

Histoire de l'Outaouais (Les Regions du Quebec; 6)

Institut quebecois de recherche scula culture – 1994

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Institutional development: 1826 – 1886

The first deputies of the region:

With the creation of the county of Ottawa, the elected politicians began to play a role in the history of the Outaouais. During the period when the Outaouais was made part of the county of York, the provincial representatives all came from outside the region, but now residents of the valley of the Outaouais could be voted directly to the Legislative Assembly. At the beginning, one deputy represented the county at the Legislative Assembly; a second was added in 1832. Political leadership was generally the simple continuation of economic leadership, and elected leaders considered this new function as an occasion to promote regional development and to serve their own interests. All the regional politicians had direct family ties with the forest industry. On the other hand, their stay in politics was generally brief, in part because they were afraid to neglect their own affairs. In effect, the leaders seem to want to represent the Outaouais in turns. Philemon Wright took his seat in the Legislative Assembly from 1830 to 1834 and, from 1832 to 1834 he was joined by Theodore Davis. These two men were replaced by Baxter Bowman and James Blackburn up to 1838.

The first indication of a distinct regional identity appeared in the fact that the Outaouais politicians put the accent on local problems rather than on the problems touching the whole province. Effectively, the deputies avoided being labelled in one or the other diverse political groupings which began to be formed in the new province during this period. When they had to take a position on big questions, their attitude on the whole was that of “us, then the others”, in which regional interests were juxtaposed to those of the rest of the province. The good deputy was one who spoke strongly for the region.

In 1841, the creation of the province of Canada changed the name of Lower Canada to that of Canada East. The number of deputies for the county of Ottawa was then changed to one and henceforth the region was mixed into the big political questions of the day. The governor-general, Lord Sydenham, held Charles Dewey Day in the highest esteem, so that in order to aid him in his election in the county of Ottawa in 1841, he changed the place on the ballot for the ‘Petite-Nation’ in Aylmer. This gesture assured the success of his electoral campaign which was financed by the principal merchants, John Egan and the Wrights.

Hull - 1800-1950 by Lucien Brault

Les Editions de l'Universite d'Ottawa (1950)

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Establishment of the canton

On March 22, 1797, Philemon Wright and his associates temporarily obtained a quarter of the canton of Hull, on the condition of making a survey and subdivision of the canton at their own expense, which Wright undertook with the surveyor Theodore Davis and ten men, from July 2 to October 9, 1801, to cost in the region of 800 pounds sterling. He was in a hurry to divide the canton of 82,429 acres into concessions around two hundred acres each, to post the boundary marks and to note the quality of the terrain, the kind of wood available there, the minerals, etc. Wright tells us that it was “a bad canton to

survey because of the Gatineau River, running in an angular direction through all the canton and was not fordable in any place that we know". After this careful examination, Wright did not seem satisfied with the quality of the land because of the mountainous and rocky state of the canton. "It is," he said "a land proper for culture, and scarcely a quarter is cultivable. To compensate for the loss, he immediately demanded a concession of the north-west part of the canton neighboring Templeton.

On account of the irregularities in the surveying of certain concessions, on February 1, 1802 the government ordered Theodore Davis to develop a true plan of the canton bounded on the north by Masham and Wakefield; in the south by the Ottawa River; in the east by the canton on Templeton; and in the west, by that of Eardley. The following November, he presented his report in which he said that a "quarter of the canton had been measured and reserved for Philemon Wright and his associates". This portion took in the southern part of the canton, bordering the Ottawa River.

Three years later on January 3, 1806, by decree of the counsel, the site of the present city of Hull and its environs became the property of Philemon Wright and his associates, the conditions of improvements and the surveying having been filled in the time limit required.

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... the inhabitants of the region demanded the privilege to elect a representative to the Chamber. This petition, sent to the Legislative Assembly in Quebec, was handed over to a special committee which, after carefully studying the situation, made its report February 14, 1824, and recommended the formation of a new county and the election of a representative to parliament for the settlements situated on the Ottawa River, below the Petite-Nation (Montebello).

This recommendation was executed in 1829, when the government subdivided all the province and formed, from the county of York, the counties of Ottawa, Deux-Montagnes and Vaudreuil. By order of the law, the polling office of the county of Ottawa was established in Hull.

Our Deputies

At the first election, Philemon Wright was elected deputy. He was happy that the first representative of the county would be its founder. Counting from 1831, the population rose to 4,786 souls, and gave the right for two representatives. The surveyor Theodore Davis who, himself, also played an important role in the beginning of the colony, joined Wright.

County of Ottawa:

Wright, Philemon, founder of Hull

1830-1834

Theodore Davis, surveyor

1832-1834