

THE FALCONS WERE FIRST

Ending an Olympic Controversy

By Brian Johannesson

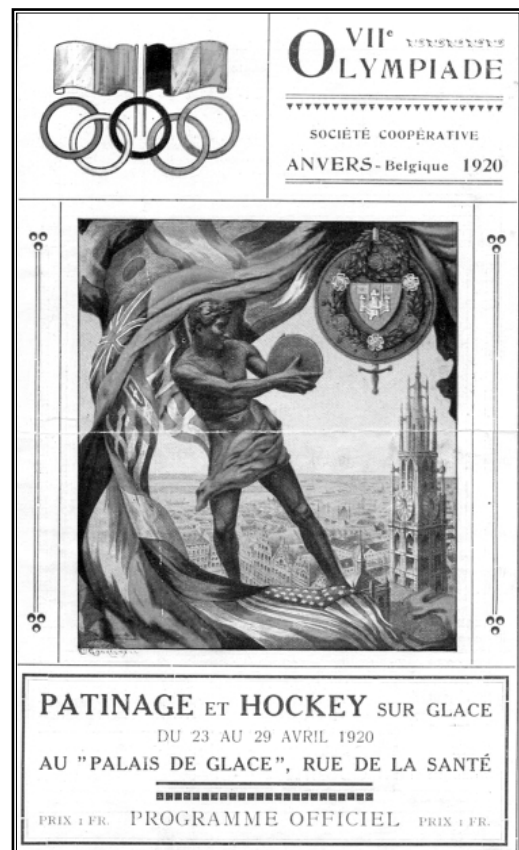
FOR DECADES, THE WINNIPEG FALCONS HOCKEY TEAM has been deprived of its proper honor as Canada's, and the world's, first Olympic hockey champions because of a mistake made by an Olympic historian many years ago. The historian Roland Renson in his book *The Games Reborn* stated that both hockey and figure skating were only "a prelude" to the 1920 Olympics. This statement has, ever since, been accepted as fact and elaborated upon until today, with most Olympic historians believing that hockey and figure skating were only "demonstration sports" and not worthy of Olympic medal recognition.

This statement has now been proven wrong, thanks to an 87-year-old scrapbook, made by Freda Johannesson, the wife of Konnie Johannesson of the Falcons. She carefully saved hundreds of clippings of all the newspaper articles about the Falcons and the Winnipeg hockey scene from 1917 to about 1923. In this scrapbook there are three articles, clippings from the original newspapers at the time of the Games, which clearly prove that both hockey and figure skating were official sports at those Games and that the Games began with them. In addition, the official Olympic Games program itself, saved in the scrapbook, proves that hockey and figure skating were medal sports at the 1920 Olympics. Copies of these items are now on the Falcons website (www.winnipegfalcons.com) and a reference to them has been forwarded to the Canadian Olympic Association and the International Ice Hockey Federation.

Another error was created by the demonstration sport assumption. Many Olympic historians believe that because hockey and figure skating were only demonstration sports, no presentation ceremonies were held and no Games medals were awarded, only participation medals. This too has been proved wrong, because the program shows the time of the ceremony and a newspaper clipping in the scrapbook describes some of the ceremonies and states that the Falcons returned home with "their first

prize medals." The existence of several gold medals, and at least one silver medal, from the hockey games also proves that mistake.

These discoveries should, after 84 years, lift the black cloud which has dogged the Falcons for so long, permitting their true recognition as the first Olympic hockey champions.



Brian Johannesson of Kitchener is the son of Winnipeg Falcons star Konnie Johannesson. He maintains the www.winnipegfalcons.com web site.