



# Shoe collectors (by André Leclerc)



There are a lot of shoes on the market these days, probably a lot more than 30 years ago. The NHPA currently sanctions 90 models, not counting the ones produced in Canada that don't pay for the sanction in the US.

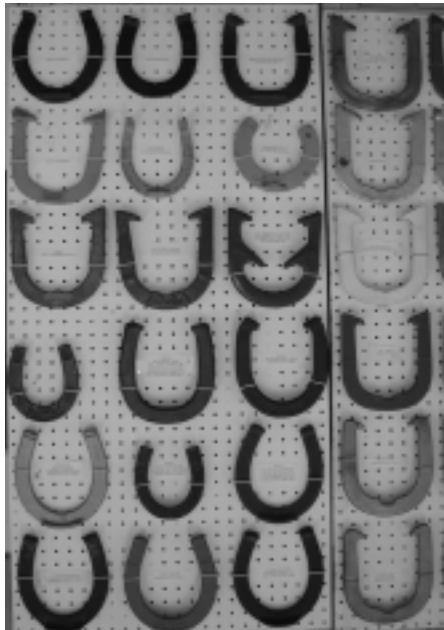
I would have never thought it possible, but so many brands and models of pitching horseshoes have been produced since 1920, that there's enough to start a very interesting collection.

There are actually over 70 collectors, the most importants being Lee Wallace (from Oregon) and Bob Dunn (from Minnesota). The Bob Dunn collection has more than 230 antique horseshoes.

In 2002, Bob Dunn, published **'THE SHOE', The Horseshoe Traders and Collectors Handbook**, that is now the Collectors Bible. Bob released a revised edition in 2005 that may be available.

During the 2003 World Tournament, in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, I took the time to discover Minnesotan Bob Dunn's impressive collection.

Among astonishing discoveries in his collection, lets mention the official horseshoes from **Norway** and **Ireland**, both pictured to the right.



A very small portion of Bob Dunn's collection!

There is also the great and mysterious "**Crum**". We have to say that before the recent discovery of that shoe, Fred M. Brust, 1919 World Champion, was usually considered the first man to produce horseshoes when he founded the Ohio Horseshoe Company still in existence today! But it seems like the "**Crum**", though we can't find proofs, was produced a few years earlier, cause we naturally connect it to the former President of the Grand League (ancestor of the NHPA), Frank Crum or Crumm, who was main organizer of the 1915 World Tournament in Kansas City.

Surprising also the discoveries of other shoes anterior to the Ohio and produced by the famous farm equipment company International Harvester.

Yet, the Ohio Horseshoe Company is considered "*the first major commercial manufacturer of pitching style shoes. This is confirmed by the Thomas Directory of American Manufacturers and states the initial year of production as 1921*".

The collection, and Bob's researches shared in his serie of articles published in the Newline (and his Handbook), allow us to follow the evolution of the pitching horseshoes. After using "shoes off the horse" probably for decades, we went from roundish-shape patented horseshoes (earliest known-patent in 1915 by William Martin of Cleveland), to oval and then to shoes with hooks. Prior to 1927, all shoes were hookless.



An historical shoe by the name of **Crum** dating from prior to 1919. Frank Crumm was President of the Grand League of Horseshoe Pitchers in 1914!

Putt Mossman's newly designed shoe in 1927, that sported hooks on the inside edge of the points, was the beginning of a major revelation in the sport. What was to be a historic event of the 1927 World Tournament (Summer) was not without some resistance. This is described in a note hand written by Frank Stinson in the late 1970's. Frank Stinson was a participant in the 1927 World Tournament, he was there in person and an eye witness to the introduction of the hooked shoe.

*"Putt Mossman invented first hooked shoe in 1927, I was one of many who used it. Other manufacturers were caught by surprise and tried to have it barred at the pre-tournament convention, but players voted to allow its use. Otto Swanstrom, president of Diamond Horseshoe Company stood and offered his shoes free to any player to use in the tournament with \$100 extra going to the one winning the title. Of course, those using the new hooked shoe had a big advantage and C.C. Davis won 1st with them."* -- Frank Stinson

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The official Norway shoe



The official Irish shoe



This rare model bears the **International Harvester logo** dates d'avant 1919.

Those initial hooks were barely buttons compared to the hooks later designed by other shoemakers. In fact, Mossman shoes were nicknamed 'Cheeters'. For those who are enjoying the benefits of the tournament styled large hooked shoes, remember, it hasn't always been like that.

Bob Dunn amassed quantities of patents, flyers on various models, ads published in old catalogs like Sears, and horseshoe publications like *Horseshoe World* edited from 1927 to 1943 where the manufacturers placed ads regularly. Traders often make new discoveries by visiting the website [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)! If you search the word "horseshoes", you'll see the phenomenon's amplitude.

Before talking about Canadian horseshoes let's conclude this section with names of models that are part of Dunn's collection (note that some of them were picnic shoes): *Crum, Ohio, Lattore, Diamond (Eagle Ringer, US Navy Military shoe, etc), Warren, Indiana, Jackson, John Deere, Budweiser, Ross Stevens, Erie Tool, National Standard, Chicago Steel, Sears Roebuck, Holiday, Roberts, Giant Grip, T.J. Octigan, Leader, Good Luck, Sure Ringer Shoe, Royal and Wonder (by St.Pierre), EMC, Cleveland, Professional Ringer, USA shoe (Phoenix Shoes), Hercules and Healthways (1950s), Rodeo and Billard (by Billard Reading Penn.), Pro Shot, Hobby, Playtime, Craftsman, Champ, Ringer, President, etc.*

Note that on April 6, 2006 we learned that "Queen City Forging Co." ran out of stock since summer 2005. As they mentioned, it is likely they've manufactured their last Gordon pitching horseshoes!

### Canadian Shoes

The collection sure includes some Canadian-made horseshoes, the oldest ones being the "Diamond" because the company based in Duluth, also had a plant in Toronto during the 20s and 30s. Some "Diamond" shoes can be found bearing the Toronto inscription. In the early 30s, we can also find the rare Atlas, produced by Atlas Steel in Welland, Ontario. Then come the various models by those two companies (Super Ringer, Official, Royal), that were followed by the contemporary companies.



*Nickel-coated Diamonds offered to Art Adams (Sask.) for his participation at the 1938 Canadian Championships.*

After WWII, many Canadians pitched with shoes produced in the US. The February 1951 issue of the *Horseshoe Pitcher* (NHPA's official newsletter) published a publicity of the Lattore horseshoes (1951) with a picture of Canadian Dean McLaughlin who pitched that popular shoe at the time.

Dean McLaughlin went on to design and sell his own horseshoe, the "Dean", as his answer to the high cost of pitching shoes. By 1984, he was marketing around 500 pairs a year. They were officially sanctioned by Horseshoe Canada at the AGM held in Toronto on August 20, 1978. They were sold \$12/pair in 1978. At least a second model, the Dean "O" was on the market too.



The company was taken over by Bill Vanderburg in the 1990s and he developed several more models. Elmer Hohl horseshoes arrived on the market in 1979 (price was \$28/pair) and was sanctioned by both the NHPA and HCA. Modified from the original, it is now marketed by his son Steve Hohl.

A third manufacturer is still in business in Ontario: the M & M Horseshoe Company, selling their products since 1987. Their number one selling horseshoe is the M&M Special. Kevin and his father Gary McLachlin also sell the "Python".

Besides those three companies located in Ontario, there's an important one based in Quebec called: "HP" in business since the early 1980s. Henri-Paul Fleurant now produces 9 different models and already collectors can preserve old models (cast) that are not available anymore today! Such is the case with the original Dean and Elmer Hohl horseshoes.

### Four main companies

#### • Elmer Hohl horseshoe company (Ont.)

One model  
(Elmer Hohl horseshoe)  
Contact: Steve Hohl  
519-662-9584  
hohlhorseshoe@rogers.com



#### • Bill Vanderburg horseshoe co. (Ont.)

Several models (Dean, TNT, V.I.P., Flipper, Can-Am, Canuck, Condor, Dean Slim, Brass King, Kodiak, Simmons, Gallina and others).

Contact: Bill Vanderburg 519-575-9163 or 905-567-9717



#### • M & M Horseshoe Company (Ont.)

Two models  
(M & M Special, Python)  
Contact: Kevin McLachlin  
mmhorseshoes@ciaccess.com  
website:  
<http://www.kent.net/horseshoes/>



#### • Fers à jouer HP (Que.)

Nine models of "HP"  
Contact: H.-P. Fleurant (819) 397-5699

#### Sanctioned Shoes by the NHPA:

<http://www.horseshoepitching.com/products/sanctionedshoes.shtml>

#### Pictures of many sanctioned shoes by the NHPA:

<http://www.horseshoepitching.com/products/shoes.shtml>

#### Bob Dunn antique horseshoe collection:

<http://www.theeagleftp.com/flys/dadsweb/antique1.htm>

#### Bob Dunn's articles "The Horseshoe Trader" published in Newsline:

<http://www.horseshoepitching.com/dunn/traderindex.shtml>

### Other Canadian Shoes

Besides the Diamond and Atlas companies that had plants or were based in Ontario, there were, to our knowledge, very few other Canadian-made shoes. If you have more details, don't hesitate to provide us about the following brands (or others):

- **President** (Victoria, B.C. - May 1991)
- **Hallyburton** (or Hallaburns from Ontario?)
- **Can-Flip** (from ?, sanctioned in 1988)
- **Sask Ringer** (from Sask.)