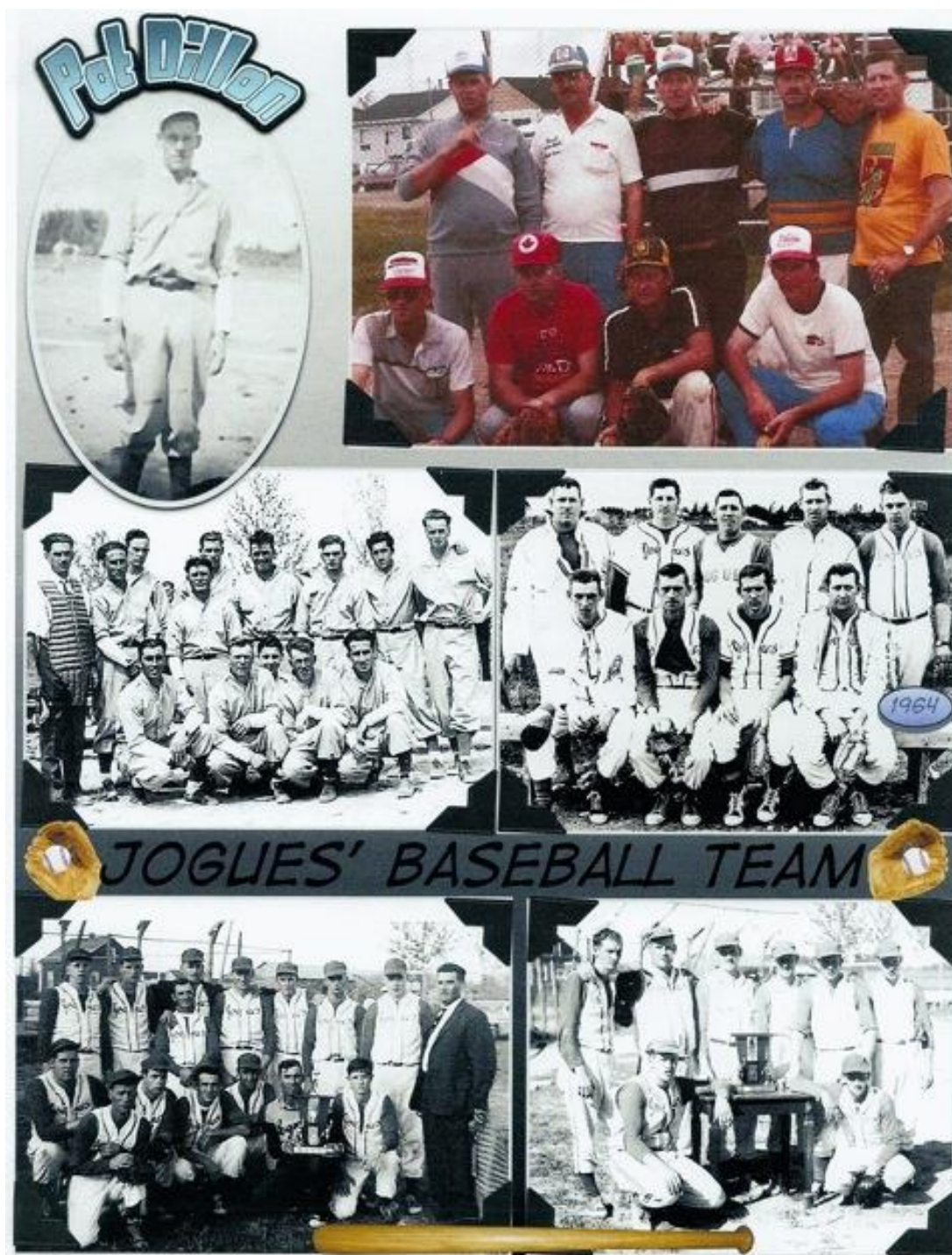


SOME HISTORY OF NORTHERN ONTARIO BASEBALL  
FEATURING THE DILLONS OF JOGUES

By Ernie Bies, updated May 11, 2020



The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum at Cooperstown New York has recognized twenty-two all-brother baseball teams in the US. Two of them, the Acerra and the Fredrickson brothers, had books written about their baseball exploits in the 1930s. We don't have to go that far to find our own all brother baseball team, just a few miles south of Hearst, to Jogues Ontario. The story begins with George William DILLON and his wife Lois Leona (Turner) who homesteaded on Concession 4 and 5 where they were the proud parents of 16 children, twelve of them boys.

Baseball had always been popular in Jogues, dating back to the 1930s.



Jogues Baseball Team-1930; - Laurin, Ti-Pit Laurin, Armand Longtin; Eximere Longtin, Baptiste Laurin, Aldéric Roy, -Laurin, -Courchesne, Omer Laurin.  
Picture courtesy of Lucienne Roy



The Jogues Beavers, pictured on the right, dated back to the mid-forties. Back Row: R-L: Adrien Boisclair, \_\_\_\_\_, Hervé Laurin, \_\_\_\_\_, George Fortier, Georges Chouinard, Armand Lemieux.....Front Row: L-R: \_\_\_\_\_, Fred Laurin, Jean-Paul Laurin, Stanislas Laurin, Majella Côté, Roland Côté. Photo (courtesy Gilles Dupuis, via Alan Jansson-Old Hearst 12)



When seventeen-year-old Patrick Dillon picked up a glove and joined the team in 1947, he opened the door for eight of his younger brothers to follow. In the next 20 plus years they competed in the Northern Pioneer Baseball League (NPBL). The Hearst Combines, Jogues, Mattice Tigers and teams from other towns along the Highway 11 corridor including Val Albert, Opasatika (Opaz), Val Rita/Harty, Moonbeam, Smooth Rock Falls and Cochrane participated in this league over the years.

It should be noted that Baseball uses the 3-inch hardball and is pitched over-hand as opposed to the under-arm pitching and larger fastball that most of us grew up playing. Occasionally the Jogues team played exhibition softball or fastball games, like the time they accepted a challenge from the Hearst High School team in 1962, and beat them handily. When Hearst switched to fastball in the Ray Lafleur / Lumberkings era of the sixties, Jogues and the NPBL continued to play baseball. The Dillons won the league championship in 1966 and were approached to play an exhibition game in the U.S. against a semi-pro team but could not go due to lack of funding.

The nine Dillon boys were managed and coached by their father, George. At the end of a hard week of farm chores and bush-work, they were a formidable team and held their own against all opponents. George would load the family into his Fargo pick-up and head for the ball field. Patrick was the pitcher and Laurent (Larry), the youngest in the family, was the catcher. Roy played second base,

Norman, short stop/pitcher, Robert, Jim and Vincent in the outfield, John, infield and a ninth brother, Arthur pitcher and infield. Edmond played a little in the early years. Phillipe passed away at an early age and there is no record of Angus having played in the league.

The photo below shows the Jogues championship Baseball Team in 1947.

Standing, right to left: Maurice Laurin, Hervé Laurin, Elias Roy, Armand



Lemieux, Patrick Dillon, Georges Chouinard, Roland Côté, Philippe Hogue, Jos. Morin...Front Row: Alfrèd Laurin, Majella Côté, Vic Lapointe (mascot), Zoël Dupuis, and Jean Paul Laurin. (Photo courtesy of Marcel Dillon.)

Circa 1940s. rear: left to right, Elias Roy, Patrick Dillon, Magella Côté, Jean-Paul Laurin, George Chouinard

front: Armand (Baquet) Lemieux, Zoël Dupuis, Victorien Lapointe, Fred Laurin, Hervé Laurin (courtesy Marcel Dillon)





Photo on right, Jogues Baseball Team circa late 50s. Back Row: L-R Armand Lemieux, Roy Dillon, Gilles Dupuis, Larry Dillon, Jules Côté, Robert Dillon, Norm Dillon...middle row L-R: Arthur Dillon, Andre Côté, John Dillon, Patrick Dillon, Jim Dillon....in front Edmond Beatty. (photo courtesy Lois Dillon))



1960 all Dillon team on left Jim, Patrick, Arthur, Robert, Roy, Norman, front: Laurent, Jean. Photo courtesy of Germaine Campeau



The Dillon Brothers Jogues Team on right circa 1971. Back Row: from L-R: Patrick, Larry, Vincent, Robert and Jim. Front Row: Norman, John, Arthur, and Roy. (Courtesy Marcel Dillon)



The Dillon boys circa 1972 at an exhibition game in Mattice. Back row: Robert, Norman, Patrick, Laurent, Vincent. Front: Jean, Jim, Roy, Arthur, (courtesy Marcel Dillon)





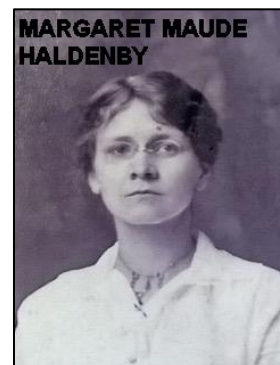
Undated Photo above of the Jogues Baseball Team. Top Front Row: L-R: Norm Dillon, Larry Dillon, Arthur Dillon, Réal Lemieux. 2nd Row. L-R: Edmond Beatty, unidentified, John Dillon, Jules Côté. 3rd row: L-R: Gaetan Beatty, Roland Côté, George Chouinard, Robert Dillon, Paul Campeau, Jim Dillon. back row: Patrick & Roy Dillon. (Courtesy Alan Jansson-Old Hearst 6).

Patrick's son Marcel was the mascot/bat boy for the Dillon team and was suited up with his own uniform, shown here with his brother Michel.



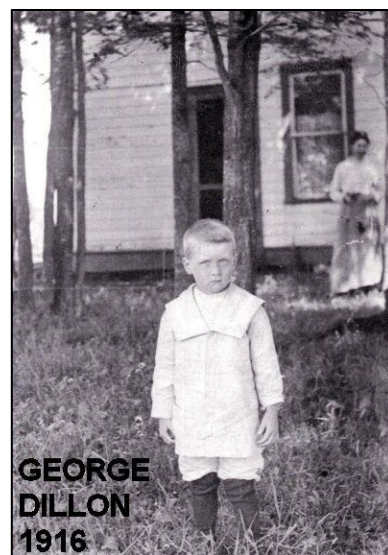
**The Dillon Family Story:** Marcel Dillon has been working on a family history tracing the Dillon name back to 1176 in Ireland. He has provided the following family information.

George William Dillon was born on May 16, 1910 to William Dillon and Margaret Maude Elizabeth Haldenby then living in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Her parents had sent her to Toronto where George William was born. He was then adopted by





friends of the family from Sault Ste. Marie, a childless couple named Patrick McQuillam and Mary McKinnon, George never knew his birth mother but his father and adopted father remained good friends. The McQuillams moved to Stavert in 1917 into a 16'x16' dirt-floor, log farmhouse that was owned by Mary McKinnon's brother, Angus. George was of Irish heritage and did not speak a word of French when he arrived. He attended a Separate school for a few years before quitting to work in the bush.



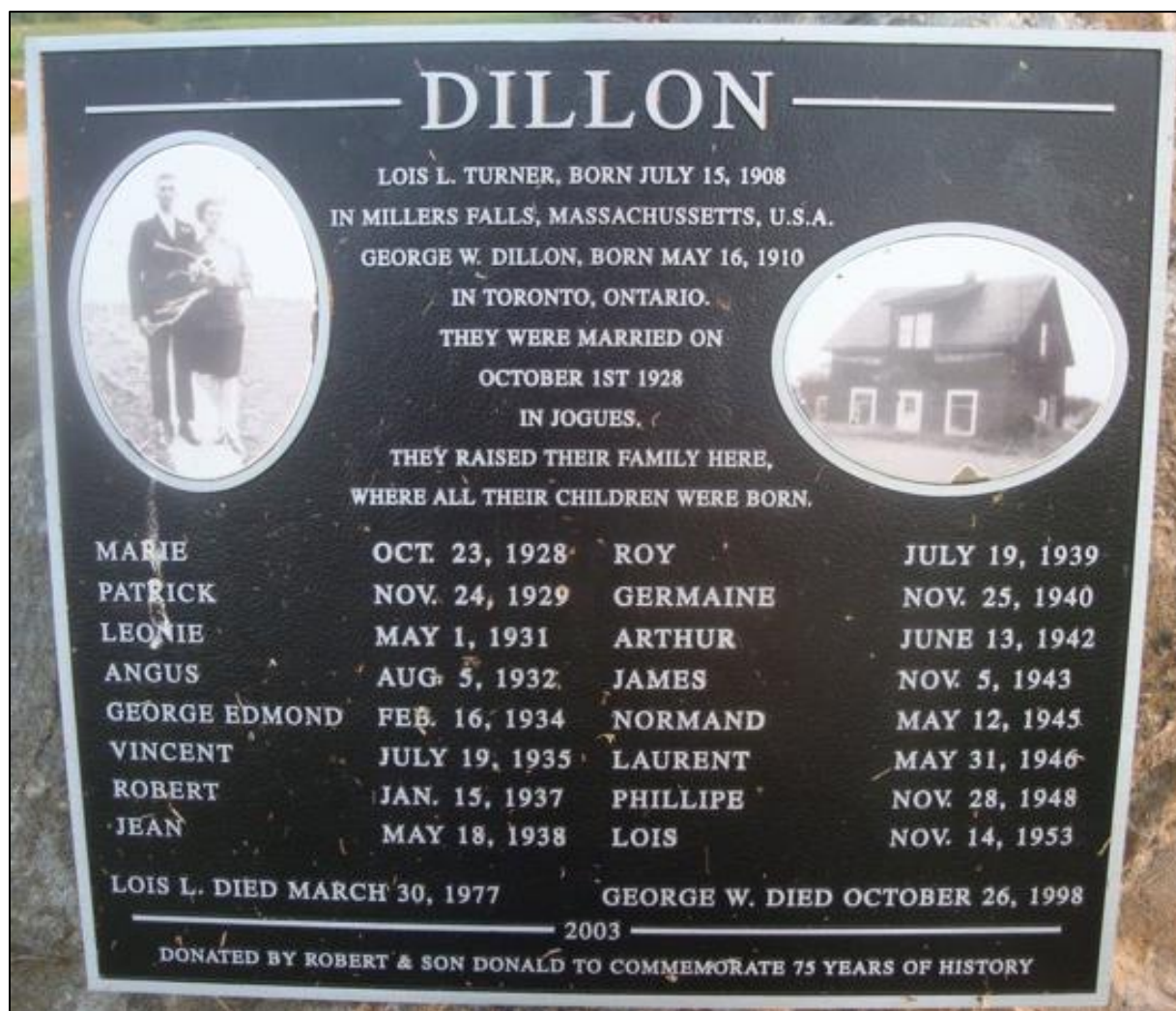
The 1921 census lists Fred McQuillam age 52, his wife Mary age 50 and son George age 11, living in Stavert. The name of the post office and town was changed to Jogues in 1922.

McQuillam Fred	-	-	-	0 68 S PL (2)	08/10/10	M 21 (52)
" Mary	-	-	-		wife	F M 50
" George	-	-	-		son	M 5 11



George married Lois Leonie Turner on October 1, 1928. She was born in Millers Falls, Massachusetts on July 15, 1908 and her family had come to Stavert in 1921. Together they raised sixteen children, 12 boys and 4 girls. George was a logging contractor supervising more than 100 bush workers including many of his sons over the years.





Wedding  
of Lois to  
Edouard  
Parent,  
December  
27, 1969,  
entire  
family  
present.



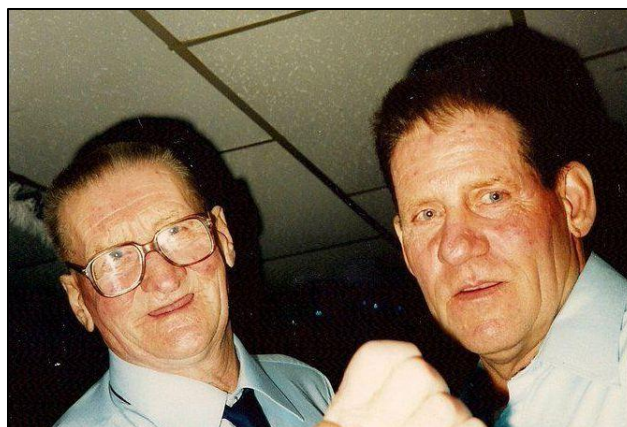


The descendants of George and Lois Dillon at the church in Jogues in 2017.

Robert, John, Roy, Jim, Vincent, Germaine and Lois remain from the original family. Lois passed away in 1977 and George in 1998.

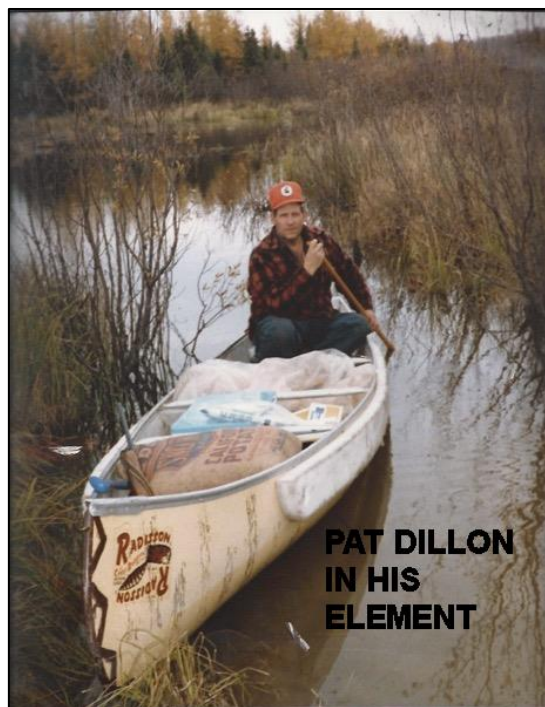


**George**

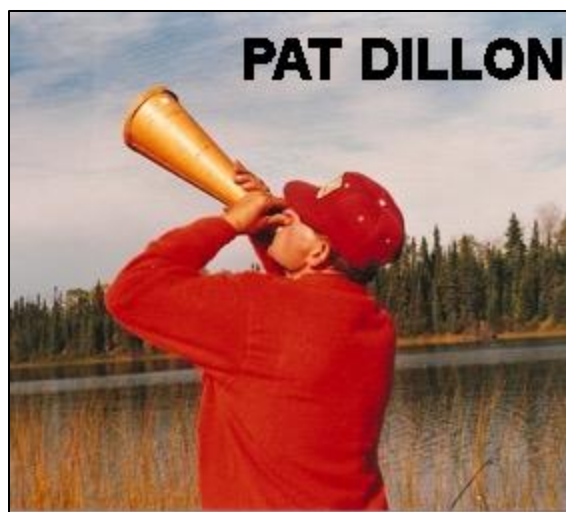


**George and Patrick**

**Patrick Dillon meets a Hall of Famer:** A trapper on the homestead farm since the age of seven, Patrick later owned two traplines with his son Michel. Pat never

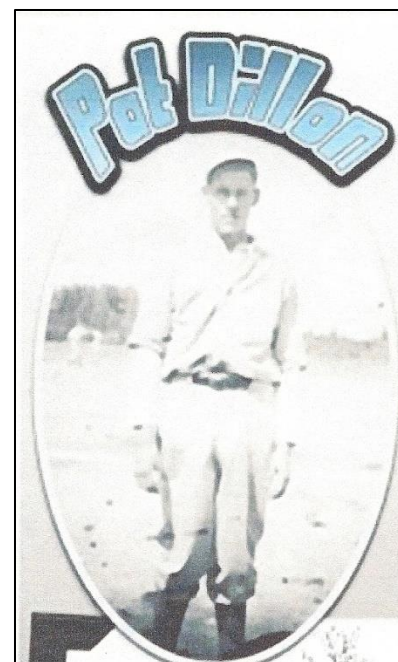


failed to meet his quotas for furs and passed along his knowledge to his sons who continued his legacy. Hunting of necessity to support of his family, he became an



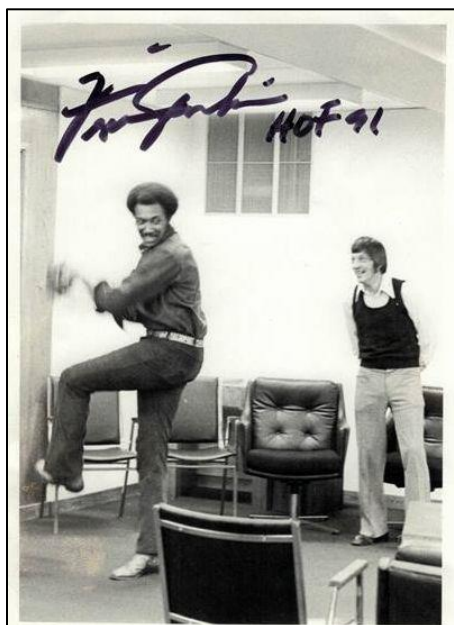
expert moose and bear hunters, later turning to guiding. Generations of hunters from the south returned to the Hearst area, the Moose Capital of Canada, to seek his guiding services. One group was from the Chatham-Blenheim area, which allowed

Patrick the ball-player and guide to connect with the first Canadian player to be inducted into the baseball Hall of Fame. Chatham's Ferguson Jenkins, was just beginning a string of 20-win seasons with the Phillies, Cubs, Rangers and





Red Sox when he came to Hearst in 1968. He would win 284 games over his 20-year career.



An avid hunter, Jenkins found himself shopping at Ted Wilson's Men's wear in Hearst. The affable salesman, Alde Collin, sold him what he needed and when asked about hunting in the area,



introduced him to Pat Dillon, the best guide around. This led to an ongoing friendship for years to come between Fergie, Alde and Pat. In the picture on the left, Fergie is shown demonstrating his pitching form as Alde looks on. I contacted Fergie on April 19, 2020 to ask about his Hearst experiences and this is his reply.

*"Went to Hearst in 1968 and met Alde Collin in a clothing store where I was buying some long underwear and he introduced me to Pat Dillon. We went hunting and I shot my first moose and from then on for 5 years I always went hunting with him up in Hearst. I never talked about them playing ball. I went to Pat's house and his wife cooked bear."*

*Fergie Jenkins.*

*The photo is from a deer hunt in Illinois.*



## Some History of Baseball in Hearst and Northern Ontario

Several different leagues have been identified in different media, namely, The Northern Ontario Baseball League, The Pioneer Baseball League and the Mattagami Baseball League. Sometimes the reports mention both the Baseball and Fastball teams of local towns in the Hearst Area. Records of these leagues are scarce except for a few undated championship team photos.

The Golden Jubilee History of Kapuskasing booklet indicates that baseball was very popular in Northern Ontario in the 20's and 30's and that Ken and Len Doherty of Hearst formed a very effective battery. The Dougherty (Doherty) family was originally from Cochrane and moved to Hearst in 1920. Len and Ken worked in West's butcher shop in the 30s, where Len gained the nickname "Butch".

1938, Hearst Baseball Team - Front Row, Unknown, Unknown, Ken Dougherty (Catcher), Len Dougherty (pitcher), Ambrose McManus.



1938 Len Doherty  
on right.

Photos courtesy  
Anne Doherty



Interest in baseball peaked again in the 40s and 50s with the formation of the Mattagami league with the Kapuskasing Dodgers, Hearst Combines, Mattice,



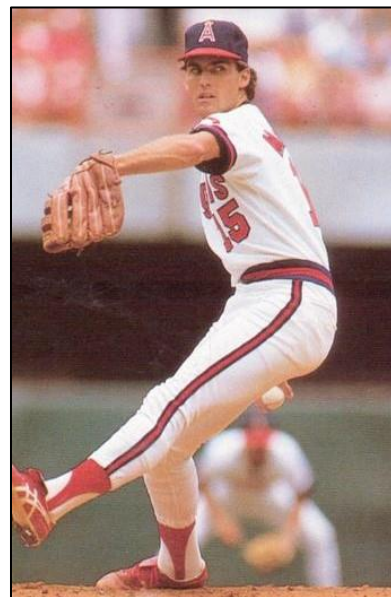
Opasatika, Jogues, Smooth Rock Falls, Cochrane and Iroquois Falls represented at different times. The Kapuskasing Dodgers dominated the 50s winning six championships but most other teams did win the trophy over the years.

More history can be found in

Julie Latimer's September 29, 2016 column in the Kapuskasing Times. With help from Mike and Wilfred Anderson, baseball was traced back to 1920, when Wilf played his first game as an 11-year-old. Wilf provided the early details in an interview in the Timmins Press dated May 22, 1952. Pioneers of early Kapuskasing baseball were Angus McCaskill and Doc F. Foster, first aid man for Spruce Falls, names that recur in northern Ontario history. Kap's Ted McCaskill played for the 1961-62 Kapuskasing GM's, along with King Begin from Hearst. The GM's, coached by Bummer Doran, were the all-Ontario Senior Hockey champions. Ted McCaskill went on to a long pro hockey career, including a few games in the NHL and appeared in



the movie “Slapshot” with Paul Newman. His son, Kirk McCaskill, was born in Kapuskasing in 1961, but chose baseball over hockey. He played 12 years in the major leagues with California and Chicago and won 106 games. He was inducted into the Canadian baseball Hall of Fame in 2003.



Wilf Anderson also talks about the early days when the roads were not friendly to cars and they would hop on a rail motor-car at noon, travel to Smooth Rock Falls, play a game and be back home by eight the same day. Many players from Northern Ontario had professional baseball potential but chose to stay close to home. Danny “Lefty” Pine, of Irish/aboriginal descent, was probably the best pitcher from the North and turned down several pro-contracts. He lost his pitching arm in a hunting accident in the 1930s.

**Hearst Baseball:** A Team from the 1930s. King Begin’s father, front row left





## 1948 Hearst Combines Baseball Team



Back Row, L-R: Mr. Hudon (a former owner of the Windsor Hotel), Jerry Russ, Don Inouye, Raoul Rondeau, Ted Wilson, R. Dufour, Gordie Achilles, Chummy Trowsse, Jack Turk..Front Row, L-R: Albert Lahde, Denis Shea, Fred Gelineau, Steve Kasenchuk, Art Gallagher, \_\_\_\_ Nolet. (Photo Alan Jansson-Old Hearst 3-courtesy of Albert Lahde



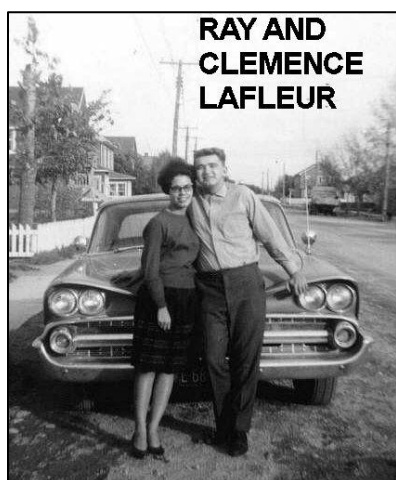
Allan Jansson recounted a baseball story in an email dated May 29, 2015, as remembered and told by his father, Mauno Jansson who was at the game:  
*"The time was circa late 1940s and it was the deciding league championship baseball game that was played out on the Stavert ball field. The two teams in question were the Hearst Combines and*



*the Stavert team that was made up of players from the Cote, Laurin, Chouinard, Roy, Lemieux, etc. families. It was a tightly contested game that saw Hearst behind by the score of 2 to 1 and heading into the last inning. Hearst managed to get runners to second and third base, but with two out and the light hitting Albert*

*Lahde next to bat. Strike one, strike two were delivered by Stavert hurler Georges Chouinard and things were looking a little bleak for the Hearst squad. Then without warning Hearst coach Denis Shea (coaching at first base) yelled to Chouinard standing on the mound and insisted on looking at the baseball. Chouinard looked puzzled and in response to Coach Shea tossed the ball over to him. Time was not called and Shea watched the ball roll into foul territory far enough to allow the two Hearst base runners to advance home with both the tying and winning runs. Hearst was jubilant in triumph and Stavert was duped into one of the oldest tricks in the book in their loss”.*

Hearst fastball legend, the late Ray “Iron -Arm” Lafleur shared some baseball



memories in an email on May 23, 2015. *“Hearst switched to fastball the year prior to my arrival in 1961...At the time I was pitching in the Timmins Senior League since the age of 16. First with the Cochrane Commandoes and thence recruited by the Schumacher Team which was the powerhouse of that senior League at the time. I met Alde Collin and his new bride on the train as he was returning from his honeymoon and he knew me because the daily press of Timmins covered the Hearst area quite extensively at the time and he knew of me. I had told him that I was going to work in Hearst the following spring as I had recently completed my Telegrapher course with the CNR.*

*George Dillon always attended our fastball games and always made it a point to speak with me after every game and this is how I knew of his playing days in the USA but I do not remember the state or states where he played. (John Dillon advised later that Georges Chouinard from Coppell, had played baseball in the US. The discussion was probably about the time the team was invited to play an exhibition game in the States). But George certainly knew his sport and was the patriarch and coach of the all Dillon Team of very fine players. We never played them because our sports were different however, we did play the one exhibition game with the Mattice Tigers of their Pioneer League. Their pitcher pitched baseball to us Lumberkings and I pitched fastball to them. The main difference in the sports was that fastball was dominated by pitching at that time and baseball was more traditional*



*Life goes by quickly. On Saturday August 15 (Or maybe 25th) 1965 exactly 50 years ago this summer I pitched the first perfect game in the annals of the Northland Fastball Association in beating the Mattagami Braves 1-0 in Hearst striking out 24 of which 17 were consecutive with a total pitch count of 96 pitches during this historic game which of course I and many others will never forget and which I believe remains the only one in NFA finals or amongst only a few throughout the years. UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS for all of us that played the game of fastball here in the North.”*

**The Mattice Tigers NPBL Baseball Team** circa early 1960s.

Back Row: L-R:

Gaston Grondin,  
Laurent Gagnon,  
Jack Gagnon, Cyril  
Philibert (CNR  
train station  
operator), Bert  
Rodrigue, Fred  
Neegan, Abel  
Rancourt, Tony  
Filion, & Gaetan  
Gosselin...Front  
Row L-R: Émile



Filion, Robert Bidal, Fred Gelineau, Ray Gagnon, Real Gagnon, Emmanuel Dupuis, Jean Paul Gagnon, Leopold Brunel, & Jacques Drouin. (Courtesy Emmanuel Dupuis. Courtesy Alan Jansson-Old Hearst 8.)

Gaston Grondin was a multi-sport athlete, excelling in hockey, fastball and baseball and an educator from Hearst who passed away on March 19, 2020. Fred Gelineau was in the Hearst Combines team photo from the 1948.

**Opasatika Baseball Team:** Circa late 1940s photo courtesy Aimé Chevrier, who identified four of his cousins as well as a few others. Note several of the players are of Japanese descent, probably from the Crow Creek settlement near Opasatika. This small community was built by Spruce Falls Pulp and Paper Company of

Kapuskasing in 1946-47 to house about 20 families of Japanese Canadians that they had been recruited from the former internee camp at Neys, Ontario. Some were temporarily housed in the Hearst Hostel at the sand pit on the Lac Ste. Therese Road in 1946. They were no longer internees and were free to shop in Hearst and send their children to the Hearst Public and High Schools. Rene Fontaine, from Hearst, remembered playing against the ball players from Crow Creek.



Back Row: Jean-Léon Chevrier, Armand Marier, Aurèle Marier, Patrice (Titom) Bélair, Pitou Harvey, unknown, unknown,  
 Front Row: Réal Chevrier, Harry Tanaka, Donat Bélair, unknown, unknown, Larry Tanaka, Patrick Brooks.



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