



The Vancouver Lawn Tennis Club Executive Committee, 1914. Back row: C.F.H. Walker, Charles Dawson, Michael Greaves, F.A. Jones, T.W. Wyndham, A.S. Milne. Middle row: A.B. Given, A.H. Edwards, Julius Griffith, E. Cave-Browne-Cave, E.N. Maltby, T.J. Derby, J.G. Stark. Front row: Duncan Carmichael, Mrs. Wyndham, Miss K. Taylor, Mrs. Lisle Fraser, Jim Hutchinson. The Committee is shown on the steps of the elegant McLure clubhouse, which would be demolished in 1957 to make room for our new parking lot.

1914–1917 • Settling In

Our Proposed Move to 16th Avenue and Fir Street

Planning the Club's move to the more spacious 16th Avenue property began during the real estate boom in Vancouver just prior to World War I, when land prices were skyrocketing. The value of the Denman Street property — the Club's principal asset, though technically owned by the Vancouver Lawn Association Society — continued to rise and the directors were sure that it could be sold at a handsome price, enabling them to purchase and develop new and larger facilities. They proceeded with their plans with unshackled optimism. But the real estate bubble burst and instead of being able to sell at a high price, the Club was forced to borrow and diminish its equity. However, looking back it is difficult to fault the directors — many landowners in Vancouver suffered similar losses as the real estate market plummeted.

The proposed move to 16th Avenue was largely a result of the blandishments of the

CPR. As already acknowledged, CPR director R.B. Angus was probably instrumental in the formation of the VLTC and securing the grounds on Denman Street. As well, before World War I the CPR owned large tracts of present-day Vancouver and was developing Shaughnessy as a prime residential area. Anxious to attract the well-heeled citizens of Vancouver — many of who played lawn tennis — to this new subdivision, the CPR encouraged the Club to abandon its Denman Street property and relocate to ritzier South Granville. Not that the West End had become shabby — far from it — but tony Shaughnessy was on the “heights,” was well-removed from the commerciality of the city, had large residential lots, and possessed an air of exclusivity. Also, the Denman Street property needed a new clubhouse — estimated to cost \$3,750 — which did not go over well with its members.

So the Club started the negotiations with the CPR that culminated in the move to the



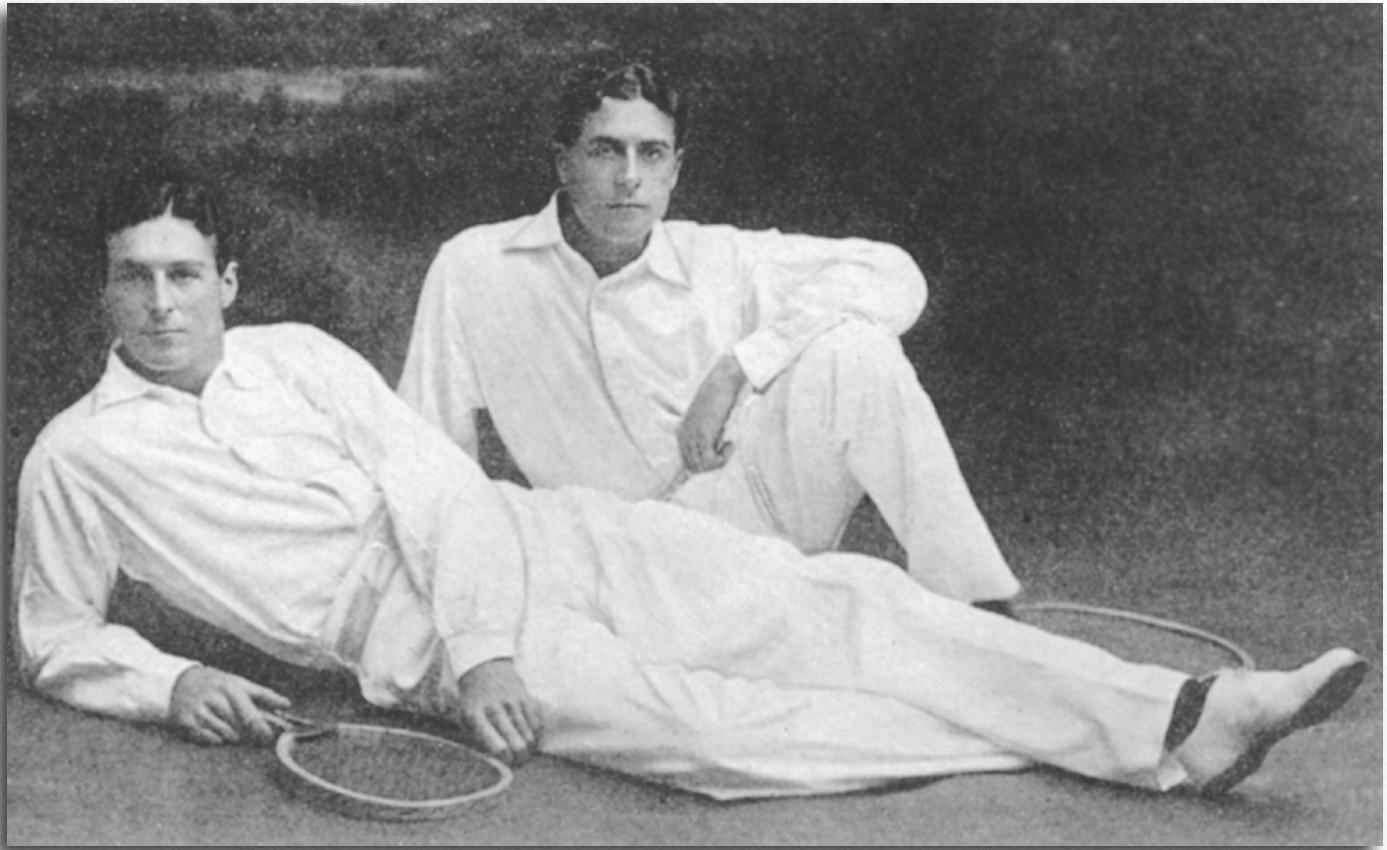
present location. Three men figured prominently in those dealings: Club President E. Cave-Browne-Cave; F.G. Crickmay, who was a perennial vice-president; and Newton J. Ker. Crickmay was a surveyor who had worked for the CPR for a number of years before establishing his own business. Ker was the CPR's land agent in charge of the Shaughnessy subdivision and represented the company in its dealings with the Club. In later years he too became a president. It was probably his idea that the move to 16th and Fir would be to the Club's advantage as well as serve the commercial interests of the CPR in its promotion of their Shaughnessy Heights lots.

Financing the Purchase of 16th and Fir

At a Club meeting in October 1911 — with Cave-Brown-Cave and Crickmay present, but not Ker — the Club launched its proposal to sell its Denman Street property and buy 20 town lots from the CPR, comprising just over three acres. They secured a short-term option for \$40,000 from the CPR. An additional \$25,000 would be needed to lay out the courts — both lawn and cinder, as well as the bowling and croquet greens — and erect a presentable clubhouse. So all told the Club faced an outlay of \$65,000. The purchaser would be the Vancouver Lawn Association Society, the legal owner of the Denman Street grounds, on the security of which the Society had already borrowed \$10,000 for their capital improvements. Since the value of the Denman Street property was estimated at \$115,000, there appeared to be ample funds to support the required borrowings for the new site. But it soon became apparent that this wasn't the case.

The Club directors were impressed by the 16th and Fir location, with its gentle slope to the north providing an outstanding view as well as easy-to-construct bleachers for spectators, which were built in 1919. Our more senior members will recall sitting in those stands with a high fence shielding them from passers-by on 16th Avenue. Next, with another example of good forward planning, the directors contemplated indoor tennis courts as well as badminton courts, but lack of money ruled that out. The Club





All white, all flannel—typical pre-World War I tennis garb for men, modeled here by England's Reggie and Laurie Doherty.

exercised its option with the CPR and the Vancouver Lawn Association Society borrowed a further \$15,000, escalating the mortgage on the Denman Street property to \$25,000. It also borrowed \$6,000 from a member, F.L. Beecher. Hence the Club was successful in borrowing enough money to purchase the property and complete the courts, but still lacked the necessary \$10,000 to build a clubhouse. The directors were hopeful that this could be financed as well, and decided to use the financial cushion of the Denman

Street grounds to provide those funds, and so they put Denman on the market. The risk in all of this was that if the Denman Street property didn't sell, the Club would have its new property but no money for a clubhouse.

1914 – Our New Grounds and the Elegant McLure Clubhouse Open

In March 1914, once we were assured that the funds to complete the clubhouse could be borrowed, we



Cornerstone Holy Rosary Cathedral laid. **1899**



Vancouver's first horseless carriage. **1899**



Vancouver Board of Trade's first banquet - \$12.50 per plate including a quart of Mumm's Champagne. **1880s**



1880s

South Africa Boer War begins. "Soldiers of the Queen, my boys."