central focus.[15] This shift in the YMCA's emphasis resulted in a period of massive growth. By 1866, as the value of exercise was coming to be recognized within the organization, only ninety YMCA branches had been established in North America. By 1900, that number had grown to 1,476. Twelve years later, roughly an additional

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[12] James H. Smart, Smart's Manual of Free Gymnastic and Dumb-Bell Exercises (Cincinnati: Wilson, Hinkle and Company, 1863), 3.
[13] Daily Journal, 23 July 1894.
[14] The individual most associated with the YMCA's organizational shift toward athletics was Dr. Luther H. Gulick. Gulick, who was a staunch advocate of the character-building merit of physical exercise, formulated the YMCA triangle, representing the unity of the body, mind, and spirit. See Pence, The YMCA, 74.
[15] Zald, Organizational Change, 33.

thousand, including branches in Fort William and Port Arthur, had been built.[16] Despite its rapid expansion, the YMCA remained an institution that catered largely to the middle class both in terms of its values and its clientele.[17]

As the YMCA was establishing a foundation in the twin cities, professional wrestling, long followed by local acolytes of sport, was on the verge of a comeback. Its rebirth as a spectator sport was initiated by the arrival in the community in 1913 of George Walker. Walker was a native of Ottawa, the son of Thomas Walker, a long-time resident of the capital city.[18] Moving to Vancouver, George Walker became actively involved with the sport of amateur wrestling. As a representative of the Vancouver Athletic Club, Walker claimed the British Columbia middleweight (158 pounds) and heavyweight championship three times. In 1911, he won the Pacific Coast middleweight championship. That same year, Walker earned a silver medal at the Festival of Empire Games in England, a precursor to the modern Commonwealth Games, held to commemorate the coronation of King George V.[19] In 1912, Walker won both the middleweight and the heavyweight amateur wrestling titles at the Dominion Championships.[20] With an extensive list of amateur titles to his credit, Walker decided to turn professional. Wrestling at the professional level required a different repertoire of techniques than amateur wrestling. Unlike amateur wrestling, the rules of professional wrestling were far more liberal, allowing the use of submission holds and other

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[16] Ibid., 31.
[17] The YMCA's annual yearbook for the year 1910 noted that only one fifth of the organization's membership in Canada and the United States was drawn from the labouring class. These numbers remained fairly consistent throughout the next decade, but by 1930, had dropped even further. See Zald, Organizational Change, 40.
[18] Daily Times-Journal, 3 February 1913.
[19] Daily Times-Journal, 10 May 1913; Howell and Howell, Sports and Games, 155; and Maxwell L. Howell and Reet A. Howell, History of Sport in Canada (Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing Company, 1981), 208.
[20] Leyshon, Of Mats and Men, 109.

techniques not permitted in amateur competition.[21] Further honing his skills under the tutelage of veteran grappler Chet McIntyre, Walker adapted quickly to the rougher professional game, and assembled a string of victories on the West Coast and in Ottawa.[22] Walker's professional exploits quickly attracted the attention of the twin cities press, not only due to his accomplishments on the mat but because he had legitimate community ties to Fort William. At least three of his siblings resided at the Lakehead, including brother Thomas Walker and two sisters.[23] During a visit to the community in the spring of 1913, Walker expressed an interest in wrestling locally at a future date. The Daily Times-Journal responded favourably to his proposition, stating, "If successful in arranging a go here, it will be his first appearance in the twin cities and the local wrestling enthusiasts would undoubtedly turn out in large numbers to see him perform."[24]

Within days, a match was signed with Port Arthur fireman Hans Peterson, to be wrestled at the Finnish Labour Temple on 14 May 1913.[25] The bout, which Walker won in two straight falls, was well attended by the public and well received by the press.[26] A return handicap contest, staged a month later in Fort William, once again proved a popular attraction.[27] On the strength of this second bout, the columnist covering the event for the Daily Times-Journal remarked:

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[21] For forther discussion of the technical differences between amateur and professional wrestling, see Mike Todd and Ian Benett, Catch: The Hold Not Taken [DVD] (Manchester: Riverhorse Productions, 2005).
[22] Daily Times-Journal, 3 February 1913.
[23]Thomas Walker is identified as a sibling of George Walker in the 25 February 1913 edition of the Daily Times-Journal. One of Walker's sisters, Mrs. Bert F. Gibbs, was a passionate supporter of her brother's career and would frequently write letters to the local papers on his behalf.
[24] Daily Times-Journal, 5 May 1913.
[25] Daily Times-Journal, 7 May 1913.
[26] See the Daily Times-Journal and Daily News-Chronicle, 15 May 1913, for detailed descriptions of the match. For details on all professional wrestling cards staged at the Lakehead between 1913 and 1933, see Appendix I.
[27] In professional wrestling, a handicap contest occurred when one wrestler was required to compete under specific conditions that made winning the match more difficult. Handicap matches were often held for the purpose of ensuring a more competitive bout between two seemingly unevenly matched wrestlers.

> Judging by the enthusiasm that was displayed by the spectators and the remarks heard after the match, wrestling is to be revived in this city... With Walker residing in Fort William and willing to accept challenges from all comers, there should be many more interesting contests pulled off.[28]

True to the paper's predictions, professional wrestling was embraced by the local population. On the strength of its preliminary showing at the Lakehead, local matches were arranged featuring some of the most prominent wrestlers in North America, including Duluth's Walter Miller, claimant of the world's welterweight title, and world lightweight champion Eugene Tremblay of Montreal.[29]

Wrestling's resurgence during the years 1913 and 1914 was particularly remarkable in light of the economic circumstances facing the Lakehead at this time. Beginning in 1913, both Port Arthur and Fort William entered a period of severe economic depression. Property values fell by over ninety percent during the next three years, factories closed, and the population, which had been increasing steadily, began to decline rapidly. By 1915, unemployment levels among labourers were as high as seventy five percent. Many of those who were able to retain employment were subjected to wage reductions. The outbreak of hostilities in Europe brought little immediate economic benefit to the region. For some, most notably the immigrant population of the region, conditions were made worse by the institution of the War Measures Act in 1914.[30] Despite the harsh conditions faced by the majority of the Lakehead's populace, people

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[28] Daily Times-Journal, 23 June 1913.

[29] Walter Miller was a Polish-American immigrant who first gained employment at the coal docks in Duluth after his arrival in the United States. Miller took up boxing in 1906 under the tutelage of George A. Barton but switched to wrestling after Barton suggested that he might be more physically well suited to the mat game. Miller proved to be an excellent wrestler, later claiming the welterweight, middleweight, and light-heavyweight championships of the world. Eugene Tremblay was a French-Canadian wrestler whose first claim to a world lightweight title came in December 1903 with his victory over George Bothner of New York. See George S. Barton, My Lifetime in Sports (Minneapolis: The Lund Press, 1957), 10-11; and the Montreal Gazette, 12 December 1903.

[30] Morrison, "The Organization of Labour," 128; and Stafford, "A Century," 44.

were still willing to spend what little free money they had on sport-related entertainment (A similar phenomenon would be seen during the 1930s as sport was among the last industries to suffer from the economic downturn of the Great Depression.).[31]

Although professional wrestling, as a business, was able to weather the conditions of economic depression in the twin cities, the wrestlers themselves were faced with institutional barriers that hampered their ability to train. George Walker, after his early appearances against Hans Peterson, was clearly establishing himself as a "home town boy" in Fort William.[32] Despite his increasing affinity with the community, however, he found it difficult to train there. The Fort William YMCA was one of the few facilities in the city with space specifically allocated for athletics. Unfortunately for Walker, he found himself barred from training at the Fort William "Y".[33] Walter Miller was faced with the same prohibition during his visits to the head of the lakes in 1913 and early 1914. He later contended that his inability to acquire adequate training facilities had served as a hindrance to his physical conditioning. Fearing the same situation, he conducted all of his training in Winnipeg prior to his April 1914 match with George Walker, only arriving in Fort William the day before his scheduled appearance on the mat.[34] Both Miller and Walker had been barred from the Fort William YMCA on the grounds of being professional athletes.[35]

The inability of either Walker or Miller to secure training facilities revealed the divisions between amateur and professional that had existed through much of Canada's

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[31] Don Morrow and Mary Keyes, eds., A Concise History of Sport in Canada (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1989), 96-97.
[32] Promotional materials and articles from this period, which published the wrestler's home community, billed Walker as being from Fort William. See Appendix V.
[33] Daily News-Chronicle, 21 August 1913.
[34] Daily Times-Journal, 13 April 1914.
[35] Ibid.

sporting history. Since Confederation, Canada's middle class elite had sought to maintain control of sport, protecting it from various competing forces in Canadian society which, according to their view, threatened the undermine its sanctity. Sport was, for members of the middle class, an institution that existed for the purpose of building character, developing better leaders, and creating better Christians. Receiving financial compensation for sporting performances was seen, by middle-class purists, as running contrary to the "spirit" of athletics.[36] Many members of the working class had a very different concept of the role of sport in society. Frequently lacking both the leisure time and the resources to pursue sport purely as a vehicle for personal and social improvement, working class athletes and spectators viewed sport as a means of earning money through purses and side bets and procuring entertainment in an existence characterized by harsh living and working conditions.[37] The issue transcended the realm of philosophical difference, however, when working-class athletes began to compete against their middle class "betters" and defeat them. Regulations were quickly developed by various sporting clubs to exclude working class men not merely over the issue of prize money but on the grounds that their manual occupations granted them natural athletic advantages. [38] Amateur athletic codes were developed in response to these challenges to the existing social order.

Within Canada, the first national organization created to regulate amateur athletics was the Canadian Amateur Athletic Union (CAAU), formed in 1884. The CAAU was created in response to the issue of traveling professional athletes who were

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[36] Kidd, The Struggle, 28; Rader, American Sports, 124.
[37] Robert Knight Barney, "Physical Education and Sport in North America," John E. Nixon, ed., History of Physical Education and Sport (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 180.
[38] Frank Cosentino, "A History of the Concept of Professionalism," 2-3.

garnering large sums of money by competing against local athletes for side-bets. By 1909, the CAAU had been supplanted by the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAUC) due to schisms that had developed between branches of the older organization in Ontario and Quebec.[39] During the period between the formation of the CAAU and its successor, the AAUC, the concept of amateurism underwent an evolution. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, restrictions on working class participation in amateur sport began to wane.[40] Nonetheless, control over the institution of amateur sport remained firmly in the hands of the middle class.[41] Following its inception, the AAUC became increasingly focused on restricting membership on the basis of having received monetary compensation. Adhering to the motto, "Once a professional, always a professional," athletes were denied AAUC membership if they had, at any time in their athletic career, accepted financial remuneration for athletic performances.[42] Among many members of the middle-class, the term 'professional' retained very negative connotations during the first decades of the twentieth century, despite the increasing growth and popularity of commercial sport in Canadian society during the same period.[43] The YMCA, operating according to the same values as the CAAU and AAUC, became closely associated with the governing bodies for amateur sport shortly after 1900.[44] The exclusion of George Walker and Walter Miller from the Fort William YMCA revealed that such views of professionals and professionalism were prevalent during the early years of wrestling's revival at the Lakehead.

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[39] Howell and Howell, Sport and Games, 150.
[40] Alan Metcalfe, "The Meaning of Amateurism," 37. According to Frank Cosentino, as restrictions were reduced on athletic competition on the basis of class, race became the primary vehicle for social exclusion in amateur sport. See Afros, Aboriginals and Amateur Sport for a thorough discussion of this issue.
[41] Kidd, The Struggle, 25.
[42] Metcalfe, "The Meaning of Amateurism," 41-42.
[43] Ibid., 44.
[44] Leyshon, Of Mats and Men, 40.

Fort William "Y" management's opposition to permitting professionals to use their facilities, though based on long-established views concerning the proper value of athletics, were not to last. Within the Lakehead's YMCA community itself, there had been conflicting opinions over the subject since Walker's arrival in the region. Members of the Port Arthur YMCA took a more lenient attitude toward professionalism than did their neighbours to the south. Though their space was far more limited than in the four story facility in downtown Fort William, Walker was able to secure training quarters there for several of his early matches.[45] By 1915, the officials of the Fort William YMCA had rescinded their policy of barring professionals from training in their gymnasium. With this more liberal approach, wrestling began to prosper in Fort William at both the professional and amateur level.

George Walker's success at resurrecting local professional wrestling after its long absence in the region helped launch the careers of several other Fort William grapplers of the era. At the professional level, by far the most significant were Ernie Arthur and John (Jack) Belanger. Born near Paris, France, Arthur trained in wrestling at Le Parc d'Hiver club in his nation's capital. Working for two years as a street car conductor in Paris, he later immigrated to Fort William and took up residence at the YMCA. Arthur obtained employment, much as he had done in Paris, with the local street railway.[46] Belanger, unlike both Walker and Arthur, was thoroughly a "home town boy." Having been born and raised in Fort William, Belanger pursued professional wrestling as a sideline to his main occupation in the grain handling industry.[47] Arthur and Belanger made their local

[45] Walker first took up training in the Port Arthur YMCA on 7 May 1913, in preparation for his first match with Hans Peterson. See the Daily Times-Journal, 7 May 1913.
[46] Daily Times-Journal, 16 January 1918; Henderson's Directories, 1914 and 1920.
[47] Daily Times-Journal, 10 January 1918; Henderson's Directory, 1920.

debuts as professionals in 1915 and 1916 respectively.[48] Although both appeared initially as preliminary event wrestlers, their great talent was quickly recognized. Arthur and Belanger, much like Walker, became local main event attractions. The public appeal of all three wrestlers was so strong that, between 1915 and the end of 1921, at least one of them was featured in the main event of forty of the forty-three major local professional wrestling cards staged during that period in the twin cities. On a number of occasions, when not engaged by visiting opponents, the three men faced one another. Although Walker and Arthur maintained what was at times a heated rivalry, the former Canadian amateur champion proved generally the superior of his French opponent. Arthur and Belanger, however, were much more closely matched. They engaged in six local contests, all of which were very well received by the public.[49] Significantly, despite their individual rivalries, after 1915 all three men shared the same training facility: the Fort William YMCA.

With the presence of highly skilled professional wrestlers at the Fort William YMCA, amateur wrestling prospered. This was particularly the case after the end of the Great War, when George Walker, who had worked between wrestling engagements at a munitions factory in Transcona, Manitoba, took up residence in Fort William.[50] By the end of 1918, Walker had assumed head coaching duties at the YMCA and was developing a large number of aspiring mat artists. Both Arthur and Belanger also

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[48] Ernie Arthur's first appearance as a wrestler on local mats was on the undercard of George Walker's bout with Fort William's old wrestling hero, George Garrett, in April of 1915. Belanger's first appearance as a professional grappler occurred in August of 1916, when he wrestled Arthur to a one hour draw on the undercard of a boxing match between Kid Sterling and Battling Thracher.

[49] See Appendix I for further information on these matches.

[50] The 1920 Henderson's Directory listed George Walker as residing at the home of his sister, Mrs. B. Gibbs, at 237 Findlayson Street.

continued to train at the facility, working alongside Walker.[51] By late January of 1919, Walker was arranging public wrestling meets to showcase his protégés' talents.[52] In early 1920, the Fort William YMCA sent a wrestler, J.H. McKinnon to the Olympic wrestling trials in Toronto. McKinnon defeated his first opponent, R. Gay of the Toronto West End YMCA, by decision after a twenty minute bout.[53] McKinnon lost in the semi-finals, by pinfall, after forty-three minutes of wrestling. In a letter home to Ernie Arthur, McKinnon expressed his disappointment over the decision, claiming that he had not actually been pinned and was hampered by having to face a relatively fresh opponent after having completed a twenty-minute bout just minutes earlier.[54] Despite the outcome of the 1920 Olympic trials being a disappointment for McKinnon, his efforts represented a landmark for local amateur wrestling in that he was the first local wrestler to compete as a representative of one of the twin cities at the national level.

Amateur wrestling's early growth in Fort William was directly linked to the efforts of professional wrestlers to train local athletes. The close relationship between the two branches of the sport, however, proved to be of equal benefit to the professionals. Many of the YMCA wrestlers appeared as preliminary attractions on professional cards, helping to provide a full evening of entertainment.[55] This high degree of familiarity between the two branches of sport, though often mutually beneficial to wrestlers at the Lakehead, was not without its downside. Recognizing the expertise that professionals could provide to their membership as coaches, the local YMCA was willing to

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[51] Daily Times-Journal, 11 January 1919.
[52] See the Appendix IV for the results of this event, staged 5 February 1919.
[53] Daily Times-Journal, 12 June 1920.
[54] Daily Times-Journal, 22 June 1920.
[55] Fort William YMCA amateur wrestlers who also appeared on professional cards included Al Lesperance, Charlie Forrester, Young Hemphill, and Jim Bailey.

accommodate men like Walker, Arthur and Belanger. Its leaders were also willing to overlook the fact that many of their athletes participated in professional wrestling events. The AAUC was not so forgiving in this respect.

During the 1920s, the AAUC continued to view professional sport as a dirty enterprise, adhering rigidly to the aphorism, "Once a professional, always a professional."[56] This rigid code of conduct would have a direct impact on several local athletes. In 1920, John Belanger petitioned to be granted amateur status by the AAUC. His request was brought forward at a hearing at Winnipeg and rejected.[57] Belanger's case represented a very clear violation of the principles of amateurism, as outlined by the AAUC. He had wrestled in the main event of several professional wrestling cards, with the purses or side-bets associated with his bouts being publicized in local newspapers.

The case of Alphonse (Al) Lesperance, however, was a more difficult issue.[58] Lesperance, who trained of the Fort William YMCA, appeared on professional wrestling cards as early as 1915. Unlike Belanger, Lesperance never graduated to main event status, but instead worked only a preliminary attraction. Most of the publicity for wrestling cards during this period centred on the main bout. As such, if Lesperance received any purses for his appearances, they were never publicized. In November of 1916, he appeared at Fort William's Orpheum Theatre in a match against D.W. Anderson that was billed as being for the Championship of the Thunder Bay District. Although it was the sole bout of the evening, it was offered in addition to the Orpheum's regular entertainment. If a purse was offered, no mention was made of it local newspapers, nor

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[56] Metcalfe, "The Meaning of Amateurism," 41.
[57] Daily Times-Journal, 7 July 1920.
[58] Al Lesperance was a long-time resident of Fort William who worked for the Dominion Government as a grain sampler. See Henderson Directories, 1920, 1925, 1929.

was the result of the match made known in the press.[59] Despite his case being somewhat more difficult to assess, by the early 1920s, Lesperance also found himself barred from amateur wrestling competition on the basis of his connection to professional and semi-professional wrestling in the twin cities.[60] By 1923, after several years of prohibition, the issue of his amateur status took on greater personal significance due to the establishment of the AAUC-sponsored District Amateur Wrestling Championships. Lesperance's status with the AAUC meant that he was ineligible to compete in the inaugural event. Taking his case before the Thunder Bay branch of the AAUC, Lesperance testified that any monies he had received for wrestling went solely to cover training expenses. After signing an affidavit confirming his claims, he was finally granted amateur status in May of that year.[61] Free to compete in the1924 District Championships, Lesperance registered his enthusiasm with his newly-granted amateur status by being the first athlete to submit his entry.[62] Although Lesperance's successful appeal to be granted amateur status was a significant personal achievement, it came at a time when wrestling at the Twin Cities was entering a period of transition.

By the time the District Amateur Wrestling Championships began to be staged, many of the forces that had been driving wrestling at the Lakehead, and more particularly, the Fort William YMCA, had disappeared. George Walker, the man most responsible for the sport's local revival in 1913 wrestled his last major match at the head of the lakes in May of 1921. In many local engagements, Walker had performed before

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[59] See the Daily Times-Journal, 7 November 1916.
[60] Daily Times-Journal, 10 May 1923.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Daily Times-Journal, 19 February 1924. Lesperance's struggles with the authorities of amateur sport did not end after the District Championships in 1924. Just two months later, he was scheduled to appear as a preliminary attraction on the Garrison Athletic Association's amateur boxing card. The bout was cancelled and Lesperance received a warning when it was discovered that his proposed opponent, W. Atherton, was a professional. See the Daily Times-Journal, 10 April 1924.

large crowds of enthusiastic spectators. His final match, staged at the Prince of Wales Rink, drew only seventy-five to one hundred people. Soon after, Walker moved on, basing his operations in Ottawa.[63] Despite several inducements to return to the region, Walker never again graced local mats. Fort William's streetcar conducting wrestler, Ernie Arthur, found himself frequently lured away on wrestling tours across Canada and the United States.[64] Little more than two months after Walker made his final appearance, Arthur wrestled his last match at the Lakehead as well. After a wrestling tour of Northern Ontario, Ernie Arthur relocated to British Columbia, where he continued his career as a professional wrestler and took on the role of physical trainer for the Trail Smoke Eaters hockey team.[65] The presence of strong professional wrestling talent at the YMCA had, since 1915, been the basis for development of their amateur program. With professionals no longer present, the continued growth of the YMCA wrestling program was stunted Wrestling continued at the Fort William YMCA but the strength of their program was soon eclipsed by the Finnish wrestlers in Port Arthur. The Finns, possessed of a distinctly different set of sporting values than those espoused by organizations like the YMCA, came to dominate the sport at both the amateur and professional level after 1921.

Although George Walker, who had been the catalyst for wrestling's revival at the Lakehead, left the region in 1921, he left behind an important legacy at the time of his departure. He was able to re-invigorate local interest in the sport, helping to establish wrestling as both a lucrative form of entertainment and a prominent participant sport in

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[63] Walker was described as a "former Fort William boy," and a resident of Ottawa in the 8 February 1924 edition of the Daily Times-Journal.
[64] For details of some of Ernie Arthur's tours, see the Daily Times-Journal, 8 June 1915; 21 August 1915; 11 March 1917; 14 March 1917 and 16 January 1918.
[65] Daily Times-Journal, 28 April 1924; 19 March 1928.

the twin cities. As a professional, both he and the individuals with whom he associated faced censure from members of the middle-class elite, whose values were opposed to the concept of professionalism in sport. Nevertheless, Walker was eventually able to establish a presence at the Fort William YMCA, which, although it was a predominantly middle-class institution, strongly emphasised sport and recognized what Walker could provide to its membership. Walker's talents, coupled with the institutional support of the YMCA, were the driving forces in wrestling's growth in Fort William during the early twentieth century. By the time of his departure, however, the Finns, who had been actively involved in local wrestling since before the First World War, were rapidly becoming the dominant force in both professional and amateur wrestling at the Lakehead.

Chapter III

The Fighting Finns

Participants in the sport of wrestling at the Lakehead were drawn from various immigrant communities in the region. Early wrestling standouts such as James Conmee and George Garrett were reflective of the ethnic composition of Port Arthur and Fort William during the late nineteenth century. Both wrestlers were of British ancestry, much like the vast majority of the citizenry living at the Lakehead during the period.[1] By 1911, however, the cultural spectrum of the twin cities had expanded as more immigrants, originally hailing from other regions of Europe, entered the region. Within Fort William, Austro-Hungarians comprised the second largest group in the city, behind only the British.[2] Port Arthur's ethnic composition was of a different nature, as a large population of immigrants from the Russian Empire, constituting the third largest ethnic community in that city by 1911, came to reside there.[3] It was this latter group, or more specifically the Finns, that had the most significant impact on the sport of wrestling at the Lakehead between 1913 and 1933. By the early 1920s, in fact, wrestlers of Finnish descent, particularly those representing Port Arthur's *Nahjus* club, came to dominate the sport at both the professional and amateur levels. Finns were able to achieve this distinction despite facing considerable social and political pressures, both from outside their community and from within. This was possible due to their strong propensity for organization and their commitment to a distinct set of sporting values.

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[1] According to 1901 census figures, 71.4 percent of Port Arthur's population and 64.0 percent of Fort William's were of British origin. Residents of French descent comprised another ten percent of the total population of the two communities. See A. Ernest Epp, "The Achievement of Community," Thorold Tronrud and Ernie Epp, eds., Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Inc., 1995), 186.

[2] The Austro-Hungarian empire, as it existed in 1911, encompassed regions that were occupied by a large number of ethnic groups, including Germans, Ukrainians, Poles, Croatians, Romanians, and Slovenians.

[3] Epp, "The Achievement," 186.

Finnish immigration to Northern Ontario and, more specifically, the Thunder Bay region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was motivated by various factors present both in their homeland and in Canada. Prior to 1917, Tsarist Russia ruled over the territories of Finland, which had been ceded to them in the early nineteenth century by Sweden. Finland remained relatively free of overt attempts at Imperial domination until 1898, when Tsar Nicholas II adopted a plan aimed at 'Russifying' the Finnish population and bringing them more directly under Tsarist control. Domestic military forces, though small, were disbanded.[4] Finnish language newspapers were banned and the Russian language was introduced to the civil service, parliament, and schools. Though universal suffrage was introduced in the 1907 election in Finland, the majority of political power remained in the hands of the Russian Duma.[5]

Political difficulties in Finland were exacerbated by a series of economic and social problems. Prior to 1914, the Finnish economy was very weak in comparison to the larger European powers and Canada.[6] The situation grew worse during the First World War when the region was faced with a severe economic recession. Overseas trade was completely cut off due to the war in Europe, resulting in factory closures and mass unemployment. Owing to the surplus of labour and reduction in industrial profits, wages also dropped considerably.[7] Economic hardship was aggravated by the fact that Finland's social security system was among the most underdeveloped on the European continent.[8]

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[4] C. Jay Smith, Jr., "Soviet Russia and the Red Revolution of 1918 in Finland," Studies of the Soviet Union 11, 4 (1971): 71.
[5] C. Jay Smith, Jr., "Russia and the Origins of the Finnish Civil War of 1918," American Slavic and Eastern European Review 14, 4 (1955): 481.
[6] Lana Puumala, "Themes on Finnish Settlement in the Thunder Bay Area," (Master's thesis, Lakehead University, 2004), 33.
[7] Smith, "Russia and the Origins," 483; and Sirikka Arosalo, 'Social Conditions for Political Violence: Red and White Terror in the Finnish Civil War of 1918,' Journal of Peace Research 35, 2 (1998): 149.
[8] Arosalo, "Social Conditions," 149.

Another topic generating discontent was land tenure. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, land ownership came to be increasingly concentrated in the hands of timber companies. Large segments of Finland's agrarian population were tenant farmers without official title to the land they worked. Many of the tenant farmers, comprising both croft farmers and general farm labourers, desired to own land but found that their land leases were being discontinued by the industrial landholders.[9] In an effort to escape the political and socioeconomic problems facing them in their homeland, Finns began looking overseas. Canada, and particularly Northern Ontario, soon became an appealing destination for Finnish immigrants.[10]

Settlement in Northern Ontario occurred as early as the 1870s, as some Finnish immigrants, who had already spent time in the United States decided to move north.[11] Direct migration to Northern Ontario from Finland came in the early 1880s when groups of Finns began to settle in the Lakehead region.[12] Initially, the number of immigrants was quite small, however, and it was not until the 1890s that Thunder Bay began to experience a modest but steady influx of Finnish settlers, wooed from their homeland by various recruiting agencies in Canada.[13] Initially, Finnish settlers were drawn to the area

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[9] Ibid., 150-151. For a detailed examination of issues related to agricultural land ownership in Finland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Eino Jutikkala, "Peasant Movements and Agrarian Problems in Finland From the end of the Nineteenth Century to the Second World War," Cahiers Internationaux d'Historie Economique et Sociale [Italy] 4 (1977): 69-95.

[10] Statistics on Finnish immigration to Canada indicate that a large percentage of those arriving in Canada were farmers. For a demographic breakdown, according to occupation, of Finnish immigrants to Canada, see Mauri Amiko Jalava, "Radicalism or a 'New Deal'? The Unfolding World View of the Finnish Immigrants in Sudbury, 1883-1932" (Masters thesis, Laurentian University, 1983), 17-18.

[11] Christine Kouhi, ed., A Chronicle of Finnish Settlements in Rural Thunder Bay (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society, 1975), 15; Christine Kouhi, "Finnish Immigrants in Thunder Bay: 1876-1914" (Honours diss., Lakehead University, 1975), 2; and Reno Kero, "Emigration From Finland to Canada Before the First World War," Lakehead University Review 9, 1 (1976): 13.

[12] Reno Kero, in "Emigration From Finland," 8, indicates that a dozen men sailed from Finland to Canada in 1880, stating their destination on the ship's passenger lists as Thunder Bay.

[13] In 1893, the Canadian government installed an immigration agent in Finland. Two years later, the Canadian Pacific Railway sent its own agent, N.D. Ennis, to entice Finns to settle in Canada. The CPR

by the availability of good paying jobs in the railway industry.[14] Canadian wages for unskilled labour were considerably higher than in their homeland during this period. In 1900, for example, workers could expect to save five times as much money working in Canada as they could in an equivalent labour position in Finland.[15] In addition to the ready availability of jobs on the Canadian Pacific, and, later, the Canadian Northern railways, the Lakehead appealed to Finnish immigrants because it resembled their homeland in both climate and terrain.[16]

From 1900 to the 1913, Finnish immigration to Canada averaged 1,548 persons per annum, peaking in the latter year at 3,508.[17] During the First World War, immigration from Finland fell off dramatically. However, by 1920, those numbers once again began to increase, as a second wave of Finnish immigration to Canada commenced. By mid-decade, arrivals were often as high as 6,000 persons a year.[18]

The second wave of Finnish immigration was driven by the difficult political circumstances facing their homeland, which culminated in Civil War during the spring of 1918. In the years prior to the Tsar's fall, socialist forces were steadily gaining electoral success in Finland, culminating in a parliamentary majority for Finland's Social Democratic Party in 1917. Following the overthrow of Nicholas II in March of 1917, the Finnish parliament began pushing strongly for independence, a cause also supported by

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placed ads in newspapers and worked in conjunction with the Finland Steamship Company to recruit immigrants. See Christine Kouhi, ed., A Chronicle, 15; Christine Kouhi, "Finnish Immigrants," 5; and Reino Kero, "Emigration From Finland," 8-9.

[14]Puumala, "Themes," 42.

[15]Reno Kero, "The Background of Finnish Immigration," Ralph J. Jalkanen, ed., The Finns in North America: A Social Symposium (Hancock, MI: Michigan State University Press for Suomi College, 1969), 60.

[16] Puumala, "Themes," 37-38.

[17] Calculations are based on statistical data provided by Lana Puumala in "Themes," 84, with immigration data originally taken from Statistics Canada.

[18] Ibid.

the conservative minority.[19] What the conservatives did not support, however, was the large amount of social legislation that was quickly enacted in the wake of the Tsar's abdication. In July, the Russian provisional government leader, Alexander Kerensky, dissolved the Finnish parliament after it passed motions that would have made the province virtually autonomous. Conservative elements of the government backed his decision, and most of the socialists resigned in protest. A parliamentary election was held on the first two days of October, and the conservatives won a slim majority.[20] Many far-left socialists, seeing the futility of continued participation in electoral politics, began to form military units, popularly termed "Red Guards."[21]

In January of 1918, the Red Guard, which found much of their support in the industrialized south of Finland, took control of the region. Russia, by then under Bolshevik rule, gave aid to the Red cause.[22] By May, however, conservative or "White" forces, had succeeded in gaining control over the nation with the assistance of German troops. The Reds faced strong persecution from the right-wing nationalist government that was, by then, firmly in control.[23] Due to the dire circumstances facing socialist Finns, individuals began leaving their homeland for Canada in much larger numbers than

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[19] Smith, "Russia and the Origins," 485.
[20] Ibid., 488-489.
[21] Kari Selen, "The Main Lines of Finnish Secruity Policy Between the World Wars," Ermei Kanninen, ed., Aspects of Security: The Case of Independent Finland (Vassa, Finland: Commission Finlandaise d'Historique Militaire, 1985), 15.
[22] A detailed study of the controversial subject of Russian support of Red Guard forces is made by CJ Smith, Jr., in "Soviet Russia and the Red Revolution of 1918 in Finland," Studies of the Soviet Union 11, 4 (1971): 71-93.
[23] Ohto Manninen, in "Red, White and Blue in Finland, 1918: A Survey of Interpretations of the Civil War,' Scandinavian Journal of History [Sweden] 3, 3 (1978): 229-49 provides a detailed demographic breakdown of those who perished on both sides of the conflict. He demonstrates that 3,233 members of the White forces were killed in conflict, and another 1,689 people were killed as a result of the "Red Terror" campaign which sought to overthrow the existing social structure of the nation. Red casualties were considerably higher. Some 8,380 people were killed by the "White Terror" that arose in reaction to the socialist uprising. It is estimated by Manninen that another 12,000 perished after the Civil War as a result of poor conditions in White prison camps.

before the Civil War. Unlike earlier Finns that settled at the Lakehead, a large number of the new immigrants, already acquainted with bushwork in their homeland, took employment in the burgeoning forestry industry of the region.[24]

Throughout Northern Ontario, during both the first and the second waves of Finnish immigration, settlement tended to occur in concentrated clusters, creating areas where people with a common identity lived together. Though their numbers were never large, this pattern of settlement made the Finns culturally visible in the communities where they took up residence.[25] The most significant of the Finnish settlement clusters, in terms of population, was the Bay Street area of Port Arthur.

The Finnish immigrants who settled in such Northern Ontario communities as Port Arthur had a strong propensity for organization. The Finnish Canadian Amateur Sports Federation, in their official history, humourously state:

> It used to be said about Finns in Canada that if two of them got together they would form a discussion group. If there were three, they would organize a sports club, as well. If they were four in number, they would not only put together the first two, but a drama group to top them off.[26]

Early examples of this were seen in the establishment of temperance societies, which had their roots in Finland during the mid-1800s.[27] In the decade before and after the turn of the twentieth century, temperance organizations were highly popular among the Finns of Northern Ontario. Finnish temperance organization began in Fort William as early as

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[24] Puumala, "Themes," 49. For an extensive examination of the role played by Finns in the logging industry of Northern Ontario, see Ian Radforth's Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario, 1900-1980 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).
[25] Varpu Lindstrom-Best, ed., "Finns in Canada," Polyphony: Finns in Ontario 3, 2 (1981): 14.
[26] Jim Tester, ed., Sports Pioneers: A History of the Finnish Canadian Amateur Sports Federation 1929-1986 (Sudbury: Alerts AC Historical Committee, 1986), 1.
[27] Tellervo Kahara, Temperance Societies Uusi Yritys (Thunder Bay: Project Bay Street, 1974), 1; and Tellervo Kahara, "The New Attempt Temperance Society 1902-1909," Marc Metsaranta, ed., Project Bay Street: Activities of Finnish-Canadians in Thunder Bay Before 1915 (Thunder Bay: Finnish Canadian Historical Society, 1989), 44.

1896 with the establishment of the *Pohjankukka*, or Flower of the North movement.[28] The *Uusi Yritys* or New Attempt Temperance Society of Port Arthur was founded six years later and soon outgrew the Fort William organization. In 1905, the organization boasted 224 listed members.[29] Part of the temperance societies' mandate was to provide cultural activities for their members that did not involve the use of alcohol.[30] Athletic pursuits, clearly consistent with this mandate, were therefore organized. Gymnastics was the main sport practiced under the auspices of the temperance movements during this period. However, during the years that temperance societies dominated Finnish social organization at the Lakehead, athletics were not as significant a part of life as they were to become.[31]

As the Finnish temperance movement reached its peak, workers organizations which embraced socialist values became increasingly popular. Between 1905 and 1910, temperance societies were superseded by the workers associations in terms of their membership numbers and following within the community. The earliest of the Finnish workers groups was the Finnish Workingmen's Association of Port Arthur, initially founded in 1903 as a branch of the Brooklyn-based Imatra organization and given the name Imatra #9.[32] Port Arthur's temperance society was absorbed by the Finnish Workingmen's Association in 1909 and disappeared as a separate entity. In Fort William, the *Pohjankukka* temperance society underwent a similar dissolution during the

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[28] Kahara, "The New Attempt," 55.
[29] Kouhi, "Finnish Immigrants," 23.
[30] Kahara, "The New Attempt," 44.
[31] Ibid., 52.
[32] Kouhi, "Finnish Immigrants," 27; Marc Metsaranta, "The Workingmen's Associations 1903-1914," Marc Metsaranta, ed., Project Bay Street: Activities of Finnish-Canadians in Thunder Bay Before 1915 (Thunder Bay: Finnish Canadian Historical Society, 1989), 69.

same period.[33] This shift in organizational focus mirrored developments within Finland itself. The earliest immigrants to Canada had not been exposed to socialist doctrine but instead had been influenced to a greater extent by temperance values. Those that followed were increasingly, but never exclusively, socialists who reflected the political changes taking place in Finland.[34]

With the growth of workers' organizations among the Finns of Thunder Bay, athletics became more popular. Local socialist groups supported sports to a far greater degree than the temperance communities that preceded them. Much of this can be attributed to a world view that embraced the "whole being," wherein mind and body were interconnected. Marx rejected the notion that your consciousness determined your existence and instead argued that social existence determines the nature of your consciousness. The physical world was therefore fundamental to the mental realm and physical activities had a direct impact on a person's mental outlook.[35] Marx viewed the industrial capitalist system of the nineteenth century as being extremely wasteful, because the long hours of labour required of its workers did not allow them the time to rejuvenate. Recreation time allowed workers the ability to reinvigorate themselves and, in the process, become more productive. To that end, Marx recommended an existence that

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[33] Ibid., 23.

[34] Mary Veltri, "Labour Radicalism Among Finnish Bushworkers at the Lakehead, 1916-1936" (Honours diss., Lakehead University, 1981), 33; Puumala, "Themes," 27; and Oiva Saarinen and Gerry Tapper, "Sudbury in the Great Depression: The Tumultuous Years," Ron Harpelle, Varpu Lindstrom, and Alex Pogorelskin, eds., Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia During the Depression Era (Beaverton, Ontario: Aspasia Books, 2004), 33. Saarinen notes, in Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Geographical Patterns of Finnish Settlement in the Sudbury Area (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1999), 266, that socialist values were not as preeminent among the American Finns as they were among the Canadian Finns during the period that is the focus of this work. This is attributed to the fact that much of the Finnish settlement in the United States occurred several decades prior to Finnish settlement in Canada, in a period that preceded the popularization of socialist doctrines in the homeland. The Finnish-American community, with many conservative members and second-generation citizens, was well established by the time socialism gained widespread popularity among their countrymen.

[35] James Riordan, "Marx, Lenin and Physical Culture," Journal of Sport History 3, 1 (1976): 152-153.

brought work and recreation together for the purpose of creating more productive and fulfilled workers.[36] Lenin expanded on Marx's ideas and favoured training the mind and body to promote the whole development of the being. In Lenin's view, sport and physical activity were vital components in achieving self-actualization and the betterment of the community.[37] However, he also viewed sport as a means of cultivating desirable character traits while acting as a deterrent to such vices as smoking and drinking.[38] Such ideas strongly influenced Finnish socialists and had a major impact on sporting programs first in their homeland and, later, in the areas where they settled. By 1914, Finland was one of the top sporting countries in the world, and Finnish immigrants to Canada brought strong sporting values with them.[39]

The Finnish workers organizations, much like the temperance societies that preceded them, began their athletic programs by organizing gymnastics classes for their members. In 1906, the athletic club *Voimistelu Seura Jyry*, or Gymnastic Club *Jyry*, was founded in Port Arthur. Its first few years were marked by a rocky relationship with the parent Imatra organization, as the former vied for a measure of independence and the latter sought to ensure that all activities were conducted through the Finnish Workingmen's Association.[40] With the completion of the Finnish Labour Temple at 314 Bay Street in 1910, *Jyry* came more directly under the control of the socialist Finns of

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[36] Ibid., 154.
[37] Ibid., 159.
[38] Ibid. As Riordan points out, Lenin's view of sport as a character builder was not entirely dissimilar to that of the Muscular Christians. Of course, the respective goals to be achieved through cultivating these desired character traits differed greatly!
[39] Tester, Sports Pioneers, 2.
[40] Marc Metsaranta, "Activities of the Workingmen's Associations 1903-1914," Marc Metsaranta, ed., Project Bay Street: Activities of Finnish-Canadians in Thunder Bay Before 1915 (Thunder Bay: Finnish Canadian Historical Society, 1989), 120-121.

Port Arthur.[41] In the decades that followed, the Labour Temple was to be the home of Finnish athletics in general, and wrestling in particular.[42]

Though the precise date when wrestling began at the Finnish Labour Temple is unknown, it is clear that wrestlers were part of the roster of *Jyry* athletes prior to the First World War. Photographs dating from that period show several notable wrestlers among their ranks.[43] The presence of the Finnish community in the wrestling game of the twin cities was of high enough regard by early 1913 that one of the *Jyry* wrestlers, Fred Paju, was appointed referee for the match between George Walker and Hans Peterson.[44] This

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[41] Ibid., 121.

[42] The importance of the Finnish Labour Temple to the workers movement and sports among the Finns of Port Arthur cannot be overstated. The physical structure of the building was quite impressive, and capable of staging not only wrestling practices but also high-profile competition. Measuring 138 feet long, 60 feet wide, and 80 feet from the ground to the tower at its peak, the Labour Temple boasted ash woodwork throughout its interior, with a finish of polished oak. The main hall had a ceiling measuring 24 feet, six inches in height and a seating capacity of several hundred. The stage was of sufficient size to accommodate the largest traveling shows of the period. In the basement was the Finnish Publishing Company and, on the second floor, a variety of offices and rooms. The total cost of construction of the Finnish Labour Temple was $42,000. In commenting on its opening, the Daily News-Chronicle of 17 March 1910 stated, "A visit to it will convince the most skeptical citizen that the Finnish Labour Temple is a credit not only to those who built it and to those whose home it will be, but also to the whole city."

[43] Wrestlers pictured in these photographs include David Takala and Fred Paju. The precise date that these photos were taken is not known. See Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection Photographic Series, MG8,D,2,27,H,I250; and Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection Photographic Series, MG8,D,2,27,H,I251. A third photo, dating from the same period, shows 21 local wrestlers, including David Takala, Lauri Ouli, and Ole Kolehmainen. The author believes, however, that this photo may date from a later period, following the establishment of the *Nahjus* Club after the First World War. This is owing to the fact that it features Alphonse Oja as the club's coach, a position he held with the *Nahjus* after 1920. See Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection Photographic Series, MG8,D,2,27,H,I247.

[44] Fred Paju, a heavyweight wrestler, arrived in Port Arthur in the fall of 1911 from Hanko, Finland, at the age of twenty-four. Paju was one of the early Finnish business pioneers of Port Arthur, operating the Port Arthur Coca-Cola Bottling Works at 118 Secord Street, located next door to his home at 116 Secord. Paju was running the Coca-Cola Bottling Works as early as 1913 and sold it on 8 November 1921 to the Coca-Cola Company of Delaware for $5,000. On 29 September 1922, Paju purchased the Adanac Hotel at 227 Simpson Street in Fort William from John Hacquoil for $20,000. He operated the hotel until 1929, when he sold it to fellow sportsman D.L. Crites for the sum of $25,000. Thereafter, he and his wife Maime lived at #7 Enzer Block in Fort William, before returning to Port Arthur to take up residence at 242 Bay Street. Paju died in the early morning of 9 February 1954. See Martti Kajorinne, ed., History of Finnish Businesses in the Thunder Bay Area (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society, 2006), 12; Henderson's Directories 1913, 1929, 1930; Thunder Bay City Archives, 1920 Assessment Roll, Ward 2, Sub-Division 1, Series 2, TBA #2286; 1929 Assessment Roll, Ward 2, Sub-Division 1, TBA #526;

match, held at the Finnish Labour Temple in Port Arthur, marked both Walker's first appearance in the city and the beginning of the wrestling revival at the Lakehead. Talk of a contest between Walker and Paju appeared in both the Fort William and Port Arthur papers, though nothing ever materialized.[45] Paju remained a fixture of the local wrestling scene, however, both as an official and a manager of several Finnish wrestlers during the next fifteen years.

By 1916, Finnish wrestlers were gaining recognition for their mat skills outside of the Finnish community. On October 26, D. Kopenan and F.Tyoanen wrestled as the undercard attraction of a boxing bout staged at Fort William's Gaiety Theatre between Steve Gardner of Duluth and Private Kid Sterling of the local 141st Bull Moose Battalion. The wrestling match, scheduled for thirty-five minutes, ended three minutes short of the bell when Kopenan forced his opponent's shoulders to the mat with the aid of a scissor hold. Interest in the contest was sufficient that the press gave it a distinct article, separate from that covering the main event.[46]

The crowning achievement for local Finnish wrestlers prior to the end of World War I came in November of 1916 when Fort William's Ernie Arthur, then laying claim to the Canadian middleweight title, faced Port Arthur's David Takala. Takala arrived in Port Arthur between 1910 and 1912 from Duluth and took up wrestling with the *Jyry* Athletic Club. Already an experienced wrestler prior to arriving in Canada, Takala also

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Port Arthur Register, #6A; Fort William Register #17A, 217; Fort William Register #20A, 220; Fort William Voters Lists 1930, 1931; and Fort William Daily Times-Journal 9 February 1954.

[45] Fort William Daily Times-Journal, 5 May 1913; and Port Arthur Daily News, 5 May 1913.

[46] Daily Times-Journal, 27 October 1916. Kopenan and Tyoanen may have been replacements for David Takala and Wilho Suni, both of Port Arthur, who were scheduled to wrestle prior to the main event. Later newspaper reports, however, recount Takala having wrestled on the Gardner-Sterling card. Either or both men may have wrestled under assumed names or, as was often the case, their names were misspelled by the English-language press. See the Daily Times-Journal, 25 November 1916.

excelled in skiing in his native Finland, where he had won first place titles in the sport.[47] Physically, Takala was an impressive figure, whose thick muscles and scarcity of body fat stood as testament to years of hard athletic training.[48]

The Ernie Arthur and David Takala match was scheduled for 28 November, at 9:00 in the Finnish Labour Hall, under catch-as-catch-can rules, best two out of three falls. A fifty dollar side bet was placed by both individuals on the outcome of the contest.[49] Takala ultimately proved the victor in an evenly matched bout, scoring the first fall in two hours and fifteen minutes, the second in three minutes. The crowd, made up of many local Port Arthur fans as well as members of the Finnish community, loudly applauded Takala's two straight fall victory.[50] Though Takala could have laid claim to the Canadian Middleweight title based on this victory, there is no evidence to that he did so. In early 1917, Arthur went on a wrestling tour of the United States, still claiming the middleweight title upon his return.[51] Takala chose not to take his wrestling skills on the road, instead remaining in Port Arthur. In 1920, he moved to Lappe and founded the athletic club there.[52] He continued to wrestle and earn distinctions in the sport. Though Takala's victory over Arthur was an important achievement for the Finnish community, it was not the only prominent wrestling contest involving a Finnish wrestler before the end of the First World War.

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[47] Elsa Takala interview, interviewer unknown, 21 June 1976, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, MG8,A,III,4,6,I100.
[48] Excellent photos of David Takala in his wrestling uniform are contained in the Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection Photographic Series, MG8,D,2,24,H,I214 and MG8,D,2,24,H,I215.
[49] Daily News-Chronicle, 24 November 1916.
[50] Daily Times-Journal, 29 November 1916.
[51] Daily Times-Journal, 14 March 1917; Daily Times-Journal, 13 April 1917.
[52] Elsa Takala interview.

In May of 1918, another Finn, Waino Ketonen, was the principal figure in two of the most high profile matches ever staged at the Lakehead when he faced first, Ernie Arthur and then George Walker. By this time, Fort William's Ernie Arthur and George Walker were well established stars of the local wrestling game with legitimate appeal as hometown talent. Ketonen, though not from the region, had two characteristics that made him an obvious local attraction. First, as a Finn, he garnered interest due to his ethnicity and to his prowess in a sport that was popular within the community. Second, as a wrestler, he was arguably the best in the world in the middleweight division, having claimed the world's title by defeating Mike Yokel of Salt Lake City and Walter Miller of Minnesota three years earlier.[53] With the obvious potential to generate keen public interest and large box office revenues, newspaper coverage and advertising for the matches was very high.

Ketonen's first local appearance, in which he faced Arthur for the world middleweight title, occurred on 6 May at Fort William's Orpheum Theatre. A large attendance was expected, owing to the population of Finnish wrestling fans in the region, so 200 seats were erected on the stage to ensure that all wishing to do so had an opportunity to attend the match.[54] The morning of the bout, a delegation of wrestling fans arrived by train from Sudbury, reportedly purchasing a block of 50 tickets.[55] To accommodate the fans from the Port Arthur, arrangements were made with the street railway to run special cars from Bay Street to the Orpheum Theatre.[56]

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[53] Daily Times-Journal, 27 April 1918.
[54] Daily Times-Journal, 27 April 1918; Daily Times-Journal, 30 April 1918.
[55] Daily Times-Journal, 6 May 1918.
[56] Ibid.

The Ketonen-Arthur match was arranged as the climax of an evening of entertainment. A five-round boxing match between local boxers, Harry Labelle and William Coleman opened the evening's entertainment, followed by a Greco-Roman wrestling contest between Otto Daminire of Fort William and Otil Kalehmainer of Port Arthur.[57] The main event commenced, as advertised, at 9:30 sharp. As anticipated, the event was well attended. Reports did not include estimates of the numbers but the Orpheum was described by main-event time as "filled to the roof" and "a house filled with sporting enthusiasts."[58] On this occasion, Ketonen, the world's champion, proved to be the superior of his French-Canadian foe, winning the bout in two straight falls. Coverage of the Arthur-Ketonen contest in the local papers was lengthy the next day, comprising the largest single item in the sporting pages of both the Daily Times-Journal and the Daily News-Chronicle.[59]

Following Ketonen's victory over Ernie Arthur, a match was arranged with George Walker for 24 May, as part of a war benefit program being staged at McKellar Park in Fort William that also included tug-of-war contests, football and baseball, games, foot races and fireworks. A large grandstand was erected for the occasion, and advertised as capable of holding 2000 spectators.[60] The Fort William Daily News-Chronicle announced the day before the event that "nothing except bad weather would seem possible to interfere with a satisfactory day for everyone who attends."[61] Unfortunately, cold temperatures and intermittent rain did, in fact, accompany the Victoria Day

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[57] Otil Kalehmainer was likely Ole Kolehmainen, an outstanding Finnish wrestler of the *Jyry* Athletic Club. Kolehmainen would become one of the most well known local wrestlers in the years that followed.
[58] Daily Times-Journal, 7 May 1918; and Daily News-Chronicle, 7 May 1918.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Daily News-Chronicle, 22 May 1918.
[61] Daily Times-Journal, 23 May 1918.

celebrations. Despite the inclement conditions, approximately 1,200 sports fans attended the wrestling program. Prior to the main event, two boxing matches were staged, followed by a wrestling exhibition between O. Tamminen and Ole Kolehmainen which featured "a lot of real spectacular stuff."[62] In the main event, Ketonen and Walker wrestled for thirty-seven minutes until the Finn was able to secure a toehold, and gain the victory. During the course of the wrestling, Walker injured his shoulder, and was unable to continue after the first fall had been scored. Despite the impromptu ending, the match was well received by both the fans and press as an excellent display of wrestling.[63] Waino Ketonen's matches with Ernie Arthur and George Walker were the last two major professional wrestling bouts in the twin cities featuring Finnish wrestlers prior to the end of both the First World War and the civil conflict in Finland.

Although the years of the First World War saw Finnish wrestlers gain local fame for their skills on the mat, the period was nevertheless a difficult one for the Finnish community as a whole. In 1914, the War Measures Act imposed restrictions on publication of socialist literature and placed new conditions on the acquisition of citizenship for immigrants of non-British origin. A five-year residency requirement, knowledge of English or French, and a formal submission to judicial authorities were all instituted.[64] Shortly thereafter, both the Finnish Building Company, which controlled the shares in the Labour Temple at 314 Bay Street as well as the Tyokansa newspaper, the only Finnish language newspaper in Canada at the time, went bankrupt.[65] In September

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[62] Daily News-Chronicle, 24 May 1918.
[63] Daily News-Chronicle, 24 May 1918; Daily Times-Journal, 24 May 1918.
[64] Saarinen, Between a Rock, 93; Peter Vasiladis, Dangerous Truth: Interethnic Competition in a Northeastern Ontario Goldmining Center (New York: AMS Press, 1988), 86.
[65] Ahti Tolvanen, Finntown: A Perspective on Urban Integration, Port Arthur Finns in the Inter-War Period of 1918-1939 (Helsinki, Finland: University of Helsinki, 1985), 41.

of 1917, the conditions of enfranchisement were altered under the War Measures Act. Though this event is popularly celebrated as the first step toward granting women the vote at the federal level, it also served to disenfranchise many naturalized Canadian residents from enemy nations. Finns, as subjects of Russia, were not among the groups targeted by the government's legislation. Nevertheless, the imposition of the War Measures Act had a significant impact on the Finnish community. The fact that voting rights could so easily be taken away, reinforced a belief among many socialists in the ultimate futility of political action.[66] More direct action against Finns living in Canada came in early 1918.

Owing to high levels of labour unrest among immigrant workers, the Royal Northwest Mounted Police dispatched a special unit to investigate the activities of the International Workers of the World (IWW), an American-based worker's organization that had found strong support with the Finns of Northern Ontario.[67] C.H. Cahan, director of the investigation, asserted the existence of a Bolshevik conspiracy in August and pronounced the Finns as a culture of anarchists.[68] Subsequently, the Borden government placed a ban on socialist organizations, among them the IWW. Any meetings conducted in the Finnish language were limited to church-related or religious gatherings. Failure to comply with the government's new restrictions could lead to a fine of up to five thousand

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[66] Vasiladis, Dangerous Truth, 86.

[67] The International Workers of the World (IWW) was founded in Chicago in 1905 and sought to bring all workers together in a unified front against capitalism. The organization viewed workplace action as central to achieving their goals and generally dismissed participation in the political arena. Ideologically, the IWW resembled the syndicalist movement that had emerged earlier in Europe. Their first inroads in Northern Ontario occurred in 1916 and 1917, when Finnish-born Amos Tobias Hill began organizing bush workers in Ignace and spreading IWW doctrine throughout bush camps around the Lakehead. This was done under the ausices of the Lumber Workers International Union, a sub-organization of the IWW that was made up largely of Finnish immgrants. See Craig Heron, The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1989), 41-42; and Radforth, Bushworkers, 111.

[68] Veltri, "Labour Radicalism," 65-66.

dollars or five years imprisonment.[69] "Enemy" language publications, including conservative, anti-labour papers such as Canadan Uutiset were prohibited, in addition to those of an anarchist, socialist, and syndicalist nature. The government's pronouncement effectively eliminated all Finnish language publications in Canada for the duration of the War.[70] Despite such severe restrictions on Finnish activities, wrestling still took place during the period that the War Measures Act was in effect. After Cahan's investigation, however, no reports of Finnish involvement in wrestling appeared in the local English language papers for the remainder of 1918. A reasonable assumption is that the government's ban on assembly curtailed the ability of young Finnish men to train and participate in organized sports.

In January of 1919, the Canadian government began easing the restrictions that had been imposed under the War Measures Act. The limitations on unlawful gatherings were lifted, and Finnish was removed from the list of enemy languages. Socialist groups began once more to organize, and the publication of Finnish language papers, including the conservative Canadan Uutiset and the socialist-oriented Vapaus out of Sudbury, resumed.[71] Activities also resumed at the Finnish Labour Temple at 314 Bay Street. The forced disbanding of the IWW under the conditions of the War Measures Act resulted in many left-leaning Finns becoming involved with the newly-formed One Big Union (OBU) movement of western Canada.[72] Within months of its founding, the

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[69] Jalava, "Radicalism," 74-75.
[70] Veltri, "Labour Radicalism," 50-51; Jean Morrison, "The Organization of Labour," 130.
[71] Javala, "Radicalism," 79.
[72] Radforth, Bushworkers, 114. The One Big Union was formed in March of 1919 at the Western Labour Conference in British Columbia by a group of influential socialists who were dissatisfied with "Eastern" unionism and the conservative nature of certain organizations such as the American Federation of Labour. The One Big Union sought, as its name implied, to unite all industrial labourers and the various separate labour groups under the banner of a single union movement. During their formative meeting, general support was offered for the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, coupled with a condemnation of the Borden

predominantly-Finnish Lumber Workers International Union (LWIU), formerly a sub-organization of the IWW, became affiliated with the OBU.[73] However, almost immediately, ethnic and political concerns arose that would spell disaster for the OBU in Northern Ontario.

In mid-1919, the Canadian government lifted its ban on the IWW. Many Finns remained with the OBU, but IWW loyalists began to challenge the union's leadership on ideological grounds.[74] Though dedicated to the elimination of capitalism and supporting large-scale protest in the workplace, the OBU was not adverse to using the advantages gained through worker protests to obtain political concessions. As syndicalists, IWW loyalists vehemently rejected the politically-oriented element of the OBU platform.[75] Another strong point of contention with the OBU, based on practical as opposed to ideological grounds, concerned control over the Finnish Labour Temple. The Finnish Building Company, which managed shares in the building, had gone bankrupt during the war.[76] In 1919, the OBU gained control over the hall by assuming its debt of approximately $29,000. Many Finns were concerned that an organization, from outside the Finnish community, had control of their social and cultural centre.[77]

The OBU, for its part, had its own issues of contention with the Finns of the area. By 1920, the union had 41,150 members in Canada. The members were to be found in a variety of industrial centres in Northern Ontario, including the steelworkers of Sault Ste. Marie and the smelters of Sudbury. Its largest representation in the region, however, was

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government. See David J. Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men: The Rise and Fall of the One Big Union (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1978), 84.

[73] Veltri, "Labour Radicalism," 66.

[74] Veltri, "Labour Radicalism," 67; A.W. Rasporich, "Faction and Class in Modern Lakehead Politics," Lakehead University Review 7, 1 (1974): 39.

[75] Veltri, "Labour Radicalism," 53.

[76] Ibid., 41.

[77] Tolvanen, Finntown, 43.

in the rapidly expanding forestry industry.[78] The OBU's subsidiary body, the LWIU, had approximately 12,000 members by 1920.[79] In an effort to expand across Canada, the OBU had issued 70,000 cards by 1920, but only half of this number had paid their union dues. The most negligent in this regard were the LWIU members. Though fees were being collected, the monies were being used by the sub-organization for their own purposes. In the summer of 1920, the LWIU attempted to expand into the agricultural sector, becoming the Lumber, Camp and Agricultural Workers Department of the One Big Union. The OBU executive grew concerned that the sub-organization, already neglectful of providing the parent organization with membership fees, was taking too many sectors of the labour force into its fold.[80] In October of 1920, the issue came up for discussion at the second convention of the OBU, held in the Finnish Labour Temple in Port Arthur. The decisions reached at the convention led to the rapid decline of the western-Canadian based OBU.

Problems immediately arose at the convention when the OBU refused to allow several key figures from the LWIU to participate in the proceedings, citing their non-payment of dues.[81] This denied the LWIU a representation at the convention proportional to their numbers within the parent organization. Despite protests, the convention continued without the LWIU representatives participating. A motion was passed that made all membership dues payable directly to the central headquarters, bypassing the district and subsidiary organizations. This motion represented a rejection

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[78] Following the First World War, the forestry industry saw massive growth in Northern Ontario. In 1919-1920, there were 528 bush camps in Northern Ontario employing 22,447 people. By 1922-1923, the industry had expanded even further, with 596 lumber camps employing 28,834 people. This remarkable growth can be attributed to the development of the domestic pulp and paper industry during the 1920s. See Radforth, Bushworkers, 250.

[79] Ibid., 164-165.

[80] Ibid., 166-167.

[81] Bercuson, Fools and Wise Men, 166.

of industry-based unionism, even under the auspices of the OBU, in favour of a single workers movement. The LWIU refused to be bound by any decisions made at the Port Arthur convention and in 1921, withdrew from the OBU altogether.[82]

Since sport and labour were intimately connected within the Finnish community, it could be expected that the political schisms of the early 1920s would have an impact on the organization of athletics. The effect of the division, however, was small. During this period, the *Jyry* Athletic Club was disbanded, to be replaced several months later by a new athletic organization, "*Nahjus*," under the direction of Alphons Oja. The *Nahjus* club remained loyal to the IWW.[83] The transition from the *Jyry* to the *Nahjus* athletic club in 1920, coinciding with the political upheavals within the IWW and OBU, had little direct impact on wrestling at the Labour Temple with respect to its participants. Many of the local Finnish wrestlers, who had been active prior to 1920, continued to engage in the sport. The early 1920s, despite being politically tumultuous, were a period of growth and prosperity for Finnish wrestlers in the region. Within a few years after the founding of *Nahjus*, Finnish wrestlers came to dominate the sport both professionally and at the amateur level.

Wrestling at the Labour Temple was one of several sports being carried out under the auspices of the *Nahjus* club. Gymnastics, a mainstay of Finnish athletics since the inception of the temperance societies' sports programs decades earlier, remained popular during the early 1920s. Gymnastic activities were often conducted within the main hall itself and on the stage. Although apparatus work, including use of the rings and balance beam, was a component of the training, the most striking characteristic of the Finnish

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[82] Ibid, 167-168.

[83] Paul Voutilainen, "Historic Events of the Athletic Club Isku," (photocopy), Lakehead University Library, Regional Collection, 2; Tester, Sports Pioneers, 57-58.

gymnastic programs of the era was an emphasis on elaborate human pyramids. These spectacles of strength, balance, and agility were not merely intended as displays of physical prowess, but also as physical symbols of worker solidarity.[84] Situated on the second floor of the Labour Temple was a gym containing a boxing ring and weight room. The space was also shared by the women's gymnastics program.[85] Within Finnish society, women, much earlier than among most other European cultures, had been accorded a degree of equality. This was reflected not only in the move toward universal suffrage in 1906, but in athletic programs as well. Women commonly trained alongside men, and there was a female counterpart for virtually every sport practiced by the males.[86] The third floor attic of the Labour Temple was the training area for one of the few sports that was an exception to the custom of parallel male and female athletics. This was the wrestling room.[87]

Wrestling at the Finnish Labour Temple took place on hand-sewn mats stuffed with straw for padding. Alphons Oja, the athletic director of the *Nahjus* Club and a tailor by trade, was both the wrestling coach and a frequent competitor in the sport during the 1920s.[88] As was also true at the Fort William YMCA during this period, both amateur and professional wrestlers worked closely together. Henry Karhunsaari, a well known professional wrestler from the United States who participated in several high profile matches at the Lakehead, made frequent visits to the Labour Temple to assist with

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[84] Lauri Lahti interview, interviewer unknown, 10 June 1976, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Lakehead Univesity Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, MG8,A,III,4,6,I4; Javala, "Radicalism," 114.
[85] Lahti interview.
[86] Kidd, The Struggle, 161.
[87] Kidd, The Struggle, 163; Arthur Kajander interview, interviewer unknown, date unknown, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Lakehead University Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, MG8,A,III,4,6,I26.
[88] Lahti interview; Henderson's Directory, 1914.

coaching.[89] At the professional level, one of the most prominent Finnish athletes produced by the *Nahjus* organization was Ole Kolehmainen, who would become one of the Lakehead's outstanding wrestlers during the 1920s.

Prior to arriving in Canada, Kolehmainen wrestled extensively in his native Finland, winning the championship of southern Finland in three consecutive years.[90] Wrestling fans in the Twin Cities were given an exhibition of his wrestling skills when he appeared on the undercard of Waino Ketonen's matches with Ernie Arthur and George Walker during the spring of 1918. In May of 1919, he emerged as a contender in the local wrestling scene when he acted as a substitute opponent for George Walker. Walker's original opponent, the Minneapolis Greek, Alexander Mellas, was detained for undisclosed reasons by immigration authorities at the border and therefore unable to fulfill his booking. Kolehmainen proved to be an excellent replacement. Although he conceded both falls to Walker, it took the Fort William grappler over an hour to accomplish the task.[91] Walker later commented on the Finn's strength during their match, stating, "Kolehmainen was one of the strongest men I have ever wrestled with...and I had a hard job to make an impression on him with the holds that would put some wrestlers to the mat in little time."[92]

Kolehmainen headlined several more cards in the next two years, including one against fellow Finnish wrestler Henry Karhunsaari and two against Scottish Champion Harry McDonald. On 17 May 1920, he competed in a wrestling tournament at the

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[89] John Paul interview, interviewer unknown, date unknown, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Lakehead Univesity Library Archives, Thunder Bay Finnish Canadian Historical Society Collection, MG8,A,III,4,6,I74. Henry Karhunsaari was a claimant to the world's middleweight wrestling title during the 1920s. He also wrestled under the pseudonym of Robert Ferguson.
[90] Daily Times-Journal, 26 September 1921.
[91] Daily News-Chronicle, 15 May 1919; Daily Times-Journal, 15 May 1919.
[92] George Walker, quoted in the Daily Times-Journal, 16 May 1919.

Finnish Labour Hall to crown the professional wrestling champion of New Ontario. Eighteen contestants were entered in four weight classes, with the winner of each weight class then going into an elimination tournament to determine the outright champion of the region. The overall winner was given a belt to signify his new title as the top wrestler in New Ontario.[93] It is unknown whether wrestlers from outside the Finnish community took part in this tournament, as all weight division champions were of Finnish descent. Kolehmainen, the winner of the light heavyweight bracket, ultimately took the overall championship prize, besting such wrestlers as O. Tamminen and David Takala for the honours.[94]

On 27 September 1921, Kolehmainen gained further laurels when he faced Ernie Arthur for the middleweight championship of Canada at the Labour Temple. A showdown between Kolehmainen and Arthur had been anticipated by local fans ever since 1919, when the Finn gained widespread recognition at the head of the lakes.[95] Like his fellow countryman David Takala a half decade earlier, Kolemainen proved too much for the French streetcar conductor. Arthur was decisively defeated in two straight falls. The first fall came with a hammerlock in twenty-two minutes and fifty seconds and the second in just three minutes and thirty seconds with the same hold. Kolehmainen's victory earned him the middleweight championship of Canada.[96] In addition to being able to claim national honours in wrestling, Kolehmainen's match with Arthur was significant for two reasons. First, it marked the final time that Ernie Arthur would appear

[93] Daily Times-Journal, 17 May 1920. The term "New Ontario," although the precise definition changed between Confederation and the 1920s, generally referred to the regions north of Lake Nipissing, extending west to what eventually became the Manitoba-Ontario border. For a discussion of the subject of New Ontario, see Peter A. Baskerville, Sites of Power: A Concise History of Ontario (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[94] Daily Times-Journal, 20 May 1920. For a listing of all the winners in this tournament, see Appendix III.
[95] Daily Times-Journal, 27 September 1921.
[96] Daily Times-Journal, 28 September 1921.

publicly on local wrestling mats. Second, after this time, all professional wrestling matches staged in the twin cities until the introduction of "modern" professional wrestling in 1933, would feature one or more grapplers of Finnish extraction in the main event.

Kolehmainen retained his hold on the Canadian middleweight title for nearly two years, although in that time he only defended the title once locally, defeating Ernest Montour of Regina in two straight falls.[97] During 1922, Kolehmainen was featured in the only local professional wrestling match of the year, a handicap bout in which Henry Karhunsaari agreed to throw both him and Jack Hill in succession within ninety minutes or concede defeat. Although Karhunsaari succeeded with Hill, Kolehmainen was able to hold him to the time limit.[98] The end of his championship reign came on 15 June 1923 at the hands of Henry Kolln, a wrestler who had been touring western Canada extensively during the period.[99] Kolehmainen took the first fall in twenty minutes, using a head and arm lock. The second period of wrestling lasted two hours and eleven minutes before Kolln succeeded in forcing Kolehmainen to surrender with a double wristlock. Although Kolehmainen had won the first fall, he was unable to continue in the third period, owing to an injured arm. Kolln was accordingly granted the victory and the Canadian middleweight title.[100]

Kolehmainen's loss to Henry Kolln marked the end of his professional wrestling activities in the twin cities but not the end of local Finnish ascendancy in the sport. The

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[97] Daily News-Chronicle, 2 May 1923; Daily Times-Journal, 2 May 1923.
[98] Daily Times-Journal, 25 May 1922. The term, "throw," within the context of early twentieth century catch-as-catch-can or Greco-Roman wrestling, referred to gaining a victory over one's opponent by either pinfall or submission with in the professional ranks, or by pinfall in the amateur class.
[99] Henry Kolln was an American wrestler who was trained by Martin "Farmer" Burns, the coach of former world heavyweight champion, Frank Gotch.
[100] Daily News-Chronicle, 16 June 1923; Daily Times-Journal, 16 June 1923.

Lakehead, by this time, was becoming a major centre for professional Finnish grapplers wishing to exhibit their trade. Henry Karhunsaari and Waino Ketonen both made several appearances in Port Arthur and Fort William rings over the next three years, as did two other Finnish wrestlers of international note, Arvo Linko and Sulo Kokko. Arvo Linko, a former Olympic medalist, had only recently arrived in Canada from his native Finland to settle in Port Arthur when he met Karhunsaari in a match at the Finnish Labour Temple on 11 October 1923. Their bout, witnessed by an audience that "filled every seat in the house and overflowed into the isles," ended in a draw.[101] The match was unique in that it was staged under Greco-Roman, as opposed to catch-as-catch-can, rules. Greco-Roman wrestling, although popular in Europe, had long since been supplanted in popularity by the catch-as-catch-can system in North America. To this point, the art of Greco-Roman wrestling had never been featured in a main event exhibition at the Lakehead. Two weeks later, Karhunsaari faced Kokko, himself a recent arrival in Sudbury from Finland and a Greco-Roman specialist. The match was staged under catch-as-catch-can rules, and Karhunsaari managed to hold Kokko to a draw despite being outweighed by fifty pounds. Kokko's lack of familiarity with the rules of catch-as-catch-can was made apparent not only in his inability to beat a much smaller opponent but in his unwillingness to come to grips with him during the duration of their bout.[102] His next local match, against noted Canadian heavyweight Jack Taylor, was somewhat of a stylistic compromise, featuring fifteen minute rounds of both Greco-Roman and catch-as-catch-can wrestling. The Finlander was able to hold his Canadian opponent to a draw during the Greco-Roman rounds but ultimately yielded to Taylor's toehold submission when grips were allowed

[101] Daily Times-Journal, 12 October 1923.
[102] Daily Times-Journal, 26 October 1923.

below the waist. Taylor was so impressed with Kokko's ability, however, that he offered to train him in the finer points of catch-as-catch-can and make him a champion in the art.[103] It is not known if Kokko took up Taylor's offer for further coaching, but the accolades accorded the Greco-Roman wrestling specialist by the Canadian heavyweight champion demonstrate the incredible skill possessed by Finnish wrestlers competing at the Lakehead during this period.

The rise of Finnish grapplers to the forefront of the Lakehead's professional wrestling scene during the early 1920s can be readily understood in light of the developments that were occurring within the Lakehead's Finnish community during that period. The years after Finland's Civil War were marked by a large exodus of people from the country. This second wave of immigration eclipsed the numbers that had arrived in Canada, and, more specifically, the Lakehead region, prior to the First World War. Many of the new Finnish immigrants were former members of the Red forces who faced persecution in their homeland.[104] Significantly, among their ranks were a large number of athletes, active in a variety of sports. Upon their arrival in Canada, the organization of sporting activities and the establishment of sports associations became even more widespread.[105] Wrestling, with a strong, established tradition in Finland, enjoyed increased popularity at the Lakehead, such wrestlers as Arvo Linko, and large numbers of supporters of the sport, took up residence in the region. What was particularly unusual about this period, however, was the emphasis on the Greco-Roman style of wrestling at the Lakehead. It was relatively rare by the 1920s to see a

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[103] Daily Times-Journal, 3 November 1923.
[104] Jalava, "Radicalism," 1.
[105] Ibid.," 114; Tester, Sports Pioneers, 2; Voutilainen, "Historic Events," 3.

professional Greco-Roman contest anywhere in Canada. With the influx of Finns to the region, however, Greco-Roman wrestling emerged as a popular spectator sport.

The growth of the local Finnish community during the 1920s, and the corresponding growth in Finnish involvement in wrestling, was seen not only in the professional ranks but also in amateur athletics. Finnish amateur wrestlers dominated local competitions for much of the decade, and achieved a high degree of success at the national level. The centre for wrestling activity among Finns at the Lakehead was the Finnish Labour Temple, and the *Nahjus* club produced many amateur athletes of outstanding caliber during the 1920s. The success of *Nahjus* athletes was attributable, in part, to the organization's capacity to plan and coordinate events that gave their athletes valuable competitive experience.

The ability of the *Najhus* athletic club to organize amateur wrestling events was seen in their staging of the District Amateur Wrestling Handicap Championship on 17 May 1922, at the Finnish Labour Temple. The local Finnish community succeeded in getting the event, which was similar to the one staged exactly two years earlier for the professional championship of New Ontario, sanctioned by the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAUC). Several wrestlers from outside the Finnish community participated in the meet, but with limited success. Champions in four weight divisions were decided, followed by a tournament to decide the overall champion. David Takala, now competing as an amateur, won both the middleweight and overall district title.[106]

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[106] Daily Times-Journal, 18 May 1922. For the results of all District Amateur Wrestling Championships staged prior to 1934, see Appendix II. David Takala's ability to compete as an amateur, despite having participated in professional wrestling matches, represents a violation of the AAUC's code of "Once a professional, always a professional." How he was able to maintain amateur status remains a matter of conjecture. It is possible, owing to the strong presence of Finns within the Thunder Bay branch of the AAUC, that they were able to advocate on his behalf, when other grapplers such as John Belanger had no such connections to the administrative apparatus of the organization.

Finnish wrestlers also did well outside of events organized by their own community. In March of 1923, the Thunder Bay branch of the AAUC, following the example set a year earlier by the Finns of Port Arthur, staged the first annual District Boxing and Wrestling Championships at the Port Arthur Armory. The event was conducted over three consecutive days, with the finals staged on 16 March. Entrants for the competition in both the boxing and wrestling categories were disproportionately drawn from the ranks of Port Arthur athletes. Three days before the competition was to commence, Port Arthur had thirty registered participants and Fort William, only two. Typical of the inter-city rivalry at the Lakehead during the period, the Daily Times-Journal commented, "While these championships are not inter-city competitions it will be interesting to note which city will win the most championships."[107] Despite encouragement from the local press, few Fort William athletes came forward. Port Arthur's boxers and wrestlers took the titles in all weight divisions. In wrestling, three weight categories were contested, and all three champions, featherweight J. Renatala, lightweight Tauno (Karl) Maki, and middleweight David Takala, came from the Finnish community.[108]

Although nearly seven hundred spectators attended the finals of the district championships, the local branch of the AAUC was unable to generate a profit from ticket sales. As a result of the failure at the box office, only one of the champions could be sent to the Canadian Championships in Winnipeg later that year. David Takala was chosen as the local representative on the basis of his strong performance at the Armory. The AAUC encouraged other champions crowned at the meet to make the journey to Winnipeg,

[107] Daily Times-Journal, 10 March 1923.
[108] Daily News-Chronicle, 17 March 1923.

although they would have to pay for the trip themselves.[109] The Port Arthur *Nahjus* club, recognizing the athletic qualities of lightweight Tauno Maki, came up with the funds to send him to the national championships. Their decision was a shrewd one. Maki first defeated D.K. Blyth of the Winnipeg YMCA and then A. Chouinard of St. Pierre, Manitoba, both by pinfall, to earn the gold in the lightweight division. David Takala, by then almost forty years old, earned a silver medal, losing by decision in the welterweight finals to Winnipeg's J. McLaughlan.[110]

Tauno Maki's gold medal victory at the 1923 National Championships in Winnipeg was a momentous achievement for both the local Finnish community and the twin cities. It was the first time that an athlete hailing from the region had earned a national amateur championship in the sport of wrestling. Maki's name now belonged to a growing list of local sporting luminaries, including the 1912 Fort William CPR Soccer Club and the 1922 Fort William War Vets junior hockey team, that claimed top national athletic honours.[111] The District Amateur Boxing and Wrestling Championships of 1924, however, held even greater potential significance than those of 1923, because of the summer Olympics to be held later that year in Paris. Though the modern Olympic games began with little fanfare in 1896, by the 1920s they were generally regarded as the premiere amateur athletic event in the world. Athletes claiming District honours would be eligible to compete at the national championships and potentially earn a berth on the Canadian Olympic wrestling team. With an established wrestler *par excellence* in Maki, hopes ran high for the Lakehead to field a representative to the Olympics. First, however,

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[109] Daily News-Chronicle, 17 March 1923; Daily Times-Journal, 17 March 1923.
[110] Manitoba Free Press, 24 March to 26 March 1923. David Takala's opponent, J. McLaughlan, would go on to win two more national wrestling titles in the welterweight class. See Leyshon, Of Mats and Men, 109.
[111] Lappage, "Competitive Spirit," 163, 166.

the Port Arthur Finn had to defend his title. His challenger, Al Lesperance, who had only recently been granted amateur status by the AAUC, proved to be a simple stepping stone for the Finnish grappler. Maki easily defeated his Fort William opponent in two straight falls. Wrestling titles were also contested in the featherweight and middleweight divisions, with Alphons Oja and David Takala taking the respective honours.[112] The stage was now set for local wrestlers to compete for much bigger prizes.

The Thunder Bay branch of the AAUC met on 10 April and 7 June to decide which athletes to send east to Montreal for the joint National Championships and Olympic trials. Several suggestions were made, but the Port Arthur contingent of the AAUC, comprised entirely of Finnish delegates, were adamant in their position that Maki and Oja should represent the region. However, it was ultimately decided, due to shortage of funds, that only Maki would be sent. Einar Kajander, a Finnish board member from Port Arthur, was given assurances that, if Oja were to travel at his own expense, he could compete as a representative of the local AAUC.[113] Both Maki and Oja did attend the Olympic trials but were not successful in earning either a championship or a place on the Olympic team. Maki was victorious in his first match against A. Marcox of Montreal,

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[112] Daily Times-Journal, 17 March 1924.

[113] Daily Times-Journal, 10 April 1924; Daily Times-Journal, 7 June 1924. Einar Kajander, much like Fred Paju, was an individual who did not feature in any prominent matches in the twin cities but was nevertheless an important figure in the local history of wrestling. Kajander was born in 1884 in Finland and moved to Port Arthur from Ahtari, Finland, in 1903. He was employed as a clerk with the Kyro-Hellberg Company of 282 Bay Street for a number of years before opening a grocery store on Algoma Street. Although not a competitive wrestler, Kajander was well known within the local Finnish community for his prowess on the mat. Several anecdotal accounts survive with respect to Kajander's abilities. In one instance, it is told that he visited the doctor after having broken his ribs. The physician inquired as to the cause of the injury, to which Kajander replied that he had been wrestling with Tauno Maki. The doctor told Kajander to stop wrestling with the champions, since he was by then sixty-five years old. Kajander also was employed in the informal role of "banker" for Finnish bushworkers returning to town after an extended period in lumber camps. The workers would give him their pay, minus a small portion, before a night of carousing on the town. They did this knowing that, if later in the evening they wished to spend the remaining portion on extending their revelry, it would be impossible to retrieve their funds. See Kajander interview; Kajorinne, History of Finnish Businesses, 68; Henderson's Directory, 1914.

but the lightweight championship ultimately went to W.J. Montgomery. Oja faced stiff opposition in the first round, losing by decision to Toronto's A. Chilcott. Chilcott, who had placed first at the national championships in 1922, went on to win the featherweight title.[114]

The professional and amateur titles won by local Finnish wrestlers between 1921 to 1924 were emblematic of their skill on the mat, the high level of organized training they received at the *Nahjus* athletic club, and their strong commitment to the value of sport. The success of the *Nahjus* wrestlers, however, belied the ongoing struggle within the Finnish community over ideological issues. Although such divisions were nothing new to Thunder Bay's Finnish residents, events following the founding of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) in 1921 proved to be particularly remarkable in this respect. Though established by Anglo-Canadians in Guelph, the CPC relied upon European immigrants for most of its support in the ensuing years. In 1922, a Finnish language federation of the Communist Party of Canada was officially formed, called the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC).[115] A recession and subsequent labour surplus in 1921 and 1922 proved difficult for workers' movements but, with an economic upturn in 1923, labour unions once more emerged as a force in the mills and forests of Northern Ontario. Communist support in the region became so strong that only the Alberta branch of the CPC rivaled the Port Arthur-Kenora branch in size.

Disproportionately high party representation was found among the Finns, who during this period comprised 60 percent of the CPC's national membership.[116] The economic resurgence of 1923 did not merely aid in the proliferation of communism. The

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[114] Daily Times-Journal, 18 June 1924; Leyshon, Of Mats and Men, 109.
[115] Vasiladis, Dangerous Truth, 131-132.
[116] Tolvanen, Finntown, 74.

IWW also began to gain strength.[117] Immediately, ideological conflicts arose between the IWW and the CPC's Finnish sub-organization, the FOC.[118] Factional schisms became intense enough that, in 1922, the FOC broke away from the syndicalist-dominated Finnish Labour Temple to found its own hall next door, at 316 Bay Street. The new Communist labour temple, generally referred to as the "Little Finn Hall," created social organizations that mirrored those already in existence. As might be expected, one of the first groups to use the new hall was an athletic club, "*Isku*."[119]

The *Isku* athletic club became part of the Finnish-Canadian Workers Sports Federation (later, the Finnish Canadian Amateur Sports Federation), which was founded on 22 May 22 1925 following a wrestling tournament at Creighton Mine. A movement toward organization of Finnish athletes on the national level had been undertaken a year earlier, when clubs in the Sudbury area established the Central Ontario Gymnastic and Athletic Clubs Co-Ordinating Organization. Both the *Nahjus* and *Isku* clubs expressed interest in joining the Central Ontario body shortly after learning of its formation. Following the establishment of the Finnish-Canadian Workers Sports Federation, however, only the *Isku* club was able to gain membership in the national sporting

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[117] Veltri, "Labour Radicalism," 69.

[118] IWW labour protest in the forestry industry during the 1920s tended to occur sporadically in response to specific grievances in bush camps. Though the movement was very good at organizing quickly, once the specific goals of the protest were met, the organization would dissolve. There was also little attempt to co-ordinate efforts between various bush camps to push for unified conditions of work. Further, long-term gains were frequently negated by the IWW's unwillingness to sign collective agreements. Much of this was owing to their rejection of such measures as inherently "political" in character. The Communists, unlike the IWW, had no compunctions against political organization. They remained continuously in operation and made efforts to co-ordinate strike actions between camps. The strategic and philosophical merit of both approaches became highly contentious among the Finns. In several instances, the IWW refused to provide support to Communist labour strikes and may have actively undermined their efforts by sending replacement workers to logging camps. See Tolvanen, Finntown, 30, 55; and J. Peter Campbell, "The Cult of Spontaneity: Finnish-Canadian Bushworkers and the Industrial Workers of the World in Northern Ontario, 1919-1934," Labour 41 (1997): 138-139.

[119] Tolvanen, Finntown, 32-33; Morrison, "The Organization," 131; Voutilainen, "Historic Events," 2-3.

organization.[120] Since the Finnish Canadian Workers Sports Federation, from its founding, was closely allied with the FOC, the inclusion of the IWW-affiliated Nahjus athletic club was ideologically problematic.[121] The *Isku* club, on the other hand, enjoyed a favoured relationship with the Federation.

The existence of a rival sporting club with links to a national organization operating a few metres from its doorstep appears to have had an impact on the *Nahjus* club's ability to field representatives for the District Championships, because few entrants were put forward by *Nahjus* in the ensuing years. Despite having a limited number of wrestlers for the remainder of the decade, *Nahjus*, not *Isku,* athletes continued to garner local and national titles outside of the Finnish community. At the 1925 District Amateur Boxing and Wrestling Championships, held two months before the founding of the Finnish Canadian Workers Sports Federation, no entrants were put forward to compete in wrestling. An exhibition match was wrestled, however, between Hans Aho and Reino Lahti.[122] Only a single wrestling match occurred at the 1926 District Championships, in which *Nahjus* athletic director Alphons Oja wrestled to a draw with Fort William's Jimmy Bailey.[123] In 1927, Port Arthur matman Tauno Maki once more claimed the district title in the only wrestling contest held at the meet. A decline in local competition did not appear to affect Maki, however, as he went on to win the national middleweight title by defeating grapplers N. Hulinsky and C. Romalus at Winnipeg on 2 and 3 May 1927, respectively.[124] Maki repeated his feat at the district level the following

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[120] Tester, Sports Pioneers, 7.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Daily Times-Journal, 17 March 1925. Lahti is mentioned in the interview with Kajander and in the 18 April 1929 edition of the Daily News-Chronicle, as a member of the *Nahjus* club.
[123] Daily Times-Journal, 17 April 1926.
[124] Daily News-Chronicle, 12 April 1927; Daily Times-Journal, 3 May 1927; Daily Times-Journal, 4 May 1927.

year while David Takala, now in his mid-forties, narrowly lost by decision to Kenora's Bill Pittman in the welterweight class.[125] As was the case four years earlier, Maki was unable to repeat his claim to a title in an Olympic year, losing in the trials to H. Thomas of Montreal in July 1928.[126]

The following year, 1929, proved to be an auspicious one for wrestling at the Lakehead, as Port Arthur was chosen as the host city for the Dominion Amateur Boxing and Wrestling Championships. A week prior to the event, the *Isku* club sponsored a wrestling meet at the Finnish Hall in Fort William, featuring wrestlers from as far away as Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, and Beaver Lake.[127] The ability to stage an event of this nature, featuring athletes from such distant communities, was a testament to the organizational capabilities of the Finnish Canadian Workers Sports Federation and its member club, *Isku*. At the Dominion Championships, however, it was once again the *Nahjus* club that furnished the entries. Port Arthur's Reino Lahti, Karl Maki, John Rinatala, Eino Mahlo, and Herman Heioman, all representing the *Nahjus* club, wrestled in the meet.[128] Port Arthur's Mahlo, a heavyweight, advanced to the finals but was unable to compete. Hans Lindborg, who had recently arrived in Port Arthur from Finland, took his place and defeated Winnipeg's Nelson Crosselly to win the national title.[129] Lindborg's club affiliation during this period is not known. Even if he was a member of the *Isku* club, he was only one of six grapplers sent to the Dominion championships by the Finnish community of Port Arthur. It is unlikely, however, that

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[125] Daily Times-Journal, 19 May 1928.
[126] Daily News-Chronicle, 7 July 1928.
[127] Daily News-Chronicle, 12 April 1929.
[128] Daily News-Chronicle, 19 April 1929; Daily News-Chronicle, 20 April 1929.
[129] Daily News-Chronicle, 22 April 1929. For a complete listing of all wrestling matches staged in the 1929 Dominion Amateur Wrestling Championships tournament, see Appendix IV.

this was the case. The reason for the absence of *Isku* wrestlers in competitions outside of those sponsored by their club or the Finnish Canadian Workers Sports Federation was due to the regulations that the organization had in place concerning the conduct of its athletes. Prior to 1939, the Federation commonly suspended athletes who participated in non-labour oriented sporting competitions. These rules were established at the organization's founding in 1925.[130] The District and Dominion Championships, as AAUC competitions, clearly fell outside the purview of organized labour. The syndicalist-oriented *Nahjus* club had no compunctions against letting its members compete in matches that were sponsored by the AAUC or even of a professional nature.

The 1929 Dominion Championships in Port Arthur represented something of a milestone in wrestling at the Lakehead. In the years that followed\

, amateur wrestling went into a period of decline. Between 1930 and 1933, the District Championships continued to be staged in Port Arthur and Fort William, but only boxers entered. Eventually, owing to a consistent lack of entries, wrestling was officially removed from the title of the annual event. Although amateur wrestling's popularity as a local athletic past-time was in decline by 1930, it had nevertheless managed to outlive its professional counterpart.

Wrestling at the professional level had completely disappeared from the local scene several years earlier, following Waino Ketonen's defeat of Fritz Hanson in April of 1926.[131] The Ketonen-Hanson card was the first professional event that had been staged in the twin cities in two years and was the last to be staged until the revival of the professional wrestling business seven years later. After this period of hibernation,

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[130] Tester, Sports Pioneers, 13.
[131] Daily Times-Journal, 5 April 1926.

professional wrestling returned to the Lakehead but in a very different form than had existed during the 1910s and 1920s. Finnish professional wrestlers, once a staple feature of the local grappling scene, no longer dominated the mats. Amateur wrestling cards continued to be held, but Lakehead's Finns were not as strong a force on both the local and national as they had been prior to the 1930s. Although local Finnish grapplers never again experienced the level of success they had enjoyed in the years between 1913 and the beginning of the Depression, their local contributions to the sport during this period far exceeded those of any other ethnic group. Much of the success that they achieved can be attributed to the sporting values that they brought from Finland. It must also be acknowledged that their success in wrestling occurred in spite of considerable social and political upheavals that were visited upon the Finnish community, both from outside and from within. On and off the mat, these grapplers were the Fighting Finns of the Lakehead!

Whether they were the Fighting Finns of Port Arthur's *Nahjus* club, or the matmen of the Fort William YMCA, wrestlers formed a tight community. Both professional and amateur wrestlers of the twin cities commonly trained together between 1913 and 1926. Despite there being a close-knit relationship between the two branches of sport, it would be incorrect to conclude that there were no differences between professional and amateur wrestling. Beyond purely technical distinctions, professional wrestling, as a business, ultimately depended upon public support at the box office for its continued existence. The profit-oriented character of professional wrestling necessitated the adoption of many unique promotional strategies that differentiated it from its amateur counterpart.

Chapter IV

The Spectacle of Wrestling

One of two pictures is readily conjured in the mind of the average citizen in twenty-first century Canada when the term "wrestling" is mentioned. The first is of the amateur sport of wrestling, sometimes seen in high schools and colleges across the country and, once every four years, on television as an Olympic sport. The second and perhaps more likely picture that emerges is of its professional variant: a mass spectacle staged in a ring in front of thousands of screaming fans, and broadcast to the general public on a weekly basis. This latter form of wrestling, although certainly showcasing athletes of considerable skill, has evolved into a form of drama that is, even by the admission of those who promote it, more entertainment than sport.

By outward appearances, professional wrestling, as practiced at the Lakehead between 1913 and 1926, bore a far greater resemblance to today's amateur version of the sport than to the present-day professional spectacle. Among all who participated, there was an absolute conviction that the matches they staged were "on the level," and free of the blatant choreography characteristic of later versions of the "sport." The nature of the wrestling being conducted in the ring was such that the matches themselves aroused very little suspicion among fans in the region. Unlike the current World Wrestling Entertainment production seen on television, the professional wrestlers of that era employed realistic techniques that could plausibly be applied against a resisting opponent.[1] Complaints of blatant fakery, as expressed in the popular press, were

[1] An impressive body of footage still remains of boxing contests from this era but virtually nothing survives on film of wrestling. The oldest known footage of a professional wrestling match features world heavyweight champion Earl Caddock defending his title against Joe Stecher on 30 January 1920 at Madison Square Garden. Both men employ a very credible style of wrestling, featuring classical wrestling

generally rare among the sporting public at the Lakehead in the two decades that are the focus of this work.

Regardless of the authenticity of the bouts, professional wrestling at the Lakehead, like any other professional sport, was a business. As such, it existed only so long as it was capable of generating revenue for those with a financial interest in it. Therefore, while it may have borne a general resemblance to amateur wrestling, it was nevertheless, first and foremost, a moneymaking enterprise. To ensure that professional wrestling was a profitable undertaking, a series of colourful strategies was used to generate interest in local cards. This pre-contest hype frequently appealed to the public's love of "pure sport," but it also went beyond the bounds of sportsmanship to exploit the vices and social tensions that were intrinsic to life at the Lakehead during the early twentieth century. Despite the close relationship between amateur and professional wrestling in the twin cities, the adoption of profit-driven practices served to clearly differentiate the two branches of the sport from one another.

Between 1913 and 1926, over sixty professional wrestling cards were staged at the Lakehead. A review of the advertising material and newspaper coverage associated with professional wrestling events reveals a variety of strategies used to promote them. Prior to any official advertising of a match, articles frequently appeared in the local newspapers speculating that a given wrestler might be appearing in one of the twin cities. To generate interest in a match, the article usually alluded to the wrestler's skill on the mat or his competitive record against other wrestlers of note. Reports of the wrestler's

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techniques such as nelsons, body scissors, and sit-outs. Although no footage exists of wrestling matches at the Lakehead from this period, local newspaper reports document the application of techniques similar to those employed in the Caddock-Stecher bout. For footage of the Earl Caddock-Joe Stecher bout, see Karl Stern, Pioneers of Wrestling [DVD] (Haleyville, AL: Dragon King Press, 2004).

victories in other cities were sometimes printed in the papers long before any appearance was officially confirmed.

In the months before wrestling's revival in the twin cities, such strategies were used to introduce George Walker to the sporting public. George Walker did not make his first appearance in the area as a wrestler until May of 1913, yet articles were being run as early as 3 February detailing his professional wrestling successes on the West Coast.[2] Within a few weeks, speculation appeared in the sporting pages of the Fort William Daily Times-Journal concerning his possible appearance in Port Arthur. The first of several articles, printed on 25 February, announced Walker as "ex-middleweight champion of Canada, who recently turned professional," and stated that he would be matched against Fred Paju, the Finnish wrestler, at a yet-to-be-determined time and place.[3] The match between Walker and Paju never materialized but, in the ensuing months, a series of articles recounting Walker's recent victories in Ottawa ensured that his exploits were not overlooked by sports fans at the Lakehead.[4] In May of 1913, Walker announced that he would be staying in Fort William for a month to visit relatives. Immediately, talk once more arose of his being matched against a local wrestler, possibly Fred Paju or the Port Arthur fireman Hans Peterson. Readers were once again reminded of Walker's accomplishments as a wrestler as well as his outstanding physical characteristics.[5] Walker's potential as a wrestling star was therefore well established in the minds of local sporting aficionados long before he ever stepped onto the mat.

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[2] Daily Times-Journal, 3 February 1913.
[3] Daily Times-Journal, 25 February 1913.
[4] See the Daily Times-Journal, 14 April 1913; Daily Times-Journal, 21 April 1913; and Daily Times-Journal, 29 April 1913.
[5] Daily Times-Journal, 5 May 1913.

Similar advance publicity appeared long before Walter Miller made his first appearance in the region. During negotiations for a bout between Miller and Walker, a letter of testimony from Duluth Herald sporting editor R. B. Leggatt was cited in the Fort William Daily Times-Journal, in which Miller was referred to as "one of the greatest middleweight wrestlers in the world" and more than a match for George Walker.[6] Miller was unable to appear at the head of the lakes owing both to a head injury sustained in a bout in Minneapolis on 9 July. Coincidentally, George Walker sustained an injury in training around the same time, and the result was that the match was postponed until a future date.[7] In the weeks that followed, however, readers were kept abreast of Miller's activities as he embarked on a wrestling tour to the West Coast. Although the reasons for his decision to compete on the West Coast are not known, attempts to generate further interest in a potential Walker-Miller bout took the form of speculation that Miller's trip to the west demonstrated his unwillingness to stake his reputation against the Canadian champion.[8]

The sources of the publicity surrounding the potential staging of wrestling matches were varied. It appears that at least some of it was generated by the local wrestling promoters who, particularly during the 1910s, were the owners and operators of theatres. In the case of the Walker-Miller match, for example, Corona Theatre owner Ben Ross frequently provided the sports editors with information on wrestlers who were either tentatively scheduled or confirmed to appear at his facility. Ross' press copy

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[6] Daily Times-Journal, 30 June 1913.
[7] For a detailed description of the Miller-Carr bout, see The Duluth Herald, 10 July 1913; and the Daily Times-Journal, 10 July 1913. Walker's injury was first alluded to in the Daily Times-Journal two days later.
[8] Daily Times-Journal, 16 July 1913.

included telegrams testifying to the abilities of visiting wrestlers, information as to when wrestlers were arriving in the cities, and updates on their wrestling activities abroad.[9]

Once a match was confirmed between wrestlers, coverage of the bout was generally very high in the local newspapers, taking a variety of forms. Some of the promotion was clearly in the form of paid advertisements, placed in the newspapers by the promoter or facility staging the event. Playbills for wrestling cards appeared in the sports pages, and sometimes throughout the papers, in the days leading up to the match. Advertisements for wrestling contests varied in terms of the extent of details provided on the event but, as a rule, included the names of the principal antagonists, the day, time and location of the match, the cost of tickets and the nature of the preliminary attractions preceding the main event.[10] When facilities with large seating capacities were retained for wrestling events, the advertisements could occupy substantial space in both of the twin cities' dailies.[11] Promotional photographs were another mainstay of advertising during this period. They were occasionally featured as part of the official advertisements for the wrestling event but, more frequently, photos accompanied a news article or a small explanatory caption related to the upcoming matches. In virtually all instances, promotional photos featured the wrestlers in a staged pose, demonstrating a wrestling stance or displaying their musculature.[12] With few exceptions, the wrestler was stripped from the waist up to display a physique that was in peak condition. Masculine imagery

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[9] For samples of such information directly attributed to Ross see The Daily Times-Journal, 16 July 1913; 5 September 1913; and 8 September 1913.

[10] For examples of wrestling playbills from this era, see Appendix V.

[11] Two wrestling cards that stand out in this regard were the George Walker-Waino Ketonen title bout of Victoria Day 1918 and the Henry Karhunsaari-Waino Ketonen title bout of 15 April 1924. In both instances anticipated attendance was upwards of 2000 people, and advertisements occupied up to one-quarter to one-third of a page in the days leading up to the matches. Often this was in addition to articles concerning the match. For samples of these advertisements, see Appendix V.

[12] For examples of photographs appearing in local dailies during this period, see Appendix VI.

served as an effective marketing tool because it capitalized on the general trend during the early twentieth century toward lauding the classical Greco-Roman physique as the ideal representation of athleticism and manliness. The fact that he looked the part of the wrestler, in addition to having the credentials of one, was clearly emerging as a selling point during the era.[13]

The sports reporters in both cities were willing to give upcoming wrestling cards publicity well in excess of that being supplied by the promoter's advertising. Large amounts of column space were devoted to providing updates on the activities of wrestlers in the days leading up to the match. Since the newspapers were keen to cover the training activities of the combatants, the wrestlers occasionally took advantage of this by staging training stunts. For example, in the lead-up to his matches with Chris Person and Walter Miller in 1913, George Walker took frequent morning hikes up Mount McKay, a fact that was announced to the public in the days leading up to both contests.[14] During preparations for the contest with Miller, he allegedly set a record for climbing the imposing landmark, traveling from the base to the peak in twelve minutes and fifteen seconds. Almost exactly seven years later, wrestler Karl Van Wurden repeated the feat when training for his match against Ernie Arthur, breaking Walker's mark by sixteen

[13] Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley, Sport in Canada: A History (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2005), 166; Lindaman, "Wrestling's Hold," 166. Two excellent histories examining, in part, the promotion and popularization of the idealized male physique during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are Robert Ernst's Weakness is a Crime: The Life of Bernarr Macfadden (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), and David L. Chapman's Sandow the Magnificent: Eugen Sandow and the Beginnings of Bodybuilding (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2006). Both McFadden, through his various books and the monthly publication, Physical Culture Magazine, and Sandow, through his traveling strongman exhibitions, played important roles in re-introducing classical Greek notions of male perfection.

[14] Daily Times-Journal, 21 August 1913; Daily Times-Journal, 12 September 1913. Rising over one thousand feet from base to peak, Mount McKay is one of the most prominent geographical features of the Thunder Bay region, dominating the skyline to the south of Fort William and the Kaministiquia River.

seconds.[15] The day following this accomplishment, a headline on the sports page of the Daily Times-Journal read, "Van Wurden Climbs Mount McKay as Training Stunt and Beats Walker's Record."[16]

Not all training stunts proved to be as successful as Van Wurden's trek up Mount McKay. In a plan obviously intended to catch the interest of reporters in both cities, Minneapolis wrestler Alexander Mellas, then in training for his 19 June 1919 bout with George Walker, announced that he would run from the Times-Journal office in Fort William to the News-Chronicle office in Port Arthur, commencing at 10:00 on the morning of 14 June.[17] Mellas covered the distance, a total of four miles, one hundred yards, in thirty minutes and thirty seconds. Reporters were not impressed. Although conceding that he was slowed down by road repairs and bridge construction on May Street, the Times-Journal remarked, "While this particular route has not been run over before, a similar distance has been covered by local runners in considerably better time."[18] Mellas' speedy roadwork did not prove to be the decisive factor in his training, any more than it proved to be a well-received publicity gimmick, as he was defeated by Walker in their match five days later.

Interest in wrestling matches could be generated by a wrestler taking his training to the public. In several instances, however, wrestlers also brought the public to their

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[15] Daily Times Journal, 10 September 1920. Van Wurden began his ascent at 11:15, signaling that he had reached the top from the edge of a rock at exactly 11:27.
[16] Ibid. Some discrepancies exist as they relate to Walker's record on Mount McKay. A report in the Daily Times-Journal, dated 14 June 1919, states that, "Several years ago while training, [Walker] ran clear to the top of Mountain McKay in sixteen and a half minutes; thirteen going up and three and a half coming down." Unfortunately, no reports appeared in the local newspapers of Walker's feat directly after it transpired. It is therefore unclear whether this statement pertains to an entirely separate training stunt performed by Walker. It is likewise not known where at the base of Mount McKay, either athlete began his ascent.
[17] Daily Times-Journal, 13 June 1919.
[18] Daily Times-Journal, 14 June 1919.

training. A popular promotional technique was to stage open wrestling practices, where anyone could attend. Frank Gotch, America's premiere heavyweight wrestler, had used this approach with great success during preparations for his 1911 bout with 'Russian Lion' George Hackenschmidt, and the tactic later proved to be a popular one at the Lakehead.[19] In September of 1913, as he readied himself to face Walter Miller, George Walker, then banned from training at the Fort William YMCA on the basis of being a professional, opened up a makeshift gymnasium in the back of McDonough's pool and billiard parlour. In the afternoons following his hikes up Mount McKay, the public was invited there to watch him work out.[20] During the lead-up to his second bout with Miller on 16 April 1914, Walker once more took up training at McDonough's, inviting all to attend his sparring sessions with his one time opponent, the Swede Hans Peterson, and an unnamed Scottish wrestler.[21]

Walter Miller took this same tactic and added another element to it. In training for his January 1914 match against the outstanding French-Canadian lightweight wrestler Eugene Tremblay, Miller not only opened his training sessions up to the public but challenged them to step on the mat with him as well. On 21 January, the Daily Times-Journal announced: "If there are any wrestlers in the twin cities weight not barred who think that they can pin Walter Miller's shoulders to the mat, they will be welcomed at the Corona theater between 5 and 6 o'clock."[22] Interest in Miller's training was evidently

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[19] Chapman, in Frank Gotch, 87, notes that upwards of four thousand people attended Gotch's Riverside Training Camp sessions during the lead-up to his successful title defense against Hackenschmidt.
[20] Daily Times-Journal,12 September 1913.
[21] Daily Times-Journal, 13 April 1914.
[22] Daily Times-Journal, 21 January 1914.

high, as the next day it was reported that more than one hundred people turned out to watch him go through the paces with grappler "Battling" Tommy West.[23]

While wrestlers' athletic abilities were utilized to promote matches, the appeal of wrestling was not based entirely on its merit as an exercise of sport but in what it came to represent for different elements of society at the Lakehead. By 1913, a variety of social tensions undercut the very fabric of life at the twin cities. A heated rivalry had grown up between Port Arthur and Fort William that, at times, drove residents of both communities to words and deeds that bordered on malice. Within the cities themselves, other sources of conflict were at play, as newly arrived immigrants competed with both each other and the existing Anglo elite for social leverage. Further, as a predominantly working class community whose existence could be attributed to the presence of the mining, railway, grain shipping and forestry industries, many elements of society had interests in wrestling that extended beyond the pleasures intrinsic in witnessing a well-contested sporting event. Members of the elite did not necessarily share this working class conception of sport and sought to temper their vices by using yet another marginalized group in society, women. Both wrestlers and promoters, cognizant of the social situation in which they were operating, exploited the prevailing tensions present in society during the period to garner greater box-office returns.

Port Arthur and Fort William, by 1913, had developed a community rivalry that permeated virtually all aspects of public life. Politicians from both cities leveled frequent taunts at one another's municipal shortcomings. Fort William was, to such Port Arthur city fathers as Thomas Marks, a "festering and stagnant swamp." Likewise, Fort William's politicians branded the Hill City little more than "an exposed and wind-blown

[23] Daily Times-Journal, 22 January 1914.

rock."[24] Both the actions and the words of politicians and community leaders at the Lakehead during the first half-century of their existence hinted at the belief that one city could not gain prosperity without the other losing it. The two cities actively competed against one another to attract commerce and industry and, at times, reveled in the other's misfortunes and failings. Even when one city made a significant civic achievement, the other sought to use it to its own advantage. In booster campaigns of the era, promotional material from one community frequently failed to acknowledge the other's existence while still using their rival's positive features as selling points. Certain fair-minded civic leaders such as W.S. Dingman called for a cessation to the constant state of mutual antagonism, proposing instead that the two cities work toward common goals. Little was accomplished in this direction, however, and rivalry continued unabated. [25]

Inter-urban enmity played itself out not only in the realm of politics and industry but also on the wrestling mat. This was seen, most particularly, in preliminary attractions preceding the main event. During the initial year of wrestling's revival at the Lakehead, preliminary events received nothing in the way of publicity. Neither the names of the parties involved nor the nature of the preliminaries were mentioned in the playbills or in the articles preceding the event. Similarly, in the reports following the match, preliminary results were not covered. The first instance of advance publicity for a preliminary attraction occurred prior to the George Walker and Young Jordan match in May of 1914, when it was advertised that Hans Peterson, former opponent of George Walker, would be facing a wrestler by the last name of McMillan. Advertisement for the

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[24] A.W. Rasporich and Thorold Tronrud, "Class, Ethnicity and Urban Competition," Thorold Tronrud and Ernie Epp, eds., Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Inc., 1995), 210.

[25] Tronrud, Guardians, 54; Rasporich and Tronrud, "Class, Ethnicity and Urban Competition," 210.

preliminary, though brief, took advantage of inter-urban rivalries by explicitly stating that Peterson hailed from Port Arthur and McMillan from Fort William.[26] Attempts were also made to capitalize on these latent hostilities in the main event match. In late April of 1914, prior to Jordan's bout with Walker, the Fort William Daily Times-Journal reported:

> The contest has stirred up considerable interest in the hill city where Jordan is very popular. He has only been in Port Arthur for two weeks, but that was sufficient time for him to make many friends... The fact that Walker is from Fort William has put the hill city fans on edge. They want to see Jordan win and will be there in full force to cheer him on to victory if possible.[27]

Jordan's connection to Port Arthur, despite the press attempt to build it up, was quite clearly a weak one. Between 1913 and 1933, few contests were staged in which the principal competitors were representatives of either of the cities. Three of the Lakehead's premiere professional wrestlers, Walker, Arthur, and Belanger, resided in Fort William, while Ole Kolehmainen hailed from Port Arthur. With the majority of local main event professional talent coming from Fort William, it would have proven impossible to sustain the business of wrestling purely on the basis of inter-city rivalry. Accordingly, it was necessary to bring in skilled wrestlers from outside the region to compete against the major local stars in the main event while preliminaries were, in most instances, made up of local athletes of lesser drawing power. When it was possible to secure preliminaries featuring a Port Arthur athlete against a Fort William resident, the advance press clearly indicated their city of origin. Inter-urban rivalry, though important in staging wrestling cards, was of limited applicability due to the small number of highly skilled professional

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[26] Daily News-Chronicle, 30 April 1914.
[27] Ibid.

wrestlers in the twin cities. Ethnicity, on the other hand, proved to be a far more fertile ground upon which to build a wrestling card.

The rapid growth of both Fort William and Port Arthur during the western wheat boom was characterized by an influx of immigrants from nations outside of those that had previously supplied most of Canada's settlers. Beginning in 1896, Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal government adopted an immigration policy that was far more open than that which had existed in the Dominion since Confederation. By 1914, over three million immigrants had arrived in Canada, many from outside of Great Britain.[28] Mirroring the development in the rest of the nation, residents of the Lakehead increasing came to be drawn from the non-English speaking nations of Europe.[29] Finnish, Ukrainian, Italian, and Greek were common languages in some neighborhoods of the cities where once only English was spoken. Most of the new immigrants obtained employment as unskilled labourers. Residents of British ancestry were employed in similar capacities, but their higher levels of literacy and knowledge of the English language allowed them greater opportunities to advance their positions within the labour market. European immigrants therefore were relegated to remaining in jobs near the bottom of the social hierarchy.[30]

The plight of new immigrants was made worse by prevailing ideas of ethnic superiority held by Anglo-Canadians who retained not only numerical, but also political, economic, and social hegemony during the period. The success of the British Empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had reinforced notions that Anglo society (notably of the Protestant variety) represented the pinnacle of cultural

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[28] Howard Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts: Anglo-Canadian Views of Multiculturalism in the Twentieth Century," Gerald Tulchinsky, ed., Immigration to Canada: Historical Perspectives (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Limited, 1994), 301.
[29] Epp, "The Achievement of Community," 186.
[30] Morrison, "Community and Conflict," 12.

development. Immigrants to Canada during the period were viewed with both paternalistic and fearful eyes by the majority of Canadians. It was seen as the duty of Anglo-Canadian society to ensure that non-English speaking immigrants were elevated out of their state of ignorance by adopting the more civilized language and customs of Britain.[31] Conversely, the public feared that hordes of foreigners would undermine the values and customs that had made the British Empire and, by extension, the Dominion of Canada the ultimate expressions of human achievement. During the First World War, fear of foreigners became intensified, as jingoistic nationalism became increasingly synonymous with loyalty to the Crown and culture of Britain.[32] The Conservative Borden government, electoral heir to Laurier's Liberals, began placing a series of restrictions on "foreign aliens" after the initiation of hostilities in Europe. This affected not only the Finns, who were prominent in the local wrestling scene, but immigrants from several other foreign nations as well.[33] The overtly contradictory world-view possessed by many Canadians, calling for the assimilation of foreigners while simultaneously discriminating against them based on their ethnic origins, ultimately served to reinforce their unwillingness to integrate into mainstream society.[34]

With Canada clearly divided along ethnic lines, professional wrestlers took advantage of the prevailing attitudes of the period to enhance their box-office appeal. The image of the "dangerous foreigner" was used to great effect by many wrestlers

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[31] Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts," 301.
[32] Ibid., 302-303.
[33] For a detailed discussion of the restrictions placed on "enemy" foreigners within Canada, see Gregory S. Kealey, "State Repression of Labour and the Left in Canada, 1914-1920: The Impact of the First World War," Francis Iacovetta, ed., A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 386-392.
[34] Palmer, "Reluctant Hosts," 305.

gracing the Lakehead's mats.[35] Charles Olson, who wrestled extensively throughout western Canada during the 1920s, billed himself as the "Terrible Swede."[36] Likewise, Henry Karhunsaari appeared locally as the "Ferocious Finn" as well as the "Furious Finn." In both instances, their rough style of wrestling was befitting of their names, but they used their ethnic origins as a means of distinguishing themselves from others. Drawing upon decades of British fear of the Ottoman Empire, visiting wrestler Kali Pascha adopted as a moniker the "Terrible Turk," a title that had been used by various wrestlers since the 1890s.[37] Certain wrestlers, portraying a cleaner image, nevertheless adopted nicknames in keeping with their ethnic origins. These included "Greek Idol" Jim Londos and Fort William's own Ernie Arthur, "The Idol of France." George Walker, on the other hand, being of Anglo-Saxon descent, did not need to qualify himself in racial or ethnic terms. He was merely the "Canadian Panther."

As much as wrestlers and wrestling promoters played on the fear of foreigners within mainstream Canadian society, the ethnic communities to which the wrestlers belonged took pride in their accomplishments. The Daily News-Chronicle noted of

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[35] For a detailed discussion of the concept of the dangerous foreigner in early twentieth century Canadian society, as well as a discussion of the views of English-speaking Canadians toward immigrants, see Donald Avery's "Dangerous Foreigners:" European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932 (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1979).

[36] The Charles Olson who wrestled at the Lakehead during the early 1920s was the second wrestler to appear under that name. The first Olson (also spelled Olsen) wrestled in the first two decades of the twentieth century and became notorious for killing at least two men in wrestling bouts. For further information on the original Olson, see Hewitt's Catch Wrestling; and Charles Nathan Hatton, "Death in the Wrestling Ring: The Strange Case of Osborne Taylor," Journal of Alternative Perspectives on the Martial Arts and Sciences 3 (2005), http://www.ejmas.com/jalt/jaltframe.htm (accessed 6 November 2006).

[37] The first of several "Terrible Turks" to appear on the mats in North America was Youssuf Ishmaelo, who dominated all challengers during a tour in 1898, culminating in his defeat of Evan "Strangler" Lewis for the heavyweight championship of the world. Ishmaelo perished during his return voyage to Europe when the ship he was traveling on, *La Bourgogne,* sank off of the coast of North America. Popular legend contends that he drowned wearing a belt containing $8000 worth of gold. For an examination of the career of Youssuf Ishmaelo and the racial stereotypes of the "Terrible Turk" image, see Graham Noble, "The Life and Death of the Terrible Turk," Journal of Manly Arts 1 (2001), http://ejmas.com/jmanly/articles/2001/jmanlyart_noble_0501.htm (accessed 15 January 2007).

Italian-born Bull Montana, who wrestled George Walker twice in March of 1921, "Wherever he wrestles, a number of his countrymen are always on hand to give their support. Montana is to the Italian wrestling fans just what Johnny Dundee is to the New York Italian boxing fans."[38] Jim Londos, the "Greek Idol," similarly met with a warm reception from Thunder Bay's Greek community, who planned an automobile parade and luncheon at a local hotel following his arrival.[39] When Ole Kolehmainen wrestled Harry McDonald in April of 1921, first in a handicap bout and later in a finish match, both the advertising and the press covering the matches made repeated references to the nationality of the combatants, often several times in the same article.[40] The Finnish language newspaper Vapaus, following Kolehmainen's victory in the first match, noted happily that their countryman had defeated the Scot.[41]

Ethnicity was so pronounced an issue that rarely did a wrestler whose origin was other than Anglo-Canadian receive press that did not, at some point, allude to his ancestry. This was not, however, the sole technique used to promote the business of wrestling at the Lakehead. Over the years, many other tactics were used, often in conjunction with issues of ethnicity, to draw paying spectators to professional matches.

A popular technique used to garner interest in a potential wrestling match was the issuing of a challenge in the local sporting pages. Unlike much of the advance press prior

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[38] Daily News-Chronicle, 8 March 1921. Johnny Dundee, born Giuseppe Carrora, was a Sicilian born featherweight boxer who grew up in the "Hell's Kitchen" neighbourhood of New York. He was one of the most prolific fighters in the history of the American prize ring, fighting in 335 bouts between 1910 and 1932. See James Roberts and Alexander G. Skutt, The Boxing Register: International Boxing Hall of Fame Official Record Book (Ithaca, New York: McBooks Press, 1999), 84-85.

[39] Daily Times-Journal, 21 May 1921. Londos' reception was held at either the Prince Arthur or Avenue Hotel.

[40] A finish match referred to a contest in which one athlete must clearly emerge as the victor before the event could be terminated. Finish matches were free of the restrictions on one wrestler that accompanied handicap matches, and they frequently had no set time limit.

[41] Vapaus, 23 April 1921.

to the scheduling of a bout, challenge letters had a clear source, always being signed by the wrestler issuing the defi. Newspaper challenges were a common technique used by athletes and teams to generate interest with the public, and they began appearing in the local press as early as 1894.[42] Between 1913 and 1933, however, they became a regular, and at times almost constant, fixture of the sports pages in both the Daily Times-Journal and the Daily News-Chronicle. Newspaper challenges could take several distinct forms. Frequently, a challenge was issued by an outside wrestler to an opponent with an identifiable connection to the Port Arthur and Fort William communities. Fort William's Ernie Arthur, George Walker, and John Belanger, as local standouts, were recurrent targets for newspaper challenges. One such letter, characteristic of an outside challenge, appeared in the 17 January 1921 edition of the Daily Times-Journal:

> Sporting Editor, Times Journal.
>
> Dear Sir- Please find space in your next issue for a challenge to John Belanger, your local wrestler, whom I would like to meet, on terms to suit himself, at any time in the near future.
>
> I am also willing to meet any other so-called wrestler at any time if a suitable guarantee is in sight. Trusting to hear from you soon. I am yours in spirit. Signed Chas. Olson, "The Terrible Swede."[43]

A match between Belanger and Olson was scheduled for 4 February, following the former's acceptance of the "Terrible Swede's" challenge on 21 January. Although Olson was successful in securing a match in Fort William, sending a letter to the local papers did not always guarantee a booking. Many outside challengers, due to scheduling

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[42] See the Daily Journal, 6 July 1894, for the earliest known example of a wrestling challenge letter in Lakehead newspapers.

[43] Daily Times-Journal, 17 January 1921.

conflicts or lack of interest from local promoters and wrestlers, were not able to secure bouts at the Lakehead.[44]

Challenges of a local nature also frequently graced the sporting pages. George Walker and Ernie Arthur regularly engaged in wars of words, often of a highly acerbic character. Much of their apparent animousity stemmed from both laying claim to the professional middleweight title of Canada. Walker repeatedly cited his victory at the amateur championship of 1912 as justification for his claim, while Arthur countered this assertion by requesting that Walker make the middleweight limit of 158 pounds, something that he seemed either unwilling or unable to do. Letters, much in keeping with this formula, appeared in the Daily Times-Journal in late April of 1918:

> Times-Journal, Fort William Ont.
> Sport Editor- Again I see Arthur is claiming the middleweight wrestling title of Canada. I hold the middleweight and heavy-weight championship of Canada and am willing to defend my middleweight title against all comers let Arthur put up the money. It talks. I am open to arrange bout.
> George Walker, Canadian Champion, Transcona[45]

Ernie Arthur's response to Walker appeared in the sports pages five days later. The streetcar conducting matman stated to a reporter:

> I am willing to meet Walker any time, at any place if he can make weight, 158 pounds. I have challenged Walker several times but have not heard from him. I met Walker three times and every time he was 30 pounds over my weight. In my last match with him he got two falls and I got one, and I am quite confident that I can down him in another match but he has to make the middleweight class.[46]

Occasionally, the banter between wrestlers would threaten to get out of hand as supporters in the community, as well as other wrestlers, jumped into the fray. Such was

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[44] In 1921 alone, Tom Johnstone, Charles Gillet, Charles Gustofson, Young Gotch, Jack J. Cole, George Gion, Jack Milo, and R.J. Dunn issued challenges to local wrestlers for matches in Fort William or Port Arthur without success.
[45] Daily Times-Journal, 20 April 1918.
[46] Ernie Arthur, quoted in the Daily Times-Journal, 25 April 1918.

the case in November of 1918 when Port Arthur's heavyweight grappler, William Kage, offered to face Ernie Arthur and Jack Belanger on the same night. After devoting considerable space to the respective views of the principal antagonists on the issue, as well those of George Walker and a group of fans represented by local resident George Allen, the sport editor of the Daily Times-Journal called a halt to the escalating drama, stating, "As everyone interested has had a say and freely expressed opinion, it would seem that the time has arrived for this controversy to close."[47] The final pronouncement of Fort William's sport editor was the last word on the issue, as no handicap match ever materialized.[48]

Several explanations present themselves as to why the newspaper challenge was a staple of the wrestling business at the Lakehead during this period. As Henry Roxborough points out with respect to nineteenth century Canadian sport, communication during the period could only occur through a very limited number of channels. Athletes wishing to voice their opinion, in Roxborough's words, "either had to hire a hall or write letters to newspapers."[49] Although this may be somewhat overstating the case, self-promoting athletes had few options available to them. Commercial radio only began in the 1920s and television, the driving force behind wrestling for the past fifty-five years, was decades away.[50] In the print medium, wrestlers found the single most effective way to get their message to a large audience. Letters were also inexpensive. For little more than the cost of postage, an athlete could gain visibility for

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[47] Daily Times-Journal, 12 November 1918.
[48] On Boxing Day, 1918, the possibility of a handicap match featuring Arthur, Belanger, and Kage became remote, when the latter badly injured his knee at work in the Can Car facility. Kage, who also served as the Port Arthur YMCA boxing instructor, was rushed to McKellar Hospital and required surgery to repair the damage. See Daily Times-Journal, 27 December 1918, for a report of Kage's injury.
[49] Roxborough, One-Hundred, 210.
[50] For an examination of the early impact of television on the wrestling business, see Lou Thesz, Hooker, 119-124.

himself among followers of sport while "testing the waters" as to the possibility of staging a match in the cities.

Much like the scene in contemporary professional boxing, wrestlers of the 1910s and 1920s who practiced their trade at the Lakehead invariably laid claim to some manner of title. In the absence of official sanctioning bodies for professional sports, championship laurels were commonly granted to wrestlers by high profile patrons of sport. Two of the most well-known sport patrons of this period were America's Richard Kyle Fox, publisher of the National Police Gazette, and Britain's Lord Lonsdale. Although both are better known for their association with professional boxing, they also supported wrestling, bestowing title belts upon their "champions."[51] In January of 1914, Montreal's Eugene Tremblay and Young Gotch, Police Gazette and Lonsdale champions respectively, met on the mat in Fort William. The day before their bout at the Corona Theatre, both men visited the Fort William Morning Herald office with their belts. Reporters noted that Tremblay's belt of solid silver, for which he had to put up a $500 dollar deposit after defeating lightweight champion George Bothner, was far more attractive than Gotch's, whose strap bore the inscription, "Championship of Europe."[52] After visiting the newspaper office, their owners put the two belts were on display by in

[51] Richard K. Fox was an American entrepreneur of Irish descent whose National Police Gazette became a widely distributed tabloid magazine known for its tales of scandal, crime, and sport during the late nineteenth century. Fox did much to publicize the sports of boxing and, to a lesser degree, wrestling, in his magazine, devoting extensive column space to the coverage of matches and granting title belts to those that he viewed as the best combatants in their divisions. Hugh Cecil Lowtner, the fifth Earl of Lonsdale, used his considerable wealth as a landed aristocrat to support the sport of boxing during an era when it lacked respectability. Beginning in 1909, Lonsdale belts were bestowed upon the top boxers and matmen in Britain. See Roberts and Skutt, The Boxing Register, 483-484, 491.

[52] Daily Times-Journal, 15 January 1914.

Harry Pelletier's barbershop window.[53] The title-versus-title nature of their match, which had overtones of "New World versus Old World," or more specifically, Quebec versus England, found its way into promoter Ben Ross' advertising of the event.[54]

Some wrestlers, not necessarily aspiring to world or international honours, claimed titles nonetheless. Both George Walker and Ernie Arthur were rival claimants for the middleweight title of Canada. They were not, however, the only "national champions" to appear at the head of the lakes. In November of 1923, in a rare heavyweight main event, Western Canada's most prominent wrestler, Jack Taylor, faced Finland's Sulo Kokko at the Fort William Armory. Taylor, whose wrestling career in Canada had, to that point, never extended beyond the Manitoba-Ontario border, claimed the heavyweight title of the Dominion.[55] Kokko, by virtue of victories in his native country in 1920, claimed the Finnish Amateur Greco-Roman championship.[56] Ironically, when the two met, it was billed as being for a third title, "the mixed championship of the territory extending west of Toronto and east of Winnipeg!"[57]

Not all wrestlers laid stake to international or national laurels. Some were more modest in their titular pronouncements. Hans Peterson, the Port Arthur fireman who was George Walker's first opponent during the wrestling revival of 1913, was billed as "Former Champion of the American Navy."[58] Nels Moe, who wrestled out of Yorkton,

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[53] Ibid. Harry Pelletier's barber shop, Pelletier and Company Limited, was located at 410 Victoria Avenue in Fort William. See Henderson's Directory, 1929. For photos of Young Gotch and Eugene Tremblay wearing their respective belts, see the Daily News-Chronicle, 13 January 1914, and 14 January 1914.
[54] See Appendix V for a playbill of the Tremblay-Gotch match.
[55] Daily Times-Journal, 2 November 1923. A short biography of Jack Taylor is available in Greg Oliver's, The Pro-Wrestling Hall of Fame: The Canadians (Toronto: ECW Press, 2003), 61-64. Oliver's book, though an excellent resource for more recent Canadian wrestlers, contains several factual inaccuracies with respect to Taylor's career.
[56] Daily Times-Journal, 23 October 1923.
[57] Daily Times-Journal, 31 October 1923.
[58] Daily News-Chronicle, 19 June 1923.

Saskatchewan, during the early 1920s, was billed as the "Inter-State Light Heavyweight Champion of the West" prior to his 1921 appearance in Fort William.[59] "The Terrible Swede," Charles Olson had two additional titles,"Western Champion," and "Pacific Coast States and Western Champion" attached to his name on playbills prior to wrestling George Walker that same year.[60] So frequently did wrestlers have some type of title associated with their name that a main event match in which neither combatant appeared as a "champion" was a rarity at the Lakehead. Tracking down either the authenticity or the origins of each titular claim would have proved an onerous, and perhaps impossible, task for sports fans of the era.[61] From the perspective of promoting the business of wrestling, however, claiming a professional title immediately lent an air of importance to any card being staged. Championship credentials, whether genuine, exaggerated or fabricated in origin, gave their possessor the appearance of credibility in his given trade, and, in some instances, reaffirmed his connection to an ethnic community within the cities.

The twin cities, though divided along urban and ethnic lines, possessed a commonality in terms of class. As industrial centres that had developed largely due to the success of the mining, railway, grain shipping, and forestry industries, both Fort William and Port Arthur boasted a sizeable working-class population. Many members of

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[59] Daily Times-Journal, 4 March 1921.

[60] Newspaper articles in both the Daily Times-Journal and the Daily News-Chronicle make no mention of Olson holding a title other than his "Terrible" moniker. Playbills prior to his 25 February bout against George Walker at Fort William's Princess Theatre, however, attribute these championship designations to him. See the Daily Times-Journal, 23 February 1921, and the Daily News-Chronicle, 25 February 1921.

[61] Even with current levels of access to newspaper microfilm and internet newspaper databases, sorting out wrestling title claims is a difficult task. By far the most thorough effort in this direction is Royal Duncan and Gary Will's Wrestling Title Histories (Waterloo, ON: Archeus Communications, 2000), a 440 page compendium, chronologically listing title changes in every weight division, in all parts of the world, beginning in the 1860s. Despite the efforts of the authors and contributors, records from this era prior to the 1930s remain sparse. Many of the "champions" listed in this section therefore do not, as yet, appear in Duncan and Will's listings.

the working class did not share the elite, middle-class conception of sport as a character builder nor did they adhere to a Muscular Christian view that saw sport as a medium through which to mould a better servant of God. Sport, for the working class, served more practical purposes. Notable among its worldly virtues was the capacity to generate immediate financial gain without the physical exertion characteristic of work during the period.[62] Betting was therefore an important feature of wrestling during this period, and the stakes associated with a match were commonly covered by the papers.

Reports of bets were of two varieties: those being offered or actually placed by the wrestlers themselves as side-bets and those being placed by the public. Offers of money accompanied the myriad challenge letters appearing in the local papers or were mentioned in articles in the newspaper sports pages. The Daily News-Chronicle noted in 1916 that Greek wrestler Charlie Geanos and the "Idol of France" Ernie Arthur had each deposited a sum of $100 on the outcome of their match, winner to take all.[63] Prior to their second encounter on Fort William mats, the Daily-Times Journal, reported, under the headline "Wager of $200 Up by Arthur and Walker," that George Walker and Ernie Arthur were both posting sums of $100 with the paper on the outcome of their 10 June 1918 bout. The money was put forward on the condition that Walker throw Arthur twice in twenty-five minutes.[64] Similar offers were regular features of the hype prior to matches in the twin cities.

Perhaps the most unique offer of a bet centred on the matches between George Walker and Fort William's wrestling hero of the late nineteenth century, George Garrett. On 25 February 1915, Walker challenged three wrestlers to handicap bouts. Among the

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[62] Rader, American Sports, 29.
[63] Daily News-Chronicle, 7 October 1916.
[64] Daily Times-Journal, 6 June 1918.

wrestlers Walker proposed to meet was Garrett, whom he offered to throw three times in one hour.[65] Two months later, a match was arranged according to Walker's conditions. Garrett offered to bet his barber shop, along with three pairs of shoes and all his clothing, save a shirt and pair of pants, that Walker could not throw him.[66] It is unknown if Walker took the battling barber up on his bet, as the "Canadian Panther" was unable to secure victory under the handicap conditions stipulated for the contest.[67] Whether real money always changed hands between wrestlers is, in fact, a matter of general uncertainty. It appears that, at times, the sporting public viewed the supposed wagers being bandied about between mat adversaries with a degree of skepticism. Prior to the June 1918 Arthur-Walker contest, for example, the Daily Times-Journal was careful to reassure the doubters that two hundred dollars of stake money had, in fact, been deposited with the sporting editor and would be given to the winner of the match at ringside.[68]

The public's wagering on wrestling matches was not as well covered by the local print media as the betting being done by the wrestlers. The illegal nature of gambling would have made open reporting of such activities, including the identity of the principal parties involved, a *faux pas*. Nevertheless, in many instances, the papers alluded to bets being placed by a wrestler's supporters. On 3 June 1919, the Daily Times-Journal reported under the byline "Big Money is Placed on Wrestler's Bout Tonight," that, "Considerable betting is taking place on the outcome of the grappling match [between George Walker and Charlie Fraser] and Walker money doesn't go far before it is covered.

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[65] Daily Times-Journal, 25 February 1915.
[66] Daily Times-Journal, 29 April 1915.
[67] Daily Times-Journal, 1 May 1915.
[68] Daily Times-Journal, 7 June 1918.

Several bets of three figures were made last night."[69] Later that month, before the Minneapolis Greek, Alexander Mellas, met John Belanger, the paper also noted that "Two bets of considerable magnitude were placed at even money on Johnny Belanger last night to win in his finish match with Alexander Mellas."[70]

Talk of side-stakes and public betting on wrestling in the sporting press added a further element of excitement to matches, suggesting to wrestling fans that the antagonists "meant business" when they stepped on to the mat and would be willing to fight hard to ensure that their money was safe. It also provided a way for men, willing to undertake the financial risks associated with gambling, to earn sizeable amounts of money. Nonetheless, many elements of middle-class society viewed this type of behaviour as morally reprobate. Members of the middle-class Anglo elite saw gambling as socially unacceptable because it was indicative of a weak character in which people failed to rein in their desires. Gambling, it was believed, was also accompanied by other licentious activities such as drinking and violence. The negative views toward wagering often carried racial overtones, as the middle-class elite commonly associated foreigners with this type of socially-undermining behavior that was unbefitting "true" Canadians of Anglo-Protestant stock.[71]

Staging a wrestling event at the twin cities was a potentially dangerous undertaking, given that athletes and promoters used emotionally sensitive issues such as the ongoing inter-city rivalry and ethnic tensions, while encouraging the blatantly illegal activity of gambling to promote the sport. Professional wrestling would have been a

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[69] Daily Times-Journal, 3 June 1919.
[70] Daily Times-Journal, 25 June 1919.
[71] Suzanne Morton, At Odds: Gambling and Canadians 1919-1969 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 71-72.

short-lived enterprise had promoters not sought a way to temper the various competing social forces that coalesced within the confined quarters of a theatre on fight night. To that end, wrestling promoters actively targeted women as a potential clientele for wrestling cards to add a semblance of respectability to the programs.

From the beginning of wrestling's revival at the Lakehead, attempts were made to encourage female attendance at wrestling bouts. The 21 August 1913 edition of the Daily Times-Journal announced, prior to a match between George Walker and Chris Person, that "Special arrangements are being made to provide for the fannettes and it is expected that many of the fair sex will be there."[72] Similar provisions accompanied articles and advertisements throughout the period. In many instances, special sections of the theatres were reserved for women and their escorts, and women were offered tickets at reduced prices.[73] Accommodating women at wrestling cards was done as much for the sake of ensuring orderly proceedings as it was to allow female fans an opportunity to see good, scientific sport. Those of the "fair sex" wishing to attend were offered frequent assurances by the management that they could do so with every confidence that their moral sensibilities would not be offended. Promises were made to eject, for the sake of the women present, persons guilty of boisterous behaviour. Prior to George Walker's May 1921 bout with Alexander Mellas, an advertisement announced,

> Note—Men with wives or lady friends who wish to attend may do so with every confidence that they will not hear any undue shouting or calling, as Manager Farmer will have the house policed to eject any objectionable character.[74]

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[72] Daily Times-Journal, 21 August 1913.
[73] For a listing of ticket prices, including those offered to women, see Appendix I.
[74] See the playbill for the Alexander Mellas-George Walker bout in Appendix V

Attempts were also made to curtail offensive activities such as smoking, not only because it was detrimental to the athletes but also because it was "disagreeable to the ladies."[75] Most of the assurances being made to women concerned activities outside of the ring and did not apply to the violence occurring between the ropes. In actuality, professional wrestling, far from becoming a more civilized affair, became increasingly brutal over time. As long as the aggression did not extend to the non-participants, however, professional wrestling did not warrant censure on the grounds of public decency. The presence of women served to rein in wild conduct and help justify, on paternalistic grounds, restraints being placed on morally unacceptable behaviour in the cosmopolitan, working class audiences.

Between 1913 and 1926, the promotion of professional wrestling involved far more than renting a theatre and waiting for an audience to arrive. Attracting patrons to a wrestling card necessitated adopting a variety of strategies that not only appealed to the public's love of sport but also capitalized on the vices and social tensions that were present in life at the Lakehead during the early twentieth century. Promoters, newspaper writers and, of course, the wrestlers themselves all played key roles in ensuring that the business remained a successful one at the Lakehead. Professional wrestling, driven by a profit motive, saw various strategies adopted to provide publicity for an upcoming card. Even prior to a match being confirmed, the publicity machine was at work. Advance press on wrestlers who might appear in the twin cities was printed in local papers as was a virtually unending stream of challenge letters from wrestlers who hoped to gain a booking. Once a match was confirmed, advertisements were taken out in local papers by the wrestling promoters, articles appeared testifying to the skills and

[75] Daily Times-Journal, 22 May 1919.

credentials of the combatants, and photos were printed that reinforced their claims to strength and physical prowess. Wrestlers also undertook a variety of training stunts to bring attention to their upcoming performance. Wrestling's attraction was not entirely to be found on athletic grounds, however. Wrestlers and promoters consciously utilized the inter-city rivalry and "racial" tensions present in the region to draw people who were more interested in jingoism than athleticism. Gambling, although illegal during this period, was also an important feature in promoting wrestling, and many individuals were attracted to wrestling matches by the potential for a financial windfall. Attempts to attract an audience on the basis of social cleavage and moral vice, however, created the potential for violence that extended beyond the wrestling ring. During this period, women were actively recruited as audience members, as much for the calming influence they might provide to the factionalized audience as for their interest in the sport. Whatever an audience member's reason for attending a wresting card, however, wrestling could not have survived if the entertainment being presented did not live up to the hype surrounding it. It was therefore critical to ensure that the show, not just the publicity surrounding it, was worthy of attention.

Chapter V

Staging and Sustaining Professional Wrestling

Spectators at a professional wrestling card were drawn to the event for a variety of reasons. Whether fans hoped to witness a scientific exhibition of sport, see a local athlete trounce his neighboring rival, or witness one of their own kind triumph over another, no amount of promotion could sustain a business if the show being offered ultimately failed to satisfy the audiences paying to see it. It was therefore necessary to create programs designed to ensure that the audience was satisfactorily entertained. Often this involved creating a program that offered not just wrestling but also a variety of entertainment. During the period between 1913 and 1926, the technical character of wrestling matches also changed in order to arouse greater interest with the fans. Technical changes served to add further elements of drama and excitement to wrestling matches. The development of ensemble programs and the introduction of technical changes to wrestling were not, however, sufficient to ensure wrestling's local survival. Strategies were also adopted that left fans anticipating the next wrestling card in the twin cities. Collectively, these conventions, coupled with the promotional techniques employed prior to a match, ensured that professional wrestling remained a popular, and profitable, spectator sport in the region for a thirteen-year period.

Professional wrestling at the Lakehead seldom consisted merely of the premiere attraction. Local promoters devised ensemble programs of both the athletic and artistic variety to satisfy their patrons and provide an entire evening of entertainment. The undercards of wrestling contests frequently featured local wrestlers, but boxing was also regularly included in the build-up to the main event. Wrestling and boxing had a

consistently close relationship with one another at the Lakehead. This was seen not only at the professional level but in also the amateur ranks, where the annual District Championships for both sports were staged simultaneously. On several occasions, wrestlers even donned the gloves in order to fill out a program. Fort William's Alphonse Lesperance, who regularly appeared on cards during this era, engaged in at least two fistic encounters, first facing Private Burney of Winnipeg in a five round bout prior to Ernie Arthur's wrestling Jack Belanger on 17 July 1918 and, later, boxing W. Thompson in a three rounder that was a lead up to the Henry Kolln and Henry Karhunsaari main event of 14 December 1923.[1] Jack Milo, a Greek light-heavyweight wrestler hailing from Minneapolis, took up temporary residence in Fort William in March of 1924.[2] Unable to secure a wrestling bout against George Walker and having had previous experience as a prizefighter, he agreed to fight Tony Rawn in a six round match prior to Henry Karhunsaari's meeting Waino Ketonen on 15 April 1924.[3]

As the two most prominent western hand-to-hand combat arts, boxing and wrestling were logical choices to be included together in an evening's entertainment. Acts of a more strictly artistic nature were nevertheless seen frequently as well. Musical productions were regular additions to local wrestling cards. Occasionally, they not only performed before a match but during it as well. Since main event matches were commonly staged with two falls out of three securing a victory, a rest was granted to wrestlers between falls. During the 18 March 1921 George Walker and Bull Montana

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[1] Daily Times-Journal, 19 July 1918; and Daily News-Chronicle, 15 December 1923. Burney's name is reported as Buckley in the Daily News-Chronicle, dated 19 July 1918.
[2] Daily Times-Journal, 7 March 1924.
[3] Daily Times-Journal, 21 March 1924.

match, the New York Jazz Orchestra performed musical numbers during the rest periods.[4] Sulo Kokko and Henry Karhunsaari's October 1923 Greco-Roman wrestling match was staged in ten minute rounds, with the Melody Boys Orchestra performing during the multiple intermissions of their six-round contest.[5]

Preliminary attractions helped ensure that ticket holders received full value for their money while simultaneously building up excitement and anticipation for the main event. The success of a wrestling card, however, was judged not by the preliminaries that preceded the feature attraction but by the feature attraction itself. While the local media were quite generous in providing advance publicity for matches, they could also be extremely critical if a main event wrestling match did not live up to expectations. When Sulo Kokko met Henry Karhunsaari, the match ended in a six round draw. The Fort William Daily Times-Journal under the headline, "Fans Disapprove Methods of Wrestling Contestants," noted sarcastically that Kokko had "surprised the fans last night with one of the finest exhibitions of an endurance waltz that local crowds had ever paid to witness... [h]e refused absolutely to get down to grips with Karhunsaari, the little Minnesota marvel."[6] The article concluded with an assessment of the audience's reaction to the grappler's efforts, reporting, "The fans were genuinely disappointed and refused to give the men a cheer at the conclusion of the bout and walked stolidly out of the hall."[7]

Similarly, when Ernie Arthur finally took to the mat with heavyweight William Kage, his superior technical acumen could not overcome the larger man's strength and bulk. Kage, suffering from apparent dehydration, spend most of the one hour and forty

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[4] Daily Times-Journal, 18 March 1921.
[5] Daily News-Chronicle, 26 October 1923.
[6] Daily Times-Journal, 26 October 1923.
[7] Ibid.

minute match face-down on the canvas as Arthur tried to turn him for the pin.[8] The Daily News-Chronicle, describing the match as "a long drawn-out affair" also proclaimed, "The [Corona] theatre people were very unfortunate in having to stop the showing of 'Mickey' which is an excellent photoplay, in order to stage the wrestling match."[9] The Daily Times-Journal gave voice to public discontent over the Arthur-Kage bout in a letter by one J. Jordon, published ten days later:

> I was at the ring side when Arthur wrestled Bill Kage last Friday Dec. 5 and I will say that I will never pay a price of 10c to see Kage wrestle again. And I would like to ask Ernie Arthur to use a little common sense before he wrestles a dead horse.[10]

Wrestling fans at the Lakehead evidently demanded more than a slow-paced exhibition of technical wrestling. They demanded action. Favourably received matches were invariably described with adjectives that attested to the speed of the principals in addition to their technical prowess.

Fast paced and action packed wrestling was always well received among fans in the region, but, over time, the nature of what constituted "action" changed. In the early years of wrestling's revival at the Lakehead, matches were cleanly-fought exhibitions, where the emphasis was placed on pinning an opponent to the mat or placing him in a submission hold that would require him to concede a fall. Over time, however, professional wrestling matches became increasingly rough. Pinning became less

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[8] Daily Times-Journal, 6 December 1919.
[9] Daily News-Chronicle, 6 December 1919.
[10] J. Jordon, quoted in the Daily Times-Journal, 16 December 1919. Jordon was apparently a wrestler himself. Despite his apparent dislike of Kage's wrestling tactics, Jordon later issued a challenge to meet him, either in public or in private, for a purse of up to $1000. The name J. Jordon was a pseudonym, as the author of these letters was only willing to make his real identity known on the day of the proposed match. Perhaps owing to Kage's lackluster performance and the poor attendance for his match with Arthur, he never again headlined a card in the Twin Cities. For Jordon's challenge letter to Kage, see the Daily Times-Journal, 19 December 1919.

common as wrestlers opted more regularly for submission holds and tactics specifically intended to wear their adversary down and inflict pain.

The evolution from clean, scientific wrestling to a rougher style of grappling was a gradual one, occurring after the end of the First World War. Hints of this change were seen in George Walker's second local match with Ottawa's Charlie Fraser, on 3 June 1919. The sporting press, although acknowledging the technical merits of the two participants, noted that Walker repeatedly attacked his opponent's arm, injured in the first fall with a series of hammerlocks, until, "Fraser, almost fainting with pain conceded the [second] fall."[11] The Daily News-Chronicle described the contest as "particularly grueling."[12]

By 1921, local matches commonly featured copious amounts of roughhousing. On 26 February, following George Walker's victory over "Terrible Swede" Charles Olson, the Daily Times-Journal reported the violent nature of their match under the headline, "Wrestling Match Splendid Exhibition---of TORTURE."[13] Both twin city dailies went into explicit detail with regard to the tactics employed by the combatants, which included bending fingers, rubbing ears, grinding the jaw into the opponent's back, and hitting the nose; all of this in addition to the regular arsenal of submissions, including headlocks, armlocks, and toeholds.[14] Reflecting on the spectacle of violence, the Fort William Daily Times-Journal sports reporter who attended the match poetically mused:

> There was something remindful in this particular match of the gladiatorial days when thumbs down from the spectators meant the death of the under-man in the arena. The only difference was that in the Roman days the under-dog was given a swift and painless end. Under modern conditions the old

[11] Daily Times-Journal, 4 June 1919.
[12] Daily News-Chronicle, 4 June 1919.
[13] Daily Times-Journal, 26 February 1921.
[14] Daily Times-Journal, 26 February 1921; Daily News-Chronicle, 26 February 1921.

> gladiator wouldn't have a look in. Bring the savagest of savages, and put him in the wrestling ring against Olson and Walker, and the poor innocent would be a babe in arms, even if he were allowed to use his teeth and nails. He would be howling for mercy in five minutes.[15]

Heightened violence did not appear to deter wrestling fans from turning out to matches. On the contrary, the remaining months of 1921 saw at least sixteen more professional cards staged at the Lakehead, a number that was, to that point, without precedent. Several of the matches staged in 1921, notably those featuring George Walker's coming to grips with Montreal's Noe Choquette and the Finnish Champion, Henry Karhunsaari, were of a similarly vicious nature.[16]

The changes in professional wrestling at the Lakehead were in keeping with developments occurring in other regions where the sport was a popular pastime. In areas as far away as Melbourne, Australia, wrestlers were employing similar tactics. Much like at the Lakehead, Melbourne fans responded well to changes in the sport, filling the stands of the West Melbourne Stadium on a near-weekly basis.[17] Professional wrestlers around the globe, it appears, were adjusting their methods to satisfy their audiences during this period. Such a phenomenon was not unique to wrestling, however, as other sports commonly adapted their style of play, not only to ensure victory, but also to make it a more exciting sport.[18]

The success of a wrestling card at the Lakehead depended greatly on assembling good preliminaries and staging main-event matches that were of an entertaining

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[15] Daily Times-Journal, 26 February 1921.
[16] For the technical details of these matches, see the Daily Times-Journal, 21 March 1921 and 14 May 1921 respectively.
[17] Rickard, "The Spectacle of Excess," 132-133.
[18] Examples of this phenomenon from other sports are myriad. Consider for instance, the adoption of the forward pass in football during the 1920s and 1930s and, later, the proliferation of "slam dunking" in basketball. Such methods not only enhanced the arsenal of tactics available to the players in their respective sports but allowed for more exciting play.

character. Methods were also required, however, to make certain that the wrestling business would enjoy *ongoing* success in the cities, beyond that which could be provided by staging a single card. It was therefore necessary to ensure that the established local stars were never out of the public's consciousness for too long, and that they, as well as visiting grapplers, would be able to make more than a single, isolated appearance on mats at the head of the lakes.

Professional wrestling's success at Fort William and Port Arthur between 1913 and 1926, much as in earlier eras, was driven largely by the presence of strong local talent. Wrestlers with ties to the communities, however, could not hope to make a full-time living in their chosen trade purely on the basis of participating in locally-staged cards. Full-time professional wrestling in the 1910s and 1920s, was, as it remains in the twenty-first century, a traveling business. Some local professional wrestlers, notably John Belanger, did not pursue wrestling as a full-time, or even seasonal, vocation. Instead, he retained his position as a grain trade worker, only wrestling professionally when the opportunity for a local match appeared.[19] In the case of George Walker, though, wrestling was a more regular form of employment, and frequent travel was therefore necessary. In some instances, it could be many months for Walker between wrestling dates in the twin cities. As a result of the cyclical nature of professional wrestling, Walker retained two other bases of operations during this period: Vancouver and Ottawa. Walker had ties to both of these communities. Despite his extended absences from Fort William, sports fans were rarely able to forget the accomplishments of the "Canadian Panther." This was owing largely to the existence of a sympathetic press that was willing to publicize his activities on an regular basis. Between 19

[19] Daily-Times-Journal, 10 January 1918.

September 1919 and 25 February 1921, George Walker, though spending time in Fort William, did not wrestle in the region. Nevertheless, during that span of time, at least sixteen of Walker's Canadian bouts were reported in the Daily Times-Journal. Similar reports appeared concerning the ongoing activities of Ernie Arthur during his absences from the city. Since sports fans were kept up to date on the whereabouts of their local champions, they, and the sport that they practiced, were never too far from the public's consciousness. Fans, instead of forgetting their local stars, could look with anticipation for their eventual return to the Lakehead.

As with much of the wrestling-related press in the local papers, the source of the news was not always clear. Some of the reports on Walker and Arthur's escapades were attributed to the Canadian Associated Press but, in many instances, no sources were given for them. With respect to reports emanating from the West Coast, however, it is possible that many were being sent to Fort William by Jack Hardy, a former resident of the city and, by 1920, editor of the Vancouver Sun.[20] Ultimately, however, the decision to print these reports was at the discretion of the local sports editor. It can therefore be said that the newspapers did much to help promote the exploits of wrestlers, not only in the build-up to a match but also during times of relative inactivity on the local scene.

When the staging of wrestling cards at the Lakehead looked like a financially viable proposition, a variety of strategies were employed to help guarantee that wrestlers received more than a single night's booking. The goal of local promoters appears to have been to hold a series of cards, all within a relatively short period of time. This benefited both the wrestler and the promoter. Since a wrestler's bookings were often based upon the acceptance of challenges, wrestling could be a tenuous business. A second, or perhaps

[20] Daily Times-Journal, 23 March 1920

a third, booking would ensure future income. Likewise, it was of benefit to the promoters because it eliminated the need to bring in and publicize another wrestler. The scheduling of return bouts was an important feature of the local wrestling business as far back as 1894, but it was achieved through a variety of creative means after 1913.

One of the more common methods of ensuring a return match was to schedule a handicap bout between two wrestlers that would end in an unsatisfactory conclusion. The wrestlers would then be brought together shortly thereafter to engage in a "finish match," free of limitations being imposed on either party. This approach was seen in the spring of 1915, when George Walker faced George Garrett. In their first match, staged on 30 April, Walker was to throw Garret three times in sixty minutes. Although he was able to gain an initial fall in just under twenty-five minutes, Walker was himself pinned by his older and larger opponent during the second stanza of wrestling. Walker immediately claimed that the wrestling barber had used unfair tactics to secure victory and issued a challenge in the Daily Times-Journal for a finish match, this time with no holds barred.[21] After some wrangling over financial issues, a second bout, this time under the conditions demanded by Walker, was scheduled for May 21. This time, the younger wrestler won easily, gaining two straight falls in just over forty-one minutes. At the close of their match, in an effort to secure a third encounter, Walker offered to throw Garret three times within 30 minutes for a side bet of up to $500.[22] Perhaps realizing that he had seen his

[21] Daily Times-Journal, 1 May 1915. Under catch-as-catch-can rules, a no holds barred match permitted the use of any holds, including chokes or strangles, against an opponent. Unlike the Brazilian sport of vale tudo, or early mixed martial arts contests during the 1990s, however, no holds barred did not mean that any tactic was permitted to gain victory. Punching, kicking, headbutting and otherwise striking an opponent were still prohibited.

[22] Daily Times-Journal, 22 May 1915.

last payday on Fort William mats, no match was ever arranged between the near-geriatric Garret and his younger opponent.

"Greek Idol" Jim Londos, one of the most well-known heavyweight grapplers in North America, visited Fort William in May of 1921 and was able to secure two matches within a week against George Walker under similar circumstances. Their first bout was staged as a handicap on Victoria Day, under the stipulation that the "Greek Idol" throw his Canadian opponent twice within seventy-five minutes. Londos was able to gain one fall after fifty-one minutes but was himself brought close to defeat in the expiring moments of the match after a series of grueling headlocks.[23] A non-handicap return bout was immediately scheduled to be held three days later. This time, Londos beat Walker in two straight falls using Japanese armlocks.[24]

Both the public and the sporting press appear to have been cognizant of the possibility that, even if the bout was not completely fixed, Londos may have been purposely prolonging its duration. Nevertheless, they did not seem incensed by the matter. The sports writer covering the bout for the Daily News-Chronicle opined:

> [E]ven had the Greek been able to apply the Japanese hold in the first few minutes of either match and won thereby he would hardly have been doing the right thing by the fans, for he was brought here from New York to give an exhibition of the science of wrestling and he would not have been doing that without taking sufficient time to demonstrate ... his very extensive repertoire. It was plain that Walker had met a better man but he did his best at all times and the wrestling fans were well satisfied that they had been treated to a fine exhibition of the art.[25]

An appreciation appears to have existed, even during this period, for the performance aspects of professional wrestling. A wrestler could carry an inferior opponent, even

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[23] Daily Times-Journal, 25 May 1921.
[24] Daily Times-Journal, 28 May 1921; Daily News-Chronicle, 28 May 1921.
[25] Daily News-Chronicle, 28 May 1921.

though doing so would run contrary to the spirit of competitive athletics, provided that the latter tried his best and the better man won. Sometimes, however, the public was not so forgiving of wrestlers trying to secure return bouts.

When Ernie Arthur faced Michigan wrestler Jack Hill in a handicap bout in March of 1920, he did so under the stipulation that he would throw the Copper Country wrestler twice in two hours. Referee J.H. Lang stopped the match after both men had secured one fall, stating that, since Arthur had been pinned in the second period, he had lost the contest. The total time both men spent on the mat did not exceed twenty-one minutes. The Daily Times-Journal admonished all who were involved with the match, warning them that staging an inconclusive handicap match followed by a finish match was a tactic that was "worn down to the bone" and that new methods were needed to keep fans interested in the sport, lest it lose all support at the Lakehead.[26] No finish bout was ever held between Arthur and Hill. The fact that the Londos-Walker matches were later staged using the formula of holding a handicap followed by a finish bout, however, did not seem to dissuade local residents from attending both contests. Fans appear to have been willing to overlook such tactics if the matches associated with them were fast-paced and entertaining spectacles. Regardless, different methods were, in fact, employed to ensure a continued interest in the wrestling business.

Henry Karhunsaari's series of title bouts, first with Henry Kolln in December of 1921 and later with Waino Ketonen in April of 1924, demonstrated that more creative means could be adopted in order to secure a local return bout. The tactic employed in both instances was to stage a return match on the basis of a knockout. Such methods, although seen sparingly at the Lakehead, were not without historical precedent in North

[26] Daily Times-Journal, 19 March 1920.

American professional wrestling. The most famous example of this was when Frank Gotch was defeated by Wisconsin's Fred Beel in 1906.[27] At the twin cities, however, this approach was not seen for another fifteen years.

Henry Karhunsaari's first finish match with Kolln was ruled a draw when the chief of police stepped into the ring to stop the bout. Both men, at that point, had secured one fall a piece, with the second going to Karhunsaari. The "Ferocious Finn" had evened the match up by throwing Kolln directly on his head with a flying mare and pinning him. Ringside doctors took five minutes to resuscitate Kolln. Although he expressed his willingness to continue, police intervention precluded the possibility of staging a third and final fall.[28] Kolln was granted a rematch, and was defeated, cleanly this time, in a closely contested bout.[29]

The "Ferocious Finn's" two matches with Waino Ketonen provided variations on a similar theme. In their first match, held in Port Arthur, Ketonen was challenger for Karhunsaari's world middleweight title. In a bout described as "replete with breathless moments of excitement, demonstrations of endurance, stamina and pure grit," Waino Ketonen was able to gain the first fall from his fellow countryman. In the second period, however, Karhunsaari used a flying mare technique to hurl Ketonen over his shoulder. Ketonen landed on his head and neck and was pinned, evening the match at one fall a piece. The third period saw Ketonen return to the mat in a visibly groggy state, allowing Karhunsaari to quickly hurl him to the mat with another flying mare to gain the deciding

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[27] Beel won the American heavyweight title by pinning a dazed and delirious Gotch after the latter hit his head on the outside of the ring. Gotch later went on to reclaim his laurels by trouncing Beel in a return engagement. For further details on these bouts see Fleischer, Milo to Londos, 96-97; and Chapman, Frank Gotch, 52-53.

[28] Daily Times-Journal, 7 December 1923.

[29] Daily Times-Journal, 15 December 1923.

fall.[30] Ketonen challenged immediately for a return match, which was staged nine days later in Fort William. In the second bout, both men secured one fall a piece. In battling for the third fall, Karhunsaari once again attempted the flying mare. Ketonen, however, grabbed the ring ropes to avert the technique, causing the "Ferocious Finn" to lose his balance. Ketonen fell directly on top of his antagonist to secure a pin and the middleweight championship.[31]

Difficulties arise in ascertaining the authenticity of these bouts. It could be that all the matches were set-ups, with their finishes purposely arranged in advance to ensure a profitable return. Conversely, it is possible, following Mike Chapman's reasoning with respect to the Frank Gotch-Fred Beel encounters, that the wrestlers and promoters simply capitalized on legitimate injuries to stage a return. Evidently, in the case of the first Karhunsaari and Kolln clash, the action in the ring was convincing enough to local police authorities for them to call a halt to the action. The fact that Karhunsaari used the same technique to finish the bout suggests, however, that elements of the bouts may have been staged. Speculation aside, all four matches, as business ventures, were successes. The press applauded each of them as exciting encounters, and the crowd, as reflected in newspaper reports, was satisfied with the wrestlers' performances. Equally important from a business perspective, attendance, particularly for the Karhunsaari-Ketonen bouts, was excellent. The first encounter drew two thousand spectators, the largest crowd ever assembled to view a wrestling match in the twin cities to that point.[32] The return match was attended by approximately five hundred people, which was still a good number by local standards. It appears, once again, that fans were willing to pay the price of

[30] Daily Times-Journal, 16 April 1924; Daily News-Chronicle, 16 April 1924.
[31] Daily Times-Journal, 25 April 1924; Daily News-Chronicle, 25 April 1924.
[32] Daily Times-Journal, 16 April 1924.

admission for return bouts if the first engagement was suitably exciting to draw interest in a second encounter. Ultimately, then, the ability to ensure the future staging of wrestling bouts depended on the wrestlers themselves and their capacity to entertain local audiences with exciting performances that would make paying to see them repeatedly a worthwhile expenditure.

Professional wrestling, as it existed between 1913 and 1926, employed an extensive number of strategies to ensure that it thrived as an economic enterprise at the Lakehead. Though the publicity generated before a card was essential in attracting people to the venue where the wrestling was being staged, wrestling could not have survived if the entertainment itself were not satisfying to the audience. Preliminary attractions were assembled that helped build up excitement prior to the main event and ensure that the audience received a full evening of entertainment. Since the success of a wrestling card was judged largely on the main event, however, wrestling itself had to adapt to ensure that the action being provided was satisfying to the audience. Following World War I, professional wrestling underwent technical changes that involved the utilization of rougher methods of grappling within the ring. Those with a vested interest in the survival of professional wrestling also adopted various strategies to ensure that the business maintained a long-term appeal among the Lakehead's sporting populace. Collectively, these methods, coupled with the promotional hype prior to a match, made professional wrestling a popular spectator attraction in the twin cities for thirteen years. Wrestling's popularity was not, however, to be permanent. By 1926, the sport was entering a period of decline. When professional wrestling returned to the region seven years later it would do so in a form that not only revolutionized the way matches were

staged, but also ended the intimate relationship that wrestling once had with the communities at the Lakehead.

Chapter VI

Requiem and Re-Birth

On 20 April 1926, Waino Ketonen, popular middleweight Finnish wrestler, world title claimant, and principal combatant in the two most heavily attended bouts ever staged at the Lakehead, stepped on to the mat against Swedish grappler Fritz Hanson at the Port Arthur Armory. Their match had many of the trappings of the previous contests staged at the Lakehead in the thirteen years since professional wrestler George Walker's first appearance in the region. Newspaper reports played heavily on ethnic rivalry, billing the bout as "Swede versus Finn" and adding that "The Swedish residents of the two cities are backing Hanson practically to a man."[1] The presence of public wagering, frequently a background feature to local wrestling matches, was once more brought to the fore by the Daily News-Chronicle which noted, "Finnish residents of the city firmly believe that Ketonen is the better man of the two and are willing to say so with more than words."[2] Prior to staging the main attraction, local Finnish wrestlers Tauno (Karl) Maki and John Ursin engaged in a ten minute bout, and an exhibition of lasso tricks was performed by cowboy entertainer, "Shorty" Campbell. The main event match itself featured a display of technical submission wrestling, with the occasional smattering of rough tactics added to the action. After one hour and forty minutes in the ring and unable to extricate himself from a hammerlock, Hanson surrendered the second and final fall of the bout. Waino Ketonen helped his defeated opponent to his feet and shook his hand.[3] That final act of sportsmanship marked the end of an era for professional wrestling in the twin cities.

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[1] Daily News-Chronicle, 20 April 1926.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Daily Times-Journal, 21 April 1926.

Following the Ketonen-Hanson bout, professional wrestling was not seen at the head of the lakes for seven years. This long period of hibernation was a result of several factors. Many of the forces previously driving local wrestling were no longer present in Fort William and Port Arthur. Although the Finnish community succeeded in keeping amateur wrestling alive, prevailing attitudes of the period made it difficult to maintain the business of wrestling on the basis of Finnish talent. Further, other forms of entertainment were emerging in the twin cities during the 1920s that came to supersede wrestling in terms of popularity. As a result of these developments, professional wrestling disappeared. During its absence, professional wrestling underwent radical changes in North America. By the time it reappeared in the region, it did so in a form that bore little resemblance to the wrestling that had existed prior to April of 1926.

The changes to professional wrestling were significant in that they revolutionized the way wrestling cards were staged and the way matches were performed, allowing them to compete with the other forms of entertainment that had emerged as rivals for the public's entertainment dollars. For residents of the Lakehead, however, the new incarnation of wrestling represented a clear break from the past. Whereas professional wrestling had previously been a locally operated business featuring athletes with clear ties to both communities, after 1933 this was no longer the case. Although some of the methods that had been used previously to promote wrestling in the region remained, by 1933 Thunder Bay was merely another stopping point in a business over which control was becoming increasingly centralized. The necessity for professional wrestling to be competitive with other forms of entertainment ultimately robbed it of many of the features that had made it a significant local phenomenon in the 1910s and early 1920s.

By April of 1926, professional wrestling was already showing signs of local decline. No professional matches had been staged in the twin cities since Waino Ketonen defeated Henry Karhnsaari exactly two years earlier. In Fort William, two of the driving forces behind wrestling's success, George Walker and Ernie Arthur, left the city and relocated to other regions of the country. In the ensuing years, no Fort William wrestlers emerged who were able to capture the public's interest in the same fashion. With the departure of Walker and Arthur after 1921, Finnish wrestlers became the dominant force in both professional and amateur wrestling at the Lakehead. The virtual monopoly that Finnish wrestlers assumed over the sport presented difficulties for sporting enthusiasts, however.

The Finnish population of the region grew considerably during the early 1920s following the end of the Finnish Civil War, but the majority of the population still remained non-Finnish, and predominantly British, in origin.[4] Racism toward "foreigners" continued to be a pervasive issue throughout the 1920s and early 1930s within Anglo-Canadian society. The Canadian government, although permitting the entry of large numbers of continental Europeans during this period, did so primarily because a sufficient number of workers could not be lured from Britain to work in agricultural and industrial labour positions.[5] The new immigrants were often viewed with hostility by religious groups, Canadian patriotic institutions, and members of mainstream society. The willingness of immigrants to work for extremely low wages, in their view, was forcing citizens of British origin into unemployment while their strange customs were eroding the values on which Canada had been founded. Feelings of anger

[4] For population statistics from this period, see Epp, "The Achievement of Community," 197.
[5] Avery, "Dangerous Foreigners," 96-97.

toward immigrant groups became particularly intense during the late 1920s, when railway companies, which had assumed control over the recruitment of immigrants to Canada, brought hundreds of thousands of Europeans into the nation to settle the west.[6]

At the Lakehead, the large number of Finnish immigrants who arrived during the 1920s were a visible reminder of the changing character of Canadian society. Although their presence greatly enhanced the depth of local wrestling talent, among mainstream Anglo-Canadians Finns were also associated with less desirable activities such as radical labour politics and worker protest. The fact that both the *Nahjus* and *Isku* athletic clubs were closely aligned with the IWW and CPC confirmed the link between Finns, labour radicalism, and wrestling. After 1921, professional wrestling was kept alive by Finnish talent, but evidence suggests that the majority of the Lakehead population shied away from major wrestling cards because the wrestlers, and the audience viewing their matches, were now composed of non-English speaking and potentially radical "foreigners." Without local wrestlers that the mainstream population of sporting enthusiasts could identify with and rally around, the business of professional wrestling lost much of its previous appeal.

By the early 1930s, even the sport-loving Finns were not as actively involved in both amateur or professional wrestling as they had been in the previous decade. The Depression brought great hardship to the Finnish community, as it did to most communities within Canadian working-class society. Finnish immigrants, however, were particularly vulnerable because many were employed in the construction, forestry, and railway industries, the sectors of the economy most grievously impacted by the economic downturn of the 1930s. Further, Finns, unlike many other ethnic groups, immigrated to

[6] For a detailed discussion of the Anglo-Canadian backlash to European settlement, see Ibid., 106-108.

Canada independently and unaccompanied by family members. Without the economic support structure of an extended family unit, many immigrants had nobody to rely on for assistance during periods of poverty and unemployment.[7] Facing severe economic hardship, large numbers of Finnish immigrants began returning to their homeland, the dream of a better life in Canada having been unfulfilled. While some returned to Finland grudgingly, others were forced to do so against their will. Between 1931 and 1933, 757 Finns were deported by Canadian authorities on the basis of vagrancy or political affiliation.[8] During the same period, Finns were also being lured in large numbers to Soviet Karelia, a region east of Finland that offered both jobs and the promise of life in a socialist utopia. The mass migration to Soviet Karelia, totaling nearly 2,300 individuals between 1931 and 1934, represented the single largest peacetime departure of a single ethnic group in Canadian history.[9] Many sports-minded people, including prominent athletes and individuals associated with Finnish sports at the Lakehead, departed to Karelia. With a declining population base and fewer athletes present, the Finnish sports movement suffered.[10]

The decline of professional wrestling's popularity at the Lakehead was not, however, exclusively attributable to the dominance, and then eventual absence, of the Finns. During the mid-1920s, other recreational diversions were emerging to take the place of wrestling. One of these was boxing. Boxing, like wrestling, experienced

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[7] Varpu Lindstorm, "The Finnish Canadian Communities During the Decade of Depression," Ron Harpelle, Varpu Lindstrom and Alex Pogorelskin eds., Karelian Exodus: Finnish Communities in North America and Soviet Karelia During the Depression Era (Beaverton, ON: Aspasia Books, 2004), 17.
[8] Ibid., 21-22.
[9] A detailed examination of topics related to the Finnish-Canadian mass migration to Karelia, including justifications for departure, the role of recruiting agencies in attracting workers, and the tragedies that befell Finnish residents of the Karelian region are contained in Ibid. See also Jalava, "Radicalism," 231-246, for an overview of the subject.
[10] Voutilainen, "Historic Events," 5.

intermittent periods of popularity. During the first decade of the twentieth century, boxing fell into local disrepute because of a series of "shady encounters" staged before the public. Neither the fans, nor the police, appeared willing to support the sport as a result.[11] During World War I, boxing recovered and cards were held under the auspices of the 141st 'Bull Moose' Battalion, featuring fighters connected with the military.[12] Boxing was also staged as a preliminary attraction to local wrestling matches by 1917.[13] The 1920s saw a tremendous rise in the popularity of boxing across North America, spurred on by the widespread legalization of the sport and the emergence of such colourful stars as heavyweight champion, the "Manassa Mauler" Jack Dempsey.[14] Reflecting its international appeal during the period, boxing began experiencing unprecedented success at the Lakehead. By the middle of the decade, it was eclipsing wrestling as a popular participant and spectator sport. Evidence for the growth in boxing, relative to wrestling, can be seen in the District Boxing and Wrestling Championships, staged annually, beginning in 1923. At the initial meet, the number of entrants for wrestling was less then half that for boxing. In the ensuing years, the gap between the two sports widened, as the number of wrestling entries remained static or decreased while the number of boxing entrants doubled. By the late 1920s, local professional boxers such as Angie McLeod were entertaining visiting challengers in much the same way that George Walker and Ernie Arthur had previously done on the mat.

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[11] Daily Times-Journal, 15 November 1917.
[12] See, for example, the Daily Times-Journal, 21 August 1916.
[13] Likewise, wrestling was often featured on the undercard of boxing events.
[14] The 1920s are widely considered to be the "Golden Age" of professional boxing. Records for both attendance and gate revenue were shattered during the decade, and newspaper coverage, which had long been generous for boxing, became even more extensive. See Sam Andre and Nat Fleischer, A Pictorial History of Boxing (New York: Bonanza Books, 1981), 95-114; and Peter Arnold, History of Boxing (Secaucus, NJ: Chartwell Books, 1985), 59-68, for a discussion of boxing during the 1920s. For a detailed examination of Jack Dempsey's boxing career and his cultural significance, see Roger Kahn, Jack Dempsey and the Roaring '20s (New York: Harvest Books, 1999).

Wrestling had more to contend with than boxing during the late 1920s and early 1930s with respect to entertainment. Competition for consumer dollars came from several venues outside of the sporting world. Notable among the varied forms of entertainment offered at the Lakehead were movies. Movies emerged as an important form of entertainment before the First World War but often appeared as one of several attractions presented in the course of an evening's entertainment. Because they were inexpensive to attend and catered to English and non-English speaking patrons alike, silent films quickly became a popular stand-alone form of entertainment in the city.[15] By the 1920s, movies, with ever-increasing production values, were driving traveling entertainment acts to the brink of extinction in Ontario because they could offer the public better performers, more action, and a greater variety of experiences, all at a fraction of the cost of live theatre.[16] Wrestling, like other forms of live entertainment, was expensive to attend relative to motion pictures.[17] For example, ticket prices for the motion picture, Scaramouche, being staged at the Orpheum theatre in April of 1924, were advertised as ranging from $0.25 to $0.75. Ticket prices for the return bout between Waino Ketonen and Henry Karhunsaari, staged two days earlier, ranged from $1.00 to $2.00. Additionally, the matches, despite featuring an element of roughhousing, were primarily demonstrations of scientific mat work. This presented difficulties for spectators who were not educated in the technical aspects of the sport. Since more

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[15] Margaret Frenette and Patricia Jasen, "Community Through Culture," Thorold Tronrud and Ernie Epp, eds., Thunder Bay: From Rivalry to Unity (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Inc., 1995), 150. For more on the early development of live and motion picture theatre in Port Arthur and Fort William, see Mark Chochla, "The Golden Years of Theatre in Thunder Bay," Papers and Records 7 (1979): 32-39.

[16] Robert B. Scott, "Professional Performers and Companies," Ann Saddlemyer and Richard Plant, eds., Later Stages: Essays in Ontario Theatre from the First World War to the 1970s (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 30.

[17] See the Daily Times-Journal, 26 April 1924.

readily-intelligible action could be found on the silver screen, wrestling became increasingly less popular. As a result, wrestling had to transform itself to compete with its more exciting competition. Such modifications to the business of wrestling were not quick to present themselves in the region. Accordingly, professional wrestling, now with so many impediments to its success, disappeared.

As professional wrestling settled into hibernation at the Lakehead, the transformation that was necessary to its survival occurred elsewhere on the continent. In the Midwestern United States, revolutionary changes were implemented in the business of wrestling, not only with respect to how wrestling matches were staged but also to the way that the entire business of wrestling was conducted. Many of these innovations were the brainchild of two individuals: Joseph "Toots" Mondt and Billy Sandow.[18] Mondt, although himself a highly skilled technical wrestler, believed that more money could be made by both wrestlers and promoters if wrestling matches were altered to provide more action and excitement for the audience. Mondt combined elements of wrestling with boxing, brawling, and a healthy dose of burlesque to create what was termed "Slam Bang Western Style Wrestling." Wrestling matches, previously highly technical and often lengthy affairs like those seen at the Lakehead between 1913 and 1926, became fast-paced spectacles with shorter time limits. New dramatic elements were also added to wrestling matches, including flashy holds and spectacular moves.[19] Mondt's innovations during this period were not limited to what was being presented to the public in the

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[18] Joseph "Toots" Mondt was born in Iowa in 1896 and raised in Greeley, Colorado. He was trained in the finer points of wrestling by Martin "Farmer" Burns, former world heavyweight catch-as-catch-can wrestling champion and coach to the legendary Frank Gotch as well as Henry Kolln. Billy Sandow, born Max Baumann, was a promoter and wrestling manager to Ed "Strangler" Lewis, one of the foremost heavyweight wrestlers on the 1910s and 1920s.

[19] Griffin, Fall Guys, 49-50.

wrestling ring, however. He also conceived the idea of creating a packaged show in which many wrestlers toured together under the management of a single promoter. Wrestlers had previously acted as independent entrepreneurs, seeking out their own matches. With the creation of packaged shows, promoters now employed a stable of wrestlers and managed their bookings. Billy Sandow ensured that wrestlers remained under his control by formulating contracts to guarantee their loyalty.[20]

The new "Slam Bang" version of the sport was well received by the public and soon spread to the eastern United States and other regions of the country. As legitimate wrestling prowess became increasingly less important, athletes from other disciplines were lured into the professional wrestling business, including football players such as Wayne "Big" Munn and "Dynamite" Gus Sonnenberg. Both Munn and Sonnenberg, as well-known athletes, brought further publicity to the fast-growing business of "Slam Bang" professional wrestling. [21] Not everyone was receptive to the changes to wrestling, however. Hjalmir Lundin, a veteran Swedish wrestler who first arrived in North America in 1893, frequently expressed his disapproval of the modern methods of wrestling in his personal memoirs. Alluding to such men as Munn and Sonnenberg, Lundin asserted, "Football players may turn to wrestling, but that is not to say that they *are* wrestlers, until

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[20] Ibid., 50; Thesz, Hooker, 51.

[21] During professional wrestling's transitional period in the mid-1920s to early 1930s, not all wrestlers were readily accepting of promoters' desires to have them lose to inferior athletes from non-wrestling backgrounds. Promoters often had to devise methods to protect unskilled "champions" from being double-crossed in the ring by legitimate wrestlers who either sought to discredit them on behalf of another wrestling promoter or make a name for themselves. In April 1925, Wayne Munn, then holding a version of the world's heavyweight title, was soundly and unexpectedly defeated by forty-six-year-old wrestler Stanislaus Zbyszko in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Gus Sonnenberg faced similar threats four years later from Nebraskan John Pesek and Richard Shikat, although neither man was successful in luring Sonnenberg into the ring for a legitimate match. For a detailed description of the circumstances surrounding these incidents, see Thesz, Hooker, 53, 56-57; and Hewitt, Catch Wrestling, 183. For a description of the bout between Munn and Zbyszko, see the Daily Times-Journal, 16 April 1925.

they put their full quota of training into it- and I have yet to meet one who has!"[22] Some scribes writing on the subject were quite poetic in their lament over the changes to the sport of wrestling. One author lamented:

> The great 'grunt' and 'groan' men who engage in this once manly art are not endowed with any degree of skill, and if there was any art in their performance, the present day audiences would soon raise a clamor that would decimate the ranks of the 'vaudevillians' that now wear the mantle of Gotch and Zbyszko and all the other illustrious line of wrestlers who labored in that then thankless Vinyard, for 'peanuts.' They, however, have the satisfaction of knowing that they did a work that required ability.[23]

Despite the misgivings of some critics, the new brand of professional wrestling quickly eclipsed its predecessor. On 4 May 1929, it was introduced to Canadian fans in Toronto. The card, staged at the Arena Gardens under the promotion of Ivan Michaelov, featured three heavyweight wrestling bouts and was described as the first card in the city "After an absence of several years."[24] Attendance for the initial show was modest, but the number of spectators increased with each successive program. By October, wrestling cards were attracting upwards of 7,600 people in Toronto.[25] Michaelov staged his wrestling shows on a weekly basis and offered the fans the features that had made "Slam Bang" wrestling popular in the United States: a rotating stable of wrestlers, several matches in a single evening, and copious excitement.

With wrestling gaining favour in the provincial capital, it soon expanded into other centres in southern Ontario. Hamilton began holding weekly cards beginning on 23 August 1929, and shortly theeafter, other cities including Brantford, Kitchener, and

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[22] Lundin, On the Mat and Off, 145.
[23] Arthur Hobart Farrar, Police Wrestling (New York: Padell Book Co., 1942), 7.
[24] Toronto Globe, 6 May 1929.
[25] Brantford Expositor, 18 October 1929.

London were added to Ivan Michaelov's circuit.[26] With a successful wrestling territory established in central Canada, Michaelov moved out to the West. On 24 June 1931, Winnipeg received its first taste of the new system of wrestling, much to the delight of the fans in attendance, who responded loudly and enthusiastically to the raucous antics in the ring.[27] Though the new style of wrestling was gaining favour across the country, it was nearly two years before it was to be witnessed by fans at the Lakehead. In February of 1933, Michaelov, whose grapplers were en route to Toronto after a successful western tour, made arrangements to stage a card at the Port Arthur Armory. Fans who witnessed Michaelov's 24 February 1933 card were visited with a very different spectacle than had been seen at the Armories nearly seven years prior.

Michaelov's premiere card at the Armory featured two bouts. In the first, Howard "Hangman" Cantonwine did battle with Ukrainian grappler Vanka Zelekniak. Initially, fans did not know how to respond to the action that was presented to them in the ring, many having never been exposed to the new methods of wrestling that were being exhibited before them. By the second match, however, which featured Hungarian wrestler Mihaly Orgovanyi against Alex Kasaboski, the Pole from Renfrew, Ontario, the audience was warming to the action. Fans responded vocally as the men tossed one another over the ropes, battled on the floor outside the ring, and body-slammed each other to the canvas.[28] Reflecting on the night's entertainment, the Daily News-Chronicle

[26] For details of the first cards staged in each of these cities, see the Hamilton Spectator , 23 August 1929; Expositor, 19 October 1929; Kitchener Record, 14 November 1929; and the London Free Press, 23 November 1929.
[27] Manitoba Free Press, 25 June 1931.
[28] Daily News-Chronicle, 25 February 1933; Daily Times-Journal, 25 February 1933.

described the crowd at the Armory as "alternately bored, hostile, enthusiastic and shocked to death."[29]

With two months to reflect on what they had witnessed, Port Arthur fans were once more invited to wrestling at the Armory on 29 April. The impressions that had been left on them were evidently favourable, as the second installment of "Slam Bang" wrestling was witnessed by a sellout crowd.[30] Two weeks later, the wrestlers appeared for the first time in Fort William at the Prince of Wales Rink. The action became so intense during the second bout of the evening, featuring Hungarian Mihaly Orgavanyi and Chicago's Tony Catalina, that the chief of the Fort William police stepped into the ring and disqualified Orgavanyi for "grossly unethical tactics and threatening serious injury to the Chicago man."[31] Evidently, despite the histrionics, some authorities were still convinced that the violence they were seeing was real enough to warrant censure.

The actions of Fort William's chief of police aside, by the early 1930s, athletic commissions across North America were recognizing the fact that the new style of wrestling was not a pure athletic contest. In April 1931, the Washington State Athletic Commission ruled that all future wrestling matches must be billed specifically as exhibitions.[32] In New York, the terms "match" or "contest" were prohibited unless specifically approved as such by the Commission.[33] Similar rulings followed across the continent. When wrestling reappeared at the head of the lakes in 1933, the playbills

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[29] Daily News-Chronicle, 25 February 1933.
[30] Daily Times-Journal, 29 April 1933.
[31] Daily Times-Journal, 13 May 1933.
[32] Daily Times-Journal, 2 April 1931.
[33] Griffin, Fall Guys, 19.

advertising the bouts were, in keeping with these developments, labeled as "Exhibitions."[34]

The in-ring performance of wrestling seen in 1933 was decidedly different from the style of grappling practiced at the Lakehead between 1913 and 1926. Nevertheless, many of the promotional elements of the sport remained the same. Photos of the matmen appeared in the local newspapers, testifying to their strength and muscularity. Wrestlers, despite the theatrics presented in the ring, still had to maintain the physical hallmarks of a wrestler. Ethnicity, long a staple in promoting wrestling, became even more pronounced during this period. Hungarian grappler Mihaly Orgavanyi assumed the role of the dangerous foreign wrestler, drawing the "genuine and unanimous hostility of the fans for his vicious and downright brutal methods of subduing an antagonist."[35] Orgavanyi, during his third appearance in the city, was billed as the "Horrible Hungarian" and repeatedly lived up to the billing with his repertoire of foul tactics.[36] Ultimately, however, he met his match in Italian Mike Romano, who proved to be even rougher than he was. After the Italian had mauled Orgavanyi sufficiently, he picked him up and hurled him over the ropes to the floor. The fall resulted in an apparent ankle injury for the Hungarian, who had to be helped from the arena.[37] Evidently, violent tactics were a hallmark of Italian grapplers, as Tony Catalino, who appeared in the main event of the same card against the distinctly Anglo-sounding George Jenkins, disposed of his opponent by roughing him up and repeatedly slamming him to the mat.[38]

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[34] See Appendix V for an example of a wrestling playbill from the April 1933 card at the Port Arthur Armory.
[35] Daily Times-Journal, 29 April 1933.
[36] Daily Times-Journal, 9 May 1933.
[37] Daily Times-Journal, 11 July 1933.
[38] Ibid.

Women, who were specifically encouraged to attend bouts during the 1910s and 1920s, were likewise targeted during wrestling's revival in 1933. Ticket prices for the new "Slam Bang" wrestling cards were generally cheaper than they had been during the era of George Walker and Ole Kolehmainen; a feature made possible because wrestlers were now traveling together and performing more regularly as part of an established circuit. For women, however, ticket prices were particularly inexpensive. The cost for a woman to attend a wrestling card was only twenty-five cents, which was half the cost (or less), of a general admission ticket. Curiously absent from the promotional material, however, were paternalistic assurances that the women would not be subjected to socially inappropriate behaviour. Although women may still have served as a moderating influence against wrestling audiences becoming too raucous and unruly, the absence of paternalistic appeals to the delicate sensibilities of the "weaker sex" was reflective of slowly evolving views about women during the post-suffrage period.

During wrestling's local rebirth in 1933, not all of the old methods of promoting a match survived. Owing to the radical changes that the business of wrestling had undergone, many promotional tactics were rendered obsolete. Since wrestlers were part of a packaged show and performing under the direction of a single promoter, challenge letters, which had been a colorful addition to the local sporting pages since the days of George Garrett and F.H. Joslin, disappeared. Wrestler's purses and the question of how the purse would be divided between the winner and the loser of a match, were not discussed for much the same reason. As contracted employees, wrestlers no longer negotiated their purses with the wrestlers that they were facing, but were paid instead for their appearance according to the conditions set out by the promoter. Likewise, after

1933, the issue of betting was never again associated with wrestling matches. Although the authenticity of local wrestling bouts had occasionally been suspect prior to 1933, the public was sufficiently convinced of their legitimacy to wager on the outcome. With the new innovations characteristic of "Slam Bang" wrestling, the sport lost its veneer of sporting purity. Wrestlers continued to maintain that their displays were "on the level," but gamblers were no longer willing to stake money on a spectacle that was, to even a largely untrained eye, a show.

The most significant changes to professional wrestling at the Lakehead, however, did not relate to how the matches were performed or promoted. Following the introduction of the "Slam Bang" version of the sport, many of the ties that professional wrestling once maintained with the communities of Fort William and Port Arthur were permanently severed. Professional wrestling, prior to its local disappearance in 1926, had been largely dependent on the presence of grapplers with strong local associations. Such main event performers as George Walker, Ernie Arthur, Jack Belanger, and Ole Kolehmainen all lived within the twin cities and had legitimate appeal as 'home town boys.' After the departure of Walker and Arthur, professional wrestling retained its local character because of the strong presence of Finnish grapplers who, even if not living in the region, had ethnic ties to the community.

With professional wrestlers traveling as part of a circuit by 1933, the Lakehead was no longer a home for professional wrestlers but merely one of several stopping points within a large territory. The loss of this local connection was significant because of the important contributions that professional wrestlers had previously made to the sporting community. Beyond providing public entertainment, professional wrestlers trained at

such facilities as the Fort William YMCA and the Finnish Labour Temple, offering their expertise to local athletes as coaches and instructors. In doing so, they helped establish an early talent base for amateur wrestling within the cities. Since professional wrestlers after 1933 only made intermittent stops in the region, the circumstances for this type of contribution to the local sporting culture no longer existed. Further, as legitimate wrestling skills became less important in the professional wrestling business, the possibility of professionals offering this kind of service diminished in the ensuing years.

The transformation of wrestling into a packaged show, with both the main event and preliminary attractions being imported to the twin cities through Ivan Michaelov's wrestling promotion, also meant that local amateur wrestling talent had less opportunity to showcase their skills. Local amateurs often helped to provide the entertainment prior to the main event, but this was no longer the case after wrestling's reappearance in 1933, since all talent was imported. Due to the large attendance that professional wrestling received prior to 1926, amateurs gained considerable exposure due to their appearances on amateur cards. Amateur wrestling meets continued to be held at the Lakehead, but they did not approach the professional cards in terms of the newspaper publicity or attendance that they received. The introduction of the packaged show also meant that only wrestling was offered on local programs. Other acts of a musical, artistic, and athletic variety were no longer included. Wrestling cards after 1933 therefore represented a more specialized form of entertainment. Individuals looking for diversions that were not strictly derived from "Slam Bang" wrestling would have to look elsewhere.

In late 1929, one newspaper pundit, observing the wildly popular spectacle that professional wrestling had become in Toronto, noted, "This type of game exemplified by

present methods is not that old style where two men lay on the mat for 15 minutes at a stretch. Action is given all the time."[39] In Thunder Bay, the "old style" of grappling had served as one of the most popular sporting attractions in the region for over a decade. By the mid-1920s, however, more fast-paced forms of entertainment, aided by changing social circumstances within the region, drove professional wrestling into oblivion. When the new style of "Slam Bang" wrestling emerged, it offered spectators action that could rival any boxing bout and drama that could match the celluloid productions of tinsel town, all for a fraction of the price of the "old" style of wrestling . What it no longer proved, however, were the local rivalries, local champions, and local contributions to the development of sport that were so intrinsic to the earlier era of the mat game.

[39] Expositor, 18 October 1929.

Appendix I
Professional Wrestling Cards at the Lakehead
1913 to 1933

Date (DD/MM/YY):	14/05/13
City:	Port Arthur
Location:	Finnish Labour Temple
Promoter:	Unknown
Official(s):	Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s):	Unknown
Attendance:	Described as a "Big crowd of enthusiasts"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Hans Peterson	Walker took two straight falls.
Two Preliminaries	No details on preliminaries announced.

Date (DD/MM/YY):	21/06/13
City:	Fort William
Location:	Corona Theatre
Promoter:	Ben Ross
Official(s):	Captain King
Ticket Price(s):	Unknown
Attendance:	Described as "a big crowd"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Hans Peterson	Handicap match. Walker took three falls in one hour.

Date (DD/MM/YY):	21/08/13
City:	Fort William
Location:	Corona Theatre
Promoter:	Ben Ross
Official(s):	Hans Peterson
Ticket Price(s):	Unknown
Attendance:	Theater described as "well crowded"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Chris Person	Walker took one fall after two hours, twelve minutes. Match stopped by police in second period
Fort William versus Port Arthur wrestler	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 17/09/13
City: Fort William
Location: Corona Theatre
Promoter: Ben Ross
Official(s): Jack Allen
Ticket Price(s): $1.00, $1.50 Ringside
Attendance: Theater described as "comfortably filled"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker drew Walter Miller	Referee stopped the match after 2 hours, no falls being scored

Date (DD/MM/YY): 05/01/14
City: Fort William
Location: Corona Theatre
Promoter: Ben Ross
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $1.00, $1.50 Ringside
Attendance: Theater described as "packed to the doors"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Walter Miller beat Young Jordon	Miller took two straight falls.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 16/01/14
City: Fort William
Location: Corona Theatre
Promoter: Ben Ross
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $1.00, $1.50 Ringside
Attendance: 500 to 600

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Eugene Tremblay beat Young Gotch	Tremblay took two straight falls.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 23/01/14
City: Fort William
Location: Corona Theatre
Promoter: Ben Ross
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): $1.00, $1.50, $2.00 Ringside
Attendance: Described as "a large crowd"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Walter Miller beat Eugene Tremblay	Handicap match, Miller agreeing to bar the toehold. Miller took two straight falls.
Two Preliminaries	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 16/04/14
City: Fort William
Location: Corona Theatre
Promoter: Ben Ross
Official(s): Young Jordon
Ticket Price(s): $1.00, $1.50, $2.00 Ringside
Attendance:

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Walter Miller beat George Walker	Walker took the first fall, Miller the second. Walker was unable to continue in the third period owing to an injured neck.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 02/05/14
City: Port Arthur
Location: Lyceum Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Described as a "small crowd"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Young Jordon	Walker took two straight falls.
Hans Peterson drew Jack McMillan	Thirty minute match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 25/05/14
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Described as "a small crowd"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Martin Johnson	Walker took two straight falls.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 30/04/15
City: Fort William
Location: Rex Theatre
Promoter: Jack Silver
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Described as a "large number of fans"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Garrett beat George Walker	Handicap match. Walker was to throw Garrett three times in one hour. He took the first fall, but was thrown by Garrett in the second period.

Nelson beat Kilonis	Kilonis took the first fall, Nelson the next two.
Ernie Arthur drew Davidson	Ten minute match
Lauri Inki drew Leihta	Ten minute match
Ernie Martin drew Al Lesperance	Ten minute match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 21/05/15
City: Fort William
Location: Rex Theatre
Promoter: Jack Silver
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat George Garrett	Walker took two straight falls.
Ernie Arthur drew Charlie Finn	Fifteen minute match
Kilonis beat Al Lesperance	Kilonis took two straight falls.
Hamilton drew Young Nelson	Fifteen minute match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 21/09/15
City: Fort William
Location: Corona Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): $0.25, $0.50, $1.00 ringside
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Ernie Arthur	Walker took two straight falls.
Two wrestling preliminaries	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 09/10/16
City: Port Arthur
Location: Gaiety Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): $0.50
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ernie Arthur beat Charlie Geanos	Arthur took two straight falls.
Two wrestling preliminaries	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 07/11/16
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Bert Farmer
Official(s): Ernie Arthur
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Al Lesperance versus D.W.Anderson	Result unknown. Fifteen minute match billed for the Championship of the Thunder Bay District

Date (DD/MM/YY): 28/11/16
City: Port Arthur
Location: Finnish Labour Temple
Promoter: Fred Paju
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): $0.50, $0.75 ringside
Attendance: 300

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
David Takala beat Ernie Arthur	Takala took two straight falls.
John Belanger drew Charlie Geanos	Twenty minute match
Greco-Roman wrestling match	Match staged between two Finnish wrestlers. No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 18/07/17
City: Fort William
Location: McKellar Park
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ernie Arthur drew John Belanger	Thirty minute match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 12/12/17
City: Fort William
Location: New Corona Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Jack Mounsey
Ticket Price(s): $0.50 balcony, $0.75 dress circle, $1.00 main floor, $1.50 ringside
Attendance: Described as "a small attendance"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ernie Arthur drew Jack London	No falls scored in two hours of wrestling

Charlie Geanos versus Al Lesperance, Al Anderson	Handicap match. Geanos agreed to throw both men in thirty minutes. No further details announced
Four minute boxing bout	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 31/12/17
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ernie Arthur versus Otto Daminire	Exhibition match to benefit victims of the Halifax explosion. No further details announced
Boxing, singing and dancing	Boxing was to feature the Cassidy kids. No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 17/01/18
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): $0.50, $0.75 ringside
Attendance: Main floor described as "filled to capacity"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ernie Arthur beat John Belanger	No falls were scored. Belanger quit after one hour and twenty three minutes, being unable to breathe for the last fifty minutes due to a bloody nose.
Preliminaries staged	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 06/05/18
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $1.00 balcony, $1.25 main floor, $1.25 ringside
Attendance: Theater described as "filled to the roof"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Waino Ketonen beat Ernie Arthur	Ketonen took two straight falls.
Otil Kalehmainer drew Otto Daminire	Fifteen minute bout under Greco-Roman rules. Kalehmainer was likely Ole Kolehmainen.
Harry Labelle beat William Coleman	Five round boxing bout. Labelle won on points.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 24/05/18
City: Fort William
Location: McKellar Park
Promoter: Executive Committee of the Great War Veterans
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: 1,400

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Waino Ketonen beat George Walker	Ketonen took the first fall. Walker was unable to continue in the second period owing to injury.
Ole Kolehmainen drew Otto Tamminen	Wrestling match, unknown duration
Bill Kage versus Kid Sterling	Boxing bout. Kage injured his ankle during the second round and could not continue.
Boxing	Three, two-minute rounds of sparring between two soldiers.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 10/06/18
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Fort William City Band
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $1.00 balcony, $1.25 main floor, $1.50 ringside
Attendance: Described as "few spectators present"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Ernie Arthur	Handicap match. Walker had agreed to throw Arthur twice in twenty-five minutes, accomplishing the goal in twenty-three minutes, thirty eight seconds.
Fort William Band	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 18/07/18
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Described as "a large enthusiastic audience"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ernie Arthur beat John Belanger	Arthur gained one fall. Belanger quit in the second period.
Al Lesperance beat Private Burney	Five round boxing bout. Burney gave up in the final round.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 02/04/19
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Bert Farmer
Official(s): Sapper McMillan, George Walker
Ticket Price(s): $1.00 balcony, $1.25 main floor, $1.50 ringside
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ernie Arthur beat the Masked Marvel	Arthur took two straight falls.
Al Lesperance drew Doig	Five round boxing bout
Young Hemphill beat Charlie Forrester	Wrestling match. Hemphill took one fall

Date (DD/MM/YY): 23/04/19
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): J. McMillan
Ticket Price(s): $1.00 house, $1.25 ringside
Attendance: Described as "the largest crowd of fans ever gathered [at the Orpheum]"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
John Belanger beat Ernie Arthur	Belanger took the first and third falls to win the bout.
Lyrall Mitchell drew Lawrence Hemphill	Fifteen minute bout. Both men secured one fall.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 24/04/19
City: Port Arthur
Location: Lyceum Theatre
Promoter: Great War Veterans' Association
Official(s): Fred Paju, Kid Sterling
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Described as "a large crowd"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Willie Trottier beat Johnny Doig	Eight round boxing bout, stopped in the first round.
Kid Sterling versus A. Lucas	Three rounds boxing
W. Robinson	Singing comical songs
Isaac Oesho versus Charlie Geanos	Wrestling match
Queenie Dawson	Singing two songs
E. Sutton versus C. Searle	Three round boxing bout

Date (DD/MM/YY): 14/05/19
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Bert Farmer
Official(s): John Belanger
Ticket Price(s): $0.25 boys under sixteen, $0.50 ladies, $0.75 balcony, $1.00 main floor, $1.50 ringside
Attendance: 500

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Ole Kolehmainen	Walker took two straight falls. Kolehmainen was a last minute substitute for Alexander Mellas.
Charlie Forrester beat Lyrall Mitchell	Forrester took two straight falls.
Charlie Geanos drew Ernie Errikala	Wrestling match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 24/05/19
City: Fort William
Location: Corona Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): J. McMillan
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Newspapers suggest attendance was small

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker drew Charlie Fraser	Fraser took the first fall, Walker the second. Police stopped the bout at midnight before a third fall had been scored.
Charlie Geanos drew Isaac Easho	Twenty minute match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 03/06/19
City: Fort William
Location: Corona Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): John Belanger
Ticket Price(s): $0.50 boys, $0.75 ladies, $1.00 main floor, $1.50 ringside
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Charlie Fraser	Walker took two straight falls.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 04/06/19
City: Port Arthur
Location: Finnish Labour Temple
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Henry Karhunsaari beat Ole Kolehmainen	Karhunsaari took two straight falls.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 19/06/19
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Alexander Mellas	Mellas took the first fall, Walker the second and third.
Band music	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 26/06/19
City: Fort William
Location: Orpheum Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Ernie Arthur
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Alexander Mellas beat John Belanger	Mellas took the first and third falls.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 19/09/19
City: Fort William
Location: Corona Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): William Kage
Ticket Price(s): $0.75 to $1.25
Attendance: Described as "a big crowd of fans"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Alexander Mellas	Walker took the first fall. Mellas left the theater before the second period and Walker was declared the winner.
Kid Hemphill drew Charlie "Young" Forrester	Ten minute match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 05/12/19
City: Fort William
Location: Corona Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $0.75 balcony, $1.00 main floor, $1.25 ringside
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
William Kage beat Ernie Arthur	Arthur failed to throw Kage in two hours and Kage was declared the winner. Bout was billed as a finish contest.
Young Hemphill beat Jim Bailey	Twenty five minute match. Hemphill took one fall.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 18/03/20
City: Fort William
Location: Corona Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): J.H. Lang
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Jack Hill beat Ernie Arthur	Handicap match. Arthur was to throw Hill twice in two hours. After securing the first fall, Arthur was thrown in the second period. Thereafter, the referee stopped the bout.
Hoeno beat Al Lesperance	Hoeno took two straight falls.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 13/09/20
City: Fort William
Location: Prince of Wales Rink
Promoter: Prince of Wales Rink Company
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $1.00, $1.50 ringside
Attendance: Described as "a small crowd"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ernie Arthur beat Karl Van Wurden	Arthur took two straight falls.
Al Lesperance drew Jim "Young" Bailey	Twenty minute match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 04/02/21
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theatre
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $0.50 under 18 years old, $1.00, $1.50 ringside
Attendance: Described as "one of the largest crowd of fans ever gathered to see a local wrestling match"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Charles Olson beat Jack Belanger	Handicap bout. Olson threw Belanger twice in one hour as per the terms of the match.
Jim Bailey drew George Homenseur	Fifteen minute match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 25/02/21
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theatre
Promoter: Fort William Sports Syndicate
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $1.00 Balcony, $1.50 main floor, $2.00 Orchestra, $2.50 ringside
Attendance: Theatre described as "nearly filled"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Charles Olson	Walker took the first and third falls.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 04/03/21
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theatre
Promoter: Fort William Sports Syndicate
Official(s): John Belanger
Ticket Price(s): $1.50
Attendance: Described as "a full house"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Nels Moe	Walker took the second and third falls.
Jim "Young" Bailey drew Howard Hemphill	Fifteen minute match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 11/03/21
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theatre
Promoter: Fort William Sports Syndicate
Official(s): Charles Olson
Ticket Price(s): $1.75 balcony, $2.25 main floor, $3.25 ringside
Attendance: Described as "the largest crowd of wrestling fans ever gathered together in Fort William"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Bull Montana beat George Walker	Walker was disqualified by the referee for using an illegal strangle hold.
Port Arthur boxers	Five rounds of boxing. No further details announced
New York Orchestra	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 18/03/21
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theatre
Promoter: Fort William Sports Syndicate
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): $2.00 main floor, $2.50 ringside
Attendance: 1,500

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Bull Montana	Walker took the second and third falls

Date (DD/MM/YY): 25/03/21
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theatre
Promoter: Fort William Sports Syndicate
Official(s): Ernie Arthur
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Described as "only a fair crowd"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Noe Choquette	Walker took two straight falls.
Jim "Young" Bailey drew Al Lesperance	Twenty minute match
Russian Dancer	No further details announced
New York Jazz Orchestra	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 01/04/21
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theatre
Promoter: Fort William Sports Syndicate
Official(s): Ernie Arthur
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Harry McDonald	Walker took two straight falls.
Chuck Patterson beat Kid Cole	Ten round boxing bout. Patterson knocked out Cole in the fourth round.
"Syndicate Avenue Cyclone" drew "Brodie Street Blizzard"	Fifteen minute wrestling match
New York Jazz Orchestra	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 08/04/21
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theatre
Promoter: Sports Syndicate
Official(s): Harry McDonald
Ticket Price(s): $1.00, $1.50 ringside
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ernie Arthur beat Jack Belanger	Arthur took two straight falls.
Jim "Young" Bailey drew Dafoe	Fifteen minute wrestling match
"Marks Street Bulldog" drew "May Street Bearcat"	Fifteen minute wrestling match
New York Jazz Orchestra	No further details announced.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 12/04/21
City: Port Arthur
Location: Finnish Labour Temple
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $1.00, $1.25 ringside
Attendance: Several hundred

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ole Kolehmainen beat Harry McDonald	Handicap match. McDonald agreed to throw Kolehmainen twice in one hour, but got only one fall.
Otto Tamminen drew Emil Salminen	Twenty minute wrestling match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 23/04/21
City: Fort William
Location: Great War Veterans' Hall
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): $0.75 and $1.00, $1.75 ringside
Attendance: Described as "an enthusiastic number of spectators"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ole Kolehmainen drew Harry McDonald	McDonald scored the first fall, Kolehmainen the second. The bout was stopped at midnight before a third fall could be scored.
Highland Fling and Sword Dancing	No further details announced
J.M Hamilton, Scottish Tenor	No further details announced
A. Hogg, Scottish Baritone	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 13/05/21
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theater
Promoter: Clarence Tremblay, working on behalf of a number of local sportsmen
Official(s): Ernie Arthur
Ticket Price(s): $1.50 balcony, $2.00 main floor, $3.50 ringside
Attendance: Described as "many spectators present"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Henry Karhunsaari drew George Walker	No falls scored in two hours and twenty minutes
Jim Bailey drew K. Dafoe	Twenty minute wrestling match
Jack Coolidge drew Stanley Warner	Five round boxing bout

Date (DD/MM/YY): 24/05/21
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theater
Promoter: Clarence Tremblay
Official(s): Ernie Arthur, Al Lesperance
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Described as "a great many fans present"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Jim Londos	Handicap match. Londos agreed to throw Walker twice in seventy-five minutes but only secured one fall.
Young Stecher beat Ernie Arthur	One fall match
Fort William City Band	No further details provided

Date (DD/MM/YY): 27/05/21
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theater
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Ernie Arthur for main event
Ticket Price(s): $1.50 balcony, $2.00main floor, $3.00 ringside
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Jim Londos beat George Walker	Londos took two straight falls.
Young Stecher beat Ernie Arthur	Arthur took the first fall, Stecher the second and third

Date (DD/MM/YY): 07/07/21
City: Fort William
Location: Prince if Walker Rink
Promoter: Management of the Prince of Wales Rink
Official(s): Ernie Arthur, Al Lesperance
Ticket Price(s): $0.75, $1.25, $1.75
Attendance: Small, 75 to 100 spectators

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Kali Pascha	Pascha took the first fall, Walker the second and third. The third fall was very controversial. Walker tapped Pascha on the back. Pascha, thinking it was the referee, released his hold. Walker then quickly reversed matters to pin Pascha.
Jack Coolidge drew Stan Warner	Three round boxing bout
Al Lesperance beat "Young" Isaacs	Lesperance took one fall

Date (DD/MM/YY): 17/08/21
City: Fort William
Location: Hippodrome
Promoter: Wortham Shows
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Kid Burns	Handicap match. Burns failed to throw Walker within the twenty five minute time limit. Burns was part of the Wortham Shows athletic troupe and was traveling across the country meeting all comers. Walker earned one dollar for every minute he remained on the mat with Burns.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 18/08/21
City: Fort William
Location: Hippodrome
Promoter: Wortham Shows
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
George Walker beat Kid Burns	Handicap match. Burns failed to throw Walker within a sixty minute time limit. Burns was part of the Wortham Shows athletic troupe and had once again agreed to pay one dollar for every minute Walker could stay with him on the mat.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 27/09/21
City: Port Arthur
Location: Finnish Labour Temple
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $1.00 main floor, $1.25 ringside
Attendance: Described as "very few wrestling fans"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ole Kolehmainen beat Ernie Arthur	Match for Canadian middleweight title. Kolehmainen took two straight falls.
Emil Oja drew Otto Tamminen	Twenty minute wrestling match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 24/05/22
City: Fort William
Location: Prince of Wales Rink
Promoter: Unknown
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): $1.25, $1.50 ringside
Attendance: Described as "a good house"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ole Kolehmainen beat Henry Karhunsaari	Handicap bout. Henry Karhunsaari agreed to throw both Jack Hill and Ole Kolehmainen within ninety minutes. Karhunsaari threw Hill after forty-nine minutes but could not throw Kolehmainen in the remaining time.
Jack Coolidge drew T. Cook	Five round boxing bout
Isaac Easho drew Joe John	Thirty minute wrestling match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 02/05/23
City: Fort William
Location: Great War Veterans' Association Building
Promoter: D. Bowron, Lake Superior Regiment
Official(s): Fred Paju, Alphonse Lesperance, H. Stafford
Ticket Price(s): $1.00
Attendance: 250, described as "a good crowd"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Ole Kolehmainen beat Ernest Montour	Kolehmainen took two straight falls.
W. Atherton	Acrobatic stunts
O. Oja drew Otto Tamminen	Twenty minute match
Bill Bellingham beat M. Guitard	Three round boxing bout. Bellingham won by decision.
Hector Currie drew Donald McLeod	Three round boxing bout
Sammy McLennan drew Clayton Webb	Wrestling match
Bugler N. Philpot drew Drummer J. Durwa	Wrestling match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 15/06/23
City: Fort William
Location: Great War Veteran's Association Building
Promoter: 52nd Battalion Athletic Club
Official(s): Fred Paju, Sergeant H. Stafford
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Henry Kolln beat Ole Kolehmainen	Match for Canadian middleweight title. Kolehmainen took the first fall, Kolln the second and third.
Ralph Holt beat Alex McDougall	Boxing bout. Holt won by knockout in the second round.
Charlie Brown beat Young Shea	Three round boxing bout. Brown won on points.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 11/10/23
City: Port Arthur
Location: Finnish Labour Temple
Promoter: Finnish Athletic Association
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $0.50 general seating, $0.75 first four rows, $1.00 ringside
Attendance: Described as "a packed house"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Henry Karhunsaari drew Arvo Linko	Greco-Roman wrestling match consisting of four ten-minute rounds
Karl Maki (Tauno Makela) drew John Ursin	Ten minute match
T. Turmo beat M. Lehtinen	Lehtinen had to quit from the mat due to a badly bleeding nose.
Melody Boy's Orchesta	No further details announced

Date (DD/MM/YY): 25/10/23
City: Port Arthur
Location: Finnish Labour Temple
Promoter: Finnish Athletic Association
Official(s): Al Lesperance
Ticket Price(s): $1.50 ringside
Attendance: Described as "a crowded house"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Henry Karhunsaari drew Sulo Kokko	Wrestling match consisting of six ten minute rounds
Karl Maki drew Alphons Oja	Ten minute match
Arvo Linko drew Otto Tamminen	Ten minute match under Greco-Roman rules
Melody Boy's Orchestra	No further details announced
Dancing	Public dancing prior to the wrestling card

Date (DD/MM/YY): 02/11/23
City: Fort William
Location: Fort William Armories
Promoter: 52nd Battalion Athletic Club
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $0.85, $1.25, $2.00 ringside
Attendance: Described as "a full house" of "close to 500 fans"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Jack Taylor beat Sulo Kokko	Scheduled for six fifteen minute rounds, the first three under Greco-Roman rules, the last three under catch-as-catch-can rules. Kokko was forced to quit during the second catch-as-catch can round when injured by Taylor's toe hold.

Karl Maki drew John Ursin	Wrestled between rounds of the main event
Al Lesperance drew John Ursin	Wrestling match
Al Lesperance drew Charlie Gorman	Boxing bout

Date (DD/MM/YY): 06/12/23
City: Fort William
Location: Fort William Armory
Promoter: 52nd Battalion Athletic Club
Official(s): Fred Paju, Sergeant H. Stafford
Ticket Price(s): $0.85, $1.25, $2.00 ringside
Attendance: Approximately 300 fans

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Henry Karhunsaari drew Henry Kolln	Kolln took the first fall, Karhunsaari the second. Kolln was injured during the second fall and could not continue.
Al Lesperance drew John Ursin	Ten minute match
Hector Currie drew Lawrence Young	Three round boxing bout

Date (DD/MM/YY): 14/12/23
City: Fort William
Location: Great War Veterans' Association Building
Promoter: 52nd Battalion Athletic Club
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $0.85, $1.25, $2.00 ringside
Attendance: Unknown

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Henry Karhunsaari beat Henry Kolln	Kolln took the first fall, Karhunsaari the second and third.
Otto Tamminen drew John Paul	Ten minute match
Peter Currie drew Hector Currie	Three round boxing bout
Al Lesperance drew Jimmy Thompson	Three round boxing bout

Date (DD/MM/YY): 15/04/24
City: Port Arthur
Location: Port Arthur Armory
Promoter: Fort William and Port Arthur Boat Clubs
Official(s): Fred Paju, Alec Thrasher
Ticket Price(s): $0.75, $1.50 reserve, $2.50 ringside
Attendance: Over 2,000

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Henry Karhunsaari beat Waino Ketonen	Ketonen took the first fall, Karhunsaari the second and third.
Jack Milo drew Tony Rawn	Six round boxing bout

Date (DD/MM/YY): 24/04/24
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theatre
Promoter: Fort William Boat Club
Official(s): Fred Paju, Inspector T. Dann
Ticket Price(s): $1.00, $1.50, $2.00 ringside
Attendance: Approximately 500

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Waino Ketonen beat Henry Karhunsaari	Ketonen took the first and third falls, Karhunsaari the second. Ketonen won the middleweight championship of the world.
Al Lesperance drew A. Mitchell	Ten minute match. Mitchell took the first fall, Lesperance the second.
Alphons Oja drew John Ursin	Ten minute match

Date (DD/MM/YY): 20/04/26
City: Port Arthur
Location: Port Arthur Armory
Promoter: Port Arthur Rowing Club
Official(s): Fred Paju
Ticket Price(s): $1.00, $1.50 general admission, $2.00 ringside
Attendance: Described as "a fair crowd"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Waino Ketonen beat Fritz Hanson	Ketonen took two straight falls.
Karl Maki (Tauno Makela) drew John Ursin	Ten minute match
"Shorty" Campbell	Lasso rope exhibition

Date (DD/MM/YY): 15/02/33
City: Port Arthur
Location: Port Arthur Armory
Promoter: Ivan Michaeloff
Official(s): Tony Rawn
Ticket Price(s): Unknown
Attendance: Several hundred

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Mihaly Orgavanyi beat Alex Kasaboski	Kasaboski took the first fall, Orgavanyi the second and third.
Vanka Zelizniak drew Harold Cantonwine	Forty five minute exhibition. Cantonwine took the first fall, Zelizniak the second.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 28/04/33
City: Port Arthur
Location: Port Arthur Armory
Promoter: Ivan Michaeloff
Official(s): Tony Rawn
Ticket Price(s): $0.25 ladies, $0.50, $0.75, $1.00 ringside
Attendance: Described as "filling every seat"

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Earl McCready beat Carl Pospeshil	McCready took two straight falls.
Mihaly Orgovanyi beat John Vasilesku	Vasilesku took the first fall, Orgovanyi the second and third.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 12/05/33
City: Fort William
Location: Prince of Wales Rink
Promoter: Ivan Michaeloff
Official(s): Unknown
Ticket Price(s): $0.25 ladies and children, $0.50, $1.00, $1.50 ringside
Attendance: Over 1,000

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Earl McCready beat Vanka Zelizniak	McCready took the first and third fall, Zelizniak the second.
Tony Catalina beat Mihaly Orgovanyi	The Chief of Police C. E. Watkins intervened in the bout, disqualifying Orgovanyi for using "grossly unethical tactics."
John Vasilesku beat Alex Kasaboski	One fall exhibition

Date (DD/MM/YY): 10/07/33
City: Port Arthur
Location: Port Arthur Arena
Promoter: Ivan Michaeloff
Official(s): Tony Rawn
Ticket Price(s): $0.25 ladies and children, $0.55, $1.10 ringside
Attendance: 500

Event Result (Main Event and Preliminaries)	**Event Details**
Tony Catalino beat George Jenkins	Catalino took two straight falls.
Mike Romano beat Mihaly Orgovanyi	Romano threw Orgovanyi over the ropes, rendering the latter unable to continue due to injury.
Alex Kasaboski drew Toivo Weiman	Ten minute exhibition

Appendix II

Thunder Bay District Amateur Wrestling Champions
1923-1933

The Thunder Bay District Amateur Wrestling Championships, under sanction of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada, were held annually, beginning in 1923, in conjunction with the District Boxing Championships. Boxing consistently garnered more local entries than wrestling.

1923
Competition held 17 March, Port Arthur Armory

Featherweight	J. Rentala, Port Arthur
Lightweight	Karl (Tauno) Maki, Port Arthur
Welterweight	David Takala, Port Arthur

1924
Competition held 15 March, Great War Veterans' Association Building

Featherweight	Alphons Oja, Port Arthur
Lightweight	Karl (Tauno) Maki, Port Arthur
Middleweight	David Takala, Port Arthur

1925
Competition held 16 March, Port Arthur Armory

No wrestling competition held. An exhibition match was wrestled between Reino Lahti and Hans Aho.

1926
Competition held 16 April, Port Arthur Armory

Featherweight	Alphons Oja, Port Arthur drew Jim Bailey, Fort William

1927
Competition held 11 April, Port Arthur Armory

Lightweight	Karl Maki, Port Arthur

1928
Competition held 18 May, Port Arthur Armory

Lightweight	Karl (Tauno) Maki, Port Arthur
Welterweight	Bill Pittman, Kenora

1929
Competition held 26 March, Orpheum Theatre

Flyweight	Leo Gauthier, Kenora (uncontested)
Welterweight	Joe Dolce, Fort William
Middleweight	Joe Bihisick, Port Arthur (uncontested)

1930-1933

No wrestling competition held

Appendix III
Professional Wrestling Tournaments at the Lakehead

Date (DD/MM/YY):	17/05/20
City:	Port Arthur
Location:	Finnish Labour Temple
Promoter:	Unknown
Official(s):	Unknown
Ticket Price(s):	$0.75, $1.25 ringside
Attendance:	Described as "good"

Event Result

Overall Champion

Ole Kolehmainen, Port Arthur

Heavyweight Division

Otto Tamminen, Fort William	First Prize
Salmi, Fort William	Second Prize
Jack Hill, Fort William	Third Prize

Light-Heavyweight Division

Ole Kolehmainen, Port Arthur	First Prize
A. Sipila, Port Arthur	Second Prize
E. Erkkila, Port Arthur	Third Prize

Middleweight Division

David Takala, Port Arthur	First Prize
E. Okerlund, Port Arthur	Second Prize

Lightweight Division

E. Heino, Fort William	First Prize
Alphons Oja, Port Arthur	Second Prize
R. Lahei, Port Arthur	Third Prize

Notes

Eighteen wrestles took part in this tournament, billed as for the Overall Professional Champion of New Ontario.

Appendix IV
Amateur Wrestling Cards Staged at the Lakehead
1919-1933

Date (DD/MM/YY): 05/02/19
Event Title: YMCA
City: Fort William
Location: Fort William YMCA

Event Result	Event Details
Palleck beat Vincent	Palleck took two straight falls.
Young Hemphill beat Charlie Forrester	Hemphill took two straight falls.
Al Lesperance beat Essic	Essic was disqualified for unfair tactics.
Irvin beat Young Kokani	Irvin took one fall.

Notes

The card was arranged by George Walker, featuring YMCA athletes. Three boxing bouts were staged following the wrestling.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 06/04/21
Event Title: Assault at Arms
City: Port Arthur
Location: Port Arthur Armory

Event Result	Event Details
Ernie Arthur drew R. McKinnon	Ten minute match
Harry McDonald drew Archie Baine	Ten minute match
Haves drew E. Radstrom	Ten minute match
Jim Bailey drew L. Pentick	Ten minute match
Judd beat K. Defoe	Judd took one fall.
Charles Gibbons drew Ainsworth	Ten minute match

Notes

Event staged by the YMCA organizations of Port Arthur and Fort William. Wrestling was held in conjunction with boxing, gymnastics and drills. All matches were decided by one fall.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 25/04/21
Event Title: Grand Athletic Tournament
City: Fort William
Location: Princess Theatre

Event Result	Event Details
J. McKinnon drew E. Radstrom	Time limit not known
Jim Bailey drew K. Defoe	Twenty minute match
L. Pentick drew R. Judd	Twenty minute match
Charles Gibbons drew C. Thomas	Time limit not known

Notes

Event staged by the Fort William City Band, featuring athletes from the Port Arthur and Fort William YMCAs. Wrestling was held in conjunction with boxing, gymnastics, Highland dance and a comedy act. All matches were decided by one fall.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 17/05/22
Event Title: Grand International Wrestling Tournament
City: Port Arthur
Location: Finnish Labour Temple

Event Result	Event Details
<u>Overall Finals</u>	
David Takala beat E. Salmi	Twenty minute match, won by decision
<u>Overall Semi Finals</u>	
David Takala beat Karl (Tauno) Maki	Takala took one fall.
E. Salmi beat Seeli Maki	Won by decision
<u>Opening Match Results</u>	
Alphons Oja beat Joe John	Won by decision
E. Salmi beat A. Sipila	Salmi took one fall.
Karl (Tauno) Maki beat Alphons Oja	Maki took one fall.
David Takala beat N. Nalli	Takala took one fall.
E. Salmi beat P. Doorway	Salmi won by default when Doorway failed to appear.
A. Sipila beat Frank Moran	Sipila took one fall.
Seeli Maki beat Urho Raivo	Maki took one fall.

David Takala beat Reino Lahti	Takala took one fall.
Joe Johns beat Karl (Tauno) Maki	Johns took one fall.
Frank Moran beat E. Salmi	Moran won by decision.
A. Sipila beat P. Doorway	Sipila took one fall.

Notes

Weight class winners were decided to be lightweight Karl (Tauno) Maki, middleweight David Takala, light-heavyweight E. Salmi and heavyweight Seeli Maki. These wrestlers went on to the overall elimination event to crown the Thunder Bay District Amateur Wrestling Handicap Championship. The event was sanctioned by the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada. All matches were decided by one fall.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 27/05/27
Event Title: International Wrestling and Boxing Tournament
City: Port Arthur
Location: Finnish Labour Temple

Event Result	**Event Details**
Al Lesperance drew John Ursin	Exhibition match
Karl (Tauno) Maki beat John Rintala	Maki took one fall
David Takala beat N. Nalli	Takala took one fall
E. Tekkinen beat T. Tuulos	Won by decision
John Rinatala beat John Conenda	Rinatala took one fall
Jim Bailey beat Eric Mertanen	Won by decision

Notes

Judges voted Maki the most scientific performer, followed by Takala, Tekkinen, and Bailey respectively. Wrestling was held in conjunction with boxing. All matches were decided by one fall.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 18/04/29 to 20/04/29
Event Title: Dominion Boxing and Wrestling Championships
City: Port Arthur
Location: Port Arthur Armory

Event Result	**Event Details**
<u>Bantamweight Finals</u>	
Jim Trifunov (Regina)	Trifunov won by default, there being no other bantamweight entries.
<u>Featherweight Finals</u>	
John Raho (Regina) beat George Gauthier (Kenora)	Raho won by decision after thirty five minutes of wrestling.

Lightweight Finals

Howard Thomas (Montreal), beat Karl Maki (Port Arthur)	Thomas won by decision.

Lightweight Semi-Finals

Karl (Tauno) Maki, beat John Rinatala (both Port Arthur)	Maki took one fall.

Welterweight Finals

Bjorn Johnson (Winnipeg) beat Reino Lahti (Port Arthur)	Johnson took one fall.

Heavyweight Finals

Hans Lindborg (Port Arthur) beat N. Crossley (Winnipeg)	Lindborg took one fall. He was a substitute for Mahlo.

Heavyweight Semi-Finals

Eino Mahlo beat Herman Heisman, both Port Arthur	Mahlo took one fall.

Notes

This event was the Canadian national championships for both boxing and wrestling.

Date (DD/MM/YY): 11/04/31
Event Title: St. Patrick's Athletic Association Meet
City: Fort William
Location: Arpin Memorial School

Event Result	**Event Details**
H. Meyers beat Jack Webb	Meyers took two out of three falls.
Al Lesperance drew Earl Kelly	Ten minute match

Notes

Wrestling was staged in conjunction with boxing and a weight lifting exhibition. Athletes were representatives of the YMCA.

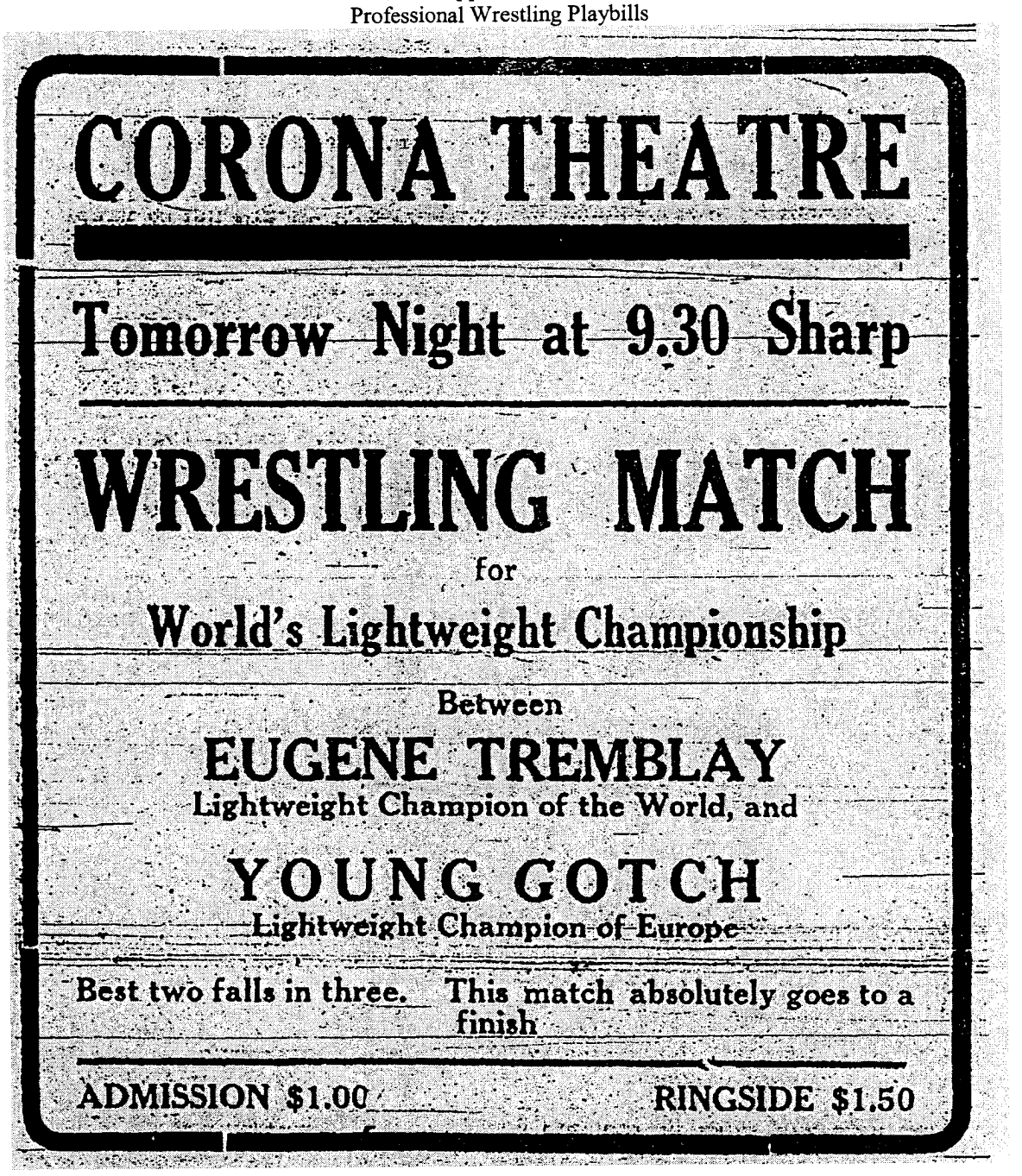
Date (DD/MM/YY): 02/04/32
Event Title: YMCA Boxing and Wrestling Exhibition
City: Fort William
Location: YMCA

Event Result	**Event Details**
Bailey versus John Commenda	Result unknown
Wally Jarvis versus Henry Meyers	Result unknown

Notes

Wrestling was staged in conjunction with boxing. Athletes were representatives of the YMCA.

Appendix V
Professional Wrestling Playbills



Port Arthur Daily News, 15 January 1914

Fort William Daily Times-Journal, 15 April 1914

VETERANS' DAY

McKELLAR PARK MAY 24TH FORT WILLIAM

Grounds Open at 1 p. m. Sharp

FOOTBALL MATCH
War Veterans vs. Fort William
Game Called 1:30 Sharp

LADIES' BASEBALL MATCH
Port Arthur vs. Fort William
Game Called 7.30 Sharp

2,000 Seats for World's Championship Wrestling Match

WAINO KETONEN of Chicago, World's Title Holder

vs.

GEORGE WALKER of Winnipeg, Champion of Canada

2,000 seats will be provided but no more—therefore, we advise getting your seats early. Seats now on sale in Fort William at F. J. Mitchell's clothing store, from Campbell's cigar store; in west Fort William at Frank Spence's drug store; in Port Arthur at Hall Austin's cigar store.

Important to Married Men

150 seats will be reserved in one group or section for men who would like to have their wives, and single men their sweethearts, to see this wonderful wrestling match. Every precaution will be taken to preserve order and decorum. Walker and Ketonen will take the mat sharp at 8 p.m., but good preliminaries will precede the main bout. This feature has already attracted big interest outside the two cities and already seats are booked from distant points.

Sports . Games

Tug-of-War

GIRLS' RACES—10 years and under and 14 years and under. Suitable prizes.

BOYS' RACES—10 years and under, and 14 years and under. Suitable prizes.

TUG-O'-WAR—Between teams composed of the gladiators of the Twin Cities.

BAYONET EXERCISES—Novel and interesting.

VETERANS' RACE—South African veterans will not be barred.

HUNDRED YARD DASH—Open to the world—when several fleet sprinters will dash into space at the crack of the gun; and other sports and games for old and young.

MINSTREL SHOW EXTRAVAGANZA 5 P. M. TO 8 P. M. Fort William Band all afternoon and evening. LADIES' NAILING CONTEST, Fish Pond, Ice Cream Parlors, Tea Gardens, Fortune Telling, Entertainment for Children, Coffee Booths, Hot Dogs, Soft Drinks, Raffles, Chuck Luck, Wheel of Fortune, Etc., Etc.

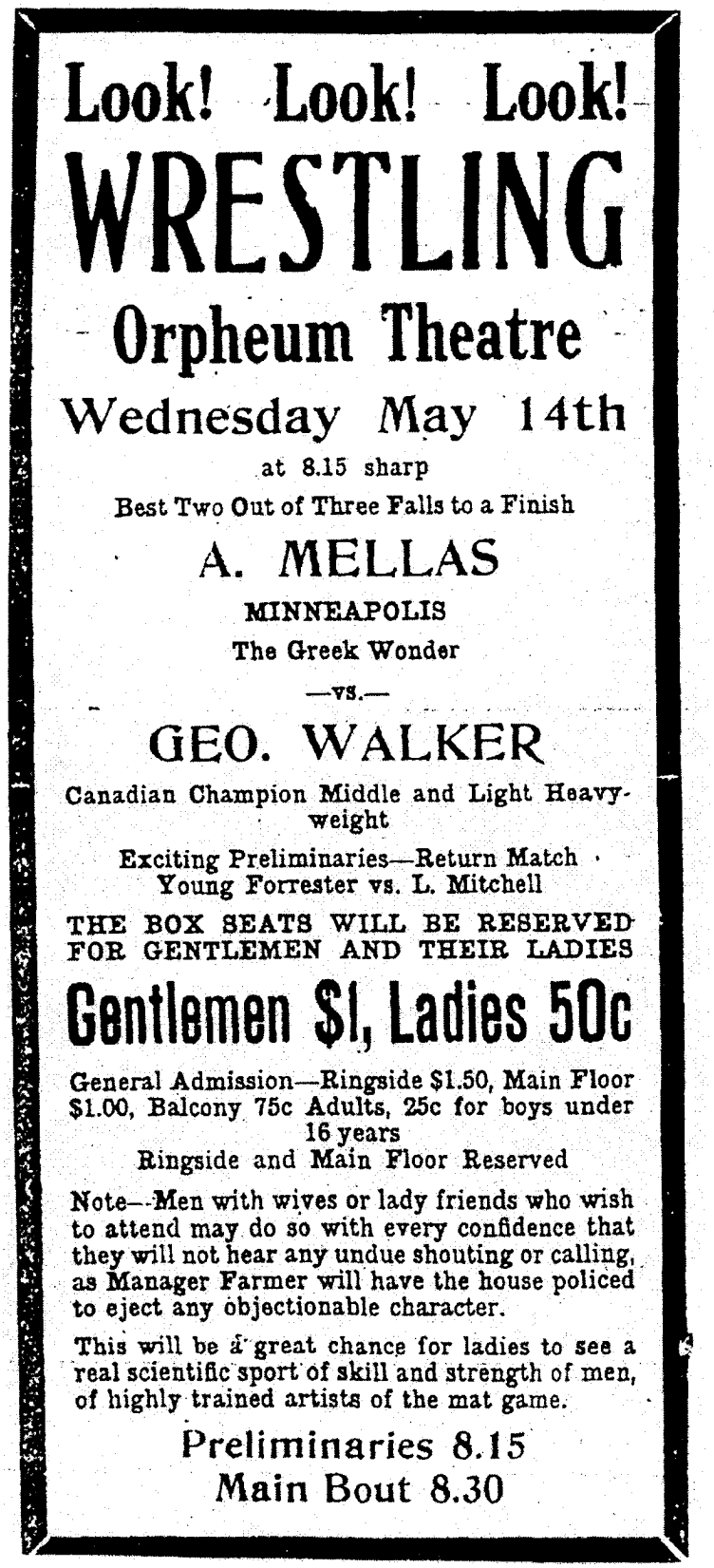
TWO SOLID HOURS OF FUN, FOLLIES AND FROLICS.

Fish Dinner served in Curling Rink from 5 to 8 by the Women's Auxiliary of Great War Veterans' Association

P. S.—Fireworks Display night of 24th. Fireworks are expensive to buy. Most of the homes, however, always have a few crackers for the kids. We want you to purchase your supply in the usual way, deliver them to our fireworks committee, and have one big grand display. It will sure be some grand display if all the people contribute some. Tell your merchant to send your supply to Mr. Noble, care Manager, Canadian Bank, for the Veterans' display. If you require further information phone him.

Net proceeds for Benevolent Fund Great War Veterans Association of Fort William. Executive Committee—Mrs. J. D. Nichol, Mrs. George A. Graham, Mrs. H. Murphy, Messrs. G. Davies, G. Bell, P. G. Etherington, C. H. Jackson, F. J. Mitchell and R. E. Walker. Fred H. Sole, Chairman; A. V. Clark, Treasurer; C. Birkett, Secretary.

Fort William Daily Times-Journal, 21 May 1918



Look! Look! Look!

WRESTLING

Orpheum Theatre

Wednesday May 14th

at 8.15 sharp

Best Two Out of Three Falls to a Finish

A. MELLAS

MINNEAPOLIS

The Greek Wonder

—vs.—

GEO. WALKER

Canadian Champion Middle and Light Heavy-weight

Exciting Preliminaries—Return Match
Young Forrester vs. L. Mitchell

THE BOX SEATS WILL BE RESERVED FOR GENTLEMEN AND THEIR LADIES

Gentlemen $1, Ladies 50c

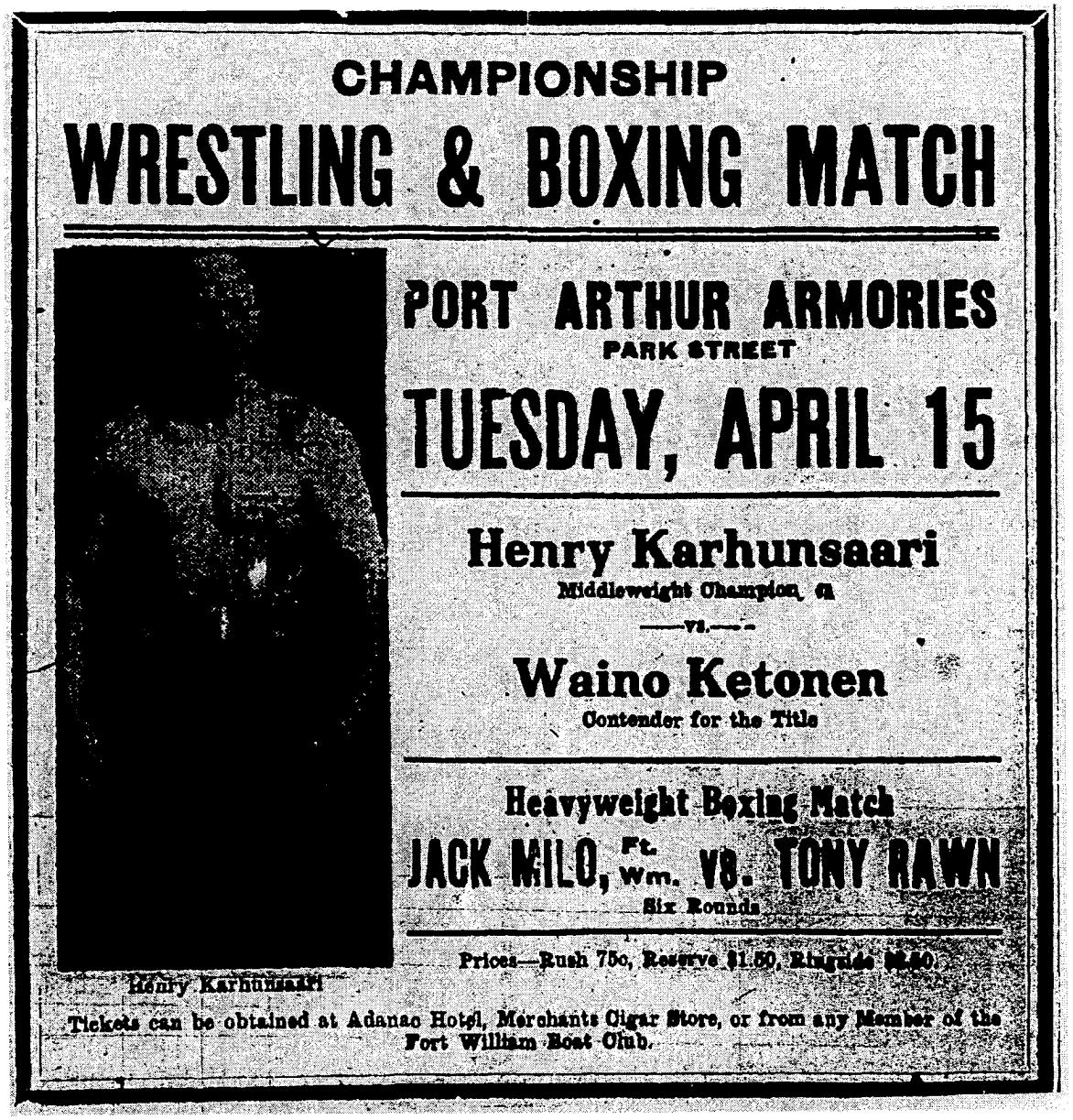
General Admission—Ringside $1.50, Main Floor $1.00, Balcony 75c Adults, 25c for boys under 16 years
Ringside and Main Floor Reserved

Note—Men with wives or lady friends who wish to attend may do so with every confidence that they will not hear any undue shouting or calling, as Manager Farmer will have the house policed to eject any objectionable character.

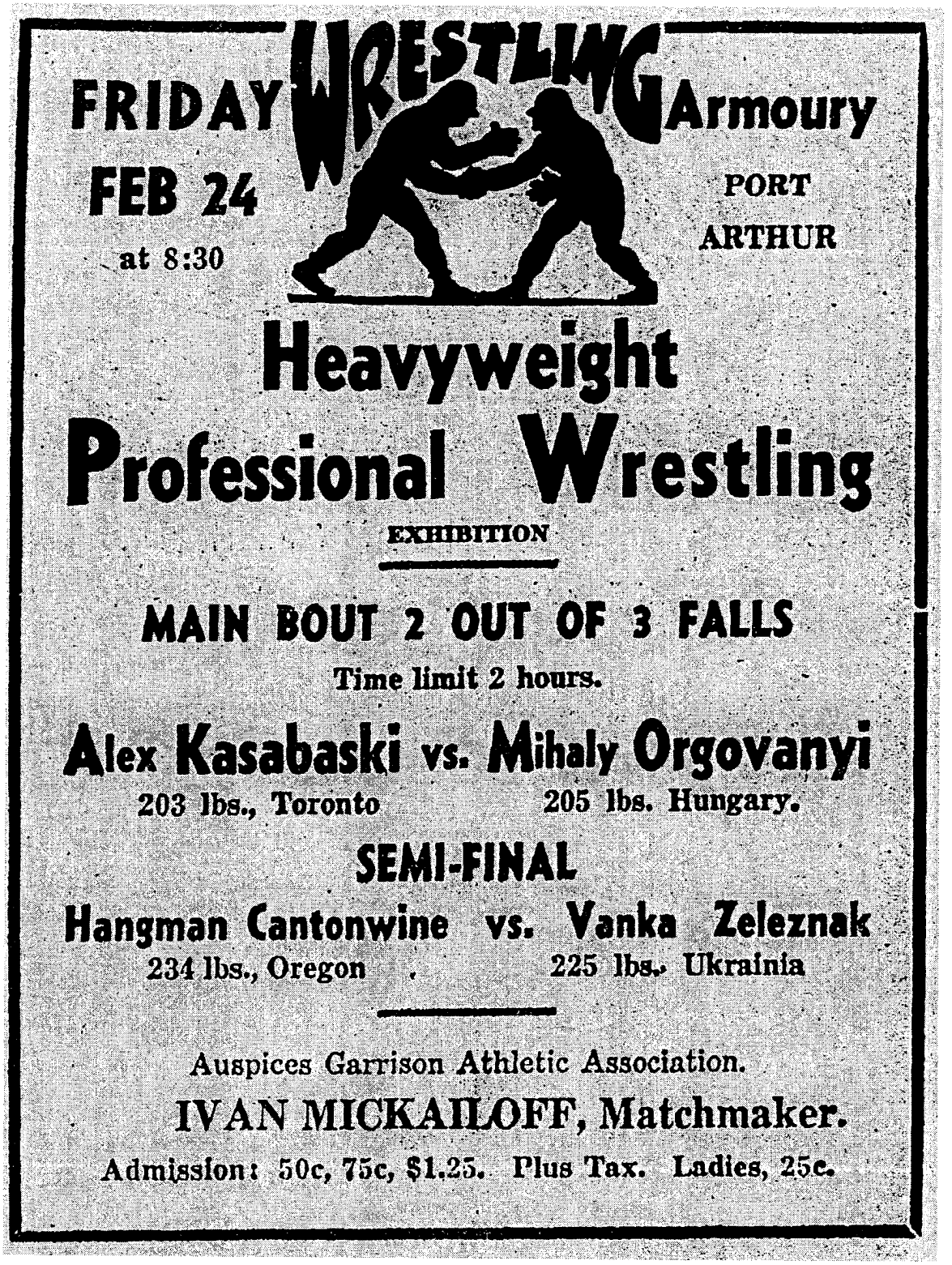
This will be a great chance for ladies to see a real scientific sport of skill and strength of men, of highly trained artists of the mat game.

Preliminaries 8.15
Main Bout 8.30

Fort William Daily Times-Journal, 12 May 1919



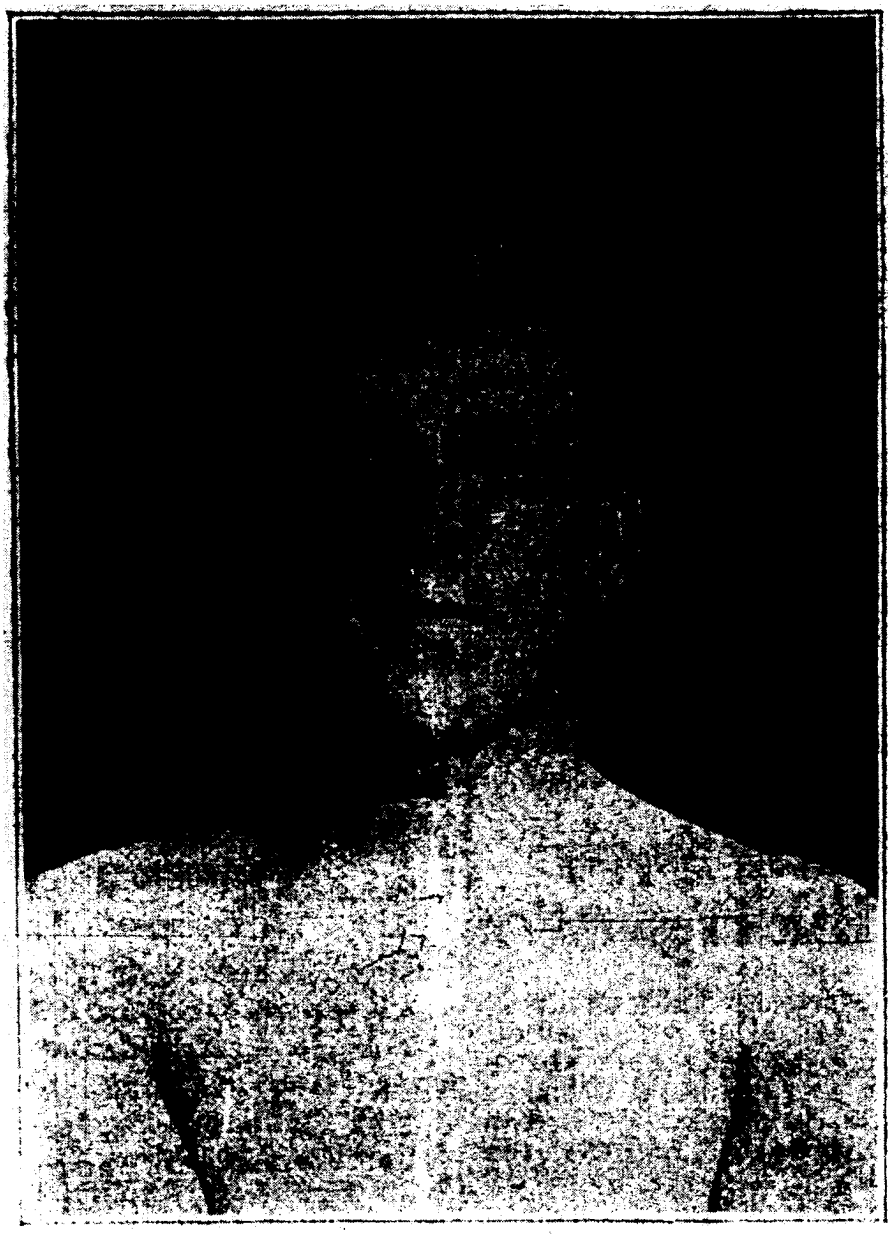
Fort William Daily Times-Journal, 10 April 1924



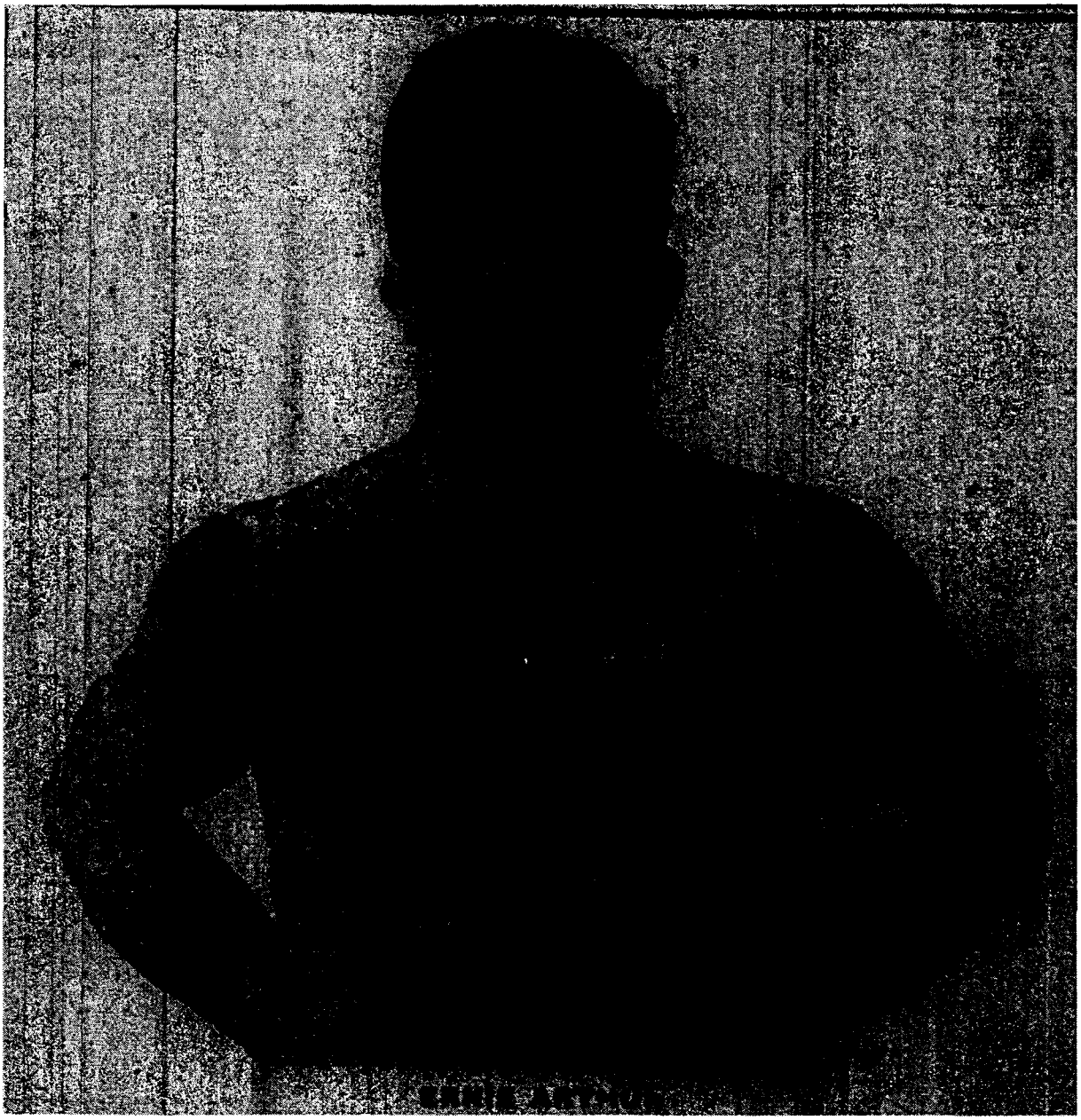
Port Arthur Daily News-Chronicle, 23 February 1933

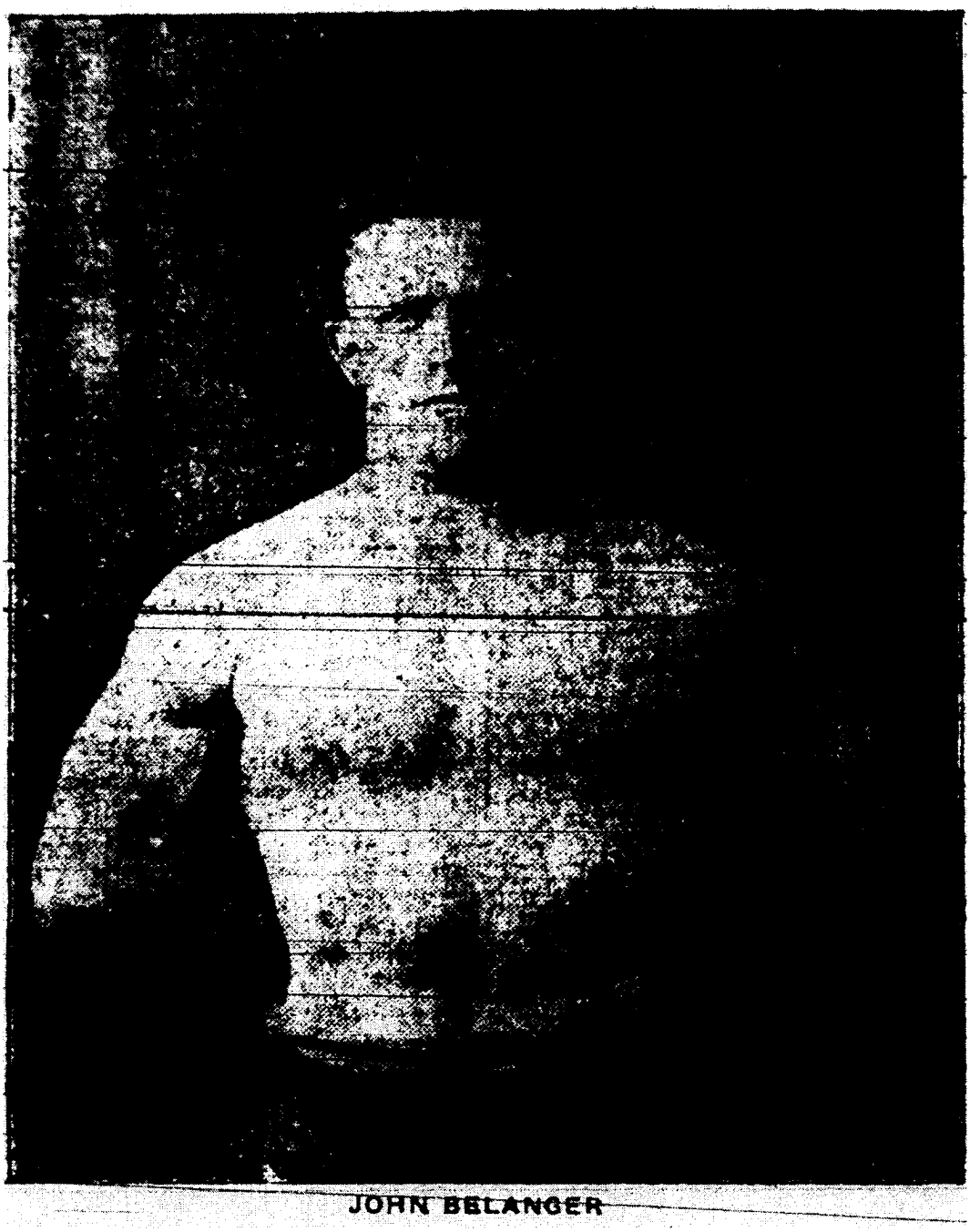
Appendix VI
Photos of
Wrestlers

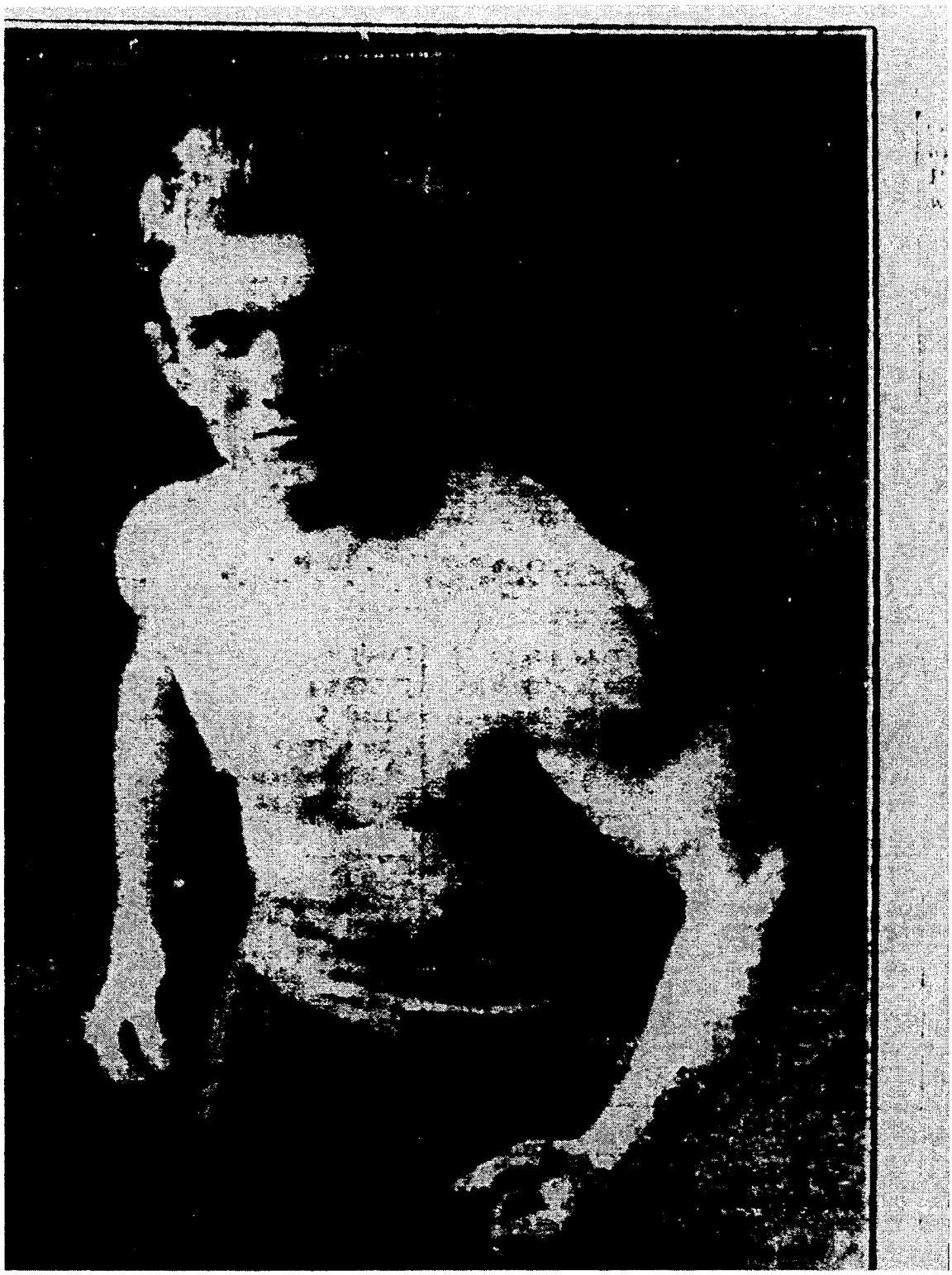
CHAMPION WRESTLER



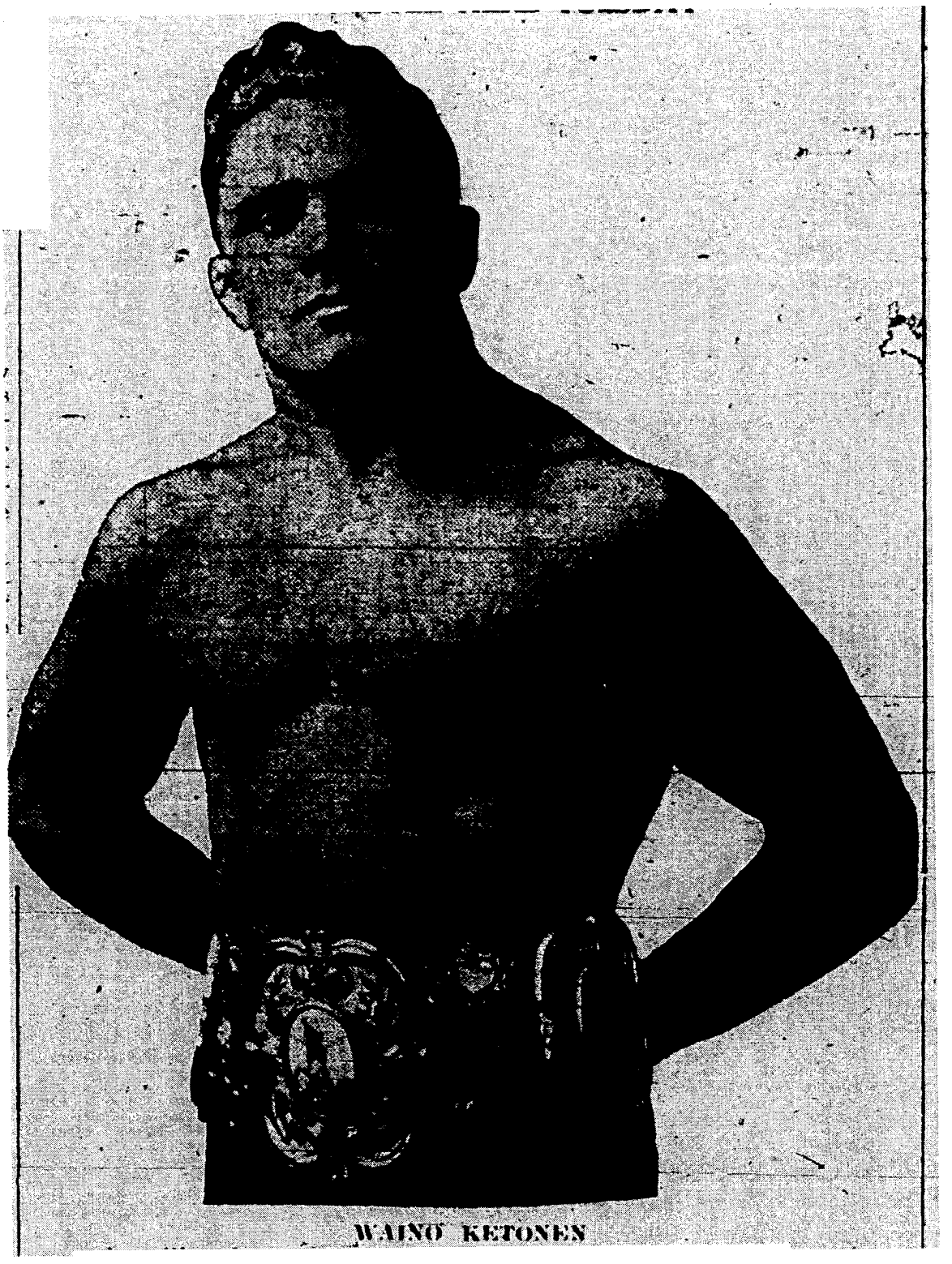
GEORGE WALKER.





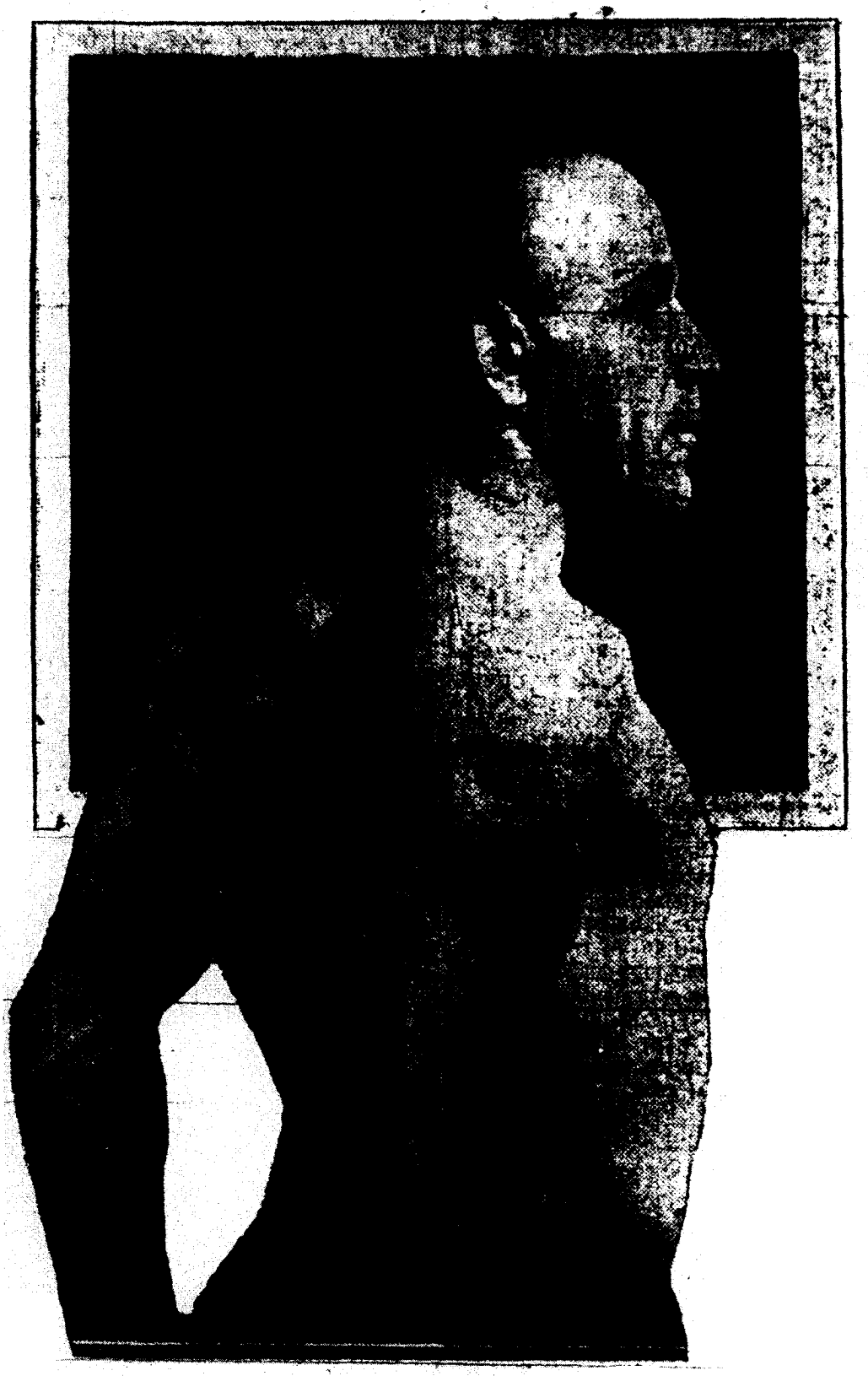


WALTER MILLER



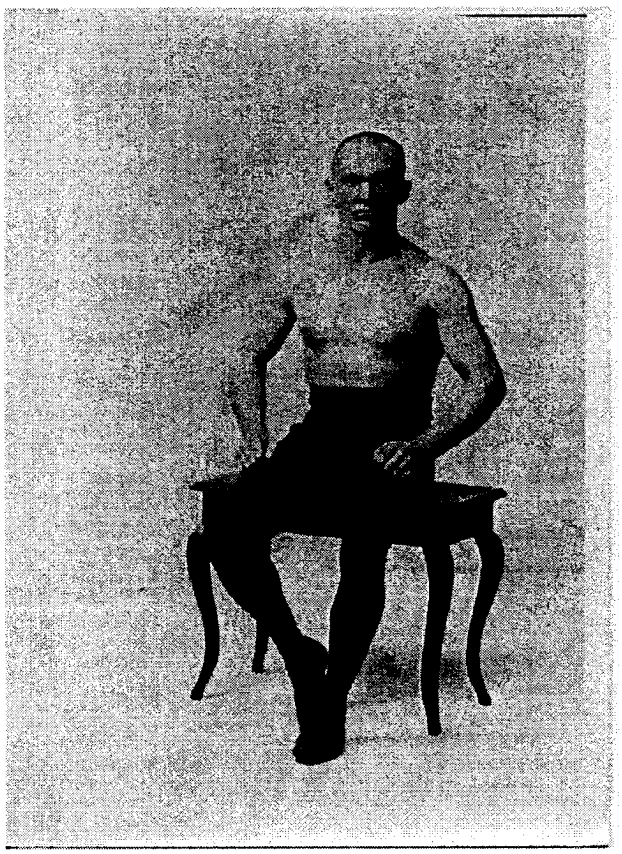
WAINO KETONEN

THE FEROCIOUS FINN



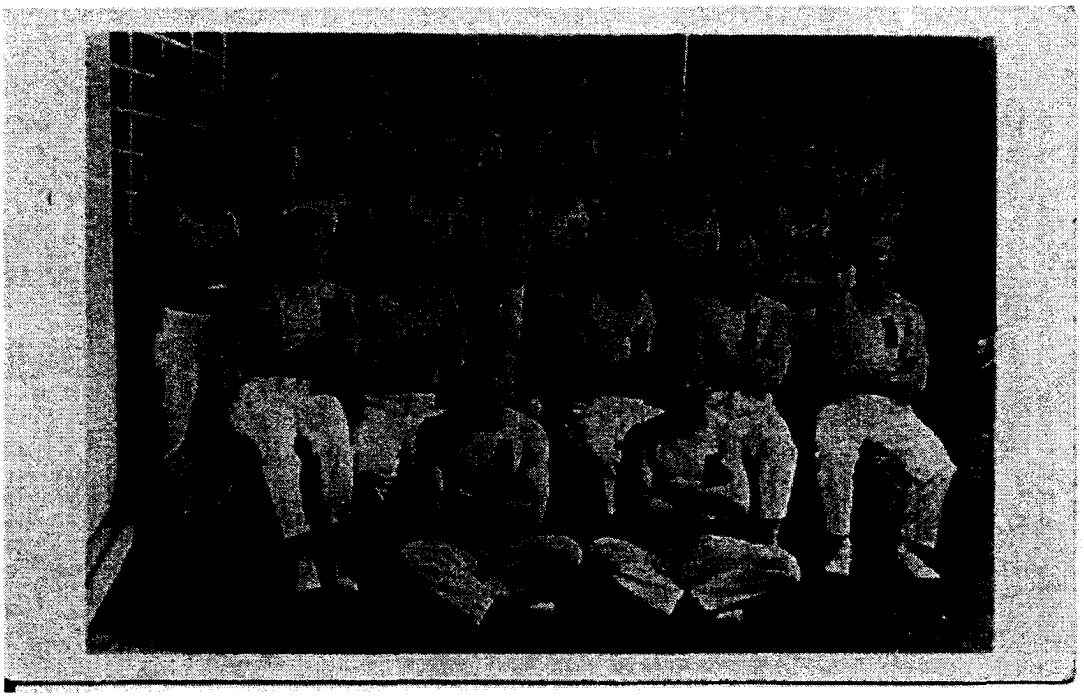
HENRY KARHUNSAARI

AL. L'ESPERANCE

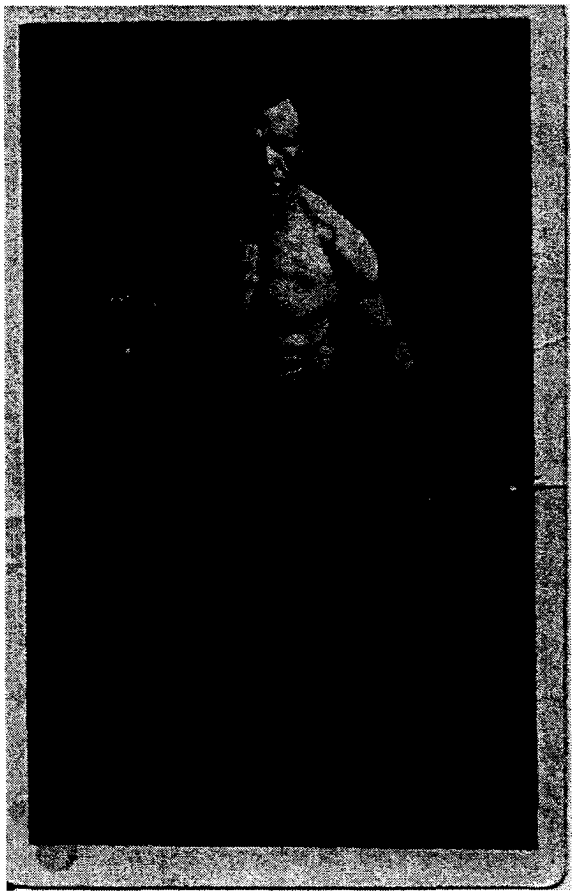


ALPHONS OJA

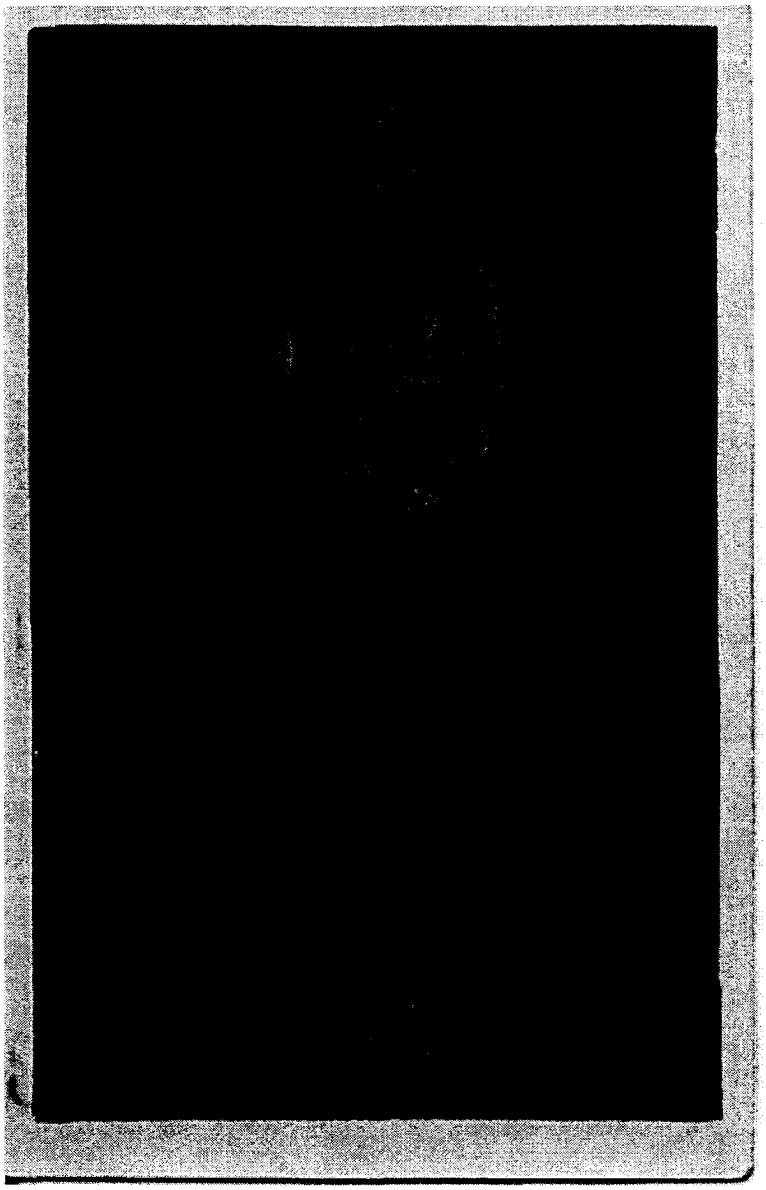
Courtesy of Lakehead University Archives, mg8,d,2,24,h,i220



NAHJUS CLUB WRESTLERS, 1920S
Courtesy of Lakehead University Archives, mg8,d,2,27,i247b



DAVID TAKALA
Courtesy of Lakehead University Archives, mg8,d,2,24,h,i214



OLE KOLEHMAINEN
Courtesy of Lakehead University Archives

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