

A-Smith family

Sidney Smith

Sidney Smith was born in Port Hope on October 16, 1823. He was the son of John D. Smith, member of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada from 1824 to 1827, and the grandson of Elias Smith founder of the town of Port Hope.

He was educated under Archdeacon Bethune at Cobourg, then continued his studies at the Home Grammar School and finished under Dr. Jonathan Short. Smith then studied law, articling with his brother John Shuter Smith. In 1844 he was called to the bar. That same year, Sidney Smith married Miss Bennett, daughter of a prominent businessman of Port Hope.

The Smith family was orientated toward political life. Sidney Smith's father and brother had both held political office so it was only natural that he too would enter that field. In 1853, Smith ran in the municipal elections and became a town councillor for Cobourg. In 1854 however he attempted to gain a seat in the legislature. He was successful at this, easily defeating his opponent D'Arcy Boulton. Another election was held in 1857 and again Sidney Smith was successful. This time he defeated the Hon. Asa A. Burnham. Smith was an avid supporter of Sir John A. Macdonald and soon became a close associate of his. When the office of Postmaster General was vacated in 1857, Macdonald asked Smith to take it over which he did.

It was a difficult position to take over. The Post Office had annually had a deficit and was in debt \$60,000. Smith was very successful in post office administration. He brought in a profit of \$120,000 the first year. During his time as Postmaster General, Smith modernized and reorganized the Post Office of Canada into a highly efficient and successful enterprise. He brought in many new reforms which the post office desperately needed.

Among the most important were the adoption of street boxes which allowed 24 hour posting service; the introduction of pre-paid postage through the use of stamps; implementation of parcel post and the expansion of overseas operations. All these reforms greatly increased the profits of the Post Office.

This successfulness was shortlived however when in 1861 Smith was defeated by James Cockburn. He then contested the riding in the Trent division and was successful yet he resigned to