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HOCKEY IN THE SILVER CITY

The Early Years (1909-1914)

When people talk about hockey in Cobalt during the early part of the 20th Century the focus is usually on the famous Cobalt Silver Kings, a team bankrolled by M.J. O'Brien owner of the extremely rich O'Brien Mine right here in Cobalt. Mr. O'Brien not only financed the Silver Kings, but also the Haileybury Comets and the Renfrew Millionaires. His son Ambrose at the time was instrumental in the start-up of the famous Montreal Canadiens. These teams all played in the National Hockey Association (N.H.A.), a league created in reality to have M.J. O'Brien's Renfrew Millionaires challenge and hopefully win the coveted Stanley Cup during the 1909-1910 season. But that's another story!

McKinley-Darragh-Savage Hockey Team - Champions of the 1910-11 Cobalt Mines Hockey League



When the Silver Kings exited the hockey scene after the 1910 season the only game in town was the "Cobalt Mines Hockey League" in existence from as early as 1909. From 1909 to 1914 many of the larger mines in the Cobalt Camp sponsored a hockey team. Since there were hundreds of men working in the mine all the players were mine personnel except maybe for the odd ringer. In fact several players on the famous Cobalt Silver Kings were recruited from the Cobalt Mines Hockey League. Hockey was serious business. The Nipissing, the O'Brien, the Cobalt Lake and the McKinley-Darragh all had teams in the Cobalt Mines Hockey League. The teams played a full schedule of games against one another and the prize at the end was the McKinley-Darragh Trophy which by the way can be viewed at the Cobalt Mining Museum along with many other photographs of the era.

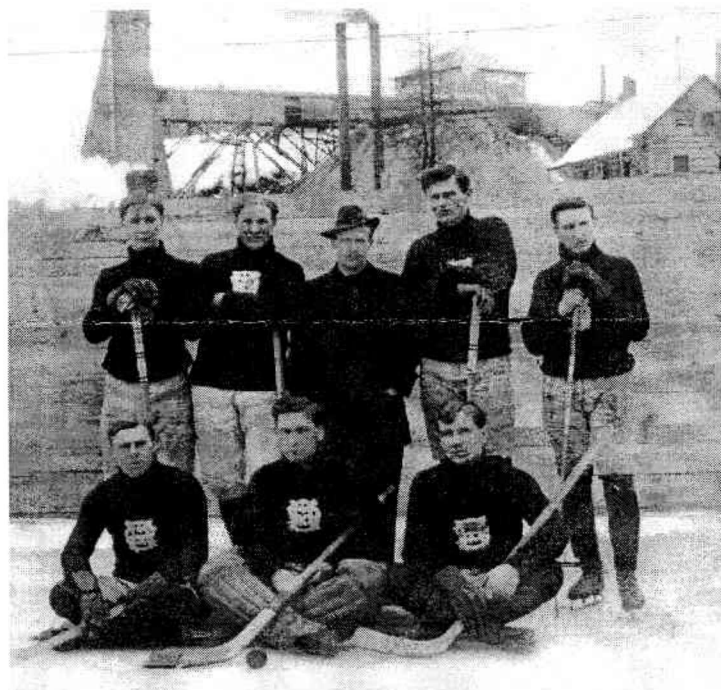
Florence Dean, a director in the Cobalt Historical Society, and whose father Charles Dean was the goal tender for the McKinley-Darragh-Savage team recalls many stories told by her father about hockey during this period.

- "Each team had only six or eight players and there were very few substitutes. They played the entire game. Hockey equipment was minimal and consisted of a pair of skates, a stick, thinly padded pants and a pair of gloves. The goalie had leg pads and a larger stick."

- Florence recalls "Another aspect was the fact that there was a great deal of betting on the games and money flowed freely for every game."

The glory days were from 1909 to 1914 when WWI began. Not only did silver production lag after 1914 when many men enlisted in the war but also the hockey league was a casualty as well. The last year the McKinley-Darragh Trophy was awarded was the 1913-1914 season.

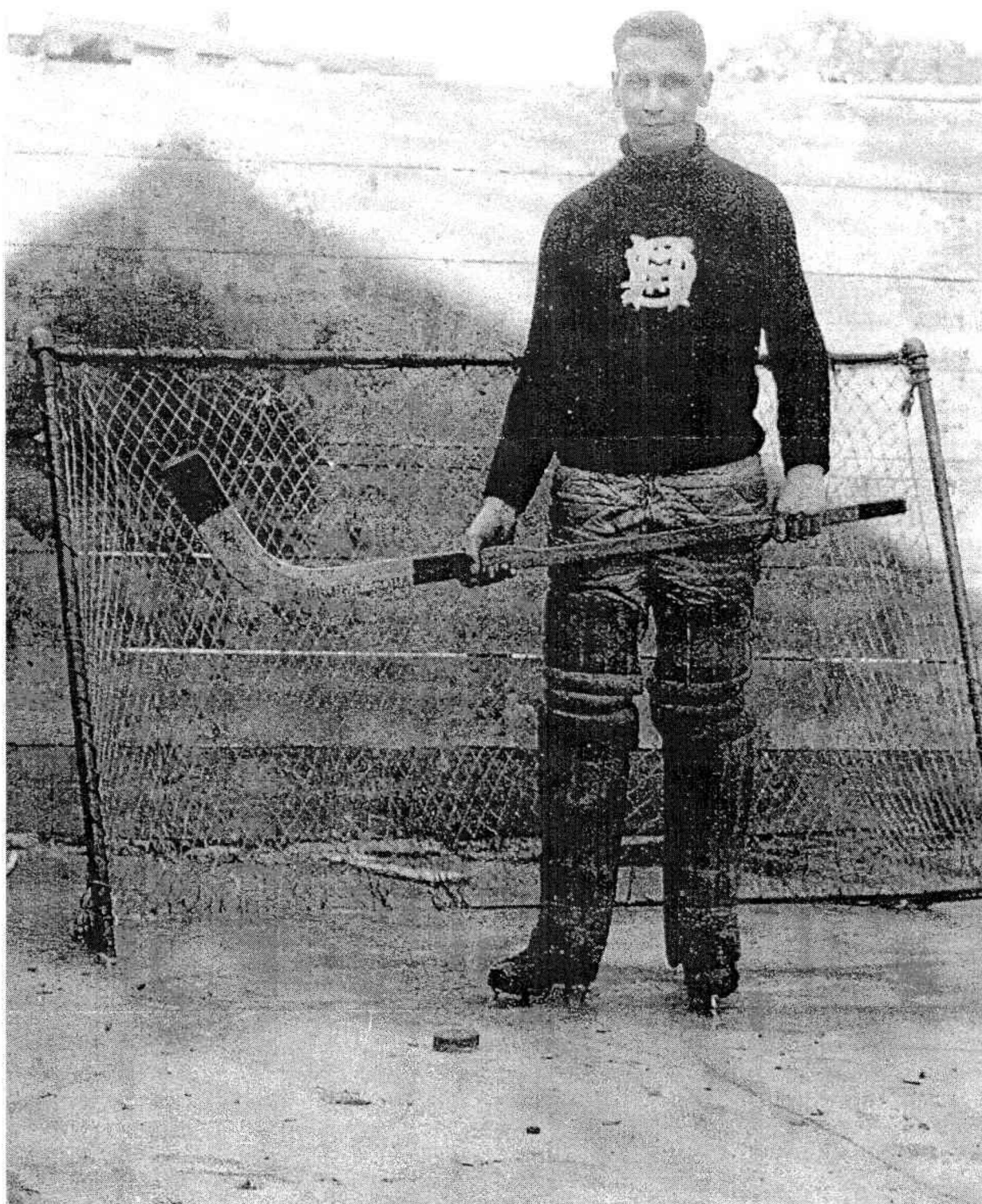
The photographs which follow (and on page 1) are from Florence Dean's own collection and they definitely tell the story of "Hockey in the Silver City 1909-1914."



McKinley-Darragh-Savage Hockey Team with the famous McKinley-Darragh Mine in the background.

Front Row: L to R. Jack Westlake, Charles Dean, Percy Windsor

Back Row: L to R. J. Debernardi, H. Debernardi, H. Bailey (tall one), F. Lafreniere.



This is Charles Dean, goalie for the McKinley-Darragh-Savage hockey team.

Note the equipment or the lack thereof. The print on the goalie stick says McBrides Cobalt. Was there a hockey stick manufactured in Cobalt?



The McKinley-Darragh Trophy

The trophy was presented for supremacy in the Cobalt Mines Hockey League 1910-1911 to 1913-1914.

The winners were: 1910-1911 McKinley-Darragh, 1911-1912 Nipissing, 1913-1914 O'Brien.

Note: In 1914 the Trophy was withdrawn from competition and was presented to Angus D. Campbell, captain of the O'Brien Hockey Team, by Ray Finnucane President of the McKinley-Darragh Mine. In 1968 Angus D. Campbell, founder of The N.O.H.A. presented the trophy to the Cobalt Mining Museum at the 50th Annual Meeting of the N.O.H.A.