SPORTS

The ghost of Denman Arena: Little remains of the stadium where Vancouver won its only Stanley Cup

By Jon Azpiri & Squire Barnes • Global News
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WATCH: The Denman arena (previously at Denman and Georgia streets in Vancouver) was the only place where Vancouver has actually won a Stanley cup. Squire Barnes has more on the history of what was once the largest arena in North America – Jun 1, 2021

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A patch of grass and a parking lot in dow
home of the only Vancouver hockey team



Built in 1911 near Denman and Georgia st
Harbour came to be known as the Denma

Its official name was The Arena, since the
at the time, and it was sometimes referred to as the Georgia Arena in ads. Whatever it was called, it was one of the city's most ambitious and unique buildings of its era.

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Squire Barnes: History of a legendary Vancouver ballpark

"It was one of the first in North America, it was the largest in North America at the time," Jason Beck of the BC Sports Hall of Fame said.

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“It changed sport in Vancouver because suddenly you could schedule things. You could say, ‘We’re going to have this game on this day,’ and you could schedule it months in advance and you can draw a crowd for it.”



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Craig Bowlsby, author of ***Empire of Ice: The Rise and Fall of the Pacific Coast Hockey Association***, said the arena had a capacity of 10,500 “plus they could squish in another 500.”

The arena was packed in 1915 when the Vancouver Millionaires played the Ottawa Senators for the Stanley Cup. The best seats in the house cost $1.25.

“There were people lined up trying to get in and they couldn’t get in and there were people calling out from the windows what the score was and if anybody had scored, and there would be cheering outside,” Bowlsby said.

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Fans cheered the Millionaires to a 3–0 sweep of the Senators in the best-of-five series. More than a century later, it remains the only Stanley Cup championship in the city's history.

But when the series sweep was over, there was no Stanley Cup to hand out.

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"Ottawa was so confident they wouldn't lose, they didn't bring the Stanley Cup with them, which was very churlish, I thought," Bowlsby said.

The Denman Arena was built by the Patrick family, the founders of the Pacific Coast Hockey Association. The Patricks also built arenas in Victoria and New Westminster, both of which burned to the ground in 1929.

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Both of those arenas were wooden structures. The Denman was also made of wood but featured a brick facade. That didn't save it from suffering a similar fate as the Patricks' other venues though.

On Aug. 20, 1936, the Denman Arena burned down hours after hosting a boxing match featuring former heavyweight champion Max Baer.

Today, there are few reminders of the Denman Arena. In fact, there aren't even photos of hockey games at the arena.

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"The arena was holding lots of equipment, lots of documents," Bowlsby said. "The evidence of its existence was burned down with the arena."

Beck describes the arena as something like a ghost.

"We know a lot about it but there are no artifacts," he said. "There's just scraps. For such an important facility at its time — it was the biggest thing in the city for sport — there's just nothing that's left.

"I wish someone would have grabbed the brick from the building or kept a seat from the arena, but no one did. So we're kind of left with just these rare glimpses into what that arena was like."

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