

History of the Stanley Cup

Who was this Stanley guy and why is hockey's most prestigious trophy named after him? Frederick Arthur Stanley was born in London, England on Jan. 15, 1841, the younger son of three-time Prime Minister of England, Edward George Geoffrey Stanley, the Fourteenth Earl of Derby. Educated at Eton and later at a military college, Frederick Stanley received his commission in the Grenadier Guards but opted for a political career.

He was elected as a Conservative Member of Parliament for Preston, and later represented North Lancashire and Blackpool in the House of Commons. Lord Stanley was a Member of the British Parliament between 1865 and 1886, including a term as Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1885 and 1886. From 1886 to 1888, Stanley was president of the Board of Trade.

On June 11, 1888, Lord Stanley succeeded the Marquis of Lansdowne as the sixth Governor-General of Canada, appointed by England's reigning monarch, Queen Victoria. Stanley's full title was the Right Honorable Sir Frederick Arthur Stanley, Earl of Derby, Baron Stanley of Preston, in the County of Lancaster, in the peerage of Great Britain, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath. Although Lord Stanley lived in the official residence of the Governor-General, Rideau Hall, upon his move to Ottawa, he built a large summer home called Stanley House in order to indulge his love of fishing. It was located on the Baie des Chaleurs near the mouth of the Grand Cascapedia River on the Gaspé Peninsula. Today, Stanley House is a charming bed and breakfast destination.

Lord Stanley's term in office as Governor-General was uneventful, with the exception of his incomparable legacy to hockey. While in Canada, Stanley's children discovered exciting new winter pursuits, including snow-shoeing, tobogganing, skating and playing hockey. His sons, Algernon and Arthur, formed a competitive hockey club called the Rideau Rebels, while his daughter Isobel was one of the first female hockey players in Canada. On March 18, 1892, the Governor-General asked Lord Kilcourse, a vice-regal aide who played on the Rideau Rebels with Stanley's sons, to read a letter on his behalf to the Ottawa Athletic Association.

"I have for some time been thinking that it would be a good thing if there were a challenge cup, which would be held from year to year by the leading hockey club in the Dominion," Stanley wrote. "Considering the general interest which hockey matches now elicit, and the importance of having the game played fairly and under rules generally recognized, I am willing to give a cup which shall be held from year to year by the winning club."

Lord Stanley's offer was enthusiastically accepted, and he subsequently requested one of his aides, Captain Colville, to purchase an appropriate trophy. Known originally as the Dominion Hockey Challenge Cup, the trophy was purchased for ten guineas (\$48.67 at the time) and quickly became known as the Stanley Cup. The silver bowl was created in

Sheffield, England but purchased in London and stood 7.28 inches tall and 11.42 inches in diameter. Today, this original Stanley Cup is kept on permanent display at the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto.

Lord Stanley insisted that the Cup remain a challenge trophy, presented for the amateur championship of Canada, and never become the property of any one team. The first Stanley Cup winner was the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association in 1893. In 1910, after having being awarded to both amateur and professional teams, the Stanley Cup was awarded exclusively to professional teams. From the National Hockey League's formation in 1917 until 1926, the magnificent trophy was awarded to the winner of a playoff between the NHL and the Pacific Coast Hockey League. When the PCHL dissolved in 1927, the Stanley Cup was presented exclusively to NHL playoff champions.

Lord Stanley never witnessed either a championship hockey contest or his namesake trophy presented to a championship team. Stanley's term as Governor-General was scheduled to end in September 1893, however, in April of that year (midway through the hockey season), Stanley's brother, the Fifteenth Earl of Derby, died. Lord Stanley resigned the Governor-Generalship and returned home to England on July 15, 1893 to become the Sixteenth Earl of Derby.

In 1893, he was appointed president of University College and when the University of Liverpool was established in 1903, Lord Stanley became the university's first Chancellor. Between 1895 and 1896, Lord Stanley served as the First Lord Mayor of Greater Liverpool and also later served as Mayor of Preston. Lord Stanley died at Knowsley, in Lancashire, on June 14, 1908.

In coming up with the challenge cup idea, Lord Stanley of Preston had no comprehension of the immense impact his trophy would have. In 1945, the donation of the Stanley Cup earned its benefactor entrance to the Hockey Hall of Fame, as a builder of the sport -- one of the 14 men inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame that initial year.