



THE SASKATOON CLUB

C E N T U R Y O N E

**1907 - 2007**



Foreword

*We are pleased to present this brief history to help mark our Club's centennial. The project should be regarded as "a start" rather than as a comprehensive and definitive document. As such, we welcome ongoing contributions to our history, such as old documents and photographs – as well as any written submissions that could augment or clarify the history of our first 100 years.*

*Thank you to Jen Pederson, the author we commissioned to develop this history, for her outstanding work on the project. We also extend a most sincere thank you to all members who corresponded with Jen to contribute to this first edition. We look forward to building upon your efforts in the years to come.*

*Ray Penner, President  
Saskatoon Club  
November 2007*

Preface

The occasion of a centennial is a natural time to create a legacy document for any institution. However, commemorating the centennial of The Saskatoon Club by writing a history poses a fundamental dilemma: How does one create a record of a place where it is understood that everything is off the record? In researching this project, I had the pleasure to meet with several members, some of whom have been coming to the Club since the 1950s. While it was certainly never my intention to dig for lascivious details, I often found that my questions about favourite stories were met with very coy answers. As the saying goes, if the walls could talk, they would certainly have many tales to tell. However – and true to the spirit upon which the Saskatoon Club was founded – the members with tales to tell are not talking!

Fortunately, there are some stories, accepted as common folklore of the Club, that are included. But more to the point, the principal purpose of this document is to provide a lasting account, as of 2007, of the development of the Club and its place in Saskatoon's business community.

This project is indebted in no small part to Rnold Smith. Mr. Smith has been a member of the Club since 1952 and has had an enduring interest in preserving and documenting the history of the Club. In 1982 he spearheaded a Past Presidents research project, proposed by Ross Pinder, during which invaluable information was gathered. He also ensured that notes of interviews with Fred MacDermid and Emmett Hall, who were asked to share their memories of the Club's early Presidents, were saved. In a letter requesting assistance from Past Presidents and their relatives, Mr. Smith wrote, "We are not entirely certain what use will be made of this information. One thought is to attach a brief condensation of the material to each of the pictures hanging in the bridge room. The more comprehensive research material will be placed in a file. Sooner or later someone is going to want to do a history of the Club, and then such a file will be invaluable." It certainly was.

Thanks to Will Arscott, Shelley Brown, Bonny Bunnah, Edith Duperreault, Neil McMillan, Ron Miller, Ray Penner, Madam Justice Allisen Rothery, Bert Salloum, Ed Sebestyen, Rnold Smith, Kent Smith-Windsor, Darren Toews, Judge Sid and Mrs. Helen Walker, Gordon and Marion Wilson, and Peter Zakreski for their assistance, as well as the staff at the Saskatoon Public Library's Local History Room, Blair Prima (Municipal Heritage Coordinator), and Jeff O'Brien (City Archivist).

*Jen Pederson*



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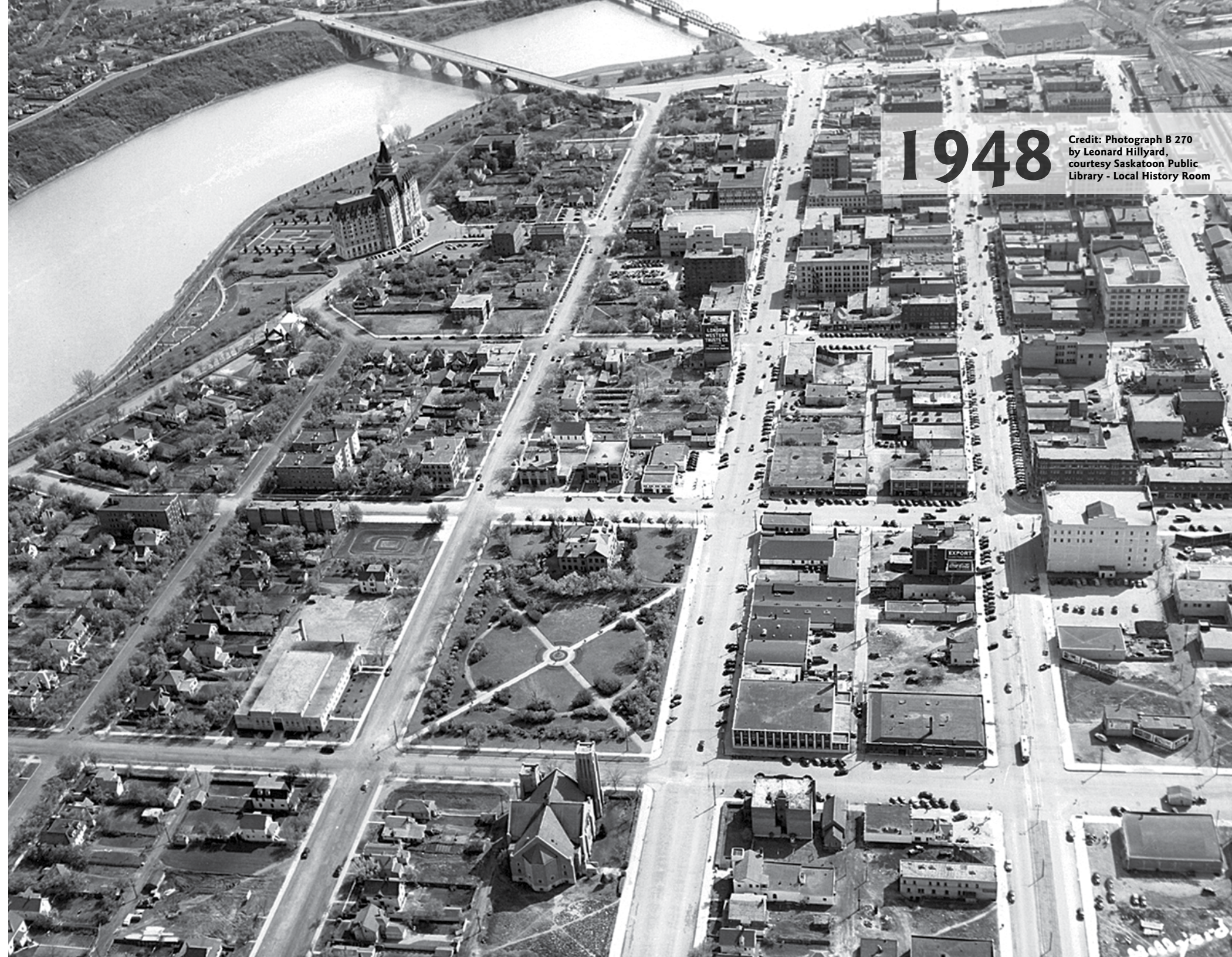


## The First 50 Years

In 1901 – 19 years after the arrival of the first settlers, but still six years before the Saskatoon Club was established – the settlement on the west side of the South Saskatchewan River was incorporated as the Village of Saskatoon (a rather precocious move considering the original east side settlement had always claimed that name). It took only two more years for Saskatoon to reach Town status. Just three years later, in 1906, Saskatoon, Nutana and Riversdale merged to create the City of Saskatoon.

By 1907, the year the Saskatoon Club was founded, Saskatoon had grown from a handful of tents to a bustling pioneer city on the verge of an unprecedented period of growth. It was a banner year for this new city, the “Queen of the North.” Civic assessment had grown from 2.5 million dollars at the time of incorporation to more than 6.6 million in less than 12 months. The city’s first suburb, Caswell Hill, had sold out, and new subdivisions were being planned and sold. After years of struggling with unreliable ferry service, the city was building its first traffic bridge, and new rail lines were laid by the CPR, CNR and the Grand Trunk Pacific. After a great deal of lobbying from Saskatoon’s political and business leaders, the provincial government announced that the University of Saskatchewan would be located in Saskatoon. Permanent buildings cropped up in the commercial center, along 1st and 2nd Avenues and 21st Street, and more and more businesses opened their doors to serve the needs of the city’s growing population. Despite a poor crop in 1907, Saskatoon was buoyed by the “Saskatoon Spirit” of optimism, and a growing number of investors kept the small city’s economy on the move. In this highly charged entrepreneurial and pioneering environment, the formation of a Club dedicated to serving the needs of the business and professional elite was a natural progression.

Though Saskatoon was relatively small and young, it had a spirited business community intent on realizing all the amenities and benefits of larger centers. The vast majority of the early builders of Saskatoon were of British descent; some were born in eastern Canada and came west in the first waves of settlement, while some had emigrated directly from Great Britain. The men’s club as an institution had existed in Britain for centuries with



# 1948

Credit: Photograph B 270  
by Leonard Hillyard,  
courtesy Saskatoon Public  
Library - Local History Room



a tradition extending as far as the Empire itself. Men of stature – political leaders, prominent businessmen, judges, doctors, and other professionals of influence – had long been creating places of privacy and discretion where they could fraternize outside of their homes.

To serve the needs of the business community itself, several prominent businessmen had established the Saskatoon Board of Trade in 1903 to promote Saskatoon businesses and attract more entrepreneurs to the city. Even with the considerable success of the Board of Trade, several business leaders still saw a need for an establishment where businessmen and professionals alike could entertain visitors to the city and socialize, closeted from more public venues and separate from fraternal or religious organizations.

In 1906, some prominent members of the community tried to solicit support for such an institution, tentatively called “The Saskatchewan Club”, through a joint-stock operation that would see early subscribers become members. The plan was to raise \$5,000, which would finance the building of a headquarters. This attempt failed, but the following year, not one but two Clubs were in the works. An Elks Club was established first, an apparent rival to the Saskatoon Club, which formed two weeks later. The Elks attempted to amalgamate with the Saskatoon Club the next year, but their proposal was rejected. However, there could not have been too much animosity between the two groups, as one of the founders of the Elks, merchant John F. Cairns, was elected Vice President of the Saskatoon Club.

In the spring of 1907, the founders of the Saskatoon Club petitioned the provincial government for incorporation of The Saskatoon Club, for social purposes. The original petition was signed in February 1907 by James Clinkskill, merchant and the first mayor of Saskatoon; H. B. Proudfoot, a land surveyor; lawyers R. W. Shannon and Henry Jordan; and Kenneth Ashworth, banker. Another Saskatoon pioneer, W.C. Sutherland, lawyer and land developer (and the man for whom the Sutherland district of Saskatoon is named) is listed on the petition, but his name is crossed out and his signature does not appear. Likewise, H.W.D. Armstrong, a civil engineer, and C.E. Strickland, a merchant, are also listed, but did not sign the document.

A notice of the application for incorporation was printed in the March 1, 1907 edition of *The Daily Phoenix*. An article in the April 9th paper announced that the bill to establish The Saskatoon Club had passed and that the Club was officially a chartered institution. That article said a meeting would be held the following day to select a location. *The Daily Phoenix* reported on May 9, 1907 that about twenty men had gathered at the Bank of Montreal building the previous evening, “and took final steps to start the Saskatoon Club on its way.” The newspaper reported that forty names were on the membership list and that the limit had been set at fifty. It was at that meeting that the first officers were elected. Kenneth Ashworth, one of the original petitioners and whose premises hosted the first meeting, was elected president. J.F. Cairns, owner of Saskatoon’s first department store, was elected Vice President; J. N. Lenon became Secretary-Treasurer; and J.A. McRae was appointed as the Auditor. W.C. Sutherland, Fred Engen, F.S. Cahill, H.L. Jordan, and James Straton were all executive committee members. The membership empowered the executive to secure quarters as soon as possible.

It didn’t take the Club’s executive long to find a location that befitted the tradition of a British men’s club. In July 1907, the Saskatoon Club moved into a property on Spadina Crescent, just south of 20th Street, near the present-day St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church. These premises were reported to be luxuriously furnished to meet the needs of entertainment-seeking members. For those unable to experience the Club for themselves, a reporter in *The Daily Phoenix* furnished an eloquent description:

*In the card room, the card table forms the centerpiece. Between the chairs surrounding the room are smart little tables with tops of hammered copper. These for holding glasses. Clutching to them are cigar trays for holding lighted cigars without anything managing to get on fire from them.*

*Coming down the softly padded stairs, one notices in the hall the register desk, the notice board, the trellis-work for the cards and the eight day clock, which was a gift to the Club from Mr. Cairns.*





*The downstairs rooms are furnished in yellow and brown with oriental Wilton rugs and brown monk's cloth curtains. The larger room, the reading room, is a delightful spot. Its furniture is of fumed oak and brown undressed kid leather. The long directors' table has a large brass pot holding a great fern and the rest of the table is heaped with magazines and newspapers. The bay window of this room is an ideal spot for book lovers with its pair of large easy chairs and table between holding a brush-brass reading lamp.*

There is no record of a reason, but by 1909 the Saskatoon Club had moved from its original riverfront location to the MacBeth Block at 109 2nd Avenue South. In February 1911, the Club purchased land on 21st Street (the Club's current location) from Benjamin Chubb, one of the founders of Saskatoon Milling Company (later Quaker Oats), for \$5,000. This land was on the very edge of the business district, though being on the same street as the railway station (now the site of Midtown Plaza's main entrance on 1st Ave. & 21st St.) would have given it a certain caché.

The Club commissioned the local firm of Thomson, Daniel and Colthurst to design the building. The British-trained architects certainly echoed the tradition of men's clubs in their design. The façade's dark red brick set off the elaborate cut stone details. The large front porch led into a vestibule and the lobby. From the main hall there was a smoking room on the left, and to the right was a room for entertaining visitors. The large dining room could seat fifty people. The wine room, steward's room, kitchen and pantry were all on the main floor and there was an eight-foot-deep verandah across the back of the building. Upstairs there was a large library, a private dining room, other private rooms, another wine room, two card rooms, a spacious bridge room and a cloakroom. There was a balcony at the rear, over the verandah. There was also a full basement that housed two large billiard rooms, each with two tables. Folding doors between these rooms could be opened to create one large space. *The Daily Phoenix* reported that the Club certainly promised to be grand and concluded that it would be, "one of the most beautifully finished structures in the City." One of the architects, T. Brammall Daniel, traveled to England to find materials for both the Club and for St. John's Cathedral, another of the firm's projects – evidence that no expense was spared in creating the desired atmosphere for the Club.



Three meals a day were served in the main dining room, which was the focal point of the Club's activities. Indeed, meals, bridge and pool remained at the heart of activities at the Club for many years to come.

Memberships were sold according to a complicated system of five different levels. Ordinary members were those who lived in the city or within a five mile radius; Non-resident members were from outside that boundary; Privileged Memberships were extended to officers of the North West Mounted Police, government and bank officials who were stationed in Saskatoon but whose jobs may well have seen them transferred elsewhere; Temporary for visitors to the city; and Absent for members moving more than one hundred miles out of the city. Presumably the difference between Non-Resident and Absent was that the latter had at one time been a permanent resident of Saskatoon but moved away. Important to note: One of the only rules publicized was that no dogs were allowed.

It was a good time to be in business in Saskatoon. The Board of Trade was promoting Saskatoon in eastern Canada, the United States and Great Britain as the fastest growing city in the world – the "Chicago of Western Canada". Fuelled by this optimism, Saskatoon boosters threw their support behind (and their money into) land speculation to develop more and more subdivisions to house the flood of immigrants they were sure was coming. Ambitious power generation and industrialization schemes were bandied about. Would-be industrialists (many of them members and executive members of the Saskatoon Club) formed an Industrial League to entice industry to locate in Saskatoon and raised one million dollars in an aggressive and impressive week-long fundraising drive in 1912.

But not long after the Club's new building was ready, Saskatoon's boom began to falter. The boom had been financed by outside capital, mostly British, and as the political landscape in Europe grew darker, British capitalists turned off the taps that had fuelled the boom. The local banks that had extended such generous credit throughout the boom called in their loans. By the time war broke out in the summer of 1914, Saskatoon's boom was officially over. The economy shifted to respond to the war effort, and hundreds of young men went overseas.



Some of the subdivisions that had been mapped out in all four directions from the city's core remained empty for fifty years.

While growth was drastically curbed, business carried on, and so did the Saskatoon Club. Records are sketchy as to the precise terms of presidents during this period, which could be attributed to the fact that some activities were curtailed during wartime.

The Club was incorporated as a joint stock company under the Companies Act in July 1916, declaring assets of \$25,000 in the form of 250 shares of \$100.00 each. Business was conducted at the Club as usual until the arrival of a rather perfunctory notice from the provincial registrar, that as of August 10, 1917, the name of Saskatoon Club Company Limited had been struck from the register and the company dissolved. Needless to say, this came as a surprise to the Club's executive. No reason was given and, according to a strongly worded petition submitted by Fred MacDermid, no notice had been given that ending the Club's right to operate as a legal entity was being considered. He assured the courts that had the Club been made aware of this possibility, "every step would have been taken to see that this was not done." Mr. MacDermid presented his affidavit to the Supreme Court in Regina on October 25, 1917; no one appeared on behalf of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies. Mr. Justice Newlands ordered that the Club's name be restored to the register and the Saskatoon Club was once again a legal entity.

The annual summaries of capital and shares that were submitted to the provincial secretary's office show that the Club was steadily paying down its debt throughout the 1920s, and had reduced it from about \$14,000 in 1918 to \$8,000 in 1929. According to City building permit records, alterations valued at \$1,000 were made in 1923. Not surprisingly, given the economic climate at the time, little progress was made on paying down the debt during the Depression, though it is important to note that it plateaued, rather than grew, during those hard years.

Revenue was undoubtedly down overall, but probably key to the survival of the Club during the Depression, rooms on the second floor were rented out as lodging. In fact, according to Fred MacDermid, Fred MacDonald, who served as President in

1936, lived upstairs for a time. He was a teacher at Bedford Road Collegiate and several people remembered that MacDonald so loved to play bridge that he would take the streetcar back to the Club at lunch hour to play a few hands, then ride back to the school in time for classes.

Card games were sometimes the subject of controversy. Angus McClaskey recounted a story in his memoirs, *Angus McClaskey Remembers*, that has a Saskatoon Club connection. In the late 1920s, when McClaskey was a Crown Prosecutor, he frequented a regular poker game, organized by a fellow named George Martin. One day, when McClaskey was not there, fortunately for him, the police raided the game in a crackdown on small poker clubs. When Martin refused to pay the \$10 fine, he went to trial. McClaskey was one of the prosecutors and Judge McLean, a Saskatoon Club member, was presiding. The evidence was certainly not in Martin's favour; he was clearly operating a gaming house under the legal definition. He took the opportunity afforded defendants to address the jury directly and, in an impassioned plea, tactfully pointed out that right across the road from the courthouse, a poker game ran three nights a week at the Saskatoon Club and that nobody ever said anything about it. McClaskey said that Martin didn't actually say outright that Judge McLean played poker at the Club, but the jury undoubtedly got the implication. Unfortunately for Martin, there was no option but to find him guilty, upon which Judge McLean asked him to stand to receive his sentence. According to McClaskey:

*[[Judge McLean] said he appreciated all the facts which had been raised, and that he thereby fined him one dollar. George reached into his pocket, took out a dollar bill, laid it in front of the Clerk of the Court saying, 'Thank you, my Lord.' Whereupon, he bowed to the court and walked out. As a footnote, I should add that this pretty well ended the prosecutions of small operators of gaming establishments.*

Like the economy in general, the Club's financial records show that after the outbreak of the Second World War, the prosperity of the Club improved and steady reduction of the debt resumed. In 1949, the Club increased its capital by offering 250 preferred shares, valued at \$50.00.



"Thursday Night Club Night"



This was in addition to the 250 ordinary shares of \$100.00, effectively increasing the capital from \$25,000 to \$37,500. By 1954, the Club was debt-free. In 1961, the capital of the Club was increased again, this time to \$50,000, by doubling the number of preferred shares to 500. In 1966, the Club changed from a shareholding entity under the Companies Act to a membership organization under the Society's Act. Shareholders exchanged their shares for memberships under the new structure.

### Socializing at the Club

Hugh Arcsott perhaps best evoked the atmosphere of Thursday Club nights, saying, "The air was blue with cigar smoke and dirty jokes." Apparently, Thursday was chosen because in the early days it was traditionally the maid's night off. Thus, it was a good night for husbands in households with maids to go out for dinner, to make less work for their wives (who stayed home).

Frank MacMillan was President in 1945. On April 12th that year, the news broke that United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt had died. It happened to be a Thursday, and according to Emmett Hall, MacMillan felt they should mark the occasion, so he called for someone versed in American politics to come from the university to speak. Before anyone arrived, though, John Davies of Reliance Lumber arrived at the Club with his boss, a "high-up" in Reliance Lumber from Minneapolis. According to Hall, MacMillan said, "We can't let this momentous occasion pass, particularly since we have such a distinguished citizen from the United States. We should hear from him." And so the man stood up and shared his feelings on the death of his President: "The best thing FDR ever did – he died today." Not likely the tribute MacMillan had hoped for.

Rnold Smith remembers Club nights being a good deal: \$3.00 for a t-bone steak and an open bar for half an hour – though the line-ups were so long it wasn't easy to actually reach the bar more than once during that time.

Liquor laws in Saskatchewan in the 1950s were quite strict. Beer parlours were allowed only if they were affiliated with hotels.

Hard alcohol was sold only in government-run stores, and consumption was limited to private homes. Since the Club did not actually have a liquor license at the time, members would buy bottles at the liquor store and would be reimbursed when they delivered them to the Club. In May 1958, the Saskatoon Club submitted a brief to the Legislative Committee on Liquor Sales and Outlets requesting that the Liquor Act be amended to allow an institution such as the Saskatoon Club to lawfully serve liquor. The argument emphasized the professional nature of the Club, both in membership and in management. Counsel for the Saskatoon Club, A. H. Bence, argued that the negative effects of alcohol on society were more likely to occur under the legislation at the time, than in a controlled environment of gentlemen, such as at the Saskatoon Club:

*We do submit that a Club such as ours is one where the members desire to have the right to enjoyment of beverages with their friends, associates and guests as they presently enjoy in their own home. It is logically a place for entertainment of business, professional and such like associates and guests, frequently in a setting and for purposes where home entertainment is neither logical nor desired. It is a right or privilege, at one time permitted by our laws, generally enjoyed elsewhere and one consistent with normal good and proper living, thereby tending to avoid the abuses which our present legislation tends to develop, though not so intended. Moderation will be generally found when consumption is permitted in good surroundings, normal to the life of our members and subject to reasonable control.*

It was inevitable that alcohol would attract unwanted attention. Future Supreme Court Justice Emmett Hall was Club President in 1949-1950 when the chief of police, George Donald, phoned him on a Monday to tell him about a complaint he had received that had to do with the Saskatoon Club. A woman had called the Chief to complain that her husband, a member of the Club, regularly came home drunk on Thursdays and she suspected that, contrary to liquor laws at the time, he was drinking at the Saskatoon Club. She demanded the Chief take action and raid the Club.





According to Hugh Arscott's telling of the story, Emmett Hall asked the Chief when the raid was planned, and he said on Wednesday, at eight o'clock. Tuesday night, members of the executive are reputed to have loaded up every single bottle of liquor into a truck. The contraband safely removed, the Club was safe for inspection, but storage was an issue. Fortunately, Hall was able to arrange safe haven with one of the Club's neighbours – in the summer kitchen of the Church of the Martyrs, which stood where the Sheraton Cavalier hotel is today. Wednesday evening, as promised, the police arrived to inspect the premises. The members present at the time of the raid were sipping water and iced tea. The officers searched everywhere, going so far as to dig through coal in the basement, sniffing glasses and teapots, peering into the corners of the attic and every closet. Their search turned up nothing, so Chief Donald dutifully reported to the accusative lady that the Club was, in fact, entirely alcohol-free. Hall recalled that when the liquor was retrieved from the Church of the Martyrs, slightly less had made the return trip to the Club. "Apparently, the good Fathers were principled men who strongly believed in tithing and so ten per cent of the booze remained as a charitable donation for the Fathers' personal dispensation."

Times changed, and with the Prohibition Era in the rear-view mirror, the social life of the Club became more prolific and no doubt more legal. Special dinners were held quite regularly. Lobster would be flown in from the east coast on occasion, and often in the fall the members who were avid hunters (Rupe Wentz, among them) would supply ducks and geese for everyone to enjoy.

The Club's longest-running tradition, the New Year's Day Levee, has for decades been the premiere event of the year. Open to families for years even before women were allowed in the Club, the Levee has long been a highlight of the holiday season.

A favourite tradition was Club Night. For years, entertainment on Club Nights was organized by different groups – the lawyers, or the bankers, for example – who would perform skits or enact mock meetings, full of good-natured jokes. The Club Nights were very popular, with sometimes more than 200 people attending. Bert Salloum remembers people from Regina would often make

sure their business in Saskatoon would necessitate a stay-over on a Thursday so they could attend.

Over time, though, the Club nights waned. There wasn't any single reason for the change, though contributing to the trend would have been the proliferation of restaurants in the growing city. The recession of the early 1980s undoubtedly precipitated a fair amount of belt-tightening. As well, there was a shift in society's attitudes towards drinking and driving, with stricter laws and more serious consequences. Thus, the entertainment programs that at one time were so popular became somehow more work intensive, and with the mounting demands of modern-day business and family commitments, they'd had their time.

That is not to say that the wits and satirists of the Club had lost their edge. For example, in the late 1990s, a group that included Ed Sebestyen, Dwight Percy, Neil McMillan, Lars Nissen, Allisen Rothery, Victor Hnatyshyn, Paul Martin and Peter Zakreski put together mock newscasts called "Eyewitless News". Complete with sets and an opening theme that gave the viewer a clue to the irreverent nature of the "reports", the group had enlisted the help of some CTV technicians to produce very well-received programs.



This photo of John Diefenbaker, Prime Minister of Canada, was on display at the Club for many years.



## The Building Itself

Not surprising for an institution steeped in centuries-old tradition, little changed at the Saskatoon Club in its first half century. From its earliest days the Club offered what the members were looking for – a good meal, a good cigar, a drink (a discreet amenity particularly appreciated during Prohibition) and opportunities to socialize with the community's business and professional elite, often at the bridge table or while shooting pool. Notes from a Past Presidents' night held in 1984 say that the building was actually up for sale in the early 1950s, with an asking price of \$100,000. The building did not sell, so as the Club's fiftieth anniversary approached, the facility got a facelift. The first major improvements to the Club, handled by H.J. Tubby & Son Ltd., included upgrades top to bottom. New drywall, oak flooring, mahogany paneling, and carpet and drapes were installed, brickwork inside and out was repaired, and the fireplace hearth, bathrooms, humidor and the plumbing, heating and ventilation systems were upgraded. A sound system was installed in the basement and receipts from the renovations show that acoustical ceilings were installed in several rooms, including a T.V. room, which in December 1956 would have been a very modern embellishment.

Several North American cities had industry-specific clubs, one of the most common in the West being Petroleum Clubs. A group of men interested in developing the oil industry established the Saskatoon Petroleum Club. The Petroleum Club rented space on the second floor of the Saskatoon Club and enjoyed reciprocal privileges. For whatever reasons, the vitality of The Saskatoon Petroleum Club was short-lived, and the lease was cancelled in 1955.

There were more upgrades in 1963, 1965, and 1971 as Saskatoon continued to expand – especially in the 1970s. In the early 1970s the Club had entertained the notion of expanding towards the street to accommodate offices for the Board of Trade. While there were certainly fiscal advantages to the proposal, there were concerns about having such a literal physical connection between the Board of Trade and the private Club, and the idea was ultimately abandoned. 1979 saw the Club's first major expansion. At a time when preserving the architectural integrity of old buildings was not a priority, the Board decided to keep the Club's distinctive

façade intact, though the \$450,000 addition on the west side of the building has been described as “aggressively modern”. This expansion, designed by John Holliday-Scott Architects, allowed for a larger main dining room as well as four additional private dining rooms. The lower level of the addition housed an athletic facility – certainly a departure from the Club's traditional amenities, but as a sign of the times and especially appropriate in Saskatoon, where the nation's fitness program, ParticipACTION, was first piloted. The fitness facility included racquetball and squash courts, an exercise area, whirlpool and sauna.

In 1986, the original rear verandah was removed, and a two-story addition, designed by A.L. Trepple & Associates, was built on the south side of the building. Columns from the verandah were saved and used in the renovation of the historic Barrister House on 6th Avenue North. This addition allowed for a much needed kitchen expansion. By this time the interior of the Club was entirely changed from the original floor plan. Capital improvements have been carried out since then to ensure the Club retains its historic design integrity while incorporating modern infrastructure and amenities.

By 2000, the board of directors decided that the Club was ready for another facelift. In 2004, the Club undertook the largest capital project since the 1979 addition. The décor was updated throughout and made an immediate impression upon those entering the Club. To reflect changing needs of members, in the basement athletic facility, the racquetball court was replaced by an 800 square foot cardio room, while upstairs the structure of the meeting rooms was changed to allow for more flexibility, including being able to divide the Upper Lounge into smaller spaces. The administrative offices were changed and updated and there was a major electrical upgrade, essential in a building that has been in Saskatoon almost as long as electricity itself! Technological requirements of modern business have also been added, including wireless internet access throughout the entire building, digital projectors, and teleconferencing and videoconferencing equipment.



Lower Level, Circa

# 1950



It was the exterior's turn for upgrades in 2005. The façade was painted and the mortar refreshed; the large brick planters were removed from the courtyard, and paving stones were installed. A new wrought iron gate was installed that sets the entrance off to its full advantage.



The Lower Lounge was remodeled in 2006. Suggestions for a new name were sought from members and the board decided upon “The Barr”, a somewhat tongue-in-cheek reference to The Barr Colonists (not to be mistaken for the earlier Temperance Colonists) who camped for a period in Saskatoon, on their way to present-day Lloydminster, about the same time as when the Saskatoon Club was formed, and who were entrepreneurs looking for the much-promised and highly advertised prosperity of “the new land.”

There is one other “fixture” at the Club, at least according to some. It is reasonable to expect that an old building with an air of secrecy should boast a ghost story. Seen occasionally on the second floor by several members of staff over the years, the spectre has been described (and quite consistently) as a woman in her 30s wearing a long dress. She takes a few steps, or just stands and watches, before disappearing. Some staff members say that people with whom they'd never discussed the ghost have mentioned seeing her. Unfortunately, command performances cannot be arranged. Could it be this is the disgruntled wife who demanded during the Prohibition Era that the Chief of Police raid the Club (with no success), and who now searches on her own for evidence of alcoholic debauchery?

### Women at the Saskatoon Club

Unlike the female ghost in the Club's folklore, women no longer have to be an apparition to walk the hallways of the Saskatoon Club. But for more than 80 years, the Saskatoon Club was a purely

traditional men's club. When the Club was founded, women in Canada could not vote or hold political office, and men were almost exclusively the ones to run businesses. Change had to occur, and it gained momentum over the years.

In the 1960s and 1970s – the turning tide epitomized by the Women's Liberation Movement – more women were holding positions of authority and influence. Not ever being at the forefront of social change – at least not overtly as an organization – the Saskatoon Club persistently remained a men-only institution, despite the fact that many women were in professions or held positions that were of course the same as those held by Club members: business owners, doctors, accountants, architects, senior civil servants, elected officials, lawyers, and judges.

Women were not allowed in the dining room before 4:00, effectively shutting them out of any business day meetings, and could not be members, regardless of their position. With the increase in the number of women in leadership roles in both business and the professions, the Club's men-only membership was less and less a reflection of the business community it aimed to serve.

Within the Club, there was at once strong opposition among some members to the notion of allowing women into the Club, and conversely those who vocally advocated extension of membership to women. The issue became increasingly contentious. Indeed, the debate spilled onto the street. Stories and letters to the editor appeared in the newspaper. For many, the fact that the policies of a private club were being influenced by external forces, in particular government bureaucracy, was as great a concern as the debate itself.

In 1984, members of City Council argued over whether public money should be spent on a membership for the City of Saskatoon Industrial Officer. Given the networking opportunities, the Club certainly was an appealing environment for someone who worked at promoting business in Saskatoon, but it was argued that by extension, the City was saying that the City of Saskatoon Industrial Officer had to be a man. In 1986 the public Board of Education faced the same debate over the director's membership. At the Club's Annual General Meeting in 1986, Peter Zakreski asked what needed to be done to allow women to be members.

He put forth a motion that the matter be explored. There was no seconder and the motion died, so Zakreski put forth another motion, this time that the Board consider allowing women full access to the Club during the day. Vern Dallin seconded the motion, but it was soundly defeated (41 votes to 12). The next year, when Robert Laing was President, the first change came: the Board decided that women would be allowed in the Club before 4:00 p.m.

The first vote regarding women membership was held in the spring of 1989 and, after the ballots were counted three times, was declared a tie: 64 to 64. The Board decided to defer the matter to a later vote.

Pressure from outside the Club increased as the Saskatchewan Medical Association cancelled its membership, saying that until its women members could be members, it could not endorse the organization's membership in the Club. The City had written to the Club in February 1989 saying that unless women were admitted to the Club, they would not renew the administration's membership.

Some affiliated clubs across the country had been relaxing their rules and so the Saskatoon Club faced being dropped from several affiliation agreements since it would not be able to extend full reciprocal services to female members from other communities. According to a 1989 survey done by the Assiniboia Club in Regina, women were allowed into 13 of the 18 private clubs in Canada. To accommodate these relationships, women from affiliated clubs had full access with the exception of Thursday nights, the traditional members' night.

Despite the pressures, on the night of the second vote, in November 1989, the debate seemed to favour remaining male-only. One of the Club's most eloquent members, Justice Emmett Hall, spoke about the importance of the Club reflecting the reality of the leadership of Saskatoon's business and professional community. Many who were at the meeting that night attest that it was Hall's emphatic speech that swung the momentum to the yes camp. The ballots were counted, and history had been made. Women would be allowed to be members of the Saskatoon Club.

Madam Justice Allisen Rothery, a lawyer at the time, was the first woman to be a member of the board of directors and was a member

of the membership committee. Rothery says that as a commercial litigation lawyer, the business contacts she made at the Club were as important for her as they were for any male lawyer. Being a member of the Club afforded an opportunity to become friends with men she probably would not otherwise have gotten to know. Her participation in the “Eyewitless News” project helped shake up the perception that women, particularly women in business, didn't have a sense of humour.

Rothery stepped down from the board when she was appointed to the bench, but not long after that Shelley Brown joined the board. Brown had lived in Calgary for several years and was a member of an equivalent club there, so when she moved back to Saskatoon in 1988, she was dismayed to discover that women could not join the Saskatoon Club. She was one of the first women to join in 1989. After several years on the board, Brown became the first woman to be President of the Saskatoon Club, in 2003-04.





### Dining at the Club

Food and drink, the heart of any social club, has evolved at the Saskatoon Club over the years as well. For many years the menu featured very traditional three course items, influenced by the standards of French cuisine that were omnipresent in high-end restaurants, complemented by a healthy appreciation for Saskatchewan beef.

Many members made a habit of going to the Club for lunch every day. Rnold Smith recalls getting an excellent lunch for about 80 cents in the 1950s, a slight premium compared to other downtown restaurants, but which reflected the Club's quality and level of service.

Today, the atmosphere has relaxed, and it is described by staff as a very friendly place to work. In an industry that sees a lot of turnover, several employees have worked much, if not all, of their careers at the Saskatoon Club. The Club has succeeded over the decades in attracting accomplished chefs to meet the expectations of its members.

For many years a mainstay in the dining room was the common table. Rather than sit by themselves, individual members who arrived without a specific lunch appointment could join the common table. A symbol of the collegial atmosphere of the Club, the common table afforded opportunities to, quite literally, rub shoulders with other members from other businesses and professions. Sometimes, you did not know who you might be sitting across from, or next to, at the table. One member recalls sitting down at the common table while a high profile trial was taking place in the city. Having followed the proceedings in the paper, he questioned what was going on at the courthouse. His cynical question to the assembled diners was, "Who's running the show down there, anyway?" The unexpected answer was a quick jab in the ribs from the presiding judge sitting beside him, who indignantly retorted, "I am!"





### Clubs within the Club

Over the years the Saskatoon Club has been a natural meeting place for a number of groups, formal and informal. The Usadians Executive Club has met at the Club for more than thirty years. The Saskatoon chapter of Saskatchewan Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs holds its meetings at the Club. A group of veterans known as the Ancient Raucous and Roaring Order of Armisticians meets for breakfast at the Saskatoon Club every November 11th, before going together to the Remembrance Day ceremony. Several of the Armisticians are members and the group has enjoyed the hospitality of the Club for more than 30 years. And – for something completely different – the “Out To Lunch Club” has been meeting for lunch on Thursdays to discuss the issues of the day.

In a club where countless business deals have been brokered, partners have also spent a great deal of time dealing with contracts, standards, duplicates, voids, finesse and...dummies? Bridge has been part of the social scene at the Saskatoon Club for decades. Fewer people play bridge than did years ago, but there is still a group of faithful players who try to get together regularly for a game. The Sanford Bridge Tournament, named for W.G. Sanford, President of the Club in 1955-56 and an avid bridge player, is held three times a year – winter, spring and fall. In 2004 one of the upstairs rooms used to house the daily bridge games was dedicated The Sanford Room to honour this legacy.





### “The Place To Be”

Many clubs like the Saskatoon Club fell on hard times in the 1980s and 1990s, and many were forced to close their doors. The endurance of the Saskatoon Club can in part be attributed to the entrepreneurial spirit of this city and a commitment to working together with that spirit. As the founders of the Club knew in 1907, any city with a dynamic business community needs a place where people can discuss business matters, but also get to know each other, regardless of profession, position or generation. Perhaps because the Club is really its membership, rather than a just a physical institution, it has adapted well to the changing marketplace while fostering a collegial atmosphere. Many members will say that you can book a meeting room anywhere, but that there is a certain warmth at the Saskatoon Club that separates it from other venues.

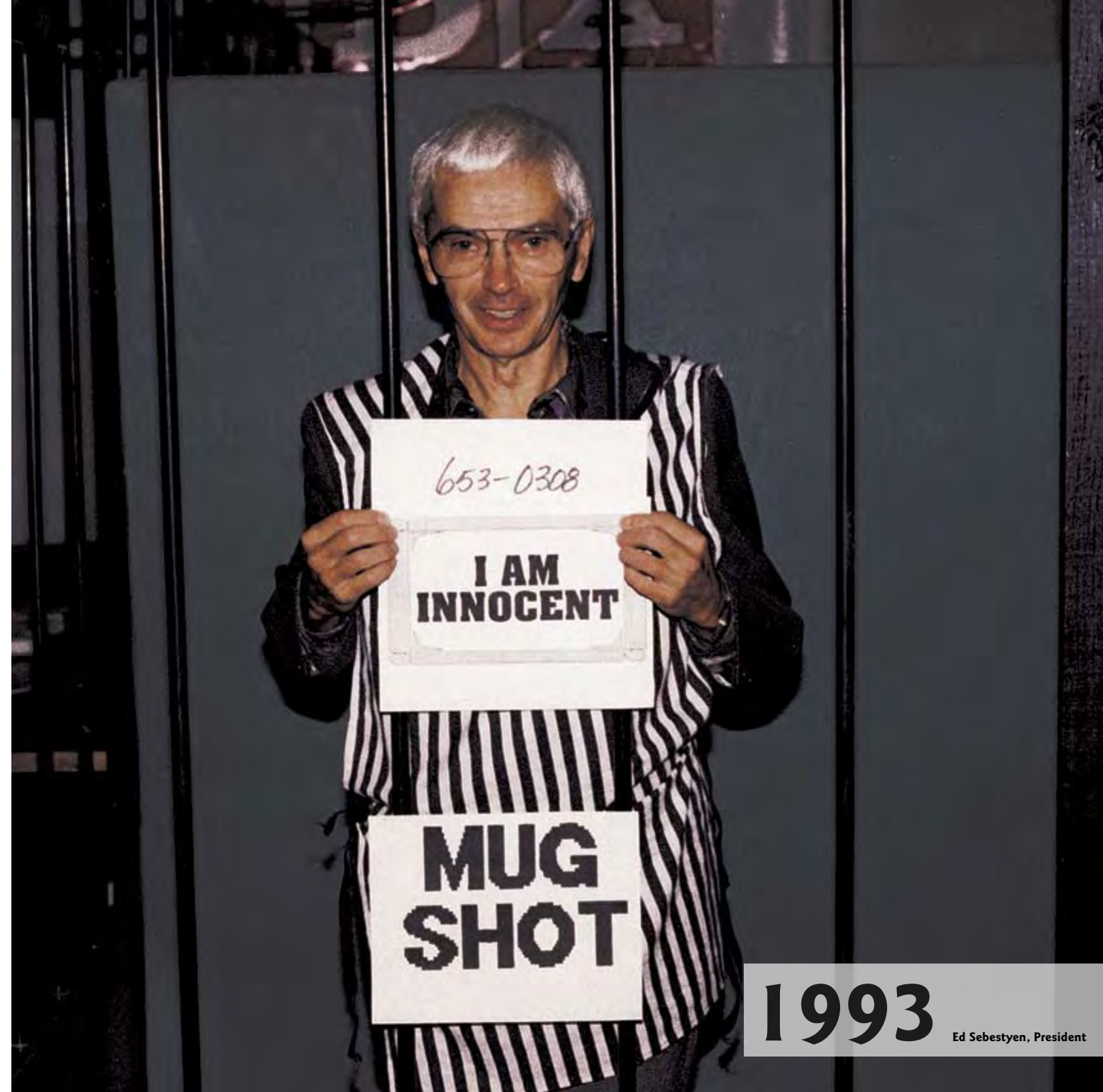
It has been said that business can be bitter, but at the Saskatoon Club, people have opportunities to meet with both their colleagues and their competition in an atmosphere of trust. Over the years the Club has responded to the needs of its members, from offering an opulent setting to enjoy a cigar in 1907, to private meeting rooms with wireless internet access in 2007. Over the years innumerable business deals have been negotiated and partnerships forged – Butler and Byers met at the Saskatoon Club in 1907 and decided to go into business together – but more than that, lifelong friendships have developed between members. There are great memories of countless games of bridge, Club nights, children’s Christmas parties and visits with the Easter Bunny, and New Year’s Day Levees.

It has never been the role of the Saskatoon Club to be at the forefront of social change. As a Club rooted in British tradition in a city founded by people of British descent at a time of male domination in commerce and politics, the Saskatoon Club was for years an “Old Boys Club.” In contrast, Saskatoon’s business community has always included women (Grace Fletcher, who died the year the Club was founded, was Saskatoon’s first industrialist. However, she was a dedicated member of the Temperance Society, so would not have approved of the wine rooms). No one can

argue that in its first hundred years the Club’s membership did fit the stereotype of “white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant”.

That said, times have changed and it would be unfair to point to the Saskatoon Club as a symbol of outdated thinking and attitudes. As was intended from the outset, the Saskatoon Club has been the place where people of influence and vision have come together to forge new ideas and advocate great dreams. At one time or another, our city’s – and many of our province’s and country’s – leaders have had their voice heard at the Club, to forge positive and significant social and economic change that has led to opportunities for all peoples, from all walks of life. No doubt, it is within these walls that history-changing discussions took place on concepts such as Medicare and a “People’s University”. It is within these walls that groups met to help realize new hospitals, new industries, new charitable foundations, the Canada Winter Games, Canada Summer Games, the Canadian Light Source, and many other outstanding accomplishments of Saskatoon’s first 100 years.

As of 2007, an influx of younger members and a general change in society’s attitude towards striking a balance between work and family has transformed the way the Club reflects and serves the city. Rather than an institution shrouded in mystery, the Saskatoon Club plays an important role in fostering relationships within the business community. A sense of belonging, being part of a tradition, being greeted by name by staff and fellow members – from 1907 until now – has made the Saskatoon Club “the place to be.”



# 1993

Ed Sebestyen, President



# Presidents

**1907-08** K. A. Ashworth

**1909** J. F. Cairn

**1910** M. Isbister

**1911** Henry L. Jordan

**1912-13** J. D. Gunn

**1914** W. P. Kirkpatrick

**1915-18** C. T. Stacey

**1919** J. M. Stevenson

**1920** W. A. Porteous

**1921** Harley Henry

**1922** J. G. Calder

**1923** F. F. MacDermid, Q.C.

**1924** H. S. Potter

**1925-26** Dr. E. F. Skinner

**1927** R. Jackson

**1928-29** D. H. Spencer

**1930-31** A. N. Boyd

**1932-33** N. C. Byers

**1934** R. M. Cantlon

**1935** J. N. Niven

**1936** F. J. Macdonald

**1937** G. S. Dawson

**1938-40** A.W. Caswell

**1941** J. L. Jamieson

**1942-43** R. R. Strickland

**1944-45** F. R. MacMillan

**1946-48** J. B. Miller

**1949-50** E. M. Hall

**1951-52** Alex Smith

**1953-54** A. D. Cavers

**1955-56** W. G. Sanford

**1957-58** W. T. A. Flavell

**1959-60** P.H. Maguire, Q.C.

**1961-62** C.E.R. Wentz

**1963-64** F.M. Matheson

**1965-66** Allan Tubby

**1967** Vern Dallin

**1968-69** G.A. McKee

**1970** T. H. Early

**1971** D. H. Wright

**1972** W. A. Milne

**1973** Rnold Smith

**1974** A. W. P. Jennings

**1975** H. W. Braithwaite

**1976** C. Holliday-Scott

**1977** J. A. MacDonald

**1978** Bert Salloum

**1979** F. E. W. Statham

**1980** A. Quentin Agnew

**1981** J. K. Struthers

**1982** William F. Ryan

**1983** Arnold MacMillan

**1984** E. W. Eadinger

**1985** Barry Chapman

**1986** T. McClocklin

**1987** R. D. Laing

**1988** R. K. Thomson

**1989** C. Derek Arnold

**1990** Tom Molloy, Q.C.

**1991** Norm Wallace

**1992** Don Gass

**1993** Ed Sebestyen

**1994** A. Neil McMillan

**1995** Lars Nissen

**1996** V. Hnatyshyn, Q.C.

**1997** Peter Zakreski

**1998** Vaughn Wyant

**1999** John Grabowski

**2000** David Good

**2001** Greg Broadbent

**2002** H.R. Ramsay

**2003** Douglas Hodson

**2004** Shelley Brown

**2005** Ron Miller Q.C.

**2006** Dwight Percy

**2007** Ray Penner

# Managers

1941 - 2007

**1941-46**(approx.) Mike Prociw

**1946-1971** Truman Brintnell

**1971-1976** George Hunt

**1977-1987** Doreen Lusher

**1988-1993** Scott Krienke

**1993-2000** Scott Stanhope

**2000-2002** Diana Hnatiuk

**2002-Present** Darren Toews



