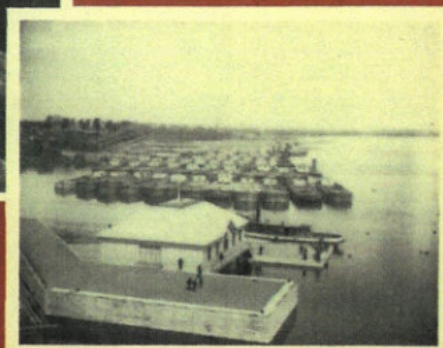
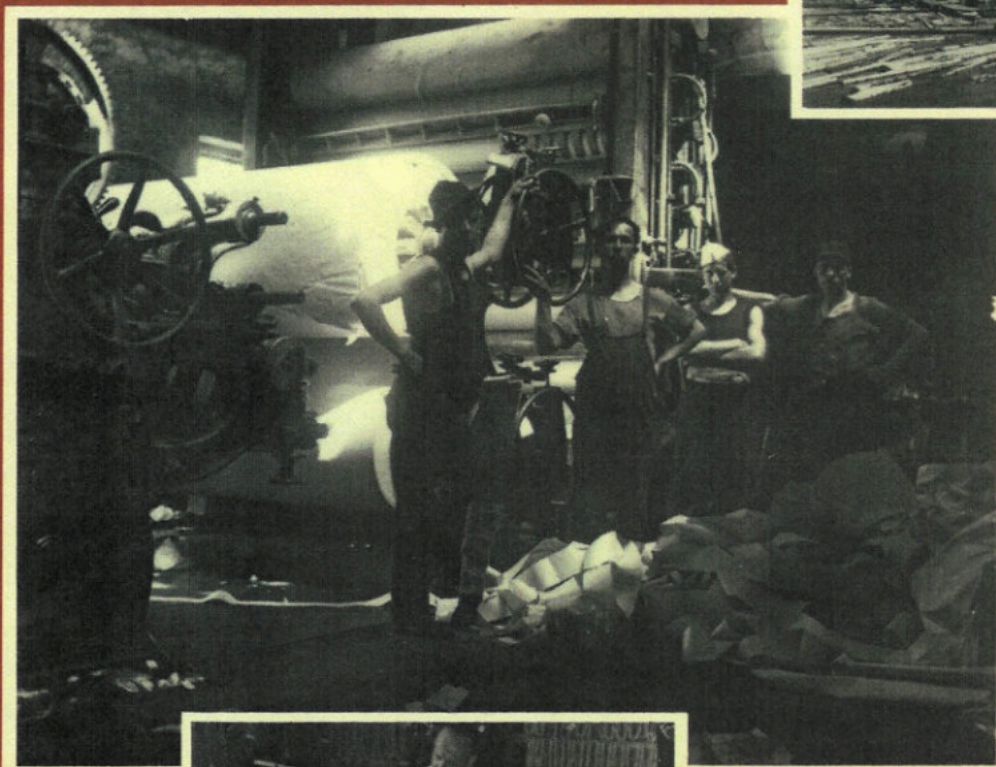


Outaouais

**Le Hull industriel
Industrial Hull**

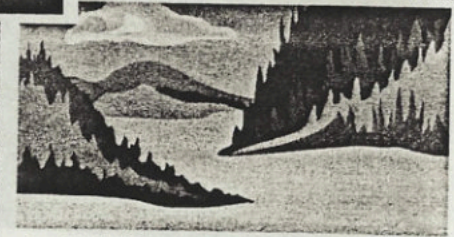
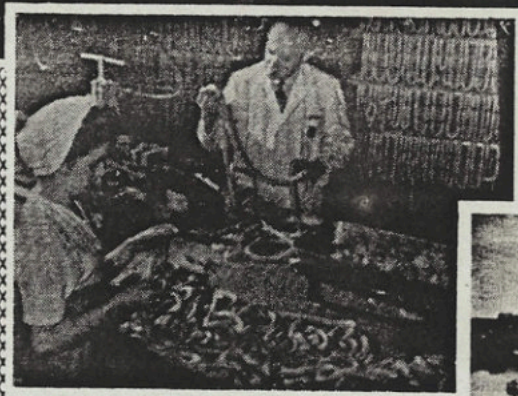
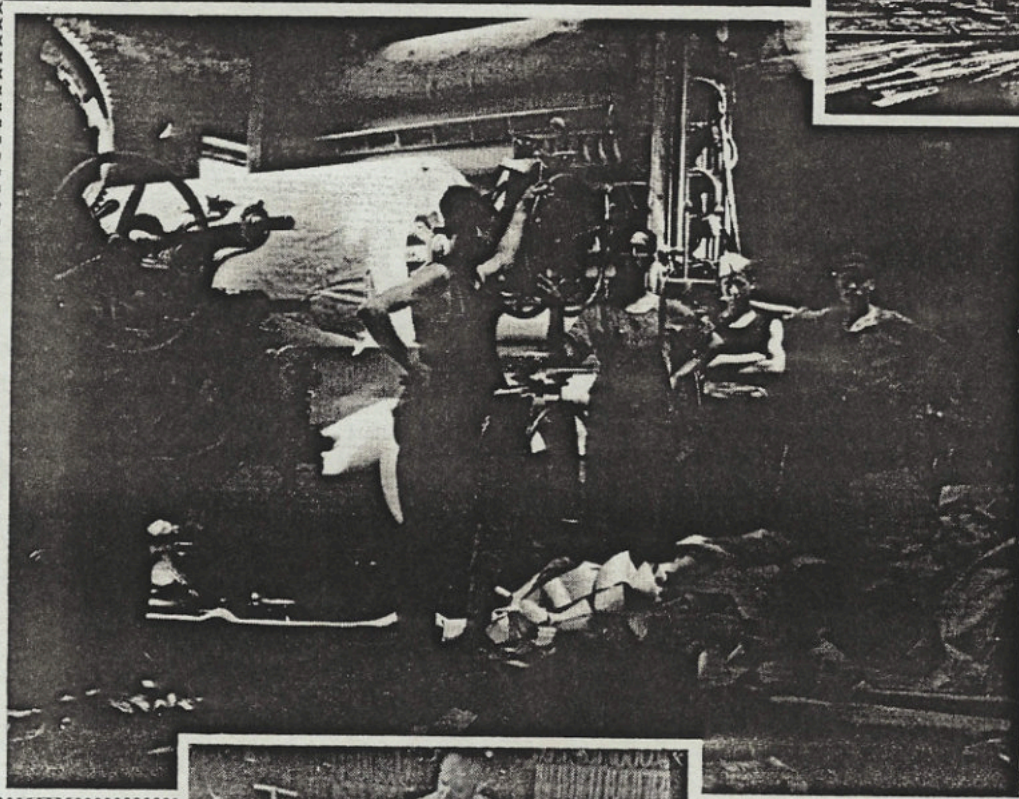
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Outaouais

**Le Hull industriel
Industrial Hull**

1900/1960



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par la Ville de Hull
1995

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grand merci au Campus Heritage pour son aide tech-
nique à ce chapitre. / A special thanks to Heritage
Campus for its technical support.
Impression/Printing : Imprimerie Gauvin et fils
8, rue Leduc
Hull, Qc

Photographies / Photo Credits

Archives nationales du Québec
Centre de l'Outaouais
Bibliothèque publique du Canada/Public Archives of Canada
Archives de la Cie E.B. Eddy/E.B. Eddy Archives
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Dépôt légal/Legal Deposit

Bibliothèque nationale du Québec
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada/National Library of Canada
1^{er} trimestre de 1986/January 1986

La revue "Outaouais" est publiée par l'Institut d'histoire et de recherche sur l'Outaouais (IHRO).
Outaouais is published by IHRO.

Adresse retour : *Société d'histoire de l'Outaouais*
C.P. 1007, Succ. «B»
Hull (Québec)
J8X 3X5



TABLE DES MATIÈRES / TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Lettre du Maire de Hull | 5 |
| Avant-Propos / Foreword | 7 |
| Préface / Preface | 9 |
| Le Grand feu de 1900 par Pierre-Louis Lapointe | 11 |
| La Propriété du sol, la "Loi relative aux constitués..." et le paysage urbain de Hull par Pierre-Louis Lapointe | 19 |
| Les "Favelas" hulloises. Le cas du Creekside par Pierre-Louis Lapointe | 25 |
| The Evolution of Industry in Hull, 1900-1960 by Edmond Kayser..... | 29 |
| Un élément important de ce paysage industriel. Les tramways de la Hull Electric Company, 1896-1946 par Chantal Berniquez | 43 |
| La Condition ouvrière à Hull, de 1919 à 1929 par Serge Lalonde | 49 |
| Grandir au Québec dans les années 20. L'enfance à Hull, 1919-1929 par Odette Vincent-Domay | 63 |
| Aspects of the Socio-economic Impact of the Depression on Hull, 1929-1933 by Mark Entwistle..... | 69 |
| La Grande dépression et l'administration du "Secours direct", à Hull, de 1930 à 1940 par René Roger | 75 |
| Infirmières, soins infirmiers et hygiène à Hull, dans la première moitié du XXe siècle par Rita Bourgeois | 79 |
| Qui donne aux pauvres prête à Dieu. La charité à Hull pendant la "Crise" par Laurent Messier | 85 |
| Intempérance et prostitution à Hull, de 1896 à 1914 par Robert A. Moreau | 89 |
| Un témoignage prophétique. Les problèmes de Hull, tels que perçus par Aimé Guertin, en 1940 | 95 |





*Ville de Hull
C.P. 1970, Succ. "B"
Hull, Québec
J8X 3Y6*

*Cabinet du Maire
Michel Légère*

La Ville de Hull est fière d'appuyer les efforts déployés par l'équipe de rédaction de la revue "OUTAOUAIS", en contribuant financièrement à l'impression de ce premier numéro de la revue de l'IHRO.

Ce numéro thématique veut faire revivre l'ancien Hull industriel en insistant de façon particulière sur les mille-et-une misères quotidiennes des Hullois de la première moitié du XX^e siècle, à la merci de conditions de travail et d'hygiène qui laissaient énormément à désirer. Les articles qui sont ici réunis nous permettent de mesurer les progrès accomplis par notre ville au cours des derniers vingt ans. Elles mettent en relief la lente et pénible amélioration des services offerts à l'ensemble de nos concitoyens depuis le début du siècle.

L'ancien Hull industriel et commercial est presque totalement disparu. Les industries, axées sur le secteur des services, sont localisées pour la plupart dans le parc industriel et la main-d'oeuvre se compose surtout de cols blancs. Nous sommes bien loin des usines polluantes, des salaires de famine, du travail "à la journée", et de la semaine de soixante heures...

La ville de Hull fut une des principales villes industrielles du Québec. Et si les choses ont bien changé, nous demeurons optimistes face à l'avenir industriel de notre ville. Nous devons nous regrouper et retrouver cette fierté du travail de bâtisseur. Ainsi les Hullois de demain pourront enfin se réconcilier avec leurs pères, auquel ce numéro de la revue *OUTAOUAIS* rend un si vibrant hommage!

Michel Légère



AVANT-PROPOS

C'est avec fierté que l'Institut d'histoire et de recherche sur l'Outaouais présente au grand public ce premier numéro de sa revue *OUTAOUAIS*. Cette parution s'attache à décrire et à analyser certains aspects de la vie du Hull d'autrefois. On verra que la vie n'y était pas de tout repos et qu'il serait présomptueux de vouloir faire de cette époque un «âge d'or» ou il ferait bon de se retrouver.

Il est essentiel de souligner le travail du Professeur Edmond Kayser, qui accepta de résumer et de réviser pour nous sa thèse de maîtrise en géographie intitulée *Industry in Hull: Its Origins and Development, 1800-1961*. Son article est au centre de cette étude du Hull industriel.

Il serait impardonnable de passer sous silence le rôle de premier plan joué par Mme Andrée Lévesque, qui, pendant son séjour comme professeur à l'Université d'Ottawa, parraina la réalisation des travaux étudiants que nous retrouvons ici, remaniés quant à la forme, mais intacts sur le plan de la méthode et du contenu. Ces travaux de Robert Moreau, de Laurent Messier, de Serge Lalonde, de Mark Entwistle, et d'Odette Vincent-Domay viennent encadrer les propos de René Roger, d'Aimé Guertin, de Rita Bourgeois, de Chantal Berniquez et de Pierre Louis Lapointe, sur des aspects complémentaires de la vie et de l'histoire de ce Hull disparu.

Ce projet n'aurait jamais vu le jour sans l'appui indéfectible du Maire et des échevins de la Ville de Hull, qui ont accepté de financer la publication de ce numéro. Et que dire de la compréhension de l'échevin Raymond Ouimet, ce promoteur acharné d'une meilleure connaissance de notre histoire et de notre patrimoine.

Ceux qui connaissent l'édition et les problèmes reliés à la publication d'une revue de cette envergure, apprécieront à leur juste valeur les efforts qui ont présidé à l'apparition de ce nouveau-né. Nous tenons à souligner de façon particulière à ce chapitre, l'expertise et le dévouement inlassable de Pierre Louis Lapointe, rédacteur de la revue, sans lequel ce projet n'aurait jamais vu le jour.

Nous sommes certains que les gens d'ici trouveront plaisir à parcourir ces textes inédits et à redécouvrir le milieu de vie de leurs ancêtres hullois. Par le biais de cette nouvelle revue, l'Institut d'histoire entend diffuser les résultats de recherche qui intéressent l'Outaouais de façon particulière. Et l'IHRO est assuré de pouvoir poursuivre l'oeuvre amorcée, grâce à l'appui des organismes de notre milieu.

Dyanne Beauvalet
Présidente
IHRO.

FOREWORD

We are extremely proud to present this edition of IHRO's new review to the public. This edition of *OUTAOUAIS* centers on life in 20th century *Industrial Hull*. It will be seen that life in that period was far from easy-going, in fact it would be inappropriate to think of this as the *Golden Age* of Hull history.

In this issue it is important to underline the work of Professor Edmond Kayser, who revised and summarized the findings his Masters thesis in geography entitled *Industry in Hull: Its Origins and Development, 1800-1961*. His article is vital to this study of *Industrial Hull*.

Mrs. Andrée Lévesque, former University of Ottawa history professor played a major role in the gathering of material for this special number on *Industrial Hull*. During her stay in Ottawa, she encouraged her students to study the social and economic history of 20th century Hull. The edited versions of some of these student papers are included here. The studies by Robert Moreau, Laurent Messier, Serge Lalonde, Mark Entwistle and Odette Vincent-Domay are a necessary complement to the articles written by René Roger, Aimé Guertin, Rita Bourgeois, Chantal Berniquez and Pierre Louis Lapointe.

This project would have been unthinkable had it not been for the whole-hearted support afforded us by Hull's Mayor and aldermen who undertook the financing of this dedicated issue of our review. And how could we forget alderman Raymond Ouimet's personal involvement and encouragement every step of the way? . . .

Those who understand the difficulties involved in editing such an extensive publication will appreciate the efforts that have gone into its preparation. We would like to single out in a very special way, the expertise and tireless dedication of Pierre-Louis Lapointe, Editor of *OUTAOUAIS*, who made this dream a reality.

We are confident that residents of Hull and Western Québec will be please to read this first number of *OUTAOUAIS*. Those who have Hull ancestors will be happy to discover the true nature of their forbears' way of life.

IHRO intends using this review to create a greater awareness of historical research on Western Québec. And we are hopeful of being able to continue to do so thanks to the continued support of local and regional bodies.

Dyanne Beauvalet
President IHRO.



PREFACE

LE HULL INDUSTRIEL

Ce premier numéro de la revue *OUTAOUAIS*, publié par l'Institut d'histoire et de recherche sur l'Outaouais (IHRO), rappelle la publication, en 1908, d'un «Pamphlet descriptif» intitulé *Hull industriel*. Cet ouvrage fort intéressant, que l'on doit à Messieurs Aubin et Bérubé, encensait la Ville de Hull, son administration, ainsi que l'esprit d'entreprise et l'industrie de ses élites commerciales, bancaires et manufacturières. L'optimisme régnait et l'on se plaisait à faire valoir, «la moralité de la population, la qualité de la main-d'oeuvre, ses parcs et amusements, ses résidences» et ses édifices de grande valeur... Cette vision tout en rose de la réalité hulloise, rejoint celle de ceux qui se rappellent de cette époque comme «du bon vieux temps».

C'est le cas des pionniers qui ont vécu cette évolution et qui se souviennent avec nostalgie du temps où ils étaient jeunes, forts et en santé... Il est tout naturel pour eux de chasser de leur souvenir les aspects négatifs de la vie d'autrefois et de ne retenir que les bons moments, envolés à jamais... C'est également le cas de ceux, qui, par romantisme «passéiste», s'imaginent à tort que c'était «l'âge d'or». Ils n'ont pas vécu les mille-et-une misères des générations de hullois de toute condition sociale, qui étaient à la merci d'un monde où les conditions de vie, de travail et d'hygiène laissaient énormément à désirer. C'est d'ailleurs ce milieu de vie, qui obligeait les gens à se serrer les coudes. La solidarité y était de mise et les rapports humains y étaient chaleureux.

Nous avons voulu faire connaître au grand public quelques-uns de ces aspects méconnus du *Hull industriel*. Les statistiques que nous vous présentons ici font découvrir une réalité qui n'a rien de très positif. Elles mettent en évidence la lente et pénible amélioration de services que nous tenons aujourd'hui pour acquis. Dans plusieurs secteurs d'activité, ce n'est qu'à la fin de la période à l'étude qu'apparaissent certaines des institutions essentielles à l'épanouissement de la collectivité hulloise. Il en est ainsi du Collège Marie-Médiatrice (Externat classique) en 1948, du Collège Marguerite d'Youville et de la Bibliothèque municipale au cours des années 1950, etc... Sur le plan institutionnel, Hull était largement sous-équipé en comparaison avec des centres de grandeur comparable du Québec. Et Hull était satellisé par Ottawa, d'autant plus que sur le plan religieux la ville allait relever de l'Archidiocèse d'Ottawa jusqu'en 1963. Nos énergies et nos talents étaient drainés vers la «ville lumière» d'en face.

À la lecture des articles que nous avons rassemblés dans ce numéro spécial sur le «Hull industriel», le lecteur ne pourra pas s'empêcher, comme nous, de replacer dans une meilleure perspective la brûlante question de la désindustrialisation de la Ville de Hull et du rôle de la Commission de la Capitale nationale à ce chapitre.

Cette question, en effet, suscite des remous politiques extraordinaires dans la région de Hull depuis plus de vingt-cinq ans. On soutient que la C.C.N., est la première responsable de la perte d'industries à Hull. Certains vont jusqu'à prétendre que c'est un complot qui vise la minorisation et la disparition de l'élément français dans la région de Hull. L'article d'Edmond Kayser et l'ensemble des données statistiques de ce numéro spécial aideront à dissiper cette vision mythique de la réalité hulloise. On y verra que le déclin de l'activité

PREFACE

INDUSTRIAL HULL

This first number of IHRO'S new magazine, entitled *OUTAOUAIS*, takes us back to the 1908 publication of Aubin and Bérubé's pamphlet on *Industrial Hull*, in which the publishers lauded the town's administration and the spirit of industry and enterprise of the commercial, banking and manufacturing elite. They were extremely optimistic and enthusiastic about the future of Hull and they spoke highly about the "moral character" of the population, the "quality" of labour and manpower, the "fine residences", the "parks and amusements", etc... This rather naive and overly optimistic vision of that period of Hull history, corresponds rather nicely with the point of view of those who nostalgically refer to the "good old days..."

Such is the case for those Hull pioneers who have lived through the drastic changes in life style experienced by Hull's population since the early 1900's. They look back with nostalgia to the days when they were young, strong and healthy... It's rather normal for them to remember only the good times... A good number of those who like reading about the past also tend to look on those bygone days as the "golden age" of Hull. Unlike those generations of Hull residents of various origins and backgrounds, they didn't have to live through the often horrendous living, working, and hygienic conditions that were the lot of almost everyone in those days. The hardships of life in Hull in that first half of the 20th century, encouraged solidarity and made people keenly aware of the importance of friendship and community spirit.

With this special edition of *OUTAOUAIS*, we want to make people aware of what life was really like in old *Industrial Hull*. The data given in this series of articles doesn't paint a very rosy picture of life in Hull. It does however show the rather slow and clumsy progress of Hull services and institutions, which nowadays we take for granted. Some educational institutions, essential to the quality of life of any community came to Hull in the late 1940's and 1950's, a full 75 years after Québec towns of even smaller size saw the establishment of colleges and convents in their midst...

Hull's municipal library, for instance, came into being in the early 1950's. Hull was a cultural and religious satellite of OTTAWA. It was part of the Roman Catholic Archbishopric of Ottawa until 1963. Our energies and our talents were drained by Ottawa, the Capital City.

In reading through the contents of this special number on *Industrial Hull*, the reader will be made aware of the real impact of the National Capital Commission on the development of Hull. For the last twenty-five years, political controversy in the Hull area has centered to a large degree on the role of the National Capital Commission in the "planning away" of industries and industrial activity in Hull. Some even see this as a plot to destroy the French fact in Western Québec. Edmond Kayser's article, and the data put forward throughout this special number of *OUTAOUAIS*, will help to dispell this mythical view of the industrial evolution of Hull, and present the facts as they stand. It will be shown that the decline of industrial and manufacturing activity in Hull had already begun during the First World War and that it continued to do so up to this day. Most industry shutdowns were related to changes in technology and market trends, and Federal

manufacturière et industrielle de Hull remonte à la première guerre mondiale et que la majorité des fermetures d'usines étaient le résultat de changements technologiques et de transformations du marché.

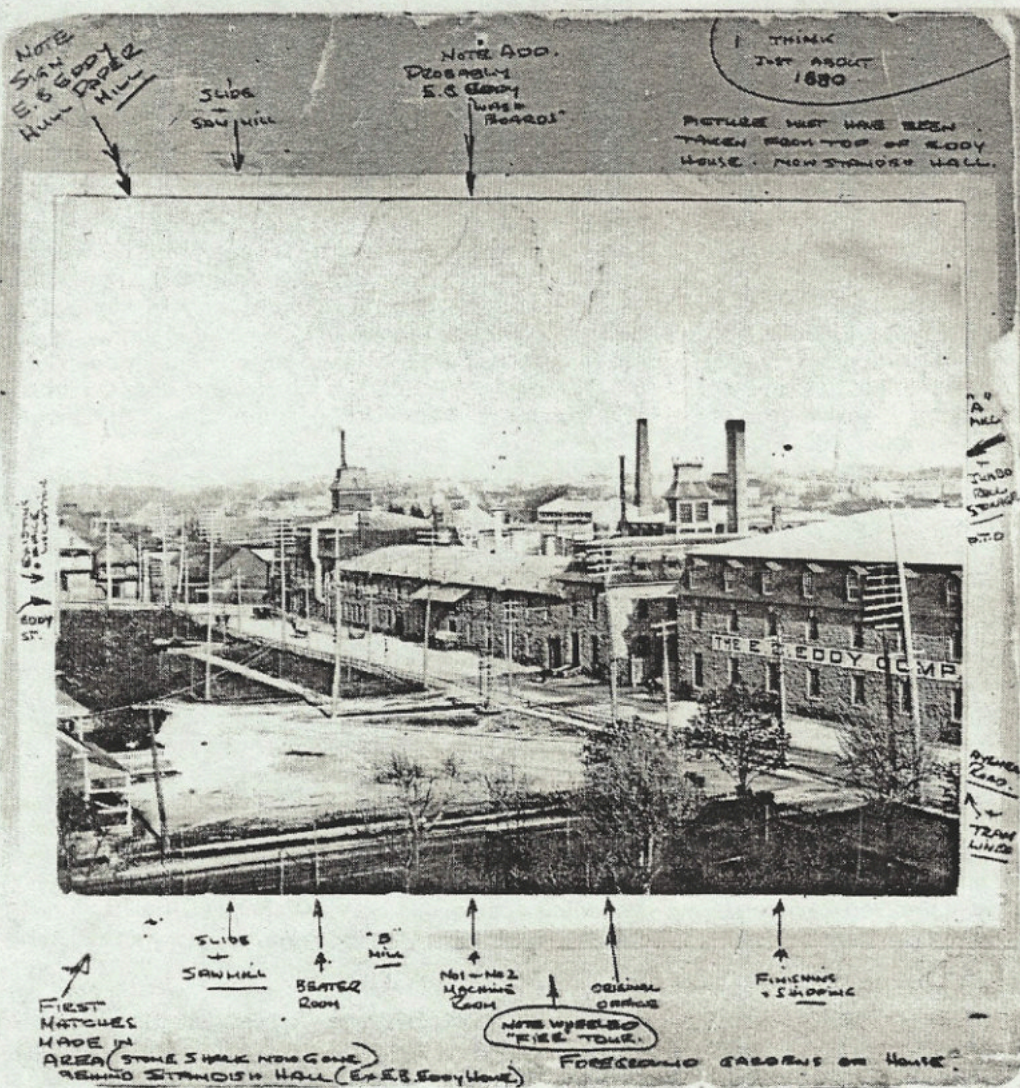
L'action du Gouvernement fédéral ne pesait pas lourd dans la balance. Toute activité industrielle ou manufacturière non-rentable était vouée à l'abandon et l'acquisition d'usines en perte de vitesse ou de sites industriels abandonnés par la C.C.N. ne pouvait qu'accélérer un processus irréversible. Et cette action était négligeable en comparaison avec l'impact des salaires payés par la Fonction publique fédérale. Comment l'industrie manufacturière aurait-elle pu offrir des salaires équivalents et des conditions de travail aussi intéressantes? Quoi qu'il en soit, nul ne pourra nier le rôle de la C.C.N. dans l'embellissement de Hull et dans l'amélioration de la qualité de vie de nos concitoyens. Comparée aux villes industrielles et manufacturières, victimes, comme elle, d'une désindustrialisation, Hull avait l'avantage d'être collée au siège du Gouvernement fédéral. Le service civil, absorbait la main-d'oeuvre délogée et permettait le passage en relative douceur à un nouveau mode de vie et à un nouveau type de société...

Government involvement had little to do with it. Manufacturing activity that ceased to be a profitable venture would have closed down in any case. The buying-up of obsolete and abandoned industrial sites by the NCC however, accelerated the process of industrial decline, but much less so than the salaries paid out to Federal Civil Servants. How could factories compete on the job market with what they were offering? Whatever is said, no one will be able to deny the fact that NCC involvement was instrumental in beautifying the City of Hull, making it a better place to live. Hull's advantage over cities of similar size, submitted to the same type of economic evolution, was the growth of the Federal Civil Service. In the Ottawa-Hull metropolitan area.

It made the passing of a way of life much more bearable...

Pierre-Louis Lapointe
Editor

Pierre-Louis Lapointe
Rédacteur



Le Grand Feu de 1900



Par Pierre-Louis Lapointe

Le Grand feu de 1900 allait laisser une immense cicatrice dans le tissu urbain de Hull et marquer la mémoire collective de toute une génération de Hullois. La première moitié du XX^e siècle s'ouvrait donc sur un cataclysme. Et, toutes proportions gardées, ce désastre du 26 avril 1900 frappait la ville de Hull beaucoup plus durement qu'Ottawa. Voici, sous forme de tableau, quelques chiffres forts éloquentes:¹

| | Hull | Ottawa | Total |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Nombre de bâtiments détruits | 1 300 | 1 900 | 3 200 |
| Nombre de laissés sans abri | | | |
| (en nombre absolu) | 5 789 | 8 370 | 14 159 |
| (en pourcentage) | 42% | 14% | |
| Population totale | 13 887 | 58 193 | |
| Superficie détruite | 276 acres | 440 acres | 716 acres |
| Pertes financières | \$3 300 494 | \$6 215 355 | \$9 515 849 |
| Assurances | \$ 770 392 | \$ 3 085 203 | |

Plus de 42% des Hullois étaient laissés sans abri et moins du quart des pertes hulloises étaient assurées. La ville d'Ottawa, quant à elle était couverte pour plus de la moitié des pertes qu'elle avait subi et n'avait à déplorer que 14% de sans abri.

Ce terrible incendie allait prendre naissance vers 10 heures 30 de l'avant-midi, dans une petite maison de la rue Chaudière, chez une Madame Kingsberry. De nos jours, cette maison serait située à l'intersection des rues St-Rédempteur et Vaudreuil. L'élément destructeur allait se propager rapidement vers le sud, poussé par un vent violent (30 milles à l'heure) et alimenté par les nombreux bâtiments de bois et

les piles de bois qui s'allongeaient partout le long de la rivière des Outaouais et sur les îles de la Chaudière. La ville de Hull, les îles de la Chaudière et une bonne partie de la ville d'Ottawa offraient à cet époque des conditions exceptionnellement favorables à la propagation des incendies, car:

- (1) La majorité des constructions étaient de bois.
- (2) La plupart des toits étaient de bardeaux de cèdre.

- (3) Les coupe-feu spatiaux et structuraux étaient très rares.
- (4) L'approvisionnement en eau était largement insuffisant pour lutter efficacement contre l'élément destructeur.
- (5) Des cours à bois s'étendaient partout, à l'intérieur des limites des villes de Hull et d'Ottawa².

A la fin de la journée, l'incendie avait balayé tout sur son passage, jusqu'au lac Dow, détruisant un grand nombre des industries qui étaient le gagne-pain des ouvriers de Hull et d'Ottawa. Deux usines de la Chaudière seulement allaient survivre; la "Bronson and Weston Carbide Works", dont les murs et la toiture étaient revêtus de tôle, et

les scieries de J.R. Booth, munies d'arroseurs et d'un système de pompes indépendantes du réseau d'aqueduc d'Ottawa³. Et à l'autre extrémité de la ville de Hull, près du pont Alexandra, qui était alors en construction, la "Sulphite" de la Compagnie Eddy était épargnée. Il aurait pu en être autrement, puisqu'un deuxième foyer d'incendie s'était allumé à la fin de l'après-midi, emportant la cour à bois de la Compagnie Gilmour and Hughson ainsi que la grande maison de Christopher Webb, située à cette époque sur l'emplacement de l'actuel Centre hospitalier "La Pieta".

Il est surprenant que les pertes en vies humaines aient été si faibles. Seulement sept personnes tombèrent victimes du Grand feu de 1900: Mlle Minnie Cook, John Pample, George Feeley, John Dare, A. Beaudin, une certaine Mme Carron et une septième personne, qui n'avait pu être identifiée⁴.

La perte des industries frappait durement les ouvriers, qui avaient perdu tout ce qu'ils possédaient et qui se retrouvaient chômeurs par la force des choses. Mais, malgré l'ampleur du désastre, nos gens allaient se relever et, appuyés par les gouvernements, les églises, et le "Comité de secours" que l'on s'était empressé de mettre sur pieds, reconstruisirent leurs demeures

1. G.W. Shorter, "Ottawa-Hull Fire of 1900", *Fire Study No. 7*, Ottawa, 1962, National Research Council of Canada, Division of Building Research, p. 6.
 2. Jocelyn Guindon et Marthe Tessier, "Le Feu de 1900", dans CCN, *Projet Chaudière, Second Round Papers*, 1982, p. 2.
 3. G.W. Shorter, "Ottawa-Hull Fire of 1900", *Ibid.*, p. 4-5.
 4. Hélène Aubrey, "Histoire sociale du complexe industriel de la Chaudière", p. 35, dans CCN, *Projet Chaudière, Cinquième ronde*, 1983.

et leurs usines. Des abris temporaires furent aménagés dans les édifices publics, de la nourriture et des vêtements furent distribués, et plus de 956 000\$ dépensé par le "Comité de secours" pour l'achat d'ameublement, d'outils et de matériaux de construction⁵. La rapidité avec laquelle s'effectua cette reconstruction est déconcertante. En moins de 10 mois, la plupart des usines et plus de 750 maisons avaient été reconstruites⁶.

Cette reconstruction exceptionnellement rapide ne s'explique qu'en fonction du climat économique général, qui allait permettre à E.B. Eddy, par exemple, d'absorber sans grande difficulté les énormes pertes qu'il venait de subir. Le "Boom" économique que connaissait le Canada depuis 1899 allait permettre à E.B. Eddy de se rebâtir, et ce, grâce en partie à la politique tarifaire canadienne, qui protégeait nos producteurs de papier. En reconstruisant ses usines, E.B. Eddy allait en profiter pour moderniser son outillage, se plaçant à la fine-pointe de la technologie et améliorant d'autant la productivité de ses usines⁷.

Certains quartiers de la ville de Hull, plus que d'autres, allaient porter pendant longtemps les cicatrices laissées par le Grand feu de 1900. C'était le cas des quartiers nos. 2 et 3. Les deux tableaux comparatifs qui suivent illustrent admirablement bien cette situation⁸.

Chiffres de la population

| Quartiers | 1884-05 | 1899-0 | 1900-01 | 1907-08 |
|-----------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| No. 1.--- | 351 | 1,068 | 1,323 | 1,265 |
| No. 2.--- | 1,138 | 2,122 | 1,572 | 1,803 |
| No. 3.--- | 3,364 | 2,684 | 1,362 | 2,186 |
| No. 3a.-- | | 2,782 | 3,324 | 3,472 |
| No. 4.--- | 2,434 | 2,432 | 1,485 | 2,622 |
| No. 5.--- | 709 | 2,363 | 2,821 | 3,172 |
| | 7,996 | 13,451 | 11,887 | 14,520 |

Valeur de la propriété foncière ou immobilière

| Quartiers | 1884-05 | 1899-0 | 1900-01 | 1907-08 |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| No. 1.--- | 355,775 | 256,245.50 | 271,636 | 384,958 |
| No. 2.--- | 335,590 | 571,542.35 | 290,948 | 870,452 |
| No. 3.--- | 377,465 | 469,789 | 314,880 | 630,215 |
| No. 3a.-- | | 195,552 | 205,953 | 316,045 |
| No. 4.--- | 292,925 | 464,769 | 367,383 | 756,382 |
| No. 5.--- | 189,525 | 399,295.50 | 278,335 | 429,791 |
| Ajouté après recomptage | | 67,610 | | |
| Totaux | 1,551,280 | 2,424,773 | 1,729,135 | 3,387,843 |

Huit ans après le désastre, la population de ces deux quartiers est encore inférieure à ce qu'elle était avant le Grand feu.

Afin de mieux mesurer l'impact de ces événements chez ceux qui les vécurent, nous donnons ici trois témoignages de contemporains. Le premier, une lettre de Sarah Rosina Wright,⁹ fait revivre cette journée mémorable sous l'angle de celui ou de celle qui se sauve

s'était passé à l'intérieur des usines Eddy au plus fort du sinistre et comment il avait réussi à se sauver tout en aidant ses amis et les membres de sa propre famille¹¹.



Le centre de Hull avant le grand feu

de l'élément destructeur. Et Rosina Wright appartient à la classe des gens aisés. Le deuxième, un extrait du *Calendrier de Notre-Dame-de-Grâce*, journal paroissial qui publie un récit repris de la *Revue littéraire de l'Université d'Ottawa*, se veut une description "littéraire" et bien sentie des événements, par un témoin qui n'était pas, il va sans dire, touché personnellement par



5. G.W. Shorter, "Ottawa-Hull Fire of 1900"..., *Ibid.*, p. 6-8.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

7. Jocelyn Guindon et Marthe Tessier, *Ibid.*, p. 7-11.

8. E.E. Cinq-Mars, *Hull, Son origine, ses progrès, son avenir*, Hull, Bérubé Frères, 1908, p. 129.

9. Cette lettre, rédigée par Sarah Rosina Wright et éditée par Patrick M.O. Evans, le généalogiste bien connu de la famille Wright, raconte avec éloquence comment elle et sa famille furent pris dans la tourmente.

10. "Conflagration à Hull et Ottawa, jeudi 26 avril 1900. Récit d'un témoin", dans *Calendrier de Notre-Dame-de-Grâce*, Hull, juin-août 1900, p. 75-81. Ce texte avait probablement été rédigé par le R.P. Louis Lejeune o.m.i., rédacteur de la *Revue littéraire de l'Université d'Ottawa*.

11. Extrait d'une lettre de Tom Harvey à George Harvey, 27 avril 1900, collection Pierre Louis Lapointe, ANQ-Outaouais.

**A LETTER WRITTEN BY SARAH
ROSINA WRIGHT¹**

THE 1900 HULL FIRE

My dear Mabel:

Will you excuse this letter in lead pencil because the only pens I can find here don't suit me. I may as well begin with Thursday morning to tell you all I can about the fire. It is almost impossible to find time to write for there are so

of the floor smouldering. I rushed out and down the road and shouted to the man to go and give the alarm at Eddy's⁷. Then I tore back and met the blacksmith who had come up from the kilns to find the working-horses as usual. I sent him off for water and he was soon back with two pails which put out the fire, then they tore up part of the floor to make sure there was no more fire. That was about 11.30 a.m.

that I had sent them in time.

The other girl and I got all the tubs, wash-boilers, etc. filled with water and put them at different corners of the verandah and while the men and our boys and George B.⁹ & Co. who arrived on the scene were working about the stables & yard putting out sparks, I kept tearing around the garden watching the corners and windows of the house and made frequent trips to the cupola to see if all was right there. Even when the boys made us leave the house, I never felt it was going to burn. One of my trips upstairs I gathered up my jewellery and put it inside my dress.



We worked like Trojans and the roof of the log stable caught fire time and again and was put out by our boys on the roof. Before the fire reached Main Street, Hull, the flying sparks set fire to the lumber on the Ottawa side directly opposite our house and soon stretched up and down along the river-bank. I took a photo of it from George's window but of course my camera & everything is gone. Soon after, the lumber between us and the river was burning, also the dry-house at the foot of the road and the wood piled in our lower garden, but fortunately there was little wood left there then.

many visitors, and Papa² is dreadfully restless and I have to watch him all the time, for fear he should get out on the street and wander away. He does not seem to realize his loss but knows something is wrong and is always wanting to start for somewhere. I do hope he will settle down in a few days for it is an awful strain to have him like this, but I'm thankful he cannot feel like he did a few years ago or his heart would be broken. That Thursday morning I drove him to town, did some shopping and laying in a supply of groceries and a lot of things he wanted. I had left Molly and Lily³ in Hull with the girls, and I called at Lizzie's⁴ on my way home, soon after 11 o'clock, and she said there was a fire in Hull. We phoned George⁵ to find out where. It was away back of the Model school house fully half a mile from our place. We drove on towards Hull and up past where the Frank Scotts⁶ used to live, and had a view of the fire but never dreamed it would be such a dreadful one. We only stayed there a minute and drove home.

I called the man to take the horse and he came running up from the stables and said he thought the hay-loft must be on fire as the stable was full of smoke. I made him run up to see and ran after him into the carriage-house where I immediately saw some boards

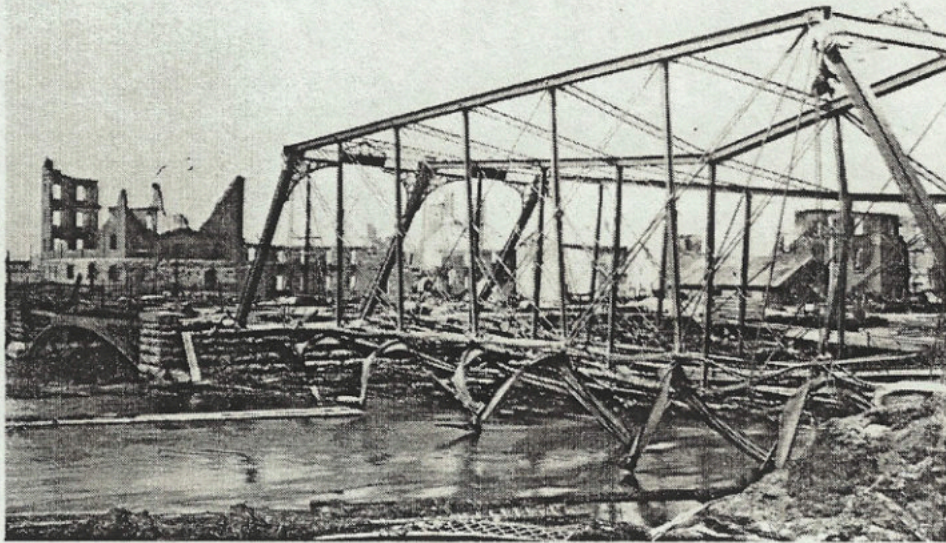
Rug⁸ came driving up soon after and got all the buildings closed up and sent for his men and stationed them about with pails. We had lots of water from our dam but no force. By that time the flames had got really to Main Street. The maid was dancing with fright and though I never thought we should be burned up, I hated to see her so excited. So my little maid took both the children over to Lizzie's through Hurdman's Lumber Yard. They could not get a car (electric streetcar) and she had to carry Lily all the way, but I was thankful later



1. Later known as "Aunt Rosi", the Wright family historian and genealogist. The footnotes to this letter were prepared by Patrick M.O. Evans, well-known Wright genealogist and member of IHRO.
2. Charles Brown Wright.
3. Youngest daughter of Charles Brown.
4. Rosa's older married sister, Mrs. Brigham.
5. Second son of Charles Brown.
6. Dr. William Francis Scott.
7. E.B. Eddy Co.
8. Ruggles, oldest son of Charles Brown.
9. George Brigham, Lizzie's husband.

Then George (Wright) said we must get Papa and we girls were to go too. The horses were all away by that time for they would have been of no earthly use to us, they were so excited and wild. The men got Papa out and put him in our new carriage & with George, hauled him down to the lime-kilns the back way. I rushed upstairs and got two small handbags and gave one to the girl telling her to put her most cherished belongings into it, and I went around and gathered up a few things but think I was rather rattled. The boys came in one after the other calling to us to come at once. I was downstairs at once but had to wait for the girl and thought I should never get her down. At last Jim¹⁰ went up and made her come down and they sent us down the back way.

Our big stable was burning on one side of the road and the sheds and ice-house and Eddy's sheds were ablaze



on the other. The boys say if we had been 5 minutes later we would have been surrounded as they were big flames. We met George W(right) coming from the Kilns but he could not come back to the house, as we heard later, so he made his way to his own office and put things away in the vault & safe. The vault was not fireproof and nearly all the things were later destroyed. His safe he has not examined yet but thinks it is alright (later it was found to have dropped through into the basement and so was saved).

George, B.¹¹ & C., Rug¹² & Jim stayed near the house till it became too hot. They brought out some of George (Wright's) books and put them in the garden but they took fire right off. When it got too hot there (in the garden) they wet each other all over from one of the

tubs, then carried one down to the lower garden where they huddled together near the stone wall and kept themselves wet, waiting till the dry-houses would be burned down sufficiently to let them get past. They were joined by four men from Eddy's and had a terrible time for nearly an hour when the pail warehouse, on the other side of the fence, took fire and the flames came shooting over their heads. They could not stand it any longer and decided to make a dash for life. One of Eddy's men, a watchman, was an old cripple, 83 years of age, and twice when they lay huddled against the wall they thought he was dead, for he lay there with his eyes closed and would not exert himself, and they kept wetting handkerchiefs and laying them over him.

When they ran to the wall along the foot of the garden they carried him and the tub too, but they could not get him over the wall which was red-hot and

burned their hands, so they carried him to a hole in one corner of the wall and left him there with the tub of water, never imagining he could survive (but he did, as they learned later). They got over the wall and into the pond, dived under water and swam to the other side, having to help another old man who could not swim and was frightened to death. They got out alright and up to Hull, between the burning paper mills on one side of the road and the burning match factory on the other, and finally ended up at Scotts', where Papa & I had got before them.

When the girl and I got to the Kilns, Papa was at the Office, and we stayed there as long as I dared, but when I saw the flames creeping down Main Street I thought we had better move before we were surrounded. She and I took Papa

between us and we walked slowly along till we came to the house of a man who used to work for Papa, and we went in there and Papa got a glass of milk, some bread & cold ham. Then I tried to direct my girl up to Mrs. Scott's to see if they could send down some sort of conveyance for Papa; she managed to find the place and they sent a horse and carriage by George Walker, who took us up there by a roundabout road, the only way we could go.

Then the flames were not on their side of the creek¹³ but soon after they got there and their conservatory took fire twice and was put out. They sent first Mrs. Scott, then Papa & me, out to Mrs. Walker's on the Chelsea road. We called at the Garriochs' and took old Mrs. G. and the baby to the Col. Wright's,¹⁴ and someone else moved out Jeff. Mrs. Willie Garrioch had had a mishap two days before and was seriously ill in bed and they did not move her - fortunately - for the fire on that side was soon put out, and nearly all Eddy-ville survived. None of the Garriochs seemed to be any the worse for the excitement. (Willie Garrioch is credited with having saved all the records from St. James Church¹⁵).

Before we left the Scotts', Rug, Jim, George, B. & C., came along and had heard that the fire was raging in Ottawa and that the Cecil Hotel was burned, and a lot of exaggerated stories. So I was in awful state about Lizzie, Stuart & Lily and implored their husbands to go right home, which they did as speedily as possible by the ferry, the only way for all the Bridges were burned (this ferry owned by George Brigham).

I did not hear till 12.30 that night when Geo. W. came out to the Walkers', that they were alright. In the meantime I put in an awful time, having to sit there and watch Papa, and not knowing how they fared. We were all made very comfortable at the Walkers' for the night — Mrs. Scott, Papa, George W., my girl & I, but it was pitiful seeing people spending the night by their belongings along

10. James C., fourth son of Charles Brown.
11. George Brigham.
11. George Cunningham Wright, second son of Charles Brown.
13. Probably Brewery Creek.
14. Likely Lt. Col. Joshua Wright.
15. (From an abridged history of St. James Church 1823-1948) "The greatest fire in the history of Hull occurred on April 26, 1900. Not only was a large part of the city destroyed, but the Church and rectory were reduced to ashes... A temporary building, known as the 'Tabernacle in the Wilderness' was erected on the Scott property."

ing the night by their belongings along the sides of the road, and it was a cold night too. All the householders were kindness itself and when their houses were full, would send out food, etc. to those in the open.

Jim W. spent the night at Charlie's,¹⁶ then later sometimes there and sometimes at Rug's, and he always calls here once a day. Friday morning the Scotts took us there (Charlie's) and after dinner drove us down to the ferry, and we came across then to here in the cars. It nearly broke my heart to look at the four walls of our dear old home; we'll never have another we will all care for so much, but I'm thankful we all escaped without injury. Rug, Jim, George, B. & C., had very sore eyes but they used boracic acid¹⁷ and they are all pretty well now.

The old man they left behind was not burned after all and must have recovered his presence of mind soon after they left him, for when the fire got very fierce he plunged his head, then his back in the tub and kept himself constantly wet. When the fire had died away he dropped himself down to the back of the island, got a plank and pushed himself across the slide, and was finally helped by someone. His escape is marvellous and the boys are so thankful for they felt dreadful at leaving him.

then right to the river. You never saw a cleaner sweep in your life — there are hardly ashes left.

In Ottawa it is just as bad; all along the Richmond Road is burned, and between that & the river; also back of the Richmond Road to the Experimental Farm (the latter place is alright). The



Dr. Marston's place, Dr. Hill's,²² Dr. Malloch's,²³ Pinhey's²⁴ and a lot of other splendid places are gone — also McKay's big flour mills at the Chaudière, and everything else there. The iron of the bridges is all twisted. Ottawa

baby carriage full of silver, and have no insurance. Anne Smith has only the clothes she stands in. We have a good deal of insurance I think, but George says it will never cover our loss, and of course all our little bits of sentiment are gone. I hardly think of it yet. Everything that brought us in rent is gone, except the farm, and it will be some time before

George gets settled again. He & Mr. Brooke have taken offices over the Molson's Bank in Ottawa, but have got to get new furniture for them. It is awful that both lost all their books.

George looks very anxious & worried but is bearing up well and says it makes him sick to think of the narrow escape Papa & the rest of us had. I don't know how it will affect Rug for I am sure the Union Bank, who owned the Cement Works, will not rebuild, but he (Rug) has some kilns away back in Hull that will keep him going, if only the bridges are fixed up soon, and he can get stuff to town (Ottawa). Charlie's (the Sherrif) household effects were moved out but his house escaped, so he's alright, but his office in the courthouse is gone of course. All I saved for Jim was a breast-pin, and for George some ties, collars, cuffs, handkerchiefs, hair-brush & a napkin ring.



Dr. Graham's¹⁸ house, Eddy's and all his mills & buildings, the Frank Scott house, all the Marston¹⁹ property, one old church, the Smiths, Lyster's, Johnston & Brooks houses all are gone; also the post office, courthouse, George W's²⁰ office (several blocks to the east), and all the Cement Works²¹ & office; the fire going the whole length of Main Street, and back of it for a long way,

has no street lights, many houses were in darkness for a couple of days, and the cars²⁵ were stopped till Friday morning.

Heaps & heaps of people we know are left without a thing but the clothes they stand in, and some have little or no insurance. The Lysters²⁶ have lost everything except his instruments & a

16. Charles Montgomery Wright, third son of Charles Brown, he was Sheriff of Wright County.
17. Boracid or Boric Acid.
18. Dr. Charles Everett Graham, J.P.
19. The Marstons.
20. George Wright, Sarah Rosina's brother.
21. Cement Works operated by Charles Brown & Son, probably Ruggles.
22. Hammett Pinhey Hill II, grandson of Dr. Hill.
23. Dr. E.C. Malloch's daughter Midge m. the son of Dr. Graham.
24. The Hammett Pinhey family.
25. Streetcars.
26. Dr. H.V. Lyster m. Vera Marston.

I saved all my diaries,²⁷ except this year's, and am so glad — a bit of the old life is still left. For the present I can get along with Lizzie's things till I have time to think, but until Papa gets settled I'm hardly able to move. I sincerely thank you for your kind offers & sympathy and will let you help me later. What I want now very much is a pair of bedroom slippers, for Liz has only one pair and I often have to jump at night when I hear Papa move. So if you want to present me with a pair, I shall be very grateful.

Our poor driving horse was the only one cremated, but I'm afraid Jerry & three puppies have all perished and our canary which they let out of the cage. Just think of my dear old palm tree & the old oil painting of Grandfather Montgomery. I had been congratulating myself that Edith Hunter was not at our house and when I telephoned Percy he told me she had suffered too. He came here last night & said she had just gone home as she had not enough clothes to stay. I am so sorry for her.

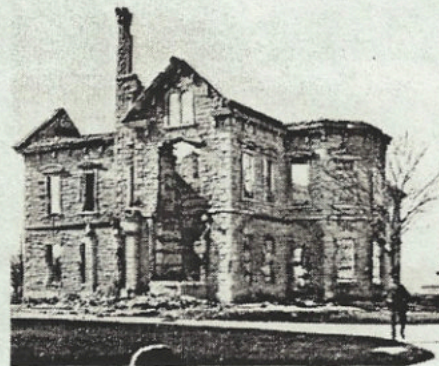
We have hardly formed any plans yet, but don't think it would be wise to rebuild in the same place, for it is bound to be a manufacturing centre. George wrote last night to Mrs. Fred, whose husband is away at the Klondike, and who with her two children is boarding in Aylmer, to see if she would rent us their house on the Aylmer Road near our farm; the house is just like ours where Uncle Ned Wright²⁸ used to live. It is furnished and has been closed up for a year and I hope we can get it till the 1st of October or November at a reasonable rate. Then the Cunninghams²⁹ could come to us for the summer, and perhaps the Brighams³⁰ too, and we could live in picnic fashion and economize till we can look about us and decide our future. I could not stand the city (Ottawa) with Papa all summer.

In the meantime we shall stay here. George B. has been kindness itself and it is so nice to be with Liz, and I could not take Papa into anyone else's house. He seems dreadfully weak tonight. Geo. B.'s foundry was all burned but his ferry-boat is doing a rushing business now that there is no other way of getting to Hull, and has been making \$200 every day since the fire. Liz. is looking very white & is rather shaky on her feet, but has sent away her nurse and is going about now; she went for a drive today with Papa & Lily while I played nurse. The baby³¹ is very good. Bea.³² is still in Stewarton but the other children³³ are at home.

I do wish you could come up for a day or two. I know Stuart³⁴ would be glad to give you a bed, or I even think some here would be wide enough for the two of us, and we could do such a lot of talking and I could show you the terrible sights. Do try to come. Everyone has been so kind & good and my opinion of the world is much better than it was. We have had so many kind letters & at least two offers of houses.

I don't think I can write any more, but this is a volume and I hope you'll be able to read it and correct the mistakes as you go along for I can never read it over. Please thank all the family for their sympathy which has been very sweet to us, and try to come up.

your loving old chum
Sarah



27. Sarah Rosina burned her diaries in 1933 prior to giving up housekeeping & moving into the Elizabeth Residence with her sister, Mrs. George Cunningham.
28. Probably Edward van Cortland Wright.
29. Her mother's family name.
30. Her brother-in-law's family.
31. Rosa Wright Brigham b. 1899.
32. Beatrice b. 1892.
33. Molly, b. 1894, Charles James b. 1895, Lily Wright b. 1898, children of her sister, Liz & George Cunningham. Two more ch. were b. after the fire: Clare M. b. 1905 & George Murray b. 1909.
34. Her sister-in-law, Mary Stuart (MacArthur), Ruggle's wife.

CONFLAGRATION À HULL ET A OTTAWA

Jeudi 26 avril 1900

Récit d'un témoin.

... Dix heures et demie sonnent à l'horloge du Parlement, et le soleil toujours radieux lutte contre la bise qui souffle à travers la vallée de l'Ottawa, formant sur la rivière de légères vagues écumantes au rebours du courant vaincu.

Mais que voit donc soudain le promeneur, là-bas, à l'ouest, non loin de la station du Pacifique à Hull? Serait-ce l'effet d'une étincelle tombée par mégarde sur des matières inflammables? C'est sans doute un amusement d'enfants!... Mais non! Plus de doute! Quels torrents de fumée! Voici la flamme, des langues de feu, des gerbes de feu: c'est un incendie! Le vent du nord-est accourt, jaloux et plein de rage, prêter main forte au feu; il soulève la poussière, s'empare des flots de fumée qu'il fait tournoyer à sa fantaisie capricieuse. Pendant que l'alarme court les fils téléphoniques à Hull, les flammes montent, descendent, travaillent, consomment, dévorent, anéantisent.

L'étincelle, jalouse et haineuse, devance dans son vol aérien et le téléphone, et le corps des pompiers, et le vent furieux, tandis que le soleil, impassible et souriant, darde ses éternels rayons à travers les distances et les plaines. Elle a trouvé de nouveaux aliments dans les cours et les hangars, à vingt ou trente arpents du premier brasier qu'elle vient d'allumer. Nouvelles clameurs, nouveaux cris de détresse! Vaincu et honteux, le vent a juré de triompher, il saisit l'étincelle, l'attise, l'enflamme et la pousse sur la peinture des habitations humaines. En quelques minutes, le feu s'acharne et se venge contre sa proie qui veut lui résister. Les secours humains abondent et se conjurent contre l'élément destructeur. Vains efforts!

L'étincelle, assouvie un instant, se lance de nouveau à travers l'espace: elle atteint d'une tire-d'aile les scieries et les manufactures de la Compagnie Eddy. La bise courroucée la suit, la poursuit, l'agite, l'active sans relâche et sans trêve. Hélas! l'affolement est au comble: aux appels d'alarmes et aux cris déchirants se mêlent des lamentations et des sanglots. Le téléphone convoque les pompiers d'Ottawa, et les chevaux effarés donnent en passant le frisson aux paisibles commerçants apeurés de la capitale: la renommée aux cents voix parcourt tous les quar-

tiers, et l'esplanade du Parlement, qui surplombe à pic la rivière et la cité soeur de Hull, est bientôt noire de curieux haletants et affolés.

La trainée de feu est tracée sur le parcours d'environ trois milles en longueur, partant de la direction nord-ouest de Hull pour aboutir à l'extrémité sud-ouest d'Ottawa. Partout cette chaîne embrasée consume et dévore planches, solives et poutres, maisons, usines, ateliers, magasins; puis, l'étincelle et le vent élargissent à plaisir sur un espace d'un quart de mille leur champs de ruine et de dévastation.

La conflagration est générale, le brasier renvoie une intensité de chaleur qui arrive jusqu'aux hauteurs du Parlement.

Le spectacle est navrant, et l'imagination commence à mesurer l'étendue des ravages et des pertes énormes: l'effondrement du commerce, la cessation du travail, le débordement de la misère et de la désolation.

Une heure sonne au Parlement, quand, à l'extrémité Est de Hull, tout près de la Gatineau, un autre étincelle attisée par le même vent allume un nouveau foyer d'incendie. Les secours font défaut et les flammes exercent à l'aise leur oeuvre néfaste. Quelle calamité inattendue! Hull va devenir, du côté opposé au premier point où le sinistre a éclaté, la proie d'un nouvel ennemi: tous deux réussiront sans nul doute à l'anéantir complètement.

La ville de Hull doit aussi le salut du dernier tiers de ce qui en reste à l'activité intelligente de ses citoyens et à l'apaisement de la bise épuisée et satisfaite. La nuit étoilée et sereine scintille alors sur des cendres et des ruines fumantes...

... Le jour s'est levé, et l'oeil du promeneur de la veille ne découvre plus que des masures, des amas calcinés, des cendres où se meurt l'étincelle, où expire la brise matinale, tandis que le même soleil radieux monte lentement dans la voûte azurée.

Les pertes matérielles sont incalculables, évaluées approximativement à QUINZE MILLIONS de dollars. Tous les moulins, toutes les manufactures, à une ou deux exceptions près, 3,500 maisons, trois églises protestantes, des

millions de pieds de bois, tous les beaux édifices de Hull, à part l'église, le presbytère et deux couvents des Soeurs Grises, la gare du Pacifique et toutes ses dépendances, tout a été annéanti et nivelé au ras du sol.

Les églises catholiques ont été toutes épargnées, et les chers paroissiens de Hull et d'Ottawa-Ouest, si dévoués aux édifices du culte ont réussi, à force de dévouement, de prières et de pleurs, à toucher la clémence céleste et à sauver leurs sanctuaires.

Qui dira les conséquences du désastre? Elles sont inappréciables, si l'on songe aux 3,500 familles ruinées ou à peu près, au grand nombre d'ouvriers sans ressource et sans travail, de commerçants obérés de crédits, de bourgeois dépouillés de leurs épargnes, si l'on songe surtout aux scènes navrantes de gémissements et de sanglots, de déchirements et de désolation, aux souvenirs et aux documents de famille consumés et anéantis, aux SIX cadavres retirés des décombres, aux germes de maladie et de mort que beaucoup ont peut-être contractés, au lendemain douloureux réservé à des milliers d'enfants et de mères de famille sans pain, sans vêtement, sans asile domestique.

Il reste à bénir la Providence qu'une si lamentable catastrophe n'ait point coïncidé avec les frimas de l'hiver, avec les ombres de la nuit; l'étendue des malheurs à déplorer, dans cette alternative, épouvante l'imagination et dérouté les conceptions les plus optimistes.

Une immense consolation rassérène en ce moment les âmes assombries et relève les courages brisés: la très grande majorité des victimes du fléau, pauvres canadiens catholiques, a manifesté, depuis ce jour, une grandeur d'âme touchante, l'héroïsme de la plus sublime résignation. De tels sentiments honorent leurs croyances religieuses, et leur mériteront, avec le regard bénissant de leur Père des cieux, les témoignages de la sympathie qui pleure avec ceux qui pleurent, de la charité qui donne à ceux qui ont faim...

Hull, Que.
April 27/1900

Dear Brother.

I do not know how to start writing of this awful awful fire. Hull and Ottawa was a regular hell of fire from 10 a.m. Thursday till, well it is burning yet, 8 p.m. Friday. The fire started right back of the Hull model school and the wind was blowing a regular gale. I was fighting the fire there and it got so hot we took our hose down in front of Helmers and tried to save the Church and I had just coupled the hose on to the hydrant when the blaze came and the first thing I knew I was on fire and the hose was all burned off the hydrant. I surely would have burned up only I had a heavy rubber coat on. There were so many hoses burned off, the water running in the street that they could not get any water to put on the fire.

Then I thought of the poor fellows in the mill and so I ran for the mills and I got about a doz. men out that surely could not have got out if they had stayed 5 minutes longer. I sent them all across to Ottawa and I had to get into Hull some how so I ran up to the dam around by Hurdsman's mills and I found Mr. Millen laying up there unable to move. He was choked with flame and smoke so I got him on my shoulder and carried him all up the logs above the dam for the dam was all on fire and the wind was so strong that it blew me off the boom into the river and Mr. Millen fell across the boom. I went under but only Mr. Millen's head went in the water. That brought him to, and I was able to handle him better and got him out on the Aylmer road then left him just in time to run for the house and carry Mother out all covered up so she could not see the flames all around her. I took her up to Gordons then we had to take her up to Feelyes in Wrightsville.

We have saved some of our clothes, most of my prizes and books and the horses and that is all. But God knows we are thankful to be alive for you cannot think of the awfullness of the whole thing. Father was at Gordons and the first thing he knew the only way for him to get out was to swim the Brewery creek so in they went. Pete Hamilton and three other men stayed at the pumps till their clothes were all on fire and they had to run right through the burning dry house and jump into the river and one of them never got there God only knows where he is. You can tell what the heat was when we were all glad to lay down in the road and drink the muddy water.

Hull is swept clean from Grahams corner to Marleau's on Brewery St. and clean down to the Catholic Church taking in everything between the river and Victoria St. the sulphite mill is safe, and running. Everything on Main St., Brewery St., Bridge St., Church St., the Post Office, the Jail, City Hall and everything is all gone.

Over in Ottawa it is terrible beyond description. All the Chaudière bridges and every house on the flats is gone. Mr. Perkins, J.R. Booth and all down through Hintonburgh then every house all the way up to the Experimental farm are all gone and they will never know how many persons are burned. They are finding bodies all the time.

Now for business. Mr. Millen told Father that they would know on Monday what they were going to do and I think seeing that the sulphite is saved that they will put in some machines right away. Just as soon as I know I will let you know. Father is just dazed. He walked the streets all night last night

but is getting around all right now. Mother is very weak but is doing fine. We have the nurse with her all the time. Uncle Joe (Harvey) and Aunt Polly did not save anything only one trunk. They will go to Holyoke tomorrow...

... All the churches and public buildings are full of homeless people and we are eating bread that the soldiers are giving away free.

If you could get away it would pay you to come along and see this sight. It is awfully grand. You can see people going around half dressed carrying a cat or perhaps a flat iron — others laughing, others crying. I had to go over today by way of the ferry and buy me a shirt. Mother has not got a shoe or hat. If it had happened in the night there would have been hundreds burned for the fire spread as fast as a man could run for it was over the Experimental farm in less than one hour from the time it started just back of the Hull school house...

