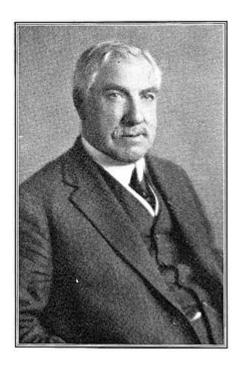


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## The HANNA CUP

## by Steve Stanton



David Blyth Hanna (1858 - 1938) was born in Thornliebank, Scotland, and emigrated to Canada in 1882, employed by the Grand Trunk Railway. In 1896, he joined the Canadian Northern Railway during a period of national expansion and became third Vice-President of the company. The town of Hanna, Alberta is named after him.

In 1906, a connecting railway was being built from Toronto to Parry Sound in order to ship timber and minerals from the north. A local municipal representative, Thomas Stanton, used his influence to have the rail line redirected one half mile to the north so that it would touch the shore of Sparrow Lake on land donated by Thomas Stanton. A boom in tourism resulted at the newly established Sparrow Lake Station, and the village of Port Stanton was established.



I remember my father taking me on a hike back in the bush along a strip of abandoned rail gravel. We walked a straight line past weedy swamps interspersed with bare rock from the Canadian Shield. Finally the coarse gravel ended abruptly in the middle of a beaver pond. Someone had halted construction at exactly that point in the Muskoka wilderness. Some railway executive had called back the work crews to a diversion point further east to begin construction on a newly surveyed trajectory. The evidence was tactile under my feet and my father's message was plain: his great-grandfather had literally changed the course of history.



The Passenger Department of CNOR printed an eight-page brochure advertising Sparrow Lake and Severn River, and landowners on the lake suddenly found themselves in the resort business. Some of the earliest families to take in tourists were Roehl House, Franklin House, Wianko House, and Uneeda Rest (Clipsham.) Otto Roehl

built a hotel that was later renamed Hotel Torpitt (Toronto-Pittsburg), and the Stanton Brothers, Albert and Frank, began building cabins in addition to operating the Stanton Steamship line from the railway station. All of the family resorts around the lake were accessible only by water. Hundreds of tourists arrived every week during the summer season. The Canadian Northern Railway operated three trains on weekdays and four on Saturday, as well as a late Sunday night train back to Toronto. One CNOR advertisement proclaimed that over 2000 customers had taken advantage of a 1910 Holiday Special.



Amid all this bustle, the Hanna Cup arrived to Sparrow Lake in time for the 1909 season: "PRESENTED BY D.B. HANNA TO THE SPARROW LAKE ASSOCIATION FOR ANNUAL COMPETITION TO HOUSE WINNING LARGEST NUMBER OF POINTS AT REGATTA." This silver cup stands just over thirteen inches tall, manufactured by Meriden Britannia Company, number 0352. At this late date, we can only speculate as to why the Hanna Cup was donated or what relationship D.B. Hanna had to Sparrow Lake. It seems reasonable to suppose that D.B. Hanna was the CNOR executive who approved the railway diversion that started the tourist boom at Sparrow Lake. The local patriarch Thomas Stanton passed away in 1907, so the Hanna Cup may have been presented in his remembrance. The 1909 winner is engraved as: "Tie Between Houses of Ms. Thos. Stanton and E.W.D. Butler." For the historical record, the annual winners are engraved:

1910 Won By Mustang Villa - Chas. J. Musson

1911 Won By H.L. Clipsham

1912 (plaque missing)

1913 Won By Mustang Villa - Chas. J. Musson

1914 Tie Between Houses of C. Brimer and Chas.

J. Musson

1915 Won By Stanton House - Geo. Stanton (pause for war)

1919 Won By Roehl's Hotel - O. Roehl 1920 Won By Vanomi Hotel

The Hanna Cup eventually went into the custody of Otto Roehl, and sat on the fireplace mantle at Grandview Lodge for decades. It was donated to Sparrow Lake Historical Society by Grandview Lodge Resort owners Jim and Susan Seabrook in 1992. Tragically, Jim Seabrook drowned in a boating accident the following year, and Grandview Lodge was demolished in 2008. The Sparrow Lake Association continued to organize annual regattas featuring canoe races, swimming competitions, and eventually powerboat races. After the heyday of the Houses had passed,

medals and plaques were awarded to individual competitors. I won a powerboat race circa 1970 in the 16 & Under class with a 10 hp limit. I remember the camaraderie in the "pits" on the beach in front of Lakeshore House as the hydroplane racers in the Unlimited Class tuned their speed machines. I witnessed a few accidents, and saw the bandaged propeller wounds on the leg of one hydroplane racer who we knew only as Marty the Mountie. The Sparrow Lake regatta was discontinued in modern times when insurance liability became an issue. The Sparrow Lake Association is now a social and environmental advocacy group that provides information, services, and news to local cottagers at sparrowlakeassociation.com



Railway service to Sparrow Lake ended in 1955, although the trains still rumble by every day. By this time, the makeshift shacks on the shore had grown into a General Store with a restaurant, fishing supplies, government wharf, and gas pumps on the roadway as well as the dock. The Stanton Bros. Store burned to the ground in October 2020 after over a century of use.

D.B. Hanna went on to become the first president of the Canadian National Railways in 1919. He retired in 1922 and was appointed the first chairman of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario in 1927-28. All of the competitors who vied for the Hanna Cup have long since passed away. Only the Artifact remains to remind us of the spirit of adventure that once filled this land.

www.sparrowlake.ca