

1896 Winnipeg Victorias Medal Found In Church Sale Donation

While sorting through donations made to a Winnipeg church a few years ago, a worker spotted a small gold medal with 1896 Victoria Hockey Club Winnipeg engraved on one side and Canadian Hockey Championship on the reverse. Wondering if it might have some value, he pulled it out to show to a staff member. The medal remained in a desk drawer until a couple of



months ago. Knowing about his interest in sports history, a member of the sale committee contacted Canstar Community News sports columnist Kent Morgan to ask for his opinion. Morgan, a Society for International Hockey Research (SIHR) member, consulted Sport Manitoba heritage manager Rick Brownlee and Andrea Reichert, the collections manager for the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame. After examining the medal, they both believed it was from the late 19th century. It opens like a locket and inside is a photo of a young woman in historical dress. Church officials had no idea who donated the medal or when it was received so agreed to donate it to the Hall of Fame.

In 1896 the Winnipeg Victorias went to Montreal to play a challenge match against the Montreal Victorias, who were the holders of the Stanley Cup. On Feb. 14, the visitors won the game 2-0 and returned home to great adulation. The Stanley Cup along with sticks and a puck used in the victory later were put on display at the Hudson's Bay store. No mention can be found in newspaper reports about the players receiving a medal.



Jack Armytage was the captain of the Victorias and the committee member had mentioned that an Armytage family had been parishioners of St. George's Anglican Church. Morgan decided it was time for some detective work. Research showed that the funeral service for Armytage, an outstanding all-around athlete who died in August 1943 at age 70, was held at St. George's. Among his survivors was a son Lt. John Green-Armytage. Further research showed that John's wife Betty died in 2008 and her service was held at St. George's.



Did the medal belong to the Victorias captain? Is the woman whose photo is inside the medal Jack's wife who died in 1958 and whose service also was held at St. George's? Did the medal remain in the Armytage family until after Betty's death when someone put it in a box to be donated to the church? All unanswered questions so provenance could not be determined. However, the story didn't end there. A Winnipeg lawyer sent Morgan's column about the medal to Armytage's grandson Jock in London, Eng., who asked to see the photo of the woman. Jock since confirmed that the woman is his grandmother Kathleen and that the family donated a variety of items from the family home to the church after his mother's death.

This medal that is connected to Winnipeg's first Stanley Cup victory is on display in the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame and Museum in Winnipeg.