

Museum serves up history of lawn tennis

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Special to The Lake Report

When world-class tennis pros come to Canada today, they often head to Toronto or Montreal for what is now called the National Bank Open.

But in 1886 the tennis world turned its eyes on Niagara-on-the-Lake, and for the next 40 years the world had a front-row seat at the fabulous Queen's Royal Hotel for some of the most prestigious tennis championships of the time.

"The International" and "The Canadian Open" would both be hosted there, with many U.S., Canadian, and Wimbledon champions competing for tennis glory.

And when the world came to they saw the beautiful six grass courts belonging to

the Queen's Royal Hotel, balconies that overlooked Lake Ontario and gave perfect viewing of the courts, and enough space all around for the hundreds of spectators.

Plus there was the golf course, the bowling greens and rowing boats for hire on the lake. The nearby military camp housed upward of 10,000 soldiers and their families, all who loved some entertainment. And with four steamships and three trains arriving daily, Niagara-on-the-Lake was a social hub.

Robert J. Lake's virtual lecture on Wednesday, April 7, "A History of Lawn Tennis in Niagara-on-the-Lake," will turn the clock back on this period of tennis history. His presentation will detail the socio-

economic influences and intricate sports dynamics that made it all happen – as well as its demise following the aftermath of World War One.

Lake is in the sport science department at Douglas College, B.C., where his research focuses on the socio-historical aspects of tennis.

A published author, he won the Lord Aberdare Literary Prize from the British Society of Sports History for "A Social History of Tennis in Britain." He also is president-elect for the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport.

He brings a wealth of sports history to his lecture and the museum is indebted to Rosemary Goodwin, director of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis



A woman plays tennis in NOTL in the late 1800s.
SUPPLIED

Club for facilitating this lecture.

* A History of Lawn Tennis in Niagara-on-the-Lake is presented April 7 at 10.30 a.m. Registration is required at www.nhsm.ca/ events.