

# Exhibit Highlights Canada's First International Sports Heroes

In 2017 the New Brunswick Sports Hall of Fame opened an exhibit about the Paris Crew team, the first Canadians to earn International Sports honors for the fledgling country. A \$2,000 Special Projects Grant awarded in 2016 from the International Sports Heritage Association offset some of the costs for the \$24,000.00 display commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Confederation of Canada.

The rowing team from St. John, New Brunswick, who competed against all odds in the Paris Regatta as part of the Paris Exhibition in July 1867. Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia united to create the Canadian Federation in 1867.

Ryan Cormier, Paris Crew 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program Coordinator for the museum, reported, "The exhibit was very well received."

The following is a description of the races compiled by Cormier:

The crew was comprised of Elijah Ross, George Price, Samuel Hutton, Robert Fulton –three fishermen and a lighthouse keeper.

The New Brunswickers were scheduled to participate in two races at the Paris Regatta. In their first race, the New Brunswickers faced heavily favoured teams from Paris, Liege, and Brighton. In the first race, "They took the lead at great pace, rowing some 46 or 47 strokes per minute" ... "The Saint Johners took the lead and held it all the way down to the buoy. Their closest competitor was a crew from Paris, the Geslings, a boat length and a quarter in the rear... As they passed the grandstand, "the stroke coolly waved his hat to the shouting crowd, rowing on with one hand, and after turning the starting point again, came back, winning easily." The surprised crowd erupted and gave the New Brunswickers "a perfect storm of well merited applause."

In the second race, the New Brunswickers faced elite crews from London, Oxford and Germany. Despite their earlier victory, the crew was again the underdog as the Oxford and London crews were 4:1 favourites to win the race. Again, the crew defeated the Europeans, and from then on have been known as the Paris Crew. As the Toronto Daily Mail argued in 1881, the victories of the Paris Crew in 1867 marked "the first occasion on which Canada distinguished herself abroad with the oar."

In the second race, the New Brunswickers used their alternate boat, which was described as "a curious old-fashioned outrigger". The New Brunswickers finished the race "talking and laughing in the easiest manner possible," a testament to their skill and top physical condition. The Morning Journal from July 16, 1867, reflected excitement but also the unshakable confidence Saint John had in their contribution to the Paris Exposition: "Our boys have won. We expected

that they would do so, and they have not disappointed us. They entered the lists with the crack oarsmen of the British Isles, and the continent of Europe -- nay the world itself -- and took the first prize in the only two races in which their boats were fitted to compete.”

Interpretive banners were displayed with a variety of artifacts.

“One of the artifacts we were most excited about is a pocket watch that belonged to Samuel Hutton. This particular pocket watch was the one given to him for the Paris Crew’s win at the Paris Regatta (all of the members of the crew received one as a prize). As far as we know it is the only one left,” Cormier explained. It was found on Hutton’s body when he died tragically in a racing accident with his yacht, the Primrose, just off shore from St. John. The watch was used to identify him.

Other artifacts in the display included two shells, a scale model of the Paris Crew, a photograph of Hutton’s yacht, a rowing machine (similar to one in the gym aboard the Titanic) to demonstrate the equipment on which crew members trained, and a replica of the pink hats worn by the crew during the race.

Additional information and photographs are available on the accompanying Power Point provided by the Museum.