

## The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall at the Ottawa Canoe Club

In its early years the Ottawa Canoe Club's membership included many of Ottawa's social elite. At least two Governor-Generals were patrons of the club; its membership included Mayor D'Arcy Scott and Warren Soper. When, in 1901, the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall (the future George V and Queen Mary) toured Canada, part of their entertainment in Ottawa was hosted by the club. The Toronto *Globe* of 24 September described the royal party's descent of the timber slides at the Chaudiere Falls and their trip to the club.

“The first operation was to go through the slides on a crib. Six cribs of square timber had been prepared, on which the members of the royal party, the Governor-General and Lady Minto, Sir Wilfrid and Lady Laurier and the pressmen were accommodated. The slides are in reality a series of canals constructed with the view of conducting rafts of timber safely round the Chaudiere Falls. The drop in height is considerable, and of course in places the water darts down the decline with somewhat startling velocity, but beyond the shipping of a little water and an occasional baptism of spray there is nothing to be alarmed about. The slides shoot under several bridges, and these afforded ideal galleries from which the public could catch a glimpse of their Royal Highnesses. When the crib containing the royal party got safely through the boiling waters everything that had a steam whistle to it, including some of the great saw and pulp mills, set up a scream of triumph that fairly made the empyrean ring. The raftsmen or voyageurs were in blue jean pants and red shirts, many of the ladies were in pure white and as the variegated colors swept down the chutes it was as if a rainbow had fallen in the stream. The cribs went no farther than the foot of the slides where Hudson Bay canoes under the charge of Factor Rankin were waiting to transport the ladies and gentlemen to Rockcliffe. The trip down the river was simply delightful, the extraordinary limestone cliffs on the Ottawa side with the low shores of the Hull side exciting universal admiration. Every place where a human being could see the river was occupied, and ever and anon from away up on the cliff cheering, which was faint in the distance, floated in the air. The giant spans of the Alexandra Bridge were also crowded, and even the street car conductors accommodated their passengers by stopping while the flotilla went by. As Joe Labresque, our steersman, said: “De river never see such sight before.”



The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York running the timber slides, 1901. (LAC, PA-011858)

### Programme of Sports

“When Rockcliffe was reached the royal guests took their stand on the piazza of the Ottawa Canoe Club to witness the sports that had been arranged. There was a war canoe race of a most exciting description, the Grand Trunk team winning by a few feet from the Britannias. But the sport that was wholly new to the visitors was the log-rolling contests. The catlike activity of the log-rollers and the laughter when someone was tumbled into the water furnished infinite amusement. Two men would go on a log, and each endeavour to unship the other by rapidly revolving the log and alternately stopping the revolutions. Nothing would convince a person that it would be possible to maintain one’s equilibrium under such circumstances unless it were actually seen. Some of the men were giants in stature, and that such nimbleness could be combined with such bulk was altogether extraordinary. The spectators frequently testified their delight by hearty applause. The electric car specially built for the royal couple by the Ottawa Street Railway Company was waiting at the top of the bank, and the party were conveyed to a handsome grove of white pine. Here a lumberman’s shanty had been built, and the whole household economy of a shantyman’s home was in full operation. It was the style of shanty known as a caboose, that is to say, it was built with a large fireplace in the centre, the smoke escaping by a wide opening in the roof. An immense cauldron of soup, another of beef and potatoes mixed in a stew, and various other of the shantymen’s bill of fare had been prepared. The Duke and Duchess went inside, took seats at the tables, and were served with soup and bread. The Governor-General and Lady Minto, Sir Wilfrid and Lady

Laurier also partook of the fare. The next exhibition was that of felling two fine pine trees, and cutting them up into logs and loading them up in a bunk. It was a highly interesting operation, and the rapidity with which the forest monarch, which a few moments before shook their silken tassels in the breeze, were reduce to commercial logs ready for the river, was wholly astonishing.”



The Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, arriving at Rockcliffe in canoes manned by Indians from the Abitibi, 1901. (LAC, PA-011795)

The *Ottawa Citizen* and *Ottawa Journal* of 23 Sept 1901 and the *Globe's* sports section gave a more detailed account of the war canoe race. Seven canoes started, numbering out from the Ontario shore, the Grand Trunk Montreal No.3 crew, Britannia, Ottawa No.2 crew, Smith's Falls, Brockville, Brockville Y.M.C.A., and Carleton Place. The half mile race started a little above Kettle Island and finished opposite the club house. In the face of a head wind and in fairly rough water the Grand Trunk took first place in a time of 3 minutes and 36 seconds. Britannia finished about a foot and a half behind with Ottawa in third place. "The crews which finished in the first three places were abreast and it was anybody's race 400 yards from the line. Then the Britannias took the lead and held it, looking like a sure winner to within fifty yards of the finish, when the Grand Trunk, who had an elegant burst of speed in reserve, and crossed the line with the bow of their canoe

not more than two feet ahead of the Britannias. The Ottawas were about half a length behind and the other crews finished a brisk three lengths back.” The Grand Trunk Team finished in a time of 3 minutes and 36 seconds. Smith’s Falls placed fourth, YMCA fifth, Brockville Rowing Club sixth, and Carleton Place seventh.

The Ottawa crew was R.W. Patterson (bow), H. Clayton, G.J. Mumford, J.B. Lawless, M. Neate, J. Russell, C.J. Burgess, J. McConnell, W. Lamb, H.B. Cowan, H. Henry, O.D. Steele, F. Burpee, E.C. Woolsey, and Archie Bell (Captain). The Britannia crew was R. Craig (bow), Clendenning, Gordon Stewart, O. Still, B. Hamilton, M. Skuce, E.R. McNeil, K. Gibson, C. Cooch, F. Morse, H. Pulford, H. Dion, R.A. Lynch, F. McGee, W.L. Donnelly.