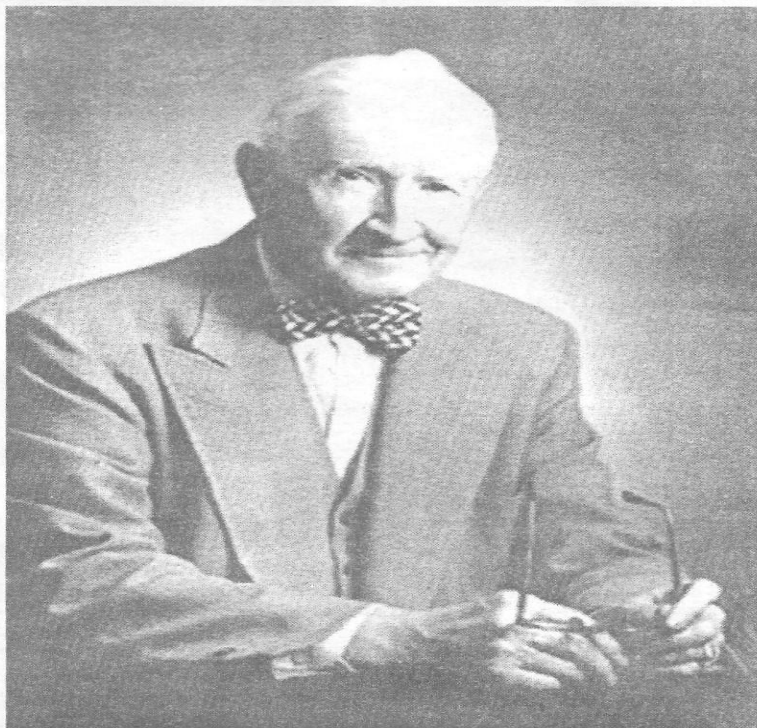




# It's Our History, Our Country

Written by: Ronald Wolf



## Thomas F. (Tommy) Ryan

1915-1961 - Mr. Five Pin Bowling

Bowling in its primitive form, is over 7,000 years old. In fact, a complete set of pins and balls was discovered in a large tomb in Egypt which dates back to 5200 BC.

The American form of bowling, Tenpin Bowling (circa 1840) came to Canada in the 1880s. In 1905, a billiard academy owner, Thomas F. (Tommy) Ryan decided to install Canada's first regulation tenpin lanes, a 10 lane setup, in the second storey of the Boisseau Building (over top of Ryrrie-Birks Jewelers) in downtown Toronto, Ont.

Ryan's establishment, known as the Toronto Bowling Club, resembled a southern plantation, with potted palm trees, ceiling fans, string orchestra, piano and a huge lunch counter. Ryan insisted that his establishment was a very elite and private club, catering only to the well-to-do, carriage trade of Toronto society.

Customer complaints about the size and weight of the tenpin bowling balls and the game being far too strenuous, led Ryan to experiment. He had his father whittle down five of the larger tenpins on a lathe, to approximately 3/4 of their original size.

He then spaced five of these pins equally on the 36" (91cm) tenpin triangle. Ryan took a hand sized hard rubber ball (approximately 5" (12.7cm) in diameter and 3 1/2 lbs. (1.6kg) in weight) and rolled the ball down the tenpin lane at the 5 pins.

In 1909, the original sport of 5-pin bowling was born. Even though many changes have taken place through the years, the original concept remains and are enjoyed in hundreds of modern bowling centers by millions of Canadians each year. In fact, in a recent poll by CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) asking Canadians to vote for the Greatest Canadian Inventions of All Time,

Tommy Ryan's invention

placed fourth, beating out other Canadian inventions of great import such as the Canadarm, Basketball and the Electron Microscope, among many others. Truly a testament to the impact Ryan and his great game have had on the Canadian people.

Since the invention of five pin bowling, it has involved to what it is today.

In 1910 First 5 Pin Bowling League was formed at Ryan's Toronto Bowling Club; 1912 Rubber band was added to the Pins; 1921 First perfect 450 game bowled by Bill Bromfield in Toronto, Ont.; 1921 First Ladies' 5 Pin Bowling League started by Marion Dibble in Toronto, Ont.; 1922 First inter-city match between Toronto and Montreal using a telephone hook-up. First 5 Pin Bowling organizations Canadian Bowling Association (CBA) formed in Toronto, Ont. T.J. (Tommy) Simpson elected first President. First Official 5 Pin Rule Book printed by the CBA.; 1940 Tillie Hosken of Toronto becomes first female bowler to roll a perfect 450 game; 1957 First automatic pin setting machine introduced.; 1963 First automatic string pinsetter introduced; 1964 First provincial Master Bowlers' Association formed in Ontario; 1965 Bowlers' Association of Canada formed; 1971 Tommy Ryan inducted into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame 10 years after his death; 1995 Government statistics report 521,000 Canadians participate regularly in 5 Pin Bowling (37 per cent male vs. 63 per cent female).

Whether you enjoy 5 or 10-pin bowling you are not alone. These games are enjoyed either recreationally or professionally. Five pin bowling is one more reason when we see the old red and white flag we get goosebumps. Canada is truly a country where great people of all races share our history and our inventions.