

# 100th Anniversary of Maine's 1st Marathon

August 14, 1908 - August 14, 2008

Rockland | Rockville | Camden | Rockport

## Notes:

The original marathon event held in Maine on August 14, 1908 was contested three weeks after the 1908 London Olympic Games marathon held July 24, 1908.

The 1908 Games are seen as the start of the Fourth Olympiad, in keeping with the now-accepted four-year cycle. For the first time the Olympic creed saying, "the most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part" was publicly proclaimed, and its creator, a bishop from Pennsylvania, uttered it at a mass held at St. Paul's Cathedral on July 19, 1908.

The White City Stadium, built in very short time especially for the games, held 68,000 people and was considered a technological marvel for the time. The distance from the start of the Marathon to the finish at the stadium was established by the Queen Alexandra at; 42.195 km (26 miles 385 yards). The starting line was moved to allow the Royal Family a good view. *(It is more than interesting to us that the run held in Maine only weeks later did not follow the royal decree and remained as independent as they do today.)*

One of the most famous incidents of the 1908 games came at the end of the marathon. It occurred when the first runner to enter the stadium, Dorando Pietri, of Italy, collapsed several times and ran the wrong way. Not far from the finish line, two of the officials took him by the arms, and brought him to the line. As a consequence, after crossing the line he was disqualified. The medal went to American Johnny Hayes who was second over the line, but the glory went to Pietri. Since he himself had not been responsible for his disqualification Queen Alexandra awarded him a gold cup in recognition of his achievement the next day.

The 1908 Games were surrounded by controversy on the opening day, following the practice first introduced at the Intercalated Games of 1906, the teams were to parade behind their national flags. However, the arrangement caused several complications:

- The Finnish team was expected to march under the Russian flag rather than the Finnish flag, so chose to march without a flag at all.
- The Swedish flag had not been displayed above the stadium, so the members of the Swedish team decided not to take part in the ceremony.
- The United States flag had also not been displayed above the stadium before the opening so the United States' flag bearer refused to dip the flag to the royal box. Though the flag was later dipped in the collective greeting of the royal family, Martin Sheridan, American team captain, gave the explanation that "this flag dips to no earthly king." Despite international customs that encourage dipping the flag as a sign of respect to heads of state, since 1908 US flag bearers have followed a tradition of not doing so.

#### 1908 London Medalists and USA finishers

1. John Hayes USA 2:55:19 Olympic Record
2. Charles Hefferon RSA 2:56:06
3. Joseph Forshaw USA 2:57:11
  
4. Alton Welton USA 2:59:45
9. Lewis Tewanima USA 3:09:16
14. Sydney Hatch USA 3:17:53

Dorando Pietri, *first finisher*, DQ