Rufus Stephenson the working member from Kent.

Robert Paul. Myers
University of Windsor

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd

Recommended Citation
https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd/3372

This online database contains the full-text of PhD dissertations and Masters’ theses of University of Windsor students from 1954 forward. These documents are made available for personal study and research purposes only, in accordance with the Canadian Copyright Act and the Creative Commons license—CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution, Non-Commercial, No Derivative Works). Under this license, works must always be attributed to the copyright holder (original author), cannot be used for any commercial purposes, and may not be altered. Any other use would require the permission of the copyright holder. Students may inquire about withdrawing their dissertation and/or thesis from this database. For additional inquiries, please contact the repository administrator via email (scholarship@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone at 519-253-3000 ext. 3208.
NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L'AVONS RECEUE
RUFUS STEPHENSON: THE WORKING MEMBER FROM KENT

by

Robert Paul Myers

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through the Department of History in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor.

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1985
ABSTRACT

The press has always played an influential role in Canadian society. Its power could build or destroy, while the opinion of a few individuals became that of the masses. In Kent the major newspaper today can trace its history to the early days of Chatham, Upper Canada when journalism was in its infancy in North America. The man responsible, Rufus Stephenson, built the young Planet into a successful weekly, and then tri-weekly before turning the paper over to his sons. In the area, other journals were less fortunate. They could not compete against the vigour of the Planet and most lasted but a few years.

The Chatham Planet was a highly visible advocate of Conservative principles. Under Stephenson's editorialship, it became one of the leading tory newspapers in the Province. He used the Planet to augment the strength of the party he was so faithful to, but not at all costs. Stephenson was more faithful to his community. In all matters, the growth and prosperity of Chatham came first. Party politics was not allowed to interfere with his role as Chatham booster.

Stephenson was a tireless worker for his town, county, and country. Whether it was personally weighing loaves of bread to make sure Chathamites were being treated fairly, or lobbying the United States House of Representatives to procure legislation which would assist Canadian tug boat owners, he exerted an equal
zeal. His Puritan background shone through in his concerns for
the family, education, and all human beings, not excluding Negroes.
The improvement to the navigation of the Thames River and the
securing of military troops for Chatham were two of his proudest
achievements. Nationally, his role as elder statesman was no
less important. Above all else, Rufus Stephenson gave all he
had for Chatham. For that alone, it is judicious for Chatham's
history that he be remembered.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is indebted to many persons during the preparation of this thesis. I would like to thank Professor Larry Kulisek for his invaluable guidance and positive suggestions throughout each stage of the work. The staffs of the City of Chatham's Clerk's Office, the Kent County Administrator's Office, and the Kent County Board of Education were most helpful in providing access to the various Minute Books. I am also grateful to Mr. Ian McClymont and Mr. Stephen Salmon of Public Archives Canada for waiving the normal restriction on the use of microfilm. A special thanks is given to Pam Currie, Arlene Mason and Lynne Brown for their most courteous help through an entire summer of research. Finally, I wish to express my most sincere appreciation to my wife, Sharron, for her editorial work and typing of this thesis, but more importantly, for her undeniable understanding as months became years. Her patience and encouragement were my real driving force. Any errors or omissions in the thesis itself, of course, are my own.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. THE YOUNG PRINTER</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE PLANET</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ADVOCATE OF CONSERVATIVE PRINCIPLES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. &quot;OUR ABLEST MEN SHOULD BE SENT TO COUNCIL&quot;</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. &quot;NO PARTY'S SLAVE&quot;</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. ELDER STATESMAN</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

After Page

Rufus Stephenson
(from County of Kent Biographical Record) ix

Sixth Street, Chatham, 1838
(from Lauriston, Romantic Kent) 1

The Western District circa 1843
(from Pryke and Kulisek, ed., The Western District) 2

Western District Townships
(from Pryke and Kulisek, ed., The Western District) 3

Chatham, 1854
(from Hamil, The Valley of the Lower Thames, 1640 to 1850) 20

Chatham Planet Advertisements
(from County of Kent Gazetteer and Geneal Business Directory, 1864) 41

Map of Kent County
(from Lauriston, Romantic Kent) 58

24th Kent Regiment
(from Papers and Addresses, Kent Historical Society, vol. 3) 71

The Kent-Lambton Boundary, 1850 – 59
(from Pryke and Kulisek, ed., The Western District) 81

Chatham, 1872
(from Lauriston, Romantic Kent) 99
When historians, whether academic or amateur, dabble in specific disciplines of history outside of the general realm, they work within a predefined framework. That is to say, the definitions and limits of political or economic history, for example, are clear-cut, and generally accepted by their practitioners. Such is not the case when dealing with local history. As of late, one modern trend in Canada and the United States has been to relate local history to a broader spectrum, albeit in varying degrees, in order to enhance the picture and give it further dimension. In order for this type of writing to have any historical merit whatsoever, the local historian must be cautioned against succumbing to the pitfalls which inevitably accompany this specialized, and often complicated, field of study. This concern was aptly addressed by C. W. Humphries in "The Writing of Local History: A Review Article." According to Humphries, one of the largest problems is the sheer amount of information. Without control local history becomes a mere list of names and insignificant facts. Once the writer has learned to work within the limits of the genre, however, local history becomes a "people's history" and a valuable instrument in the

1Charles W. Humphries, "The Writing of Local History: A Review Article," B C Studies No. 22 (Summer, 1974); 71 - 75.

wider framework of Canadian history. The value of local history can not be underestimated. Apart from intrinsic interest, regional and local studies provide a more realistic view of Canada's pluralism. This was clearly demonstrated in October, 1979 when a conference was held at the University of Windsor to examine the uniqueness of the Western District. While there are those who, undoubtedly, still view this approach to history with scorn, their numbers are dwindling. "Local history performs the sacred mission of giving readers an intimate sense of time and place and of being part of a community." It has earned its rightful place in the academic world.

In examining the works produced on Chatham, Ontario, and area, one is quick to note the overlapping of themes. That is not to say that important events have not occurred in Chatham. This writer would be the first to compare selected moments of Chatham's bygone days with any community struggling for survival in Upper Canada, then, Canada West, and finally, Ontario. Rather, such prominent forces as the Thames River and its importance to navigation and shipbuilding; the War of 1812 and the area's hero of that contest, Chief Tecumseh, and the reaction of the white population to the Negro influx, have played the dominant role in the writing of the area's history.

Few real concise works exist. Fred Coyne Hamil's, The Valley of the Lower Thames 1640 to 1850, published in 1953, is

---


4 Thomas D. Clark, "Local History: A Mainspring for National History," Local History Today, 1979, 51.
a most scholarly text, but is quite broad in nature and limited to pioneer life and times. Even more overwhelming is Victor Lauriston’s, Romantic Kent. The Story of a County 1626–1952, published in 1952. Indeed, three and one-quarter centuries of history in one volume leaves little room for detail. While the importance of these works can not be denied, their vastness created exactly what they were intended to, a general picture of the area. A more precise endeavour is The Western District, (1983) edited by K. G. Pryke and L. L. Kulisek. Several individual papers contained within the publication offer insight into the development of Kent’s early history. The seven volumes of Papers and Addresses, produced between 1914 and 1951 by the Kent Historical Society, also offer valuable information, if only on a limited basis.

Fewer, still, are biographies of men who built and shaped the community. If one subscribes to the theory that great men are a mere reflection of their times and are only as significant as the events around them, then surely Chatham had its share of eminent individuals. The American Civil War, Confederation, and Macdonald’s National Policy were as important for Chatham as they were for the country. During these years, Chatham grew from obscurity into a mature thriving town. A man who not only lived through this epoch, but was a major player in the game deserves attention. The present thesis has examined one such individual, Rufus Stephenson, and the role he played in the development of Chatham.

In the past, biography writing was frowned upon by most historians. They saw no relevance to the complex issues of 'church and state' and 'war and peace' with the trivial happenings surrounding a single individual's life. That attitude has changed, however, especially since World War II. 

John A. Garraty's *The Nature of Biography*, published in 1958, is a most worthwhile tool in examining the development of biography writing through the ages. Equally important is *Biography as Art. Selected Criticism 1560 - 1960* edited by James L. Clifford (1962). Clifford's introduction gives a good explanation as to just what constitutes a biographer. His bibliography is an excellent source of full length and shorter studies on the criticism of biography. Today, the writing of biography is not only popular, but quite acceptable in the academic world.

To write a true biography, some argue, one had to have lived with or known the subject. Voltaire once said, "...'tis a monstrous piece of charlatanry to pretend to paint a personage with whom you have never lived." Most, including this writer, disagree. While there is no doubt the task of compiling information would be much easier, it would be impossible to fully comprehend the person's place in history.

If biography writing is an accepted mode of historical study, what criteria must be used in selecting one's subject? Must he be a Churchill, a Hitler, a Roosevelt? Such is not the case. The defence given by Phillips Brooks in 1866 is most


suitable. "The intrinsic life of any human being is so interesting if it can be simply and sympathetically put into words it will be legitimately interesting to other men." For this writer, there can be no better reason for selecting Rufus Stephenson as the subject of the present thesis.

In the writing of an individual's life, it is not enough to give mere facts. There must be a theme. During Stephenson's life as proprietor and editor of the Chatham Planet as as a politician both municipally and, then federally for a period of approximately twenty-five years, such a theme emerges above all else. He was a first-class Chatham booster. At a time when Chatham was in its infancy, Stephenson played an integral role in its direction and growth.

The first chapter defines Chatham as it existed a dozen years or so before Stephenson's arrival. It was a time of struggle and bitter resentment towards the district town of Sandwich. Once this obstacle was overcome, prosperity was not long in arriving. While this information can be readily found in books an attempt had been made by the author to highlight the period with articles and data secured from the newspapers of the day. These newspapers, of which there are several,

8 Garraty, The Nature of Biography, 140.


10 For a detailed explanation of the separatist movement in the Western District, and the attempts by citizens in Chatham to make that town the county seat, see C. F. J. Whebell, "The Fragmentation of the Western District, 1830 - 1860: A Study of Local Separatism", in Pryke and Kulisek, ed., The Western District, 158 - 195.
and which were most useful, not only for the first chapter, but the entire thesis, exist in a remarkable run on microfilm in the Chatham Public Library.

Without a doubt, the greatest tool used to contemplate and reflect on Stephenson, the man, was his newspaper, the Chatham Planet. The second chapter focuses on Stephenson as newspaperman. Being not only the proprietor, but editor as well, his ideals were constantly put before the public. One is given the unique opportunity of witnessing the enunciation of those ideals and any changes they underwent. More importantly, one must be conscious of the impact of such a position of responsibility. Then, as now, the author is convinced that the beliefs and convictions of many citizens were, and are, formulated after reading the views expounded in the newspaper. Such capability must not be treated with light regard in determining Stephenson's influence in the community.

The betterment of Chatham was always one of the chief preoccupations of Rufus Stephenson. Chapter three examines his involvement in the community from his early days with the volunteer fire brigade, through his tenure as town councillor, deputy-reeve, and, eventually, mayor of Chatham. Notwithstanding the value of the newspaper, the Minute books are an even greater asset in researching Stephenson's municipal political career. The original copies of the Minute Book of County Council Proceedings, 1860 - 1865 and the Town of Chatham Minute Book, January 21, 1861 to September 25, 1868 are kept in the vaults of the Kent County Municipal Building and the Civic Centre, Chatham, respectively. From these, much was gained.
Rufus Stephenson's political career representing his constituents of Kent spanned some fifteen years. Fortunately, he was a hard-working Member of Parliament, if not over zealous at times, for the betterment of the entire area. The best record of his achievements and failures were solicited from the Debates of the House of Commons, the Journals of the House of Commons, and the Sessional Papers for the time period in question. As well, the Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, housed at the Public Archives in Ottawa, are most valuable in understanding Stephenson's political life behind closed doors and his relationship with the Prime Minister. The fourth chapter deals with this period of his life; a period marked with successes. In four general elections, Stephenson was never defeated. He even survived the post-Pacific Scandal election (1874), which swept the Liberal-Conservatives from power in a devastating manner. Throughout, he initiated many measures of importance, not only to his constituency, but to the country. It was in this service Stephenson left his greatest mark on Kent County.

After two decades of active politics and a life-long commitment to the growth of Chatham, Rufus Stephenson was ready to slow down, if only slightly. Appropriately, the role of elder statesman capped his career. The final chapter examines this role, and the frustration Stephenson experienced in the latter years of his life by the government he had so dutifully served.

Chatham, indeed, had enviable growth in the era from the 1840's to the 1880's. The downturn in the economic cycle did not seem to have quite the negative affect here as it had in similar communities elsewhere. Many hands assisted in the
molding of Chatham on its way to becoming a fine city. One such sculptor of consequence was Rufus Stephenson.
CHAPTER I

THE YOUNG PRINTER

From its beginning, those who came to settle and clear the land around Chatham were proud of their community. Visitors were more ambivalent. Many found it to be a picturesque settlement nestled among the maple trees at the forks of McGregor's Creek and the Thames River; others found it to be a swampy backwater void of any semblance of civilization.

In 1791, John Graves Simcoe was named Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada. With the title came the arduous challenge to carve a nation out of the wilderness. Simcoe set about his labour with energetic zeal, and soon envisioned a country made in the image of Britain. Crucial to commercial life and military defence of the colony was the navigation of the Thames River. The establishment of a dry dock and a vigorous shipbuilding enterprise were needed at the most strategic point. For Simcoe, Chatham suited his scheme best. By 1795, some 600 acres were set aside as a military reserve and town plot at Chatham. Thus, the foundation was laid.

In the three decades that followed, Chatham grew. A census of 1830 show a population of 100; 300 in 1835; 759 in 1939; and 812 by 1841.¹ A slow beginning, perhaps, but it was a beginning.

¹The Planet. Souvenir Edition, Chatham, Ontario, Canada,
SIXTH STREET, CHATHAM, 1838

Painting by Lt. P. Bainbrigge. Public Archives of Canada
A souvenir edition of the Planet listed the building accomplishments of the hamlet in that period. The first church, St. Paul's Anglican, was constructed in 1820. The first steamboat to ply the Thames, the Argo, made its appearance in 1828. The first public school was erected in 1831 and the first grist mill in 1833. In the year 1834, the first steam saw mill was constructed, as was a bridge over McGregor's Creek. A distillery was established in 1836 and, finally, in 1837 North Chatham was surveyed.²

By 1841, Chatham had become a village, and its first newspaper, the Chatham Journal, was born that summer. At the time, a report from the local temperance society noted that in Chatham there were "three breweries, thirteen licensed places, six unlicensed, three magistrates and thirty-six drunkards, truly a pleasant record even for a village."³

An editorial which appeared in the Chatham Journal in the summer of 1843 clearly boasts of the advancements made. "The improvements and additions that have taken place since the commencement of the present year, surpasses those of all other towns in the district taken collectively."⁴ By now, the population had reached 1,082 residing on both sides of the river.⁵ In the end, however, the editor had to lament, "while Sandwich

1904, 6. The exact date of this special homecoming publication is not known. The regular issue of 30 May 1904, however, stated that the souvenir issue would be published the next day.

²Planet, 1904, 5.
³Planet, 1904, 5.
⁴The Chatham Weekly Journal, 12 August 1843, 2.
⁵Chatham Journal, 9 December 1843, 3.
rejoices in numbering among her most wealthy inhabitants about a half dozen barristers, besides a whole squad of sucking gentlemen of the long robe! Chatham can scarcely give employment to a single lawyer!!⁶ That was a sore spot for Chathamites.

Almost from the inception of the Western District, Chatham resented Sandwich’s role as the district town. Chatham was growing at a rapid rate, and its citizens saw no need to have to travel to the remote corner of the district to conduct their legal business. In fact, this feeling became more pronounced throughout the district as townsites developed and the seat of government appeared to move further away from the people it served.⁷ Separatist fever ran rampant as petitions were sent to the legislature seeking the division of the Western District.⁸ The solution seemed a simple matter to Chathamites.

⁶Chatham Journal, 12 August 1843, 5.

⁷The resentment of several centres including Chatham towards Sandwich as the District Town was legitimate. C. F. J. Whelbell examined this issue and outlined the political maneuvers and frustrations involved in "The Fragmentation of the Western District 1830 - 1860: A Study of Local Separatism". See K. G. Pryke and L. L. Kulisek, ed., The Western District (Windsor: Essex County Historical Society and the Western District Council, 1983), pages 167 to 190.

⁸Pryke and Kulisek, ed., The Western District, pages 172 to 178. Whether it was the established seat at Sandwich, or the interests of the northern section of the District centre around Warwick - Sarnia, or the concerns of the Chatham community; each had their reasons, mainly economical, to support or oppose District division in one form or another. Over a period of approximately fifteen years, petitions were brought before the legislature in an attempt to procure change. On 1 January 1850, Districts were abolished and replaced with the familiar County structure. The Western District became the United Counties of Essex, Kent, and Lambton. The following year Kent was separated and Chatham became the County seat.
Western District Townships

1 Sandwich 11 Dover 21 Bosanquet
2 Maidstone 12 Chatham 22 Sarnia
3 Rochester 13 Camden 23 Plympton
4 Tilbury West 14 Zone 24 Warwick
5 Aydeerton 15 Romney 25 Moore
6 Malden 16 Tilbury East 26 Enniskillen
7 Colchester 17 Raleigh 27 Brooke
8 Gosfield 18 Harwick 28 Somba
9 Mereas 19 Howard 29 Dawn
10 Pelee Island 20 Orford 30 Euphemia

MAP 5
Western District
Persons Per Square Mile
1851

KEY TO MAPS
0-10
10-20
20-30
30-40
40-50
50 and up
A white blank indicates no recorded population
Chatham, centrally located, the district seat as opposed to Sandwich and there would be no need for division.

In preparing information for his Canadian Gazetteer to be published in 1846, W. H. Smith was impressed with what he saw in Chatham. His detailed list of professions and trades, as well as his favourable account, spoke well of the growing village. "The town," he wrote, may be said to have commenced only about fifteen years ago, since which time it has progressed rapidly and now contains about 1,500 inhabitants; and property has greatly increased in value, so much so, that a small town lot, which at the first settlement could have been worth but a mere trifle, was sold a short time since to a merchant at the enormous advance of 750 dollars.

The new road from London to Amherstburgh passes through the town. Four - horsed stages going eastward and westward, leave Chatham everyday.

Chatham contains four churches and chapels; Episcopal, Presbyterian, Secession, and Methodist; also a theatre, which is well attended, the performers being amateur; and a cricket club.

As the overall population increased, so did the number of Negroes who moved into the area. While the Act abolishing slavery in the British colonies was not passed until 1833, a law forbidding the importation of slaves into Upper Canada was passed by its Legislature as early as 1793. 10 This opened the door for thousands of slaves who fled the United States for the freedom of the north. Due to its geographic position, and the generosity of certain of its citizens, Kent County quickly became a haven for these escaped slaves. Chatham, the largest

town in the County, became well known as one of the termini of the Underground Railroad. From here, many moved to the Negro settlements of Buxton or Dresden; others remained in Chatham. Benjamin Drew, an abolitionist, visited Kent County in 1855 and reported on the surprisingly large number of Negroes in the area. "At Chatham," Drew wrote, "the fugitives are as thick as blackbirds in a cornfield."

The result of Drew's interviews with many of these former slaves indicated they were leading a life of happiness and prosperity; at least by their standards. Not all records, however, attested to the ideals of proper human dignity. While the treatment of the coloured people in Southern Ontario can not be compared to that given in the southern United States, the attitude towards them was one of condescension. A reporter from the Chatham Journal expressed surprise about the manner in which the coloured folk of the town were able to conduct themselves during the emancipation day celebrations. "It gives us pleasure to add, the greatest regularity and decorum was preserved, and the appearance they presented was very respectable." To say the Negro was treated with contempt was most evident in a Chatham Journal article of 1844. A negro, Dennis Jackson, had been caught stealing some pork from the root

13Chatham Journal, 28 August 1841, 3.
cellar of a prominent white citizen, Henry Eberts. The newspaper reporter seemed to have a great deal of fun with the story at the expense of Mr. Jackson as well as the town's entire coloured population.

Mr. E's return created some confusion among the black cattle and they set their wits to work to hide the plunder; 'Golly!' exclaimed one, 'I guess I'll take my bag o' pork two mile back in de bush, now Massa Henry's come back.'

Supposedly, there were others involved and together they decided to hide the pork until some time later. When Jackson returned to collect his share, the entire pork was gone.

'Goramity,' cried the sable victim, 'if I don't peach I go tell Massa Henry orl bout dese dam nigger teevs'. Accordingly, that is just what we did. From the documents researched, this form of ridicule was more common than not in Chatham during the 1840's.

Many of the Negroes in Chatham and surrounding area were intelligent, hard-working individuals who desired to contribute to the community and were not at all as the picture painted in the Chatham Journal. Those inclined to follow politics were staunch supporters of the Tory party. The reasons were abundantly clear. The pro-British and anti-American policies of Tories reassured the Negro that slavery would be kept out of Canada West. On the other hand, the Reformers' flirtation from time to time with pro-American feelings left the Negro population with a sense of uneasiness.

14 Chatham Journal, 24 February, 1844, 3.
On 18 December 1847, the Solicitor-General John Hillyard Cameron received a petition from the Coloured Freeholders of Kent in which they asked:

We, the undersigned, who have sought freedom from the glorious flag which proclaims it to the world, beg to call you to come forward to represent the County of Kent.

We, as the Freeholders in the County, and, as a body we wish to testify our gratitude to the country which has received use, and the Constitution which protects us; by recording our votes in favour of loyal and good man.

That you are such, we feel assured, that you will not neglect the educational and other interests of the coloured race we are certain, and again request you to come and receive our votes.

Cameron received their petition and support with gratitude. "I shall be glad," he promised, "to assist in doing all in my power for the benefit of your race, for the promotion of the education of your children, and for making them worthy to take a proper position among their Fellow Canadian Subjects." 17

By the end of the decade, growth and prosperity were on Chatham's doorstep. Clubs and societies to occupy one's leisure hours were being formed. Advertisements for regular steamboat and stagecoach service between Chatham and Amherstburg were common in the local newspaper. In addition, a large number of prominent citizens had met to discuss petitioning the Legislature to obtain a charter for the formation of a "Joint Stock Company" with the aim to plank the main road from Chatham to London. 18 The escape from the shackles of Sandwich was at hand.

16 Farrell, History of the Negro Community, 63.
17 Farrell, History of the Negro Community, 64.
18 The Chatham Gleaner, Chatham, Canada West, 9 January 1848, 2.
With the formation of Kent into a separate county, Chatham became the County Town. There was no looking back.

In all probability 1850 was ushered in with the usual pomp and festivities; few realizing it was the beginning of an era. In that year, Eli Stephenson moved his family from St. Catharines to Chatham. The Kent County Census Returns for 1851 list Eli Stephenson, innkeeper, as the head of the household, age 53; his wife, Chloe, 50 years of age; their sons, Eli, age 26, an engineer; Seymour, 20 years of age, a physician; and Rufus, at age 16, a printer.19

Rufus Stephenson was born in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1835. His paternal ancestors were from England and the famous railway engineers, George and Robert Stephenson, were from the same branch of the family tree.20 He received his formal education at the Grantham Academy in St. Catharines.21 In his own right, Rufus would add greatly to the honour of the family.

The exact date of the Stephenson family arrival is unclear. To be sure, there would have been no fanfare. There was a visitor to Chatham in that same year, however, who should have created momentous excitement. Lord Elgin, the Governor-General of Canada arrived on the afternoon of 24 August.22

19 Canada Census, 1851, Kent County, 53.
20 Commemorative Biography Record of the County of Kent (Toronto: J. H. Beers and Company, 1904), 8.
22 The Kent Advertiser, Chatham, Canada West, 29 August 1850, 2.
part to the fact that His Excellency's intention to visit Chatham was made known only twenty-four hours beforehand, Chathamites did not gather in throngs to give a proper reception. The newspaper had been published two days previous and would not be in print for another week. Few knew of Lord Elgin's arrival, or perhaps few cared. The reporter for the *Kent Advertiser* expressed dismay:

...they, therefore, do not feel themselves bound to express an enthusiastic devotion, or a knee-bending loyalty, to any man. It was not, therefore, to be expected that Lord Elgin, under all the circumstances, would be received with any extravagant demonstrations of joy. It was proper, however, that he should be respectfully welcomed by principle inhabitants of the town if nothing more.

Later that week, Lord Elgin attended services at the Episcopal Church. As the minister had become ill, a lay person, Mr. George Thomas the Upper Canada Bank Agent took charge of the ministerial duties. It was a common practice to have a prayer for the Governor-General's health and well-being recited during the service. Inadvertently, and as one can imagine much to Mr. Thomas' horror, that particular page was missing. Rather than fumble and stammer through an impromptu prayer, Thomas omitted it entirely. Lord Elgin must have pondered at the state of affairs in Chatham and reflected upon the loyalty, or lack of such, in this part of the country. The next day he left in much the same fashion as he had arrived.

We saw no cloud of claps in the air, we heard no such hum as when a multitude bids adieu, the concave sky reverberated back no sound of mighty voices, but

---

*Kent Advertiser*, 29 August 1850, 2.
we are compelled to the admission that everything de-
noted carelessness, want of interest, and impos-
sibility. 24

Why such apathy? Was the town comprised mainly of
Tories, and were they merely shunning the representative of
the Reform Government? Was the Rebellion Losses Bill still
fresh in their minds? 25 This writer thinks not. Politically,
the town was Clear Grit territory. The current member of
Parliament for Kent was Malcolm Cameron, a cabinet minister in
the Baldwin-Lafontaine government, 26 and in 1851, Kent's support
for the Reformers would remain constant with the election of
George Brown as their member. 27 It was not surprising that the
local Tories failed to line the streets for Elgin, but why
the lack of interest among the Reformers? If the actions of
their Member of Parliament was a true indication of local senti-
ment, the answer becomes more clear. The Clear Grit movement
had been gaining momentum. The moderate Baldwin had rejected
the radicalism he saw taking hold in his party. 28 One of the
leading proponents of Gritism was Cameron who, by 1850, had

24 Kent Advertiser, 29 August 1850, 2.
25 J. M. S. Careless, ed., The Pre-Confederation Premiers:
Ontario Government Leaders, 1841-1867 (Toronto: University of
Toronto Press, 1980), 137. On 25 April 1849, Elgin gave his
assent to the Rebellion Losses Bill which, in part, compensated
certain members of the Reformers involved in the uprising of
1837. Furious Tories invaded the Parliament and set the building
ablaze. Throughout that summer, Lord Elgin travelled through
Upper Canada in an attempt to suppress Tory indignation.
26 Careless, The Pre-Confederation Premiers, 132.
27 R. S. Woods, Harrison Hall and Its Associations
(Chatham: Planet Book and Job Department, 1896), 135.
28 Careless, The Pre-Confederation Premiers, 139.
left the Baldwin cabinet. While in Chatham, Elgin found few who sympathized or even cared about his visit.

The precise date as to the commencement of Rufus Stephenson's career as a newspaper journalist in Chatham is uncertain. Let it suffice to say that he secured employment with the Kent Advertiser within months of his arrival. One can only assume, due to his youth and inexperience, that his duties were confined to the tedious labours of the press room or the necessary, but unstimulating, chores of the office as a prerequisite for advancement in his chosen profession. Whatever his duties or responsibilities, Stephenson used them as stepping stones to fulfill a career as one of the country's most influential newspapermen. By his own hand, in an article written about the history of the Kent Advertiser upon its demise, we know that Stephenson worked for that newspaper for two years and seven months. The exact reasons for his departure, however, remain speculative.

When the Stephenson family first arrived in Chatham, the Kent Advertiser was an infant newspaper. Its predecessor, the Chatham Gleaner, due to financial difficulties, had its type and press seized by the Sheriff in February of 1849. The Gleaner had been a staunch Conservative paper and in its last editorial took solace in announcing that those principles

---

29 Careless, The Pre-Confederation Premiers, 139.
30 Chatham Planet, 3 May 1860, 2.
31 The Chatham Gleaner, Chatham, Canada West, 20 February 1849, 2.
would continue to be advocated under the new owner, Mr. Thomas A. Ireland. "In the midst of our difficulties," the editor stated,

we feel a pleasure in stating to our subscribers that a Conservative paper would emanate from the same press, under the control of Mr. Ireland, a gentleman well and favourably known throughout the District, the new paper will be called "The Kent Advertiser." 32

Why did Rufus Stephenson go to work at the Kent Advertiser in the first place? More importantly, what prompted him to leave when he did? The answer to these questions may never be fully answered. However, when one examines the editorials to solicit viewpoints, distinct possibilities for his leaving become clear; and perhaps, in less than three years, they were all too clear to Stephenson. Unfortunately, a complete run of the Kent Advertiser no longer exists. As listed in the Union List of Canadian Newspapers Held by Canadian Libraries, only the issues from February 21, 1850 to April 10, 1851, December 29, 1854, and May 18, 1855 are available. Nevertheless, those still in existence offer excellent commentary on a variety of topics. Unlike the promise made in the last issue of the Chatham Gleaner, the Kent Advertiser was not wholeheartedly Conservative.

The Chatham Gleaner began in 1844 after the demise of one of the town's earliest newspapers, the Chatham Journal. 33

32 Chatham Gleaner, 20 February 1849, 2.

33 The Chatham Journal (1841 - 44) was owned by Charles Dolsen and Dr. Fulford. In 1844 the Chatham Gleaner, published by Edwin Larwill and George Gould, continued to be the Conservative organ in Kent. Illustrated Historical Atlas
In four years time, it also ceased to exist, and lead to the birth of the Kent Advertiser. All three were sympathetic to Conservative views. However, another paper, the Chatham Chronicle, began publication in 1849 and also professed to be Conservative. The size of Chatham and the competition to secure advertisers dictated the necessity for one of the papers to deviate from its original intentions.

Editorial dogfights between the Kent Advertiser and its adversary, the Chatham Chronicle, were common reading for the citizens of Chatham. It is in these editorials that one is able to ascertain the political patronage of both. Although not clearly stated, the violence which had erupted in 1849 in Montreal as a result of Elgin accepting the Rebellion Losses Bill provided the background for the editor of the Kent Advertiser to show which side of the fence he would sit.

It was the Conservative Press which raised a hue and cry against a measure for Lower Canada, which was precisely similar to the one which their own friends had passed but a short time before for Upper Canada, and by their incendiary language incited a mob to commit acts of violence and wanton destruction of both public and private property, the atrocity of

of the Counties of Essex and Kent (Toronto: H. Belden and Company, 1880), 52.

Larwill had been defeated by George Brown in 1851 for his bid to win Kent. He returned in 1854 and was Kent's Member of Parliament until 1857. That year Larwill suffered a humiliating defeat (1828 votes to 1050) to the strong Reform candidate Archibald McKellar. R. S. Woods, Harrison Hall, 136.

34 The population of Chatham in 1843 was 1,082. See Chatham Journal, 9 December 1843, 3. By 1852 the population has increased dramatically, but still only 2,050. See Chatham Planet, 13 February 1861, 3.

which have but few parallels in modern times. It was the Conservative Party alone, who after the act was committed, excused the guilty and palliated the circumstances, and it is the Chatham Chronicle, a Conservative paper which arose out of the violence and excesses of those times, which now attempts to turn away the guilt from the real actors and fasten it upon those whom the incendaries wished to destroy.

With respect to the Chronicle's remarks about his not knowing who now edits the Kent Advertiser, we can assure our contemporary that the Conservatives need not dispise him as a renegade, for he never held their policial faith, nor need the Reformers view him with the suspicion as a newly gained convert to their opinion, for as far as his humble abilities would allow, he has always been a supporter of their cause, and so long as he remains what the Chronicle, in his wrath, is pleased to call the 'Kent Scribbler', he will be found if not an able, at least a zealous advocate of the great principles of Reform. 36

It was also quite evident that the Kent Advertiser was at odds with other so-called 'Conservative' journals as the Amherstburg Courier and the Hamilton Spectator. The Advertiser responded to an article which had appeared earlier in the Courier under the title "Politics in Kent". Using the same title, the editor replied:

Under the above caption appears the leading article in the last Amherstburg Courier prefaced by a letter presumably from Kent over the signature of 'Alpha'. The letter calls upon the Amherstburg Courier to support the Conservative interest in this County and in a very flattering manner states the Editor of the Courier will readily use the advantage 'his paper may be to the County of Kent, being strictly Conservative'.

We presume that 'Alpha' means that either the Courier, is strictly Conservative, or that the County of Kent is strictly Conservative - the former we have no objections to admit, as for the latter the history of the last few elections most emphatically denies it. 37

The politics of the Advertiser was straightforward. As

36 Kent Advertiser, 25 April 1850, 2.
37 Kent Advertiser, 12 December 1850, 2.
stated earlier, its limited availability must lead one to speculate on this matter. However, there is little to suggest its principles changed under the proprietorship of Mr. Ireland. For this reason, one might question Rufus Stephenson's association with this journal. Although Stephenson would have most assuredly had definite political convictions, the game of politics would have been of little consequence to him at that juncture of his life. One must also bear in mind that job opportunities for him would have been scarce. Regardless of the reason, young Rufus dutifully learned his trade and waited for the right opportunity to move onward and upward.

Knowing that Stephenson worked at the Kent Advertiser for two years and seven months, and assuming he began some time in the latter half of 1850, the year 1853 would be the most logical estimate as to when opportunity knocked. That opportunity came in the form of a job with the young Western Planet, but would end as one of the most successful and influential careers in the city's history.

In October of 1854, at the age of nineteen, Rufus Stephenson married Miss Georgiana Emma Andrew of Chatham. According to the announcement which appeared in the Western Planet, the couple were married by the Reverend McColl of the Free Church, and shortly after the ceremony left by train for the Falls.

38 In 1851, Miles Miller left his partner Thomas Ireland at the Kent Advertiser, and with Jacob Dolsen founded the Western Planet. The Planet succeeded the Chatham Chronicle.

39 The Western Planet, Chatham, Canada West, 11 October 1854, 3.
The announcement also listed Stephenson as the foreman of the Western Planet Office. Within a year, the first of nine children would be born to the Stephensons. 40

It is an ironic, but pleasant, coincidence that in 1855 Chatham was incorporated as a town. In that same year, the young Rufus Stephenson, husband and family man, took over the management of the Planet. Stephenson was but twenty years of age. Both the City and the young printer had grown; both were continuing to move ahead by leaps and bounds, but had already reached a symbolic stage of maturity.

40 Planet, 5 November 1855, 2.
CHAPTER II

THE PLANET
THE ADVOCATE OF CONSERVATIVE PRINCIPLES

British North American journalism did not evolve from within the nation; it was the result of the older and tried methods from the Old World and New England Colonies.\(^1\) With increased Loyalist migration, there existed a need to satisfy the appetite of those members of society who craved the news of the world. In 1793, the Upper Canada Gazette, the first newspaper in the province, was founded by Louis Roy.\(^2\) It was not an innovative measure but, rather, a transplant of a popular industry in other lands. Its popularity in the British north was slow to take hold, however. The early occupations of fishing and fur trading discouraged settlements and growth.\(^3\) As a result, by 1813 there was but one newspaper in Upper Canada.\(^4\)


\(^2\) Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada, 3. Louis Roy published the Upper Canada Gazette for only one year. Then, Gideon and Silvester Tiffany took control of the Gazette. Both are considered the first real publishers in Upper Canada. See W. S. Wallace "The First Journalists in Upper Canada". Canadian Historical Review. XXVII (December, 1945): 372 - 380.

\(^3\) Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada, 10.

\(^4\) Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada, 11.
The 1840's were a significant period in the history of Canadian journalism. The population of both Canadas had increased dramatically. With this growth, new industries such as farming and lumbering took shape. Local manufacturing shops sprang up as craftsmen became an integral part of the community. Newspaper editors found a home amongst these early industrialists. Technological advances also aided the cause. With forests cleared and roads built, news was gathered more easily and quickly. It was not long before newsprint was purchased from the United States as opposed to Britain, and, eventually, manufactured in Upper Canada itself. By 1853, there appeared 114 newspapers in Canada West alone.

It is interesting to note that journals such as the Toronto Globe (1844), the London Free Press (1849), and the Bytown Packet (1844) were established during this period and remain significant newspapers today. While the newspaper grew at a healthy pace, circulation remained small. Readership was obviously limited to those with education. For that reason, and the slow process of gathering news, weeklies were most common. It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that

5 Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada, 10. The population of the two Canadas increased by 677,000.
6 Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada, 11.
8 Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada, 11.
dailies began to have an impact on the newspaper industry. The political system which evolved from Lord Elgin's responsible government was subject to many interpretations of principle. Newspapers were labelled according to the stand they took on that very issue. They quickly became known as Reform or anti-Reform (Conservative). This common situation was no different in Chatham.

With the demise of the Chatham Gleaner and the formation of the Kent Advertiser, Conservative principles were advocated by two journals in Chatham by the late 1840's; the other being the Chatham Chronicle. As we have seen, however, the balance of nature was not long in securing the proper order of things as the Kent Advertiser leaned towards the ideals of reform from its earliest issues. Unfortunately, as with the Gleaner, the Chronicle succumbed to the economic burdens associated with the early industry. This created a void for the expression in printed form of Conservative opinions in the area; a void which lasted but two years.

In April of 1851, the Western Planet under the proprietorship of Jacob A. Dolsen and Miles Miller, made its debut

10(Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada, 25. Canada West's first successful daily was the British Whig of Kingston established in 1849.

11(Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada, 14.

12Dolsen was a proud pioneer family name in Kent. Isaac had moved from Pennsylvania as a Loyalist. He settled on the Raleigh side of the Thames where his tavern became a favourite watering hole for travellers between Detroit and the interior. Many of his sons and grandchildren carried on the family tradition of leadership.
in Chatham. Mr. Miller had been a partner with Thomas Ireland in the early days of the Kent Advertiser. Possibly, the senior partner's sympathetic treatment towards Reformers and their policies forced Miller, a loyal Tory, into the formation of the Planet. This sheet, as early newspapers were often called, set about immediately to expound and defend the causes of righteousness and justice of true Conservatism. None, at the time, fully anticipated the unprecedented success which would be enjoyed by the Planet.

The precise sentiments of the Western Planet for the initial two years will remain in obscurity, however, as the earliest extant issue is that of June 13, 1853. During those years, Dolsen's departure left Miller as the editor and sole proprietor. The writer has also speculated that it was at about this time, early to mid 1853, that Rufus Stephenson began his long and industrious career with the Planet. Thus, while Matthew operated a tavern and trading store on the Dover side of the Thames. Here, he also established a grist mill, a tannery, a distillery, and a blacksmith shop at a time when Chatham could not get on her feet.

John was a member of the First District Council of 1842. He also became a Warden and Deputy Reeve of Raleigh. Charles was one of the publishers of Chatham's first newspaper, the Chatham Journal. See the many references to the Dolsen name in Victor Lauriston, Romantic Kent. The Story of a County 1626 - 1952 (Wallaceburg, Ontario: Standard Press, 1952).

CHATHAM, 1854, LOOKING NORTHEAST FROM ABOVE
THE RANKIN DOCK

Toronto Public Library—John Ross Robertson Collection

1 McKerrell Hotel  
2 Caleb Wheeler's butcher shop  
3 James Burns' residence, Thames Street  
4 John Tissiman's residence  
5 No. 2 Firehall and Police Station  
6 John Smith's tannery, afterwards William Currier's establishment  
7 Old Fifth Street bridge over the Thames  
8 Tecumseh Park  
9 Barracks  
10 Crow and Beatty's warehouse  
11 Rankin warehouse and wharf
Stephenson was not the actual architect of "his" journal, it was not long before the reins of power were in his hands.

One can well imagine that operating a newspaper business in the middle of the nineteenth century would have been trying. With the competition vying for the limited number of subscriptions only the strongest could survive. Most did not. Such appeared to be the case for Miles Miller in 1855. In the Planet, he announced:

The cares, labours and anxieties necessarily attendant on the management of a rapidly increasing business, and the consequent injurious effect they have had on his health, together with a large amount of outstanding debts, have reluctantly compelled him to retire for a season from it.

In reference to Mr. Stephenson to whom he has made an assignment of his business, he would intimate, that for some years he has been Foreman in the Office, and being a young man of intelligence, good business habits, and much experience as the conductor of a Journal he would recommend him to the notice and patronage of the supporters of the Planet. 14

With that very issue, in the top left-hand corner of page one, appeared the name of Rufus Stephenson as printer and publisher. As well, in the same issue, Stephenson wasted no time in securing support. While admitting to being somewhat of an unknown, he pledged to work relentlessly for the betterment of the journal and, ultimately, for that of its subscribers.

To all, however, I would say that there are solid guarantees that this journal will hereafter be as worthy of patronage as it has been heretofore, as no particular change will take place in any of its departments. The Planet has, since the semi-

14 Western Planet, 29 October 1855, 2.
weekly issue commenced, acquired a reputation for
giving the latest news on the principal topics of
the day, both foreign and domestic; and it shall be
my earnest endeavor not to allow it to recede, but
to advance it onward, and upward.

It is the intention to make it a newspaper in
every sense of the work, by giving the general news
of the day, as early, if not earlier, than any of our
contemporaries who possess the same facilities. The
foreign news columns will prove this.

I might also add that the local news, which has
weekly served to increase the interest of the community,
in this paper, has been principally supplied by myself,
in which capacity I intend to continue to act, and if
possible, to improve that department, so that I may al-
ready claim some acquaintance, editorially, with our
numerous readers.

The above promises are made, and made to be per-
formed.16

For the time being, at least, Stephenson was able to flex his
muscles.

The daily operations and financial management of the
Planet were in Stephenson's hands; that much is certain. Under
whose pen the editorials were written, however, is ambiguous.
To be sure, he was not the owner of the journal. One can
glean from Miller's editorial that he would return to the helm
after a period of recuperation. In the interval, Stephenson
gained invaluable experience at the business end of operating
a newspaper; the writing and printing end having already been
perfected.

With the June 9, 1856 issue, the fifth volume was con-
cluded, but a new chapter in the Planet's history was being for-
mulated. With the beginning of the next volume, the Planet

15 The Planet began semi-weekly issues on 7 June 1855.
16 Planet, 1 November, 1855, 2.
would begin tri-weekly publication. Stephenson had fulfilled his promise "to advance it onward and upward." Ironically, he was forced out of the limelight as the new volume witnessed the return of Miles Miller. In that final issue of the fifth volume, Rufus Stephenson, in commenting on the necessity of a free press, philosophized on the new era for the Planet. "Its power and influence cannot we think be exaggerated." 17

Citing the growth of the city as the need for a tri-weekly, the proprietor explained that such editions were primarily for businessmen and gentlemen, while a weekly edition would be published for the farmers in the area. "Our weekly will contain all the reading matter of three tri-weeklies, which will be far more than any other paper in this Western country now gives, together with the very latest news up to the hour of going to press." 18 Indeed, the Planet was prospering.

By July of 1857, Miles Miller had had enough. Through a formal notice, he indicated that he had disposed of all of his interests in the Chatham Planet to Messrs. Rufus Stephenson and Charles Stuart. 19 "For nearly five years past," Stephenson addressed his subscribers in an inaugural editorial, the writer of this article has been closely associated with the publication of the Planet, in the several capacities of printer, publisher, and editor. Since the last of December, 1856, we have been the sole and only writer engaged upon these columns. In political matters, we shall, as heretofore

17 Planet, 9 June 1856, 2.
18 Planet, 23 June 1856, 2.
19 Planet, 20 July 1857, 3. There is little information on Charles Stuart. From Stephenson's editorial we know Stuart had been living in Chatham for one year.
be decidedly conservative. 20 Stephenson continued, at great length, to explain that the best of news concerning agricultural, local and provincial matters, as well as news from the Old World would be incorporated "to improve the Planet in every material point - to cause it to take an honourable position amongst the best papers of the province, and maintain it." 21 The young printer of only seven years earlier had realized a dream.

Throughout his editorialship of twenty-two years, Rufus Stephenson tackled every conceivable issue. Whether serious or sarcastic, supportive or on the attack, he was sincere and straightforward with his readers. They knew where he stood. Obviously, he took every opportunity to advocate the merits of Conservative principles. At the same time, he took delight in chastising those hideous ideals of reform and the notorious leader of such, George Brown. Locally, each journal professing to be a Grit organ came under the wrath of Stephenson's pen. In elections at each level, Stephenson attempted in a most vehement way to sway the voters, not always successfully one might add. Interestingly, as Stephenson's life changed, so did the mood in his editorials. Once he became a town councillor, editorial criticism of local municipal affairs was noticeably absent. After becoming a Member of Parliament for Kent, scathing political editorials of the senior level of government were replaced with

20 Planet, 20 July 1857, 3. By "columns", one assumes that Stephenson meant the editorial columns.

21 Planet, 20 July 1857, 3.
the more definitive policies of the Liberal-Conservative government; and, for obvious reasons, one would argue rightfully so.

To scrutinize all of the editorials written by Stephenson would be an insurmountable and needless task. Consequently, the writer has attempted to use the editorials to determine what influence they had on the community and to gauge community sentiment. In so doing, Stephenson's growth and resulting characteristics were revealed. As an editor, Rufus Stephenson was at his "best in the late 1850's and early 1860's. Presumably, personal political achievements and responsibilities preoccupied the latter part of his newspaper career. Therefore, to examine this influence, change and growth of both Stephenson and the community, the editorials have been dealt with chronologically rather than topically.

Out of professionalism, the change in ownership at the Planet had been widely reported in journals across the province. Stephenson took great pride in reprinting the excerpts from over a dozen contemporaries, friend and foe alike. The Berlin Chronicle wrote:

The Planet has long been a spiritedly conducted paper, and from a personal acquaintance with the editor, Mr. Stephenson, we feel certain his abilities and energy will please the Planet in a prosperous and highly creditable position. 22

The St. Catherines Journal remarked:

Although the Planet is Conservative in politics, we are sufficiently well acquainted with the independent course of that paper in times past to know that where principal is at stake, party is of no moment.

22 Planet, 7 August 1857, 2.
Mr. Stephenson, the editor, can drive a good honest quill, with an honest mind and heart, and, therefore we hope the paper under his charge will 'go-a-head' and be well supported. 23

In the true spirit of competition, the Dumfries Reformer added:

The Chatham Planet has changed proprietorship and the recent numbers give evidence of more life and energy having been infused into its management. It is edited with considerable ability and appears to enjoy a large amount of patronage. May the Planet meet that reward which ever should be vouchsafed to the efforts of the talented and enterprising. 24

In his first real editorial as proprietor, Stephenson issued a warning to the Conservative party of Canada. The problem, according to the editor, was that, "Scarcely one member of the party is acquainted with the particular views of his neighbour, however well they may understand one another upon general politics." 25 As a result, they were constantly being defeated at the polls. To ensure success and ultimate triumph, they had to pull together as one. The warning came as a hint that a general election was close at hand. In Kent, the names of several deserving candidates had been mentioned, but Stephenson cautioned against too many entering the race. It was better that one should come forward and let all unite behind him. "Therefore let union be the motto, and we are sure to win." 26

---

23 Planet, 7 August 1857, 2.

24 Planet, 7 August 1857, 2. Favourable commentary, as would have been a common welcoming practice, were also printed from such journals as the London Free Press, the Hamilton Spectator, the Maple Leaf, the Brampton Times, the Galt Reporter, the St. Catherines Semi-Weekly Post, the Oakville Sentinel, the Woodstock Times, and the Windsor Herald.

25 Planet, 24 July 1857, 2.

26 Planet, 11 September 1857, 2.
Being pro anything invites criticism. It is not in the criticism but in Stephenson's response to it that one is better able to understand the man. "Now, Sir that you have entirely evaded the subject between us," the Deputy Reeve of Chatham, John Smith wrote:

that you might puff yourself into notoriety, I will only add as I before stated, that it is in perfect accordance with your self-dubed honest, manly, and conceited stile of pedogogueism, oh 'Village' Editor, beware lest your refined and sensitive Education should produce in your cranium, one of those ever to be deplored casualities consequent upon an over exerted brain, self-defenced and conceited man. God protect you.27

Feeling Smith was simply electioneering for 1858, and therefore trying to show his intelligence, Stephenson printed the letter, while confessing to understand none of it. He did not let the opportunity pass, however, without taking a tongue-in-cheek swipe at his assailant. Referring to recent attempts to erect a poor house in Chatham, Stephenson wondered whether community support could be had to support a lunatic asylum. "Some institutions of this kind, conducted upon principles of peculiar economy, would, without doubt, prove an admirable place of refuge for such men as Mr. Smith."28 But, alas, the editor concluded that his idea would not find suit with the ratepayers as they would realize that "the incoherent ravings of a 'Village Councillor' more closely resembled those of a fool than of a madman."29 Such was the wit of Rufus Stephenson.

27Planet, 11 September 1857, 2.
28Planet, 11 September 1857, 2.
29Planet, 11 September 1857, 2.
Realizing the importance of agriculture to the area, Stephenson was always quick to print substantial remarks about the contribution of the neighbouring countryside to the Town of Chatham. Whether he firmly believed that, or whether it was just good politics for the continued patronage of his "weekly" editions, one is not certain. Nevertheless, his detailed report and ensuing editorials of country agricultural fairs offer much insight into the growth and development of the surrounding townships. Quite naturally, then, when the editor of the Kent Advertiser criticized local farmers for letting their buildings fall into a state of disrepair primarily due to "a want of thrift - a culpable negligence," Stephenson came to their defence. He found such innuendos appalling. "The man who does the editorial for that sheet (Kent Advertiser)," the Planet editor rebuked,

has long since ceased to attract any notice to his stupid twaddle. Even his readers, who endeavour to wade thro' his columns of trash with the commendable object of trying to get some remuneration for their patronage and money, have to retire from them in disgust.

The gross manner in which they (farmers) have been libelled by our neighbour in his issue of last Wednesday, calls for a reply from us, not only exhibiting the animus of the writer, but also as proving how little adapted he is to fill the office

---

30 One such editorial appeared in the 28 September 1857 issue, page 2. Three full columns were devoted to every aspect of competition at the Kent County Agricultural Fair. "Let us have a prosperous country," Stephenson wrote, "and towns will be prosperous likewise. Therefore, we have taken special pains to show up a few features of the productions of Kent, believing in so doing justice to the whole of this fine peninsula - a finer tract of country than which there is not - anywhere."

31 Planet, 30 October 1857, 2.
it is his ambition to occupy.\textsuperscript{32}

What followed was a bitter attack on the editor of the Kent Advertiser and his knowledge of farm life. Using example upon example, Stephenson enhanced the image of the farmer while attempting to bury his contemporary.

Due to the fact that local elections were held at the beginning of each year, late December journal issues, and those of early January, were filled with municipal concerns. Being a successful businessman, Stephenson felt a municipality, like a business, had to stay out of debt. Such was not the case in Chatham with the dawning of 1858. Citing a debt of £25,000 to the Municipal Loan Fund,\textsuperscript{33} the editor cautioned the citizens to select those who would be honest and economical. "Ever since 1851, it has appeared to us to be the end and sum of Municipal legislation for Councillors to devise not how they might avoid expenditure, but rather how they might incur it."\textsuperscript{34}

To add to Stephenson's concerns were rumours that certain individuals would try to introduce party politics at the municipal level. "This plan we can not deprecate in language too strong. We want neither Clear Grits, Conservatives, Reformers, Tories, nor Moderates - we want Economists, and we must have

\textsuperscript{32}Planet, 30 October 1857, 2.

\textsuperscript{33}The Municipal Loan Fund had been established by legislation to assist municipalities through loans for capital projects. The rate of interest on the loan was fixed, but the municipal levy needed to pay the debt fluctuated as the value of the assessment changed. More detail can be found in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{34}Planet, 1 January 1858, 2.
them if we are to bear up under the burden of 1858."\textsuperscript{35} It was obvious Rufus Stephenson cared for his municipality and its inhabitants. Even though an avid Tory, he realized as most do today that party politics at the grassroots level would be detrimental to the growth of the community. To that end he fought, and sound reasoning prevailed.

On March 24, 1858, the partnership of Rufus Stephenson and Charles Stuart was dissolved. A notice of such dissolution appeared in the Chatham Planet.\textsuperscript{36} No reasons for the dissolution were given, nor could they be ascertained. One must not overestimate the significance of this action. True, Stephenson now became the sole proprietor, but for all intents and purposes it appeared little, if anything, had been in the control of the "junior partner". One cannot help but wonder, however, at the motives with which Stuart left the scene.

A subject in which Stephenson was deeply interested, a subject which he would address often as a Member of Parliament, was naturalization. In 1858, a bill had been introduced by the government to reduce the required term of residency from three years to one year. Stephenson spoke strongly and often on the necessity for increased emigration, especially to Canada West. One would have thought that this bill would have posed few problems for him, but such was not the case. "We are decidedly opposed to the proposed shortening of the period of residence to

\textsuperscript{35}Planet, 1 January 1858, 2.

\textsuperscript{36}Planet, 31 March 1858, 3.
one year. Three years is short enough; and indeed we would prefer even as long as five years."\textsuperscript{37} Stephenson argued this type of a bill would produce a state of "know nothingness" as it had in other countries. "No foreigner can become acquainted with the institutions of a country in a single twelve months."\textsuperscript{38} It would take anywhere from three to five years to know what was right in the new land, and without that knowledge, according to Stephenson, the entire country would suffer.

To fully understand Rufus Stephenson as an individual, one must also examine his perception of the Negro population in Chatham. Due to its geographical location, Chatham became a haven for the black slaves who had escaped the oppression of the United States. Their numbers were great. To ignore their presence or influence would leave an incomplete picture of Stephenson.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Benjamin Drew had reported most favourably on the living conditions of Chatham's coloured population. Only a few years earlier, the Report of the Tribune's Special Commission on the Negroes in Chatham was published. While it had little positive to say about the town itself, the author marvelled at the prosperity of the blacks, as well as the harmonious way in which they lived amongst the white residents.

...about one-third of the population\textsuperscript{39} are coloured

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Planet}, 7 May 1858, 2.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Planet}, 7 May 1858, 2.
\textsuperscript{39} The population of Chatham at this time was about 6,000.
people, and they appear to contribute their full quota towards its industry.

The houses inhabited by the better class of coloured people are two-storey frame buildings, painted white, for the most part, surrounded by well-kept gardens, and quite equal in appearance to those belonging to the same class of white residents.

Indeed there is to be found there a much higher degree of education and culture than among the same class in Toronto.\textsuperscript{40}

To think all gazed upon the Negro population with delight and an approving eye would be naïve, however. In fact, local journals reported near riots between whites and blacks on more than one occasion in Chatham's early history. What were Stephenson's true feelings? In late September, 1858, a telegram was sent from London to Chatham informing certain residents that a Southern gentleman travelling with a Negro boy would be passing through Chatham on the Great Western Railroad.\textsuperscript{41} The observer was convinced the boy was kidnapped to be shipped back to the United States. Close to one hundred coloured and white men and women, armed with clubs, gathered at the station and waited for the train. When it arrived, they boarded, and, with little trouble no doubt, took the boy.\textsuperscript{42} In the court case that followed, seven, including an off-duty police constable, were found guilt of rioting and fined.\textsuperscript{43} It is here, in this one small incident, one gains insight into Stephenson's view of the Negro. In the \textit{Planet}, he appealed to the citizens to

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Planet}, 5 November 1857, 2.

\textsuperscript{41} Farrell, \textit{History of the Negro Community}, 83.

\textsuperscript{42} Farrell, \textit{History of the Negro Community}, 84.

\textsuperscript{43} Farrell, \textit{History of the Negro Community}, 89.
contribute towards the cost of the fines, adding, "...if in releasing this boy, the laws of our country were slightly overstepped, we feel Canadians of every class, creed and colour, are not altogether dead to the recognition of 'a higher law than all human laws'." In that, Stephenson was sincere. His Puritan background had served him well. Throughout his tenure as editor of the Planet, he remained sympathetic to the plight of the Negro population in Chatham.

Invariably, newspaper writers of the day rarely sat on the political fence. In most communities there were at least two journals printed simultaneously; one usually being born as a result of the other. Consequently, fierce battles raged for economical and practical reasons. Securing and maintaining subscriptions paid the bills and was, thus, the foremost consideration. Each, as well, had a duty to party politics to show their cause to be correct and just. The situation between the Chatham Planet and the Kent Advertiser was no different. Attacking each other on any matter was routine, but at election time they were at their editorial best.

Rufus Stephenson was always against the admission of party politics into municipal government. With the political campaign for 1859 underway, however, he felt that view threatened due to "that rampant, self-appointed organ of Clear Gritism - the Kent Advertiser." The Advertiser supported Walter McCrea for

---

44 Planet, 25 October 1858, 2.
45 Planet, 12 November 1858, 2.
Mayor. Citing the fact that McCrea, a lawyer, was a partner to the Grit M.P.P., Archibald McKellar, Stephenson charged it was the "intention of Mr. McCrea and his organist to carry the principle of politics into all our municipal elections." In the next breath, Stephenson did exactly what he accused his contemporary of doing. The Planet's man was Joseph Northwood, a businessman. What followed were two months of editorials devoted almost exclusively to the municipal election of 1859 by two Chatham journals - one Grit, one Conservative.

Northwood and McCrea were each attacked vigorously by the opposing journal. Such was to be expected. The Planet admitted to having nothing personal against McCrea and, in fact, felt compassion for him. After all, he had already lost the candidate for Reeveship, and had failed two years in succession to be elected Mayor. What would be best for him, according to Stephenson, would be to wait and try again in a few years: "Nothing in the world is so injurious to a man's popularity, as to be continually grasping at honours, and being as often disappointed. If Mr. McCrea has any real friends, let them advise him of the true state of public opinion in reference to the Mayoralty of Chatham for 1859, and thus save him the unpleasant reflections that would be the result of a defeat." With the backing of the "official paper of the county", as the Planet called itself, and the support which would presumably

46 Planet, 12 November 1858, 2.
47 Planet, 22 November 1858, 2.
follow from its patrons, how could Northwood lose!

When the votes were tallied, McCrea polled 227 votes; Northwood 213.\(^{48}\) Sour grapes appeared in the ensuing Planet editorial. "The winning candidate," Stephenson wrote, has but little to boast of, nor the defeated, but little - perhaps nothing - to regret.

Even supposing the narrow majority of 14 votes which appears in Mr. McCrea's favour to be bona-fide - it is confidently stated it is not - there is little-room for congratulations on his part. It is said that 16 bad votes were polled for Mr. McCrea in one ward alone, 3 in another, and 2 in another.

Personally, we are free to confess that we used our best endeavours to secure Mr. Northwood's return, as we did the return of certain councillors elect, and in so doing feel conscious of having laboured in a good cause and that the non-success of the former is the result of no fault on our part.\(^{49}\)

There were no irregularities, and McCrea was sworn in as Mayor.

One should not attach too much significance to the fact that Stephenson's man was defeated. The number of Chatham voters in 1859 was not large. Most of these would have been committed to one political party or the other. Any newspaper would have had the power to sway but a handful of voters.

Another warning for the Conservatives formed the basis for an editorial which appeared during the late summer of 1859. In so doing, Stephenson revealed many interesting political beliefs of his own. What were needed, he felt, were distinct Liberal-Conservative policies. Years earlier, the party had advocated free entry of goods not produced here into the Province,

\(^{48}\) *Planet*, 5 January 1859, 2.

\(^{49}\) *Planet*, 5 January 1859, 2.
and a tariff on articles that could be made by Canadians.
"What has become of this question? Is it dead?" The issue
of representation by population had to be resolved as well.
It had been around far too long. "If the principle of represen-
tation according to the numbers were correct and desirable
in 1852 and 1853, surely, with our increased wealth, population,
&c, it cannot be less desirable at the present time. Then why
not advocate it?" Most urgent of policies for the editor
was the need for a federal union of British Provinces. "If the
entire British North American Provinces cannot be induced to
join in a confederation, let the principle be worked out between
Upper and Lower Canada and the North West first and the more
Eastern Provinces will not long remain without knocking for
admission to the only Free Union of the North." When these
principles are adhered to, and only then, would the Liberal-
Conservative party have complete success in leading a united
Canada.

With the municipal elections for 1860 around the corner,
the competing newspapers lined up behind their chosen candidates
for mayor. The Planet supported Dr. Askin, the "people's
candidate", while the Advertiser supported Mr. Dolsen. The same
type of support and criticism which went hand-in-hand with
municipal elections, appeared in the journal columns once again.
In the end, Dr. Askin won and the Planet complimented the people.

50 Planet, 25 August 1859, 2.
51 Planet, 25 August 1859, 2.
52 Planet, 25 August 1859, 2.
"Not only have the old clique been driven from office horse foot and dragon, but they are supplanted by men of acknowledged ability, of education and integrity." At the same time, one sensed a tinge of personal triumph for Stephenson as well.

In the early months of 1860, a proposed by-law which would dramatically increase the fee charged on a license to sell intoxicating drinks provided the platform needed to weigh any advancement in the Planet's power of influence. The specific proposal would, supposedly, have two affects. First, more revenue would be generated for the town treasury. Second, in some way which was not exactly clear, it would curb the problem of drunkenness. Stephenson failed to see how the proposal would effect the latter. He did, however, offer a solution. He wanted the town to keep the license at a fair rate and put in inspectors who would regularly investigate the problems of drunkards and unreasonable hours, and, at the same time, give these inspectors the power to take licenses away and "haul up the offenders."

The proposed Liquor License By-Law was taken to the people in the form of a plebiscite. Much to Stephenson's horror, it passed by a slim margin of 33 votes. He was quick to point out in his editorial of March 15, 1860 that the people had been misled into believing increased revenues would lower their own taxes. "Like many other matters that are sent to the people,

53 Planet, 3 January 1860, 2.
54 Planet, 16 February 1860, 2.
55 Planet, 15 March 1860, 2.
it was carried by a side wind, quite foreign to the question at issue.  

Whatever disappointment Stephenson suffered, it was quickly replaced with a boyish giddiness. The Kent Advertiser actually called upon George Brown to step aside. It, "for once in its life, expressed an independent thought concerning the leadership of the party of which it has been the acknowledged organ in Kent for nearly six years." This display of independence, however, was a disastrous mistake for the Advertiser. Almost immediately, there was a move afoot to supplant the Advertiser with a more loyal Clear Grit organ. It was to be known as the Argus. The Planet, taking delight in the whole situation, suggested a motto be formed for the new journal by joining Brown's cry, "Down with the Pope" with McGee's cry, "More Power to the Pope".

By May 3, Stephenson was able to print:

The Advertiser is dead! Let no one dare to raise a loud guffaw. Let no one laugh up his sleeve at this melancholy catastrophe. But let us all be serious over the unavoidable demise of an old and familiar acquaintance.

With the formation of the Argus and each succeeding journal to advocate reform, the Planet would do battle, but not with the same intensity that had been waged against the Advertiser. Perhaps no other was as worthy an opponent. Perhaps,
Stephenson, with his many other endeavours taking shape, lost interest.

With the retirement of Colonel Prince, M.P.P., for the Western District, rumours circulated that the Planet editor would be a candidate in the next general election. Responding to the Morpeth Gleaner, Stephenson indicated he would not be a candidate, nor was he "at all anxious for the honourable position left vacant by the retiring Colonel." Instead, the Planet fully supported Sir Allan McNab for representative in the Legislative Council. Although McNab won, the Planet's influence in Kent was questionable. He did very well in the Town of Chatham, but was defeated in every township except Dover. Suffice it to say, Stephenson felt he had done his part.

Stephenson felt the itch. In 1861, he entered the political arena as a candidate for Town Council. At the same time, he supported Dr. Cross for mayor. Stephenson was successful, but John Dolsen handed Dr. Cross a thumping defeat. Presumably, because of the proprietor's active involvement, this municipal election, and those that followed, did not attract the same attention they once did in the editorial columns of the

60 Planet, 26 October 1860, 2.
61 Planet, 26 November 1860, 2. While McNab did well in Windsor and the Town of Sandwich, his majority in Kent was only 27 votes. In the Town of Chatham alone, however, he polled 259 votes to his opponent's 167.
62 Planet, 9 January 1861, 2. John Dolsen defeated Dr. Cross 255 to 159. Stephenson, in his first venture into politics, was elected to the Eberts Ward receiving the greatest number of votes at 106. Dr. Charles Askin was second with 94 votes.
Planet. Stephenson was now editor, publisher, and Town Councillor.

By the summer of 1861, with the conflict raging in the United States, Stephenson's thoughts turned to the horrid possibility of war in Canada. Were Canadians prepared? "A period of peace," he warned,

is said to afford a fitting opportunity to be prepared for war. This truism Canadians appear to have wholly forgotten the force of.

With the population Canada at present possesses, it ought to be able at a week's notice to place in the field 50,000 men, fully armed and provided for active war service. But the fact of the matter is, our militia organization is very inferior, and the rank and file know absolutely nothing of the movements of the ordinary service drill.63

To the Home and Imperial Governments, the Planet editorials complained:

...not an Enfield rifle, not a battery of guns, not a company of regulars, not even a regularly appointed drill Sergeant is set apart for the defense of our locality and people. Now we maintain this should not be.

Chatham ought to be the headquarters of a significant body of soldiers of the line, to form a nucleus around which the volunteers could rally. A force of five hundred or a thousand men would fully meet this necessity.

A moderate organized force stationed at Chatham could not only raise almost insurmountable barriers to the progress of the invaders from the West to the East, but could, in case of necessity readily move to meet the foe either on the shore of Lake Erie or on the River St. Clair. It was on account of these views being entertained by Colonel Simcoe, Lieutenant-Governor, that the present location was selected for Chatham.64

For the time being, Stephenson's plea went unanswered, but he was on a crusade which would last to his days as a Member of

63 Planet, 14 May 1861, 2.
64 Planet, 26 December 1861, 2.
Parliament.

From June, 1862 through June, 1875, the availability of the Chatham Planet’s weekly and tri-weekly editions is limited. Entire volumes are missing; tattered and torn pages make comprehension of the content next to impossible; and, what is available on microfilm is difficult to read. Reading what is available, convinced the writer that the first five years or so were, nevertheless, the most important in gaining insight into Rufus Stephenson, newspaper editor. After that time, his career in municipal and federal politics were more influential than his editorials in the Planet. Consequently, such editorials lost much of the fire and fury which had been characteristic of the early years.

To say Rufus Stephenson was proud of his accomplishment in building the Chatham Planet would be an understatement. By 1871, he could boast successful ownership of a tri-weekly of which very few existed in Canada or the United States; and, fewer still were able to turn a profit. The Planet had been in the black for years. He felt he had done his loyal best, through his journal, to advance his town, his country, and the principles by which he had raised his family.

In the December 23, 1878 issue of the Planet, in the usual spot reserved for editorials, appeared a letter from Rufus Stephenson to his patrons and the public at large. After twenty-seven years, the editor put down his pen. He

---

65 Planet, 23 December 1878, 1.
THE OLDEST PAPER IN THE WEST.

"Chatham Planet",

IS PUBLISHED

TRI-WEEKLY & WEEKLY,

BY

RUFUS STEPHENSON

AT HIS OFFICE, IN

EBERT'S BLOCK, KING STREET, CHATHAM, O.W.

Circulation DOUBLE that of any other Paper printed West of London.

THE WEEKLY "PLANET"

Is one of the Largest and Best Newspapers in Western Canada, giving the correct current NEWS of the day; also, accurate reports of the state of Foreign and Home Markets, and full details of all Local News.

PRICE PER ANNUM—IN ADVANCE—$1.50

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE FOR THE TRI-WEEKLY PLANET

$3.00 PER ANNUM, IN ADVANCE.

BOOK AND JOB PRINTING,

OF ALL DESCRIPTIONS,

NEATLY, CHEAPLY, AND EXPEDITIOUSLY DONE.

In fact, if you want superior Clothing, call on James Rice.
severed his connection with the journal completely and turned it over to his sons, Sydney and Edwin. It marked the end of an era for Stephenson, but new challenges were on the horizon.

66 Like their father, Sydney and Edwin worked diligently to improve upon the Chatham Planet and make it the best in the County. In time, it became a daily newspaper; and in 1922 merged with the Banner News to become the Chatham Daily News - the main newspaper in Kent County today. Rufus Stephenson would have smiled with a tremendous sense of pride.
CHAPTER III

"OUR ABLEST MEN SHOULD BE SENT TO COUNCIL"

Communities are only as strong as their citizens. While the investor and manufacturer move into the area for whatever reason - the economy, the availability of resources, closeness to markets - their ultimate goal is to secure profits. The profits generate growth for the industry and, consequently, for the community. This is survival, but not necessarily living. The vitality of a community is the true measure of its worth. It is not something learned from books, or passed from generation to generation; it must come from within. Not all possess this vigor. For those who do, it is imperative that they take command; that they become the driving force. Only then does the community do more than merely survive - it lives.

By 1858, Rufus Stephenson had already become the type of individual capable of being a leader in Chatham. His family background and environment had provided him with a wide spectrum of knowledge and interests. He was the sole proprietor and editor of one of the most successful newspapers in the area. As evidenced by his early editorials, he was genuinely concerned with the community and the well-being of its inhabitants. He had a firm grasp on the politics of the day, and was not hesitant to stand behind his convictions. Through the press, he
had the power to influence others. All that was lacking was the down-to-earth personal involvement.

In the early days of Chatham's history, those few individuals who answered the call to civic duties did so with pride and a sense of responsibility. They were usually blessed with a formal education which set them apart from the majority of the community. The job of organizing and leading fell upon their willing shoulders. It was not uncommon to see the same names in a variety of different positions with clubs and associations. Often, these acted as stepping stones to the much loftier responsibility of a political career. From this group came men like Rufus Stephenson who made Chatham come alive.

One of the more socially active and yet essential organizations in Chatham at that time was the volunteer fire brigade. By the early 1850's, two such brigades existed. The No. 1 Company was located in the Market building near the centre of town, and the No. 2 Company was on the north side of the Thames River near the Fifth Street Bridge.¹ Great rivalries existed between these two companies, and for some time a prize of five dollars was offered to the company first reaching a fire.² This contest did not always prove beneficial to the merchants who displayed their goods on the sidewalk. On account of the terrible muddy conditions which sometimes plagued Chatham streets, the firemen were allowed to use these sidewalks.³

can imagine the disarray and scattering of wares as the volunteers scurried to attain their prize, and, hopefully, put out a fire.

Due to its social enhancement, many leading citizens of the community vied with each other for the executive positions of the volunteer fire brigade. Stephenson was no exception. In 1858, he was elected to a two-year stint as secretary of Union Fire Company No. 2. Such a position proved valuable to Stephenson and to the Company which had newspaper notices published, undoubtedly, gratis. From these notices, we know that meetings were held on the first Tuesday of each month for the dispatch of business. The outcome of those meetings was not usually published, nor have the minutes survived. Occasionally, Stephenson printed a particular item from a meeting which exalted the No. 2 Company or the entire Fire Department. A potential disaster had been averted in the winter of 1859 when the Fire Brigade was able to contain a fire at the Great Western Railway Depot. In appreciation for a job well done, the Managing Director from Hamilton sent a one hundred dollar note to the Brigade. As secretary, Stephenson had the delight of not only acknowledging the gift, but printing the story:

5Chatham Planet, Chatham, Canada West, 9 July 1858, 2. The name of Fire Company Number One was the Excelsior Company. Both comprised the Chatham Fire Department.
6Planet, 13 September 1858, 3.
7Planet, 24 January 1859, 2.
Stephenson was always sympathetic to the plight of the Negro. He used whatever influence he had to advance their cause in Chatham. A soirée for the family of the late John Brown found Stephenson as a speaker soliciting donations. Brown, an American abolitionist, had spent considerable time in Chatham seeking support and framing a Constitution for a slave-free provisional republic within the United States. The plan envisioned the establishment of a stronghold in the Appalachian mountains from where guerrilla warfare could be waged on the slave owners. The slaves would, in turn, revolt en masse. Such was not to be. In an ill-fated attack on the government arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, Brown was captured by forces commanded by Colonel Robert E. Lee. He was subsequently tried for treason and hanged on December 2, 1859. The fact that Brown had support and made friends in Chatham was enough reason for Stephenson to become involved. A full report of the evening's activities was accompanied by an Editor's note. "We learn," Stephenson wrote,

that the sum of about $62. was realized, which amount, after deducting a few trifling expenses, will be at once forwarded to the unhappy widow of the brave but unfortunate man, John Brown. In the municipal arena, the Planet became the political

---

8Planet, 15 December 1859, 3.
9Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 460.
10Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 462.
11Planet, 29 October 1859, 2.
12Planet, 29 October 1859, 2.
watchdog. Throughout the year, its editorial pages expressed opinion on matters of concern to the community. Prior to each local election, it actively supported what it termed the "People's Candidate" for Mayor. While the people did not always agree with the Planet's choice, the biased tone of Stephenson's editorials encouraged voter participation.

As the end of 1860 approached, the economic situation in Chatham was threatening. Its citizens were paying a tax levy of twenty-four cents on the dollar, "a rate higher than any other municipality in Canada." A full third of this levy was destined to pay the interest of the Municipal Loan Fund debt. The Fund had been established by Legislation to assist municipalities by way of loans for capital projects. The rate of interest on the loans was fixed, but the municipal levy needed to pay the debt naturally fluctuated as the value of the assessment changed. A few years earlier, Chatham had borrowed $100,000.00 to pay for part of the construction of the St. Clair and Rondeau Plank and Gravel Road ($32,000), and part of the construction of the Chatham and Camden Plank Road ($12,000), and local improvements to streets, sidewalks, bridges, and sewers within the Town ($56,000). The debt would torment Stephenson for the duration of his stay in Chatham.

---

13 In the election of 1859, the Planet strongly supported Joseph Northwood for Mayor. Walter McCrea, a Reformer, won the race by 14 votes, 227 - 213. The next year, however, the "People's Candidate", Dr. Askin, was elected Mayor over John Dolsen with a resounding 70-vote majority.

14 Planet, 28 December 1860, 1.

15 Planet, 30 March 1865, 2.
of his municipal political career.

The intent of the Municipal Loan Fund was good. What was lacking was a system of monitoring the individual municipality's ability to pay back the debt. Municipalities "got in over their heads" as Councillors authorized borrowing without fully understanding the ramifications for the future. This appeared to be the case in Chatham. Rufus Stephenson blamed the Town Council of 1860 and preceding years for this type of disastrous financial mismanagement. The apathy shown by the town's prominent citizens distressed him. "Our ablest men", he argued, "should be willing to go and should be sent to Council."\(^\text{16}\) It was the only way to get Chatham back on the road to recovery. Being a true leader, Stephenson lent credence to his words. He would contest the position of Councillor for Eberts ward.

For the position of Mayor, Dr. Cross, a veteran politician, was challenged by a relatively inexperienced Councillor, John Dolsen.\(^\text{17}\) In the \textit{Planet}, Stephenson questioned the motives of Dolsen, an acknowledged Reformer. The post of Chief Magistrate was too important to be given to just anyone. It should be reserved as a reward for those proven public servants who have served the electors well.\(^\text{18}\) Obviously, Dolsen had not deserved the reward, and so, the \textit{Planet} threw its full

\(^{16}\textit{Planet}, 28 December 1860, 1.\)

\(^{17}\)Dolsen had been a councillor for one year, while Cross had served in the capacity of Councillor for many years as well as being Deputy Reeve and Reeve.

\(^{18}\textit{Planet}, 28 December 1860, 1.\)
support behind Dr. Cross.

The election returns for 1861 provided satisfaction, but not total jubilation for Stephenson. In his first venture into municipal politics, he topped the poll in the Eberts Ward.\(^{19}\) For that, he must have felt truly gratified. His views were shared by many, and he would now have a chance to correct the ills plaguing the community. His candidate for Mayor, on the other hand, suffered a humiliating defeat.\(^{20}\) There was good reason for this. Candidates in both the Chrysler and Northwood Wards were personal friends of Dolsen, and he was swept into power on their coat tails. According to the new Councillor, had Dr. Cross' friends organized and entered the field as did Dolsen's friends, "in all probability, the result of the contest would have been much different.\(^{21}\)

Stephenson was not part of the old clique, but rather the bright, new ray of hope to the community. His guidance would help set Chatham back on her feet. Of course, having your own newspaper to claim your good deeds does have a distinct advantage. The census returns early that year provided the aura of optimism needed. In less than a decade, the population of Chatham had increased 115 per cent. "We believe," the Planet editor boasted, "there is hardly a city or town in Canada that

\(^{19}\) *Planet*, 9 January 1861, 1. Stephenson received 106 votes; Dr. Askin received 94 votes; Thomas Holmes polled 85 votes.

\(^{20}\) *Planet*, 9 January 1861, 1.

\(^{21}\) *Planet*, 9 January 1861, 1.
can exhibit a better increase than this."  

Good fortune came Stephenson's way in a hurry. He was appointed to the position of assistant secretary of Union No. 2 Company after having completed the previous year as fire Warden. The Planet was prospering. He now had three children and the family was living in a comfortable one-storey frame house complete with acreage and even a cow. Riding high on a crest of excitement, Stephenson had every right to be his own man. Unexplainably, the rocky Councillor was not appointed to any Standing Committees for 1861. Equally bewildering was his irregular attendance. Although Council met weekly, by August Stephenson had attended only two meetings. From the Town of Chatham Minute Book and the Town Council Proceedings published in the Planet, we are able to follow the meetings with regularity. Not all information can be ascertained, however, as the content of reports were rarely printed, only the action on those reports.

It is not the intent here to deal with each decision of Council. Rather, actions which affected the entire community or those which Stephenson strongly opposed or supported are examined. In this way, one is able to weigh his direction and influence. The two main issues in 1861 were a by-law dealing with liquor licenses and the Municipal Loan Fund debt. The liquor

---

22 Planet, 13 February 1861, 3.
23 Planet, 11 January 1861, 3.
24 Planet, 7 January 1860, 3.
25 Canada West Census, Kent, 1861, 70.
license by-law limited the number of licenses granted in any one year. Stephenson felt this to be grossly unfair. As long as the entrepreneurs were willing to purchase a license and live within the guidelines of the by-law, Council should grant the license to anyone who desired it. The proposal, with Stephenson's support, passed by a slim majority of sixty-four.\(^\text{26}\)

A more complex issue was how to deal with the debt associated with the Municipal Loan Fund. The by-law to raise taxes for the year would have pegged the levy at eighteen cents on the dollar. Realizing this to be an intolerable amount, a motion by Stephenson to omit the 5¢ needed to pay the interest on the debt passed seven to three.\(^\text{27}\) Chatham had a real problem, but was not alone in this dilemma. At a meeting held that fall in London, delegations from all municipalities west of Hamilton with similar concerns attempted to arrive at a consensus on how to seek relief from Parliament.\(^\text{28}\) It became painfully apparent that the situation had not yet seen its darkest moments and Town Councils would have to put pressure on the Legislature to resolve the issue.

A proportionate share of the monies derived from the sale of Clergy Reserve Land had previously been forwarded to the municipalities in which those lands were sold. With the passing of

\(^{26}\) Town of Chatham Minute Book, January 21, 1861 to September 25, 1868, 26 October 1861, 71.

\(^{27}\) Town of Chatham Minute Book, 11 October 1861, 68.

\(^{28}\) Planet, 28 October 1861, 1. By a resolution adopted at the Council meeting of 18 October 1861, the Mayor and Dr. Askin were appointed to represent Chatham.
of the Seigneurial Amendment Act of 1859, the rules changed slightly. Clergy Reserve monies were not to be paid to any municipality in debt to the Municipal Loan Fund. Such a law was seen as highly discriminative. Stephenson presented to Council a draft of a petition to be sent to all branches of the Legislature complaining about the injustice of such legislation. The petition further stated that a satisfactory remedy would be to apply their fair share of Clergy Reserve monies against the Municipal Loan Fund debt. Council agreed with Stephenson and adopted the Petition unanimously.

As Stephenson concluded his first year as Councillor, it is interesting to examine his voting record. Of the nine recorded votes cast, he voted in opposition to the Mayor each time. Bear in mind his criticism of Dolsen in the Planet prior to, and immediately after, the election. As well, Stephenson never voted with John Smith, and only once with Israel Evans. All three were Reformers. With Dr. Askin, a professed Conservative, Stephenson voted eight out of nine times. Party politics were supposed to be absent at the municipal level. Stephenson agreed with this philosophy, and always claimed he voted for the most good for the majority of the citizens irregardless of party allegiances. The evidence in 1861, at any rate, suggests the

29 Planet, 2 January 1862, 2.
30 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 6 December 1861, 81.
31 Planet, 11 January 1861, 1.
32 Planet, 10 March 1864, 2.
contrary.

With the advent of the municipal elections for 1862, the editorials critical of Council's endeavor, so common at this time of the year, were not to be found in the Planet. The editor did support A. D. McLean over Councillor John Smith for Mayor. In an editorial, Stephenson cited the financial problems still facing the community, and the possible conflict which could arise out of the tension between Great Britain and the United States as reasons enough to support McLean. He was intelligent and well versed in both provincial and financial matters. Smith, on the other hand, was "not qualified in point of education". Stephenson did not have a chance to test his public sentiment, as prior to the election McLean withdrew from the race. Smith, an old adversary, was declared Mayor by acclamation.

The election itself proved little excitement. All six candidates in the Chrysler and Northwood wards were elected by acclamation. In the Eberts ward, Stephenson again was re-elected with the most votes. With two exceptions, the Council of 1862 contained the same faces as the previous year.

Stephenson was appointed to three Standing Committees for 1862 - Finance, Police, and Fire and Water. More importantly,

---

33 *Planet*, 20 December 1861, 2.
34 *Planet*, 20 December 1861, 2.
35 *Planet*, 8 January 1862, 3. Stephenson received 108 votes to 95 for both Thomas Holmes and George Orr.
36 George Orr in Eberts Ward and Sylvester Hadley in Chrysler Ward were the only two new Councillors for 1862.
he was selected as the chairman of a special committee including Mayor Smith and Councillor Dolsen to obtain a body of troops to be stationed in Chatham.\textsuperscript{37} His involvement in this committee and his continued pursuit of a solution to Chatham's debt problem would prove Stephenson to be a leader amongst his fellow councilors.

Within three weeks of his appointment to the Special Committee, the chairman proudly reported to Council that he had contacted Sir A. MacNab personally, and had been told that during a recent trip to England, the stationing of regular troops was discussed. Chatham had been selected as a site, and written confirmation would be forwarded.\textsuperscript{38} It never arrived. Instead, council received word from General Williams at Quebec\textsuperscript{39} that there were simply no troops to spare. Stephenson was not discouraged. For the time being, he would intensify his campaign to have an armoury established in town.

Having a military force and a significant armoury in Chatham was a dream for Stephenson, and one toward which he diligently worked. Chastising the people of Toronto for their greediness in charging excessive rent for accommodations to the military, Stephenson offered Chatham. Here there was plenty of room at comfortable barracks for two to three hundred men. If needed, good brick buildings could be rented cheaply. As many as one thousand troops

\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Town of Chatham Minute Book}, 7 February 1862, 98.
\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Town of Chatham Minute Book}, 28 February 1862, 99.
\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Town of Chatham Minute Book}, 14 March 1862, 102.
could be accommodate comfortably and cheaply. The inducement was there.

In a subsequent editorial, Stephenson pleaded the case for Chatham. There was no military depot west of London. Yet, the area comprised 15,000 square miles, encompassed five counties, and had a population of 162,000. Proper protection was simply not available. Stephenson quoted from the 80th Section of the Militia Law which stated that arms and armament shall be kept in armouries at, among other places, Chatham. As Chatham was the most westerly town mentioned in the 80th Section, the location of an armoury here was not only desirable, but logical. By May, Stephenson was sufficiently primed to introduce a draft petition to Council. The petition was to be sent to His Excellency, the Governor-General, praying that an armoury be constructed on the Military Reserve in Chatham. Copies were to be sent to Sir A. MacNab of the Legislative Council and A. McKellar, M.P.P. Council, adopted Stephenson's petition.

Council's petition of December last, pertaining to the method in which Clergy Reserve monies were distributed, fell on deaf ears in Toronto. At a regular meeting of Council, Mayor Smith read a reply from the Provincial Secretary. According to Statutes, municipalities in arrears to the Government were not permitted to share in the wealth derived from the sale of Clergy

---

40 Planet, 12 February 1862, 2.
41 Planet, 6 March 1862, 2.
42 Planet, 15 May 1862, 1. Stephenson introduced the petition to the regular meeting of Town Council on May 9.
43 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 7 April 1862, 106.
Reserve lands. When Mr. T. C. Street, member from Welland, introduced a Bill into the House of Assembly 44 which would repeal that part of the law authorizing withholding of Clergy Reserves money, new hope loomed. Once again, Council adopted another of Stephenson's petitions to be sent to the three branches of the Legislature. This one begged to repeal or amend Section 20 of the Seigneurial Assessment Act. 45 If passgd, Stephenson concluded that Chatham would receive $1,000.00 annually 46: good reason to pray that Street's position be looked upon favourably.

Stephenson's concern for his fellow human beings went beyond the boundaries of Chatham. At the Council meeting of September 25, he called for a public meeting of the town "to take into consideration the distress at present prevailing in the mother country, especially in the manufacturing district in the North of England and in Scotland." 47 His sympathetic views were not endorsed by all of his colleagues, but carried five votes to three.

At that same meeting, a motion to pay the accounts, which included an item of $38.80 to Rufus Stephenson for printing, was duly made and seconded. A payment to Stephenson for printing was not unusual as his office did much work for the Town and the

44 Planet, 9 May 1862, 2.
45 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 9 May 1862, 110.
46 Planet, 9 May 1862, 2.
47 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 25 September 1862, 125.
County. The amount was questioned by Councillors Higgins, Evans, and Orr on the basis that it contained the payment for three ads, at $2.50 each, for the public meeting held for the Lancashire Relief Fund. Stephenson had promised, according to the objectors, to print the advertisements without charge. The only explanation offered by Stephenson was that the accounts had been ordered to be paid. An ensuing amendment to deduct the $7.50 from the payment did, surprisingly, lose three votes to six with Stephenson not voting.\(^48\) Regardless of one's opinion on this matter, it is convincing that Stephenson had attained a high degree of respect as a leader, even from those who had opposed him politically.

Not all of Stephenson's community contribution in 1862 was from his capacity as a Councillor. At the Annual Meeting of the Chatham Fire Department,\(^49\) he was nominated to the top position of Chief Engineer; as was James Marquand. Stephenson represented Union Company No. 2, while Marquand was from the Excelsior Company No. 1. Stephenson asked those present to reflect on the history of the position of Chief Engineer. In the eight year existence of the Department, the Chief had always been selected from the much larger No. 1 Company. This was not entirely fair. As the Department contained two Companies, the top position should be alternated annually. A vote for him would not only establish this precedent, but would do much to produce a harmonious relationship between the two. After a short and less than enthusiastic

\(^{48}\) Town of Chatham Minute Book, 25 September 1862, 125.

\(^{49}\) Planet, 10 April 1862, 1.
speech by Marquand, Stephenson was elected to the two-year post of Chief Engineer. In the true spirit of the organization, the firemen marched in procession to the Royal Exchange Hotel and afterwards to the North American "where refreshments were partaken of." 50

The lack of newspaper issues for the first half of 1863 and poorly kept minutes by the Town Clerk make an assessment of Stephenson's total involvement difficult. From the Town of Chatham Minute Book, one is able to ascertain that he was re-elected to a Council which saw no less than five new faces, including the Mayor, Dr. Thomas Cross. He was also elected by his peers to be the Town's Deputy Reeve on Kent County Council. 51 The information that is available from the Kent County Minute Book, 1860 - 1865 and the newspaper in the latter half of the year, show Rufus Stephenson, Councillor, Deputy Reeve, and Fire Chief garnering the support he desired in his community.

County Council was a congregation of seventeen councillors representing all the municipalities in Kent. Their primary function was to deal with matters which affected the whole of the County. The Reeves and Deputy Reeves were not elected by the people, but rather chosen annually by their peers as a type of honorary position. The work involved, however, required a great deal of zeal and energy. Three sessions - January, June, December constituted the term of office.

50 Planet, 10 April 1862, 1. Stephenson received 59 votes, Marquand 31.
51 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 19 January 1863, 142.
Map of Kent County
Deputy Reeve Stephenson was appointed to a committee on Public Buildings, and to a committee to examine the condition of all county roads. Both were Standing Committees and nothing of significance was reported. During the June session, County Council attempted to encourage the manufacturing of salt. A motion which offered a premium of twenty cents a barrel on the first 20,000 barrels manufactured in the County was amended by Stephenson. He preferred a more lucrative offer. A premium of $400.00 on the first 400 barrels produced, provided more of an incentive. The amendment lost as the original motion was adopted. Unfortunately, it did not produce the desired goal, and in the last session the By-law was changed to reflect Stephenson's amendment. Even so, the manufacturing of salt never took hold in the County.

While immigration to the area was encouraged, it was not without its drawbacks. All too often, the emigrant arrived with a large family, little money, and no trade. It became such a problem in Chatham that a special three-man committee, consisting of Councillors Holmes, Smith and Stephenson as Chairman, was appointed to care for these people until employment could be secured. The Mayor was also authorized to write Mr. Buchanan,

53 Kent County Council Minute Book, 29 January 1863.
54 Kent County Council Minute Book, 13 June 1863.
55 Kent County Council Minute Book, 15 December 1863.
56 Planet, 10 September 1863, 2. The committee was approved at a special meeting of Council on 8 September 1863.
the Emigrant Agent at Quebec, to request that no emigrants be sent unless they had the means, or the Government was willing to provide for them until employment was found. The Committee did what it could to find suitable accommodations and jobs through the generosity of citizens. This type of work provided Stephenson with a great sense of worth. Whatever help these emigrants needed, one visualizes him ready at any hour of the day.

The editorial pages of the Planet found Stephenson defending the need for tax increases by both the Town and the County. The levy to pay the interest on the Municipal Loan Fund debt had been reinstated during the previous year, and would now be at an all time high. A debenture was due, and the cost of constructing the William Street Bridge would be double the original estimate. Town Council was left with little choice. A rate of fifteen cents on the dollar was necessary to meet the requirements for 1863.

As a member of the County Council, Stephenson felt the need to rationalize the expenditures and the raising of taxes by that Corporation. The increase was for the ultimate benefit of the citizens in the form of local improvements. The real question was not the increase, but whether it could be afforded. His answer was an undeniable yes. In the last decade, the County "doubled its population; but it has quadrupled in wealth and

57 Planet, 10 September 1863, 2.
58 Town of Chatham By-Law Book, January 1, 1855 to January 10, 1879, 198.
59 Planet, 23 July 1863, 2.
material resources." As a result, "there is no County probably in Canada", the Planet editor concluded, "which is better able to pay more taxes and which is called upon to pay less than this very County of Kent." These were brave words from the politician, but the situation with the Municipal Loan Fund debt just kept getting worse. Council received a letter from Mr. H. Bernard of the Crown Law Department for Upper Canada. Acting Mayor Stephenson revealed to the Councillors that unless the arrears for 1862, amounting to $4,001.23, were paid by October 1st, legal proceedings would be brought against the Town. The interest was ordered paid, and time bought to reach a solution.

There is a thin line between civic duty and the desire for a political career, not that the former ceases with the inception of the latter. By the end of 1863, Stephenson had crossed that line. A man, not yet thirty, had concluded an abnormally ambitious year no worse for the wear. Family man, successful newspaperman, Councillor, Deputy Reeve, Fire Chief, were all titles he wore proudly. Chatham was fortunate to have such a citizen in her midst. Stephenson would slow down, but only long enough to catch his breath.

Once again, Stephenson used the Planet to influence the selection of the Mayor in 1864. It supported long-time friend

---

60 Planet, 25 June 1863, 2.
61 Planet, 25 June 1863, 2.
62 Planet, 20 August 1863, 1.
63 Planet, 10 December 1863, 1.
and Conservative, Dr. Askin. His opponent was former Mayor and political rival, John Smith. The intensity of the fight was lacking, however. Too many pleas had met with too many rejections. The people loved Stephenson, but their loyalty only went so far. There were still strong pockets of sympathy for the Reform movement. How could they support Stephenson, a Conservative, but not his Conservative friends for Mayor? Although party politics did not exist at the municipal level, the electors were well aware of the political views of each candidate. They voted for those whose views were most akin to their own, and, for the most part, Chatham was not a Conservative town. Very rarely someone comes along who is able to transcend the political barrier. Rufus Stephenson was such a man. The people believed in him; they believed he worked for the benefit of the town and the people regardless of his personal political bias. He had exemplified this on numerous occasions; he had gained their trust. Stephenson was re-elected to Council, but his candidate, Dr. Askin went down to defeat.

The new Council was less than obliging. It took two meetings and fourteen motions and amendments to select a Deputy

---

64 In the previous five municipal elections, the Planet's candidate for Mayor was successful on only one occasion. In 1859, long-time friend of Stephenson, Joseph Northwood, was defeated by Walter McCrea. The only Conservative to be successful in this period was Dr. Askin over John Dolsen in 1860. In 1861, Dolsen made a comeback and defeated Dr. Thomas Cross. The Reformer, John Smith, won the position of Mayor for the next two years defeating A. D. McLean in 1862 and Dr. Cross in 1863.

65 Planet, 14 January 1864, 1.
Reeve. 66 When the smoke cleared, John Dolsen was victorious. Council's first problem was not a new one. The Mayor read a letter from Sheriff Mercer stating that he had received a writ from the Attorney-General's Department to immediately secure from the Town of Chatham $3,001.00 being the balance in arrears for 1862 to the Municipal Loan Fund. 67 In the confusion, it was discovered that only $1,000.00 had been sent the previous year. The reason was never clearly given. The total amount needed had been assessed and collected, but never sent. 68 The Town Treasurer was instructed to forward the money to the Government post haste.

The only political excitement that year was the information that the Government would station two companies of active Volunteer Forces in Chatham if sufficient accommodation was available. At a special meeting of Council, 69 Stephenson's motion to provide hotel rooms for the militia was adopted, as was his motion to allow the Town Volunteers the use of the Town Hall for drill purposes two nights each week. Imagine having to worry about a place for your own Volunteers to drill because the barrack grounds were full. What a wonderful problem for Stephenson. He had waited many years for this dream to come true.

As Rufus Stephenson once remarked that the Mayor's chair should be reserved as a reward for those tried public servants

66 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 18 January 1864, 220 and 221, and 22 January 1864, 222 and 223.
67 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 19 February 1864, 231.
68 Planet, 25 February 1864, 2.
69 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 29 December 1864, 277.
who had served their electors well, it was time for his reward. In his first bid for Mayor, Stephenson was unopposed. His main goals in that first year were to accommodate the Volunteer Forces, to find a solution to the ever present Municipal Loan Fund debt, and to keep taxes as low as possible while improving the Town of Chatham. He was not entirely unsuccessful.

The defence build-up in Upper and Lower Canada and the Maritimes had been brought about by several reasons. By 1861, the British Mailship 'Trént' was stopped in the Bahamas Channel under the orders of American naval Captain Charles Wilkes who suspected Southern sympathizers to be on board. After searching the ship, two Confederate commissioners, James Mason and John Slidell, were seized. Although both were later released unharmed, the entire affair created the possibility of war between Britain and the United States; a war which would be fought on Canadian soil. As will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, peace in Canada was threatened on another front. With the growing fear of Fenian raids on Canadian border towns, the Canadian government began placing volunteer companies at strategic locations. Chatham was no exception.

The enthusiasm generated by the arrival of the Volunteer Forces was too great to contain. The Planet ran feature stories on their every move. Even an article giving the number of single

70 Planet, 28 December 1860, 1.
71 Planet, 29 December 1864, 1.
men in the two companies was written with child-like excitement. The Volunteers, under the direction of Major S. Amsden, consisted of the Dunnville Rifle Company and St. Catherines Volunteer Infantry Company. Before long, they were leading the lives of regular soldiers, and the town felt a sense of security it had not known before.

Stephenson's pressure had paid off handsomely. By the end of the year, Colonel Wolseley had written Council offering a detachment of troops similar in size to the one at Sandwich if accommodations could be had free. Such a condition proved no obstacle as the Mayor was authorized to telegraph Wolseley accepting his offer. In a good neighbourly gesture, County Council voted unanimously to donate $300 to be expended by the Corporation of Chatham in providing better accommodations for Her Majesty's troops.

The by-law to raise taxes for the year 1865 pegged the rate at 19¢ on the dollar. Although it appeared to be a high rate, it was comparatively fair. The items which Town Council could not control, the County levy, the School levy, and the levy for debenture payments, amounted to ten cents. The levy for the debt of the Municipal Loan Fund was kept at a reasonable five

73 Planet, 19 January 1865, 1.
74 Planet, 12 January 1865, 1.
75 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 13 November 1865, 326. Colonel Wolseley stated that the detachment at Sandwich consisted of 3 Officers, 75 men and 20 women.
76 Planet, 21 December 1865, 2.
77 Town of Chatham By-Law Book, 28 July 1865, 310.
cents. The levy for town improvements jumped to four cents on the dollar, the highest since Stephenson entered politics. This was, however, the only area in which the town benefited directly. In the Planet, he argued the financial position of Chatham was not only good, but far superior to many municipalities in the province. This was important to the businessman and manufacturer who would look favourably on investing in Chatham.

On the issue of the debt, the Mayor, through his newspaper, attempted to paint a rosier picture than one had been led to believe. To do this, he compared Chatham to other municipalities. Chatham needed $4,001.00 to meet her annual interest payment on the debt. St. Catherines, on the other hand, was in arrears by approximately $43,000.00. The arrears for the municipality of London amounted to an astronomical sum of $124,899.75. All in all, then, the situation was not that bad. In comparison, Chatham's financial position was anything but bleak.

Rufus Stephenson wanted the 1865 celebration of the Queen's birthday to be the best ever experienced in Chatham. A meeting of interested citizens was held in the editorial rooms of the Planet and a committee was formed with Stephenson as chairman to " canvass the Town and solicit subscriptions for a grand..."

---


79 Planet, 30 March 1865, 2.
celebration." The committee was off to a rousing start with $122.00 donated by the enthusiastic crowd that very evening. If the Planet can be viewed as an unbiased observer, the citizens of Chatham were greeted to a grand festivity indeed. A huge parade, speeches, games, fireworks, and steamboat excursions were only part of the activities offered to the young and old alike. "Without a single exception," the Planet editor boasted:

the proudest and most glorious day Chatham ever had was Wednesday last, the 24th inst., the 46th anniversary of the Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. Never before in this section of Canada was there anything approaching a corresponding exhibition of loyalty, of true heart felt enthusiasm.

Although no longer on the executive, Stephenson still maintained an active role with the Chatham Fire Department. Whether taking part at the Annual Meeting of the Fire Department, or organizing a celebration, or running the affairs of the town as the Chief Magistrate, Stephenson had won the respect of the people. It is little wonder none opposed him for his second term as Mayor.

One of the more important institutions undergoing change in Upper Canada at this time was that of education. Shortly after the 1866 municipal election, a County School Convention was held at Chatham's Town Hall. The guest of honour was the Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada, Dr. Egerton Ryerson. He was in

---

80 Planet, 11 May 1865, 1.
81 Planet, 1 June 1865, 1.
82 Planet, 1 June 1865, 1.
83 Planet, 13 April 1865, 1.
84 Planet, 8 February 1866, 1.
the process of travelling about the countryside promoting a three-pronged policy for the improvement of education. There was a need for a more consistent and better managed system. This could be accomplished by having, for example, examinations for all schools set in Toronto. Compulsory attendance was a must. "No parent," Ryerson emphasized, "has a right to deprive a child of that which is essential to enable him to battle successfully with life." 85 The final step which Ryerson had originally hoped to implement, but was encountering continued opposition, was the elimination of Board of School Trustees, their duties falling upon Township Councils. 86

The meeting was well attended with approximately two hundred interested citizens. Among them, an active participant led the support for the progressive changes outlined. By way of motions and seconding of motions, Rufus Stephenson demonstrated his desire for improved educational system in the province. One of the motions passed at the Chatham Convention would give municipal Councils the power to pass a by-law for compulsory school attendance for children between seven and twelve years of age during four months of the year. 87 Further motion, contrary to Ryerson's wish, was that Board of School Trustees would remain separate from the Township Councils, and would continue to be elected by the ratepayers. 88 Within a few short years, these and other

85 *Planet*, 8 February 1866, 1.
86 *Planet*, 8 February 1866, 1.
87 *Planet*, 8 February 1866, 1.
88 *Planet*, 8 February 1866, 1.
changes came into effect in Ontario with the passing of the School Improvement Act. 89

Mayor Stephenson was quite at ease whether meeting visiting dignitaries or addressing a convention of provincial significance. He was equally adept in listening to the concerns of the man in the street. At a regular meeting of Town Council, the Mayor was dismayed to report what he perceived to be a deliberate attempt to cheat the local citizens. Acting on several complaints about bread being sold below the required standards, Stephenson, himself, investigated. He visited the grocers throughout the town, and had several loaves of bread weighed. In each case, the weight was less than the required amount. A special committee consisting of the Mayor, Councillors Askin, Higgins, Smith and the Chief Constable was promptly formed to pay regular visits to the bakers. 90 After that, the citizens of Chatham were assured an honest loaf of bread.

As we have already seen, having troops stationed in Chatham was important, not only for Stephenson, but the town. They would bolster the economy, as well as have a positive influence on society. More importantly, their mere presence offered a sense of security in an era in which peace was not guaranteed. The middle of the 1860's was a troubled time in North America. The American Civil War generated many Canadian sympathies for the North. Britain, on the other hand, needing the cotton grown on

---

89 The School Improvement Act was passed in 1871. See Neil F. Morrison, Garden Gateway to Canada (Windsor: Herald Press Limited, 1954), 108.

90 Planet, 8 March 1866, 1.
Southern plantations, appeared to favour the South. This created a strong anti-British flavour in the northern states. As a result, talks of annexation and attacks on Canada could not be taken lightly.

It was in this atmosphere that the Canadian government, in 1862, authorized the formation of Volunteer Companies. Within months, Chatham had two companies formed. In the event of an attack, however, strategic points such as Chatham, could not be defended by the regular militia units. It was on this premise that Stephenson fought so vehemently to have it recognized as a garrison town, complete with all the trimmings. In the meantime, the companies met for weekly drill sessions, and prepared for an American invasion.

Fortunately, the attacks never came. The Civil War ended and it seemed that Canadian fears could be laid to rest. Tranquility, however, was short-lived. A threat greater than any other since the War of 1812 was already brewing — the Fenians. The Fenian Order, or Irish Republican Brotherhood, established in Ireland in 1858, and in the United States the following year, was a patriotic group seeking Ireland's independence from Great Britain through force. To put pressure on Britain, one of their

---


93 Lauriston, *Romantic Kent*, 730. On 26 December 1862, No. 1 Company of Chatham was organized with three officers and 55 men. The No. 2 Company, of similar size, was formed on 16 January 1863.

goals was to conquer Canada. By the spring of 1866, thousands had collected along the American border with little interference from the Government.

By early March, the Chatham Volunteers were needed in Windsor. At a special meeting of Town Council, the sum of ten dollars was authorized to be expended on refreshments for the troops under Captains Smith and Glendenning as they departed for the front. It was common for other Volunteer Companies, on their way to Windsor, to billet in Chatham. In each instance, a delegation of Council, including Mayor Stephenson, met the men at the train station, and offered their utmost in the way of assistance and hospitality. From a letter written by an Elora Volunteer to his friends, one is cognizant of the appreciation shown by Stephenson towards the Volunteers. "We found the Mayor of the Town," the young man wrote, "waiting for us at the station. One of the local papers (Planet) gave quite a flattering character to us on our arrival." After a couple of months and no action, the Chatham Volunteers returned home.

Although raids on border towns did take place, they were not altogether successful and the Fenian Order never accomplished its task. The American Civil War and the Fenian threats impressed

95 Orlo Miller, A Century of Western Ontario (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1949), 156.
96 Miller, A Century of Western Ontario, 156.
97 Planet, 22 March 1866, 2.
98 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 21 March 1866, 352.
99 Planet, 19 April 1866, 2. The letter was dated in Chatham, Canada West, April 6, 1866.
24th KENT REGIMENT ON OLD BARRACKS GROUND. TECUMSEH PARK.
upon the Canadian Government the need for improved security. To be more effective, Volunteer Companies banded together into battalions. By the general militia order of 14 September 1866, the 24th Battalion of Infantry, Kent, was formed. This Battalion comprised the eight Companies in existance in Kent. Under the new Battalion, Rufus Stephenson, fittingly, became the captain of No. 2 Company, Chatham. The 24th saw relatively no action in the era of peace that followed. If it had, Stephenson would have been the first to the front to protect his family, his town, and his country.

The lack of local newspapers, and poorly kept Council minutes for the latter half of 1866 and the entire year of 1867, made it difficult assessing that period of Stephenson's municipal career. From the report of 'Municipal Election Returns' published in the Globe, we learn that Stephenson was challenged for the position of Mayor for the first time in 1867. His opponent was a long-time Conservative and personal friend, Dr. Askin. The two-way battle was not the amicable affair it would appear on the surface. It was Stephenson's first real mayoralty contest. He had something to prove, if only to himself. More importantly, the win was necessary for Stephenson's political advancement.


101 Weir, "Twenty-Fourth Regiment," 42.

102 The Globe, Toronto, Canada West, 8 January 1867, 3.

103 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 579.
It was apparent that the invincible Grit, Archibald McKellar, would be fighting for the Kent seat in the first Confederation parliament. If Stephenson hoped to realize his similar aspirations, he had to defeat Askin. Rather than run their own candidate, the Grits supported Askin in an attempt to knock the wind out of Stephenson's sails. Although it was a close election, Stephenson's home ward, Northwood, came through and he was elected to his third successive term as Mayor with a fifty-one vote majority.

In his final year as Mayor, Stephenson attempted to give the people the most for their tax dollar. The total tax levy was held to a respectable sixteen cents on the dollar. The levy to cover the Municipal Loan Fund debt was four cents, the lowest in Stephenson's seven-year municipal career (save for 1861 when the Town Council voted not to pay anything towards the debt); the levy of five cents for town improvements, the highest. That year, Council authorized the purchase of three steam fire engines. When Lieutenant-Colonel Smith requested $80.00 to entertain the "several companies of Volunteers of the 24th"

104 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 579.
105 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 579.
106 Globe, 8 January 1867, 3. In Eberts Ward, Stephenson polled 120 votes to Dr. Askin's 103. Dr. Askin won Chrysler War 102 to 88. The big difference came from Northwood Ward where Stephenson received 108 votes and Askin only 60.
107 Town of Chatham By-law Book, 1867, 255.
108 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 25 April 1867, 449.
on the Queen's birthday, Council heartily consented.109 Ironically, the same enthusiasm was not exhibited towards the July 1st celebrations. A motion to allocate $75.00 for the celebrations was defeated.110 It was felt any funds for this occasion should be had from private subscription only.

Stephenson's final year in municipal politics was marked by sporadic attendance.111 He was in the midst of preparation for a much broader political involvement. It was an era filled with anticipation. Eyes were shifting away from the local scene to the more grandiose vision of nation. Confederation was in vogue.

One cannot underestimate Stephenson's accomplishments, as an elected municipal official, both for the Town of Chatham, and his personal gain. His victory in the 1867 Mayoralty contest was undoubtedly important for his success in that first Dominion battle. Stephenson fully realized the impact. One could argue that his extra-curricular activities such as those with the Chatham Fire Department and the Kent Infantry did him no harm politically. There is no debate on that point. However, the writer is convinced that those positions of civic responsibility were undertaken not for political gain as much as for personal gratification. His relentless drive to secure protection for Chatham did not go

109 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 10 May 1867, 451.
110 Town of Chatham Minute Book, 21 June 1867, 459.
111 In the four months preceding the first Dominion election, Stephenson was absent from six of nine regular meetings of Town Council.
unrewarded. His genuine concern for the Town's financial plight helped to put it back on the road to recovery and prosperity. Chatham was his home; his family's home. Rufus Stephenson did everything in his power to promote it and foster its growth. If, in the process, he was elevated, that was the icing on the cake. Now, with Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Canada East and Canada West coming together to form the Dominion of Canada, new challenges had to be addressed. For Rufus Stephenson, his services were needed to tackle those challenges for the betterment of Chatham and its citizens.
CHAPTER IV

"NO PARTY LEADER'S SLAVE"

With the advent of the first Dominion election, Rufus Stephenson took to the hustings against a worthy opponent. To think Archibald McKellar or his Grit supporters would stand back in awe would have been naive. A Liberal-Conservative victory in Kent was by no means guaranteed. In the end, as will be discussed in more detail later, Stephenson's popularity gave him the edge over the area's most dominant politician, McKellar. Even more interesting was the hold Stephenson maintained on the constituency for fifteen years, eventually retiring from federal politics undefeated.

During Stephenson's tenure as Member of Parliament, he was not considered Cabinet material. This was not an injustice by any means. In fact, the writer doubts he had such aspirations. Of Rufus Stephenson's participation in the House, H. Belden, in his Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Essex and Kent, commented, "He has not been a very frequent speaker, but in the speeches delivered by him in the Commons, strong common sense and sound logic have been the characteristics."1 This was consistent with his sense of purpose. As already shown, Stephenson's first political allegiance was to Chatham; now, it

---

1Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Essex and Kent, 47.
would be expanded slightly to Kent County. He worked diligently for the improvement of his riding, and the ultimate betterment of its citizens.

Confederation did not occur overnight, nor was it conceived by any one set of principles. Rather, a series of events over time gave way to the desire for a federation of the British North American provinces. It is not the intention here to give a detailed history of the coalitions and conventions which resulted in Confederation, but to briefly outline the causes which produced that perceived need for union. For the concerns of the nation were also the concerns of the Towns like Chatham, and of men like Rufus Stephenson.

On the surface, one of the most obvious reasons for union was a commonalty of heritage, a sense of nationality as it were. The majority of the people in the British north, with the exception of Quebec, were of similar stock. The 1871 Census for Kent revealed a population of 5,873 in the Town of Chatham. Of that total 1,809 were of English ancestry, 1,160 were Irish, and 1,018 were Scottish. This sense of family did not hinder the progress of Confederation.

The financial debts piled up by each province forced them to turn to one another for help. The 1840's, 1850's, and 1860's had been an age of ambitious canal and railroad projects. To pay for these, duties and excise taxes were needed which, in

---

2 Canada Census, 1870 - 71, Kent County, 252.

turn, depended on markets. Unfortunately, Canadian transportation facilities never lived up to their expectations, and could not compete with their American counterparts. In the very early stages, Upper and Lower Canada were forced to turn to the United States for markets as England adopted a policy of free trade.\textsuperscript{4} No longer could the Canada's rely on their guaranteed market abroad. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise, and resulted in the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 between Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, and the United States.\textsuperscript{5} By the terms of the treaty, which would remain in force for ten years and then could be abrogated with twelve months' notice by either side, the prosperity of the colonies flourished.\textsuperscript{6} The Crimean War and American Civil War and their ensuing demand for foodstuffs provided an even greater boom for the colonies.\textsuperscript{7} It was not to last forever. With the wars over, and America's resentment towards Great Britain for its involvement in the Civil War, the United States government gave notice of its intent to abrogate the Reciprocity Treaty on 17 March 1866.\textsuperscript{8} This action was a shot in the arm for the Confederation movement. The need for a national economy with free trade within British North America became the rallying

\textsuperscript{4}LaPierre, \textit{Genesis of a Nation}, 74.
\textsuperscript{5}D. C. Masters, \textit{Reciprocity, 1846 - 1911, Historical Booklet no. 12 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Society, 1969)}, 6.
\textsuperscript{6}Masters, \textit{Reciprocity}, 7.
\textsuperscript{7}Masters, \textit{Reciprocity}, 8.
\textsuperscript{8}Masters, \textit{Reciprocity}, 10.
cry for survival.

Finally, there existed in British North America an intense fear of the United States. The attitude that Canada rightfully belonged to the United States, and could be easily taken, was not to be ignored. As already mentioned, Great Britain's involvement in the American Civil War only added fuel to the fire. With the abrogation of the Reciprocity Treaty, the American government committed itself to a "protective expansion." This expansion would undoubtedly be into British North America. Confederation was the tool needed to stop the American advancement into the area of the Hudson's Bay Company and to the west. "If Canada is to remain a country separate from the United States," John A. Macdonald claimed during the debates on Confederation, "it is of great importance to her that they (the United States) should not get behind us by right or by force, and intercept the route to the Pacific." 11

The political barrier to a federation of the Canadas or the whole of the British North American Provinces was dismantled with the "Great Coalition" of 1864. 12 What followed was a series of debates, conventions, and elections for a period of three years. During that time, the Confederation proposal was

9 LaPierre, Genesis of a Nation, 85.
10 LaPierre, Genesis of a Nation, 85.
11 LaPierre, Genesis of a Nation, 86.
12 For a concise explanation of the Great Coalition, see Paul G. Cornell, The Great Coalition, Historical Booklet no. 19 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Society, 1966).
contemplated with mixed reactions throughout the nation. July 13th the First, 1867, the day of Canada's birth, witnessed the culmination of the planning; the more arduous task was to build upon that foundation.

Prior to Confederation, Kent had been predominantly Reform territory. In 1847, the Western District was divided to separate Essex from the Kent-Lambton area. In the ensuing election in Kent, an avid Reformer, Malcolm Cameron was elected. Thus began, with one interruption, a twenty-year domination of Reform politics in the County.

The main objective of the Reform party of the 1840's had been to achieve Responsible Government. Once this goal was realized by 1848, the party itself went into disarray and lacked a consensus of direction. With the transfer of power from Baldwin and Lafontaine to Francis Hincks and A. N. Morin, an attempt to take control of the party came in the form of pragmatic policies. These policies were meant not only to strengthen the Reform party, but to persuade the more moderate Conservatives to join their ranks. Not all Reformers were supportive. A faction

---

13 The Confederation debate in United Canada and the Maritimes is examined in Chapters 10 (A Nobler Future for Our Youth) and 11 (Stop Your Puffing and Blowing) of LaPierre's Genesis of a Nation.


of the party advocating a continuation of radical policies split away and became known as the Clear Grits in Canada West and Rouges in Canada East. Malcolm Cameron shunned these extremists and remained loyal to the party.

By 1851, George Brown, an architect of the Clear Grit movement, felt it necessary to run as an independent in Kent to unseat the incumbent. Meanwhile, Cameron had already decided to run in Huron County, but used his influence to induce two other Reformers to enter the field, Arthur Rankin and a Mr. Wilkes. 16 The Conservative nominee was Edwin Larwill. Even with three Reformers splitting the vote, Brown was elected, polling 836 votes to Larwill's 739. 17 In retrospect, it was Kent that gave Canada one of its most dynamic and driving politicians of the nineteenth century.

George Brown had not been a stranger to the Kent-Lambton area prior to the 1851 election. He had been a constant visitor and had good friends at Sarnia. Hope and Alexander Mackenzie both worked enthusiastically on his election committee. 18 Brown had also been buying land in the northern region of Kent. This land happened to be, not by coincidence, on the route of the Great Western Railway. It was here that he built a way-station and named it Bothwell. 19 Brown worked hard for Kent, but his real endeavours were national. Nevertheless, the area's history

17 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 493.
19 Careless, George Brown, 20.
would have been significantly altered had he remained the Member for Kent.

By 1854, a steady population increase warranted the separation of Lambton from Kent. Brown chose to run in Lambton. Not only did this open Kent, but it provided Larwill with a seemingly easy contest. Brown, who had not defeated him by that great a margin, was out of the way, as was that section of the former County which had been most sympathetic to the Reform cause. Larwill faced three opponents, John Wadell, R. S. Woods, and the Reeve of Chatham, Archibald McKellar. The taste of political revenge was sweet for Larwill as he reversed the last electoral decision. For the time being, at least, Kent was Conservative domain.

Larwill lasted but one term. The seat of government issue had been hotly contested in Parliament. At one point, Quebec and Kingston were in the running. Larwill’s vote was for Quebec. In the final analysis, a compromise was made whereby Parliament would alternate between Quebec and Toronto. It was not soon enough to save Larwill. His pro-Quebec stand had been a most unpopular choice. Early one morning, his effigy with a placard, "Quebec and traitor", was found hanging from a tree just outside of Chatham.

---

20 Careless, George Brown, 24.
22 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 493.
23 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 494.
The election of 1857 saw the return of Archibald McKellar as the Grit nominee. With no other candidates, it became a two-man contest, but was hardly close. McKellar was the decisive victor with a 778-vote majority, a majority which would not be surpassed by another Kent politician for half a century.\textsuperscript{24} He successfully represented Kent for the next ten years.\textsuperscript{25} During that time, McKellar remained a staunch fighter for Reform, and emulated such contemporaries as George Brown, and Alexander Mackenzie. Having gained the reputation as an impressive parliamentarian, and winning three successive elections, his defeat was unthinkable. Kent had proved itself to be solid Grit domain.

The British North American Act came into effect on July 1, 1867. The day was hailed as a triumphant victory by the majority of Canadians, and was filled with festive activities across the new nation. For politicians, it marked the beginning of a campaign for a seat in the first Dominion Parliament. Archibald McKellar, no doubt, would run for Kent. A more logical question was who could the Conservatives find to muster a serious challenge to him. With calculated intent, the veteran municipal politician and successful newspaper proprietor, Rufus Stephenson, came forward. The seemingly invincible McKellar was well-liked, represented his constituency dutifully, and had the confidence of the people and the necessary experience. On the other hand,

\textsuperscript{24} Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 494.

\textsuperscript{25} In the election of 1861, McKellar defeated Albert Prince by 261 votes. In 1863, he defeated Joseph Northwood (who would eventually become a Senator) by 295. See Soutar's Chatham Directory, 1885-86.
Stephenson was equally well-liked, versed in politics, and already proved that he could secure votes regardless of political allegiances. It was shaping up to be a most interesting battle.

In that first election, Dominion and Provincial seats were voted on the same days, and members could stand for both. Stephenson and McKellar chose to run for the Dominion seat only, while the Provincial candidates were John McMichael of Blenheim for the Conservatives, and John Smith of Chatham for the Reform party. In 1867, electoral districts were redefined. The townships of Howard, Orford, Camden, Zone and the town of Bothwell were removed from Kent and, together with the former Lambton County townships of Sombra, Dawn, and Euphemia, comprised the new riding of Bothwell. With George Brown’s influence in the area, it would undoubtedly become a Reform stronghold. More importantly for the Conservatives in Kent, it removed a portion of the element seen as a hinderance to their success.

Election day, as we know it, did not exist in 1867. Voting took place over several weeks and usually lasted two days in each riding. In Kent, September 4 and 5 were chosen; while September 15 and 16 were the dates for voting in Bothwell. Kent continued to be loyal to the Grits sending Smith to the

26 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 580.
27 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 580.
28 Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Essex and Kent, 47.
Provincial Legislature with a slim majority of forty-four votes. In the Federal contest, however, Stephenson scored a dramatic upset. After the first day's polling, he was ahead of McKellar in the Town of Chatham 217 to 176, in Chatham Township 220 to 204, in Harwich Township 334 to 272, and in Dover 91 to 63; McKellar received the edge in Romney 36 to 32, in Township of Tilbury East 96 to 60, and in his home poll of Raleigh 181 to 40. Thus, Stephenson had a 66-vote majority. By the end of the second day, Rufus Stephenson was elected over Archibald McKellar 1,524 votes to 1,427. The Grit dominance had been broken.

The jubilation experienced in Stephenson's camp was equalled only by the agony in McKellar's. The political career of a man who had served so long and so well had been thwarted. His defeat was not taken lightly. George Brown in the Globe charged the Government with unscrupulous action:

We regret to find the close of the second day's polling gives Mr. Stephenson a majority over Mr. McKellar of from 97 to 101. But it could hardly have proved otherwise, as the Government were determined on securing Mr. McKellar's defeat and $10,000.00 were devoted by them to that purpose.

The Globe's accusation may have been justified. In a letter dated two months prior to the election, Sir John A. Macdonald replied to an inquiry from Stephenson. "Unfortunately," Macdonald wrote,

---

30 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 580.
31 Globe, 6 September 1867, 3.
33 Globe, 7 September 1867, 3.
"the government have no secret service money at their disposal to help friends at elections, but I will see what can be done among the Conservative community to strengthen your hands." Where the Conservatives got the necessary funds was immaterial, and the Grit protest was not loud or long. Rufus Stephenson was on his way to Ottawa.

Archibald McKellar did not accept defeat lightly. In Bothwell, the election had not yet occured. There Dr. Jacob Smith, the Reform candidate for the Provincial seat, was persuaded to stand aside for McKellar. In a very bold attempt, he secured a 75-vote majority, and began an ambitious new career. For Dominion honours, Bothwell returned David Mills with a 109-vote margin. As with Stephenson, both McKellar and Mills enjoyed long, successful political lives.

---


35 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 580.

36 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 580.


38 McKellar remained in Provincial politics until 1875. In 1872, he was sworn in as the Commissioner of Crown Lands. He also aided in the establishment of the Ontario Agricultural College. After 1875, McKellar became Sheriff of Wentworth until his death in 1894. See Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 528 - 584. Mills, under the Mackenzie government became the Minister of the Interior and the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs. He was called to the bar in 1883, and the following year was before the Privy Council as the Province's counsel in the Ontario-Manitoba boundary dispute. In 1891, he was called to the Senate. With the election of the Liberal government under Sir Wilfred Laurier, Mills became the Minister of Justice. See Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 590 - 591 and Guide to Canadian Ministries Since Confederation (PAC, 1982), 7, 41.
The first Dominion government under John A. Macdonald was a union government of sorts known as the Liberal-Conservatives. The very name suggested a moderate, middle-of-the-road party eager to do the right thing at the right time. Radical ideas of the left or right were unwelcome. With all of the election returns in, the Liberal-Conservatives held 101 seats, the Opposition 80. 39 Confederation had been fought for and won. With the machinery in place, men like Rufus Stephenson were needed to make it run.

The first Ministry enjoyed a simple existence. Once the groundwork had been laid and the ministerial offices in place, it was necessary for Parliament to meet only two or three months of the year. 40 It did not provide Members the opportunity to dabble in too many concerns. Whenever the opportunity afforded itself, most spoke to matters having the greatest impact on their own riding. National policies such as imports, exports, and tariffs could always be reduced to a much narrower scope of vision. Such was the case with the Member for Kent, especially in his formative years. The improvement of the Thames River, the establishment of a Harbour of Refuge on the north-shore of Lake Erie, and living in close proximity to several of the Great Lakes, coasting and wrecking in Canadian waters were always matters of an imperative nature for Stephenson. Outside of this realm, his most important contribution to the government was his years of


service on the Joint Committee on the Printing of Parliament. Stephenson's appointment was a logical one owing to his many years of printing experience, and it was equally appropriate that he would eventually rise to the chairman's post. Throughout his career as Member of Parliament for Kent, Rufus Stephenson tackled each problem as it arose and did not let go until a solution was at hand.

Today, the Thames River meanders through Kent providing recreational pleasure for sporting enthusiasts. During the summer months, hundreds of American boaters ply its course to dock for a few relaxing days in Chatham. Thousands of ice-fishing shanties dot its hardened surface during the winter from one end of the County to the other. Its days as a swimming hole, however, have long since passed except for the most foolhardy. In the 1860's, it was much more. The Thames River was the commercial highway of the County. In a single season, the Port of Chatham received 214 British and 255 American steamers and sailing vessels. The value of the goods exported was over $300,000.00. It was expedient that the river be maintained for proper navigation.

Deposits of silt had caused a bar to be formed across the mouth of the River Thames. As ships became larger and heavier, and traffic increased, the bar became a hazard. Stephenson

41 R. R. Sutherland, County of Kent Gazeteer and General Business Directory for 1864 (Ingersoll, Canada West: A. R. and John Sutherland, 1864, 107.

42 Sutherland, County of Kent Gazeteer, 107. Among the chief items exported were cordwood, horses, butler, furs, wool, barley, rye, beans, oats, and wheat.
wasted no time in addressing the problem. Even before the first session of Parliament, he wrote John A. Macdonald requesting assistance. The Prime Minister found the letter reminiscent of his younger days when he, too, was first elected a Member of Parliament.

I thought it necessary to set to work relentlessly to do something for my constituency. It is so with all young members, but by and by you will find out that you can take things easily.\footnote{PAC, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, vol. 514, p. 135, Macdonald to Stephenson, 12 October 1867 (PAC reel C-25).}

He clearly misinterpreted the request as one of politics. "You must remember," Macdonald cautioned, "that you have got five years leave, and all that you do now in 67 (1867) will be ultimately forgotten by your constituents in 72 (1872).\footnote{PAC, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, vol. 514, p. 136, Macdonald to Stephenson, 12 October 1867 (PAC reel C-25).}

More to the issue, however, Macdonald reminded Stephenson that responsibility for such an improvement was not his, but that of the provincial member. The work had to be authorized and carried out by the Government at Toronto. In that case, "Let McKellar make as many promises as he pleases on these matters. The more he makes the worse for him, because he certainly will not succeed in carrying them all out.\footnote{PAC, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, vol. 514, p. 136, Macdonald to Stephenson, 12 October 1867 (PAC reel C-25).}

Macdonald's answer failed to deter Stephenson. He was not playing politics. The potential dangers and loss of trade were too great to ignore. Unfortunately, the Provincial Government did not agree with the Dominion Government's position. At a
time when both governments were in their infancy, the limits of jurisdiction were not yet clearly defined. "By this means both Houses shirk responsibility," Stephenson wrote, and he realized that he would have to initiate the removal of the impediment himself.

Part of Stephenson's scheme was to put pressure on the Federal Government. In less than one and a half years, no fewer than four petitions from the Corporation of the County of Kent, one from the Township of Tilbury East, one from the Township of Dover, one from the Township of Harwich, and one from prominent citizens in each of the above Townships, were presented before the House. The second phase of the plan was to offer a concrete proposal by which the government could assist in the improvement, but not assume full costs. The initial estimate for removing the bar was $4,800.00. If the Government would pay half that amount, Stephenson would secure the other half from private persons. The private funds could be repaid by charging a levy on boats using the Thames. The plan was a sound one and appealed to the Minister of Public Works, the

---

46 *Planet*, 3 June 1868, 2.
48 Journals, 29 April 1869, 49.
49 *Journals*, 3 May 1869, 55.
50 *Journals*, 7 May 1869, 55.
51 *Journals*, 3 May 1869, 55.
52 *Planet*, 30 July 1868, 2.
53 *Planet*, 30 July 1868, 2.
Honourable William McDougall. He encouraged Stephenson to find his entrepreneur, but not to do anything definite until the matter could be brought before the Privy Council during the next session.  

Just prior to the close of the second session of Parliament, everything fell into place. A resolution "improving the channels and facilitating the navigation to the Port of Chatham" was passed. The resolution also imposed a tonnage duty not exceeding ten cents per ton on vessels entering the port. A month earlier, Mr. T. N. Molesworth, Government Engineer, had visited the mouth of the Thames. In a letter to the Honourable John Carling, Head of Public Works for the Province of Ontario, he suggested the proposed federal scheme was inadequate, and estimated $9,000.00 was necessary to do a proper job. The Planet printed a copy of the letter for two reasons, the writer believes. First, although the work to be carried out was by virtue of Stephenson's plan, any inadequacies with it had to be laid against the Federal Government for lack of foresight and proper engineering studies. Second, it showed that he was

---

54 *Planet*, 30 July 1868, 2. The second session of the First Parliament opened 15 April 1869.

55 *Journals*, 19 June 1869, 280.

56 John Carling was a Minister in Oliver Mowat's Cabinet but was a Conservative. Donald Swainson, ed., *Oliver Mowat's Ontario* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1972) 62.

57 *Planet*, 13 May 1869, 2.
successful in getting both levels of government involved. The Planet not so humbly asserted, "Mr. Stephenson deserves the thanks of his constituents for his attention to this important matter."\(^{58}\) Owing to the very nature of geography, and the flow of flood waters which were prevalent with each spring thaw, the bar at the mouth of the Thames would return. For now, however, Stephenson could bask in the sun.

Not everyone gave Stephenson credit. In a very damning article, the Chatham Banner denied he was at all responsible, and asserted that real credit should go to opposition leader Mackenzie and to the Member for Bothwell, David Mills.\(^{59}\) A few days after the Estimates were brought down, Macdonald announced that the Government was going to leave all local improvements to the Provinces. Thus, the Thames River dredging would have been left out. It was on the insistence of Mackenzie and Mills that that one particular item be reinstated as the local authorities could not afford the work. After some debate on the matter, it was agreed that the work would be put back into the Estimates. Stephenson was not even present. "When Messrs. Mackenzie and Mills were looking after the interests of Kent, our representative was engaged down stairs with a straw in his mouth."\(^{60}\) The work was carried out in 1870,\(^{61}\) but to some,

\(^{58}\) Planet, 13 May 1869, 2.

\(^{59}\) The Chatham Banner, Chatham, Ontario, 27 October 1870, 2.

\(^{60}\) Chatham Banner, 27 October 1870, 2.

\(^{61}\) Planet, 18 January 1872, 2.
Stephenson's reputation had been tarnished.

Stephenson's creditability would have been even more damaged had the public been aware of his dealings behind the scenes. A private letter from Macdonald is most revealing. Stephenson used his influence in an attempt to secure the Thanes River dredging contract for a friend. "If the Minister of Public Works", the Premier chastised,

had yielded to the pressure that you brought upon him and upon myself and given the Contract to Lamont at his tender, in preference to Brown who was much lower and who is a perfectly capable and solvent contractor, it would have brought disgrace on the Government, on you and on Lamont. 62 ... the Minister of Public Works cannot tamper with a tender, and must take them as he finds them. 63

So as not to totally discourage Stephenson from trying to help a friend, Macdonald reminded him that contracts for the Pacific Railway would soon be available. ... there will be lots of work for Contractor friends and I have no doubt that in one way or another Mr. Lamont can be profitably employed." 64 The Member for Kent knew what he wanted, and used every possible means at his disposal to get it.

Another important matter that preoccupied Stephenson during the first Parliament was his attempt to secure a harbour of refuge on the north shore of Lake Erie. Parliament was not

---


63 PAC, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, vol. 518, p. 45, Macdonald to Stephenson, 4 January 1871 (PAC reel C-29). This last sentence was added as a postscript.

yet three weeks old when he began amassing his ammunition. In the House, he moved for reports having reference to the survey and construction of a harbour of refuge on the north shore of Lake Erie, together with a return of all appropriations made by the Canadian Government towards the construction of harbours and lighthouses in the Province of Ontario naming the amount expended, the year, and the locality of each since 1845.65

When the Government announced it was sending engineers to the shores of Lake Huron to examine possible sites for the construction of a harbour, the Planet complained. A harbour of refuge on Lake Huron was fine, but not needed. When were the authorities going to realize there was an urgent need for such a harbour between Long Point and Point Pelee on Lake Erie.66 Stephenson knew of the perfect spot - Rond Eau. By 1856, the Rond Eau Harbour had fallen into a terrible state of disrepair.67 The Government had the authority to take over harbour companies who failed to keep their harbours in the proper state of repair. Acting on this clause, the Sheriff of Kent County, John Mercer, was instructed to take possession of the Rond Eau Harbour Company; which he did, and turned it over to the Government.68 Here, Stephenson was convinced, could be constructed the ideal harbour of refuge.


66Planet, 22 October 1868, 2.

67Sessional Papers, no. 57, 9.

68Sessional Papers, no. 57, 14.
In the third session, Stephenson continued his pursuit. In the meantime, he had the Corporation of the County of Kent petition the Government for construction of a harbour of refuge at Rond Eau. When he raised the issue on March 14, 1870, a lengthy debate followed. Mr. Masson, a Member from Quebec, felt Ontario already received too many benefits because of the feeling of superiority of the Members from Ontario, and if a harbour were to be built, he wanted one in his riding at Coteau du Lac. Mr. Mackenzie replied that a matter such as this should not be discussed along sectional lines. The position of the Government should be to build harbours where money was lost in the shipping trade. This was most appropriate in Lakes Erie and Huron where lights and harbours were sadly lacking.

Mr. Mills concurred. He stated the only question should be whether a harbour on Lake Erie was warranted. In his mind it was. Mr. Langevin, the Minister, ultimately responsible for the work, pointed out that the Member from Kent had been "untiring in his efforts to bring this matter before the Government." It was the responsibility of the Government that a proper site be chosen, and this had been done in a report recently completed.

---

69 Journals, 12 April 1869, 75.
70 House of Commons Debates, 1870, 380, 14 March 1870.
71 House of Commons Debates, 1871, 381, 14 March 1870.
72 House of Commons Debates, 1870, 382, 14 March 1870.
73 House of Commons Debates, 1870, 385, 14 March 1870.
the House. 74

The task of selecting the proper site for the harbour of refuge was given to the Chief Engineer of Public Works, John Page. Whatever pressure, if any, Page was under is not clear. Maybe Rond Eau was the best site. In his report, he advised that "a great and permanent benefit would be conferred on the general commerce of the lakes" 75 if improvements were made at "Rondeau". Stephenson had scored another victory; this time for the benefit of a great many outside of his riding.

By early 1872, ships were again running aground at the mouth of the Thames River. Upon careful survey, ordered by the Ontario Minister of Public Works, it was determined that ships were not staying within the narrow, fifty-foot wide channel. 76 Outside of the channel, the water was only five feet deep, 77 and it was here that problems occurred.

Stephenson immediately set off to secure the improvements for a deeper and wider channel. Within months, he was able to inform Chatham Town Council that he had received assurances from Honourable Sir John A. Macdonald and the Honourable Hector Langevin that they would recommend to Parliament the voting of one half ($5,000.00) towards improvements at the mouth of the Thames River. The other half was to come from local sources; or, they

74 House of Commons Debates, 1870, 385, 14 March 1870.
75 Sessional Papers, no. 49
76 Planet, 18 January 1872, 2.
77 Planet, 18 January 1872, 2.
(Government) could impose a levy of ten cents per ton on all vessels until the total amount had been secured. The second option was chosen with a slight variation. Tonnage dues would be paid once a year on vessels under 100 tons, and twice a year on vessels over 100 tons. The work would take three years to complete, but Rufus Stephenson was a contented politician at the close of his first term as Member of Parliament.

At the Liberal-Conservative Party of Kent's County Convention, Stephenson was nominated and unanimously supported by the fifty-seven delegates representing each municipality in Kent. Amongst cheers and applause, he gave his acceptance speech. The speech, itself, is invaluable as it gives one the opportunity to gauge Stephenson's own impression of his work. After speaking about some of the wise government policies such as railways, home markets, and home industries, his speech turned personal. While he belonged to one political party, he was "no party leader's slave". His interest was the "People's interest". He felt he had been elected "to do the People's work, and he had never shirked his share, no matter what inconvenience came his way". He believed too much talking in Parliament was a waste of time. It was more important to work to get the job done. He felt it an honour to be called "a Working Member rather than a Talking Member". One can picture the delegates raising their glasses.

---

78 _Planet_, 2 May 1872, 2.
79 _Planet_, 2 May 1872, 2.
80 _Planet_, 4 April 1871, 2. The convention was held on Tuesday, April 2,
81 _Planet_, 4 April 1871, 2.
and cheering with each sentence. It must have been some evening; one for which Stephenson had worked hard.

Being a Member of Parliament in the early stages of Canadian history was not a full time occupation. Stephenson continued to own and act as editor for the Planet. As well, he continued to hold important positions of responsibility in the community. In 1866, an advertisement for an upcoming meeting of the Freemasons, Wellington Lodge No. 46 was signed by Rufus Stephenson, Secretary. By 1869, he was listed as Brother Rufus Stephenson, Chaplain; a post he held for two years. During those same two years, he also handled all of the Lodge's financial reports. There is nothing to suggest that his involvement with the Freemasons was anything but social, and the normal thing to do for a man with his status.

What is more amazing is Stephenson's tenure as a School Board Trustee. He was first elected to the Board in January of 1867; the same month he was elected Mayor of Chatham, and the same year he was elected Member of Parliament for Kent. He continued to serve for four years in various capacities including manager for the North Chatham School in 1869, and Chairman in

---

82 *Planet*, 4 January 1866, 2.
84 *Worth, Landmarks*, 14.
85 *Chatham Board of School Trustees Minute Book, January 1861 to December 1875, 15 January 1867*, 223.
1870. The fact that Stephenson spread himself too thin was evidenced by his sporadic attendance. In his position as Chairman, he missed six out of thirteen meetings. He was finding out that he could not be everywhere, and do everything at the same time. He did not seek re-election in 1871.

Stephenson's only aspiration as a School Trustee was for the betterment of education in Chatham. He realized he would not be able to give a full commitment, but felt he had something to offer. During his term, a new school was built in Northwood Ward, his home ward. Within two years, the school had to be enlarged and an assistant teacher hired.

In the general election of 1872, the Liberals chose wine grower W. S. Stripp as their candidate for Kent. Ironically, Stephenson had been appointed to a select committee of the House in 1868 to investigate whether it was desirable or even practical to cultivate "wine, and making wine in Canada". He used the Planet to encourage farmers to experiment with different types, and to try different methods of growing the crop. Stripp did just that, and had made money at it.

87 School Trustees Minute Book, 18 January 1870, n. page.  
88 School Trustees Minute Book, 5 February 1867, 227.  
89 School Trustees Minute Book, 2 February 1869, 327.  
91 Journals, 22 April 1868, 216.  
92 Planet, 8 October 1868, 1.  
93 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 583.
SOLDIERS AT CHATHAM BARRACKS 1872

KING STREET (1872) LOOKING WEST FROM BEND
(Eberta Block to Right Facing Royal Exchange)
Stephenson must have amusingly wondered if he was going to be the architect of his own doom.

The voters in Kent had not forgotten how hard their Member had worked for them. Stephenson was elected with a majority of 144; 1874 votes to 1730.\textsuperscript{94} Nationally, the Conservatives were returned with only a six-seat majority. British Columbia\textsuperscript{95} and Manitoba,\textsuperscript{96} now part of the Dominion, returned nine out of ten seats for the Conservatives. The setback came in Ontario and Quebec where the Liberals significantly increased their support.\textsuperscript{97} The trouble with Louis Riel and the Red River Colony,\textsuperscript{98} and Macdonald's handling of the whole affair may explain the reason for some voter dissatisfaction with the Conservatives.

The second Parliament sat for a total of only six months. The charges that Macdonald and the Conservative party accepted a bribe during the 1872 election campaign for the issuing of a railway contract led to long and bitter debate in the House. Little else was accomplished. The infamous Pacific Scandal of


\textsuperscript{95}British Columbia became a Province in 1871.

\textsuperscript{96}Manitoba became a Province in 1870.

\textsuperscript{97}Carrigan, *Canadian Party Platforms*, 8. In 1867, the Liberals held 36 seats in Ontario and 20 in Quebec. In 1872, eight new ridings were added to Ontario and Liberals increased their total to 50 in that province and to 27 in Quebec.

1873 forced Macdonald and his cabinet to resign. A new election was called. Embarrassed Conservatives would take to the campaign trail severely handicapped.

Rufus Stephenson knew a victory was no longer guaranteed. Obviously, a great many Conservatives would be defeated. Would he survive? His opponent was, once again, William Stripp. The election was slated for January 22, 1874, and most of the nation was to vote on the same day. 99 Without a doubt, that particular day would have been the most anxious in Stephenson's political career. When the announcement was finally made, it was a victory by a slim 72 votes, but a victory nonetheless. 100 Across the country, the Conservatives were devastated. In Ontario, only twenty-four Conservatives survived, while a whopping sixty-three Liberals were elected. 101 Alexander Mackenzie became the second Prime Minister in Canadian history, and John A. Macdonald had to settle for the role of Leader of the Opposition.

Stephenson was not very active in the House as a Member of the Opposition. When he was, it was during the last two sessions of the third Parliament, as a new election approached. During the fourth session, Stephenson moved for the returns detailing the loss incurred by fire the previous fall at the Rondeau harbour lighthouse. 102 The harbour had been repaired,

99 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 583.
100 Spicer, History of the Federal Electoral Ridings, 340. Stephenson polled 1,895 votes to 1,823 for Stripp.
102 House of Commons Debates, 1877, 530, 7 March 1877.
but he understood from steamboat owners that the light had never been put back into operation rendering the harbour useless. He could not understand why something had not been done about this, especially when it was the only harbour of refuge on the north shore of Lake Erie. The Honourable Sir Albert Smith, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, replied, that the lighthouse keeper had been showing a temporary light. Stephenson disputed the comment by reading from the Minister's own report:

Owing to an accident from fire, the lamps and reflections of the revolving apparatus of the main light were destroyed on the 19th October last, and the light has not been shown since that period.

Smith backtracked by saying he thought a temporary light was being shown until a new one could be installed, but he could not remember. Regardless, he would check into it immediately.

Stephenson's most important contribution during the Mackenzie Ministry was his dedication to expedite Canadian coasting regulations. In the days before railway domination, the prosperity of many a community depended on the waterways. Harbours, lighthouses, and proper channels were all heartily fought for to facilitate better shipping. With thousands of ships plying the Great Lakes, towing and wrecking became big business. As more and more tug owners entered the field, the business became more competitive. Whoever reached the site first had the job. Before long, an increasing number of jobs in Canadian waters were being handled by American tugs. This was especially true in Lakes

103 House of Commons Debates, 1877, 530, 7 March 1877.
104 House of Commons Debates, 1877, 531, 7 March 1877.
105 House of Commons Debates, 1877, 531, 7 March 1877.
Erie and St. Clair.

The official government policy was that American tugs could enter Canadian waters to render service only to vessels in distress. 106 This was not always adhered to, of course, and A. R. Schulenburg, Manager of the Canada Towing and Wrecking Company at Windsor, complained to Rufus Stephenson that many American tugs were continually breaking the law. 107 In a very lengthy petition to the Minister of Customs, the Honourable Isaac Burpee, Stephenson pleaded Schulenburg's case, and demanded strict regulations to curtail the violators. 108

In the meanwhile, Stephenson realized that a Canadian law on coasting and towing would have more impact if a similar law existed in the United States. He succeeded in having Mr. Amos Townsend bring the matter before the House of Representatives. 109 In a letter dated February 9, 1878, Townsend informed Stephenson that he had introduced two bills in the House, both relating to the wrecking and towing of vessels. "I trust the provisions of the wrecking bill," Townsend concluded,

may meet your own views and possibly of the authorities of Canada and will result in a better state of feeling between the two governments on the subject of wrecked and disabled vessels. 110

---

106 PAC, Sir Mackenzie Bowell Papers, MG 26, E 1 (a), vol. 1, Alexander Mackenzie to L. B. Fortier, 7 November 1877.
107 PAC, Sir Mackenzie Bowell Papers, vol. 1 A. R. Schulenburg to Stephenson, 10 November 1877.
109 PAC, Sir Mackenzie Bowell Papers, vol. 1 Amos Townsend to Burpee, 4 December 1877.
110 PAC, Sir Mackenzie Bowell Papers, vol. 1 Amos Townsend to Stephenson, 9 February 1878.
New orders were issued to all Collectors of Customs. They read:

...no vessels, foreign or Canadian can interfere with wrecked vessels on Canadian shore unless they report to the nearest Collector of Customs and have his permission. Further, no foreign vessel shall receive such permission.\footnote{PAC, Sir Mackenzie Bowell Papers, vol. 1, Memorandum from Customs Department to all Collectors of Customs, 1 December 1877. The orders came into effect with Circular no. 210 dated 8 March 1878.}

A matter of international importance had been resolved primarily through the zealous efforts of Rufus Stephenson. Such an accomplishment was praiseworthy at any time; being a Member of the Opposition made it more so. By coincidence or design, the next general election was only months away.

For the Liberals, the reign of power seemed to be slipping away. The economy had gone sour and they appeared helpless to do anything about it. A sharp decline in international prices led to less world money available to buy Canadian exports, thus leaving Canadian manufacturers with few markets. The amount of foreign capital available for international lending plummeted. It had also become increasingly difficult to find investors to pour money into sectors with uncertain markets.\footnote{J. M. S. Careless and R. C. Brown, The Canadians 1867 - 1967 (Toronto: The macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1967), 455.} By 1874, American manufacturers were using Canada as a dumping ground for their goods.\footnote{P. B. Waite, Canada 1874 - 1896 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971), 79.} Mackenzie and the Liberals maintained a low tariff policy whereby raw materials and semi-finished products were allowed to come into Canada duty free. A levy of
17.5% was charged on most manufactured goods.\textsuperscript{114} It was not enough for the Canadian manufacturing interests who cried for relief.

Macdonald listened to those cries, and began campaigning in 1876 with refreshing new ideas to counter the stagnant Liberal policies. His ideas were molded into the "National Policy" which was really a series of policies; one of the most important being a full-fledged tariff for protection.\textsuperscript{115} "In the eyes of the Conservatives, the tariff was the beneficial means of promoting industry and strengthening the economy."\textsuperscript{116} The people liked what Macdonald had to say. It appeared he was on the road back to power.

In Kent, the Liberals selected an outsider, Hugh McMahon, to challenge Stephenson. McMahon, a London barrister, was a former Liberal-Conservative who had been asked to leave the party in 1872. He joined the Reformers and opposed John Carling in London where he was defeated by over 300 votes. Shortly thereafter, he was appointed Queen's Counsel.\textsuperscript{117} The Liberals pulled out all the stops in an attempt to defeat Stephenson. On separate occasions Wilfrid Laurier and Alexander Mackenzie visited Chatham to rally support for McMahon. Neither proved successful.


\textsuperscript{117} Planet, 27 May 1878, 2.
Laurier, in his speech, actually complimented Stephenson saying he had the greatest respect for him, and could find no fault with him.\textsuperscript{118} At the Liberal rally at Scane's Music Hall, Mackenzie received only a lukewarm reception, while Stephenson and J. J. Hawkins, the Conservative candidate for Bothwell, received thunderous applause when they entered.\textsuperscript{119}

In speech after speech, village after village, McMahon lost ground. Hecklers became more numerous.\textsuperscript{120} He could not break the stigma of being an outsider. Stephenson may have been a Conservative, but to many of the area's Liberals he was one of them which McMahon could never be. In his last election, Stephenson polled an impressive majority of 533 votes.\textsuperscript{121} That night a victory celebration and concert were held at the Music Hall. Among the gifts bestowed upon Stephenson was a gold-headed cane, valued at $600.00, by Reverend Williams of the Roman Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{122} One must fully appreciate the significance of that night; and of that gift. Stephenson had just been elected in his fourth successive bid as Member of Parliament. Since 1861, he had not met political defeat. All manner of men, regardless

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{118} \textit{Planet}, 3 July 1878, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{119} \textit{Planet}, 16 September 1878, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{120} \textit{Planet}, 29 May 1878, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Spicer, \textit{History of the Federal Electoral Ridings}, 340. Stephenson received 2,502 votes to 1,969 for McMahon.
\item \textsuperscript{122} \textit{Planet}, 20 September 1878, 2. The cane was a gift of appreciation from the Liberal-Conservative Association of Chatham. It was presented by Rev. Williams as he presided over the evening's festivities.
\end{itemize}
of race or religion, had supported him. He had truly won the respect of the community, not by some form of deceit, but by being himself. The printer/editor was a proud man indeed.

Across the country, Liberal seats were exchanged for Conservative. A complete reversal of the last election indicated the success of the promises in the "National Policy". The Right Honourable Sir John A. Macdonald would form the next government with a 137-seat majority; the Opposition had a mere 69.\textsuperscript{123} It was an overpowering, yet sweet, victory for the Conservatives.

During his final stint as Kent's Federal member, Stephenson concerned himself with some familiar problems, and tackled new ones. What was missing, however, was the vitality manifested in his earlier days. Little is on record of his participation in the House. No longer did he use the \textit{Planet} to embellish his positions, as the editorialship was now in the hands of his sons. He was content to remain what he had become known as - "a working Member", while looking to the future. Before this term ended, Stephenson had already laid the groundwork for life after active politics.

Throughout Stephenson's political career, certain issues remained priorities. An attempt by Stephenson to have his Government appoint special agents in Great Britain and Ireland for the promotion of emigration of tenant farmers to Canada was rejected. The Prime Minister spoke out against the proposal.

\textsuperscript{123} Carrigan, \textit{Canadian Party Platforms}, 15. In Ontario, the Conservatives secured 59 seats as opposed to only 24 in 1874.
stating that the regular staff in the Old Country was adequate.\textsuperscript{124} Improvements and repairs to Rond Eau Harbour continued in this period. Stephenson stayed on top of these to make sure they were carried out properly and above board.\textsuperscript{125} Wrecking and coasting in Canadian waters also remained serious problems as American tugs ignored the laws.\textsuperscript{126} Stephenson was relentless in his pressure on the Minister of Customs to protect the Canadian tug owners as required by legislation.\textsuperscript{127} A new challenge for the member from Kent was to secure the construction of a post office in Chatham. During a heated debate in House of Commons on which town would be next in line to receive a public building, Stephenson rationalized the choice was Chatham. Of the five towns, in which the Government of 1873 had proposed to erect post offices, Belleville, Brantford, Guelph, St. Catherine and Chatham, only Chatham remained without.\textsuperscript{128} Here, the Post Office, Customs Department and Inland Revenue Department collected an annual sum of approximately $64,000.00 for the Treasury.\textsuperscript{129} "Therefore, I think," Stephenson declared, "it will be seen that Chatham should receive the first consideration at

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{124} House of Commons Debates, 1880, 1152, 7 April 1880.
\item \textsuperscript{125} House of Commons Debates, 1879, 675, 24 March 1879.
\item \textsuperscript{126} House of Commons Debates, 1879, 119, 3 March 1879.
\item \textsuperscript{127} House of Commons Debates, 1879, 1405, 21 April 1879.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Sessional Papers, no. 124.
\item \textsuperscript{129} House of Commons Debates, 1880, 373, 2 March 1880.
\end{itemize}
the hands of the Government in making these appropriations.\footnote{130} Unfortunately, satisfaction was not immediate. The Prime Minister, while agreeing that the concept of building your own edifice to save on rent charges was sound, cautioned against moving too quickly. The Government's position was declared by Macdonald in rapier-like wit. "I think the Government, which is an economical Government, will have to throw itself upon its rural friends to resist this great pressure from the towns."\footnote{131} A week later, Stephenson pressed the issue by asking whether the Government had any intentions of putting into the estimates a sum of money for the erection of a proper building in Chatham to accommodate the Customs, Postal and Inland Revenue offices. The Minister of Public Works, Sir Hector Langevin, would only say the matter was under consideration by the Government.\footnote{132} At least it was a start.

One of Stephenson's most noteworthy accomplishments in the House of Commons was the role he played on the Printing Committee. From the beginning, the House of Commons and the Senate pooled their resources and formed a Joint Committee on Printing of Parliament. It was logical that Stephenson, a printer by trade, be appointed to such a committee. His first appointment came in 1869 and continued annually for the duration of his tenure. By 1880, he ascended to the position of Chairman.

Stephenson's contribution to this standing committee was

\footnote{130}{House of Commons Debates, 1880, 373, 2 March 1880.}

\footnote{131}{House of Commons Debates, 1880, 369, 2 March 1880.}

\footnote{132}{House of Commons Debates, 1880, 569, 10 March 1880.}
by no means passive. From the outset, it was apparent this was his game and he had come to play. Within the Committee a sub-committee of five, one of whom was Stephenson, was selected in 1869 to examine the tenders on printing for the next five years and make recommendations to the Joint Committee. To that time all printing had been contracted to Hunter Rose and Company. As expected, they submitted a tender, as did Mr. I. B. Taylor. Hunter, Rose and Lemieux's bid was $16,472.75 a year for the next five years; Taylor's bid was $14,696.76; a difference of $1,775.99 annually. The sub-committee voted three to two, however, in favour of the higher tender because as they reasoned of the "efficient manner in which they have performed the service." The two dissenting votes were that of Rufus Stephenson and Mackenzie Bowell. When the sub-committee's report and recommendation went to the Joint Committee, Stephenson attempted to reverse the decision. His motion was one of economics. Awarding the tender to Taylor would result in a savings of $8,879.95 over the life of the contract. He found some support, but not enough as the motion lost seven votes to eight. The report was now ready for presentation to the House. Stephenson would have one last chance.

In the House, Chairman Mackenzie moved the adoption of the Sixth Report of the Joint Committee of Both Houses on the

\[133\] Journals, 1869, Appendix no. 2, 3.
\[134\] Journals, 1869, Appendix no. 2, 11.
\[135\] Journals, 1869, Appendix no. 2, 11.
Printing of Parliament. 136 The first to speak was Stephenson. He moved an amendment that the report be "referred back to the said Committee with the recommendation to amend the same by reporting for the acceptance of this House the tender of W. B. Taylor for printing." 137 Stephenson's persistence was rewarded. In the ensuing vote, his motion succeeded 115 to 22. 138 Taylor would have the job; and Stephenson, a strong sense of accomplishment.

This story-book ending was not to be, however. By 1873, controversy arose. It seems that with increased costs, Mr. Taylor was finding it impossible to meet the tender price without incurring a loss. He, therefore, asked for relief from the original bid. The Fifth Report of the Joint Committee recommended increasing the amount of the tender. 139 Stephenson was in full concurrence citing the decision of the Committee was "dictated by a desire to do justice to the contractor." 140 What followed was a lengthy and heated debate on the principles of altering prices on a fixed contract. Most argued that such a step would cause a complete breakdown of Government tendering practices. Contractors would bid in nominal figures expecting

136 House of Commons Debates, 1869, (Leddy Library, University of Windsor, reel no. 4), 198, 7 June 1869.
137 House of Commons Debates, 1869, 198, 7 June 1869.
138 House of Commons Debates, 1869, 199, 7 June 1869.
139 House of Commons Debates, 1873, Leddy Library, reel no. 5), 195, 19 May 1873.
140 House of Commons Debates, 1873, 195, 19 May 1873.
the House to make up the money needed at a future date.\textsuperscript{141} Stephenson's amendment before the House would increase the amount paid to Taylor, or let him out of the contract if he so desired. By a slim margin of one, 71 to 70, the amendment carried.\textsuperscript{142} Since Taylor continued to the end of term of his contract, one assumes he received his "extra" money. To many, the House had compromised itself in an unprecedented move.

When the tenders were opened in 1874 for the succeeding five years, the firm of MacLean, Roger and Company replaced I. B. Taylor as the official Government printer.\textsuperscript{143} Taylor would remain under contract until such time as the printing of the Census Papers was concluded.\textsuperscript{144} MacLean, Roger and Company performed their duties satisfactorily during the life of this contract, and the Joint Committee on Printing progressed through the stages of maturity. The most significant recommendation to come from the Committee during this time was that an index be prepared and printed of all the Journals and Sessional Papers since 1867.\textsuperscript{145}

The largest scandal during Stephenson's association with the Printing Committee came during his term as chairman. Of

\textsuperscript{141} \textit{House of Commons Debates}, 1873, 195, 19 May 1873.

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{House of Commons Debates}, 1873, 196, 19 May 1873.

\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Journals}, 1874, Appendix no. 4, 1. MacLean, Roger and Company's tender price was $29,435.13 while I. B. Taylor's was $30,376.55

\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Journals}, 1876, Appendix no. 1, 3.

\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Journals}, 8 March 1877, 114. The House concurred on 14 March 1877.
the nine tenderers submitting bids on the printing contract in 1879, MacLean, Roger and Company was the sixth lowest. Before the contract was awarded, however, the first five withdrew. 146 Naturally, the Committee's recommendation to accept MacLean, Roger and Company's tender of $34,123.11 was accepted. 147 In the meantime, an investigation was launched into the circumstances surrounding the withdrawal of the other bids. It was discovered that the contract was "obtained through irregular and improper means." 148 So as to not disrupt the House, the Committee recommended the cancellation of the contract after the current session. 149

In the wave of this controversy, Stephenson faced a deluge of criticism. Some wanted the contract cancelled immediately. 150 Others charged fraud and corruption. 151 Stephenson pointed out that while he favored cancelling the contract that amendment had lost in Committee, and the Senate had already accepted the recommendation to cancel the contract only after the current session. Therefore, any action to the contrary would put the

146 Journals, 1880, Appendix no. 3, 1.
147 Journals, 18 April 1879, 303.
148 Journals, 1880, Appendix no. 2.
149 Journals, 1880, Appendix no. 2, iv.
150 House of Commons Debates, 1880, 2015, 7 May 1880. Leading the attack was the Member from Essex, Mr. Patterson.
House in conflict with the Senate. Mr. White, the Member for East Hastings, accused the Committee and especially its Chairman of mishandling their mandate. "I do not wish the honourable gentleman," White charged, to think that I am all alone in this opinion of him. A great deal of fault has been found with him by different members, who have not independence enough to come forward and say so.

Stephenson defended his committee:

This Committee, I dare not hesitate to say, has sat more times and has done more days' work this Session than all the other committees of the House put together. ...I have never yet been accused of beating around the bush, or of shirking any responsibility that rightfully belongs to me.

Faced with little real choice, the House concurred with the Senate and accepted the Joint Committee's recommendation. MacLean, Roger and Company continued to work under contract, not only to the end of the session, but to the end of the entire fourth Parliament.

Under Stephenson's guidance, the Joint Committee on Printing continued to mature and took its place amongst the more important committees of the House. More accurate reporting of the debates, and a first-class index of such evolved during this time.

---

152 House of Commons Debates, 1880, 1882, 691, 3 April 1882.
With the conclusion of the fourth session of Parliament in 1882, Stephenson ended his political career and that of the most prestigious position he held in the House of Commons. A more fitting finale could not be had for a man who was, first and foremost, a printer.

As with his municipal career, Rufus Stephenson never experienced defeat in his fifteen years as the Member of Parliament for Kent. There was no secret formula to his success, just sincerity. His philosophy to work hard to achieve the most good for the majority of the people prevailed throughout. His accomplishments in the promotion of emigration, in attaining better coasting relations with the United States, in securing a much-needed harbour on the north shore of Lake Erie, and in maintaining improvements for the navigation of the Thames River were all substantial measures which augmented the area's prosperity. Kent supported him not because he was Conservative, but because he was Rufus Stephenson. He never attained a seat in the Cabinet; but achieved much more. Rufus Stephenson earned the admiration and respect of the citizens of Kent as their "working Member".
CHAPTER V
ELDER STATESMAN

In 1882, Stephenson was only 47 years of age, but had already logged 21 years of active political service to his constituency and the country. It was time to assume a less hectic role; the role of elder statesman. Although Stephenson would continue to serve his country for the remainder of his life through patronage appointments, these positions were by no means given on a silver platter.

Before his final term as Member of Parliament ended, Stephenson began planning for the future. In a letter to Macdonald, dated November 28, 1881, Stephenson appears to be growing impatient. "It is with anxiety I await your promised communication to me which is of vital importance."1 Was he referring to a position after politics? It appears so. Stephenson felt an apt reward was deserving of his many years of service. "You need not to be told, my dear Sir John," Stephenson wrote, "how from 1850 down to present day I have written, planned, laboured, first to make Kent a Conservative County and secondly to keep it so."2 Whatever deal had been contrived, one is not certain.

Stephenson's first Government appointment came in late 1883. An announcement appearing in the "Local Brevities" column of the Planet informed its readers that Rufus Stephenson had been appointed Justice of the Peace for the Province of Manitoba. At a testimonial banquet given in his honour, some three weeks later in Winnipeg, Stephenson was referred to as the Inspector of Colonization Companies. Regardless of his official title, he wasted little time in warming the hearts of the locals. At the banquet, flowery words of praise, thunderous applause, and a "handsome cap and overcoat valued at $250.00" were bestowed upon the ex-politician as he embarked on a new career.

Manitoba entered Confederation in 1870. As white settlers moved into the area, the Métis soon found themselves outnumbered and began to move westward. As they moved, so did the railway, surveyors and colonization companies. In 1881, the population of the North-West Territories was a mere 5,400; by 1885 it had reached 48,362. The Métis envisioned an end to

---

3 Planet, 6 December 1883, 6.
4 Planet, 27 December 1883, 6. The story was taken from the Winnipeg Times.
5 A good source of information in condensed form on Manitoba's entry into Confederation is G. F. G. Stanley's Louis Riel. Patriot or Rebel?, Historical Booklet no. 2 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Society, 1974).
6 The Métis were the half-breeds, half Indian and half French or English, who had inhabited the area of the North-West. They had their own distinct culture and were not accustomed to the ways of the white settlers.
7 Stanley, Louis Riel, 16.
their culture and way of life. Joined by disgruntled settlers who had faced poor crops and low prices for their grain, the people of the west turned to Louis Riel for help. It was in this atmosphere that Stephenson journeyed throughout the North-West.

Witnessing the discontent for himself, Stephenson felt compelled to inform Macdonald of his personal observations during the crisis of 1885. "...the outbreak must be put down now," Stephenson warned, and this once for all, there must be no half measures. The Half breeds are not satisfied with the very liberal treatment they are receiving. They got what they asked and after having got that they are still dissatisfied. ...Indians should be compelled to go upon their reserves and remain there; and that to one and all the fact should go forth that the Government will protect and provide for them but they must no longer be in a position to retard settlement and terrorize white people.

Less than a month after Stephenson wrote his letter, the rebellion came to an end. As a people, the Métis were soundly defeated; their homes burned; property destroyed. Several who too part in the uprising were imprisoned and Riel was hanged for treason. These events had a dramatic impact not only in

9 Stanley, Louis Riel. For information concerning the rebellion see pp. 18 - 22; and concerning Riel's trial and execution see pp. 22 - 23.

10 PAC, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, vol. 415, p. 201016, Stephenson to Macdonald, 4 May 1885 (PAC reel C-1771). Stephenson sent the letter from Winnipeg where he had recently arrived from Regina and Qu'Appelle.


12 Stanley, Louis Riel, 21.

13 Stanley, Louis Riel, 23.
the west, but throughout the country. Stephenson's observations did not go unrewarded.

By the late 1880's, a severe drought brought a decline in westward migration from Ontario, Britain and the United States. Interestingly, it was precisely this time period that European immigration commenced. Much of this immigration was sponsored by the railway companies. As new colonies began to dot the North-West, Stephenson was assigned his final task as Inspector of Colonization Companies – to report, in detail, on the condition of the London, Crofter, Scandinavian, Hungarian, Church, German, and Icelandic Colonies (See Appendix A). The real extent of his work is not known as only a summary of his report was printed for Parliament. It is enough, however, to surmise Stephenson's style in writing was borrowed from the authors of historical atlases and biographical records of the period. The endearing qualities of each colony were elevated to such a level as to suggest no finer could be found anywhere. Although the report was not presented to Parliament until March, 1889, it had been completed sometime in 1888. With its conclusion, and the reason is unclear, Stephenson's work in the North-West ceased. For the next four and one-half years, he would be without a job.

In several letters to Macdonald, Stephenson pleaded for further consideration. In the earliest of these, he asked for

---

14 Thomas, North-West Territories, 13.
15 Thomas, North-West Territories, 13.
the job of Queen's Printer. 16 Three weeks later, another letter was sent just to ask Macdonald if he had received the first one. 17 Weeks turned into months and before long into a year; still no opportunities came. From a letter to Macdonald by Rufus' oldest son, Sydney, there is evidence to suggest a position had been promised to Rufus in August, 1889. 18 That was three months earlier. "The matter is one of the greatest importance to Mrs. Stephenson and her family," complained the young Stephenson,

and I feel it is incumbent upon me to beg that you will either give my father a position, or intimate to him that the Government is unable to do so. This should not go on any longer as it is an injustice especially to one who is so devoted and has been to the Conservative Party. 19

By the autumn of 1890, Rufus Stephenson was a very frustrated man. He could not understand why Macdonald was not doing something for him. He had always done as Macdonald requested even when it was to "part with the Planet and go out of business in 1878." 20 Stephenson does not go into detail. One assumes that Macdonald requested him to put his full energies into being a Member of Parliament and to get out of the newspaper

business. The reasons for such a request are unclear.
Stephenson, however, complied. He had given of his time and
energy even to the detriment of his financial position. Now,
what was to be his reward - obscurity. In desperation he
wrote:

While I detest self-laudation I think I will be forgiven
when I say that during the many years we have been ac-
quainted with each other I have bothered you very little
with that. But I must say that I do feel that I am not
being fairly dealt by, and I am not by any means alone
in this opinion.

Sir John A. Macdonald died on 6 June 1891, and Rufus Stephenson
was left without a position.

The writer could find no concrete reason for Stephenson's
dilemma or the lack of Macdonald's support. One can only specu-
late that Macdonald's advanced age was the true culprit. Never-
theless, within months, Stephenson received what he felt he
justly deserved. He was appointed to the position of Collector
of Customs for Chatham, a position he proudly held until his
death nine years later.

On February 15, 1901, Rufus Stephenson succumbed to

21 With the 23 December 1878 issue of the Planet,
Rufus Stephenson's name no longer appears as editor and proprietor.
In its place are the names of two of his sons, Sydney and Edwin.
In an open letter to his patrons and an editorial entitled, "A
Glance Backward", Rufus severed total connection with the journal.

22 PAC, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, vol. 488, p. 243865,
Stephenson to Macdonald, 3 September 1890 (PAC reel C-1802).

23 PAC, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, vol. 488, p. 243865,
Stephenson to Macdonald, 3 September 1890 (PAC reel C-1802).

24 Guide to Canadian Ministries Since Confederation, 22.

25 Planet, 4 April 1892, 2. Out of interest, the Planet
began daily publication on 12 December 1891.
pneumonia. At his bedside were his eldest son, Sydney, and his three daughters, Mary, Georgianna, and Clara. Four days later, his coffin was carried through the streets of Chatham followed by his family, employees of the Planet, members of the Public School Board, members of the Board of Health, the Knights of Pythias, members of the Wellington Lodge, members of the Parthenon Lodge, City Council, representatives from all of the County municipalities, and hundreds of citizens in a grand procession to Maple Leaf Cemetery. Here, he was interred next to his wife, Georgianna Emma, who had predeceased him three years earlier. Chatham lost more than one of her favourite sons; she lost one of the truly great architects of her existence.

26 Planet, 15 February 1901, 1. Stephenson passed away at his home on Victoria Avenue at 9:45 a.m. Six days earlier he had contacted pneumonia. Interestingly, in a separate article highlighting Stephenson’s career, he is listed as Inspector of the Colonization until 25 April 1892 at which time he became the Collector of Customs for Chatham.

27 Planet, 15 February 1901, 1.

28 Planet, 19 February 1901, 1. Stephenson was buried with full Masonic honours.
CONCLUSION

Rufus Stephenson left many testaments to his life's achievements. In a more physical sense, he also left behind four daughters and five sons to carry on the family heritage, as he had, with pride and dignity. Few stayed in Chatham, however. At the time of his death, only two unmarried daughters, Georgianna and Clara, and Sydney called Chatham home. Mrs. William Goodeve lived in Ottawa; Mrs. J. M. McWhinney in London; Rufus Jr. in West Superior, Wisconsin; John in Duluth, Minnesota; Andrew, an executive with Massey-Harris Company, in Toronto; and Edwin Frederick, who had become the Commissioner of Crown Lands, in Winnipeg.\footnote{Planet, 15 February 1901, 1.} There is no reason to suggest that Stephenson was financially wealthy, but what he had was divided amongst his children. They all shared equally in his personal estate, while Georgianna and Clara received the family real estate.\footnote{Surrogate Court - Wills, Kent County, Register no. 5, 1900 - 1902, Provincial Archives of Ontario, no. 2636, 421 - 423.}

At the time of his death, the Chatham Stephenson helped to build was witnessing new growth in an era of prosperity. Most city streets were being paved. William Gray began producing motor cars at his carriage works plant.\footnote{Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 631.} Dozens of new manufacturing plants were sprouting throughout the city. A sum
of $19,000. to build a library had been donated by the
Scottish-American steel king, Andrew Carnegie. New schools
were being built and optimism was the order of the day. Inter-
estingly, several newspapers were born and hit the streets of
Chatham. Few survived; only the Planet remained truly successful.

Rufus Stephenson was the sort of player who played the
game from the sidelines. He was never in the limelight outside
of Kent, but made important contributions to the nation from
its inception. His work on the Joint Printing Committee of
Parliament was an invaluable service to the Canadian government.
His unrelentless efforts to secure better coating regulations
were a benefit to a good many Canadians. Finally, his obser-
vations in the North-West showed a genuine concern for his
country.

At home, Stephenson's greatest legacy to Chatham was his
boosterism. Although he was always faithful to the Conser-
vative Party, party politics never stood in his way to accomp-
lish any measure which might benefit the city and its residents.
Improvements to the Thames River aided the agricultural commu-
nity as well as the manufacturing interests in the area. The
stationing of military troops in Chatham bolstered its economy
and provided an unequivocal sense of security. Almost from
the time of his arrival, the town he loved so well was the
recipient of his devotion and dedication.

4Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 641.
Supplement

to the

Annual Report

of the

Department of the Interior

for the year

1888

being summary of reports on the London, Crofter, Scandinavian, Hungarian, Church, German, and Icelandic colonies

by

Rufus Stephenson

Printed by order of Parliament.

Ottawa:
Printed for the Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery.
A. Senecal, Superintendent of Printing.
1889.
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OTTAWA, 30th March, 1889.

Sir,—I have the honour to submit herewith a summary of the several reports made by Mr. Rufus Stephenson on the London, Crofter, Scandinavian, Hungarian, Commercial, Church, German and Icelandic Colonies. These reports are made in accordance with instructions issued by you to Mr. Stephenson in November last.

I might add that the original reports of which this is a summary, deal with the condition of each colony in detail, but it was thought desirable that Mr. Stephenson should be asked to condense these detailed reports, and that the information in this condensed form should be printed for the information of Parliament.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

A. M. BURGESS,
Deputy of the Minister of the Interior

The Hon. E. DEWDNEY,
Minister of the Interior,
OTTAWA.
SUMMARY OF REPORTS
ON THE
LONDON, CROFTER, SCANDINAVIAN, HUNGARIAN, COMMERCIAL, CHURCH, GERMAN AND ICELANDIC COLONIES.

Mr. Rufus Stephenson.

EAST LONDON ARTISAN'S COLONY, SOUTH OF MOOSOMIN.
Townships 11, Ranges 31 and 32, Townships 12, Ranges 31 and 32, and Township 13, Range 32, all west of 1st P.Meridian.

This colony was projected by Major-General Sir Francis DeWinton, Mr. Burdett-Coutts, Sir John Whittaker, James Bankia, M.P., Mr. C.H. Bowesfield and other citizens of London, England. To thirteen of the settlers enumerated—the total number being 28—the sum of $500 has been advanced to each; and to each of the thirteen others $250 has been advanced by the “East London Colonization Society.” Several of those to whom money has been loaned, I understand, have not up to the present time given any security to the Company for its repayment, neither has the Company placed other homesteaders upon those homesteads which have been abandoned by the original homesteaders, nor have these abandoned homesteads been cancelled by the Department of the Interior. This colony may be said to be now fairly prosperous, and now that the worst period having been tided over there is little doubt but that the settlement will flourish much more rapidly from this out than it has done up to the present time. The condition of these settlers as given to me by themselves is a complete refutation of the statements of those who have used the press to reflect on the promoters of this colony.

THE COMMERCIAL COLONY (NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES.)
Townships 22, 23 and 24, Range 1, and Townships 23 and 24, Range 2, west 2nd P.M.

Eighty-four settlers were enumerated by me as homesteaders in this colony. The greater portion of the advances made to them was by the North-West Land Company—to Crofters and others; other advances were made by Sir John Whittaker, Messrs. Ellis, A.B. Coutts and W. Peacock Edwards, to Londons. Cash advances were made to all the settlers but four, of sums ranging from $275.25 to $600; to one man $600 were given. These are mostly secured by liens on the lands homesteaded. These advances were expended for the most part in the erection of comfortable frame houses, in the ploughing of land, and in the purchase of cattle, stoves, wagons, ploughs, harrows and farming implements generally. The settlers were especially well pleased with the country—many of them were quite enthusiastic on this point. Their replies to enquiries put to them by me will amply repay perusal. Though but recently organized this colony promises exceedingly well. The quantity of land ready for crop speaks volumes for the industry of these colonists.
CHURCH COLONIZATION LAND SOCIETY'S COLONY, N. W. T.

Townships 22 and 22, Ranges 32 and 33, W. 1st P. M.

The number of homesteaders enumerated by me in this Colony is 24. Those of them who have seriously attempted, with the assistance rendered by the Colonization Society—and that assistance has been liberal indeed—to make homes for themselves here have done fairly well and make few if any complaints when answering my inquiries. But I must confess that others for whom so much has been done, and who have done but very little for themselves, were outspoken fault finders. One of these thought the soil would wear out in three years at longest. He cropped five acres in 1888 of 12 acres ploughed, and for the want of being dug a fine crop of potatoes was frozen in the ground. To this person an advance of $600 was made by the Church Society. A second complains that "the promises made by the Church Society have not been fulfilled"—"he was to have a pre-emption." This person also got aid in cattle, farming implements, &c., &c., to the value of $600 from Mr. A. P. Eden, Agent for the Church Society, for which receipt has been acknowledged before Homestead Inspector Allamn; yet, up to the present time, he has neither house for himself and wife, nor stables for his cattle on his 160 acres homestead. In 1888 he had but six acres broken and cropped. A third found fault with the company's agent because he did not get the grain threshed and a market found for it. In pleasing contrast to the foregoing, I quote a few words uttered to me by another settler in the colony. He says: "I am well satisfied so far—like the country and believe I will do well. But a man has got to work to get a start, and with work he can do well. He's got to rough it at first." This man had 13 acres broken in 1888, and 13 acres in crops. When I visited him, only a few days ago, he was throwing out his wheat with a full, had plenty of hay for his cattle, and altogether was in comfortable circumstances.

THE CROFTER SETTLEMENT, PIPESTONE CREEK, N.W. T.

Township 13, Range 33; Township 14, Range 32; Township 14, Range 33, W. of 1st P. M., and Townships 14 and 15, Range 1, W. of 2nd P. M.

In this settlement which was first begun in 1884-85, I enumerated 105 homesteaders, all of whom, with one or two exceptions, expressed themselves in the very strongest terms in favor of the climate, the fertility of the soil and the locality they were in. Indeed, in some instances, I almost thought they were too extravagant in their language, and when putting to paper their utterances I was careful to give briefly what they said, and, as nearly as possible, the very words they uttered. With them, apparently, industry and prosperity go hand in hand with contentment. Their dwelling houses are comfortable—I believe only two of the original "Crofter cabins" are at present occupied by their first occupants, and one of these will be vacated for a new log house in the spring—while their stables are capacious and warm. The cattle present the appearance of being well cared for, and the abundance of hay un consumed that I saw in stacks indicates no lack of food before the prairies will be covered with rich green grass. While these settlers have shown much industry in the way of ploughing and grain raising, it is evident that the rearing of cattle is one of their especial hobbies and in the cultivation of which they are sure to succeed. Schools and religious teachings are encouraged by them, there being no less than six of the former in operation in the settlement, and stated preaching by both Roman Catholic and Protestant clergymen. In proof of the correctness of the foregoing, respecting this colony, I will just quote here the following from my extended report: "James Miller, N. W. 4, Tp. 12, R. 13, Sec. 33. Log house 14 by 20, sod house 20 by 20; three stables joined together, 14 by 60; good well of water; 50 acres broken, 30 acres in crop in 1888, wheat, oats and barley—150 bushels wheat, 100 bushels oats, 25
bushels barley; 1 span of horses, 1 yoke oxen, 14 cows in calf, 12 steers, 3 sheep, 6 pigs, 37 fowls, 2 wagons, 3 ploughs, 2 sets barrows, 1 mowing, 1 horse rake, 1 binder, 1 set sleighs. Married, wife and five children. "Nobody, said Mr. Miller, and his utterances were confirmed by his son," has any right to say anything about this country but what is good. I am well satisfied that we all came out here, and we would not go back again if all were paid to do so. The climate here is much better than it was where I came from in Scotland. I can go out here and work in the worst days of the year with less clothing on than would be required in Scotland to keep the cold and wet from our skins. It is my opinion that Lady Cathcart is entitled to the heartfelt thanks of us all for having helped us to our homes here in Canada, no matter what anybody says to the contrary. We are all thankful to that good lady, to the Government here, and to the North-West Land Company. There could not be a finer man than Mr. Scarih." Some of others hearing similar testimony could be quoted here from my reports if necessary.

HUNGARIAN (ESTERHASY) COLONY, N. W. T.

Townships 19 and 19 A, Range 1, and Townships 18 and 19, Range 2, West of 2nd Principal Meridian.

The homesteaders in this colony number forty-five at present. They are all doing remarkably well since a number brought in by Count D'Esterhazy have been weeded out and their places filled by a better class. The colonists here have been largely aided by Sir George Stephen when President of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It is my opinion, however, that too much money was expended in the erection of costly dwelling houses. Had less capital been put into the buildings and more into cattle at the start I am sure the results would have been better in many cases. The first cost of many of these houses ranged as high as $350 each, while suitable log houses could have been built for one-third of that amount. The settlers, however, were getting along well. In 1888 they had a large acreage broken and cropped. Their crops all turned out well. They were not troubled—except in one case and in that but slightly—with summer frosts. Their wheat was marketed in excellent condition and realized in some cases as high a price as $1.10 per bushel at Whitewood station—on the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway—to which the haul was about twenty miles. Mr. Breenan, a wheat buyer, informed me that the finest wheat sold in the Whitewood market came from this colony. Their stock of cattle is being rapidly augmented. Altogether this colony is remarkably prosperous. Mr. I. Vasa is doing valuable work there, and his good judgment and sound advice is much relied on by the settlers in this locality. An addition to this colony of about sixty homesteaders is expected during the present year.

THE SCANDINAVIAN COLONY, N.W.T.

Townships 18, 19 and 19 A, Ranges 2 and 3, W. of 2nd P. M.

This colony is composed of thirty-nine homesteaders, and gives great promise of soon being an important one. The land is gently undulating, the soil is excellent, the tract is well supplied with wood for fuel and building purposes, and the water is capital and easily obtained. Considering the short period since this settlement was begun, the quantity of land broken and prepared for cropping is remarkably large. The houses—mostly log—already erected, are large, and built in a neat and workmanlike manner. The settlers themselves are of a superior stamp and evince much intelligence, industry and practical ingenuity. A large addition to their number is expected to arrive from Sweden this year. Ten men are at present in the settlement prepared to make their entries for homesteads this coming spring. No injury
52 Victoria. Sessional Papers (No.15A.) A. 1889

130

to the crops here has resulted from the summer frosts. Sir George Stephen, while President of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, by the substantial aid which he rendered has largely promoted the welfare of this colony.

THE GERMAN COLONY, "HOLENLOHE," MAN.

Townships 21 and 22, Ranges 30, 31 and 32, West of 1st Principal Meridian.

This Colony, located immediately on the line of the Manitoba and North-Western Railway and 246 miles north-west from Winnipeg and 9 miles east from the "Church Colonization Society's Colony," is another which promises well in the near future. It contains 45 homesteaders, more than one-half of whom are married men. Only 11 out of the whole number have been advanced any pecuniary aid by the Manitoba and North-Western Railway Company, the promoters of the Colony. Many of them have already commodious and comfortable framed or log houses, while others are preparing to build this season. They have large breakings ready for seeding, and are steadily adding to the number of their cattle and collecting around themselves implements to more efficiently cultivate their farms. In only one case was any difficulty expressed about easily obtaining plenty of good water by digging to a moderate depth. The climate and the quality of the land were highly spoken of. Only four instances were given where damage was done to wheat by frost, and in one of these it was admitted that the seed was sown too late in the season. All kinds of vegetables did remarkably well. On the whole the settlers appeared to be well satisfied with their location and future prospects.

THE ICELANDIC COLONY, "THINGVALLA," N.W.T.

Townships 22 and 23, Ranges 31 and 32, West of 1st Principal Meridian.

The same and even more may be truthfully said of this colony that has already been said of the German colony as to its general prosperity thus far and of its prospects in the near future. The number of homesteaders enumerated is fifty-two, of whom only eight have received pecuniary assistance from the Manitoba and North-Western Railway Company, and the total amount advanced to these is only $1,250.66. Altogether, the settlers in this colony own no less than 277 head of harnessed cattle, 174 sheep and eight horses. The dwelling houses are well built of logs, and the stabling is roomy and comfortable for their stock all of which looks thrifty and well cared for. By some of the settlers considerable breaking has been done, but, as a general thing, the quantity of land broken for grain crops is as yet small, though potatoes and turnips are grown to a considerable extent. The raising of cattle and sheep appears to occupy the greater share of their attention at present, and, in this direction, it must be admitted they have been eminently successful. Wood, water and hay are easily to be procured in this colony. The colonists themselves are well satisfied with their lot. Two of them came from Dakota, U.S.

HUNGARIAN COLONY, "HUNSVALLEY," MAN.

Township 16, Range 16, West of 1st Principal Meridian.

Mr. G. DeDory initiated this settlement in the year 1887. It is located about twenty miles north-east from the town of Minnedosa on the line of the Manitoba and North-Western Railway, and is well supplied with wood and water. A majority of those homesteading have erected their dwellings in the wide valley through which meanders a small stream known by the name of Stony Creek, which takes its rise in the Riding Mountains and ultimately finds its way into the Little Saskatchewan
RIVER. The number of homesteaders here is twenty-six, of whom sixteen have been
advanced assistance in the shape of money, cattle and farm implements by the Mani-
toba and North-Western Railway Company. But now they are beginning to get
somewhat "before handed," as it is termed, and are making preparations to wipe out
the liens given upon their lands. Their general progress has not been as marked as
that of settlers in other colonies. They appear to be sober and industrious, but seem
more inclined to follow other pursuits than to closely apply themselves to tilling the
soil. I believe some of them have been workers in mines in former days. Gradu-
ally cattle are being gathered by them and no doubt in a few years more this colony
will present a marked improvement upon the present condition of affairs. Situated
as the settlers here are, considerable clearing of underbrush and cutting of trees will
have to be done on the uplands in order to enable them to prosecute grain growing
to any great extent.

THE SCANDINAVIAN COLONY, MAN.

Townships 17, Ranges 17 and 18, and Township 18, Ranges 17 and 18 West of 1st Principal
Meridian.

This Colony is planted in four Townships in the Riding Mountains, and the
greater number of the homesteads are at present located in the vicinity of a fine body
of water known as Otter Lake on the east side of which is laid out the Town plot of
Scandinavia. Here is a capital saw-mill where spruce, poplar and pine logs are
manufactured into all dimensions of lumber, and a shingle machine is now there in
running order. There is here, also, a well built and roomy two story frame building
splendidly adapted for the temporary residence of immigrants until such times as
suitable houses could be put up on homesteads. Besides Mr. I. Hammingson, who
has already done very much to advance the welfare and comfort of those who have
sought homes in that part of the country, has a commodious house in which he res-
sides and where all the necessary of life can be procured by new settlers. The saw-
mill has already given much profitable work to colonists. The land in proximity to
the town site of Scandinavia is heavily timbered, but farther northward it is more
open and better adapted to purposes of pasturing and grain growing. As might
naturally be expected the dwelling houses and other buildings erected by the home-
steaders here in this well timbered section, are of a good class, either frame or log.
Stock raising is being gone into and much the same line of procedure is being
followed by the settlers here as that adopted by the Scandinavian and Icelandic
Colonies already referred to. One settler, Mr. R. Patterson, of whom special mention
deserves to be made, is at present the owner of 4 horses, 3 oxen, 2 bulls, 3 steers, 12
cows, 11 head of young cattle, 6 sheep and 20 pig, and numerous fowls of various
kinds. Six of his cattle are from registered thoroughbred stock. This Colony, I am
sure, will succeed. It is said many new settlers will come in there this summer. Of
those already there four families came from Dakota, U. S., one family from the State
of Wisconsin and one other homesteader came from another State in the neighboring
Republic.

RUFUS STEPHENSON,
Inspector.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

I. Canadian Government


Canada. Parliament. Sessional Papers of the House of Commons. Sessional Papers 57 (1867); 74 (1867); 49 (1870); 124 (1879).


II. Public Archives of Canada

MG 26 A, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers

MG 26 E, Sir Mackenzie Bowell Papers.

III. Minute Books

Chatham Board of School Trustees. Chatham. 1861 - 1875.


132
IV. Newspapers

Chatham Banner. Chatham. 1870, 1873, 1877.
Chatham Chronicle. Chatham. 1849.
Chatham Evening Banner. Chatham. 1899.
Chatham Gleaner. Chatham. 1845 - 1848.
Chatham Planet. Chatham. 1854 - 1904.
Globe. Toronto. 1867.
Kent Advertiser. Chatham, 1850.

SECONDARY SOURCES

I. Books


COWAN, PARRY; COWAN, NANCY; and WILCOX, LEN. Chatham Fire Department. The First Hundred Years. Dresden, Ontario: Leader Publications Limited, 1980.


HAMIL, FRED COYNE. The Valley of the Lower Thames, 1640 to 1850. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951.


MCGEE, ROBERT. *The Fenian Raids on the Huntington Frontier 1866 and 1870.* n.p., n.d.


II. Articles


HARLEY, D. C. "The Importance of Local History in the Writing of General History." The Canadian Historical Review XII:3 (September, 1932): 244 - 251.

HUMPHRIES, CHARLES W. "The Writing of Local History: A Review Article." B C Studies No. 22 (Summer, 1974): 71 - 75.


VITA AUCTORIS

Robert Paul Myers was born on 24 July 1952 in Chatham, Ontario. He received his elementary education in the Kent Roman Catholic school system and his secondary education at Chatham-Kent Secondary School. He graduated in 1971 with his Honours Secondary School Graduation Diploma.

He registered at the University of Windsor in the fall of 1971 and graduated with his B.A. in History in 1975. He, then, registered for his B.Ed. degree at the Faculty of Education, University of Windsor and graduated in 1976 being named to the President's Roll of Scholars.

After accepting a teaching position with the Kent County Board of Education, he continued his studies in History on a part-time basis. He received his honours degree in 1978 and began graduate work in 1979. He received his Master of Arts degree in History from the University of Windsor in the Spring of 1985.