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CANADA

WORKING CLASS CULTURE and The Development of Hull, Quebec, 1800-1929



Large Lumber Shanty & Occupants (about 40) “Clavette”

<Photo. owner Ken Clavette (& family) grant permission for this use in support of Michael Martin’s book.>

About this book

Michael Martin, the author of this amazing book has worked in the Ottawa - Hull area for most of his life as a journalist, author, and public servant, but his real passion has been “History” and, as a writer, what else could he do but write a book about the history of the area where he lived. But Michael had no intention of writing one of your conventional “overview” histories, populated by, and predicated on, the pronouncements and actions of the few individuals who history normally casts as the “Voice of the Past.”

No, Michael finds his history in the actions, statistics, and the rarely recorded voices of “Joe. Everyman,” the Worker, the Logger, the Tradesman, the Union Organizer, and to an extent the “Boss,” who employed these workers but was kept too busy by his business to join the ranks of the “Statesmen,” the ones the French language so nicely describe as the “petite-bourgeoisie.”

So, a major part of what puts this book beyond any conventional history you have ever read, is that it is the working man’s story of Canada’s entry into the “Industrial Revolution.” The revolution that was brought on by the creation of a few vital technical innovations, such as the steam engine, the railway, and the mechanized factory. Innovations never even dreamed of by the ordinary worker who, nevertheless, had to find a way to keep himself and his family, sheltered and fed in this dynamic and radically different environment. For most physical workers this was a shift from an agrarian life, where the basics of life were often available close at hand for those willing to expend the hours and energy to get them, to a place where food and shelter had to be earned in service to one of the new and strange factories, where agricultural skills counted for nothing and the workers quality of life depended almost exclusively on the whims and opinions of “The Boss.”

Michael has chosen the recently renamed city of Gatineau as the primary setting of his examination of this tumultuous history, although he calls it Hull, that being the name it carried throughout the period of this history. Not only are the earliest agrarian roots of this city (and its sister city of Ottawa across the river) well known but it was also, in its time, a thriving centre of the timber trade. A trade which was a large contributor to Canada’s climb out of the roll of an offshore “farm” or “plantation” (and source of exotic “furs”) to that of a self governing trading nation with a World supply of valuable resources. Thus it was an important centre of Canada’s earliest experiences in “mass production” which also had close and intimate contact with those bodies set up to administer and govern Canada’s growth. In fact a “hot spot” in Canada’s industrial development.

Clearly this is a complicated history to tell and yet Michael manages to break it down into manageable and acceptable segments, identifying and explaining all the infinite detail which accompanies such a complex story while never losing sight of his primary aim of telling the story from the view of the working man. At one point, Michael reproduces a rare 1872 directory of the occupations of the people of Hull, from the “top bosses” down to the “labourers” which provides an interesting complete profile of the city’s population.

As the story moves along Michael details the logging of the vast watershed which empties down the Ottawa river, and explains how the nature of the logging business changes to include the processing of some of the basic lumber into finished and partially processed product, thus providing added value to the lumber trade. For both geographic and geopolitical reasons a lot of this value added processing took place in the Ottawa Hull region, introducing the industrial “factory” sites to the area with all the consequences of labour exploitation, heavy-handed political influence, the growth of labour community and representation organizations, and the cultural conflict such developments so often create.

And then admixed with all this social and political activity come the pseudo-random “natural” events such as the Great Fire of Ottawa / Hull, Influenza and small-pox epidemics and other semi-independent social issues such as female suffrage. Suddenly Hull, has developed from a simple agrarian based village to a modern, mechanized city, with a complex social structure, seemingly endless rules and regulations and stressful living conditions. In other words it has acquired all the “benefits” of modern civilization.

Yes, a challenging agenda indeed! But one Michael Martin has mastered, and has encapsulated for us, in this fascinating book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Michael Martin

Photo credit: Élizabeth Martin. © 2015.

MICHAEL MARTIN holds degrees as Master's of Public Administration from Queen's University, and an Honours B.A. in Political Science, from Laurentian University. He is fluent in both English and French, and has performed as a jazz singer although he prefers to describe himself as a local historian and the author of two books:

- **WORKING CLASS CULTURE** and the development of Hull, Quebec, 1800-1929, Gatineau, 2006.
- **THE RED PATCH: A story of political imprisonment** in Hull, Quebec during WWII, Gatineau, 2007.

He was also the Principal translator (French / English) of a history of Buckingham, Quebec, entitled: **THE CITY OF BUCKINGHAM**, written by Pierre Louis Lapointe, published in 1990.

As a freelance journalist, Michael has written about 300 articles, published in 25 or so trade and consumer publications: i.e., :

Habitabec; Canadian Forum; Perception; Le Droit; Atlantic Co-operator; Canadian Medical Association Journal; Canadian Family Physician; Canadian Building; Catholic New Times; Anglican Journal; National Anti-poverty News; Hier encore; Credit Union Way; Le Devoir; Quebec Heritage News; West Quebec Post; The Bottom Line; Bonjour-Dimanche; Construction Business; Home Builder; Skills Letter; Co-observations; Bâtiment; Le Bulletin d'Aylmer; about subjects such as local history, architecture, social policy, housing, politics, real estate, social housing, medicine, health care, construction, cooperatives, urban planning, public administration, management.

As a professional author he has undertaken Public relations writing, consulting, and speechwriting for clients such as :

Chambre immobilière de l'Outaouais; Secretary of State; Canadian Heritage; Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada; Health Canada; Canadian Co-operative Housing Federation; Association des tenanciers de la ville de Hull; Canadian Real Estate Association; Chez Barbe restaurant.

As a federal public servant he filled a number of positions, i.e.,:

Chief, Management Improvement, Energy Mines and Resources (EMR) and
Chief, Planning, Petroleum Incentives Administration, EMR

Planner, Health and Welfare Canada, responsible for developing social policy and administrative systems for federal legislation concerning social services.

He has also been an activist in numerous community, political, and social organizations, over the years, the latest effort being the writing of an ethics document about kidney dialysis entitled **VERS DES SOINS DE DIALYSE PLUS HUMAINS**.

ABOUT THIS DIGITAL EDITION:

The original manuscript of this book was generated in the time honored style of a printed document so you will find its presentation and layout fairly familiar. In this digital edition, however we have overlaid this traditional layout with many of the conveniences and shortcuts enabled by the digital format. The use of color coding in titling is perhaps the most obvious. There is a conventional Table of Contents in the introductory pages where the hierarchy of color coding is shown and those same colors will be found throughout. Color has also been used in tables and diagrams for easier understanding.

This book is richly augmented with citations of quoted passages and of information sources. There are also hyperlinks from the numerical tags identifying the presence of a footnote to that footnote (should it not be visible at that moment) so it can be consulted easily. Both the footnote and its “tag” are highlighted with the same colour for ease of recognition. Some of the illustration credits also provide outside links to their originating sources but these are, of course, only “clickable” if you have a connection to the internet.

The page numbers in the Table of Contents and those in the Index of Illustrations are hyperlinked to the page bearing the information, and at the bottom of every page of the book are links to return to either the Table of Contents or the Index of Illustrations.

The book has been saved in the Portable Document Format (PDF) for maximum cross platform compatibility with (most) e-Readers, virtually all desktop computers, and to most forms of portable “smart” machine such as laptops, tablets and mobile phones. As a digital edition, of course, the whole of the text of the book can be accessed through the “Search and / or Find” features of the browser application, providing instantaneous access to the location of each occurrence of the search term.

Not all PDF compatible platforms offer the same features however so while the file, for instance, also includes a set of “bookmarks” emulating the table of contents, this and Search / Find functions may not be available on your choice of browser / platform.

PLEASE NOTE: All internal links, available in the complete product, have been disabled in this sampler because not ALL of the target pages have been included meaning that many of the indicated links would appear to be "broken." All links in the complete product are functional.

**WORKING CLASS
CULTURE
and
The Development of Hull,
Quebec, 1800-1929**

by Michael Martin

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PREFACE

“The history of a country is the narrative or story of the character and conduct of its prominent citizens or inhabitants.”

– J. L. Gourlay, *History of the Ottawa Valley*, 1896, p. 3.

This, most decidedly, is not only the narrative of the prominent citizens in the history of Hull. Rather, it is the story of thousands of virtually unknown men, women, and children of the working class of Hull, Quebec. Among many others, it’s the story of James McConnell, a worker from Nova Scotia, hired by Philemon Wright in Quebec City in 1801. It’s the story of Luther Colton, a carpenter from New York, who came to Hull in 1802. It’s the story of Joseph Delorme, one of the first French-Canadians to be hired by Philemon Wright to work in his shanties, just to give three examples of normally unnamed workers.

This study of the ordinary people of Hull reflects an agenda that emerged in the last half of the 20th century when historians came to see that “the real task of history in our time is to recreate, appreciate and analyze the full spectrum of past societies; that means, pre-eminently to attempt to understand the lives of the working people, the great mass of any society,”¹ rather than merely the politicians and elites who governed past societies.

This book also studies the workers who helped the workers of Hull forge an awareness of themselves as a class in a self-conscious attempt to improve the lot of ordinary working people. Thus, this book is the story of Cuthbert Bordeleau, the shoemaker who founded the most important mutual benefit society for Hull workers in 1863; of Napoléon Fauteux, the millhand who led the 1891 strike of lumber millworkers at the Chaudière; of Napoléon Pagé, the journalist who led the Knights of Labour in Hull during the 1890’s; of Achille Morin, the machinist who led the Catholic unions in Hull during the second decade of the 20th century; of Donald Charron, who led the 1924 strike by women match workers in Hull, the first strike by women in Quebec. Thus, this study describes the bottom of Hull society, but also the militant minority that attempted to give form to the effort by workers to improve their lives. This effort sometimes clashed with the interests of other classes, especially the bourgeoisie and *petite-bourgeoisie*; thus this book also describes the relationship of workers with other classes, and necessarily, how the other classes also developed in Hull.

MM

¹ Michael Cross, *The Workingmen in the Nineteenth Century*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 1.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This study is an attempt at local history. Nonetheless, the history of Hull workers and their culture is also relevant, owing to its similarities, with the history of workers in Ottawa and the Ottawa Valley, and in Quebec and Canada, more generally. Sometimes local history displays a certain nostalgia for the ‘good old days’. We should have no illusions. Workers in Hull and elsewhere in Canada lived difficult lives in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. Survival was not at all assured to a child born of a working class family. Nevertheless, survive, workers did, and we give them their due for the culture that allowed them to survive and grow.

The scientific value of local history would be lessened were it not placed in the larger context (economic, social, political) in which people chose to come to Hull and make their lives here. Without this context, the explanatory value of local history is diminished. Thus, theory is needed, as is some understanding of the overall socioeconomic development of Canada. These, along with the historical antecedents of the workers who came to Hull, are the subjects of Part I and of the Annex. Part II describes the social and economic development of Hull and of its work force, while Part III describes the working class culture of Hull.

We hope this book will be of interest to historians of various specializations, as well as to social scientists, trade unionists, politicians and political activists but also to workers who want to know more about their history. It is hoped that the writing contained herein is accessible, and that the book stands on its own. The reader shouldn’t require a lot of prior, specialized knowledge but only broad culture in order to benefit from this book. Part I and the Annex might be familiar ground to the professional historian, but they provide valuable context to the layperson who wants to understand the history of Hull workers. We hope that all will see that working class consciousness is not a bizarre, marginal phenomenon, but one that has a long, noble, and central role in history, and in the history of one town in particular: Hull, Quebec, it will continue to be essential for the social progress of the majority of the population in Hull and elsewhere.

At various points in the book, I have listed names of workers where germane, deliberately to highlight them and to name normally, unnamed people. Readers from this region may learn about their worker-ancestors should they discover or uncover information herein about their relatives. Finally, the names of the streets in Hull have changed several times over the years; I have used the modern appellations to limit confusion.

MM

CHAPTER 2:

CANADA'S DEVELOPMENT AND INDUSTRIALIZATION

Introduction

Canada in 1929 was very different than the Canada of 1800 to which Philemon Wright immigrated when he established his colony in Hull. In 1929, the country was industrialized and most people lived in towns or cities. They worked for wages or salaries paid by someone else. They were workers and part of a working class, irrespective of their awareness of class. In 1800, indeed for most of the 19th century, most people lived on the farm, or were small, independent producers working in the fur trade or the fishery, often occupying more than one of these functions. The number of workers was small, limited to villages or the few towns that existed: Montreal, Quebec City, Trois-Rivières, as well as Saint John and Halifax, in Nova Scotia, the latter two communities not yet part of Canada.

How this transformation occurred is the subject of this chapter. We deal with the Canadian society of the period prior to the 1840's. After this period, the autonomous Canadian state emerged during the period from 1840 to the 1870's. This period coincided with the first industrial revolution. A second industrial revolution occurred in the years from the 1880's to the 1920's. We analyze the social changes wrought by these two industrial revolutions, which we also describe. Finally, we describe the response of workers to these changing conditions, a response that employed the tradition of mutualism that workers had displayed throughout the history of Western society. The aim of this chapter is not comprehensiveness in terms of the Canadian history of the period; rather, the aim is to provide a broad understanding that will help situate the history of Hull and its workers within the prevailing conditions.

Canadian Society Before the 1840's

According to the Constitutional Act of 1791, which divided the Province of Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada, Crown lands in the Canadas were to be granted according to English law and custom, free tenure rather than the French seigneurial system, even though the latter was to continue existing in the St. Lawrence Valley in Lower Canada. The measure helped limit French-Canadians to their traditional territory, however, it begged the question of who was going to settle the remaining lands. Americans were moving westward from New England, and large-scale emigration from Britain was not to become a reality for another two generations. It appeared obvious that Upper Canada and some parts of Lower Canada, such as the Eastern Townships and the Ottawa Valley, were going to be settled by Americans. While the Loyalists who had already come to the Canadas during the American Revolution were faithful to the Crown, and could be counted on to welcome their cousins

EARLY HULL

sold in 1854 to a concern from Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, which took out 2, 000 tons of iron ore before closing the mine in 1866.

All this economic activity meant that the Wrights were principal employers of labour. In 1817/1818, Wright businesses employed 63, while another 55 worked for Wright's timbering business. The Wrights employed almost 60% of the workers in the Township. In 1820, the Wrights employed 164 men and 11 women, while 80 or so other families only employed 119 men and 23 women.¹⁶² Hull had become a model of self-sufficiency. Its farms provided food, wool, and hides to the lumberjacks and craftsmen, while the latter made the tools, construction materials, and clothes that the farmers needed.

Wright's Timber Business

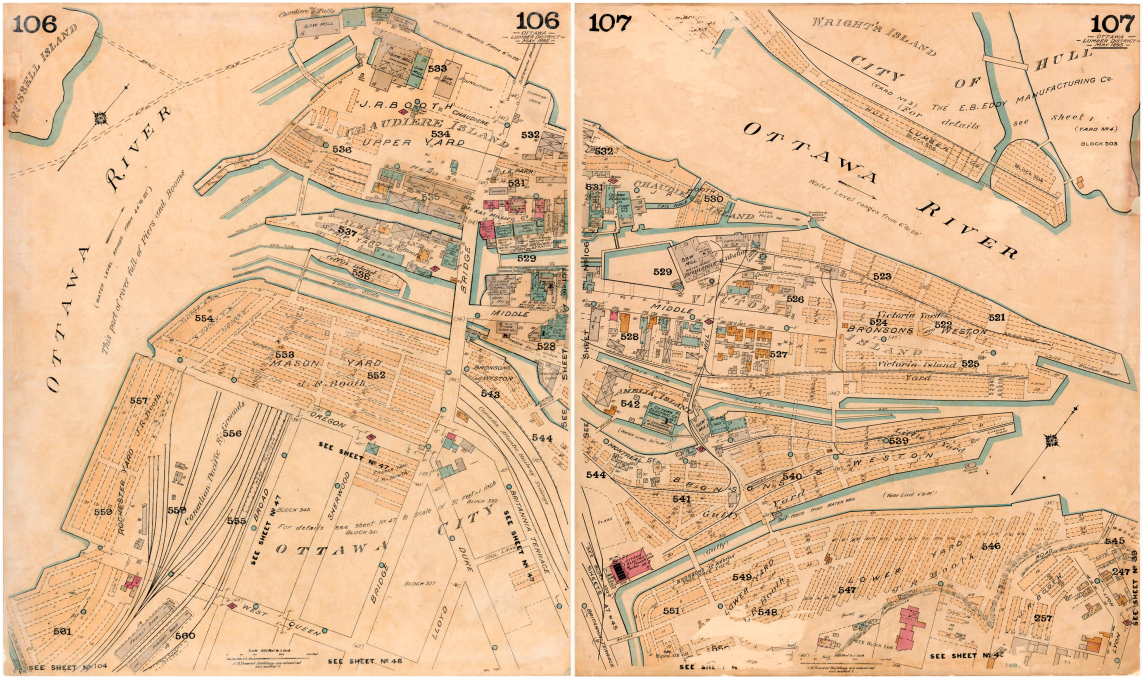
From its inception, Wright's timber business was an attempt to address his labour problem. In the winter, the farms and enterprises only required about 25% of the labour required at other times, but had he laid off his workers in the winter, he would not have been able to hire them in the spring, since Hull was so isolated. Thus, as per many employers in pre-industrial Canada, Wright had to adopt a paternalistic attitude. He had to provide paid employment for his workers during the slow season. This surplus labour was put to work chopping and preparing timber for transport to Quebec City, the principal shipping link to Britain. In fact, chopping wood would have been a principal activity anyway during the winter for obvious purposes of firewood, but also because the forest had to be cleared to make farmland.

The other factor that pushed Wright to begin logging was that, by 1806, he had already expended \$20,000 of capital. He needed a source of exports to provide cash to offset this investment, so that year, Wright took his first shipment of timber, principally oak, to Quebec City. Wright made a daring calculation that he could find a channel in the St. Lawrence on the north side of the Island of Montreal. This he did, but only after several weeks of difficulty. The first timber train was not a sterling success. It took Wright several weeks to find a buyer for his timber at Quebec. The next year, however, Wright managed the expedition more successfully. Thus, the timber business in the Ottawa Valley had begun.

In 1808, Wright started making lumber from his timber, sawing boards and planks at a sawmill in Hull. In December, 1814, Wright collapsed his various enterprises into a family company named P. Wright and Sons. Hull became the principal entrepôt for the Ottawa Valley timber trade, a role that was eventually taken over by Bytown in the 1830's. In the 1820's, the Wrights operated a wharf near the site of the current Alexandra Bridge for their

¹⁶² Eliot, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

THE FORESTRY INDUSTRY IN THE OTTAWA VALLEY



Map Of Lumber Stacks And Industry In Central Ottawa

<Credit: Library and Archive Canada: Ottawa, Lumber District, May 1895, revised Oct. 1898. Ref. R6990-276-3-E- >

The first method of transporting timber was simply to use the flow of rivers, amplified during the spring runoff. Pine could be floated, while other woods less floatable, such as oak, had to be placed carefully on the raft to ensure buoyancy. The building of canals improved navigation on the Ottawa and St. Lawrence, and movement between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. Canals, as with the Rideau Canal, joined two watersheds, thereby increasing the distance that goods could be transported. When winds were favorable, the speed of the rafts was improved by roughly-made sails. Before the introduction of steam sailing in barges or tugboats, rafts were advanced on lakes by a method of weighing anchor ahead of the raft, and moving the raft forward by winching a rope or cable where the current was too slow, or where winds countered the river flow. By the 1840's, tugs were in general use on the Great Lakes and on the Saint Lawrence between Montreal and Quebec City. Dams were used to increase water flow and to break log jams, especially on small rivers. The Rideau Canal, Welland Canal, and Chambly Canal permitted the shipping of lumber to the United States. Shipping to the U.S. was greatly accelerated, however, by the railways, which permitted shipping across several watersheds. There were important rail links built between Hull and Montreal, Ottawa and Brockville, Ottawa and Prescott, Hull and the Pontiac, and Hull and the Gatineau Valley. When J. R. Booth and his associates built a railway from Ot-

LABOUR IN THE OTTAWA VALLEY FOREST

mates were \$10 in 1820, \$12 in 1840, \$15 by Confederation, and \$30 by the 1880's.²⁹² By 1900, wages doubled and tripled to compete for French-Canadians who were attracted to the better-paying jobs in the cities. At the same time, hours and quantity of work diminished. It was only with WWII and the post-war period however, that wages in the woods would increase again significantly.

There could be considerable variation in the wages paid individual workers depending upon their experience, or when indeed they were hired. Frequent depressions in the lumber market, and too much supply, constantly conspired against workers. Within the industry, there were other trends. Some trades typically received more, for example, hewers, river pilots and cooks, as well as men in traditional trades such as smiths, saddlers, carpenters, and boat-wrights. Foremen typically earned two or three times the going rate for men. For example, it is reputed that Jos Montferrand, who worked as a shanty foreman for Joseph Moore, Baxter Bowman, Peter McGill, and Allan Gilmour, retired from the woods at 54 years of age with a small fortune.²⁹³

In urban Hull and Ottawa, wages at the Chaudière were controlled at low levels, as they were in the woods. The lumber operators had unwritten agreements for wage rates for various types of work in the Valley. As well, they refused to hire each other's men so that labour prices could not be bid upward.²⁹⁴ In total, about ¼ to ½ of the cost of producing timber went for wages, roughly the same amount that went to feeding men and animals, and providing basic supplies such as axes and sleighs.²⁹⁵ These wages were reduced, furthermore, depending upon purchases that the men made at company stores for tobacco, tea, or clothing. These reductions were not insignificant. Accounts for 269 Wright workers during the 1832–1840 period were analyzed by Douglas McCalla. 29 workers, or 11%, received nothing from the Wrights at the end of their term, since they had spent all of their wages in goods advanced from the company store. Five workers, or two percent, actually completed their terms owing money to the employer. 114 workers, or 42%, the largest tranche, were owed less than \$40. Another 80, or 30%, received between \$40 and \$80. Only 11, or 4%, were owed between \$80 and \$100. The average credit left to the men at the end of the term was \$48.²⁹⁶ Obviously, the company store selling to a captive market was a good way to recover a significant portion of labour costs, which could amount to nearly one-half of costs.

292 Cynthia Helen Craigie, "*The Influence of the Timber Trade and Philemon Wright on the Social and Economic Development of Hull Township, 1800-1860*", Master's Thesis, Carleton University, 1969, p. 94.

293 Louis-Marie Bourgouin, "*Jos Montferrand, contremaître de chantier et guide de cage*", *Asticou*, no. 23, June, 1980.

294 Peter Gillis, "*E.H. Bronson and Corporate Capitalism: A Study in Canadian Business Thought and Action*", Master's Thesis, Queen's University, December, 1975, p. 72.

295 McCalla, *op. cit.*

296 *Ibid.*, p. 185.

LABOUR IN THE OTTAWA VALLEY FOREST

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295 McCalla, *op. cit.*

296 *Ibid.*, p. 185.

URBAN HULL

The original Wright village was a small quadrilateral defined by the Ottawa River to the south, Frontenac Street to the North, Montcalm Street to the West, and Laval Street to the East. The French-Canadian workers, for the most part, settled in what came to be known as the lower village, or village d'en-bas, that is, the area east of Laval Street proceeding towards the River below the Chaudière, where are now found the Canadian Museum of Civilization and Jacques Cartier Park. On a petition in 1866 appear the signatures of 32 property owners living in the Lower Village. This would appear to include the first French-Canadian workers who settled in Hull. Since names of workers are often absent from historical documents, these names are worth listing:

Stanislas Aubry	Uldéric Lauzon	Pierre Renault
Baptiste Boulianne	Pierre Meilleur	Pierre Rivais
Charles Bouvet	Félix Montreuil	François Rollet
Onésime Cardinal	François Ouellet	Isidore Sarrazin
Élie Champagne	Moïse Ouellet	François Sauriol
Pierre Champagne	Joseph Pépin	Thomas Synott
Camille Chenevert	Joseph Phillion	Frédéric Vanasse
France Courval	Agnace Renault	Baptiste Villeneuve
Ubalde Laporte	Hermas Renault	Florian Villeneuve

The signature of five others were illegible. These people were heads of families; only one, France Courval, was a woman; she might have been a widow.³¹³

Early Sawmills

Very early, the Wrights sawed wood for local use, including for construction of the Rideau Canal. In 1849, Tiberius Wright employed 180 workers at a sawmill on the eastern shore of the Gatineau, probably at Limbour. The Hamiltons in Hawkesbury were important producers of deals for the British market. The Blasdell brothers, blacksmiths, built a mill in 1841 at Chelsea Falls on the Gatineau River, and were assisted financially by the Gilmours. In 1849, this mill was rebuilt to operate by steam, one of the first in the region.³¹⁴ John Egan also opened a deal mill at Quyon in 1848.³¹⁵

These operations were aimed at the local market or the British market. In the 1840's, however, milling operations began that were aimed at the American market. In 1842, Philip

³¹³ Boutet, Tome I, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

³¹⁴ Jean Hamelin and Yves Roby, *Histoire économique du Québec, 1851-1896*, Montreal: Fides, 1971, p. 218.

³¹⁵ Pierre Louis Lapointe, editor, *Actes du Colloque sur l'identité régionale dans l'Outaouais, Hull*: Institut d'histoire et de recherche sur l'Outaouais, 1982, p. 55.

URBAN HULL

the same year, the village of Bell's Corners burnt, as did 5,000,000 pieces of lumber at the Gilmour mill in Chelsea. 1,500 workers from the Chaudière left work to prevent the Chelsea fire from reaching Hull.³⁹¹

Fire often struck in Hull itself, independent of forest fires. Fire could destroy a whole block, easily spreading from one wooden house to another. Examples are:

- July, 1869 10 houses
- December, 1875 16 houses
- May, 1876 8 houses
- April, 1880 400 houses (600 families left homeless and sectors of town destroyed.)
- May, 1886 110 houses (150 families left homeless)
- June, 1896 16 houses
- April, 1902 16 houses
- June, 1903 36 houses
- August, 1906 38 houses.³⁹²

Fires often burnt the housing of workers, but workers were also affected by loss of employment when shops, businesses, and institutions burnt. Here is a list of some of these losses:

- Summer, 1865 St. James Anglican Church;
- June, 1877 The local farmers' market on Hull Island;
- July, 1877 10 buildings on Promenade du Portage, the main commercial artery;
- June, 1888 City Hall, Notre-Dame de Grace Church, and 125 other buildings;
- May, 1897 Several buildings on Promenade du Portage;
- December, 1905 The coal dépôt of the cement company operating at Leamy Lake;
- May, 1907 Part of the Interprovincial (Alexandra) Bridge;
- June, 1910 St-Jean-Baptiste school;
- October, 1915 Saint-Rédempteur church;
- January, 1927 The Windsor Hotel on Promenade du Portage;
- January, 1928 Parc Royal, an amusement park on Laurier St. near the River;
- Christmas Day, 1928 Sacré-Coeur Hospital.³⁹³

³⁹¹ See the impressive record put together by local historian Raymond Ouimet in his book, *Une ville en flammes*, Hull: Éditions Vent d'Ouest, 1997; p. 18 and 19 deal with the 1870 forest fires.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, see «Annex II – Les principaux incendies dans l'histoire de Hull, 1808 à aujourd'hui».

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

WORKERS IN URBAN HULL

- 1870, just before the 1873-1895 depression began;
- 1875, during the depression;
- 1886, during the hearings of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labour;
- 1900 to 1919, the first, two decades of the 20th century; and the
- 1920's, after the first blush of effective trade unionism in Hull.

This wage information is only fragmentary, but it permits us to understand the going wages for different categories of workers:

- for skilled workers;
- for semi-skilled workers;
- for unskilled workers doing specialized work in a factory setting;
- for laborers;
- for service employees; and
- for white-collar workers.

The first source is average wage rates for skilled artisans working in Ottawa in 1870.⁴²⁷ We can assume that, owing to the mobility of Hull workers back and forth across the River, that wage rates would have been similar in Hull and the fact that a disproportionate share of skilled workers in Ottawa were Hull residents. The hierarchy is as follows:

Pay rates for Hull Skilled Artisans:

Masons and Stonecutters	\$2/ day
Plumbers, Millwrights, Machinists	\$1.75/ day
Carpenters, Cabinet-makers, Blacksmiths, Painters, Plasterers, Brick-makers	\$1.25/ day
Millers, Printers	\$1.10/ day
Bakers	\$12 to \$14 / month plus board
Butchers	\$8 to \$10 / month plus board

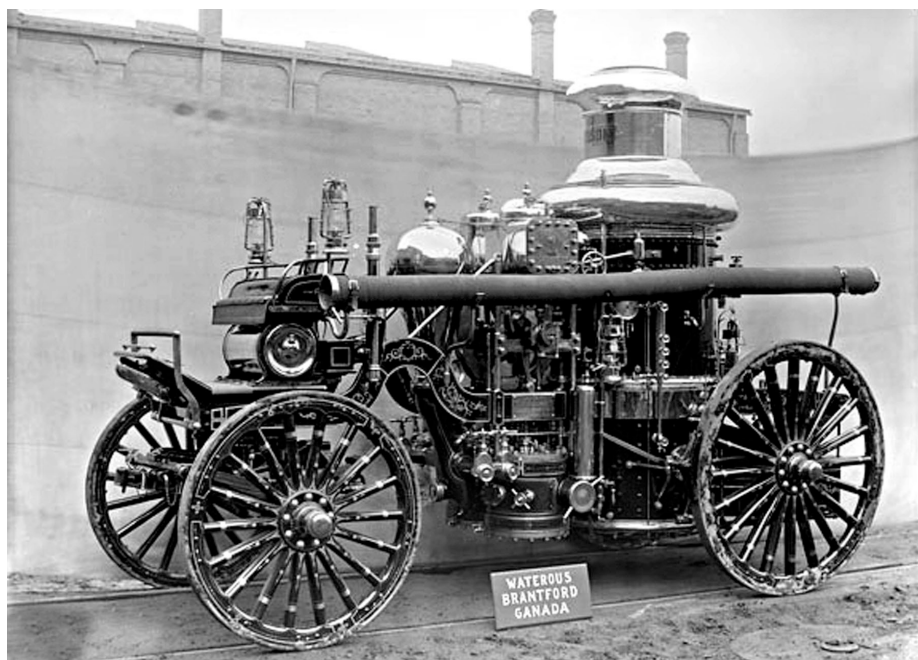
Traditionally, masons were paid more than other craftsmen. Part of the explanation for this difference accrued locally to the demand created by construction of Parliament and other federal buildings. These skilled craftsmen managed to resist the loss of wages that affected most workers during the 1873-1895 depression, even making small gains. For instance, in 1875, masons along with bricklayers, stonecutters, and carpenters earned \$2 to \$3

⁴²⁷ Steven Langdon, "The Political Economy of Capitalist Transformation: Central Canada from the 1840's to the 1870's", Master's Thesis, Carleton University, 1972, p. 140, 141.

PARISH AND MUNICIPALITY

Fire services lagged in Hull, as seen in the never-ending saga of local fires. There were two voluntary firefighting organizations early in the 1870's: the Victoria Brigade and the *Voltigeurs canadiens*, but both had ceased to function a decade later. In July, 1885, the local chief of police, Ludger Genest, succeeded in organizing about thirty volunteers in the Jacques-Cartier Brigade. The City gave the Brigade \$200 per year, and issued regulations requiring that homeowners maintain good ladders for reaching roofs in the event of fire. A system was established where carters and water-truck operators were required to provide water in the event of fire, in return for payment. The City, however, refused to build an aqueduct to provide water throughout Hull, or to buy a steam-operated pump.⁴⁸³

After the Great Fire of 1900, Hull citizens were treated to a polemic about the cause of fire being the wooden homes with wooden roofs that workers had built. Municipal council passed regulation 78 one month after the Great Fire, which prohibited building such houses, and provided for the destruction of any new such houses within 48 hours. The greater risk of fire, as reflected in fire insurance rates, was from the lumber companies and their wood-piles, but there was no touching the sacrosanct property of business.⁴⁸⁴



A Later "Waterous" Horse Drawn Steam Fire Pumper.

<Credit: Andrew Merrilees / Library and Archives Canada / e006610058>

483 Raymond Ouimet, *Une ville en flammes, Hull: Éditions Vents d'Ouest, 2000, p. 35, 36.*

484 *Ibid.*, p. 128, 129

ELECTORAL POLITICS

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 10

Hull Workers Who Sat on Municipal Council, 1896-1925

Labourers:	Clerks:	Butchers:	
Élie Scott.. Xavier Laurier. Joseph Chénier. Ovila Jeanette.	Thomas Kelly. Israël Charette. Napoléon Bélanger. Victor Navion.	Adrien Labelle. Joseph Simard. Étienne Talbot. Christopher Boland.	
Machinists:	Bakers :	Other Professions:	
Thomas Gagnon. Michael Burns. James Walsh.	Augustin Thibault. Jean-Baptiste Larose. Victor-Ovide Falardeau. (served as mayor)	<u>Name:</u>	<u>Profession</u>
Carpenters:	Printers:	Édouard Mousseau.	Mechanic
Octave St-Laurent. Jules Hamelin. Arthur Ouellette.	Polycarpe Doucet. George Gauvin. Edouard Forcier.	André Coursol.	Electrician
Masons:	Foremen:	Hector Lebanc.	Blacksmith
Alfred Rochon. Jérémis Dufresne.	Félix Legault. Charles Gervais .	Andrew Stafford.	Train Conductor
		Cléophas Léonard.	Barber
		Félix Charron.	Painter
		Ernest Roy.	Cabinet- Maker

[\(Return to “Knights of Labour” in Chapter 10\)](#)

MUTUAL AID

Mutual Aid and Fire⁵⁸⁸

In a town beset by problems of fire, one might expect that private fire insurance companies would do good business. In fact, most Hull workers could not afford the fire insurance services offered by these companies. This only added to the devastating impact of fire, along with poor fire-fighting services, inadequate municipal regulations, lack of constraints upon local mills, and polemics against the working class when fire struck. In Hull, the prime protection from fire came from voluntary fire brigades. There were two in the 1870's: the Victoria Brigade and the *voltigeurs canadiens*. In the 1880's, the chief of police organized the Jacques Cartier Brigade. In addition to fighting fire as best it could, the Jacques Cartier Brigade organized the annual picnic on July 1, at which over 5,000 people regularly attended.

Only in the twentieth century was affordable fire insurance organized for local workers. In 1910, the Pontiac and Ottawa Fire Insurance Mutual, headquartered in Papineauville, began operations. In 1916, the fabriques (lay administrators) of the parishes in the Outaouais began providing fire insurance. In the 1920's, seven of these insurance societies merged.

Other Classes

We'd be remiss if we didn't talk about the other classes in urban Hull, the *petite-bourgeoisie* and the bourgeoisie, and their efforts to associate to advance their interests. It wasn't just workers who associated; others also did so, however, their efforts were blessed as legitimate by respectable society, contrary to the suppression of labour unions that occurred in the same period. Merchants and other business people had always associated in Western history, sometimes in association with workers. With the emergence of industrial capitalism, their organizations at times clashed with those representing the interests of workers; at other times, the two collaborated where interests were deemed to meet. Capitalists developed industrial sector associations, for example, in the lumber industry, while they also developed cross-sector organizations such as manufacturing associations. At local levels, mechanics' institutes served to group business leaders as did chambers of commerce. The ultimate tool of mutual aid among business people was the joint-stock, limited liability corporation, which began with the railway fever of the 1850s, and became the ubiquitous form of business organization in modern times. In Hull, this form came to be used in many industries, but especially in pulp and paper and in hydroelectric power.

588 Sources for this section include: Diane Saint-Pierre, *La mutualité-incendie au Québec depuis 1835* Sillery: Promutuel, 1997; Deschênes, *op. cit.*; Raymond Ouimet, *Une ville en flammes*, Hull: Éditions Vents d'Ouest, 1997; and Erard Séguin, "Le mouvement coopératif régional, sources, survol, avenues de recherche in Lapointe, editor, *op. cit.*

A GENEALOGY OF WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS

the end of the 11th century, began to free itself in the 12th century by work, revolt, and royal protection.”⁷⁰¹

Confréries

Philosophically, at least, the guild attempted to provide a family-like link among members, including responding to charitable needs in event of illness or death. In practice, these charitable functions and other religious and social functions were often provided by *confréries*, religious brotherhoods. These *Confréries* were established parallel to the merchant or craft guilds, but sometimes grouped more than one guild. Sometimes, a *confrérie* covered an entire neighbourhood. In fact, often a *confrérie* coincided with a particular neighbourhood where a trade was concentrated. At other times, a *confrérie* included the people of an ethnic group. Boundaries among *confréries* could be fluid. In New France, in the 1650's, carpenter-joiners formed a *confrérie* dedicated to Ste-Anne, mother of Mary, as had existed in Paris. In time, other tradesmen joined the brotherhood, and eventually Sainte-Anne came to be known as the patron-saint of French-Canadians generally, as can be seen in the many Quebec towns named for Saint-Anne, e.g. Ste-Anne de Beaupré, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue.

The religious brotherhood recalled the Roman workers' colleges, the germanic or Anglo-Saxon guilds, and the religious/social guilds that preceded the merchant and craft guilds. In fact, the lineage is, at least, one of form, if not of substance. For example, the pre-Christian Roman college had a patron-god as an element of worship and organization. The *confrérie*, in the Christian era, achieved similar goals by use of patron-saints. These patron-saints had a longevity that was remarkable, well into the 19th century: for instance, Saint Crispin, among shoemakers, Saint Eloi, among metal-workers, Saint John the Evangelist, among book merchants. The last example serves to remind us, as well, that merchants were also grouped into religious brotherhoods. The distinction between workers' and merchants' brotherhoods, it bears repeating, as was the case of guilds themselves, was one of quantity and not of kind. It cost more to join a merchants' brotherhood than a workers' brotherhood, but the two were similar.

What was the goal of the religious brotherhood in feudal times? According to Levasseur, “the *confréries*” goal, even if only partially achieved; was to join all men of the same trade, as in one family, united by faith, under one patron-saint, assembled for joyful festivities.”⁷⁰² Martin Saint-Léon further described the goals of the *confrérie* as “the union of all members in the same pious sentiment for worshipping God, for beseeching Him for the welfare of living members and the eternal happiness of deceased members, and for operat-

⁷⁰¹ Levasseur, *op. cit.*, p. 449 (Author's adaptation from French to English).

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 579 (Author's adaptation from French to English).

WORKING CLASS CULTURE & THE DEVELOPMENT OF HULL

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