

BRAMPTON CANADETTES

By Marg Poste

(A short history: reproduced from our 1980 Souvenir Program)

Few people today realize that the Brampton Canadettes are now in their seventeenth year of existence and will be hosting their thirteenth annual Dominion Ladies' Hockey Tournament with 124 teams entered this coming Easter weekend.

The old Bolton arena, reminiscent of a farmer's barn and complete with a dip in the ice at the blue line to catch unsuspecting opponents, was the birth site of the Club. Under the tutelage of Roy Morris and Jim Tokiwa, a band of young ladies were gradually transformed into hockey players.

The fall of 1964 saw the team entered into the Central Ontario Women's Hockey League with teams from Caledon East, Malton, Georgetown, Barrie, Richmond Hill and Schomberg. Later, in 1966 the team moved up to "A" competition in the newly-formed Central Ontario Ladies' Hockey Association with teams from Don Mills, Quelfh, Ajax, Barrie, Cooksville and Humberstone.

Considered a "fad" or described in other uncomplimentary terms, many people came to watch the ladies make fools of themselves but stayed to take in some excellent, exciting hockey. Additional public exposure brought more enquiries from girls and women wishing to join the Canadettes and in 1967, under Reg Fukasaka and Gary Moore, a second Canadettes team was born. The Canadettes were now a Club.

Canada's Centennial Year was also the opening chapter in the Dominion Ladies' Hockey Tournament. Twenty-two teams vied for the honours in that first Tournament at Doublerinks Arenas. "A" Consolation and "B" Championship titles went to the "A" and "B" Canadette teams.

That first Tournament also featured the widest age range in players as Mabel Boyd, a grandmother in her fifties, represented Cooksville and Lynne Franklin, age nine, represented the Canadettes.

The following year the Tournament drew 32 entries in four divisions with the addition of a "D" series to accommodate players in the 8 - 12 years of age range. The Brampton Windler Canadettes represented the Club in this division and along with the other two teams were successful in their title search.

Asked to comment on why girls would want to play ice hockey, Roy Morris said, "I don't know what attracts them to the game, but this thing has grown in leaps and bounds. The girls learn quickly and are certainly a treat to coach. And it doesn't make them any less lady-like either, just come to one of our banquets sometime."

Just as the Tournament entries steadily increased each year, so have the Canadette numbers. By 1975 the Club had become the Brampton Canadettes and the Tournament had been transferred to the city of Brampton where it attracted 56 entries. New playing divisions had been set with Midget, Bantam and Pee Wee allocations to allow age classifications for the younger players to facilitate more equal play. It may be noted here that the Canadettes were the first to introduce classification into women's hockey, via the Tournament, whereby teams were classified according to ability. Later, with the explosion of younger and better teams, classifications were increased and age limits put in.

The year 1975 also saw the entry of a team from York University, the first time this had happened. Made up of players from Universities where hockey is a non-body checking game, the York team relied on positional play and fast skating and passing to gain a play-off berth in the "B" final against Agincourt Canadians, a game they narrowly lost 2 - 1 in overtime. Unfortunately with all the firsts, only the Brampton Canadettes Bantams won their division at this, the eighth Tournament.

By 1977 the Tournament had grown so large that it was physically impossible to run it in Brampton and ice was secured at Meadowvale Four Rinks in Mississauga. Also, the date of the Tournament became permanently set to the Easter weekend to allow more time to accommodate teams.

Numbering 200 strong, the Canadettes have continued to grow and be a driving force in women's hockey. Five teams represent Brampton in five divisions. A house league of 8 teams continues to provide new talent. Over the past three years, Brampton Canadette teams have won six Ontario titles in four divisions. In Tournament and League play they have won countless Championships. Quite an enviable record.

As I look back over the years I wonder where it will stop. Will there come a time when people will finally refuse to volunteer their time and effort to coach, referee and administer Leagues and Tournaments, as has been the case with many organizations, be they men's or women's. Or will the Canadettes continue to be a strong force in the organization of women's hockey? A solid, proud group have done it for the past seventeen years, this old timer hopes they do it for the next seventeen!