

Legacy of the City Beautiful

It was about 1666 when M. Trouve and M. de Fenelon of the Roman Catholic Sulpician Order established the Kente Mission on the north shore of Lake Consec in Prince Edward County, which lies across the bay from Belleville. The mission, however, languished because of native apathy, and soon after its establishment it was abandoned.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, as the American Revolution

moved ahead and British Loyalists in the thirteen colonies were subjected to persecutions, several thousands of United Empire Loyalists settled in what is now the Province of Ontario. In June 1784, one such group landed at Adolphustown, near the site where Belleville now stands.

Although some Loyalists settled in the vicinity of Belleville prior to 1789, that year generally is acknowledged as the beginning of the community. Among the new settlers in 1789 was Captain John W. Meyers, whose sawmill was the first industry in the city. Meyers later engaged in other activities that resulted in the establishment of the city, and in the early nineteenth century the site briefly bore his name as Meyers Creek.

It was in 1816, however, that a group of prominent citizens decided that the area should be named in honour of Lady Arabella Gore, wife of the province's

lieutenant governor, Sir Francis Gore. The original spelling was "Bellville."

Surrounded by rich timberlands and blessed with the Moira River as access to those lands, Belleville's early history is a tale of French-Canadian loggers bringing drives of timber downstream to one of the many sawmills where cut timber was prepared and loaded every day onto schooners for shipment to England.

In 1832 an English immigrant, Henry Corby, arrived in Belleville and soon became one of the city's — and one of Canada's — most distinguished citizens. In 1849 Corby erected a mill on the Moira River and 10 years later established the Corby Distillery. In 1867 Henry Corby celebrated Canadian confederation by becoming mayor of Belleville. Henry Corby and his descendants gave the city a legacy that to this day is evident in museums, beautiful parks, and political leadership.

On October 27, 1856, the Grand Trunk Railway's first Montreal-Toronto train arrived in Belleville, marking the beginning of a new industry in the city. The Grand Trunk selected Belleville as the site for one of its three stops and, from that time to the present, Belleville has been a major rail centre.

Ten years after the arrival of the Grand Trunk, gold was discovered in Eldorado, 30 miles to the north, and Belleville became known as the "Gateway to the Golden North." The event seemed full of promise then, but a year later, as the citizens of Hastings County massed in front of the court house to celebrate Confederation, the Eldorado mines gradually were closing. Until the turn of the century, Belleville and Hastings County prospered little and grew only slightly.

On January 1, 1878, the city was officially incorporated, and the event was marked some seven months later, on Dominion Day, which a reporter for the *Ontario* noted as having "dawned still and very hot." "About 3 o'clock in the morning," the journalist said, "the booming of a cannon and the discharge of small arms awoke the citizens of Belleville to their Jubilee day."

For the next 25 years the city seemed caught in an economic struggle that was the outgrowth of the new age of mechanization. The new century, however, brought a new prosperity that continues to the present day. The United Empire Loyalists of 1789 are gone now, but their descendants remain; and the city's streets are a veritable gallery of greatness in architectural achievement. Her industries flourish. Her people are young and vital, a third of them under the age of 20, and half between 20 and 59 years.



Leaders for the Next Century

Generations born in this century are, at best, only vaguely familiar with the primitive one-room schoolhouses of earlier times, although many of our forebears did attend such schools. In fact, today's grandparents, born just at the turn of the century, may well remember fondly the experiences and the hardships of those schools.

The first schoolhouse in Belleville probably came into being about the end of the eighteenth century. Historians do record the existence of such a one-room school — a log cabin — around 1809, but the exact date of its construction is unknown. That it had a low ceiling and was a cramped affair is a matter of history.

Centennial Secondary School on Palmer Road is, in 1978, one of Canada's most modern and complete educational units. Its two-storey climate-controlled edifice, with more than 1400 students in daily attendance, is far beyond what the first educators in our city could have hoped for in that tiny, stooped log cabin that was the first school in our city. Such notions as grade 13, now common in

Ontario secondary systems, were inconceivable.

The handicapped of the earliest days were neglected entirely. But in 1870, the Ontario Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb opened and counted a total of three students in attendance. Now operating as Sir James Whitney School, and still a school for the deaf, this excellent centre is unmatched in its facilities and curriculum. Equal educational opportunity for the deaf is a fact of life today, and as educational technology improves, so does Sir James Whitney School, just as any other school

Loyalist College of Applied Arts and Technology is one of Belleville's proudest institutions of higher education and offers two-year programmes in a number of occupational and academic fields. Its graduates often go on to four-year universities, but the aim of the college is to prepare the students to become self-sufficient members of the business community. Its founding president, J.K. Bradford, is still a Belleville resident and still in touch with the college he fondly calls his "offspring." It was under Bradford's keen guidance that Loyalist became more than a training centre.

Public education in Belleville is directed by the Hastings County Board of Education, located in the Education Centre at 156 Ann Street. More than 25,000 students are enrolled in its programmes. The school board meets on the second and fourth Mondays of every month at the Education Centre, and the meetings are open to the public.

Albert College, which offers elementary and secondary programmes and business courses, was founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1857; at that time it bore the name Belleville Seminary. The present name was given in 1866.

Private education in Belleville is focused mainly in the Ontario Business College, which offers certificates in commercial and business-administration courses. The college was established in 1866 by Samuel G. Beatty and George Wallbridge. Both day and evening courses are offered.

Both Albert College and the Ontario Business College have received worldwide recognition, and many students from Caribbean and Asian countries follow in the footsteps of their fathers, who came to Belleville for their education.

The Roman Catholic Separate School Board operates six schools in Hastings and Prince Edward counties and maintains standards that rank very high in the nation. Its graduates, like those of the Hastings County Board of Education, are among the leaders of the city and the region today.

The Belleville & District Chamber of Commerce and the Belleville Economic Development Commission work closely with the secondary and higher-education institutions to maintain programmes that successfully direct the students toward existing and future vocational opportunities.

A Century of Good Government

Alexander Robertson was the first mayor of the newly incorporated city of Belleville that Dominion Day in 1878, which "dawned still and very hot." He served with 21 aldermen in the city hall that stands today as the centre of Belleville's city government. Remodelled and enlarged since that time, the city hall is a magnificent example of Gothic architecture, with its clock tower rising 185 feet above street level.

Many successors have followed Alexander Robertson, but only Francis McAnnany, who began his first term in office in 1842, before incorporation, can claim 10 election victories in that office.

Today the office is presided over by His Worship Mayor J. Ben Corke, who serves his city with not 21 aldermen as did Mayor Robertson, but 10 aldermen and an appointed city manager, Wilbur Purcell. As mayor, Mr. Corke is head of the city council, chief magistrate of the city, and a member of all city boards and commissions.

